

- 267 **CHRISTIAN POLYNESIANS AND PAGAN SPIRITS: ANUTA, SOLOMON ISLANDS*****RICHARD FEINBERG* Kent State University****INTRODUCTION**

Notwithstanding generations of scholarly interest in pre-Christian Polynesian religion, relatively little discussion of the topic has been based on systematic first-hand observation by professional investigators. Throughout the major archipelagoes, missions have obscured earlier patterns. The information that we have comes largely from the journals of explorers, traders, cast-aways, and missionaries. Some of these were keen observers and their data may be useful for a host of purposes. Still, the reports are at best uneven, reflecting the chroniclers' biases and limitations.¹

The western Polynesian outliers offer a partial exception to this generalisation. On some of these islands, traditional religious practices continued well into the present century and have been recorded in a series of important ethnographic works. Most prominent among these are Sir Raymond Firth's unparalleled accounts of Tikopia paganism (see Firth 1967a [1940], 1967b, 1970). In addition, Hogbin (1930, 1932, 1961 [1934]) offers valuable descriptions of Ontong Javanese religious practice and belief, and Monberg's work (1966, 1971, 1991) provides exemplary accounts of pre-Christian religion on Bellona. However, elsewhere in the region anthropologists have yet to take advantage of a range of opportunities to view non-Christian spirit concepts as a living body of indigenous concern.²

The present work attempts to be responsive to the latter issue. For two decades, I have been immersed in the study of Anuta, an isolated Polynesian island in the eastern Solomons. Although Anutans abandoned their old worship ceremonies shortly after the establishment of the Anglican Church during the second decade of this century, they continue to be convinced of the truth of their pre-Christian spirit beliefs. During my first visit to Anuta in the early 1970s, my oldest associates recalled witnessing kava rites performed for major deities; and a few Anutans still speak confidently about the old religion. Even today, Anutans occupy a world that they perceive to be inhabited by spiritual beings, including those of the old types; and they continue to encounter spirits as a normal fact of life.

One objective of this essay, then, is to present an outline of Anuta's spirit - 268  world as it has been revealed to me over the past twenty years, both through Anutans' statements and through my first-hand observation.³ I then explore why the Anutans have maintained old spirit concepts despite three quarters of a century of Christianity. This, in turn, involves examination of the island's church, the process of "domestication" (Sahlins 1985; Kaplan 1990) through which Anutans have made it their own, and its integration with the pre-existing system to forge a distinctively Anutan form of Polynesian syncretism.⁴

To pose the matter as I have begs several methodological questions. The most prominent, perhaps, involves the cultural construction (or "invention") of tradition. A number of anthropologists (e.g., Keesing and Tonkinson 1982; Keesing 1989; Linnekin 1983, 1992; Handler and Linnekin 1984; Hanson 1989) have argued that "tradition" is symbolically constructed in the present and reflects contemporary social and political concerns. If this is true, Anutans' statements during the time of my field research may bear little correspondence with the thoughts and actions of their ancestors. Therefore, I should emphasise that in referring to "traditional religion" I mean only to relate what islanders have told me without passing judgment on the historical veracity of their assertions. At the same

time, I am open to the possibility that oral history is sometimes useful in attempts to reconstruct the past; and several strands of evidence render Anutan understandings of their old beliefs and practices at least plausible. ⁵

Secondly, to use the phrase “traditional religion” risks giving the impression of a static, monolithic body of shared understandings and behaviours. In actuality, Anutans holding different social-structural positions and undergoing different personal experiences also differ somewhat in perceptions of their supernatural environment. Furthermore, Anutan understandings have undoubtedly changed over time. Such differences are necessarily obscured by the attempt to generalise about a community—particularly about those aspects of belief and practice that have been partly dormant for three quarters of a century. While I may not give variation of this kind the attention one might wish, I call attention to intra-community disagreements where such data are available.

Lastly, I should note that my objective in this essay is to represent Anutans' views of their pre-Christian system of religion as faithfully as possible. For reasons of economy and clarity, I tend to paraphrase in lieu of rendering original Anutan texts, and in that regard I do not present Anutan voices. I would add, however, that bi-lingual islanders have consistently endorsed my representations of their positions; and I draw comfort from Anutan reassurance that my paraphrasing has not introduced major distortion.

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A SPIRIT ENCOUNTER

My first clear indication that non-Christian spirits still play an important role in Anutan life occurred on New Year's morning 1973, toward the end of my first visit. Young people had stayed up all night to dance in the church yard. At three o'clock, the catechist called everyone together, and on his signal the assembly gave a rousing cheer. One participant beat on the empty metal cylinder which served as a church bell. Others whooped and shouted, stamped their feet upon the ground or beat the earth with sticks. Then we proceeded through the villages, continuing to make as much commotion as we could.

When this procedure was complete, we walked across the island toward the spring to bathe before the morning service. As we neared the spring, a young boy at my side noticed a faint phosphorescent glow in the bushes near the trail. He grabbed my hand, shouted “*Te atua! Te atua!*” “The spirit! The spirit!”, and instructed me to shine my light on it. But when I did so, the glow disappeared. When I turned the flashlight off, it reappeared; and when I turned it on again it disappeared once more. After I had done this several times, my companion started to pull frantically at me and say “*Taa oro!*” ‘Let's go! Let's get out of here!’

As we proceeded toward the spring, I thought the matter closed. Through the remainder of that day, however, people kept approaching me to ask if I had seen the spirit near the water. This gave me an opportunity to inquire about *their* spirit encounters.

During the next few weeks, I recorded many stories about local spirits; I learned much of what I know about the structure of Anuta's spirit world; and I learned of the conviction with which Anutans still hold to their old religion. Much of this information was recorded in my writings on Anutan medical beliefs (Feinberg 1979, 1980) and social structure (1981a). Even at this point, however, details of traditional religion remained vague.

Much of the remaining detail was provided during a visit to the Solomons in 1988. The purpose of that visit was to collect, transcribe, and translate Anutan oral traditions. The subject naturally involved pre-Christian spirits, their names, habits, and relations with the world of mortal human beings; and in the course of conversation, I was given information I had been convinced was lost for over half a century.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ANUTAN SPIRITS

Anutan spirits fall into a number of distinct classes. Still there are some properties that spirits share, regardless of their type.

Spirits are discrete beings, each with its own personality and autonomous will. They are sexual beings, whose emotional and social lives resemble those of living people. Spirits tend to be invisible and intangible; thus, most spirit activities are hidden from human perception. However, they can take on a variety of shapes. Sometimes they enter and possess bodies of animals or other natural phenomena. This is most often how they manifest themselves to mortal human beings. At other times, they enter human bodies, causing bizarre actions and speaking through the vocal apparatus of their hosts. In pre-Christian times, a person so possessed was called a *vakaatua* ‘spirit vessel’ or ‘spirit medium’, and it is through such mediums that spirits made their feelings known to living people. Firth (1967b, 1970) depicts spirit mediumship as a major Tikopian psychological and social preoccupation at least until the 1950s. Anutans, by contrast, have not practised spirit mediumship in this sense for many decades. On occasion people may still be possessed by spirits, resulting in temporary insanity (see Feinberg 1979, 1980). But Anutans tend to view this as devoid of social benefits.

Spirits are more powerful than human beings, as is demonstrated by their ability to materialise and dematerialise at will, to travel at astounding speeds, and to control natural phenomena. Spirits can cause rain or sunshine, make crops die or flourish, cause fish to fling themselves onto an angler's hook or to shun hungry fishermen. They can cause disease and dreadful accidents or make one impervious to injury. Although they have their own concerns, they also take an interest in living people. People can induce spirits to treat them kindly by observing proper ritual, or they can anger spirits by failing to act with deference.

SPIRIT CLASSES

The general Anutan term for ‘spirit’ is *atua*. Of these, there are several main varieties. Most powerful spirits with clearly differentiated personalities and habits are known as *tupua*, the most important of which were ghosts of deceased chiefs and other leading individuals. These were major gods who must be systematically worshipped in order to secure their blessings and ensure prosperity. Such spirits were most often simply termed *tupua* but might be given the specific designation *tupua tapu* ‘sacred spirit’.

A second type of powerful *atua* includes ancient spirits who had never taken human form. Some of these were associated with particular descent groups, made themselves manifest in the form of various animals, and could be called on for assistance. Such spirits might be roughly termed “totemic”. Spirits of this type were sometimes called *atua tapu*, but they were distinguished from *tupua*.

Others spirits of non-human origin were associated with important geographical and geological features of the island and immediately surrounding ocean. These are termed *tupua penua* ‘spirits of the land’. *Tupua penua* were *tapu* in the sense that they were dangerous. However, they were rarely worshipped, and they seldom acted to the benefit of human beings.⁶

Lastly, there are minor spirits. These are *atua vare* ‘common’ or ‘undistinguished spirits’. Unlike *atua tapu*, most *atua vare* are unnamed, lack distinctive personalities, and are not worshipped. They are neither helpful nor malevolent, but tend to be malicious and are best avoided. Firth (1970) has suggested ‘spooks’ as a gloss for the Tikopian equivalent. I consider each of these varieties in the order in which they appear in Anutan oral traditions.

TUPUA PENUA

The names of great pan-Polynesian gods—Rongo, Tu, and Taane—evoke from present-day Anutans little hint of

recognition. Tangaroa figures in some narratives of a genre known as *tangikakai*—tales recited for the benefit of children, mostly as bedtime stories. However, the name applies not to an individual but a group of spirits, associated with the ocean. In their major appearance, they are defeated by a clever culture hero, and they are not regarded as a serious cosmological force.

Tingirau is a celestial presence whom Anutans share with other Polynesians. Anutans refer to him as Te Ariki o Rangi ‘The Chief of the Heavens’. A constellation known as Te Kupenga ‘The Net’, consisting of the Southern Cross plus Centaurus, is said to be the fishing net of Tingirau. Ina, known to other Polynesians as Hina or Sina, is said to be Tingirau's sister. Anutans refer to her as Te Papine Ariki ‘The Chiefly Female’ or Te Papine Totonga, a title indicating that she was a female of extraordinary mana. She and Tingirau together ruled Rangi Tuangapuru, the tenth (and highest) level of heaven.

Another class of ancient spirits may be described roughly as totemic. Anuta's present population is said to have descended to the island in canoes from Tonga and Uvea. These groups brought with them tutelary spirits from their homelands. The Tongans' god, named Putiuraua, was embodied (*pakatino*) in the eel (*te toke*); the Uveans' god, Tokitaaitekere, inhabited the body of a lizard (*moko*).

Approximately nine generations ago, a chief named Tearakura, his two brothers, and one brother-in-law, are said to have slain the remainder of Anuta's male population and given rise to the four present ‘clans’ (*kainanga*). The highest ranking ‘clan’ is called the Kainanga i Mua ‘The Clan in Front’ and is descended from Tearakura. The second ‘clan’ is the Kainanga i Tepuko and traces its ancestry to Tearakura's younger brother, Pu Tepuko. Third is the Kainanga i Pangatau, descended from Tearakura's two sisters, Nau Ariki and Nau Pangatau, and their shared husband, Pu Pangatau. The - 272 lowest ranking ‘clan’ is the Kainanga i Rotomua, descended from Tearakura's youngest brother, Tauvakatai.

Each of Anuta's ‘clans’ had a special relationship with particular *atua*, residing in a certain type of fish or other sea creature. These spirits were not *tupua*.

The Kainanga i Mua, Kainanga i Tepuko, and Kainanga i Rotomua all had the same *atua*: *te mangoo* ‘the shark’. This was because they were all from the same *pare* ‘house’—their founders were a single sibling set (*te paanaunga e tai*). People in these ‘clans’ were not forbidden to eat sharks, as normal sharks out in the ocean—those likely to be caught by hook and line—were not *atua*. Rather, one might recognise a shark as an *atua* by its unusual behaviour. In particular, spirit sharks were said to come onto the reef to *moe* ‘lie’ or ‘sleep’ near Rotoapi village (see map, figure 1) in front of a sacred clearing (*marae pai kava*) known as Tapu Ariki. The shark was *te atua taa tangata* ‘a man-killing spirit’. When one was angry at another person, one would appeal to the spirit of the shark to “bite” the offensive individual. Any species of shark might be an *atua*.

Another *atua* associated with the Kainanga i Mua was *te peke* ‘the octopus’. Te Peke was a female spirit, sometimes also known as Te Pae ‘The Mother(?)’. This was an *atua porau* ‘voyaging spirit’, which took corporeal shape in the body of an octopus. It is interesting that voyaging, a distinctly masculine domain in mundane social life, should be associated with a female spirit. On the other hand, standard sex-roles are reflected in association of killing with a male spirit (the shark) while sailors seek protection and nurturance from a female spirit (the octopus).

Like the other ‘clans’, the Kainanga i Pangatau was intimately associated with two “totemic” spirits: *te ponu* ‘sea turtle’ and *te ririko* ‘manta ray’. According to at least one informant, both species were *tapu* for members of this ‘clan’ to eat in pagan times. As Anutans hardly ever catch these animals, this was no great hardship. The *ririko* seems to have been Pangatau's voyaging spirit.

Pangatau's primary god was Piita i te Rangi. After death, one's *mauuri* 'soul' or 'life force' ascended to Nga Rangi 'The Heavens'. People of the Kainanga i Mua, Tepuko, and Rotomua went to Te Rangi Tokerau 'The Northern Rangi'; people of Pangatau went to Te Rangi Mata a te Tonga 'The Rangi of the Eastern Face'. Piita ruled the latter heavenly abode.

Piita was male and not associated with any particular animal. He was both a voyaging spirit (*atua porau*) and a war god. Members of the Pangatau 'clan' performed kava for Piita in preparation for ocean journeys, and they would appeal to him to guarantee success in combat. One informant, Pu Pouro, asserted that his grandfather's brother, Toomotu, had led the slaughter of the

appealed to Piita, who entered his body and made him into an incredibly powerful fighter.

No one with whom I spoke was able to identify the spiritual ruler of Te Rangi Tokerau. According to Pu Pouro, the major gods of the Kainanga i Mua differed from those of Pangatau in that they were the spirits of dead chiefs—particularly Tearakura and Toroaki.

More recently, after the time of Tearakura, people divided up the natural species such that each person had his or her own personal *atua*. They might be fish, birds, animals—anything. This practice was discontinued with the coming of the church.

“Clan totems” are widely known by present-day Anutans; however, I could reconstruct little additional information about them. More is remembered about spirits known as *tupua penua*.

According to local tradition, Anuta was initially pulled from the ocean floor by the demigod Motikitiki—a character who has close analogues in tales from many Polynesian islands. Other Motikitiki stories refer to Te Ao Rere ‘Large Magellanic Cloud’ and Te Ao Toka ‘Small Magellanic Cloud’ as the female spirits Rua Taka (see below). Manu ‘Bird’ is a male spirit seen in a constellation consisting of Sirius (his ‘body’), Canopus (his ‘east wing’), and Procyon (his ‘north wing’). Manu's north wing is shorter than his east wing, having been broken in a fight with Motikitiki over the female spirit, Taro (Antares).

Stories of Motikitiki and his consociates may once have been taken as true; today, since the establishment of Christianity, they are believed only by children. Adults describe them as “just stories”, referring questions of creation to the Book of Genesis. Belief in the *tupua penua*, by contrast, has remained as firm as ever.

Tupua penua were spirits native to Anuta, perhaps from the time of its creation (*pakatupu*). Thus, they had already been there for a long time when the first immigrants arrived from Tonga and Uvea. They are a type of *atua*—according to a number of informants, they were actually *atua tapu* ‘sacred spirits’. By some accounts, at one time people ‘worshipped’ (*pakataputapu*) them and performed kava ceremonies (*pai kava*) to them. They would help people who ‘respected’ (*pakaepa*) them but brought death and misfortune to those who did not.

Tupua penua were numerous and of both sexes. Most of them preferred to live in caves, and there are stories of battles for dwelling sites among the *tupua penua*. Spirits in this class include the following:

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Uuperuu. Uuperuu was a female spirit with just one breast which was very long and folded over (*na uu e peruperu*). She would throw it out and lasso men, pulling them in to her to force them to have sexual relations. My informants offered no opinion as to whether or not she was attractive on grounds that no one living today has actually seen her. Perhaps they did in former times, but not in recent memory. Unlike most *tupua penua*, who lived in caves, Uuperuu's primary dwelling place was the base of a tree on Maunga, Anuta's 200-foot hill. The tree is of a sort called *te putu*, which normally grows on the beach. The anomalous location of the tree which served as Uuperuu's abode is preserved in its name: Te Putu i Maunga ‘The Mountain Putu’. A second dwelling place for Uuperuu was a cave along the southern shoreline, known as Te Ana Tii (see figure 1).

Uunapine. Uunapine, another female spirit, lived in a cave at the base of a monolith, standing on the beach near the main passage to the ocean. The cave is known as Te Ana Rai ‘The Large Cave’ (see figure 1). Today Anutans usually call Uunapine by her Tikopian name, Puapine. This was her ‘respect name’ (*ingoa pakaepa*); her familiar name was Piipi. There was some suggestion that Uunapine's abode was not the cave itself, but actually a tree of a type known as *te miro*, growing near her cave. People, particularly children, were forbidden to enter the area, especially in the

evening and at night. The area was safe during the day; at other times, one would be well advised to give it a wide berth.

Rua Taka. This name means something like ‘Two Spinsters’ (*rua* ‘two’; *taka* ‘unmarried’) and denotes a pair of sisters. These sisters were alter-egos; reflections of one spirit. There was some suggestion that Rua Taka was/were the same being(s) as Puapine, but this was denied by my most knowledgeable informant.

One of the island's best known stories of *tupua penua* involves Rua Taka and their banishment by Tearakura from the island. According to this tale, Tearakura was working in his taro garden in the small valley (*vaamaunga*) between the hill's two crests. He saw the two women looking at him and immediately recognised them as a spirit. They were standing there—or perhaps sitting on the stone which was their dwelling place (*noporanga*)—and laughing at him. Unlike most *atua*, they did not just stay a short time and disappear. They remained and kept on giggling day after day—or, more likely, given the nature of Anutan spirits, night after night—for three days. After the third day, Tearakura became angry. He sanctified (*pakatapu*) the garden and built a huge bonfire with wood and leaves and large amounts of - 276 rubbish (*nga penu*) so that it would smoke profusely. Then he jumped across the fire and back, through the smoke, three times.

After jumping back for the third time, he descended from the hill to Ukupanga, the bathing area in the easternmost section of the island. The two women followed him. He warned them that if they did not desist, he would fix them so that they could not disappear in the morning, as spirits are wont to do; and the whole island would see their corporeal bodies (*tino*).

They still refused to leave, subjecting him instead to several tests of mana, from which he emerged victorious. He then performed a kava ceremony, forcing them to remain visible past dawn. After all the people had had a chance to look at them, he told the two to leave and follow the path of spirits, never more returning to the world of men. (“*Tautari ki te rotoara o nga atua; aua koru popoki mai ki atangata nei*”) They did not cease to exist but went to the world of spirits and were never seen again by human beings. In one version of the story, they became the constellations known as Te Ao Toka and Te Ao Rere, the two Magellanic Clouds.

In commemoration of these events, Tearakura gave his son, Pu Nukutaua, the personal name (*ingoa tangata*) Rakaiautiapi, which means ‘Hurry Through the Smoke’. This was not a traditional Anutan name but one that he created (*ne patu*) just for the occasion. Since that time, the name has been preserved in Tearakura's line, and currently is represented by Ta Tongotere's eldest son in the abbreviated form, Autiapi.

Anutans distinguish three kinds of story. *Araarapanga* are tales taken to be unembellished observed fact. *Taratupua* are tales about spirits, viewed as factual in their main outlines but known only via circumstantial evidence. Finally, *tangikakai* are “fairy tales”, taken to be fictional accounts, told only for their entertainment value. I asked a number of informants if the story of Tearakura and Rua Taka was a *taratupua* and was emphatically told no! This is an *araarapanga*. It is recent and true. Allegedly, the whole community witnessed the events; therefore, there is no doubt as to the story's authenticity.

Paaira. Paaira was sometimes male and sometimes female. (S)he lived in a cave known as Te Ana Tii on the island's southern shore (see figure 1) and changed sex depending on the occasion. Paaira is said to have had white skin “like a European”.

Uuarenga. Uuarenga was a male spirit whose dwelling place was Ukupanga i te Vae Reke—a bathing area at the northeastern end of the island's beach. Uuarenga had a second residence near that of Uunapine in Te Ana Rai.

Matarua and Pu Roa. In addition to Uuarenga, two other *tupua penua* lived - 277 n Te Vae Reke—Matarua and Pu Roa. These spirits were also male. Matarua, like Uuarenga, lived in two different caves.

Because of the church, *tupua penua* have not been prominent in recent years. Still, they were reported as a major force as recently as the past generation; and they are still at times encountered.

Other spirits arrived later from other places. Many of these, however, share important features with *tupua penua*. Among these, Ure ‘Penis’, was the name for a male spirit, and Tore ‘Vagina’ was a female spirit. Tore and Ure lived together at the base of a *puko* tree in a garden site called Paretai. And a female spirit named Te Atua i Tuariki was known to approach men in their dreams in order to seduce them. Informants stated that the men experienced no negative effects from this, asserting such encounters ‘are just dreamed’ (*e miti pero ia*).

SPIRITS OF DEAD CHIEFS

In the most general sense, there are two types of *atua*: minor spirits known simply as *atua*, and major spirits, most of whom are known as *tupua*. Thus, a *tupua* is a type of *atua*. Most are ‘sacred spirits’ (*atua tapu*). Anuta's premier pagan gods—spirits that were regularly worshipped—were ghosts of deceased chiefs, the most important being Tearakura. Tearakura was Te Atua Rai ‘The Great Atua’, Te Atua Tapu ‘The Sacred Atua’ or more simply, Te Tupua.

Tearakura was Anuta's chief about nine generations ago and is said to have directed the slaughter of the island's male population (*te taanga o te penua*). Tearakura's leading assistant was his younger brother, Pu Tepuko. Tauvakatai was the youngest and physically least imposing of the three brothers. Indeed, one of his marital names was Pu Rikiriki ‘Mr. Small’. Yet, it was the quick, athletic Tauvakatai who took the lead in battling the brothers' most notable adversary—a powerful warrior named Ranginapa—and in repelling a subsequent Tikopian invasion. Tearakura, Pu Tepuko, and Tauvakatai became the founders of three of Anuta's *kainanga* ‘clans’, and Tearakura served as chief of the community until his death. The remaining ‘clan’ traces its origin to Tearakura's two sisters, Nau Ariki and Nau Pangatau, and their husband, Pu Pangatau.

After Tearakura's death, he was to have been succeeded by his son, Kavataorua. Kavataorua, however, declined the chieftainship in favour of Pu Tepuko. Upon the latter's death, Kavataorua assumed the chieftainship, but he created a second chiefly office for descendants of Pu Tepuko. Since that time, the island's senior chief, Tui Anuta (also known as Te Ariki i Mua), has come from Tearakura's descendants in the Kainanga i Mua; the junior chief, - 278 Tui Kainanga (also called Te Ariki Tepuko or Te Ariki i Muri) has come from Pu Tepuko's descendants in the second-ranking Kainanga i Tepuko. The Kainanga i Pangatau and the Kainanga i Rotomua are not led by chiefs.

Tearakura and his siblings are known collectively as *Te Paanau Ariki* ‘The Chiefly Brethren’, and the founding of the present ‘clan’ system is regarded as a watershed. The most important deities—those regularly worshipped through kava ceremonies and on whom the community depended for continued well-being—were ghosts of Tearakura, Pu Tepuko, Tauvakatai, and Nau Ariki.

Each of these deities had multiple names. Most important was the sacred name, by which (s)he was addressed when one requested supernatural assistance. If a spirit were not addressed by the correct name, no assistance was forthcoming. On the other hand, one must not invoke a sacred name when discussing mundane affairs. For this purpose a familiar name was used.

Thus, Tearakura was a sacred spiritual name (*ingoa pakataputapu* or *ingoa pakaatua*). When discussing mundane matters, he should be called Tauurupui. In addition, one informant cited as his mundane marital name (*ingoa pakamaatuaa*) Pu Nukuora. (Another identified Pu Nukuora as the Anutan marital name of Tearakura's youngest brother, Tauvakatai.) Even when he was alive, no one—siblings included—could call him Tearakura. Rather, they

would use his mundane appellation.

Pu Tepuko was a marital name (*ingoa pakamaatuaa*). This man/spirit's *ingoa pakataputapu* was Tearavave, and his mundane personal name (*ingoa tangata or ingoa poouri*) was Kavekau.

The third brother was Tauvakatai. His marital name was cited by one informant as Pu Teakaumotu; another claimed it to be Pu Nukuora. Pu Rikiriki 'Mr.Small' was his 'respect name' (*ingoa pakaepa*). Apart from indicating his physical stature, this name identified him as the last of the Chiefly Brethren. In addition, there was some suggestion that Pu Rikiriki was actually Tauvakatai's Tikopian name. The latter assertion makes linguistic sense as *riki* is the Tikopian word for 'small'. The Anutan equivalent is *tii*.

The last of the great deities from this sibling set was Nau Ariki. Her personal (non-marital) name (*ingoa paka papine taka*) was Nevengarai. Nau Ariki was her spiritual name because she was *te ariki papine* 'the female chief'. The 'personal name' of Nau Ariki's husband, Pu Pangatau, was Teuruumua.

Anutans first became aware of Tearakura's special *manuu* 'mana; spiritual power' at his birth. It is said that he was born with his face "coloured like a rainbow". The indigenous expression is *ne pani marara*, which literally means 'coloured like charcoal' or 'coloured with charcoal'. Certain ceremonial activities involved colouring one's face with charcoal, and the

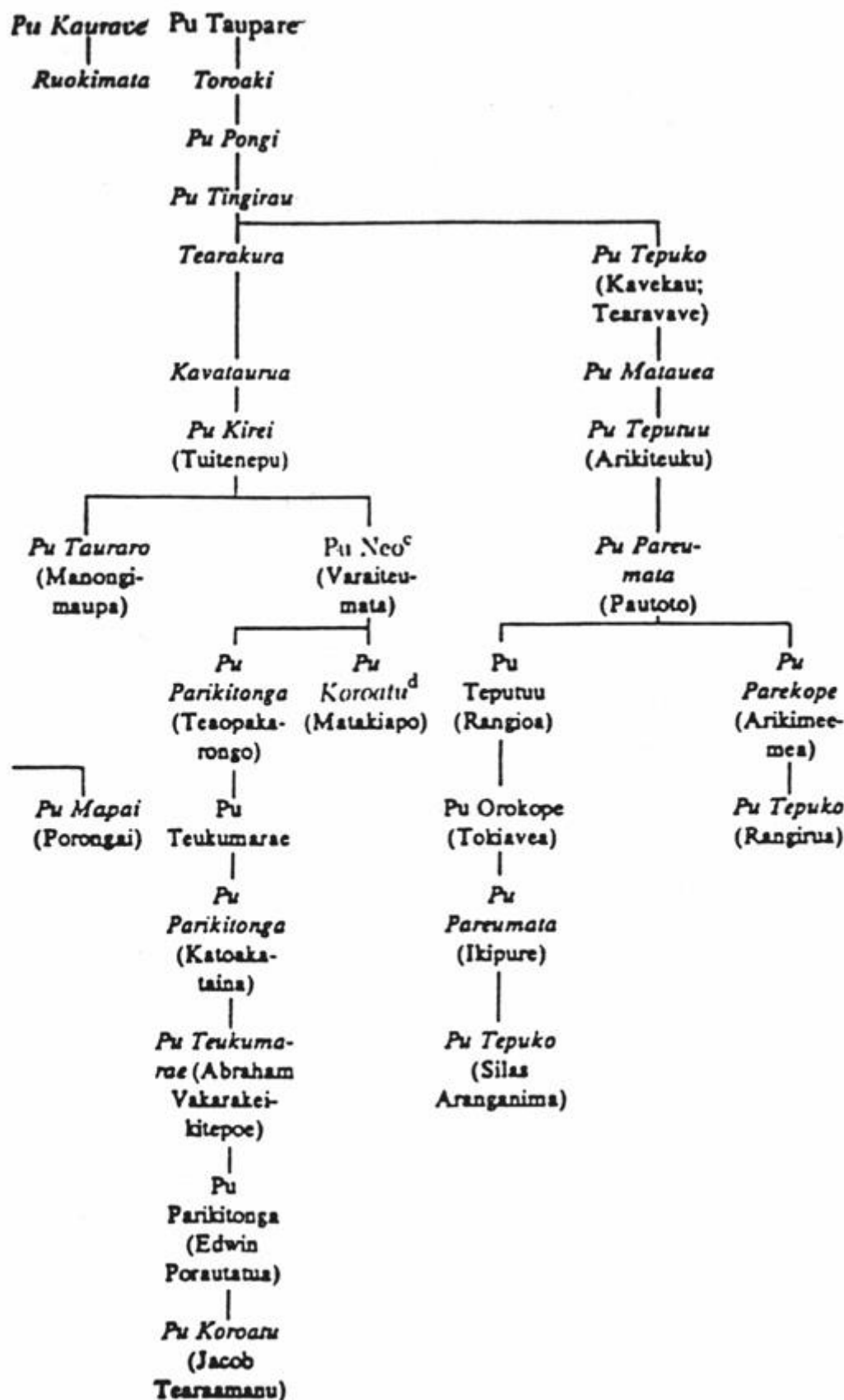


Figure 2. Anutan Chiefly Genealogy. (Chiefs appear in italics; nonchiefs in standard print.)

phrase was intended to indicate that he had special ceremonial attributes. Thus, when he was born, people were able immediately to identify him as an *ariki manuu*.

In addition to Tearakura, there were two other *ariki manuu*, born with their faces coloured. The next after Tearakura was Pu Tauraro (see figure 2), and the third was Pu Tauraro's son. Unfortunately for the last of these, he apparently was born at night. The family did not get a good look at him and thought he was a girl. Infanticide was practised on girls born at night; so the third *ariki manuu* died before he was named and never came close to becoming an actual *ariki*.

Among Tearakura's more notable spheres of influence, he served as a guardian of voyagers. If a storm were imminent, one of the crew would stand up in the bow of the canoe, remove his waist cloth, known as *te maro* or *te pakamaruu*—preferably one dyed with turmeric (*te maro tapi*)—and offer it to Tearakura. This procedure was called *taute te maro* ‘doing the *maro*’. The lightning would flash and the thunder roll, signalling Tearakura's entry. Then, the storm would dissipate before it damaged the canoe. This procedure was still practised until the time of my informants' grandparents.

Tearakura became spectacularly involved in social affairs as recently as the lifetime of Pu Raropuko, the last ritual elder (*mataapure*) to perform kava, some time after the turn of the century. Pu Raropuko made up a song of a type called *tauaangutu*, making fun of Pu Avatere, a warrior who lived at the time of the Paanau Ariki and was killed by Ranginapa. Not surprisingly, perhaps, Pu Avatere—or, more precisely, his spirit—was offended and came after Pu Raropuko to strike him down. Pu Avatere was a giant, much taller and with thicker arms and legs than anyone Pu Raropuko had ever seen in life. The *atua* caught him at Te Ana Tii and would have killed him if Tearakura and Tauvakatai had not intervened. Now, since the coming of the church, the song is performed by anyone without fear of retaliation.

Nau Ariki, like her brothers, was known as a chief (*ariki*). Indeed she is termed *te ariki papine* ‘the female chief’ and is the only female chief reported in Anutan history. She held this position because she was the first-born female (*te urumatua papine*) of the Paanau Ariki.

Because of Nau Ariki's sex, she ranked below Tearakura; but she was above both Kavekau and Tauvakatai because she was the first-born (*te urumatua*). Also, Kavekau (Pu Tepuko), in contrast with Nau Ariki, was not a chief as long as Tearakura was alive. Tauvakatai, as the youngest, was a distant fourth.

As *ariki papine*, Nau Ariki did not exercise political leadership, but she had tremendous mana—second only to Tearakura. In the Anutan phrase, she “held the highest portion of the leaf (*ne taapite uru o te rau raakau*)” referring - 281 to control of ceremonial leaves from which mana emanates. After death, when she became an *atua*, Nau Ariki was her spiritual name (*ingoapakaatua*), which no one could utter because of its sanctity. Her familiar name, by which people addressed her during normal discourse, has long been forgotten.

Nau Ariki's *manuu* was such that if someone were sick and she touched his head, he would quickly recover. Alternately, if one failed to show her adequate respect, she could cause sickness and death.

Her power derived both from being the eldest and from the fact that she was Tearakura's sister (*kave*). The father's sister (*makitanga*), in olden times, had a terrible power to curse (*tautuku*). Even today, one owes the *makitanga* great respect—“just like the father from whom you were born (*pakapea mo te tamana ne ke paanau i ei*).” The *makitanga* is not called “female father” as in some societies (cf. Radcliffe-Brown 1952[1920]), but that is how she is conceptualised. “She is just like the *tamana*.” ⁷

Along with the Paanau Ariki, and almost on a par with Tearakura in importance, was Toroaki. Toroaki was the son of Pu Taupare, the first immigrant to Anuta from Uvea. Pu Taupare never served as chief, being eclipsed by his Tongan brother-in-law, Pu Kaurave. However, Pu Kaurave's son, Ruokimata, left no heir. After Ruokimata's death, Toroaki assumed the chieftainship, becoming the first chief of the Anuta's Uvean line and Tearakura's great grandfather. Among Toroaki's duties as a spirit was to assist Anutans at sea. He was one of three gods to whom canoes were dedicated upon completion—the others being Tearakura and Pu Tauraro (Feinberg 1988:151). In addition, before the coming of the church, when men swam in the ocean, they would take stones with them. Should a large shark approach, the swimmer would toss the stones toward the fish while mouthing the words, “*Toroaki toaki!*” ‘Toroaki, help!’. Invariably, the shark would leave.

Deceased chiefs became the island's most important gods. However, all human beings were thought to become spirits after death (cf. Hanson 1986a, 1986b). Generally, the more prominent a person, the more powerful that person's spirit. In the same way that living people take an interest in the welfare of their relatives, spirits take an interest in their descendants' wellbeing. Thus, in time of trouble one might call on spirits of deceased kin—especially patrilineal ancestors and maternal uncles—in addition to chiefs for assistance.

ATUA VARE

Most spirit encounters in recent years have been with *atua vare* ‘common’ or ‘undistinguished spirits’. Such spirits may be ghosts of deceased people or may never have been human. Rarely do Anutans make an effort to identify such spirits by name, nor do *atua vare* have strongly differentiated person- - 282  alities. In this sense, ‘generic spirits’ may be an appropriate gloss for beings of this type.

Atua vare are rarely if ever helpful, and they are never worshipped. They are not truly malevolent but tend to take malicious pleasure in annoying pranks. Such spirits are most active after dark and tend to disappear during the day. They are particularly apt to inhabit the bush and frighten anyone so foolish as to go about alone at night. ⁸ Typical of their activities is to molest men hunting birds.

A common hunting technique is to climb a tree at night and snare birds with a noose or net, or grab them by hand. Once a hunter finds a suitable tree, he may stay there for hours, holding captured birds in one hand and the noose in the other. However, while a man is hunting in this manner, a spirit may approach and shake the tree, forcing the hunter to grasp the trunk with both hands and release the birds. When at length he descends to the ground, he finds the birds have disappeared. One effective defence against such attacks is ostensibly to urinate on the *atua*'s head. Spirits evidently are revolted, and they quickly leave the scene (see Feinberg n.d.b for descriptions of particular encounters).

As elsewhere in Polynesia, common wisdom on Anuta is that spirits are most likely to attack persons who fear them most. Most Anutans describe spirit encounters as extremely frightening and report an overwhelming urge to flee. But when people overcome their fear and stand their ground or run directly toward the spirit, the *atua* usually retreats (Feinberg n.d.b; cf. Levy 1973: 165).

Spirits may take many forms. Often they look much like ordinary people, but are larger and more powerful. Typically, they come and go; one does not see them constantly. They appear for a short time, seemingly out of nowhere, and then equally mysteriously disappear. Some islanders report encountering spirits more frequently while children than as adults, but they may be seen by persons of any age.

On a recent visit to the Solomons, I discussed with some Anutans my experience of New Year's morning 1973 (see above). These informants said that what I had observed was not actually a spirit but a phenomenon produced by a spirit. "Sometimes you see the spirit's body; sometimes its light." Occasionally a spirit may take the form of an animal—fish, bird, reptile, or mammal—rather than a person. Such animals are recognised as spirits when they behave in a manner that is out of character for their species. A deep water fish that swims onto the fringing reef, a normally diurnal bird that is active at night, or a normally timid animal which does not flee at one's approach is likely to be identified as a spirit.

Often spirits are not seen but heard, smelt, or sensed through intangible - 283  clues. Again, the evidence is something significantly out of the ordinary. A pungent, unfamiliar aroma. Spoken words when only the hearer is known to be present. Or just an eerie feeling. ⁹

In 1973, a fifteen-year-old youth told me that he had never seen a spirit but had heard one. The boy was walking through the bush alone at night and heard a spirit 'crying' (*tangi*) to him. I inquired as to how the spirit sounded and was told it sounded like a bird. My obvious response was, "If it sounded like a bird, how do you know it was a spirit rather than a bird?" He replied that "I was very frightened. I'm not afraid of birds, so it must have been a spirit."

The logic of this answer struck me as dubious, but when I jokingly mentioned it to other people, there was general agreement with the boy's assessment. The fact that he had reacted in an atypical manner to an apparently typical bird call indicated that there was something unusual about it. To my informants, the most obvious explanation was that it was not a bird at all but a spirit.

Spirits are more active at some times than others. As in other parts of the Pacific, Anutans deem it more likely that they will be encountered at night than by daylight. ¹⁰ In addition, social discord, taboo violation, or generally inappropriate behaviour on the part of a large number of people tends to stimulate spirit activity. When problems arise on a community scale, such as epidemic disease, crop failure, poor fishing, or destructive storms, these are, in the first instance, attributed to inappropriate behaviour by a large portion of the community. Ultimately, such experiences are likely to be seen as punishment by either the old spirits or the Christian God. However, coincident with massive social problems, and thought to contribute to them, is unusual activity among *atua vare*. At such times, spirits come into the dwelling area, surround and even enter dwelling houses, frighten, and torment the populace. Such a period occurred in 1981 when political strife over the sale of locally grown food and the organisation of the church was accompanied by crop failure, epidemic, and a fatal accident involving an eighteen-year-old youth (see Feinberg 1986 for details). For weeks, people huddled together inside their houses, especially at night, barring the doors and not daring to venture outside.

Anutans say that spirits are particularly common and active on their home island. Thus, one friend noted that while he attended school on Guadalcanal, he would hunt crabs by himself without a light on the darkest of nights and was not the least bit frightened. However, he would not do such a thing back on Anuta. In fact, at home he does not go to places even slightly dark unless he has company.

One particularly well known instance of spirit activity encountered in the - 284  central Solomons, involves a ghost ship frequenting the ocean near Honiara (*te vaka o nga atua e tu mai i te moana*). This is a ship filled with the ghosts of soldiers who died in the bloody battles of Guadalcanal during the Second World War. The ship is always in the area, but one only sees it at night. Sometimes it looks very big, like a copra boat or a passenger liner; sometimes it looks very small, like a skiff with an outboard motor.

Sometimes one can hear the motor or engine, and sometimes it moves silently across the sea. However, it is always the same boat; and it can change form very quickly. It usually is visible from shore, but it is generally far out at sea. If you go fishing in a canoe, sometimes it will come very close—perhaps as near as fifty yards. But however close it is, if you paddle toward it, you can never reach it. Instead, it keeps receding further and further into the distance. It is a well known feature of the local seascape. I was told that all the Tikopians, Anutans, and even Melanesians who go to sea near Honiara are familiar with it. Some people find it frightening; others do not. But generally it minds its own business.

Another informant told me that he had also seen ‘ghost ships’ (*vaka atua*) near Honiara and in the Russell Islands, but never on Anuta. They are very brightly lit, but if you try to approach one, it will disappear and reappear someplace else. The *atua* aboard such ships keep to themselves and generally do not come close to the canoes. If they do come close, the fish stop biting, which seems to be the major negative effect.

Anutans evince considerable differences of opinion on such matters as this. Thus, when I mentioned the ‘ghost ship’ to Pu Avatere, a relative skeptic, he scoffed at the idea. He acknowledged having seen the same phenomenon that others had reported, but he interpreted it differently. Rather, he asserted, it is just an ordinary European ship—or actually many ships. The reason that it sometimes seems brightly lit and sometimes not is that when the people aboard a ship go to sleep, they turn off the lights(!). The reason it is always around is that Honiara has become a rather busy port, and there are always large ships going in and out. He said that he *had* paddled up to it a couple of times. He *did* reach it (or them) and saw that it (they) was (were) ordinary European ship(s) with ordinary living crews.

Pu Avatere's skepticism, however, proved somewhat illusory. No sooner had he ridiculed the stories of a ghost ship off the Guadalcanal coast than he proceeded to tell me about the *real* one he once saw at Graciosa Bay in the Santa Cruz Islands.

He and another young man, Pu Tereata, had been fishing late one night and saw what looked like a large ship, brightly lit and anchored near Temotu Neo, a small island by the mouth of the bay, in a place where they knew the water was very shallow. They were several hundred yards away and could hear - 285  voices talking, but saw no people. It was getting late, so they returned to shore instead of going to investigate. But they knew it had to be a ghost ship! There was no government ship, fishing boat, or cruise ship in the area, an understanding later confirmed by government officials. Nor was there enough water in that spot to float a large ship. That evening there had been no ship there, nor was there one the next morning. *Both* Pu Avatere and Pu Tereata saw the ship, but no one else did.

One night in 1988, I got to see the ghost ship for myself. I went down to the beach at White River with Pu Penuamuri, and we sat there for some time. Finally, we saw a dim yellow-orange light in the distance, near a point of land jutting out into the ocean well past Kakombona. It glowed for several minutes, then faded away. Perhaps twenty minutes later this was repeated.

I explored possibilities other than *atua*. It looked to me like it might be a fire someone lit on the beach. But Pu Penuamuri retorted that fire is ‘red’ (*mero*), and this was more yellow. I suggested that it might be the lights of someone's house. But he firmly asserted that there was no house in that location. I suggested that it might be the lights of a ship, but he said a ship would not stay that long in one spot, nor would it turn off *all* its lights. Also, night after night, the *vaka atua* appears in more or less that same spot, which a ship would not do.

He said that sometimes it appears in different places too, and he thought similar *vaka atua* appear in Santa Cruz and off Tikopia, but not near Anuta, which already has more than its share of other *atua*. They appear off Tikopia because, he claimed, that island still has people who perform kava to pagan spirits.

Once in a while, Pu Penuamuri related, the *vaka atua* off Guadalcanal comes close enough that he can hear spirits talking, but he cannot understand their speech or see their bodies. Sometimes he hears what sounds like the whine of a loud outboard engine, but he cannot see any boat. When he first came to Guadalcanal, he did not know what to make of these phenomena, but people who had lived there a long time told him what they were. The explanation made sense to him.

There was one respect in which Pu Penuamuri's understanding differed from that of most other Anutans and Tikopians. The consensus is that the ship is inhabited by spirits of soldiers who died on Guadalcanal in the Second World War. His opinion was that they are 'sea creatures' (*nga manumanu o te moana*)—or, more accurately, *nga atua o te moana* 'spirits of the ocean', which sometimes inhabit the bodies of various sea animals.

In the course of talking about spirits, several people asked if I had ever seen one. I described my experience on New Year's morning 1973. When my informants asked how we reacted, I replied that my companion seemed quite - 286  although I was not. They observed that this was because I did not really believe in Anutan spirits. It has been the same with other people visiting from overseas. They are not afraid, whereas Anutans live in mortal fear. Because the visitors do not believe in and know nothing of Anutan spirits, they do not see them and are not frightened.

They added that there are a plethora of spirits on Anuta, and they come to people both while waking and in dreams. One time, Pu Nukumanaia, who is not easily frightened, and who is usually not even too frightened of spirits, was chased by an *atua* near the church. And Pu Maevatau was once levitated by a spirit.

The latter event took place during a dream. Pu Maevatau was sleeping on a wooden platform on the beach by his house, Aramera, near the Ana Tii. Suddenly, he felt that he was being lifted—in fact, the whole platform was being lifted—by a spirit. He fought with the spirit, managed to get free, and ran back to his house. The *atua* did not come in after him, and he was safely lying in his house when he awoke.

CHRISTIAN SPIRITS

As is true in other parts of the Pacific (cf. Barker 1990), Anutans have adopted Christianity, re-interpreted it in terms of their experience and understanding, and thus, made it distinctively their own. Anuta has been at least nominally Christian for most of this century. According to informants, the Anglican Church was established on the island in 1916 and this was followed by conversion of the entire population (see Feinberg n.d.b for details). This did not mean loss of conviction regarding the truth of the old religion and the existence of pagan spirits. Rather, the Christian God was seen as one more spirit, similar in kind to those that preceded Him, but surpassing them in power.

Anutans had long admired European wealth and technological sophistication. In part, they attributed such traits to Europeans' innate ingenuity. However, of equal importance was the support of a particularly powerful god. As far as Anutans could tell, the structure of the Europeans' religious system was similar to their own. The major difference was the particular deities the Europeans worshipped and the power of those deities. For Anutans, as for other Polynesians (e.g., Tikopia, see Firth 1959, 1967a [1940], 1970), the point of worship was to secure the community's material wellbeing. Therefore, when Anutans were

confronted with a deity capable of even greater feats than their traditional spirits, discretion told them they should worship the new god in lieu of the old.

With adoption of Christianity, certain aspects of the old religion changed. - 287  A new deity was worshipped. His blessings were invoked through different prayers and different rituals. Worship activities occurred in a different place—a church house rather than an open *marae*. Key symbols such as kava were abandoned while such new ones as the cross became predominant. And the formal connection between genealogical rank and one's position in the religious system was lost. Structurally, however, Christianity has been incorporated into Anuta's world-view in such a way that the new system recapitulates the old.

In pre-Christian times, Anutans' social and political structure were supported logically and ideologically by the spirit world. That same system now is undergirded by Anutan Christianity. As in olden times, the spirits bestow mana (cf. Shore 1989); but the ultimate source (*te tapito o te manuu katoa*) is now said to be God rather than the ghosts of deceased chiefs. Still, like the deities of old, the Christian God bestows mana in more or less direct proportion to one's genealogical rank, thereby maintaining the close bond between spiritual potency, ritual respect, and political power. Conversely, the chiefs and their close kin have taken on themselves primary responsibility for the smooth working of the religious system. Thus, during my first visit to Anuta, the leader of the local church (the island's catechist) was the younger brother of the senior chief. Both chiefs were leaders in the church auxiliary, the Companions of the Brotherhood of Melanesia. The senior chief led services and preached sermons in a second church, which was built in 1972; and when his temporal leadership was challenged some years hence (see Feinberg 1986), a major controversy was over who would conduct services and preach at the two churches.

Moreover, at the same time that the traditional ranking system was formally separated from status in the religious order, the structure of that system was replicated in the organisation of the church. In the temporal order, the first chief has formal honour, and it is he who has the ultimate authority to make decisions, although this is done in the name of the community. The second chief is given chiefly honour, but his political authority is more analogous to that of the *maru*, leading kinsmen of the senior chief. The *maru* are not given formal honour, but they act as advisors to the chiefs and make sure that the proclamations of the island council (*te pono*) are implemented.

In the church, political power is in the hands of the catechist, although his assistants (referred to by the same term—*pakaako*) are honoured also by means of ritual prestations known as *pakamisionari*. In fact, were an Anutan to describe the relationship between the catechist and his assistants, he might well say, “Pu Tokerau (the catechist in 1972-73) *i mua; rake mea i muri*” ‘Pu Tokerau is in front; the others are behind’—the same terms used to describe - 288  the relationship between the two chiefs. The Companions have little formal honour as a result of their position, but they advise the catechist at weekly meetings or as the need arises. It is their duty to see that the policies of the church (*te rotu or tepekau*), in whose name the catechist acts, are carried out. There are even weekly meetings of the catechists and the Companions, comparable to formal weekly meetings of the *maru* and the chiefs.

While Anutans place their own distinctive gloss on Christianity, they take it very seriously. Every able-bodied adolescent and adult is expected to attend services twice daily—before the morning and evening meals. Philosophical and theological points are routinely debated, biblical themes often appear in dreams, and people justify their actions and make major life decisions with reference to scripture.

Thus, Pu Avatere, a man who was at one time in training to become an Anglican priest, and has since been deeply involved in a variety of development projects, attributes his life plan to a dream that he

experienced while still a child back on Anuta. After the dream, which he had in the middle 1960s, he wrote a letter to Dr. C. E. Fox, a widely respected leader in the Church of Melanesia, for an interpretation. He had finished standard seven, had taken his exams, and was trying to decide whether to go to secular secondary school or Kohimarama Theological College. Fox wrote back that his dream meant that he would be a strong leader and work for the benefit of his people. On the basis of this letter, Pu Avatere decided to go to Kohimarama to study for the priesthood. He has tried to lead his life in accordance with his dream and Dr. Fox's advice. Through the years, this has led him into assorted problems (see Feinberg n.d.c), but he has never swayed from his commitment.

In a second important dream, Pu Avatere was at school and saw a great procession descending from the sky. It was a procession of angels. They came to him, then turned to go back to the sky. As they were leaving, one turned so that Pu Avatere could see his face. He asked, "Do you know who I am?" When my informant replied in the negative, the angel identified himself as the prophet Abraham. Pu Avatere was looking through a large round stone which was clear, like glass. He could see the angels, but none of his schoolmates could. When he put the stone down, the angels disappeared, and it became opaque.

The next morning, he found a round smooth flat black stone lying on the dormitory floor. It looked just like the one in his dream. He asked the other boys if they had put it there. They said no, so he concluded that this was the stone about which he had dreamed. He picked it up and has kept it with him ever since, thinking that it would bring him good luck. The stone was lying on the floor of my room in Pu Avatere's house near Honiara during my 1988 - 289  visit, where it served as a door-stopper. He admits that he is somewhat careless with it considering that it is so special; but in all these years he has not lost it. He said that he had never told his fellow islanders about his dreams, so no one else knew of the stone's significance.

In the aftermath of our conversation, Pu Avatere reflected that dreams are very important to Solomon Islanders in general, and Anutans in particular—unlike Europeans, who do not seem to believe that dreams hold any special revelations about external reality. Not all dreams are important omens. Occasionally, however, one has a vivid dream and cannot get it out of his mind. Such dreams, he said, are clearly meant to convey vital information.

Most Anutans take scripture quite literally. Even the few skeptics do not doubt the truth of Christianity, but only *literal* acceptance of the Bible.

The most articulate expression of the latter view was given by Pu Avatere, who had more religious training than any of his fellow islanders. According to Pu Avatere, many stories in the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, ought to be understood as "myths". (Although our conversation was conducted in Anutan, he used the English term.) The New Testament he took to be more reliable because it deals with more recent events, and he believes that Jesus was a real person. Adam and Eve, by contrast, may never have lived; and he was dubious about creation of the world in just six days.

When he was at Kohimarama studying to be a priest, a teacher told him that many of the stories were not literally true. Yet, that same teacher admonished students that as priests they must not divulge this insight to their congregations. If people thought some Bible stories were not true, they would begin to question all of Christian doctrine and might leave the church. It was better, he was told, to keep the people faithful by maintaining a "white lie".

CONTEMPORARY PAGAN PRACTICES

Anutans have been able to combine aspects of Christianity and paganism into a reasonably well integrated world-view. Despite Anutans' firm belief in Christianity, no one in the twenty years of my association with them has expressed the slightest doubt regarding the existence of pre-Christian spirits or their ability to affect people's lives. Such beings may have been more active before the church's establishment; still people regularly encounter and must deal with spirits of all kinds.

Pu Avatere and Nau Penuamuri, who described to me Pu Maevatau's levitation and subsequent struggle (see above), agreed that the spirit which had fought with him—and perhaps also the one that had chased Pu Nukumanaia—was probably Uperuu, a *tupua penua* one of whose dwelling places is the Ana Tii. I expressed surprise because I thought the *tupua penua* - 290 had been driven off by the church. Both consultants opined that they are still present (*koi pare*). They sometimes even lurk close by the churches, although they probably decline to go inside. Nevertheless, the Ana Tii, dwelling place of several *tupua penua*, is practically in St. John's Churchyard. Pu Avatere suggested that Uperuu, one of the spirits living there, probably spends most of her time on the far side of the monolith (the side closer to Pu Maevatau's abode) since the coming of the church. Still, she is a presence to be reckoned with.

Even in the churches, uncanny events are reported to occur. For example, on several occasions, the cross in front of the church has spun around in front of a bedazzled congregation. This has happened in both churches, the most recent occasion being during Lent of 1988. Nau Penuamuri was there and asserts that no one was anywhere near the cross at the time. It was firmly fixed in place; and it was indoors, so there was no wind. Besides, Pu Avatere pointed out, the cross is very big and heavy, and would not be turned around by even a strong breeze. This happened after the conch shell sounded to summon the congregation, as people were filing into the church. Everyone was very frightened. My informants speculated that this was not a case of an *atua* entering the church, but God, *Te Tupua Tapu*, warning people to beware of their misdeeds. Still, the possibility that this was the work of a different spirit could not be dismissed.

On another occasion, Pu Nukuoika (Misak Taukoroa) discussed *rau raakau* 'magic, leaf potions'. Anutans have told me that they themselves can utter curses (*tautuku*) but do not have *rau raakau* magic, which they regard as a Melanesian trait. Pu Nukuoika wanted to know if Melanesian magic affected Europeans. I replied that it sometimes does, people who believe in it being the most susceptible. Non-believers tend not to be affected. Misak and other people gathered in the house agreed with this assessment.

I then asked if *rau raakau* magic affected Polynesians. Pu Nukuoika said it sometimes does. But he is not afraid of it because he has protection from his island's custom. He then told me how sometimes he knows that he is under attack, and when he is, he calls on his 'grandfather', Pu Teukumarae (a former chief) and Pu Parikitonga (Pu Teukumarae's son, and father of the present senior chief) for assistance.

He related several incidents in which this has happened. On one occasion, while he was working in the central Solomons, he left his room to get some betel. On returning, he found it had been disturbed. He knew that a Malaitan co-worker had placed a spell upon his betel. So he went to the window, held it up, and asked Pu Teukumarae to help. The next morning, the fellow who had cursed the betel was working with a knife. He slipped, cutting himself badly on the hand. The man denied having placed a curse on anything, but - 291 Pu Nukuoika knew better. However, Pu Teuku's protection was strong enough that he was impervious. The magic rebounded off him and struck down the perpetrator.

In a second instance, a Melanesian sorcerer was using a bush knife and accidentally cut his leg open while working in a cocoa plantation, for the same reason. A third incident was still more harrowing.

Pu Nukuoika got into an argument with some Malaitans while at work. The next morning he was accosted by a group of 25 Malaitans, each carrying a large bush knife. He was terrified and called on Pu Teuku and Pu Parikitonga. He felt them come down and stand beside him. Immediately, he lost all sense of fear. He grabbed his bush knife and declared that he would kill whoever came near him. Then he walked out of the circle which parted at his approach.

The reason he appeals to these two individuals is that they are his *tupuna* 'grandfather' and *tuatina* 'mother's brother'. Pu Teuku was the chief, and Pu Teuku's son, Pu Parikitonga, had adopted Pu Nukuoika when he was a baby, making him *kauapi* 'adopted child' to both. They had affection (*ne pakapere*) for him when they were alive. They looked after his welfare, and if he had a problem, he would go to them to solve it. They do not look after him as closely now that they have died and come to be *atua*, but they are still concerned about his welfare and in time of real need, when he has appealed to them, they have not let him down.

Pu Nukuoika commented in this respect that out of all Anuta's chiefs, Pu Teuku was the best. He was the most compassionate (*e pakapere*), and from this he derived his *manuu* 'mana', which is very great. It is not because of his physical strength as a warrior (*toa*) or his position as an *atua* that he has sufficient *manuu* to protect Misak from magical attack. Rather, it derives from his compassion.

I asked if the church might disapprove of his invoking deceased relatives for help. He insisted that this would not bother the church because Christianity is only concerned about the *evil* spirits of old and the *vakaatua* 'spirit mediums', who no longer practise. The church could never object to acts of compassion among close relatives.¹¹

Anutan Christianity, in contrast with its Western counterpart, but like the island's old religion, allows for the addition of important human beings to the pantheon of gods and demigods. The most prominent addition to date is Dr. C. E. Fox.

Charles Elliot Fox was an Anglican missionary from New Zealand. He died in 1977 at the age of 100, after spending most of his long life in the Solomon Islands. His closest ties were with the island of Makira, where he made his home for many years and was given the affectionate nickname, - 292 Kakamora.¹² Because of his affection and commitment to the people of the Solomons he, in contrast with most Europeans, did not flee before the Japanese invasion during the Second World War. Instead, he hid in the bush along with his local compatriots. Over several generations, he influenced thousands of Solomon Islanders, shaping their perception of and relation to the church; and by the time he left the Solomons in 1973, he was revered throughout the archipelago.

Dr. Fox had few direct dealings with Anuta. According to his autobiography (Fox 1985), he only visited the island once. Toward the end of my first visit to the Solomons, I helped arrange a meeting at the central hospital in Honiara between Fox and the Anutan chiefs. In addition, Anutans say he visited their island on a number of less public occasions by walking across the ocean. At least once, perhaps in a dream, he held a private audience with the senior chief. On another occasion, the entire population allegedly saw him walk across the water.

In addition to these few encounters, Fox had occasional contacts with Anutans who had emigrated to the central Solomons. As indicated by Pu Avatere's comments cited above, he corresponded with Anutans (as with other Solomon Islanders), answering questions and giving advice. Still more importantly, perhaps,

his reputation as a wise and powerful church leader preceded him throughout the islands and was well established in Anutan minds.

Presently, a number of miraculous feats are associated with Dr. Fox, who is known on Anuta simply as Dokta. Some of the more notable have obvious scriptural precedents.

According to Pu Teukumarae, grandson of the chief discussed above, a feast many years ago was held in Honiara to mark Fox's birthday. This occurred while Pu Teuku was a schoolboy at Alangaula, which would place the event in the late 1950s or early 60s.

The church butchered a pig and got some other food, but to their surprise, virtually everyone in Honiara attended the feast. The officials viewed the crowd, then looked at the food, and realised that there was not nearly enough to feed such a large assembly. The bishop ordered someone to go around to the stores and purchase more food to feed the crowd, but Dokta forbade him. That would be expensive, and he did not want the church to waste money on his feast. He assured officials that the food would be sufficient. Everyone was skeptical, but at length the organisers acceded to his request. They sat down at a very long mat on which the food was spread out, and it looked paltry in comparison with the size of the gathering. Dokta then blessed the food and people started to eat. They ate and ate until everyone was satiated; and still food was left over!

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Pu Taumako added other stories of occasions on which Dokta performed similar feats. Once, a child on Tikopia heard the church bell ring. He loudly announced that he was hungry and wanted to go home and eat rather than go to church. Dokta was hundreds of miles away, at Marovovo, but heard this and came to the boy. He told him not to speak like that. If he were really terribly hungry, it was all right for him to go home and eat, but he should not make a public spectacle of it. The boy took this experience to heart and grew up to be a priest.

The moral and compassionate side of Dokta's behaviour is as important as his spectacular feats. Pu Taumako related an occasion on which Fox was travelling by ship and a trolling line was let out. The crew caught a barracuda and took it off the hook, leaving it to struggle on the deck while people went about their business. Dokta picked up the fish and threw it back into the sea. He then admonished the gathering that if they caught a fish, they should kill it right away and not let it suffer. Do not let it struggle on the deck and cry out pitifully (*tangi pakaaropa*).

Dokta claimed to know only English, Pidgin, Mota, and a few local languages, but he seemed capable of communicating in any language he chose. People would write to him in English from all over the Solomons, and he would always reply to their letters in the local language.

Pu Taumako added that Dokta was omniscient—he knows everything that is going on, and he is in on every conversation. Pu Teuku corrected him here. Pu Taumako, for example, had asserted that Dokta could hear the conversation we were having at the moment. Pu Teuku said that Dokta once had told Anuta's senior chief not to call him by name. “Just refer to me as Dokta. If you speak my name, *then* I'll hear, wherever I am”. The implication was that one should only call his name when one needed him for something serious. In this respect, his character resembled that of the traditional Anutan gods.

I asked if Dokta were a man or a spirit (*Ko ia te tangata pe ko te atua?*). My friends replied that that was a good question. He was certainly not an ordinary man; the things he did were ‘mind-boggling’ (*e pakareku*

atamai). Yet so many people witnessed them, including my informants (e.g., Pu Teuku was at the birthday party in Honiara along with his other schoolmates from Alangaula), that they seem indisputable. Pu Teuku quoted Bishop Norman Palmer's description of Dokta as "a small man who did great things". They finally concluded that he was probably an *atua*. Pu Teuku said that he thought Dokta was someone perhaps like John the Baptist but rejected my suggestion that maybe he was the second coming of Jesus—although he acknowledged that Dokta had performed many Christ-like miracles. Then he quoted his brother, the senior chief, - 294 as saying he did not believe Dokta to be a man but *te paanau ariki*, which in this context means either the son or brother of Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Despite some changes in vocabulary, Levy-Bruhl's distinction between "primitive mentality", based on mystical "participation", and modern thought processes of Western peoples, has been echoed through the years by many anthropologists. Geertz, in a now classic essay, contrasts the "scientific" mode of thought with what he calls the "common sense" and the "religious" modes. "Scientific" thought involves "suspension of the pragmatic motive in favour of disinterested observation" (Geertz 1966:27). It strives for coherence, operating with a built-in skepticism, so that all assertions are subjected to critical scrutiny. "Common sense" thought tends to be pragmatic and uncritical, while the "religious" mode of thought ultimately depends upon a higher authority (pp. 26-27). The truth of religious propositions must be accepted on faith and cannot be refuted by mundane experience. Rather, "he who would know must first believe" (p. 26).

In like manner, Young (1976) distinguishes what he calls "systematising", "everyday", and "religious" perspectives. Tambiah (1990) recently has argued that science involves rigorous, critical application of rational thought whereas religious thought is fundamentally aesthetic, more akin to poetry than physics. And Firth, in his most systematic treatment of religious thought and practice among Tikopians, states: "Religion is prepared to ... claim knowledge of or belief in forces or entities not verifiable by ordinary empirical means". It "is characterised by faith in the correctness of its propositions", and "rests on foundations which can be challenged but not destroyed by outside scepticism" (Firth 1970:17).

Anutans' spirit beliefs, contrary to such anthropological expectations, strike me as no less rational or empirically based than their beliefs about any other subject. Anutans are careful observers, demanding systematic evidence for their interpretations. They are concerned with truth and constantly ask others—anthropologists included—for more convincing explanations. They emphasise sense data—particularly visual and auditory—as a basis for evaluating truth, and they draw a firm distinction between direct observation and hearsay. ¹³ Spirits are invoked as explanations for unusual, anomalous, or threatening events which cannot be explained in mundane terms. Animals behaving strangely, disembodied lights and voices, bizarre accidents and epidemic disease, humanoids who suddenly appear and disappear, or reactions of fear to phenomena that normally do not produce such feelings are taken to be evidence of spirit presence. Although most encounters were recounted second-hand to me, on a number of occasions I witnessed the - 295 events along with my informants. Coming, as I do, from a Western scientific background, I am inclined to favour material over spiritual explanations. Still, I often could give no material account that fit our shared experiences better than their spiritual ones. The glow in the bush beside Anuta's spring and the 'ghost ship' at sea near Honiara are but two examples.

Neither are Anutan spirits less accessible to sensory perception than the material forces invoked by Western science. Although not always directly observable, spirits may be seen, heard, smelled, or felt. In this respect, they compare favourably with such scientific constructs as electrons.

The contrast between Anutan spirit beliefs and Western science seems less an opposition between rationality and faith than between what has been termed “personalistic” and “naturalistic” views of causality (Foster 1976, Foster and Anderson 1978). Almost everything that happens is in some way influenced by spiritual forces, and spirits are autonomous, self-motivated beings. The difference between personalistic and naturalistic causality, however, is isomorphic with neither the religion/science nor the faith/reason dichotomy. Ayurvedic medicine is not accepted by Western science although it operates according to a naturalistic model, while modern psychology claims scientific status despite heavy reliance upon personalistic explanation.

Nor do I perceive a deep emotional attachment by Anutans to most of the spirits populating their universe. They would gladly be convinced that ghosts and spooks of the *atua vare* and *tupua penua* variety do not exist without any sense of loss.

They are committed to the Christian God and concept of the Holy Trinity. It would be difficult for most Anutans to concede that God or Jesus is a figment of their collective imagination without radically reorganising their perceptions of reality. In this respect, their spirit beliefs are not particularly different from those of many Christians in the West. The other class of spirits to which Anutans evidence a real attachment include spirits of dead relatives and ancestors. Anutans find it hard to think that kinsmen who cared deeply for them during life would cease to care for and protect them after death.

Keesing (1992) argues that many Kwaio of Malaita (Solomon Islands) have maintained allegiance to their pagan system of religion as a form of resistance to external domination, an assertion of local pride and sovereignty. Like Fijians (Kaplan 1990), but in contrast with the Kwaio, Anutans do not draw a stark distinction between Christianity and their old religion, in which one is required to reject one or the other. Nonetheless, Anutans are protective of local autonomy and take pride in their language, culture, and traditions, all of which distinguish them from other Solomon Islanders. In - 296 this respect, the message contained in Anutans' ongoing commitment both to pagan spirits and their special brand of Christianity (cf. Smith 1990; Armstrong 1990) is as much political as theological.

Anutan religion is linked to the politics of culture through a construct known as *aropa*. This term has cognates throughout Polynesia and denotes positive affect as expressed through the extension of material assistance. *Aropa* provides the conceptual underpinning for all positive social relationships. It is the cornerstone of kin relations (Feinberg 1981a:134-136, 1981b:67-70), rank (1978:18-19), and chieftainship (n.d.d:9-11). Parents and senior kin show feelings of compassion (*aropa*) by guarding their children's (or junior kin's) wellbeing. Simultaneously, children and junior kin show *aropa* to their social superiors in the form of loyalty, honour, and appreciation. Relations between chiefs and commoners are similarly structured. And social relations among living Anutans are replicated in relations between living people and ancestral spirits. ¹⁴

Spirits are more powerful than living people, but standards of morality and kinship are essentially the same. Firth (1967a [1940], 1970) repeatedly cites Tikopian formulae for invoking spirits in which the supplicant portrays himself as humble, starving, utterly subservient. Such formulae are intended to induce spirits to take pity (*arofa* [=ANU *aropa*]) on their human worshippers, thus ensuring them

prosperity and health. Anutans today do not recall specific formulae, but many statements suggest that their predecessors conceptualised relations with their gods in similar terms. For ancestors to fail to cherish and support their living kin would be to deny the conceptual foundation on which Anutans have built their society. The Christian God as the embodiment of love resembles an exceptionally powerful ancestor. Loss of belief in ancestors or God would be profoundly disturbing because it would remove the ultimate source of all *aropa*.

Anuta's pre-Christian religion made no claims of universality. Local spirits were important locally, but that precluded neither the existence nor importance of other spirits in other places or in association with other peoples. Therefore, Christianity and paganism, despite missionary teachings, were not viewed as mutually exclusive; and Anutans could adopt the church without denying their traditional religion.¹⁵

The ability of pagan and Christian beliefs to co-exist also is affected by the form of Christianity adopted on Anuta. The Melanesian Mission of the Anglican Church has been relatively tolerant of traditional beliefs and practices as long as they do not directly interfere with services and the church calendar. Calvinist sects with their "radical monotheistic stress" (Tambiah 1990:16-17) have been much more rigid in suppressing remnants of their converts' old religions. The Church of Melanesia, on the other hand, seems - 297 closer to traditional Catholicism with its "principle of plenitude". Thus the Anutan church has proven itself willing to accept commitment to a multiplicity of spirit beings, from a multiplicity of sources, leading to its unique brand of Polynesian syncretism.

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¹ This is not to say that anthropologists are without biases and limitations. However, unlike many of our predecessors, we are aware of the problem and make a self-conscious attempt to suppress our ethnocentric judgments and presuppositions. Although such efforts never are entirely successful, they have, in my view, produced marked improvement in the quality of ethnographic writing over the past century. This point is argued more systematically in Feinberg (1994).

² Communities in which such opportunities exist include Takuu and Nukumanu, Polynesian atolls in Papua New Guinea's North Solomons Province, which successfully resisted missionisation at least until the time of my own visit there in 1984. Linguist Irwin Howard and anthropologist Barbara Moir have worked on these atolls, but the only publication of which I am aware dealing systematically with spirit beliefs in this area is my brief account of Nukumanu aetiological concepts (Feinberg 1990; see also parts of Feinberg n.d.a). Moreover, despite the lack of formally established churches on Takuu and Nukumanu, most community-wide rites and memory of major gods and spirits have been lost for decades.

³ I refer here to the observation of phenomena Anutans identified to me as spirits or evidence of spirit activity. I discuss this issue later at some length.

⁴ In this respect, my point is similar to that made by contributors to Barker (1990).

- ⁵ Positions similar to mine have been expressed by Firth (1961), Kirch and Yen (1982), Vansina (1985), Macintyre (1990:88 and passim), and Keesing (1992). For my assessment of Anutan oral traditions, see Feinberg (1976, 1981a, 1989, 1994, n.d.e). Strands of evidence relating to the reliability of Anutan accounts as guides to past religious practice include the relative recency of conversion, comparative material from elsewhere in Polynesia, particularly Tikopia (Firth 1967a [1940], 1967b, 1970), and the self-critical scrutiny to which Anutans regularly subject their understandings of the world (see Feinberg n.d.b).
- ⁶ There was some disagreement on this point, a few informants claiming that *tupua penua*, if treated with appropriate respect, might well assist a mortal human being.
- ⁷ Conversely, the *tuatina* 'mother's brother' is "just like" the mother (*pae*). Again, he is in fact a "male mother", although he is not called by that term. The *tuatina* is emphatically above the *iraamutu* 'sister's son' in rank, but one need not show him ritual respect (*pakaepa*). He is superior in rank, just like the mother, but one may around (*pai taakaro*) with him. A man may do so with his mother also; but that is much more limited. One has warm feelings (*tautua*) towards both the mother and the mother's brother.
- ⁸ Levy (1973) reports a similar belief among Tahitians. As among Tahitians, Anutans consider themselves to be most vulnerable when they are by themselves in dark and lonely places, like the bush at night. Apparently in contrast with Tahitians (Levy 1973:152-153), however, Anutans also may encounter spirits when they are in groups and often call on witnesses to corroborate their stories (e.g., see Feinberg n.d.b).
- ⁹ Levy (1973:151-153) notes that Tahitians distinguish between 'uncanny fear' (*mehameha*) and ordinary fear. The latter is experienced under such conditions as physical threat, while the former occurs in eerie situations and indicates spirit presence. Anutans use the same word for these two kinds of feeling, but the sensations Levy describes are very similar to those depicted for me by Anutans.
- ¹⁰ Like other Polynesians, Anutans bifurcate the 24-hour day into 'daylight' (*maarama* or *ao*) and 'darkness' (*poouri*). However, while spirits are most active during periods of darkness, Anutans do not rigidly identify night with the spirit world or daytime with the mundane world of human beings (cf. Levy 1973:148-150). In fact, such association is confused by use of *poouri* to depict pre-Christian times, ideas, and practices, in contrast with the church—which is equally supernatural but said to be *maarama* 'light'. The Anutan view, described below, that violation of social norms may induce spiritual punishment is also shared by other Polynesians (e.g., see Firth 1970:386-388; Levy 1973:166-177).
- ¹¹ Firth (1970) cites similar arguments by Tikopians for continuing to perform kava even after Christianity's arrival on their island.
- ¹² The *Kakamora*, according to the island's traditions, were clever little people, perhaps analogous to the Hawaiian *Menehune* and Bellonese *Hitihihi*, who preceded the contemporary population. Fox, who stood only 158 cm, reminded his hosts of their legendary predecessors.
- ¹³ For further discussion of Anutans' critical epistemology, see Feinberg (n.d.b, n.d.e).
- ¹⁴ Flinn (1990a, 1990b) makes similar points about the Pulapese of Chuuk State in Micronesia.
- ¹⁵ Similar findings have been reported in a number of Pacific communities. Among the more notable are contributions to Barker (1990) by Chowning, Macintyre, Kaplan, and Barker.