Semantic Fields and Social Change: The Concept Gnek in Tangu

Social anthropoligists, faced with an unfamilar concept in the language of the people they are describing, often retain the indigenous term and attempt to delineate its uses rather than offer a translation. We have such examples as Mauss' use of the term hau in The Gift , the Nuer term kwoth, and so on. The central concept with which I propose to deal in this paper, gnek,is of this type.

Gnek, Burridge says, is a word "which may be translated as 'soul', 'mind', 'nous', 'psyche', or even 'conscience', but which is probably best thought of simply as gnek" (1969:176). It is a term operating in that difficult area of language associated with mental activity and its manifestations, and we are well aware of the problems we face in describing such activity. 'Mind' is a capricious concept.

As Wittgenstein tells us, "a substantive makes us look for a thing that corresponds to it". Where one is convinced, especially by adherence to the theology of a particular tradition, that there is a thing to find (mind, soul), it is much easier to take that step. It was taken by the missionaries in Tangu with significant results in the field of social and conceptual change. We are told that "Each human being today is deemed whilst alive to have a gnek. But it is probable that in the past only an adult man was deemed to have a gnek. For the gnek is, or appears as, the immediate source of responsible behaviour" (ibid.). Not only was it not a conceptual parallel with the Christian notion of soul, as it was supposed to be by the missionaries, but it is not even best described as a "source of responsible behaviour". Rather, it seems to be more like a manifestation of responsible behaviour. In this paper, I shall be examining its place in both traditional society, and in the ostensibly Christian society which followed it.

In a previous paper, "Power and the Big Man in New Guinea" (1974), I suggested that the way to decide whether "alien rule restricts the power of traditional authorities" or "gives new powers to the native authorities it establishes" (Brown 1963:1) was not by casting round almost at random for evidence of indigenous despotism or of misuse of power by government-appointed officials, but by a careful examination of the details of at least one situation of culture contact and its ramifications in the changing modes of thought and action amongst the peoples contacted (Patching 1974:102). In this paper,I concentrate on just one aspect of culture contact, the changing concept of the person, or individual, within the society, but I hope to show its centrality within the whole spectrum of social and conceptual change. The society I shall concentrate on is Tangu, described in various publications by Burridge.

In my previous paper I frequently referred to the associated ideals in typical New Guinea societies of what is sometimes referred to as "consensus democracy" and of reciprocity, and began to show that these are not merely political concepts but spheres of thought and action germane to all social behaviour. And this is reflected in the many roles of the big man. Not simply a political leader, the typical big man operates within the 'total

social framework'; having importance in political, moral, economic, horticultural, religious and ritual fields of action, and he is also, in many of the cultures, expected to have an awareness of the meanings of the traditions and philosophy of the group as exemplified in the myths. It is the gradual development of expertise in both the practical and the theoretical fields which characterises the development of a big man, and the 'bigness' of a big man, his authority (in the very widest sense of the term) and his centrality in the activities in the group within which he has his ascribed status, is a matter of degree. In Tangu, amongst whom Burridge prefers to talk of 'managers' rather than 'big men', the acquisition of the capabilities associated with the 'manager' is the duty of every man. The Tangu myths persistently relate to the development of responsible behaviour on the part of the growing youth, and the story of the gaining of total responsibility by a man is the story of the 'creation' of a manager. In an ideal world all grown men in Tangu, being fully responsible, operating within the opposition between self-will and self-restraint, would be managers. In practice, of course, some are more successful than others, and it is the reality of degrees of success which separates a manager from other men.

Yet success must be viewed with caution. It would appear to western eyes that the success which went with the ascription of the status of manager in Tangu would be success in horticulture, in ritual, in social manipulation, and so on; success almost susceptible to abstract mensuration. But there is always the man who is too successful in these pursuits, the man who consistently embarrasses his exchange partners by the large quantities of goods offered for exchange, the man whose eloquence in debate carries him beyond the bounds of propriety. Such a man was Kwaling who was "too good for his nearest rival, too cunning and too shrewd. He lost out because by being too good he was unable to maintain equivalence" (Burridge 1957:771). In the acquisition of relevant skills on the way to becoming a responsible man, maybe even a manager, a man must not operate with 'social blinkers' on. No kudos comes to a man who blindly demonstrates his expertise whilst remaining in ignorance of the limits of capability of his colleagues - his kin, affines, friends, and exchange partners. A successful man operating in such a manner is successful only in isolation, subjectively. In the eyes of the community, he has failed.

If we look a little more closely at the fields of activity in which a responsible man has to operate we may be able, more clearly, to see how this situation comes about. A mature man is expected to demonstrate "technological skills; responsible initiatives; effective articulation and communication of thought; management of affairs; obligations to son and to the garamb [the men's house in traditional society in which men, as mothers' brothers, circumcised and taught restraint to their sisters' sons]...; a control over wife; the provision of feasts; acknowledgement of reciprocities, particularly with wife's brothers; the use of dreams and charms; maintaining the moral order; recognition of appropriate relations with the divine; the creation of culture from the wild..." (Burridge 1969:281). In all of these situations one might assume that a man's success depends solely on inherent abilities and on the acumen demonstrated in the learning of and

demonstration of traditional skills learnt at the father's knee. However, the qualities themselves must take second place to a man's social situation. It is skilful operation within other-defined roles rather than self-defined, measurable success in all fields of activity which gives a man responsible or managerial status. Without the appropriate social, affinal, and kin relations, no amount of demonstrable ability will help a man towards approved social status. Operating with 'measurable' success outside of these roles a man will become more of a sorcerer (of whom we shall hear a little more later) than a manager.

There are two aspects of this necessity for operating within a variously defined set of relationships; the one practical, mundane, and contingent, which could to a limited degree be overcome by an energetic and skilful man. The other is semantic, structural, and necessary, and this can in no way be bypassed. From the practical point of view a man would find it extremely difficult to demonstrate the appropriate skills without a father to teach him, a mother's brother to circumcise him, partners to exchange with, a wife or wives to assist him, sons to teach, or sisters' sons to lead through the process of growth and maturation. But the major significance of such an extreme situation would not be practical so much as social, moral, philosophical. It is not so much what a man does from day to day which gives him responsibility as with and for whom he does it. Just as the same behaviour can be morally reprehensible if performed with one woman - "incest"- but morally required with another; so the activities which are a part of responsible behaviour only gain that significance in the appropriate social context. A man is what he does with and to the correct people.

In such a situation the manifestation of responsible behaviour, the use of gnek, in indigenous terms, is what defines a man. Always operating as half of a pair - father and son, mother's brother and sister's son, husband and wife, sister's husband and wife's brother, elder brother and younger brother, and so on - there is no significant activity in which a responsible man can engage which has no moral bearing upon others in the community; unless a man wishes to risk condemnation within the community as a sorcerer. The Tangu concept of self - in traditional terms - begins not with a unified individual, contingently related to others in the social environment, but with an ever-increasing series of human relationships within which the responsible man will strive to become central. A successful man is not merely one who produces much, speaks well in debate, and so on, but one who is centrally involved in as many networks as he can manage - husband to many wives, father to many sons, mother's brother to many sisters' sons, partner in many exchange relationships. A man's identity is pieced together in the developmental process towards acquiring gnek. Gnek is itself the reflection of a man's achievement in becoming necessary in the lives of his many dependants. For Tangu, as for many other peoples in New Guinea, there is, "a particular conception of man which does not allow for any clearly recognized distinction between the individual and the status which he occupies" (Read 1955:256). The greater the number of socially defined roles a man occupies, the greater his status, the more of man he is. A man's personality, his 'self' is not born into him, it must be

achieved. To gain gnek, a man must first be drawn into, or draw himself into, the many networks, based upon reciprocity, upon pairing, which characterise Tangu society.

Tangu mythology includes many characters who, for one reason or another, lack the social status required of a mature man in the moral commuhity. The concept of the singular, anathema to the moral community, is examined in many forms in the narratives, and in those several cases where, the singular position of the character cannot be ameliorated by the embracing of the community, catastrophe results, in the form of violent storm, flood, or earthquake. A common theme is that of orphans, a kinless brother and sister who have to ride the storm which their anomalous position (impossible in the mundane world, of course) has precipitated. Another theme, closely connected coneptually, concerns the singular man, lacking a mother's brother, whose masculinity, fecund with power, becomes uncontrollable through unbridled self-will. Figuring in the form of the snake, drawing on the energies of the natural world, his potential creativity becomes, becuase of his singularity, his isolation from the community as expressed by the absence of the regulative operation of circumcision, ultimately destructive, and, again, catastrophe results. Singularity for Tangu means power, but power which is dangerous and bound to lead to the collapse of society as it is known. The indigenous term for the storm, flood or earthquake which in the mythology overturns the recognised world is pupu'-riem'riembaki. It is, according to the mythology, which in traditional times held all the truths, the only conceivable result of uncontrolled singularity.

It is in this conceptual environment that we must assess the impact of the advent of the European and his minions. The European does not fit into the various networks which typify Tangu society and cannot help but be singular. The question for Tangu to answer is what will be the result of the singular behaviour of these obviously powerful beings? For Tangu confronted with examples of just that type of singular being and behaviour which proliferate in their mythology, pupu'riem'riembaki is just round the corner. Unless, that is, these Europeans can be classed as sorcerers, ranguova, singular men who are recognisable to Tangu but whose singularity, perhaps, can be controlled.

"The word ranguma is conveniently translated as 'sorcerer', though in many situations 'witch' or 'criminal' or 'assassin' or 'scapegoat' or 'outlaw' or 'villain' or 'knave' might be more accurate. While allowing that there are different kinds of ranguma, Tangu have but the one word" (Burridge 1969:133). Now it is clear that Tangu do not believe that Europeans are sorcerers (or witches or criminals, etc). What is meant is that Europeans can fall into the category as a result of a significant parallel in their activities and attitudes. "It is what ranguova (plural of ranguma) have in common that justifies the single category, that distinguishes them from other men. A ranguma is he who deliberately places himself outside the system of reciprocities which characterizes the moral order: a singular man, any man who behaves thus singularly" (op. cit.:136).

The concept ranguma is a situational concept. Given that a man could, perhaps, through a series of misfortunes, become like a ranguma, being isolated and therefore acting of necessity outside of the normal reciprocal frameworks, it is far more common for the term to be applied to one who, though in a position to act from concern for his dependants, neglects to do so. And since this sort of neglect for the community can be a feature of any man's behaviour at one time or another, all men run the risk of being classed as a ranguma. But this situation can normally be resolved. Some men, especially if acting in a ranguma-like manner from ignorance, will be easily brought back into line. Others may be persuaded with a little more difficulty. But ultimately, a recalcitrant ranguma becomes the target for physical assault, even assassination. The singularity of the unyielding sorcerer's act is balanced by the singularity of the extreme course of action to the threatened community, and reciprocity is restored.

There are, then, various ways in which Tangu can feel secure in the presence of the potential danger of the ranguma, he who acts in a singular manner, without respect for the reciprocities of the moral community. Yet when Europeans act in this fashion, the situation is far from comfortable. Europeans, classed as ranguova, are so classified not only because of the fact of their singular behaviour, but also by virtue of the fact that they are rangama, strangers. It is necessarily true that strangers, having no reciprocal links within the Tangu community, will be like ranguova; the stranger cannot help but act in a singular manner, having no kin or affines within the community, and, in most cases as well, no exchange relationships there. Yet the stranger will normally pass on. He comes amongst Tangu at their sufferance and will act with tact and courtesy if he knows what is good for him, aware of his anomalous and dangerous position in the sphere of Tangu thought and action. The new strangers, Europeans, are a different problem altogether. "In Tangu, recalcitrant sorcerers who act outside the conventions which control them are beaten up, exiled or killed. White men, on the other hand, so it would seem to Tangu, make their own laws which Tangu have to obey, give their own orders, pay what wages they choose, and imprison when they feel like it" (Burridge 1960:39). Rather than being able to control these new ranguova Tangu are being controlled by them.

So the problem remains. Even classed as ranguova, rather than analogies with the singular, destructive characters in the mythology, Europeans remain as a threat, as unremitting sorcerers who cannot, by force or persuasion, be brought into the community to restore reciprocity and structural harmony, nor can they be driven away or killed. The singularity of the European remains unabated.

Quite by chance, however, one aspect of missionary teaching gave a new slant to the dilemma facing Tangu. It was common practice for the missionaries of the area to carry out all "secular and religious teaching at the lower levels and all church services... as far as possible in native languages" (Lawrence 1956:77). Now this is a laudable intention, but it can create logical difficulties based upon the semantic depth of certain indigenuous concepts. The problem for the missionary is, in part, to construct

in native terms such 'truths' as that "souls must be led to the knowledge of their sinfulness and to the experience of the grace of God" (Keysser 1924:430). The missionary must sift through the indigenous language to find linguistic parallels to the Christian concepts of 'soul', 'knowledge', 'sinfulness', and 'God', or, at least, for terms which can be manipulated through teaching the gospels and other elements of the Christian doctrines so that at some point the equivalent phrases in the native language have meanings sufficiently similar to those in the European language to satisfy the missionary that progress in the process of conversion can be made.

It seems, then, that the word the missionary in Tangu decided to borrow from the native language to mean 'soul' was gnek. Through the manipulation of this concept would come about that "awakening of individuals" (ibid.) which is the aim of the missionary. Instead of being the fruits of a long process of growth and gathering of responsibility, with all the structural relations which that entailed in traditional society, gnek (soul) was now given by God to every man, woman, and child as a birthright. And gnek was now a unifying agent creating a new concept of the individual, having a personal relationship with God, was now to be seen "as denoting the whole 'self' or personality, the essential principle of human nature, the basis of conscious, continuous, individual existence" (Robinson 1920:733), rather than a diversifying concept reflecting a mature man's various roles. The moral rules of Tangu society were intially unaffected by this semantic shift, but it soon began to be clear that a man's gnek - his self - was no longer earned from the other members of the society through status, to be constantly monitored by a man's peers, but was now given by God. From being defined by others in society, a man was now to be seen as defined by God. To save his gnek in the old days a man was responsible to many. To save his soul (gnek) a man in the new Christian community was responsible to God. Tangu had to begin to accept the philosophy of singularity to accept Christianity. It was an uncomfortable change.

Why, then, did Tangu go along with this teaching if it was so contradictory to their traditional values? This is almost impossible to demonstrate with full conviction, but we may suspect that the impression of power created by the technology of the Europeans was at least influential in the acceptance of missionary teaching, for, although the missionaries were hardly exemplars of the powerful, gun-toting, jeep-driving, aircraft-flying Europeans, they were the only ones who were there to teach the natives, and the only ones who were seen to be offering anything like answers to the questions Tangu were asking themselves at the time. Given the association in traditional patterns of thought (which I have not the time to go into at this point) between awareness, or knowledge, and power, control of natural forces, it was but a short step to the assumption that acquisition of the sort of knowledge offered by the European missionaries would produce for Tangu the sorts of power demonstrated by the Europeans as a class. As Lawrence puts it, "the attitude was quite early established in the natives' minds that the Mission was a

source from which to secure material wealth" (Lawrence 1956:75). It was knowledge with practical ends which the natives sought from the Mission, and this is expressed concisely by a Tangu informant who told Burridge, "You white men seem to know everything, and now the Mission is teaching us the truth" (1960:153). Even if the 'truth' seemed to contradict certain fundamentals of indigenous thought, Tangu were prepared to accept the intellectual disparity with its attendant fears concerning the dangers of unbridled singularity for the sake of knowledge and its rewards. If the singularity inherent in the European conception of the individual as implied in their use of the term gnek had in traditional times necessarily brought about pupu'riem'riembaki, perhaps Europeans had the means of channelling the already recognised creative potential in non-destructive ways, the means to hold the reins of the power unleashed by uncontrolled, singular, non-reciprocal behaviour. In the years that followed the introduction of Christian teachings this possibility was examined by Tangu both in myth and through the events they perceived in their lives.

Two of the Tangu narratives stand out from the body of traditional mythology, and these are the narratives through which Tangu begin to make the examination of the new concepts. Burridge says of the myths in question, "They are not in the same style or genre, they hardly belong. Yet Tangu regard them as in a sense more precious, more meaningful than their other narratives" (1969: 404). These are the narratives relating to Duongangwongar and Mambu respectively, and they are the only ones in which the European environment figures. The first narrative consists of two parts: the first bears some resemblances to the more traditional tales, whilst the second part seems closely based upon a series of coastal myths concerning the two brothers Kilibob and Manup, which have been variously described elsewhere (e.g. Aufinger 1942-5; de Bruijn 1951; Lawrence 1964). And it is worth noting that Tangu first heard of the European from their neighbours on the coast. The Mambu narrative seems to be an entirely new creation, based loosely upon history, and bearing little relation in structure to the more traditional myths.

Of the Duongangwongar narrative, Burridge says that "the first half appears as but an ill-learned preamble to the dialogue between Ambwerk and Tuman [the brothers who are the protagonists of the second half]" (1969:406). I think that this is an uncharacteristically superficial comment by the ethnographer. If we look at the story from the point of view of the attempted 'resolution' of the contradiction inherent in the old and the new uses of the concept gnek, and its implications for singular, individual, non-reciprocal behaviour, we may more readily see its significance. Briefly, the narrative is as follows (omitting, for the sake of brevity, many otherwise important features): Duongangwongar, a man with a mother, butno father or mother's brother, went hunting for pigs with the other men of the village. Finding a pig, he shot and wounded it with an arrow, calling to the others for help. The other men came and each speared the pig, but as they drew their spears out from the pig, they in turn plunged their spears into Duongangwongar who fell dead. His mother, Gundakar, learning of his death in a dream, found his body and

left the village trying to find a place to settle down and bury her dead son. Eventually, at the coast, she met a man who agreed to marry her and the body of Duongangwongar was finally buried. Gundakar bore a son to her new husband. Gundakar found salt water and fish in Duongangwongar's grave and cooked some of the fish which so nourished her new son that he grew and matured overnight. The next day her husband's younger brother, Tuman, visited and remarked on the rapid growth of the youth, upon which Gundakar told Tuman's wife of the salt water and fish in Duongangwongar's grave, warning her not to kill the large, snake-like ramatzka fish which lived in the grave. However, Tuman's wife ignored the warning and speared the large fish. Immediately there was an earthquake, and thunder, and water gushed out of Duongangwongar's nostrils, causing a flood which separated Gundakar's husband, Ambwerk, from his younger brother, Tuman. In the second part of the story Tuman invents, in sequence, writing, canoe-building, boat-building, engines, motor cars and bikes, and a large ship of the type which brings cargo to the jetties on the coast. Ambwerk copies each invention with amazement at the ingenuity of his younger brother.

Duongangwongar was a 'structural' ranguma, a singular man without the modifying mother's brother to control his singularity by circumcision. As such he is killed by his fellows, and rightfully so, for he is unable to take part in society as a mature man. His power, however, lives on in the ramatzka fish which Tuman's wife kills. The fish, being like a snake, associated in traditional thought with the power of uncircumcised self-will, must be controlled but not killed; a lesson learned from the older narratives. Its death causes pupu'riem'riembaki. But in this case, as would most probably have been the case in the older stories (Cf. the Zawapai narrative, Burridge 1969:316-20), this does not conclude the story. The white man, singular, teaching that gnek, individuality, and - by implication - responsibility, is God-given and not to be gained by growth and maturation, has taught, also implicitly, that the singular can be constructive: the white man is singular; he also has superior technology. The two implications of the Missionaries' meaning of gnek, overlaid on the traditional semantic field of the term are worked through in the myth. Gnek used to be associated with maturity, and if the missionary says that gnek is given by God at birth, then maturity must come with it. Consequently the son of Ambwerk's wife grows to almost immediate maturity overnight. (Perhaps at the time Tangu had never seen a European child, but this would not make any difference on the logical level.) This is the more cautious implication. The other is that the singularity of the new meaning of gnek releases the full power of unbridled singularity, which is what is implied by the action of the wife of Tuman, and, drawing on this power in the manner of a European, Tuman was able to perform technological miracles. The cautious Ambwerk, the New Guinea native, must be content to copy and marvel at the wondrous achievements of his brother. The lesson is, perhaps, that caution in the matter of singularity avoids pupu'riem'riembaki, but it also denies access to that power which produces cargo. The choice is set out for Tangu: either continue to accept the doctrines of old which reject the singular, and be content

to remain subservient to the European; or accept his teaching on the singular, for all the inherent dangers, and learn how to control the strom, pupu'riem'riembaki.

It must still be an uncomfortable choice. The truths of the past, the shadow of the ranguma, the threat of the storm cannot be forgotten with ease, and the social structure of kin and exchange will continue to restrain the would-be singular man. It is therefore significant that the earliest expressions of an acceptance of uncontrolled singularity did not come from within the community but were accepted from outside. Burridge says that "In Tangu the internal political values preclude the exercise of authority, or outright leadership, by a single individual Tangu. But they are willing to accept outsiders in such roles. Thus, in Tangu, no hero emerged from within: he came from outside" (1960:42). But, as we have already seen, it was not merely the "internal political values" which prevented outright leadership, it was the entire conceptual significance of the singular which individual leadership implies. It was, I suggest, only with the early stages of acceptance of the Christian form of gnek that even outside individual leadership was welcomed (as opposed to the grudging tolerance of the leadership of the European). Yet the ranguma-like implications would remain strong in these early days, hence the unwillingness on the part of individual Tangu to act out this new form of individual, singular behaviour in any depth. In the guise of the stranger (ranguama), however, the ranguma implications are already present, and acceptance of ranguma-like behaviour from an outsider is far less threatening to the Tangu community in transition than exploration of the implications by their own members. Blame for resultant misfortune, should there by any, could easily be put upon a stranger. Blame of the order expected by the sceptical, put upon members of the moral community within Tangu could cause irreparable fission.

The first New Guinea native to fill the role of singular man in this way was Mambu (Höltker 1941; Burridge 1960). With the Mambu narrative we come across the cargo cult. This is hardly the place for a survey of the empirical and theoretical literature on the subject, but it must be made clear how the changing concept of gnek influenced the way in which Tangu embraced the millenarian doctrines espoused by Mambu and his successor, Yali. Inselmann, a Lutheran missionary working in an area slightly to the east of Tangu was convinced that the Missions had nothing to do with the advent of millenariam activity. He argues (1946:44) that "the primitive natives of New Guinea, under Mission supervision, were making rapid progress towards higher standards of life until their contact with unChristian white man's culture gave rise to the cargo cult." Höltker, a Catholic missionary working in and around Tangu, seems more perceptive. He says of cargo cults that "It is an undeniable fact... that they arise almost spontaneously when a pagan tribe gets its first contact with Christianity and accepts it in part only" (1946:70). Neither of the missionaries, however, goes into the conceptual background to cargo cults in a way which shows satisfactorily what the thinking behind the movements may have been. (Cf. Lawrence 1964).

Gnek, it will be remembered, was that which was acquired by an adult, responsible man when he proved worthy of the status he gained as pivotal in a series of networks. To achieve and maintain this status required hard work to produce goods and artefacts, both mundane and sacred. To a large degree, gnek was manifested in the production of food, valuables, pigs, etc. for exchange; tools and weapons for the daily tasks; slit-gongs for ceremonies; and so on. In fact, the material culture of Tangu stemmed entirely from the gnaker of the mature men. Now if material culture was the product of gnek for Tangu, so it ought to be for Europeans. Cargo, white man's material culture, was the product of the European gnek or soul. Yet the Mission taught that gnek (soul) was not a thing to be worked for: it was given by God to every man, woman and child. The implication must be that this powerful being called God provided Europeans not only with the means to control pupu'riem'riembaki, but also with that responsibility that goes with maturity, and the goods which go with it. If the Mission taught that God gave gnek, but also made the natives channel their energies into "purely secular work - building decent homes, making large fields and proper roads" (Keysser 1924:432), something of the truth was being withheld from Tangu. The missionaries were contradicting themselves: "They did not realise that although the external forms [of native religion] might be removed - even forgotten - the underlying concepts would remain, and that the new institutions and beliefs would be interpreted in terms of the old, which they were meant to replace" (Lawrence 1956:82). Gnek was not a new concept. It was a traditional one with new layers of meaning. In the case of Tangu the Mission had, by implication, offered cargo with one hand, and snatched it away with the other. Europeans must have the answer, but they were withholding it from Tangu; the Mission by telling lies, or, at best, half-truths; the Administration by creating new forms of authority, based not upon reciprocity - the essence of the traditional big man and his gnek - but upon the singular and hierarchical.

The political question with which this investigation was begun in my previous paper has all but completely dissolved. To understand situations of culture contact and the thoughts and activities of those contacted we must do away with the notion that we can work satisfactorily in terms derived from sociology or political science. Tangu concern over the changing patterns of their culture, as seen in the roles of the traditional big man as opposed to the government appointed official, does not stem from a worry about the relative coercive powers of the two roles, but from the fact that there is a whole series of contradictions and choices confronting the society in question, none of the choices being made easier by the way in which the European modes of thought have been presented to Tangu by the missionaries. The change is not so much "From Anarchy to Satrapy", as Brown (1963) would have it, but from logical order to cognitve dissonance, created by the heterogeneous nature of the conceptual patterns experienced by members of the community operating with a traditional linguistic framework wrenched out of context by Mission teaching.

The big man fulfilled a multiplicity of roles in Tangu society, was irrevocably enmeshed in a series of networks based upon reciprocity and pairing. In him the structure and semantics of the society were reflected and given substance in the mundane world. He, more than anyone in Tangu, was the foil to the singular, with its inherent dangers. The government-appointed official came amongst Tangu as a sort of ranguma. Necessarily singular in his role, and agent for Europeans who had the means of channeling the forces of the non-reciprocal, natural world, through their gneker, souls, into the creation of cargo, but who kept their secret from Tangu, the government-appointed official had an unenviable position in the society. His job, which was largely to oversee the digging of latrines, building of roads, tending the cash crops, all viewed as unnecessary in the eyes of Tangu, would seem to have been primarily to keep the men busy and out of the way. "In general, Tangu feel that the labour involved is only worthwhile when an administrative officer on patrol is expected - in order to avoid punishment or wordy castigation" (Burridge 1960:55). Often, only an inadequate man could be persuaded to take on the job, because of the contempt Tangu feel for anyone willing to become a 'stooge' for these deceptive overlords. As Burridge says, "unless an official is also a manager he cannot command the respect of his fellow villagers. He is truly a puppet" (op. cit.:261). A potentially dangerous puppet, however, for, holding the key to success in the European environment, his efficiency will be in direct proportion to the rapidity of the onset of the breakdown of Tangu traditions, of pupu'riem'riembaki. But this does not stem from his political status. It stems primarily from what he, the singular, individual man, represents to his society, a culture in social and conceptual transition.

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