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Bona Gene: The Pig-Kill Festival of Numai (Simbu Province)[1]— Tradition and Change

Introduction

Festivals of renewal are found throughout Melanesia. Over and above the benefits of celebration, these festivals aim to renew life and personal relationships—either within a kin group, a clan, between clans or between a clan and its surrounding environment. Some festivals, such as the Milamala Festival of the Trobriand Islanders, aim also at renewing relationships with recently dead relatives.[2] The dead deign to attend these festivals. Others, such as the Barazi Festival on Manam Island, bring a renewal of the relaltionship between the participants and an eminent deity or remote ancestor.[3] Again, some festivals, the Fish Festival of Lumi in the West Sepik for example, bring good health to those who participate in them.[4] Many are multi-purpose, such as the *Kong Gar Gol* Festival of the Middle Wahgi which ensures "healthy children, abundant pigs, and excellent gardens".[5]

Some festivals, the Milamala Festival for instance, take place at the same time, even on the same days, every year. Others, such as the Barazi Festival, should take place at the same time every year but, for a variety of unfavourable circumstances, are often postponed till the following year. Festivals occur in cycles varying from two to thirty years. An Orokolo clan in the Papuan Gulf hosted a Hevehe Festival only once in thirty years.[6] By design, the Tege Festival of the Huli people in the Southern Highlands does not follow a set cycle. Even though its sequence is spread over several years, its main ceremonies are held periodically in response to serious natural disasters and epidemics.[7]

Unfortunately some Melanesian festivals have died out or have been absorbed into contemporary festivals.[8] But many Melanesian festivals of renewal, although changing, are still celebrated enthusiastically.

In order to explore this Melanesian phenomenon in greater depth, I shall focus on one set of pig-killing festivals of the central highlands of Papua New Guinea. These festivals are still celebrated, and although they have important differences, they do possess enough features in common with festivals of renewal throughout Melanesia to make them representative. In particular, I shall focus on the Bona Gene Festival of Numai people in the Sinasina Local Government Council of the Simbu Province. I do this because, although I have attended pig-killing festivals in various places in the Simbu Province, I have been able to follow the Numai through a complete Bona Gene cycle from October 1969 to October 1978.

The Simbu

Pre-history

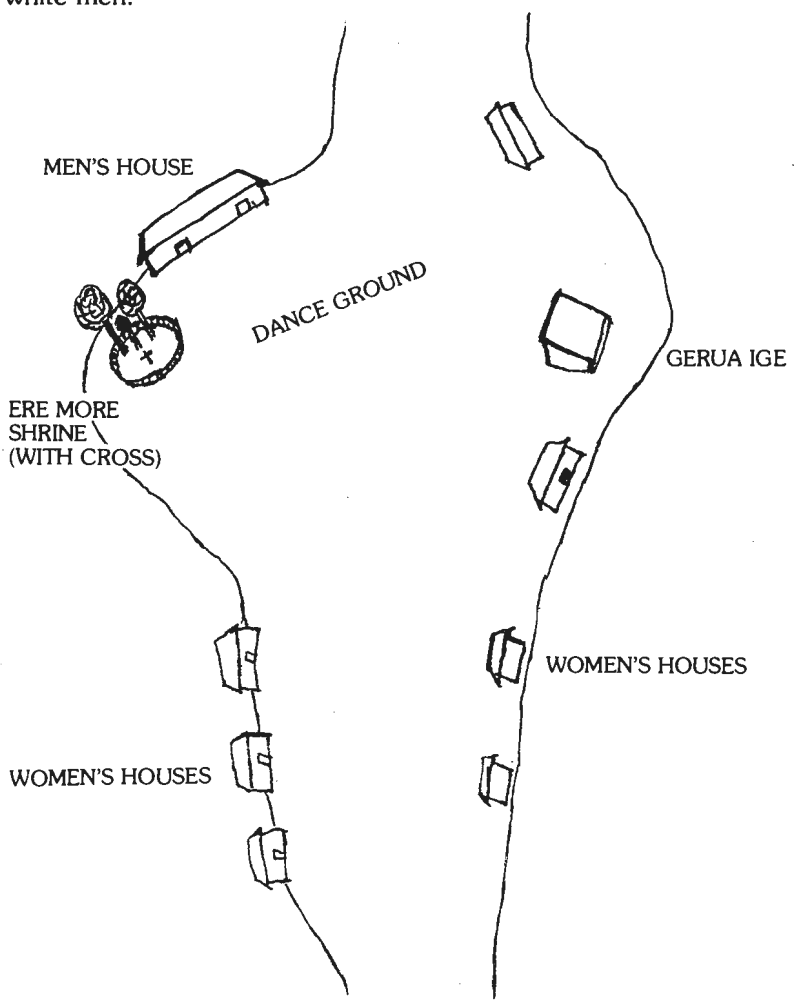
From archeological evidence of the Simbu Province and people, E. E. Bulmer has concluded, that there has been human occupation there for at least 10,000 years.[9] The archeological evidence also points to a human population that experienced slow but constant change. The earliest occupants were gatherers and hunters. They used bone and flaked stone tools. Somewhere between 6,000 and 9,000 years ago the Simbu people began to plant root crops; taro was probably the main one. From then on, there was a slow movement from gathering and hunting to agriculture. The pig came to the Simbu more than 5,000 years ago; it was probably traded in from the lowlands as a domestic animal. A technological revolution came with the introduction of a stone axe with a ground edge. This tool made the large scale clearing of forests possible and thus gardening and pig husbandry graudally increased and became more intensive.

With the intensification of gardening and pig husbandry the available ground became scarce. Interclan warfare because of disputed land has therefore long been a feature of Simbu society. The culture which the Simbu people developed throughout their history was fashioned by wisdom gleaned from constantly changing experiences. The Bona Gene Festival is one of the outstanding achievements of that culture.

Mission Impact

With the Taylor, Leahy and Spinks expedition of 1933, the Simbu and Numai people had their first face to face contact with white men. Later in the same year Father A. Schaefer S.V.D. crossed into the

Simbu from the north, and in 1934 both Catholic and Lutheran missions were established. Although a Catholic priest passed through the Numai area in 1934, Lutheran missionaries were the only missionaries with whom the Numai had continuous contact before 1947. In 1947, the Numai gave the Catholic mission ground for establishing a mission station. The colonial government established its headquarters in Kundiawa in 1934 and patrolled the Numai area from there. The Numai quickly began to adapt themselves and their institutions to the changes introduced by the white men.



The Bona Gene Festival is one Numai institution which reveals the natural response to the impact of white men on the culture of the Simbu people.

The Bona Gene

I shall attempt to describe the Bona Gene Festival of the Numais from two perspectives. The first perspective will be the Bona Gene Festival as it was celebrated by the Numai prior to their contact with Christianity. The source of this description is the many oral reports given me by elderly Numai men and women who had participated in Bona Gene festivals before the arrival of Christian missionaries. The second perspective will be the Bona Gene Festival as it was celebrated from May to October, 1969 and from April to October, 1978.

The Cycle and Preparations

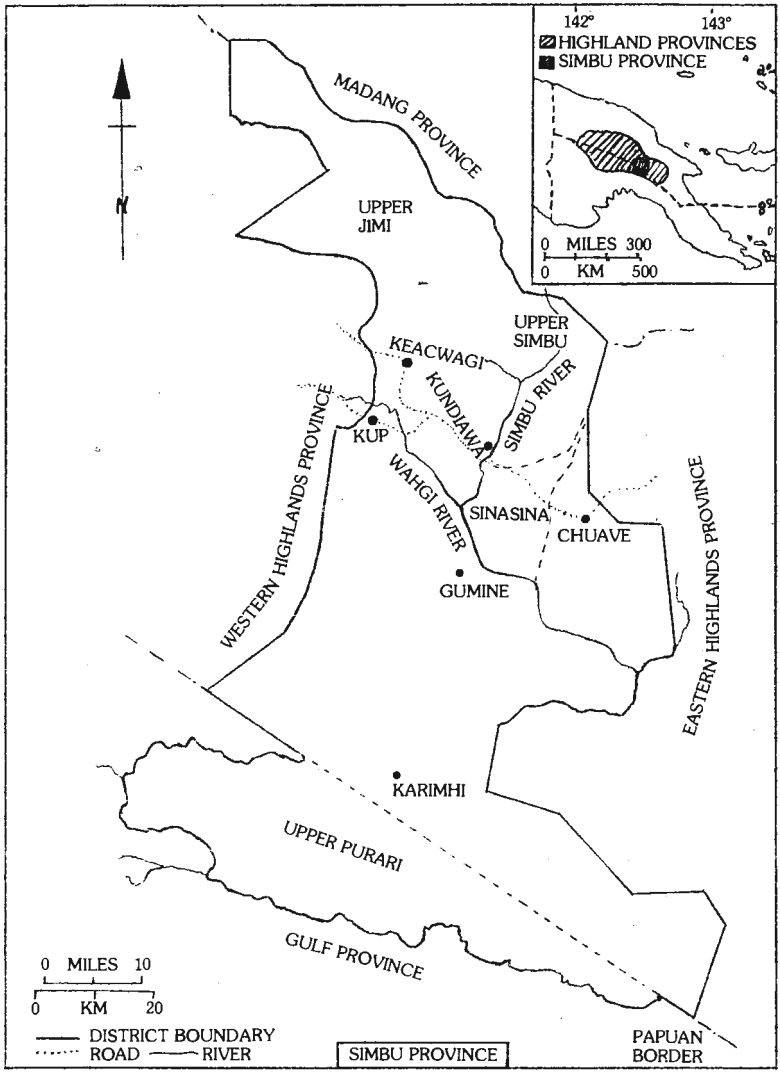
In the Sinasina, there are groups of clans which celebrate a pig-killing festival together. They could be called tribes, although the pig-killing festival is the only activity they actually do together and they do not always see themselves as descendants of a single ancestor. In most cases, the same clans unite today for celebrating a Bona Gene Festival, as they did in the period prior to colonial contact. There are six groups of celebrating clans and they follow an elastic cycle which requires them to hold a festival once every six to nine years. The following table outlines the festivals which were held by Sinasina groups during the 1969-78 Numai cycle.[10] Each group follows its own cycle, but the cycles are synchronised to the extent necessary to prevent festivals from colliding with one another. The populations are those provided by the 1971 census.

Groups	Festivals	Population 1971
Numai and Dinga 2	1969	4691
Tabare (Dumen)	1972	3785
Dom (Kagul)+	1972	2763
Dinga 1	1973	1422
Tabare (Yobakogil) & Kere	1974	8275
Gunage and Keboi	1975	4743
Numai and Dinga 2	1978	4691

(+ Dom (Kagul) celebrated their festival with other Dom clans outside the Sinasina Local Government Council area and so the total population hosting the Dom festival would be much larger than Dom (Kagul) alone.)(11)

In the Numai and Dinga 2 combination, the Numai clans numbered exactly 2,000 in 1967. Originally Numai was one exogamous clan, but in the early 1950's it broke up into two exogamous clans. Each exogamous clan has several subclans and these subclans group together for celebrating a festival in a way similar to the grouping together of clans at a higher level. Traditionally the Numai subclans clustered into four, sometimes

five, groups for celebrating a Bona Gene Festival. Today there are seven groups. We shall treat these low level subclan groups in detail later.



The possibility of the Numai holding a pig-killing festival depends on an adequate surplus in their pig herd.[11] The surplus has, first of all, to be large enough for the Numai to repay all their previously incurred debts. For the most part these debts were incurred when clans both in and outside the Sinasina held festivals and gave pork to the Numai. But the surplus must also be large enough to ensure that the "repayment" is greater than the debts, so

that the receiver will be in debt to the giver. Thus the future of the exchange relationships and pig-killing festivals is assured. It is very difficult to estimate the size of this surplus, as pigs are slaughtered to mark the various stages of the festival. The main slaughter of pigs is in the final stage of the festival and the largest pigs are kept for this stage. From the pig-killings I have witnessed in the Simbu Province, I estimate that in general a subclan of 150 people will kill between 150 and 200 pigs during the course of a festival.

A complex strategy of pig and garden management is necessary to ensure that the Numai's pig population increases to the needed number and weight.[12] In order that sufficient food be produced for the pig herd, and for visiting relatives and friends, the building of large new gardens must commence at least two years before the festival. These gardens are, to a great extent, communal and require organized community efforts. Efforts must also be made to collect Bird of Paradise plumage and other valuable items for self decoration.

Methodology: Rites of Passage

At the turn of this century a Dutch anthropologist, Arnold van Gennep, described and analysed what he called "Rites of Passage" in ritual processes, such as birth and name-giving, initiation, marriage and death and funeral ceremonies.[13] He discerned three phases in these ritual processes: separation, threshold and incorporation. He also perceived the pattern of rituals which accompany each phase as forming a rite. Hence, in a single ritual process he was able to speak of a rite of separation, a rite of threshold and a rite of incorporation, and, referring to the ritual process as a whole, of "rites of passage".

While pig-killing festivals are normally not considered from the perspective of "rites of passage", they do in fact possess phases of separation, threshold and incorporation, each with its accompanying pattern of rituals. Therefore, we shall follow the general methodology of van Gennep.

In the first phase, *separation*, the community moves itself away from the state in which it was prior to the ritual process. The rituals which enable the community to make this move can be called a "rite of separation".

The second phase called *threshold* or *liminal*, has to be seen in relationship to the phase which goes before it, separation, and the phase which comes after it, incorporation. It is a 'time-in-between'; a time of uncertainty, ambiguity yet openness, especially to the sacred.

Victor Turner, a modern anthropologist, sees it as a phase, or period, within a ritual process when the normal social structures and statuses of everyday life are put aside so that a deeper life, which all

members of the community share but normally do not consider, may come to the surface and into the foreground. He calls the sharing of this deeper life "communitas".[14]

The third phase which van Gennep discerned, he called *incorporation* (sometimes *aggregation).* Rituals performed in this phase characterise the new situation in which a community finds itself as the result of the ritual process.

Separation

The making of new gardens and the building up of the pig herd showed that the Numai were moving away from what might be called their *status quo.* Should, however, the pig herd not achieve a satisfactory growth rate, the clan leaders could in pre-christian times command a ritual for promoting the increase of their pig herd. This ritual took place in and around a sacred house called *erare ige.* (*Ige* is the word for house). Within this house were kept sacred stone artifacts; for this reason the house was also called *kobela ige* (house of the stones) and *galtaban ige* (house of the string bag, which contains the sacred things).[15] The ritual expert engaged by the clan leaders to preside over the ceremony was called *bonawageyal.* This name is a compound of *bona* = pig, *wagi* = good and *yal* = man, and perhaps can be best translated as "the man of the good pigs". There were four ritual experts among the Numai.

The ritual required that the people would gather around the sacred house with large quantities of food. Then, the ritual expert, who had prepared for the ceremony by refusing to eat any food not grown on the land owned by his clan, said a prayer to the sun, *(are),* and killed a pig. The pig was held so that its head was inside the sacred house but its body remained outside. The ritual expert stationed himself inside the house and killed the pig by striking it across the forehead with a wooden club. The blood from the dead pig was smeared on sweet potato runners, which were planted later in the clan's gardens. Before the pig was killed the women sat around the sacred house with the sweet potato vines piled neatly on their heads. When the pig was killed, the women handed the vines to their husbands who handed them onto the ritual expert. After he had smeared the pig's blood on the vines he handed them back to the husbands, who passed them to their wives by taking the vines in their left hands only and passing them behind their backs. The wives came forward and took the vines. If a husband looked around at his wife, the potency of the smeared pig's blood would be destroyed.

The pig was then cooked in an earth-oven. The men dug a hole in the ground, which they first lined with banana leaves and into which they then placed hot stones and the slaughtered pig. Sweet potatoes and green vegetables were packed around the pig and water poured over the contents. The oven was quickly sealed with more banana leaves and earth heaped over the banana leaves. The

pig and vegetables were left to "pressure cook". When cooked they were removed and served for a communal meal.

The fat of this pig, however, was taken by the men to where the pigs roamed. It was rubbed on the door posts of the houses in which the pigs sheltered and on any tree or post against which the pigs seemed inclined to rub themselves. It was believed that this would cause the pigs to grow large and fat.

But the ritual which traditionally signalled that the Numai were in the process of separating from their *status quo* was the playing of the sacred flutes (Mugale).[16] These flutes were the most secret possession of the initiated men in traditional Simbu and Numai society; their playing was reserved for very important occasions. For the Bona Gene Festival, they were played only after the Numai clan leaders had decided that the pig herd was developing satisfactorily and a pig-killing was guaranteed. This was usually a year to fifteen months before the main pig-killing at the festival. These bamboo flutes, which were—and still are—played in pairs, produce an unnerving but exciting hooting sound. Each Numai subclan owned a hooting melody slightly different from other subclans. The hooting continued for some months to inform Numai's neighbours that the Bona Gene Festival was definitely on.

During this period, a major house building programme was begun, in anticipation of the festival crowds. Houses in a state of decay were torn down and new houses built in their stead; repairs were carried out on otherwise solid houses. The Numai also built special houses in which decorated boards were made for the dancing still to come. These boards were known as *gerua* boards and the houses in which they were made as *gerua ige*. The *gerua ige* was a low, rectangular construction some 30 by 15 feet, with a half-gable roof that sloped from the front to the back. The front faced onto the dancing ground. Wooden plank sides completely enclosed the house, except for a single entrance. Within the house a *gerua* maker toiled away with his assistants producing the decorative *gerua* boards. Every cluster of subclans that celebrated the Bona Gene Festival together had their own *gerua* workshop.

Each cluster usually possessed a line of houses strung out in pre-colonial days like capping along the tops of ridges. Usually the top of the ridge was wide enough so that a "street" was formed by the houses being set neatly on both edges at the top of the ridge. Where the "street" was widest a congregating area established itself, which also served as a dancing ground during a Bone Gene Festival. The houses were built in two very functional styles. Smaller houses were constructed for each wife and her children, and larger common houses were constructed in which up to twenty initiated men might live. The men's house and associated wives' houses are known as a "house-line".

The last houses to be completed in the building programme

were the common houses for men. In traditional Numai society, women were forbidden to enter the men's house, and any woman who dared set foot inside would, I was informed, be killed on the spot. Nevertheless, it was with the completion of each new men's house that a feast was given for the children. Visiting relatives and friends contributed food and labour to the organizing of this feast. Each in return received a piece of pork, which designated that he would be the recipient of a larger gift of pork at the final killing of pigs. I see this feast as ending the phase of "separation" and beginning the phase of "threshold."

Threshold

Dancing

Only small pigs that did not measure up to the expectations of the final pig-slaughter were killed at the Bona-Gene feast for the children. Just how many pigs were killed depended on the wealth of the parents. During the feast the children, decked out in their parents' finest Bird of Paradise plumes, danced. Their day! This feast also marked the suspension of the normal work life, since ample food from the large gardens was assured. Now began the period of dancing.

Once the children had their turn, the men danced. A few marriageable young girls danced with the men; now was a good time for attracting a future husband. Prior to colonial contact, the dancing period lasted about two months. Dancing gave a clan an opportunity to display its wealth in the form of decorative shells and magnificent head-dresses of Bird of Paradise plumage. It gave them a chance to show their dancing ability too. A dance group was considered successful when it seduced a number of young girls and even married women.

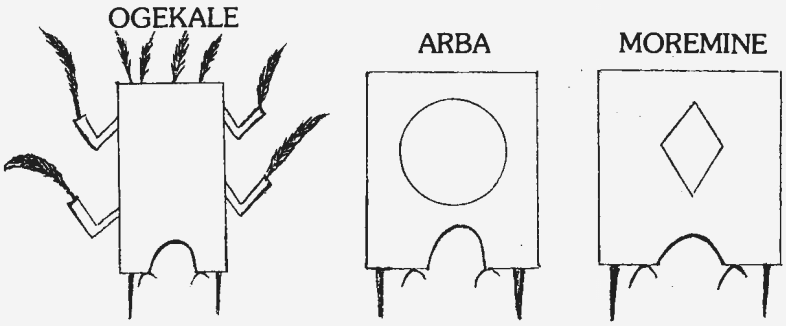
The Gerua Boards

A major occasion was the coming out of the *gerua* boards.[17]

A *gerua* was made from a wooden plank in roughly the shape of a shield. It had a semicircle cut out of its base where the dancer could insert his head, saddles shaped into either side of the semicircle that fitted onto the dancer's shoulders, and two legs protruding the base. The dancer held the *gerua* steady by these legs. *Geruas* came in various sizes. Some small enough to be pinned in one's hair. The important ones, however, were over a meter in length and carried by a dancer upright on his head and shoulders.

There were three basic designs for a *gerua* amongst the Numai. The first was the *ogekale* (*ogene* = hand and *kale* = leg) design. A dancer would carry an *ogekale gerua* in memory of a parent, grandparent or even a child who had died within the past few years. Then there was the *arba* design (*are* = sun and *ba* = moon.) The sun was a great spirit of the Numai people and the moon, a

BASIC GERUA DESIGNS



lesser but important spirit. The last design was the *moremimine*, a word which simply means diamond-shaped.

Besides a *gerua* a man, or a woman, could wear a wig *(aril)* made from the hair of dead relatives and a cape *(bremambole)*. The cape was made from tree bark and it covered the head and extended down the back to just over the shoulders. The wearing of a *bremambole* did not prevent one from wearing a head-dress as well, either of plumes or a *gerua* plank.

A man carrying a large *gerua* danced with a vigorous turning motion, one half turn to the left followed by a half turn to the right. To a large *gerua* was attached light ropes about six meters in length. As the dancer made his turning progression the young women in the dance group, and sometimes young men in female dress, would hold the rope lightly as they danced back and forth around the *gerua* dancer.

After all the Numai subclans had had a turn at dancing, neighbouring clans came and danced for the Numai. The Numai were now viewed as the hosts and the visiting clans as guests. Individual guests were given food by their trading partners. The guests did not wear *geruas* but they were expected to provide a fine display of dancing, even though it did seduce Numai women to follow them back home—a source of much post-festival trouble!

Male initiation

When the dancing was moving toward a climax the young boys were separated from their mothers and secluded for several days in the men's-house to be initiated.[18]

I shall not discuss the initiation rites here, as they formed a unit in themselves. As far as the Bona Gene Festival was concerned, the return of the boys after their initiation triggered off the final stage of the dancing.

Ere More shrine

To each cluster of Numai subclans united for the Bona Gene celebrations there belonged a *ere more* shrine. (*Ere* is the general term for tree and *more* denotes a species of trees.)[19] This shrine was

usually placed at the edge of the dancing ground belonging to one of the leading men's houses within the cluster of subclans. The shrine contained one or more trees and was surrounded by a low fence. Each of the trees had been planted at the conclusion of a previous Bona Gene Festival, hence they varied in size. The jawbones of pigs killed in previous festivals were also hung on these trees.

Part of the preparations for the children's feast at the beginning of the dancing was the cleaning up of the *ere more* shrine, including the mending of the fence and planting of decorative shrubs. From that point on the *ere more* shrine had become a focus of the celebration. It was often decorated with colourful flowers.

But the shrine was fully activated by the installation of the *ere more* post. Once installed this *ere more* post became the centre of the festival.

A few days prior to the installation the four ritual experts of the Numai selected a tree from the timbered country in the southern portion of the Numai land. Then on the night before the main and final killing of the pigs, all the Numai men gathered at the tree chosen by the four ritual experts. As they left their "house-lines" they played their flutes, which kept the women and children inside as well as telling them that something important was about to happen. Once gathered at the tree, the men surrounded it and pulled it out of the ground, roots and all. One ritual expert next chopped up the tree into a number of posts, roughly a meter and a half in length. Each post was given to one of the clusters of subclans that owned an *ere more* shrine. Whatever was left over of the tree, including the leaves and chips, had to be carefully gathered up by the ritual experts because they were seen as having power and could be dangerous. When the task was completed each cluster carried its post back to its *ere more* shrine, accompanied again with the playing of flutes.

Back at their *ere more* shrines, the clusters planted their posts in front of the trees but within the fence surrounding the shrine. The men then decorated it with large mother of pearl shells *(kina)* and strings of small shells *(tambu)*, and rubbed it with pig fat. Finally, the shrines were given a last clean and touch up.

When sun rose and the women and children discovered a decorated post in their *ere more* shrine they were amazed. The women brought their sweet potato vines, cuttings of sugar cane and the seedlings of any other fruits or vegetables they grew in their gardens and placed them together with their digging sticks around the mysterious post. The men did the same with their stone axes. Young piglets that represented the beginnings of the new pig herd, once all the adult pigs had been slaughtered, were tied up just outside the fence around the shrine. More fresh flowers were strewn about inside the shrine and the men completed the decorating by sticking Bird of Paradise plumes into the top of the post. Some even drapped the long skirt which the men wore when dancing down the front of the post.

Later in the morning the *gerua* boards used during the dancing were placed within the *ere more* shrine, some being propped up against the post. They were left there for the remainder of the ceremonies. Although the dancing was officially over, the atmosphere remained festive and some small groups of dancers continued to entertain the crowds of visitors. The stage was slowly being set for the killing of the pigs.

The Killing of the Pigs

Earlier in the morning the pigs had been brought onto the dance grounds and tethered to stakes. Now that the time had come, the owner of each pig took a wooden club and "marked" his pig by swinging the club as if he intended to kill but stopping before the club made contact with the pig. The wife of the owner would immediately begin to cry, and the owner would hand the club to another man to kill the pig.

This man took some grass seeds, young shoots of a banana tree and a few sweet potato leaves and wrapped them around the club, holding them fast with his hands. Then taking his position in front of the pig he clubbed it to death. As the pig was being clubbed the owner exclaimed, "We brought you down here from where you have grazed." Then he shouted the name of the place where the pig had grazed. This was to ensure that the pig's spirit would return to that spot and enter the body of one of the owner's few young pigs. This would cause the young pigs to grow quickly. Then the blood of the dead pig was collected and some of it smeared on the sweet potato vines and the other seedlings around the installed post. The leg ropes of the dead pigs were also placed at the base of the sacred post.

As soon as one family began to kill pigs, other families immediately followed and the scene described above was repeated over and over again until the last pig had been killed. In less than an hour the Numai might have slaughtered 1,500 pigs at their various *ere more* shrines.

The slaughtered pigs were placed side by side around the *ere more* shrine and left there for some time. After this interlude they were passed through a fire, so that their hair was scorched off, and butchered. Next the whole of their carcasses, except a few heads and small pieces of choice meat, were cooked together with vegetables and greens in large earth-ovens.

The heads and pieces of meat were cooked within the shrine in small earth ovens. When the pieces had been cooked they were divided amongst the members of the hosting families. Each member of those families had a right to at least one small piece.

After the pig carcasses, vegetables and greens had been cooked and removed from the large earth-ovens, their owners took handfulls of fat, considered the choicest part of a pig, and rubbed them on the post in the *ere more* shrine.

Family Meal—"Communitas"

That evening there was a family meal—in the fullest meaning of that term. At least three generations of the hosting family, plus relatives and friends, joined in this family meal. Although relatives and friends, these individuals were still members of enemy clans—a fact that could be fully forgotten only on an occasion such as this! Normally too, men and women ate separately, with the choicest portions of the pig being reserved for the men, while the women had to do with the not-so-choice portions. For this meal both these taboos were suspended.

What Victor Turner calls "communitas" (i.e. the suspension of the normal social structures and conventions so that the deeper life of the community may emerge) seems to have been present all through this "threshold" phase. But nowhere does it seem to have been more evident than in this final family meal.

Incorporation

In one way "incorporation" is a return to "life-as-usual". Hence one of the functions of the rituals in this phase, is to reinstate social structures and conventions which were suspended during the threshold phase. But in another way, it is incorporation into a new situation, which to a large degree is the reverse of the situation from which the community separated itself at the beginning of the festival. I shall try to show how this was true of the Bona Gene Festival of the Numai.

There was a time among the Numai when the evening meal, which I have just described, was not held. On the afternoon of the day on which the pigs had been slaughtered, the pork was removed from the earth-ovens after it had cooked, and arranged in a number of heaps. Each heap was designated for a particular relative or friend. Speeches were then made reviewing the state of the relationship between the kin and clan groups involved and donating the heaps of pork to those for whom they had been designated. The recipients replied with speeches and shouts of acceptance. They then loaded their pork onto their shoulders and into their string bags and returned home rejoicing.

As far as I can ascertain, the introduction of the evening family meal was made at least ten years before the arrival of the white men in the Simbu. It was introduced by adopting the custom of the central Simbu people to the west of the Numai. Accepting ritual innovations from the central Simbu people seems to have been the normal pattern for the Numai, as we shall see later.

The innovation of the evening family meal meant that the distribution of pork had to be delayed until the following morning. In pre-colonial days, the distribution of pork on the following morning

followed fairly closely the procedure it had followed when the pork had been distributed the previous afternoon. When I once asked an old man, however, why the pork could not be distributed during the evening family meal, he replied that this was not a fitting time at all. He said he would want to wait till the daylight so that he could look his relatives or friends straight in the eye when he gave them their share of pork. This seems to indicate that a change of attitude was required between the meal of the evening and the distribution of the following morning.

One final ceremony concluded the Bona Gene Festival. It took place one or two days after the killing of the pigs. The clubs that had been used to kill the pigs were buried in a muddy area near a spring. One Numai cluster of subclans said they buried the post from the *ere more* shrine with the clubs. They then planted a seedling of a *more* tree in the hole left by the removal of the post. They said it was important that the post be buried in muddy ground before the pig fat on it dried up. The post had to stay wet if the future growth of the gardens and pigs was to be assured.

All the other subclan clusters claimed that they left the post in the shrine. It was allowed, together with the *gerua* boards placed around it, to rot away. But they did plant a *more* tree seedling within the shrine. The planting of seedlings was accompanied by the hanging of the jawbones of slaughtered pigs on the trees within the shrine. These rituals signalled the end of a Numai Gene Festival.

Bona Gene: 1969 and 1978

Following the phases of separation, threshold and incorporation used above. I shall briefly describe what I observed and was told about the Numai Bona Gene festivals of 1969 and 1978.

These descriptions illustrate the patterns of change evident with the advent of the white man and the Christian missionary.

Separation Rites

When I arrived in Sinasina in May 1968, the hooting of the flutes was already announcing the coming Bona Gene Festival. The flutes, however, were played quite openly. On my first visit to a men's house, I was surprised to find women and children flocking into this sanctuary in order to hear the "sacred" flutes. Not only the secrecy but the fear generated by the flutes had been totally banished. The *irare ige* house too had disappeared, and with it the emergency rite to speed up the growth of the pigs.

The garden and house building programmes were, however, very evident. By mid 1968, the new gardens had been prepared and largely planted; new houses were under construction and old ones were being repaired. Preparations for the 1978 festival followed the

pattern of 1968 to 1969 but with some notable exceptions. At the end of 1977, one Numai clan, Bomaiku, began to build a "long-house" for its expected visitors. A long-house is a temporary shelter, which at its highest point (the peak of its gable roof) reaches to less than two meters. The roof slopes down on both sides to about a meter above the ground; its dwarfed sides are walled in with small entrances every five meters or so. It is about three meters wide, but its length can be extended indefinitely to over one hundred meters if needed. The long-house has always been a feature of pig-killing festivals in central Simbu and further west. But 1978 was its first appearance in a Numai festival, and to my knowledge anywhere else in Sinasina. On the other hand, the *gerua ige*, the half-gable houses in which the *gerua* boards were made, were not constructed either in 1969 or in 1978.

Another change was an unplanned necessity rather than a willing choice. During the national elections of 1977, fierce fighting broke out between the Numai and Dinga clans. The fighting caused the deaths of one Numai and five Dinga men. It broke out as a result of the death of a child in a car accident, which involved the Member for Sinasina and Minister for Education in the National Parliament.

The fighting and ensuing hostility caused the Bona Gene Festival, which originally had been planned for 1977, to be postponed till 1978. But of even greater effect on the festival was the fact that pigs which were being fattened for the festival had to be given to other clans in order to settle debts incurred during the fighting. Owing to sky-rocketing coffee prices in 1976 and 1977, the Numai were able to buy over two hundred head of cattle which they killed at the 1978 pig-killing festival! Hence they saved their prestige in Sinasina.

Threshold Rites

Nevertheless, neither in 1969 nor 1978 could one conclude that the Bone Gene Festival of the Numais was disintegrating or dying. In many ways it was growing, innovating and even reappropriating ceremonies that had been lost. The dancing period is evidence of that.

By the end of May 1969, all the Numai subclan clusters had held the feast for the children and commenced the dancing period. The feast was deliberately held during the May school holidays, even though at the time less than twenty percent of the children of school age were actually in school. The children also continued to dance for a few weeks before they were replaced by groups of men and young girls from various Numai subclans. The Numai danced and the following weeks neighbouring clans came and danced. From then until October, dance groups, either Numai or their neighbours, performed at least twice a week, although there was a lull during the height of the coffee picking season in July.

At this time, a group of Catholics came to me, as I was their parish priest, and asked could they wear *gerua* boards while dancing. Dancing with *gerua* boards had been forbidden to both the Lutherans and Catholics of Numai. I asked why they wanted to use the *gerua* boards and they replied only for decoration *(bilas nating)*. We discussed the group's wish for quite some time, and even though many Catholics could agree with the group, they doubted that it would be a wise thing to do. They feared it would cause conflict with the Lutherans. Finally, we left the decision up to the group. They did make one *gerua,* an *ogekale,* and danced with it. But it caused too much tension and was abandoned after its second use. The matter was forgotten until the beginning of the dancing for 1978 festival, when a large number of Numais decided they would like to wear *gerua* boards while dancing. The matter was discussed again, but with more understanding. All, Lutherans and Catholics, agreed that if a person wore a *gerua* for decoration, or simple remembrance of a dead relative, it would not offend Christian beliefs and sensitivities.

Many *gerua* boards, mostly of the *ogekale* type, were worn during the dancing of the 1978 festival. I even noticed a grandmother dancing with a *gerua,* which was made in remembrance of her three year old grandchild who had died the previous year. Physically she was able to dance with a *gerua* because *gerua* boards are now made of light plywood, and not hewn with stone axes from heavy wooden planks. Perhaps this is also one reason why there has been no talk of reviving the *gerua ige,* the houses in which the *gerua* boards were made.

Further differences between the dancing periods of 1969 and 1978 struck me. In 1969, dance groups performed anytime during the week, while in 1978 there was definite preference for weekend performances, and the coffee flush did not noticeably affect the number of performances. Drunkedness, which was not evident in 1969, became a serious disruption during some of the dancing performances of 1978. Tinsel, crepe paper, neck ties and so on were, however, less in evidence amongst the Bird of Paradise plumes and other traditional decorations in 1978 than 1969.

In these two modern festivals, the dancing period was more than twice the length it was in pre-colonial days. However, the dancing did tend to peter out near the end of the period instead of building up to a climax. As the last Numai initiation rites were held in the early 1950's, there were no initiation ceremonies at this point. Both Catholic and Lutheran missionaries had preached against the *ere more* shrines, especially the ceremonial installation of the "centre" post within the shrine.

On this last point, however, there was a change of Catholic policy in 1960. The parish priest introduced a ceremony called *blesim kruse* (the blessing of the cross).[20] In this ceremony the installation of the post within the *ere more* shrines was replaced by

the installation of a wooden cross. The installing of the cross ceremony was not performed during the night before the killing of the pigs but either during the day before, or during the morning of the day on which the pigs were killed. The parish priest walked from one *ere more* shrine to another and presided over the ceremonies. He led prayers for the crops, pigs and people and waited while the wooden cross was planted in the *ere more* shrine. Then he blessed the cross. Next he blessed the sweet potato vines, cuttings of sugar cane, seedlings from vegetables to be grown in the gardens, spades, steel axes and piglets—all of which were arranged around the cross. Then he blessed the pigs to be killed and finally the people themselves. The "blesim kruse" ceremony was held in subclan clusters where the majority of the population were Catholic in both 1969 and 1978.

The family meal in the evening was very much part of the 1969 and 1978 festival. In 1978, the killing of the pigs and cattle (238 head by one count) extended over three days. I saw no evidence to suggest that this adversely affected the character of the evening meals. The occasion did remain festive and a spirit of "communitas" prevailed.[21]

Incorporation Rites

There was a marked difference between the phases of incorporation of the 1969 and 1978 festivals. I shall first describe, as I remember it, the morning on which distribution of pork for the 1969 Bona Gene Festival took place.

As the sun rose, men and women moved quickly from their houses and began to discuss the activities for the day, with an earnestness which was surprising for the end of a long period of festivities. The children, who had been playing their noisy games for at least an hour before sunrise, left their games to listen intently to the discussion carried on by the adults. The families hosting the pig-festival became totally involved in lining up in neat bundles the pork (plus the beef from the two steers) to be distributed to their relatives and friends. The relatives and friends removed themselves from the scene and congregated with their own clans at the edge of the ceremonial area. It was soon obvious that the series of large extended families of the night before had broken up and regrouped according to clan membership.

Once the pork had been arranged in lots ready for distribution, a few men, dressed in full dance regalia and armed with long ceremonial spears, danced out to where the visiting clans were assembled. These men danced vigorously up to the visitors, feigning an attack on them. They threateningly aimed their spears at the visitors and then suddenly retreated back to where the hosting clans and pork were assembled. When they retreated, the visiting clans followed them, only to find that when they had taken a few steps the

dancers, who had raced away from them, turned about quickly and feigned another attack on them. The dancers kept repeating this pattern, which provided a display of hostility, while with the retreating movement, they led visiting clans to the spot where the pork was to be distributed.

A young sapling, which had been cut down and lopped so that only the trunk and two or three solid, foot long branches remained, was then dug into the ground immediately in front of where the pork had been assembled. Two Numai leaders hoisted themselves up the tree and perched in the forks. One then made a speech in which he stressed that his clan had worked hard to raise so many pigs, and now that these pigs had been killed and cooked, his clan was going to give all of them away to other clans.

The mood of oneness and communion of the previous night was gone. It had been replaced by the excitement of economic competition and the need to keep clan prestige high. The relatives and friends of the previous night had suddenly reverted to being members of competitive, even enemy clans.

When all the pork had been presented and accepted, the visitors loaded their gifts into string bags and onto their shoulders, and then a mighty and prolonged shout the Numai drove them in three directions out of the assembly area. The visitors ran out of the Numai territory staggering under their heavy loads.

By contrast, the distribution of pork (and beef) at the 1978 Bona Gene Festival became a series of ceremonies, held by individual subclans and often single families. The protracted killing period, it would seem, led some families and subclans to make their speeches and distribute their pork and beef before others. The opportunity for a large interclan ceremony involving all the Numai and neighbouring clans may simply not have materialised. Added to a lack of opportunity was a lack of space. Houses had been built on most of the large assembly area on which the 1969 distribution was held. A visitor from a neighbouring clan friendly to the Numai speculated, however, that it was fear of more interclan warfare which deterred a big interclan ceremony.

Another feature of the 1978 festival was the large sums of money given, together with the pork and beef. There were small gifts of money handed over at the 1969 distribution, but they hardly bare comparison with the donations of 1978. Most of this money consisted of two kina banknotes (=A$2.26) fixed side by side along five or six meters of towering bamboo poles. These money poles toppled around gracefully as they were presented with the pork and beef. The thousands of Kinas which constituted them were again made possible by the high coffee prices in 1977-78.

Finally, since the installation of the "centre" post in the *ere more* shrine had been abandoned, it was not buried in muddy ground after the festival, and although the pigs were still clubbed to

death in 1969 and 1978, the clubs too were not buried. The wooden crosses, however, were left in the shrines after the 1969 festival, to rot away and be replaced only at the following festival. In 1978, however, many Catholics had crosses made from iron pipes. When I asked why they preferred iron crosses, they replied that iron crosses would be more permanent and would not rot away after some time as the wooden crosses do.

Conclusion

The finding of this study can be summarized by viewing the ritual process from several perspectives (see page 193).

The economic activity (exchanges) for example, is modified during the various phases of the festival. During the threshold phase a gift of pork, beef or money is seen as "helping" the host family, which does not mean that the host family has no obligation to return the gift. It means rather that, because the unity of the kinship group is all important during the threshold, kinsmen will give gifts to the host families so that the host families may keep their prestige high—by giving these same gifts away again in the major presentations during the phase of incorporation. Clan leaders take no part in these exchanges; many exchanges are completely private affairs, while gifts given during the phase of incorporation have the quality of one-up-manship. They emphasise the competition between clans. Gifts are 'proof' that the host clan has succeeded in reversing the score between the clans. It is almost necessary that clan leaders take prominent roles in the presentation of such gifts.

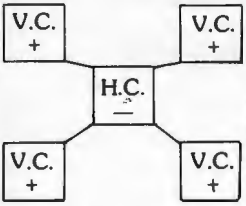
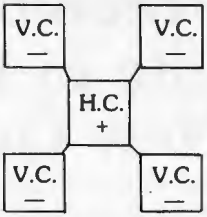
Three quite distinct patterns of change can be discussed in the changing celebration of the Bona-Gene festival.

The first pattern, adopted before colonial contact, is that of the Numai adopting new rituals (such as the evening meal) from Central Simbu (i.e. from the west).

The second pattern of change is the first of two patterns introduced by the Christian missionaries. The opposition of both Catholic and Lutheran missionaries to the secrecy of the flutes, the gerua boards and the *ere-more* shrines, tended to secularise the Bona-Gene Festival. The third pattern and the second of the two promoted by the missionaries, is the attempt by Catholic missionaries to christianise the religious significance of the ceremony through the "blessim Kruse" ceremony.

There are a number of questions related to the religious dimensions of pig-killing festivals in the central highlands of P.N.G. which are worth answering. First, there are questions as to the continuities and discontinuities of religious meanings in the pig-killing festivals. For instance, in which ways and to what extent has the concern for increased fertility of pre-christian era festivals

continued into their modern counterparts? And in which ways and to what extent has it not continued? Second, one might ask questions as to the secularity of modern festivals. Are modern festivals in fact more secular than traditional, pre-colonial festivals? If there has been a secularising of the festivals, what were its causes and what has been the effect of this process on the whole festival? Finally, there are questions as to the Catholic attempt to christianize the festivals. What have been the results of the Catholic attempt to Christianize the festivals? Why has the attempt had the type of results it has had?

SEPARATION	THRESHOLD	INCORPORATION
Economic The hosting clans are in a state of *debt*.  H.C. = a hosting clan V.C. = a visiting clan	Internal exchanges within clan and kin groups; exchanges are more personal and lacking in clan competition	Hosting clans give pork to visiting clans. Visiting clans are now in a state of debt.  Economic competition
Social Need for renewal of relationships. Families and kinship groups combine to build gardens houses for initiation, etc.	Experience of "communitas", especially in extended family kin and dance groups. (Initiation rites)	Family and kinship groups strengthened
Political The big men plan the festival		The big men take over the distribution of pork—inter-clan competition is stressed

Psychological Anticipation, apprehension, insecurity.	*Dancing & Decoration* Excitement, release	*Installation of post cross* Reverence, awe	*Family Meal* Warmth, oneness	Excitement, satisfaction, guardedness.
Religious Need for renewal of life. Sacrifice to the Sun when the festival is threatened. Flutes played, sacred space prepared	*Dancing* Openness, no taboos, permissiveness, Celebration with boards	*Installation* of post or cross and killing of pigs. Veneration, presence of sacred life and ancestors	*Family* Meal Oneness with the spirits of the dead Communication—also with ancestors	Burial of posts and clubs—removal of dangerous elements. New life in pigs, gardens and people.