

Elements of leadership in Oceania

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Introduction

From the time of early European contact to the present, few issues have captured the imagination of commentators on Pacific Island communities more than their systems of leadership. Explorers, missionaries, government officials, and contemporary anthropologists have described, dissected, and debated the features that make chiefs (both 'populist' and 'kingly'), big men, great men, and assorted other types of Oceanic leader.¹ Much of that discussion, both in this journal (White & Lindstrom 1993) and elsewhere, has centred around the cultural construction of tradition, a viewpoint holding that 'custom' is symbolically constructed and continually reshaped in such a way as to reflect the pressures of the moment.

One implication of the view that custom is 'invented' or constructed in the present is that past events and practices are prone to distortion in the service of political agendas. Thus Keesing, for example, argued in a series of influential publications that many Melanesians portray 'chiefs' as avatars of *kastom*, thereby helping to forge a sense of unity and promoting resistance to imperialist domination. Keesing was politically sympathetic to such anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist movements; nonetheless, he claimed that Melanesian 'custom chiefs' are usually outgrowths of the colonial experience itself. Consequently, Melanesian representations of tradition are often counterfactual or—as Jolly (1992) put the matter—inauthentic.² Others (e.g., Philibert 1986; Babadzan 1988) have adopted similar positions, while sharply opposing views are expressed by writers such as Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (1996). Parallel debates regarding Polynesia have emerged between Linnekin and Trask, and between Hanson and Maori leaders concerning Aotearoa (New Zealand).³

Two articles that appeared in 1992 conveniently juxtaposed contrasting strategies for resolving these disputes. First, Jolly, following a line of thought developed particularly by Linnekin (1983, 1991a, 1992; Handler & Linnekin 1984), argued that, because tradition is constantly changing, it is not surprising to find elements derived both from other indigenous communities and from the colonial experience incorporated into a people's *kastom*. Thus, a tradition need not reach into the distant past in order to be authentic. As she put the matter:

it is not so much that Pacific peoples are glossing over differences in an indiscriminating valorization of precolonial and colonial strata of their

past as that Pacific peoples are more accepting of both indigenous and exogenous elements as constituting *their* culture. (Jolly 1992:53)

Yet, while Jolly renounced the language of inauthenticity, she echoed Keesing's view that there are often large discrepancies between representations of the past and what 'really' happened. She observes:

My argument is not that scholars should maintain silence . . . But I do think we should be careful of what we say in what contexts. This does not imply a suspension of critical judgment, but avoiding a style of writing that presumes Western scholars have the truths and Pacific politicians are perpetrating illusions or self-delusions. I doubt that scholars any more than Pacific peoples can tell 'real pasts'. (Jolly 1992:63)

In other words, while Western scholars may be wrong, indigenous peoples' views of the past can also be in error, and scholars should retain the right to criticise what we perceive to be mistaken understandings. We should learn to express our doubts and criticisms diplomatically, by adopting a new 'style of writing'. The difference between Jolly and Keesing, then, is largely semantic.

In the second article, White takes up the issue of authenticity with respect to the creation of a putatively traditional island-wide council of chiefs on Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands. White acknowledges the influence of Christianity and Western notions of governmental structure in the establishment of Isabel's council of chiefs and installation of former priest Dudley Tuti as the island's first paramount chief. He also argues, however, that contemporary Isabel conceptions of chieftainship have been constructed largely on an indigenous, precolonial model. Thus, in contrast with Keesing, Hanson, Babadzan and others who have treated attempts to resurrect 'custom' with more than a touch of skepticism, White (1992:77) asserts that, 'Interpreting concepts of "custom" and "custom chiefs" as responses to colonization tends to overlook the force of indigenous models that contribute to cultural continuity.'

My objective here is to explore the elements from which such indigenous models of leadership are constructed throughout Oceania. I suggest that Pacific Island systems of leadership—whether leaders are called big men, chiefs, or anything else—are constructed of constant underlying elements, albeit combined in different ways, with different emphases, in different regions. If I am correct, contemporary efforts to retain, reintroduce, or recreate decision-making systems based on the idea of 'chieftainship' draw upon deep-seated cultural assumptions in addressing a novel set of problems. When seen in this light, supposed discrepancies between contemporary rhetoric and older practices prove to be superficial, and thus fail to challenge claims of 'authenticity'.⁴ A final corollary to this argument supports those writers (*e.g.*, Thomas 1989; Godelier 1986; Godelier & Strathern 1991; Feinberg & Watson-Gegeo 1996) who have, over the

past decade, questioned the existence of sharp distinctions among the putative culture areas of Oceania.

Invention of tradition and delineation of Pacific culture areas

Commentators, since Dumont-D'Urville in the early nineteenth century, have tended to divide the insular Pacific into three great culture areas: Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. Each area is taken to be geographically more or less discrete, and its people are portrayed as having common biological characteristics distinguishing them from those of the other two; speaking a distinctive set of (mostly) Austronesian languages; and sharing a distinctive set of culture traits. The picture is complicated by the presence of non-Austronesian languages and of Polynesian 'outliers', situated in what typically is viewed as Melanesian or Micronesian territory.⁵ Still, most overviews of the Pacific (*e.g.*, see Furnas 1948: 31–63; Oliver 1989a:15, 1989b:883–1149; Crocombe 1989:20–23) accept the idea of three contrasting culture areas, and much of their discussion focuses on differing patterns of leadership.

The starting point for most comparative discussions of Pacific Island leadership systems is Sahlins's (1963) essay, 'Poor man, rich man, big man, chief: Political types in Melanesia and Polynesia'. He argued that 'big men' and 'chiefs', associated with Melanesia and Polynesia, respectively, exemplify radically divergent leadership styles. Big man systems emphasise the individual and his ability to build a faction of loyal followers by demonstrating competence in religious, military, and economic endeavours. A big man lacks the power to command, but must persuade his followers to implement his wishes. In return, he offers them reflected renown deriving from association with an important personage, *i.e.*, himself. Big man systems are competitive, and intrinsically unstable. As the leader presses his followers to contribute ever more of their resources to expand his renown, he creates resentment, and, when his followers suffer major economic hardship, they abandon him. Since power resides in the individual, when he fails, his faction collapses with him, only to be built anew by some competitor.

By contrast, chiefly systems emphasise the power of office. The chief assumes an extant post on the basis of genealogical entitlement: usually, the chief is the genealogically senior male in his descent group, most often the previous chief's eldest son.⁶ His polity is not built around him as an individual; rather, it precedes him. By assuming the title and office of chief, he obtains not just informal influence but also formal power to command, backed by coercive sanctions up to and including control over life and death. Although the evolutionary possibilities inherent in a chiefly system have their limits, a point made convincingly for Micronesian polities by Petersen (1982, 1999), Sahlins argued that they provide considerably greater latitude for growth than can be found in big man systems.

Because of Melanesia's association with big man systems and Polynesia's

association with chiefly ones, these two culture areas are often seen as representing opposite ends of a continuum. Although this must be reconciled with the existence of such well-known Melanesian chiefdoms as the Trobriands (*e.g.*, see Malinowski 1961:52; Mosko 1995), these are commonly regarded as exceptions. Meanwhile, the subtlety and flexibility of Polynesian leadership systems, detailed particularly by Firth (1964a, b, 1970, 1979, and elsewhere), have largely been ignored.⁷ Since publication of the essay by Sahlins, however, anthropologists have become increasingly uncomfortable with the big man/chief dichotomy and have responded in a variety of ways. Among the most noteworthy is Godelier's addition of a third political type, which he termed the 'great man' (Godelier 1986; Godelier & Strathern 1991). In great man systems, leadership is generally hereditary, focusing on ritual activities, especially male initiation rites, and on warfare as a direct response to homicide. In contrast with big man societies, involving achieved status, complex exchange, and decentralisation of wealth, great men are found in societies with direct exchange, ascribed status, ritual elaboration, and a lack of emphasis on material accumulation. In contrast with chiefly societies, involving hereditary rank, generalised exchange, and centralisation of wealth, great men are found in predominantly egalitarian societies.

Godelier's pioneering volume on the Baruya was followed by an edited collection (Godelier & Strathern 1991) in which contributors described more than a dozen communities, representing New Guinea and Island Melanesia, in terms of Godelier's big man/great man contrast. In most instances, the authors found that neither model coincided perfectly with ethnographic facts; instead, communities incorporated elements of both the great man and the big man systems. In some cases, elements of chiefly leadership were found as well. The latter point has much in common with arguments by Douglas (1979) and Thomas (1989) suggesting that the old tripartite division of the insular Pacific is, at best, grossly exaggerated. Still, Melanesia tends to be associated with big man systems in the anthropological collective consciousness. Even such enlightened commentators as Petersen (1999), while recognising significant parallels between Micronesian and Polynesian leadership systems, appear to see Melanesian systems as a fundamentally different kind of sociopolitical phenomenon.⁸ Hence, it is not surprising that when Melanesians call for re-establishment of supposedly ancestral chiefly systems, many anthropologists dismiss such calls as an 'invention of tradition'.

Notwithstanding the recent popularity of literature on 'invention of tradition', however, traditions rarely are pure fabrications. As both historians and anthropologists have argued, oral narratives can be remarkably consistent with archaeological and linguistic evidence as well as recorded history (*e.g.*, Firth 1961, 1990:156, 249; Kirch & Yen 1982; Feinberg 1976, 1981a, 1989, 1994, 1998; Miller 1980; Vansina 1985). Sahlins (1993) shows that the important Fijian custom of *kerekere*, a system of reciprocal requests for assistance, particularly among kin, has persisted in similar form at least since the early contact period (but *cf.*

Thomas 1992, 1993). Petersen (1992) argued that tradition provides a variety of alternatives for dealing with new situations as they arise, and actors often select among extant alternatives rather than inventing something truly new. Furthermore, while Thomas (1992, 1993) noted that customs often are re-valorised and objectified in light of changed circumstances, he also acknowledged that the process of objectification usually builds upon a past reality.

In like manner, my objective here is to reframe questions of Pacific Island leadership so as to show that indigenous attempts at re-establishing tradition involve invention only in a superficial sense; that they draw on common elements dispersed through Oceania, combining and recombining them in distinctive ways depending upon local pressures and concerns. Toward this end, I outline several themes identified by Goldman (1970) and show how they inform leadership systems at apparently opposing poles of Sahlins's big man/chief dichotomy.⁹ The communities I use for purposes of illustration are: Anuta, a Polynesian island in the eastern Solomon Islands, on which I have conducted research for three decades; and the Siwai of Bougainville as described by Oliver (1967) in his classic ethnography, *A Solomon Island society*.¹⁰

I should note that, although I am interested in historical issues insofar as they relate to indigenous constructions of the past, I am not concerned with such functional and evolutionary questions as the reason for the rise of Oceanic chiefdoms (cf. Fried 1967; Alkire 1980; Kirch 1984; Hunter-Anderson & Zan 1996). I am not attempting to construct a model of change, nor do I address the question of why elements of leadership have come to be combined in particular ways in different places. Important as these questions are, they lie beyond the scope of this essay.¹¹ Rather, my concern is with what Oceanic leadership systems mean and how they work. In this respect, the present contribution complements the work of writers such as Douglas (1979), Mosko (1995), Petersen (1999), and others noted above.

Themes in Oceanic culture

In 1970, Goldman published an important book exploring basic elements of Polynesian aristocracy. These include: ritual honour; genealogical seniority; primogeniture; *mana*; sanctity (*tapu*); fighting ability (*toa*); and skill at crafts, ranging from carpentry to priesthood (*tohunga*).¹² The way in which these elements were manipulated for purposes of status rivalry, Goldman suggested, led to an evolutionary progression from what he termed 'traditional' to 'open' to 'stratified' sociopolitical systems. While Goldman's assertions are debatable, I submit that he is correct about the values underlying Polynesian claims to leadership. I further suggest that analogous concepts are not limited to Polynesia; rather, they are elements of leadership throughout the Pacific.

I now review the concepts cited by Goldman, with my own glosses and the

addition of what I will call *aloha*, the Hawaiian variant of a pan-Polynesian term. I then explore the way in which these elements combine to define leadership on Anuta (*cf.* Feinberg 1978, 1981a, 1996a) and among the Siwai (Oliver 1967). By examining how important variables are transformed and rearranged, we may begin to understand the variation among Oceanic systems of political authority, while escaping the stark divisions among island culture areas that have been in vogue since Sahlins's influential article and, indeed, long before.

Honour

Honour has been a topic of considerable anthropological discussion, particularly in the Mediterranean area (Abu-Lughod 1986; Peristiany 1966; Stewart 1994), and it is a central theme in any status system. Yet, despite its centrality, the term has been used to cover a multitude of phenomena, ranging from respect and reputation to notions of virtue, integrity, and esteem, making it difficult to pin down (see, *e.g.*, Herzfeld 1980). For one Polynesian society, Kuschel *et al.* (1999: 60) define it as the social recognition of 'a person's exceptional achievements, social conduct, and personal bearings that are regarded as being of particular importance and significance for the society, and acknowledging his right to be respected'. For present purposes, I will be guided by Goldman's (1970:7) definition: 'By status system I mean the principles that define worth and more specifically honor, that establish the scales of personal and group value, that relate position or role to privileges and obligations, that allocate respects, and that codify respect behavior.'

In the Pacific, honour is associated with political authority and rank. It is a function both of genealogical seniority (often, but by no means universally, as traced through the male line) and achievement (particularly in warfare, generation of material abundance, and generosity and support to others). While Goldman writes of honour in relation to Polynesian aristocracy, it is no less a concern among the more egalitarian societies of Melanesia, though it tends to be discussed in somewhat different terms. Preoccupation with dignity and honour is apparent, for example, in Keesing's Kwaio biographies (*e.g.*, Keesing 1978, 1992; Fifi'i 1989), as it is in Burrridge's emphasis on the redemptive character of millenarian movements (Burrridge 1969:61 and *passim*). Similarly, over the past few years, a devastating ethnic conflict in the Solomon Islands has been repeatedly fuelled by members of one community directing abusive language against another. In the more stratified and centralised of Micronesian chiefdoms, concern with honour is implied in discussions of rank and purity (*e.g.*, Labby 1976:ch. 5).

Mana

Honour in Polynesia, whether based on genealogical seniority, achievement, or some combination of these, is associated with *mana*. *Mana* has been long

discussed by Oceanic scholars. Proposed definitions include 'supernatural power' (Codrington 1972), 'luck' (Hogbin 1936), 'efficacy' (Firth 1967), 'potency' (Howard 1985), and "'effective" or "godly power to act"' (Salmond 1989:73). It may be used as a noun, adjective, or stative verb (see Keesing 1984). When used as a noun, it refers to an unusual ability to affect one's surroundings in a favourable way. One who has (or is) *mana* can promote fertility and growth, both of food and people (e.g., see Shore 1989). He is successful in warfare, navigation, gardening, and other technical pursuits, but because of spiritual rather than physical prowess, although he may also have the latter.

The ultimate source of *mana* is the spirit world (e.g., Firth 1967; Feinberg 1978, 1981a, 1996a; Salmond 1989; Shore 1989), and spirits typically bestow it in approximate proportion to genealogical seniority. In much of Oceania (although by no means everywhere), *mana* resides primarily in males and is obtained, above all, from one's father. Most of one's *mana*, according to the latter model, goes to one's eldest son, so there is less available for the next and least for the youngest. The greatest *mana* is assumed to reside in the senior male descendant of a line of eldest sons; the least rests with the junior descendant through a line of youngest sons. *Mana* flows from gods, who typically are also ancestors.¹³ Since *mana* is identified with power, efficacy, or competence, it is only recognised when seen in action. People's competence, however, does not always vary in direct proportion to their genealogical seniority. Therefore, if things go wrong—if one loses power and control—it is taken to be *prima facie* evidence that one lacks *mana*. This always can be understood in terms of the inscrutable will of the gods, and it opens the way for achieved status, even in systems of presumably hereditary rank.

In some instances, females also are major receptacles of *mana*. Thus, Anutans speak of Nau Ariki, a prominent woman who lived about nine generations back, as a *papine ariki*, 'chiefly woman', and describe her as a person of tremendous *mana*. Similarly, many Hawaiian and Maori women had exceptional *mana* undergirding their economic and political power (e.g. see Linnekin 1990:226 and *passim*; Metge 1976:24, 62–65). *Mana* also may reside in natural items and such artifacts as weapons, headrests, or other objects associated with important persons.

Mana is associated with positions of authority and honour, prominent among which are chief, warrior, and priest or craftsperson. In Polynesian languages, these positions are usually called by variants of *tui* or *ariki*, *toa*, and *tohunga*, respectively. In addition to named statuses, one might gain respect and honour because of wisdom, expertise, technical competence, or acquisition and distribution of wealth. All of these characteristics indicate possession of *mana* and might be called upon for purposes of status rivalry.

Over the past several decades, most discussions of *mana* have focused on Polynesia (e.g., Firth 1967; Salmond 1989; Shore 1989). Yet the concept and even the term are widespread among Oceanic communities.¹⁴ The most widely cited

early scholarly analysis of *mana* was by Codrington (1972:118–120, 191–208 and *passim*) in his famous account of Melanesia, and one of the most influential recent contributions was presented by a Melanesianist (Keesing 1984). Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (1996) offer a penetrating analysis of *mamana* and *mamana'anga*, cognates used by the Melanesian Kwara'ae of the Solomon Islands. In Micronesia, the Pohnpeian concept of *manaman* is described in terms virtually identical to Polynesian *mana* (Petersen 1982:17).

Tapu

Tapu and its cognates (e.g., *tabu*, *tambu*, *abu*, *kapu*) have been glossed as 'holy', 'sacred', 'forbidden', or 'demanding of respect'. The concept is intimately associated with *mana* (e.g. see Salmond 1989; Shore 1989). *Mana* can ensure fertility, nurturance, abundance, and general wellbeing, but it is also dangerous and, if abused, can be a potent source of destruction. Therefore, it must be treated with care and circumspection.

Typically, the head is the most *tapu* part of the body. The body of a Polynesian chief is *tapu* and may not be touched.¹⁵ Objects used by someone of high rank, such as a sleeping mat or headrest, are *tapu* for others to use or touch. A high-ranking person might touch a subordinate, but an inferior should not initiate physical contact with a superior. On islands with less elaborate systems of personal *tapu*, only bodily contact is forbidden; for those with the most *tapu*, commoners might have to step aside, sit down, or lie prostrate on the ground upon a chief's approach.

As in the case of *mana*, *tapu* and related terms and concepts extend well beyond the boundaries of Polynesia. In the Solomons and Papua New Guinea, *tapu* is so widespread as to have been incorporated (as *tambu*) into Pijin and Tok Pisin, Melanesian pidgins that constitute the most widely spoken languages in those countries. It is discussed at length by Keesing (1982c) for the Kwaio, and Burt (1988) and Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (1996) for the Kwara'ae (see also Codrington 1972:215–217 and *passim*). It is implied by the ritual underpinnings of Godelier's 'great men' and the spiritual basis underlying the Trobriand distinction between people of *guya'u*, 'high rank', and *tokay*, 'commoner', status (see particularly Weiner 1988:108–110; also Malinowski 1929:30, 457–458; Weiner 1976:43–50). Among Micronesians, it is seen in the Yapese distinction between 'pure' (*tabugul*) and 'impure' (*taay*) (Labby 1976:ch. 5; see also Lingenfelter 1975: 96–97, 102–103 and *passim*). Even on the small and relatively egalitarian atoll of Ulithi, Lessa (1966:34–35) reports that the paramount chief or 'king' is

transformed into an individual of sacred character who henceforth must live a life apart ... the investiture and the observance of the taboos endow him with an aura that goes a long way towards maintaining his position of authority and responsibility.

Aloha

Aloha and its cognates (e.g., *aroha*, *alofa*, *arofa*, *aropa*, *'ofa*) denote a pan-Polynesian concept that combines genealogy and achievement, binding them to power, honour, economics, kinship, and descent. It may be glossed as 'pity', 'love', 'affection', 'sympathy', or 'empathy'. It denotes positive affect directed toward another being, but it must be validated by giving, sharing, or assistance in performing economic tasks.

Typically, kin share a genealogical connection, and they should treat one another in a manner that expresses *aloha*. *Aloha*, however, is not a secondary attribute of kin; it enters into the definition of kinship to differing degrees in different communities. In some instances, persons with no genealogical link may be classed as kin if they behave according to the proper code for conduct. Likewise, a distinction between 'near' and 'distant' kin may be the product of an interface between appropriate behaviour and genealogy.¹⁶

In general, gods grant *mana* to the chiefs because of feelings of *aloha* for their most direct descendants. Meanwhile, chiefs return *aloha* through their worship practices. The gods show *aloha* by providing for the island's welfare, and the people show *aloha* to the gods through acts of sacrifice. People of high rank, particularly chiefs, have more *mana* than do ordinary people. They are expected to show sympathy (*aloha*) for people who lack *mana* to provide for their own welfare; therefore, chiefs and people of high rank serve as protectors and providers for the rest of the community. Conversely, ordinary people feel *aloha* for persons of rank in return for their assistance and protection; and they demonstrate *aloha* through obedience and loyalty, by ceding honour and by paying tribute or first fruits.

As is true of *mana* and *tapu*, discussions of *aloha* usually relate to Polynesia, yet it is equally significant in the other regions. For example, Kwara'ae leaders must be *gwaunga'i*, a term referring to respected elders. *Gwaunga'i* rank, however, is not only a matter of age; a *gwaunga'i* is expected to embody core values of Kwara'ae culture, prominent among which is *alafe'anga*. This term appears to be a cognate of *aloha* and is used to similar effect. Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo (1990: 167) translate it as 'love, including obligations to kin and society as well as feelings of affection'. Other characteristics of *gwaugna'i* nicely complement *alafe'anga*. These include:

- (2) *aroaro'anga*, peace, peaceful behavior; (3) *babato'o'anga*, emotional and behavioral stability and maturity, dependability, settling down in one place peacefully; (4) *enoeno'anga*, humility, delicacy, adaptability, gracefulness, tranquillity, gentleness; (5) *fangale'a'anga*, giving, sharing, and receiving, as well as etiquette and manners ...; (6) *kwaigwale'e'anga*, welcoming, comforting, hospitality ...; (7) *kwaisare'e'anga*, feeding someone without expectation of return; and (8) *mamana'anga*, honesty, truthfulness, and

power. (Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo 1990:167; see also Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo 1996)

Similar concepts are found in Micronesia, although not always designated by a cognate term. On Namoluk in Chuuk State, for example, 'the word *ttong* ... carries many of the connotations of the English word "love"' (Marshall 1977: 656). As with *aloha*, the same word connotes what in English is termed 'love' and 'pity', and 'One expresses one's love through overt acts—by taking care of the object of such feelings. In Chuukese kinship, actions speak louder than words: *ttong* must be *demonstrated* by nurturant acts' (Marshall 1977:656; see also 1976:39–40). Marshall's discussion deals directly with kinship, but the implications for political dynamics are apparent.

Descent

Descent is vital for transmitting *mana*, and it underpins feelings of solidarity and property ownership. Most Polynesian descent groups were initially described as 'patrilineal' because of a preponderance of links through males (*e.g.*, see Gifford 1929). Usually, however, one may claim descent through links of either sex, although greater prestige accrues if it can be traced agnatically. In recent decades, groups of this sort have been called by a variety of terms including 'optative descent groups' (Firth 1957), 'nonunilinear descent groups' (Goodenough 1955), or 'cognatic descent groups', perhaps with patrilineal skewing (*e.g.*, Fox 1967). My own feeling is that they are often not descent groups at all, if by 'descent group' is meant a unit whose membership is determined by putative biological connections (see Feinberg 1981a, b, 1990). Rather, while descent is one criterion, one may also be recruited to a group through ties of *aloha* as expressed in economic terms: through sharing goods and work or joint relationship to plots of land.¹⁷

From one community to the next, the relative importance of *aloha* and descent (implying genealogical connection) may vary; and, in some areas, the patrilineal bias of the genealogical component may shift to a matrilineal orientation. Examination of such structural transformations shows that leadership in the Pacific, whether of the so-called chiefly or big man variety, involves common elements differently combined.

Anutan chieftainship

Goldman distinguished three types of pre-contact Polynesian social structure. In 'traditional' societies, the status system was based on primogeniture and seniority as traced through the male line. It approximated what Sahlins (1958) called a 'ramage system' or what Kirchoff (1955) and others termed a 'conical clan'. In

such societies, chiefs were senior kin who served both as priests and rulers by virtue of their spiritual precedence, and one's place in the political order was primarily determined by genealogical position. Sahlins (1968:160) describes this type of system in the following terms:

Genealogical ranking is its distinctive feature; members of the same descent unit are ranked by genealogical distance from the common ancestor; lines of the same group become senior and cadet branches on this principle; related corporate lineages are relatively ranked, again by genealogical priority.

In 'open' societies, the unquestioned power and authority associated with the senior line had broken down. Titles could be gained through competition, drawing upon claims of moral virtue, persuasive ability, political acumen, or military prowess. Ultimately, however, one or another faction would emerge victorious and consolidate its power, imposing a new hierarchy predicated upon naked force. Goldman termed the latter type of system 'stratified'.¹⁸

In language and culture, Anuta closely resembles its neighbour, Tikopia, which Goldman classed as 'traditional'. Thus, one should expect Anutan leadership and rank to be hierarchical and pyramidal as determined by genealogical criteria. The senior descendant of a founding chiefly ancestor should succeed to chieftainship, and, once his title is bestowed, he ought to wield authority and rank intrinsic to his office. This would place Anuta squarely among what Sahlins (1968) termed 'chiefly' systems. In fact, however, we find considerable flexibility, providing many opportunities to achieve leadership positions. This is seen particularly in rules of succession and the cosmological bases underlying rank. These issues are discussed at length elsewhere (Feinberg 1978, 1981a, 1996a); what follows is a summary of the main points.

Outline of Anutan chieftainship

Anuta includes four major 'descent' groups called *kainanga*, 'clans', ranked on the basis of genealogical seniority. The Kainanga i Mua is descended from Tearakura, a former chief (*ariki*) who ruled about nine generations ago and became the island's premier deity after his death. The Kainanga i Tepuko is descended from Tearakura's younger brother, Pu Tepuko, who also served for a time as chief. The Kainanga i Pangatau is descended from Tearakura's two sisters, Nau Ariki and Nau Pangatau, and their shared husband, Pu Pangatau; and the Kainanga i Rotomua is descended from Tearakura's youngest brother, Tauvakatai. The chiefs are the genealogically senior males in the two leading *kainanga*. The first chief, the Ariki i Mua or Tui Anuta, is at the head of the Kainanga i Mua and a direct descendant of Tearakura; the second chief, known

as the Ariki Tepuko or Tui Kainanga, is at the head of the Kainanga i Tepuko and a direct descendant of its founder, Pu Tepuko.

Role and definition

From an honorific point of view, the two chiefs sit atop Anuta's social hierarchy. There is no 'chiefly language' as in some Polynesian chiefdoms. In other respects, however, everyone must show the greatest deference. No one may stand in the *ariki's* presence if the chief is seated. No one may touch any part of his body, especially his head, except on his direct instructions. Shouting or raising one's voice in the chief's presence, and playing in the vicinity of his house, are forbidden. Anyone who meets a chief while walking on a path should step aside until the *ariki* has passed. At a distribution of vegetables or fish, in addition to the allocation for each domestic unit, a special portion called the *pakaariki* is set aside for each of the chiefs; and if some especially desirable fish is caught it is typically presented to the chiefs.

There are many types of ceremony in which the chiefs are given special honour, and no feast should start until both chiefs are present. Those around a chief should not begin to eat before he does. When a chief leaves for an overseas voyage, he is carried down the beach and set in the canoe. He travels with an entourage to ensure his comfort and wellbeing. When fishing for the day, a chief sits in his canoe while others push it through the surf. Visitors undergo a greeting ceremony in which they crawl to the two chiefs and attempt to press their noses to the chiefs' knees as a sign of deference; and Anutans seeing a chief for the first time after a protracted absence go through the same procedure.

The Ariki i Mua stands at the apex of Anuta's political structure. On policy matters affecting the entire island, he has ultimate say—except in church-related affairs, where his influence is second to that of the catechist.¹⁹ He is responsible for organising public works activities and for maintaining public order. He resolves major conflicts, and he may assign his followers such tasks as cooking, gardening, or fishing. A chief's commands take precedence over any conflicting plans.

The Ariki Tepuko's responsibilities and powers are similar in kind to Tui Anuta's, but they are much attenuated. He is respected as a chief and has authority to give commands, particularly if the senior chief is absent. However, he is primarily responsible for his own *kainanga*. If the office of Tui Anuta is temporarily vacant, one of the leading men (*maru*) from the Kainanga i Mua rather than the Ariki Tepuko serves as the island's guardian and leader.

The Kainanga i Pangatau and Kainanga i Rotomua do not have chiefs, but they have leaders. The Kainanga i Pangatau has three lines: one descended from Nau Ariki, Tearakura's elder sister; one from Nau Pangatau, the younger sister; and one from Pu Matangi, a more recent Tikopian immigrant. Each of these

three 'houses' (*pare*), during the period of my first study in 1972–73, had its own head.

The leaders were ranked according to the lines they represented. Each was responsible primarily for his own 'house', although they were called collectively the three 'heads' (*pokouru*) of the Kainanga i Pangatau. They had no *ariki* title, were not deferred to in the manner of chiefs, were not given *pakaariki* portions during disbursement of food, and did not sit with the chiefs on ceremonial occasions. While they were responsible for ensuring proper behaviour on the part of their subordinates, they did not make policy decisions; and they derived their positions from the senior chief rather than by genealogical seniority. In fact, only one of the three leaders in 1972–73 was the genealogically senior male in his 'house'. Nor need this *kainanga* have three 'heads'; the number depends on the senior chief's judgment about the personalities involved and the requirements of efficient leadership. These comments on Pangatau also apply in principle to the Kainanga i Rotomua. In most collective activities, this 'clan' joined forces with the Kainanga i Pangatau.

Succession

Succession passes through males and is based on primogeniture, so a chief is normally his predecessor's eldest son. However, if the eldest son has died, is away from the island and not expected to return, or is incompetent, he may be passed over in favour of his eldest available brother.

Many chiefs have assumed office due to death or absence of elder brothers. On the other hand, oral traditions attest to only one instance of an elder brother who was passed over solely because of unsuitable behaviour. That case involved the three sons of Toroaki, Tearakura's great-grandfather. Pu Rongomai, the middle son, attempted to provoke his elder brother, Pu Raatu, to fight to the death. Pu Raatu would not be provoked; and, when he left the island some time later, he proclaimed that Pu Pongi, the youngest, should become chief when their father died.

A chief or heir apparent may announce his own successor, and such pronouncements are usually (but not necessarily) honoured, even if they contravene normal succession patterns. In addition to the case cited above, this accounts for the ascension of the first Pu Tepuko (following Tearakura) and Pu Maapai (following Pu Koroatu Matakiapo, as depicted in Figure 1). From a genealogical perspective, Pu Maapai was outside the chiefly line, and in the following generation the title reverted to the senior line. Thus, the opportunity to override genealogical priorities on the basis of overt agreement and appropriate behaviour, which is central to many aspects of Anutan culture (*e.g.*, see Feinberg 1981a), provides an element of voluntarism and flexibility in what one might mistakenly assume to be a rigid system.

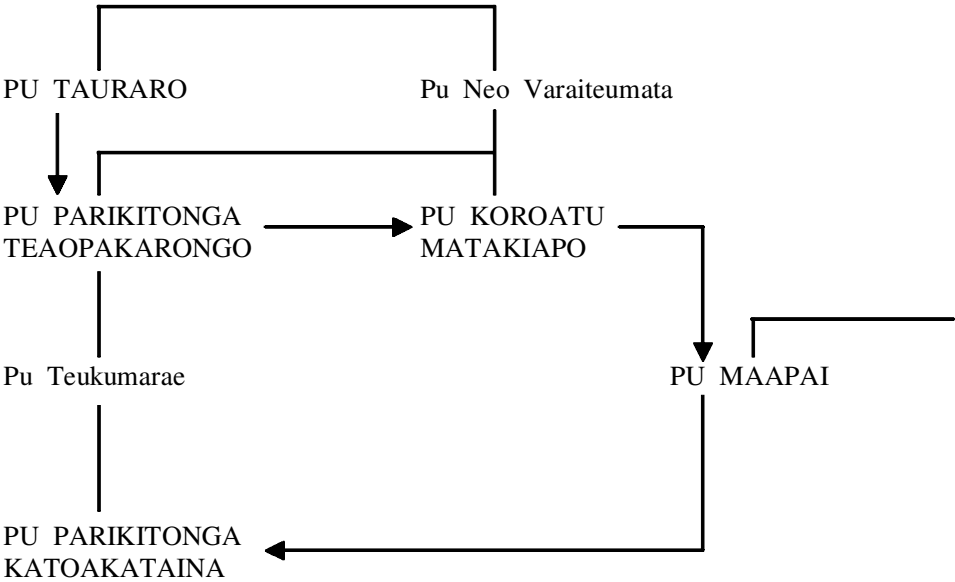


Figure 1. A case of irregular succession in the Kainanga i Mua. Arrows indicate the succession path. (Chiefs appear in capital letters; non-chiefs in lower case.)

If a chief has no direct patrilineal descendant, succession becomes problematic. Potential candidates include the chief's brothers, their sons, and a variety of other kin.²⁰ As Pu Maapai demonstrates, it is even possible for chieftainship to pass out of the supposed chiefly line entirely. If, however, the office has passed to a junior line because the deceased chief's descendants were unavailable or not of age—as in the case of Pu Maapai—rather than because he did not have any male descendants, genealogies are not manipulated to coincide with the new political alignments (contra Petersen 1999). Rather, in the following generation the title normally reverts to the unquestioned senior line. This reversion is illustrated by the passage of the chiefly title from Tearakura to Pu Tepuko and back to Kavataorua, or from Pu Koroatu to Pu Maapai and back to Pu Koroatu's elder brother's son, Pu Parikitonga Katoakataina. The most recent example of such a succession pattern begins with Pu Teputuu Rangioa, the great-grandfather of the present Ariki Tepuko (see Figure 2). Pu Teputuu was the eldest son and in line to become chief; but while still a young man he travelled to Tikopia and never returned, thus forfeiting his right of succession to his younger brother, Pu Parekope Arikimeemea. Pu Parekope was followed by his son, Pu Tepuko Rangirua; but while the latter occupied the chieftainship, Pu Teputuu's son, Pu Orokope, returned from Tikopia. In the following generation the chieftainship was returned to the senior line in the person of Pu Orokope's son, Pu Pareumata Ikipure, father of the present junior chief.

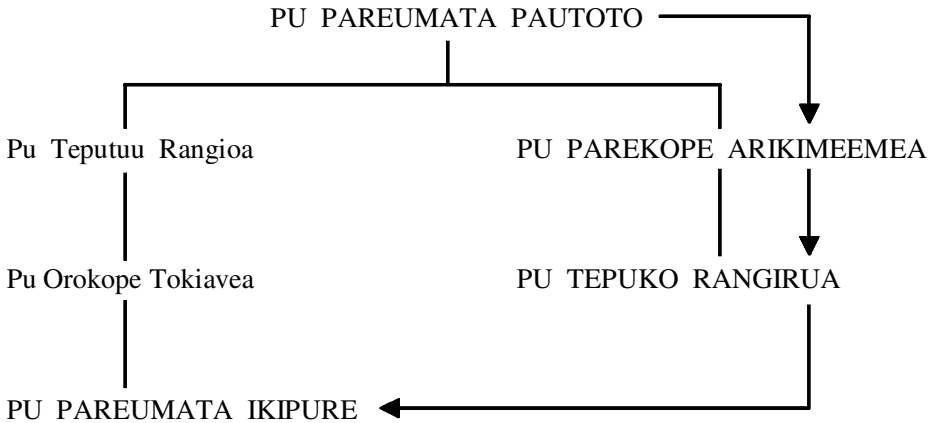


Figure 2. A case of irregular succession in the Kainanga i Tepuko. Arrows indicate the succession path. (Chiefs appear in capital letters; non-chiefs in lower case.)

Under such circumstances, succession cannot be assumed. Pu Pareumata was Pu Tepuko's obvious successor because the latter had no sons. If he did, they could well have argued that the office should remain with them, and the outcome would have been uncertain. After a lapse of only one generation, should the senior contender be qualified, he is unlikely to meet determined opposition. As the number of generations increases, however, the claim of the junior line becomes increasingly strong. Ultimately, the matter rests on the persuasiveness of the divergent claims.

Cosmological premises

The most important determinant of social status, both political and honorific, is genealogical seniority. An older son outranks his younger brother, his children outrank those of his younger brothers, and so forth. The individual of highest rank is the eldest son of the eldest son. Tui Anuta is the genealogically senior male on the island, and Tui Kainanga is the genealogically senior male in the Kainanga i Tepuko. It is on the basis of genealogical seniority that siblings of the same sex are ranked with respect to one another, and it is on this basis that the leaders of the lower kainanga as well as those of individual domestic units (patongia or pare) usually are chosen.

Yet, despite the genealogical presumptions, power and prestige are based on both ascription and achievement. Not only is it true that genealogical seniority contains intrinsic ambiguities and grounds for contestation (see Note 6). Perhaps more importantly, if the most genealogically suitable candidate's behaviour is inappropriate, he may be superseded by the man in the most appropriate

genealogical slot who exhibits acceptable behavioural qualities. Then, once a title is bestowed, the bearer is elevated by his title above the level that he had occupied purely on the basis of his genealogical position. Although one's genealogical status does not change upon one's installation in the chieftainship, one's political power and ritual honour are dramatically affected. Thus, if for behavioural or other reasons one is superseded by a younger brother, the junior relative must be obeyed and respected for his title irrespective of his genealogical inferiority.

Below the level of chieftainship, the potential for achieved status is greatest. Perceptivity, wisdom, persuasiveness, and a willingness to assert oneself are among the most important characteristics for a leader. Anutan oral traditions tell of men who rose to extraordinary heights in the political system on the basis of physical strength and fighting skill. Generosity, leading an exemplary life, or having expertise in occupations such as gardening, fishing, carpentry, or navigation are greatly admired and bring prestige to their possessors. Although being endowed with these qualities is insufficient, in and of itself, for attainment of titles, they should be evident in people of high rank, and their absence can compromise a person's status and authority.

In the traditional religion, worshipped deities were deceased people, and the position of a god in the Anutan pantheon varied in approximate proportion to his rank while living as a human being. The most powerful gods were worshipped under the leadership of the senior chief, who also was the island's high priest. The senior chief was assisted by the second chief and other leading men, known as *mataapure* (see Feinberg 1995, 1996a, b). A lower-ranking deity might be invoked by his senior surviving male descendant on behalf of his domestic unit. With the coming of the church, religious rank no longer depended on genealogical seniority; traditional leaders have felt an obligation to assume positions of responsibility in the church, but such positions are not limited to them.

Fundamental to Anuta's ranking system and the chiefs' position in it are concepts of *aropa* and *manuu*. Anutans use the terms *mana* and *manuu* synonymously, to designate a kind of potency or efficacy.²¹ *Manuu*, which is believed to vary in approximate proportion to one's social rank, is inherited from one's father and flows down genealogical lines. The higher one's rank, the more *manuu* one has to pass on to one's sons. It goes to the eldest son before the next, and so on, so that by the time it gets to the youngest there may be little left. Thus, its most common immediate source is genealogical seniority, although the other criteria for rank are also factors. Other things being equal, women have less *manuu* than men, and infants have little or none. It gradually increases as they get older and grow into adulthood. A high title, especially that of *ariki*, brings a great deal of *manuu* to the one who bears it. Despite the varied immediate sources, however, its ultimate source is the same: in the ancient religion it derived from the traditional deities; in more recent times, it has issued from the Christian God.

Manuu is manifested in such qualities as wisdom, physical strength, occupational expertise, and skill in dealing with problems. Ideally, genealogically senior men are also competent individuals, in which case the two principles are mutually reinforcing. Sometimes, however, one demonstrates through competence or ineptitude that one has been endowed with more or less *manuu* than one would normally expect on the basis of ascriptive criteria. This is taken as an indication that the individual is especially favoured or disfavoured by the gods (or God) and is ultimately what accounts for the degree of openness in Anuta's ranking system.

The sanction behind rank derives from the *manuu* of the superior party. It is said that, in earlier times, if a chief were annoyed at someone he could curse him with illness, sterility, or death; and, despite the establishment of the church, many Anutans are convinced that chiefs retain this power. In addition, illness and misfortune are believed to result inexorably from disrespect or disobedience directed toward a chief.²² While Anutans may obey their chiefs in part because they fear what might occur if they did otherwise, however, the legitimate right to exercise political authority and compel deference comes from ancient tradition (*te tukutukunga mai mua*) and one's position as protector and provider for the wellbeing of one's subordinates.

The obligation shared by persons of high rank to care for those below them derives from the idea of *aropa*, the Anutan variant of *aloha*. In different contexts, this term may be translated as 'pity', 'sympathy', 'empathy', 'love', or 'affection'. However, it is defined at least as much in terms of actions—particularly those involving economic support and assistance—as feelings. The importance of *aropa* is expressed in the very terms, *maru* and *pakaaropa*, by which members of the chiefly and non-chiefly *kainanga* are called. The word *maru* refers to shade from the sun or shelter from the rain. A husband is his wife's *maru*, and, in one funeral dirge for a dead chief, the *ariki* is described as 'my *maru*'. When this is put together with the role of the men of the leading *kainanga*, who are described by the same term, it may be seen as a unitary concept translatable as 'guardian' or 'protector'.

The lesser *kainanga* are termed *pakaaropa*, which may be glossed as 'sympathy-producing' or even 'pitiable'. The *pakaaropa* are weak. They lack the *manuu* to care for themselves and, in traditional times, they did not carry enough influence with the gods to ensure their island's welfare and prosperity. Thus, they produce feelings of *aropa* in those with greater *manuu*. The latter express *aropa* by providing protection both in the supernatural sphere through performance of *kava* rites (or today by ensuring smooth operation of the church) and in the temporal sphere by ensuring lower-ranking people a reasonably secure and comfortable material existence. In return for such solicitous behaviour, the *pakaaropa* owe the *maru* and their chiefs allegiance, obedience, ritual deference, and occasional prestations of material goods as symbols of their *aropa* (translated in this case perhaps as 'appreciation').

This model may also be applied to other hierarchical relationships. Men own canoes and have primary interest in gardens. This economic relationship is consistent with their superior *manuu*, and fashions their role as protectors and providers for the welfare of their wives and sisters. Their ritual and political precedence may be understood in this context. Similarly, parents care for and protect their children. Yet, as they get older and the dependence relationship reverses, respect relations also begin to shift in favour of the child.

Older persons, so long as they are vigorous and active, are expected to be more experienced and, hence, more knowledgeable and competent than their juniors, who are dependent upon them for tutelage and assistance. A strong man, great warrior, or man of outstanding wisdom is expected to use his prowess to protect the island from foreign invasion and to maintain order; and the church, as 'source of all *manuu*', assumes ultimate responsibility for the community's wellbeing.

In sum, then, one defers to persons of superior rank because of their *manuu*, but *manuu* carries an obligation to exhibit *aropa*. This reciprocity is reflected in the humility of high-ranking individuals who often defer to those below them in ritual contexts, and it is reflected in their role as providers and protectors. In return, those of low rank show *aropa* for their benefactors by means of periodic ritual prestations and acceptance of their relative status, thus affirming the legitimacy of the ranking system along with the assertions of political authority and ritual honour that it entails.

A putative big man system: Siwai of Bougainville

Anuta seems to have what Goldman termed a 'traditional' Polynesian sociopolitical system. It is similar to that of Tikopia and other communities characterised as having 'ramage' systems (Sahlins 1958). This should place it firmly among chiefly communities, where authority derives from the office rather than the individual, and offices are attained on the basis of genealogical seniority. On closer inspection, however, it is apparent that Anuta's system provides opportunities for achieving leadership positions through demonstration of *manuu* and *aropa*.

If this is true of a hierarchical Polynesian chiefdom, it certainly is true of less stratified communities in Polynesia, such as those frequently found on atolls, and of many Melanesian communities long recognised to be more egalitarian than those of Polynesia. Yet, just as Polynesian societies may be less rigid than has been appreciated by most Western observers, Melanesian societies may be less open than typical anthropological representations imply. Here, I explore this possibility through an examination of the Siwai of Bougainville. The Siwai are the subject of Douglas Oliver's (1967) classic ethnography, *A Solomon Island*

society—a book that formed much of the basis for Sahlins's depiction of the 'big man' system.

Descent

The Siwai of Oliver's account live in the mountains of Bougainville, the largest island of Papua New Guinea's North Solomons Province and recent site of an armed independence movement. Their descent system is matrilineal and, like Anuta's, recognises several levels of inclusiveness. What Oliver calls the 'sib' is a matrilineal aggregate. It has no corporate functions, and members never get together as a group. They do, however, share a totem and the consequent taboos. The sib is exogamous and geographically dispersed.

Sibs are divided into 'sub-sibs' and 'sub-sub-sibs'. Each of these is structurally analogous to the others, but they exist at successively lower levels of inclusiveness. All are totemic aggregates, which own and have access to shrines but not to economically valuable land. Members are incapable of tracing genealogical ties to a putative shared ancestor.

Below the sub-sub-sib is the 'matrilineage'. Lineage members can trace genealogical connections to a common ancestor. The lineage is small, including fewer than 30 members and averaging around 16. It may act as a corporate group, and owns land for gardening and hunting as well as 'heirlooms'. The matrilineage may pressure patrilineal relatives to provide for an adequate funeral for a deceased member. Members assist one another in economic enterprises and provide mutual support in time of illness or need. If a sorcerer attacks one lineage member, he attacks them all.

In contrast with Anuta or other 'conical clan' systems, descent units are not ranked with respect to one another, and genealogical seniority is not an issue from the level of the sib down to the matrilineage. However, uterine siblings and their children may act as a separate social unit, owning land as a distinct corporation. In this grouping, which Oliver terms the 'sub-matrilineage', seniority is a consideration.

So long as the matrilineage remains geographically unified, it can hold together. As women marry out and move in with their husbands, however, members lose dependency on common lands and grow away from one another. Over a period of generations, the ties are forgotten. Lineages divide, losing their character as corporate groups. The same can happen with sib members if they move away from their shrine.

As genealogy becomes increasingly important in determination of corporate group membership, group membership becomes more separated from residence and subsistence. This may be seen in the combination of virilocal residence and matrilineal descent, which results in matrilineal descent groups being geographically dispersed. Many people grow crops on land belonging to a

lineage other than their own, and 'attachers' may even use the produce of such land in acquiring renown.

Residence

The household is independent and economically self-sufficient. It typically consists of a nuclear or polygynous family. However, because of potential conflict among co-wives, having more people in the household to worry about, and greater expenditure required for bridewealth payments, polygyny is uncommon. On the other hand, it provides more workers to grow crops and feed pigs. Polygyny is not itself a status symbol, but a utilitarian instrument for attaining status.

Households are grouped into 'hamlets'. A hamlet consists of a cluster of houses within 400–500 metres of one another and not separated by any major natural boundary. Hamlet residents are usually close relatives. They may be connected through either males or females. There is no definitive residence rule, but there is a statistical predominance of virilocal residence. Members of a single hamlet are likely to pool food, cook together, and cooperate in hunting, fishing, house construction, and agricultural pursuits. Hamlets are isolated from one another, and a woman rarely leaves her husband's hamlet except to visit her parents' home. However, men from different hamlets meet in clubhouses, and men and women meet in 'line villages'.

Line villages were imposed by the Australian colonial administration to keep people together so that they might more easily be monitored and controlled. In part, this also was a function of administrative ideas about improving health. Village houses were required to be built on stilts, while hamlet houses stood directly on the ground, which was often wet. Vegetation in the village area had to be cut back and garbage removed. Each family was required to maintain a village residence or be subject to a fine. However, Siwai appreciated space, privacy, and proximity to garden land. In addition, pigs were not permitted in villages and had to be kept in the hamlets. Therefore, at the time of Oliver's study, most families spent a large proportion of their time at their hamlet residences.

Rank

Within low-level units, there is a degree of genealogical ranking. The first-born in a nuclear family is called by a distinctive title. Within the nuclear family, a younger member defers to an elder, and female defers to male. However, in most contexts status is achieved through well-planned actions. A man builds a following by his exemplary performance. Various types of voluntary association can be drawn upon for support. These include trading partners (*taovu*) and local kin. In addition, sorcerers and diviners inspire awe and acquire wealth and

supporters from among their patrons. Also crucial for attainment of rank is the 'men's society'. An aspiring leader must build a 'clubhouse'. Men spend time at clubhouses whose owners are respected and well liked. The owner, by offering hospitality and having men gather around his clubhouse, increases his body of supporters, his renown, and his ability to increase his renown. Ultimately, however, the success of a clubhouse leader rests on his relationship with a 'clubhouse demon'.

The demon wanders about in search of a sufficiently illustrious *mumi* 'leader'. A man discovers that he has been chosen when he becomes sick, goes to a diviner, and is informed of his selection. Then, he makes a deal with the demon, allowing the spirit to reside in the clubhouse where it is nourished by 'essence of pig' from feasts. In return, the spirit supports and assists the *mumi* in his attempts to accumulate renown by giving feasts. The essence of food from the feasts keeps the demon friendly. However, clubhouse demons are notoriously dangerous; and, if the *mumi* is no longer able to support the demon with feasts, or loses renown, the spirit may withdraw its assistance and turn on him, perhaps causing sickness or death. The clubhouse demon for the Siwai, then, is much like *mana* among Polynesians, operating as a post-hoc explanation for success and failure.

Gaining renown requires the acquisition of certain types of wealth. *Manunu* refers to wealth in excess of basic needs, food beyond that necessary for subsistence, all pigs, and all shell money. A poor man is generally assumed to be incompetent or lazy and not respected. A rich man is admired as long as he has not accumulated his wealth by being miserly. Generosity is appreciated, although excessive generosity leads one to be liked but not respected. To be respected, one must fulfil certain duties such as helping kin with bridewealth payments or funeral feasts. These, however, are expected and do not convey special renown. A man gains renown by being generous and hospitable to guests in his clubhouse, and by compensating people who help in building a clubhouse, making slit-gongs, or carrying slit-gongs to a clubhouse. However, the most important pathway to renown is the *muminai* or 'competitive feast'.

The competitive feast begins with a competitive gift. For example, A may give B 30 spans of shell money for a pig. B is expected, if A is a man of rank, to give a pig worth about 40 spans in return. If B wants to compete with A for his renown, he gives a pig worth much more—perhaps 60 spans. At that point, either A cannot afford 60 spans and must return the pig in humiliation, or (even worse) keep a pig for which he cannot offer adequate compensation. A third alternative is for A to give B the difference in value in shell money and no more. He thus saves face, but drops out of the competition and lets B take over his renown. A fourth possibility is for A to give B several hundred spans of shell money, which he cannot possibly repay, an act designed to put the upstart in his place. On the other hand, if B can garner enough resources, he responds by holding a *muminai* feast.

The competitive feast

When a *mumi* decides to hold a *muminai*, he calls on his kinsmen, trading partners, friends, and followers to work hard in their gardens, acquire pigs, and provide the wherewithal to hold a major feast. They help because of favours owed the *mumi*, because of kinship obligations, and because it reflects well on them to be associated in the public eye with a renowned leader.

Most preparations for the feast are carried out by members of the host's men's society. A prominent local ally is invited as the 'principal defender'. He comes with his followers, may help with preparations, and functions to provide an additional base of support for the host. The guest of honour is carefully selected. He may be: some pretender who is to be taught a lesson; a person of superior renown whom the host wishes to displace; or the host of a previous feast that the present host now must return in order to save his good name.

Acquiring renown is dangerous and difficult. One must always work to grow more food, to raise more pigs, and to give more and larger feasts. One must constantly strive to form new alliances while preserving old ones. One must maintain and exploit trading partners. Also, one must obtain more wives, thereby gaining access to their lands and their brothers' wealth. Yet competition can be dangerous because of envy and hostility directed toward a man of renown by ambitious up-and-coming young men or defeated rivals. Often a host does not attend his own feast for fear of sorcery being directed against him; if he does, he is uncomfortable and frequently will not move from a spot where he feels well protected by his clubhouse demon.

While the mechanism for attaining rank may differ, it carries many of the same prerogatives as in Polynesia. Leaders do not bear burdens or perform menial tasks. Subordinates are quiet and refrain from joking or rough-housing in the leader's presence. The leader opens conversations. Subordinates do not touch the leader's body—a taboo sanctioned in part by the clubhouse demon. People obey leaders and respect taboos because they enjoy reflected glory from one with whom they are recognised as being close, or out of loyalty and desire for praise from an illustrious person, or from fear that if a leader becomes angry he may humiliate them with competitive feasts. Yet while a leader has honorific and utilitarian claims on his subordinates, he also must produce for them. He does so in various ways: by providing reflected glory; holding frequent feasts at which much food is redistributed; acting as adjudicator in conflicts among his subordinates; and giving generous assistance in everyday affairs.

Conclusion

If one differentiates chiefly from big man systems, Anuta and Siwai appear to be situated close to the opposing poles. Although these systems exhibit many points

of contrast, however, the continuities are also marked. In each instance, leadership carries respect, honour, and signs of deference. In each case, leaders have the power to command, although to differing degrees, and to disobey a leader or neglect to show proper respect is to court disaster at the hands of sorcerers and clubhouse demons, through intervention by protective spirits, or via *mana* and *tapu*. In each instance, however, the power to command has limits, and shades into what political scientists call influence: the ability to bring about desired actions without either direct force or threat of force. If the Siwai big man pushes his followers to the point that their sacrifice is no longer offset by his protection and reflected renown, they may abandon him. Thus, he is ever challenged to convince his people that continued deference and support is in their interest as well as his.²³

In theory, the Anutan chief must be obeyed absolutely and without question. However, should his subjects question his power and wisdom or the value of his decisions to their personal self-interest, they may resist in a variety of ways. Therefore, chiefs have mechanisms through which they both enforce decisions and monitor public opinion so that they may assess what decisions can realistically be enforced. I have documented limitations on the power of Anutan chiefs (see particularly Feinberg 1986, 1996a–c), as has Firth (1964a, b, and elsewhere) for the Tikopia.

Genealogy is always a factor in the organisation of social groups and determination of rank. Among the Siwai, matrilineal descent is the predominant factor in delimiting the sib, sub-sib, and sub-sub-sib. In the lower-level groups like the matrilineage and sub-matrilineage, which are more cohesive and functionally more significant, what one does grows increasingly important and one's genealogical position less so in determining who is a member of what group. Anutan social units are more like Siwai matrilineages than sibs in their constitution.

Genealogical seniority as traced through the male line is the major (but not the only) determinant of Anutan chieftainship. At the lower levels, like headship of non-chiefly 'clans' and leadership of domestic units, genealogical seniority is less and conduct more important. For the Siwai, this is inverted. Seniority is unimportant at the level of the sib, but becomes more important in determination of leadership for the lower-level units, particularly the sub-matrilineage and nuclear family.

Siwai big men cannot exactly designate successors. However, a big man can provide resources to improve a son's or nephew's chances of success in the political arena. Thus, someone from a wealthy family, sub-lineage, or matrilineage starts with an advantage when he must compete to prove his generosity. Conversely, for Anuta, although a chief may nominate a successor, such nomination does not guarantee results. Succession is affirmed only when leading men from the opposite *kainanga* voice formal assent. On the Micronesian island of Pohnpei, as in Polynesian Samoa, titleholders are selected from among genealogically qualified persons on the basis of their service to the polity.

Economic assistance is fundamental in each case. Shared economic interests and mutual support provide the extragenealogical element in definitions of kinship and determination of group membership. Ensuring the economic well-being of one's subordinates is an essential part of leadership. This is the essence of *aropa* as expressed by Anutan chiefs and men of rank; and for the Siwai, gaining renown requires redistribution of large quantities of food and other material goods at competitive feasts, while the established *mumi* is expected to be generous in his assistance to his followers. As Oliver (1967:410) puts the matter:

Scrupulous trustworthiness is also expected of a leader, and any dishonesty on his part is sure to be deeply resented by his victims and widely publicized by his enemies as evidence of the shaky foundations of his renown. Coöperativeness and geniality on the leader's part are of course essential to the conduct of successful social-climbing; without them an ambitious man would experience difficulty in winning willing and loyal adherents. Above all, the leader must exhibit generosity—not only the formalized and calculated munificence of feast-giving but everyday open-handedness as well. The leader must be willing to assist his adherents when crises occur in their lives, and he should allow them access to his possessions except when these are under special taboo. In normal times natives do not hesitate to take coconuts or areca nuts from their leader's groves, asserting that, "We are his kitoria (children)." In walking about a *mumi*'s groves one frequently sees half a coconut shell tied to a palm; this is a *haraka*. When a native takes nuts or bananas from another's trees he leaves a *haraka* nearby so that the owner will realize that it is not theft and hence will not become angry. In this and in other respects, the demands of noblesse oblige make deeper inroads on a leader's possessions than on those of an ordinary man.

Further:

The premise which is probably basic to all thought and action patterns associated with [rank-related] activities is as follows:

1. The most praiseworthy thing a man can do is to exceed the transactional requirements of ordinary trade and kin relationships by paying generously (in goods) for all goods and services he receives, by giving goods to persons to whom he is not directly obligated, and by doing these things after the manner of the leaders of the past. From this it follows that:
2. The man who excels in these transactions deserves most praise and deference. (Oliver 1967:456)

My choice of Anuta and the Siwai to illustrate the Polynesia/Melanesia contrast is in a way misleading. Polynesia includes societies, such as Samoa, where chiefly titles are a reward for superior achievement, and the genealogical element

is much downplayed. It also includes communities, such as the atolls of Tuvalu (*e.g.*, see Besnier 1996; Luem 1996), where chiefs have little prestige and less power. Meanwhile, Melanesia is, if anything, more variable, ranging from such well-known chiefdoms as the Trobriands or peoples of the eastern Solomons (*e.g.*, see Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo 1990; Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo 1996) to 'big man' systems of Highland New Guinea.²⁴ While this essay focuses on peoples near the ends of a continuum, it is the continuum itself that is of paramount importance.²⁵

Moreover, each system of leadership, regardless of its place on that continuum, is produced through the manipulation of common elements: honour, genealogical seniority, supernaturally derived power or efficacy, personal taboo, and positive affect as expressed through economic support. Some systems may emphasise genealogy over action, what one is over what one does, ascriptive over achieved status, or the power of office over the influence of the individual; but no element is ever totally ignored. The appearance of similar elements among political systems that anthropological wisdom has portrayed as radically divergent belies attempts to dismiss claims of traditional resemblance as merely the 'invention of tradition'. The distribution of these elements throughout the Pacific in communities with widely differing colonial histories and patterns of external contact suggests that they are long-standing features of Pacific Island leadership.²⁶

Lastly, one may object that, in the search for common elements underlying Oceanic politics, I have deprived the region of its unique character, since many of the factors that I cite for leadership in the Pacific might be identified in any system. After all, leadership inevitably draws on a combination of what one may loosely term ascription and achievement, and there always is a need to balance concern for what ordinary people want against the power to command. This point, while often overlooked, was noted almost five centuries ago by Machiavelli.²⁷ One objective of the present work is to remind the reader of this truth. What is distinctive about Oceania is found not in the most general dynamics but in the particularities—in such themes as honour, *mana*, *tapu*, and *aloha*, and the way they are personified in leaders throughout the Pacific.

NOTES

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1. See, for example, Sahlins (1968); Douglas (1979); Alkire (1980); Kirch (1984); Marcus

(1989); Godelier (1986); Godelier & Strathern (1991); Feinberg & Watson-Gegeo (1996); Mosko (1995); Hunter-Anderson & Zan (1996); Hage (1998); Petersen (1982, 1999).

2. For example, see Keesing (1969, 1982a, b, 1989, 1991, 1992). Discussion of this issue in the Pacific context can be traced to Keesing & Tonkinson's landmark special issue of the journal *Mankind*, in 1982. That work was followed by special issues of *Oceania* (Jolly & Thomas 1992), *Anthropological Forum* (White & Lindstrom 1993), and *Ethnology* (Feinberg & Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1995) as well as scattered journal articles. The importance of this point for the social sciences and humanities other than anthropology is suggested by Hobsbawm and Ranger's influential volume, published in 1983. In addition, it has been a major focus of discussion among anthropologists and political leaders from the French Canadian independence movement (e.g., Handler & Linnekin 1984) to Native North Americans (see, e.g., Crow Dog & Erdoes 1995; Means 1995) and advocates of Afrocentrism (e.g., Diop 1974; Asante 1987, 1988; Jeffries 1991; Nantambu 1993; Alkebulan & Wilson 1995). Still, nowhere has it assumed greater prominence than in Oceania.

3. See Linnekin (1983, 1985, 1991a, b); Handler & Linnekin (1984); Trask (1991); Hanson (1989); Wilford (1990).

4. I am not objecting to the argument that notions of tradition are affected by contemporary pressures. My objective is more limited: to counter the assertion that Melanesian claims of chieftainship in places like Santa Isabel or among the Kwara'ae of Malaita are, therefore, necessarily 'inauthentic'.

5. Two Polynesian outliers are located in Micronesia: Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro, both in the Central Carolines of the Federated States of Micronesia. Of those in Melanesian territory, three (Nukuria, Takuu, and Nukumanu) are located in Papua New Guinea. Several (Ontong Java, Sikaiana, Rennell, Bellona, some of the Reef Islands, Taumako, Tikopia, and Anuta) are in the Solomon Islands. In Vanuatu, Futuna, Aniwa, Mele, and Fila are considered Polynesian, as is West Uvea in the Loyalty Islands of New Caledonia. Non-Austronesian languages are spoken primarily in the interior of New Guinea and some of the other large islands of western Melanesia; a few are found in the Santa Cruz group of the eastern Solomons.

6. Petersen (1999) correctly notes that 'genealogical seniority' is an ambiguous and problematic term. As described below in this article, although a senior male in a patrilineal system is usually taken to be the product of a line of eldest sons, this leaves the relative status of a low-ranking man from a senior line and a high-ranking man from a junior line open to debate. Petersen further observes that seniority may refer either to birth order in a sibling set or to chronological age, thus leaving open the question of the relative seniority of, say, a chief's younger brother and his son. Such ambiguities, as I have noted here and elsewhere (see Feinberg 1978, 1981a, 1996a) and as Petersen argues in his 1999 essay, create considerable room for political manoeuvre in determining succession to leadership positions in what appear to be genealogically constrained systems. Petersen also notes, as I do, that behavioural criteria can be as important as genealogy in determining succession even to positions of chieftainship in a 'conical clan'. While I agree with Petersen's main point, however, I think he confuses the issue by treating such traits as competence as if they were points of difficulty in discerning genealogical seniority. I argue, by contrast, that seniority is only one part of the formula for determining succession, even in chiefly systems.

7. A refreshing exception is Petersen (1999), who cites approvingly Firth's recognition of the 'democratic' character of Tikopia chieftainship.

8. This is implied, for example, by his characterisation of ranking as 'an element of a widespread legacy from early settlers of *Eastern Oceania*' (Petersen 1999:396, emphasis added).

9. The ideal strategy would be to offer an exhaustive survey of leadership in communities throughout the Pacific and indicate how the critical elements are combined in each one. In the interest of brevity, however, I have had to adopt the alternative approach of examining communities commonly assumed to exist at opposite extremes of the leadership spectrum. My premise is that if a similar constellation of elements can be found in each of these systems, they should be present in the intermediate cases as well. Where necessary, I cite ethnographic descriptions from additional communities in each of the three putative culture areas, but space considerations preclude their detailed examination.

10. Oliver spelled the name of this group Siuai. In this article, I use the spelling found in most contemporary sources. Inclusion of the Siwai as one of my test cases is significant in part because of Scaglion's (1996) suggestion that the texture of social relations, including notions of leadership, in non-Austronesian-speaking communities differs fundamentally from that in the Austronesian-speaking communities of Polynesia, Micronesia, and eastern Melanesia. If I am correct that the non-Austronesian-speaking Siwai share critical features of their leadership system with the Polynesians of Anuta, it would suggest that the Austronesian/non-Austronesian divide may be less stark than Scaglion imagined.

11. I have addressed aspects of these problems elsewhere (see, particularly, Feinberg 1980a, 1988). As I argue explicitly in those works, and as is implied here, I understand change to be largely shaped by pre-existing structures. In that respect, my views resemble those of Sahlins (1976, 1981, 1985).

12. Each of these terms has cognates throughout Polynesia. Goldman, for his standard, presents the Maori variants. *Mana*, *tapu*, *toa*, *tohunga*, *aloha* (which I introduce below), and their various cognates, of course, have somewhat divergent meanings in different communities. In most cases, however, those differences are matters of nuance and can be understood as variations on a common theme.

13. This might involve a system in which chiefs are thought to be descended from divinity, as in Hawai'i, or gods are deceased chiefs, as on Tikopia and Anuta. The relationship between *mana* and genealogical seniority must be understood in light of the caveat expressed in Note 6.

14. Furthermore, the term is absent even from some Polynesian languages. In most of those instances, related concepts may be found although called by a different term. On Nukumanu, for example, *hai mahi* has a meaning similar to *mana* elsewhere, although it includes physical strength as well as spiritual power. One possible exception is Bellona, a Polynesian outlier in the central Solomon Islands, where Kuschel *et al.* (1999:55) assert that 'the relationship between *mana* and social status is absent' (see also Monberg 1991 for similar assertions). Yet comments to the effect that *hakahua*, people of 'high social status', are recognised on the basis of 'outstanding socio-religious positioning and personal qualities' (Kuschel *et al.* 1999:57) lead one to question the reported absence of a *mana*-like concept even on Bellona.

15. In an extreme case, high-ranking Tahitian chiefs were carried by retainers for fear that the ground would become *tapu*, and thus dangerous for commoners to walk upon, should a chief touch it with his feet.

16. Sahlins (1985:3) characterises the Hawaiian *aloha* as denoting 'the sympathy we feel for the suffering of any sensible being, especially those like ourselves. In this sense, *aloha* suggests a kinship of substance with the other, and a giving without thought of immediate returns'. The interface between genealogical connection and behaviour manifesting *aloha* in defining kinship has been documented throughout the Pacific. A partial list of works on Polynesia where this connection is made clear includes Samoa (Shore 1976a, b), Tokelau (Huntsman & Hooper 1976:265–267), Pukapuka (Hecht 1981),

Tuvalu (Brady 1974:138–144, 1976:123–127), Nukuoro (Carroll 1966, 1970), Kapingamarangi (Lieber 1968, 1970:163, 1974:76), Hawai'i (Howard *et al.* 1970:43–46), Rapa (Hanson 1970:93–101), and Tahiti (Levy 1970:82–83). Writings on Polynesia in which this is implied but not explicitly acknowledged include: Gifford (1929:26–27) on Tonga; Mead (1969:40, 126–127) on Samoa; Hogbin (1930) on Ontong Java; and Elbert & Monberg (1965:6–12) on Rennell and Bellona. Similar suggestions in Micronesia may be adduced for Banaba (Silverman 1970:210–211, 1971), Yap (Schneider 1953:221; Kirkpatrick & Broder 1976:204–205) and Namoluk (Marshall 1976:39–40, 1977). Among Melanesian speakers, suggestive observations date at least to Rivers (1915:700) for the Banks Islands of what is now Vanuatu, and they are present in Weiner's (*e.g.*, 1976:16–17) writings on the Trobriands. For non-Austronesian-speaking 'Melanesians', see Oliver (1967:247, 289–292, 454–455) on the Siwai, Strathern (1973:29) for the New Guinea Highlands, and Bateson (1958:50) for the Iatmul of New Guinea's Sepik region. In most instances, the concept is called by some cognate of *aloha*, but even where such terms are absent (this is particularly true among non-Austronesian speakers), similar concepts are readily identifiable. In Namoluk of Chuuk State in the Micronesian Central Carolines, *ttong* carries very similar significance (Marshall 1977), and Sahlins (1962, 1993) describes the Fijian practice of *kerekere* to like effect. This material is laid out more systematically and analysed more thoroughly in Feinberg (1981a:171–186, 1981b).

17. To take some Polynesian cases, evidence for such a state of affairs may be adduced for Tonga (Gifford 1929:30–31; Decktor Korn 1974:9–10, 1978), 'Uvea (Burrows 1937:64–66), Samoa (Mead 1969:20–30), Rennell and Bellona (Elbert & Monberg 1965:6–12), Ontong Java (Hogbin 1930), Kapingamarangi (Lieber 1970:160–162), Nukuoro (Carroll 1966), Maori (Firth 1973; Best 1924a, b; Metge 1976), and Rotuma (Howard 1970:78). This evidence is analysed in some detail in Feinberg (1981a:186–197).

18. Some 'traditional' societies persisted into the post-contact era. As illustrations, Goldman cited the New Zealand Maori, Manihiki, Rakahanga, Tongareva, 'Uvea, Futuna, Tokelau, Tikopia, Pukapuka, and Ontong Java. Open societies were exemplified by Mangaia, Easter Island, the Marquesas, Samoa, and Niue. Stratified societies included Mangareva, the Society Islands, Hawai'i, and Tonga.

19. Even in this area, it should be added, the chiefs and their close relatives have taken prime responsibility. Thus, the catechist at the time of my first Anutan study was the senior chief's younger brother. During that period, a second church was constructed on the island, and the chief appointed himself catechist in the new church.

20. This problem is discussed at length in Feinberg (1996a).

21. Despite their differing etymologies and differing meanings in some Polynesian languages, these words have come to be used interchangeably in Tikopian and Anutan (see Firth 1967; Feinberg 1996a).

22. See Feinberg (1979, 1980b, 1986, 1996a, b) for illustrations of the working of this sanction.

23. A similar dynamic on Pohnpei is summarised in Petersen's observation that 'One man cannot rule a thousand' (1982; see also Petersen 1999). If the polity becomes too large, a chief cannot effectively exercise his largesse, and fission occurs.

24. But, *cf.* Mosko's (1995) argument that Trobriand so-called chiefs are, in fact, less 'chiefly' than has commonly been believed.

25. In order to keep an already lengthy article to manageable size, I have not pursued a systematic discussion of Micronesia here. In an earlier draft of this essay, I included a section on Pohnpei, based on works by Petersen (1982) and Riesenberger (1968), in terms similar to those applied here to Anuta and the Siwai. I felt at liberty to remove the section because anthropological discussions generally do not place Micronesia at either end of

the political spectrum and, therefore, it is implicitly included as a kind of 'intermediate' case. Also, Petersen's (1999) general discussion of Micronesian leadership in terms that parallel parts of this essay perhaps absolves me of the need to recapitulate the argument here.

26. Sahlins (1993:859) argues that Fiji's custom of *kerekere* could not have developed recently as a reaction to European hegemonic discourse because, 'if that is all it takes, then ... virtually all Pacific islanders should have the specific equivalent of *kerekere*, as a named, self-conscious, emblematic, and protean custom, because they have all had the same kind of experience with European commercial ethics'. I agree with his conclusion, but for the opposite reason. In my estimation, practices analogous to *kerekere* are, indeed, well nigh universal in the region and are closely associated with notions of *aloha* (see Note 16). However, I suggest that different communities differ radically in their external contacts. That concepts like *aloha*, *mana*, *tapu*, and the rest are found among geographically disparate peoples with widely divergent histories and physical environments underscores the importance and antiquity of these concepts in Oceanic cultures, a view supported by the reconstructions of historical linguists (e.g., Pawley 1982; Lichtenberk 1986).

27. As Machiavelli (1976:105) put the matter, 'Even if a new prince has one of the strongest armies ... he always needs the good will of the local people'. For this reason, he devotes a great deal of attention to techniques for maintaining the people's loyalty.

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