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## **Making Genealogies: Gender, Memory and Contesting Ancestral Histories in the Solomon Islands**

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### Abstract

This paper examines the poetics and politics of 'genealogy' in memorizing and contesting ancestral histories among the Langalanga, Solomon Islands, particularly from the gender perspective. Traditionally, the Langalanga concept of genealogy—*futana*—lit. birth, is related to patrilineal descent ideology, learnt by men and practiced especially in the form of ritual recitation and sacrifice to ancestors. It is typical that people speak of genealogy in a vertical way which starts from the most ancient ancestor down to the current generation—i.e., the speaker himself or his son and grandsons. Moreover, it is common for narrators to enlist only one single line, starting from his founding ancestor to himself, while eliminating all other collaborate lines, both male and female. While men seem to monopolize genealogy, however, I argue that women also acquire genealogical information, and there is a gender diversion in the syntax of genealogical knowledge. While men tend to emphasize lineal and lengthy vertical links from ancient ancestors to the speakers today, women enrich the picture with extensive memory of affinal connections.

Since the introduction of Western concept of genealogy and the teaching of anthropological diagrams in school, the introduction of court system and its preference in unilineal inheritance in settling land disputes, the conceptualization and appropriation of genealogy in the Solomon Islands has been transformed. This paper also looks into the roles genealogies play in contemporary Langalanga, especially how the making and presentation of different versions of genealogy constructs historical memory and 're-presents' the past of ancestral migration. Finally, I will discuss the implications of such transformation of historicity in terms of gender and power.