

# **TRADITIONAL KABU FEASTING IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS' MBAHOMEAN COMMUNITY**

**Cephas Kuba**

*Cephas Kuba hails from the Solomon Islands, and graduated from the Christian Leaders' Training College, Papua New Guinea, in 2002 with a Bachelor of Theology degree.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Over the last few years, prominent church leaders, and some lay people, have been having difficulties in dealing with the issue of Kabu feasting among the Mbahomea community of the Solomon Islands. Kabu feasting is a traditional feast, which the Mbahomea community observes. It involves the exchange of food, in order to strengthen relationship in the community. Some church leaders thought that this traditional feast had to do with ancestral spirits, and, therefore, should not be observed. Furthermore, they said, that this feast had some negative effects on the church. For instance, the Kabu feast encouraged pride and boasting among communities. It also brought about social ills, and placed a financial burden on families. Therefore, some church leaders thought that Christians should not participate in this traditional feast.

However, other prominent church leaders argued in support of this feast, because they believed that it was already Christianised by the missionaries. Furthermore, they also understood that the prime purpose of this traditional feast was to bring the Mbahomean communities together, to enhance good relationship among them. It was also an avenue toward cooperative work in the community, and it was able to help young and old, men and women, to learn from each other about their cultural values. Therefore, these church leaders supported the feast.

This issue has been a great concern for the church for quite some time, resulting in division and tension among Christians. Therefore, the author wishes to address this issue to help the Mbahomean South Seas Evangelical church (SSEC) to evaluate celebrating Kabu, in light of the biblical pattern of feasting. At the same time, recommendations will be made for improving this feast, in order to make it more meaningful for Christians.

## **BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON FEASTING**

This section will discuss three of the Old Testament biblical feasts, and the Lord's Supper in the New Testament.

### **OLD TESTAMENT FEASTS**

God gave several feasts to the Jewish people to celebrate throughout the year. These feasts were not just ordinary feasts, like the ones we celebrate today, for instance, Independence Day, birthdays, Mother's and Father's Days, but were religious feasts, which God Himself appointed and sanctified as holy, joyful occasions. Ryken and Wilhoit state that these biblical celebrations were filled with "images of joyful voices, festive music, and dancing and abundant food. They were not simply parties, but celebrations of God's goodness towards His people."<sup>1</sup> These feasts brought together the 12 tribes of Israel, to commemorate God's sovereign love and goodness towards them, and to renew their love relationship with God and to each other.

God established three significant pilgrimage feasts in the Old Testament for the Jewish people to observe: the Passover Feast, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Scholars have made their own assumptions regarding the roots of these feasts. For instance, Fleming suggests Israelites were largely farming people, and their feasts were built into their agriculture cycle,<sup>2</sup> however, the author favours Bromley's idea that these feasts not only had an agricultural significance, but were

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<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, s.v. "feast".

<sup>2</sup> Don Fleming, *Bridge Bible Dictionary*, Brisbane Qld: Bridgeway Publications, 1990, p. 133.

also meant to commemorate national events.<sup>3</sup> The chart, below, explains the occasions, months, and references of these pilgrimage feasts.<sup>4</sup>

Month Number	Jewish Name	Modern Name	Day Date	Occasion	Scriptures
First	<i>Nisan</i>	April	14	Passover	Lev 23:5 Deut 16:2
			15	Unleavened bread	Ex 23:14-17
Third	<i>Siwani</i>	June	6	Pentecost	Deut 16:9-12
				First fruits and Harvest	Ex 23:16 Lev 25:8-9
Seventh	<i>Tishri</i>	October	1-2	Trumpets	Lev 23:24
			10	Day of atonement	Lev 23:27
			15-21	Tabernacles	Lev 23:34 Deut 16:13

### ***The Passover Feast***

#### *The Definition of the Passover Feast*

According to Roland Vaux, “Passover” is derived from the Hebrew word פסח = *pesach*, which means Yahweh “jumped over”, or “left out”, the houses where the Passover was being served.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Origin of the Passover Feast*

The writer of Exodus recorded that the Passover Feast began in Egypt, some think around 1446 BC, at the time when God delivered the Israelites from a 430-year period of slavery, under the Pharaohs of Egypt. On the evening of Passover, each family, which trusted God, killed an animal, and spilled its blood on the doorposts and lintel of their house, so that, when the angel of death passed over each of the houses, he would not slay the first-born sons inside the blood-smeared houses. God proclaimed

<sup>3</sup> *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Old Testament feasts”.

<sup>4</sup> R. K. Harrison. *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, Leicester UK: IVP, 1982, p. 214.

<sup>5</sup> Roland Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1958, p. 488.

to Moses and Aaron that the month of Abib, equivalent to March and April on our calendar, should be the first month of the religious year, because that was the month the Israelites escaped from bondage in Egypt. Since then, the Israelites have observed the month of Abib, later known as Nisan, as the beginning of their religious calendar.

### *Purpose of the Passover Feast*

The primary purpose of celebrating the Passover feast was to provide an annual opportunity for each Israelite person to recall that, before the Passover, the Jewish people had been slaves in Egypt,<sup>6</sup> but God's mighty acts had freed them, and sustained them, through the wilderness journey. Furthermore, through the Passover feast, the Israelites would renew their covenant relationship with God and each other.

### *Practice of the Passover Feast*

On the tenth day of the first month, each family was to take a one-year-old male lamb or goat,<sup>7</sup> without any defect, and guard it well until the 14th day. If the family was small, two families could join together to celebrate the feast. On the 14th day, the head of each family was to kill the lamb,<sup>8</sup> and spread the blood on the two doorposts and the lintel of the house. The Feast was to take place during the night, and all the meat had to be consumed by men or by fire, because it was forbidden to leave any left over for the next day.

Importantly, every person in every family was required to attend the Passover feast. Foreigners were not allowed to participate, as Youngblood stated, "Foreigners, including temporary residents and hired workers, would not be permitted. The purchased slaves could take part only after being circumcised."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ex 6:6-7.

<sup>7</sup> Ex 12:5.

<sup>8</sup> Ex 12:6.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald F. Youngblood, *Commentary on Exodus*, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1983, p. 64-65.

### *Effects of the Passover*

- Participating in the Passover feast helped Israelites to value their identity as the people of God, regardless of the tribe to which they belonged.
- The Passover feast strengthened the people's relationship with God and with each other.
- Each new generation learnt about their God, and about fearing and loving Him.
- The celebration aspect of the feast stimulated a longing for it.

### *Conclusion*

This was an important feast for the Hebrews to observe annually, because it commemorated God's sovereign love and goodness towards them, and gave them an opportunity to renew their love relationship with God, and with each other. The failure to honour God, and each other, in this feast resulted in God's anger. God expected the Israelites to honour Him, and to love and be unified with each other, as they came to observe this feast.

### *The Feast of Tabernacles*

#### *Definition*

"Tabernacle" is a transliteration of the word used by the Vulgate, and means little to modern readers,<sup>10</sup> because it does not refer to the Tabernacle used in the wilderness, but to the temporary huts, in which the Israelites resided for a week during this feast.

#### *Origin of the Feast of Tabernacles*

The Bible<sup>11</sup> states that God was the one who instituted this great feast for the Israelites. It was held on 15-21 Tishri, which is equivalent to September and October in the modern-day calendar. This period marks the completion of the grain harvest, and the ingathering of the grapes.

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<sup>10</sup> Vaux, *Israel*, p. 495.

<sup>11</sup> Lev 23:33-44.

This feast has been described as the most joyful celebration. The Israelites started to observe this feast when they came into Canaan.

There have been records of the Israelites celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles after King Solomon's completion of the temple, and continuing until the time of Jesus.<sup>12</sup>

### *Purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles*

The primary purpose of celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles was to provide an opportunity for the Israelites to remember their wandering in the wilderness, after having been delivered from Egypt. They were to share their material possessions with the poor, needy, and orphans among them, and to sing and dance with a joyful voice unto the Lord, because God was the one who had delivered them from Egypt.

### *Practice of the Feast of Tabernacles*

The feast went from 15-21 Tishri. During the eight days of celebration, the Israelites were to live in booths<sup>13</sup> made from tree branches. They would live in the booths for seven days, as a reminder of the tents they lived in when they were in the wilderness. "It was a time of joy for the entire family, sons and daughters, servants, Levities, foreigners, the fatherless, and widows, all joined in the celebration."<sup>14</sup>

The first and the eighth days were a time of rest, and nobody was allowed to work. There were a number of sacrifices<sup>15</sup> made during the week, and people brought gifts and freewill offerings, according to whatever they had vowed.

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<sup>12</sup> Fleming, *Dictionary*; and 2 Chr 8:12-13; John 7:2.

<sup>13</sup> Lev 23:42.

<sup>14</sup> J. Samuel Schultz, *Exodus: God Among His People*, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1983, p. 112.

<sup>15</sup> Lev 23:35-36.

### *Effects of the Tabernacle Feast*

- This helped the Israelites to value God's goodness to them, and, in return, they would offer gifts to God, and share their blessings with others.
- Participation also affected their emotions, causing them to sing, dance, and shout praises to God for His goodness.

### *Conclusion*

It was understood that the Feast of Tabernacles was the most joyous of all the biblical feasts. It was a time the Israelites recalled their wilderness wandering, and how God provided for them by His mighty power, guiding them into the Promised Land. In response to God, they gratefully shared their material possessions with the needy. Love and unity were evident in the midst of the community, when they came to observe this feast.

### *The Feast of Weeks/Pentecost*

#### *Definition*

The Feast of Weeks referred to the Israelites' harvest festival, which was held 50 days after the Passover feast. In the New Testament it is known as Pentecost, which comes from a Greek word *πεντηκόστη*,<sup>16</sup> which is a translation of the Old Testament Hebrew for "50".

#### *Origin of the Feast of Weeks*

The Feast of Weeks began at the giving of the law at Mt Sinai,<sup>17</sup> however, in the Old Testament, this particular feast was known as the Feast of First Fruits or the Feast of Harvest. Originally, it was a harvest feast, usually held on 6 Sivan,<sup>18</sup> to celebrate the conclusion of the grain harvest, and it was usually celebrated in the Temple.

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<sup>16</sup> It was held 50 days, or seven weeks, after the time they began to harvest the grain. See also Acts 2:1.

<sup>17</sup> Lev 23:15-22.

<sup>18</sup> Equivalent to May-June.

### *Purpose of the Feast of Weeks*

The purpose of this particular feast was for the entire nation of Israel to acknowledge God as the giver of the land of Canaan, and all its material blessings. During this feast, the Israelites would give back to God the first fruits of their produce, for instance, loaves of bread and animal sacrifices, acknowledging that God was, indeed, the source of all that the land had produced.

### *Practice of the Feast of Weeks*

After the Passover Feast, the people would return to their homes, “and, for the next six weeks, they were busy harvesting, first the barley, and then the wheat”.<sup>19</sup> At the end of the wheat harvest, the people showed their thanks to God by presenting two loaves of leavened bread. They also presented to Him an animal sacrifice, cereal, other gifts, and drink offerings.<sup>20</sup> No hard work was allowed during the period of holy gathering, the needs of the poor and the strangers were to be remembered at this time, and this was known to be a joyful occasion.<sup>21</sup>

### *Effects of the Feast of Weeks*

This feast developed recognition that God was the originator and giver of everything that existed on earth, including the Promised Land that God had given to them. This understanding moved them to commemorate, annually, the Feast of Weeks. Their participation helped them to see the needs of others, and to give gifts to the needy, orphans, and the widows among them.

### *Conclusion*

God intended these feasts for the people to present the “first fruits” of their produce back to Him. They were to acknowledge Him, not only as their God, but also as the one, who provided for their needs. God’s intention was also that they share their harvest blessing with others

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<sup>19</sup> Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and the Customs of the Bible*, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1987, p. 375.

<sup>20</sup> Lev 23:19-20.

<sup>21</sup> Harrison, *Leviticus*, p. 218.

among them, who were in need. This feast brought honour to God, and unified the whole community.

### ***Negative Effects of the Old Testament Feasts***

Though the biblical feasts were holy and important, they also had negative effects. Firstly, God expected the Israelites to celebrate these feasts with sincerity of heart. Yet the Israelites failed to honour God's expectations. In response, God raised up the prophet Amos to speak against them.<sup>22</sup> God showed His anger by destroying their crops.

Secondly, at times, the Israelites carelessly offered unacceptable animals, when they came to observe these feasts, thus exhibiting their selfishness, dishonesty, and pride. God also spoke against these actions, through the prophet Isaiah.<sup>23</sup>

Thirdly, God came to see these feasts as meaningless, corrupt, and sinful,<sup>24</sup> because, after a time, the Israelites celebrated with wrong motives, honouring themselves rather than God. God then spoke out against these practices.

### **FEASTING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The discussion will centre on the particular feast that Jesus initiated for His disciples.

#### ***Definition of the Lord's Supper***

Following are Fleming's descriptions of the Lord's Supper:<sup>25</sup>

- Paul called it, literally, the "Supper of the Lord", because Christians observed it on the Lord's authority, and in His honour.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Amos 5:12-24.

<sup>23</sup> Is 5:10-12.

<sup>24</sup> Is 1:12-14.

<sup>25</sup> Fleming, *Dictionary*, p. 265.

<sup>26</sup> 1Cor 11:23-35.

- It was also known as “Communion”, meaning an act of fellowship, or of sharing of Christ.<sup>27</sup>
- Luke called it the “breaking of the bread”, a part of the meal.<sup>28</sup>
- Another name is the *Eucharist*, from the Greek, meaning “thanksgiving”, in reference to Jesus’ thanking God for the bread and the wine.<sup>29</sup>

### ***Origin of the Lord’s Supper***

The Bible is clear that Jesus Christ instituted the Lord’s Supper<sup>30</sup> while eating the Passover meal with His disciples the night before His trial and crucifixion around AD 30-33. During the Passover meal, Jesus took some bread and wine from the table, passed it around among His disciples, and invited each one to eat and drink. The bread and the wine were symbols of His body and His blood.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Concepts of the Lord’s Supper***

Clark states, “Eating and drinking wine together at the Lord’s Supper is more than just a remembrance of Christ’s suffering and death.”<sup>32</sup> It is a spiritual sharing together, in the body and the blood of Jesus Christ, proclaiming the benefit of Christ’s death. The apostle Paul urged all believers to keep observing this feast until Jesus returns.<sup>33</sup> Another significant aspect of this feast is the important companionship in worship in the church. It empowers believers,<sup>34</sup> as they meet to sing songs, pray, and learn from the scriptures. This enables believers to link together as the body of Christ, in spite of different family backgrounds.

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<sup>27</sup> 1Cor 10:16.

<sup>28</sup> Luke 22:19.

<sup>29</sup> Mark 14: 22-23; 1 Cor 11:24.

<sup>30</sup> Luke 22:8.

<sup>31</sup> Matt 26:26-28.

<sup>32</sup> G. Arthur Clark, *New Testament Principles*, New York NY: Loizeaux Brothers, 1962, p. 33.

<sup>33</sup> 1Cor 11:26.

<sup>34</sup> Acts 2:42-47.

### ***Practice of the Lord's Supper***

During the time Christ Jesus sat with His disciples around the table, He took bread and wine and shared it with them.<sup>35</sup> Each one received it with thanksgiving. During the days of the early church, believers met regularly to celebrate the Lord's Supper in different homes. Scripture conveys that the Lord's Supper had become part of their daily lives.<sup>36</sup> Later, the early church ate the Lord's Supper on a weekly basis,<sup>37</sup> but the practice of sharing with those who were in need was still an important component of the feast.

### ***Effects of the Lord's Supper***

Just like the feasts from the Old Testament, this feast also had its effects.

#### *The Positive Effects*

- As a result of participation among the body of believers, it enhanced companionship among the believers. They saw themselves as one family, and, as such, they shared their belongings<sup>38</sup> with those who were in great need, and their food with those who came to celebrate the Lord's Supper.
- Despite persecution, the Christians persevered. Participation in the Lord's Supper brought renewed mind, strength, and a growing love relationship with God. They remained loyal and faithful to God.

#### *Negative Effects*

- Man's approach to the Lord's Supper was tainted by wrong motives. The congregation participated to gain favour with man.<sup>39</sup>
- Others participated out of greed and selfishness. They ate their finest food without thought of others, and Paul was

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<sup>35</sup> Luke 22:17-19.

<sup>36</sup> Acts 2:46.

<sup>37</sup> Acts 20:7.

<sup>38</sup> Acts 2:42-46.

<sup>39</sup> 1 Cor 11:22-33.

critical of this attitude, when he addressed the believers at Corinth.<sup>40</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, when He shared the Passover meal with His disciples. In the meal, He helped them to understand the significance of the bread and wine. The early church was urged to come together to celebrate the Lord's Supper, to help them to recall and appreciate what Christ had done on the cross. They were to celebrate in joyful singing, dancing, praying, and sharing of their possessions with those in need. These observances were to be done with genuine love for God and the community. The Lord's Supper is still very significant to believers today, because it will restore and strengthen a love relationship with God and fellow Christian brothers and sisters. In response to God, Christians are supposed to show sincere love to others, by giving gifts to them, in response to God.

### **KABU FEAST AMONG THE MBAHOMEA COMMUNITY**

The Mbahomea community is similar to any other Solomon Islands community, where feasts are an integral part of the culture. The feasts differ from one tribe to another throughout the Solomon Islands; nevertheless, they serve a common purpose of giving life, strength, renewal, and identity.

The Mbahomea community has various types of feasts for different occasions. *Save Vale* is a feast to mark the completion of a chief's house. *Vuvutu Ngari* is similar to child dedication in the church. *Pichukurina* is a feast for the dead. *Livosai* refers to a marriage feast. *Ponikibo* signifies compensation and reconciliation feasting. *Pesu* is a feast given in appreciation for assistance in making of gardens, or help in tribal warfare. Some of these feasts are no longer observed, while others, such as *Livosai*, *Ponikibo*, and *Vuvutu Ngari* are still observed today.

One particular feast, which will be discussed in detail in this paper, stands out as most significant to the Mbahomea community, is called the

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<sup>40</sup> 1 Cor 11:20-21.

Kabu feast. The feast is important because it links the Mbahomea people with their ancestral spirits, in terms of renewal, thanksgiving, and identity. Furthermore, the feast brings the communities together to enhance love, friendship, and unity in the community.

## **IDENTITY OF THE MBAHOMEA**

The Mbahomea community is located in the central part of the largest island of Guadalcanal. Central Guadalcanal consists of four communities: Malongo, Valolo, Betilonga, and Mbahomea. Mbahomea is located in the centre of the four communities. Appendix A provides more information about the background and location of this community. Languages cause many divisions throughout the Solomon Islands, as in all Melanesian countries. Just in Central Guadalcanal, there are three different languages.<sup>41</sup>

The term Mbahomea has two separate parts: *Mba* meaning “OK”, and *homea* meaning “you do it”. The term refers back to the time when ancestors, in the past century, participated in tribal wars, wealth sorcery, feasting, and *Tiagi*.<sup>42</sup> The word “Mbahomea” conveys a message to tribes far and near, informing them about the Mbahomea tribes’ readiness to declare war any time another tribe challenges or schemes against them. In other words, they are saying to other tribes, “We are already getting ready to retaliate.”

The Mbahomea community is made up of two major clans: the Garavu and Manukiki. These two clans have their own sub-clans, similar to the Numai clan<sup>43</sup> in Simbu Province of Papua New Guinea. These major clans worshipped and sacrificed to different ancestral spirits at the appropriate shrines. They also owned separate blocks of land, among which they used to migrate. The land boundary could be identified easily by dividing ranges and streams. Though each Mbahomea clan

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<sup>41</sup> These are the Teha, Lalaona, and Suta.

<sup>42</sup> Mbahomean word for “compensation”.

<sup>43</sup> J. Knight, “A Case Study of a Feast”, 1999, p. 176.

worshipped and sacrificed to different ancestral spirits, yet they were all bound by a common culture.<sup>44</sup>

## **DEFINITION AND THE ORIGIN OF KABU**

The word “Kabu” has two separate meanings. It could be “a variety of food brought together for storage”, or “a huge assortment of food being consumed among different people”.<sup>45</sup>

### ***Origin of Kabu Feasting***

Originally, ancestral spirits introduced the Kabu feast to the Mbahomea community. These spirits, known as the *Taovia Vaituru*, “someone, somewhere, up there”, were the initiators, protectors, and givers of life, wealth, land, and powers for each clan in the Mbahomea community.<sup>46</sup>

The ancestral spirits gave the Kabu feast to each clan, so they can show respect for the ancestral spirits. The feast was a time to renew thanksgiving and identity. For instance, the ancestral spirits desired a *gut fala stay*<sup>47</sup> between themselves and their clans, and they even wanted to attract neighbouring clans. Therefore, the ancestral spirits considered the Kabu feast the appropriate time to strengthen weak relationships, and even to improve relationships with other clans. Bad relationships between the clans and the spirits would result in the withdrawal of blessings, or even death.

There is no fixed time for observing the Kabu feast; it depends entirely on the adequate supply of pigs, and plentiful garden produce. This is similar to the *Bone Gene* pig festival of the Numai in Simbu Province in Papua New Guinea. A Kabu feast cannot be held unless a clan is prosperous.

### ***Main Purposes of Kabu Feasting***

Firstly, the Kabu feast is to renew both vertical and horizontal relationships, between the clan and their ancestral spirit, and between the

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<sup>44</sup> They had shared beliefs and moral values.

<sup>45</sup> Chief Amuraih Launi of Chichinge, interview by author, May, 2000.

<sup>46</sup> Chiefs Silas Salevua and Gabriel Dii, interview by author, November, 2000.

<sup>47</sup> Solomon Islands’ Pidgin term for “better living”.

clan and different clans in the Mbahomea community, and their surrounding environment. This is similar to what Jim Knight stressed in his article “Festival on Manam Island”.<sup>48</sup> Renewal of the relationship between the participant and an eminent deity or remote ancestor is common across all Melanesian societies. The second aim of celebrating the Kabu feast is to give thanks to the ancestral spirit, because it is the one who provides, protects, guides, and sustains the clan. The third purpose of observing the Kabu feast is for the whole<sup>49</sup> clan to come together and to identify themselves as one particular people. Identification with a clan is evidenced through participation in the feast.<sup>50</sup>

### ***Practice of the Kabu Feast in the Pre-Christian Era***

At daybreak, each head of a family would gather their pigs and stake them on the ceremonial arena. Then the priest, in the presence of the clan head, would stand in front of the ceremony arena, offer a prayer of thanksgiving, and pronounce a blessing upon the clan, and to all others, who would participate in the feast. When the prayer was over, the head of each family had the pigs slaughtered and distributed, along with garden foods, to the visiting clans. The next time the feast was held, the visiting clans would host those who gave the previous feast. The hosts would always be careful to give back the same amount of food as the givers had offered previously.

According to the Mbahomea community, the exchange would affirm a bond. For instance, when the hosting clan gave food to other clans, they are actually creating a sense of friendship with that particular family. Outsiders would view this exchange of foods as a debt, but the Mbahomea community views this exchange as something which binds in friendship.

After the sharing of food is over, the visiting clans would chat with the host clan for a while then leave for their respective homes, rejoicing. The

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<sup>48</sup> Habel Norman, ed., *Powers, Plumes, and Piglets*, Adelaide SA: Flinders University Press, 1979, p. 173.

<sup>49</sup> Includes men, women, and children.

<sup>50</sup> Participation involves the sharing of foods, and sleeping together. The elderly educated the young men and women about their cultural heritage.

hosting clan would share the leftover food among themselves on the next day. They called that day *Pari Tinae*.<sup>51</sup>

The success of the whole festival would be determined by the fear and respect the clans had for the spirits, and by the generosity of the hosts, in providing pigs and garden foods for the celebration. If the clans did not genuinely honour the spirits, or freely give the food, a disturbance would arise with the ancestral spirits. The ancestral spirits like to see total devotion to themselves, and wholehearted observance of the feast. Refer to Appendix B for a detailed description of practices for initiating the feast, and offering sacrifices to the spirits in the pre-Christian era.

### ***Practice of Kabu Feast in the Christian Era***

At an elders' meeting in 1964, the missionaries allowed the Mbahomea Christians to again observe their traditional Kabu feast, if they did away with any parts that were linked with the ancestral spirits. So, the elders agreed to put God as their main focus, when they came to celebrate the feast. The pastor was to replace the clan's priest, and Christian songs, and the preaching of God's Word would be observed during the whole night, before the actual day of killing of pigs and sharing of food. Refer to Appendix C for a detailed history of the how the feast was modified under Christian influences.

### ***Conclusion***

This particular feast is, indeed, very significant for the Mbahomea community, because this feast was the only avenue of bringing the Mbahomea clans together for fellowship, in order to strengthen relationships, and to identify, together as one people, who served one God, and shared a culture. However, there are still some areas that the Mbahomea South Seas Evangelical church (SSEC) leaders and congregations need to resolve and adjust, especially regarding the negative aspects this feast has upon the church, when it is observed with hypocrisy.

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<sup>51</sup> Refers to leftover food.

## **PROBLEMS THE KABU FEAST HAS UPON CHRISTIANS**

This section shall cover some of the problems seen in the lives of the people, which result from observing the Kabu feast. A biblical response to each of these problems shall then be drawn.

### ***The Kabu Feast Stimulates Pride***

Some Christians argue that Kabu is one of the avenues that stimulates pride in people's lives. For instance, the host community usually boasts about the number and size of their pigs being slaughtered, and the participants usually boast about the shares they received. This is in spite of the fact that, according to the Mbahomea culture, pride is unacceptable in the community, because it can trigger a tribal war, or even compensation, between clans. It is assumed that pride usually occurs in people's lives as a result of participating in this feast with a wrong motive.

It is right to be concerned about this, because the Bible clearly teaches us that pride is sinful,<sup>52</sup> and God hates it.<sup>53</sup> The Bible says that pride causes a person to rebel against God,<sup>54</sup> but to say the Kabu feast is an avenue for pride is wrong. Kabu, alone, is good, but pride remains a characteristic aspect of the fallen human nature, and one of the hardest evils to overcome,<sup>55</sup> even without the practices of Kabu. Christians should avoid being boastful, when observing the Kabu feast.

### ***Shows Favouritism in Sharing of Foods***

The host community shows favouritism in the sharing foods, instead of sharing food according to need. For instance, the big man, and the wealthiest ones, receive the best shares, while widows, orphans, and the neediest ones receive less, or none. According to the Mbahomea culture, to ignore someone during such a feast is seen as disgracing the community, and such practices are unacceptable. The original idea of

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<sup>52</sup> Is 25:11; Dan 4:30-32.

<sup>53</sup> Prov 8:13; 16:5.

<sup>54</sup> Ex 5:2; Luke 18:9.

<sup>55</sup> Prov 16:18; Mark 7:21-22; Rom 1:28-30.

this feast was to give to people, according to their need, and without regard for their status.

The Bible forbids Christians from practising the idea of showing favouritism to someone. “Do not pervert justice, do not show partiality to the poor, or favouritism to the rich.”<sup>56</sup> Jesus did not show favouritism.<sup>57</sup> To show favouritism is a sin.<sup>58</sup> Christians must not show favouritism while distributing food during this feast, because people need to be given food fairly, in spite of their status. This is the kind of giving, which Christians should adopt and follow during the Kabu feast.

### ***Brings Social Problems***

The Kabu feast usually brought social ills inside the community, for instance, the consumption of drugs (alcohol, home-brew, and marijuana) by some people during the Kabu could end up in fighting and hatred. Some young people end up in sexual relationships, instead of enjoying the feast. The affected ones end up with hurt feelings, and this really undermines the idea of fellowship, in the Kabu feast. In Mbahomea culture, such practices are unacceptable. These practices disgrace the community.

The Bible strongly teaches against such evil practices,<sup>59</sup> because they will only ruin the lives of God’s people. Therefore, such evil practices should not be entertained during the Kabu feast.

### ***Creates Obligation***

The exchanging of foods is seen as a problem, because it creates a sense of obligation and debt among the people. Therefore, some Christians have argued that such practices are not helpful.

The exchange of foods in Mbahomea culture is for the purpose of restoring or creating relationships between clans and families. According to Mbahomea culture, people do not just speak about love and friendship,

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<sup>56</sup> Lev 19:15.

<sup>57</sup> James 2:1.

<sup>58</sup> James 2:9.

<sup>59</sup> Prov 15:9.

but they do practical things, such as exchanging gifts,<sup>60</sup> to demonstrate their feelings. They see this as showing the reality of relationships, by actions, rather than just speaking empty words.

It is assumed that such concerns are the result of not understanding the cultural ideas of this feast. The Bible instructs believers that, when they give things to others, they must not expect a repayment or praise. Their giving should be unselfish, like God's love.<sup>61</sup>

### ***Wrong Motives in the Practising of Kabu***

Some people host and participate in the Kabu with a wrong motive, for instance, for gaining favour from men instead of God. Some people have the purpose of gaining wealth, and some just come to meet their social and physical needs. Culturally, participating in such an occasion with a wrong motive usually brings destruction to the community, even to one's personal life.

God spoke against the Jewish people, because they came to observe His feast with such wrong motives.<sup>62</sup> God can do the same today, if the Kabu feast is it is not done to honour Him. God would like to see truth, love, and unity in men's hearts, when they come to celebrate in Kabu feasting.

### ***Conclusion***

To conclude, nothing man has established and practised here on earth is free from problems, like the practices of the Kabu feast. These problems occur, because the people, who have come to observe this feast, are coming with wrong motives in their hearts. If people, who are hosting and participating in this feast, are doing it with a genuine motive to honour God, and really show this love, by giving to others, and relating well to others, then the practices of this feast will be free from problems. The abolition of Kabu is not the actual solution to these problems, but the solution lies in men's spiritual relationships. Church leaders need to

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<sup>60</sup> Foods, land, and shell money.

<sup>61</sup> Deut 15:10-11; 2 Cor 9:7.

<sup>62</sup> Is 29:13; 66:3.

teach their people to honour God, and to love each other, when they come to observe this feast.

### COMPARISON OF THE KABU FEAST TO BIBLICAL FEASTS

This section will not attempt to expound on every single point of relevance, but, rather, to look for a few obvious ones that would provide an answer to the question of whether the Kabu feast is somehow similar to the four biblical feasts addressed earlier.

#### COMPARISON BASED ON COMMUNAL ASPECTS OF FEASTING

If the Kabu feast is closely related to the biblical feasts,<sup>63</sup> then it could be relevant and acceptable for the Mbahomea SSEC people to partake. Otherwise, the Kabu feast would be unacceptable for the Mbahomea SSEC people to observe.

On close observation, there are many similarities. However, we need to understand that the biblical feast is a perfect, holy feast, because it originated from God, whereas Kabu originated from fallen man, and, therefore, it is not a perfect feast.

#### SIMILARITIES

##### *Origin*

SIMILARITIES	KABU	JEWISH FESTIVALS	LORD'S SUPPER
Nature of feast	It is considered a holy feast, because it was given by ancestors.	It is considered a holy feast, because God gave this feast to the Jews. Ex 23:14-17; Lev 23:4-25	It is considered a holy feast, because Jesus started it with His disciples. Luke 22:17-20; Matt 26:26-28

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<sup>63</sup> Passover, Feast of Weeks, Tabernacles, and Lord's Supper.

**Purposes**

<b>SIMILARITIES</b>	<b>KABU</b>	<b>JEWISH FESTIVALS</b>	<b>LORD'S SUPPER</b>
Renewing relationship	It is an avenue for clans to renew their relationship with their ancestral spirits, and with each other.	It was an avenue for Israel's tribes to renew their relationship with God, and with each other. Lev 23:19; Num 28:22, 30	It is an avenue for Christians to renew their relationship with Jesus, and with each other. Acts 2:42-46
Giving thanks	A purpose is to give thanks to ancestral spirits for their kindness.	A purpose is to give thanks to God for His kindness and goodness. Lev 23:40-43	To give thanks to God for what Christ has done on the cross. 1 Cor 11:23-26; Luke 22:14-20
Giving gifts	It stimulates the community to give back to the ancestral spirits, and to one another.	The Israelites usually gave to God, and to one another, during these feasts. Deut 16:17; Ex 12:4	Early Christians gave gifts of food, and accepted one other. Acts 2:42-46
Worship	People worship and adore their ancestral spirits, because they are the source of their well-being.	Jews worshipped and adored God, because He is the source of their well-being Ex 12:27; 23:14-17; Deut 16:15-16	Christians are to worship God, when they meet for the Lord's Supper. Acts 2:46-47

**Practice**

<b>SIMILARITIES</b>	<b>KABU</b>	<b>JEWS</b>	<b>LORD'S SUPPER</b>
Participants	All the clans are eligible to come and participate in the Kabu.	The 12 tribes of Israel are eligible to participate in the feast. Deut 16:16; Ex 12:47	All Christians are eligible to observe this feast. Luke 22:17; Acts 20:7
Sacrifice	An animal (a pig) is the object for the sacrifice. The people gave the sacrifice to the ancestors as thanks.	An animal (lamb or goat) is the object of the sacrifice. The sacrifice was given to God in thanks from the people. Ex 12:3, 5	In the New Testament, Christians offered a sacrifice of praise to God, singing, praying, and reading God's Word.
Celebration	Singing and dancing was the highlight of the occasion. The singing and dancing were addressed to the ancestral spirits.	Singing and dancing was the highlight of the occasion. The singing and dancing were addressed to God Almighty. Lev 23:39-40	Christians are to sing songs to celebrate what Christ has done for them on the cross. Acts 2:46-47
Sharing	Sharing of food among the visiting clans was the means of fellowship.	Israel used to share food and their belongings with one another, in response to God. Ex 12:4; Deut 16:10-11	Christians are to share food, belongings, and God's Word with each other. Acts 2:42-47
Preparation	Much preparation is required: building houses, gardening, and killing pigs.	Much preparation was required: collecting wheat and barley, cooking food, killing lambs and goats. Deut 16:5-8	In the New Testament, they prepared the unleavened bread for the Lord's Supper. Luke 22:8

**Positive Effects**

<b>SIMILARITIES</b>	<b>KABU</b>	<b>JEWISH FESTIVALS</b>	<b>LORD'S SUPPER</b>
Communion	It drew clans together for fellowship: people would work, eat, sleep, and communicate.	It drew the Israelites together for fellowship, as people would work, eat, sleep, and talk.	It draws Christians together for fellowship, to enhance love and unity. Acts 2:42-47
Education	The younger generation was to learn about cultural values and identities.	The younger generation was able to learn about cultural values and identity. Ex 12:26-27; 13:8-10	It helps Christians to remember what Christ did on the cross. 1 Cor 11:24-29
Cooperation	Preparing together in the fields, and visiting and listening to each other, enhances cooperation.	Preparing the lamb together enhances cooperation. Ex 12:1-12	Christians meet to pray and share burdens, which enhances cooperation. Act 2:42-47
Identification	It enables the clans to identify themselves as one people, the people of one particular ancestor spirit.	It enabled the 12 tribes of Israel to identify each other as one people, the people of God. Deut 16:14; Ex 12:47	It enables Christians to identify as one people, the body of Christ. Acts 2:42-47

**Negative Effects**

SIMILARITIES	KABU	JEWISH FESTIVALS	LORD'S SUPPER
Pride	People become proud, and boast about their feast as the best one, because they kill lots of pigs.	The Jews became proud, and boasted about their feast as the best one. Amos 5:21	Christians are so proud about the food they bring to the Lord's Supper. 1 Cor 11:33-34
Injustice	People show injustice in their dealings, by being selective in the sharing of food.	The Jews showed injustice in their dealings, by being selective in sharing and eating of their food. Is 1:14; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8	Some do not bother to wait and share their food with others. 1 Cor 11:33
Wrong Motives	People participate to gain favour with man not the ancestral spirits.	Jews participated to gain favour with man, not from God. Is 29:13	Some come and eat the food selfishly, others get drunk. 1 Cor 11:21

**THE DIFFERENCES**

The three obvious differences are the origin, timing, and purpose of the feast. Detailed explanations are below.

**Origin of the Feast**

The ancestral spirits gave the Kabu feast to the Mbahomeans so that the people would offer thanks, adoration, and acknowledgment to the spirits, as the peoples' ultimate source of well-being. In return, the ancestral spirits would continue to protect, lead, and sustain the worshippers. For the Jews, God gave them the feasts, and the people would honour God Almighty by their participation. The Jews would give thanks to God for His goodness and love towards them, and recommit themselves to God. By comparing these two ideas, it seems that God is actually the initiator of the feast idea, but fallen man adopted it, and twisted it to suit his thinking.

### ***Timing of the Feast***

There is no fixed time for observing the Kabu feast. The timing was dependent entirely on the people's efforts. While, for the Jews, the timing of their feast was fixed, according to the appropriate time in their calendar.<sup>64</sup> Though the timing is different, the most important thing, in both cases, was to fulfil the observation of the feast.

### ***Purpose of the Feast***

For the Kabu feast, the exchange of food between the hosting and visiting communities was for the purpose of creating and strengthening relationships. When the Jews feasted, there was no exchange between parties, but there was unilateral giving to the widows, orphans, or needy.

When comparing the exchange idea in Mbahomea with the giving idea in Israel, although the methods vary, giving is valued in both. The giving and exchange of gifts play a very significant role in both Hebrew and Mbahomea cultures. Even a meal, or food offered to someone, implies friendship and peace. Gift-giving gestures enhance good relationships, and restore ones that have become bad between people.<sup>65</sup>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MBAHOMEA SSEC COMMUNITY**

After considering the positive and the negative effects of the Kabu feast, this section recommends the following to both the Mbahomea SSEC leaders and other Christians, in order to make Kabu relevant and meaningful in a Christian perspective.

### **THE KABU FEAST SHOULD BE MAINTAINED**

It is recommended that the Mbahomea SSEC church maintain the practice and their participation in the Kabu feast. Communal ties between clans, families, and denominational groups in the Mbahomea community are, indeed, very important. The communal feasts are the main avenues for maintaining their good relationships and identity as one God-honouring community. This feast helps the people avoid conflicts,

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<sup>64</sup> Lunar calendar.

<sup>65</sup> Gen 24:30; 26:28-30; 31:53-55.

rivalry, and selfishness among themselves. Currently, no other program exists, which draws all the Mbahomeans together for common fellowship. The denominational programs, even sporting activities, cannot do it as well. Only the Kabu feasts are able to draw the Mbahomeans together for common fellowship.

The Mbahomea church should be seriously thinking about the communal aspects of this feast. Patterns of being independent and individualistic are creeping into Mbahomean society. If leaders are not careful, the Mbahomeans may soon lose the good, God-given concept of community.

From the beginning, God has truly valued and honoured the concept of community. For instance, he communed with Adam and Eve, in order to cultivate a close relationship. He also established holy festivals, for the Israelites to come together annually to honour Him, and to strengthen their relationships with each other. In the New Testament, Jesus instigated the Lord's Supper for His disciples to observe communally, and later, the early church continued this communal observance. In the New Testament, the Greek word for "communion" or "common" is **κοινωνία** = *koinōnia*. It derives from the same root word for fellowship, and it means "partnership, participation, social intercourse, communication, communion, and distribution fellowship, either physically or spiritually."<sup>66</sup> The early church members physically distributed food and belongings to one another, and spiritually shared in God's Word and in prayer.

The idea of community is very significant, and the church should not discourage Kabu. Instead, church leaders should identify the weaknesses and strengths of this feast, according to the suggestions in the following section. Refer to Appendix D – How the Church Should Contextualise Kabu.

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<sup>66</sup> James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995, Gk 2842.

## **THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE KABU FEAST**

Mbahomea SSEC church leaders and congregations should play their role in changing the Kabu feast, according to the following recommendations.

### ***The Church Should Influence the Kabu***

The role of Mbahomean SSEC leaders should be to influence the whole process of the Kabu feast, in order to make it more meaningful and relevant, from a Christian perspective. For instance, church leaders should participate in, and inject Christian ideas, when the community is in the process of discussing the planning of Kabu. The church should not be silent or isolated. Rather than complain and argue over the negative effects seen in people's lives, it should inject positive changes.

Church leaders need to apply the words that Jesus said to His followers, "You are the light of the world."<sup>67</sup> The Greek word for light is  $\phi\omega\varsigma$  = *phōs*, and means, "to shine or make manifest, to give direction for others to follow".<sup>68</sup> Church leaders and Christians are supposed to be showing Christians ways to make the Kabu feast more relevant and acceptable to Christians. Again, the fine example is Jesus Himself, who once proclaimed Himself to be the light of the world.<sup>69</sup>

Church leaders wrongly think that the Kabu feast was just a social feast, because it has many links with tradition. Therefore, they assume that tribal chiefs and the paramount chief are the right people to lead the Kabu process. Because most of these chiefs are nominal Christians and backsliders, problems have developed with the feast. Church leaders must be the light, to help people to honour God, and to love each other, united as a community, when coming to observe the feast.

### ***Appreciate the Kabu Values***

The ultimate role of church leaders in the Kabu feast is to clearly explain, and encourage all Christians to appreciate, the cultural values of Kabu,

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<sup>67</sup> Matt 5:14.

<sup>68</sup> Strong, *Concordance*, Gk 5457.

<sup>69</sup> John 8:12.

in the light of biblical teaching. They should not bring confusion and division among Christians, regarding the values of Kabu, based on ignorance and pride. Jesus valued good cultural ideas, and rejected bad ones.<sup>70</sup> However, He never compromised over cultural matters. One way church leaders could deal with such cultural issues is outlined in Appendix D.

### ***Use Kabu to Proclaim Christ***

It is recommended that Mbahomea SSEC leaders, and other believers, adopt the Kabu feast, as an evangelistic opportunity to proclaim the love of Jesus to those people, who are coming to partake in the Kabu feast. Usually, those, who are coming to participate in the feast, have different kinds of spiritual and physical needs, and the church should be using Kabu as an occasion to meet those needs. The clear example is Jesus Himself. He used celebration gatherings to explain the Kingdom of God to those who did not understand it. Examples are the wedding feast at Cana,<sup>71</sup> and the washing of the disciples' feet just before the Passover.<sup>72</sup> At the wedding at Cana, the disciples came to realise Jesus was sent from God. At the Passover feast, He taught His disciples about leaders serving other believers. If the church could use the Kabu feast in the same way, it could bring many lost people into God's kingdom. Christians would appreciate the practice of the Kabu feast, too.

### ***Address the Negative Effects of the Kabu***

One of the major roles of the church is to openly address, with strong biblical exposition, all the negative effects of culture on the lives of the people. This could be done, by hosting or participating in the Kabu feast. It is the leaders' responsibility to help their people realise how the negative effects of Kabu could affect community life. Then, and most

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<sup>70</sup> John 5:1-18; Luke 6:1-11. Jesus ignored the Jews' interpretation of the Sabbath law, in order to do good.

<sup>71</sup> John 2:1-11.

<sup>72</sup> John 13:1-8.

importantly, the leaders must show the people that God truly hates these effects, because they are evil.<sup>73</sup>

The church often blames Kabu for stimulating negative effects on the people's lives. Such logic led the church to complain and pray against the practice of Kabu, but they failed miserably to see that these negative effects are derived from man's heart, and not from the Kabu feast. If the church abolished the Kabu feast, these negative effects would still be seen in people's lives.

God spoke against the Israelites, when they failed to honour Him, with their attitudes in His feasts. God may do the same thing to the Mbhomea church leaders, and other Christians, if they host or participate in this feast with the wrong attitudes.

### ***Encourage Right Behaviour in Observing the Kabu***

One role of the church is to encourage believing Christians to truly honour God with a sincere heart, as they come together to observe the Kabu feast. Participants are not there to impress others, but, in order to win their favour, or to lift up the community. Whether people participate through singing, preaching, or sharing of food, they must do it to glorify God, and with the intention of seeing the community unified, and sharing freely with each other, as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

God requires man to do things from the heart.<sup>74</sup> The Greek word for "heart" is καρδιά = *kardia*, which involves the thoughts, soul, mind, and emotions of a person.<sup>75</sup> To do things from the heart means to do thing for God, with all their being. When Kabu is observed from the heart, then God will honour the Kabu feast as a godly feast. Otherwise, the Kabu feast will be an empty ritual that God hates. As the scripture says, the keeping of the religious feasts often became empty rituals, celebrated hypocritically, rather than sincerely, and thus God hated them.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Prov 15:9.

<sup>74</sup> Eph 6:6.

<sup>75</sup> Strong, *Concordance*, Gk 2588.

<sup>76</sup> Amos 5:21a.

### ***The Church Must Apply Christian Methods of Giving in the Kabu Feast***

Although the cultural idea of exchanging food during the Kabu feast is significant and good (as has already been explained in the previous section), some church leaders, and other Christians, see these ideas as unhelpful for the church, because they create a sense of obligation and debt among the Christians. This section will not devalue the cultural ideas of exchange, but will recommend church leaders consider practising the Christian pattern of giving, when observing the Kabu feast, instead of being bound to the cultural idea of exchange.

The Bible reveals to Christians that giving to others is a way of giving to God,<sup>77</sup> regardless of status, whether widows or orphans, rich or poor. The giving should be characterised by a love for God, from the depth of the heart,<sup>78</sup> and, in response to God, Christians should give food and belongings to others, without the expectation of repayment and praise from others.<sup>79</sup>

Within the biblical feasts discussed, above, there was no mention of exchange in them. The giving was centred entirely on God. In response to God, the people gave food and belongings to one another freely, without expecting repayment from the receivers. This is true love for God and others.

If Christians adopted and applied these Christian methods of giving, rather than the exchange ideas, then the Kabu feast will become meaningful for the Christian context. Furthermore, it will achieve the purpose of enhancing a true relationship with God, and each other, as a people of God, in the Mbahomea community. It is a time for all church leaders, and other Christians, to be prayerfully and carefully considering whether it is relevant for Christians to continue with the practice of exchange, or to apply the pattern of Christian giving. The decision is between God and us. Amen.

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<sup>77</sup> Deut 15:10-11.

<sup>78</sup> 2 Cor 9:7.

<sup>79</sup> Matt 6:2-4.

## CONCLUSION

The church must realise that the Kabu feast has its own problems. These problems occur, simply because people are not honouring God and each other, when coming to observe the Kabu feast. However, for church leaders to debate and argue over different problems, this feast creates for Christians, is not helpful. It only creates division and tension in the church.

This paper covered the origins, purposes, practices, and the effects of both the biblical feasts and the Kabu feast. If church leaders read, and thoroughly analyse, the content of this paper, they will be in a better position to address, and to offer solutions to, each of the Kabu problems that are affecting the Christians. This paper also provides recommendations for leaders to introduce Christian ways into the Kabu feast.

The biblical feasts and the Kabu feast have been shown to be the bridge for human relationships to be restored and renewed. This comes as a result of a united human relationship with God and each other, in order to continue experiencing *gut fala stay* in the community, and to avoid selfishness and conflict.

If Mbahomea church leaders could understand and implement each of the recommendations that are provided in this paper, then they would preach, teach, and encourage Christians to observe the Kabu feast to honour God wholeheartedly. The result would not only lift one community up, but also worship, and lift up, the name of God. The food, and the numbers of people who attend the feast, are not so important, but what really matters is to honour God, and to worship Him, from the depth of our hearts.

It is the author's prayer that, either sooner or later, church leaders use Christian methods to influence the practice of the Kabu feast, to make it become more meaningful for all SSEC Christians in the Mbahomea community, or even throughout the whole of the SSEC in the Solomon Islands.

## **APPENDIX A: LOCATION OF THE MBAHOMEA COMMUNITY**

As James Ofasia explained:

The island country of the Solomons is a chain of islands that lies to the southeast of Papua New Guinea, and to the northeast of Australia. Solomon Islands received its independence in 1978 from British Colonial rule. The Solomons is made up of six main islands, Choiseul, New Georgia, Santa Isabel, Guadalcanal, San Cristobal (Makira), and Malaita. The main inhabitants of the larger islands are Melanesians, while those from the smaller islands are Polynesians.<sup>80</sup>

Guadalcanal, the largest island in the archipelago, encompasses an area of 6,475 square kilometres (2,500 square miles). The Kavo mountain range extends the length of the island, and reaches a maximum height of 2,440 metres (8,005 feet) at Mt Makarakomburu. The island's chief town is Honiara, which is also the capital of the Solomon Islands. Agriculture, fishing, mining, and timber are the mainstays of the Guadalcanal economy.

The following figures were collected from the census of the year 2000.<sup>81</sup> The whole population of the Solomon Islands is 488,020. The population of Guadalcanal alone is 60,295. The population of Central Guadalcanal, where Mbahomea is located, is 7,015.

## **APPENDIX B: PRACTICE OF THE KABU FEAST IN THE PRE-CHRISTIAN ERA**

When the *Taovia Ni Vuguvugu*<sup>82</sup> identified, and was satisfied with, the number of pigs each of his clan families had, he would convene a meeting for all the heads of families, including the *Tinoni Tarungaha*,<sup>83</sup> by blowing a *tavuli*.<sup>84</sup> They would all come to the *Vale Tarungaha*<sup>85</sup> for the important *Koriagu*.<sup>86</sup> Usually the tribal chief had the power to initiate a

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<sup>80</sup> James Ofasia, "Traditional Tobaitan Method of Forgiveness and Reconciliation", Banz PNG: CLTC, 1990, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Solomon Islands' Census for Year 2000.

Kabu feast, and his clansmen would have no objection to the chief's decision.

After the important discussion, the tribal chief would inform all the surrounding clans about the possibility of his clan hosting the Kabu feast. This would give them enough time to prepare for their attendance. At the same time, he would tell his clan to commence preparations. For instance, they may need to repair old buildings, and erect new, temporary ones, just before the time of feasting. Importantly, the supply of both the houses and the garden food must be adequate to accommodate and feed all the visiting clans. However, all this preparation was usually done cooperatively, and never on an individual basis. Cooperative work made the preparations easy and quick.

As the actual time of feast drew near, the clan priest, together with his clansmen, would get two *tabu* pigs, reared specially for this event, and take them to two different sacrificing spots, to sacrifice them to the ancestral spirit. The site of the sacrificing shrine, which was kept secret, was either on the side, or top, of a mountain. The sacrifice to the ancestral spirit was handing back to the ancestors what already belonged to them.

At the shrine, the priest would offer a *tataru*<sup>87</sup> to the ancestral spirit.<sup>88</sup> It was a prayer of thankfulness for the spirit's efforts toward the clan, a prayer of confession and seeking forgiveness from the ancestor's spirit, on behalf of the clan, and a prayer of seeking the spirit's peace and blessing during and after the Kabu feast. After prayers, the pig was burnt as an offering, and the meat was consumed by the priest, and those appointed by the priest to offer the sacrifice.

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<sup>82</sup> Mbahomean word for "tribal chief".

<sup>83</sup> "Priest".

<sup>84</sup> "Cone shell".

<sup>85</sup> "Chief's house".

<sup>86</sup> "Discussion".

<sup>87</sup> "Prayer".

<sup>88</sup> Cornelius Kirisi, letter sent August, 2002.

After the priest and his men returned home, the feast would commence the following day. In the first part of the feast, *Hanipichu*, the hosts, would kill all the undersized pigs, and cook them in the *mumu*,<sup>89</sup> together with taro and yam. Celebration commences straight after the *Hanipichu*. Throughout the night, everyone from both the host and the visiting clans would sing songs through *Rope and lele*<sup>90</sup> and *Halevu*.<sup>91</sup> This music was an expression of deep appreciation to the ancestral spirits' goodness, protection, and harvest supply.

### **APPENDIX C: HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE ON THE KABU FEAST**

From 1937-1953, the gospel of Christ was brought into, and preached throughout, the Mbahomea community by Nicholas Nigua from Weather Coast of South Guadalcanal Island, and Nicholas Kaboe from Mbahomea. These two men were among those who were saved under Samson Jacko's ministry. Samson Jacko was among those men, who were taken as labourers to Queensland, Australia, and came back to the Solomon Islands around 1894.<sup>92</sup> Samson Jacko returned to the Solomon Islands about the same time as Peter Ambuofa.<sup>93</sup>

Through the ministry of two men,<sup>94</sup> and other *Luvurongo*<sup>95</sup> later on, the gospel penetrated throughout the Mbahomea area, and many people from the two major clans in Mbahomea gave their lives to the Lord. All the Christians decided not to believe in, or offer sacrifices to, any ancestral spirits. From then on, the unbelievers from these two clans found it difficult to observe the feast meaningfully, because this feast was meant for the community as a whole, and not for the few. The remnant had no other alternative but to abolish the Kabu feast.

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<sup>89</sup> A hot stone oven covered with earth and leaves.

<sup>90</sup> A special style of singing.

<sup>91</sup> Making music with a bamboo pipe.

<sup>92</sup> Alison Griffith, *Fire in the Islands*, Wheaton IL: Harold Shaw, 1977, p. 77.

<sup>93</sup> The man who brought the gospel to Malaita Island.

<sup>94</sup> Two expatriate men: Norman Deck Waite and Ken Griffith.

<sup>95</sup> SSEC word for an evangelist.

From 1959-1963, there was much discussion among the Christians regarding resurrecting the practice of Kabu feast again, but in a more Christian way. The Christians wished to have the Kabu feast back, because the Kabu feast enhances friendship, and deters conflicts and selfishness inside the whole community.

#### **APPENDIX D: HOW THE CHURCH SHOULD CONTEXTUALISE KABU**

Paul Hiebert is a contemporary missiologist, who offers a model called “critical contextualisation”. Contextualisation refers to the process of adapting the gospel message and Christian practice to a particular cultural setting. According to Hiebert, there are three approaches to old beliefs, rituals, stories, songs, customs, arts, music, etc. The first is the denial of the old (rejection of contextualisation). This leads to viewing the gospel as foreign – it is rejected, or the old goes underground – syncretism. The second is dealing with the old (critical contextualisation). There are four steps to follow: (1) gather data about the old; (2) study biblical teaching about the event; (3) evaluate the old in light of biblical teaching; and (4) create a new, contextualised Christian practice. The third is uncritical acceptance of the old (uncritical contextualisation), which leads to syncretism.<sup>96</sup> The church could use this model to contextualise the Kabu feast.

Firstly, the church leaders should gather all the relevant information from the appropriate people about the purpose, meaning, and symbols of Kabu, and study it thoroughly. They must ensure the Mbahomea people understand Kabu, in an unbiased way. Secondly, the church leaders need to study the scriptures about comparable events in the Bible. Thirdly, church leaders and believers should carefully evaluate the old practice of Kabu feast, in the light of the biblical feasts. Fourthly, after the evaluation is done, the church should be in a better position to develop a new Christian structure for Kabu feasting, based on biblical insight. The leaders can inform, teach, and preach the new structure to the congregation.

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<sup>96</sup> Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1977, p. 188.

The Mbahomea SSEC leaders should adopt these four steps in dealing with Kabu, or any other cultural matters. Without contextualisation, the SSEC, including Mbahomea, is experiencing confusion and conflict among the leaders over cultural issues, and syncretism creeping into the church.

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Launi, Amuraih, chief and church elder, interview by author, May, 2000, Chichinge.

Rere, Ruben, chief and storyteller for Chavuchavu clan, letter dated August, 2000, Tanatita.

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