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Ph.D. Feb '1983.

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IDEOLOGY AND IDENTITY:
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY
ON NGUNA, VANUATU

by

Ellen E. Facey

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

May, 1982

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with Nguna, a ni-Vanuatu island community which has been radically transformed over the last 150 years, yet has demonstrated a remarkable degree of sociopolitical stability.

My central concern is with contemporary modes of identification and my theoretical orientation derives from the sociology of knowledge. I address myself to these 3 main tasks: to examine the historical transformation of this traditional, matrilineal chiefly system into a Christian theocracy dominated by elders and titleholders who now succeed to their positions in the male line; to investigate changing Ngunese perceptions of the self and society; and to analyse the inter-relationship of symbolic process and political ideology.

I first examine the situation on Nguna just prior to the arrival of Europeans, focussing in particular on political structures, in order to establish an historical baseline with reference to which the contemporary situation can be viewed. Then I explore the major social structural aspects of modern day Nguna, concentrating on the idioms through which the Ngunese conceptualize their relationships with one another and the relationship between their culture as they know it in the present and as they conceive it to have been in the past.

As seems to be true throughout the whole of Vanuatu, local evaluations of the present state of affairs are comparative, the present being conceived of in relation to

traditional values, patterns of behaviour and traditional sociopolitical structures, encapsulated in the (Bislama) term kastom. However, the specific content of kastom is a highly contentious, political issue. Due to the loss of certain, important supports incurred through the transformations of the last century and a half, local leaders depend heavily on ideological manipulation of concepts such as kastom to maintain their positions. How they do so is clearly demonstrated in their response to and interpretation of the ideology articulated by the Vanuaaku Pati, an indigenous-based party which has had great success on Nguna, and in Vanuatu as a whole, during the last decade.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Australian Commonwealth Department of Education and Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan Committee for their financial assistance from February, 1977 to May, 1981, without which I would never have had the opportunity to undertake a degree at the University of Sydney. I am also indebted to the Carlyle Greenwell Bequest Fund and the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, for fieldwork expenses.

The nature of anthropological fieldwork is such that we ask a great deal of our "objects" of study and, although we try to offer something in return, it often turns out that our "goods" - material or otherwise - have little local currency. Consequently, one operates as a child who takes much and can only partially reciprocate. To those Ngunese who had the graciousness and compassion to accept me as a person and treat me as their sister, daughter, or even "little mother", I give my thanks. Some of these, sadly, have already left us: Thomas Tavirana, Kaltaṣau M̃asemata, John Mariwota and John Kos. The rest are far too numerous to mention by name, but I would like to thank the chiefs and people of Tikilasoā and Nekaṣa villages in particular as the great bulk of my time was shared with them.

The Ngunese have a fine tradition of hospitality, but the following people surpassed the demands of propriety and, as mothers, father and sisters, gave me comfort for body and soul when I entered their homes: Leisei and Minnie

in Tiki; Merly and Mūrriēl in Nekaḗa; and, above all, Mama Jack Tavimāsoe and Teete Chrissie who found it in their hearts to take me into not only their home but also their family.

A number of people with an abiding interest in Vanuatu have given me a great deal of help by sharing their knowledge and experience, either in person or through the written word. Among these are: Mr. Keith Woodward, Dr. Albert Schütz, Dr. Ross Clark, the late Mr. Robert Murray, Mrs. Jessie Murray, Mr. Kirk Huffman on behalf of the Cultural Centre in Vila, and, especially, Mr. Gordon Parsonson who has helped me greatly to clarify certain historical issues.

Many helpful comments and support have come from my colleagues in the postgraduate seminar in the Anthropology Department and a number of staff members have also read and commented on draft chapters. Thank you in particular to Dr. Diane Austin, Dr. Paul Alexander, Professor Peter Lawrence, Ms. Nescha Teckle and Ms. Cheryl Swanson.

The last words of thanks are usually reserved for one's supervisor and I, too, will follow this custom. It is hard to know what to say, as Dr. Michael Allen has supervised a great many students and they have, in their theses, already used most of the complimentary phrases which come to mind. I will only say, then, that the supervisor/supervisee relationship is by nature a difficult one, but that during our 5-year association I have had the absolute minimum of obstruction and maximum of constructive criticism from my supervisor and I therefore offer him my heartfelt thanks.

DEDICATION

In memory of pua,
from whom I have drawn much strength

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SOME NOTES CONCERNING LANGUAGE

There are three sounds in the Ngunese language which are quite difficult for the English-speaker to pronounce. These are the bilabial lenis implosive stop, /p̃/, the bilabial nasal with dorso-velar constriction /m̃/, and the voiced dorso-velar nasal, /g/ (Schütz 1969b:15-16). The reader might consider the first two as "pw" and "mw", respectively, and the third as "ng"; but as these are only approximations, I have followed the Ngunese' and Schütz's example and transcribed them using the tilde (~).

A more vexed issue is that of the distinction between /t/ and /d/. Here my decision concerning orthography differs from that of Schütz who chose to use only /t/. I have decided instead to use both /t/ and /d/ for ethnographic rather than linguistic reasons, by which I mean that the Ngunese insist that there are two distinct sounds involved. I bow to their intuitions and preference.

For similar reasons I, in conjunction with a number of local informants well-versed in English, have also edited Schütz's translations of those stories (or parts thereof) which are reproduced here from Nguna Texts. I would like to thank Dr. Schütz for allowing us to make these revisions which were originally made during preparation of a booklet on Ngunese kastom for local distribution.

INTRODUCTION

The "Field" Situation

I went to Vanuatu when it was still the "New Hebrides". However, the rising intellectual and political élite of the 1970's and certain of the pro-Independence expatriates knew this unique British and French Condominium as the "Conundrum" and its joint government as the "Pandemonium Government". Their use of these phrases is indicative of the feelings of anger and mistrust that prevailed among ni-Vanuatu during the time I lived on Nguna island: March to December in 1978 and from September, 1979 to February, 1980.

I made plans to fly to Vila in early December, 1977. Only a few weeks before my departure, however, I received notice from the British Residency that they had, for the time being, reversed their decision to allow me to come to work in the Central District. This was a result of several recent incidents and, indeed, an increasing air of unrest and hostility toward the colonial Governments and Europeans in general. In view of my being young, female and single, the Residency felt that they "could not take responsibility for my security".

However, in the months that followed the Vanuaaku Pati's Declaration of the People's Provisional Government on November 29, 1977, the fear that violence would spread was allayed, and I was permitted entrance to the New Hebrides in late January, 1978. Although the situation was no longer seen as so potentially explosive as had

been the case two month previously, two facts were impressed upon me by British Residency and British Immigration officials: first, my position was to be a neutral one and my behaviour was therefore to be strictly a-political. Under no circumstance was I to begin making anthropological inquiries, nor to travel outside Vila for such a purpose until I had been granted permission to do my study in a specific location. Secondly, the area in which I had proposed working was considered by all and sundry to be a Vanuaaku Pati stronghold and, regardless of this, in line with the first fact, it was made clear that if I should engage in any pro-Vanuaaku Pati activity I would be liable to having my permission revoked.

I must admit that such admonishments took me aback somewhat. What manner of party was this? In the circumstances of my chosen area being such a pillar of Vanuaaku Pati strength, what were the chances that I could maintain the neutral stance demanded by the official government bodies? Over the next month I waited restlessly in Vila, barred from initiating any inquiries, while my research application was reviewed by the Vanuaaku Pati leaders themselves; for I had been advised (unofficially) that I would have to seek permission from the Pati itself, via the Vila-based representative association for Nguna and Pele islands.

Eventually permission was granted and off I went with some trepidation and an (illegal) Vanuaaku Pati Passport that cost one dollar and listed my name, occupation, purpose of visit, and permitted length of stay - nine months

(although I had requested 12 months, the same period as had already been approved by the British Residency).

As it turned out, I never was asked to show my "passport", nor to declare my political sympathies. When the issue arose in conversation on a few occasions my protestation that as a foreigner I was a disinterested spectator was accepted graciously, and my attendance at political rallies I suspect was taken as silent assent.

Nevertheless, there were instances in which I perceived hostility and these will be discussed in the body of the thesis. Here, by way of introduction, I would only say this: I went to Nguna to discover what, if any, constructs of the "person" they might have and what was (what I called) their "sense of 'self'". Central Vanuatu suggested itself for this because it had undergone apparently radical change in becoming Christian at the turn of the century and had remained politically and religiously stable in the 80 years since, as far as we knew. These matters seemed to me to be far from "politics", but this illusion was shattered in the course of my fieldwork, as I came to realize that the Ngunese sense of "self" is very much a political one. It is not possible to separate a people's cultural identity from their social reality - and that includes their politics and their religion. These, then, are the subjects of this thesis: ideology, politics and identity in the contemporary worldview of a ni-Vanuatu people.

Field Methods

My first priority was to learn the language as quickly and as well as possible. Having previously had a few months' intense exposure to another Melanesian language in the Solomons and being blessed with a very experienced, thorough and hard-working teacher, I made rapid progress, in the meantime getting by on my own atrocious version of the local pidgin, "Bislama". After six months I was ready (and glad) to put Bislama aside and conduct my affairs, for better or worse, in the local language which, for convenience's sake, I will refer to simply as Ngunese. How proficient a speaker one is one can never be sure. The Ngunese themselves, however, were very generous in their assessment and took some pride, in fact, in extolling the virtues of "their anthropologist" when comparing my accomplishments with those of other areas' pet anthropologists. Be that as it may, I felt that I was able to communicate reasonably reliably with anyone on any subject and this is what I tried to do.

Beginning with older men who had the time and interest, I collected stories on tape and began a routine of visiting households in "my" village, Tikilaso, in order to make myself known and to get to know its inhabitants by name. Eventually I recorded genealogies for all household heads and their wives except where they had already been included on one given by a more senior member of their family. The rest of my activities in that first stay can be simply described as participant observation:

attending church, village meetings and other public events, and chatting with those engaged in various activities around the village.

Informants

During that period two things began to concern me. One was that, aside from my language-tutor, no-one had made any overtures toward me out of their own interest in me or in what I was doing. In other words, the informants were not beating a path to my door. I was tolerated and looked after, but no more. I had hoped to learn more from women than men, but the women were exasperatingly reticent. I became suspicious that some at least made a special effort to avoid having to deal with me. This was highlighted by the difficulty I encountered in trying to find someone who would take me to "the bush" and introduce me to the world of subsistence gardening. As an essential part of island life, I considered this something I must of necessity familiarize myself with even though I was not primarily interested in the specifics of agriculture or economics. By dint of much persuasion I finally managed to break through one mature woman's fear that I would be a burden or, worse, hurt myself in a fall or some such misfortune, and thereafter I made numerous such excursions. Nevertheless, the fact remained that I was always regarded as different - sometimes in the sense of special and thus to be treated respectfully, and sometimes in a more negative sense, as an outsider, an intruder. It is a painful declaration for a fieldworker to make, but is important to a

fair understanding of my material to admit that I was never accepted as a member of the Ngunese community. Although I suspect that anyone who does make such a claim is deceiving himself or herself, I believe that others have had more success in this than did I.

The way in which I came to leave Tikilasoā is indicative of this. I hesitate to speak of it, knowing that it may cause some embarrassment to some of the people of Tikilasoā, but it is too significant an event to omit.

As I have said, the extraordinary political situation that prevailed in Vanuatu in early 1978 demanded that I pass inspection at the hands of the Vanuaaku Pati and, more particularly, the local Nguna/Pele Association. Representatives of the latter in Vila accepted my programme of research and told me that they would relay my desire to work on Nguna to the local authorities there. In a short time they gave me the word that this had been done and that the "path had been made clear".

Therefore I made arrangements to rent a house in Tikilasoā and proceeded there. When, eight months later, my permit from the Vanuaaku Pati was approaching expiry, I applied to the Association for an extension of a month, through Christmas. They replied that at that point the matter was for those with whom I had been living to decide. So my request for a few more weeks went before the village meeting and I was asked not to attend. The following morning the council chairman conveyed the reply to me: my request was denied - with no reason given - and I was informed that since the permit had by then expired I

should leave by a specific date, five days from then. Moreover, if I were to return in the future (as I had already suggested I might), it was felt that I ought to stay in some other village.

From this I could only surmise that the extended presence of a "European" outsider had caused strain of which I was unaware. Surprised and saddened, I took my leave hastily and, after a few months in Sydney, returned to Nekaña where I was welcomed into the home of my principal tutor.

This mandatory change of venue meant that I had to spend precious time getting acquainted with a new set of consociates. I returned to Tikilasoá regularly, but only as a day visitor. Nevertheless, this situation had certain advantages, in that it afforded me an outside view of Tikilasoá and a first-hand experience of a smaller village where I lived with a family instead of alone.

For the moment I would like to use this slice of fieldwork reality to explain something about this thesis rather than to illuminate issues of outsider vs. insider or the control of knowledge. I recount these events in order to put into perspective my choice of data. Being unable to concentrate on one village, I could not compile detailed case histories of disputes or relationships.

Nevertheless, I was able to conduct lengthy, in-depth interviews with a number of men. Given women's position, and mine, "interviews" with women were always less private and less prolonged. As for the younger generation, I found them by and large rather distant. In the case of

young women, as with their mothers and grandmothers, this had to do with my having been accorded a higher status as a European. In the case of young men that factor was combined with the envy they seemed to feel toward me. After all, I as a female of their own age-group was treated deferentially for the most part by older men and, relative to these young fellows, I had an enviable degree of financial and personal independence. Consequently, my attempts to communicate with this group were met on most occasions with derision.

In summary, my most prolonged encounters were with men who had left behind their most physically active years and therefore had the time and patience to speak with me. This has resulted in a somewhat androcentric analysis, which I have attempted to temper with the views of other sectors of the population wherever possible. I certainly did spend a great deal of time with women given the "natural" assumption in this as in all other Melanesian societies that a woman's proper place - and where she feels most comfortable - is with other women. I passed many hours in ladies' "kitchens" in their homes and at wedding-feast sites, and gained important insights from their comments and conversation.

Another point I would like to add concerns the role into which I was cast once I began learning the local language and taping kastom stories. My initial interest in knowledge of the past branded me as a folklorist or kastom-recorder and never was I able to dispel this image even when I turned later to aspects of contemporary life such

as kinship and politics. It was this definition and the consuming interest that it generated amongst the older men with whom I worked most closely that eventually led me to the issues with which this thesis deals. I had to ask myself why this particular segment of the population was so concerned with establishing "the way it really was" long ago. This historical interest became even more intriguing as, as time went on, I began hearing more and more comments about the "problems" of the present. It was the juxtaposition of these two foci of Ngunese thought and discussion that animated my own thinking about the social reality in which I was involved; and it is therefore at the very centre of those issues with which this thesis is concerned.

The Analysis

As I have said, this thesis concerns ideology, politics and identity. It has two major foci: cultural idioms and politico-religious process.

Although I have put considerable time and effort into reconstructing the situation on Nguna just prior to the arrival of Europeans, especially as regards political structure, I am primarily interested in contemporary Nguna, and particularly in accounting for the modern day Ngunese's preferences in current national politics.

In both the pre-Christian and early Christian periods Nguna has been marked by a high degree of stability in the sense that its political structures were comparatively closed and rigid and resistant to potentially threatening,

alternative political ideologies. In the past this was achieved through its leaders' ability to restrict entrance to positions of power and authority and to monopolize the right to define the accepted vision of society.

These may be common goals of all Melanesian leaders, but seldom are they so successfully achieved as has been the case on Nguna. It is possible that the Ngunese system of hereditary titles emerged from a special set of material conditions which allowed leaders to so tightly close the political arena. But there is simply not enough information available about these aspects of the pre-Contact situation for one to test any such hypothesis.

On the other hand, in the contemporary context, differential control of or access to major resources - specifically, land and labour - is certainly not a sufficient foundation for the chiefly system. The differential is not great and its significance is also undermined by the availability of other, new resources. A good command of English or French, mathematics and other marketable skills or training allows more and more people to achieve a high degree of economic security independent of their situation vis-à-vis the traditional resources of land and labour.

So, for holders of positions in the "traditional" systems of authority, the most important resources today are non-material ones. These include access to mystical powers and the possession of various kinds of knowledge, in particular, knowledge of the past. My claim is that the holders of positions of power and authority increasingly base their positions - and the (chiefly and church)

systems in which those positions are grounded - on "historical" priority. I propose to demonstrate in this thesis, as an essay in the sociology of knowledge, that contemporary politics on Nguna is predominantly about leaders attempting to maintain their positions through ideological manipulation of notions about the past, the present and the future in the face of contemporary socioeconomic conditions and the resultant questioning of the relevance of the institutions within which local authority is vested.

In the past Nguna's leaders effectively coped with the introduction of new ideas by either appropriating and incorporating them or by denying and excluding them. For example, Christianity and its accompanying economic base, cash-cropping, were adopted and dominated by the local leaders. Similarly, these men became the local links with the colonial administrations. Likewise, more recently, chiefs and elders have opposed other Christian denominations whose conversion of the already-Christian threatens to fragment the population of Nguna in terms of religious affiliation.

In the last decade another set of ideas, originally oriented toward national issues, was introduced by the Vanuaaku Pati. These notions represent a new way by which local cultures might relate to the wider context - both to Vanuatu as a nation and to the "European" socioeconomic order. In addition, the party supplies a new organizational structure to mediate that relationship. The people of Nguna have responded wholeheartedly to the advantages it offers. Initially, therefore, it constituted

a potential threat to the authority of local leaders. However, like their predecessors, the latter have met the challenge positively. Instead of opposing the Vanuaaku Pati, they support it, capitalising on the conservative elements of its ideology, i.e., those that stress the importance of preserving traditional structures of authority and respecting their representatives.

Outline

Chapter One presents an introductory description of Ngunu as one finds it today - a society much and rapidly transformed through its involvement with foreign, colonial cultures. In the following chapter I reconstruct Ngunese society just prior to the advent of Europeans, focussing in particular on its political structure. An examination of the process of "conversion" to Christianity sheds more light on that structure. Chapter Three returns to contemporary Ngunu to explore basic conceptualizations of identity and kinship. In Chapter Four I turn to the structure of modern day Ngunese politics to demonstrate how the local bodies of power and authority - chiefly, church and village councils - overlap and reinforce each other. Having done that one may then consider local views of these institutions. In Chapter Five I discuss a particular construction of the past by means of which those in positions of authority seek to legitimate their positions. Chapter Six focusses on certain phenomena that are seen as constituting contemporary social "problems" and the various causes to which they are attributed by different sectors

of the population. The next to last chapter considers the role of the Vanuaaku Pati in this context and I offer two major reasons for its phenomenal success on Nguna. The concluding chapter returns to issues that appeared earlier in the thesis, specifically, cultural notions concerning the unity, continuity and reproduction of the social whole. Whereas I first considered these as cultural ideals, in Chapter Eight I go a step further to suggest that these notions are part of a larger idiom modelled, in some respects, on that of kinship. As a political tool, this idiom has at its centre a concept of very recent origin - that of cultural identity. I will examine the advent of the notion of cultural identity on Nguna in comparison with its emergence in Vanuatu as a whole.

CHAPTER ONE

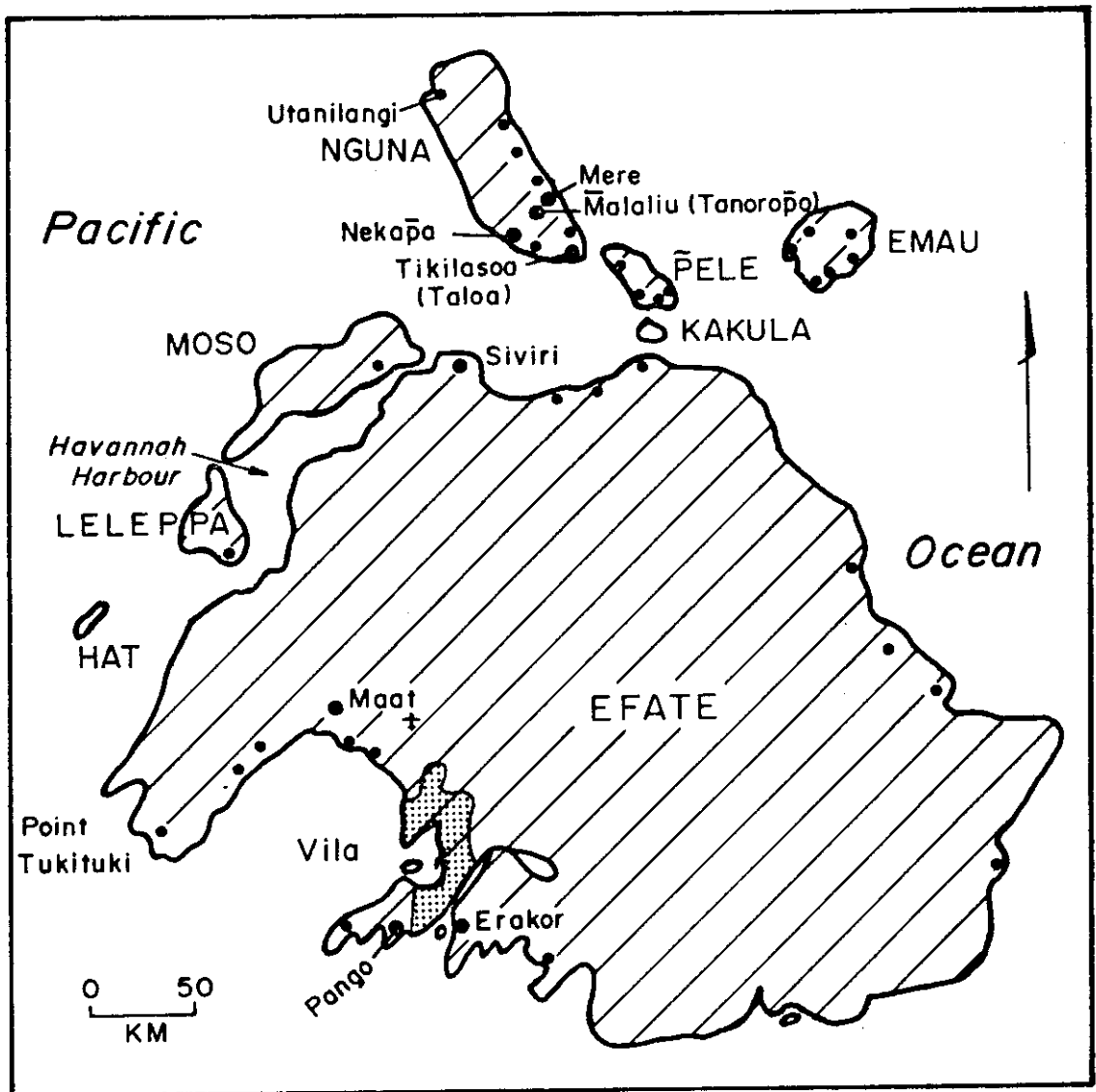
CONTEMPORARY NGUNA

This chapter is intended to orient the reader to Nguna in two ways. In the first section I will introduce the general features of the island, the villages, and three major aspects of island life: economic activities and educational and employment opportunities. In the second section I will discuss briefly the essential bases of social organization of Ngunese society.

General Features: The Island

Nguna is an island measuring 10 by 5 kilometres which lies 7 kilometres off the north coast of Efate, central Vanuatu. The nearest island to the southwest is Moso which is separated from mainland Efate by Havannah Harbour. No more than two hundred metres from Nguna's southeastern tip is Pele, an island about one-fifth the size of Nguna. Beyond it, in turn, is the tiny, almost perfectly round and uninhabited Kakula (see Map 1).

To reach any of these islands from Vila one bumps along a coral road which was originally constructed by American troops in the early 1940's. Passing in and out of scattered hamlets the Vila taxi or local Toyota pickup reaches the concrete wharf at Emua within an hour and a half - barring breakdowns, washouts, bad weather and other mishaps.



MAP 1 : EFATE and NGUNA

One's first green glimpse of Nguna (Plate 1) is gained from the road between Leleppa and Moso. From that perspective the island appears to be dominated by two volcanic cones, although the higher of the two, at 670 metres, is often concealed in low-lying cloud. Then as the travellers descend the clutch-tearing slope to Undine Bay the island emerges broadside as a nearly symmetrical, smooth curve and the long, white beach that runs along most of that southern end becomes evident.

With luck the launch requested by radio message the previous evening is waiting at the wharf's end. If not, one must signal by lighting a small fire at one of several spots along the beach that correspond to the various launches from the villages on Nguna's southern coast.

Once one's transport has arrived it is a speedy but fairly expensive journey. The lone individual must pay seven or eight dollars, one-way, although a group can share the fee equally amongst them at a dollar or two apiece. The crossing takes only fifteen or twenty minutes unless strong winds prevail, forcing the driver to proceed cautiously, hugging Pēle's protected shoreline.

Most Western visitors, be they doctors come to inspect the local clinic, Government officials or just public servants in search of a hill and a view for a picnic, land at Tikilasoā. There one can most readily find a truck in running order to take one wherever one is going by the only road on the island.

Aside from the southern coast and the northernmost tip where there is a large bay, the coast is more or less

inaccessible from the sea, rising steeply and fringed by jagged, volcanic rocks. Many garden plots near the shore lie at angles that make traversing them with awkward or heavy loads very difficult. However, the majority of the land is more level and easily cultivated. On the other hand, coconut groves take up a considerable proportion of the arable land, as one notices in walking along either the road or bush paths. Furthermore, many of these trees are growing old and bearing less having been planted many decades ago.

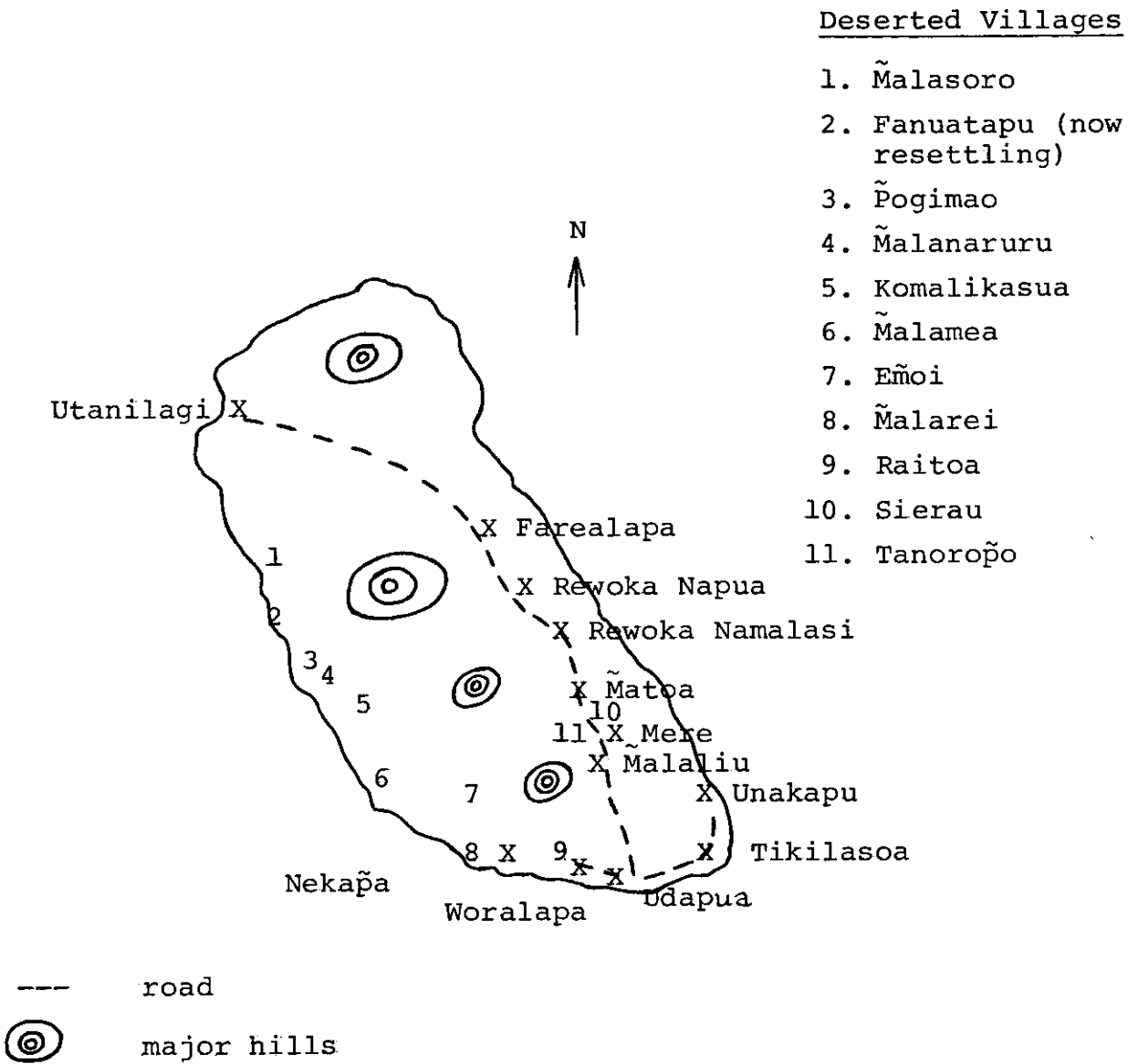
The Village

The island's official population as of 1979 was 981, as compared to 787 in 1967. All of Nguna's 12 villages except one have grown since the earlier census. Tikilasoā was then and still is the largest village with a present population of 196 (see Figure 1 and Table 1).

One's first impression of Tikilasoā is of neatness and compactness. As in other villages the grass is kept short with bushknives and the odd lawnmower and the paths of beaten dirt are swept free of debris every morning (except Sunday) and weeded regularly. These tasks are performed without fail by women and girls using short brushes made from the dry spines of coconut fronds.

The paths themselves are remarkably straight and the village as a whole is highly nucleated and roughly rectangular. The main thoroughfare passes through the centre, running parallel to the road that follows the shore past the village. Another, narrower path parallel to this one

Figure 1. Nguna's Villages (indicated by X).



Adapted from: Carte de la Mélanésie au 1/100 000 (Km.)
Archipel des Nouvelles Hébrides, Feuille N° 12, EFATÉ.

Table 1. Population Distribution on Nguna.

Population	1967 ^a	1979 ^a
Tikilasoā	160	196
Rewoka	66	140*
Nekaṗa	112	127
Unakapu	64	105
Woralapa	75	97
Utanilagi	63	89
Malaliu	78	77
Matoa	53	65
Mere	49	25
Udapua	17	19
Fareafau	16	?*
Farealapa	34	41
Total	787	981

* Rewoka is defined as a combination of 1) Rewoka Napua (also called Rewoka #1 by the Ngunese), 2) Rewoka Namalasi (also called Rewoka #2 or Fareafau), and 3) Fanuatapu.

^a These figures are from the 1967 Census and the Provisional General Population Census, 1979.

borders the village on the inland side, separating it from the pit toilets and pig compound beyond. The rest of the trafficways are also more or less straight and run perpendicular to those already mentioned, as is diagrammed in Figure 2.

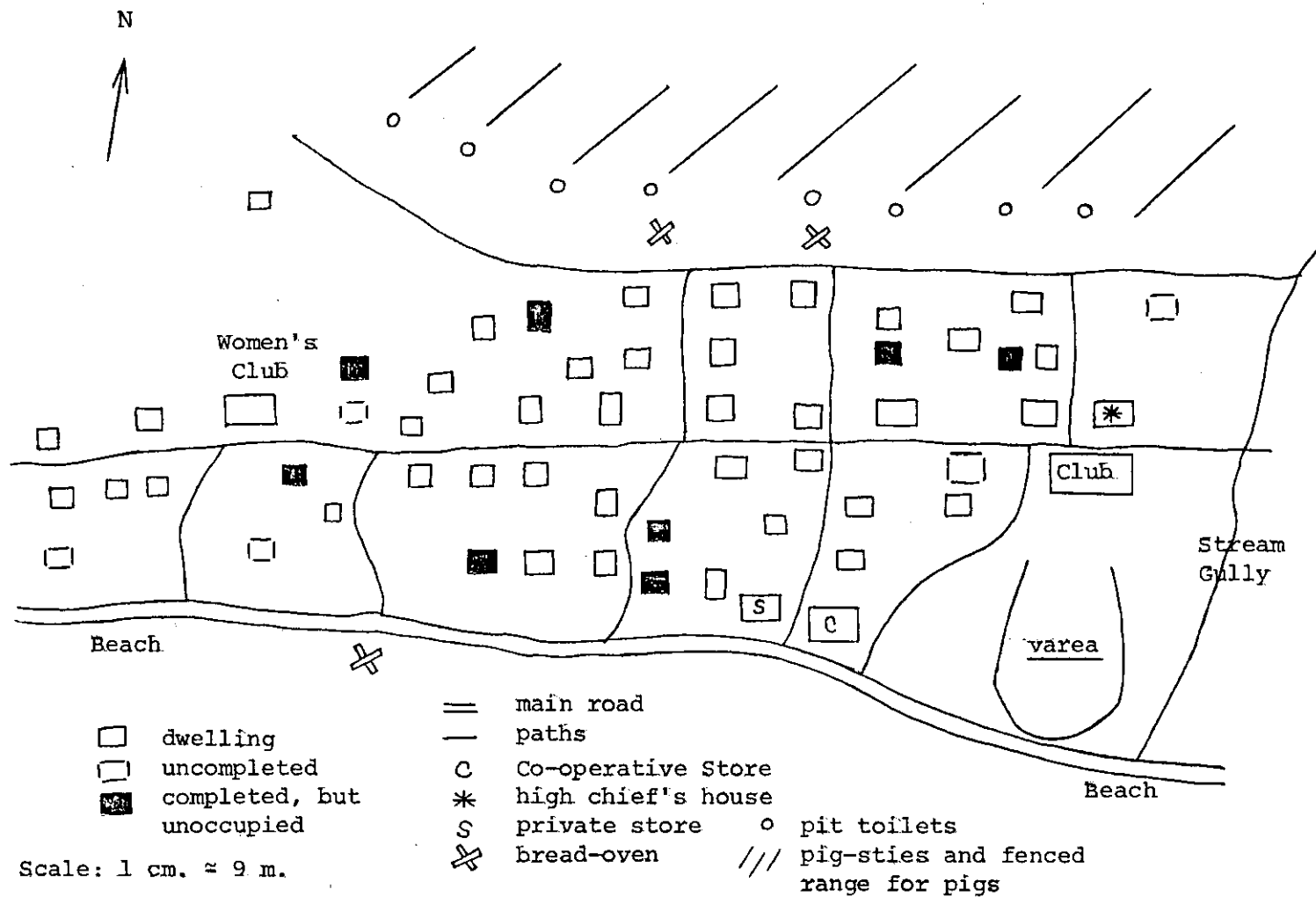
What Figure 2 does not show, however, is the way in which flowering plants (such as croton), hedges (some of which have edible leaves), coral blocks and, more rarely, wooden fences further subdivide the village into houseyards. Since these do not deter the wanderings of dogs, chickens and other errant, domestic fauna, these various types of space-dividers are not serving a pragmatic purpose. They have to do with boundary-maintenance, a matter on which I will have more to say later.

As in other villages on Nguna, in Tikilaso housing of a Western style is very evident. Over half of its families sleep and keep most of their belongings in square or rectangular, cement-block houses with corrugated iron roofs. Many of the rest live in homes of the same shape rendered less expensive by using sheet iron for both the walls and the roof. Quite a few semi-traditional structures of thatch, wood and bamboo co-exist with the Western-style houses, but the majority of these serve as cook-houses or "kitchens" rather than dwellings.

The village scene is dominated by several other buildings: the church and yarea, in particular. While every village has some sort of church or at least a building which is used for worship, the island's largest church lies on Tikilaso's eastern edge beyond a shallow gully.

Figure 2

Diagrammatic Representation of Tikilasoa Village, Nguna.

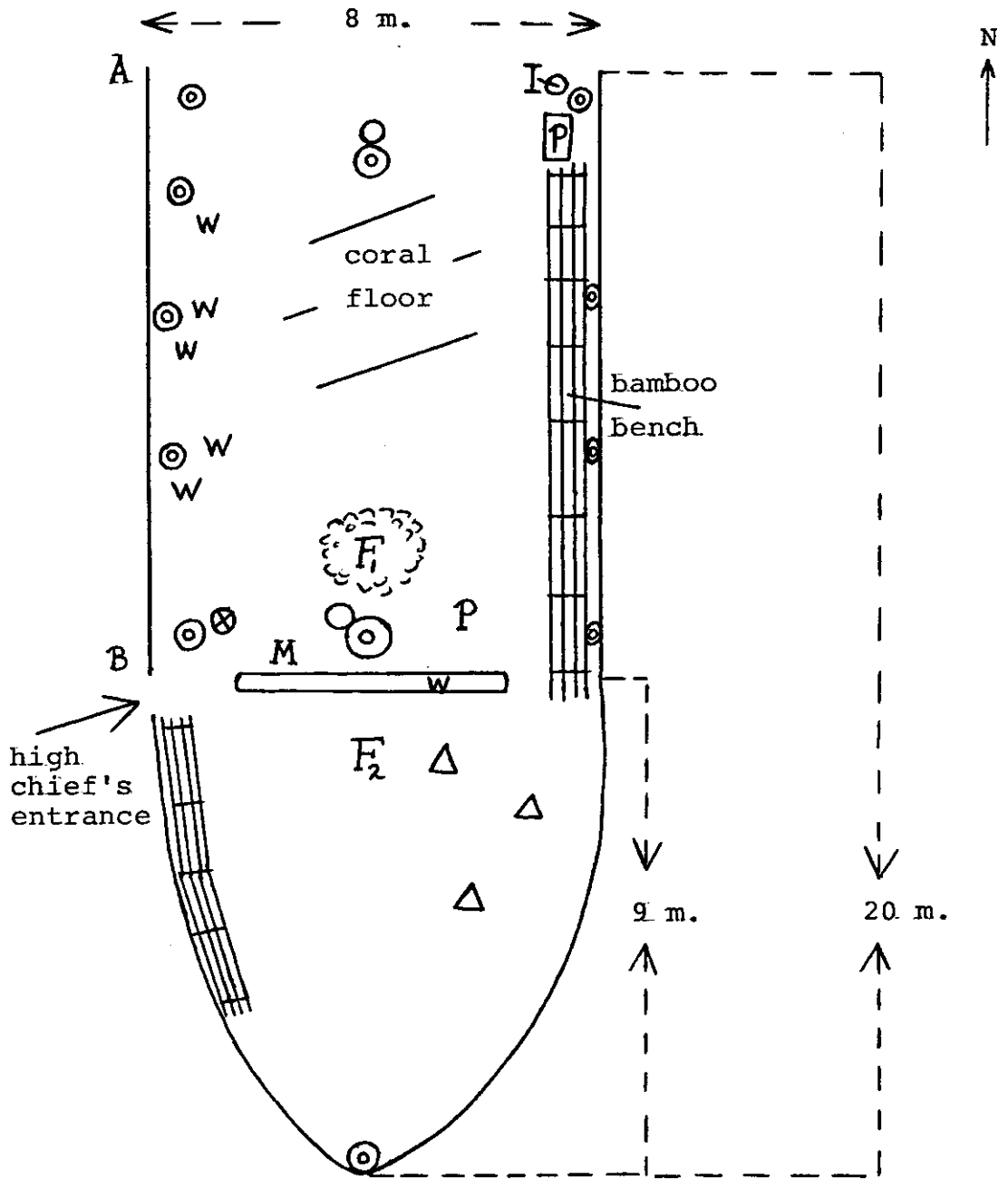


A fenced-in area of several hectares called Taloa contains a church that can seat 500 people and features a steeple-bell which can be heard at a distance of nearly a mile. This church is located on the same spot as the original church erected by Nguna's first missionary, Rev. Peter Milne, in 1872. In addition there is a large, airy house for the Pastor and his family on virtually the same spot as Milne's own first home.

Within the village the massive, traditional-style varea is found (see Plates 2 and 3). It is some 20 metres long and 8 metres in height at its highest point, with one fully open end and one partially open side, the wall falling approximately 2/3 of a metre short of the ground along half of that side (see also Figure 3). Three years ago it was rebuilt over a period of several months by the village men using only local materials. It is used as a meeting-house for discussion, communal meals on special occasions, housing large numbers of overnight guests of the village, as well as for everyday informal assemblies of weaving women or chatting men escaping the afternoon heat. While every village has a special building or, at least, a space for these purposes that is referred to as the varea, this building, in its traditional design and materials, size and excellent state of repair is unique not only to Nguna but to North Efate and all of Efate's offshore islands.

Another dominating - but not unique - feature of Tikilaso is known only as "The Club". A much larger version of the cement-block house, this structure has only been in existence for a few years. It is located directly

Figure 3 Diagram of the Tikilasoá Yarea.



w - wooden seats

Δ - log seats

F₁ - ovenplace

F₂ - fireplace

○ - seat for chief's helpers

⊙ - main uprights

⊗ - seat for high chief

AB - partially open wall

M - seat for chief's "tongue"

P - seat for chief's "police"

I - iron cauldron

between the yarea and the village's high chief's house. It, too, sometimes serves as the site for communal meals, but predominantly it is the locus of the popular string-band dances. These are held from time to time for simple entertainment and also precede or follow most marriages of members of the village. For this Tikilaso's "Club" is much appreciated, since its cement floor and corrugated iron roof ensure dry but dust-free dancing.

Four of Nguna's larger villages house copra co-operatives. Tikilaso's, named "Tamu Co-operative", is called a British one, as a member of the national Co-operative Federation which sells to British companies in Vila. Others are known as French co-ops, but both types are organized in the same way: a Committee of local shareholders employs and oversees a "secretary" who keeps the books and operates the copra sales and the store associated with the co-op. Once a year an inspector from the federation comes to examine the accounts and pay cash dividends, if any.

Each co-op store, like those run in many villages from back-rooms in private homes, sells all the necessities and some of the luxuries, for example, tins of butter, meat, fish and vegetables; stick tobacco, cigarettes and matches; thread, ribbon and cloth; coffee, tea, sugar, salt and rice, and so on. Bread, the breakfast staple, is produced most days by one or the other of several individuals in makeshift brick and cement ovens.

The last major landmark in Tikilaso is a cement-block building which is the size of one of the larger houses.

This is the headquarters of the village's chapter of the Presbyterian Women's Mother's Union (P.W.M.U.) which was started by Peter Milne's wife at the end of the last century. Most Fridays the adult women of Tikilasoia gather there to talk over any problems with which they are concerned as churchwomen and those related to the running of their association. They work together on various crafts, mostly weaving of baskets, bags and mats. The latter are relatively small - approximately 2 metres by 1½ metres - and are used for everyday domestic purposes such as bedding and floor-covering. They also figure prominently in marriage and funerary ceremonies (see Plates 4 and 5) and are bought and sold for \$2-5.

Economic Activities

While Ngunese agriculture includes slash-and-burn gardening (for taro, manioc and yam) and small-scale stock-raising, the universal primary source of cash is the production of copra. A few people - teachers and Pastor - are able to earn a good salary and live at home, too, but these are liable to be transferred elsewhere in the Group for years at a time. Others, the entrepreneurial type, derive a portion of their income from part-time involvement in "taxi"-work, with launch or truck on the island or on Efate. Some do well enough to hire others - young, single, male relatives - to do the driving for them for a wage or, more often, for a cut of the profits after running-expenses have been subtracted. However, that requires a considerable outlay of cash to buy the vehicle or boat in the first place.

More people engage in part-time pursuits that entail either no or only small cash expenditures but many labour-hours, e.g., weaving, carving and baking, the products of which are taken periodically to the market in Vila. Especially when fruits that sell well in town are in abundance, the Ngunese make many trips to Efate. Though rather exhausting in terms of the preparation required, the nature of local travel, and the early hour of the morning at which one must set out, they can be relatively lucrative.

Yet others, more skilled, find employment locally building homes of the Western type. Providing the person whose house it is can afford to provide all the necessary materials at once, the job can be completed within a few weeks. Whether or not the workers are paid in full when it is done also depends on that same factor.

Educational and Employment Opportunities

There are two full primary schools on Nguna. Eles School, located just outside Tikilaso, beyond the church grounds, consists of half a dozen classrooms. Some of these are of the Western type while others are made from mostly local materials - woven bamboo for walls and thatch roofs - and have been built by the people themselves. There are also four cement block houses each with accompanying small cistern, cookhouse, bath-hut, and water-sealed toilet for the use of the teachers. The six full-time teachers, one of whom is Headmaster, are employed by the British National Service, but the students (143 in 1978) must pay fees and purchase their own stationery supplies.

Free education, on the other hand, is available a mile down the road at Matarara, the French full primary school. It began in 1967, some 20 years after the elevation of Eles School to the status of "District School" from that of "village school". In 1971 better facilities for Matarara were built, and today it is a visual treat: the sloping grounds are beautifully landscaped and the Headmaster's and teachers' houses as well as four classrooms, two dormitories (for live-in students) and dining-hall are all modern and well-equipped.

Despite this, enrolments at Matarara have been falling. The total for 1978 was 95 and for 1979, 78. The crucial factor is enrolments for Class One. In 1978 there were only ten children in Class One and it was the Headmaster's opinion that, if that represented the future trend, the school would close due to under-enrolment within three years.

He also expressed some concern over the fact that some parents who had chosen not to send their children to Matarara were unable to enrol them in Eles School because they could not afford the fees. Hence, a growing number of children were not receiving any education at all.

This potential problem aside, one should note that literacy is virtually 100% on the island at the present. Even those in their seventies or older have received at least a rudimentary education in the church-run village schools of the early years of this century. Many middle-aged men have had considerable off-island educational

experience, not only in secondary school, but also in teaching institutes in New Zealand and Fiji.

Graduates of the first class to go to high school on Efate from Nguna are now in their mid-thirties. However, access to secondary schooling in Vanuatu is still restricted in that not all who pass their examinations at the end of their years in primary school can find places in a high school. Those with the best marks go on to high school, provided their families can afford the fees. Some of these students eventually become teachers, banking and commercial clerks, ministers of the church, and so on. A large proportion of these will go to Vila to work after completing their studies.

Even amongst those who conclude their schooling at Eles or Matarara there is a strong tendency for both males and females to engage in employment in Vila after finishing school and before marrying. Just how high the numbers are, for Tikilaso, is shown in **Table 2**. Work taken up varies in terms of length of stay required and type of job. Young men are frequently called for short-term stints involving heavy labour - unloading ships, for example - as well as long-term manual labour in construction, shipping, and the service industries. Most of the young women concerned are employed in the latter as maids, waitresses, etc. A fair number, too, live with married relatives and act as baby-sitters for room and board only. Even though it is not wage labour per se, this is an important phenomenon in that it is a socially acceptable life-style for single young women, while at the same time it allows them a greater

Table 2. Resident versus Non-Resident Membership in Tikilasoā, by Age, Sex and Marital Status (from 1978 data).

Marital Status and Sex	Age Group	Number Resident	Number Non-Res.	% Non-Res. in Age Grp.
<u>Single:</u>				
Males:	11-19 yrs.	15	6	29
	20-29 yrs.	11	17	61
	30-39 yrs.	0	3	100
	40-49 yrs.	1	1	50
	50-59 yrs.	0	2	100
Females:	11-19 yrs.	18	5	22
	20-29 yrs.	4	8	67
	30-39 yrs.	3	2	40
	40-49 yrs.	1	0	0
	50-59 yrs.	1	0	0
<u>Married*:</u>				
Males:	20-29 yrs.	3	3	50
	30-39 yrs.	5	5	50
	40-49 yrs.	5	5	50
	50-59 yrs.	7	0	0
	60-79 yrs.	12	0	0
Females:	20-29 yrs.	5	12	70
	30-39 yrs.	4	9	69
	40-49 yrs.	5	5	50
	50-59 yrs.	13	1	7
	60-79 yrs.	9	0	0

* excluding women who have married men of other villages and including de facto couples and widowed individuals.

degree of autonomy and the opportunity to enjoy the attractions of town life than would be possible if they lived with their parents. The same is true of young men; but, in their case, the older generation assumes that they must establish themselves "as men" in their own right and that their efforts to do so will sometimes take the form of rebellious behaviour at home or of separation from home and achievement in a different sphere.

Social Organization

The Ngunese use several different levels of socio-cultural identification. At the most general level they differentiate between "Black" and "White" (tea loa/tea taare), and "native" and "stranger" (naatatoko/nañenaki). The former is a simple contrast on the basis of colour alone, so it can be applied to Afro-Americans as opposed to Anglo-Americans or Melanesians versus "Europeans", that is, English, French, Australians, etc.

The second dichotomy, likewise, is used in many contexts; thus its second element can be translated in various ways. A "European" visitor from overseas, a local from a nearby island or a Ngunese person from a different village can all be referred to as nañenaki, be they day-visitors, overnight guests - note that ñenaki alone is a verb meaning "to sleep over/spend the night" - or temporary residents for a few months. But the most significant context for this contrast is that in which it defines whether or not one can claim rights in a particular locale. Essentially this includes the rights to cultivate land

and to reside permanently. "Native" status, then, is an assertion of having such rights by virtue of ancestry.

I will expand on the bases on which such a claim may be reckoned in Chapter Three. Here I will only say that the first level at which this distinction operates is the island level. In Bislama, one is man Nguna as opposed to man Efate, man Santo and so on. Thereafter the distinction is at the village level. Thus man Nguna becomes man Tikilaso (tea ni Tikilaso, in Ngunese) or man Unakap or whatever. Sometimes the distinction is also made between two types of village: inland (euta) versus seaboard (elau). In the past there was much animosity between "hill" and "sea" people; but today the bases for distinction between them are fairly insignificant ones, for example, slight dialectal differences and variations in house-construction.

The remaining two essential bases of sociocultural identification are agnation and matriliney. These will be examined at length in Chapter Three as "idioms of identification". At this point I would like to merely give the reader a brief indication as to the role of these and of village identity in social organization.

As I have already mentioned villages are carefully subdivided internally by means of hedges, fences and so on. Preferential male agnatic co-residence results in the common situation of an elderly parent or parents having one or more of their married sons living beside them. The space between their houses and kitchens is open, creating a common compound within which the women of these related

households prepare meals or wash clothes together and the men may sit and drink kava in the evening. Often in this area, too, there is a hearthplace which is used for communal cooking of large numbers of coconut puddings during wedding celebrations.

It is the nuclear household which is the unit for everyday purposes of eating, sleeping, gardening and so on. The extended family functions in cooperation for larger tasks, as at the time of clearing new gardens. Particularly in wedding preparations one's parents and siblings are one's primary, most reliable source of help.

Villages are highly nucleated and their lands are clearly demarcated as "dominions" (namarakiana maga) overseen by each village's high chief. Villagers act collectively for some purposes, for example, in yam planting, wherein village members form a team which plants each family's gardens in turn, starting with the chief's. Various parts of a wedding celebration are constituted as acts performed by or directed toward villages as wholes. For example, in the distribution of food for the wedding feast, the pork and yams are assembled in piles of different sizes each of which is assigned to a particular village according to the number of its members who are in attendance.

Crosscutting village boundaries are the ideally exogamous matriclans. There are over a dozen of these clans which are totemic in the sense that each is named after some object (octopus, fish, certain plants, etc.). There are three main points to note about these clans: (1) they

are widely dispersed on Nguna (and the surrounding islands, as well); (2) it is mainly at weddings and chiefly investitures that clan members cooperate as such.

Let me conclude this introductory overview with the following remarks. Great changes have taken place on Nguna over the last 150 years. This has been the result of gradual, selective incorporation of novel ideas, practices and behaviours or parts thereof. It has proceeded by means of both inclusion and exclusion or acceptance and rejection. Consequently that which is taken in and becomes an integral part of the existing configuration is transformed and so, too, is that of which it has become a part. Contemporary Ngunese society is not static, an "end-product" of its history. It is, rather, a moment in a continuous process of transformation, just as is "traditional" Ngunese society, reconstructed in Chapter Two.

While this view is now commonplace in modern ethnography, I think it is still worthwhile to reiterate; for, throughout this thesis, I am concerned with transformation in these two ways. First, I show the historical continuity evident in each aspect of contemporary Ngunese society and culture; and, second, I demonstrate the role of constructions of the past in presentday Ngunese political discourse. In other words, I deal with the present as a transformation of the past and the past, as different groups conceive of it, as a potential transformer of the present. Before attempting either of these tasks, however, I must first establish a baseline for comparison. The following chapter, then, provides a historical reconstruction of Ngunese

society just prior to European Contact and briefly traces the major events and transformations which occurred during the early Contact period.



Plate 1. Nguna, as seen from N.W. Efate.

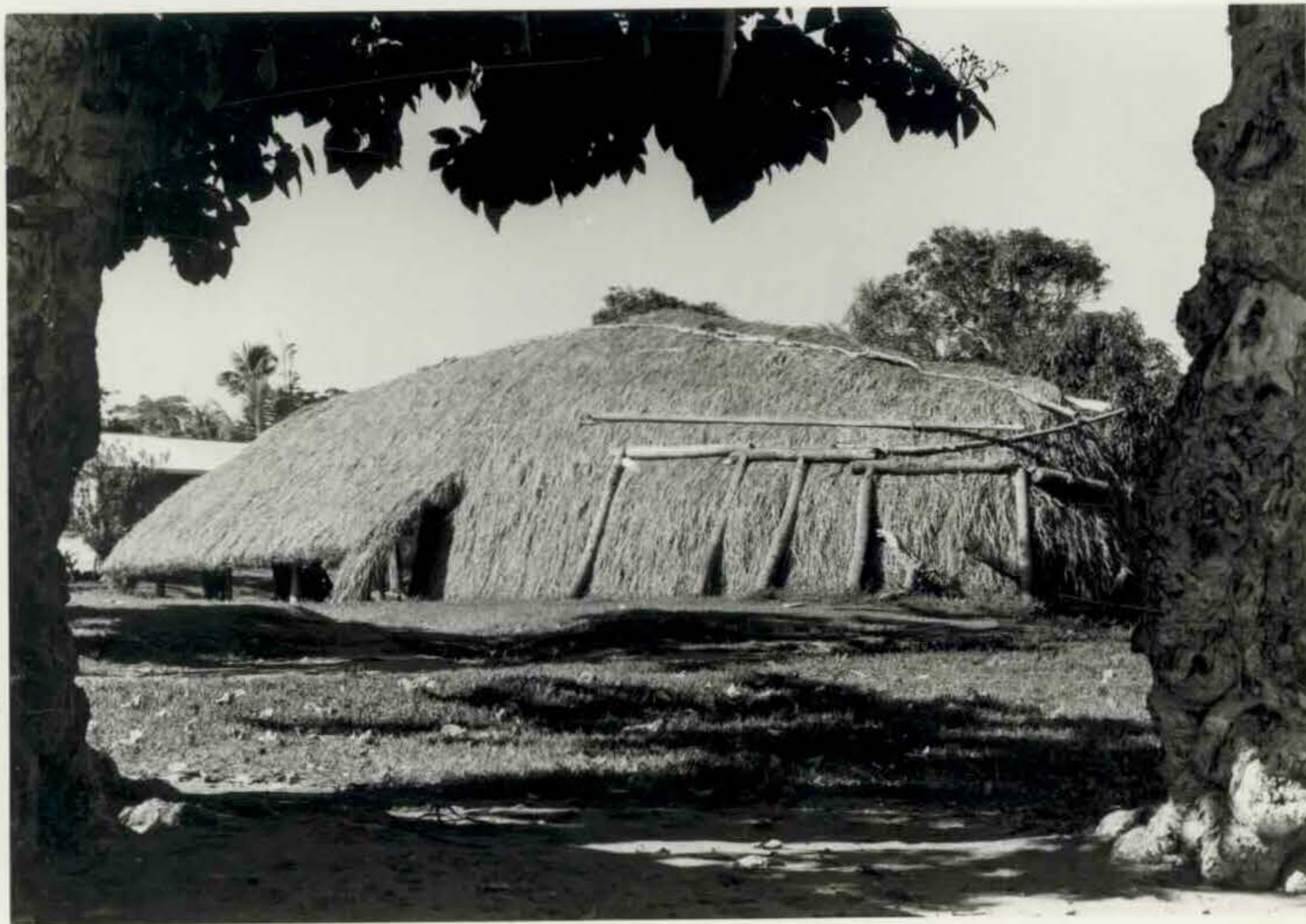


Plate 2. Tikilasoa varea, side view.



Plate 3. Tikilasoa yarea on the occasion of the Nguna-Pele P.W.M.U. end-of-year meeting.



Plate 4. Pandanus mats folded and packed in bundles of 10 for presentation at a wedding celebration.



Plate 5. A funerary gathering of female mourners. The body is first covered with many lengths of cloth and then wrapped in mats for burial.

CHAPTER TWO

RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST

In this chapter, I will attempt to reconstruct Ngunese society as it was in the period immediately preceding European Contact, concentrating on its political aspect. As there are no substantial historical writings prior to the arrival of a Christian missionary, this is of necessity a somewhat speculative account. It is based on three major sources: observations made by Reverend Peter Milne¹ as recorded in Alexander Don's 1927 biography, Peter Milne of Nguna; data gathered by Professor Jean Guiart in the late 1950's in the context of a regional survey of central Vanuatu; and my own data, which consists of stories and memories of presentday Ngunese. Given the weaknesses and limitations of each of these bodies of information, and the disparity between them, I have taken a great deal of care in building up this hypothetical model. Having done so, I then consider the process of "conversion" to Christianity as it informs us about the nature of pre-Contact politics.

The Pre-Contact Period

Nguna is divided today into a number of "dominions" (this word being the translation of namarakiana which denotes "that which is ruled or led"), each of which is an area defined by common boundaries that it shares with its neighbouring dominions. A number of man-made boundaries, marked by trees or ridges of stone, begin at the

seashore and extend inland until they converge with those of the inland dominions. Every few years the youngest members of a dominion are conducted on a tour of their own dominion's boundaries as a defence against future predatory boundary-hopping.

The "village" as we know it today - a highly nucleated aggregation of dwellings inhabited by people of whom many are not consanguineally related to each other - had not yet come into existence in the 19th century. Today dominions and villages are in a one-to-one relationship, so that one may cite one village and thereby imply the entire area to which its members lay claim. This was not true in the past. This difference provides a starting-point for this historical reconstruction of the social, religious and political structures of Ngunese society just prior to European Contact.

Within any given dominion there were once various numbers of dispersed hamlets or villages, each composed of smaller groups of houses inhabited by extended families. Guiart (1973: 338) describes each such cluster of houses, called yarea², as a patrilineal, patrilocal unit. My own investigations indicate that this was a residential rather than a descent unit. Moreover, each hamlet contained as many men's houses, also known as vareas, as there were matriclans represented in the hamlet.

Each men's house bore a unique name, such as "varea of meat". Each also had its own dancing-ground (malala), although in some cases two vareas shared the same one. The dancing-ground was simply a cleared, sometimes

considerably elevated, flat space located in the bush some distance from the village. Its principal feature was the group of slit-drums at one end, usually under a banyan tree. These were elaborately carved, hollowed-out logs representing dead chiefs to whom propitiatory offerings of pigs and food were made during ritual feasts, dances and chiefly investitures (see Plates 6 and 7).

Cutting across the local, and perhaps predominantly agnatic groups were over a dozen totemic, exogamous matriclans, the members of which were widely dispersed throughout Nguna as well as Efate and its other offshore islands. Communal preparations and presentations for weddings were largely done by, and in the name of, one's fellow matriclan members.

Based on his survey of the whole of central Vanuatu Guiart asserted that the primary function of matriclans was not the regulation of marriage, but rather:

...de rendre possible les relations extérieures au group par l'existence de garanties de sécurité permettant les déplacements et assurant l'hospitalité, ou un refuge, en tous points.³

(ibid.: 275)

It is interesting that this function is also explicitly expressed in a widespread account of the origin of matriclans. Certain chiefs are said to have instituted these totemic groups in order to reduce a disastrous level of warfare. Yet one ought not to overlook the possible role that the system of matriclans might once have had in regulating marriage and, thereby, in regulating access to

chiefly power. Indeed, there may well have been a considerable degree of clan hegemony within any given dominion at various times - or even one dominating several dominions at once.

The political norm within a dominion was cooperation with a strong sense of identification. Each dominion was known as navata-something, for example, navatataura, "the whale people" or, likewise, navatatipaga, "the owl people". Each dominion was identified by one of these names and was thought to have certain related, collective characteristics, most of which alluded to communal habits or exploits of a heroic nature. No doubt these terms served to symbolically reinforce and assert intra-dominion solidarity.

Contrasting sharply with this intra-dominion ethos was inter-dominion hostility. This was expressed particularly in the dichotomy solwota/bus, in Bislama, or elau/euta, in Ngunes. It was in terms of sea people vs. hill people that conflicts were engaged in during the first missionary's early years on the island. This division, however, could have been a relatively recent opposition due to differential access to weapons in the early contact period. Be that as it may, this was the basis of much hostility during Milne's stay. He records that an initial act such as a murder or "theft" of a woman would result in long-lasting animosity and intermittent violent flare-ups. Retributive night raids were made to even a score, and in the light of day the victim village might find several of its members dead or missing - the latter having been taken

captive, destined to be cooked and ritually consumed by the men of the attacking group.

Given this, travel between dominions was very dangerous. Consequently a narrow path of safety - a neutral ribbon crosscutting the island - was created by constructing two borders of large stones or bamboo fencing that linked the villages of each dominion to those of the other dominions. This allowed peaceful inter-dominion communication for purposes such as marriage and feast-exchanges.

Guiart describes the traditional political system as "hierarchical" (*ibid.*: 408). In each varea only one man was designated by the term nawota which is translated as "chief" (see Plate 8). He was considered titular owner of that varea's men's house and dancing-ground. Several other men in each varea bore titles, too, but theirs were of a lower order than that of the chief. The entire area defined as a "dominion" was presided over by one of the chiefs who, in contrast to all the other varea-chiefs (or "small" chiefs) was known as the "big" or "high" chief. In his writings (Don, 1927) Nguna's first missionary, Rev. Peter Milne makes this distinction in referring to "head chief" as opposed to "under-chief". The residents of each varea owed tribute (nasautoga) in the form of pigs, mats and kava to their "small" chief and he, in turn, was obligated to make prestations to the "big" chief. Of these various title-holders only the latter, in any given dominion, would be involved in such relationships with men of other dominions or even other islands.

All relationships between title-holders, in Guiart's terms, were either "dominant" or "dominé", that is, they entailed either the privilege to receive or the obligation to give tribute to another party. Non-title-holders could only be the "dominé", whereas titled men might simultaneously participate in a number of different relationships in some of which they acted as the "dominé" and in others as the "dominant".

The notion of "tribute" requires some qualification, however, with respect to its nature and beginnings. It is certain that prestations of this kind were an integral part of intra- and inter-dominion relationships in the pre-Christian era⁴, but, as Parsonson tells us from his study of Milne's writings, "...Milne does not record [formal tribute given annually to Tariþoaliu] preconversion." He goes on to conjecture that "...Suasavi [Tariþoaliu, invested in 1900] exacted tribute, but that this was a new custom, introduced in his own day...nasautoga must have come into prominence only after the collapse of the old-style naleoana and virtually replaced them" (Parsonson, per letter, 31 March, 1980).

The naleoana⁵ was, in essence, an exchange of gifts, in food and pigs, between visiting villages and the host village of a particular dominion. They took place with considerable frequency, if not regularity, and were mandatory on the occasion of a marriage and at specified intervals throughout the period of mourning following a death. In order to carry one off the chief in charge had to activate relationships in which he was "dominant" as well as

utilizing the produce of specific plots of land set aside for this unique use within his own dominion. The explicit purpose of these feasts, however, was not the glorification of the host chief himself, but rather the appeasement of the spirits of the dead ancestors and, when they followed a death, the necessary supplication to the deceased to ensure that he did not remain nearby as a harmful ghost.

The naleoana served, then, to regulate the relationship between the dead and the living. In this way chiefs, in staging naleoana, were seen to perform a vital task on behalf of their people. Hence the latter's burden of obligation to the former in terms of material goods and labour was perhaps seen as balanced or tempered with this reciprocal action for the common good.

However, when chiefs took up Christianity, abandoned ancestor worship and ritual sacrifice of pigs - or men - there was no longer any place for the feast and dances of the naleoana. It would seem likely that at that point Tariñoaliu took the opportunity of introducing "tribute" as a secular custom in order not to lose it as a resource when the religious *raison d'être* of naleoana had been nullified. One should, then, bear this transformation of "tribute" from its traditional to its 20th Century manifestation in mind, although the two are not terminologically distinguished here.

To continue, let us consider the question of access to positions of authority. All the sources agree that in the traditional period titles ideally passed in the matriline from mother's brother to sister's son, the latter

preferably being a man of the title-holder's varea or of one sharing the same dancing-ground. The title was considered to be the possession of the matriclan, and, in the case of at least the "big" chief's title, the right to fill the position of chief was grounded in one clan's status as indigenous to that area. Nevertheless, it was more important that the successor be of the correct category - son of the chief's true sister. Thus, if no appropriate individual resided in the chief's varea or even in the entire dominion, one would be sought in another dominion. If found in the latter, he would be "redeemed" (daulua) by making a payment to the "big" chief of that (his father's) dominion, and he would be brought back to the first dominion to reside there permanently. Once chosen the successor was given a special name which announced his new status as future chief. Only when ritually invested did he receive the chiefly title itself.⁶

At the investiture ceremony of such a dominion-chief one hundred pigs were sacrificed to the spirits of the dead ancestors (see Appendix 1). The central element in the rite was the "pulling up" of the sacred spirit from the predecessor and the installation of it within his successor. Since this involved the transferral of a potentially fatal power it had to be performed by other chiefs within a sacred enclosure (of coconut fronds) constructed especially for the occasion. If non-chiefs approached this area they could be killed by the force of this sacred spirit. Similarly, the new chief's assistant had to perform a ritual of striking the food-ovens for the ensuing

feast to remove that sacredness and thus free them for consumption.

Each chief had a body of aides who also occupied hereditary positions and were, ideally, of the same clan as he. These included a principal assistant (atavi), who accompanied his chief constantly and saw that his word was carried out; a priest or ritual expert (munuai) who could perform extraordinary feats by virtue of his ritual knowledge and personal relationship with the world of spirits and gods; a speaker (namena) who voiced the chief's word in public; one or more war-champions (maau); and others (tasiga; naatañoli vasa) who variously mediated in marriage negotiations, supervised feasts, and directed communal undertakings such as yam-planting or varea-building. Each of these functions was associated with a particular title and at least the first three listed entailed rights to a substantial number of plots of land. The dominion-chief also had specific plots on which were planted crops for exclusive use at the naleoana and other similar celebrations, plus land having fruit-trees, as well as the sacred land inhabited by his gods and on which no ordinary person would dare to tread. He even had his own small area by the shore on which he was helped to robe and disrobe, as it were, for bathing. His was not a different type of clothing from that of ordinary men, but certain of his ornaments - pig-tusk bracelets, armbands and necklace would be of a design and quality appropriate only to a man of his position. In terms of food, too, chiefs' special and superior quality was acknowledged in the

restriction of pigs' heads and forelegs for their consumption at feasts.

Formidable powers are attributed to dominion chiefs. One is told that a death-sentence given by such a chief condemning one of his subjects was carried out by one of his champions or the word passed to an allied dominion. The marked man could flee, but he risked death elsewhere, too. If he were killed by men of a different dominion, his head was sent back to his chief to be consumed and the skull and jaws hung up in the rafters of the chief's varea. Such a fate awaited one who committed adultery with one of the chief's wives (who might number upwards of ten, not to mention ones unpaid for, acquired by raid or seduction). The following excerpts from Milne's biography bear witness to the "big" chief's powers on Efate as on Nguna.

A man of the village of Pau, Efaté, ran off to the village of Eséma with one of the wives of his chief. The chief sent a messenger after the couple, requesting the chief of Eséma to have the man killed, and the request was carried out. The body was then carried, lashed to a pole like a pig, all the way (some 20 miles) from Eséma to Pau, there to be eaten. The woman was made to walk back naked, carrying one end of the pole.

On one visit to Pau, Efaté, in the early days, the people seemed restless and impatient, some of them were armed with barbed spears and others had red-painted faces. It turned out that, eight days before, they had killed a man of their own village... that the man's body was tied to a pole at the farea and left there for the dogs to eat...

The reason for the massacre was that the man had misconducted himself with the wife of an under-chief of the village.

For other crimes a chief could order the destruction of a man's possessions; or he could pronounce him only fit to be a "slave". Any other chief was then free to claim this man for his servant and he would be delivered over to that chief to live in, clean and care for the latter's yarea for the rest of his life. This enslavement resulted from a man's efforts to increase his own prestige - to "make himself high" - by speaking critically of the chief or by taking more than a reasonable number of wives, i.e., in excess of one or two for an ordinary person.

Duties of the chief concerned dominion-welfare: war-making; peace-making; resource-management (through the application of taboos to certain crops or areas to ensure a sufficiency for special feasts); and the appropriate allotment of land for everyday gardening needs throughout his dominion.

Everything in his dominion, including the people, was the chief's. Periodically tokens were presented to him by each household declaring precise numbers and kinds of pigs, yams, kava and mats which were his to command. He would then be able to decide how he might best utilize these resources in political display and exchange, particularly on the inter-dominion level. In the meantime, his people stored or, in the case of livestock, continued to care for their pledged contributions until the chief should need them.

No legitimate means existed for deposing a chief. Indeed, when old and having relinquished his chiefly name, an ex-chief still retained a residue of sacred power. He

would also have many exploits to his credit: feasts, murders, wars, and an accumulation of cannibalized bones in his meeting-house. Provided he was still reasonably sound of body and mind, he could continue to wield great influence while instructing his successor.

Death ceremonies for chiefs were similar to those of ordinary people, but on a grander scale: sacrifices and grave-goods were greater; the period of mourning was much extended; and displays and exchanges were more numerous. However, unlike others, a dead chief might be accompanied by one or more of his wives - buried alive or strangled. News of his death could not be passed verbally; rather was it spread by sending one of his dogs, dead, to other villages' vareas. Then for the duration of the mourning period - 100 days - war was not to be waged against his dominion.

The historical and oral records of these facts are supported by archaeological information yielded by excavation on Retoka (or Hat Island) south of Nguna. Since Efate and its offshore islands shared this chiefly complex, one may take the following excerpts from Bellwood's Man's Conquest of the Pacific as applicable to the pre-Contact situation on Nguna (bearing in mind, of course, that this probably represents the extreme upper limit of power and status possible within that complex, "Roy Mata" being the legendary high chief of all Efate):

In 1967, the French archaeologist José Garanger was led by informants to a group of small standing stones on Retoka island, and commenced excavations. The

results were quite startling. The body of a man, who can hardly be any other than Roy Mata himself, was found extended on its back in a pit which also contained, to his left, a man and woman side by side, to his right a single male, and across the feet of these four parallel bodies, a young girl. Between the legs of Roy Mata lay a bundled secondary burial, possibly of a predeceased wife. The pit was marked on the ground surface by two large slabs of stone, and by a number of large marine shells. Around it were slightly shallower burials of 35 individuals, of which 22 comprised men and women buried together in pairs... Burials of pigs and scattered cannibalised human bones attested to some of the rites which must have accompanied this mass burial, and it seems that the men may have been stupefied with kava before burial, while the women were in many cases buried alive and conscious.

Nearly all of the burials were associated with personal ornaments, with some being very much richer than others, and some having even more ornaments than Roy Mata himself. Individual preferences seem to have differed widely, but the overall range of artefacts is quite surprising...

The collective sepulture of Roy Mata has a carbon date of A.D. 1265 ±140...

(Bellwood 1979: 270-2)

Despite this rather grandiose scenario of Roy Mata's burial on Retoka and the impressive powers and activities of "big" chiefs on Nguna, there are indications that the system of chiefs was not as tightly closed as it has thus far appeared. Another critical look at the conditions of entry into this system is in order.

We have seen above that the principle of matrilineal heredity determined the transmission of titles which entailed rights to land and support from subordinates, rather than merely the right to compete for prestige and support

as is the case with titles assumed in "big man"-based politics. Titles were not "just" titles, but designated hierarchical positions.

This is comparable to the situation regarding leadership among the Mekeo of Papua. Epeli Hau'ofa argues that the chiefly system of the Mekeo,

...[is] based on the hereditary principle of father/son succession. Moreover, there is a definite structure of 'officialdom' consisting of hereditary, parttime functionaries with specific official duties... they [i.e., the chiefs] have many hereditary privileges which mark them off distinctly from the common people...

(Hau'ofa 1971: 153)

There can be no doubt that the distinctive properties of Mekeo traditional leadership are echoed in that of traditional Nguna. There was a definite support structure or "officialdom" under the chief and chiefs were differentiated from their people in terms of dress, food, deference required toward them, control of titled property, funerary custom, and the sacred nature bestowed on them at their investiture.

Although we know that succession was hereditary, neither informants (see Plate 9) nor Milne's writings yield a specific account of how a successor was actually chosen. Many men could theoretically qualify as a sister's son, given that a chief might have several sisters, so it is quite likely that there were restricting rules that reduced the number who qualified. The following quote from Milne implies that there was only one possible candidate while

at the same time it introduces an element - achievement - running counter to the principle of attribution.

The normal claim to the chiefship was hereditary, yet it sometimes happened that owing to weakness or unpopularity, the hereditary claimant was rejected in favour of another. An ambitious or strong man, too, might take the office by force and hold it against all opposition. He could not found a new 'dynasty', however, for the old chief-name still persisted.

(In Don 1927: 19).

This statement asserts that there was room, after all, for a man with great personal ambition and strength to thrust himself into power. Nevertheless, he still needed support from the others in chiefly positions.

The Ngunese word pono denotes intensive, all-night discussion undertaken in the varea on many successive occasions in order to come to a decision acceptable to everyone as to who will succeed as chief. In the case of a "big" chief's successor, the various varea-chiefs would undoubtedly have dominated the affair. Consequently, even the strongest claim, if not authorized by this process, would be an illegitimate claim, and could only last as long as the claimant's physical forces prevailed. On the other hand, the legitimate successor, once invested, would have the position for life.

With this in mind we should now examine the unique position of the "paramount" chief. So far I have spoken of "small" and "big" or "high" chiefs; but one "higher" than these is in existence today. He is the grandson of Matokoale to whom Milne referred many times as "head-chief"

of Tanoroꞑo and as the "highest chief on Nguna". Matokoaale is said to have been a descendant of a supernatural female being who was captured on Efate and married to a man of Siviri village on the North coast of Efate. This quasi-woman had two sons, one of whom crossed to Nguna and was given land and a people to rule by chief Masekaau of Raitoa (see Appendix II). In due time this newcomer, whose chiefly name was Tariꞑoaliu, became high chief over that whole dominion as well as four others. He initiated the slaughter of an unheard-of number of pigs - 1,000 - at his investiture, earning the name "head of a thousand" (naꞑau ni manu). Thereafter at the investiture of other "big" chiefs within his newly-created realm 50 rather than 100 pigs were sacrificed.

This is said to have taken place many generations ago. Matokoaale held this position in 1870, but the chiefly name, Tariꞑoaliu, had already been officially passed to another man. The latter died without an heir in late 1879 and Matokoaale's own son eventually took over in 1900. He was ordained by Milne as the first Tariꞑoaliu to have as his jurisdiction the whole of Nguna and, indeed, the islands of Pele and Kakula plus Siviri village, North Efate, as well.

Although the origin of the first Tariꞑoaliu and the line of descent linking Matokoaale with him remain relatively obscure, it is clear that Matokoaale was more powerful than the other "high chiefs" with whom he was allied. Milne cites an incident in which Matokoaale had the high chief, Masekaau (also known as Masikailapalapa), killed.

In Milne's words this was,

... [for] becoming rich and ambitious. He owned many pigs and he wore very broad armlets and, in his arrogant belief that no one dare interfere, he had misconducted himself with the wife of a Tanoropo man.

(In Don 1927: 151)

Parsonson's research further illuminates this event. He has suggested (per letter: Dec. 5, 1980) that Masekaau was "... a high chief in his own right, if not sometime head of one of the confederacies on the island". Moreover, he adds this crucial bit of information: the heir to the murdered Masekaau made claim to the title of Tariñoaliu in 1936 and the then incumbent (Suasavi) Tariñoaliu offered to stand down in his favour. This was never effected, but it strongly indicates that the murder of Masekaau was not a jural act to punish sexual "misconduct", as Milne interpreted it. It was, rather, the calculated removal of a real or potential rival to Matokoaaale. Matokoaaale was able to maintain his position thereafter, but Parsonson points out that he left soon after that incident to teach on Eñae. This does not sustain the image of a man in a supreme position, a "paramount chief". It has more the character of a flight from retribution on the part of a "big man" who has overstepped his authority and fears that his own life may be in jeopardy. That this is so is supported by certain aspects of the conversion experience to which I will now turn.

The Contact Period

The earliest contact with Nguna was that of one or two explorers, including Cook who landed briefly in 1774. When trade came to the New Hebrides, however, a large percentage of the ships would have been seen by Ngunese, for Havannah Harbour provided an excellent natural anchorage and fresh water was available on mainland Efate. Regardless of the object of a voyage, this spot was a favoured port of call for reprovisioning and repair. From 1842 onward, sandalwooders in particular were active on Efate.

Yet Nguna had nothing to attract the sandalwooders; similarly its involvement with traders after pearlshell or bêche-de-mer was negligible. Furthermore, according to K.R. Howe's study (1977: 87), the Loyalty Islanders were preferred when native crews were required. It was, rather, the sugarcane plantations' labour needs that finally brought ships to Nguna in the late 1860's.

In 1860 the cultivation of cotton got under way in Fiji and Queensland. Thus by the mid-60's the central New Hebrides was in the thick of the labour trade. Rev. R. Steel (Royal Commission Report 1869: 38) noted that 18 ships called at Efate in 18 months, taking off a total of 250 people to various destinations. However, contrary to the opinion of Steel and his Presbyterian colleagues, in the majority of cases the natives quite freely volunteered to go. This was the finding of a Queensland Government Royal Inquiry in 1869.

The situation for the Ngunese is only known in general terms, but there is no doubt that many men went, and most

did so voluntarily, for the opportunity to travel to exotic new places, for economic gain, or to escape obligations or punishments at home. Most did return at the end of their term and the fortunate few who had acquired calico, axes, pots, guns, and so on, were able to engage in gift-giving in reciprocation for which they might also be given rights to one or more parcels of land. Any goods they might have been able to keep for themselves, along with their superior knowledge of Whites and the trade-language, would have constituted substantial increases in personal resources and lent considerable weight to their word, making them more influential in local decision-making than would otherwise have been the case.

Contact with Christian representatives preceded Peter Milne's arrival in 1870. Polynesian teacher-catechists (referred to simply as "Teachers") had eventually been successfully settled on Efate near present-day Port Vila as well as two missionaries, although both vacated their positions before 1870. It was, however, Rev. W. Geddie who persuaded the Nguneses to accept a missionary.

Milne, a Scots Presbyterian, was a man aflame with missionary zeal. He had originally wanted to join the mission to China, but his application was refused. When he later received an invitation from the Otago and Southland Synod in New Zealand to be placed in the New Hebrides, he jumped at the opportunity. He acquired a wife as rapidly as propriety allowed and set out. Two years later he was settled on Nguna near the village of Tikilaso. Furthermore, the land "purchased" for his domicile and the

future church was the taboo ground of Tikilaso'a's head chief. Given that it was fatal for mortals to set foot on this spirit's abode, one might be forgiven for assuming that the chief who sold it to him anticipated that theirs would be an association of limited duration.

However, Milne was evidently made of sterner stuff. He had been sorely disappointed when his own choice of setting, Erromanga, was rejected by a congress of his brother missionaries. Nicknamed "the Martyr Isle", it was considered too dangerous and the Mission also was concerned at that time with expanding its operations northward. Therefore, Milne went to Nguna as required and proved to be a fearless and dogged pursuer of heathenism, and an inflexible perfectionist in building, translating, or teaching reading and writing.

In the end his purpose was fulfilled. The whole of his district was converted by 1900. The last to accept Christianity were Nguna in 1896 and Emau in 1897. In Milne's definition, success meant that:

... every village... had definitely renounced heathenism, that the last village chiefs had disregarded the warnings of the last few reactionaries, and had accepted Teachers, and that the majority of the people were attending school and church.

(Don 1927: 267)

Focussing on the social rather than the spiritual, one can list concomitant changes: many villages on Nguna had been relocated, first by gradual movement of each converted man's household to the vicinity of the lay teacher's

house, outside the village, then later whole villages were moved down to the shore either in response to the ravages of epidemics or for more convenient access by Milne. Amalgamation of small, dispersed hamlets into larger villages was encouraged for the latter reason. The voices of the chiefs and images of dead chiefs, the slit-drums, had been burnt and, in many instances, sacred stones and conch-shells had been delivered up to Milne by chiefs or their sacred men. Ceremonial pig-killing at chiefs' investitures and funerals was no longer done; extended mourning, fasting, feasting, and insertion of extraneous goods into the grave were finished, as were ritual dancing and singing. Kava, smoking and drinking "grog" were all forbidden. The workless Sunday was strictly observed, such that children could not draw in the dirt with a stick - it was too much like breaking ground in garden-work. The position of the matrilineal principle had been seriously undermined by a gradual shift toward hereditary succession through males, that is, as chiefly titles came to pass routinely from father to son rather than from "mother's brother" to "sister's son". Consequently, the essential continuity of clan "line" in political positions was broken off. Then in 1900 twelve new Christian chiefs were invested, but this time within a Christian context in a ceremony officiated by Milne. On this day the chief considered highest of all on Nguna was replaced by his son, and this Tariñoaliu was declared head of all of Nguna, Pēle, Kakula and Siviri village, Efate, as already mentioned above.

On Nguna Christianity was 30 years gaining acceptance, but since it did, it has never been seriously challenged. There have been no Cargo movements despite the existence of a stereotypic Cargo explanation of why Melanesians accidentally missed out on the knowledge and goods the Europeans got. This latter has never openly been taken up by individuals as a political platform. Further, no other religious denomination has been able to make more than a handful of converts, and certainly none has been allowed to set up headquarters or conduct services.

I would argue that this demonstrates the persistence of a high degree of closure from the traditional era into the present in both politics and religion. It is becoming clear that the key to this closure lies in the relationship between politics and religion or secular and sacred power. In order to illuminate this somewhat, I will outline what little is known of traditional religious ideas on Nguna.

Capell (1938: 68-71) refers to Milne's manuscripts to tell us that Mauitikitiki was the foremost spirit in Ngunes belief. He was the son of Tamakaia and had pulled the islands of the Shepherds up out of the sea with a rope. His footprints, still to be seen on Emae, testified to this. Likewise, pottery sherds found on the various islands were witness to the existence of Maui's wife, Lei Mauitikitiki, who had thrown a water-bottle in anger, breaking it.

Other lesser spirits were many. Each chief had at least one in his dominion that dwelt in a particular cave, a hole in a rock or tree, or in the sea. Most of these took the form of a snake, crab or shark - even a whale.

Each chief or his sacred man could go to his own spirit's place and leave a food offering so that the spirit would make fruitful the harvest or make some feast or war successful. These spirits could also kill a person if some of his food scraps were placed there instead of an offering.

Death was the beginning of a journey to the spirit world. The spirit travelled under the sea to Point Tuki-tuki on south-west Efate. In the first stage of the underworld the spirit encountered a hostile spirit who tried to cut open his head with an axe. The dog sacrificed after a chief's death was meant to drive off this spirit so that the chief might enter unharmed. This first stage, Pokasi, was similar to earthly life. Only a sacred man's spirit could visit it while he was still alive and return to his body safely. Eventually the spirit died again and sank lower to the second stage, one less familiar and less comfortable than Pokasi. Again death took the person to a final stage inaccessible to the living - indeed, this was a descent into nothingness.

At all stages but the last, spirits of the dead were believed to be still in contact to some extent with the living. Past chiefs and one's closest deceased family members, such as one's father or grandfather, in particular, were thought to oversee the doings of the living. Mysterious illnesses were sent by the spirits. Thus sacred men visited the land of the dead and would find the sick person's spirit bound by the ancestors. The victim would die unless he admitted the misdeed for which he was being punished and rectified the situation.

Milne tells us also of the "first yam ceremony" with an amount of detail unusual for him. I will cite this in full as it gives a strong sense of the tenor of spiritual life on traditional Nguna, central to which were the ritual experts as "priests":

This occurs in December. The sacred man of a village goes one evening to his plantation, where he digs all the soil away from one side of a yam until he sees the point of it. Thus he leaves it, and returns to his house. Next morning he rises at cock-crow, digs out the yam and wraps it in all its own leaves, leaving none. No one seeing him, he takes it to a sacred place and there makes a fire. He places the yam upon a grave, holds a pointed stick perpendicularly above it, without touching, and calls upon the natemate (spirits of the dead) to cause some man (naming him), who had behaved badly, to die this year. If the yam broke in two of itself, the man would die; if not, he would not die. The sacred man then broke it with the stick, skinned it, wrapped it up, and left it baking in the oven. Late in the afternoon the yam is taken out in the presence of a large number of men, and cut up into pieces the size of a small button. Each man gets a piece. When one calls out Eta, they all make as if to put the piece into the mouth, but draw it back, saying Ta eto as they move their heads from side to side. This they do four times, then bite the piece into two, spitting out the half in the mouth and saying, "That is for you, Natemate; go and take it." The other half they lay upon the head of the grave. They then go to the farea and call out to the women, who have remained indoors all day. The ovens are then opened, and men and women eat both new and old yams.

(In Don 1927:22)

Though the facts are few, at least it is evident that ritual experts were hereditary title-holders thought to command extraordinary powers. There are indications that each chief had at least one such man among his assistants

while there is only one instance known of a chief who was also a ritual expert in this sense. As priests this category of men performed vital tasks in conducting ceremonies that mediated between the living and the dead and natural forces.

Opting for Christianity

Milne bought land from Tikilaso'a's chief, the latter who was allied with other shore dominions against Matoko'aale and his allies. In about 1860 open hostilities flared between Tanoro[~]po and Tikilaso'a. This was patched up, but they remained in opposition. Then, in 1877, this was exploited by a man of Mere village who murdered another Mere man and then tricked people into thinking that a Tikilaso'a man was responsible. In retaliation Mere's ally, Tanoro[~]po, once more attacked Tikilaso'a. In 1878 peace was made between all of them. Five months after this Matoko'aale and two of his sons attended church at Taloa Mission next to Tikilaso'a, as did the chief of Tikilaso'a and another old enemy of Matoko'aale, chief Tariliu of Pele island.

Later that same year Matoko'aale forbade the traditional killing of pigs at the graveside when a man of his village was buried. He also moved onto Taloa Mission compound and began attending church and school. In compliance with Christian rules, he renounced his marriage to all of his ten wives except the first, the mother of his two sons. The following year he began the work of burning slit-drums and giving sacred articles to Milne and also made his first trip away from Nguna in a European ship, accompanying one

of the other missionaries to Erromanga for the annual Synod.

Certainly Matokoale's sudden change of attitude allowed many people who were already interested in church or school to take it up; but this is not to say that all his people followed him like sheep. Indeed, on returning from Erromanga in 1879, he found that his future successor had been unable to prevent the live burial of an old woman of Tanoro^opo. Moreover, when he himself pursued the murderer to Mere, the men of the village came out armed and defied him to try to take the man.

Nevertheless, the next year he was among the first Ngunese baptized, as was the chief of Tikilaso. At the same time the latter's daughter and Matokoale's younger son were married, Christian-style. No doubt this secured the peace made two years earlier. The first appearance in church that year by two chiefs of remote and, up until then, intractable Utanilagi may indicate that another alliance was formed at the same time.

The production of arrowroot was initiated then, too, although one cannot construe a profit motive for conversion since the profits went toward paying for printing Ngunese translations of the Gospels, primary reading texts and European building materials for churches and schools. Several years elapsed after the first spate of baptisms while the Milne's went on furlough and teachers minded his district. Recruiting went on as before and when some of the most faithful Christians, including Matokoale and his

younger son, went to Emae Island as "Teachers", Mrs. Milne recorded this frustrated observation:

Nguna, generally, is as dark as ever.
Not a single village will take a Teacher,
or even gather regularly for a meeting...

(In Don 1927:240)

The 1880's, though, saw several factors come together. Large plantations on Efate that had been abandoned by 1880 after several years of being plagued by severe hurricanes and attacks of malaria were reactivated and producing £4,000 worth of maize annually by 1882 (Scarr 1967:181). The labour trade hit an all-time high in 1883 but then began to decline due to purely commercial factors (Coates 1970:168). At the same time the sale of firearms was prohibited. Also, in 1882 a new, European-style church was built of imported hardwood at Taloa Mission. But, most important of all, in the early 1890's dysentery, pneumonia, whooping cough and measles decimated every island in the district. Many elderly people died, some of whom were the most powerful and resistant pagans. As for the men in their prime, as of 1889 eighteen Ngunese men had gone with their wives on a £6-10 yearly salary as Christian "Teachers" for other islands in Vanuatu.

To summarize, let me again quote at length from Parsonson for his evaluation of the process of "conversion" of the Ngunese or, as would be more accurate, the "adoption" of Christianity by the Ngunese.

The 'conversion' is, of course, a very complex business, but the long delay compared with, say, Aneityum

is easily explained. One major factor was the sheer excitement of the old life on Nguna which, indeed, even Milne felt. Another was the impact of the Great Migration which drained off many of those who might otherwise have found life at home pretty intolerable and therefore have been more inclined to listen to the missionary and, per contra, returned them hardened swearers and smokers and agnostics, thoroughly opposed to the Christian faith. The absence of any pressing social crisis on the island such as can be traced on Aneitym in 1848-52 was another powerful factor; Christianity did not seem relevant until the late 'eighties when in fact there was a major social crisis beyond the competence of Supe [the preeminent pre-Christian spirit or deity] to alleviate, let alone solve. It was not in fact until after the arms embargo in 1884 that there was any real movement towards Christianity. The political crisis sparked off by the killing of Masikailapalapa was another factor. The universal hatred directed against Matokoale thereafter had a very powerful effect which was, of course, seriously exacerbated by Matokoale's determined espousal of Milne and his rather ill-considered and indeed rash iconoclastic demonstration in Mere in favour of Jehovah. The removal of most of Milne's - and Matokoale's major opponents and, in particular, the death of Tariñoaliu - weak vessel though he was - followed by the virtual collapse of the matrilineal order for want of legitimate successors finally saved the day and the 'conversion' then proceeded apace.

(Parsonson, per letter
31 March 1980)

Summary

In this chapter I have described some social structural features of pre-Christian Ngunese society in general terms and, in more depth, its political structure. The latter was a remarkably closed system of hierarchically ordered,

hereditary titles. Higher-order title-holders were the recipients of certain privileges and exercised considerable power over those subordinate to them. Most importantly, they functioned as mediators or managers of intergroup relations on behalf of the groups which they represented, as Powell has found was the case in the Trobriands (cf. Powell 1960). Similarly, in the spiritual rather than the secular realm, they mediated between the living and the dead through their ritual specialist assistants. In so far as the latter were under the control of the high chiefs, responsibility for the fertility, health and security of the social whole rested with the high chiefs.

Christianity entered this scene in 1870 and certain events which occurred in the succeeding years led to the adoption of it as a "road" in the sense in which Allen (1968, 1972, 1981b) has used this term, that is, as an idiom or ideology by reference to which authority is legitimated. In classic big-man systems such as West Aoba in northern Vanuatu, adherents to Christianity and the cash-cropping economy triumphed over those who supported the ritual graded system and the pig-breeding economy. In the end even those who had achieved the highest rank in the traditional system relinquished that ideology and its lifestyle and, like the others, instead sought formal titles within the newly established church hierarchy (Allen 1981b: 126).

On Nguna, in contrast, although Christianity was eventually embraced by everyone and people other than chiefs were able to enter the church hierarchy, bearers of chiefly

titles and their sons predominated. Moreover, they kept their titles so that the hierarchy of chiefly positions was preserved. Even though the large-scale slaughters of pigs at title-assuming rituals ceased, the chiefly system did not disappear; rather were the two, the chiefly and church hierarchies, entwined.

The contemporary manifestation of this will be discussed in Chapter Four. However, I would like first to pursue other subjects which have figured in this historical reconstruction. The next chapter, then, deals with idioms of kinship and identification, in particular those relating to matriclans.

FOOTNOTES

1. Several hand-written diaries by Milne plus an autobiographical manuscript of some length are held in the Presbyterian Archives in Dunedin, New Zealand, but are rapidly decaying as well as containing not a great deal of ethnographic detail (G.S. Parsonson, per letter, 1978).
2. My informants, however, called this taoa.
3. My translation: "... to make possible relations external to the group through the existence of guarantees of security permitting movement and ensuring hospitality or refuge anywhere."
4. In Land and Politics in the New Hebrides Barak Sope describes nasautonga as it existed elsewhere in central Vanuatu:

On the island of Tongoa, secondary landholders pay nasautonga to the primary owners. The payment of nasautonga is made up of some fruits and products of the secondary owner's garden. If the tenant dies, the descendants can continue to use the land as long as the nasautonga is paid. Traditionally the payment of nasautonga served two purposes: it was a form of rental fee for the usage of the land, and more importantly, it reminded the occupants, and their descendants, that the land they were using did not belong to them.

(Sope 1975:8-9)

5. It is worthwhile to have a look at what Milne learned about naleoana, as well as a similar event, the nata-maté or "Sing Sing".

When a new house is [being built] and before completion, when a child is born, or when a death occurs, and for many other things, [including the erection of slit-drums] what is called naleoana is made. Everyone concerned takes bananas, a yam, or a certain number of pigs. The former two, with sugarcane and coconuts are all piled together and then laid in a row - a bunch of bananas and a yam to each. If it is at the making of a house, pigs are carried around it and their brains clubbed out in front of the door, which is to korokoro the house - i.e., to keep the natématés away...

(In Don 1927:29-30)

Milne's most detailed description concerns burial ceremonies.

When a person dies there is a great wailing for 24 hours. The body is buried inside the house or outside in front, usually within 12 hours after death. The face is painted black and the body is wrapped in calico and mats, each of his friends contributing some. While the body is being lowered into the grave a number of pigs, usually eight or ten, are killed and laid in a row near the grave. The surplus calico and mats not required for putting around the body are put into the grave, besides most of the property of the deceased, and always a weapon - hatchet, club, or gun. The weapon is put in, so that the deceased may be able to defend himself against attack upon the first part of his journey to Hades. With each pig killed at the burial there are placed one yam, one bunch of bananas, and two growing coconuts. The pig thus

sacrificed to natématé (spirit of the dead) is called pélé. One pélé with its concomitants is given to each neighbouring chief. On the 5th, 10th, 50th, and 100th nakupa (day of 24 hours) after death a wailing for the dead takes place. All the adult near relatives of the deceased abstain from food cooked by fire, such as pork and yams, for the full period of mourning.

On the fifth day after death people gather from surrounding friendly villages bringing presents of yams, bananas, sugar cane, coconuts which were laid in separate heaps beside the grave. The grave is then opened and three strings tied around each arm. The buried weapon is taken out, a pig killed, and the presents divided up - the people of each village carrying away as much as they brought. This exchange of presents is called a naleoana, and it is repeated every fifth day until the hundredth day. Pigs were killed at every naleoana - at the burial the largest number; then one or two every fifth day up to the hundredth, excepting that on the thirtieth, fiftieth, and hundredth days the number was the same as on the first day...

(ibid.:27-8)

But the naleoana pales before the natamaté, or "Sing Sing" proper, which takes place when pigs, yams, etc., are plentiful, and which usually lasts for a month, sometimes by day and sometimes in the moonlight. The word natamaté means peace, because one is not possible during fighting; or, making peace with the spirits by offerings. It consists in singing and dancing furiously around a group of drum-images (nakpéa). The men all hold weapons in their hands - most in the right a spear, and in the left a tomohawk; some a bunch of poisoned arrows in the right and a bow in the left; some muskets. All are very gaudily attired. Clad in red or other bright calicoes, with variegated branches and leaves stuck in belt and armlets, with large white cockades on their heads; most of their bodies painted red and some of their faces black - a weird combination of grotesque and picturesque.

There are also a few women and girl dancers, covered from head to feet in bright coloured calico, in their right hands the variegated branch of a tree, and in their left one of different colours. With faces and arms painted red, a black stroke on each cheek converging toward the mouth, and another down the nose, the whole effect is intensified.

(ibid.:31-2)

6. Present day Ngunese say that Ngunese kastom demands that a chief be dead before his successor can be invested. Since the latter must take on the sacred spirit, his predecessor must be dead in order that that force may then animate the new chief. In agreement with this several cases of murder of old, senile or chronically ill chiefs are mentioned by Milne (e.g., in Don 1927:24). His observations suggest that a chief who became weak might be removed forcibly, for example, buried alive. Of course, one of Milne's first priorities was to stop murder; hence, individuals today have no experience of such happenings.

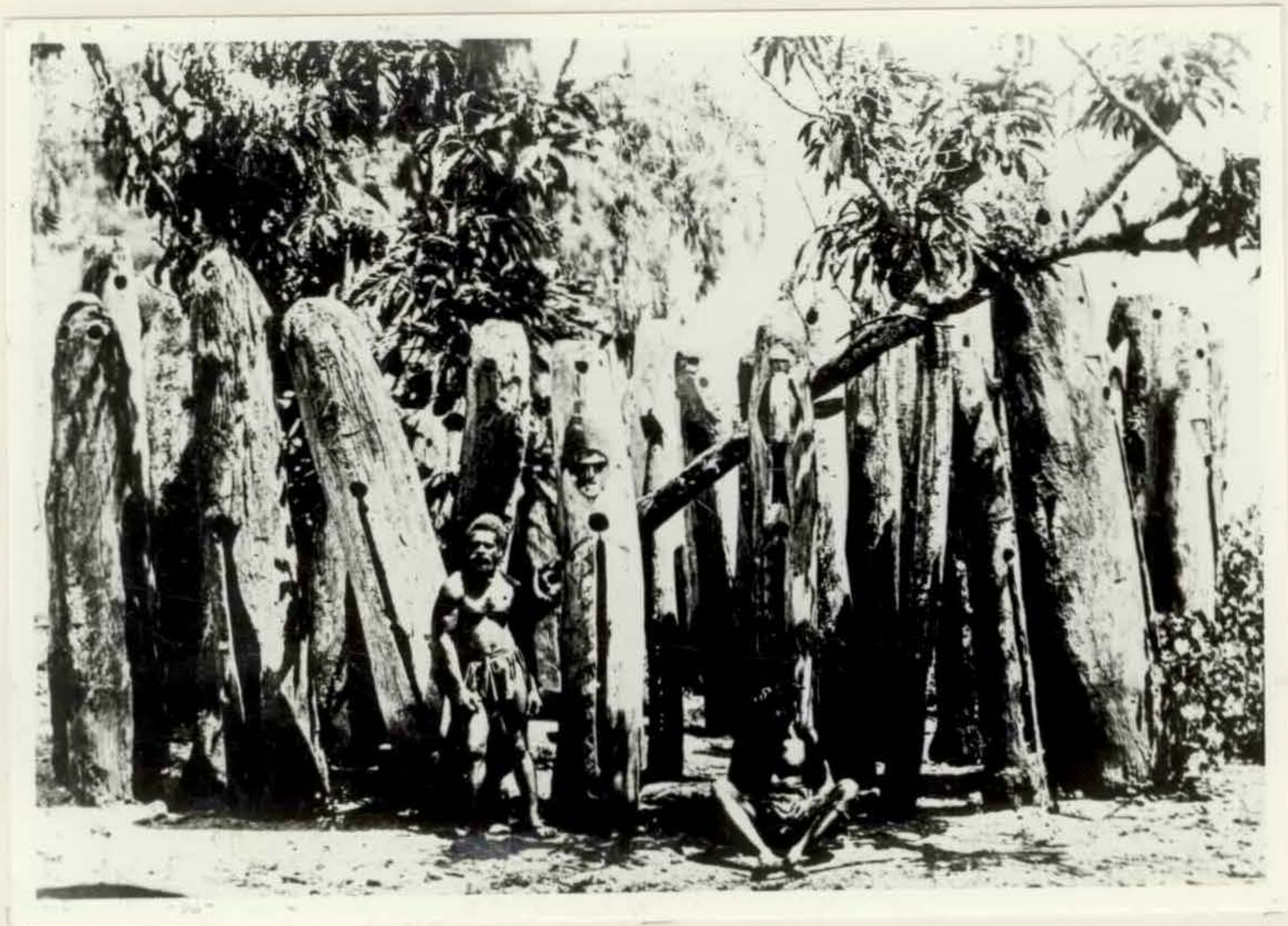


Plate 6. North Efate, c. 1900 - A group of slit-drums. (By courtesy of the Cultural Centre, Port Vila, Vanuatu.)



Plate 7. Utanilagi, Nguna - Slit-drums as depicted in a drawing made during a visit by H.M.S. Pearl in 1875. (By courtesy of the Cultural Centre, Port Vila, Vanuatu.)



Plate 8. A chief from the Havannah Harbour area of Efate, *sketched* in 1906. (By courtesy of the Cultural Centre, Port Vila.)



Plate 9. The ethnographer's local tutors in kastom: (l. to r.) Lui Taatalele, Ronneth Manutukituki, Jack Tavimasoe.

CHAPTER THREE

IDIOMS OF KINSHIP AND IDENTIFICATION

In this chapter I will be concerned with certain terms by which the Ngunese identify themselves and conceptualize their relationships with those with whom they believe they share common bonds of kinship of various sorts. I will first enumerate the several types of names individuals bear and then explore the institution of "adoption". Finally I will show how the abovementioned terms operate as idioms of kinship and identification.

Naming

Every Ngunese individual is in possession of several names. By the time a child is born, or within one month after its birth, two names have been chosen for him or her. On the Sunday nearest its first month it is taken to church and the Pastor or an elder will bless it. If it is the Pastor he will actually baptise the child at that time; otherwise, it is baptised at his earliest convenience.

Of these two names one is generally of a Western type, for example, Fred or Jack, Mary or Alice, and the other is a traditional name. The former is referred to as a name "for the side of Whites" and the latter as a name "for the side of Blacks" or an "island name" in the sense of "traditional" or "native" name. Both, however, are called "small names" (smol nem¹ in Bislama) as distinct from chiefly titles or "big names".

Individuals may choose to go by either name, in accordance with their own personal preferences. However, in the European-dominated contexts of high school or technical school and most town employment, the Western name is almost a necessity. Whites are notoriously incompetent as linguists: they are either incapable of or unwilling to make an effort to pronounce "hard" or "funny" native names. Consequently Ngunese who are heavily involved in such contexts tend to choose to be identified by their Western names in order to avoid embarrassment and inconvenience. Nevertheless, there are many examples of a preference for using the Western name in the home situation where such pressures do not apply. The choice also depends on the reasons why the names were given in the first place. Since parents tend to address their child by the name which is more significant for them, their preference may greatly influence that of the individual concerned.

Like most Western names "island names" unambiguously denote the sex of the bearer. However, an "island name" can also reveal the village of the bearer's father. For, in the past, it is said, each village had a number of names which were peculiar to it alone. Each child was given one of the names that belonged to his or her father's village. Therefore one could tell the village membership of a person's father from that person's name alone. Nowadays, however, this practice has largely disappeared.

Names tend to reoccur from one generation to another as mothers and fathers name their children after favourite brothers or sisters or parents. Very often the surviving

grandparents are given the privilege of naming the newborn. The process is an important one, for the act constitutes a "memory", that is, a memorial to the deceased or long-absent relative. It serves both to honour or show respect to and affection for the namesake and to remind the child, as it grows older, of its origins. Such a name stands as witness to the child's predecessor as a person and also as a member of a particular place, be it another village or another island. Therefore it also signals the child's pre-existent relationship with that other place.

There is a third name which can be considered a smol nem and which is possessed by every person. This is a traditional name the root of which is a term associated with the matriline of the individual's father. Each such term has an ambiguous symbolic relationship with a particular clan. Hence, for example, the child whose namavesi, as these are called, is epu sale (because his father is of the wita clan), will have a namavesi name which entails at least part of that expression, perhaps Kalsale (for a boy) or Leisalewia (for a girl). The relevance of these names will be discussed at some length below.

A fourth mode of naming, like the European smol nem, follows the European tradition. This is the use of one person's smol nem as another's surname. For official purposes, such as letter-writing, bank accounts and school enrolment where one must identify oneself more formally than is necessary in everyday contexts, children, untitled men and unmarried women use their fathers' names as their own surnames. In the same way married women use their

husbands' names. Occasionally one uses one's father's or husband's chiefly title in this manner, but this is not entirely acceptable, and is not a standard practice. It is seen as improper since conferring a title on a man indicates his holding a particular position which cannot be claimed by even his son purely by virtue of his being the title-holder's son, that is, not until and if he is indeed chosen to succeed his father and the title officially passes to him. The smol nem, in contrast, has no such restrictions on it.

The fifth and last kind of name is the chiefly title itself. Ideally the individual only is identified by this after he has been formally invested with it, as I have said. But, in practice, there are many men who actually function as chiefs without benefit of the ritual. In fact, as regards the "big" chief of each village, a full 8 out of 12 have not been formally invested. These men are still referred to by the title, but, for the stranger, the informant will always qualify his statement to point out that this is the case. It may be that the investiture simply has not yet been carried out (which may in itself indicate that some members of the community do not approve of that person's officially taking that title). Alternatively, it may be that the person is admittedly not the right successor, but that he, usually the latter's brother, is "just acting like (it)" for the time being (e olioli ñoli). This is most often the case when the real successor is absent from the island for extended periods, probably working in Vila or tending and living on his lands elsewhere,

should he happen to have a wife particularly well-endowed with land on less heavily populated Efate, for example. Nevertheless, the stand-in does not assume the title by merely acting in that capacity, although for the time being he can enjoy the use of any lands associated with that title and whatever status it imparts.

Kinship Terminology

A sixth mode of reference, if not strictly "naming", is that of kinship terminology. The following brief discussion should be read in conjunction with the diagram and tables in Appendices IIIA, B and C.

Kinship terminology is denoted in the Ngunese language by the word naviosoana. Literally translated this means "the calling", deriving from the verb pioso or "to call" as in to call out to someone. Such terms are by far the most commonly used form of address and of reference (at least when the referee is present).

In analytical terms this body of terms constitutes a Crow system wherein 1) F and FB are classed together and distinguished from MB; 2) M and MZ are classed together and distinguished from FZ; 3) parallel cousins are classed with siblings and distinguished from cross cousins; and 4) patrilateral cross cousins are "raised" a generation (to be classed with F and FZ), while matrilateral cross cousins are "lowered" a generation (to be classed with Ego's child).

Furthermore, the Ngunese system displays the terminological equivalence of FZH with MB, as wawa or aloea, and

Z with MBW, as mimi. This corresponds to the past custom of sister-exchange which is known as lakipiliu. Let us break this word down into its component parts: laki is the verb "to marry", used only in reference to females; and piliu has been translated by the linguist, Schütz, as "to exchange positions". Pi also occurs in other compounds such as the verb pituaki wherein dua-ki or tua-ki means "to give to" and thus pituaki means "to share".

Schütz has called this prefix a "reciprocal" and cites another example of a contrasting pair of base versus base plus prefix: tawiri as in e tawiri a or "he married her", as opposed to ero pitawiri or "they (two) got married" (Schütz 1969b:32). The element of equivalence carried by this prefix is even more clear in the word pitotowo. Totowo alone means "amount, figure; size", but when prefixed by pi it means "equal, even" as when a team in some game or sport has evened the score. The two teams are then said to be pitotowo.

Lakipiliu, then, as "to marry (of women only), exchanging positions", is said to have been a common practice in the past. My inquiries brought to light only one example of real siblings marrying real siblings and several of men marrying women of clans into which their sisters had married. One man of Utanilagi village stated that his mother and father had married through such an arrangement. By virtue of their union this man was to (and did) marry a daughter of his wawa (i.e., his MBD who was also his FZD) and their son, if he chose to do likewise, would marry his MFBSD/FFZSD in turn.

However, this is in no way prescriptive and neither are any of the other statements people make when asked who should marry whom. Some draw a contrast between Ngunese traditional practices and those of the Shepherd Islands to the north. They state that in the latter a man is supposed to marry his actual FZD, while on Nguna this is too "close" a relationship. A "remote" or "distant" FZD, on the other hand, is a potential spouse. I will elaborate on this notion of relative proximity below.

One preferential statement that I recorded was that formerly men married their MBDs. This is said to have been good with regard to property (naveaniana), specifically land, because such a woman is tea aginami, "one of ours". In other words such a woman is the offspring of a man of the same clan as her husband.

A similar reason is used to argue the advantage of a man's marrying his father's pelemata, that is, a woman of the category of FZD (mimi), she being a member of the man's father's clan. The offspring of such a pair are members of the clan of their FF which would allow for the passage of clan-held land rights to members of the same clan in the second descending generation.

Again, though, the actual FZD or MBD is not marriageable. First cousins are considered to be tea sikai maau, "just (or all) one"; therefore they cannot marry each other. Guiart (1963:103) quotes Rev. William Milne's testimony that the Ngunese did not marry their FZD or MBD, but in all probability Milne took this in its primary sense. If that was the case, then he was right, for this is

certainly an incestuous combination in the Ngunese' eyes. Yet, a "remote" FZD is not prohibited and, as I have said, she is an attractive choice with regard to land rights.

In the present the matter of who marries whom is not well-defined. People assert that only the closest family connections are "protected" (pavaigoro) and that free choice is exercised by men and women. My inquiries revealed that in only 9 out of 46 marriages which have taken place in the last 5 years² on Nguna the husband and wife's genealogical relationship could be accurately traced. Taken from the male point of view, these wives were related to their husbands in the following ways:

MMBSD	FZSD
MMBD	FFZDD
	FFZSD (2)
	FFZSDD
	FMFZSD
	FMMZDSD

In each of these cases the man and woman involved had "callings" for one another before marrying, such as mama, "father", and natu, "child". But this is not very significant since everyone has one "calling" or another for any given person. Even strangers can very readily find a mutually satisfactory terminology for each other by reference to clan identity. Taking into account their relative age and sex people can construct new relationships by reference to an immediate family member of one of them. For example, a young man might inform his older, male acquaintance that his own maternal grandfather was of the same clan as the latter and that, therefore, the younger will address him

as pua (MF) and the reciprocal term will then be suuli ("grandchild").

There are no categories of kin term which define the referee as either a potential or a prohibited spouse. Neither are there any terms of the type "wife-givers" versus "wife-takers". Nevertheless, I did record one tantalizing comment made when I asked a very old woman how she and her (late) husband had been related before they married. She stated that she had been namatarau kakana. This could mean "the matriclan of (or for) it", but namatarau also has a more general meaning, as will be explained later in this chapter. I was unable to obtain a clarification of this particular instance since this lady could not recall the clans or even the names of her husband's father and father's father. All one can say is that there are no specific and explicit categories of marriageable people in the contemporary kinship system.

I would like to mention a number of distinctions which are expressed in kin terminology usage. First, people distinguish between "real" relatives and all other relatives using the adjectives wia ("good") or lomau ("true") to describe the former. For example, a man's "real" mother is the woman "from whom he was born (or 'emerged')" (waina e pakilina pae asa), and his "real" brother is a man who has the same mother and father as he - literally, "we (two) have one father and one mother". He refers to his "real" mother as pilagu ("mother-my") or as teete ("mother") while he refers to any other woman of the category of "mother" as teete aginau (aginami) sikai ("one of my (our,

implying his siblings] mothers"). If a number of his "mothers" are present, he will designate his biological mother (or address her) as teete only, but will designate (or address) one of his other "mothers" as teete "so-and-so" using her smol nem. He would never use his "real" mother's smol nem in this (or in any other) situation. Likewise, a man addresses any "brother" as tai, but he designates his "real" brother as taigu ("brother-my") as distinct from tai aginau (aginami) sikai ("one of my (our) brothers"). One should note the differential use of the possessive pronominal suffix as opposed to the possessive pronominal adjective. Other nouns which take the former are categorized (Schütz 1969b:44) as "inalienable", e.g., body parts. The implication of the usage of the suffixed possessive for "real" relatives is that they are in some sense part of Ego whereas other relatives of the same terminological category are not.

The notion of relative proximity (mentioned above), as expressed in the contrast of "near" (maladigi) versus "far" (uvea), is intimately related to this notion of "real"-ness. The limits of "real"-ness are not clearly defined; a person will often say that he is related to someone, but that it is "very close" (maladigi saa), "a bit close" (maladigi kiiki), "a bit far" (uvea kiiki), or "very far" (uvea saa). The first of these descriptions would apply to parallel first cousins, they being the offspring of "real" brothers or sisters. The sort of relationship which is called "very far" - or, rather, very "remote" - falls into one of 3 types: the individuals

concerned have a common ancestor at several generations' remove; they recognize a genealogical connection in which (at least) one of the intermediate links is not a "real" one; or, they recognize a connection based solely on the knowledge that some of their relatives have or had a kinship relation. For example, two men may call each other "brother" because their fathers called each other "brother", even though the former have no idea as to the original rationale for this "calling". This sort of kinship is said to be "by 'line' only", meaning that it is not reliant upon genealogy. In that sense it has much the same emic connotation as the etic phrase "fictive kinship".

Other salient features of Ngunese kinship terminology are: the ways of expressing birth order, relative age and sex; terminological techniques for dealing with the more delicate relationships; and reciprocal terms.

The eldest child of a family is called takalapa and the youngest takariki, which mean literally "size-big" and "size-small". The second child is called takarausia ("size-following") and any other in between is simply "the one in the middle" (tea ni māleoputo). The distinction between elder and younger is expressed through the contrast of matua ("old(er)") versus kiiki ("small(er)").

The importance of seniority is demonstrated in the custom whereby the first child in a family is introduced to the members of its village and those of other villages, particularly its matrilineal kin. This may be done for succeeding offspring, but it is said that it is the most important for the first and is optional for later ones.

This is a relatively informal process in which the child, which may still be in arms, is shown off to the people of each household by its parents. The child is made to shake hands with them. It is from this action that this custom's name, natalovaana veea ("the shaking-hands first"), is derived. (See Plate 10 for an illustration of natalovaana in the context of marriage.)

Usually aware in advance that the child is to be brought to them, people make a small gift either in coin or a mat, yam or even a chicken or a small pig to the child. The parents, or the child itself if it is old enough, make a return prestation of a few "shillings", up to 5 for "line" relatives (those of the categories of MB, MF, MM, etc.). It is said that in the future the child's parents will "help it remember" what it received from whom on that occasion. Therefore at a tender age it becomes involved in the supra-village kinship network that is based on clan affiliation and mutual support. However, I should point out that before this rather ritualized first greeting has been accomplished a child should not go to the house of its wawa (MB). Clearly the MB/ZS relationship is a particularly important one, the MB representing both authority and nurturance of the ZS's own matriline.

Relative sex of "real" siblings is contained in the contrast of tai versus gore. The former means same-sex sibling and the latter opposite-sex sibling. A contrast on the basis of sex is also made between offspring of a woman in the category of mimi (FZ, FZD, FZDD, FFZD, etc.), her daughters being mimi and her sons, mama.

A number of other terms are not sex-specific. As one can see from the diagram, it applies to quite a variety of categories of kin apart from B(m.s.) and Z(f.s.), including "great grandchild" and "great grandparent". In other words those who are separated from Ego by 3 generations, ascending or descending, are terminologically equated with Ego regardless of their relative sex. The relative sex distinction is also dropped for remote "siblings".

Another non-sex-specific term is taguri, which can be literally translated as "my good (or 'dear') friend". This is applied to collaterals one generation further removed from the remote type of tai. Similarly, older folk say that those of the generation above or below that of taguri should be called agutea - which means "one of mine" - but that this "calling" has fallen into disuse. It once marked, as taguri does now, the end of kinship tracing. Beyond that point people say naviosoana e pinovinooi or "the calling disappears" (or, more accurately, "fades away into nothing")³.

This is in marked contrast to the line of relatives who spring from mimi (FZ). The category of mimi crosses generation after generation from woman to daughter such that when it reaches the fifth generation of descendants of Ego's FZ, the term is still mimi. By that stage all other lines of descent have reached the contemporary limits of recognition of kinship: taguri. Note also that once the line of mimi produces a male the terminology shifts so that his offspring, no longer of the same clan as Ego's father, become tai and gore rather than mama and mimi.

Thereafter the "callings" follow the same pattern as do those of descendants of the FZS. They become more "distant" from Ego each succeeding generation, males and females merging in non-sex-specific terms until these "callings", too, "fade away into nothing".

Let me now turn to terminological techniques for dealing with delicate types of relationships: affinal terms and teknonyms. These are the exclusively affinal terms: m̃ona, napuruṃa and tawiana. The former is a term of reference a man has for his parents-in-law and the other consanguineals of his wife in ascending generations. All of these address each other reciprocally as napuruṃa, except for the man's WMB. The latter and his ZDH address each other as tawiana as do the man's brothers-in-law. The equivalence of brothers with one another lies behind informants' statements that a man's wife is "half" (namagovai) or, rather, "partly" his brother's so that the latter could legitimately call her "wife". However, people say that this would not be respectful, so they call each other by their smol nem or by tawiana, although the use of the latter for females is said by some to be contrary to traditional practices.

Once the woman has had a child, though, she and her brother-in-law shift to using teknonyms for each other. The Ngunese speak of this as "calling for the children", magi piakirikiri maga pioso. For example, a woman's HB will refer to her as "the mother of x (the woman's child)" or call her "little mother" (teete kiiki); and she will

refer to him as "little father" (mama kiiki), or "older father" (mama matua) if he is older than her husband.

Women do not have special affinal terms of address for their parents-in-law as men do. From the time a woman marries she refers to and addresses them as tia (FF) and tua (FM), as the children she will have will address them. This is described in general as that, when a woman marries, she "leaves behind" her old "callings" (for the people who become her affines) and "takes up" those (consanguineal terms) by which her husband knows them. Her parents-in-law call her suuli, thereby terminologically equating her with her children. I will have more to say about the significance of this particular term and its use in a later section of this chapter.

One should also note that it is also said that by rights a man could call his MBW his own wife, but that he does not because this is "hard", in the sense of "offensive", just as would be a man's calling his BW his own wife, (as mentioned above). In this case the terms actually used are mimi for the MBW and mama for her HZS (usually qualified by either kiiki or matua depending on the relative age of the MB and ZS).

In-marrying women and strangers are alike in one respect. When a man from a different village or island comes to live in a Ngunese village, he will eventually "join" (liko paki or "cling to") a family, and ties of affection and friendship will be transformed into those of kinship by his coming to be seen as a brother (tai) of one of the men of his new village. He, then, like a wife, is located

In the past a man would show his deep respect for his mother-in-law or father-in-law by stepping off the path and turning his back if he met them. He was to treat them with reverence "as if they were chiefs". Although these extreme avoidance behaviours are no longer observed, he is still expected to give them help and act circumspectly in their presence. If he should be angry with them over something he cannot approach them directly, but sends a third party to them to iron out the problem.

3. The extension of Crow terminology over an indefinite number of generations for Ego's father's matriline, i.e., FZD, FZDD, FZDDD (and so on) are all classed as FZ, and FZS, FZDS, FZDDS (and so on) are all classed as F.

4. The following 3 reduction rules can be seen to be at work in this system (although they do not account for all usages - certain glaring exceptions will be discussed below).

- 1) skewing rule (Crow type 1): MB...→B.
- 2) merging rule: $\sigma^{\uparrow}B... \rightarrow \sigma^{\uparrow}...$, and $\varphi Z... \rightarrow \varphi...$
- 3) half-sibling rule: FS→B; MS→B; FD→Z; MD→Z.

In conflict with the second principle of reduction, in some instances the child of tai is taguri and in others it is natu. This is a result of the polysemous nature of the term tai. As I explained above, in its most specific sense tai means "same-sex sibling"; but it is also used for "line"-mates with no known genealogical connection to Ego and for kinsmen in the most general sense, as what might be called a courtesy term. So where tai is understood to mean a remote relationship, the child of tai will be taguri,

and where tai is understood to mean a sibling(-like) relationship, the child of tai will be natu. These two meanings of tai are so different that the Ngunese speaker has no difficulty knowing which term would appropriately follow for "child of tai".

Also, the differentiation of "sibling" into tai versus gore is not uniform. Note these usages:

- 1) FZSS/D are both tai for a female Ego, but a male Ego makes the distinction: FZSS = tai; FZSD = gore.
- 2) FZDSS/D are both tai for a female Ego, but a male Ego makes the distinction: FZDSS = tai; FZDSD = gore.

I have not elicited kin terms from enough informants to generalize on these differences, although the variation would seem to depend on the sex of the speaker, males making the relative-sex distinction while females do not. However, another possibility suggests itself when one looks at the terms elicited by Guiart (1963:105) approximately 25 years ago. There one finds that the relative-sex distinction has been made by the (male) informant for the remote "sibling", i.e., FFM and MFM are gore while FFF and MFF are tai. Yet my informants, male and female alike, classed all 4 of these together, as tai. In other words, the relative sex distinction for remote categories of tai seems to be disappearing - although why this should be so is not at all clear to me.

A number of other incongruous usages crop up, e.g. MBCC is tai (m.s.) versus suuli (f.s.). Having cross-checked this usage with several men I can only surmise

that there are additional principles of discrimination operating which have yet to be identified.

In the case of MZSC and MZDC one would have anticipated that the latter would have been pelemata for a male Ego (as a child of his gore). However, the response, surprisingly, was natu for both MZSC and MZDC for male and female Ego alike. Apart from possible error on the part of the interviewer or the informant - which I am quite confident is not involved in this case - this may be attributable to a divergence between ideal and practice whereby the "correct" terms are replaced in practice by terms which are felt by the people involved to be more appropriate to the character of their relationship. On various occasions people distinguished between the right term for a person of a certain category and that actually used. One of these examples concerned a man and his pelemata: if the MB and ZC are very close, the former might address the latter as natu in lieu of pelemata. Whether or not the reciprocal used would then be mama rather than wawa, I am not certain.

It is also important to note that there are often alternative means of categorizing any particular person. A very intensive survey of actual usage patterns would enable one to define the points at which people begin to classify more genealogically remote relatives according to more general principles. Two examples of this spring readily to mind: one male informant stated that his MBSD was rightly his tai, but that she called him pua because he was of the same matriclan as her actual MF (pua), and

therefore he referred to and addressed her as his suuli, the reciprocal of pua; second, one female informant gave the term for her FZDSD as tai, but added that this person actually called her teete (M) because the informant happened to be of the same matriclan as the other woman's actual mother. Such identifications are so compelling that they override the terminology which is based on the individuals' traceable genealogical connection.

The Matriclan

The most fundamental or primary element in personal identification is the matriclan, exemplified by the appearance of clan emblems on many headstones in Nguna's graveyards (see Plate 11). These totemic groups, called nakai-naga, are said to be a human invention (although inspired by the ancestors). Two stories tell how certain chiefs called their people together and assigned each person to a clan in accordance with whatever object he or she had brought - be it octopus, stone, breadfruit or fish, and so on - for the feast. One of these stories tells how this was effected on Nguna by two Ngunese chiefs, while the other, first recorded by Guiart in the 1950's, gives the credit to two or three Efate chiefs and locates the event on Efate uniquely (see Appendices IVA and B). Nevertheless the two accounts agree on the process by which clans originated and the purpose for which they were created. Their *raison d'être* is given as the reduction of a disastrously high level of inter-group hostility and killing. With the establishment of clans based on a mutual-

support or friendship ethic, the traveller or shipwrecked canoeist would find safe refuge with people of his clan in different villages or islands (since this institution is recognized through central Vanuatu).

Today matriclan membership is widely dispersed. There are 19 clans on Nguna, 3 of which have several subdivisions (see Table 3), and 3 more exist in memory only as they have no living representatives. Any of these may be found on Efate and all of its off-shore islands and as far north as Epi.

The distribution of clans in any given village on Nguna is fairly wide. In Tikilasoia 13 of the 16 clans are represented. As Tables 4a and 4b show, there is quite a disparity in total number of residents with respect to their clan membership and, consequently, there is a large difference in terms of total numbers of matriclan members propagated in that village according to the genealogies I compiled.

While the nuclear family is the unit of labour for everyday sorts of endeavour and the extended family is that for larger jobs such as clearing fields and planting yams, weddings and funerals call for the participation of one's clan-mates. This will be elaborated on later in this chapter.

Before turning to the role of matriclans, let me first consider some of the semantic aspects of nakainaga. The main root-word is kai, na being a very common noun-prefix and naga possibly being a form of the plural marker maga. Kai denotes the skinlike fibrous layer immediately

Table 3. List of Matriclans of Nguna and English Terms

Ngunese	English
{ noopa	"native cabbage"
{ noasi	
ñaalu	wild yam
wita (tau)	(white) octopus
wita (loa)	(black) octopus
naadi	banana
karau	large clam
napetau	breadfruit
naika	fish
kukusue	chiton
natale	taro
naita	species of tree
nawii	yam
vatu	stone
napaga	banyan tree
naniu	coconut
ñakadu	species of taro
neaka	species of yam
pero	species of mushroom
toa	chicken or fowl

Table 4a. Numbers of Matriclan Members Originating from Tikilasoā as per Genealogies.

Matriclans	Male	Female	Total
noopa	52	59	111
maalu	21	29	50
wita	33	26	59
naadi	9	10	19
karau	3	4	7
napetau	2	0	2
naika	13	11	24
kukusue	6	3	9
natale	1	0	1
naita	3	8	11
nawii	10	9	19
vatu	8	14	22
12 clans represented	Total 161	173	334

Table 4b. Numbers of Matriclan Members Counting only Married Adults Permanently Resident in Tikilasoā.

Matriclans	Male	Female	Total
noopa	9	12	21
maalu	6	7	13
wita	13	9	22
naadi	2	3	5
karau	1	3	4
napetau	2	0	2
naika	1	3	4
kukusue	5	1	6
natale	2	0	2
naita	0	1	1
nawii	1	4	5
vatu	1	2	3
napaga	1	0	1
13 clans represented	Total: 44	45	89

under the outer skin of a yam, which may be one of several different colours.

In order to identify the type of yam, one first considers all the other indicative characteristics, e.g., the colour of the leaves and vine of the plant, and the size, shape, length, outer texture and colour of the yam itself. Then the colour of kai, revealed by scratching off a small patch of the outer skin with one's fingernail, constitutes the definitive last factor in correct identification of the yam. (As there are at least some sixty named kinds of yams, this is no mean accomplishment.)

One elderly man suggested that members of the various clans are distinguishable in terms of characteristics such as humility or the inability to lead, to make decisions and speak for one's people as a chief must do. However, this thought was not confirmed by other individuals when speaking in non-directed contexts.

Neither do clan members share other features found in other totemic systems. They observe no taboos of avoidance or abstention with respect to their particular totems. Nevertheless, in a vague sense different nakainaga are thought to constitute different types of people whose distinctiveness is passed on from generation to generation just as is that of the various types of yam.

Matriclan Ancestries

There are a number of stories, called nariwota, each of which tells of the origin of a particular matriclan, that is, how its representatives came to be located on

Nguna. Each begins with a specific woman, usually from Efate or, perhaps, from Moso or Leleppa. It traces, stage by stage, the moves made by that woman, her husband and family, from village to village or between different islands. Sometimes this entails changes in generation, following the woman's daughter to her husband's place and their daughter, in turn, as she marries and goes to live and bear children in yet another place. Reasons may be given for these moves, for example, population pressure that creates land shortage and hostility among the indigenes. In this way a nariwota recounts the coming of a particular matriclan to a particular village from woman to woman to woman. However, when referred to in order to support a land claim, the story is only related in this fashion until the matriclan appears in the claimant's village. After that the claimant can establish his right to use that clan's land through men or women; in other words, from that point on a land-claim can be based on inheritance from non-matrilineal kin.

The coming of certain chiefs from outside Nguna is recounted in tales of the same name, but of somewhat different structure (for an example, see Appendix V). In these the arrival of the first bearer of a particular high chiefly title locates that title and the matriclan that originally held the right to bear it in a certain village. Then follows a chronicle of succession as the title passed from generation to generation, from uncle to nephew at first, and then, in the last stages, out of the matriclan and to the chief's son instead. Thenceforth each title went to a

man of a different clan with each successor, up to the present day. Out of approximately 22 "big" chiefly titles only 4 - one in each of Tikilasoā, Raitoa (now Woralapa), Farealapa and Unakapu - are portrayed as truly "native" to Ngunā in their nariwotas.

There is no explanatory story or nariwota for a full 10 others. However, this could well be due to any of a number of factors: depopulation; the exodus of young men to Fiji and Queensland; and, later, the absence of many for purposes of education and missionization as well as cash labour. Each of these contributed to a severe breakdown in inter-generational communication which resulted in the loss of such "histories" and much more cultural information.

The remaining 8 titles have off-island origins as related in their nariwota. In each of these an important element is the sacred object, usually a stone of some sort that was brought by the new arrival or arrivals. This was the seat of their clan's spirit. The Ngunese say that this spirit could kill and did so in the form of one of several kinds of thing, from a crab to an octopus to an eel. Only a high chief and his sacred man or priest could safely approach this supernatural animal on its own territory, i.e., on the taboo place where its home - the sacred stone - was located. Unfortunately there are no indications as to how such spirits were related to the overarching supreme god, nor how the clan, its chiefship and its sacred spirit were interrelated conceptually.

Nevertheless, today many of these taboo places are still known and held in differing degrees of awe, fear or, at least, suspicion. Particular stones are pointed out to strangers as ones which must not be touched lest a serious, sometimes fatal, illness characterized by swelling of the belly or genital region should befall them. This unique malady is associated with a sacred or supernatural power that high chiefs or sacred men ideally have, called nata-kara.

When faced with a patient suffering from unusual or particularly persistent symptoms, local curers who are also experienced in the job of contacting the ancestors while asleep, that is, in spirit, not in body, often "discover" that the illness is either a punishment for an error of trespass on such a taboo place or the direct result of contact with such sacred powers as are present at that site. The successful cure requires that the curer intercede with the ancestors on the patient's behalf and that the latter should swear never to repeat the act and make reparation, if possible.

This is a reality quite apart from that of the Ngunese' Christian belief; yet the spirits and ancestors conceptually co-exist with God. The two realms are complementary, not conflicting. Hence, one can speak of the experience of a spiritual bond between the individual and the place considered to be the original settlement of his matriclan without reference to Christian beliefs. The nariwota portray a past situation in which one matriclan in each dominion had special status by virtue of its claim to being founders of

it or, at least, its first occupants. This matriclan was dominant in so far as it held sole rights to the position of "big" chief for that dominion and, probably, ownership rights over the land within it. Whether the latter were purely nominal or more "real", in the sense that the "owning" matriclan controlled usufruct rights, one cannot say. Yet, what the Ngunese call the annual "kastom tax" - one or two dollars to be paid into the high chief's "purse" by every person of a different dominion who uses land in that chief's dominion - points to the latter possibility.

In the present the idiom of ownership focusses on the clan - for example, a man will explain that a certain plot of land belongs to "the stones", i.e., the yatu matriclan. Nevertheless, he will go on to say that the person who is working that plot now is doing so (legitimately) because it was his father's and his father's before him. In other words, the strongest acceptable claim to rights of cultivation is patrilineal inheritance. The bulk of a man's lands come from the equal division between him and his brothers of his father's plots, apportioned before the latter's death. Daughters may or may not receive anything in this distribution. But they are given one plot (or more, if possible) on marrying. This plot is known as her ṗaumaaso and usually has bearing coconuts on it. It is hers to use for the rest of her life and then for her children and their children and so on. In the case of an out-marrying woman, though, this plot may revert, after one or two generations, to descendants of the woman's male siblings who remained

in her (and their) natal village after marriage and thereafter functioned as on-site caretakers of her land(s).

Note how the woman's inheritance, like certain personal names described above, constitutes a memorial to her parents, and simultaneously, for her children, a recognition of the place of origin of their grandparents. The latter's nurturant role is embodied in that plot of land to which one comes occasionally to supplement one's primary resources. This recognition is also made in the context of marriage when the heads of the pigs baked by the bride's family for their own consumption are "sent back" or "returned" to the natal village of the bride's mother and the bride's grandmother respectively. The Ngunese expression for a baked head is naṣau maaso. Not purely one-way nurturance, then, is suggested here, but reciprocity, or return to the grandparents by their newly married granddaughter of the security (ṣaumaaso) passed down to her from her mother, and coming originally from the latter's mother. As with other prestations made in connection with a wedding, however, this is in no sense a payment to cancel a debt - it is, rather, an expression of respect and a renewal of commitment to an ongoing inter-generational relationship, the "line of women".

Returning to the issue of land, I must make it very clear that although rights to cultivate land are transmitted patrilineally, rights to "ownership" - meaning the more enduring rights of control over or determination of land-use - are defined in terms of matriclan membership. This fact was brought home to me by an unpleasant encounter I

had with a Ngunese fellow of violent temperament who accused me of collecting nariwota from the knowledgeable (and, in his view, gullible) old men in order to steal Ngunese land. As he put it, I was compiling these accounts for other Whites - presumably men! - who would come back and turn them against the locals, i.e., use them as proof that many people are resident on land that is not "traditionally" theirs, as defined by the nariwota. This implies that the Ngunese regard clan affiliation as a strong, historically justifiable claim to land rights. This man's anxiety may be a measure of the extent to which contemporary residential practices diverge from the (probably idealized) view of traditional land tenure practice.

Likewise, there is a significant disjunction between the ideal of exogamy for matriclans and the occurrence of intra-clan marriage. In the 1930's this was not the case, in the opinion of Rev. William V. Milne (who was born on Nguna and succeeded his father there). Guiart quotes his reply to queries from Dr. Arthur Capell of the University of Sydney as follows:

A man, or a woman, must marry outside his, or her own totem. A man may marry either in or outside his own village; it does not matter so long as it is outside his own totem. A man may marry anyone he likes so long as the woman does not belong to his totem, nor is a blood relation, however far removed.

(Guiart 1963:103)

Guiart himself found through his own research in 1958-9 that,

The above statements were entirely confirmed in the course of my own fieldwork. Marriage is exogamous with respect alike to known kin, the matrilineal namatarao, and the namayisi or father's matrilineal "totem".

(ibid.:103-4)

However, the most recent fact of the matter is that intra-clan marriages are taking place. In Tikilaso alone there are two such matches, both of which involve members of the wita clan. Such marriages are also occurring elsewhere and in other clans, at a very low frequency. Yet the attitude is still that it is not a good thing. It is seen as problematic in terms of its consequences for the definition and regulation of interpersonal relationships.

Before a couple marries, the man and the woman, if they are of the same clan, address each other and each other's family members by the appropriate kin terms. But when they marry, any given pair of these relatives finds itself in a different relationship, so that these individuals must come to some agreement as to which set of terms they will choose to use for each other - the old or the new? People feel that some "callings" would dominate over others, sometimes the old prevailing over the new, affinal term, but in other cases vice versa. For instance, the bride would most certainly have to use the affinal term of respect for her mother-in-law although she had previously called her sister or aunt. On the other hand, if the marriage resulted in a straight reversal of terms, as when a woman whom the bride used to call mother had become the bride's classificatory child and the bride her mother, the

original relationship, by its very nature and, as a result, through its terminology, would persist. Some cases, of course, would be less easy to decide to the mutual satisfaction of the participants. Hence, marriage between clan-mates is described as something which makes the kinship terminology "terribly confused" (e pinovinooi paki tea saa). We can regard this as a shorthand way of saying that intra-clan marriage confuses the definition of many people's relationships with one another by transforming the consanguineal into the affinal.

Nevertheless, one bears with such decisions when necessary, for it is a constantly reiterated ethic that "we marry for love", and as love is God-sent, one must not try to interfere with it nor try to prevent the satisfaction of a couple's desire to marry.

A last point on nakainaga per se concerns their size. People have fairly accurate notions of how many people there are in any given clan at present and, relative to the recent past, which clans are on the increase and which on the decrease. Those whose clan is particularly small express some dismay at this state of affairs; for they say that a small clan is incapable of accomplishing "big jobs", referring to such matters as weddings.

While these may be seen as pragmatic advantages and disadvantages of clan-size, other cultural notions concerning reproduction and continuity are involved as well. I would like to illustrate these through a consideration of an institution which I will call "adoption".

Adoption

The Ngunese person is expected to marry and have children. Those few who do remain single long after reaching physical maturity to some extent never attain full status as adults. They often appear rather alienated from their fellows and in many cases they are attributed with some characteristic, such as a physical deformity, or a negative personality trait, or a violent temper, which suffices to explain their failure to marry. People tend to feel that such individuals really wanted to marry, like everyone else, but were unable to find partners given their unfortunate situation. Where no such explanation can be reasonably constructed, people express some bewilderment as to why someone would actually choose of his or her own volition to remain single. The questions, "Why would anyone want to be all alone?" and, "Why wouldn't he/she want a helpmate?" are tinged with suspicion, as if these were "natural" human desires whose contravention suggests disturbing things about the nature or the normalcy of the person who chooses not to marry (and, likewise, the woman who is unable to conceive).

The accepted, "normal" pattern, similarly, is for the individual to desire children. Informants offer reasons or conscious motivations that fall into two different categories: the practical and the emotional or ideological. In terms of the first, people say that they want children so that they will be their helpers. In keeping with the sexual division of labour, a woman tends to want at least one daughter and a man at least one son. However, both

husband and wife want sons in order that they may take over their parents' land and be their providers in their old age. Similarly a daughter is expected to be both her parents' strength in a more personal way when they become feeble and must be helped to dress, eat and move about.

The second type of motivation concerns the notion that it is good to have children per se. Nevertheless, it is also seen as a good thing to abstain from intercourse after childbirth until the last child can walk, in order to space births in a manner most beneficial to both mother and children. Modern contraceptives are used today in place of abstention to achieve this effect as well as to prevent further pregnancies indefinitely, but they are only applied for the latter purpose when the couple already has a healthy family of what they consider an acceptable size, say, 4 to 6 children.

The significance of children is most clearly seen in the description of the person who has none. This individual is said to feel narogokitesaana which literally translates as "feeling bad" or "bad feeling" and is used where one might say that a person feels saddened or hurt (for example, after being the victim of an unprovoked insult or betrayal of trust), depressed, or disappointed. In the context of childlessness, narogokitesaana refers to emotional distress caused by the fear that one will have no one to "take (or stand in) one's place". It is the continuity of personal existence through one's offspring that hangs in the balance, and this is profoundly disturbing to the individual.

Most couples, then, who have either had no children or have had only abnormal, still-born or short-lived children after several years of marriage, will seek to adopt a child. So also do those who have only girls, and, to a lesser extent, those who have only boys. Consequently adoption is very common.

In this kind of adoption the clan identity of the child is not of prime importance. But since the adopting couple's first choice is generally the wife's sister's child, the adoptee is usually already a member of the wife's clan as well as being the couple's classificatory child. On the other hand, if no such child is available, they will appeal to another relative, the husband's sisters or brothers or an aunt (mimi) or uncle (wawa) of either spouse; so in one out of every 4 or 5 cases, the child eventually chosen will not be of either the husband's or the wife's clan.

The process of adoption is referred to as dape lua. to "take out". People say that a very young child, i.e., a two or three-month-old baby, does not yet know its parents as such, while one somewhat older has already learned to distinguish them (from others) as his parents. There is a general feeling that the younger a child is when adopted, the better. This has to do with the strength of the emotional tie between the parents and the child, and the problem of controlling the child. One salient feature of residence is that a great number of children occupy different households over the course of a year. A large proportion of the instances of this is accounted for by the fact

that these are adoptees who are alternating their residence between their original parents' and adoptive parents' homes. Furthermore, they do so of their own volition, which freedom provides insurance against mistreatment of the child. However, it can also cause the parents considerable trouble, for, by the time the child has reached the age of 8 or 9, he has learned how to use this liberty as a tool in the manipulation of one or both sets of parents. If he behaves badly and his (adoptive) parents become angry, he may go and visit his other parents. If the same happens there, or if he simply tires of staying there, he may return to the first household. This makes discipline of the child a difficult matter for both sets of parents. Particularly if the child repeatedly flees from the adoptive parents it may be rumoured that they are not good parents and they then run the risk of forfeiting the child, of having to restore it to its original home permanently.

This type of adoption is effected by means of a prestation of food (a few nakoau or "coconut puddings") and mats (from 3 to 15 in the cases for which I have the specifics) and a small amount of cash. An adoption, like a marriage, is only considered complete when this has been presented and the child (like the bride) has been officially delivered to its new parents. Up until then the adopters may be anxious lest the agreement come to nothing. Sometimes the original parents are slow to let the child go, and he or she begins school without this prestation having been made. Then the prospective adopters may buy things such as clothes for the child and contribute to paying the

school fees and expenses in order to prove that they are willing and able to take on parental responsibilities for the child. If this state of affairs goes on for a few years, the adopters will feel increasingly angry, suspecting that the child's parents are reneging and, moreso, never did intend to go through with it. Should that prove to be the case, there is nothing to be done aside from trying to get a partial cash compensation for one's expenditures made in good faith. Fortunately this is not a common occurrence, for it creates extremely bitter feelings. Such behaviour between close kin is deemed insufferable, and the bulk of such adoptions do involve closely related people.

Variations in the size of payments reveal an interesting paradox. When the donor-parent is a close relative, i.e., the brother or sister of the adoptive husband or wife, people say that only a token, minimal payment is required because those involved "are all one" (tea sikai maau). Being "one" or being "the same" implies both that it is very hard for the child's parents to refuse the request to let their child go and that any payment is inappropriate because in a sense the child is already the child of the adopters. Yet, at the same time, the adopters are sensitive to the love of the parents for the child and empathize with their feelings about losing it - which, by the way, are said to be experienced even when the child is to remain in its natal village after adoption. Consequently they acknowledge and show their gratitude for this sacrifice on the part of the child-giving couple by making a

substantial payment. In fact - and here is the paradox - this theoretically unnecessary payment by close-kin adopters tends to be far greater than that given by adopters who are less closely related and hence are expected to make a relatively hefty payment. While it may be true that more distantly related adopters are less sensitive to the feelings of the original parents, the size of their payment is probably more so the result of the fact that their relationship with the donor-parents is qualitatively different from that obtaining between close kin - they are less involved in fewer social contexts and therefore less interdependent.

Far less common than this type of adoption (described by the phrase dape lua) is that by which the "line" of a child is changed. This phenomenon is called nawasiana, although the noun form occurs only rarely. More often it comes into the conversation when a child is referred to as tea pasiana ("one 'adopted'") or as one that someone else has pasia ("'adopted' him/her"). In other contexts pasia may be translated as "to break off" (as of a long object, e.g., a tree branch), or "to break apart". The phrase pakotoyi lua is also used sometimes to refer to this. Pakotoyi is used as "to buy, purchase" and lua means "out, away (from)". However, kotoyi alone means "to cut" of a long object that one cuts part off with a knife. The cognate term kokoti means to cut coconut pudding of a gooey consistency into arclike wedges, separating one at a time from the whole pudding. Hence one can see that such "adoption" is conceptualized in terms of the cutting off or breaking off of some part from a larger whole. The central

image of the branch features, too, in the ceremony by which it is effected. Although I have never witnessed this sort of ritual transaction, descriptions of it are of the following outline: the child's mother holds a branch of the napilelu (?) tree and, after breaking off a leaf, hands it and the child to the adopter; or, alternatively, the two adults might exchange tokens of their clans, for example, the child's mother might hand her over with a small fish (the adoptive woman being of the fish clan) and the adopter replying with leaves of taro (the child's mother being of the taro clan). A prestation of the same sort as mentioned above, i.e., a few dollars, mats and coconut puddings forms part of this ritual action.

The most important point about this type of adoption is that it involves only female adoptees (usually, but not necessarily, small children), whereas at least half of the individuals adopted for other reasons are male. Furthermore, adoption for "line" need not entail a change of residence of the adoptee. It may not even create a new set of parents. This is the case when a man makes a ritual payment to his wife in order to "buy out" one of his own daughters. From then on the girl is a member of her father's clan rather than that of her mother's as she was from birth and her children, too, will be members of her father's clan. In other cases the child will have her "line" changed and also be adopted in the usual sense, meaning that she will go to live with new parents. In this instance two payments will be made, one for each of

the two reassignments of identity. These may be made simultaneously or separately, some months apart.

At this point I should add that where a woman from foreign parts, i.e., outside the boundaries of the institution of totemic matriclans, marries a Ngunese man, she too is adopted (in the ḡasi sense) by her husband and his "line"-mates or by a very close friend (of his) and the latter's clan. She may also be re-named with a local smol nem, this being conferred upon her by the high chief of her husband's village. Thus she becomes a member of the latter and is duly enrolled in the village membership register, held by that chief.

The last type of adoption occurs when an individual feels compelled to send back a replacement for him or herself to his or her natal village. This is spoken of in terms of sending one's child - preferably a female who will reproduce - "to take one's place" or "to stand in one's stead". This is not, however, a commonplace procedure and, furthermore, it is most often done by males who have chosen, for whatever reason, not to live in their fathers' village.

The institution of adoption, in summary, is seen as serving to prevent the disappearance or extinction of both the individual as a person and as a member of a particular clan. While the former concerns the continuity of "blood", as the transmittable aspect of individuality, the latter involves the notion of "line", as the transmittable aspect of group identity; and women, as the producers of human-kind, are essential for both.

However, let it be clearly understood that there is no naiveté about the male role in procreation, for a man's children are known as those of or having his "Blood" in consequence of the part he plays in conception. Yet, in terms of the substance - similar, but different from "blood" - which is passed by women and referred to as "line", a man's "line" is said to "finish", "end" or "come to rest" with him. As one man said to me, "I shall die, but my sisters will pass on the 'line'." As the phrase goes, "Women reproduce on behalf of their brother" (magi goreda payakawora). The term for a man's sister's child (male or female), then, is pelemata which derives from pele, "belly" or, sometimes, "genital region", and namata which has many meanings, among them being "eye; face", "door" and, metaphorically, "source, origin". In contrast, a woman's sister's child is terminologically her "child".

Therefore a woman not only reproduces, as wife, "for her husband" (magi anawoota), but she does so, at the same time, as sister, for her brother, thereby ensuring the survival of his "line", his clan identity carried by her children. Given this, plus the fact that chiefly titles are understood to have followed the matriline in the past, and the spiritual association between each clan and its totem and sacred spirit (as described above), I would propose that clan identification was in the past, and still is today, the predominant mode of identification.

Namatarau

To explore this further one must consider the concept, namatarau, which is expressed in Bislama as famli or, in English, as "family". In some contexts this word is used as synonymous with nakainaga; but, in others, a distinction is made between them, as in, "If it weren't for nakainaga, there would be no namatarau." Namatarau, then, refers to all those people who are related to Ego by virtue of "line", that is, all those who were born of any "lines" with which Ego identifies. This includes all one's consanguineals as well as those who belong to the matrilineal clans of each of one's most immediate family members, i.e., those of the clans of one's father, one's paternal and maternal grandfathers, oneself (or one's mother), plus that of one's spouse, one's mother's brother's wife, one's siblings' spouses and one's step-parents', if any.

The major cooperative activity performed in the name of namatarau is the wedding. Before a couple may marry they each must have the consent of their families, who are collectively referred to as the two "sides" (taleva dua), the "side of the woman" and the "side of the man", each of which is also called a namatarau. This is first achieved informally in private, but it must also be ratified before the local Pastor and all concerned parties in a public meeting, usually carried out in the Taloa church after the Sunday afternoon service.

All of these people are, to a greater or lesser extent, under obligation to appear at the village of the man or the woman not later than the night preceding the

wedding, although this is somewhat relaxed for those who work in town and must travel back from there. Weddings are often held on Friday, in part to make it less troublesome for them, i.e., so that they need not lose a full day or more of work and can stay over for the weekend, celebrate with their families and friends and then return to Vila on Sunday or early Monday morning.

The choice of whether or not one will come in person to a wedding is one's own, but one can scarcely fail to send a contribution, in the form of money, mats, yams and/or other food or material goods - plates, cloth, and such. If one did, one would jeopardise one's own future endeavours, and probably that of one's siblings and children as well; for one's non-participation is noted and not forgotten. Especially when one is the only available representative of a particular "line" closely related to one of the principals, such as when the groom's mother's father and his brothers are all dead, but one woman in another village is of their "line", that woman will feel under some pressure to appear at the wedding as a stand-in or surrogate maternal grandfather to the groom.

The greatest burden of effort and expense, though, falls on the parents and siblings of the person to be married. The absence of any of them is very conspicuous and could irreparably damage intrafamilial relations; for the nuclear family has a preeminent position as support group. People say that, if they need help, they first ask their brothers and father. The latter might then ask his own brothers on behalf of his son. Likewise the son could

ask his mother, but would be loathe to ask his mother's brothers himself through namatakua. This word usually means "fear", but in this case it could be translated as "shame". To ask something of "those of one's house" is "easy" or "light"; to ask something of "those of outside" is "difficult" or "heavy".

Only after one has approached these close members of one's family would one seek help from other men of one's nakainaga and, after them, from those who are one's age-mates, the latter of whom are especially important for men, most of whom are able to maintain childhood friendships throughout their entire lives in their natal villages.

Namavesi

Having discussed "the line of mothers", let us examine the more limited "line of fathers", that is, namavesi. In his article "Marriage Regulations and Kinship in the South Central New Hebrides", Guiart says that,

The names of namavisi are difficult to obtain, and their meanings, though symbolic, are obscure. They are made up of two words, of which one is usually untranslatable, so that the symbolic association with namatarao is unclear.

(Guiart 1963:102)

His list of these words has been reproduced from that article, along with the corresponding namavesi names. These, gathered in 1958-9, can be compared with those that I compiled (see Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5. List of Namayesi Names (from Guiart 1963:102).

<u>Namayesi*</u>	<u>Associated Namatarao</u>
1. <u>one fakalo</u> (<u>fakalo</u> = to fight)	<u>nowasi</u> (bush vine)
2. <u>epu sale</u> (<u>sale</u> = to drift)	<u>kwita tau</u> (red octopus)
3. <u>nawotu</u> (power)	<u>kwita loa</u> (black octopus)
4. <u>esema fakalo</u>	<u>kusue</u> (rat)
5. <u>mamu wia</u> (<u>wia</u> = good)	<u>naika</u> (fish)
6. <u>earo sale</u>	<u>karaw</u> (clamshell)
7. <u>epena manu</u> (<u>manu</u> = bird)	<u>fatu</u> (stone)
8. <u>asoe liko</u> (bark stripped off but still adhering to a tree)	<u>napataw</u> (breadfruit)
9. <u>leya serey</u> (<u>serey</u> is to cut the roots of a tuber)	<u>natale</u> (taro)
10. <u>talepwatu nearu</u> (<u>nearu</u> = ironwood)	<u>malu</u> (wild yam)
11. <u>mweriki wia</u>	<u>nati</u> (banana)
12. <u>fakalo takpwasi</u> (<u>takpwasi</u> is to cut off branches)	<u>nawi</u> (yam)
13. <u>nawore tafaro</u> (breakers on a reef)	<u>napanga</u> (banyan)
14. <u>wore pule</u> (greatness)	<u>naniu</u> (coconut)
15. <u>esua savi</u> (to sharpen a point, e.g., of a spear)	<u>makatu</u> (arrowroot)

Table 6. List of Namavesi Names Collected in this Study.

<u>Namavesi</u>	<u>Associated Nakainaga</u>
1. <u>one</u>	<u>noopa/</u> <u>noasi</u> (native cabbage)
2. <u>epu</u> (for males) <u>(e)suu</u> (for females)	<u>wita tau/taare</u> (white octopus)
2a. <u>nawootu</u> (males) <u>pilelu</u> (females)	<u>wita loa</u> (black octopus)
3. <u>esema</u>	<u>kukusue</u> (chiton)
4. <u>tasi</u> <u>manu</u> (male) <u>erata</u> (female)	<u>naika</u> (fish - #1) <u>naika</u> (fish - #2)
5. <u>earo</u>	<u>karau</u> (large clam)
6. <u>epega</u>	<u>yatu</u> (stone)
7. <u>asoe</u>	<u>napetau</u> (breadfruit)
8. <u>erau</u> <u>leia</u>	<u>natale masakivaualoara</u> (taro - #1) <u>natale masakivautau</u> (taro - #2)
9. <u>talepaata</u> (male) <u>malala</u> (female)	<u>malu</u> (wild yam)
10. <u>meriki</u>	<u>naadi</u> (banana)
11. <u>emako</u> <u>kayika</u> (male) <u>nawaa</u> (female) <u>uloa</u> <u>tetea</u> <u>vakalo</u> (male) <u>tukurau</u> (female)	<u>nawii megevelolo</u> (yam #1) <u>nawii</u> (yam #2) <u>nawii mature</u> (yam #3, green type) <u>nawii mature</u> (yam #3, red type) <u>nawii solea</u> (yam #4)
12. <u>nawore</u> (male) <u>magaleke</u> (female)	<u>napaga</u> (banyan)

Table 6. List of Namayesi Names (cont'd.)

<u>Namayesi</u>	<u>Associated Nakainaga</u>
13. <u>woore</u>	<u>naniu</u> (coconut)
14. <u>esua</u>	<u>makadu</u> (species of taro)
15. <u>mele</u>	<u>neaka</u> (species of yam)*
16. <u>tele</u>	<u>naita</u> (species of tree)
17. <u>elau</u>	<u>pero</u> (mushroom)*
18. ?	<u>toa</u> (chicken)*

* - extinct (mayunuvunu)

As to the purpose of these rather cryptic phrases, Guiart notes that on Leleppa,

... informants offered a simple and probably valid explanation for namavisi, namely, as a means of avoiding the mention of nakainanga names, which was formerly forbidden, in greeting a newcomer.

(Guiart 1963:103)

In terms of the analytical meaning of these terms, he explained that,

... anything transmitted patrilineally from one generation to the next is called namayisi... Thus if a man is one, and addressed as such, this indicates that his father is a member of the nowasi (bush vine) namatarao. The namayisi is not strictly patrilineal, except for one generation, since it links a man to his father's maternal namatarao.

(ibid.:102)

The significance of namavesi is most clear in the context of address. It was explained to me that, if a man called another male by the latter's namavesi name, this was tantamount to saying that the latter was his child. This happens when the former is of the same "line" as the addressee's father. People say that the one is the other's "child" because the former's "line" beget him (pesi a). Pesi means to scoop out a hole in the earth in order to plant or harvest (yams). Pesivesi, which suggests repeated or continuous action, is translated as "to beget". By using this metaphor of cultivation for the male role in procreation (which, by the way, is also used for starting a fire (pesi nakapu) by rubbing a grooved stick with a

pointed one, an action said to have formerly been a solely male activity) the speaker invokes all the males of his "line". In doing so he makes a two-fold assertion: first, he claims responsibility for producing that person on behalf of all the male members of his matriclan; and, second, he asserts the legitimacy of any claim that that group of men might have occasion to make on that person, for loyalty or labour or a say in his actions, in particular, his marriage. It is only as collective genitors of the individual in this sense that they are able to make these claims.

Naworawora

The last major concept concerning descent or kinship is naworawora. There are many words which relate to this term and through which we can gain some insight into the meaning and connotations of it:

wora = place; vagina (?)

ṗorae/worae = to break

worawora = to break into many pieces

nawora = landing place, anchorage; passage; a new shoot that springs up beside the mature plant or tree of any kind (excluding the banana, the new shoot of which is called suuli, which is also the term for "grand-child").

pavakawora = to propagate, have offspring, multiply.

(Note that, according to Schütz (1969b: 31-2), vaka is a causative affix.

Wora, then, again appears with the connotation of the creation of new life or growth.)

nayayakaworaana = descendants

In her recent contribution to the Ambrym kinship debate Patterson presents an analysis of the meaning of certain terms in the North Ambrym language which are clearly related to this bundle of Ngunese words. She distinguishes wor, meaning the pile of stones on which pigs are killed, or (as a pronoun) meaning "part" or "section", or, in the compound worgehu, meaning "some", from wuru. The latter means "reef passage", but also

... was the same as the term applied to the local group from which one's mother came and for those kin addressed as mesung (MB), itning (FZ/MBW), tubyung (MBS/FZS), yaleng wehen (MBSW/ZD), (male speaking) and tung wehen/tutu (MBSW/D), (female speaking).

(Patterson 1976:97-98)

Furthermore, Patterson's informants said that

...wurunjesul means 'those who are our passage'; when we are in trouble we take refuge with them; just as a ship passes through the reef into calm waters we go and 'hide' with them. The dual sense of providing sanctuary and a harbour is nicely expressed in the English verb 'to harbour'.

(ibid.:98)

As my translations, given above, for nawora show, the Ngunese terms and their meanings are very like those Patterson found for North Ambrym. Remembering that na is a noun-marking prefix, one can see that, like wuru, wora carries both the meaning of "reef passage" as a sheltered place by which one can escape the turbulence of the sea

and of a safe place to which one may return. Hence a child, on being taken to the natal village of its mother for the first time, is told, "Don't be afraid. This place (wora waia) is yours."

However, I have also listed "vagina", if somewhat tentatively, as one meaning of wora, as a consequence of this common usage: when distinguishing true consanguineal siblings from classificatory ones, people say, "They (two) come from one (i.e., the same) mother", and then further clarify or emphasize by saying, "They (two) come from one (i.e., the same) napua ("road" or "path")". But again, he or she might say, "They (two) come from one (i.e., the same) wora." Eliciting words for such things as "vagina" is very difficult, but given that the expressions consistently offered for "uterus" or "womb" or in answer to the question "where does the child live inside its mother?" are naala/nasuŋa ni piakiiki ("basket/house of the child"), it seems reasonable to say that wora refers, if not specifically to the physiological vagina, certainly in a metaphoric sense to the vagina as the "path" or "passage" by which people move from their first liquid homes into life and the arms of their kin. As such its stress is distinctively matrilineal as it describes the life-giving movement from sea to harbour and from danger to safety that is mediated by women.

At this point let us consider the term naworawora. The word "tribe", in the Biblical sense, is often used by the Ngunese in place of naworawora. Thus one can refer, for example, to the "tribe" of one's grandfather who begat

one's father, who begat oneself, and so on. However, one does not use this term to trace descent far back into the past to some remote ancestor. It is used, rather, to describe an Ego-oriented, cognatic kin group. This is pictured as a five-tiered structure, like a house having five stories, the latter representing succeeding generations of people. The topmost story is Ego's grandparents' generation and the bottommost that of Ego's grandchildren.

Naworawora contrasts with nakainaga and, to a lesser degree, with namatarau. Naworawora is seen as a divine creation, something which has existed since the beginning of time. Nakainaga, on the other hand, is a human invention with a specific, historical origin (described earlier in this chapter).

Secondly, the matriclan bond is thought of as one of common "line", whereas the family tie of naworawora is called one of shared "blood". Although it does have a historical moment of inception, nakainaga is seen as something stretching from the far distant past through the present and on into the future. In contrast, naworawora is a way of referring to the filiative relationship that obtains between successive and contemporary (or near-contemporary) generations.

Lastly, let us compare naworawora and namatarau. I describe namatarau above as referring to all those who are related to any given individual by virtue of their "line" identity. The Ngunese liken it to a coconut pudding, in which each piece represents a different family but all have

the same origin, or to a tree whose branches (or families) all spring from a common trunk.

However, when people are asked to explain the difference between naworawora and namatarau, their responses become confused. Most people start out by saying that they are different, but soon conclude that they must be the same after all. The problem, though, really lies in the question itself; for it assumes the existence of analytically discrete entities, and, in fact, neither of these terms has such a referent.

When an individual speaks of being naworawora of someone (usually a grandparent, male or female), it is in the sense of being that person's offspring or descendant. People say, "We are one blood" (Au pei nadaa sikai maau). This is not a conceptualization in terms of a group. It is, instead, a reference to direct consanguineal ties that link individuals in two or more successive generations. But, one's immediate kin are members of particular matrilineal clans, therefore those for whom one is naworawora are also one's namatarau by virtue of clan identification. For example, one is not only the naworawora of one's father's father, as the child of his child, but one also identifies with one's grandfather as a person of a particular clan and, by extension, with all other members of that clan.

So naworawora does not refer uniquely to matrilineal relatives, nor to such individuals as a "group". To put it simply, naworawora is an idiom of consanguinity or filiation. Moreover, recalling the semantic associations of this word (i.e., with "path", "passage" and, ultimately,

"vagina"), and given the fact that the duplication of wora in naworawora indicates a repeated action, the idiom is clearly one of female, uterine reproduction. Furthermore, it is one of successive reproduction of individuals. This explains why the Ngunese find the Biblical notion of "tribe" an apt translation of naworawora.

I proposed near the outset of this chapter that the primary element in personal identification for the Ngunese is the individual's own matriline. At this point I will go further and say that Ngunese kinship is conceptualized in terms of an idiom of female reproduction, and other types of relationship are derived, in turn, from this conceptualization. Allen has argued in a like manner for other parts of Vanuatu:

In predominantly agnatic north Ambrym as much as in matrilineal east Aoba or Nguna, the kin who can be most relied upon for succour, support and protection are those linked through a succession of wombs and vaginal passages. In some fundamental ontological way 'real' kinship is uterine kinship and all other consanguineal and affinal connections are of a secondary or derivative kind.

(Allen 1981a:30)

Hence, while agnatic kinship has great functional importance in the transmission of land-usage rights and of chiefly titles on Nguna, even it is conceived of as relationships between successively regenerating progeny rather than between offspring of a male ancestor.

In addition, the reproductive idiom lays considerable stress on continuity of substance and identity from one generation to another. Examples of adoption discussed

earlier in this chapter give evidence for the great concern individuals have with the persistence through time of clan identity (as "line") and, similarly - but in a more restricted time span - the transmission of personal identity (as "blood"). The metaphor of replacement, of finding someone to "stand in (or take) one's place" is a common one. A man who succeeds his father as chief is said to stand in his stead. Likewise, at a funeral one of the close female relatives who mourn at the side of the corpse sometimes expresses her feelings of loss, grief and anger in slapping the wrapped figure with her hand or a package of calico and calling out, "Why have you left me, father? Who will take your place?" Even the foreign anthropologist in her role as kastom-recorder may be reproached for her imminent and permanent departure in like terms. There is a sense in which the individual is accorded uniqueness as a person having a particular set of capabilities, as a person who makes, as do all others, his or her own unique contribution to the experience of communal life. But there is at the same time a perceived necessity of finding a reasonable facsimile so that the "space" (namalopaa) which is left by that person's departure or death may be adequately filled. In the interests of those who stay behind a chief must either be succeeded by a new chief or his title held for safe-keeping in the interim by his brother; a son must take over his father's lands; and a young widow must consider remarrying so that she and her children will be provided for properly. Examples of this type of thinking are plentiful, and they all point to a holistic conception of

social life. Gaps are dangerous breaks in continuity which potentially jeopardise not only the individual's security and welfare but also the maintenance and persistence of the social order as a whole from the past into the unpredictable future.

Before examining further this notion of the reproduction of the social whole, one must understand the conception of the social whole itself. In the preceding chapter I presented a historical reconstruction of pre-Contact Ngunese society. The next chapter analyzes the island's contemporary politico-religious structures. With this done one can interpret local views and evaluations of Ngunese society both in the past and the present.

FOOTNOTES

1. This term, presumably in Bislama, is defined as used on S.E. Ambrym by R. Tonkinson as an extra-family boundary, i.e.,

... a named residential area of the village, most of whose male inhabitants claim membership in the same patrilineage.

(Tonkinson 1977:279)

On Nguna the corresponding sub-area of the village would be that of the co-residential agnatic cluster originally referred to as the varea. Although the individual's smol nem is not defined explicitly in reference to his natal varea, it is semantically contrasted with the big nem, i.e., a chiefly title, which may only be assumed in maturity and which has significance beyond the varea. Hence the smol nem, as the Ngunese use the term, does have an association with a particular residential area of the village.

2. Unfortunately Nguna's pastor was unable to locate church records of marriages any further back than this.
3. Pinovinooi was used to translate the Biblical concept of "the void", but it also occurs in this more colloquial context: naṗoṗona ("his heart") e pinovinooi. This describes the state of mind of a person who finds himself in a novel and troubling situation and who is at a loss to know what to do about his problem.



Plate 10. Natalovaana in the context of marriage. Here the "woman's side" has come from Tikilasoa to shake hands with the "man's side" in Nekapa. Note that the young groom is simultaneously presenting a cash gift to his new father-in-law.

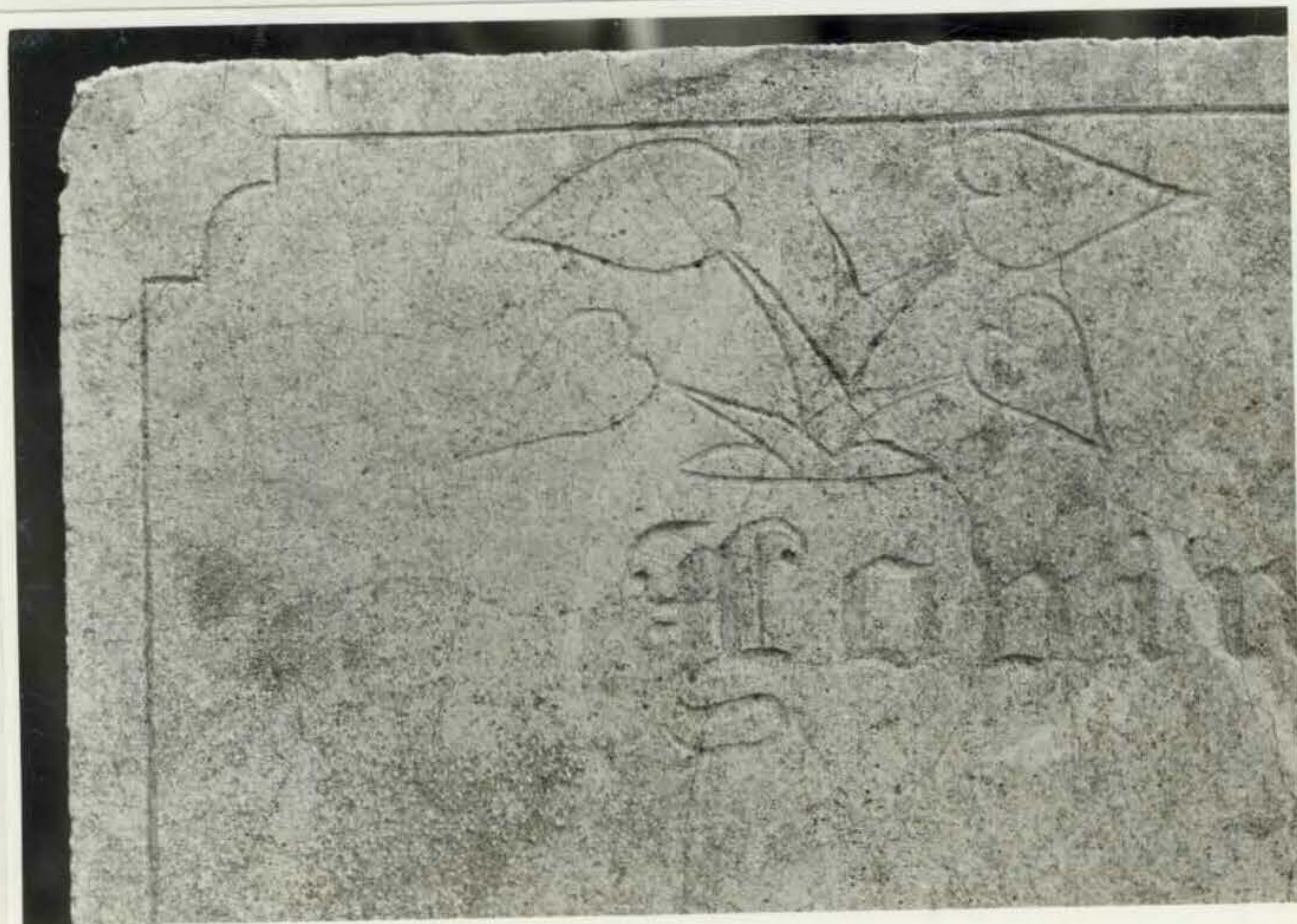


Plate 11. The headstones on many graves bear stylized emblems of the deceased's matriclan, in this instance it is that of the taro ("natale") clan.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL STRUCTURES

This chapter is concerned with local politics. I want first to demonstrate to what extent power on Nguna is grounded in differential control of material resources. Secondly, I will describe the various institutions within which power is exercised. Thirdly, in the last section I will discuss a non-material resource which has largely disappeared from the scene. In order to evaluate the consequences of this I will make a speculative extension of the historical reconstruction of pre-Contact Ngunese politics made in Chapter Two.

Resources

On modern day Nguna there are a number of resources available to the individual. Material ones include land, labour, cash, mats, pigs and food. Non-material ones include hereditary titles, various sorts of knowledge and mystical powers.

As always throughout Melanesia land is a most crucial resource. Unfortunately this means that it is also often a tricky subject for the researcher. People may be unwilling to disclose the extent or location of their lands for different reasons. On Nguna I found the idea expressed that people should all have sufficient lands for their needs. Consequently people would not care to have bruit abroad how much they have, lest someone argue that they have more than they need while others are wanting. Moreover,

the general political tenor during my period of fieldwork exacerbated the inherent level of suspicion, especially in relation to outsiders and, specifically, "Whites". Given that, land was not a topic that I could directly research.

However, as a general observation, I would say that there is a small, but significant disproportion in the distribution of land amongst the male population. As mentioned in Chapter Three, a woman only inherits more than one or two plots of land if she has no brothers, and brothers, on the other hand, ideally receive equal amounts. However, in practice, the eldest has several advantages. Being older, it is likely that he will be ready to marry and start a family before his brothers are. In fact, it is considered proper that he should marry first. Consequently, there are cases in which a younger brother desires to marry but is prevented from doing so by his parents until his elder brother has married. As a result the latter receives his share of his parents' lands first and may also use that of his unmarried siblings to support his new household until such time as they have need of it themselves. The eldest son will probably also inherit his parents' house when they die. Therefore, by the time the youngest sons in a large family marry, they may be unable to make good their claim to family lands that have been long in use by their siblings. Hence they are likely to have to move away to work lands to which they have rights in different areas of the island.

On top of this advantage which seniority provides for eldest sons are the lands associated with chiefly titles.

Most of these titles have no more than two or three plots that belong to them; but high chiefly titles have in the neighbourhood of 6 or 7 (see Table 7). Claims to these lands are not heritable since they go to the successor to the title. However, since nowadays the successor is generally the chief's eldest son, these lands will also be his upon being invested with the title.

It is important to note, though, that these chiefly lands are meant to be used for the whole community's benefit. For example, in time of drought the chief ought to make them available for communal use. His superior land-resources, then, are taken to be appropriate and justified in view of his protective duty vis-à-vis his people.

Access to labour reveals a similar differential in favour of chiefs. The latter are able to command labour above the level of the extended family where ordinary folk cannot - at least, not directly. The village high chief can call his village to do a special job, such as constructing a new meeting-house, or to do the annual yam-planting. In fact, in Nekaña village two days a week are designated as "the chief's day" during the season of yam-planting and people are expected to do their own work on other days and work communally on those two days. But, though it is called working for the chief, it is seen as being for the benefit of the village as a whole (or even, in the case of pan-island needs such as roads and schools, for the benefit of Nguna as a whole). Sometimes ordinary individuals need similar assistance, e.g., the construction of a house or cistern, because they do not have sufficient resources.

Table 7. List of Plots of Land Associated with High Chiefly Titles and Their Traditional Uses.

1. vanuanimanu = plot-of-a-thousand
Reminiscent of the name for the paramount chief, "head of a thousand" (nañau ni manu), this name indicates a plot of land on which every kind of food is grown (excluding kava): yam, taro, sugar-cane, noiapu (a type of sweet yam), etc.
2. vanuanitiro = plot-of-mirror
This small area is that in which the high chief undresses to bathe. The "mirror" derives from the pool of water which forms in a small depression in a rock at this spot. This location may also be called namuluenivadasi which refers to the chief's disrobing there.
3. vanuanipirogo = plot-of-storage
Any man might have such a plot, but this one is specifically that of the dominion's high chief. It is the place where foods of all kinds are stored when harvested and enclosed by a high fence made of reeds.
4. vanuanitapesu = plot of tapesu
Tapesu is a species of bird (the Purple Swamp Hen (Porphyrio porphyrio), pers. comm. Dr. Ross Clark, 1979). This plot of land lies, in some instances, within a single dominion (e.g., Matoa) and, in other instances, between the boundaries of more than one dominion (e.g., between Eñoi, Raitoa and Malamea). It is an area on which all types of food are planted. Should a high chief impose a restriction on the harvesting of a particular food - make it tapu - for a specific period of time in order to accumulate a good supply for an upcoming feast, the people of

Table 7. List of Plots of Land (cont'd.).

-
4. his dominion are able to go to nayanuanitapesu to obtain that food. It is "free" to them on only that plot for the duration of the restriction.
5. vanuanivarea = plot-of-meeting-house
- This refers to the site of each dominion's primary meeting-house, i.e., that of its high chief. (In some dominions whose villages have been relocated, e.g., Utanilagi, the location of the varea itself can be picked out today as a border of stones laid in the ground.)
6. vanuanimalala = plot-of-dancing-ground
- This is an elevated, flat space surrounded by casuarina trees (nearu). It includes, of course, the group of slit-drums (nakpea) that are erected at one end of the ground.
7. vanuanimatigo = plot-of-graves
- Each dominion's high chiefs are buried in this area, apart from the village, while ordinary people are buried inside or outside the front of their own houses.
-

These are labour-intensive tasks so one must either have enough relatives to help or enough cash to hire others. Failing both of these the individual voices his need to the high chief's assistant and the work is organized by the chiefs and announced at the village meeting. On the appointed day members of the village turn out to do the work and, in return, the individual whose job it is pays a certain amount of money into the village purse (e.g., \$20 in the case of cistern-construction), as well as supplying any materials that must be purchased and providing refreshments for the workers.

Access to the remaining major material resources is relatively unrestricted. People earn what cash they can in a variety of part-time endeavours as I have mentioned elsewhere. The primary local means, of course, is copra and therefore depends on one's having coconut groves.

Given that land is such a contentious issue on Nguna - and especially so during my time there in view of the prominence of the question of land-alienation in national politics - I never felt free to make a detailed investigation into either land-holdings, especially coconut plantations, or incomes from copra production. Consequently, I can only offer these comments. First, I found no evidence that there are any individuals who are completely without access to this resource. Everyone has somewhere that they can cut coconuts and belongs to one copra cooperative or another, although in many cases the members of the extended family work their groves together, sharing the payment equally. However, secondly, between Malaliu and Tikilaso there is

a quite extensive plantation which is said to belong to "all the (high) chiefs" and is harvested periodically by village work-parties. When this is done it is referred to as cutting copra "for the chief". Virtually all the coconuts on the island were planted in similar communal efforts during the mid-1920's, as happened on W. Aoba at approximately the same time (Allen 1969:142-6). On Nguna as on W. Aoba conversion to Christianity was accompanied by the replacement of the traditional economic base, pigs, by copra, and those men who had dominated in the traditional politico-economic systems - although that of Nguna and that of W. Aoba differed in certain respects - continued to do so. The changes that took place did not entail a restructuring of the distribution of wealth nor of the power relations which it supported. Although there was a transformation of the essential resource, traditional leaders maintained both their superior position with respect to that resource and their political dominance in the community.

The history of the development of copra production on Nguna plus the existence of this sizeable plantation "for the chiefs" are strong indications that today high chiefs maintain disproportionate control of this primary resource. Yet, I can only suggest that this is the case, hampered as I am by the inaccessibility of hard data on the subject.

Pandanus mats, pigs and food are the last material resources to consider. The former, necessary for domestic use and in marriage prestations, in particular, are woven solely by women and are bought and sold for a few dollars.

A man's wife and daughters or mother and sisters supply most of his needs in mats. Only a man with neither wife nor close female kin would be at a disadvantage in terms of this, having to buy mats instead. Likewise, pigs and food as resources are available to anyone who works for them, but one can do little alone. I found no sector of the population producing these goods in significantly greater amounts than any other sector. Unlike in many other parts of Vanuau, on Nguna nothing is done to pigs to make them more valuable, such as knocking out the upper canines to create curved tusks. Most pigs do not even attain a particularly impressive size and when one is needed for a feast it is of no consequence whether it has been raised by the hosts or donors or purchased from another source.

Turning to non-material resources, hereditary titles are a very important one. I will be more specific about this below, but for the moment let it suffice to say that although a goodly proportion of the male population of a given village bears titles, most of these are minor functionaries. Those who can properly be referred to and are regarded as "chiefs" are a very small percentage. Also, the only element of competition or achievement involved in succession is between a chief's sons. Although the eldest is considered the rightful heir to his father's title, his behaviour as a child and youth and that of his younger brothers is said to be carefully scrutinized. If the eldest does not show the required attitudes and aptitudes but one of the younger ones does, their father may

choose to pass over the eldest in view of his unsuitability.

Certain sorts of knowledge, as practical skills such as carpentry, are accessible to any man - or woman, in the case of weaving or sewing, for example - but some may have a quasi-hereditary edge in that their parents have passed on special tools or training to them. Modern formal education, on the other hand, at least up to the end of primary school, is open to everyone. Thereafter the financial capacity of students' families to fund their secondary education comes into play. Thus the offspring of those with more coconuts for copra or incomes from part-time work have a better chance of obtaining well-paid employment based on secondary and further education.

Another important sort of knowledge depends on age, a reliable memory and a trustworthy reputation. These allow people to perform the crucial role of experts on genealogy, land ownership, kastom and Christian law. These areas of knowledge are central in sorting out such problems as land disputes and marriage arrangements. Here the experience that goes with age outweighs gender so that mature women speak with more authority than young men. But it is older men who are usually at the fore when such matters are under discussion.

The last major resource is access to or control of mystical powers. On Nguna there are a handful of men and women who are widely recognized as (part-time) curers or folk healers. They have been trained by someone, usually a relative, in the use of a number of plants and herbs and

the practice of massage to treat illness. Their skills and knowledge are much admired and appreciated.

Some of these also are said to have the ability to visit the world of the ancestors in spirit form while they "sleep" on behalf of a troubled client. One might call them "diviners" but not "sorcerers", since they do not use their mystical connection for harmful purposes.

On the other hand, there are those who are whispered to be "sorcerers" in that sense, who are "known" to have poisoned people in the past by inserting some foul substance into the very food or drink they shared with their victims. But, though they are "known", these people do not identify themselves as such and, to my knowledge, public accusations are not made. These of whom I am aware are outsiders, from a different village or island. Women, many of whom are also outsiders with respect to their husbands' villages, are often said to be at the root of much trouble in general. Sometimes, however, this is in a very direct way, such as when a woman who has born her husband sons remarries after his death and then produces only daughters for her new husband. The latter may suspect her of taking some potion of which only women know in order to prevent having more sons.

Mystical power is also associated with chiefs, but more so with those who are dead than those who are living. More will be said below of the "sacred" spirit or nature (natapuana) which is thought to come upon a man at his investiture as a high chief, but here I would like to mention the power of the ancestors. In so far as I was able

to determine, most Ngunese believe that the ancestors are aware of transgressions on the everyday plane of existence and that, be it in response to theft of land or adultery or some deviation from kastom which involves a slighting of chiefly authority, they may strike down the offender. Living chiefs themselves are not thought to control the ancestors in the way in which sorcerers consciously apply their poisons; yet, by virtue of their titles, chiefs are linked with the powers of their predecessors. As I will say more of this in the final section of this chapter, I would now like to turn to an analysis of the various institutions within which power is yielded on Nguni. There are three major political structures presently in existence: the chiefly system; the Presbyterian church hierarchy; and the village councils. I will discuss each of these as regards their personnel and activities.

The Chiefly System

In Chapter Two the features of the traditional chiefly system were reconstructed, yielding a portrait marked by the principles of hierarchical ordering and ascription (inheritance of titles through the matriline). As it now exists, there are two major differences: titles follow the patriline¹; and there is only a token ritual pig-killing at the ceremony of taking a high chiefly title.

Nevertheless, in form, chiefly investitures are very traditional. If the successor has already been chosen by the time of the present chief's death, he should attend the funeral in order to perform the nataameleana. This

simply requires the successor to touch the foot of the chief's corpse, wrapped as it is in many lengths of cloth and mats, with his own foot. This act affirms his succession to the chief's title although the ritual of investiture must still be performed at a later date.

I never had the opportunity to witness the latter ritual myself, but one which took place in Nekaña village in mid-1979 was described as following the traditional pattern. This entails certain payments, a ceremonial laying-on-of-hands and a feast.

Like many other titles, there had been no holder of the village's highest title for many years. The previous holder, whose smol nem was Tamata, had 3 sons and chose the eldest, Otto, to succeed him. However, Otto predeceased his father; therefore Tamata named Otto's eldest son as his successor. Since the latter was only a youth when Tamata died, Otto's younger brother, Tatupe, held the position as "caretaker" (see below) until the successor had reached maturity.

Finally the time was appointed for Otto's son, Takalo, to be invested with the title of Matakoromaraata. On the evening preceding the event members of the "tribe" (nawora-wora, see Chapter Three) of Tamata assembled a number of mats (approx. 20) and money (a small amount) at Tatupe's house. They then took them to Takalo's home and presented them to him. This prestation is referred to as mori nagisa or "to pay for the name", not in the sense of buying, but in the sense of the successor's being given a token reimbursement from those who have held his title and lands in

trust over some years. It also connotes respect for him as chief-to-be and is a tangible sign that the name has been yielded to him.²

The following day the investiture took place in two parts: first, there was a church service in Nekaña where the Pastor and elders ordained him; then he was invested by the high chief of M̃alaliu in a coconut-frond shelter that had been constructed outside especially for the occasion. In this second stage the new chief stood surrounded by his new "assistant" and 4 new "small chiefs". While they placed their hands on his head, the chief of M̃alaliu called out the new chief's ordinary name (his smol nem). He stated that that smol nem had been cast into the sea for a shark to swallow and thenceforth the new chief would be known only by his chiefly title, Matakoromaraata. Thereafter, in fact, anyone who calls the chief by his old, discarded name is liable to be fined.

In this case the same had to be performed for the second high chief, Nekaña being the only dominion having a joint chiefship. The second, Matakoroliu, however, is seen as junior and subordinate to the first since the first known bearers of these titles were twins and Matakoromaraata was the elder.

Once the two high chiefs had been invested, the other 5 men were ritually installed, receiving lesser titles in the same manner, not including payments.

The last such ceremony took place in 1970 when two high chiefs and 7 low chiefs in all were invested. These included one high chief and his assistant for each of M̃atoa

and M̃alamea villages plus 3 low chiefs for Tikilasoā and 2 for Udapua. Judging by this and from the testimony of men who went through similar ceremonies before that, investitures are generally done several at a time. It seems to be relatively acceptable for lesser positions to lie empty for a number of years until an investiture ceremony for a higher title provides the opportunity to have them filled at the same time. But the more important higher positions must be filled, if not by the title-holder, at least by an acting caretaker until the successor can be invested. In fact, it is said that a special ceremony was occasionally resorted to in the past to invest a chief even though he was absent from the island at the time. This tends to support the notion that higher positions must be filled at least nominally at all times. The fact that so many such positions have not been formally filled is probably a result of the high degree of mobility of young men. Legitimate successors are often involved in cash employment off-island and are therefore disinclined to accept the responsibility of office and settle down in the village. Indeed, I recorded a number of cases in which such men refused the title outright. This meant that a new successor had to be chosen, a process which could prove lengthy and contentious so that the matter might remain undecided for some years.

I would like to clarify the role of "caretaker". Generally a caretaker is the dead chief's brother or son, and he acts as chief with the understanding that it is temporary and informal. Once the legitimate successor has been formally invested with the title, the caretaker or acting

chief relinquishes authority over whatever lands are associated with the title that has been entrusted to his care. Here one might note that this leaves room for trouble since those plots of land may have been effectively his for some years. Especially if he has mature sons, disputes over which lands they may inherit and which are associated with the title are liable to erupt.

Once invested with a chiefly title, a man has it for the rest of his life. There is no formal mechanism for deposing a chief. Furthermore, even though there is much discontent over some chiefs' behaviour, one hears people say that, "there is no such thing as a bad chief". This implies that once a man has been made chief he is in some sense beyond criticism. The casting away of his smol nem in his investiture ceremony symbolizes the depersonalization of the individual on his taking a title. His former identity is stripped away and his individual uniqueness is subordinated to his new identity as chief.

Let us consider the distribution of the various types of chiefly titles amongst the (male) population. Tikilasoa has 75 male members over the age of 18, only 44 of whom actually reside in the village for a major part of the year. Of these 44, 12 bear chiefly titles that are considered to be indigenous to Tikilasoa. Of the non-resident 31, 3 have titles. Another 7 men bear titles associated with villages other than Tiki; likewise, 2 men who are members of and resident in villages other than Tiki bear titles associated with Tiki. Table 8 shows how many of each type of title there are and Table 9 breaks down

Table 8. Distribution of Chiefly Titles in Tikilasoā,
by Type and Matriclan.

Type of Title	Number of Titles Held	No. Titles Unfilled	Matriclans of Title-Holders
I. Titles Associated with Tiki:			
High chief (<u>nawota warua</u>) (<u>nawota vakilagi</u>)	1		<u>wita</u>
Speaker (<u>namena</u>)	1		<u>wita</u>
High chief's assistant (<u>atavi</u>)	2		<u>vatu</u> <u>naika</u>
Small chiefs (<u>nawota vakitano</u>)	5	3	<u>noopa</u> (3) <u>wita</u> (2)
Intermediaries (<u>tasiga</u>)	2		<u>wita</u> <u>kukusue</u>
Facilitators (<u>naatañoli vasa</u>)	2		<u>ñmaalu</u> <u>wita</u>
Small chief's assistant (<u>atavi</u>)	1		<u>wita</u>

Total:	14	3	*

II. Titles Associated with Other Villages:			
Small chiefs (<u>nawota vakitano</u>)	5		<u>nawii</u> <u>ñmaalu</u> <u>naadi</u> <u>kukusue</u> (2)
High chief's assistant (<u>atavi</u>)	1		<u>wita</u>
Aide of Tariñoaliu (<u>maanu</u>)	1		<u>kukusue</u>

Total:	7	0	*

* See Table 9.

Table 9. Distribution of Title-Holders in Tikilasoa
by Matriclan Membership.

<u>Matriclans</u>	<u>Number of Title-Holders</u>
Titles Associated with Tiki:	
<u>wita</u>	7
<u>noopa</u>	3
<u>vatu</u>	1
<u>naika</u>	1
<u>kukusue</u>	1
<u>maalu</u>	1

	Total: 14

Titles Associated with Other Villages:	
<u>kukusue</u>	3
<u>wita</u>	1
<u>maalu</u>	1
<u>naadi</u>	1
<u>nawii</u>	1

	Total: 7

the distribution of chiefly titles in terms of matrilineal membership. This reveals that a majority of titles are held by members of two clans (wita and noopa) although there are 13 clans in Tiki. As noted above in Table 4a (following Chapter Three), wita and noopa are also the most numerous clans in this particular village. Therefore, as well as being larger these two clans are at a small, but significant advantage over the other clans by virtue of holding those lands which are associated with the various chiefly titles born by their members.

I will conclude this description of the chiefly system with a few more observations concerning the activities of high chiefs.

In Table 10 I present two sets of data. The first is the number of high chiefly titles which are believed to have been in existence in the various villages before the turn of the century and the clans to which these titles belonged. The second is the number of such titles which are in existence today and the clan membership of their present holders. The first distribution was compiled by a number of men well-known as experts on all things kastom, while the other is common knowledge to most adults on Nguna.

The differences between the distributions are striking, but easily explained by the shift from matrilineal to patrilineal succession that happened around 1900. However, if one looks at the total numbers of these titles something more revealing emerges: there are a full 6 out of 19 traditional titles which are not held by anyone today. As many again are held unofficially, that is, either by successors-

Table 10. Traditional and Present Day Distribution of High Chiefly Titles on Nguna: a) by Village and Matriclan; b) Numerically by Matriclan.

a:	Village	Traditional Title-Holding Matriclans	Matriclan of Present Title-Holder
1.	Farealapa	<u>karau</u>	no holder
2.	~Malasoro	<u>karau</u>	<u>napaga</u> *†
3.	E~moi	<u>karau</u>	<u>naadi</u> (now Neka~pa)
4.	E~moi	<u>karau</u>	<u>wita loa</u> (")
5.	Fanuatapu	<u>naniu</u>	<u>naadi</u> *††
6.	Unakapu	<u>naniu</u>	no holder
7.	Utani~lagi	<u>naniu</u>	no holder
8.	Po~gimao	<u>wita loa</u>	no holder†
9.	Rewoka	<u>wita loa</u>	<u>naika</u>
10.	Tikilaso~a	<u>kukusue</u>	<u>wita loa</u>
11.	~Malamea	<u>kukusue</u>	<u>naika</u> *†
12.	Fareafau	<u>noopa</u>	<u>vatu</u>
13.	Mere	<u>noopa</u>	<u>naika</u> *
14.	~Malanaruru	<u>natale</u>	<u>kukusue</u> *†
15.	Komalikasua	<u>natale</u>	no holder†
16.	Raitoa	<u>napetau</u>	no holder (now Woralapa)
17.	~Malaliu (or Komalinala~pa)	<u>naika</u>	<u>~maalu</u>
18.	~Matoa	<u>nawii</u>	<u>naadi</u> *
19.	Udapua	unknown	<u>napaga</u>
Total:		19	13

b:	Titles per Clan:	Traditional	Present Day
		<u>karau</u> - 4	<u>naika</u> - 3
		<u>naniu</u> - 3	<u>naadi</u> - 3
		<u>wita loa</u> - 2	<u>wita loa</u> - 2
		<u>kukusue</u> - 2	<u>~maalu</u> - 1
		<u>noopa</u> - 2	<u>napaga</u> - 2
		<u>natale</u> - 2	<u>vatu</u> - 1
		<u>napetau</u> - 1	<u>kukusue</u> - 1
		<u>naika</u> - 1	
		<u>nawii</u> - 1	
		unknown - 1	

* Not (yet) formally invested with the title.
 † Village deserted.
 †† Very recently being resettled.

to-be who have yet to be formally invested or by "care-takers" or "acting chiefs". Note, however, that the existence of a successor to a title does not depend on the continued existence of the village with which his title is associated; for, although 6 villages have disappeared since the epidemics and population movements of the 1880's and 1890's, 4 of their high chiefly titles are being carried by unofficial successors. On the other hand, all of Nguna's (7) fully invested high chiefs live in the villages with which their titles are associated. For them, and for those (2) who have not yet been invested but do live in the villages with which their titles are associated, their positions grant them not only the rights to the lands associated with their titles in that dominion but also the opportunity to take a foremost role in village and island affairs.

Being a high chief brings with it the privilege of receiving superficial deference, the right to live in a central position in the village, near the yarea or an area set aside for like purposes, and the obligation of overseeing the village's internal business and representing it in its external relations.

I will return to the chief's role within the village later in this chapter. Here I would like to comment briefly on his functions as mediator between the local and wider communities.

In 1953 the colonial powers introduced the role of "Government Assessor" into the Group. A number of local men were appointed in the various Districts essentially as

aides to the District Agents who patrolled these areas. The Assessors were instructed to report serious crimes or disputes - most of which concerned conflicting claims to land - and assist the Agents in restoring the peace.

At that time it made obvious sense to choose those who already had positions of authority and were respected within the local community. On Nguna this meant that Assessors were high chiefs and although District Agents have ceased making their rounds, the Assessors remain. They still perform the task of contacting the central authorities when a crime of a particularly serious nature is committed (e.g., violent assault, murder or rape).

The important point to note is that as of 1979 two of the three Assessors were high chiefs - one from Tikilaso and the other from M̃atoa. (The third claimed status as a direct descendant of a well-known diviner/priest (munuai), but the authorities probably chose him for his practical knowledge gained in his younger days as a native advocate.) Therefore nearly 30 years after the creation of this role whereby the island community was linked to the police and the judicial system of the central government, the role of Assessor is still filled mostly by men with high chiefly titles.

To conclude this initial outline of the chiefly system I would note that the high chiefs meet generally once a month, both those who have been formally invested and those who are caretakers or successors-to-be. Given that their meetings are conducted in private, I cannot comment on the form these deliberations take. One can only gain

some idea of the issues with which the high chiefs concern themselves from the occasional public meetings they hold. However, I will reserve that analysis until I have described the church hierarchy, so that the functions of the two bodies can be compared.

The Church Hierarchy

The present discussion concerns itself with the Pastor and elders of the Nguna-Āele Presbyterian Kirk Session. There are 24 elders - all male - including 5 so-called "retired" elders, one each for Tikilasoā, NekaĀa and Utanilagi, and 2 for Unakapu. Their distribution by village is as follows: Tiki - 5; Unakapu - 2; Woralapa - 2; NekaĀa - 3; Mālalīu - 1; Mere - 1; Mātoa - 3; Fareafau - 1; Farealapa - 1; Utanilagi - 1; Rewoka - 1; Āele Island (which has 4 villages) - 3. Only Udupua is without even a retired elder.

The first elders were elected by church members in 1884. In the early years of the church the same individuals often performed all three roles of chief, teacher and elder, and in the present there is a similar tendency. For example, 13 out of the 24 elders mentioned above bear chiefly titles of one kind or another. Among these are two of the paramount chief's aides (maanu) - of which, again, there are 4 more titles not presently held - and 3 of the 13 high chiefs. Most of these have served as teachers in village schools in the past, although nowadays graduates of the religiously-oriented Tangoa Training Institute (T.T.I.) are being ousted from the Government

district schools by the younger generation of teachers from Kawenu College in Vila. If one examines elders' fathers' occupations one sees that the majority (i.e., 16 out of 24) of present day elders are sons of men who were both chiefs and teachers. Two such fathers were chiefs only, 4 were teachers only, and just 2 were neither chief nor teacher. Furthermore, the fact that 9 of the present elders are sons of elders indicates an informal bias towards inheritance of positions of authority within the church.

The present head of the local district church is a Tikilaso man, himself the son of one of the paramount chief's aides. Having received his training in Vanuatu and New Zealand, he ministered to parishes on Ambrym and Emau - 6 years in each - and in 1974 came to Nguna (2 years after the last White missionary had left).³ The system of placement of pastors is one whereby each parish's Session "calls" a particular pastor and, if he accepts, he goes to that parish for 3 years. At the end of that period the parish members may vote to reinvite him if they are content with him. If not, he is then free to answer a "call" from any other parish in the Group.

The district of which Nguna is part includes Pēle, Emau and Mataso, and this is Nguna's pastor's jurisdiction. Using the church's launch, Tokoepa ("The Dove"), he visits the furthest parish, Mataso, only once or twice a year and Emau, which is about 10 kilometres from his headquarters in Tikilaso, several times a year. His duties are to administer the Lord's Supper (on special days only, such as Christmas), perform baptisms and marriages, preside over

Session meetings and so on. Between his commitment to visiting the more distant islands in his parish and obligations to attend district pastors' meetings, the annual national Presbytery conference and suchlike, the Pastor is absent from Nguna as often as he is present - at least, this was the case during my months living there. This means that a considerable portion of the burden of everyday church activities rests with the elders.

Every month the Pastor devises a roster of responsibilities for preaching. Each village is assigned one elder who will make his way there early Sunday morning to conduct the morning service and one other is chosen to lead the afternoon worship in Taloa church. The elder in charge gives two addresses - one for the children, who have already attended Sunday school before the service, and one for the adults. He also chooses the hymns, prayers and readings, although some elders prefer to allow individuals to pick their favourite hymns on the spot and ask volunteers to express their particular concerns or desires in prayer. This creates a more spontaneous, sometimes quite moving, service.

Every village, then, has a different "preacher" each week, some of whom have to travel some miles by foot (long leg nomo, as the descriptively accurate Bislama phrase would have it). The rare female who has been trained at T.T.I.⁴ or Kawenu College may also receive a special invitation to be a guest preacher. Also, in late 1979 the Pastor persuaded his somewhat reluctant elders to support the initiation of female joint preaching on a regular basis. Groups

of four to six women in their active years were appointed to travel, as groups rather than individually as men do, to their assigned village as is the custom for elders. The decision to introduce female elders was made some time ago, but has never been put into practice, so this move can be seen as a transitional step in that direction.

In addition to preaching duties elders perform many other functions, some of them as a replacement for the Pastor, e.g., blessing new-born children or conducting funerals. They also regularly (although there are the more and the less zealous among them) visit and pray for the sick and dying; take turns leading the monthly Christian Endeavour meeting (a service of prayer and Bible-study which also rotates from village to village and is attended in the majority by women); test the knowledge of would-be new church members; exhort newlywed couples to proper behaviour, and so on. There are a few functions which only the Pastor can fulfill, primarily performing marriages and baptisms, as well as his organizational and administrative functions. Still there is a considerable status gap between the two positions, and an elder will always defer to the Pastor if he is insistent about some issue on which the elder does not agree with him.

The Pastor and his elders meet once a month in Taloa church. This is usually referred to as "Session" and is also attended by one or two female representatives of the Presbyterian Women's Mothers' Union - usually its President and Secretary - and the President of the church's Youth Fellowship. These will give a report and financial statement

and announce upcoming functions when called upon; otherwise they tend to remain silent for the rest of the day-long meeting.

Above I have included those individuals called "retired" elders. These men, septuagenarians or older, in being referred to by this phrase, would seem to have withdrawn from active involvement in the work of Session. However, in practice, this pertains only to those duties which require considerable physical effort, primarily, the itinerant preacher role. They are no longer rostered to go all over the island to preach on a Sunday morning, yet they still take their turn leading the worship in their own or neighbouring villages and those among them who are still strong will walk to Taloa to do so there. They also participate in other duties. Indeed, retired elders are the most faithful in their attendance at Session meetings. In part this is a result of the decrease in their physical powers; for, released from the bulk of the garden work and other village work, they have more time to spend on church affairs. They also display much more concern with and a greater emotional involvement in such matters. It is these so-called "retired" men who are the most vocal in any given Session meeting. The discussion of issues is largely confined to these men. Their age and experience demand respect from younger elders, although officially all elders are of equal status. Hence the younger men do not offer suggestions or opinions until their elders have had opportunity to do so - even, perhaps, unless the latter do so. The role of the younger ones, then, is to agree

with the elder who expresses their own sentiment. Very often some view is enunciated and later speakers add to or reshape it, taking care not to criticize it in its original form.

The Pastor alone, with a secretary at his side, presides at these meetings, calling them to order shortly after 10 AM. I will give a brief outline of the format of the meeting and then present examples of the type of material dealt with by this body.⁵

As with other communal meetings (or meals) a hymn and several prayers open the event in an appropriate manner, the prayers often including an appeal for divine guidance to ensure clarity and acceptability of the participants' thought and expression. Then, after noting apologies on behalf of those absent, the Pastor deals with topics he has noted down for discussion beforehand, including the presentation of reports from special committees such as the finance committee. Those in attendance are free to make comment on any of these items of business. By and large there are quite a few items, so that attending to them often takes the morning and most of the afternoon after a lunch break of 1 to 1½ hours. Consequently the time remaining for discussion of other issues which might be of concern to and raised by individual elders might be no more than half an hour or an hour. Matters raised then tend to be those of wider significance to the church as a whole and the discussion more animated than earlier ones. However, the constraint of falling darkness for those who have some distance to go on bush paths to return home means

that these issues often receive only superficial treatment. This is a source of deep concern for many elders. They express their dissatisfaction privately, saying that so much time is taken up with financial and administrative business that they are not performing their primary task: "All we ever talk about is money. Money, money! What about the life of the church?" In other words, economic troubles are their major consideration, although their real commitment is to the maintenance of the spiritual aspect of the church. Certain phenomena which are considered indicative of an alarmingly widespread, general moral and spiritual decline are only dealt with piecemeal, that is, as particular instances of individual misconduct and the larger, more general processes which they reflect are not examined.

Let us evaluate this assessment by looking at the types of issue dealt with by the elders' Session. The first is financial and organizational, concerning current expenses, debts, much-needed repairs to church buildings, and ways of allocating or raising sufficient funds to cover these expenditures.

The second type of issue elders discuss in Session is one which concerns the institution of marriage. Let me take first the question of brideprice payments. In 1948 the figure of 20£ was set by the national Presbytery as the maximum cash gift to be made by a groom to his father-in-law at the time of a marriage. The intention was to eliminate the competitive aspect of brideprice. They sought to prevent unmarried couples from living together

by stabilizing it at a level accessible to all. Today payments range from A\$30 to A\$300. Although \$300 is roughly equivalent to the 1948 limit given inflation, churchmen complain that it is too high. Older men also observe that in recent years the number of mats and small amounts of money presented by the bride's "side" to the groom's "side" have risen sharply. While formerly only the immediate family were recipients of such gifts, now as many as 60 individuals may be included.

All couples must present their intention to marry to Session via their local elder. Session then considers whether or not to grant approval of the match and of the time and place of the wedding. However, between 1978 and 1980 a number of couples approached Session seeking permission to marry by kastom alone. This means that they did not want to go through the Christian ceremony, but only to "marry" in the traditional fashion, solely by ceremonial exchange of prestations, feasting and so on. These appeals have met with rejection and cause great consternation amongst the members of Session.

There is, indeed, reason to be concerned from the church's point of view, for this is a measure of the extent to which young people, in particular, are falling away from Christianity. Two related phenomena are low church attendance and the loss of increasing numbers of church members to different denominations such as Seventh Day Adventist. In terms of numbers, these converts are very few, but they are, nevertheless, a source of much concern. In 1978 the Nguna-Pele Session categorically refused to allow local

Seventh Day Adventists to build a church on Pele, although they are able to worship as they choose in their own homes on either island.

At the same time there have been instances in which people, when the objects of criticism for their behaviour, use conversion of themselves and their families as a threat - "Leave me alone or I'll join the _____ church!" Opting out of Presbyterianism, then, can be a way of freeing oneself of social pressures just as is moving off the island or, in the past, going to the canefields of Queensland. Each of these actions poses a threat to the authority and integrity of the Presbyterian church on Nguna.

Interrelationship of Chiefly and Church Hierarchies

At this point I would like to discuss the interrelationship of the chiefly and church hierarchies as bodies of authority. Their members claim that their jurisdictions are separate and independent of one another. Yet there is a certain amount of overlap both in membership and activities or functions. Elders may not attend chiefs' meetings unless specifically invited. Similarly, should a chief attend a Session meeting in order to address a particular issue, he first asks permission to speak and does not participate in the discussion of other issues.

However, there are 3 men who are both high chiefs and elders and who therefore attend both Session and the high chiefs' meetings. At times they act as go-betweens for the two groups when something arises which qualifies to be considered by both groups. Where this is the case judgment

By one body is suspended until the other's opinion is received. Here is one example of a matter which is seen as falling under the jurisdiction of both groups.

It was felt by several members of Session that a church should be built in the paramount chief's village of Udupua. Session as a whole approved of the idea and so two elders were assigned the task of visiting the paramount chief and discussing it with him. The following month they reported back to Session that Tariñoaliu favoured the idea, but that he felt that in order to accomplish it every village on the island would have to contribute. He had suggested that a certain amount of copra be cut by each village to fund the project. At that point Session decided to forward his proposal to the high chief's meeting since only the latter has the authority to command islandwide labour and resources.

Let me now turn to the major interests or activities of the high chiefs as a group, as revealed in a public meeting they held in April, 1978. The purpose of the gathering - to which 30 to 40 men, most of them over the age of 50, came - was to present a number of draft "laws" for discussion.

Ten proposals (listed in Table 11), explicitly modelled on the Ten Commandments, were presented by 3 high chiefs seated at a table before those who had assembled on the grass under a large, shady tree. The proposals can be grouped into several categories. One concerned the relatively minor offences of swearing and stealing. The proposal consisted merely of fines to be imposed: for swearing it was a sliding scale from 20 to 90¢, depending on

Table 11. Draft Laws Presented for Public Discussion,
April, 1978: Problematic Behaviours and
Their Associated Proposals.

Problematic Behaviour	Proposal
1. Theft	Fine: Return of 2 of whatever was taken.
2. Adultery	Fine: \$10, 5 pigs and kava to be paid by the man involved.
3. Out-of-wedlock pregnancy	Fine: Hospital costs for child-birth plus 1 piece of land to be paid to the woman by the man involved.
4. Out-of-wedlock pregnancy where the female is under 16 years of age	Fine: Same as in #3 plus 7 mats.
5. Swearing	Fine: 20-90¢
6. Fornication	Recommendation: more strict supervision of young women.
7. Lack of respect for chiefs	No specific proposal.
8. Non-payment of fines	Chief's "police" to take the payment by force from the offender's home.
9. Extended residence of jobless Ngunese in Vila	Passcard system.
10. Abortion by leaf-medicine	Fine: Woman to pay \$20 and 10 mats.

the degree of the offence, to be decided by the high chief of the offender's village; and for stealing the simple requirement was that the thief should return two of whatever he had stolen to the injured party.

A full 4 out of the 10 proposals dealt with the regulation of sexual behaviour: fornication and adultery. Two of them set out fines to be applied to a man who had "made trouble to" a young woman. That is, if a single female became pregnant, her (also single) lover would be obliged to pay the transport and hospital costs for her delivery of the child and he would also have to give her a piece of land. Furthermore, should the girl involved be under 16 years of age, the man would also pay a fine of 7 mats (presumably in part to her and her parents and in part to her village's chief). In the case of adultery the fines were considerably stiffer. The general issue of the number of unwed mothers received much attention, but no "laws" were proposed. There was only an exhortation that parents should watch over their daughters' behaviour more carefully and encourage their youths and adolescent girls to approach their father and mother should they take a fancy to someone of the opposite sex. In that way parents would be able to arrange the marriage before something else resulted.

The last actual offence dealt with was "murder", in this instance referring solely to abortion. This is said to be a common occurrence, obviously related to the same degree of sexual freedom which creates unwed mothers. A quite heavy fine was also suggested as punishment for this.

I would remind the reader here that murder, violent assault and rape are all out of the hands of local authorities as instances of these are reported by the local Government Assessors to the central police and dealt with by the Vila courts.

The remaining three proposals clearly concerned the degree of control presently held by chiefs as a body of authority. The first recognized the fact that punishment meted out to offenders is very often ineffective. In many cases fines such as those listed above are not paid. The chiefs' recommendation was that if someone is fined for some offence, but does not pay it within the allotted time, his village chief's "police" (see below in the discussion of village councils) should go to his house and take the money or goods on the spot. This would restore a concrete sanction that chiefs had at their disposal in both the pre-Christian and early Christian periods. People remember instances that occurred 40 or 50 years ago in which chiefs actually did use their assistants to enforce their authority. One elderly woman, in fact, vividly recalled seeing the gardens of a man who had committed adultery burnt and the produce chopped to pieces on the order of the paramount chief.

The second issue raised at this meeting which relates to the same problem is that of lack of respect for chiefs. Although no specific proposal was put forward to right this, several examples of disrespectful behaviour toward chiefs were cited. Since this discussion in fact preceded the above proposal for enforcing fines, it gives the impression

of being a bit of rhetoric, strategically positioned to demonstrate the necessity of the proposal which followed.

The third such item concerned control of Ngunese people in Vila. There are quite a number of young people (for details, see Chapter Six) who go to Vila ostensibly to work, but instead enjoy free board and lodging at their relatives' expense. This may drag on for some time, creating hardship and annoyance for the young people's hosts, and leading to trouble when unoccupied youths start to drink and look for excitement.

The high chiefs had received a suggestion from the president of the Nguna-Pele Association to the effect that all those who desire to visit Vila for whatever purpose should first have to make application to the high chiefs. They would be required to stipulate their intentions as to the purpose - whether for work, holiday or otherwise - and length of stay. If approved, a passcard would be issued to them by the chiefs and at the end of the promised period they would be obliged to return to Nguna. Policing this was apparently to be the responsibility of members of the Association, all of whom are more or less permanent residents of Vila.

Although the present situation is a cause for legitimate concern, it is revealing that the proposed solution is a dramatic extension of the authority of the chiefs, especially given the difficulty chiefs have in enforcing their authority at home. What all of these proposed "laws" have in common is the desire on the part of the chiefs to shore up, and then extend, their authority. Other ways

in which they attempt to do so will be examined in the following chapters.

Village Meetings and Councils

I would now like to consider the activities of village meetings and councils. By living in both Nekaña and Tiki-lasoa I had the opportunity of observing two different styles of village politics. I will describe that of Nekaña/Woralapa first and then compare it with that of Tiki which has undergone some important changes recently.

Nekaña/Woralapa village meetings take place most Mondays. They are conducted during the daytime and generally take the entire day, with an hour or more off for lunch. The meal is prepared beforehand by the women, then brought to a nearby house, pooled and handed out to each person. The meeting is held in the central space of Nekaña which is referred to as the yarea although it is only an impermanent shelter over one long table and benches of local materials.

The meetings are open to all members of both Nekaña and Woralapa. The two villages are separated by no more than 200 metres and function in many contexts as a single unit referred to as "Newora". Since I lived in Nekaña over the Christmas period when meetings are suspended, I was only able to attend those which were held between September and November of 1979. Attendance during that time was fairly stable at between 30 and 40 (out of a combined, resident adult population of 93), but this may not be representative of the whole year. There were about the

same number of men as women and all age-ranges (except children) were represented, although the proportion of young, single women was considerably less. To some extent this is because their household duties - especially child-care and the endless task of washing clothes - take priority. But this is in part due to their attitude that such business is not their concern. Although young men rarely participate actively their presence indicates that they feel more involved in the political process (and have greater freedom to do so).

The spatial organization of the meeting reflects the differential participation of men and women. The latter sit just within earshot beyond the shelter's edges, while the males occupy the benches, logs and stones under the palm-frond roof. The women tend to come and go as domestic affairs necessitate, one or another slipping away from time to time to tend to a child or check food cooking on the fire. They do not address remarks to the assembly very often, but do make many whispered comments to each other. If they share a strong reaction to some statement their murmur rises to a level audible to the men. At that point the chairman will invite them to express their views and one of the older, more confident women will speak out clearly. Occasionally such a senior woman makes a very forceful statement, her companions nodding and interjecting remarks or noises in agreement. The most striking instance of this in my experience constituted a reprimand of all the men for not only failing to act in accordance with the laws of the land themselves, but also for their hypocrisy in

condemning those who were under discussion for having committed the same offences. These trenchant criticisms produced stunned silence which, among the women, was permeated with the fear that she had gone too far.

The Nekaña/Woralapa meetings are usually chaired by the father of the high chief's speaker. The latter was formally installed in that position in the 1979 investiture ceremony described above but, since he works full-time in Vila, his father performs that function in his absence. It is his job to compile an agenda for each meeting, initiate discussion and record the proceedings.

Next to him at the table sit the other holders of chiefly titles. They and the other senior men are the most vocal.

The meeting serves several functions. In some instances it is purely a medium for the dissemination of information. Communications from external sources such as the central Government are announced, reminding people of taxes coming due or imminent visits from officials, inter-village celebrations and so on. Other items of business concern communal projects such as repairs to schools, churches or roads, the proposed construction of houses, or yam-planting. This type of issue is presented as a *fait accompli* in the sense that it has been decided on by the chiefs in private consultation and it is only the details of when and how it can be done which remain to be negotiated by those in attendance. Any discussion, then, will concern the allocation of specific aspects of the task, for example, to men versus women or one part of a village as against other parts.

Rarely is the viability or necessity of the project itself debated.

Similarly, fines and taxes are declared, not deliberated on in the meeting. The former covers the types of offences mentioned in connection with the public meetings held by the high chiefs: swearing; theft or destruction of property; sexual offences and so on. Fines take the form of money and/or mats, pigs and kava (for more serious offences) or, sometimes, punishment in the form of labour (road maintenance, for example). Excluding the latter, part of each fine is specified as being "for the chiefs" and is put into the village purse (naala or "basket/bag"). This may be 20¢ for bad language or it could be several mats and \$5-10 in the case of something like adultery. Offences are seen as acts against the chiefs as representatives of the whole community. So when a crime affects a particular person the guilty party must make reparation to both the injured party and the village chiefs and shake hands with all of them. This is said to restore "good heart" (põpõ wia) by erasing ill feeling on all sides.

There are several different taxes which are announced in village meetings. The most important of these is the so-called "kastom tax" on land. Any individual who uses land in a dominion other than his own gives \$1 to the high chief of the dominion where those lands are located for each such plot he has. Out of this, plus the money raised by fines, the chiefs and other title-holders such as the tasiga and "policemen" receive a nominal yearly wage as a token of appreciation for their services. Other

taxes are applied in the short term to finance specific village projects such as improving the water supply or building a "Club"-house.

A different sort of matter is that on which individual opinions are solicited. Complaints which have been made to the chiefs in advance - or, sometimes, on the spot - or general problems are opened up for discussion. In this instance many people may speak to the issue and alternative solutions may be offered. Eventually one of these may be accepted and an informal vote will demonstrate consensus. However, if no agreement is reached, the chiefs and chairman will decide to shelve the problem for the time being, postponing the discussion until a later meeting when people have had the opportunity to give it more thought. In some cases, though, the very act of airing a problem is considered to be sufficient in so far as it constitutes a reminder of existing rules and a warning against breaking them.

A striking difference between the Nekaṣā/Woralapa meetings and those of Tikilasoā is the appearance in the former of very dramatic scenes in which serious offences are dealt with. Never in my (much longer) stay in Tiki was I witness to such emotionally charged public events as took place in some of the meetings in Nekaṣā. Two such scenes concerned adultery and a long-standing dispute over rights to land on which a vital water-source is located. There is no doubt that Tiki has its share of similar problems - in fact, given its size, in all probability it has more - so the question arises as to why these kinds of issue were so public in one village but not in another.

If one is to account for this difference, one must first establish what is the norm regarding the degree to which such events are exposed publicly. The most explicit statement I recorded on the subject was made by the chairman of the Nekaña/Woralapa meeting at the outset of the ritual settlement of the adultery case mentioned above. He stated that such prestations were ordinarily not made at the public meeting but that, since the villages' chiefs had only been invested a few months previously, on this occasion an exception would be made in order to demonstrate the strength of the new chiefs. One may conclude from this that this sort of event is normally not visible in Nekaña either.

But this is not the only such instance. I already cited a hotly contested land dispute which emerged in Nekaña, and there were others during my short period of attendance. Yet no similar dispute came up in the Tiki meeting during my nine months' residence. My contention is that with the recent development of a formal village council in Tikilasoá many controversial issues have ceased being exposed publicly there. Let me now describe Tiki meetings and their council.

On the surface Tiki meetings differ little from those held in Nekaña. They also take place on most Mondays, although in the evening since the chairman teaches school during the day. In 1978 attendance in the varea ranged from 12 to 50 out of a field of 89 permanently resident adults. Occasionally meetings were cancelled due to poor turnouts - not aided, I should add, by the chilly conditions

that prevail at night from June throughout August. This and the tardiness of people when summoned by the clangs of a rusty iron tank that serves as a modern day slit-gong cause the chairman and others some dismay. The "policeman's" beating on the surrogate slit-gong, like his blowing of the shell-trumpet (woli) to begin communal work are said to be "the voice of the chief". When people fail to heed it or do so, but in their own good time, this is interpreted as an expression of disregard for the chief's representatives and even for the chief himself.

I will now turn to the council itself. It may be that the council is modelled on the Local Council which was created in 1959 with the encouragement of the British District Agent for the area at the time. It was a joint Nguna-Ñele council which collected a yearly tax and accomplished some important tasks such as building cisterns in the different villages. However, it ceased to function in 1971, when some people refused to pay the tax.

Tiki's village council began in 1977, growing out of the village meeting. That of Nekaña/Woralapa is following the same path. They will soon have a formal council, too, composed of the top 5 chiefs of their two dominions and 10 others, most of whom are title-holders.

Tiki's council is likewise heavily biased toward chiefly title-holders. In its first year it was made up of 12 men, 8 of whom are title-holders. The following year 4 women were chosen, but they, of course, do not bear titles.

As in Nekaña the high chief's speaker or "tongue" (namena) functions as chairman at Tiki's village meetings. He is also president of the council. The others include 2 assistants (atavi), 2 small or "low" chiefs (nawota vakitano), 1 intermediary (tasiga), 1 "policeman" and 1 "facilitator" (naatañoli yasa, literally, a "talking person"). A tasiga is a man who functions as an intermediary, predominantly in marriage arrangements. If a person wants to marry someone, his or her parents will speak to their high chief's tasiga who relays the information to the chief. If he approves, he will send the tasiga to approach the family of the intended spouse or, if the latter is a member of another village, the tasiga approaches the tasiga of that village. The tasiga continues to operate as go-between for the families throughout the wedding preparations. Facilitators, on the other hand, are there to see that the instructions the chief has given are carried out correctly whether it is in yam-planting or house-building or whatever. The "policemen", who are not referred to by any Ngunese term, are strong, young men whose major function - 2 at a time on a fortnightly shift - is to patrol the village nightly to prevent trouble, particularly theft. They also travel to other villages with urgent news such as a death, and in Nekaña I saw them bring in a reluctant witness to a meeting on the chief's orders.

Beside these, 3 of the other council members are sons of title-holders and are, therefore, the probable successors to those titles. Even the 4 female members are all of the

families of title-bearers, that is, their fathers or uncles have chiefly titles.

As to matriclan membership, 8 of Tiki's 13 clans are represented on the council, in the following proportions:

<u>Matriclans</u>	Adult Population of Tiki			<u>Members of Council</u>
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Both</u>	
<u>wita</u>	13	9	22	8
<u>naika</u>	1	3	4	2
<u>noopa</u>	9	12	21	1
<u>karau</u>	1	3	4	1
<u>kukusue</u>	5	1	6	1
<u>naadi</u>	2	3	5	1
<u>maalu</u>	6	7	13	1
<u>vatu</u>	1	2	3	1
<u>napetau</u>	2	0	2	0
<u>nawii</u>	1	4	5	0
<u>naita</u>	0	1	1	0
<u>natale</u>	2	0	2	0
<u>napaga</u>	1	0	1	0
Totals: 13	44	45	89	16

Clearly the wita clan is heavily represented, having a far greater proportion of members of the council than do the other most numerous clans, maalu and noopa. This gives those of the wita clan a greater say in the council's deliberations than members of those clans who also have substantial numbers of people in the village.

In summary, the council is dominated by title-holders and also by members of one particular clan - specifically, that of the high chief. In addition, the council meets privately, on average twice a month, and that is where the kinds of steamy issues that I found in Nekaḗpa's but not

Tiki's meetings do come up. For example, there are so many land disputes that a special committee, a subsection of the council, works on only land problems. Here again I was stymied in my attempts to get to essential issues such as that of land ownership by being refused permission to attend the council's meetings. Nevertheless, this is in itself important since it indicates the extent to which knowledge is controlled and restricted only to insiders so that outsiders such as myself should learn only what they are allowed to see and hear. This tallies with the events (mentioned in the Introduction) preceding my departure from Tiki. It was my impression on various occasions that I had learned too much of the language when people showed some dismay upon discovering how well I had understood their conversation. However, the village council restricts knowledge to a reduced number of insiders as well.

I began this chapter by saying that the most valued resources on Nguna are in relatively abundant supply and that access to them is not restricted. In the later discussion, however, some significant differences were noted regarding land and labour amongst the material resources and titles and mystical powers amongst the non-material resources. In the succeeding discussion of the major political structures I showed how there is a considerable overlap in personnel between all of these structures even though they ostensibly operate independently of each other. It is clear that chiefly titles are one of the most valuable resources since they control access to positions of power

and authority within the village and at the island level and beyond in both the chiefly and church hierarchies.

Nevertheless, it was also seen that many of the issues over which these bodies deliberate concern their very persistence as the accepted legitimate bodies of authority. While the church leaders work on bringing young people into the Presbyterian church and keeping other denominations from gaining legitimacy on the island, the chiefs seek to institute greater sanctions to back up their authority and simultaneously extend it into Vila to control the non-resident segment of Nguna's population.

The crucial question is how much power do chiefs really have. What this chapter demonstrates is that by virtue of a chiefly title a man has a number of special privileges, but the greatest of these is his right to a greater than normal involvement in the political process. Titles bestow the right to speak with authority, provided this is accepted by the majority. Chiefs are not in a sufficiently dominant economic position to impose their will on the rest of society.

In the past it is most probable that Ngunesse chiefs' authority was sustained through their close association with the diviner/priests (munuai) referred to in Chapter Two. As I have already pointed out, the structure of traditional Mekeo politics and that of Nguna bear striking similarities. Hau'ofa (1981) describes how "civilian chiefs" were "men of peace" yet had dangerous powers at their disposal in the person of sorcerers who would avenge crimes when commanded by the chiefs to do so. The threat

of sorcery, then, was the major regulator of conduct in traditional Mekeo (ibid.:298). Moreover, it is virtually the same today. The historical particularities of the Mekeo case are such that sorcery has survived conversion whereas on Nguna anything related to it was quashed by Rev. Milne.

However, one should not imagine that this was because sorcery was of little account on Nguna. On the contrary, sorcery beliefs and practices were deeply entrenched. The only explanation I have heard of the meaning of the name, Nguna, is that it derives from a word naguna meaning "sorcery". It was said that in the distant past Nguna was so riddled with sorcery that it had a fearsome reputation - hence its name.

Although this word is not in use today, Milne's own writings support the explanation. They are peppered with references to "sacred men", "witch-doctors" and "sacred stones". The first two are not distinguished clearly by Milne. He uses interchangeably the indigenous terms na-atamolī tapu ("sacred man") and manuai (which, as munuai, I have translated here as "ritual expert, priest or sorcerer"). Anything out of the ordinary course of nature - droughts, floods, hurricanes, tidal waves, the death of children or of adults (that did not appear to be the result of aging alone) - was attributed to an evil spirit or a man who was in contact with one. However, such men were thought to be able to both cause and cure disease. The practice of contagious magic was named nawosidoaana which means literally "to cause (something) to turn" in

the sense of change or, one might say, to take an unnatural course.

Mrs. Milne's account of this practice is as follows:

In a small cave on Pélé, near the Sacred Stones, was found a large shell called Paiga - a very ugly-looking thing it is, but greatly feared by the natives. They believe that if a man has ill-will toward another man and wishes him to be out of the way, he goes to the sacred man and tells him. The sacred man then seizes the first opportunity of getting some remains of food left by the doomed man, and puts these into the shell. The spirit of the cave eats the food, the man takes some disease and dies. No heathen would dare to enter that cave, far less to touch the shell.

(In Don 1927:27)

Given to more detailed descriptions than her husband, Mrs. Milne also gives us an account of the reverse process: curing.

When anyone is sick the na-atamoli tapu is summoned. He comes with a few leaves of a tree in his hand and looks the patient in the face. Seeing there the demon in him, he spits upon the leaves and touches with them the head, shoulders, arms, breast, and legs of the patient, rubbing them over the chest. Then, with the leaves still in his hands, he pretends to pull the evil spirit out, exhibiting a small stone or snake in the leaves, which he says is the demon in that shape. During this performance he keeps mumbling something. As the spirit of an ancestor, perhaps a father, causes the sickness, to appease his anger an offering is given to him - part of a fowl, a small piece of yam, or the tip of the tail of a pig killed on the grave, wherein they suppose the spirit remains after death. Natématé comes in the shape of a fowl or rat and eats what is laid for him! The sacred man will not even shake hands with the missionary, which would make him moli, or common. The common people dare not

touch a sacred man, fearing sickness or death.

Or he ties a piece of glass to a cord around the sick person's neck. Or he blows into his mouth with a straw and blows the demon out. Or he opens a young coconut, blows into it at sunset and makes the patient drink the water, which has the same effect. And so on.

(ibid.:25)

It is important to note that at least some of these powers were associated with matriliney. One of Milne's first converts was a Pele island chief named Masongomapula. It was he who surrendered the paiga⁶ (a type of triton shell) mentioned by Mrs. Milne in the description cited above. This and 4 "sacred stones" - 2 largish ones called Bakoa lapa ("Big shark") and Bakoa riki ("Little shark") and two smaller ones, seen as the "children" of the first two - had all been passed down to Masongomapula from his mother's brother (ibid.:176).

Rev. Milne's view of all of this is summarized in his own words as follows:

This natématé worship and the feasts and kava drinking in connection with it, are the greatest hindrance to the progress of the Gospel of Christ throughout this whole Group of islands...

(ibid.:30)

Consequently Milne concentrated his efforts on breaking down this complex by demanding that prospective converts reject everything associated with such "demon worship". Chiefs who expressed a desire to be baptised had first to burn all the slit-drums over which they had charge and

surrender any stones or shells they had, whether they were used in the performance of sorcery or just to protect their owner from spirit attack, injury in battle or whatever. Therefore, by the time conversion had become universal not a single slit-drum remained intact and the entire island had been purged of magical objects.

This stands in marked contrast to the situation on Ambrym whose reputation as a dark den of sorcery has lasted almost into the present day. It was only in 1978 that it became possible to say that Ambrym's church leaders had finally broken the back of sorcery (Tonkinson 1981:252). Milne's 19th Century success is largely attributable to two factors: his unique status as a White foreigner; and the length of his residence on Nguna - 54 years. However, in keeping with my interpretation of the Christianization of Nguna as a process of voluntary "adoption" rather than "conversion", I would add a third factor: the internal dynamics of pre-Christian, Ngunesé politics. Let me expand briefly on this point.

Although the reconstruction of pre-Contact Nguna is not complete, there is ample evidence to show that in that era mystical sanctions were extremely important. If sorcery was indeed the bulwark of chiefly authority there as in the Mekeo and S.E. Ambrym systems, then its delegitimization and virtual elimination would have been a great blow to chiefs. Obviously the power of Christianity replaced that of the ancestors to a great extent; otherwise the first converts would hardly have been chiefs. If they were willing to destroy the images of dead chiefs - the

slit-drums - to which they had formerly made sacrificial offerings, and to surrender those objects through which they tapped those spirits' powers, they must have been convinced that the missionary's God was the supreme power. I am tempted to take these speculations one step further and also suggest that there was an element of competition between chiefs and sorcerers as Hau'ofa (1981:262) found was the case in Mekeo. If that were so, undermining sorcerers' power would have consolidated both chiefly authority and spiritual, this time Christian, powers in the hands of chiefs, so many of whom became elders or teacher-catechists. Furthermore, if sorcery knowledge and objects passed through the matriline, as Milne's observations suggest, then the elimination of sorcery would have reduced the influence of mothers' brothers over sisters' sons, giving fathers more exclusive control over their sons and (from thenceforth) successors.

However, to return to the present, we have seen that contemporary chiefs enjoy a certain degree of advantage in terms of access to material resources. Yet this differential is relatively small. It has also decreased in significance as modern socioeconomic circumstances afford those who are poor in terms of traditional resources the opportunity to acquire material wealth through means which are not dependent upon those traditional resources.

Nevertheless, chiefs still hold a considerable degree of political dominance over their fellows. In part this is due to the intertwining of chiefly and church authority that I have described in this chapter. But it is also

predicated upon ideology. This is not the superior control of mystical forces as Hau'ofa argues is the basis of Mekeo chiefs' dominance, although on Nguna there are still definite associations of chiefs with ancestral powers (see Chapter Six). It is, rather, the concept of historical validity - the chiefly institution as the very essence of Ngunese culture - which is the chiefs' greatest support today. The rest of this thesis focusses on how and why present day Ngunese leaders are engaged in manipulation of this aspect of ideology.

FOOTNOTES

1. Guiart assigns to Rev. Peter Milne the responsibility for altering the mode of transmission of inheritance:

The former importance of the maternal uncle has been obscured by the insistence of Peter Milne... on the adoption of patrilineal inheritance.

(Guiart 1963:106)

He says the same of the mode of transmission of chiefly titles:

A lire les mémoires publiées du Révérend Peter Milne, on se rend compte de quel poids à pesé sur la société locale l'autorité d'un homme de caractère, voué à l'élimination du paganisme, en particulier par son insistence à vouloir remplacer la tradition matrilineaire de la transmission des titres - titres conservés, l'intronisation devenant le privilège du missionnaire - par un héritage en lignée paternelle. Ceci a faussé toute la structure locale.

(Guiart 1973:338)

My translation of this passage is as follows:

In reading the published memoirs of Reverend Peter Milne, one realizes what pressure this man of character, devoted to the elimination of paganism, must have exerted on the local society, especially in his insistence in trying to replace the matrilineal tradition in the transmission of titles - the titles were kept, investiture became the missionary's privilege - with inheritance through the patriline. This altered the entire local structure.

2. An interesting analogy is made (implicitly) between the bestowal of a chiefly title and the delivery of a new bride to her groom's village. The same word is used in describing both processes:

Eu pusi nagisana = They "delivered" his name (i.e., title).

Eu pusi(yusi) nagoroi aneana = They "delivered" his wife.

The similarity of the two actions is threefold:

- 1) the transferral of a valued title or person;
- 2) the cession of control by the donors; and
- 3) the simultaneous prestation which is a sign of that cession of control.

3. Rev. Peter Milne was succeeded by his son Rev. William V. Milne. However, the latter died tragically in 1937 when a local man ran amuck and attacked a number of people, fatally injuring Milne as well as an elderly man of his own village. Milne was eventually replaced by Rev. Kenneth Crump, during whose residence there were two major changes: the district was divided in two and the first ni-Vanuatuan pastor was ordained. Crump retired in 1954 and his successor, Rev. Robert Murray, came to Nguna from Tongoa in 1957.

There are indications that Murray's retirement in 1972 was not solely a result of the church's intention to "indigenize" its leadership throughout the country. Although the accounts are conflicting and hard to substantiate, they suggest that there was a

local urge to have Murray removed. His political sympathies seem to have been regarded unfavourably by many Ngunese whose preference for the Vanuaaku Pati was beginning to emerge at that time - the very early 1970's. Certainly the timing of his retirement coincides closely with the politicization of the question of control of local affairs, even though the authority to remove a missionary is not vested in the local community but in the national church administration.

4. The Institute accepted its first female students in 1962.
5. I might note that these first-hand observations were gained through my attending the local Session meetings throughout my stay on Nguna. I received permission to do so in advance from the Pastor who said that he saw no reason why I ought not to attend. However, when I later mentioned this to a Reformed Presbyterian Church missionary - an Australian - then engaged in missionary work on Efate, I discovered that my acceptance into Session as an observer was highly irregular in terms of church policy. It was this man's opinion that, had a White missionary been in charge rather than a ni-Vanuatu Pastor, I would have been refused entrance to these meetings. I think that this contrast reflects two things: first, the desire of Session to avoid its activities being seen as secret operations, in accordance with cultural notions that positively

value doing things "in the open"; second, the view of Whites as more learned than Blacks. This is particularly intriguing in view of the closed-door policy that I encountered with respect to high chiefs' meetings. It seems to imply - at the very least - that "chiefs' business" is more politically sensitive than that of church leaders.

6. Contemporary accounts differ slightly on this point. They suggest that in the pre-Contact era anyone could use paiga and woli shells, but that sagoa shells were exclusively held by high chiefs. Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain identifications and thereby distinguish these 3 types of tritons in terms of their scientific classifications.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MEANING OF THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

In the introduction I spoke of how on Nguna I was cast in the role of historiographer - kastom recorder. Certain of my skills and knowledge were of practical value to those who were already engaged in an ethnohistorical enterprise - the social construction of the past.

In Chapter Two I put forward my own historical reconstruction of the pre-Contact era on Nguna based on a variety of sources. I used local notions about the past critically, presenting only those which were confirmed by other sources.

In this chapter I would like to consider such local views from a very different perspective, concentrating not on objective historicity, but on meaning. I want to explore local conceptualizations of Nguna's past as the outcome of a process of reality-construction. For this I draw on Berger and Luckmann's framework (1966) in general and, in particular, on their analysis of the process of "objectification" of an institution. This is the attempt by some segment of society to endow an institution with an historical quality in transmitting it to others through certain educative techniques (ibid.:66-79). In this chapter I hope to show how a particular construction of the past is being propagated on Nguna by present day holders of positions of power and authority in order to lend authenticity to the politico-religious structures in which their positions lie.

In listening to Ngunese people speak of their own culture I became aware that both their interpretation and evaluation of contemporary life on Nguna rest on an ethno-historical perspective. The present is conceived of in relation to two distinct past eras: pre-Christian or pre-Contact times; and the early Christian period. I will outline first how each of these is understood by present day Ngunese and then go on to describe a number of conceptions relating to kinds of behaviour which are propagated as the proper way to act according to kastom.

The Pre-Christian Period

The only unambiguous term for the pre-Christian period is "The Darkness". This is how it was designated by the first missionaries, in contrast to "The Light" of Christianity; and it is also how it is still spoken of by the Ngunese themselves. The negative connotations implicit in this dichotomy indicate one aspect of the Ngunese view of the pagan period. It was a hard (kasua) time, people say; a time when war was rife, and men always kept their weapons at hand. Stories recount how warring groups attacked each others' villages by night; how warriors were shot with poison arrows; how to travel between villages one risked ambush and so on. Sources for these ideas are indirect, since none of the people alive today saw those days. One of the major sources is the first missionary's observations as found in Don's biography of him which has been available in Vila in paperback for several years and is read by some Ngunese. I hardly need add that these descriptions are

also largely negative. So, it seems, were comments made by the first generation of Ngunese Christians to their children or grandchildren. These latter, now themselves grandparents, are often completely unable to add any personal observations or explanations about the pagan era since, when they themselves asked out of curiosity, they were warned harshly to leave those times be. They were evil times, when bad things, contrary to the teachings of the church, were done; so one must not talk or think about such things lest they become powerful again.

This is the "dark" side of Ngunese history, but it has a positive aspect as well. The word used above translated as "hard" can also mean "strong" in a positive sense. Thus the people of the pagan era are portrayed as taller and stronger than the present generations because they ate no "weak" (manainai) European foods and drank only coconut water and natural water.

The stories relating to these times stress both physical strength and political might. The latter is evidenced in accounts of these same wars and in communal achievements such as great feasts and dances and the erection of slit-drums and large meeting-houses. Not only the people but the yams and other crops were bigger and better, and men were rich with pigs to the extent that the gardens had to be fenced to protect them from the free-ranging pigs. Today, on the other hand, it is the pigs that are fenced in and they are few and small.

There are other elements of this period of which people speak with a nostalgic sort of admiration or, sometimes,

awe. This is very clear when munuai (as diviner cum miracle-workers) or chiefs are the subject. It is their extraordinary powers that make them (and, therefore, the period as a whole) admirable in so far as they represent the exercise of legitimate authority.

While munuai are said to have performed super-human feats such as transporting themselves underwater to distant islands, greatest value is placed on their ability to call fire down to earth from the sky to rekindle cold hearth-fires and to provide the best of coconut puddings with pork and chicken in them to feed the people when one village was feasting another.

In a similar way chiefs are portrayed as having cared for their people, as having husbanded them as a man does his pigs. A family would not go homeless as long as the chief was there to see that all the villagers helped to build them a house; and a whole village would not go hungry as long as the chief wisely managed its resources. Furthermore, the chiefs upheld the law of the land in no uncertain terms. Elders of the church today stress love and Christian charity, but when they discuss how things used to be, they laud the enforcement of society's rules by chiefs who, for example, would have had a man killed for committing adultery. They believe in the Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill", but, when concerned with the exercise of chiefly sanctions, they suffer no pangs in saying that those harsh times were good times; for then chiefs really had power and they defended the law.

The Early Christian Period

Let us turn to local views of the period from 1900 to the death of the paramount chief in the early 1930's. Milne himself died in 1924, still resident on Nguna. He and Tariñoaliu are both described as men of strength - one as religious leader and the other as both political leader and strong Christian.

The few who were young during Milne's last years give witness to his forcefulness of personality and strict approach, both in the classroom and the pulpit. A story of rather mythical nature is told of how he insisted that the last munuai shake hands with him, thereby overcoming the munuai who died a short time thereafter (see Appendix VI). This was a demonstration of Milne's and God's greater power. However, in some versions of the story the munuai also shows his power or superhuman nature by rising from the dead three times before disappearing forever.

Milne also organized some long-term native proselytization in which there is still some pride taken by the Ngunese. They say that, once converted themselves, they took "The Light" to virtually every island in the Group. They were dispatched by Milne as lay missionaries, called "Teachers", like the Polynesian Christians who performed the same function in the earliest years of the ni-Vanuatu church.

To my mind it is ironic that Milne is also seen as the first recorder of kastom for posterity. For example, when a few older men and I attempted to fully document their knowledge of traditional customs, they brought along

a copy of Don's biography as a reference text for one particular area of which they knew they had very fuzzy notions. Interestingly, this was the timing, type and size of funerary sacrifices at graveside for a chief.

This search for authentic, traditional customs and artifacts spread to the rest of the community, as well, for the country's first annual Arts Festival in 1979. People pooled their knowledge to produce items such as men's woven belts that had neither been worn nor made since the turn of the century. At this time a fear of being judged and found wanting was articulated. People exhorted each other to keep to strictly indigenous products in order that these would prove acceptable. But they were more concerned with the opinion of Europeans than with that of their fellow country-men. Some felt that to a large extent the impetus for the Festival and the new respect for things kastom in general had come from Whites.

The strength of the paramount chief during the early Christian period is usually expressed in terms of social control. One is told that he kept the law strong and that, in order to do so, he had a number of "policemen". When some infringement of the rules was committed, the high chief of the guilty party's village could send him or her to the paramount chief to be judged. He would assign an appropriate fine or punishment which would then be enforced by his "police". This could be monetary or in the form of road maintenance or incarceration in this chief's "calaboose", a small building near his house. In extreme instances punishment was the destruction of the guilty party's gardens.

Consequently, there was a strong incentive to heed the chiefs' word and to express deference toward them. These days are remembered as a time in which crimes were answered with punishment and young folk behaved circumspectly, especially young, single men vis-à-vis young women. In fact, one of the "policemen's" duties was to keep apart single people of the opposite sex, especially in the darkness of evening. A blast on the shell-trumpet in mid-evening served as curfew and young men found abroad after then would be chased home with blows from sticks or even a whip to speed them on their way.

There are two things I would like to point out about these portraits of the past. The first one is the linking of secular and sacred authority or, rather, political and mystical or religious power. I have argued in earlier chapters that in the pre-Contact period these two phenomena were bound together, chiefs and their ritual experts complementing each other. Likewise in the idealized views of the past that I have just outlined, much stress is laid on this combination. As chiefs and ritual experts of "The Darkness" are described, so are Suasavi Tariñoaliu and Rev. Milne of "The Light" described. If the reader will bear this in point in mind, in the next chapter I will return to it in relation to the present.

The second thing to note about local views of the past is the centrality of chiefs. So much is said of them that it is necessary to consider the ideal concept of the chief in a little more detail.

The Concept of "Chief"

The word for chief, nawota, is clearly a cognate of terms in use elsewhere in Vanuatu. Layard (1942:704-5) notes the common derivative of the words for stone circles or platforms on which pigs are killed: na-vot in Vao; na-wot in Atchin; vota in Malo; and ot in south Raga; while Patterson (1976:99) adds to these the north Ambrym word wor/wot. The Ngunes word for stone, vatu, is obviously also a cognate of the northern variations and is similarly linked with pig-killing rituals. In this case, however, it was not part of an open, competitive, ritual grade-taking system; nor were the pigs actually slain on these stones. Nevertheless, the metaphor of standing up on a stone to ritually legitimate claims to authority (and, in turn, to land rights) can be heard today on Nguna.

Nawota is used metaphorically in two other contexts, in my observation, i.e., as a term for "husband" and for "boss", for example, the leader of a group of workers or a student's teacher or supervisor. On the other hand, naveinawotaana, a synonym of nawota, is used in many contexts. Literally it means the "being-a-chief". But one might also gloss it as "possession, dominion (over), control (of), right of (or, to) control (of)" in its various occurrences. Thus one may have naveinawotaana over making a decision as to the lending of a possession such as an axe or a piece of land. What this word denotes is the power of disposal someone holds over some object or the power of decision on some specific issue.

The linguist Schütz observed that there are two forms in Ngunese of the possessive preposition "of": ni and ki. The latter is used in phrases such as "the x of y" ("y" being a person or other animate being) only when a particular sort of relationship obtains between "x" and "y". Schütz considered this a relationship of active control (Schütz 1969b:41-2, following Buse 1960:131). The importance of this usage for the present discussion is that the relationship between a chief and his people is conceived of in these terms. Thus, just as a person would say "the book of Jack" using ki as the possessive preposition because the actor has control over his inanimate possession, the book, so would one say "the assistant of the chief" or "the people of the chief" using ki even though the objects of the preposition are animate beings. Furthermore, the word "to have" (peani) is used of a people's possessions but also of a chief's people, his varea, and his dominion as a whole. The controlling and judicial role of a chief with respect to his subjects is nowhere so evident as in the symbolism of certain aspects of the varea itself.

A chief is said to be above and to hold his people, as the walls of a varea do, curving upwards to form the roof. A chief is often likened to a banyan tree for similar reasons: its domineering size, strength and ability to shelter many birds. A central feature inside the varea is a large pile of fire-rocks for baking communal meals. Some say that these rocks are like the chief's people and that he, like the bamboo tongs, may reach in and pluck out a single person to deal with him if he commits a crime.

In Chapter Four I described chiefly investitures. I noted that they involve to some degree a process of depersonalization in that a successor's personal name is discarded as he is invested with the chiefly title born by each of his predecessors. The bestowal of a title was also once thought to entail a transference of mystical power, a sacred spirit, to the new title-holder. Ideally, then, the chief was one who was set apart from the common people through this ritual. Therefore he had a special nature by virtue of which he both controlled and maintained his people as "his subjects" (narei aneana).

Behavioural Ideals

In the next chapter I will be exploring views of the present. I will discuss a number of explanations put forward by various members of Ngunese society for certain phenomena that are interpreted as contemporary "problems". Most of these lay the blame on the behaviour of today's chiefs. However, chiefs themselves argue that these troubles are a result of serious deviations from traditional behavioural ideals on the part of all members of society. At this point I would like to examine these ideals to which chiefs and elders make reference.

I have demarcated the following 4 ideals: 1) humility; 2) respect; 3) truthfulness; and 4) generosity. I will now expand on each of these.

In its simplest form humility consists of the effort to refrain from self-praise or self-aggrandisement. I first became aware of it on noticing how often the English word

"proud" was used by individuals when we discussed their own life-stories. Fieldworkers often anticipate that one of the topics on which people will most enjoy speaking will be themselves and their accomplishments. However, as it turned out, while Ngunese people do indeed like to talk about these things, doing so also raises some problems for them. Eventually I realized that "proud" has a quite negative connotation for the Ngunese. While it can mean either "having a just awareness of one's merits or achievements" or "haughty, arrogant", to the Ngunese it means only the latter. So thereafter I looked for a word with a semantic load more like that of "proud" in the first, more positive sense. The reasonable facsimile that I found in Ngunese was laelae which means "to enjoy, rejoice (in), be glad (to, or of)". Speakers can, and frequently did say that they laelae some work or achievement without giving the impression that they were praising themselves. Furthermore, laelae, being a verb, locates the emphasis in the action itself rather than in the performer (and speaker), or in a product of the activity, thereby downplaying the speaker's own role. This is often done effectively, too, by attributing one's achievements to God himself. Rather than claim credit for some deed, people sometimes portray themselves as but tools - even reluctant ones, in some cases - by which the Lord realizes his plan on earth.

A very commonly used strategy for avoiding giving the impression that one is taking personal credit, boasting or showing off is that of undervaluation. For example, a

man goes to visit his clan-mate who has an upcoming wedding for his daughter. On arriving, the visitor greets his friend and informs him that he has brought a "poor little (low-quality) yam" as a gift. But as he presents it, everyone sees that it is actually a fine specimen of the best sort of yam, highly valued for its superlative colour, size, texture and taste and a must for the wedding feast. Similarly, a gift of a large pig may be described by the giver as a small chicken or a bit of food. The same phenomenon is at work when the traveller, stopping for a rest at the home of friends, is asked to wait while the hostess "gets the fire going", as if to make tea, and eventually is served a full meal. For the ignorant, similarly, it comes as quite a surprise to return from a short wander and visit around the territory absolutely laden with gifts of food; but the initiated know enough to take along a bag or basket on such an occasion for all those "just a little somethings" that are sure to be pressed upon one along the way.

The aim of this convention of undervaluation is to prevent others from construing one's own actions as attempts to "make oneself high", to "lift oneself up". The possibility of being accused of this has a great deal of power. That is not to say that individuals will not try to achieve personal aggrandisement, but that they are still sensitive to what people are saying about them. They know that if they persist in such attempts regardless of signs of disapproval from their fellows, they risk social isolation.

The second behavioural ideal is respect for others. In terms of respecting their possessions or property this applies equally to all. However, within the immediate family it slackens considerably such that one can never be sure who might be wearing one's sandals if they are not to be found; and when one does find out, there is little one can say. Nevertheless, one of the most commonly and most fervently condemned acts is stealing. Of the few things on which children are lectured by their elders, this is one.

Another aspect of this ideal concerns people's individuality, that is, the understanding that "everyone is different", meaning that everyone has a unique set of likes and dislikes or preferences. Although this idea is espoused in numerous contexts, I can most easily exemplify it and its consequences in terms of people's eating habits. In ordinary circumstances it is women's responsibility to provide food and drink for others, and it is a matter of some importance that they should provide suitable nourishment. Consequently a woman exhibits considerable anxiety over and goes to some trouble to supply the right type of food to any given person. As one might guess, her tension is greater or less depending on how familiar she is with the person and his or her preferences and on the degree of formality of the occasion. Even tea, the simplest of repasts, poses a problem if one does not know one's guest's habits with respect to milk and sugar. One young married woman spoke of her fear of serving someone something that they disliked and said that she now simply sets out the

sugar alongside the tea so that her guests can serve themselves. As she put it, "Only you know yourself. You (like it) sweet, you (like it) as it is, or however you (like it)". The problem is the possibility of giving offence. As such, it is more troublesome when one is entertaining strangers; but it is equally important when one is host to family and clan members at a wedding.

The third major aspect of this ideal is respect for and obedience to authority figures. This is stressed explicitly in moral admonishment of youngsters, whether it be for parents, older people, church elders, Pastor, school-teachers, chiefs or anyone else bearing a chiefly title or occupying an official position. In conjunction with this there is a strong association between the right to speak or take other forms of action concerning particular issues and specific positions, more or less formal. Along with those just listed this may include a family head or the owner of a specific object which is the centre of the issue. However, for the office-holder, the authority to speak is as much a duty as a right.

One who speaks on a subject over which he has no authority runs the risk of being accused of trying to make himself into something that, by definition, he is not. Furthermore, he may well be seen as trying to gain a position not rightfully his and so can be interpreted as challenging its incumbent. So one finds that, though great and serious concern with some situation may be expressed in private, the individual speaking will be unwilling to

express the same sentiments publicly if, in his own estimation, the right to do so is someone else's, not his.

In order to avoid giving challenge to authority, one must refrain from criticising authority figures openly. Moderating influences or, one might say, liberating influences are old age and status associated with membership in the church or chiefly authority systems. For example, an elder in the church could not very well make disparaging remarks about shortcomings in the Pastor's carrying out of his duty, but he might well exhort his fellow-villagers to more Christian behaviour, and especially so were he senior in terms of age. At the same time, though, his position within the church would not allow him to make any explicit comments about the doings of chiefs, unless he were one of the several men who have membership in both groups. Yet these latter men are, in fact, the most careful to be diplomatic in this sort of instance, a point to which I will return below.

On the issue of respect as it relates to positions of authority, I would like to bring a particularly ubiquitous phrase to bear. In its simplest usage paataka means "enough" or "sufficient", as in "I've had enough to eat" or, "There are sufficient pigs for the meal". But in many contexts it carries a pronominal suffix. Some examples of how it is used follow:

a) 'Sugoro waia e daa paatakagu'. Depending on the situation this could mean "This shirt is not big enough for me", or equally, "This shirt is not small enough for me". To do justice to the non-specificity of the word paataka,

one should really translate the sentence as, "This shirt is not suitable for me".

b) 'Paataka ni nalakiana'. This could be translated as "enough/suitable/appropriate for marriage". It refers to an evaluation of a girl's fitness or readiness for marriage. It is a question of age or, more to the point, of her degree of physical maturity. (Note that the same construction can be used with reference to a male, but "marriage", in that case, would be expressed by the word navita-wiriana instead.)

c) 'Paataka ni nawosiana'. This means "able/capable of (doing) the work". When said in the negative of an elderly person this indicates that the person no longer has the strength, either physically, mentally, or both, to do a certain job. In the case of a child or adolescent, it means that he or she is as yet incapable of performing the task due to insufficient development, physical, mental or cultural, the latter term referring to acquired skills or knowledge.

Inherent in this is a well-defined preconception of what abilities, skills, etc. are necessary to the successful completion of any given task. Given that, a judgement can be made by the actor or some other person(s) as to whether or not he fulfills those requirements, that is, whether or not he is equal to the task.

I should point out here that such judgements can be conflicting. For example, take the young man who feels that he is ready for grownup life, while in the judgement of his elders he is still too young to partake in the

Lord's Supper. What he may do is go right ahead and act as though he had already been admitted into the church and society as an adult. He may insist on doing what the older, already-admitted group of young people do - staying out all night at dances, sleeping in a single friend's house or in an uncle's house instead of in his parents' home, working in Vila, and so on. So one can sometimes deny others' definition of oneself and successfully assert one's own definition; but, when it comes to suitability for admission to formal positions, access is strictly controlled. One cannot successfully claim the right to take such a position without social approbation.

d) 'Paataka ni nayeinawotaana'. This is best translated as "equal to being the chief" as in c) above. "Equal to" conveys the idea that the "being-a-chief" is a duty-bound role which, if it is to be successfully performed, requires certain characteristics and skills. But, though some of these are personal attributes, they are necessary but not sufficient elements. The one indispensable element, of course, is the successor's consanguineous relationship to his predecessor.

Since each person has his own place and job to do and knows better than another what that is, it is not for one person to tell another what to do; neither is it fitting to make judgements on others' actions or decisions nor to interfere with them.

Another endlessly occurring phrase epitomizes this: 'Anigo e pei anigo'. The literal translation of this is, "Yours is yours". Any of the personal possessives - except

for the first person - can appear in this construction, producing the following variations: "His/hers is his/hers" and "Theirs is theirs". This phrase does not refer to rights of possession over particular objects, as one might expect; rather is it uttered in the context of decision-making. When people expound on what someone else, who may or may not be present, ought to do about a particular problem, the last comment is often this one. The implication is that that person's decision or future action is, in the end, his own and the completed discussion is irrelevant. The fact that the opinions might have been forcefully expressed in the presence of the individual whose decision it is, is, of course, important. But by closing the scene with this statement one reaffirms both the autonomy of the acting person and the impartiality of the discussants of the issue. Although the literal meaning of the phrase "Yours is yours" lays stress on the independent authority of the person to whom this is said, the speaker is equally concerned to demonstrate through his use of this expression that he is not making an attempt to usurp the other's authority over the matter.

The same concern with individual autonomy or authority is seen in the phrase 'A mariatae noa aginau, ma a marisaa noa agi tea pōta'. Literally this means, "I can tell mine, but I can't tell anyone else's". For example, I asked a woman why she chose to prevent becoming pregnant after having had a number of children. To this she gave a frank answer, but when I asked her opinion as to whether this was a common activity amongst other women, she replied with

the above phrase. She refused to generalize from her own experience to that of others. It was not that she did not know why other women choose to do as they do, but that 1) she could not presume to speak for someone else, and 2) people's motivations are conceived of as both hidden and unpredictable. Therefore, she could not hazard a guess for fear of her statements being later found to be false; for this would leave her open to an accusation of lying with intent - to deceive me or to defame others.

I will say more on lying shortly, but first I would like to give another example of this concern with the preservation of the individual's autonomy. In pursuing the area of child-rearing and education of the younger generation by the older, I had occasion to speak to an elderly woman whom I knew quite well. I inquired as to what explicit instructions she gave her daughters as new mothers with their own children. She said that she told her girls nothing of the "proper" way of doing these things, that she could not tell even her own daughters how to care for their children as each of them would find her own way. She said, "E duñana peani namidoakiataeana kakana" or, "She herself has the understanding of it". Ideally, even a grandmother may not presume to usurp her granddaughter's jurisdiction over her children. She just hopes that the younger woman will find her own way through a "natural" development in her knowledge combined with observation of the example set by her mother and others.

The third behavioural ideal is truthfulness. As in any small community lying, truth-twisting, tale-fabricating

and other forms of deception of one's neighbour are dangerous to the smooth functioning of the whole. Wilson (1974) has clearly demonstrated - with respect to the enterprise of doing ethnography - that one's "good name" is a highly valued and terribly vulnerable possession of the individual. It is made or unmade, Wilson suggests, through language alone.

But for the Ngunese, at least, actions speak louder than words. That is not to say that verbal lies are impotent; indeed, they can cause great havoc. The point is that the linguistic medium is seen as inherently unreliable. Second-hand information is always suspect; so only eyewitness reports are treated as reliable. Small children are rehearsed well before they are sent on an errand so that they will repeat that request or message without alteration, and the one who does so is applauded. On the other hand, the child who tries to deceive its parents is rewarded with a stern rebuke. Here lie the seeds of the adult's concern that his word should be held by others to be good - "straight" (leana) rather than "crooked" (dagele).

I recall asking my primary aide to name people who were honourable, whom one could trust. After considering my request for a few moments, he replied, "No, I'm sorry. I can't do it." His reason was, "One never knows... I could lie to you if I said that a man was a respectable person and tomorrow he did something dishonest."

An example of a very different sort, but even more striking evidence of the strength of the ideal of truthfulness, concerns a forcible rape of a local girl by a

local fellow which happened while I was on Nguna. She was 12 years old and he was an unmarried man in his mid-20's. The case was taken to the authorities in Vila and the man was given a 5-year jail sentence. The length of his sentence was probably a result of three factors: the girl's age; the threat of death by which she was forced to submit; and the fact that this was not the man's first offence of this nature. I discussed the case with two men of that man's village, one quite elderly and the other about 45 years old. In their view the court's reasons for giving a fairly heavy sentence were 1) her tender age, and 2) his dishonesty.

This time, and in the previous instances in which he had committed similar offences, this man had denied his guilt when first accused. To have admitted the truth once found out would have been the action of a properly-acting, honourable person (naatañoli leana). Furthermore, he had caused the family of the girl, who had to take her to Vila to identify him in court - as well as the police who came to Nguna to investigate and take him into custody - considerable expense in transport costs. In these men's minds, it was not so much the violent, sexual act itself but the deception after the fact and the inconvenience and expense that this caused others that deserved severe punishment.

The fourth and last behavioural ideal to be considered is generosity. One of the few misdemeanours for which I witnessed a child being struck on the spot with nary a warning in advance was selfishness. For example, two small children, approximately 7 years old, but one

considerably taller than the other, go looking for mangoes. The taller one reaches some for himself, but the other cannot. So he asks his "brother" to reach one for him. Not only does the latter refuse to do so, but he also refuses to give him any of the ones he has already picked. The first child's mother, nearby, hears the ensuing commotion and, upon ascertaining the cause, seizes the nearest hard object and smacks her child soundly, all the while speaking harshly to him. As she divvies up the controversial fruit equally to both children, she emphasizes that one is meant to help one's brother and especially to share one's food or belongings with him.

The same ideal can be observed in adult's behaviour. It is applied in many other contexts such as when a member of one's family admires one's dress and asks to borrow it. The tacit assumption is that she will keep it, but one cannot refuse for any reason, however good. That such a request within the family is binding is expressed in a specific verb "to ask for" (sea) as distinct from the one used in other contexts (datago).

Lending and giving away things, primarily food, tools and human labour all come under the same rule of reciprocity. Although it is of a generalized nature so that there is no strict time-limit, there can certainly be a sense of a receiver's having let pass more opportunities to repay a debt than is reasonable. But the giver most definitely ought not to allude to the fact, given that his initial "gift" was handed over as exactly that, that is, as having no strings or expectations attached.

Consequently, should the debtor appear with another request, making no mention of the outstanding obligation, the giver is in a moral and emotional double-bind. Does he lie and say, "No, I'm sorry, I have none", or refuse pointblank? Both are poor choices in view of his desire to live up to the ideal of generosity. So he usually decides to fulfill the request and take his chances that he may never reap the fruits of his "gift". This allows the individual who would take advantage of others to do so to an unfortunately great extent. There are people who plead poverty time and time again, though when it comes to luxuries like alcohol and lollies they have ample money. Those who suffer most at their hands are those whose actions most closely approximate the ideal. The rest compromise when they feel they cannot afford to be as generous as they would like to be. But one must be careful, for one can get a bad name by consistently contravening the ideal. For example, a man who failed to provide hearty meals as host of a wedding was said to maripunue namauriana aneana. Literally that means to "kill his (own) life". One might more freely translate it as to "destroy his reputation". By stinting on food he both showed himself lacking in generosity and offended his guests, thereby endangering any future large enterprise he might undertake for which he would need their support.

Summary

If we look at all 4 behavioural ideals together, we see that there are three underlying propositions about

human behaviour. First, people are essentially unpredictable. They have motivations, desires and feelings that cannot be known with any certainty from their outward signs, primarily what they say. Yet, second, people are dependent upon one another, particularly upon those with whom they live and cooperate. Therefore great stress is laid on the individual's actions as it is through them that he or she is judged. Third - and this is in conflict with the second tenet - people are also seen as being ideally independent and autonomous. Everyone is conceived of as having jurisdiction over something, be it material possessions, the organization of the household or merely their own opinions. Even an infant's refusal to eat is interpreted as the expression of an idiosyncratic preference, a conscious choice asserted by it.

Rooted in these three fundamental conceptions about human behaviour are 1) the preoccupation with one's reputation, that is, how one is regarded by one's fellows; and 2) the concern with the inviolability of authority in all its forms and contexts. In each of these ideals respect for and obedience to figures of authority are central. Those who most appear to subscribe to these ideals and who are the most vocal in propagating them are those who hold positions in the local authority structures. It is obvious that if people conform to this code they will lend support to those same structures.

So when chiefs and elders talk about these ideals they are really putting forward an argument to account for the discrepancy between the idealized past and the less-than-

perfect present. They are asserting that today's troubles are a result of everyone's failing to live up to these traditional ways of acting¹ and that the solution to today's problems is for everyone to act more closely in accordance with these ideals.

Aside from that they assert the need to improve the situation by directly reinvigorating the chiefly and church systems themselves. They say that in order to strengthen Ngunese society as a whole both chiefs and church must be strengthened.

Hence elders are discussing the possibility of inviting a well-known evangelical group from Tongoa to the north to come and hold reviyalist meetings on Nguna. The local Session's stand against a return to kastom marriage and against other denominations such as the Seventh Day Adventist church also constitute attempts to assert the church's authority.

Very recently token monthly prestations of food to the Pastor and to Tikilaso'a's high chief have been instituted as a lapsed, traditional gesture of respect and deference, affirmations that chiefs and church are working for their people. There is some talk of also reviving the more expensive yearly tribute (nasautoga) in traditional goods - pigs, mats and kava - but even those who propose it admit that this would be too difficult given how few pigs people raise these days. The process of codifying laws by which chiefs might assess fines and punishments for misconduct is being advanced further, as has already been seen in the preceding chapter. In this enterprise

the notion that money is a poor medium for such transactions is evident. For example, for theft, the proposed penalty is that the thief should replace the stolen goods rather than make cash compensation. This is felt to be both a more effective deterrent and a more meaningful penalty in that it is a return to kastom forms of punishment. Finally, my own presence and interests afforded those who were trying to achieve these changes the opportunity to produce a kastom booklet printed in both English and Ngunese, bringing together all that was remembered about rituals and other activities involving chiefs. I must emphasize that, in so far as I was able to judge, it was an honest attempt in the sense that the individuals with whom I collaborated tried to be historically accurate. However - though I did not realize this at the time - this, too, was part of the effort to bolster chiefly authority. The issues stressed in it - primarily the sacred nature and protective or managerial role of chiefs - clearly make this document another contribution toward lending the contemporary chiefly system historical authenticity, thereby legitimating the claims to authority by holders of positions within it.

In the next chapter I will explore further this ideological struggle by expanding on the specific content of the "problems" around which argument and counter-argument turn.

FOOTNOTES

1. The question of the extent to which these behavioural ideals are traditional is an interesting one. A number of them, particularly those of "humility" and "generosity", bear obvious similarities to Christian ideals of behaviour. So one is tempted to claim that these are not "traditional" in an objective sense.

However, for these reasons I do not consider this an appropriate issue to explore: first, it would be quite impossible to discriminate between pre-Christian and Christian elements since there is no way of reconstructing pre-Christian ideals as has been possible with respect to pre-Christian political structures. Therefore there is no historical baseline for comparison with the contemporary conceptions.

Secondly, it is my feeling that the objective status of these notions as "traditional" or otherwise is irrelevant in the sense that it is a purely academic issue. For my purposes what is important is that these ideals - whatever their origins - are not only propagated, but also universally accepted, as "traditional". Christianity and all that is part of it have taken on a quality of historical authenticity which is tantamount to being traditional in the Ngunese' eyes in the same way as such things as matriclans and the chiefly system are classified as kastom. This is an essential fact of contemporary Ngunese intellectual and social life and I will be returning to it at some length in the latter chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER SIX

CONSTRUCTION OF THE PRESENT -

"THE LAND IS FALLING"

In the preceding chapter I explored local conceptualizations of Nguna's past. In this chapter I will consider local conceptualizations of the present, focussing on a number of issues around which revolve negative evaluations of the state of contemporary life on Nguna.

The main "problems" that receive attention are:

1) population decline; 2) land shortage; 3) the number of unmarried mothers; 4) alcohol abuse; and 5) lack of respect for authority figures. I will discuss each of these in turn, explaining why they are problematic and for whom.

In public fora I have heard chiefs, as keepers of the village membership rolls, say that the population of Nguna is falling. Yet official census records from 1967 and 1979 (given in Chapter One) show that the populations of 11 out of Nguna's 12 villages have increased in that 12-year period. Consequently the perceived decline is based on something other than village membership as given in these statistics. I contend that the discrepancy lies in the phenomenon of off-island residence.

Taking Tikilasoia as an example, 17 out of 28 single males aged 20 to 29 (i.e., 61%) and 8 out of 12 single females of the same age bracket (i.e., 67%) are resident semi-permanently off the island, most of them in Port Vila. Although much smaller, the proportions of married couples

residing off-island is very significant, as well, at 28% (i.e., 12 out of 43 couples). (This excludes women who have married non-Tiki men and are therefore no longer considered members of Tiki and are expected to reside elsewhere.)

While the monetary support which these individuals give to local projects, such as weddings, is vital, the absence of so many for extended periods has some very serious consequences. One result is that these people's children may be ignorant of valuable cultural knowledge such as the ability to recognize (and be recognized by) their relatives and address them by the proper kin terms. They may also be unaware of the locations and names of garden-land, plots of fruit-trees and coconut stands to which they have rights. This kind of information, vital to the adult's future on the island, is passed on gradually to the island-dwelling child through its elders' tutelage, reinforced by first-hand experience.

However, this can be achieved, too, by a Ngunese couple resident in Vila sending one or more of their young offspring - especially boys - home to the island for most of the year. They live with relatives, often their grandparents, to be taught the types of things mentioned above.

They also take their schooling largely in the local language, in the case of those who attend Eles, the British school. The language of instruction at Matarara, on the other hand, is French, but the students' informal language when out of the classroom is Ngunese, whereas it is usually Bislama after hours between children from different places

in Vila's playgrounds. The Ngunese are rather proud of their language and are dismayed by the deterioration which is rapidly taking place as phrases from English and Bislama creep into usage and displace indigenous items of vocabulary. It is believed that this practice of having the children of non-resident couples spend a large portion of their youth on the island will help to prevent the level of competence of succeeding generations from falling still further. This is probably true of their socialization in general, too, especially with regard to traditional values, since in the urban context children are subject to conflicting ideas.

A second aspect of the phenomenon of off-island residence is relevant to the second "problem" - land-shortage. People report that they are unable to let garden-plots lie fallow as long as they ought, as their elders taught them to do. They claim that this has resulted in poorer crops, and that the situation is aggravated by the drying effect of the large stands of coconuts planted earlier this century. In short, the general feeling is that there is not enough land to go around and that this has been a factor in the exodus to Vila. Indeed, there is a great deal of squabbling over land and here, again, non-residence causes problems.

When an adult lives away from Nguna, he - this is more relevant to men since women inherit so little - will usually delegate the responsibility of looking after his land to his father or brother. The latter has the opportunity to work the land or harvest its fruits, with the understanding

that the land is still his brother's. When the first man returns he will reclaim it and begin to use it himself.

However, in the event that coconuts have been planted on the land during his absence, there will be much ado about it, for the caretaker will have thereby made a long-term claim on the land which is hard to challenge. But such manoeuvres are not lauded. In fact, they are liable to be defined as theft of an especially serious kind in so far as they constitute breaches of the trust and love that is supposed to characterize relations between immediate family members.

Nevertheless, it is evident that the longer one stays away from home, the more difficult will it be to return. Even though he might want to settle down on Nguna again, the man long absent may find that he has lost (or failed to ever establish) his rights to the very resources that make island-living possible.

Whenever Ngunese living in Vila are teasingly referred to as "Vila people" (naka ni Vila), they deny it vehemently, claiming that they are only there temporarily. The possibility that it might be otherwise is disturbing because it implies that they have severed or might eventually sever all links with Nguna. The prolonged absence of people from the island calls into doubt their primary identification; so the "tease" has a point. "You're a Vila person!" is both a challenge to one's loyalty and a subtle warning that one's rights to island resources may be forfeit if one continues to reside off-island and participate only minimally in island life.

The third "problem" is that of the number of unwed mothers. In the villages that I know well virtually every household has one unmarried daughter who has one or more children. This fact is not always apparent, though, since such a child is frequently adopted by the mother's older, married sibling or other relative, including her own mother, the child's biological grandmother. I have already discussed this in an earlier chapter, but I would like to make a few additional remarks here.

Having a child out of wedlock does not seem to be a socially devastating event for mother or child. The whole family is shamed for a time, to which some young women react by retiring from the public eye for a few months. Others, however, may exhibit a cocky, provocative attitude in their casual manner in public during their pregnancy or in very offhand treatment of the baby once delivered. Older married women especially are negatively impressed by such behaviour, as for example when a pregnant girl runs and climbs on rocks or fallen trees "as if she weren't pregnant". I have myself seen a few instances of disturbingly rough handling of very young babies by their single mothers.

One can only interpret these behaviours as expressions of contempt and, more specifically, of the rejection of cultural definitions of motherhood and the accompanying expectations about a mother's behaviour. Not only have these young women resisted the cultural pressures confining their sexual activity to marriage, but they persist in operating as single women after the birth of their children.

For instance, they continue to associate with their age-mates rather than with older women, and attend dances, leaving their offspring at home to be taken care of by their own mothers or other cooperative relatives.

Although pre-marital sex is not condoned, it is regarded as less serious than adultery. People assume that single men will try to find accommodating young women and there is ample opportunity for sexual contact, especially at all-night dances. Neither are females exempt from blame. Especially when it is found that a girl has had not one but several lovers, people may be heard to say that she has deliberately seduced them.

However, the concern of the older generation is with the pre-marital birth-rate moreso than with pre-marital chastity. It is the social consequences for the offspring of such illicit liaisons that trouble them most. Such a child is called a "child of the path" (piakiiki ni napua). This image captures both the stealthy circumstances of its conception and the fact of its "outside" status. Such a person is a member of a particular matriclan by virtue of birth alone; but he or she is not a member of any village, for this aspect of identity is supplied by the individual's father. In most cases the genitor is known or soon becomes known, but not always does this pair marry. There will certainly be pressure on them to do so, but either the woman or the man may hold out. Nevertheless, be it the child's genitor or someone else, in almost all cases the woman does marry within a few years. However, in the meantime, unless the parents are already intending to marry,

the child will be adopted by a married couple. It must be furnished with a sociological father or pater so that it will have membership in a village and will be part of a localized agnatic group. Otherwise, in adulthood, the person would have minimal rights to land since the bulk of them pass through men. So one can see that the essence of out-of-wedlock childbirth as a "problem", like the first two issues discussed here, is the availability of land. That explains why half-caste children - of whom there are a handful on Nguna - are looked on with even greater dismay; for no social pressure can be applied to a child's White genitor to give the mother financial support let alone local land rights.

The fourth major social ill recognized by the Ngunese is that of alcohol abuse. Superficially this appears to be an intergenerational conflict, yet involvement in drinking and the attendant problems of theft, violence and destruction of property is not confined entirely to the younger generation.

The Christmas period of 1977/78 was so badly marred all over the island by drink-related incidents that the high chiefs banned all sales of liquor on the island. They forbade the Co-op stores from selling it for a 6-month trial period, the only exception being for special events such as weddings and dances for which a licence for beer and wine could be purchased from the chiefs by the organizers. A black market soon developed as a few men who work in Vila would come home for the weekend, smuggling in liquor

and selling it to their dry co-villagers for exorbitant prices.

When 6 months had elapsed the question was debated again. Many people felt that the ban had gone a long way toward reducing disruptive behaviour in spite of the black market trade. So, although young men argued strenuously for unrestricted access locally, the church Session and women's group (P.W.M.U.) supported retention of the ban. As far as I am aware it is still in force and the black marketeers are still enjoying a brisk trade.

Nevertheless the young men persist. In 1979 some of them devised a scheme whereby they recommenced selling beer from one of the inland village Co-ops, but in a restricted manner, a set number of cans per person and only between certain hours of the day. This was soon shut down, however, by one of the highest chiefs cum elder who lives nearby. He claimed that their system of controls had been violated by the sellers when their relatives persuaded them to give them special favours, either going over the limit or out of hours, and that it was only because they failed to operate it as promised that he forbade it.

The fifth major "problem" - and this, again, is very much from the older generation's viewpoint - is the lack of respect generally shown for those to whom deference is due. As I have said before, this includes the elderly, parents, and men of rank, particularly high chiefs.

People have mixed emotions about the fact that children are receiving a higher level of education than past generations have. They are proud of them, and appreciate

the financial benefits that it offers, but they also feel that it results in their looking on their parents with contempt, as unlearned or ignorant. Older folk say that young people have no "fear" (namatakuana) of their elders nor of people who hold important positions, and that they therefore do not respect them. Children act like strong heds, meaning "rebellious, wilful or stubborn". They disobey, or obey at a snail's pace, and talk back when reprimanded; or they may walk too closely in front of or bump against an adult in playing. Within the family children are treated with great tolerance. A mother will endure such behaviour without greatly concerning herself over it, although she will occasionally mildly rebuke the child. However, if the same child acts this way in the presence of a person of some status, its mother will react suddenly and severely to punish it and instruct it as to the folly of its ways. So when young people display unruly behaviour in close proximity to a chief, for example, the older generation regards them with disapproval. Their actions are taken as evidence of contempt for figures of authority.

This fifth "problem" is the most general, yet the most inclusive of all; for, while it covers specific instances of disrespect to figures of authority, it really comprehends all the other "problems" as well. Not only that, it includes all the other troublesome issues that were mentioned in earlier chapters: proposed kastom marriages, non-payment of fines, and so on.

The outsider might quite justifiably interpret some of these difficulties as inevitable consequences of the

many, profound socioeconomic transformations that have occurred on Nguna within the last 3 generations. But the Ngunese have their own explanations.

I have heard chiefs and elders alike wrap up the situation with the phrase, "The Land is falling" (Navanua e dowo) and then give the reason as that "the chiefs are falling" (nawota maga eu dowo) or that "the chiefs are weak" (nawota maga eu manainai). I pointed out earlier that chiefs are absolutely central in the vision people have of the past; and they are equally so in this view of the present. Chiefs seem to stand for the social whole itself so that as go the chiefs, so goes the entire society.

But in the Nguna of today, chiefs are accused of not living up to the ideals of behaviour they themselves are supposed to uphold. People say that they no longer serve as examples for others to follow. They are said to abuse alcohol, steal land, lie, commit adultery and so on. Therefore, as people bluntly put it, why should an offender take seriously the judgement of his chief if he knows that the chief is himself guilty of similar wrongs? So, according to this view, it is because of chiefs' individual behaviour that people have lost respect for them which has, in turn, made the chiefs unable to control their people.

The evaluation of the present paramount chief is the prime example (see Plate 12). He is condemned as "weak", due in part to his actual age - over 70 - and declining health, but also in part to his past behaviour. Incidents from 20 or 30 years ago, associated with traffic in alcohol, are quoted as the cause of his loss of respect.

For his own part, Tariñoaliu admits his past failings, yet adds another reason. He described his position to me once using the analogy of a mast on a canoe. Though such a mast be straight and tall, it cannot stand alone; it must have strong rigging. In other words, even the paramount chief cannot be effective without support, specifically, without the help of his under-chiefs or maanu, who will ensure that his decisions are implemented, as well as the cooperation of other high chiefs throughout the island.

Tariñoaliu is also condemned by those who are most vigorously anti-White for what they see as his collusion with Whites in the alienation of native land for his own monetary gain. This accusation was made particularly bluntly in a poem which is reproduced in the following chapter. It was written by a well-educated man in his 30's from North Efate and circulated on Nguna in 1979 at a Vanuaaku Pati rally. In this poem the "chief of a thousand", i.e., the paramount chief, was likened to a stranger or foreigner (nañenaki) for following his own desires and those of Whites at the expense of the good of his people. Although I could not find out conclusively, this probably refers to his years of working for French traders and plantation-owners in the area or to the assistance he gave the French in their establishment of Matarara school.

Let us consider for a moment what is going on from an external perspective. In Chapter Five I described the social construction of the past - in fact, two different pasts - as part of a process of "objectification" of an

institution in Berger and Luckmann's terms. I argued that Ngunese leaders use "history" in the form of Kastom to legitimate the structures of authority within which they operate. Here I have stated that chiefs (and, to a lesser extent, the Pastor and elders of the church) represent the social whole. This is expressed analytically by Berger and Luckmann in the following way:

All roles represent the institutional order... Some roles, however, symbolically represent that order in its totality more than others. Such roles are of great strategic importance in a society, since they represent not only this or that institution, but the integration of all institutions in a meaningful world.

... Historically, roles that symbolically represent the total institutional order have been most commonly located in political and religious institutions.

(Berger and Luckmann 1966:76)

However, the actual conduct of the individuals who perform those roles is crucial. Berger and Luckmann go on to say that, "... these representations, however, become 'dead' (that is, bereft of subjective reality) unless they are ongoingly 'brought to life' in actual human conduct" (ibid.:75).

This is the very essence of the Ngunese case. Although a man has been formally invested with a chiefly title or ordained as an elder, his own conduct must meet the expectations other have of his behaviour. If, for example, a chief does not do so, he may be referred to as nawota moli. Moli means "just, only or ordinary" with a connotation of "nothing" or "empty" in some context. So, in other words,

nawota ñoli is a chief in name only. Such a man is considered to deserve neither respect nor obedience. When a chief earns such a negative reputation, it reflects badly on the whole institution within which his position lies.

If the credibility of the institution as a whole, i.e., its reputation "... as a 'permanent' solution to a 'permanent' problem of the given collectivity" (ibid.:70), is to be preserved, leaders must be able to account for the "problems" that concern people - in particular, for their own failure to live up to ideal expectations of their behaviour. In the preceding chapter I discussed how Ngunese leaders seek to explain modern day troubles largely by laying the blame on everyone's failure to live according to either customary or Christian rules of behaviour. Above I have shown that they do not deny their own ineffectiveness or "weakness"; rather, they refer again to "history" to displace responsibility onto something other than themselves.

Their argument hinges on the notion of the "sacred spirit" (naata tapu) which is associated with high chiefly titles. One high-ranking chief suggested to me that when the transmission of titles shifted out of the matriline when Christianity was adopted this spirit must have been lost by at least some of the chiefs. As a result their modern day successors labour without it, which explains those particular men's inability to act the way they should as chiefs ("to walk the right path of it" or surata napua leana kakana) and their inability to inspire fear and, therefore, obedience in their people.

This notion constitutes an emic parallel to my own theory, advanced in Chapter Four, concerning the probable role of the munuai in the pre-Contact era. Both hypothesize that a particular mystical sanction has been lost to recent generations of chiefs and that it is as a result of this that they are having trouble retaining control today. However, in concentrating on the comparison between the past and the present, both arguments lose sight of the fact that chiefs are still regarded as being somewhat extraordinary. It is still widely believed that certain dangerous powers cling to chiefs and objects closely associated with them. For example, people avoid a number of stones in the bush that are said to have belonged to particular chiefs or sorcerers in the past. Diagnoses of strange illnesses sometimes attribute the cause to the patient's having touched one of these stones. Likewise, a high chief's personal belongings - his bed, for instance - and his seat in the varea must not be touched by anyone else. Children are cautioned to stay away from that particular log lest they touch it and fall down unconscious, perhaps even dead. Once I witnessed a young child actually sit in this very place while his mother and her friends were weaving in the cool of the varea. When the child's mother noticed him perched on said spot, she rushed to pull him away from it. Although he was unharmed, the women were visibly distressed, demonstrating that the taboo has real meaning for them.

Let me cite two other examples that evidence the existence of a fear of chiefs' powers. Early in my fieldwork

I ran across the notion that if a chief should become angry at someone he will, in Bislama, tingting strong long yu.

In other words, the chief's anger will focus on one who has offended him, resulting in illness or misfortune unless the offender can appease the chief by making him gifts (to restore pōpō wia, as discussed in Chapter Four]. These placatory offerings are called taapa; similar prestations made to ordinary people are simply "gifts" (navituaana).

What makes this power particularly frightening is that its effect can be felt long after the event which provokes it. For example, when an old man was dying of abdominal cancer (according to the Vila doctor who examined him during his visit to the island), it was confided to me by several of his age-mates that the cause of his illness lay some 20 years in the past. I was informed that he had taken a title belonging to a village other than his own, but that the investiture ceremony had been held in his own village. This in itself was acceptable because the first village was no longer inhabited. However, the man in question had failed to seek the permission of the other chiefs of his village first. It was their anger at this slighting of their authority or that of their ancestral predecessors - it is hard to tell which - that is seen as having produced this outcome years later.

However, I do not want to overstate the case. Sorcery as it was known in the past on Nguna (as described in Chapter Four) is certainly dead. Chiefs are clearly not in possession of the power of life and death in the way in which they were believed to be in pre-Christian times.

The personal use of "sacred stones" is gone forever and these "kastom leaf-medicines" knowledge of which is held by folk healers are regarded in the same way as are those dispensed by Western doctors. "You take it because you believe it will work," people say, "but you don't know how it works." In other words, leaf-medicines are only as "mystical" or "magical" as Aspirin. The point to bear in mind is that, although there remains an association of chiefs with ancestral powers, it is only a shadow of the powerful beliefs of the past era.

Let me review. Five phenomena of contemporary Ngunese life are interpreted as constituting "problems". The first 3 of these involve the question of the availability of land, the responsibility for the distribution of which is at least nominally that of the high chief of each dominion. We have already seen elsewhere, too, that bearers of chiefly titles themselves generally have rights to a greater number of plots of land than do other men and that among these are a substantial number of stands of coconuts. Moreover, it is sometimes claimed that chiefs use such lands, that ideally ought to be of benefit to the whole dominion, for their own gain.

However, the local leaders assert that Nguna's troubles stem from a general lack of respect for rules - both customary and Christian - and for those authority figures whose job it is to see that those rules are upheld. This difficulty in turn is claimed to derive from a number of things beyond their control; loss of the chiefly sacred spirits;

inadequate support from their aides; widespread deviation from traditional behavioural patterns, and so on.

However, the rest of the population remains largely unconvinced by these explanations. They accept that there are real "problems", and share the interpretation that modern day behaviour in general falls far short of the ideals. However, they lay the blame squarely on the undistinguished conduct of authority-figures. They say that since the latter's behaviour is no better than that of ordinary people, leaders thereby "bring themselves low" (duñada dape ra pakitano).

The arguments and counter-arguments recorded in the preceding pages reflect the fact that the Ngunese of the 1980's find themselves in a situation in which change is ever more rapid and the standards for acceptable behaviour have become subject to debate. Moreover, the grounds by which one can claim legitimate right to authority are being questioned. For example, a formal education and a steady, white-collar job off-island confer a certain amount of prestige, alternative to status within either of the local structures of authority.

Obviously there are those for whom the present state of ideological confusion affords a chance to do things otherwise impossible, including attaining a degree of authority previously inaccessible to them. Likewise, there are those whose positions are seriously threatened by this state of affairs. Thus, to varying degrees and for varying purposes, different sectors of the society are engaged in a competitive process of reality-construction.

Nevertheless, everyone seems to agree that the Ngunese do have "problems", and to feel that their solution lies in a restructuring of power relations - although, of course, their notions of how it should be done differ. Given such a situation it is quite understandable that a novel political movement should arise at this time in response to these needs. In the following chapter I will examine the birth and rise to popularity of the Vanuaaku Pati and its significance for the people of Nguna.

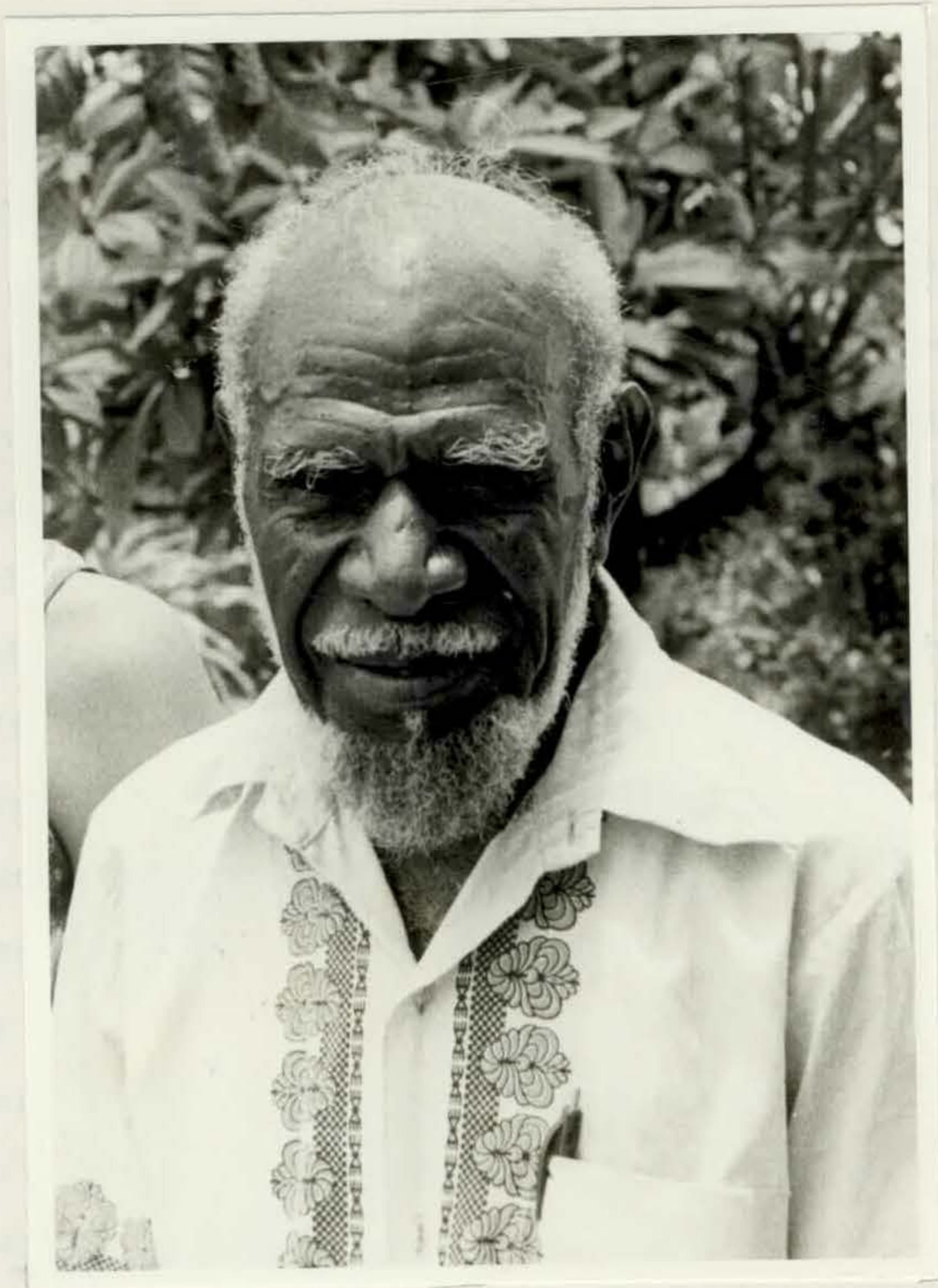


Plate 12. Leith Tariñoaliu, paramount chief of Nguna, 1978.

(i) to promote the advancement of
the New Hebrides economically, polit-
ically, educationally and socially
in relation with the traditional cul-
ture and heritage of the islands.
(ii) to promote goodwill, tolerance,
understanding and harmony among all
communities in the New Hebrides with
the aim of building them into one
nation, etc.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RESOLUTION: TO BE 'OF ONE MIND'.

In Vila in January, 1978, as I made ready to go to Nguna, I discovered that the people of North Efate and Efate's offshore islands, including Nguna, were considered by everyone with whom I spoke to be solid Vanuaaku Pati supporters. My own subsequent observations on Nguna confirmed that the Ngunese "were Vanuaaku" almost to a man, as did the results of the general elections held in November, 1979, for which there was a 90% national turnout of registered voters (Sawer and Jupp 1980:24). In the North Efate Rural District, which includes Nguna, voters elected all three of their representatives from the Vanuaaku Pati. In order to understand why this party received such unanimous support in this area one must look to its recent history: its origin, goals, achievements and, finally, local perceptions of it.

In 1971 the "New Hebridean Cultural Association" was formed and within a few months had been renamed the "New Hebrides National Party", the first political party in the Group. At that time its constitution had these objectives:

- (i) to promote the advancement of New Hebrideans economically, politically, educationally and socially in relation with New Hebridean culture and Western civilisation,
- (ii) to promote goodwill, tolerance, understanding and harmony amongst all communities in the New Hebrides with the aim of building them into one nation, and

(iii) to endorse and assist candidates for election to local or municipal or other government recognised legislative bodies.

(Sope 1975: 34)

The alienation of land quickly became a central issue (Tonkinson n.d.: 3; Sope 1975), symptomatic as it was of the subordinate position of ni-Vanuatu within their own country. Sope gives a clear exposition of the inequities that existed in the distribution of ownership of land in 1968. Europeans, although only 3% of the total population, held 36% of the land, and ni-Vanuatu, while comprising 95% of the population, owned only 64%. In terms of land actually in use at that time, the disparity is even more apparent: approximately half of the 90,000 hectares in use was owned by Europeans (Sope *ibid.*:19). If this was not reason enough for discontent among ni-Vanuatu, the wave of speculation in the north by infamous foreign entrepreneurs, starting in 1967, provided that impetus.

When regulations were finally introduced by the Resident Commissioners in 1971 to halt such purchases and nullify previous sales, the National Party took its first steps in the political arena by organizing a demonstration to support the new regulations (Sope *ibid.*:42). In the succeeding four years it worked out its policies in detail under the headings of Immigration, Foreign Affairs, Economic Policy, Land Policy, and Education (Plant 1977:41-3).

Sope (*ibid.*:35) notes that it was necessary for the Vanuaaku Pati to mobilise rural support, but to do so it had to find a means of transcending the various divisions - rural/urban, educated/uneducated, and British-educated as

opposed to French-educated - which were working against the unification of all ni-Vanuatu. The answer was found in the form of the Protestant churches, in particular, the Presbyterian Church of the New Hebrides. It professed its support for "the goal of responsible self-government of the New Hebrides people as a nation" at its 25th General Assembly in May, 1973, and urged the South Pacific Commission and United Nations to "... cooperate with our New Hebrides administrations in achieving self-government without delay, without violence, and with due preparation of our people for the duties, functions, rights and responsibilities of independent government" (ibid.:35-6).

In the years following this declaration the church has become directly involved in Vanuatu politics as clergymen have entered the political arena as leaders and representatives. By early 1980, according to Allen Nafuki Namel, coordinator of the National Programme of Research of the Vanuatu Christian Council and himself a Presbyterian Pastor,

There are seven ordained ministers who are members of the Representative Assembly. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman are Pastors and there are three ordained Ministers and four Elders who hold positions as Ministers of different ministries in the Vanuatu Government, and one Roman Catholic priest is in the Opposition.

(Namel 1980:225)

In 1974 the Vanuaaku Pati's leader, Father Walter Lini, an Anglican priest, took a very clear stand on the question of church involvement in the politics of the emerging country in response to criticism:

Should the church play politics? My answer is Yes. The Church must play politics because church and politics are two sides of one thing: man's existence or man's life ...

I would say that the minister of the church who is aware of the injustice in his society has every right to condemn the system and structure which brings about injustices to man, either in society or between one another. Does the minister of the church condemn from the pulpit? No. The right place is with the government and the people who are the exploiters and with the people who are being exploited. It is important to work through the right channels in order that the whole community is involved and decides which way to develop...

I believe that the church must play politics because its role today is not so much concerned with individuals as with governments, which are responsible for changing the system and structures so that justice will come.

(In Plant 1977:56-9)

Whereas Lini justified the political role of the church and its religious leaders in terms of moral responsibilities incumbent upon them given the contemporary state of affairs of the nation, the following statement approved by the 1976 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the New Hebrides used tradition as historical precedent:

The traditional chiefs who form the local governments work in partnership with the traditional priests. The two are dependent on one another for their existence and, most important, for the good and future of the people they serve. On some islands the chief was both the chief and the priest. Therefore it is right and proper that the church and the present and future governments of the New Hebrides maintain this traditional union of religious and secular governments.

(In Plant 1977:59)

One may summarize the Vanuaaku Pati's policy as stressing the preservation of traditional values and lifestyles, understood by the ambiguous term kastom, but at the same time asserting the Christian character of most of Vanuatu society - as Tonkinson (op. cit.:11-12) has put it, the Vanuaaku Pati could only promote "kastom within Christianity". In the Preamble of the new republic's Constitution this double commitment and identification is manifest:¹

PREAMBLE

WE the people of the New Hebrides,
PROUD of our struggle for freedom,
DETERMINED to safeguard the achievements of this struggle,
CHERISHING our ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity,
MINDFUL at the same time of our common destiny,
HEREBY proclaim the establishment of the united and free Republic of the New Hebrides founded on traditional Melanesian values, faith in God and Christian principles,
AND for this purpose give ourselves this Constitution.

(Constitution of the Republic of the New Hebrides:3)

Thus far I have considered the Vanuaaku Pati's national, official image. How it is perceived at the "grass-roots level" is an entirely different matter. In short, there are notions abroad on Nguna which picture the Vanuaaku Pati in very classically Cargo cult or Cargo movement terms. Although the Nguneses express astonishment at and even contempt for the followers of the John Frum cult on Tanna who are said to have thrown all their money into the sea - to the Nguneses a quite incomprehensible act - similar

ideas and hopes are evinced by many Ngunese, who are, by and large, intelligent, relatively sophisticated people.

A story is told which begins in Queensland with New Hebrideans who had gone to work in the canefields last century. Two versions of it explain how a quite substantial amount of money was accumulated. In one, the men who died there and so never returned home had put their savings into the bank; in the other, when the Melanesians were "thrown out" of Australia just after the turn of the century, they each handed a certain amount over to an American named "Mr. Nichol". This appears to be a negative interpretation of the return of many Melanesians to their countries of origin as a result of the Repatriation Act passed in Queensland in 1906. The source of the American is rather more obscure. That such a figure should be an American is not in the least surprising since the people of this area had a great deal to do with several thousand American troops who occupied a camp at Havannah Harbour from 1942 to 1945. People still marvel at the soldiers' friendliness and generosity - especially that of those who were Black like themselves - and at the staggering volume of goods such as food, clothing, ammunitions, etc. with which they were kept supplied by ships and planes. One can easily imagine such a black American making the sort of republican remarks attributed to Mr. Nichol. One might, on the other hand, consider the fact that Tanna's British District Agent in 1941 was also named Nichol. In trying to cope with the growth of the John Frum movement there he may well have made statements which impressed themselves

upon people's minds and have of late taken on new meaning and immediacy. Since there were Ngunesse teachers stationed on Tanna during that period, this could be the source of the figure of Mr. Nichol, but one could not say for certain.

That aside, this person was also said, by men returning from Australia, to have taken their money to hold in trust for them until such time as the New Hebrides should become an independent nation, that is, with the proviso that ni-Vanuatu should not fly either the British or French flag. In other words, the Americans would only release said funds if the country successfully resisted the sovereignty of both colonial powers. If they did so, the money, estimated to have grown by now to anything from £5,000 to £50,000, would flow back into Vanuatu. In this metaphor of a tap which has been locked to conserve a store of water, the Vanuaaku Pati is seen as having the "key" which will allow that money to flow into and nurture the country.

One should note that the image of unlocking something in order to release wealth was also used by Nagriamel supporters in Santo beginning in the 1960's. This was reported in the first issue of the National Party's paper New Hebridean Viewpoints (which later became Vanuaaku Viewpoints):

In October... Na-Gariamel [sic] is supposed to be releasing \$50,000 with which the Independent Government of the New Hebrides would begin to finance its programme of development of the New Hebrides. The members of Na-Gariamel today say that money is the key to open that lock through which independence would come. Thus the members of Na-Gariamel say even though the

people who are in the Local Councils
despise them they are going to open
the door to all New Hebrideans.

(New Hebridean Viewpoints: 1:3)

The declaration of the People's Provisional Govern-
ment by the Vanuaaku Pati on November 29, 1977, was marked
by the ceremonial raising of their flag. In many places
this was accomplished without trouble - excepting Luganville,
Santo and Port Vila itself - and was an occasion of great
joy and celebration in the solidly Vanuaaku Pati areas
such as Nguna, since it symbolized the realization of their
dream of independence and promised a new era of prosperity.
The following poem printed in Vanuaaku Viewpoints in early
1978 expresses great depth of feeling for the flag as a
symbol of identification and unity.

VPPG FLAG

Green for the Land
Where I dwell, work and die
Black for the People
Who rule the Land
Red for the Blood
That unites you and me
And Seli-HOO sign
Which unites our strength to work.

At long last
I have something to belong to
Something of my own
Which identifies me
Something to replace
My long-gone culture
Gone, Gone, Gone before I was born.

Oh beautiful VPPG flag
I adore you
I believe in you
And I will worship you forever
I will guide you with my life
I will defend you from your enemies
And I will fight for you
Because to me you are worth more than gold.

Long Live the VPPG flag
And the people you unite
You mean more than just cotton
The strength you bear
Is worth seven long years hard struggle
I laughed, cried, fought, attacked, threatened²
But for your sake
I never gave up hope and I never will.

Hilly

(Vanuaaku Viewpoints 8(1):14)

The notion of a fight or struggle is a central one in political writings which have proliferated in Vanuatu in the 1970's. For example, Father Lini has been described as similar to four other figures, as revolutionary leaders - De Gaulle, Oliver Cromwell, Ho Chi Minh and Ben Khedda (Vanuaaku Viewpoints 7:24). Nevertheless, I must stress that Lini himself employs neither an idiom of violent revolution nor of Cargo. Father Lini is a modern man, well-travelled and educated, unlike Mr. Jimmy Stephens of Nagriamel or the leaders of the John Frum movement on Tanna. His close associates, similarly, include those who have degrees in politics and law and considerable overseas experience. Nevertheless, he is a very articulate, emotive speaker, and one might well say that he is a "prophet" in the sense in which Burrige uses the term: that is, as "...the leader, prime mover, star or central personality in the kinds of activities we are discussing (1969:12). Such a person need not be given to trances or visions. Again, as Burrige puts it,

A prophet is he or she who organizes
the new assumptions and articulates
them; who is listened to and found
acceptable; whose revelation is

accorded authority for however brief a period.

(ibid.:14)

The fact that Lini is an Anglican priest has undoubtedly also lent authority to his words to such a unanimously Christian community as that of the Ngunes. Aside from that, Ngunes give two other specific reasons why they support the Vanuaaku Pati. One is that the latter is the only "all-Black" one, as distinct from any of the other parties (UCNH³, MANH⁴, etc.) which have arisen in the last decade. Each of these is seen as adulterated, and therefore less trustworthy, because it either has Whites in its leadership or is understood to be backed by or sympathetic toward one or other of the colonial powers.

The other reason cited is that the Vanuaaku Pati had vowed to rid the Group of Whites. Although I was generally treated with respect - even, at times, with a disconcerting degree of deference - I also perceived considerable hostility - toward myself specifically, in a few instances, toward the French specifically, in some instances, and on other occasions toward Whites in general, as when this hope that they would all be "chased out" was expressed in my hearing. Again, I must emphasize that such sentiments are not propagated by Father Lini, as party policy. Indeed, he appeals in his official statements for cooperation and harmony between Black and White and fair compensation for any of the latter who may be disadvantaged by future schemes for redistribution of land. Nevertheless, very pointed, anti-European statements have appeared in Vanuaaku Viewpoints

and in Vanuaaku Pati Press Releases such as one which came out a few weeks before the People's Provisional Government was declared. It states bluntly that one of the aims of the new government was "...to drive out the British and French colonial governments from Vanuaaku" (Plant 1978: 201).

The Vanuaaku Pati demonstrated early on that it would push hard for action at the national and international levels. Demonstrations organized by it in 1977 on the land issue made ni-Vanuatu themselves realize that by making a stand as a united group their actions could have real effect.

I think, then, that the reasons behind the massive support on Nguna for the Vanuaaku Pati boil down to two major ones: first, its leaders articulate concerns that the Ngunese share, and have showed that they have the capacity to deal with them as local, traditional leaders cannot; and, secondly, people respond to the fact that the party's organization and philosophy are basically democratic.

While I am in no way asserting that the Vanuaaku Pati is a Cargo Cult or movement, I think that it is obvious from the circumstances of its emergence and the local perception of it on Nguna that it bears similarities to concurrent phenomena such as Nagriamel and the John Frum Cult. Therefore I would like to make use of the two major analyses of Cargo Cults which, for their quality and depth of analysis, still dominate the now vast literature on the subject. My objective in doing so, I must stress again,

is not to "prove" that the Vanuaaku Pati is "really" a Cargo Cult, but to understand what sort of movement it is and then to explain why it has had such great success on Nguna.

In his comparative work, New Heaven, New Earth, Burridge treats millenary movements as synthetic intellectual processes which are essentially regenerative and spring from either actual, material "oppression" or simply from dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in general:

... millenarian movements involve the adoption of new assumptions, a new redemptive process, a new politico-economic framework, a new mode of measuring the man, a new integrity, a new community: in short, a new man.

(1969:13)

Burridge also points out that any religion or religious activity is concerned with both religion and power. In his words,

... not only are religions concerned with the truth about power, but the reverse also holds: a concern with the truth about power is a religious activity.

(ibid.:7)

The Vanuaaku Pati is, similarly, both a religious and a political phenomenon, as one entails the other. In this sense it is like Tanna's John Frum cult or Jimmy Stephens' Nagriamel in so far as they are all responses to feelings of powerlessness and constitute attempts to restructure the power balance so as to regain their adherents' political

autonomy and reassert their cultural integrity - two sides of the same coin.

Lawrence (primarily 1964), on the other hand, has argued that a Cargo cult is a conservative rather than a revolutionary movement. In considering the events that took place between 1871 and 1950 in the southern Madang District of New Guinea, he found that the changes which came about there were,

... purely superficial. In the economic and social field, the loss of some institutions and addition of others did not seriously affect the basic principles of traditional behaviour and relationships, and the values associated with them.

[1964:223]

At first glance Lawrence's and Burrige's analyses seem contradictory, one finding creativity and change, the other finding conservatism and continuity or maintenance of the social order. But looking at the Vanuaaku Pati, one can see that it has both characteristics. On the one hand, it has made the voice of ni-Vanuatu heard in order to effect a reformation of power relations at the national level and thereby achieve greater equality of opportunity for ni-Vanuatu in education and employment. But, on the other hand, the party continues to promote things traditional - above all, indigenous structures of leadership and authority. One marvels at the lengths to which they have gone in this regard.

The book called Vanuatu which was released in 1980 to commemorate the official granting of Independence is authored

almost exclusively by ni-Vanuatu and is introduced by Father Lini as "the story of our achievements". It covers every aspect of life from politics to religion to sport and the future; but a recurrent theme is that of the necessity of maintaining the integrity of their traditions. Thus, even in the section entitled "Agriculture" - written, in fact, by a Ngunes man who is the Deputy Director of Agriculture - one finds this unexpected statement, concluding an account of the role of agriculture in Vanuatu's economy:

We can look forward to a bright and fruitful future, but we must preserve our traditions and keep respect for our traditional leaders.

(1980:103)

If such a statement seems not to follow logically on a discussion of agriculture, the appearance of a similar sentiment in the new Vanuatu Constitution is utterly unprecedented as Mr. Michel Bernast points out in the same volume when he discusses the provision for a National Council of Chiefs. According to him this,

... is unique among the constitutions of independent Melanesian countries in the Pacific. At the same time as setting up a system of government along the lines of those in other countries, Vanuatu kept a special place within the system for those with power in custom law. Perhaps the best image for this would be that of a marriage between Melanesian and European institutions.

(ibid.:193)

This part of the Constitution is the outcome of a lengthy series of debates and motions in the Representative Assembly which I will outline briefly here.

The first proposals relating to the creation of a Constitution for the New Hebrides did not include provision for representation of Custom through the inclusion of Chiefs in the Assembly. This was later suggested by ni-Vanuatu during talks in Vila led by Miss Joan Lestor, representing the British government, and M. Olivier Stirn, representing the French government, in January, 1975. Later in the year the Advisory Council of the New Hebrides approved a proposal made by the two Residencies to include four Chiefs in the Representative Assembly. One was to be elected for each of the four Districts of the Group by electoral colleges, the latter to be appointed by the Resident Commissioners based on the recommendations of the District Agents for each District (Woodward 1978:5-6;14). The method of choosing the members of the electoral colleges was left imprecise, in Woodward's words,

... not due to an oversight, but rather to the fact that the structure of Melanesian society differed from District to District and from island to island, with the result that there was no uniform system of Chiefly authority and that no precise rules as to the manner of setting up the electoral Colleges would be valid for each District.

(ibid.:14-15)

This very situation led to difficulty in arriving at Chiefly representatives for the Northern and Southern Districts, although not for Central Districts 1 and 2, the

former including Nguna, Efate and its other offshore islands. Thereafter the Nagriamel declarations of Independence in 1975 intervened, and resulted in the suggestion that the number be increased to eight (from four) in the hope that Jimmy Stephens might be elected and thus the Nagriamel followers would be placated. However, the National Party turned this suggestion down in 1976. A further suggestion that the number be increased even more - this time to ten - was also unacceptable. Not until June, 1976 was agreement reached on the issue and the Representative Assembly passed a two-pronged motion. Its first part returned to the original proposal that there should be four seats for Chiefs in the Representative Assembly, while the second proposed the establishment of a separate Council of Customary Chiefs to be composed of 20 members, five from each District. This joint National Party-U.C.N.H. motion was passed by 36 out of 37 members present and soon thereafter was approved by the two Metropolitan Governments (ibid.:18-21). Later it was voted that the four Chiefs who sat in the Assembly would also be full voting members of said Council.

The question of the Council's role was another issue in itself. Although it was not altogether to their liking, in 1976 the Resident Commissioners empowered the Council to advise the Representative Assembly on draft Regulation submitted to the latter (without its having to be referred to the Council by the Resident Commissioners). As Woodward points out,

From the point of view of constitutional law it should be noted that the establishment of the Council of Chiefs to some extent restricted the powers conferred upon the Assembly, since the latter could not validly deliberate on some subjects, including hunting and fishing and land, until it had consulted the Council.

(ibid.:25)

Moreover, at its third meeting on 7-9 June, 1977, the newly created Council of Chiefs voted that the Mal Fatu Mauri (as they had renamed themselves) should constitute an Upper House vis-à-vis the Assembly and that thenceforth there would be no need for Chiefly seats in the latter (ibid.:37). Although this radical proposal was not approved, the Council of Chiefs has been incorporated into the new Constitution and assigned a (potentially, at least) crucial role in national politics, largely due to the insistence of the National Party (Vanuaaku Pati) - and this in spite of the fact, so rightly noted by Woodward (above), that there is not now, nor has there ever been, a concept of a "chief" common to all areas within Vanuatu.

Indeed, this archipelago is well-known for the wide variation it displays in terms of indigenous political structures. In some cases chiefly positions were actually products of the colonial encounter; and, although the motivation in this instance comes from ni-Vanuatu themselves, the creation of this Council of Chiefs may be seen as a similar imposition on local structures necessitated by the demand for uniformity that is entailed in the assumption of a Western style of central government. I should think it unlikely, however, that this will result in changes in

in those local structures. As for Central District 1, with which I am primarily concerned here, the notion of chiefly positions is quite in keeping with local conceptions and thus the election of Chiefly representatives has not been problematic nor is it liable to cause any disturbance in the future.

To return to the local level, then, it is indeed evident that the incorporation of traditional leaders into the national decision-making process is highly favourable to the Ngunese. Their support of the Vanuaaku Pati does not mean that they have chosen the modern, Western way of life and politics over their traditional lifestyle and politics. On the contrary, Vanuaaku Pati supporters demonstrate a strong commitment to their traditional political institutions. This was manifest at a number of rallies which I witnessed. They were conducted largely by established chiefs (along with one or more of the local district "commissars"⁵ who tend to be younger and not yet titled men) and mutual respect was shown between them and the party leaders.

In one such instance a question was directed at these officials concerning the relationship between a chief and his people. The reply, made by Barak Sope, then Secretary-General of the Pati, was to the effect that the chief and his people must agree - that respect and power come from both and force cannot be used between them.

Before turning to the second reason I proposed to explain the Vanuaaku Pati's success, let me refer back to my comparison of the Vanuaaku Pati with Cargo movements. I

noted above that Burridge's and Lawrence's conclusions as to the nature of Cargo Cults differ, the former stressing their creative, revolutionary aspect and the latter their conservative aspect; and I have shown that there is a sense in which the Vanuaaku Pati is both creative and conservative at the same time. But it is also true that a Cargo Cult or any other politico-religious movement may change in intention from one point in its history to another. Therefore, one may describe such a movement in its initial moments - be that several days, weeks, or years - as having a creative and revolutionary thrust. But, particularly if it succeeds in achieving wide acceptance, and its leaders consolidate their authority, it may become institutionalized. At that point a revolutionary attitude will no longer be necessary; it would, in fact, probably prove counter-productive. So then the type of aspirations that are expressed and the sort of action which is engaged in in order to realize them will differ markedly from those of the earlier period, leaning instead in a conservative direction.

Having achieved its goal of independence, the Vanuaaku Pati may now be in a transitional era in which revolutionary and conservative elements co-exist in its ideology. As time goes on one would expect to find that its stance will become increasingly conservative, concerned with maintenance of the social order, rather than with issues such as the redistribution of power which was relevant in the early stages of the party's development.

Let me now turn to the second reason I have proposed to explain the Vanuaaku Pati's success on Nguna - the party's

democratic organization and philosophy. I believe that the Ngunese are receptive to the Pati because it bases its strength on consensus of its membership as a whole. While the party's leadership takes the initiative in proposing goals and the means of achieving them, it is seen to listen to the people whom it represents via its system of sub-committees and local commissars and especially the Pati Congress, which is held every year (beginning in 1973) in a different part of the Group. My argument is that this democratic ideal is now (but was probably less so in the pre-Christian past) the essence of local politics on Nguna even though the selection of leaders is largely based on an ascriptive principle, i.e., heredity. The discontent with chiefs which was discussed at length in Chapter Six concerns the divergence of the behaviour of the incumbents of traditional positions from the ideal conception of the behaviour appropriate to men in such positions. While the majority of the Ngunese are resistant to suggestions that chiefs should again exact "tribute" or take on greater powers in a return to supposed kastom ways, they are still very much in favour of retaining the chiefly institution, provided it meets their ideal expectations.

Let me expand further on this notion of democratic leadership and its role in the rise of the Vanuaaku Pati in this area by first examining the following two poems or "psalms", which were included in a "Seli-Hoo"⁶ handout circulated at a public meeting on August 26, 1979 in Tiki-lasoa. They were both written in Ngunese by a young North Efate man.

The first, clearly modelled on The Lord's Prayer, paints a highly stylized picture of the role of traditional leaders (including church leaders):

First Psalm (my translation)⁷

Chiefs and leaders of religion in
the land
Your names should be kept sacred
Your dominion should be clear
So that you might be respected
Your dominion should be as (it was)
when
The ancestors first walked there
In accordance with the desires of
the whole people
You should give us true and honest
help
You should forgive us
And direct the life of the people
As we do with our children
You should not lead us into temptation
But deliver us out of the
Hands of Whites, (our) attackers
And those who would take our land
for nothing.
We trust completely that the domin-
ion is
Yours, the Strength and the Truth
Which calls forth respect from all
the people.

This is in stark contrast to its companion piece (to which I have already referred in Chapter Six) which I will present here in full (again, in my own translation).⁸

Second Psalm

Today I was on the hill of Sacred Grass
And was a stranger in my own land
Many people call me Chief of NaṣauniManu
In place of my father who was the last
Chief of a Thousand
The temptation of the riches of the
whiteskins
Made me cover myself over with a white
skin
So that the people would run after me
and lose their land.

My children my rule is weak
My children I covered my black skin
with a white skin
And my whole life has been running
after the ideas
Of whiteskins, I ran after their riches
And forgot the Chiefship into which I
was ordained
I help wrongdoers and go against the
group because
I myself first walked that crooked path
That is the way of strangers and whiteskins.

The juxtaposition of these two messages - one presenting, in the Christian idiom, the ideal role of the chief, and the other portraying the paramount chief as having betrayed his sacred trust - is a type of oratorical strategy whose use in other small polities has been pointed out by Comaroff, Bloch and others (in Bloch 1975). In this instance the chiefly system itself is first praised, and the altruistic character of the chief stressed; then the actual incumbent is described, in no uncertain terms, as having violated that behavioural ideal. The result is that the audience perceives a serious divergence between the ideal and the actual performance. In this case the chief had no opportunity to defend himself; but I have discussed elsewhere the various interpretations I have heard chiefs advance on certain occasions in order to shift responsibility for this divergence onto others, or, alternatively, to reduce the perceived degree of divergence.

Unlike the Tshidi of South Africa discussed by Comaroff - or, for that matter, myriad other Melanesian societies - the Ngunese do not engage in public, combative, oratorical displays between rivals or rival factions.

Whatever factions there may be do not make themselves apparent. "Division" is almost a dirty word and it is the notion of oneness or unity that is constantly proclaimed as the ideal state for families, clans, villages and for society itself. As in Sope's remarks, quoted above, the cultural emphasis is on consensus, which is often expressed as that the people are "of one mind" (namidoakiana e pei sikai maau). Moreover, this state is seen as resulting from the free, responsible choices of individuals. The ethic of respect for the individual's integrity that was outlined in Chapter Five is entailed by a view of society as an association of autonomous persons, each of whom attains with maturity a certain degree of "wisdom" or "understanding" (namidoakiataeana) which enables, and even requires him, to participate responsibly in the political process. The ordinary person bears the duty of contributing to the decision-making process as well as to the actual performance of tasks that are of communal benefit. Although titled men are endorsed by their fellows to be more involved in the political life of the community and to speak or act on behalf of the latter in certain contexts, they are, by the same token, seen as responsible to their people.

From Firth's description (1975) one may conclude that a very similar relationship obtains between Tikopian chiefs and their people. He found that on Tikopia there was,

... a recognition of the delicate balance that exists between the power and authority of the chiefs and the compliance of the people.

In the last resort, the people choose [Firth's emphasis] to obey their chiefs, and the chiefs know this, and do not push their demands to extremes. With all their conformity and respect, the Tikopia maintain a sturdy exercise of choice in matters where individual obligations to the chief in personal relationship is not to the fore.

(1975:34)

Thus, the Tikopia are wont to agree publicly to some proposal but then demonstrate their dissent when it comes to the actual implementation of it by not doing what was asked or by carrying on doing what they had seemingly agreed to cease doing (ibid.:40). On Nguna, as on Tikopia, the man who would hope to have people follow his directions, though he be chief, had best look first to his own actions. For, if he is known to act contrary to the way he is proposing for everyone else, his words will be to no avail. He may be heard, but not listened to, if he is not himself an example of what he asks of his fellows.

I would like to explore this ideal a little further as it is manifested in a written statement that accompanied the two "psalms" discussed above.

The author was a young Ngunese fellow who worked for the British Education Office and was a strong Vanuaaku Pati supporter. He first painted a picture of the sort of man whom the Ngunese ought not to choose as their representative in the coming election. His characteristics were: a concern with himself, that is, his own welfare and wealth; a tendency to get involved in money-making schemes and depend on Whites to succeed in them; pride in his education

and accomplishments and the tendency to conceal his faults or errors, in so doing losing his people's trust; and finally, ignorance of "the way of caring for and ruling the land".

Thereafter he went on to portray the right sort of man, essentially a one-to-one inversion of the first hypothetical character. In other words, the right choice is the man who is selfless, a "servant" (tea suasua) of his people, who has proven himself capable of successfully accomplishing whatever task he has applied himself to, who is humble, yet serves as a good example for others in his actions, and who knows how to take care of and lead his people. Furthermore, the author added a final qualifying point, which he emphasized by placing it last in the statement, by repetition, and by calling the audience's attention to it by addressing them directly: "My friends,... The good leader is one who serves the people", and, "the decisions that he makes are not his alone but are those of his friends [in the sense of "fellows"], of all his people."

Here, then, one can see the image of the chief reappearing as the ideal prototype for the leader in national politics. Although his field of action is much greater than that of the local or kastom chief, the desirable Assembly representative is conceived of in very traditional terms. The "new man" envisioned in this view of the contemporary ni-Vanuatu reality is simply the old man in a new context of power. To put it more concretely, the role of the traditional chief is not jeopardized, but sustained by the Vanuaaku Pati's ideas. Consequently, I would assert that

virtually all of Nguna's traditional leaders have endorsed the Pati because it provides them with an ideology by which they can legitimate their claims to authority. Yet, at the same time, it gives younger, untitled men the chance to establish their reputations by performing organizational tasks for the party. Such activity may allow those among them who are not in line for hereditary titles to achieve or to prove themselves in another arena, without in so doing giving challenge to the traditional holders of authority. The remainder, those men who hold or will likely come to hold titles eventually, are likewise receptive to the Vanuaaku Pati, but for different reasons again. It is they who most oppose that which a few high chiefs and elders are advocating - greater powers for the bearers of the highest titles. If the latter's attempt were successful, men with lower titles would find them of even less consequence (i.e., in terms of conferring prestige and privilege) than they are today. Hence such men have a vested interest in both an ideology which argues for the retention of traditional chiefs and in not returning to the past as constructed by a few top men.

To what extent these issues are on the minds of the last major subdivision within the community - women - I could not say. However, they are generally pro-Vanuaaku Pati because of the stand it has taken on the necessity of developing sexual equality in the new nation, especially as regards education and employment opportunities. That they will make their own judgements as to whether or not the party is worthy of their support is clear in these

definite remarks from Grace Molisa, Second Secretary to the Prime Minister:

Vanuaaku Women, consciously or otherwise, gave their support for the election of an all-male assembly, to form the Vanuaaku Pati's first National Government. Section 9.3(B) of the present government's platform specifically promises the promotion of women in national life. Time will tell whether the government makes good its promise and whether women wake up to the consequences of their past and future actions.

(1980:265-7)

It is to the Pati leadership's credit, however, that they do encourage women to weigh their choices carefully themselves and to come to their own decisions individually as to how they vote, rather than simply following their fathers or husbands as they have been taught to do in the past. Although when questioned about political matters women generally demure and direct one to a man instead, my impression is that they do indeed hold definite opinions on these issues and do exercise their liberty at the polls.

In this chapter I have traced the rise of the Vanuaaku Pati and advanced a number of reasons to explain the striking success it has had on Nguna, while taking into account different local subgroups' aspirations with respect to the indigenous authority structures. In the next, and final, chapter I will take the analysis further by considering two cultural ideals which are of great significance for the Ngunese. These constitute part of a larger idiom of social reproduction, by reference to which the Ngunese conceptualize their own society. I will be drawing together the

preceding parts of my analysis in order to show how the social construction of the past, as kastom, figures in the social construction of the present and the future at not only the local level but also the national level.

FOOTNOTES

1. Note that this Preamble is also quoted in Vanuatu, but that there the name of the country has been replaced with "Vanuatu" in each instance, in the English version only. The French and Bislama versions use "les Nouvelles-Hébrides" and "Niu Hebridis" respectively.
2. Mr. Keith Woodward has pointed out that there is in all likelihood an original printing error in this poem. Given that the supporters of the Vanuaaku Pati were subjected to considerable pressure in late 1977 and early 1978, it is Woodward's view that "... the last sentence only makes historical sense if 'was' can be inserted before the words 'fought, attacked, threatened'" (per letter Nov. 30, 1981).
3. U.C.N.H. stands for "Union des Communautés des Nouvelles-Hébrides". This party was set up in 1974 and sprang up as a reaction against the National Party by French people in Vila and Efate and French-speaking ni-Vanuatu (Woodward 1978:4).
4. M.A.N.H. stands for "Mouvement d'Action (or, originally, Autonomiste) des Nouvelles-Hébrides". This party was formed in Luganville, Santo, in 1973 and was also based on an anti-National Party reaction by French settlers and half-castes and some French-oriented ni-Vanuatu (Woodward 1978:3).

5. "Commissar" is the term for delegates from Vanuaaku Pati sub-committees who represent their areas at Pati meetings, disseminate information locally, collect membership fees and perform other, sundry organizational and communicational tasks.
6. "Seli-Hoo" is a work-chant which means "pull together". It is used by the Vanuaaku Pati as a slogan symbolizing the call for unity in order to achieve independence.
7. The original is as follows:

SALAMO VEA

Nawota ngo tea maraki ni nalotuana doko navanua
Nangisamu eunga vei tea tapungoroana
Namarakiana animu eunga toko lina
Nanga kunga vei tea dodomadanganiana
Namarakiana animu enga tapala waina
Tea matua ni tuai eu pea surata asa
Patakaní namasauana ki narei mamau
Kunga tuangami nasilaeana lomau ngo leana
Kunga manginami midoakikorokoro
Po dotowo kasua namauriana ki narei
Dapala waina au do marira paki natungami manga
Kunga ta pirangi ngami paki nasurueana mau
Na kunga yua lua ngami melu dua ki
Nãmelearu ni tea tare manga, tea marisauoa
Ngo tea tape pavakoto navanua.
Au payatu kasua nalakena namarakiana epei
Animu, Nakasuana ngo Nalomauana
Waina e dalua nadodomadanganiana melu narei mamau.

8. The original is as follows:

SALAMO KERUA

Masoso a doko tava ni Taputoara
Po pei nañenaki vanua/anginau
Tea laapa eu soso au ki Nawota ni Nañau ni Manu
Du oli tamangu waina epea pei Nawota Tivilia
Nasurueana ni nasongolapana ki wili tare manga
E marí au a duñangu kovangoro au ki wili tare
Nangã narei eunga sava dausi au po dape puoliki
vanua adeada.

Natungu manga namaramaraana anginau e manainai
Natungu manga a Kovangoro wili loa anginau ki
wili tare
Ngo namauriana anginau mamau esava dausi nami-
dodoana
Ki wili tare manga, a sava dausi nasongolapana
adeada
Po malioki Naveinawotaana waina apeï tea vusa-
keana asa
A silae tea maripele po mari diãa taua nalakena
Kinau ma apea surata napua tangele wanongoe
Waina epei natomariana ki namenaki ngo wili
tare manga.

CHAPTER EIGHT

UNITY, CONTINUITY AND KASTOM

The subject of this thesis is a society which has undergone profound transformations in the last 150 years. It has become much involved with a type of social system very different to it, and the latter's influence can be seen in all aspects of Ngunese society - the social, economic, religious and political.

By and large these transformations have taken place gradually. Even Christianity, as was argued in Chapter Two, was not imposed from the outside. Rather did the Ngunese make it their own so that, transformed itself, it became a part of their society and life in a uniquely Melanesian and, specifically, Ngunese way.¹

Intriguing though it is, I have been less concerned here with mapping the stages and process of transformation of the various aspects of Ngunese life than with grasping the way in which the individuals who constitute this society view them. In the last three chapters in particular I have explored emic perspectives on Ngunese society: views of the past (both pre-Christian and early Christian), the present, and of change itself.

In the course of this and in the examination of local ways of conceptualizing interpersonal and inter-group relations two themes have emerged repeatedly. These are, in fact, two predominant cultural ideals: unity and continuity. Sometimes explicit and sometimes implicit, these two

concepts describe for the Ngunese the ideal state of society, and it is toward these goals that they believe they must strive.

Although I have chosen to use two discrete terms to capture the Ngunese concerns which I am trying to describe, they are really two aspects of the same ideal. Unity is a short-hand expression for an ideal state of society characterized by harmonious co-operation. In other words, it is the peaceful co-existence of people who are united by common interests, activities and values. As such it is a synchronic concept, a vision of an ideal here-and-now state that applies to each level of social organization from the nuclear family to the dispersed matriclan and Ngunas as a whole.

Continuity, on the other hand, is a diachronic concept, referring to the preservation of this ideal state through time. Time brings many things which threaten the integrity of the various units in terms of which communal life is conceptualized and organized: death; competition for land, husbands and wives; imported ideas and practices, and so on. Therefore, in order to maintain a peaceful present that will survive the onslaught of change, the reduction of social relations of all kinds must be ensured, and those aspects of social life which serve to unite must be positively stressed while those that lead to conflict and division must be suppressed or eliminated.

In this chapter I will review and expand on the notions of unity, continuity and reproduction that have appeared in the preceding discussions and show how the Ngunese

conceptualization of human reproduction serves as a model for that of social reproduction or reproduction of the social whole. I will then discuss the part played by these ideas in the most recent ideological development on Nguna and in Vanuatu as a whole - the politicization of the notion of cultural identity.

Unity and Continuity

I would like to examine these cultural ideals as they are expressed or manifested in the following contexts: language, education, religion, politics and social structure. At the same time I will indicate those factors, tendencies and pressures which are in conflict with or contradict the ideal. Like any ideal, unity and continuity are sometimes achieved in practice and sometimes not. In the latter instance it is often seen that people will construct an interpretation of the situation which plays down or even denies outright the failure to achieve them. It may be said that in some cases the impression that an ideal is being met is as useful as its actual achievement. This is especially so when the ideal is the subject of conscious political manipulation, a matter which I will consider toward the end of this chapter.

Language

Let us begin with language, a source of much pride but also much dismay for the people of Nguna. The former has been fed by the translation of the Bible and many hymns into Ngunese (referred to, however, by missionaries

as the Nguna-Tongoa dialect). Relative to other languages of Vanuatu, Ngunesse is fairly easy to learn and is already spoken by a comparatively large number of native and non-native speakers (especially among Efate residents). Aware of this, some Ngunesse anticipate that their language may be chosen as a national indigenous language alongside English and French, to replace Bislama. Consequently there is annoyance over the insistence by past headmasters of the French school on Nguna that their students should speak French at all times, even in the playground. Similarly, it is considered a problem that Ngunesse children who reside in Vila and so attend school with speakers of languages from all over Vanuatu lose competence in their own language by communicating with their playmates in Bislama.

On the other hand, outsiders who settle permanently on Nguna - through marriage to Ngunesse, in the majority of cases - are not long in learning the language, and they are expected to discontinue using Bislama as soon as they are able. Europeans who do likewise - be they missionaries, anthropologists, or simply intermittent visitors such as doctors who become competent at exchanging pleasantries in the vernacular - are considered to be demonstrating respect for their hosts by so doing. He or she who speaks very well receives much praise and can even earn unofficial status as honorary member of the community - "Your're a real Nguna man(woman) now!" One has really "made it" when people decide that one should have an "island name".

At the same time, however, there has obviously been and will continue to be a deterioration of Ngunesse.

This is partly due to the loss of words rendered irrelevant by sociocultural change and partly to intrusion of English, French and Bislama vocabulary. Some of this is unavoidable because there are new concepts for which there is no word in Ngunese. But there is also a great deal of usage of Bislama terms, in particular, for which there are perfectly suitable Ngunese expressions. In addition, the Bible itself is problematic in that many words in it are so little used in ordinary conversation that they have become archaisms poorly understood, especially by young people. Moreover, a number of words had to be actually invented in order to translate foreign concepts and some of their meanings are quite obscure to modern generations.

Language can also serve to divide. Small dialectal variations in vocabulary support the distinction between seaboard and inland groups. In the larger context, too, Ngunese also excludes as well as includes. To put it another way, here language is a primary means of measuring social as well as geographical distance. Thus groups on neighbouring islands who speak very similar dialects - they are said to "turn the language" (doa navasaana) slightly - are seen as like the Ngunese. The further one goes, the wider the linguistic gap and the greater the perceived cultural difference.

Education

The Ngunese have made a clear choice of the British educational system over that of the French by removing their support from the latter. In one way this will have

a unifying effect; since the advent of the French school young people have graduated sharing their first but not their second language. For those who have entered the working world outside Nguna this has meant that to some extent they have moved in different social and commercial spheres. This cultural parting-of-the-ways will no longer happen if there is only one type of schooling available.

However, this has a predictable side-effect which could prove even more divisive than the co-existence of different linguistic and cultural affiliations. I refer to the question of access to education. There are those parents who cannot afford school fees for all of their children. With the coming of the French school they were able to have them educated at no cost. If this option is removed there will undoubtedly be a certain number of children who will receive no schooling at all, resulting in a division between those qualified to obtain secure employment or higher training in town and those without the primary skills necessary to do so.

Religion

The field of religion is one in which Nguna superficially demonstrates a high degree of stability. Since conversion was completed at the turn of the century there have been no major reversions to pagan beliefs and no emergence of competing denominations to threaten this Presbyterian stronghold. The recent gains made by the Seventh Day Adventist Church are small and the local Presbyterian Session has successfully taken a step to retard

these converts' attempts to strengthen their position locally by denying them permission to construct their own church.

The Presbyterians see themselves as rightful heirs to their forefathers' faith. Since the island was "brought into the Light" by a Presbyterian missionary only this church has historical validation. To its adherents the person who abandons it for another church is betraying, even denying, the faith of his or her fathers.

Nevertheless there are those who choose to leave. There are also others, a few, who have tried several different denominations in succession. These are looked on as utterly false, as only "playing at" religion. Again, there are yet others who use the threat of change of affiliation when criticized for their behaviour. But more than these, there are all those whose attitude is essentially one of disinterest. Especially amongst young males a sizeable number do not actively demonstrate a Christian affiliation by going to church. They may even display contempt for those who do. In part this is an aspect of youthful rebellion and some of these individuals will undoubtedly see fit to act in a more orthodox fashion as they grow into adulthood. But it is also evidence of a nascent secularism which is an unavoidable consequence of the changing socioeconomic situation of the country as a whole, bringing - as Westernization always does - a competing system of values and the opportunity for individuals to adopt a different lifestyle without social penalty.

Politics

Ngunese politics has never been characterized by ostentatious public competition between individuals as actual or aspiring "Big Men", as I have explained in earlier chapters. Nevertheless, there are a few men whose words carry more weight than others' and this is not satisfactorily accounted for by their relative positions in the chiefly hierarchy. Personal attributes or skills, such as a good command of local "history" and sheer charismatic presence, certainly single out some chiefs over others. There are also interpersonal conflicts between chiefs, but their supporters do not operate publicly as followings in opposition to each other. Political differences are not thrashed out on Nguna by rival factions as they are on Tanna or Aoba or elsewhere in Vanuatu.

This does not mean that there are no differences, no long-standing animosities and scores to settle - indeed, there are. But to realize the ideal of unity these conflicts are submerged as people conceptualize their community as a cohesive whole.

Modern party-politics is much condemned because of its oppositional structure. The Ngunese have come to use the word politik in a pejorative sense - as a largely useless and destructive endeavour characterized by heated argument, efforts to deceive and, often, incitement to violence. Consequently the one-party system of government is considered far better than that with two or more. Anything else is seen as only anti-productive in the sense that different policies would only create argument and inaction.

As I have already discussed in Chapter Seven, what opposition there is to the Vanuaaku Pati is only expressed privately. Dissenting individuals are loathe to controvert the image of their society as a single-minded community. By doing so, they would not falsify that image; rather, they would leave themselves open to the accusation that they are antisocial, bent on disrupting the peace by urging people to take opposing sides.

These individuals, under pressure to conceal their difference of opinion, feel somewhat powerless, perhaps resentful. One wonders whether the proposed formal village council for Nekaḷa/Woralapa will likewise spawn frustration and anger in some people. Those who have instigated its introduction have recommended it as an improvement on the public village meeting which takes many precious hours of many people each week. However, to relieve the bulk of the villagers of this task is also to drastically reduce their involvement in the political process. It may prove to be a high price to pay in order to make village government more "efficient".

Social Structure

Let me orient my argument by offering this proposition: unity : co-residence :: continuity : matriliney. By this I mean that the two cultural ideals discussed above correspond to the two essential bases of organization in Ngunes society, i.e., locality and descent. These two principles are represented by the concepts of "blood" and "line" respectively; and it is the interplay of them, sometimes in

conflict and sometimes in complementarity, which shapes Ngunese society.

As we have seen above the Ngunese are concerned with maintaining a number of social units, among which are the "family", the village and the matriclan. Earlier on I spoke of the co-resident agnatic cluster as the basic group in which people live and work and the village as a spatially and politically highly bounded entity. In the former the members are united under the authority of the male head while, in the latter, villagers unite as one "people" (narei) under their high chief. Co-residence at village and sub-village levels yields unity in space.

On the other hand, matriliney can join those who do not share space in their everyday lives. This is achieved by the dispersal of women outwards, from the family in the first instance and very often also from the village and even from the island itself.

While unity depends on closure in the sense of maintaining boundaries - either by inclusion or exclusion - continuity calls for movement or transaction across these boundaries. In terms of the ideal of unity the loss of women is divisive, disunifying and therefore to be negatively valued. But in terms of the ideal of continuity, it is positively valued. There is a recognition that to "let go of women" (doropusi nagoroi) is necessary if they are to fulfil their rôle of bearing children. Parents who refuse to allow their daughter to marry are criticized. They ought not to "hang onto" or "keep her" (mauti a) as a selfish

child hoards a toy, refusing to share it with anyone else.

A similar conflict of interest is evidenced in the case of young people who forsake the island for further study or work in Vila or elsewhere. They are lauded for their achievements and their contribution in money or skills to life at home. However, this exodus in general is deplored and pressures are exerted on such individuals by their families to preserve their ties with their island kinspeople. Of late Ngunese leaders have also initiated efforts to cast their net of authority wider in order to assert control over "their people" even in the urban centre.

These ambivalent attitudes toward out-marrying and out-migration exemplify the existential situation as the Ngunese see it. Practically anything one asks a Ngunese person's opinion of will be said to be "good, but not good, too". This seeming non-answer indicates two things: first, the reluctance people have to giving a definitive answer, lest they be proven wrong (and therefore will be open to the accusation of having intended to deceive); and, second, the understanding that most of one's actions are subject to contrary pressures, that in order to act the individual is compelled to choose between alternatives each of which has its own positive and negative features.

Several local "proverbs" (naluluakia maga) describe the person (represented by a bird, fish or animal) who has two choices but cannot decide between them. One of these² expresses this dilemma through the image of a certain bird

standing between two streams. It desires to drink but, equally attracted by both, it cannot decide which one it prefers. In this case the penalty for the inability to choose is that the bird dies of thirst. The point is clear. The Ngunese (1) envision action as constrained by conflicting pressures which, (2) demand that one decide between opposing alternatives, (3) do not allow one to refuse to choose, and (4) always entail losses as well as gains or disadvantages as well as advantages.

To understand this better let us look more closely at the proposition offered at the outset of this section. It suggests associations between locality and unity, and between matriliney and continuity. Agnatic residence and inheritance lend stability and unity to Ngunese villages and families; whereas the fact that women marry out of their families and often out of their villages as well is a loss when seen in terms of the local level.

However, the situation - and my proposition - is the reverse when one takes a supra-village perspective. At this level it is the flow of women across clan and village boundaries which is regarded as the major unifying force. The movement of women from place to place (from one generation to the next) establishes inter-group bonds of friendship or solidarity between men of different places and in successive generations, as clansmen.

At this level the Ngunese make the same equations as Turner (1957) tells us the matrilineal and virilocal Ndembu do; that is, femininity is equated with continuity and

masculinity with discontinuity. For the Ngunese, femaleness is also equated with "line" and maleness with "blood".

Take, for example, the idea that the loss of chiefly "sacredness" or "power" occurred when matrilineal succession was abandoned in favour of patrilineal succession at the turn of the century. That succession to chiefly titles was through the matriclan in pre-Christian times is evidenced by the matrilineal idiom used to talk about chiefly succession.

The kin term for a man's sister's son is pelemata, as I noted in the course of my discussion of the meaning of the various idioms relating to kinship (see Chapter Three). There I showed how this term derives from pele and namata, pele meaning "belly; genital region" and namata meaning "door; eye, face; source, origin" in different contexts. Namata also occurs in the word namatarau, the "family" of people related through multiple clan affiliations. But namata has yet another meaning which I first became aware of in a short story told about a young girl and her grandmother (see Appendix VII). The unfortunate girl lost her grandmother's clam-shell for scraping green bananas and promised to find namatana, i.e., a "look-alike", "substitute" or "replacement" for it. It is in this sense that people speak of a chief's successor - in traditional times his pelemata - as namata ni naveinawotaana ("the replacment of the chief").

So the semantic associations of these phrases concerning chiefly succession are purely matrilineal. It is the uterine "line" which people believe ensured the continuous

transmission of the chiefly essence from predecessor to successor from generation to generation in the past.

The switch to patrilineal succession is seen as having ruptured the flow of that special quality of chiefs as "line" gave way to "Blood" as the ideological vehicle of transgenerational continuity. It is clear that the patriarchal emphasis which pervades Christian conceptions provided the necessary validation for this alternative ideology for succession. Still today when people discuss the historical shift to nanatu (succession by sons rather than sisters' sons) they justify the change by reference to Biblical instances of filial succession - primarily, of course, Christ himself as the Son of God. They also cite scriptural passages that use blood to symbolize the logic and legitimacy of filial succession.

Nevertheless, there is now a trace of doubt in some people's minds as they ponder whether the blood-line is as efficient a medium for the transmission of the chiefly sacredness as was the clan-line in the past. There are a small number of holders of chiefly titles who feel strongly enough about the necessity of returning to kastom ways to suggest that there should be a universal reversion to succession by sisters' sons. Whether or not this will come to pass remains to be seen, but it does indicate the great concern than the Ngunese have with recreating or reproducing the structures around which their lives revolve in the face of the changes that come with the passage of time. They must cope with not only the loss (through death) of people who occupy crucial positions but also with the

consequences of a radical alteration of the means by which successors to those positions are found.

At the risk of being redundant, I must stress the profundity of this change whose effects are still being felt 80 years after the fact. As I explained at length in Chapter Three, the matrilineal on Nguna is not to be understood as a corporate group but as an idiom of uterine reproduction which serves as the basis of conceptualization of kinship and other relations. Even agnatic kinship is conceived as relationships between successively regenerating progeny rather than as those between offspring of a male ancestor as his descendants. Furthermore, we have seen that in pre-Christian times the transmission of the essence of clan identity (as "line") to successive generations of chiefs ensured proper reproduction of both the political and spiritual orders. The switch to patrilineality in chiefly succession constituted a substitution of the transmission of the essence of personal identity for that of clan identity. As I have already argued, in some respects the person is seen as an individual, that is, as unique and irreplaceable. However, in other respects he or she plays roles or performs functions which can, and in some cases must be, taken over by someone else when the person dies or leaves or for some other reason ceases to perform those functions. The conceptual difficulties to which the shift from matrilineal to patrilineal succession has given rise stem from the qualitative difference between personal essence and clan essence. The former can be transmitted via "blood" from father to child, but not through following

generations, whereas clan essence is passed through women on and on without changing. Recall the difference between naworawora and nakainaga which was explored in Chapter Three. The one has meaning for an Ego-oriented kin group of no more than 5 generations in depth; but the other is seen as a shared quality that stretches far back into the past and on into the future. My point is that the very heart of matrilineality on Nguna is the transcendence of time and individuality (cf. Weiner 1976, 1979) and that therefore its delegitimization in the context of chiefly succession has struck the chiefly institution a hard blow. The ideology of patrilineal succession simply does not have the capacity to carry the symbolic load that that of matrilineality did in the past. Given this, it is easy to see why continuity is such a fundamental concern for present day Ngunese.

With that, let me turn to the matter of reproduction itself. The human reproductive idiom which serves as the model for social reproduction is summarized by the following three proverbs:³

- 1) The clan is the tree of peace.
- 2) Women are the throwing-stick of the nakara tree.
- 3) Men are the centre-post of the Land.

The last of these uses the metaphor of the very large, very solid centre-posts without which the yarea would not stand. It suggests not only male sexual potency but also the enduring, spatial stability which agnatic kinship and virilocal postmarital residence give the village and dominion. Women, on the other hand, are not associated with

the village at all but with the nakara tree⁴ whose branches, when planted, will shoot forth with new life wherever they lie. This concise statement of the nature of women's regenerative capacity needs no explanation, and the remaining metaphor is equally direct. Male strength in unified groups is tempered by the fibres (clans) created and maintained through time by the movement of women to allow peace to reign between different groups.

Let me now return briefly to the proverb of the unfortunate bird to make a final clarification regarding these ideals.

The gist of my argument is that, first, the Ngunese see social life as a succession of decisions that generally require the actor to choose between opposing alternatives. Second, such decisions are difficult to make because the alternatives are virtually never entirely positive nor entirely negative. Third, the same is true of the two essential principles that govern social life: locality and descent.

I have shown that my original proposition - which associates co-residence with unity (and, therefore, clanspeople with disunity) and matriliney with continuity (and therefore, the agnatic local group with discontinuity) - only holds at the village level. At the level of the larger social whole, it is clanspeople rather than agnates who are associated with unity. Likewise maleness and femaleness are not exclusively equated with continuity and discontinuity, respectively, in all contexts.

Let us focus on the notion of the social whole and consider the ideals of unity and continuity as they relate to the largest unit recognized by the Ngunese, i.e., navanua meaning "the Land" or Nguna. It is the notion of kastom which forms the basis of the Ngunese conception of their society. Kastom embodies the essential distinctiveness of Ngunese society as an integral entity vis-à-vis all others. It invokes, then, both the unity and continuity through time of the social whole. The Ngunese equivalent of kastom, natoomariana ni navanua, means literally "the-way-(things)-are-done of the Land" in a progressive or continuous sense. It has been amply demonstrated throughout this thesis that, on the one hand, the Ngunese feel that contemporary activities and behaviour should approximate these standards and that, on the other hand, there is a considerable difference of opinion as to the actual substance of these standards. However, I have also shown that the core of kastom for the Ngunese is still the traditional chiefly system. Yet Christianity is also regarded as traditional to contemporary generations even though it originated with Europeans. The essence of Ngunese culture for the Ngunese themselves is this dual identification which the phrase "kastom within Christianity" (Tonkinson, quoted above) captures so neatly.

At this point I would like to consider the role of kastom in the development of a concept of a social whole larger and more diverse than that of navanua.

Developing a National Identity

For a few years and for several years to come the Ngunese have been and will continue to try to conceive of a novel social concept, that of Vanuatu. In pre-Contact days the notion of what lay beyond the boundaries of navanua must have been rather vague. Neighbouring islands socioculturally similar to Nguna would have had a greater air of reality than those more distant, known through trade and castaways. With the coming of Europeans different kinds of first and second-hand experiences provided more knowledge of other peoples and their ways of doing things. Especially when warfare had been halted and islanders began to participate in pan-Group institutions introduced by Europeans - foremost among these being Christianity - the Ngunese began to develop some feeling for being part of a larger whole. This is a cumulative process which has no date of inception, nor of completion.

However, since 1975 the process itself has become an object. Given a name, "cultural identity", this process has become the focus of political action in this as in other emerging nations. It is said to be a goal, but it is, in fact, a tool, a notion which can be manipulated for political purposes.

In Learning to Be Rotuman Howard addresses this issue of the development of group identity. He divides the population of the Polynesian island of Rotuma into the educated and the uneducated, in the sense of those having experienced Western formal education, life and work in the predominantly Western urban centres as opposed to those who have not.

The latter, he claims, value their indigenous culture because "... it is the way they know best and because they feel inadequate in the face of modern society" (1970:149). For the educated élite things are very different. They have succeeded in that other world and, through their experience, have gained the capacity to compare that and their home culture as abstract entities.

I would argue that even the least sophisticated, least educated Ngunese are capable of making such a comparison. However, their evaluation of their own culture relative to European culture tends to be negative, like that of uneducated Rotumans. The obvious wealth and technological complexity of European society combined with the Europeans' own condemnation of many aspects of indigenous culture have resulted in the Ngunese' acceptance of the inferiority of their culture.

Only within the last decade and a half have educated ni-Vanuatu begun to achieve the perspective that Howard observed among educated Rotumans. This growing segment of the population now, as Howard puts it, "... recognize[s] the value of Rotuman [or Ngunese] custom for its own sake, from a moral-ethical point of view" (ibid.:150).

Moreover, Howard goes on to say that the educated élite "... can also recognize its [i.e., custom's] significance as a source of common identity and make efforts to endow custom with dignity" (ibid.). This statement could just as well be used to describe what is happening right now in Vanuatu. The following thoughts on the future from Father Lini aim at a radical restructuring of the country's

self-concept:

We believe that small is beautiful,
peace is powerful, respect is
honourable, and that our traditional
sense of community is both wise and
practical for the people of Vanuatu.

(1980:290)

Traditional values and lifestyle are encapsulated in the notion of kastom. But founding a national cultural identity on such a concept is not an easy task. As Lindstrom (n.d.) points out kastom is a particularly variable entity which is the source of much dispute within even very small geographical areas. Indeed, in many parts of Vanuatu it is the idiom in which cultural differences are expressed.

Ironically, this is also kastom's great strength as a political idiom for unity and historical, cultural continuity. When used abstractly by the Vanuaaku Pati leaders it transcends local variation and avoids conflict. The other major support in the construction of a national consciousness - Christianity - serves the same purpose. Yet it, too, alienates some, i.e., those who still hold traditional religious beliefs - in other words, the "pagan" sector, which is sizeable on islands such as Tanna.

As I have said, cultural identity is fostered as a goal in contemporary Vanuatu. But it is also a tool indispensable to the country's leaders; for without it the new government could lose support in many areas and the fledgling republic's newly found stability could be jeopardized.

Keesing (n.d.) has drawn our attention to various types of "neotraditionalism" now abounding in Melanesia. In each

case "custom" or traditional culture has been taken up as a political symbol. His major research has been with a group on Malaïta which is still quite isolated, still resistant to religious proselytization, and still following a traditional lifestyle. On the other hand, Tonkinson (n.d.) reports that a similar process is at work within the greatly transformed sociopolitical situation of Southeast Ambrym, Vanuatu.

As these examples, plus that of Nguna and Vanuatu as a whole show, traditional culture as kastom is proving to be the most powerful symbol in postcolonial Melanesian politics. Whether or not it will remain so is another question. Tonkinson seems to think (ibid.:13) that it will of necessity give way to other symbols in the future. I have advanced a similar hypothesis in Chapter Seven with respect to the Vanuaaku Pati's revolutionary ideology, to the effect that it may evolve into a more conservative one in the post-independence era. But, as for the kastom element, I would say that its relevance in the future is dubious. However, that is purely speculative.

To conclude, let me return to the focus of this study - Nguna. The Ngunese of the 1970's and 1980's find themselves in a situation rather like that which faced their great-grandfathers at the end of the last century. The major influences of the latter era were discussed in Chapter Two: the labour trade; initiation of cash-labour and cash-cropping; and a sudden, severe drop in population due to epidemics of novel diseases. These phenomena produced effects which were similar to those experienced in the

last decade or two on Nguna: a large number of people - particularly the young - absent for extended periods, with those who return bringing different values and habits which tend to be socially disruptive or in conflict with local values. I contend that in both of these periods these socioeconomic changes have resulted in a state of ideological crisis. By this I mean that contradictory notions abounded - in other words, proponents of different social constructions of reality vied for ideological control. In the historical case the new Christians emerged victorious from this ideological confusion and in the present the supporters of the Vanuaaku Pati have done likewise.

Yet, what singles Nguna out from other ni-Vanuatu cultures which have gone through similar crises is the fact that, in both instances, not only have the pre-existent leaders managed to maintain their dominance, but the society has also maintained the appearance of unity. Just as the Nguneses all became Christian - there were no resistant pockets of paganism nor eventual reversions to paganism nor the emergence of support for alternative ideologies such as "Cargo" - so have they all now become Vanuaaku Pati people. I hope that I have proven that the Vanuaaku Pati won Nguna with its "kastom within Christianity" stance; for nothing else would have supported the status quo on Nguna, grounded as it is in the tandem structures of the chiefly system and Presbyterian Christianity.

FOOTNOTES

1. Although I have not explored in depth the character of Ngunese Christianity here - it could in itself be the subject of an entire volume - I have shown how its leadership structure has been entwined with the traditional chiefly structure. A detailed examination of local beliefs would also reveal an idiosyncratic synthesis of traditional and Christian ideas, although the paucity of information available on the former would make an historical analysis difficult.
2. The proverb is: Īilake rogorogo rua.
The Banded Rail hears two.
3. The Ngunese original proverbs are:
 - (1) Nakainaga e pei nakau ni nataĩate.
Clan it is tree of peace.
 - (2) Nagoroĩ e pei kupe ni nakara.
Woman she is throwing-stick of nakara-tree.
 - (3) Naanoai e pei naĩadu ni navanua.
Man he is centre-post of the-Land.
4. Unfortunately I was unable to identify this tree with respect to its scientific name.

APPENDIX I

"Installation of a Chief"

I want to tell about a new chief. If the chief of a village dies, and the office lies empty, but he had a wife, his wife will still look after (the affairs) for a short time. They call his wife the acting chief. When they want to install a new chief, since the wife of the chief is unable to look after (it) for many years, those in the village talk every night; they converse. And they converse a few nights. They talk because they want to discuss the work (involved) when they might choose their new chief. And they begin and say, "This year we'll make the gardens and plant many yams." They discuss amongst themselves, "Do we have enough pigs to install a new chief?" Then they count the pigs until they say, "Yes, it's enough for installing the chief." And they promise (it) for the next year.

Then when the next year comes, they meet and set the month. And each time they do much work; it is a time for many things. It is when the yams are ripe, and bananas, and everything necessary for the installation of the chief. Then when it is time, they talk, and divide the pigs for the ovens, enough for all the villages. And when it is enough, and it is time for the installation, everyone comes from all the villages until they meet at that village. They have already prepared his seat. They make an enclosure and decorate it with coconut leaves. And those coconut leaves they say are the foundation of the chief. It has a sacredness in it, and everybody stands back, because they are

afraid of the sacredness of the chief - it might kill someone.

And the assistant goes in front of the chief. He clears the path for him then beckons him on. And two chiefs are in front and beckon to him. They want him to go through underneath the enclosure. But he must not touch it since the enclosure is sacred. And one of these chiefs who beckon to him beckons to him with a branch of the nagaau tree while asking, "Who is that bending over?" And his friend answers, "I don't know." So they keep going in that way until they have passed through into the enclosure. The chief holds his hands behind him and follows him until he enters the enclosure. The chief's good friends, who are (also) chiefs, are near him. And when they go to the fence, the trumpet shells are blown. One chief, who has gone ahead, takes a leaf of the banyan tree, strips it, and spreads it over that enclosure, and the new chief walks over the banyan leaves. The chief near him takes the crown and puts it on the head of the new chief and anoints it with coconut oil. It is the chief's crown. And when he has put it on, the assistant sits at the left. The chief who has put the crown on him sits on the right, and the (new) chief stays on his seat. After that he is brought to the weede, where he stands. They call that the stone of the chief; it is the place (of anointing) at which they anoint the chief. And he stands there.

That chief who is near him calls and says, "This person, his name is so-and-so..." (I am unable to say his name, but am telling (only) about the chiefship.) And

that chief says, "His small name has been thrown into the sea for a shark to swallow, but now his name is Tariṗoamata (or whatever it is)." Then the ordination is complete.

And all the people return, but the chief stays behind, because if he goes ahead, the sacredness of being a chief will kill someone. It is for that reason that the chief stays behind while the crowd returns. Then the assistant goes up to the chief with many people. They come to show the ovens of what they are giving the villages. The assistant comes, takes a branch of the nakosoava, and runs around the oven. When he has finished running around it, it is as if the oven has been freed and it is no longer tapu.

Then many people uncover the ovens, and they are no longer afraid. But if the assistant did not free the ovens the power of the chief could kill someone - he would fall down, unconscious. But when the assistant takes the leaf of the nakosoava, if he wipes his forehead with it, he - the one who has fallen - can stand up again. But they do not want it to be like that, so the assistant of the new chief takes the branch of the nakosoava and runs around the ovens until it is finished. And the ovens are free. Then all the people are able to eat without fear.

And when the chief has been ordained, his speaker says to the new chief, "The meeting-house is yours, along with everything in it: lifting sticks, moving sticks, ovens, cooking stones, smaller stones, leaf-coverings. Everything in the meeting-house is yours. And the head of the pig yard (i.e., tribute of pigs) is yours. And you,

the chief, have control over the meeting-house." And that is the end of it.

(Ethnographer's note: This account is an edited version of text #26 from Schütz's Nguna Texts. It was recorded in 1966 or 1967 by Jack Taviñasoe who was then approximately 60 years old, a former village-school teacher, Bible and hymn-translator and a retired (but still very active) elder for Nekaña village.

This story is a good example of Jack's style in its clarity and careful attention to detail. In attesting to its accuracy I would add that Jack has a remarkable memory and approaches the task of relating such "histories" in a most conscientious manner.]

APPENDIX II

"Two Chiefs: Tariñoaliu and Tariñoamata"

I want to tell about the beginning of two chiefs, Tariñoaliu and Tariñoamata. This story is true.

The two of them were born of a tribe of strange people (called sagalegaale). In olden days the people of Siviri lived at their old village, which they called Malañati. They worked in their gardens at Lañoa, and many of them planted bananas, yams and plenty of everything. And some of them noticed that their bananas were disappearing, and their cabbage was disappearing. And they said amongst themselves, "As for me, my bananas are gone. Someone has stolen them." And some said, "It's like that with me, too." So they said, "We ought to guard our gardens at night." So one day they went and cut many poles and built a fence: it was a pen. Then one night many of them went to their gardens and while they were there one of them said, "I hear a child crying." Another said, "I hear it, too." So they went and watched their gardens. And one of them saw that that person - but she was not a person like us - had climbed up and was at the top of a clump of bananas; and her little daughter was below, crying. The former was eating her bananas - the ripe ones - and she dropped several of them to the ground to her child. And those who lay hidden took many small sticks, ran up and stuck them in all around the trunk of the banana tree. Then they picked up the child and ran, and then put her inside the pen. Her mother was climbing down, but she was unable to

come quickly because of her long ears. Her ears kept catching on the small sticks, but eventually she got down to the ground. Then she ran after them, but they had taken the child - her daughter - and put it into that sturdy pen. Then they ran away. She searched for her child, but in the end she could not find it. Then she went and climbed a natalie tree, and when she was in it she sang. And she broke the branches as she went to the top level. She kept singing until she got to the topmost level. Then she spoke to the village and said, "You have taken the girl away. You should look after her until she is big. Then, if she marries, you will see that if she has a boy, or if she has two boys, you will name the one Tariþoaliu and the other Tariþoamata."

And when they gave (the child) hot food, she vomited all the dark things until they were all gone. Then she ate and gained strength and they looked after her until she was big - she had become a young woman. And someone married her, and she bore her first child, which was a boy. She called him Tariþoaliu. Then she bore her second child, and he was a boy. They gave him the name Tariþoamata.

Tariþoaliu went across to Nguna and stayed there. He was the big chief of Nguna. As for Tariþoamata, he stayed on Efate and was the big chief of Efate. And those two were chiefs from the same stock. And they had many offspring; it was the offspring of the sagalegaale.

One descendant was the chief who became the first Christian on Nguna. When Mr. Peter Milne came, he became the first Christian. The first marriage ceremony Milne

performed was for that person. That chief was called Matokoaale. And Matokoaale had a son; he was Tariñoaliu. He stood in his father's stead. When Tariñoaliu died, he too had some sons, and once again one took his place.

(Ethnographer's Note: This account is an edited version of text #13 from Schütz's Nguna Texts. It was recorded by Jack Taviñasoe (see Note following Appendix I).)

APPENDIX IIIA

NGUNESE KIN TERMS AND
THEIR ASSOCIATED CATEGORIES

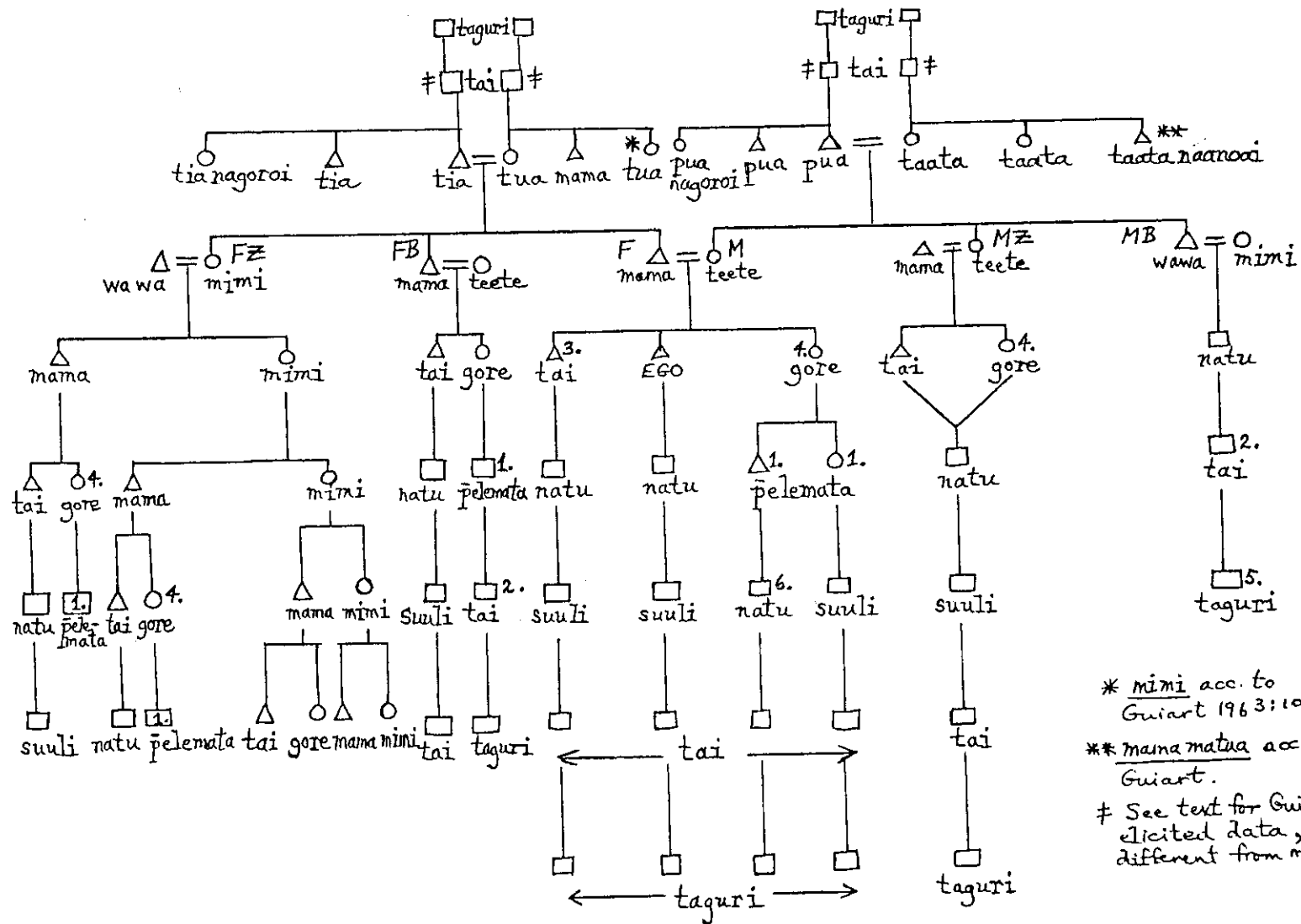
Ngunese Kin Terms

Associated Categories

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <u>tai</u> | B, Z, BDSC, BDCC, BSSC, BSDC,
ZSW (m.s.), ZDSC, ZDDC, MBWM/F,
MBSC (m.s.), MBDC (m.s.),
MBSSC (f.s.), MBSDC (f.s.), MZS,
MZD (f.s.), FBS, FBD (f.s.),
FBDC (m.s.), FBDDC (m.s.), FZSS,
FZSD (f.s.), FZDSS, FZDSD (f.s.),
FFBSS, FFBSD (f.s.), FMBC, MFF/M,
MMBC (m.s.), MMZC (m.s.), FFF/M*,
FFFB/Z, MMM*, MMMB/Z, HBW, SSC*,
SDC*, DSC*, DDC* |
| | * - can also be <u>taila</u> (f.s.) |
| 2. <u>gore</u> | B (f.s.), Z (m.s.), MZD (m.s.),
FBD (m.s.), FZSD (m.s.), FZDSD
(m.s.), FFBSD (m.s.), WBW |
| 3. a) <u>mama</u> | F, FB, MZH, FZS, FZDS, FZDDS,
FFBS, FFZS, FMB, FMZS, HB |
| b) <u>tama</u>
(+ possessive pro-
nominal suffix) | F |
| 4. a) <u>teete</u> | M, MZ, BW (m.s.), FBW, WZ |
| b) <u>ṣila</u>
(+ possessive pro-
nominal suffix) | M |
| 5. <u>natu</u> | C, BC, ZC (f.s.), ZSC (m.s.), MBC,
MZSC, MZDC, FBSC, FBDC, FZSSC,
FZSDC (f.s.), FFBSSC (m.s.), MMBC
(f.s.), MMZC (f.s.), MMMBC (f.s.),
HBC, HZC, WZC |

6. suuli SC, DC, SW, BDC, BSC, BDSW, BSW, ZHF (m.s.), ZSW (f.s.), ZSC (f.s.), ZDC, MBSW, MBSC (f.s.), MBDC (f.s.), MZSSC, FBSSC, FBDSC (f.s.), FBDDC (f.s.), MMBSS (f.s.), MMBSC (f.s.)
7. a) wawa MB, FZH
 b) aloa MB
 (+ possessive pronominal suffix)
8. mini FZ, FZD, FZDD, FZDDD, FFBD, FFZD, FMZD, MBW
9. pelemata ZC (m.s.), FBDC (m.s.), FZSDC (m.s.), WBC
10. taguri MBCCC (m.s.), FFFF, MMMM, FFFBC, MMMBC (m.s.), MMMZC (m.s.)
11. tia FF, FFB, FFZ*, HF, ZHF (f.s.)
 * - often tia nagoroi ("female FF")
12. tua FM, FMZ, FFBW, ZHM, HM, HZ, BW (f.s.)
13. pua MF, MFB, MFZ*
 * - often pua nagoroi ("female MF")
14. taata MM, MMZ, MMB*
 * - often taata naanoai ("male MM")
15. { mogu
napuruña BWM/F, BDH, BDDH, ZDH (f.s.), WM/F, WMM/F, WFM/F, DH
16. tawiana ZH, ZDH (m.s.), WB, WZH, HB

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY FRAMEWORK FOR A MALE EGO.



APPENDIX III C

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY:

DIFFERENCES FOR A FEMALE EGO

1. natu instead of pelemata (FBDC, FZSDC, ZC and FZSDSC).
2. suuli instead of tai (FBDCC and MBCC).
3. gore instead of tai (B).
4. tai instead of gore (Z, MZD, FZSD, FZDSD).
5. tai instead of taguri (MBCCC).
6. suuli instead of natu (ZSC, FZSDSC).

APPENDIX IVA

"The Beginning of 'Lines'"

Long, long ago people used to eat each other and kill each other. And they did not know that they themselves were one people, because that time long ago was the darkness. And there were two chiefs who lived down on Efate. One was Roimata and one was Roimuru and one [other] chief lived on the side of P̃au. They called him Marivaleanata-m̃ate. At that time the two thought about the people who lived in every land almost all around the New Hebrides [includes Nguna, P̃ele, Emau, Efate]. They wanted to make a great feast and sent the message to every island that this day every person should come to the dancing ground, the dancing ground of P̃au, which was named M̃alata-m̃ate. And that dancing ground remains until today and everything that they brought remains today on that dancing ground, M̃alata-m̃ate. And that day many people came and brought every [kind of] thing - from the sea and from the land, even wood which made a cooking-fire. And they took it to the dancing ground and those three chiefs stayed in the middle of the dancing ground. At that time to those two or three who had brought bananas, they said, "You go and be a group there." And to those who had brought fish, who were a few more than three, he said, "You go and be a group there." Also stones; those people who had brought every other thing were in groups. And when they came to be finished he said to them, "Now I am going to tell you the decision. You who are fish are one family [line] and

you should no longer kill each other. And you who brought stones are one people and you should no longer kill each other and eat each other. And the people who brought banyan wood or the people who brought breadfruit or the people who brought yams - everything - you are [each] one people." And then they went back to their lands. They went and told their people of it, saying, "We are just one [people]." Those people who stayed home and did not go to the dancing ground said, "We are just one line." And they did it, all people of the lands of Nguna, Pele and Efate - nearly all the New Hebrides - made those lines. And today those lines remain since that time of old when the three chiefs made that celebration. And those lines remain today. This little story is finished.

(Ethnographer's Note: This account was recorded by the late Kaltaṣau Māsemata of Unakapu in March, 1978. Many people tell this story and the various versions are all in agreement on the major points. I have chosen to include Kaltaṣau's version because it is more detailed than most and has that special quality that is the mark of the master story-teller. Blind since his early youth, Kaltaṣau invested most of his energy in developing this talent and he had a seemingly endless supply of stories of various kinds some of which were not only long and quite complex, but also dramatic and very vital.)

APPENDIX IVB

"Mariori and Masiloa"

The story I am going to tell is the story of two chiefs. They performed the same task as Roimata and Roimuru did. The names of these two chiefs are Mariori and Masiloa. Long ago there was war throughout the lands of Nguna and Efate. These two saw that people were killing and eating each other. And they worried about it, saying, "How can we put an end to this war?" They discussed it and thought, "We should invite the people to come to a feast concerning this war that has been (going on) throughout the land for so long." Then they invited all the people from every village in every land from Efate to Nguna and Pele. They invited them and said to them, "In seven days we will hold a feast and we want you to come and bring all the things that are on the land and in the sea." So they went (back) and waited until the appointed day and then they came. They came bringing everything. Some brought stones and some breadfruit. Some brought yams, some brought cabbage, some brought taro, and some bananas. There were many people. Clams and fish - they brought every kind of thing. As they brought them they called them out to be assembled. So when they gathered them together, the person who brought fish and his friend who brought fish became one line. That was the beginning of lines. So to the one who brought a stone and his friend who brought a stone, he said, "You two are one line." Likewise another came bringing an octopus and another brought one, so (he said), "You two

are one line." When they had finished putting everything together he said, "These are your lines. You are not to hurt each other nor kill each other anymore. You are now brothers of the same line." Then they thought they had conquered the war that had been going on so long in which they had hurt, killed and eaten each other. So there was peace, peace which lasted for some time. That is the end of the story.

(Ethnographer's Note: This account was recorded by Ronneth Manutukituki of M̃atoa village in June, 1978. As a high chief (maanu of Tariṗoaliu), elder and Government Assessor - in his mid to late 50's - Ronneth is amongst the most politically active, influential men on Nguna. Consequently he is a very busy man and the preceding story is one of the few which he was able to record for me.)

APPENDIX V

"Mariamearaliu"

One chief was from Efate. And that chief was from Tapuñara. Her landing-place was Takara. She crossed to Nguna. It was long, long ago. When she left, she left for Nguna. She went ashore at the beach (below) M̃atoa. That beach is called the beach of Vatuñau. She went up inland and settled in the village of M̃atoa. At that time she became the chief of M̃atoa, a female chief. They called her Leiameara. She lived in M̃atoa. From then until she died she remained there (as chief). And (there was) a man called Mantai. He killed one hundred (pigs) because that woman was a chief of one hundred. And this Mantai killed a hundred so he became chief. He remained until he died. And a man who lived in M̃atoa was called Manaatamate. He in turn killed one hundred and became Mariameara (chief of M̃atoa). He remained until they shot him in a war. And he died. They had no more men who were of the yam clan to take that name. Then they sought a man in other villages and they went to Rewoka village. And there they found a man of the yam clan who was called Marikoroi. So they took this Marikoroi to M̃atoa. He likewise killed one hundred for "Mariameara" and he in turn became Mariameara. He killed one hundred for (the place of) Manaatamate. Then Marikoroi remained until he died, (and) there was no-one else. But Marikoroi had one sister. That sister had married into a village near Rewoka, Rewokanapua (Fareafau). And they found a man living there. He was of the yam clan because

he was the son of Marikorof's sister. They found this man and the people of M̃atoa brought him back and he in turn became chief. They called him Taatalele. He remained (chief) until he died. And that custom ceased. They changed that custom and it became (succession by) sons. And this Taatalele was of the yam clan but his son was not because they changed the chiefship of Mariameara. (So) his son was of the native cabbage clan but he took the chiefship of Mariameara in his turn. From that time it began that it went to the son. That son of his who became Mariameara did not kill one hundred in his turn. It began to go to the son and his son was Kenneth. He took the chiefship; he became Mariameara. That is the end. Kenneth died, and again it was his son, Abel, who in turn took the chiefship. He in turn became Mariameara. Kenneth was the seventh (Mariameara).

(Ethnographer's Note: This chiefly ancestry (nariwota) was recorded by Lui Taatalele of Fareafau in May, 1978. Now in his 60's, Lui is an elder of the church and uses his father's smol nem as his surname. As an inhabitant of Fareafau and son of a former chief of that village he is accepted as the rightful possessor and relator of this history.)

APPENDIX VI

"The New Diviner"

I wanted to tell the story of the new diviner. This man's name was P̃akae. And at that time he decided that he wanted to be a diviner. So he went to the shore (below) Farealapa. And when he went he sat down on a rock. And he saw bluefish where the waves were breaking on the shore. He said, "Oh, I want to eat one of those fish - a bluefish." When he had been waiting a little while he saw a wave. It carried one bluefish up to the shore and deposited it at the base of a rock. And when he wanted to see the fish that it had hidden there he went but it was a light-skinned woman there at the base of the rock. So then the two of them came until he put her into his pig-pen. And this P̃akae had many concubines, many women. He went to see his concubines who were preparing food. They made it and then he said, "Alright! I will go give the pigs the rubbish." While they prepared their food they would cut it up and wrap it in parcels. Then he would parcel up the rubbish and take it to the pen. So he took it and gave it to the white woman. And she ate it. And he went on doing this until finally his concubines noticed. They said, "Oh, this old man is doing something. We didn't see him acting like this before. There is something." And he had said that when they made pudding they should not make pudding from red yams. So they had been making pudding of white yams only. (This went on) until one time when he again went to do the feeding and one woman followed him. She followed

him but kept hidden. And she saw that he threw the rubbish in for the pigs, but that he took the parcel and gave it to the white woman. And so they said to him, "Hey! Go and bring this woman that you are giving food to up to the house. We shall all live together. We won't hurt her in anger." So they brought her to the house and they all lived together. They continued to make pudding, until one time his concubines said to him, "Today we shall make red yam pudding only. We won't make any white pudding." So then they went to their gardens and got red yams only and came back and grated them for pudding. But the white woman saw what they were doing. And when her husband came she said to him, "Those women are doing ill to me now. I am going to leave you." Finally they opened the ovens in the afternoon. And she could not eat those red yams. When he ate, she would leave. So he ate it and then she descended (the hill) to go back. Her husband, Pākae, followed her. He followed her and said, "Sure! You go! How can you do this to me?" And she said, "I give you my power. If you want anything, go looking for it and you shall find it. But I must go." And she left. And he decided that he wanted to be a diviner. And when he came to the house he decided to go see Masekaau. So then he got up and went to see Masekaau. When he got to the village of Raitoa he saw Masekaau was in his meeting-house, Matakudalo. So then Pākae went inside. He said, "What do you want?" He said, "I want to be a diviner." So he took him to his sacred place. He took him to his sacred place and he saw a little stone there that was round. And he said to him, "Pick up this

stone!" And when he took that stone it was not a stone but it was a big lizard. But he was not afraid of it and held onto it. Finally he put it back down and then it was a stone. He said, "Take it again a second time." And that man took it a second time and then it was a big snake. But that man was not afraid of it. He kept it. Finally he put it back and it was a stone again. He said, "Go! The sacredness is upon you. The diviner's sacredness is upon you. Return to your village." And when he went he performed some deeds, some small deeds which they call diviner's work. But they did not realize (that he was) until he said to them, "I want fire. You put out all your fires." For long ago it was a time when they kept a big fire lit. It was a perpetual fire. So they put out all those fires all around Nguna. And he wanted to summon fire. So he climbed, he climbed up high and summoned fire, and a burning stick was sent from the heavens and fell to earth. When it fell to earth many people in turn took that fire and fanned it in their villages. And he heard of a dance in Emau. And he went. He went and they were all dancing. And they did not know where he had come from. But he had come from under the sea. And he stayed there dancing until finally he returned to his village, Farealapa. And the dancing-ground they were dancing on was Wowolapa. That dancing-ground is still there today. Then one time they were making gardens, the people of Utanilagi and the people of Farealapa. They made big gardens. And sometimes the people of Utanilagi planted for the people of Farealapa. So the people of Utanilagi all went. They came to plant

yams in their gardens for them. And they planted until close to the midday meal. But there was no food. And all his children were planting and one came to the house and said to that man, "Father, we have been planting until it is time for the midday meal, but we don't see any food. What shall we eat?" And he said to them, "You go first and (then) I will come." So they went and then he arrived. And he said to his son, "Go call them to come into the shade." "But there is no food. If they come into the shade what will they eat?" And then his son called to the many people of Utanilagi who were planting, "Come into the shade." And when they came into the shade, he said to all of them, "Close your eyes. If any one of you should hear something making a noise, don't look." So they all closed their eyes and stayed there in the shade of a banyan tree. And then they heard the noise of puddings falling to the ground. But none of them looked. They all had their eyes closed and listened to the sound until he said to them, "Open your eyes!" And when they opened their eyes, they saw puddings there in the shade of the banyan. And he said, "Take these puddings and open them." And when they had gathered them all up (they found that) they were still hot. And he told them to open them. They opened them. But they were afraid to eat them, because they did not know where those puddings had come from. So he got up and ate a piece that they cut for him, with meat inside - the puddings all had meat inside. And it was still steaming. When he had eaten first he said, "Don't be afraid. Eat them." And many people ate. That is the end of the story.

(Ethnographer's Note: This story was recorded by Kaltaṣau M̃asemata (see Note following Appendix IVA) in April, 1978. A shorter version of the same story, as given by Jack Taviṃasoe (see Note following Appendix I), appears in Nguna Texts (#21). I would like to include the last two paragraphs of Jack's version as it recounts the unusual and untimely death of the "new diviner".]

...One day he wanted to go to a dance, so he went down to the shore and continued under the sea to a different land that they call Emau. And the people (there) saw him come out from the ground at the place where they danced. And they danced until it was time to eat. Many people ate, and they gave him some food, which was pieces of pudding. He took these pieces, went back down into the ground, and walked under the sea until he came back to land. There he appeared to the women who were walking on the reef. And he took the pieces of pudding he had brought from Emau, opened them, and ate them. Then he went up to his village and said, "We will take something that is new.. a book, that has pages with writing on them. It's a book that has language in it." And it was Jehovah who gave the written word to him.

And when Peter Milne came to Nguna, he wanted to shake hands with the diviner, but the diviner refused. But Milne insisted that he shake hands with the new diviner. He still refused, but Milne's words were forceful, and finally he shook hands. But blood came from the new diviner's hands, and he stayed but a short time, then died. They buried him, and after the third day, they went to his grave and saw that it was sunken in and the body of the new diviner was

not in it. He was the last diviner on Nguna. There have not been any more.

APPENDIX VII

"The Little Girl and her Grandmother"

There was a little girl and her (maternal) grandmother and it was raining. And her grandmother was weaving. She was weaving a mat. She wove until that little girl took the clam shell with which they scraped out bananas. She took it and made little ditches for the falling rain. Her granddaughter took the clams and used them for the water. It was flowing. And her grandmother went on weaving. She wove until she said to her, "Hey! Little girl, where is my clam shell?" She said, "Oh, grandmother, I've lost the clam shell. The clam shell is gone. The water ran and floated it away." So her grandmother hit her. The little girl cried, and sang, "... (in Tongoan) ...". And she said, "Grandmother, you are angry over your clam shell. I will follow its path to the beach for you. Perhaps the water has taken it until it reached the sea." So she went crying and looking and kept looking for that shell. Her grandmother said, "Hey, come here, my granddaughter. It doesn't matter that that shell is lost. For all my things are yours, not mine anymore. So come, let's go to the house." She said, "No, grandmother, you are angry over your clam shell. I am going to go swimming at the beach and get another one for you." And this was sung, "... " And her grandmother followed her until she reached the beach, like here, (and) the little girl said to her grandmother, "Grandmother, look at the house. The old chief's house is on fire. A huge fire is consuming it and

it's ablaze." Her grandmother looked back to the house like this, and she (the little girl) dove into the sea and died. That is all.

(Ethnographer's Note: This story was told by Rita Kalpilelu of Piliura village, Pele Island. Now in her 50's, Rita first learned this tale from a relative on Tongoa, which is why I cannot supply a translation of the song-portion, that dialect being considerably different from Ngunese as I and my linguistic tutors speak it.)

GLOSSARY

<u>atavi</u>	chief's assistant
<u>dagele</u>	crooked; "false"
<u>dape lua</u>	to take out, "adopt"
<u>datago</u>	to ask for, request
<u>daulua</u>	to redeem or "buy out"
<u>doa</u>	to turn; to alter
<u>doropusi</u>	to put down; to let go of
<u>dowo</u>	to fall
<u>elau</u>	seaboard, coast
<u>euta</u>	inland
<u>kai</u>	fibre; skinlike layer underlying the outer skin of a yam
<u>kastom</u>	traditional values, beliefs and practices (Bislama)
<u>kasua</u>	hard, difficult; harsh; strong
<u>ki</u>	of
<u>kiiki</u>	small
<u>kokoti</u>	to cut coconut pudding in arc-like wedges
<u>kotovi</u>	to cut (of a long object)
<u>kupe</u>	throwing-stick
<u>laelae</u>	to enjoy, rejoice (in), be glad ("to" or "of")
<u>laki</u>	to marry (of women only)
<u>lakipiliu</u>	sister-exchange marriage
<u>leana</u>	straight; correct, true
<u>maanu</u>	paramount chief's assistants
<u>manainai</u>	weak
<u>manu</u>	thousand
<u>maripunue</u>	to kill, destroy
<u>matua</u>	old; mature
<u>mauti</u>	to keep, hang onto
<u>mori</u>	to pay for, recompense
<u>munuai</u>	priest, diviner, ritual expert
<u>maladigi</u>	near, close
<u>malala</u>	dancing-ground
<u>menaki</u>	to sleep over, spend the night

<u>m̃oli</u>	just, only; ordinary
<u>naala</u>	basket, bag
<u>naanoai</u>	man; male
<u>naata</u>	spirit
<u>naatamate</u>	spirit of the dead
<u>naatãmoli</u>	person
<u>naatãmoli vasa</u>	chief's facilitator
<u>naatatoko</u>	[a] native inhabitant
<u>nãaa</u>	blood
<u>nagisa</u>	name; title
<u>nagoroĩ</u>	woman; female
<u>nakainaga</u>	matriclan
<u>nakau</u>	tree
<u>nakoau</u>	coconut pudding; <u>laplap</u> (Bislama)
<u>nak̃̃ea</u>	slit-drum
<u>naleoana</u>	feast, celebration
<u>naluluakia</u>	proverb
<u>namagovai</u>	half; partly
<u>namalopaa</u>	space; sky
<u>namarakiana</u>	dominion
<u>namata</u>	door; eye; face; source; origin; substitute, replacement
<u>namatakuana</u>	fear; shame
<u>namatarau</u>	an Ego-centred kindred
<u>namauriana</u>	life
<u>namayesi</u>	clan-associated personal name
<u>namena</u>	tongue
<u>namidoakiana</u>	thought
<u>namidoakiataeana</u>	understanding, wisdom
<u>nã̃adu</u>	centre-post
<u>nanatu</u>	filial succession
<u>napua</u>	path, road; vagina (?)
<u>nã̃au</u>	head
<u>nã̃au ni manu</u>	head of a thousand (i.e., the paramount chief)
<u>narei</u>	people (or "subjects")
<u>nariwota</u>	origin story for a matriclan; ancestry (of an individual)
<u>narogokitesaana</u>	"[a] bad feeling" or "feeling bad" (e.g., humiliation, anger, disap- pointment, sorrow, etc.)

<u>nasautoga</u>	tribute to chiefs
<u>nasuŋa</u>	house
<u>nataameleana</u>	part of the chiefly investiture ceremony
<u>natakara</u>	sacred power of chiefs or sacred men
<u>natalovaana</u>	shaking hands in greeting
<u>natapuana</u>	sacredness
<u>natoomariana ni navanua</u>	Ngunese <u>kastom</u> (see above)
<u>navanua</u>	land, country; Nguna
<u>navasaana</u>	word; language
<u>navata</u>	group (relating to village membership)
<u>navavakaworaana</u>	descendants
<u>naveaniana</u>	property, belongings
<u>naveinawotaana</u>	chief; possession, dominion (over), control (of), right of (or "to") control (of)
<u>naviosoana</u>	"the calling", i.e., kinship terminology
<u>navituaana</u>	gift
<u>nawora</u>	landing-place, anchorage; passage; new shoot of a plant
<u>naworawora</u>	the idiom for consanguinity or filiation
<u>nawosidoaana</u>	contagious magic, sorcery
<u>nawota</u>	chief; also, "boss" and "husband"
<u>ni</u>	of
<u>paataka</u>	enough; suitable; "equal to"
<u>paiga</u>	(type of) triton shell
<u>pakotovi</u>	to buy, pay for
<u>pavaigoro</u>	to protect
<u>pavakawora</u>	to reproduce
<u>peani</u>	to have, possess
<u>pesi</u>	to kindle a fire (by the stick and groove method); to dig a hole with one's hands for planting; to beget
<u>pesivesi</u>	to beget
<u>piakiiki</u>	child
<u>pinovinoofi</u>	to disappear, fade away into nothing
<u>pioso</u>	to call, address

<u>pitawiri</u>	to marry (one another)
<u>pitua(ki)</u>	to share
<u>pono</u>	to discuss at length
<u>pasi</u>	to break off (as of a branch from a tree), break apart; to "adopt"
<u>paumaaso</u>	a woman's maternal inheritance
<u>pele</u>	belly; genital region
<u>pelemata</u>	a man's sister's child
<u>Pokasi</u>	the first stage in the underworld reached by the dead, according to traditional notions in central Vanuatu
<u>poŋo</u>	heart
<u>poŋo wia</u>	good feeling
<u>sagoa</u>	(type) of triton shell
<u>sea</u>	to ask for (from close kin)
<u>smol nem</u>	(a) personal name of an individual (Bislama)
<u>surata</u>	to walk
<u>takalapa</u>	eldest
<u>takarausia</u>	second eldest
<u>takariki</u>	youngest
<u>taleva</u>	side
<u>taoa</u>	group; kin (possibly a synonym of <u>varea</u>)
<u>taapa</u>	placatory offering to a chief
<u>tapu</u>	sacred
<u>taŋesu</u>	Purple Swamp Hen
<u>tasiga</u>	chief's "intermediary"
<u>tea loa</u>	(a) "Black"
<u>tea sikai maau</u>	just (or "all") one
<u>tea suasua</u>	servant
<u>tea taare</u>	(a) "White"
<u>totowo</u>	amount, figure; size
<u>uvea</u>	far, distant
<u>varea</u>	men's house, meeting house; residential unit based on an agnatic cluster
<u>vatu</u>	stone
<u>wia</u>	good; correct

woli

(type of) triton shell; shell-
trumpet

wora

place; vagina (?)

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