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**Borofsky, Robert Alan**

**MAKING HISTORY: THE CREATION OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE  
ON PUKAPUKA, A POLYNESIAN ATOLL**

*University of Hawaii*

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MAKING HISTORY:

THE CREATION OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE  
ON PUKAPUKA, A POLYNESIAN ATOLL

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN ANTHROPOLOGY

DECEMBER, 1982

by

Robert Alan Borofsky

Thesis Committee:  
Richard Lieban, Chairman  
Alan Howard  
Stephen Boggs  
Andrew Arno  
Godwin Chu

To Nancy,

with more than words can express

ABSTRACT

As a means of raising broad questions about the nature of cultural knowledge and how anthropologists describe it, the thesis considers the implications of a particular contradiction - between what the inhabitants of a Polynesian atoll, Pukapuka, assert about their past and what various outside sources corroborate. From 1976 to 1980, Pukapukans lived under a form of social organization, the Akatawa, which they not only viewed as a revival of an important tradition but whose history was well-known to several people. A few select informants even recalled having experienced this same pattern of organization in their youth. But a host of historical and anthropological materials, including research by five well-known anthropologists over a 40 year period, indicate that this form of social organization may not have previously occurred and that, at the very least, was poorly known and/or culturally insignificant prior to 1976.

To understand this contradiction, the thesis presents a detailed ethnographic description of how Pukapukans acquire, validate, and utilize their traditional knowledge. The material indicates that rather than being a set product from the past, Pukapukan traditional knowledge is more of a process - continually changing as various individuals in each new generation reinterpret it in diverse ways. While a general core of shared understandings exists, there are also numerous elements of diversity, fluidity, and ambiguity.

The dissertation suggests that, in certain respects, the contradiction results from Pukapukans and anthropologists utilizing Pukapukan traditional knowledge in different ways - to solve different

problems related to different audiences. For Pukapukans, the knowledge is used in status rivalries with other Pukapukans. As a way of affirming their self-competence and as a manifestation of the culture's egalitarian orientation, Pukapukans often challenge, reinterpret, or qualify what their peers claim to be true about the past.

Anthropologists, on the other hand, try to make Pukapukan traditions intelligible to outsiders, to those who have not directly experienced the culture. Their audience is less interested in focusing on subtle individual differences of opinion (as a way of expressing their self-competence vis-a-vis various Pukapukans) than in grasping the broad patterns of a culture different than their own, in putting their own culture in perspective. Also, anthropologists write down what Pukapukans state about particular traditions even though some of these data may soon become outdated - as a new generation of Pukapukans reinterprets and modifies its knowledge of the traditions in new ways. Thus Pukapukans, by continually reinterpreting particular traditions, tend to emphasize their diversity and fluidity. Anthropologists, in recording them for outsiders, tend to focus more on their stability and uniformity.

These two differing orientations (based on two differing purposes), the thesis argues, may at times lead to contradictory accounts of certain Pukapukan traditions - as the case of the Akatawa illustrates. But such contradictions do not negate the anthropological endeavor. They confirm it (in a pragmatic sense). By making apparent a difference of views, the contradictions provide insight into how both Pukapukans and anthropologists formulate cultural traditions. Out of such contradictions comes greater understanding of how others and ourselves create certain forms of knowledge.



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PREFACE

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 Punavai, Metua, Ine, Tutai, Lualau wolo, Okotai, Aulua, Elikana,  
 Papaa, Tenua, Amota, Ilo, Malua, Koyi Iewu, Metua Iewu, Taakelepo  
 Iewu, Tanetoa, Tupou, Ane, Kumala, Lipene, Taleima, Atela, Moapii,  
 Naomi, Ka, Lakela, Viday, Mala, Palau, Talai, Walevaka, Wuliia, Peli,  
 Tiava, Akakino, Taakelepo wolo, Tele, Ape, Iva, Tumu, Ene, Wualelei  
 wolo, Paniani, Leleau, Akailo, Koia, Lemuna, Lulutangi, Paala,  
 Pelepele wolo, Taakave, Telema wolo, Tutoka, Ulaula, Taavini, Lautana,  
 Kainana, Taapaki, Elikana, Langiuila, Aketa, Taakele, Ataela, Kupa,  
 Manea, Vaotiale, Potai, Toa, Litawa, Tangiula, Elati, Punga wolo,  
 Lito, Taapeta wolo, Ieluta, Maina, Tai, Telema Iewu, Pateteepa,  
 Leleimua, Toolua, Maluu, Kaatia, Kinolongo, Lakini, Tapa, Poilua, Ono,  
 Tala, Witivaka, Yeia, Lutonga, Akatu, Mikala, Pilato, Pitia, Tilipa,  
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## CONDITIONS OF FIELD WORK

Research was carried out on Pukapuka for 41 months - from November 1977 to April 1981. During that time, I made two brief sojourns to Samoa (for medical treatment and supplies) involving a total absence of approximately four weeks. No other off island travel occurred. Before traveling to Pukapuka, I also spent approximately one month microfilming documents on Pukapuka in the Rarotongan government archives.

My interactions with Pukapukans covered a wide range of activities and contexts. It is important to note that my wife, Nancy, and my daughter, Amelia (who was one year old at the time of our arrival), accompanied me through out the field work. We were a family dwelling among families. We lived under a variety of arrangements - as members of a larger family, as renters of a house in which certain cooking facilities were shared with others, and as owners of our own house with our own cooking facilities. Never were we isolated from the general run of daily activities. Something was always occurring around us. What we did not energetically seek out usually came to us anyway - through friends, through my daughter's playmates, or through the fact that many Pukapukans just liked to socialize on our porch.

I utilized two basic strategies in collecting data. The first involved participant-observation. What Firth states for his research among the Tikopia, also held for mine.

Conformity to their customs they take not so much as a compliment as a natural adaptation; in a specific ceremony they can conceive only of participants, not of observers. At such a time one cannot be outside the group, one must be of it. There are limits, of course. One has a notebook, for writing is one's habit; one does not wail at funerals, for it is recognized that Europeans are dry fountains; but one must be of this party or that, one must keep the prescribed taboos of sitting or eating, one must make and receive the normal economic contributions.

At the same time the fact that one wears different clothing, usually sleeps in one's house and normally takes at least the evening meal there, and acts in so many things as an independent unit, not as a member of a group, always prevents complete absorption into one's native surroundings (1936:11).

In addition to participant-observation, I carried out extensive formal surveys on people's knowledge of various subjects. For the main surveys, I used a stratified sample of 80 informants - involving both males and females drawn from various age groups.<sup>1</sup> These were followed by greater in depth interviews with a more select group of informants (ranging from five to 30 depending on the topic). Finally, five to six people (also depending on the topic) collectively discussed and "thrashed out" in a group answers to questions raised by the various interviews.

Moreover, I carried out numerous informal interviews - casually asking people certain questions when and where the opportunity arose. I did not simply listen to what Pukapukans told me. I discussed, I argued with them - so I could better understand what they meant.

Over the period I conducted the large formal surveys, I found it helpful to use various assistants.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the assistants did not really act as translators - particularly after the first several months of field work. Mainly they (1) assisted in

interviews, (2) allowed me to observe in a relatively controlled manner how the assistants, through listening to the interviews, expanded their knowledge of certain cultural traditions, and (3) emphasized the interviews' public nature. While Pukapukans might feel safe privately confiding to me anything they wanted me to believe (even to the point of their knowing nothing), the situation was somewhat different with another Pukapukan present. The interviewees, in order to prove their competence before others, usually felt called upon to demonstrate their knowledge to me. Given (1) the nature of the rapport established with certain informants and (2) the range of material discussed, I deemed it unwise to use assistants in more in-depth interviews. These I conducted solely by myself. Also, no assistants were utilized in the group discussions.

The list of informants recorded in the Pukapukan acknowledgments constitutes those people whom I interviewed in depth regarding one matter or another. The first list of eighteen people (on page viii) constitutes what might be termed "key" informants - those who were interviewed in particular detail. But the second list (on pages viii-ix), while interviewed mainly in a variety of general surveys, still contributed a considerable amount of valued data.

There are two general groups of informants referred to in the thesis. The first set is named (with pseudonyms mostly derived from individuals who assisted in the Beagleholes' research) and involves people who are repeatedly cited throughout the text (e.g. Mitimoa and

Veeti). These individuals contribute a sense of personality and context to the general descriptions and, hopefully, provide insight into how specific individuals interact with certain broad cultural themes. The second set are unnamed (with only sex and approximate age mentioned). They provide a perspective on how the named group of informants' remarks and behaviors fit within the wider perspective of the islands' general population. To prevent ready identification of the named informants, their ages are given only in the most approximate terms: Wakalua (sex: female, age: over 64); Veeti (sex: male, age: over 64); Lotoa (sex: female, age: over 64); Talainga (sex: male, age: over 64); Te Ingoa (sex: male, age: over 64); Winangalo (sex: male, age: over 64); Wakamaa (sex: female, age: over 64); Ula (sex: male, age: over 64); Kuluu (sex: male, age: over 64); Utalenga (sex: male, age: over 64); Iakopo (sex: male, age: over 64); Mitimooa (sex: male, age: 55-75); Makilai (sex: male, age: 45-64); Eliu (sex: male, age: 45-64); Pau (sex: male, age: 45-64); Tiele (sex: male, age: 35-55); Pakuu (sex: male, age: 35-55); Akalulu (sex: male, 35-55); Luka (sex: male, 35-55); Te Kula (sex: male, age: 35-55); Lepuama (sex: male, age: 35-55); Nimeti (sex: male, age: 15-35); Te Alo (sex: 15-35); and Apela (sex: male, age: 15-35).

Generally, I talked to my own family in English. At times I would also talk to a few Pukapukans, such as the school teachers, in English as well. But I talked to most Pukapukans most of the time in their own native language. How could I do otherwise when the great

majority of the over 200 informants I worked with knew only a smattering of English? As will become readily apparent in chapters two and three, I generally had little difficulty in following conversations and making myself understood.

While obviously Pukapukan is the indigenous language of the island, it is not the sole language spoken by Pukapukans on Pukapuka. Most people, in fact, speak a combination of Pukapukan and Rarotongan. Rarotongan, being the language of status, is generally used on more formal occasions and in written records (see Beaglehole 1938:6). Exactly which words belong to which language is often a matter of debate. Where appropriate, I have used the established Pukapukan term. But if the Rarotongan form represents the far more common usage today (e.g. koputangata vs. wuaanga), I cite that instead.

All quotes by Pukapukans are verbatim transcriptions of taped conversations unless otherwise noted. All the translations are my own. Long vowels are indicated in the text by a doubling of the vowel. This procedure is followed by Biggs (1969) and is the one used in our dictionary (Mataola, Tutai, Borofsky, et al ms.). In regard to the translations, parentheses within quotes are used to indicate where I have inserted additional material to give the figurative sense implied. I generally include Pukapukan words in the translations under one of three conditions: (1) where I have taken liberties with the translation so that others may get a sense of the biases injected, (2) when I am not fully sure of the correct translation, and (3) where it may help others clarify what is being said. Following Levy (1973), I also use single quote marks, ' ', to refer to certain translations

of kin terms. For example, 'father' refers to the Pukapukan kinship term for father (matua tane, paapaa, or taati) while father (without single quotation marks) refers to the actual father of an individual.

The reader should know that the data presented in chapters two and three - which form the heart of the ethnographic descriptions - do not solely derive from my observations alone. They represent the observations of three "outsiders". I paid close attention to my wife Nancy's observations and to Ron Vetter's, the Australian Volunteer in Service teacher who taught at the Pukapukan high school during part of my field work. The three of us did not always agree on every ethnographic detail or on how to interpret them. But we did concur on the general ideas described in the chapters below. Agreements were far more common than disagreements. I alone, however, should be held responsible for the analysis of the Akatawa social organization.

But rather than simply assert what the conditions of field work were like, I have tried to make them part of my analysis. Partially, this is because concrete illustrations convey far better than simple assertions the degree to which I participated in Pukapukan culture during my 41 month stay. But there is another reason too. The thesis focuses on the creation of knowledge. It is appropriate, therefore, to describe not only how Pukapukans create knowledge but also how I - in gathering data to write the thesis - did as well.



FOOTNOTES FOR THE PREFACE

1

I formed a stratified random sample of 70 Pukapukans - ten children ten years old, ten roughly twenty years old, ten roughly 30 years old, ten roughly 40 years old, ten roughly 50 years old, and 20 adults 64 years of age and over. (The "roughly" refers to the fact that I had to include people slightly older and slightly younger when there were not enough individuals of the specific age group.) In each group, half were men, half women (except in a few surveys regarding fishing knowledge which are not of concern in this thesis.) In addition, I included the ten people viewed (by Pukapukans) as most knowledgeable in traditional affairs. Since these individuals were all at least 64 years of age, the elderly group really consisted of 30 people. But only 20 were selected randomly. While the actual elderly population on the atoll was 69 in my census, when one excluded people (1) who had died between the census and the undertaking of various surveys, (2) who were too sick to be interviewed, (3) who were obviously senile, and (4) who had left the island, the survey population was no more than 56 and went lower throughout the research. Thus the elderly non-random sample of 30 constituted 54% of the elderly population examinable on the island.

2

I used five paid assistants in all. This allowed for flexibility in work hours, an opportunity to gauge how the personalities of various assistants influenced interview sessions and a chance to gain insight into how these assistants used the interview sessions to expand their own knowledge of Pukapukan traditions.

## INTRODUCTION

### Chapter One

The facts of the case are these. In February 1976, the high council of a small Polynesian coral atoll, Pukapuka, temporarily revived what it believed to be an ancient form of social organization. The council replaced the island's traditional tripartite village pattern with a bipartite structure called the Akatawa - involving two tawa or sides. My own detailed investigations beginning more than a year later uncovered considerable knowledge about the historical antecedents for this revived form of social organization. Several elderly Pukapukans, for example, could describe aspects of former Akatawa. A few knowledgeable informants even claimed to have lived through a similar period of the Akatawa in their youth.

But here is the rub. Extensive data from other sources suggest the Akatawa may never have existed before 1976. Five well qualified anthropologists carried out research on the island - three specifically on traditional Pukapukan social organization and one as recently as 1974. None of them mention it in their reports. The same holds true for numerous government officials, missionaries, and other outsiders visiting the island after 1908. None of them make any reference to it - even though some of them were on the atoll at a time when certain informants claim the Akatawa was in operation. Again and again various people write about certain forms of traditional social

organization. Again and again each source reinforces the general impression gained from other sources. But none of them ever mention the Akatawa.

The various data are examined in detail below. But even this brief summary indicates the problem - a contradiction exists between what Pukapukans assert about their past and what Western reports corroborate. How did such a contradiction come about? The more one looks at this question the more subtle and complicated the issue becomes.

At first glance, it might seem that the error lies in the accuracy of the Western reports. It is certainly true, for example, that at least one researcher who briefly visited the island, MacGregor (1935), seriously misinterpreted important aspects of Pukapukan culture. Also, it is well-known that one anthropologist can develop a theme that another anthropologist, studying the same culture, may down-play, ignore, or simply interpret differently (e.g. Redfield 1930, 1960 and Lewis 1951; Malinowski 1961, 1929 and Weiner 1976; see also Bennett 1946, Gartell 1979, and Pelto and Pelto 1978).

But whatever the reader's skepticism concerning these Western reports, it must be tempered by their sheer number, diversity, and quality. It is not a question of one anthropologist's account or one historical record. It is a matter of numerous anthropological and historical records from diverse sources all providing the same impression - that, at the very least, the Akatawa was relatively unknown by the general populace and/or of marginal significance to the culture prior to 1976.

Yet to assert the overall validity of the Western reports does not necessarily invalidate Pukapukan perceptions of the Akatawa as a revival of the past. True a considerable body of data support the fact that people create sociological charters, create "charter myths", for present-day forms of social organization (e.g. Malinowski (1954), Evans-Pritchard 1940, Bohannan 1952, Beattie 1960, Blount 1975, Irvine 1978 and Vansina 1978). But it would be incorrect to assume that people's descriptions of former Akatawa were simply an attempt to give historical validation to a new event. Various accounts by Pukapukans who attended the high council's (or Kau Wowolo's) meeting on February 6, 1976 make it clear that some people knew about the Akatawa before the meeting took place. These reports indicate the 1976 Akatawa was established because of its historical precedents, not vice-versa. Some of the very descriptions that validated its occurrence actually formed the basis for instituting the Akatawa in the first place.

What is at stake, the thesis suggests, is not a question of one group being right and the other wrong. What is at issue is how various people utilize the past to order and explain events. The contradiction, as will be seen, says much about Pukapukans and the nature of their traditional knowledge. But it also says something about anthropologists and how they formulate ethnographies.

Pukapukan traditions are far from static. To a certain degree, they are being created all the time. In being reproduced from one generation to another, traditional knowledge becomes partially

transformed; in being validated by Pukapukans today, assertions about the past become somewhat altered; in being applied to the solution of current problems, traditional knowledge becomes changed in the process. Rather than being a set product from the past, traditional knowledge is more of a process - continually being reinterpreted to give it meaning within the present.

George Herbert Mead states the point well.

Each generation and often different minds within a generation have discovered different pasts. And these pasts are not only different because they have become more spacious and richer in detail. They have become essentially different in their fundamental significance. We speak of the past as final and irrevocable. There is nothing less so, when we consider it as the pictured extension which each generation has spread behind itself. One past displaces another as inexorably as the rising generation buries the old (1938:95).

What orders the fluidity, what gives coherence to various ambiguous and diverse opinions about the past, the thesis suggests, is that certain conceptualizations help resolve present-day problems.

Again quoting from George Herbert Mead:

The long and short of it is that the only reality of the past open to our reflective research is the implication of the present, that the only reason for research into the past is the present problem of understanding a problematic world, and the only test of the truth of what we have discovered is our ability to so state the past that we can continue the conduct whose inhibition has set the problem to us (1938:97).

What is involved in the above contradiction, the thesis asserts, are two different cultural perspectives being applied to resolving two different problems. Let me briefly illustrate what I mean. Take, for instance, the issue of closure (a topic elaborated on later in this chapter). Generally, there are few instances where Pukapukans require

formal group closure in respect to traditional knowledge. Each person, after hearing a variety of opinions at a meeting, goes home and constructs his own personal analysis. In developing his synthesis, he emphasizes what he himself knows, what he himself has experienced - as a way of affirming his own competence as a Pukapukan and the egalitarian orientation of the culture. Diverse opinions, consequently, exist on certain subjects. So may a certain amount of fluidity - because the knowledge is constantly being reinterpreted by various individuals in terms of their own present-day understandings of the past.

Such diversity and flux, however, may prove unsatisfactory for anthropologists writing ethnographies. As an anthropologist, I try to make Pukapukan traditions intelligible to outsiders, to those who have not directly experienced the culture. Instead of focusing on the tremendous diversity that may exist, I try to give the material a somewhat greater sense of coherence - so it will be clearer to people unfamiliar with the culture on a day to day basis. In interviewing 80 people on traditional social organization, I tend to summarize my results in terms of certain shared understandings. My audience is less interested in using the material as a way of expressing their own self-competence vis-a-vis other Pukapukans than as a way of grasping the broad outlines of a culture different than their own, as a means of putting their own culture in perspective. Likewise, I write down what Pukapukans tell me about the past even though some of these data may soon become outdated - as a new generation reinterprets and modifies its knowledge of the past in new ways. Being concerned with

(1) explicating this traditional knowledge to non-Pukapukans and (2) recording it in writing, I tend to depict the traditional knowledge in a different form than many Pukapukans do.

Similarly, Pukapukans and anthropologists may use different validating techniques in solving their different problems. Most Pukapukans, for example, seemed not to question the validity of the Akatawa's historical antecedents. Most people, that I talked to at least, simply assumed that such antecedents existed. It was not an issue requiring much elaboration because everyone agreed on it. The majority of the people simply relied on what they had vaguely heard, on what they remembered, and on what made sense to them. Only in the case of a few people, viewed as more knowledgeable than others, did any real need exist for elaborating in any systematic way on former Akatawa. Occasionally other Pukapukans might ask them questions on the topic or they might be called on to demonstrate their competence in public debate (or an anthropologist might interview them).

I, on the other hand, was interested in gathering data on the Akatawa's historical antecedents because it seemed to contradict previous writings on Pukapukan social organization. Possessing a background in psychology and anthropology, I had reason to distrust people's recollections as the sole basis for validating past events. Coming from a Western literate tradition, I was interested not only in what Pukapukans asserted about their past but also in what outside observers, particularly other trained anthropologists, had written about the topic.

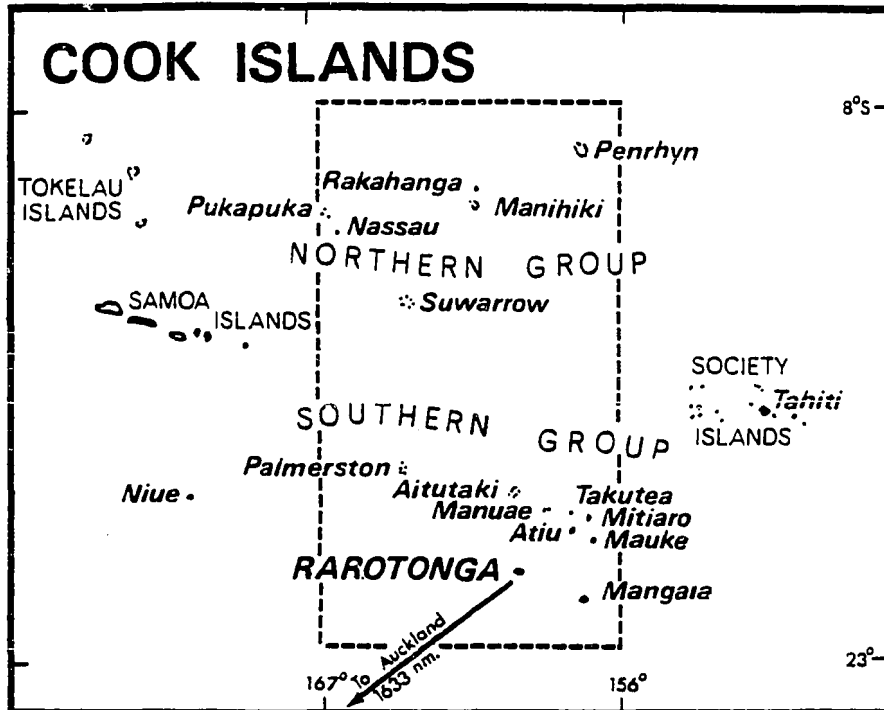
What is at stake in the Akatawa contradiction, the thesis asserts, is a matter of perspective - two different views are being applied to Pukapukan traditions for two different purposes. The contradiction not only provides insight into how Pukapukans order certain knowledge in the process of using it. It also indicates how anthropologists do as well. The contradiction, by making apparent a clash of perspectives, tells us somethings about both Pukapukans and ourselves.

But I am getting too far ahead of myself. A good story (so they say) starts at the beginning. If the reader first understands the contexts in which the 1976 Akatawa took place, he can better comprehend the whole event and the apparent contradiction surrounding it. It will help, however, to emphasize now that the 1976 Akatawa did not simply appear out of thin air on a certain day. On the contrary, it represented the culmination of certain events that began years earlier. In describing the contexts surrounding the 1976 Akatawa, it seems appropriate to begin with the island of Pukapuka itself - where it is and what it is like.

#### PUKAPUKA

The island is located at 165 50' west longitude by 11 55' south latitude. That makes it approximately 390 miles northeast of Samoa and 715 miles northwest of Rarotonga. Its nearest neighbors are Nassau 42 miles to the southeast and Manihiki 286 miles to the northeast (see map one).





MAP ONE

(Source: Gilson 1980)

Since a fairly large literature already exists on Pukapuka, the following description need only be brief - to set the stage for the following chapters.<sup>1</sup> The first thing to note about the coral atoll is that it is stunningly beautiful. Describing his first glimpse of Pukapuka the anthropologist Ernest Beaglehole, who along with his wife conducted research on the island in 1934-35, waxes poetic.

White clouds flicked the sky overhead, the sea below us was a tangle of shadowy blues and foaming wave crests, the sun had a caressing warmth about it . . . we could distinguish the vivid belt of green coconut and pandanus trees poised in the air above beaches of glittering whiteness . . . coming nearer still, we could make out little coconut-thatched native houses growing as if out of the sandy beach itself (1944:6).

The American writer Robert Frisbie, who lived there for several years, also describes the island:

[It] comprises three small islets threaded on a reef six or seven miles in circumference, which encloses a lagoon so beautifully clear that one can see the strange forests of coral to a depth of ten fathoms. The islets are little more than banks of sand and bleached coral where coconut palms and pandanus and puka trees break momentarily the steady sweep of the trade wind (1928:1).

There is some dispute about the island's actual size. The Beagleholes (1938:17) estimated the acreage at 1250; James Gosselin and Paleuā Katoa at approximately 1800 (Hecht 1976:28, 1977:184). A question also exists as to the island's height:

The height of these islets is stated in the New Zealand Year Book to be 150 feet above high water mark. The Royal New Zealand Air Force have stated the height as 80 feet above sea level. The impression is gained that at no point is the land higher than 20 feet above high water, and a considerable area must be lower than this (Department of Health n.d.:1)

Based on my own assessments, I lean more towards the Beagleholes' estimate of the acreage and towards Hecht's 40 foot (1976:24) estimate of its height. But whatever the precise details, the island is certainly neither very large nor very high.

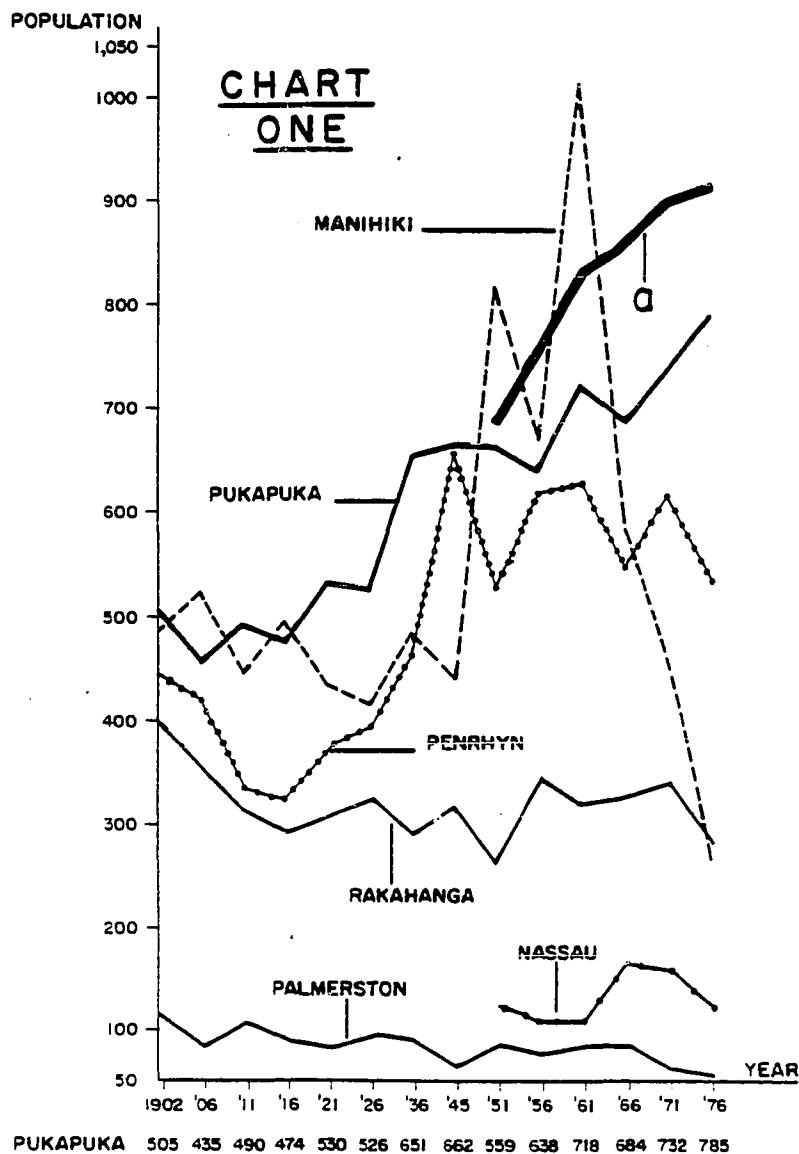
The climate is tropical. The average mean temperature - based on records from 1930 to 1974 - is 27.9 centigrade (New Zealand Meteorological Service). April possesses the highest mean temperature, 29.8, while February possesses the lowest, 25.9. Generally east and southeast trade winds blow from May through October; more variable, stormy winds from the north and northwest between November and April (Beaglehole 1938:20). It is during this latter period that major storms tend to occur. Technically the island lies outside the "hurricane belt". But twice during the past seventy years hurricanes have ravaged the island causing acute food shortages (Beckett 1964:413).

The rainfall - again based on data from a forty-four year period - averages 2841 millimeters with a standard deviation of 527 millimeters. January has the highest average rainfall, 1065, while September has the lowest, 16 (New Zealand Meteorological Service). Water shortages, as I personally experienced, may occur at times between May and October.

According to the 1976 Cook Island's census, the population of Pukapuka is 785.<sup>2</sup> The most significant fact about the population is that it is still growing - in contrast to most other atolls in the Cook Islands (see chart one). Unlike Manihiki, Rakahanga, and Penrhyn, it also has a fairly low dependency ratio

POPULATION OF THE INHABITED ATOLLS  
IN THE NORTHERN COOK ISLANDS

(Source: Turner 1978)



a = the combined populations of Pukapuka and Nassau. This line (rather than the line labelled Pukapuka) actually represents the total Pukapukan population since Nassau is owned by Pukapuka and only Pukapukans reside there (see Vayda 1958).

(137.5 versus 157.8, 197.9, and 159.0 respectively) indicating a proportionally larger number of residents in the 15 to 64 age range.<sup>3</sup>

On the main island (Wale), three villages exist stretched out in a line, or "ribbon development." In the 1976 Cook Islands census, there were 219 people living within the geographic boundaries of Ngake village, 274 within Loto village, and 292 within Yato village. (In 1966 the figures were 177, 252, and 255 respectively; in 1971, 206, 276, and 250.)

Physically, the population falls within the Polynesian "physical type" though their stature, perhaps because of dietary problems, is comparatively short (Shapiro 1944, Department of Health n.d.). Material on Pukapukan health and education are summarized in Turner (1978) and Department of Health (n.d.).

According to J. Beaglehole (1966:68), Maude (1968:64-66), and Kloosterman (1976:37), Pukapuka was first discovered by Europeans on August 20, 1595 when Mendana and Quiros passed by the island on their way to the Solomons. They named it San Bernado. The next recorded European sighting of the island was by Commodore Byron, on June 21, 1765. Because various rocks and breakers made a landing too difficult, he called the three islets of Pukapuka "Islands of Danger" (J. Beaglehole 1966:198 and E. Beaglehole 1944). From this, the atoll got the name Danger Island - a name still used on certain maps today. Interestingly enough, no clear account exists of how the island came to be called Pukapuka. The original native appellation, Te Ulu-o-te-Watu (or "the head of the rock"), refers to an origin myth (see Beaglehole 1938:375-377). But as the Beagleholes note, today "the word Pukapuka has no meaning" in Pukapukan (1938:17).

The first native Christian teachers landed on Pukapuka in December 1857 (Lovett 1899:372). The Seventh Day Adventists started a mission there in 1919 and the Roman Catholics in about 1929 (Beaglehole 1938:5). Today, according to the 1976 census, 596 Pukapukans are Cook Islands Congregationalists (the former London Missionary Society), 113 Catholics, and 76 Seventh Day Adventists. E. Beaglehole (1944:112-117) and Beckett (1964:418-420, 425-427) provide brief overviews of religion on Pukapuka. Both emphasize the generally conservative/traditional orientation of the Christian practices.

Pukapuka became a British protectorate on June 2, 1892 (Kloosterman 1976:38, Morrell 1960:287). In 1901 New Zealand took over its administration (Beaglehole 1938:5). But it was not until 1914 that the first regular Resident Agent actually lived on the atoll (Beaglehole 1938:5).

Pukapuka is now one of 15 scattered islands within the Cook Islands - an internally self-governing state but with strong political and economic ties to New Zealand. Geographically, the country is divided into two halves - a southern group involving mostly high or volcanic islands and a northern group of flat coral atolls. Pukapuka belongs to the latter group. The capital island, Rarotonga, dominates the country politically, economically, and culturally. Rarotongan, for example, is the national language of the Cook Islands.

Today Pukapukans tend to speak in a mixture of Rarotongan and Pukapukan (see Beaglehole 1938:6). They keep some written records, especially genealogies. But it should be emphasized that, in respect to their cultural traditions, Pukapuka is still essentially a preliterate culture. Except for what various

anthropologists, government officials, missionaries, and other outsiders have noted, Pukapukans have few written records about their own past. They still basically preserve their cultural traditions through oral transmission and memory.

Social Organization: Ample evidence indicates that Pukapukan social organization was not some monolithic entity that endured unchanged through time. Quite the contrary was true. It was, and still is, a somewhat fluid, flexible organization - in which certain basic elements not only undergo gradual change through time but whose elements may also be interpreted differently in different contexts. This is a point that Goldman makes for Polynesian social organization in general: "conventional lineages hold to categorical rules of exclusion and affiliation; the Polynesian status lineages, to flexible rules" (1970:422).

Traditionally, especially in pre-contact times, Pukapuka had a form of social organization frequently referred to as "double descent" (see Hecht 1976:1 ff.) This involved, as will be elaborated upon in chapter four, a system of distinct matrilineages and patrilineages. Most anthropologists agree on this point (see especially Beaglehole 1938, ms. a. and Hecht 1976, but also Beckett 1964, Vayda 1959).

The Beagleholes' ethnography makes it clear that changes occurred in the system over time.

Team membership for fishing and sporting contests was formerly always based on maternal lineage membership. One moiety contested against another moiety. At a later period, organization was in terms of either *wua* [i.e. matrilineal] or *yolongc* [sic., i.e. patrilineal] units. Village membership is the rule for team membership today (1938:231-232).

It is permissible speculation to consider Pukapukan history as a struggle for dominance between three social groupings, principally however, between the maternal and paternal lineages. At the present time, the paternal lineage is much more important in social organization than the maternal grouping (1938:232).

Today island's social organization is dominated by a tripartite pattern of villages. Julia Hecht stresses that this form of organization too has changed over time.

While the pre-contact villages were basically aggregations of residential units, and the village personnel were representatives of the kin categories of village affiliates, the village itself has now become the structural and organizational focus of Pukapukan life (1976:22).

Entries in a book dealing with land disputes written by various Resident Agents (and stored at Pukapuka) lend considerable support to Hecht's statement (see particularly entries written by Geoffrey Henry for October 12, 1929).

It appears inappropriate, in my opinion, to view all these changes as simply stemming from Western contact. (Though historical records only date from that point in time, there is no reason to assume that all these changes do too.) An examination of the Beagleholes' field notes indicates the Beagleholes too felt certain changes, particularly the decline in importance of the matrilineal social units, predated Western contact (see e.g. ms. a. "Wua and Yoŋongo [sic.] divisions", "Wale atua and Kainga", and compare "Activities organized on Yoŋongo [sic.] etc. lines" with "Activities organized on wua lines").

It seems wiser, as Howard (personal communication) suggests, to view this structural fluidity within a larger perspective - as



part of the basic Pukapukan social organization. A periodic realignment of group structures helps accomplish some of the same ends that many people emphasize cross-cutting ties achieve on coral atolls - they dampen socially disruptive conflict (see e.g. Sahlins 1958). The structural fluidity - by reducing the possibility that over time particular social units may solidify into socially antagonistic groups (cf. Goldman 1970:549) - helps promote harmony.

It is important to note in this respect that the 1976 Akatawa (or bifurcation of the island), while never previously recorded by anthropologists, does involve the continuation of a certain process described by them. The Beagleholes and Hecht both make clear that each of the three villages represented the joining together of two or more patrilineages. The Akatawa simply extended this merging by joining together the three villages into two tawa. Comparatively localized units with control over certain reserve lands were being formed into larger and larger aggregations.

In discussing Pukapukan social organization, it is important to keep in mind two other points. First, Pukapuka is a small atoll with limited resources where cross-cutting ties help to reduce economic vulnerability and promote social harmony. Such a multiplicity of ties is common on Polynesian atolls, as Sahlins explains:

Limited exploitative possibilities on the coral atolls place a premium on the organization of personnel - - the more diversified these organizations become, the better adapted is the group. Other things being equal, coral atoll organizations should show greater intricacy with respect to social alignment principles than high-island organization (1958:236-237).

On Pukapuka, conflict which can permanently disrupt these cross-cutting ties - especially intense public arguments among close cognatic kin - tends to be discouraged.

Second, a strong egalitarian orientation pervades the island. Again quoting from Sahlins: on Polynesian atolls "associated with low productivity and sporadic surplus, an element of egalitarianism can be expected" (1958:236, see also Goldman 1970:487, cf. Mason 1959). As is explained below, this egalitarianism helps generate certain orientations that run counter to the social harmony just stressed. The egalitarianism helps stimulate status rivalries - rivalries some anthropologists describe as pervading Polynesia (see e.g. Goldman 1970, Howard 1972, Ritchie 1979:26, 80).<sup>4</sup> While overt interpersonal conflict among close relatives is generally discouraged on Pukapuka (so as not to threaten the cross-cutting ties), status rivalries commonly pervade certain contexts - especially official inter-village competitions (where they are partially ritualized) and small intimate gatherings (cf. Ritchie 1979:53).

Village Organization (as a form of social grouping): There are three villages (lulu in Pukapukan, oile in Rarotongan) on the atoll - Ngake, Loto, and Yato. They play, as both the Beagleholes (1938:221) and Hecht (1977:184) note, a primary role in the island's social organization (see Beaglehole 1938:32-41, 219-21, 232, Beckett 1964, and Hecht 1976:22, 29-32, 60-63, and 136). Part of their importance stems from the fact that between 3/4ths and 4/5ths of the atoll's land is under their control (cf. Beckett 1964:417, Vayda 1959:128). Each village communally owns its own public reserve or motu - Ngake

controls Motu Ko, Loto controls Motu Uta, and Yato controls Motu Kotawa and Motu Niua. (Parenthetically, it should be noted, however, that certain taro swamps in both Motu Uta and Motu Ko are privately owned by cognatic descent groups.) Each village regulates access to its public reserve and, in equitable fashion, shares out to its members various resources and/or money and produce derived from it. Every village, for example, annually redivides certain taro swamps (uwi) located in its reserve equally among all its adult and child members. While technically owned by the villages, the swamp sections are mostly cultivated and harvested by individual families for their own personal use. Each village also controls its own copra-making. It stipulates through meetings of its adult members when its reserve is open for copra making, how many coconuts each adult member must break, and how the resulting income shall be distributed. In October 1980, for example, Ngake village shared out \$7,993.10 to its members in payment for the copra they collectively produced at their reserve during the late summer and early fall. Each adult man and woman received \$37.00, every child \$13.00. (The remaining money was saved until the next division.)

Produce derived from the reserve and/or collectively gathered by the village is also divided among all village members. Such food forms an important supplement to that collected through everyday subsistence activities. The following example illustrates how it operates. Prior to a big feast (imukai) held by Yato on February 4, 1981, all the men of the village went out one evening to fish talao (a type of rock grouper, see Beagiehole 1938:29). On another night, they all caught coconut crabs (kaveu) at their reserve on Motu Kotawa.

Every adult, in addition, brought certain food to the feast - each woman six taataa (or cooked taro, see Beaglehole 1938:102) and each man four drinking nuts. Through their combined efforts, village members were able to collect over 600 taataa, 240 coconuts, 373 talao, and 208 coconut crabs.

The food was then redivided to all village members in terms of specific food shares (cf. Beaglehole 1938:36). For the taataa, every man received four, every woman three, and every child two. The talao were divided up so that each woman got three, each man two, and each child one. While every woman got a whole coconut crab, each man and child only got one-half. For the coconuts, each woman got two, while every man and child got one.

These divisions of money and food are based on tuanga kai, or village food-sharing units. Ngake possesses ten such units, Loto eight, and Yato six. While Loto village uses names to describe their units, Ngake and Yato simply refer to them by numbers. It is critical to note for what follows that the Loto units can readily be associated with strips of land (kawa) in their reserve, Motu Uta (cf. Beaglehole 1938:42). Four of these units belong to the side of Motu Uta called Tawa Lalo (Te Paa, Taikaiana, Te Welo i te Kilikili, and Te Keonga) and four to the side called Tawa Ngake (Te Keonga, Wala Kakala, Te Welo, Te Utuu). Today, the units in the other villages only roughly correspond to such strips of land and while older informants agree on the basic principle involved - of food-sharing units being related to land strips - they often disagree on specific details (cf. Hecht 1976:61-62).

The number of members within any particular food unit varies considerably. In Yato, for example, unit one has eight adult men, fourteen adult women, and twenty-one children. Unit six has only four men, four women, and six children. Though membership in a particular food-sharing unit tends to persist through time, an adult can, if he so chooses, alter it. (A person, however, can belong to one and only one food-sharing unit at any one time.) To a limited extent, families and households tend to coalesce around a particular food-sharing unit over time. Usually families have established genealogical ties to a particular unit going back several generations (cf. Hecht 1976:61). Husband and wife, especially if they are legally married, share the same food-sharing unit. But a few of their children (as tuanga tau) may belong to different units - either in their own or in other villages - to cement cognatic ties, obtain certain foods available only at a particular reserve, and/or to strengthen inheritance claims to certain pieces of land (see Hecht 1976:97-99, Beaglehole 1938:221, ms. a).

The cross-cutting ties that develop with other food-sharing units and other villages can be seen in the following statistics. Of the 49 household heads (in my census) who belonged to Loto village, 19 of them (or 39%) had all household members within their own food-sharing units. Seven other households (14%) had one or more of its members in a different Loto food-sharing unit. Eight (or 16%) had some household members in both different Loto units and Ngake or Yato units. (Of the 24 individuals involved, eleven were in Loto units, six in Ngake, and seven in Yato.) Of the remaining fifteen households (31%), nine had some members in Ngake units, four had some in Yato units, and two had

some in both Ngake and Yato units. Turning to the other two villages, ten households in Yato had one or more household members in a Loto food-sharing unit. Two households in Ngake had members in a Loto unit. Thus while each food-sharing unit involves a set of core households, certain children residing in these households belong to other units, thereby establishing a set of cross-cutting ties, both within and outside the village.

Members of the same village are not necessarily related to one another. Certain families tend to belong to specific villages - by tradition, by blood or adoptive ties, and/or in order to claim certain resources in a particular reserve. But adults are free to alter their village membership. (As with food-sharing units, however, they can belong to only one village at any one time.) Membership in a village is vaguely tied to residence. A majority of the people residing within the geographic boundaries of a particular village tend to belong to that village viewed as a social unit. But the rule is far from absolute. Numerous people reside in one village and belong to (or tau in) another (cf. Beaglehole 1938:219-221, Hecht 1976:63). Returning to Loto once more, 34 (or 69%) of the 49 households physically located within the geographic confines of the village actually belong to it as a social unit. The rest are members of (or tau in) Ngake village. Twelve of the 48 households physically located in Yato belong to Loto village; so does one of the 40 households physically located in Ngake. As can be seen, residence and village membership, like membership in food-sharing units, involves a variety of cross-cutting ties.

The legal/administrative arm of the village is the pule. This group (1) enforces village decisions, (2) guards the village's reserve against illegal trespassers, and (3) imposes fines on various people for infractions of village rules. The number and composition of pule varies with each village. Loto presently has six - three composed of men and three of women - while Ngake only has two - composed solely of men (cf. Beaglehole 1938: 35-36). (In Loto, usually half the year is allocated to the men's pule and half the year to the women's, cf. Beaglehole 1938:36.) All pule do not operate at the same time; rather they rotate their responsibilities. Today the pule usually change every two weeks, after reporting at a village meeting (uwingapule) on the actions they have undertaken during their term of office (cf. Beaglehole 1938:36). At these meetings, other important village matters are also discussed and decided upon. General village meetings (uwipaanga) may occur at other times as well when the need arises. If a meeting does not reach a consensus on an issue, the matter may be either put off to another time or, on occasion, decided upon by majority vote.

All adults of the appropriate sex must belong to and participate in one of the pule. No village member is exempted. Membership in a particular pule is generally drawn from all the available village food-sharing units. (Drawing people for a particular pule from only one food-sharing unit would place an inconvenient burden on the households attached to these units - too many of their members would be tied up in pule activities at certain times of the year.)

The pule handle minor infractions of village laws but serious ones are generally brought before the whole village. The village's most severe punishment - of reducing an adult to the status of a child (wakatamaliki) - commands serious respect among Pukapukans. While the amount of food and money a person thereby loses can be bothersome, the greatest impact of such a punishment is in how it shames the individual. Pukapukans unanimously agree that it is an ignominious punishment indeed.

Organized competitions of one sort or another are extremely popular on Pukapuka. Almost three months, for example, are taken up with practicing for and competing in the annual New Year's games. While intra-village competitions occur - one pule against another or one sex against another - most competitions occur between villages. Cricket games and fishing contests, are particularly common. A series of cricket games may go on for several weeks at a time, as villages rechallenge one another to avenge previous losses. Fishing contests can become passionate (but not violent) affairs of the heart - as one village seeks to demonstrate its superiority over the other two.

The villages also form the basis for organizing certain island-wide political and religious activities. Each village, for instance, elects two members to the Island Council. The Cook Islands Congregational Church possesses a meeting house in every village and each village elects its own church deacons (cf. Hecht 1976:23, Beckett:424). The Seventh Day Adventists and Catholics have their own food-sharing units set aside for them in Ngake village. Since most Catholics and Seventh-Day Adventists belong to these units, they mainly tend to participate in that village's affairs.



Three points are important to remember in this brief overview of village organization. (1) The villages constitute the primary focus of social organization on the island today. They control not only the major resources on the island and their distribution but also form the basis for various social activities, such as sport competitions. (2) A strong egalitarian orientation prevades the control of village affairs. All adults equally participate in village activities and with a few limited exceptions, they all equally reap the rewards of this participation. Important decisions are reached at public meetings in which all adult members have an equal right to express their opinions. (3) A variety of cross-cutting ties between villages help dampen the frequent status rivalries that go on between them, such as during organized competitions.

The Koputangata (as a form of social grouping): The koputangata, as a social grouping, constitutes a modern transformation of the traditional Pukapukan system of "double descent" (cf. Beckett 1964:417, Beaglehole 1938:41-44, 221-233, and Hecht 1976:64-85). It particularly differs from the village form of organization in one important respect. Members of any one koputangata can and do possess a variety of overlapping memberships in other koputangata. Interestingly enough, the term koputangata is not Pukapukan; it is Rarotongan. It refers to kinsmen, to people of the same flesh (see Savage 1962:115; cf. Hecht 1967:87-89 regarding wuaanga).<sup>5</sup> Kopu refers to womb, belly, or flesh; tangata to person.

Technically speaking, the koputangata is not really a cohesive social grouping at all. It is really more of a "descent construct" (in Scheffler's terms 1964, 1966) which takes on different manifestations in different contexts (nb. Firth 1963 and Keesing 1970). Anthropologically, the term can refer to (1) cognatic descent groups, (2) cognatic descent categories, and (3) general consanguineal relatives (see Keesing 1975). But pending a more detailed analysis, it will be sufficient for this thesis's purposes to view the koputangata as another form of social grouping - as long as the reader realizes this involves the over systematizing, to a certain extent, of a flexible indigenous concept.

Turning first to cognatic descent groups and categories, considerable ambiguity exists today over who justifiably can claim permanent rights to a particular piece of private land or taro swamp (i.e. to property not directly controlled by the villages). People generally assert that at some time in the past a particular ancestor (pu mua) possessed sole ownership of a certain area. They mean by this that, as a result of some early land division among a group of kinsmen, this individual and this individual alone, gained control over the property. Critical to this conception is the fact that all other members of the group gave up their rights to the land because they received equitable allotments elsewhere. (Each individual, in other words, now had his own private section to which others could no longer lay claim.)

In justifying their rights to a particular piece of land today, Pukapukans invariably cite a cognatic genealogical connection to these earlier owners (pu mua). People who collectively acknowledge each

others permanent rights to a particular piece of land today form a cognatic descent group - since they all justify their ownership of the land by tracing descent cognatically to the land's earlier owner. That much is clear.

Where the confusion comes is in distinguishing between cognatic groups and cognatic categories. A Pukapukan readily acknowledges that he shares certain cognatic descent ties with other additional people not in his cognatic descent group. But he strongly objects to allowing these other people laying permanent claim to the specific property he himself owns. Generally a Pukapukan tries to shrug off questions about why certain cognatic descendants of the earlier owner have been excluded from the property. He insists - by vague references, repetition, and emotionally laden statements - that these other relatives are already well provided for with lands elsewhere. They have no right to take more than the equitable share allocated to their family long ago. Just as in the land division mentioned above with the pu mua, these people have now lost all rights to his property.

The difficulty is that no one can really prove that (1) such additional land divisions took place in the past and (2) if they did, that every member of this cognatic descent category was equitably provided for. Hence, few individuals trace out their claims in public (except during heated land disputes) for fear that others will lay claim to this land. Likewise, many Pukapukans seem interested in knowing if they have claims to lands that their cognatic relatives have not told them about.

The basic problem in private land tenure today is that the means for excluding people of one's cognatic descent category from joining one's cognatic descent group are problematic at best. Generally people claim land near where they reside. But there are no overarching rules for exclusions, except perhaps a sense of "fair-play". Hence, the distinction between who belongs to one's cognatic descent group and who merely belongs to one's cognatic descent category can lead to numerous bitter disputes and subterfuges. Since any individual can claim membership in several koputangata, he can, in principal at least, lay claim to a great deal of land - if he knows all the various genealogical connections. As Pukapukans themselves stress, there is no end to the trouble a greedy person can cause in this manner.

The koputangata, as a general collectivity of consanguineal relatives, is also socially important in a variety of ways. It affects the selection of marriage partners, burial sites (or po), personal names, membership in particular village food-sharing units, and provides the basis for adoptions and requests for help. As both the Beagleholes and Hecht (1976:103) note, "persons related by blood may not marry unless they are of the third generation removed from the common ancestor" (Beaglehole 1938:294). Formerly, as the Beagleholes (1938:229-231) make clear, unadopted children were generally buried in their father's cemetery. Today cognatic principles predominate (cf. Hecht 1976:92). The father now commonly chooses the burial location of his first two children and then alternates turns with his wife - she chooses the third, he the fourth, etc. While there is a tendency

for people to be buried with one or the other of their parents, children may also be buried anywhere a consanguineal or adopted relative lies buried.

As Julia Hecht (1976:93-97) indicates, naming of children follows the same pattern. The parents basically take turns. While a tendency exists for a child to be named after one of his grandparents, the pattern can be quite varied. Examining some of the naming patterns Hecht discovered (1976:97), provides an idea of the wide range of consanguineal relationships that may be involved in a koputangata:

Males named after:

F, FB, MB, FF, FadF, MF, FFB, FMB, MMB, FFF, MMF,  
FMF, MMF, FFMF, FMMF, adFFFFFF, FFFMF, FFMFF, MFFMF,  
MFMMF

Females named after:

M, FZ, MZ, FM, FFZ, FadFZ, MM, FFM, MFM, FMMZ, FMFZ,  
FFFBD, FMMZD, FMMM, FFMM, FMFFBSD, FFFFM

Consanguineal ties also play an important role in fosterage and adoption as well. (Refer to Hecht 1976:99-101 and 143-154 for an excellent elaboration of these points; also see Beaglehole 1938:251-256.) Likewise they can be quite important in selecting alternative food-sharing units for certain members of one's family.

The koputangata - as a cognatic descent group, as a cognatic descent category, and as a collection of consanguineal relatives - thus plays a significant role in Pukapukan society. The very fact that it possesses cross-cutting ties across village boundaries and lacks exclusivity, allows for considerable fluidity and flexibility in

its application to questions of land inheritance, marriage, burial site selection, naming patterns, village food-unit selection, fosterage, and adoption.

The Island (as a form of social grouping): Another important social unit on Pukapuka is the island itself, the island viewed as a whole. It functions as a collectivity regulating both inter-village affairs and off-island matters involving the national government. Two key bodies represent this unit - (1) the Island Council and (2) the Kau Wowolo (or council of important people). The Island Council is a creation of the national government and acts (along with the elected representative to the national legislature) as the legal intermediary between the island's population and the national government in Rarotonga. The Island Councillors decide on various other matters of island-wide concern as well - such as when villages should open up their reserves for copra making and problems not falling within the purview of specific villages. They meet frequently, as often as once or twice a month. Since 1947, two members from each village have been democratically elected by ballot (Beckett 1964:420, 422). Previously the local government agent appointed them. (A chief, elected annually by the Kau Wowolo, also attends these meetings.) Terms of office for council members now are for one, two or three years depending on the policy in vogue with the national government. Though elections are open to all adults, as Beckett (1964:422) notes, a strong tendency exists for standing members to be returned to office.

The Kau Wowolo (or council of important people) represents a modern carry over of the traditional Pukapukan council of chiefs (wakapononga no te wui aliki see Beaglehole 1938:245, Hecht 1976:56). Theoretically, the Kau Wowolo should (and formerly did) only include the high chief of the island (aliki wolo) and the several lesser chiefs (langatila or mataiapo) from various patrilineal descent lines within each village. Today, however, it possess a somewhat different composition. In addition to the above members, it now also includes all Island Councillors, whether they possess chiefly affiliations or not. (It is relevant to note in passing, that at least two Island Councillors are also langatila or mataiapo.)

The Kau Wowolo collectively decide, either by consensus or vote, (1) minor laws which regulate the lands outside of the village motu (i.e. Wale), (2) matters which affect the preservation of the island's traditions - such as the organization of various island-wide sports' activities as well as special events like the formation of the Akatawa, and (3) general matters of inter-village concern that fall outside the purview of the Island Council (such as land disputes). Generally the Kau Wowolo meets at the beginning of each year to discuss these matters and to revise its own regulations. It also can meet at other times if the need arises - for example, if various koputangata request their opinion on certain land disputes. Legally speaking, however, the Kau Wowolo does not possess any authority to govern the island. Its decisions are not recognized as legally valid by the national government in Rarotonga. But since chiefs are viewed as deserving of respect and its meetings (because of the presence of

the Island Councillors) can be technically viewed as meetings of the Island Council, its decisions are still adhered to by the population of the island (except perhaps in the case of heated land disputes).

The Impact of Extra-Island Powers and Orientations:

So far

Pukapuka has been described as if it were an island unto itself.

Communication with the outside world is certainly limited. Based on data supplied by the late Tipuia Tiro, in the period from 1942 to 1965 shipping calls averaged 4.7 per year (Tiro n.d.). (It is slightly less than that at the present time.) With modern boats, the journey takes at least four days to go from Rarotonga (the legal port of entry for the Cook Islands) to Pukapuka. But Pukapukans are still very much aware and a part of the modern world. Broader powers and broader orientations still exert their influence over the atoll.

The first thing to note is that the island imports a large quantity of foodstuffs and has for quite some time. In 1950, a survey showed that Pukapuka imported approximately 10,573 lbs. of flour, 1,187 lbs. of sugar, 1,254 lbs. of rice, 507 lbs. of cabin biscuits, and 1,387 lbs. of canned meat (Department of Health n.d.:14). Today the amounts are larger. In 1978, it imported approximately 71,676 lbs. of flour, 28,298 lbs. of sugar, 34,650 lbs. of rice, 580 tins of cabin biscuits, and 288 cases of tinned corned beef. (Almost 2,000 tins of canned fish also came onto the island.)<sup>6</sup> The total annual cost of these foodstuffs in 1978 amounted to approximately \$63,920 (Turner 1978:19).



Foodstuffs are not the only items imported - so are building materials, outboard motors, clothes, lamps, and other such merchandise. The total known outflow of money from Pukapuka in 1978 was approximately \$125,640 (Turner 1978:20).

Unlike certain other islands in the northern Cooks, Pukapuka possesses no marketable exports except copra. Pearl shell cannot be grown because of the lagoon's muddy bottom (Turner 1976:17). The total income from copra production for both Pukapuka and Nassau (which Pukapuka owns) amounted to approximately \$32,355, in 1977. Where did the additional money come from to pay for these goods? Most of it probably came from government salaries (approximately \$61,000) and governmental grants, especially old age pensions (approximately \$31,000) (Turner 1978:17-18). Without such extensive governmental support, the island would drastically have to curtail its imports.

Yet though the imports are certainly extensive, no Pukapukan family relies solely on them for its daily diet. All adult men go fishing and all adult women work in the taro swamps (no matter what their income). The fact that large taro swamps exist on Pukapuka gives the island an advantage over other atolls in the northern Cooks. Pukapukans can, if need be, become basically self-sufficient in food stuffs. A nutritional study of the native diet in 1950 - including native foodstuffs such as talo, pulaka, coconuts, and fish, but excluding imported products - indicated that the diet met most nutritional requirements except for a mild deficiency in vitamin C and a marked deficiency in vitamin A (Department of Health n.d.:15-20). The extensive imports are thus more of an addiction than an absolute necessity.

It has already been mentioned that the villages control their own affairs and that the Island Council and the Kau Wowolo exert a certain amount of authority over the island as a whole. But control over many important decisions affecting Pukapukans is centered in Rarotonga, in the hands of the national government. The government's main representative on the island, the Chief Administrative Officer, consequently possesses considerable political power (cf. Beckett 1964:420 ff.).

As Julia Hecht notes (1976:12-15, 1978), extensive migration from Pukapuka has occurred over the past several years. Probably more than half the people who might be termed Pukapukan do not now live on the island itself. As of January 1974, when the population of Pukapuka numbered 761, Hecht believes over 600 Pukapukans probably lived in New Zealand; in Rarotonga, probably over 200 (1976:12-15). (Today I presume the number of emigrants to these places would be somewhat higher.)

Considerable contact is maintained between Pukapukans living on the atoll and those dwelling elsewhere. Frequently Pukapukans visit their relatives in Rarotonga or New Zealand. Occasionally these relatives also come to visit people on Pukapuka. Some migrants even return permanently to the island after making money elsewhere. Unlike the population on many other atolls of the northern Cooks, the movement of people is by no means only in an outward direction.

In spite of all these outside influences, however, the impression one still gets of Pukapuka is that it is relatively traditional. This is the point Beckett emphasizes:

Nowhere in Polynesia can one find an indigenous culture intact, but there are communities which, having made an initial adaptation to European dominance - often as many as four generations ago - continue what might be called a secondary growth of tradition . . . Pukapuka . . . retains this character and has changed little over the last 35 years. It has been shielded from outside influences by its isolation and its lack of exploitable economic resources, but there has generally been internal resistance to such influences as have penetrated. A communal system of land tenure, a profound suspicion of the New Zealand Administration, and a feeling of being different from other Cook Islanders, have all militated against change (1964:411).

This is the same impression a group of American tourists who visited the northern Cooks in 1980 got.

My feeling coming from Aitutaki all the way up (north) is that this is a little part of New Zealand with Polynesian people. There is not really much Polynesian culture. Pukapuka is about the first place we have come to that still has semblances of the original Polynesia. [A man in his late thirties]

I felt on the other islands people were apologizing for their lack of Western accommodations, Western-style furnishings, their lack of electricity. But here in Pukapuka, although they seem to have much less in the way of Western material culture, they are not apologizing for it . . . They are not saying that their way of life is poor compared to ours. [A woman in her late twenties].

Most people who visit the island gather the same general impression - that it is relatively traditional (cf. Hecht 1978:11). Based on their own backgrounds and values, they admittedly react in different ways. (Some view it as paradisiacal, others as backward and deplorable.) But few would disagree that, at least by outer appearances, Pukapuka is not only one of the most traditional islands in the Cooks but also in Polynesia.

THE AKATAWA SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Overview: As already noted, on February 5, 1976, the Kau Wowolo (or council of important people) temporarily instituted the Akatawa as the island's basic form of social organization. The council's minutes briefly describe what changes this entailed in the traditional three village system.

(There will be) two groupings (lulu lua). Ngake (village) with all the sections of Tawa Ngake of the village (oile) Loto. Yato (village) and all the sections of Tawa Lalo of the village Loto. There are, therefore, two tawa (or sides) which (will be) called Tawa Ngake and Tawa Lalo.

The word Akatawa consists of two morphemes. Aka is a causative prefix. "The general sense of the prefix aka is . . . to make . . . to cause something to be done" (Savage 1962:13). It generally refers to becoming the state mentioned in a noun or approaching (or causing of) the state indicated in a verb.<sup>7</sup> The most interesting aspect of the prefix is that it is not Pukapukan at all but Rarotongan. The proper Pukapukan prefix would be waka. While waka is still certainly used in a whole variety of Pukapukan words today (e.g. wakalelei, wakamaa, wakaaloa), I never heard it used by Pukapukans in this context. It was always Akatawa.<sup>8</sup>

Tawa, on the other hand, is clearly Pukapukan. The letter "w" does not even exist in the Rarotongan alphabet. Tawa has basically three meanings: (1) side or part, (2) edge of the reef, and (3) slang for money (Mataola, Tutai, Borofsky et al ms.). The meaning that concerns us is the first. Ka wakamata te tutaka a te taote mai te tawa ki laloo ia. "The doctor's inspection will begin from the

westward side (of the island)." Akatawa, in the sense used here, connotes the idea of dividing into sides or really splitting the island in half.

Degree to Which the Akatawa Transformed the Village Organization:

Certainly on the surface, altering the island's social organization, even temporarily, from three villages to two tawa seemed to entail major changes. Control over the public reserves (motu), control over more than three-fourths of the island, had to be altered. The system for distributing produce and/or money derived from these reserves, the food-sharing units (or tuanga kai), also had to be changed. The same held true for organizing the pule guard, the sport competitions, and the island-wide political and religious structure.

Overall, four distinct problems existed. The first, and perhaps most critical, involved the reorganization of the village reserves. Motu Uta, the reserve of Loto, had to be split in two - with part of it becoming affiliated with Ngake's reserve at Motu Ko and part becoming affiliated with Yato's reserves at Motu Niu and Motu Kotawa (see map two). While the boundary between the two sides of Motu Uta (that is between Tawa Lalo and Tawa Ngake) seemed fairly clear, in some spots disputes existed. There was also the issue of resource depletion. There were too many people for too few resources. If Ngake village and half of Loto village, for example, all used Tawa Nagke (in Loto's Motu Uta) together, then the reserve would soon be depleted.

MAP OF PUKAPUKA

- Wale: refers to (1) the northern most islet (i.e. both Motu Uta and the three villages of Ngake, Loto, and Yato) as well as (2) the section of the northern most islet outside of Loto's public reserve, Motu Uta (i.e. just the three villages of Ngake, Loto, and Yato).
- 5 = Toka. This is an uninhabited sand bar which belongs to Yato village or Tawa Lalo. It is extremely dangerous to land at except in the calmest of weather.

VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

Villages:

- N = Ngake  
 L = Loto  
 Y = Yato

AKATAWA ORGANIZATION

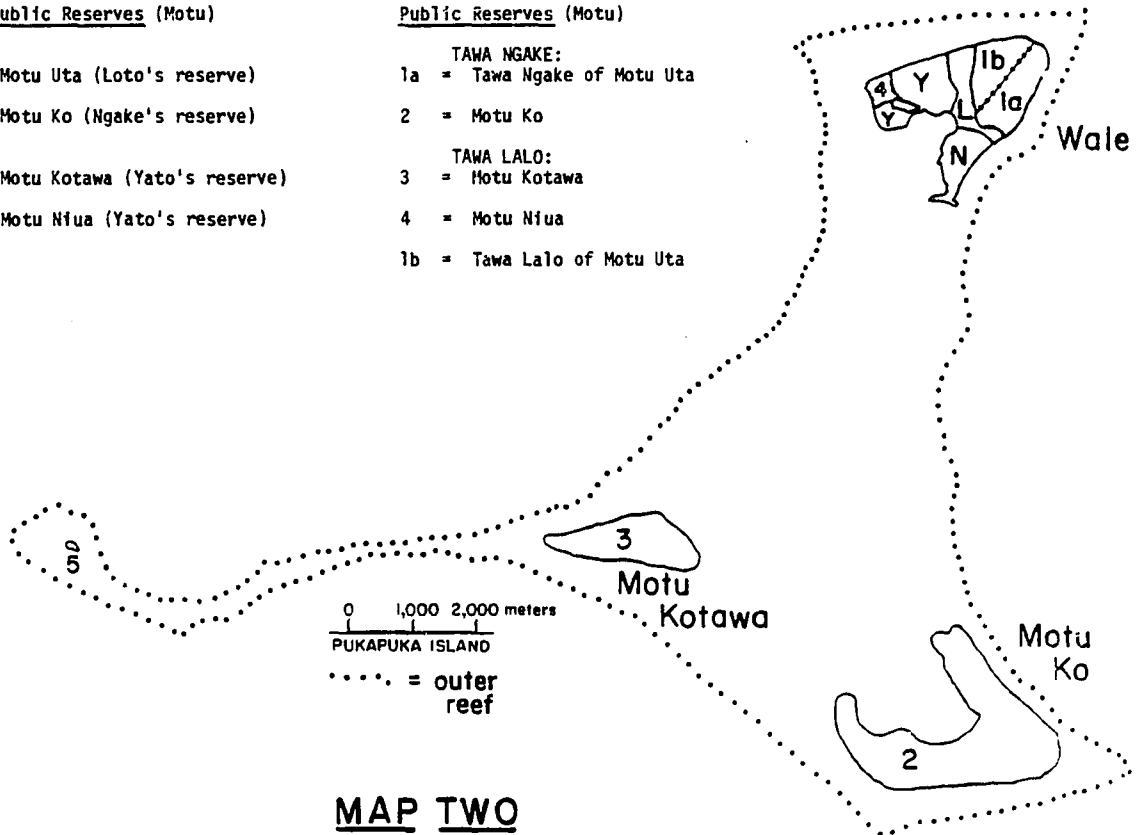
Villages are not demarcated under the Akatawa organization; the boundary between the two tawa is vague outside of Motu Uta on the northern most islet (Wale)

Public Reserves (Motu)

- 1 = Motu Uta (Loto's reserve)  
 2 = Motu Ko (Ngake's reserve)  
 3 = Motu Kotawa (Yato's reserve)  
 4 = Motu Niua (Yato's reserve)

Public Reserves (Motu)

- TAWA NGAKE:  
 1a = Tawa Ngake of Motu Uta  
 2 = Motu Ko  
 TAWA LALO:  
 3 = Motu Kotawa  
 4 = Motu Niua  
 1b = Tawa Lalo of Motu Uta



Moreover, a difficulty existed as to how people would collect coconuts for copra. In both Motu Uta and Motu Ko, sets of families tended to have their own specific areas for gathering coconuts. Especially in Motu Uta (of Loto Village) specific food-sharing units (tuanga kai) tended to be affiliated with specific strips (kawa) of land in which coconuts were gathered.<sup>9</sup> With new people making copra on these reserves, the old pattern could be thrown into chaos. On what basis would new people be assigned areas for collecting nuts? How could it be assured that one area would not be overly depleted before another?

Other difficulties existed as well in regard to the reserves. If Loto villagers were going to stay at the reserves of either Ngake or Yato (that is, at Motu Ko or Motu Kotawa) for any duration, they needed places to live, cook, and dry copra.<sup>10</sup> The system of village owned taro swamps (uwi) had to be reorganized - so that new members would receive equitable shares. New pule groups had to be created.

How was the reorganization of the reserves handled? In actual practice, it turned out to be far easier than initial appearances might lead one to suspect. In regard to the splitting of Motu Uta in two, people simply adhered to the old division between Tawa Lalo and Tawa Ngake (see map two). Places where the boundary was in dispute - such as at one or two of the taro swamps and at Te Keonga - were simply left ambiguous. No real need existed for resolution anyway. Koputangata privately owned the taro swamps and the spot at Te Keonga involved relatively few coconuts. The resources that one or the other side might gain by clarifying the boundary were not worth fighting over.

The tawa (or sides) handled the issue of resource depletion by limiting their stays at any one reserve. It was true that more people utilized resources in a particular reserve under the Akatawa. But since Tawa Ngake and Tawa Lalo now both possessed two major reserves, people could stay at any one place a shorter time and still produce the same amount of copra as under the village system. Tawa Ngake, for example, collected copra both from Tawa Ngake in Motu Uta and from Motu Ko. People in Loto continued to gather coconuts from their strips (or kawa) in Motu Uta; likewise, so did the people of Ngake at Motu Ko. Newcomers simply fit in where convenient. The whole issue, in other words, was left to resolve itself. However, a general opening up of various strips to all members did occur. People began collecting copra from all over each reserve.<sup>11</sup>

In regard to housing, koputangata (i.e. consanguineal kin) helped out. Some people, assisted by relatives, built housing at Motu Ko or Motu Kotawa. But because so many Pukapukans had emigrated, this was often unnecessary. Loto villagers could usually discover some consanguineal tie with some emigrant from Yato or Ngake that allowed them to lay claim to an empty house at Motu Kotawa or Motu Ko.

The reorganization of the public taro swamps did not prove especially troublesome either. Each year, each village had to redivide its public swamps anyway - to make the divisions correspond to current membership rolls. (Otherwise new members in a village would not possess a share while former members would.) All people did was to simply make a new division. Instead of having a few large sections in one reserve as before, people now had several smaller sections in two reserves. There was not all that much difference



in the amount of taro swamps each family obtained under the two systems. The private taro swamps owned by various koputangata in the villages' reserves initially presented no problem. People continued to harvest them as before. But with time, certain difficulties did arise. Since people from both Ngake and Yato villages under the Akatawa had a right to enter Motu Uta at will, they gradually began laying claim to sections of swamp owned by their relatives in Loto. This also happened at Motu Ko. (Thus, the same types of problems as discussed under koputangata land tenure above began to arise.)

Since the pule guard, like the public taro swamps, changed each year anyway, to accord with new membership rolls, no major difficulties arose in forming new ones. With two reserves rather than one to guard, their duties became slightly more onerous. But the work was still far from strenuous.

The second problem faced with the Akatawa involved reorganizing the distributive system - the food-sharing units (tuanga kai). On the surface this too seemed rather difficult. Certain families had been attached to particular food-sharing units for generations. One set of units could not simply be wiped out and a whole new set put in their place, as annually occurred with the pule guard and the village owned taro swamps.

Fortunately however, almost no reorganization was required. Loto village (as already noted) had preserved the association of food-sharing units with land strips (or kawa) in Motu Uta. It already had four food-sharing units associated with Tawa La'alo and four food-sharing units associated with Tawa Ngake (at Motu Uta). The Tawa La'alo units (of Loto), with their names still intact, were simply added

to Yato's six units to form ten food-sharing units within Tawa Lalo (of the Akatawa). Likewise, the four units of Tawa Ngake (of Loto) were simply added to the ten of Ngake village. It basically only meant that more people were collecting more produce which, in turn, was divided in more ways. Nothing else was significantly affected.

The third problem - reorganizing the relationship between the villages and the broader political, religious, and sports structure of the island - likewise proved fairly easy to resolve in practice. In regard to the Island Council, one member from Loto fortunately already belonged to Tawa Lalo and one to Tawa Ngake. No real changes were therefore needed in the Council's makeup. All that altered was the constituency that each represented - rather than two members representing each village, three members now represented each tawa.

For Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists, the changes were again minimal. As noted above, these groups were mostly already affiliated with Ngake village. Belonging to Tawa Ngake or Ngake village made no significant difference in their religious organization. For the Cook Islands Congregational Church (C.I.C.C.), some changes were necessary. But they were minor at best. Instead of having adults sit in three sections of the church, they now sat in two sections. Instead of using three meeting houses for the uwapou weekly religious meetings, they now used two.

In sport competitions, interestingly enough, having two teams rather than three also did not make a great deal of difference. Since the new tawa teams were larger, most of the same individuals who had played before continued to do so. Only the fact that they now represented two tawa rather than three villages really changed.

Spectators did, however, seem more involved in the competitions with the Akatawa. Previously one village had stood aside while the other two competed. Now, with only two sides, everyone was emotionally involved. Especially exciting was the fact that the two tawa teams were relatively evenly matched in cricket, a particular passion among Pukapukans. A series of matches could go on for weeks as each team sought to gain a slightly greater number of victories than defeats. On the negative side, more arguments tended to arise in these competitions. With three villages, members of the non-participating village had always acted as umpires. But with the Akatawa, umpires had to be chosen equally from the two competitors. One team did not always view the other side's umpires as impartial.

The final problem was a relatively trivial one. Both Tawa Ngake and Tawa Lalo needed places to hold meetings. As occurred with the uwapou religious services, they simply took over the old village meeting houses. Generally, people preferred the meeting houses of Yato and Ngake village though Loto's meeting house was also occasionally used. All that was involved was a slight reconceptualization - viewing the old village meeting houses as tawa meeting houses instead.

Thus, though the concrete changes required to transform the village system into the Akatawa appeared major, they were in actual practice relatively minor. The Akatawa - in being constituted as a concrete form of social organization - was basically superimposed on the established structures of the traditional village organization with slight alterations here and there. This fits with a point already suggested above. Even though no anthropological data exist on

previous Akatawa, the Akatawa form of social organization clearly represents a continuation of certain basic themes already depicted by anthropologists.

All this is not to say that problems did not exist. Some did. The issue of who actually owned Motu Ko (i.e. Ngake village or Tawa Ngake) came to a head when other Pukapukans wanted to build an airport there. (Ngake villagers eventually excluded people belonging to Tawa Ngake Loto from their meetings on the issue because they felt Tawa Ngake's control of the reserve was only temporary. At that time, the Akatawa supposedly was to run for only three years.) The fact that people started collecting coconuts from all over a reserve, rather than from just their own sections, caused resentment among some people whose sections were thereby depleted of copra. Loto villagers now had to buy gasoline for traveling to Motu Ko or Motu Kotawa (where before they had remained on the main island). And people from other villages began encroaching on the taro swamps owned by their relatives in other villages.

But at least initially, these problems were relatively minor. The Akatawa provided people with a set of new experiences - something which should not be played down on a small coral atoll where life is highly repetitive. People could visit new reserves, compete on new sports teams. Rather than always travelling to separate islets, people could now stay together longer on the main island (Wale), since both tawa made copra at Motu Uta. Week after week two evenly matched cricket teams could, therefore, "slug it out" seeking to avenge some previous loss and/or humiliate their opponents.

Knowledge About Previous Akatawa: General Comments Pukapukans, as already noted, felt they were not creating a new form of social organization; rather they were reviving an old one. So having described the Akatawa's modern organization, it now seems appropriate to examine people's knowledge of the Akatawa's historical antecedents.

The Akatawa, interestingly enough, has what could be viewed as its own origin myth.

Te Vaopupu [the wife of Mataaliki, the first Pukapukan] became pregnant. She gave birth to a child, the child was born, a male child, Tumulivaka was his name. She swelled again, gave birth also, a girl child; Te Matakiate was her name. She was the younger sister of Tumulivaka.

The group of four lived on. They lived on with Tumulivaka watching the doings of Mata[a]liki. He was gathering the many gods at his side. Tumilivaka watched, Mata[a]liki was going to give the island to the gods. Tumilivaka got angry. He stamped on the island; it broke in two.

Mata[a]liki and Te Vaopupu moved to the western side. Tumulivaka and Te Matakiate moved to the eastern side of the island. That was over (Beaglehole 1938:377).<sup>12</sup>

This story also forms the origin myth for the taro swamps that presently run down the middle of the island. Because Tumulivaka supposedly created them by stamping (or kicking) the earth with his feet these swamps are sometimes referred to today as Te Akangavae (or kicking with the sole of the foot) of Tumilivaka (cf. Beaglehole 1938:40). Within Loto's Motu Uta, the split in the reserve caused by these taro swamps corresponds to the two halves of Motu Uta - Tawa Lalo (or western side) and Tawa Ngake (or eastern side). These names provided the appellations for the two Akatawa units - Tawa Lalo and Tawa Ngake.

Few people today know the complete story of this origin myth - such as the names of all four characters or exactly who lived where. But many adult Pukapukans do know of Tumuivaka and that he split the island in half sometime in the past.

Even more interesting is the fact that seven of the Pukapukans I interviewed in a sample of 30 elderly informants claimed to have lived through a generally similar Akatawa in their youth - Waka'lua, Lotoa, Wakamaa, Veeti, Talainga, Winangalo, and Kuluu.<sup>13</sup> (The first three are women; the last four men.) How were these people viewed by their fellow Pukapukans? Five of them were considered among the most knowledgeable people on the island. (Some of them were also my most "reliable" informants!)

I interviewed 91 Pukapukans (i.e. all the people on the island over fifty) in regard to whom they felt were the most knowledgeable people on the island concerning traditional Pukapukan customs. In the survey, people ranked Waka'lua first (with 76 "votes"), Veeti second (with 72), Talainga third (with 64), Winangalo eighth (with 33) and Kuluu 20th (with 14). One cannot help but get the feeling that some of these individuals were speaking with the voice of recognized authority in claiming to have lived through another Akatawa in their youth.

Of the seven, Talainga claimed to have observed the Akatawa - as an actual social grouping - twice before, around 1913 and around 1940. The rest simply claimed to have seen it just once - sometime in their youth. Of this latter group, only Veeti could specifically

mentioned a date to me, around 1915. But in a later meeting with several of these informants, all concurred with Veeti's statement. They too felt it had occurred just after the 1914 hurricane.

Further Analysis of How Previous Akatawa Operated: In exploring who knew what about the Akatawa's history, I interviewed 30 elderly informants (or approximately 54% of the Pukapukans 64 years of age or older, see footnote one in the Preface). (In addition, I interviewed 50 others between the ages of ten and fifty, but since they possessed little knowledge of the Akatawa's history, they need not concern us here.)

What did this sample of 30 people say? Seventy-three percent viewed the present Akatawa as similar to previous ones, while 10% viewed it as somewhat different in character, and 17% (one of whom was Wakalua) did not really know whether it was or was not. The emphasis on the Akatawa being similar to previous ones fits with an earlier statement. Most people felt the Akatawa involved the revival of a past form of social organization, not the creation of a new one. But having said that, one should realize that not everyone agreed on the nature of this similarity. Seven of the 22 (including Wakamaa) felt it meant the island was again split into two halves. Three emphasized that in both cases the Akatawa worked well. No critical conflicts arose. Five (including Veeti, Winangalo, and Kuluu) asserted that the two Akatawa must by their very nature be similar. People, they implied, did not simply create such traditional customs. They were

passed down from generation to generation. (Four, one of whom was Talainga, gave a variety of miscellaneous answers and three gave no clarification at all.)

People who asserted the modern Akatawa was different from previous ones also did not agree exactly on what that difference was. One claimed that previous Akatawa had lasted for shorter periods of time, for only months, rather than years as in the present case. Another said that, unlike today, there had been no troubles in the past. And finally one (Lotoa) stated that, unlike today, there had been troubles in the past.

As to when the Akatawa first arose, opinions again differed. Twenty-three percent (including Winangalo) believed the Akatawa to be a relatively recent innovation, certainly subsequent to the great tidal wave that had devastated the island 300 years ago (te mate o Wanguna, see Beaglehole 1938:386). Thirty percent (among them Kuluu and Veeti) felt the Akatawa predated the tidal wave. Ten percent, while not stating when it arose, stressed that it was not a direct response to the devastations caused by the great tidal wave. Another 37% percent (including Wakalua, Talainga, Lotoa, and Wakamaa) admitted they did not know.

Thus while several Pukapukans knew that Tumulivaka had split the island in half at sometime in the past, not all of them viewed his actions as the actual genesis of the Akatawa organization. What seems like an origin myth to the anthropologist and some of his "key" informants may not be felt as one by other "key" informants.



As might be expected in a non-literate culture such as Pukapuka, no one could give a precise figure as to the number of times the Akatawa occurred in the past. Seven percent (including Veeti) mentioned that it had been occurring from the time of Tumulivaka up until today. Another 20% provided vague answers affirming that it had simply existed in the past. Twenty-three percent tended to side-step the direct question by discussing former occurrences about which they specifically knew. Five (including Wakalua, Talainga, Kuluu, Wakamaa, and Winangalo) mentioned their own personal experiences. Two others mentioned experiences that people told them about. And finally 40% (among them Lotoa) admitted they did not know the answer to the question. (Ten percent of the people dodged the question completely and did not really provide answers.)

Widespread opinions also existed as to why the Akatawa had formerly arisen. Seventeen percent (including Veeti and Talainga) emphasized it had previously occurred so as to encourage the perpetuation of certain Pukapukan traditions. This explanation fits with the general one offered by people today for the "revival" of the Akatawa - to ensure knowledge of this form of social organization would not become lost. Thirteen percent (among them Wakalua, Kuluu, and Wakamaa) felt that the earlier Akatawa had been a "trial run" so to speak - to see if this form of social organization worked reasonably well as an alternative to the village system. Seven percent (including Winangalo) gave vague miscellaneous answers; 53% (among them Lotoa) openly pleaded ignorance; and 10% did not really answer the question.

Only 23% of the sample gave specific answers when asked about the length of previous Akatawa. One said one month, one three months, one approximately a year. Talainga said one to two years; Veeti three to four years. Another suggested 90 years and one simply stated a long time. Clearly there was no consensus as to duration. Another 10% (including Wakalua, Winangalo, and Wakamaa) mentioned that its length varied - depending on whether trouble arose or not. Forty-three percent (including Lotoa) admitted they did not know. And 23% (among whom was Kuluu) either were not asked the question (because of their previous responses) or did not really provide a direct answer.

Likewise there was no general agreement as to why the previous Akatawa had ended. Thirteen percent (among them Wakalua, Talainga, and Veeti) asserted that Loto villagers in Tawa Ngake had caused problems on Ngake's reserve at Motu Ko by being greedy. Ten percent (including Kuluu and Wakamaa) vaguely mentioned problems had developed, though exactly what they were was never made clear. Three percent believed that the island had temporarily set the Akatawa aside - to be revived at a later date. And another 3 % (i.e. Winangalo), suspected it was terminated because the agreed upon time had come to an end. Forty percent (including Lotoa) pleaded ignorance as to the correct answer. (Thirty percent were not asked the question because of their previous responses.)

Two points stick out in this review of people's knowledge about former Akatawas. First, while there was some core agreement - especially in regard to how the current Akatawa resembled previous ones - a considerable amount of diversity and doubt also existed. People gave various answers; many admitted they did not know. Second,

the seven who claimed to have lived through another Akatawa in their youth did seem to know significantly more about former Akatawa than most people in my sample. In a sense, that would be expected - since others viewed many of them as more knowledgeable to begin with. But interestingly enough, in a majority of the cases, these seven's answers do not differ all that significantly from other people who also claimed to possess knowledge about past Akatawa. Apparently these others had also learned, or could also make educated guesses, about what former Akatawa were like.

#### Developing A Group Consensus About How Previous Akatawa Operated:

Even though diversity and ambiguity clearly existed regarding people's knowledge, this did not preclude people reaching a consensus. When I brought Wakalua, Winangalo, Talainga, and Winangalo and two other people - Mitimoo and Te Ingoa - together in a group, they certainly did come to an agreement on these matters. They all concurred that the modern Akatawa was essentially the same today as it had been in the past. (One should note that Mitimoo, in his private formal interview, had insisted that they were different.) Likewise, everyone in the group agreed with Veeti's assertion that the Akatawa dated back to the time of Tumulivaka. Also, they all concurred that the Akatawa had existed several times in Pukapukan history.

In regard to the earlier Akatawa some had lived through in their youth, the whole group agreed with Wakalua's suggestion - that it arose as a result of a decision by the island's chiefs (aliki). (The exact reasons behind the decision were not made clear though presumably they involved the two factors mentioned above by various

individuals. All seemed to agree with Veeti's and Wakaīua's suggestion that it had lasted for approximately two years. The whole group, in addition, collectively concurred with a suggestion - again voiced by Wakalua and Veeti - that this earlier Akatawa had collapsed as a result of greediness on the part of certain Loto people in Tawa Ngake. The Loto people had not only been excessive in cutting down valuable trees on Motu Ko (which, properly speaking, belonged to Ngake village) but had also refused to let Ngake villagers cut down trees in Motu Uta (i.e. Loto's reserve, see map two). Supposedly Apakuka of Ngake village urged langi motu, langi lele - "break (the Akatawa) completely apart (or break it all the way from the earth up to the sky)". And the Akatawa was eventually terminated.

Finally, in response to my probing, they all pretty much agreed on when the earlier Akatawa, that some had lived through, did in fact occur. They concurred with Veeti's statement that it had been around 1914 or 1915 - just after the 1914 hurricane. People in the group were so consensus minded, in fact, that Te Ingoa - who was older than several of the participants and who previously never claimed to have seen an earlier Akatawa - now changed his mind. He recalled experiencing an earlier one too.

It should be noted, there is a certain implicit sense to the 1914-1915 date for most Pukapukans. People were all well aware that tidal waves and hurricanes caused great damage to their island. Most adult Pukapukans knew their island had taken on a different form of social organization directly after the tidal wave decimated the island 300 years ago (Beaglehole 1938:386-390).

Given the fact that many people knew a hurricane had devastated the island in 1914 (see Beaglehole 1938:32, Hecht 1976:21, and Beckett 1964:413, 427), the 1914-1915 date for the Akatawa organization made considerable sense. It fit nicely with what Pukapukans already knew (1) about how people coped with past devastations and (2) about the occurrence of previous hurricanes.

The above sections, in summary, have discussed the Akatawa's operation and what various people knew about its historical antecedents. They indicate that the Akatawa (1) represented the continuation of certain themes in Pukapukan social organization and (2) was instituted by modestly readjusting certain social structures already existing under the three village system. In examining people's knowledge of past Akatawa, it has been noted that several people - viewed as extremely knowledgeable about past traditions - actually claimed to have lived through a similar Akatawa in their youth. Moreover, the organization also possessed its own origin myth and reports of its occurrence in 1914-1915 make considerable sense to modern Pukapukans. Thus, anthropologically speaking, there is considerable evidence for viewing the Akatawa form of social organization established in 1976 as a clear revival of past traditions.

AN ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE ON THE AKATAWA -  
WHAT ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RECORDS SUGGEST

Yet, there is also good reason to doubt the Akatawa ever previously existed as a significant form of traditional Pukapukan social organization - especially as described and/or experienced by several of the above "key" informants. Considerable anthropological and historical data raise important questions regarding the above accounts of previous Akatawa and whether such a form of social organization actually could have ever occurred for two years shortly after the 1914 hurricane.

Ethnographic Descriptions By Anthropologists: Between 1934 and 1974, five anthropologists conducted ethnographic investigations on Pukapuka - Ernest and Pearl Beaglehole (1934-35), Andrew Vayda (1957), Jeremy Beckett(1964), and Julia Hecht (1972-74). They have collectively produced a reasonably large corpus of material: Ernest Beaglehole (1937, 1944), Ernest and Pearl Beaglehole (1938, 1939, 1941, ms. a, ms. b.), Vayda (1958, 1959, ms.), Beckett (1964), and Hecht (1976, 1977, 1978, 1981). Yet nowhere in this extensive literature is any reference made to the Akatawa. Again and again the anthropologists refer to only three basic forms of social organization in modern and/or traditional times - (1) the villages (lulu or oile), (2) the patrilineages (po) and (3) the matrimoieties (wua) or matrilineages (momo or keinanga). How could so many highly trained

anthropologists miss something which so many Pukapukans know about today? Why did some of my informants not tell other anthropologists the data they so willingly and spontaneously confided to me? These are a rather intriguing and important set of questions.

The evening I sat around with a group of informants collectively discussing the Akatawa, I asked them why the Beagleholes had never written about the subject. Wakalua (who had been one of their "key" informants) provided an interesting answer. "They did not ask. Ernest did not ask about this matter."

While the Beagleholes may not have specifically asked about the Akatawa, an analysis of their field notes clearly indicates that they did raise a lot of other questions about closely related matters of traditional social organization. Today, if I had asked such questions, informants would clearly have brought up the Akatawa. But they apparently did not do so with the Beagleholes.

The fault, if there is any at all, I would suggest, does not necessarily lie with the Beagleholes or with their informants. It is clear from an examination of both the Beagleholes' published reports and unpublished field notes that they attempted to thoroughly investigate traditional forms of Pukapukan culture - including traditional forms of social organization.

We went with a . . . concrete purpose in mind: to place on record as much as possible of the old-time customs of the people of Pukapuka. (Ernest Beaglehole 1944:5)

The systematic consideration of each phase of Pukapukan culture was taken up. (Beaglehole 1938:4)

From the Beagleholes materials, it appears that their Pukapukan informants also were quite interested in compiling a thorough record of the atoll's traditions.

The process of rethinking themselves, under our stimulus, back into past times and of recapturing past customs was necessarily a slow one, but once started, informants went ahead with enthusiasm and interest (Beaglehole 1938:4)

[Veeti] once told me that he was going to live until he saw in his hands a copy of the book we were going to write about Pukapuka . . . It was typical of his attitude, . . . and that of his friends, this overwhelming pride in, and affection for, the past . . .

We had shown him scientific books about other Polynesian groups. He was thrilled by words he could not understand and by plates and drawings that he could. When he could see the book in his hands, he at last would have certitude that some of the past would never be lost to the younger generations about him. It was the same enthusiasm to record the past that brought Pau, the ablest scholar on Pukapuka [to stay with us at Motu Ko for a day or two each week] (E. Beaglehole 1944:126-127).<sup>14</sup>

One only has to look at the Ethnology of Pukapuka to see the Beagleholes interest in the various forms of traditional social organization (1938:32-46 and 219-232). If one goes further and examines their field notes (ms. a.), it becomes clearer still that they systematically raised various questions on this topic with their informants - not only about how the society in general had traditionally been organized, but also about how food divisions and games, in specific, had been structured. A set of the Beagleholes unpublished field notes, for example, is labeled "organization for food divisions and games etc." It consists of four sheets of typescript. The sheets numbered one and two deal with the Yolongo [sic.] or patrilineal organizational principle; the one labeled three deals with the Wua or matrilineal organizational principle; and the



one labeled four deals with the Matoyinga or village organizational principle. These data are then elaborated upon in depth. There are several sheets specifically on: "activities organized on Yolongo [sic.] lines"; "activities organized on wua lines"; and "activities organized on village lines, matoyinga or lulu kakai".

They also raised questions about how Pukapukans might apply traditional principles to modern contexts. This is clear, for example, in the case of the women's pule in Loto - a relatively recent innovation at the time of the Beagleholes research (1938:35-36). The Beagleholes asked if such pule could be organized on matrilineal principles even though they had not been done so in the past and were not so organized at the present time.

Though the idea of a women's pule is new, informants noted that it was entirely consonant with Pukapukan patterns that the women's pule should be organized on wua lines, all the Kati women serving at once, followed by the Lulu women (Beaglehole ms. a. "Activities organized on wua lines").

Finally, other material indicate that they systematically gathered data on the names and reasons for various feasts. Some of this material is included in their book (1938:93-95). An even more comprehensive description is in the unpublished field notes. (It involves a 14 sheet typescript labeled "Feasts"). While both sets of data mention feasts organized by villages, feasts organized by patrilineages, feasts organized by matrilineages (or matrimoieties), neither set mentions anything about feasts organized by Akatawa.

One cannot help but get the impression that it was not from want of trying that the Beagleholes never discovered anything about the Akatawa. They asked their informants all sorts of questions about

topics that would have brought the Akatawa to the fore if I had asked them of my informants today. They asked about various types of food divisions, about various ways to compete in sports, about various principles for collecting people together for feasts.

Could it be that the Beagleholes' informants were somehow less knowledgeable about the past than the informants I dealt with? No one I talked to during my 41 month stay suggested such a thing. People unanimously agreed on the fact that (1) the Beagleholes' "key" informants were extremely knowledgeable and (2) collectively knew far more about Pukapukan traditions than people today knew.<sup>15</sup> Certainly if the Akatawa had occurred just 20 years before the Beagleholes' research, their informants should have remembered it. When I interviewed people almost 50 years after the Beagleholes, they still recalled having lived through it.

The only mention of the Akatawa by an anthropologist comes from Julia Hecht. Hecht conducted research on traditional Pukapukan social organization in Rarotonga and Pukapuka between 1972 and 1974 (1976:ii). She "spent thirteen months in Pukapuka, concentrating [her] efforts on the cultural symbolism of kinship and land tenure" (1977:183). None of the material she has made publicly available (1976, 1977, 1978, 1981) mentions the Akatawa. But in an informal conversation with her in 1982, she did mention something very important - something which will be elaborated upon below. She vaguely remembered someone mentioning something during her field work about dividing the island in half, into Akatawa, at sometime in the past (subsequent to the time of Tumuilivaka). As to when, how, or

why, she could not say. The reference was so vague, she added, she was not even sure what to make of it, what to do with it.

Government (and Other Non-Anthropological) Records: Anthropologists were not alone in failing to systematically record the Akatawa as a traditional form of social organization. The same occurred with other visitors to the island who made records of native traditions. All the government archival material in Rarotonga and Pukapuka, dating from 1908 onward, consistently mentions the existence of three villages on the atoll. References occur again and again to Yato, Loto, and Ngake. But never is there any mention of the Akatawa. This is particularly striking since the Akatawa, especially with its bipartite organization and especially if it had lasted two years, should have been noticed by outside observers.

In a report dated June 26, 1908 to the government in Rarotonga, the L.M.S. minister Tau discusses the people's plans for cleaning up Pukapuka: "here is how it will be done. Pilato and the people of his village (oile) will go to their reserve (motu), Luka and the people of his village will go to their reserve, Pani and his village to their reserve." (Related materials make it clear that these individuals were the leaders of Loto, Yato, and Ngake villages respectively at the time.)

The next set of reports comes from Johnstone Dyer, the first government Resident Agent to permanently reside on Pukapuka. In an entry entitled "Conduct of People of Pukapuka, September 4 to December 31, 1914" he states: "Roto excellent, Ato excellent, Ngake,

excellent. No complaints everybody peaceful." The fact that two of the village names are slightly misspelled is of minor concern. Dyer was simply using the Rarotongan spellings. (Pukapukans themselves often use such forms today in referring to these two villages.) In another related entry dealing with the conduct of the people in Pukapuka for the year 1915, he states: "Roto ariki settlement. excellent. Ato. Kavana [Rarotongan coin word for Governor] Luka. excellent. Ngake. unsettled. At present everything peaceful." A report dated June 24, 1915 includes references to "Luka, Kavana of Ato . . . Pani, Kavana of Ngake and of Motu Ko . . . [and] Tukia, Kavana of Roto . . . the Ariki [i.e. high chief] Pilato of Roto . . . has no say in Ngake or Ato." A report to H.H.G. Ralfe, Esq. dated June 21, 1915 dealing with the condition of the island subsequent to the hurricane mentions Roto and Ngake villages. There is no mention of Tawa Lalo or Tawa Ngake in these reports. The proof, moreover, is not simply negative - that no mention is made of the Akatawa. During the Akatawa, Yato and Loto are not used as appellations for social groupings. (The two sides are called Tawa Lalo and Tawa Ngake.) Hence, any reference to Yato and/or Loto is positive proof that the village, rather than the Akatawa form of social organization, was in operation.

A report by the Reverend Koteka that is dated June 24, 1915, concerns the "kopu ariki" (or family of the chiefs, Savage 1962:114) in Roto and Ngake. A report by Dyer dated September 22, 1915 and related to the formation of an island council refers to the Kavanas of Ato, Roto, and Ngake. An undated map, but clearly in Johnstone Dyer's handwriting, places Luka's settlement at the present location of Yato

village and notes that Motu Kotawa belongs to Luka's tribe. "King Pilato's settlement" is placed in the location of modern Loto village. Where Motu Uta is located today is inscribed "Pilato's motu" (or reserve). The same holds true for Pani's settlement at Ngake. Motu Ko is stated to belong to "Pani's tribe."

Sometime during 1916, J.H. Robertson, the Collector of Customs at Apia, visited the island. In the report on his trip to "Remote Islands of the Pacific" he notes in regard to Pukapuka "the island on which we landed is the principal island of the three [i.e. Wale]. On it stands the village, or rather three villages all close together."

H. Brian Morris was the next government Resident Agent to permanently live on the island. In his report on the state of the island between 11/13/17 to 3/31/18 to the Resident Commissioner in Rarotonga, Morris observes "the three villages have worked eagerly to make their villages clean and sanitary." His report contains specific references to the villages of Loto and Ato.

In a report dated January 29, 1918, Morris describes a discussion that was called "to determine the manner in which suspension of the Rauli [or prohibition on entering the reserves] was to be carried out."

On former occasions the mataiapos [i.e. minor chiefs] of the three villages performed [the duty], but to, it was stated, the sole advantage of Ngake and Ato and the detriment of Roto.

. . . Ato and Ngake noted that as their plantations were on the motus of Katowa [sic.] and Ko, they were safe from stealing or interference. While Roto's plantations were on Pukapuka [i.e. Wale - Motu Uta] and as such open to theft and abuse from anybody.

A report dated February 13, 1918 not only contains references to three villages but also to the fact that each village had erected its own copra house. A later report, dated April 17 1918, summarizes a meeting held with "87 of the chief men" in attendance. Again there are clear references to three villages and three motus. In the minutes of the Island Council meeting of April 12, 1918, one of the members (who was to subsequently be a valued informant of the Beagleholes) reported that Ngake had produced approximately 15 and 1/2 tons of copra, Loto 12 and 1/2 tons, and Ato 13 tons. Numerous other entries in Morris's reports contain similar references to three villages - Ato, Roto (or Loto) and Ngake - or to their ownership of specific reserves.

An Acting Resident Agent, R.S. Trotter,<sup>16</sup> in summarizing an Island Council meeting of September 10, 1918, mentions three settlements on the main island and the fact that the people of Ato were then living at their reserve islet. In a later undated entry which consists of a set of instructions to Ula (the native Pukapukan who subsequently took over as acting Resident Agent for several years), Trotter urges him to look after the people in all three of the villages - in Ngake, Roto, and Ato.

In his report to the Resident Commissioner in Rarotonga on October 6, 1919, Ula indicates that Ngake, Ato, and Roto each contributed 2,240 lbs. of copra to the war fund. In his census of January 15, 1924, Ula notes Ngake had 232 people, Roto 173, and Ato 138. Again and again in reports written by Ula from 1919 through 1925 (several of which are still in Pukapuka) there are the same references to the same villages (oile) - Ngake, Roto, and Ato.

When the Resident Commissioner, Ayson, visited Pukapuka in June of 1924, he wrote a summary report of the traditional social organization (to the Secretary of the Cook Islands Administration in Wellington which was dated September 22, 1924). He states "Pukapuka consists of three good Islands named Ware [i. e. Wale] (the main Island, on which are the villages of Ato, Roto, or Loto, and Ngake), Ko (presumed to belong to the people of the village of Ngake), and Kotawa or Kotao, which is presumed to belong to the people of Ato."

The American writer Robert Frisbie began living on the island in August of 1924. He wrote numerous fictionalized accounts of the Pukapukan way of life. He repeatedly described the three villages and their three reserves. But nowhere, in the material that I examined, did he write anything about an Akatawa form of social organization (R. Frisbie 1928a, 1928b, 1929a, 1929b, 1929c, 1930, 1939, 1944; see also J. Frisbie 1959).

The same pattern exists for the two government agents who followed Ula. W. R. Wrench and Geoffrey Henry both make repeated references in their reports to the three villages of Ngake, Roto, and Ato as well as to several other features of traditional social organization. But never do they mention anything about an Akatawa form of social organization.

Thus the reports by various outsiders - be they anthropologists, missionaries, government agents, or writers - are fairly consistent. They fail to mention anything about an Akatawa form of traditional social organization. Not only that, but they tend to generally

overlap in the features of general Pukapukan social organization that they do mention. So one can develop a fairly coherent view of the concrete social groupings existing on the island from 1908 onward.

Implications: It is important to stress that all these data do not mean that the Akatawa never occurred at some period in the distant past. We lack the historical data to prove one way or the other whether the Akatawa form of social organization did or did not exist prior to Western contact.

But all these data do suggest, in my opinion, that prior to 1976, the Akatawa form of social organization, was poorly known by most Pukapukans and/or perceived by them as something of relatively small cultural significance. On what basis do I draw this conclusion? Consider these facts. The Beagleholes' "key informants" - who were not only viewed as knowledgeable by their peers but who also displayed considerable concern for preserving their native traditions - never spontaneously emphasized the Akatawa as an important form of traditional social organization - certainly not enough for the Beagleholes to make a notation on it anywhere in their fairly extensive field notes. Neither did the Beagleholes comprehensive questioning on (1) types of traditional social organization, (2) types of traditional food divisions, (3) types of traditional sporting competitions, and (4) types of traditional feasting uncover any reference to the Akatawa.

Nor did anthropologists after the Beagleholes mention the Akatawa in any of their ethnographic publications. The dearth of ethnographic data on the Akatawa thus is not something limited to two particular



anthropologists. It is something shared by all of the anthropologists who visited the island prior to 1976.

No apparent reason exists, moreover, for the Pukapukans wanting to collectively hide such knowledge from outsiders, as the Tikopia initially tried to do with Firth (see Firth 1936:8-9). Any explanation for purposely secretive behavior on the part of Pukapukans would have to explicate this important fact - Pukapukans spontaneously told me about the Akatawa. Why would they try to hide something from other anthropologists that they would spontaneously discuss with me?

There are also the informal comments of Julia Hecht. Someone, she recalled, mentioned something (during her 1972-1974 field work), about dividing the island in half, into Akatawa, at some time in the past. The comment, as she indicated, did not make a whole lot of sense at the time. It did not fit into any meaningful pattern of what most people were telling her.

Several times in my detailed surveys of people's knowledge, I came across similar material. A few individuals might make vague, ambiguous comments that made no sense in terms of what I already knew about Pukapukan traditions or what others had told me. No socially meaningful context existed in which to place such remarks.

The absence of data on the Akatawa contrasts sharply with the abundance of material available on certain other forms of traditional social organization. Most anthropologists, for example, had little difficulty uncovering data on the matrimoieties and patrilineages. The Beagleholes and Julia Hecht, in particular, discuss these topics at length. It is clear from examining the Beagleholes field notes and from my discussion with Julia Hecht that (!) Pukapukans spontaneously

brought up these forms of social organization in conversations about the past, (2) these topics were readily elaborated upon by Pukapukans from general questions raised by anthropologists, and/or (3) Pukapukans could give coherent accounts of these organizational patterns with supporting data (such as genealogies) to buttress their statements.

Such data lead one to the conclusion that, at the very least, the key informants used by these anthropologists did not know about the Akatawa or did not view the topic as significant enough to emphasize in their interviews - certainly not to the degree they stressed other forms of traditional social organization. Such a statement gains particular credence from the fact that I used some of the same "key" informants as Julia Hecht and one of the same "key" informants as the Beagleholes. It is important to remember, that most of these informants, unlike certain informants used by anthropologists in other cultures (e.g Evans-Pritchard 1940), were quite intent on helping the anthropologists to preserve native traditions. Moreover, other Pukapukans viewed these informants as quite knowledgeable about their cultural heritage.

Subsequent to 1976, when I conducted my field work, the situation was radically different. Knowledge regarding the Akatawa now was much more akin to knowledge of the traditional matrimoieties and patrilineages. In fact, it was viewed by most people as on equal footing with them - as a major traditional form of social organization. In discussions about the past by Pukapukans with other Pukapukans as well as with myself, I heard repeated references to the Akatawa. Pukapukans would spontaneously bring up the subject.

Moreover, informants readily discussed former Akatawa in interviews. Some could even validate their assertions by describing their personal involvements with this form of social organization at an earlier period of time. Brought into a group, people could openly discuss and come to a coherent consensus about former Akatawa.

Such a change in the information informants present to anthropologists over time helps to emphasize an important point. Traditional knowledge on Pukapuka is not some static entity, it is not simply some product passed down unaltered from generation to generation. It is more of a process. The conception of the Akatawa - as a form of traditional Pukapukan social organization - changed over time. It had gone from being an idea of dubious cultural importance and/or only known by a few people to a belief of major significance widely held by most Pukapukans about their past.

#### PERSPECTIVES

Various social scientists have emphasized how, as the culture changes, so do certain beliefs. Marx in a well-known passage, for example, states:

It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or - what is but a legal expression of the same thing - with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then occurs a period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is . . . transformed (1956:51-52).

Mannheim suggests that the "independent system of meanings varies both in all its parts and in its totality from one historical period to another" (1936:68-69). And Malinowski asserts:

Every historical change creates its mythology, which is, however, but indirectly related to historical fact. Myth is a constant by-product of living faith, which is in need of miracle; of sociological status that demands precedent; of moral rule, which requires sanction (1954:146).

But what are the key factors stimulating the changes in knowledge - particularly about the past, in knowledge about a culture's traditions? Marx, of course, possesses one perspective; Condorcet, Comte, and Hegel another. And numerous anthropologists, from Harris (1974, 1977), to Leach (1954) to Douglas (1970) have proposed still others. To answer this question for Pukapuka - not only in regard to the Akatawa but in relation to its cultural traditions in general - the thesis focuses on two processes. The first concerns the creation of ideas; the second their social acceptance. Anthropologists and sociologists of knowledge alike have noted this distinction.

Barnett, for instance, clearly differentiates between the two - between what he calls innovation and acceptance.

From the standpoint of social consequences the fate of an innovation is as important as its conception. Many new ideas are stillborn, and countless others are ephemeral and perish without a trace. Some are only casual thoughts; others are cornerstones of faith. Some affect only the innovator himself; others, millions of individuals . . . While the problems of innovation and acceptance . . . join at many points, the two phenomena are distinct and have different determinants. Although the conditions, attitudes, and consequences that relate to them overlap in some degree, they also diverge. (1953:291-292)

Scheler makes the same point but within a more encompassing framework. Ideas, he asserts, have their own creation independent of more existential, social factors. Social factors encourage or hinder, open up or select out, which potential ideas will find social expression.

The realm of mind has its own immanent laws of development, but mind is not a realization factor; that is to say, an idea does not have an inherent power to become objective in the world. An idea as such is dead. The "purer" the mind the more impotent it is. In order to be effective in life, it must be bound up with some interest, drive, or tendency, and thereby acquire power and indirect influence. Luther's tacking of the ninety-five theses on the church door at Wittenberg of itself would not have brought the reformation. It was only the support of the territorial princes that the Protestant Revolt could make any headway (Becker and Dahlke 1941:313).

Understanding What Constitutes Traditional Knowledge: In

discussing the creation of traditional knowledge throughout this thesis, the reader may find himself confused. How can knowledge from the past be something that is created today, created in the present? What is being meant by "traditional knowledge"? Within this thesis, knowledge refers to "acquaintance with facts, range of information, ken, . . . theoretical or practical understanding of [something] . . . skill in . . . something" (Murray 1901:748; cf. Webster's Third New International 1971:1252, The Random House Dictionary 1966:793, Concise Oxford Dictionary 1976:599). Traditional knowledge refers to that knowledge perceived as being handed down from the past. It focuses on the cognitive understandings and ways of doing things that Pukapukans feel have been transmitted to them from their ancestors - including

knowledge of past events, past beliefs, past skills. Within the Pukapukan context, it stands in contrast to knowledge acquired from participating in the modern, and especially the modern Western, world.

Distinctions among belief, truth, and knowledge are not always precise - either in this thesis or in other anthropological monographs. At times belief is used interchangeably with knowledge in that both refer to certain cultural affirmations - about what is or is not true in the world. What the anthropologist views as a native's beliefs, for example, the native may view as factual knowledge. (The opposite might also be asserted - see e.g. Malinowski 1929:184-185.) Likewise, as noted below, the point at which knowledge merges with truth is debatable. But enough has been said to give the reader a general sense of what constitutes knowledge, and especially traditional knowledge, within the confines of this thesis. A deeper analysis would require discussing various epistemological issues that have concerned philosophers since the Greeks - especially the issue of rationalism versus empiricism. For present purposes, that is unnecessary.

A critical theme of the dissertation is that far from being static, far from being stagnant, Pukapukan traditional knowledge is constantly in flux. It is continually being reinterpreted. In being reproduced from one generation to another, traditional knowledge becomes partially transformed; in being validated by Pukapukans today, it becomes somewhat altered; in being applied to the solution of current problems, it becomes changed in the process.

That is why George Herbert Mead's perspective on history is so relevant. It makes the point that knowledge about the past, rather than being some product - something static that does not alter - is a dynamic process that is continually changing through time.

Each generation and often different minds within a generation have discovered different pasts. And these pasts are not only different because they have become more spacious and richer in detail. They have become different in their fundamental significance. We speak of the past as final and irrevocable. There is nothing less so, when we consider it as the pictured extension which each generation has spread behind itself. One past displaces another as inexorably as the rising generation buries the old (1938:95)

What orders the fluidity, what gives coherence to various opinions about the past, what determines general cultural acceptance, the thesis suggests, is that certain conceptualizations help resolve present-day problems. Underlying this perspective is a particular view of valid knowledge - that espoused by certain pragmatic philosophers. Dewey asserts: "if ideas, meanings, conceptions, notions, theories, systems are instrumental to an active reorganization of the given environment, to a removal of a specific trouble and perplexity, then the test of their validity lies in accomplishing this work" (1948:156). Knowledge, Mead states, "is the discovery through the implication of things and events of some thing or things which enable us to carry on when a problem has held us up. It is the fact that we can carry on that guarantees our knowledge" (1938:95).

Different Perspectives Based on Different Problems (1): Status

Rivalry A basic theme of the thesis is that Pukapukans and I are coming at the same fluid, ambiguous and diverse material - traditional knowledge of the past - from different perspectives to solve different problems. My aim of trying to coherently record ethnographic material on Pukapukan culture - partially for the indigenous population but more generally for various outsiders - will probably not seem all that problematic to many readers. After all, numerous other anthropological ethnographies share a similar goal. Implicit in this objective is that ethnographies are not simply trying to repeat back to various informants what these informants have already told the anthropologist. Rather ethnographies are trying to appeal to a larger audience in terms of broader concerns.

But what problems do the Pukapukans face? One central one, that is readily apparent to most outside observers, is what I have called status rivalry. Following Goldman,

By status system I mean the principles that define worth and more specifically honor, that establish the scales of personal and group value, that relate position or role to privileges and obligations, that allocate respects, and that codify respect behavior (1970:7).

Status rivalry refers to competition over these types of issues. Pukapukans are certainly not alone in this regard (as Goldman indicates in his book). In discussing Goldman's analysis, Howard notes, that most Polynesian specialists "will probably accept [the] assertion that status rivalry is particularly acute in Polynesian societies" (1972:818). The Ritchies comment, "it seems to us, and to most people who have looked at Polynesian cultures, that Goldman was



right when he identified the central preoccupation of Polynesia as one of status and rivalry between people of similar or different statuses" (1979:80). Marcus (1978) provides an excellent analysis of such rivalry in Tonga.

Pukapukan status rivalry, in regard to displays of knowledge, occurs within the general framework of hierarchy and deference common throughout Polynesia.<sup>17</sup> People in positions of power are usually deferred to in questions of knowledge - not necessarily because they know more but simply because of their superior social position. To challenge a person's assertions in public is to indirectly question his superior social standing. This is the basic point Arno makes in discussing various patterns of political communication in the Pacific - "in situations of rigid hierarchy public speaking will tend to be of a largely impressive, non-persuasive nature" (n.d.:5). Public speeches tend to reinforce rather than question the decisions of chiefs or the political structure supporting them. Publicly proposing answers different than those of the chief becomes lese majesty. It is viewed as challenging his authority. This occurs in Pukapuka to a certain extent. When people publicly questioned a decision reached by the Kau Wowolo (or council of important people), for example, - as they did regarding the Kau Wowolo's recalling the inhabitants of Nassau to Pukapuka in 1980 - the members of the Kau Wowolo felt that their authority, not just the specific decision, was being called into question.

But social deference to those in authority often becomes inverted, becomes transformed, within the Pukapukan context where egalitarian rather than hierarchical orientations are stressed.

Almost as a way of affirming their own individual statuses Pukapukans challenge, qualify, or elaborate upon what others claim to be true. Rather than hierarchy, equality - that is mainly qualified by respect for age and partially by sex - pervades public discussions. In certain contexts, adult Pukapukans continually challenge each other's assertions, or improve upon them, so as not to be viewed as deferring to others. In questioning or qualifying the validity of each other's statements, people are both expressing their own worth and the egalitarian orientation of the culture. There is, as a result, a constant one upmanship about who knows more about this or who can better perform that.

This tendency, of course, exists within the confines of the other cultural principles discussed under Pukapukan social organization and is muted by them. Given the limited resources of their atoll environment, Pukapukans, for example, seek not to disrupt the elaborate system of cross-cutting ties that envelops them. They avoid direct interpersonal conflicts that will lead to lasting disruptions of close personal relationships. Status rivalries tend to be mainly stressed in certain ritualized competitions between villages and in small intimate gatherings. They tend to be down played with close cognatic relatives.

Also, people may at times avoid challenging others for fear of losing. Pukapukans rather dislike being ridiculed or appearing ignorant in public (partly because of these status issues and partly because of certain child-rearing techniques to be discussed in the next chapter). They may feel the rewards of success are not worth the risks of failure. In addition, if it is not done too often, some

people may ignore such bantering as a way of asserting their competence. Their position of status is strong enough that they need not defend it at each and every opportunity. Or people may withhold comment out of courtesy or curiosity - just to see what others will say.

But over arching these factors is the basic point, that people question or qualify other people's statements as a way of expressing their own worth. The presentation of knowledge is very much tied into the atoll's social system - to questions of social prerogative, social deference, status rivalry.

Different Perspectives Based on Different Problems (2): The Issue of Group Closure

A good illustration of how Pukapukans - because of their concern with status rivalries - are approaching certain issues differently than I am relates to the matter of group closure. Pukapukans often argue back and forth, in discussions of traditional knowledge, without coming to any overall consensus. Each participant displays his knowledge - contradicting one person's position or clarifying and confirming another's. More than just the validity of certain assertions is at stake - so are issues of competence and social standing. Unless some overriding community need exists for group closure, many issues regarding traditional knowledge are left somewhat ambiguous and/or unresolved in public. To do otherwise would be to go against the grain of the egalitarian orientation. It would imply publicly that some people could impose their knowledge on others, that some people's answers were not as good as the rest.

The closure that does result, regarding disputed points of traditional knowledge, tends to occur on a more individual level - as each person privately reflects on the information presented in public meetings.

We can see this in a group discussion among several teachers.

An argument arose among certain teachers one afternoon as we worked on the Pukapukan-English Dictionary. At stake was whether the word taavilinga, or key hole, was Pukapukan (and should be included in the dictionary) or was Rarotongan (and should not). One teacher asserted it was Pukapukan and used the following sentence to prove his point: Aulaka koe e peeni i te taavilinga o te ngutupaa naa. "Do not paint the keyhole of that door."

A second teacher questioned this argument. He stated that the real Pukapukan word for key hole was pu vili. The first teacher scoffed at the suggestion. Other islands, he asserted, did not use the word taavilinga for key hole, only Pukapuka.

A third teacher got into the argument. He stated that he heard numerous people use the word taavilinga in everyday speech. Certainly taavilinga was a much more common word for key hole than pu vili. But the second teacher insisted that pu vili was clearer - it referred to the hole (pu) into which the key (vili) was put. The third teacher countered that taavilinga referred to the place where the key was turned (taavili).

The discussion went on and on like this with various teachers adding their own personal comments. The teachers never developed any overall consensus or resolution of the issue. I finally suggested we all go on to another word since our time together was limited.

While all these teachers expressed an interest in writing a dictionary (by what they said and what they did), they still spent numerous hours wrangling over small words like this. (Unlike me, they seemed to enjoy it.) If there was no clear pressure from me to come to a consensus, they often left the issue publicly unresolved. But such ambiguity was unsatisfactory for my purposes. I was responsible for checking and coordinating various parts of the dictionary. A decision had to be made regarding taavilinga - should it be included or not.

To leave the issue with no clear group consensus left me somewhat in doubt about what action to take. I could simply say that people disagreed on this (and numerous other words). I could simply record each and every disagreement the teachers had. But that would increase and complicate our task immensely to the extent we might never finish (even with my 41 month stay). It would also make the dictionary something it was never intended to be - mostly a record of certain teachers' disagreements.

Interestingly enough, most of the Pukapukan teachers seemed to realize (by what they told me) that we needed some sort of consensus on words like these - otherwise we would spend all our time arguing. But they left it to me to usually bring about a resolution. At times when one of them tried to do so, someone else would inject a slightly different opinion. For certain words at least, it became too much trouble for the teachers to develop a group consensus - because no one wanted to defer to anyone else.

As an outsider I was not as caught up in such status rivalries over traditional knowledge. The fact that I was ignorant of such things explained what I was doing in Pukapuka in the first place and why I asked all sorts of questions. When I injected a comment into the above discussion, interestingly enough, everyone ignored me. I was not even worth competing with.

Thus I could bring about a consensus. But who is to say that what was agreed upon was correct? For years Pukapukans have been speaking a mixture of Pukapukan and Rarotongan (see e.g. Beaglehole 1938:6). Today diversity of opinion abounds on which words of the spoken language are Pukapukan and which Rarotongan. The teacher's

diversity of opinions probably expresses the current situation far better than the consensus I encouraged - that proved helpful for writing the language down for future readers, that was stressed in "preserving" the language.

One should not over emphasize the debates over words or the discrepancies between our two orientations. Certainly the teachers agreed on many words without argument. At times they could also bring about group closure on their own. I could (and did) note, moreover, the existence of diverse opinions - as the above anecdote shows. But we often did approach the issue of writing the dictionary from different perspectives. I at times tended to create something which was not necessarily there. While appreciating the existence of diversity and fluidity of traditional Pukapukan knowledge, I tended to create a consensus of opinion because of my primary aim in recording certain aspects of the traditional culture. The Pukapukans, while appreciating the need for consensus in order to record this knowledge, nonetheless focused more on affirming their social worth through the medium of status rivalry. Consequently diverse opinions, rather than uniform agreement, tended to develop in their discussions with each other. Each of us displayed a certain sensitivity to the dilemmas facing us. Each of us focused on achieving one goal while being aware that something was lost in the process.

Mannheim's Dilemma: An issue of particular concern to sociologists of knowledge relates directly to this point. It involves the degree to which one's own analyses are bound up in the ideological processes that one is describing for others. It is a question that arises particularly in the works of Marx, Levi-Strauss, and Mannheim. Since Mannheim discusses it at considerable length (in developing his "total conception of ideology") I will refer to it as "Mannheim's dilemma."

For Marx, only some ideas were biased.

In the Marxian formulation, attention was called to the functions of ideology for the defense of class privileges, and to the distortion and falsification of ideas that derived from the privileged positions of bourgeois thinkers. In contrast to this interpretation of bourgeois ideology, Marx's own ideas were held by Marxists to be true and unbiased by virtue of their being an expression of a class - the proletariat - that had no privileged interests to defend (Coser 1971:431).

The fallacy of this position is obvious. To say that another's position represents the ideological expression of a particular political orientation or particular class leaves oneself open to the same criticism. As Max Weber has stated: "The materialistic conception of history is not to be compared to a cab that one can enter or alight from at will, for once they enter it, even the revolutionaries themselves are not free to leave it" (in Mannheim 1936:75).

This is also the problem that faces Levi-Strauss - he is a prisoner of his own analysis. His explanations of how the mind conceptualizes reality, how it resolves oppositions between nature and culture, is itself part of the same process. His explanation is not an objective statement but another expression of the mind's own logic

which he is trying to explain. As Kolakowski states (1968:66) "in all the universe, man cannot find a well so deep that, leaning over it, he does not discover at the bottom his own face." He cannot prove the validity of his analysis without becoming entrapped in tautologies. (See Scholte 1973 for an elaboration of this theme.)

Mannheim struggled with this same issue throughout his career. He tried a variety of solutions - from dynamic criteria of adjustment (e.g. taking "account of the new realities applying to a situation", 1936:96), to relationalism (or a critical awareness of the biases inherent in a situation), to reliance on the socially unattached intelligentsia as being beyond such biases. But he never really succeeded. As Coser notes: "it seems to be the scholarly consensus that Mannheim's attempts to escape the accusation of relativistic nihilism by the routes of the notion of pragmatic adjustment or of free floating intelligentsia were far from successful" (1971:436). In the end, the best that can be asserted is what Mannheim himself stated: "even though [the modern investigator] does not discover 'truth itself' he will discover the cultural setting and many hereto unknown 'circumstances' which are relevant to the discovery of truth" (1936:84).

Conceptions of Truth: Certainly anthropologists (as well as natives) have biases, have orientations that affect their analyses. But it is not necessary to therefore say one cannot properly describe a particular culture. After all, the fact remains that numerous



anthropologists have written successful ethnographies. There is more than one conception of truth and understanding this can help one out of the maze. For brevity sake, only three will be discussed here.

The first, and perhaps most famous, is the correspondence theory of truth. Truth, according to Russell, "consists in some form of correspondence between belief and fact" (Prior 1967:223). Various philosophers have taken this position through time - e.g. Aristotle, Aquinas, and Moore. Though individual variations and elaborations exist, most would agree with the point made by Moore. "To say that this belief is true is to say that there is in the Universe a fact to which it corresponds, and to say that it is false is to say that there is not in the Universe any fact to which it corresponds" (1953:277).

The second theory emphasizes coherence.

According to the coherence theory [of truth], to say that a statement (usually called a judgment) is true or false is to say that it coheres or fails to cohere with a system of other statements; that it is a member of a system whose elements are related to each other by ties of logical implication as the elements in a system of pure mathematics are related (White 1967:130).

While both Plato and Locke contain elements of coherence theory, Bradley, Joachim and Blanshard are the best modern representatives of this perspective. Bradley suggests that coherence is the only criterion for truth that we can apply to the past. We cannot compare, for instance, whether or not Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 B.C. with some external fact of the world because none now exists. What we can do is compare what various documents, history books, etc. state to see if they agree or disagree. This is the perspective used in

pointing out the contradiction between what Pukapukans assert about the 1976 Akatawa and what various historical reports indicate. (It is also the orientation anthropologists use in evaluating ethnographic materials they themselves have not experienced.)

A third perspective, the pragmatic theory of truth, is the one emphasized in this thesis (though I do not thereby deny the value of these other perspectives, pragmatically speaking, for understanding phenomena in particular contexts). Overall, the pragmatic theory focuses not on what exists or what coheres, but on what works, on what problems are resolved (see Ezorsky 1967). In Pierce's view, truth is the outcome of inquiry. To discuss metaphysical conceptions of truth apart from concrete investigations is unnecessary - it violates Ockham's razor. For James, truth is what satisfies one's needs and interests - "whatever put[s] one into satisfactory relations with the world" (Reese 1981:589). Since in science one wants to predict experience or cope with the environment, experimental verification affirms what is true. In regard to theology, "if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is 'true'" (1907:299). God exists for the individual to the degree that it satisfies his psychological needs. This perspective leads to James' famous assertion that "the true is only the expedient in our way of thinking" (1909:vii).

For Dewey, truth was not that which satisfies needs but rather that which removes doubt and perplexity.

"Warranted assertion" is the term for Dewey's version of truth. Inquiry is initiated in conditions of doubt; it terminates in the establishment of conditions in which doubt is no longer needed or felt. It is the settling of conditions of doubt, a settlement produced and warranted by inquiry, which distinguishes the warranted assertion" (Thayer 1967:434).

The point is that if the different analyses work - in the sense that they resolve the difficulties confronting them - then they are valid, are warranted assertions. They answer the questions at hand. To assert a correspondence theory of truth as a resolution of Mannheim's dilemma presents one with numerous unnecessary problems that can never be properly resolved. It goes, as Pierce indicates, against Ockham's razor. Nor can a coherence theory resolve the dilemma since people with different perspectives often develop different analyses. It is just this fact, Mannheim stresses, that brought about the sociology of knowledge as a modern field of study in the first place.

It is clear that such problems [as those raised by the sociology of knowledge] can become general only in an age in which disagreement is more conspicuous than agreement. One turns . . . to the consideration of ways of thinking only when the possibility of the direct and continuous elaboration of concepts concerning things and situations has collapsed in face of a the multiplicity of fundamentally divergent definitions. (1936:6).

Overview of the Themes Developed in the Thesis: Overall this thesis has two primary objectives. It presents a specific ethnographic study of how Pukapukans acquire and validate traditional knowledge. While these concerns are not frequently discussed in the

anthropological literature, they are nonetheless ethnographically important. They help broaden our understanding of how changes and variations develop over time in a culture's knowledge of its traditions.

The thesis, in addition, seeks to make two points of a more theoretical nature. First, it discusses the general character of Pukapukan traditional knowledge. It stresses that rather than being a set product from the past, Pukapukan traditional knowledge is more of a process - continually being reinterpreted by diverse individuals as they acquire and validate it. This means that while a general core of shared understandings, a common fund of knowledge, certainly occurs, numerous elements of diversity, fluidity, and ambiguity exist as well. Second, the dissertation suggests that, at least in certain respects, Pukapukans and anthropologists utilize this fluid, diverse, ambiguous body of knowledge in different ways to solve different problems related to different audiences. These different orientations can, at times, lead to different perceptions of cultural phenomena - as they have done in the case of the Akatawa's historical precedents. Such differences, however, do not cast doubt on the anthropological enterprise of writing ethnographies. Rather they emphasize its value (in a pragmatic sense). By making apparent that different perspectives exist, they tell us something not only about how others create cultural traditions but about how we do as well.

In turning now to an examination of how Pukapukans acquire knowledge about their cultural traditions, we can perceive how Pukapukans (to turn Marx's famous saying on its head) "make history" - how they continually reinterpret knowledge about the past to make it meaningful in the present.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

1

E. Beaglehole (1937, 1944), Beagleholes (1938, 1939, 1941, ms. a, ms. b.), Beckett (1964), Department of Health (n.d.), J. Frisbie (1959), R. Frisbie (1928a, 1928b, 1929a, 1929b, 1929c, 1930, 1939, 1944), Gill (1912), Hecht (1976, 1977, 1978, 1981), Hutchin (1904), Mataola, Tutai, Borofsky et al (ms.), New Zealand Meteorological Service (n.d.), Shapiro (1942), Statistics Office (1977), Tiro (n.d.) Turner (1978), Vayda (1958, 1959, ms.) plus considerable archival material (some of which is cited in this thesis) located in the Government Archives, Rarotonga or in the Government Office, Pukapuka.

2

For various other historical estimate of the population see MacArthur (1967).

3

The dependency ratio represents an attempt to determine the ratio of productive individuals versus the number of dependents. As calculated by the Cook Islands Statistics Office, (1) the 0 to 14 year old population is added to the 65 years and over population, (2) this sum is then multiplied by 100, and (3) finally this figure is divided by the 15 to 64 year old population.

4

In discussing Tongan status rivalries, Marcus (1978) develops a similar theme - status rivalries tend to occur among those equal in rank.

5

The Pukapukan word, wuaanga, tends to be less used today in describing these sets of social relationships than koputangata. Today, wuaanga usually refers to (1) a nuclear family and (2) to consanguineal relatives in general (Mataola, Tutai, Borofsky, et al. ms., cf. Hecht 1967:87-89).

6

These figures were calculated by (1) taking the two boats trips Turner has records for imported foodstuffs, (2) dividing each amount in half (to get the figure per trip) and then (3) multiplying by five (i.e. the number of boat trips in 1978). The 1978 figures, I suspect, may be somewhat inflated - because wide variations exist between trips depending on what supplies are available in Rarotonga at the time of the boat's departure. But the figures still give a rough idea of the degree that Pukapukans import food from the outside.

7

The term is, in fact, more complex than described here. For a clear analysis of the New Zealand Maori cognate whaka, see Biggs (1969:83 ff).

8

Pukapukans could readily understand what wakatawa means. It was just that they never seemed to use it - just as in English with "thou" and "dost".

9

This relates to an earlier association among patrilineages (po), land strips (kawa) (both inside and outside the reserve), and food-sharing units (see Beagleholes 1938:41-42, 229-232, Ms. a, and Hecht 1976:36-38, 60-63).

10

Since people making copra in Motu Uta stayed in their permanent houses on Wale, no problem really existed for members of Yato and Ngake villages when they worked in Loto's reserve.

11

No problem existed on Motu Kotawa for Tawa Lalo since Yato had already opened up its whole reserve to everyone in the village several years before.

12

Much the same story is repeated in the Beagleholes unpublished field notes on traditional history (ms. a).

13

I interviewed 30 "elderly" people (i.e. people 64 years old or older). Thus the seven individuals constituted 23% of my sample size. The precise details of the sample selection are discussed under footnote one in the Preface.

14

These names refer to the Beagleholes' informants. The Beagleholes' informants' names are used as pseudonyms for my own informants - out of respect for what these informants helped the Beagleholes to accomplish.

15

For a list of the actual informants see Beagleholes (1938:4).

16

The "T" of Trotter is poorly written and the letter could possibly be "J".

17

This idea derives from discussions with Alan Howard and owes a considerable amount to his insightful remarks. I alone, of course, can be held responsible for whatever deficiencies still exist. But he deserves much of the credit for whatever is positive in this analysis.



ACQUIRING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

## Chapter Two

While the studies of knowledge acquisition in non-Western cultures are relatively small in comparison to the large literature on general psychological development (Middleton 1970:xvi ff.), their import is still relatively clear. Various educational processes can and do effectively transmit important cultural information from one generation to another. The processes and material transmitted vary from culture to culture. But an examination of Middleton (1970), Gearing (1973), Ritchie (1979), Kimball and Burnett (1973), Mead (1928, 1964), Fortes (1938), Firth (1936), Howard (1970), Heider (1976), DuBois (1944), Raum (1938), Williams (1958), and Berland (1977) makes it clear that, with certain qualifications, non-Western educational styles do work effectively, especially in more "traditionally oriented" and culturally homogeneous environments. At a more detailed level, however, what do these various educational processes imply as to the nature of knowledge acquired? Do different individuals all acquire the same commonly shared traditions passed on unaltered from parent to child, generation after generation? Or does the educational process encourage diversity and creativity of knowledge as people adapt traditions of the past to present-day contexts? In discussing the Pukapukan situation, it will help if we begin with a specific example that illustrates certain key educational principles observed many times during field work.

The day before Luka started repairing the large old Pukapukan canoe, we had a little talk. He told me that Nimeti and Apela (two boys in their twenties) would assist him so that he could teach them how to fix old-fashioned canoes. (He had wanted helpers and had chosen these two for that reason.) From my conversations with Nimeti and Apela and from the way they seemed involved in the task, it was clear that they too had the same idea. They were assisting so they could learn more. But very little direct teaching occurred. Rarely did Luka give explicit instructions on how to perform a particular task. Nimeti and Apela learned far more (in my opinion) from observing and experimenting than from direct advice Luka gave them.

For example, it seemed apparent from watching Nimeti and Apela that, while they both had had some experience in hewing, neither had actually hewed such a big outrigger before. They frequently hesitated in their work and often paused to see how it was progressing. (Later conversations with each of them confirmed this. Nimeti had previously hewn one short outrigger by himself; Apela had only assisted in the hewing of one.) Since Luka felt it appropriate to teach them, he also must have known about their limitations.

Yet Luka did not give them any overt instructions. He just started in on shaping the outrigger himself. The other two hung around, casually watching him, and talking to me. Luka seemed almost uninterested in whether they watched him or not. Similarly, they seemed only partially interested in what he was doing. When Luka got tired, he simply handed the adze to Nimeti and told him to take over. Luka then sat down and ate a coconut. Only occasionally, and in the most casual manner, did he take a look at how Nimeti was progressing.

At first, Nimeti was hesitant; he seemed unsure about how to proceed. But he never asked Luka. He simply started in and, as he built up a little confidence, he started taking bigger cuts. Only when the cuts became deeper, did Luka give a few specific directions mixed with minor criticisms. "You are starting to make your cuts in that direction too deep, make them smaller. Sometimes cut from the other direction as well. Cut a little more off the front." Nimeti kept working without saying a word.

When he got tired, Apela who had been carefully watching Nimeti, eagerly took over. Apela, too, initially seemed hesitant about how to proceed. But Luka seemed to ignore Apela. Luka appeared far more engrossed in telling me about Vakayala and Uyo, two legendary Pukapukan figures. (In contrast to his teaching of Apela and Nimeti, he directly questioned me several times to make sure I was following the conversation.) As Apela became more

confident, and started making deeper cuts, Luka gave him a few directions. They were just some small details about where to and where not to make further cuts. But no formal overall directions were given.

Throughout this whole period, Luka never once uttered a word of praise to either one of them. I had the impression, observing Nimeti and Apela, that they were more relaxed when Luka was not watching them. Just the absence of attention seemed to be praise enough. When he watched carefully for any period of time, it seemed to imply (at least to me) that something wrong was being done.

When the fine hewing had to be performed, Luka again took over. He made no effort to show either Nimeti or Apela the subtleties of what he was doing. He just did it. Nor did Nimeti and Apela seem really absorbed in watching him. They just casually looked on as they talked to me and ate coconuts.

Finally, with only a few small details left, Luka handed over the work to both of them. Some bark still had to be skinned off the log and a few rough spots had to be smoothed out. Nimeti and Apela took turns alternately using the adze for hewing and the knife for skinning. Luka seemed to ignore the person with the knife; he only watched the person using the adze. But again he said very little unless a mistake was being made.

When it came to lashing the outrigger two days later, the same pattern occurred. Luka simply started doing a lashing. He mainly seemed interested in finishing the task. Overtly at least, he displayed little interest in teaching Nimeti or Apela what to do. They appeared to watch him but in a casual, low-key manner. I seemed far more interested in learning the exact details of what he was doing than they did. Only when Luka needed some specific help - to hit the sinnet after each turn so that it would be tight - did he call Nimeti over and give him specific instructions.

After Luka had finished two lashings, Apela and Nimeti each tried to do one on their own. While it was clear from the way they worked that they had had some previous lashing experience, it was also clear (to me) that they were not perfectly sure how to proceed with the exact lashing that Luka had made (see Beaglehole 1938:179). Every once in a while, one or the other would look over at one of Luka's lashings. Nimeti and Apela tried to be careful in their work; they certainly were not casual about it. And, when they were finished, both of their lashings looked identical to Luka's from the top. But only Apela's matched Luka's on the underside. Nimeti's was different.

Apparently, both Apela and Nimeti had made educated guesses as to how Luka had done the lashing on the underside based on what they could see from the top. But they had guessed differently. The difference was not that

big - just a matter of making a diagonal or not before going under the bottom piece - but it was still apparent upon close examination. Nimeti noticed it when he had finished his lashing and had gone back to look at Luka's. But since no one else said anything, he just left it. During this whole time, Luka only occasionally looked up from his own work to see how Apela and Nimeti were progressing. As long as they seemed absorbed in their work, he said nothing.

On another day, Luka and Apela lashed the three tutuki sticks to the outrigger poles. Luka cut some sinnet for Apela and some for himself. Luka told Apela to lash the front joint. Then Luka started in on lashing the back most joint. When Apela did not immediately start moving towards the front, Luka looked at him a little surprised and asked him if he knew how to do the lashing. Apela said nothing. He just stood watching Luka start his own.

As Apela passed by me on the way to the front of the canoe, he whispered softly to me "I don't know how to do it; I don't know how to do it." But he said nothing to Luka. He just went to the front joint, and after watching Luka for another minute or so, started in on his own lashing. When Luka undid his lashing so I could draw the details of how it was done, Apela kept on with his. After finishing four turns on each side - the general limit one can go in this type of lashing before proceeding on with a different pattern - he just paused casually as if to rest. He waited for Luka to catch-up and go ahead of him. Apela would frequently look over at Luka's lashing and experiment with different styles, before finally deciding on a particular procedure.

Luka, by and large, seemed to ignore Apela. Only occasionally would he look up to see if Apela was working. But once he did give Apela a direct set of instructions. Seeing the way Apela had incorrectly wrapped a piece of sinnet around a stick, he told him that the wrapping should start from the top of the stick rather than from the bottom. Apela obediently unwrapped the whole piece and started over again.

When Apela was finished, his lashing, though looser, resembled Luka's fairly closely. The main difference between them was in terms of time - in the period it had taken Apela to lash his one joint, Luka had almost completed two. Nonetheless, Apela was clearly pleased with himself.

As the above illustration suggests, education in Pukapuka tends to be less explicit and formal than in our own schools. Scribner and Cole call this learning process "informal" because "it occurs in the course of mundane adult activities in which young take part according to their abilities" (1973:554-5, see also Greenfield and Lave 1982). Howard makes a similar point for Rotuman education: "One absorbs the information informally, usually without anything being made explicit. The process contrasts dramatically with the formal explicitness of school, where learning is so artificially separated from life" (1970:65).

#### LEARNING OCCURS WITHIN SITUATIONALLY RELEVANT CONTEXTS

Knowledge in Pukapuka is generally acquired in the context of some activity. It is embedded in some purpose; it is situationally relevant. As Firth notes, one of the "cardinal points of education in a native society such as Tikopia [is] . . . its practicality - not in the sense of being directed to economic ends, but as arising from actual situations in daily life" (1936:134, see also Ritchie 1979:107). In the above illustration Nimeti and Apela learned because Luka had a task to do and needed help.

One can see the importance of context by listening to people describe how they acquired certain knowledge. In the following quote Mitimoa recalls how he learned about place names along a particular reef.

I really enjoyed the way I listened to (the old people) talk about old things and what they taught me. . . Many times my father and I would go in the lagoon, my real 'father' and his 'younger brother', to catch some fish. . . If we went on (my uncle's) canoe, to fish in the lagoon I would at times ask questions (uwuwi maalie) "what is the name of the place, of this place, what is the name of this islet (motu)?" I would then be told "this is the islet of te Tali." "What is the name of . . .?" "That is the islet of Tau Yili." "What is the name of that place?" "That is the islet of te Mako." . . . When I came back to this place, I might ask someone else, to Talainga or someone else . . .

(When I got to be a young man), we (presumably the reference is to his going with other young men fishing) would go along the reef and say we are coming to such and such a place, we (would say we) are approaching to the islet of Tau Yili, then we would go on to the (place called the) Aua Loa and stay there (fishing). Consequently, I learned all the places, all the islets.

Or one can listen to Ula describe how he gradually mastered what each fish precisely looked like:

If a 'parent' (matua) said "Go get some (fish called) eve (for us), "I would go fish for some eve. I understood what an eve looked like so when I caught one I would say "yes, this is an eve." When I brought it back my 'parent', he would say, that it was correct. I had caught an eve. Or perhaps one of them might say, "hey, go get some (fish called) wu talaloa. I have a real craving (umiti) for some wu talaloa." Then I would go fishing and get some wu talaloa. They would be for my 'mother', these wu talaloa. That is how we came (to really know all) about these fish.

In regard to social organization, especially burial customs, Te Ingoa noted:

(The old days) were a time when (people) went to the cemeteries (po) (and stayed a long time in mourning), if a child died. . . (When) we went to the cemetery, (someone) would say to me "that is a such and such." That is how I learned all about the (customs related to) the cemeteries and patrilineages.

Yet it would be inaccurate to view all education in Pukapuka as simply being tied to a particular activity, to a particular purposive context. For some knowledge is primarily learned for its own enjoyment. Here is how Wakalua described learning legends in her youth:

At nighttime, at the time we were getting ready to sleep, the children would ask (uwuiwi) "tell us (some) stories." Then our old 'grandfather' would tell the legend of Wutu and other similar tales. It was a common thing for all the 'fathers' (to do), (we might also hear) the stories at some other homes. It was a common thing for all the old people to do (for their children) in the olden days. The children would ask their 'parents', "please tell the legend of so and so, the legend of Lata, the legend of Yii." The legends of all (the old) people . . .

We would ask (pati), the children would ask, "Some other home tells a certain legend to their children. We heard about it. Please tell us the legend of so and so (because) so and so told it to their children. Please tell us so we can listen." (Then) our 'father' would tell it to us. (The implication is that either they heard it from the other children and did not understand it and/or they wanted to know what was the real version, implying that someone else's version might not be correct.)

Again and again one hears this same basic pattern for legends. An elderly woman (in her eighties) comments:

All the people would tell legends all the time in the olden days. They enjoyed these traditional legends in those days, that is how I learned. Someone would tell (a legend) to all the children (wi tamaliki), another person would tell (another legend) to all the children, that is how they did it all the time in the olden days. (They would) go to one person, go to another, the children would listen (to them) . . .

[Did the old people just want to tell the legends or did you specifically ask them to do so?] No, the children would go listen at a particular place then go to another place. "Tell the legend of so and so, tell (us) a legend." All the children would go, the old people would tell legends. (Then the children) would go to another place. (The old people) just liked telling legends and the children (from all over) would go (listen).

Variations thus exist in the degree to which education is contextualized, is tied to concrete tasks. Fish names, place names, or burial customs generally are more easily explained and learned within concrete settings. Also, the relevant tasks in which they are needed occur frequently. Other education may be less tied to specific needs or projects. Telling legends, for example, really constitutes a form of entertainment and a means for acquainting the younger generation with Pukapukan history. But still, generally speaking, most knowledge seems to be acquired within a situationally relevant context; within a context in which what is learned arises from actual projects, from concrete tasks, in daily life.

It is important to keep this contextual aspect of education in mind in reading the following sections. The context helps to limit the diversity that might naturally develop in a particular situation. What people observe, what they hear, might be open to a variety of interpretations. But the context helps to indicate the appropriate one. The word paapaa, for instance, which is a coin word from English, may mean either father or grandfather depending on the age of the speaker. For young children today, taati usually refers to father and paapaa to grandfather. Among older people, paapaa generally indicates father. Likewise, the word wua possesses over ten meanings some quite distinct from one another. It can refer to a pill, a group of fisherman, or a section of taro swamp. From either word alone, it is impossible to know which interpretation is meant. One needs to know details about the sentence and/or the speaker. It is context which thus makes the meaning clear. Or more precisely, it is the context which makes it clearer.



## LEARNING STRESSES OBSERVATION AND IMITATION

The generalization Munroe and Munroe suggest for many traditionally oriented cultures holds true for Pukapuka - "explicit verbal instruction is rarely given . . . [and the child] learns by observation and subsequent imitation" (1975:88). Many skills may be observed and/or practiced tens if not hundreds of times by a child before he is called upon to perform them competently as an adult. Nimeti and Apela, for example, had an opportunity to observe Luka at work before they themselves hewed the outrigger or lashed the joints.

Children commonly can be observed on the fringes of many grown-up activities, either casually watching or imitating the adults. "In every Polynesian society," the Ritchies' assert, "children, so long as they do not interfere, may be participant observers in most aspects of family, village, informal, or ceremonial life" (1979:85). Each of the four times I watched the annual adult wrestling competitions, for instance, there were always children on the side lines. Usually when the children got tired of observing the adults, they would start in wrestling among themselves. Likewise, when they got tired of wrestling, they would start watching the adults. Unless they intruded on the adult matches, the grown-ups generally ignored them.

Pukapukan children would not usually request permission to watch. They just did it. They acted as if they had a right to observe, especially if their presence was not intrusive.

Clarifying Illustrations: Often adults quite consciously use these techniques in instructing younger people. The following illustration concerns preparation for a bible story presented at the 1979 Gospel Day celebrations.

During one of the play practices Utalenga, the director, stated that people were far from ready to present the play publicly. As yet, people were not living their parts or giving long speeches. (Plays have no formal scripts; the actors improvise their actions and speeches as they go along.) Utalenga suggested they should rehearse the whole play over again.

In the play a teenage boy, acting as a messenger, has to report on what he has seen outside the city gates. During the first rehearsal, he had performed the part poorly. So in the second rehearsal, an older man, Ula, came over to where the teenager was standing. When the exact moment came for the speech, Ula gave it instead (a little to boy's surprise). When he was done, Ula simply said to the teenager that that was the way it should be performed. He then went back to his chair and sat down.

The teenage boy proceeded to give the same speech over again. It was briefer than Ula's and differed in several small ways. But it was still much better than his previous effort. Next the teenager went on to say another part of the speech not covered by Ula. Here he incorporated even more of Ula's style and language.

Adults also learn from other adults through observation and imitation. But the focus tends to be mostly on keeping up certain appearances and avoiding ridicule. (Though the following example involves certain extraneous information within the present context, the data play an important role later in the chapter and illustrate how various principles of learning may not

always be easily separated out from one another in anecdotes.) Every year, the social units involved in the New Year sports competitions (either the three villages, lulu, or the two tawa of the Akatawa) practice chants they will use during the annual wrestling matches. The single practice session is always a rather casual affair. No verbal instructions are given. Men (and sometimes women) just participate as best they can. A few may subsequently make an effort to learn some chants from older people. But for many who are unsure of the chants, what they pick up in the practice session - through listening, observing and imitating - is what they will have to rely on in reciting chants at the next day's matches. (I observed these practices four years in a row and each time it was the same.)

Several older men, including among others Veeti, Talainga, Winangalo, and Te Ingoa, were sitting on the beach with some others mostly in their forties and fifties. Behind them and slightly off to the side sat Wakalua, and two or three other old women. All of them ostensibly had come to practice wrestling chants (tila).

Veeti started up a chant and the others joined in. Mitimca who had been off elsewhere, came up and immediately began chanting too. After each chant was finished, one of the older men started in on a new one. It seemed to me that a few of the younger men (in their forties) did not really know certain chants and were trying to bluff their way through them. (They were only imitating some of the gestures and sounds of the more knowledgeable men.) Since the chants were performed in a group and certain words tended to get merged together, it was quite feasible to bluff one's way through various portions of the chants - as long as one had the vaguely right sounds and actions.

During the pauses between verses or between chants, one or another person made a comment about who did and did not know the chants. One elderly man jokingly challenged Talainga's knowledge of a verse just chanted. Talainga laughingly replied that the other man's comment was absurd. Another elderly man commented about the lack of knowledge among the young men in their twenties who were just then starting to come into the group in preparation for wrestling practice. (The young men generally do the wrestling and the older men perform the victory chants afterwards - see Beaglehole 1938:267-69.)

On a more subtle level, a competition appeared to exist between Veeti and Mitimoa regarding who could think of new chants quicker or who did not stumble through a particular verse. Neither wasted his time commenting about the other's skill. But it was clear to me that Mitimoa was trying to assert himself as the master of these chants and that Veeti was making him work for this claim.

Various adults' retrospective statements indicate that observation played an important part in their acquisition of skills:

I mainly watched the people (making things) and then I would try myself to do it. I would try doing it and it would be correct. That is the way (I learned making) hats. We (taaua) would watch the people who knew how to make (hats, then) we would know how to make them. [Wakamaa]

I (learned by) observing (while) next to . . . the old people as they made these things. I would watch and then I would know (how to make them). I did not ask people questions. [A woman in her sixties]

Another way to see the importance of observation is to realize that the word kite possesses two basic meanings. Kite is commonly used in the sense of to see, to observe, to witness. Na kite koe i te payii? "Did you see the ship?" Kooku the kite o to laaua pekapeka. "I am the person who witnessed (or I was witness to) their quarrel." Likewise, kite in the sense of to know, to possess knowledge, is common in everyday speech. Wakamaa, in her above quote, states Onoono wua taaua ki te alonga e wai, kite ai taaua i te wai i te mea ia. "We would watch the people who knew how to make (such a thing, then) we would know how to make this thing." In the quote by the above woman in her sixties, it is not exactly clear which sense of kite she is in fact using. Na kite wua au i tawa . . . i na maani i na mea a te kau maatutua. The phrase could be translated either as "I gained knowledge (or learned while) next to the old people as they made these

things" or "I observed (while) next to the old people as they made these things." My own translation combines both of these senses because the context suggests to me that is what she means. But the phrase is somewhat ambiguous.

These various illustrations indicate the importance of observation in acquiring knowledge. Children, and even adults, have an opportunity to observe before and/or as they participate. Formal instructions are kept to a minimum. Rather than formulating a particular practice in words or rules, it is demonstrated. People then imitate the performance as best they can.

But in making this point, a host of questions are also raised. Why is observation one of the most favored techniques of education? Why is formal instruction of individuals kept to a minimum? How can people learn the same thing if they are not given standardized instructions? And why do people not ask more questions? Each of these questions will be taken up in turn, but let us begin by examining this last question since it directly overlaps with an analysis of observation.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ASKING QUESTIONS

While it is by no means absolute, listening tends to be emphasized over the asking of questions in Pukapuka. People often assert that they acquired knowledge simply by listening to conversations.

[Did any one specifically tell you about these legends?] No, for instance at the gatherings of (village A), . . . all the knowledgeable people would tell these (sort of) tales . . . I am a person who likes to sit at all the meetings (so that) I can listen to all that is said. If a group gathers (somewhere), I will sit down beside them (so that) I can listen to (and thereby) learn what is said. [Winangalo]

or:

[How did you learn about such things as the old patrilineages (po) and matrimoieties (wua)?] From the old people, the elderly (ai metua), (they) taught me, (they) told (these things) to me. . . . [Did you ask someone who was especially knowledgeable or did you just listen to what various people said?] I just listened to what (some people) said in their meetings. [a man in his seventies]

The woman in her eighties, who previously discussed how she learned about legends, likewise implied she acquired most of her knowledge simply by listening to various people's accounts.

Putting these quotes into a wider perspective, of 18 people asked if they learned about place names mostly from questioning other people or simply from listening to conversations, ten (or 56%) emphasized listening as primary while six (or 33%) emphasized questions. Two people (or 11%) stressed both when asked.

Asking Questions: Generally, adults do not encourage children to ask lots of questions.

One afternoon, I was walking along in Yato village looking for several individuals who I had to interview regarding certain pieces of land. A seven year old boy saw me and asked where I was going. Since children often asked me that question (and I got tired of answering it), I just vaguely pointed towards where I was walking and ignored his further questions.

After finishing with one person, I came back about two hours later and saw the boy's father (a man in his forties). He also was one of the people I had to interview. I explained what I wanted to the father and he kindly agreed to go look at the exact site of land with me. As we started leaving, the boy called out regarding where we were going. His father turned around, and yelled back at him in a sarcastic voice, "you are always asking questions, don't you have any brain (or sense) at all (e tamaiti uwiwi wua, kae lolo la). The child said nothing and went back to playing.

Several people emphasized this theme - that extensive questioning by children was discouraged in Pukapuka. Ula, in his normally colorful and lucid way, gave the best explanation of why.

Sometimes a little child, if he says "'grandpa' (paapaa), what is this, huh 'grandpa'. I tell him, "it is a such and such. "What is that thing up there, that thing that is hanging?" "That is a such and such, that is what it is." "There is another thing 'grandpa', look, what is that?" "Why do you like to ask so many questions?"

This type of child, the 'parent' (matua) shall get tired explaining all these things. This (type of) child is always asking questions (kano uwiwi wua) to us. (But if he just) looked, he would see (what it is). "A lizard". "What is that thing that is crawling?" We (taaua) would explain "a beetle". "What is that?" "An ant".

(Then the child) asks about some other animal, (then) asks (again) about some other (different) animal. This is the time, that we get angry. We don't get angry if there is one question, two questions, or three questions. But if he starts asking a lot of questions, that is the reason the person gets angry.

[Why?] Because the child (just) likes to ask questions, he is just a child, for what reason does he ask (these things)? You explain (that this thing is) a beetle, what is he going to do with this beetle? He is not going to do anything with this beetle. He does not (then) follow that beetle. (It is just that he) likes to ask questions.

"Hey, what is that hanging?" You explain "clothes." He does not go and get the clothes, (so) why does he ask about them. That is the reason that I will get angry. "You come (here just) to ask questions." Nothing of value is going to result from this. Consequently, the 'parent' gets angry. "You just like to keep asks questions? Here, take (or eat, kai) this" (the idea is that the child is being beaten). That is why all parents get angry.

I know from personal experience that some people got tired of being asked too many questions. At first many informants were pleased that I came to them because it implied that they were knowledgeable people. But no matter how knowledgeable my questions might make certain people feel, they would get tired of them over a period of time. After a lengthy interview, many people were quite glad not to be interviewed by me for another month or so (even though I offered recompense, such as cigarettes, for their help). Moreover, it frequently puzzled people why I had to ask so many questions at all. Other anthropologists had been to Pukapuka. Why should people have to answer the same sort of questions again (asked only five years before)?

Ula's above quote illustrates another important point. It would be inaccurate to say that questions per se are discouraged. Under certain circumstances questions are encouraged. If the parent sees that something of value will result to the child or himself - such as in showing the child a special fishing technique so he can catch more fish - then the parent will often gladly help the child. Likewise, if the child wants to know something about Pukapukan traditions, and if the parent knows the answer, he will usually be glad to answer the question - if he is not busy and the child asks appropriately. That is why Mitimoa, in describing how he asked questions to learn certain place names, used the phrase uwuwi maalie which literally means asking questions slowly but in this context could be better translated as occasionally asking questions. The idea is that he did not ask too many questions at once.



People are doing you a favor by answering your questions. Wakalua in describing how she asked to be told legends not only used the word uwi (to ask in the sense of inquiring for information) but also pati (to ask in the sense of requesting a favor). In another section of Mitimoa's interview on how he learned various place names, he emphasized just this aspect - how his asking for information was really requesting a favor. Certain place names: "I would really want to know, it was a request (pati) by me, I requested, 'Please tell me so that I will know (the name of) this place. I do not know.' Then they would tell me." (Several other informants made similar statements.)

But ask too many questions, especially about something not perceived of as having much value, and the person may well get angry. This goes back to the importance of context. Questions about concrete situations which have concrete applications are not discouraged. But questions of no perceived import are frowned upon.

Not Appearing Ignorant: Thus, though Pukapukans generally stress listening, certain questions are really not discouraged - when they are important, where there is a need to know. Most informants agree on this. Yet my data suggest that adults, at least, do not tend to ask direct questions under such circumstances. Why? It goes back to the issue of social competence, to questions of status rivalry, discussed in chapter one. Most adults do not want to appear subordinate to another or, even worse, ignorant. This is how one "key" informant explains the issue:

[You have said several times over the past year that you were interested in learning more about Pukapukan traditions. You also mentioned that some day you might like to ask Winangalo about some of the old legends. Yet you have not done that. I wonder if you are a little hesitant (akamaa) about doing so.] Well, there is no time for me to ask him. But maybe, if there is any time for Winangalo to come to my home for some other purpose, I think that would be a good time to ask him.

[But you would not go to Winangalo's house?] No, no. [Why?] Well, I do not want to go to someone's home to ask questions like that. Maybe they will say that "that person is a fool to come to our house and ask those questions." I wait (for the appropriate time). Sometimes, in a meeting, (or) when there are three or four persons that might meet outside the post office, something like that, that is a good time to ask.

[Would you be ashamed (akamaa) to go to Winangalo's house?] No I would not be ashamed. I would not be ashamed. But I do not have any time to go to his home. . . I can go to his house on some other purpose, (but) not on that purpose. [I am not sure that I fully understand?] Well, . . . (he gives a long sigh as if tired). I do not know. That is our custom.

[Do you mean that they would criticize you?] Maybe, maybe. Well, because I am a Pukapukan and they are Pukapukan too. If I go to Winangalo's house for this purpose, they (might) say "hey, he is a fool." They believe that all the Pukapukans should know that. And yet I go to him and ask him those questions. It is simple for them to say that "it is a waste of time for him to come and ask these questions because his 'parents' know about (these things)." Because all people on the island believe that everyone on the island knows their culture. It's like that. . .

Maybe this person does not say anything (critical) and he agrees with you in a friendly way. He welcomes you and says good things to you. He explains what you want to know. But for the people of the home, and for other people in other homes. . . they (may) say "there is a fool." Maybe your question is very simple for them. Maybe they know the answer to that.

As indicated below, children are clearly subordinate to adults. Hence, they do not possess such qualms about asking questions. They have very little status to lose. But as people get older, especially when one adult deals with another, they tend to avoid asking direct

questions that imply their own ignorance. They would rather, as the "key" informant suggests, wait for an appropriate moment to ask the question indirectly, in a casual manner.

In addition to this problem - of the questioner not appearing ignorant - another problem also arises with a direct question. The replier does not want his answer to be ridiculed. In discussing with Lepuama how some people answer questions, he stated something I heard time and time again: "Some people do not answer properly because they do not know the proper answer. They are ignorant (valetiko); they do not know. They come and they tell something quite different (from the correct answer)." Few Pukapukans would like to have that said about their replies.

As a consequence, people are not always willing to answer certain questions, no matter how appropriately people ask them because they do not want to be laughed at. They too have something to lose.

I was sitting with a teenage girl and Eliu watching a play practice for the legend of Malotini. As they got to the part dealing with the tanganga, the teenage girl casually but courteously asked Eliu what a tanganga was. Eliu did not reply. He seemed too absorbed in the play practice. The girl asked again. This time Eliu briefly said it had to do with food. He then again went back to watching the play.

This at first puzzled me. Eliu frequently made a point in public speeches that the youth should be more interested in learning about the past. Here was a golden opportunity for him to teach someone. But his answer was so vague as to be confusing. It could mean so many things. (I subsequently discovered during a private interview that Eliu felt unclear as to the word's exact meaning.) After thinking about Eliu's answer, the girl lost interest in pursuing the question and went back to watching the play.

Certainly people are at times willing to admit that they do not know something. People, for instance, admitted they did not know some of the answers to specific questions I asked them. (Though several added a small comment to put the reply in a better light - that they did not want to mislead me like some other people might. They wanted to tell me the truth.)

But overall, I have the impression that in areas that are viewed as common knowledge (such as in respect to certain important Pukapukan traditions) many if not most adults try to avoid admitting their ignorance, try to avoid opening themselves up to ridicule - especially in public, especially among other adults. It is a matter of degree, admittedly, a matter of context. But with certain qualifications - in regard to the topic, the individuals involved, the number of times one has to admit one's ignorance and who else is listening - Pukapukans clearly try to avoid displaying their ignorance. They try to avoid opening themselves up to ridicule. Now one can better understand why Nimeti and Apela never asked Luka a question while working on the canoe even though they were at times hesitant about how to carry out various tasks.

Clarifying Illustrations: As a result of these issues, people may often become involved in a delicate minuet - as one person tries to ask questions in a way that does not make him appear ignorant and the respondent tries to reply in a way that does not make him look foolish. How then do Pukapukans ask questions in these situations? A common style is to slowly draw the other person into the conversation, intriguing him, making him curious. During our first year in

Pukapuka, for instance, we commonly did some meditative exercises down at the beach in the early morning. This led to the following exchange one day around 11 a.m.

A boy in his twenties came up to me as I sat down by our house on Motu Kotawa. He asked me "what is (or was) that?" (E wea te mea na?) I looked around and could not see what he was pointing to. "What you did this morning," he added when he saw my puzzlement about what he was referring to. When this morning I asked him trying to think what I had been doing so far that day. "This morning before the communal morning prayer. What was it? (pause) . . . Was it some sort of exercise or some sort of prayer?" Understanding what he wanted, I then explained as best I could.

The boy had drawn me into the conversation by stages. He left the exact question ambiguous until he could judge (it seemed to me) how ready I was to respond in a positive manner.

Another approach is to shift the responsibility for being ignorant away from the questioner towards other people. The following case involves Tiele who assisted in part of my research. (I observed it numerous times with other people as well.) It was clear not only from Tiele's own interview, but also from the way he listened to my interviewing other people, that he did not know a great deal about traditional legends. His comments and his actions suggested to me that he wanted to learn more.

When Mitimoa indicated in a survey, that he knew certain legends, I could sense Tiele's interest in finding out more about them. What did he do?

For the story "Te Awuawu ma Ngaliyeyeu," Tiele indicated that Winangalo had suggested, when we interviewed him, that the legend concerned two Pukapukan gods who had made some sort of journey. But, Tiele added, he was a little uncertain because some other people (whom he did not mention) had said that this referred to a different legend. Mitimoa listened and paused for a while. After thinking it over, he noted that the legend did involve certain old gods,

two of which he named, but it occurred in Pukapuka, not elsewhere. When I checked back in my notes, I discovered that Winangalo had never claimed to know this legend.

Likewise, when we came to the legend of "Papalangi", Tiele said that he was confused by all the various versions people had told him in our interviews. (We had not asked anyone about this legend. But Mitimoo did not know this.) Tiele then just left it open for Mitimoo to say something or not as he wished. Mitimoo mentioned a few specific things about the legend, especially that Papalangi was a cannibal, and left it at that.

In both of these cases (and in several others too), Tiele seemed quite eager to learn more about certain legends. But he did not ask Mitimoo directly. It would have implied, I suspect, that Tiele was ignorant about them. Also, any question, if too direct, might be seen as requesting a favor that might necessitate a return favor later on. Tiele skillfully turned the questions around so that they implied that others were at fault. He was confused because other people had not explained the legends well. The implication being that if Mitimoo really knew what he was talking about, he could clarify things for Tiele. But Tiele never said that directly.

Here is an additional example of the same common pattern.

Makilai and I had just finished taking certain measurements of a piece of land close to Tokelau cemetery (po) and were discussing his genealogical connection to it. A man in his late fifties, who was on his way back from feeding his pig, saw us working. He came over to chat.

As an introduction, he made a mildly sarcastic remark about how we were just fooling around. We did not know what we were doing. Makilai said no, in fact, he was teaching me something about Tokelau cemetery and its reputed founder Koulangi. (That was basically true. In addition to Makilai's tracing out his genealogical claim to the section of land, Makilai and I were discussing Tokelau cemetery and its affiliations with other cemeteries in Yato.) When Makilai did not offer more information, the man made a further comment. He said that he did not really believe what people nowadays asserted about the affiliations of various cemeteries in Yato. People just

said contradictory things which confused him. He did not know really who to believe. He added that it was a shame he could not straighten things out better. It was sad how certain traditional knowledge was being lost. But he never asked Makilai directly what he knew. The man just waited to see if Makilai would respond.

Makilai after a moment's hesitation took the up the cue. He noted that his 'father' had told him that Tokelau cemetery had previously been affiliated with Walepia - not all of Walepia, just the part under the frangipani tree. Makilai, then suggested, that Koulangi, in fact, had originally been from Walepia. This appeared to intrigue the man. I knew from an earlier interview with him that he knew little of Koulangi's parents or their genealogical ties. But at the same time, he seemed hesitant to believe Makilai. After all, he and most other people felt that Tokelau was affiliated with Yayi kawa not the kawa that included Walepia. (In former times each kawa, or strip of land, was associated with certain cemeteries, see Beaglehole 1938:41-44 and 229-231.)

The man never directly challenged Makilai. He just smiled and said that he had believed all these years what other people had said - that Tokelau belonged to Yayi kawa. Makilai commented he had heard that too. But it was not true. Some kawa, he asserted, did not simply go in a straight unbroken line from the lagoon (tai) to the ocean side (tua) of the island. As part of his proof, he noted that Yamaunga kawa really only went up to Ipu'i - it did not go all the way to the ocean side of the island. All the land between Loto village and Yaalongo kawa belonged to Yayi kawa.

The man never directly asked Makilai a question or directly challenged what he said. The man simply admitted uncertainty and left Makilai to respond as he chose. By asking the question indirectly, the man not only made himself seem less ignorant but also left plenty of room for Makilai to maneuver in. Perhaps Makilai did not know the answer; perhaps he had been simply joking and we had been talking about something else. Presumably the man did not know. But he seemed curious enough to try exploring the issue further in his own cautious way.

Another example concerns Wakalua, an informant well-versed in genealogies. In interviewing Wakalua, I generally would keep my own opinions to myself. I would simply ask her certain questions and record her answers. I tried not to lead her in a particular direction nor give her any clues as to what I thought the correct responses might be. But I often wondered how Pukapukans might interview someone like Wakalua. Hence I was quite intrigued one day to see a man in his mid-fifties asking her about some genealogies. I went nearby to observe.

In some ways our styles were the same. He was quite respectful to her and asked his questions politely. He was clearly showing that he appreciated her time and effort. But beyond this, there were significant differences. First of all, he seemed to be more casual in his questions and seemed to roam from one topic to another. He could easily get side tracked into something else - such as some genealogical relationship that had nothing to do with the one he was collecting.

Secondly, he asserted far more of his own opinions. Though respectful to her, he seemed to be continually trying to show her that he knew quite a lot too. He was knowledgeable in his own way. Wakalua would at times simply let him go on. At times she would throw in something of her own. At other times she would correct him.

When she pointed out some error to him, the man often would sound surprised. He might say something like, "you don't say, really. And here all these people in Loto village had told me something different." Wakalua would laugh and then go on to justify her position. The man would take careful notes on what she said. Or sometimes, he would pause think a second and say, "yes, now I remember. That is correct. You know I had gotten this confused with so and so" and he would name some other person. Then he would take down Wakalua's explanation. In contrast to me who tried to remove my biases from the interview, he constantly tried to inject his view point.

About a month later, I interviewed the man about certain genealogies. The interview included some information that he had gained from Wakalua. Did he believe all that she had said to him? No, he commented, he had discovered (what he viewed as) some mistakes.



One can see in all these examples, how adult Pukapukans, concerned with appearances, concerned with status rivalry, cautiously ask questions. They ask questions that emphasize their own competence. They ask them in ways that do not alienate others, especially in public.

The Types of Questions Asked: Regarding the implications of this style of questioning, we have already noted that children gradually get discouraged from asking too many questions. Adults learn to approach matters indirectly. But why do Pukapukans ask certain types of questions and not others? Generally, they seem to focus mostly on the contexts and concerns they are familiar with. In regard to legends, for example, people seem to focus on questions of status, location, public appearances, and genealogical relationships.

In Tiele's questioning of Mitimoa about legends, for instance, Tiele decided to write down some of what Mitimoa told him. But he did not write down anything about the plots. He just wrote down two or three character's names and a few brief remarks about their relationships to one another and about the locations of various events. I asked Tiele later if he wanted to record more, such as the plots or the legends' importance. No, he replied, that was all he wanted. A few days later, I asked him if he remembered the legends' plots. He admitted he was a bit vague about some of the details. Then he asked me about certain people's names. I had forgotten them.

I had only remembered something about the plots because I had been interested in the legends' meaning and their anthropological significance.

When Nancy and I showed people pictures of our families in America, what questions did they ask? They asked who the people were. They asked how were they related to one another and whether they lived near by us or not. That was all usually. Then they would go on to make some remark about a person in the picture - such as one of the people had a funny haircut. Rarely did people ask about what they were like as people or what their occupations were. (Pictures of scenery seemed to bore them; beautiful Hawaiian vistas were passed over with just a glance.)

To a certain extent, some Pukapukans are aware that they do not ask particular types of questions. Eliu, in explaining to me that he did not know the meaning of the chant in the legend of Wutu stated, "When I was small, I did not really learn well (about this). I just mainly listened. I did not ask questions about what the meaning (really) was. I simply listened."

One incident vividly expressed, for me, this theme about the nature of questions Pukapukans ask. Pakuu, who had had some advanced education in New Zealand, one day was conversing with me in front of his house about anthropology and what anthropologists did. He emphasized that anthropologists could play an important role in preserving many of the Pukapukan traditions. I replied that Pukapukans could do this for themselves. They did not have to rely on outside help. He disagreed. Yes, they could ask the older people questions if they wanted. Admittedly, not too many people seemed to

do so. But that was not what he was thinking about. He had asked several older people questions and all he had gotten back was what he viewed as vague, worthless information. He thought that I, as an anthropologist, learned at the university what types of questions to ask people. He added, that sometimes he overheard one of the older people telling legends to a few children or teenagers. Shaking his head, he observed, when a story was finished, the audience would usually ask some of (what he viewed as) the stupidest questions - just about some trivial little detail such as the location of an event, the interrelationships among the participants, or the behavior towards another that had precipitated a particular response. Nothing was asked of broader significance, such as how the legend related to certain traditional customs. He felt that as an anthropologist I knew what broader questions to ask.

It is important to stress that Pukapukans are not some how intellectually limited in the types of questions they tend to raise. It is not a matter of their being unable to deal with "abstract" matters or that they are limited to certain "concrete" concerns (see Levy 1973:258-270 and Laboratory of Human Cognition 1979). Rather, what is involved, in my opinion, relates to a theme emphasized in chapter one. Pukapukans have different concerns than I do and that affects the types of questions they tend to focus on, that they are familiar with. With practice both of us could presumably transcend our everyday foci to ask about other concerns. (I could become, with practice, more engrossed in genealogical relations, especially if I

owned land on Pukapuka.) What is at stake is that different people are facing different problems and this affects the types of questions they are familiar with and tend to ask others.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF REPETITION IN THE GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE

The styles of observing, listening, and questioning, while important, are not the crucial factors that make informal Pukapukan education successful. The critical factor is repetition. What is missed in one observation or in one listening, is gotten in another. What is only partially learned at one stage, is improved upon through repeated experiences. Learning in Pukapuka is a gradual process. Repeated practice helps bring mastery.

Most sport practices simply involve playing intra-squad games. (Howard notes a similar phenomenon on Rotuma, 1970:67.) Volleyball practice for the New Years' games, for example, usually begins in November and goes on for six or seven weeks. Little formal instruction is generally given except for a critical comment here and there. They simply play game after game. When they begin their practices in November, the teams seem rather disorganized. But each week they practice, they progressively improve.

A sense of how much repetition is involved in learning can be gotten from looking at one of the initial practice sessions held by the Yato Village Youth Club in preparation for a chant competition I sponsored. During this session, in which the club attempted to learn four verses, they repeated the first verse approximately 30 times. Since they must have had 15 or more additional sessions subsequent to

this one, the verse probably was eventually repeated over 200 times. An examination of various quotes cited above also indicates the importance of repetition. Mitimoa specifically mentioned it regarding place names. Wakalua and the elderly woman (in her eighties) convey the impression that they repeatedly heard some of the same tales, either from their own parents or from various other adults.

These repetitive experiences gradually develop a core of knowledge that is shared by most people. Different people may tell slightly different versions of a particular legend. But the more versions a person hears, the more the versions tend to overlap and provide a common overall form or structure. The large amount of repetitive activity in Pukapuka thus helps to provide unity to variant accounts and experiences.

Building Knowledge Cores: The importance of repetition in Pukapukan culture was pointedly driven home to me in how I myself learned certain dances.

About three months after we had arrived, while we were still very much getting our feet on the ground, Tawa Ngake (i.e. one of the two sides in the Akatawa form of social organization) had its only practice session for the next day's victory celebration dance. Because people were busy with one thing and another, the practice began around 8:00 p.m. It lasted only until 12:00 midnight.

The leader, a man in his mid-thirties, began by discussing certain steps with several others around him. Then he would try them out. Usually there would be some modification of the initial steps as various people suggested further improvements. Because of the various modifications made and the performers laughter when they first followed the leader in performing the steps, I assumed people were learning a new dance.

We ourselves participated in the dance practice though we found it rather hard. Nancy commented to me later, "how could so many people learn these dance steps so quickly?" People could barely see what was going on half the time with two poorly working benzine lanterns providing the only light. By the end of the practice, we still had not properly learned the steps.

Almost two years later, it was quite a different story. By most standards, the time set aside to practice dance steps for the Christmas Day dance competition is short. Ideally, there are about two hours for the men of one tawa and the women of another tawa to create new dance steps and practice them. (At the Christmas celebrations women of one tawa are matched with the men of the other tawa.) But usually, people do not rush getting ready and there is often only an hour to an hour and a half left in which to develop and learn dance steps for the competition.

For the Tawa Lalo men and Tawa Ngake women on Christmas day 1979, there was even less time than that. When one of the leaders announced that we had only forty-five minutes left in which to learn new steps, a wave of tension went through the dancers. We had wasted over 30 minutes getting the band sorted out and still had no clear idea what movements we were going to perform. It seemed to several of us that we could not possibly win the competition.

Lepuama then took over. He immediately told the band to play the Banana Court number he had composed for the special Nassau celebrations five months earlier. As the men swung into a familiar step, people's spirits started to pick up. Though it had taken us several lessons to originally learn the steps, we only needed five or six repetitions to remember the pattern. The Tawa Ngake women had little difficulty fitting in because they used a general pattern that went with several different men's steps.

Lepuama next explained a few new movements he had thought up based on the original dance and within fifteen minutes we had mastered these. With about twenty minutes left we had to slowly start making our way towards the judges' stand. All did not seem as lost as before. But it certainly was going to be close. Lepuama showed the women a slight variation. A woman in her thirties immediately caught on and demonstrated it to the other women. As the women practiced this step, the men went over their own steps.

Then Lepuama, with Te Kula's assistance, developed a simple but humorous new step. It was similar to one we had done at the Nassau celebrations and was not too hard to pick up. It had a certain sexual bawdiness to it which made us all the more enthusiastic. The excitement facilitated our learning it. With about five to eight minutes left, we moved still closer to the judges' stand. It looked like we finally had something competitive.

As we made our final practices, we seemed to be gaining more and more confidence. We were not good, especially towards the rear of the line, but many of us had the idea and could perform reasonably well. Those in the very front looked quite professional. Of course, they were the best dancers to begin with anyway.

We delayed our final movement toward the judges' stand because the leaders were intent on making sure everything was set. The band had the rhythm; the dancers seemed to be performing creditably. Everything seemed to have fallen into place. Finally, we moved up to the judges' stand and performed.

For part of the dance, I watched from the sidelines so I could see how we actually looked. I thought we were as good if not better than the other team. But did we win? No, we lost. The judges stated that both teams had performed well and they could not decide between us. But since we had arrived at the judges' stand a few minutes late, they awarded the prize to the other side.

Generally, as time goes on people have plenty of opportunity to repeat certain skills. Each situation is not exactly the same as the next. Some may, in fact, appear on the surface to be quite different. But the basic pattern is often similar. Through repetition over time people gradually improve their skills. As will be described below, extensive repetition was used the first time we learned the Banana Court dance. But having learned the steps once, developing new steps based on the old ones was relatively easy. The same occurs with the wrestling chant practice mentioned above. These practice sessions tend to occur only once a year. People cannot possibly count on a single session to learn all the chants. But the practices occur year after year. What is missed in one practice can be gained in another. Also, the critical remarks made about one's knowledge, especially if true, can become especially irritating if mentioned from one year to the next. Thus, some people may gradually become motivated to seek outside assistance in such cases.

Fortes, in his classical study of Tallensi education (1938), asserts that at an early age Tale develop a set of schemas which are gradually expanded and elaborated upon as they grow older.

These total patterns which constitute the texture of Tale cultural behavior are not built up bit by bit, by addition, during the course of the child's life. They are present as schemas from the beginning . . . Further experience strengthens and amplifies the interest at the same time it causes the details of the postural diagram to be filled out, making it more and more adaptable and controllable, producing more discriminatory responses to real situations, and linking it up with norms of observance. The total pattern is not built up brick by brick, like a house, but evolves from embryonic form (1938:42-44).

He provides examples of this process, one of which concerns kinship.

The schema, rudimentary and unstable as yet, can be detected in the 3-4-year-old . . . A child learns the fundamental kinship terms and has the idea of distinguishing its relatives according to generation and genealogical distance long before it can couple this knowledge accurately with differential behavior towards kinsmen. The 6-year-old knows the correct terms and appropriate behavior defining its relations with the members of its own paternal family and has grasped the principle of classification according to descent. But in practice, he still confuses spatial proximity and relative age with kinship, beyond the limits of his own family. The 10-12-year-old has mastered the schema, except for some collateral and affinal kinsmen, the terms for whom are known though he cannot describe the relationships (1938:43-44).

Fortes' analysis raises an important question about how repetitive experiences get built up. Are there schemas and, if so, when do they develop? Do they follow the schemas suggested by Piaget (1966)? Or do they develop later in time? Various surveys I conducted clearly indicate that Pukapukan traditional knowledge increases with age. But is this knowledge the evolution and clarification of an embryonic form or the building up of knowledge "brick by brick"? I am not sure. It



depends, at least in part, on the topic concerned and the definition of schema within that context. How does one precisely distinguish schematic evolution from simple increment learning?

A complete discussion of this question carries us well beyond the scope of this analysis. But common statements, such as Veeti's, suggests to me that, at least in certain areas, knowledge is not only evolved from a schema but is also built up "brick by brick".

When I was young, it was a time when there were lots of good fisherman, they use to catch large numbers of fish. Consequently, when we, the children, would go look at the fish, we would frequently ask questions. "What is the name of these fish?" Some person who was knowledgeable about fish names would say "Its a such and such." So then I would know that the fish was called "such and such". (Someone) would ask about another fish "what is the name of that fish?" A person would reply that it was a such and such fish. That is the way it was.

Then at some other time, when we might see a new fish, some new fish from the ocean, we would ask "what is the name of this fish?" Then (one of the people) who was knowledgeable about these things, someone who was old, would reply, "Such and such, is the name of that fish." By doing this we would learn about more and more fish. Then at a later time, it would happen again and we would learn still more. We would do this again and again, learning from the knowledge of the very old people as we grew up.

Then when we became teenagers, we would start going fishing with those who knew how to fish. When we went with these people, one of us might catch a fish and look at how small it was. Then we would say "Oh yes, right this is the fish that so and so talked about. It is called such and such." Then we would have a clear understanding of not only its name but what it looked like. Thus we would know the name well.

It was like this as we learned more and more fish, as we grew older. Until now, when we are really old, we know about all the names of the fish, all of them completely. That is how I learned not only about the various names of the fish but about what they look like. Sometimes the old people told us, or sometimes I might ask my father, when I came back from fishing what is the name of this fish. He would say it was a such and such. Likewise, my mother might also explain to me the name of the fish . . .

Everytime we would see a new fish we would ask someone about it until we learned all the fish names. The people who wanted to learn thus could learn all about these names. Those who did not set their minds to it (makokole), some of the names they learned and some of the names they just forgot. That is the way most people are.

Repetition seems to be especially important in the earlier stages of learning. As already noted in the Yato Village Youth Club, for example, repetition played a particularly important role in the initial practice sessions. But as time goes on and people gradually learn what is required, repetition becomes less significant. What takes its place are criticism and ridicule. People use ridicule to correct and improve each other's performances once they have mastered the basics.

#### RIDICULE AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL AND THE ABSENCE OF PRAISE

Ridicule is a pervasive element in Pukapukan education. It merges with the concerns over status rivalry discussed in chapter one in that people, in asserting their own competence, frequently criticize the foibles of others. Rarely is praise given. Levy's statement about Tahitian upbringing is applicable to Pukapukan childhood too. The child "is not coached 'positively' - 'Do it this way.' But his errors are corrected - 'You are doing it wrong.' He begins to learn that both learning and proper performance consist of scanning for and avoiding errors" (1973:460). This is what happened when Luka taught Nimeti and Apela about hewing the outrigger. He

corrected their mistakes. He told Nimeti, "you are starting to make your cuts in that direction too deep, make them smaller." Never did Luka offer a word of encouragement to either of them.

The following passage from a later practice session by the Yato Village Youth Club, conveys the flavor of how this criticism works:

After a few minutes, a twenty year old girl, started the uyu (the high pitched introduction to a chant). An older man (in his early fifties), who was assisting the club, immediately stopped her and said she was doing it wrong. She tried twice more and each time the older man made a critical remark. One of the boys (in his early twenties) yelled at another girl (also twenty) to try. The girl just sat where she was and said nothing. Again the boy yelled at her to try. Again she did nothing. So a woman in her early thirties tried. Half way through the uyu she started to laugh in embarrassment. This made several people "snarl" at her in disgust. Then the girl who unsuccessfully tried to do it in the first place tried again. Everyone picked it up from her.

For the second verse, this woman and the thirty year old woman (who laughed in the middle of her previous effort) did the uyu together. Another boy in his early twenties turned to a teenager and told him to pay attention. In general through out the this whole chant, people made such little snipping remarks to each other. The remarks usually took the form of jokes which made others laugh. It was more one upmanship than anything else . . . After the second verse, the older man said that it should be chanted slower. A boy in his early twenties added his approval to the older man's comment.

Then there was a small break. Three people spoke to the group and each separately made a comment about something wrong with the practice. The older man's comment focused on how they were saying the chant incorrectly. The comments by two boys in their twenties stressed how the group should not fool around so much.

And so it went for most of this session. Some of the critical remarks, as noted, added a spice to the session. They relieved the repetitive routine. But many of them had the effect of pressuring people into following a certain pattern.

In a way it is not fully correct to call this ridicule. From the Pukapukan perspective, many people view this as simply being helpful. One time, for example, when I was assisting Te Kula with some work, he told me I was hitting the nails like an old lady. I suggested to him that it was wiser not to criticize (avili) those who were helping him. They might not want to help as much. He looked at me somewhat surprised. He said he was not trying to ridicule me. He was just trying to help me hit the nails better. I was not hitting the nails with a firm hard stroke.

Lack of Praise: Positive reinforcement is not commonly given in learning situations. During the final Yato Village Youth Club practice before the chant competition, for example, it was clear (to many Pukapukans and myself) that the youth club had done a superb job of learning three chants. But did any of the audience of older people, who came to listen to the practice, clap? Not one. If there were any favorable comments made to members of the youth club afterwards, I did not hear them.

But it would be inaccurate to say that there had been no praise used during the learning sessions. My notes indicate a few positive comments made here and there, particularly in the early sessions and particularly when the group's performance markedly surpassed what others had been led to expect. It would be more appropriate to say that praise is simply uncommon, especially among people who are familiar (maatau) with each other. Praise to newcomers can be lavish, but not to one's friends or children. For them you reserve sarcastic praise (waiakanau) - such as complimenting someone on their cricket

batting after they have just been bowled out twice. As the example of Luka implies, the absence of criticism may in itself be a form of praise.

A comparison between two teachers helps to clarify the differences between this Pukapukan educational perspective and our own Western one (see also Ritchie 1979). During my stay on the island, we became close friends with an Australian Volunteer in Service teacher who taught at the government school. The teacher was extremely competent, dedicated, and well-liked. He frequently used positive reinforcement with the children - encouraging them with compliments and treating them, within reason, as equals. This, he felt, was the most effective way to stimulate self-expression among the children - both in their discussions and in their writing. Without some sort of encouragement, he thought, they would not be eager to learn.

Another teacher, a Pukapukan, was also quite dedicated and competent. But he thought the Australian teacher was too soft on the children. Students, he asserted, must learn how to persevere in the face of adversity. One must challenge the student and not let him feel content with what he has done. By giving too much positive reinforcement, the student gets a "swelled head" about his own capabilities. He becomes too self-aggrandizing in his relations with others (cf. Ritchie 1979:156).

The lack of positive reinforcement was brought home to me quite directly in two ways. Pau, who speaks some English, was helping me go over a few questions in Pukapukan to use in a questionnaire. I had trouble translating praise into Pukapukan and I had asked him how he would do it. He first understood praise in the sarcastic sense noted

above (waiakanau). I explained that I meant it in a positive sense. It took us about twenty minutes of discussion to get the idea of the sentence correct - E ni toe tangata na tautuluina koe i au wakamaunga ma te talapaya? "Did some people assist you in your learning by the use of praise." When I asked some Pukapukans that question, particularly people in their twenties, they did not understand what I meant. I had to spend several minutes elaborating on what the question referred to. They were not even sure of talapaya's meaning in this context.

The Australian teacher was widely admired on the island. He was the first (and to date only) non-Cook Island teacher ever to teach at the Pukapukan government school. When he was getting ready to leave, I asked him if anyone had complimented him on the superb job he had done. No, he said, no one really had. A few Pukapukans who were visiting the island from New Zealand and Rarotonga had been very complimentary. But not the Pukapukans that he knew well in Pukapuka. True, several people had given him mats. A few people had mentioned he had done a good job at feasts (imukai) held for the departing passengers. But, he noted with a smile, they did that for everyone. Yet none of this should be taken to mean that he was not admired and appreciated. He clearly was. People simply did not express their respect directly to his face.

This lack of praise ties in with previous comments about trying not to appear ignorant. Emphasis is placed on the avoidance of mistakes, not on an accentuation of the positive.

## CHALLENGING AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL

Because of Pukapukans' concern with status rivalry, challenging other's opinions is quite common in certain contexts. Children, as well as adults, learn by trying to pick apart each other's assertions, through discussions involving one upmanship. The following example, observed by the Australian teacher and dealing with a Pukapukan legend, illustrates the process well.

A dispute developed among the children in the form five class in regard to the punishment meted out to Vakayala for his crimes. After most of Vakayala's flesh had been beaten off, were his testicles exploded by placing hot stones on them or was he just thrown into the water to drift with his testicles still intact? The argument went on for about twenty minutes.

One teenage boy, A, asserted that Vakayala's testicles had been exploded. Since two other boys frequently viewed A as being too haughty, they began criticizing his answer. They indicated that A did not know what he was talking about. He was just making up this particular section; his assertion had no basis to it. As it turned out, they were not too sure of the legend themselves.

Another teenage boy, B, asserted that Vakayala's testicles had not been exploded. As proof, he mentioned his father had told him this story and had not mentioned anything about exploding testicles. This brought in still another boy, C, on A's side. C always liked to kid B about how B felt he knew so much because of what his father had told him. Several others, both girls and boys, also participated in the discussion. But that day the discussion was left unresolved.

Some children then apparently went home and asked others about the legend. B asked his father again. One of the teenage girls went to ask Wakalua. C asked his 'mother'. When they all discussed the matter the next day, the general consensus tended towards the testicles not having been exploded. The children mostly accepted Wakalua's opinion because they viewed her as being more knowledgeable than the others queried. She had not mentioned anything about testicles to the teenage girl. But there was no complete agreement. A and C still had their doubts that Wakalua knew everything there was to know about the legend of Vakayala. They still felt that they were at least partially right.

(Interestingly enough, the Beagleholes recorded both versions of the Vakayala legend in their field notes.)

In adult discussions the process may be somewhat more subtle. Adults do not criticize others so directly (except in certain ritualized competitions as illustrated below). They may listen, wait, and then suggest an alternative view - as the man in his late fifties did with Makilai. Or they may make the criticisms into jokes as the elderly man did with Talainga in the wrestling chanting practice. Pukapukans may imply (as a manifestation of their concern with status rivalry) that their challenges and counter-challenges are quite direct. But as an outside observer, they seem to me to be diluted through jokes, tact, and innuendos. A concern with status rivalry is tempered by the desire to avoid seriously disrupting relationships with close cognatic kin.

The important point is that, whatever the actual degree of challenging, Pukapukans do feel the pressure, do feel the competition. Often it acts as a stimulant to learning. People compete to see who knows more. During the wrestling chant practice described above, Mitimoa challenged Veeti's dominance. Others got swept up in the competition and tried to show off. The elderly man's remark regarding Talainga, for example, implied that he was no novice himself.

In a sense, a real motivator to learn is to be able to withstand other people's challenges or aspersions that they know more than you. Eliu expressed this well when he stated - when I was young because "I was somewhat of a braggard (toku ngakau akatietie), I liked to (learn)



some legends. If some other child told me a story, well then I could also tell him one too." Eliu is implying that he did not want other children to assume that they knew more than he did.

To stand up to a challenge becomes an affirmation of one's competence. The word wakalalilali is a derogatory one in Pukapuka. In working on our dictionary (Mataola, Tutai, Borofsky, et al ms.), various people suggested it basically meant a good for nothing person and/or a person who was a waste of time. When they explained it further, it became clear what they meant was that the person was not much of a challenge to compete with. Ia koe i te wakalalilali ke poopoko mai kia aku. "It is a waste of time for me to wrestle with you (since you are not much of a challenge)."

Limiting Diversity: This type of criticism and challenging is what sometimes makes a person hesitant to fully respond in public to another's questions. Utalenga states it well (though many others also made the same point to me).

If an ignorant (valetiko) person (asks me a question) I will answer (him). If its an adult (tangata really means person), someone who knows (these things), I will not answer because if I answer him (he will) criticize me. Sometimes though if I give an answer (and he) criticizes me, that is the time for us to argue or debate with each other (akatautotoko). . . "Our (maatou) matrilineage (momo) is a Kati. All of you there are old (or really you are all old enough to know such things. Yet) you say to me you are from the Lakawanga (matrilineage). No you are not from the Lakawanga you are from the Kenakena." That is the way we would argue with each other.

Like context and repetition, these critical remarks, these challenges, play an important role in the development of a common fund of knowledge - at least in terms of what people say publicly. With

some limited exceptions, assertions which seem too out of the ordinary, may bring considerable ridicule down upon the person's head. While people may have a whole variety of opinions on a subject, not all of them get publicly expressed. People tend to focus on the safe ones; the ones that other people will basically agree with.

It is within this context that Makilai's conversation with the man in his late fifties takes on a new light. While I heard various opinions about how kawa, or strips of land, had traditionally been organized in Yato village, I never heard anyone else suggest what Makilai stated - that Yamaunga kawa went only up to Ipu cemetery. Though it had an intriguing reasoning to it which both the other man and I could appreciate, it went strongly against the grain of what everyone else that I interviewed asserted - that kawa went from the lagoon side of the island (tai) to the back or ocean side (tua). This fact probably helps explain why the man in his late fifties was hearing Makilai's idea for the first time even though they were on fairly good terms, had know each other for years, and belonged to the same village. Makilai had apparently been hesitant to say such an idea in public.

One can thus see that challenging and criticism - like context and repetition - play important roles in limiting the diversity of knowledge, at least as it is expressed publicly. While the informal educational styles of observing, listening and questioning when combined with questions of status rivalry can generate diversity and ambiguity, there are also forces at work that help limit such elements

as well. Yet this still leaves a particular question unanswered. Why do so many Pukapukans tend to shy away from direct individual instruction and gravitate towards indirect listening and observing?

#### SUBORDINATING THE LEARNER AS A TEACHING STYLE

One of the fascinating aspects of Pukapukan education is that most older people profess an interest in teaching the younger generation. A man in his sixties expressed a common theme when he stated: "If the person is hungry (umiti really means craving) to learn and comes to me, I will tell him what I know. I will not be stingy if he comes to my house." But few of the younger generation seem to come; few of them appear interested in being taught.

For children, being "taught" can be rather a humiliating experience. To punish a child for certain wrongs, Pukapukans not only beat the child with some object (such as a coconut spathe or a bunch of coconut leaves tied together), but they may beat the child until he stops crying. What Ernest Beaglehole noted in 1934-35 still holds true today: "The Pukapukan technique requires the child be whipped until he stop [sic] crying. I have never seen a child cease crying immediately in an effort to avoid further punishment. . . . He cries as long as he is whipped" (1944:161-62). Admittedly the child probably is not seriously hurt. But the punishment does generate a feeling of helplessness and frustration. The punishment not only teaches the child to avoid repeating the offense. It also teaches him that he possesses a distinctly subordinate role during the

"instructional" process. (Though the following illustration is a bit more vivid than many others I observed, it represents a common pattern.)

As Nancy and I were sitting by the road, we saw a man (in his fifties) come up to the water tank with his 'son' (of about four years old). The man was holding a coconut spathe in his hand. In a firm voice he told his 'son' to turn the faucet on and fill up the bottle he was holding. The boy, with a little trepidation, obeyed.

I asked the man what was going on. He explained that he was training the boy. Apparently, his 'son' had initially refused to go get some water for the household. The man decided that his 'son' should be taught to obey better. (The boy being the youngest child in the family was admittedly a bit spoiled by the man and his wife.)

The boy finished filling the bottle and held it up to look at. The man pointed the spathe towards home and non-verbally indicated that his 'son' should move in that direction. The boy seemed rather pleased with himself for having gotten the water. He started walking towards home with a smile on his face a little oblivious to his father behind him. Seeing his 'son's' nonchalance, the man poked the boy gently with the spathe. The boy appeared to ignore the poke. The boy's continued nonchalance seemed to perturb the man. He hit his 'son' firmly with the spathe.

This caused the boy to go into a tantrum. He started crying loudly. This in turn motivated the man to hit the boy harder to stop him crying. The boy went into a worse tantrum. The man continued to hit his 'son' until the boy, in absolute rage and frustration, dropped the bottle and ran for home. This irritated the man even more. (The reason the boy got in trouble in the first place was because of the bottle.) After a moment's pause to decide whether or not to pick up the bottle, he headed for home leaving the bottle where it was dropped. About ten minutes later, one of the man's older children came from the house and fetched the bottle.

One can understand what one of Levy's Tahitian informants meant when he stated "In childhood . . . one is too much under the control of others" (1973:48, cf. Ritchie 1979:78). Or the joy of becoming a young adult is that you are no longer hit: "In my childhood, one was hit. You went to school and were mischievous and you were hit. You

returned to the house and you were ordered to do things. If you didn't go [and do them] you were hit. Now, no." (Levy 1973:468). One can get a sense of why so many students liked the Australian teacher. He showed them respect.

This does not mean that the Pukapukan childhood is necessarily an unhappy one. The Australian teacher, Nancy, and I all viewed Pukapukan childhood as being basically enjoyable. After all, the whole island constituted a playground and parents tended to leave their children alone to play among themselves (a point the Ritchies, 1979:49 ff., suggest is common throughout Polynesia). But this one aspect of subordination seemed to rankle children immensely. It is little wonder, therefore, that older children and adults did not like to be put in a subordinate position again through the "teaching" process.

Teachers often emphasize their superiority in relation to the student. The learner must show the proper respect and appreciation for what he is getting. Mitimoa implies this in discussing under what conditions he would teach others. (It is a point I heard many others make as well.)

I will teach some other people. (But first I want to see what type of people they are. If I perceive that he is just boasting (and will soon) lose interest, I will start to lose interest too. . . . (If it is) someone who has criticized me before, what I have said before, I won't (help him)).

One can now better understand why Mitimoa described his learning experiences the way he did in earlier sections of this chapter. He was implying that he had showed the proper respect to his teachers.

The tone of Iakopo's comments below expresses even more clearly the subordination of the learner. Proper respect, in this case, verges on humiliation since Veeti is an important village elder and is viewed as highly knowledgeable about Pukapukan traditions.

(If) Veeti comes to me, (if) Veeti asks to me about some genealogy, "What is the name of some particular person"... (such as) who is the 'parent' (matua) of Pepeu, his 'mother' (matua wawine)? I (will) say "I do not know. I do not know (the name of) his 'mother'. Perhaps if I reply you will criticize (me)". . . .

"I (really) know who the 'mother' of Pepeu is but I will not tell you." (If) he (then admits to) me that he has asked Wakalua. (That) Wakalua gave him an answer . . . (but) he does not believe what she has said . . . That he really does not know (the answer). (Then) I (will) tell him (the answer) . . . the 'mother' of Pepeu . . . is Ulapo.

In giving this hypothetical example, Iakopo is implying that if anyone (even someone as important as Veeti) comes to him to obtain important information, he is going to make sure that the asker humbles himself a bit.

Given how people do not like to abase themselves in front of their equals, given questions of status rivalry, one can sense why many people are not so eager to be taught directly. It goes back to why people do not ask too many questions. It is just not worth all the trouble; it is just not worth all the humiliation. Its better to wait, to observe, to ask indirectly - as a "key" informant suggested above. One can now perhaps better understand why the man in his fifties who interviewed Wakalua regarding genealogies did so in the way he did.

These comments relate very nicely to an aspect of Pukapukan vocabulary. There is no specific word for student in Pukapukan. The closest one comes to student is child (tamaiti). Students at the

government school are called school children (tamaliki api). There is one word that can indicate student in a very special sense, apianga. It refers specifically to theology students (who must leave the island for formal schooling). Ko Takamoa te konga o te apianga ko noonoo ai. "Takamoa is the place where the theology students live (or stay)." But for the general term student, people either use the word child or some circumlocution to convey what is meant for a particular context.

Clarifying Illustrations: The subordination often implicit in formal instruction helps to explain the reactions of certain women when Pakuu offered them several helpful suggestions before an important volleyball game.

Pakuu did not try to be excessively aggrandizing in instructing them. He tried to be helpful. But there was still a patronizing tone to what he said that implied that he knew more than they did.

Some of the younger girls, in the late teens and early twenties, who had worked with Pakuu at the school, listened quite carefully to the advice. But not the women Pakuu's age. A woman in her late twenties made several joking remarks about the instruction to other members of the team. She laughed nervously several times. The situation obviously embarrassed her. But a woman in her early thirties did not seem to be embarrassed. She just totally ignored everything Pakuu said. Every time he spoke, she would stare up at some coconuts in a tree until he was finished.

One can perhaps better understand now also why the teenage boy did not immediately follow Ula's example in the bible play or why Nimeti and Apela seemed so casual in watching Luka hew the outrigger and lash the canoe. They did not want to appear subordinate. (Note that Apela watched Nimeti far more carefully than he did Luka.)

The following example summarizes some of the complications and subtleties involved in the whole process.

As I was collecting some genealogies from Wakalua, a woman (in her mid-forties) came up behind me to watch what I was doing. She made a joking remark about how I was collecting Pukapukan genealogies to show to people in America (where no Pukapukans lived).

I consequently suggested that she might like to learn about some of the genealogies I was discussing with Wakalua. She gave a huff and replied that of course she knew most of these genealogies. Was I trying to imply that she did not know about her own forebears? No, I said, I just thought she seemed interested in what I was doing. Perhaps, if she listened, she might learn something new. Again she huffed. How could she know all that Wakalua knew, she asked me. Was she as old as Wakalua? She was still relatively young. (The implication here was that she had not had enough experience to learn certain genealogies.)

I suggested that she nonetheless might want to listen. She just looked at me a little perturbed. Why, she asked, should she learn more if Wakalua already knew these things. (Wakalua smiled at the off-handed compliment.) There was no real reason for her to learn. She could always go ask Wakalua if she needed to know a genealogy related to some land dispute.

I then went back to working with Wakalua. The woman stood watching for about ten minutes. Then she sat down near me because, as she said, her legs hurt. As time went on, she tried to answer a few of my questions about specific genealogical relationships. Sometimes, for fairly recent relationships, she would tell me the answer before Wakalua responded. For earlier relationships, she would turn to Wakalua and ask for confirmation. Rather than becoming a student, she had decided to teach me.

After another ten minutes or so, the woman became intrigued by one of my questions and asked Wakalua to develop it further, to explain how it fit with something else she knew. During the rest of the interview, she mostly listened to Wakalua. Occasionally though she would try to answer one of my questions before Wakalua. If I expressed doubt about her knowledge, she would turn to Wakalua for confirmation.

When the interview was over, the woman smiled at me. Now, she asserted, I had proof that she was quite knowledgeable about genealogies. If I wanted, I could also interview her too. That way I would have more material to take back with me to America.



Self-Learning: Such concerns over status and subordination help to explain why various people emphasize that they learned things mostly for themselves. (Levy notes a similar pattern for his Tahitian informants, 1973:220, 452.) The point was made clear to me during our early months on the island when I conducted a survey of how children learned various fish names. The vast majority of the ten year old boys asserted that no one else had taught them about fish names. They had learned about them by themselves. Only with considerable probing did they mention a few other people who had instructed them in such matters.

The ambiguity between what is taught and what is learned can be seen in the Pukapukan word apii. In working on the dictionary, Akalulu asserted that apii meant both to teach and to learn. When I checked this with others, such as a man in his early fifties and with Veeti, they disagreed. Apii meant to teach; wakamau meant to learn. When I asked someone else a few days later, he was emphatic about the term's meaning. Apii meant to learn. He used the following sentence to prove his point: Ko apii au ke aku iloa te maani wale. "I am learning how to build a house." Rechecking with the man in his early fifties, he too was insistent. Apii did not mean to learn.

While I do not now know whether apii means to learn or not, I do find the confusion about the term's meaning interesting. One can see exactly the same confusion in how teaching seems to merge with learning. Is it teaching or self-learning when Winangalo and the man in his early seventies listen to the talk of the older men? What is

it when Te Ingoa remembers comments told to him about old burial customs? And is it learning or teaching when a ten year old boy becomes acquainted with certain fish names?

Whatever the answers to these questions, it is now clearer why individual Pukapukans hesitate to be formally taught by another person. It involves too much subordination. It is too painful a reminder of certain childhood experiences. It goes against their assertion of self-competence through the medium of status rivalry.

#### LEARNING FROM PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF KNOWLEDGE

Given such concerns, one can see why public occasions provide an ideal opportunity for acquiring knowledge. People openly display what they know. Others can listen quietly taking it all in.

But having said this, there is one caveat which complicates the situation immensely. The event occurs within the normal Pukapukan framework of challenges and counter-challenges. A lot of information gets presented. But it is not exactly clear which information is correct.

The inspection tour by the council of important people (Kau Wowolo) to the the public reserve islet owned by village A was the occasion for two huge feasts (imukai). After the first one, various people got up and made speeches. The first person, from village A, praised the great feast his village had prepared. The next two, who belonged to other villages, while expressing their appreciation for the meal, publicly doubted whether it really matched up to the feasts their own respective villages had recently put on for the council of important people. But out of compassion (wakaaloo), they both added, for all the effort by the people of village A, they would donate a small gift of money.

About the fourth person to get up was Veeti. He waited for everyone to quiet down before beginning. (Normally people just try to speak over the noise.) By his manner, he was able to draw people's attention to what he was about to say. After praising the feast of his village, he decided to ask several questions to the assemblage. Certainly many people, particularly from other villages, might claim to be knowledgeable, but when tested publicly, did they really know all that much about the past traditions of Pukapuka.

After a pause, to make sure he had people's attention, he continued. He asked the assemblage what was the true meaning of the word kula - not the obvious meaning concerning the color red, but the real ancient meaning of the term. His next question concerned what the terms kula pupuni and kula moemoe referred to. As he took in breath to proceed on to a third question, he paused and stopped. He stated that would be enough for now. But the clear implication was that there were many more questions that he could ask if people wanted him to.

A man in his late fifties, who was an important official of village A, was the first to reply. I knew, from private discussions with him, that he felt unsure about many matters of tradition. But apparently he felt he knew one of the answers and was eager to display this fact. In his opening remarks, he noted that it was appropriate that he, as an official of village A, should answer Veeti's first question since it implied the greatness of the village that they both belonged to. He also expressed his appreciation to Veeti for presenting such questions which would educate the Pukapukan youth.

The man was not completely sure of the whole story and asked for Veeti's help if he forgot any part of it. But as he understood it, someone from Pukapuka had gone to a foreign island where that person had found a very bright red object. This object the person brought back to Pukapuka. Because this person was from village A, the object itself eventually became associated with the village. It became the basis for one of village A's traditional names.

Veeti listened to the man carefully and courteously. But when the man was done, he just stood there quietly waiting for other people to speak. Akalulu, a high person in village B, got up. He admitted that he was not sure of what the term kula meant. Nonetheless he doubted the previous speaker's explanation. As everyone knew, one of the old names for village A was Te Langai kula, not just kula. Obviously, there was something wrong with the man's explanation. He thought he would turn his attention to the second of Veeti's questions which seemed more interesting. Kula pupuni he felt meant the child when it was in the womb. It could not see; its eyes were closed (pupuni).

Kula moemoe referred to the child just after it was born. The child slept a lot (moemoe) and hence was given this name.

Pau, an important person from village C, next stood up and spoke. Essentially, he said, he agreed with Akalulu's answer though he had a few minor reservations about its completeness. Since the first question was obviously harder, he would focus on that one. He felt it probably dealt with a trip (tele) of some sort. At various times in his speech he expressed both definiteness and uncertainty concerning this assertion. For example, paraphrasing him he stated, "for sure the word has something to do with a trip, that is certain. But I am not sure in what way. Perhaps it is a trip, perhaps it is something else. I am not sure. At least that is my opinion."

Veeti then rose to speak again. He urged people to think deeply about these questions. They dealt with the past that was being ignored by today's generation. Then he preceded to debunk Akalulu's conception of kula pupuni and kula moemoe. Akalulu, while making a reasonable guess, had been mistaken. As a hint, he said people should think about the old chants and try to use them to figure out what the various terms meant.

He turned to me and asked me if I knew. He added that I should not to worry about the terms kula pupuni and kula moemoe since those were not difficult. But did I know what kula meant? (His question must be seen in light of the fact that I had been interviewing him extensively for the past two weeks.) Having no idea, I said nothing.

Utalenga, another important person from village B, then got up and spoke. He began by jokingly stating the term kula meant the color of cooked coconut crabs and referred to the food of village A's feast. Various people smiled at the joke. The answer obviously was not that simple. Utalenga went on to express his general agreement with Pau that kula referred to a trip, but in a slightly different sense than what Pau had suggested. It referred to the people who were involved in the trip.

As proof of his assertion, Utalenga offered the following phrase: Kavea te kula ki olaanga which he translated into modern Pukapukan as kave te kula (or tele) ki Motu Kotawa, Ko, ma Uta ("Take the party of people to each of the publicly owned village reserves - Kotawa, Ko and Uta.") Olaanga, in the sense of being life, he said referred to the public reserves (motu) which provided people with the nourishment to live. These were the reserves that the Council of Important People was now visiting. Hence Veeti's question was quite timely. (In my later private questioning of Utalenga, he sheepishly admitted that his phrase did not actually come from a chant but was from a religious song, the name of which he had forgotten.)

Luka, a high person from village C, next stood up and said the questions were not really as hard as people suggested. In fact, they were quite simple. Pula pupuni he said was obvious. Pau looked up at Luka and asked with a wry grin, if Luka meant kula pupuni or pula pupuni. Luka, with a broad innocent smile, replied pula pupuni. Pula pupuni referred to a patch (pula) sewn on a piece of clothing to cover (pupuni) a hole. This brought several laughs because he had obviously changed things around so that he could give a clever answer. He was clearly talking about something totally different from what Veeti had meant.

Pula moemoe, Luka continued, referred to someone who slept on a rough surface, such as gravel. Because the top of the head would rub against the surface, the person would gradually lose all his hair. He would become bald (pula). With an outstretched hand, he vaguely pointed in the direction of an important official in village A who was partially bald. This brought even more laughs over his clever joke at the other person's expense.

During these speeches, Veeti just listened. He took it all in but said nothing. Likewise Mitimoa listened carefully to each speaker. He seemed, however, a bit hesitant to get up and speak himself. Wakalua occasionally listened to the speeches. But she did not seem particularly interested in what was going on. Though she laughed at Luka's jokes, she mainly seemed absorbed in eating coconut crabs.

Eliu, an important person on the island and an official of village C, next stood up. He made a brief statement thanking village A for their feast and presented village A with some money in an envelope. He completely side stepped Veeti's questions. The next speaker did the same.

Then Veeti stood up and explained what the terms meant. People had gotten confused, he said, because they did not examine the two questions properly. The kula of the first question was somewhat different from the kula of the second question. Kula referred to something that the parents, the po (the patrilineal burial grouping), or the yoolonga (the localized patrilineal grouping) held very precious or dear (wakaemaema).<sup>1</sup> The proof of this statement, he noted, could be seen in the chant of Malo in the phrase: ngalo ai to tatou kula. It meant in respect to the po that it was becoming extinct, that there were no more descendants to carry it on. Kula pupuni referred to when the child was born, when he came out of the mother's womb. The eyes were covered with blood and hence the baby could not see. Kula moemoe referred to a child when it was about five or six months old, when it began to recognize people. At this time, the child mainly ate and slept. He was not very much involved with people. Having thus answered his own questions, Veeti sat down.

Subsequently, several different people stood up and gave speeches similar to Eliu's. Some emphasized the puniness of village A's feast in comparison with the magnificent feasts their own villages had put on. Others just briefly expressed their gratitude. But all gave a little money.

That night I ask Pau what he thought about Veeti's speech. He said that Veeti had been correct. As he elaborated upon it, he stressed how Akalulu had been wrong. When I pointed out to him that he had basically agreed with Akalulu, he smiled. That, he said, had just been to be polite. Was Veeti right about the term kula? Pau suspected so because it sort of fitted with some things his mother had told him when he was younger.

The next morning, at the second of the feasts, Mitimoa got up to speak. He said that he now wanted to reply to Veeti's questions. With a smile, he looked at Luka and said that the term was kula pupuni not pula pupuni. It was meant as a joke. But it did not come off because people were still too busy eating. (Mitimoa had really gotten up too soon to speak. People did not seem intent on listening to him.)

Kula pupuni, Mitimoa said, referred to the child up to three or five days after birth. About this time the umbilical cord (pito) dropped off. Before this time, the umbilical cord must be covered - so that it would not break off and cause bleeding. Pupuni referred to covering the umbilical cord. The term kula, meaning red, referred to blood. Kula moemoe referred to the child when it slept most of the time, all the way from just after birth up to about six months, when the belly bottom (pito) and digestion were all right. The child got this name partly because it slept all the time and partly because the child's skin was a bit reddish. Satisfied with his explanation, Mitimoa sat down. But it is not at all clear why he got up in the first place. Most people were still engrossed in eating and Veeti had already given what he viewed as the correct answers the evening before.

A few days later, I asked Akalulu about Veeti's speech. He thought it was a fine idea to teach people about the old traditions. But the sad thing about Veeti, Akalulu commented, was that he was now really too old. He could not be fully relied upon anymore - such as regarding what he said about kula pupuni and kula moemoe. Akalulu felt that his own answers had been closer to the truth.

When I asked Luka about Veeti's speech, he laughed at me. Go ask the people in village A, he told me. They knew. Mitimoa was a bit embittered by the fact that people had not listened closer to what he had said. Yet, he commented, what could one do if they criticized you and did not want to listen. But he knew he was right. Veeti was wrong. Utalenga had a slightly different perspective. He was surprised by my question. Weren't everyone's answers exactly the same he asked.

It is hard to know exactly what kula, kula pupuni, and kula moemoe precisely mean (in a correspondence theory of truth). There is, of course, a great deal of overlap between what various people said. Kula pupuni and kula moemoe concern the child around the time of his birth and a few months thereafter. But as to the specific details, people differed. (The Beagleholes discuss the terms, 1938:233, if one is interested in still another perspective.)

Public occasions, such as these, clearly offer opportunities for people to learn. People can avoid much of the subordination involved in other contexts. They can simply listen to the knowledge being presented before them. But the existence of discrepancies in various people's accounts means that plenty of ambiguity exists as to which statements are correct.

#### POSSESSING THE APPEARANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

What Pukapukans seem interested in is the application of knowledge to certain pragmatic ends - to resolving problems they are faced with in particular contexts and/or with particular audiences. More than truth, in some correspondence sense, they are concerned with how particular statements fit within the context of their status

rivalries with one another. To go beyond this, to "truth" in some ultimate sense, would clearly be difficult in the Pukapukan context. An interested individual would have to find the right opportunities for casually asking various respected elders about the matter. And when he had queried these people, if the people did not all agree how would he know who was right?

Moreover, if the individual did discover the correct answer, it would not necessarily mean that others would accept it. Others might still criticize the answer anyway as a matter of status rivalry (as occurred with the legend of Vakayala and the meaning of kula pupuni). If I had included all that Mitimoa had said privately to me regarding Veeti, the reader would realize that Veeti's specific definitions were of secondary importance to Mitimoa. Mitimoa simply felt that he was smarter than Veeti. That is why Veeti's answers were incorrect.

Yet why even go to all that trouble of further investigations, subordination, and criticisms when there are plenty of ways of hiding what one does not know? We already saw that Apela did not know how to lash the tutuiki sticks. But he did not bother telling Luka that. He tried to bluff his way through just as several men did with the wrestling chants. They may not have really known certain facts, but they knew how to cover up their ignorance.

What becomes important is the appearance of knowledge. What is important was not just what Veeti said about kula pupuni and kula moemoe, but the manner in which he said it. Veeti is a master of this. He defined the issues and used his manner and presence to dominate the scene. Pau, Utalenga, and Akalulu were all forced into playing the game on Veeti's terms. Only Luka decided it was more



advantageous to play the game on other terms. Mitimoa is certainly knowledgeable but he did not have that presence, or charisma, to make his interpretations stick.

When Mitimoa privately complained that Veeti was ignorant in particular areas, he was partially correct. Veeti does have gaps in his knowledge. (I know from all the questions I privately asked Veeti.) But Veeti knows how to manipulate the situation to his advantage, choosing his terms, using his charisma. We may be in doubt as to what kula, kula pupuni, and kula moemoe precisely mean in some correspondence sense of truth and whether Veeti was correct or not. But we can certainly be impressed by a skill Veeti does possess. He is a master at the art of appearing to know before others. He knows how to use his knowledge to handle certain status rivalry problems with his peers.

#### MORE FORMALIZED PATTERNS OF EDUCATION

To finally complete the general analysis of Pukapukan education, it should be emphasized that not all the processes involved can be neatly listed under Scribner and Cole's heading of "informal education" (cf. Greenfield and Lave 1982). Some might be better listed under what Scribner and Cole call "noninstitutionalized formal education." They assert:

Drawing on recent anthropological discussions, we can provisionally define formal education as any process of cultural transmission that is (i) organized deliberately to fulfill the specific purpose of transmission, (ii) extracted from the manifold of daily life, placed in a special setting and carried out according to specific routines, and (iii) made the responsibility of the larger group (1973:555).

Of course it is a matter of degree. Informal education grades into formal education to a certain extent.

In formalized education, many of the same basic processes described above still occur. But certain additional principles exist as well. Generally, difficult parts are divided into smaller sections so they can be learned more easily. Those who are best acquainted with what is being taught - the best dancers, the best chanters - are overtly used as models for others to follow. They act as a core group that essentially learns the material quicker than others and then teaches it to the rest of the people in turn - just as one of the women did in the Christmas dance practice. Subordination tends to be muted because the formal teaching occurs within a large group of peers. In fact, the challenge of trying to learn what is being taught, the competition of trying to master it before some others, the excitement of doing it in a group, can be quite exhilarating.

A fitting example of this more formalized educational pattern is the way several Pukapukans, Nancy, and I learned the original Banana Court dance which figured in the preparations for the Christmas Day dance contest in 1979. Having seen how a basic foundation of skills was used to quickly develop new ones, the reader can now see all the effort that went into developing the original skills.

The Banana Court dance was composed by Lepuama. The name derives from a bar of that title in Rarotonga. Supposedly the steps relate in some manner to drunkenness, but the exact connection seems a bit vague. At best the dance steps express a special exuberance that some drunken people display. At any rate, the title was a real winner; it caught people's imaginations.

Lepuama broke the dance down into two main parts. The initial section, the easier one, was taught the first night. Lepuama started by telling the drummers what type of beat he wanted and then got at the head of one of the two men's lines. (Lines of men and women are interspaced with one line of men specifically designated as partners for a particular woman's line.) With the band playing, he did the whole first part of the dance by himself. Two or three of the young men (in their twenties), who could dance well, imitated him. But most people, particularly the older ones, just watched. The second time Lepuama did it, a few more people joined in. By the third time everyone was performing the steps. That night the steps were practiced eight times. People seemed engrossed in learning the steps. Most appeared uninterested in looking for flaws in other people's performances or trying to criticize them.

The next night, the first section was practiced again eight or nine times. During this period, Lepuama just sat on the sidelines and watched. Occasionally, he would make a critical remark to one of the men leading a line. (The best dancers are always at the head of the line.) During this time, the women did not have any special steps to learn. They just did a general hip movement which, according to Nancy, occurs in most dances.

After these practices, Lepuama got up and performed the second part of the dance. This was much harder. Following two or three attempts at imitating him, people formed a third line so that more people could directly observe Lepuama. (The original lines were rather long and it made no sense following the person in front of you since he often did not know the steps either.) But this attempt too did not prove very successful. So Te Kula, the person in charge, shouted that only a few people should try it. Some of the best dancers, approximately ten men and ten women, formed into three sets of lines and tried following Lepuama. After practicing the steps about six or seven times, they seemed to get the hang of it. At this stage, the second dance practice ended.

During the next session, the first section was practiced five or six times. Then, after a pause, Lepuama got up and led the second part of the dance two or three times. Instead of just being at the head of one line, he went in front of everyone and faced them so that more people could observe better what he was doing. Finally he

sat down and watched people do the steps. Every so often he would yell at one of the men at the head of a line to correct some error. The yelling seemed the same whether the mistake was major or minor. This section was practiced around six or seven times. Then the session ended.

If during the dance, the drummers made a mistake or missed a beat, several of the dancers would yell at them in disgust. Usually it would be a general degradation of the band but occasionally a specific person was picked out. (It should be noted that the band consisted of people in their teens and twenties. Such direct public criticism of an older person would be unusual.)

Through out the following dance practices, the two leaders, a woman (in her forties) and Te Kula, would watch from the front. If someone down a line seemed to be fooling around, one of them would hit the person with a small bunch of coconut leaves. The leaves did not hurt. It was just the idea of the thing. One time, for instance, the woman went down the line and hit a teenage boy. Then, just because another teenage boy smiled at the first boy getting hit, she hit him too. The second teenage boy seemed, to me at least, to be doing a fine job. But it apparently was a matter of discipline in the woman's eyes.

For the next three sessions, the complete dance was practiced. The dance was probably repeated around eight times at each session. The repetitions were not all done at once though. They were interspersed with the other dances being learned.

At the next practice session, the women learned some new steps. While the men were off elsewhere, the women formed into three lines. Lepuama gave some brief instructions and then demonstrated to the women at the head of each line regarding what to do. Next all the women together tried the new steps. When they made a mistake, he would yell at them collectively or mock their efforts with a caricature of what they looked like. The steps were a bit hard but the women picked them up fairly quickly with only four or five practices. When the men returned, the whole dance was practiced approximately another six times.

As the session neared the end, Lepuama, Te Kula, and Pau decided to add a small final section to the dance. Lepuama started it. Then Pau suggested a few changes and some of these Lepuama integrated these into his movements. Te Kula, at the head of one of the lines, slightly altered Lepuama's version. For a while there were different steps being performed by various people in the lines. But after a few practices and a few critical comments, things seemed to get straightened out and Lepuama, Te Kula, and Pau all basically agreed on what the additions would be. The new additions were then practiced several times more.

Two more practice sessions occurred before the actual official performance. The general pattern, however, was essentially the same as above - except people seemed more critical of each other. The woman (in her forties) and Te Kula were more vigilant in their observations and more people yelled at a person if he made an obvious mistake. But these were the only changes.

Essentially then, with the exceptions noted above, the pattern is the same as for informal learning. Observation, imitation, repetition and criticism are emphasized. As occurred in the earlier description of Nimeti and Apela repairing a canoe, learning through observation and imitation can lead to a certain amount of variation on particular occasions (such as the final additions to the dance created by Lepuama, Pau, and Te Kula). But with repetition and criticism, the variations become less obvious.

#### IMPLICATIONS

Overall then, one can perceive the effectiveness of Pukapukan education. Education, Middleton asserts, "is the learning of culture" (1970:xiii). "Education in the widest sense is the process by which the cultural heritage is transmitted from generation to generation" (Fortes 1938:5). We have examined how Pukapukans acquire knowledge regarding canoe building, lashing, place names, fish names, social organization, legends, weaving, chants, and dances to cite several of the examples mentioned above. Clearly, the general principles of context, observation, imitation, repetition, criticism, and challenging - or what has been called informal education by various authors - work well. Part of the reason for this is that these

principles fit with important aspects of Pukapukan culture. The informal pattern of education, for example, functions effectively in educating the young because only a limited need exists for specialized training on the atoll (cf. Ritchie 1979:122). As the Beagleholes note: "The amount of specialization in Pukapukan economic life is small. Every man considers himself able to perform adequately most adult male duties, and every woman considers herself a good enough cook or mat plaiter" (1938:47). Even specialized skills, such as canoe building, require only a limited amount of formal instruction. People can simply pick them up by watching others and practicing.

The population, moreover, is culturally homogeneous. No need exists for a formalized system of education to instill a common framework of knowledge and values in culturally diverse groups - as is necessary in the United States. Pukapukan education really overlaps with and reinforces the ongoing cultural life of the atoll. The repetitive quality of everyday existence means that knowledge not grasped on one occasion can be grasped on another. While specific details may vary from one occasion to the next, the basic pattern often is repeated over and over again. What may appear to the outsider as a spontaneous, new dance may well possess the same basic elements of numerous other dances performed on numerous other occasions.

## DIVERSITY OF KNOWLEDGE

Because Pukapukan education focuses on observing, listening, and not asking too many questions, it tends to encourage, to a certain degree, diversity of knowledge. People do not always agree on what they observe or hear. In the example of Nimeti and Apela, their lashings on the outrigger differed slightly because, while both followed Luka's basic pattern, they drew different conclusions regarding how Luka lashed the underneath portion. One made a diagonal before going under the bottom piece, the other did not. If Luka had specifically instructed them or if they had watched closer (rather than being concerned about not feeling too subordinate), this may well not have happened.

Because adults often ask questions indirectly, people do not always find out exactly what they want to know. Tiele, for example, probably would have liked more information than Mitimoa provided about certain legends. Likewise, because people may reply in a way that does not open themselves up as much to criticism, their answers may not always make sense to those asking the questions (as occurred with Eliu's reply to the girl regarding tanganga). Plenty of room exists for variations in how something is understood.

Moreover, the fact that Pukapukan status rivalries frequently pervade the public discussions means that no real group closure may develop regarding a particular topic. People may leave a meeting having differing perceptions of which account is correct. Veeti,

Mitimoa, and Akalulu all came away with differing perceptions of what kula, kula pupuni, and kula moemoe meant. Many other people probably did so as well.

Such comments imply that diversity of knowledge is common in Pukapuka. That is true. As Wallace notes: "When the process of socialization is examined closely, it becomes apparent that, within the limits of practical human control and observation, it is not a perfectly reliable mechanism for replication" (1961:28). But the situation does not get out of hand because, as noted, there are also factors which impede variation from becoming too pronounced. The issue really becomes how is diversity organized.

#### DEVELOPING KNOWLEDGE CORES AND LIMITING DIVERSITY

Because learning usually occurs within a situationally relevant context, limits are placed on the number of possible interpretations people can make. Words such as wua or paapaa, for instance, are only meaningful within specified contexts. For wua it is a matter of the sentence. For paapaa, it depends, more on the age of the speaker. Often, people learn about a place in the process of going there. Or a child hears a fish name when he can readily observe the fish being talked about.

Moreover, repetition allows experiences which initially may be poorly grasped to become better understood through time. Nimeti had not learned to hew an outrigger from the single time he had done it prior to working with Luka. Nor did Tiele apparently remember the details Mitimoa told him about the legends of "Te Awuawu ma



Ngaliyeyeu" and "Papalangi". But as the examples regarding the volleyball and dance practices illustrate, people learn these things over time.

Repetition also allows people to develop a common set of shared experiences - because many events are repeated over and over again with only slight variations. At one time a person might share the experience with one individual at another time with some one else. But gradually over time people come to share the same types of experiences. Not all the children on the island, for instance, hear the same exact version of a particular legend. But because children tend to go around to different adults, they get to know what the various versions have in common, what the range of possibilities are. Though each separate experience might be slightly different, as they get repeated over and over again through time, Pukapukans gradually build up a common core of shared experiences with each other.

Ridicule and challenges also put limits on what is publicly viewed as acceptable variation. People do not want to appear ignorant or foolish especially in public. So within reason, they tend to give the same sorts of answers. The whole discussion of kula, kula pupuni, and kula moemoe had a common thread to it with slight variations. No one presented a totally different account. There well might have been others at the feast who had opinions about what the three terms meant. But they, like Eliu, were not willing to challenge those who had discussed the matter. As the example of Makilai illustrates, people may know each other for years and never broach a topic of common interest (especially in public), presumably because they do not want to be ridiculed.

Ambiguity: It would be inappropriate, however, only to view Pukapukans as possessing shared or unshared knowledge. As the next chapter elaborates at length, people may simply be unclear or uncertain about the validity of certain knowledge. While Pukapukans clearly possess criteria for evaluating knowledge claims, it does not mean that conflicting claims are always resolved. How are Pukapukans, for instance, to determine precisely what kula, kula pupuni and kula moemoe mean? Or what happened to Vakayala's testicles? The educational process not only leads to diversity and overlapping cores of knowledge. It helps to generate certain ambiguities in this knowledge as well.

#### THE ROLE OF CREATIVITY IN UNDERSTANDING

While the ways Pukapukans validate certain claims regarding traditional knowledge will be discussed in the next chapter, it is relevant to note here that people often synthesize their own accounts from what they hear or observe. They create their own knowledge. Pau, for example, clearly knew about another person's assertion that particular taro swamps had been owned by matrilineages (momo) in times past. But, as he explained to me, the assertion just did not make sense to him. It just did not fit with what he knew today about matrilineages. Hence he developed his own theory of how matrilineages had operated in the past. One afternoon Iakopo remarked to me that part of the reason he learned many legends was so that he could tell them to his 'children'. But he confided, some legends did not

always make sense. So "in some cases where there are mistakes (or misinterpretations), (I) just throw (those parts) away."

Appropriately enough, Iakopo's version of a particular legend explained an ambiguity existing in many other people's accounts. But though it made his version clearer, it also made it unique. No one else told the legend in that way.

Or take the example of Te Alo, another person who assisted me. His own interview, before we had begun interviewing others, indicated he only possessed a vague idea of what the legend of Wutu was about. Later, after finishing a series of interviews, I asked Te Alo one evening what he thought of the various versions of Wutu we had heard together. He noted that some people had ambiguities in their accounts, particularly about where the ghosts were taking Wutu in relation to how Wutu subsequently escaped along the reef. But Te Alo felt the majority of the people had been right - that the ghosts had planned to carry Wutu to Te Aumaloa. This surprised me considerably because I could recall no one ever giving such a version. In discussing the matter with him, he did not mention specific individuals' names. But he conveyed the clear impression that many people had told us the legend that way. What he suggested actually made a great deal of sense. But when I checked over the accounts we had heard together, none of them mentioned the ghosts carrying Wutu to Te Aumaloa.

Or take the case of Tiele. I also interviewed Tiele before and after he assisted in a survey dealing with the identification of Pukapukan material artifacts. He felt he had done much better in his post-survey interview than in his pre-survey one. I asked him why.

He explained that he had initially been unsure of many answers. But when he listened carefully to what various knowledgeable people, such as Veeti, Waka'ua, and Mitimoa, said in their interviews and compared their accounts, they were identical. Therefore he now knew what the correct answers were. That made good sense, of course. But a problem exists. While in some ways the various accounts Tiele mentioned did overlap, they certainly did not overlap completely. Nor were all the answers Tiele gave identical with those that these people shared in common. Whether he actually believed that his and these other people's answers were all the same or whether he was just using that statement to justify his own answers is hard to say. But certainly he had created a new version based on what he had heard and observed during the interviews.

This creativity exists in public performances as well as in private or semi-private reflections. Before the first play rehearsal began for the legend of Malotini, Utalenga, the director, outlined the main plot. Briefly, he mentioned, that Malotini had gotten in trouble and had been killed after coming back from fishing. With each rehearsal thereafter, the play took on more color. Where there had been ambiguity about what trouble he had gotten into, his lechery with married women gradually became more and more prominent because it made the play more humorous. Where initially Utalenga claimed Malotini had been out fishing by himself, it became a tanganga (or age-mate fishing group) because someone remembered the term and more people could be included in the play. The fact that several people, including Eliu,

Te Kula, and Pau, emphasize they learned about Pukapukan traditions from plays such as these makes the impact of this creativity all the more potent.

The point I want to emphasize is that at times people creatively synthesize their own knowledge - usually privately based on what they have experienced but also on occasion in public group performances. This brings us back to a theme discussed in chapter one. Considerable evidence suggests that Pukapukan traditional knowledge is not only passed on down from generation to generation but is also created in the present (cf. Lord 1960, and Finnegan 1977).

#### LEARNING HOW TO KNOW

Various people have discussed what Bateson (1972:167 ff.) calls deuterio-learning or "learning how to learn" (e.g. Bruner, Oliver, and Greenfield 1966, Scribner and Cole 1973, and Brown and French 1979). If one uses the phrase in a general sense then this type of learning certainly occurs in Pukapuka. Repetition helps people not only acquire a skill but develop the basic knowledge needed for improving on it still further - as illustrated in learning new dance steps.

But overall, rather than teaching people "how to learn", Pukapukan education really teaches people "how to know" - how to appear knowledgeable to other Pukapukans. People learn how to acquire knowledge, to display it, to synthesize it, to hide it. It is not simply a matter of knowing something in the abstract. It is a matter of knowing, or appearing to know, something in certain contexts for

certain purposes - particularly in status rivalries with other Pukapukans (as the example of kula, kula pupuni, kula moemoe illustrates).

In this chapter we have seen that traditional knowledge is not simply a static product of the past but a dynamic process of the present - undergoing change as each new generation learns it. The educational process helps transmit to each generation a body of traditional knowledge that not only possesses elements of unanimity, but elements of diversity, ambiguity, and creativity as well. We have also seen that Pukapukans have a certain orientation, a certain perspective, regarding the application of this knowledge to everyday life and that this perspective derives from particular problems they face in relation to other Pukapukans - especially in regard to affirming their social competence through the medium of status rivalry. In now turning to how Pukapukans validate traditional knowledge, many of the same themes occur again. Validating techniques overlap with and reinforce certain aspects of the educational process.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

1

It is sufficient here simply to know that Veeti is discussing older forms of social organization. More precise definitions for these terms are presented in chapter four.

VALIDATING ASSERTIONS ABOUT TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Chapter Three

On Pukapuka, it is not just Radin's (1927) hypothetical thinkers who ponder the validity of various assertions about traditional knowledge.<sup>1</sup> In certain areas, many Pukapukans are puzzled about ambiguous and discrepant accounts of one sort or another.<sup>2</sup> These puzzling accounts do not simply concern obscure definitional matters such as the meanings of kula, kula pupuni, and kula moemoe. They involve topics of far larger import - including questions of basic social organization.

It has already been noted, for example, that most Pukapukans believe kawa, or strips of land, traditionally ran from the lagoon to the ocean (see Beaglehole 1938: 41-42, Hecht 1976: 36-38). Today considerable doubt exists regarding the exact location of several kawa. Obviously, contested land boundaries involve controversy. But ambiguous and discrepant accounts of boundaries exist even when they are not in open, public dispute.<sup>3</sup>

The traditional kawa boundaries in Yato perplexed me and one day I went to see Ula about them. After some discussion on the subject, he referred me to two other people he thought knew more about the matter. The whole issue was a bit hazy in his mind, he said, and it would be better to ask people who really knew. (He incidently expressed an interest in hearing what they might tell me.)

The first person Ula referred me to was a man in his nineties. The old man admitted that he himself was not completely sure of where the boundaries were in Yato. What he recalled being told as a child was that the boundary



between Walepia and Yaalongo kawa began along the entrance path to the C.I.C.C. minister's house. The other person Ula referred me to was a woman in her seventies. She too was unsure about the exact boundaries. But she recalled being told that the boundary between Walepia and Yaalongo kawa began elsewhere.

On some of the Yato kawa boundaries, they both agreed. Both, for instance, believed that the taro swamp (uwi) Taulangi belonged in Walepia kawa and that the boundary between Yaalongo and Yayi kawa ran beside a particular person's house. But for others, they clearly disagreed. One said that the Tupanau taro swamp belonged completely within Yaalongo kawa; the other claimed that it belonged half in Yaalongo kawa and half in Yayi kawa.

When I told Ula about the disagreements, he smiled. Yes, they were puzzling he admitted. He had heard the same types of assertions. He clearly viewed them as discrepant and was not fully sure who to believe.

He tended to side with the old man, however, more than the old woman though. The old man's versions made more sense to him, he said.

Other people I discussed the issue with were also puzzled. They too were curious exactly where the boundaries were.

In the traditional social organization, kawa were associated with certain cemeteries (po) which in turn were associated with certain food-sharing units (tuanga kai) (see Beaglehole 1938: 41-42, 229-232, Beaglehole ms. a., and Hecht 1976: 36-38, 60-63). While today this pattern has been significantly altered in Ngake and Yato villages, older informants generally concur that all villages on the island previously followed this basic pattern (cf. Hecht 1976:62).

Today in Yato, people recognize four main kawa (Walepia, Yaalongo, Yayi, and Yamaunga) and six main cemeteries (Walepia, Yaalongo, Yamaunga or Malamalama, Ipui, Tokelau, and Maatanga).<sup>4</sup> So how many food-sharing units were there formerly in Yato? I asked this question to two Yato men in their seventies. Based on their recollections, on what they claimed to have observed in their youth, these two men came to two different conclusions. One said four (based on the four kawa); the other six (based on the six cemeteries). When the matter was discussed with each separately, both expressed some doubt on the issue (though neither thought the other person's answer was correct). Both could agree that the number of kawa and cemeteries were related to the number of food-sharing units. But they could not agree on the exact number of such units in earlier times. Other people with whom I discussed the issue likewise admitted uncertainty. A few even suggested I see the two elderly men just mentioned. When I explained what the two men had said, people often smiled at the contradiction. It made one wonder, they reflected, exactly how many food-sharing units had actually existed.

It might be suggested that ambiguities such as these - the above being just a small sample of those recorded in field notes - were brought into focus by my asking people questions. That is perhaps true to a certain degree, particularly in the above example. But in other cases, this was clearly not the case. I observed several incidents such as the following.

One afternoon, I was sitting with three men (who were in their thirties and forties) discussing the various cemeteries (po) that existed in Pukapuka. The conversation became focused on Ovete cemetery because it seemed somewhat anomalous. While located in Ngake village, some people suggested it belonged to a patrilineage (po) in Yato. Others doubted this since all main cemeteries are affiliated with the village (or more precisely the kawa of the patrilineage) on which they are located (see Beaglehole 1938:42,229, Hecht 1976:74 ff.).

Having a respect for one of the men's fathers, I asked the man what his father thought about Ovete's affiliations. The man avoided answering my question and the conversation continued on to some other aspect of the problem.

As we talked about various people's opinions, the man then gave an indirect answer to my question. He said, "when you mention something to the old people, such as my father, they seem so vague. They just say, 'Maybe, it could be like that.' " He laughed a little and then added, "It just as well might not be. Who knows?"

Another way to perceive this same point is to examine the surveys I conducted of various people's knowledge - in subjects ranging from traditional social organization, to myths, to place names, to material culture. At the end of many interviews, I inquired how the informant knew what he had told me to be true. (Some variant of the question E wea tau akapapu ki aku e ko tika au mea na tala mai naa?) Within a sample of 30 elderly informants, I obtained 91 responses.<sup>5</sup> Certainly, given the nature of the context in which the question was asked, it was not a question to encourage the expression of uncertainty among Pukapukans. Yet 15 responses (or 17%) expressed various degrees of doubt as to their answers. The following is a representative sample of what people said.

Here is my way of ascertaining (the truth) of these ancient (taito) things (we have discussed). I listened to all the old people discuss these things . . . (but) was (what they said) true (tika) or not, we do not really know. [A lady in her late sixties]

I am not really clear (about this) . . . I just told you (what I believed). Is there a person who could ascertain what I said (to you) is true? (He chuckles to himself.) [A man in his seventies.]

I have just told you (what I believe). Is it true or is it incorrect? (He pauses and then adds, in certain cases,) some other people ascertained these things, so they are true. [A man in his early seventies.]

But having made my point, a note of caution is also in order. Just because certain discrepancies or ambiguities perplex the anthropologist does not mean that they also perplex Pukapukans. What is ambiguous to me is not always ambiguous to them. Take, for instance, the following illustration. I showed several people the fish pictures in Bagnis, Mazellier, Bennett and Christian (1972) and asked for the fishes' traditional Pukapukan names.

In discussing the various pictures, there were clear disagreements, as well as agreements, among the people involved. For the multibarbed false eel (1972:280), for example, Pakuu and another person asserted no such fish existed in Pukapukan waters. Akalulu disagreed. He said it did. The same occurred in regard to certain cardinal fishes (1972:300). To me, who was listening, there seemed to be clear discrepancies in what people were saying. Doubt existed as to the correct answer.

But the Pukapukans did not seem to react in that way. On the first day we looked at the book, the Pukapukan recording people's answers almost always put down just one name. Talking to him afterward, he affirmed that in most cases only one correct answer existed and that he had recorded it.

When a different Pukapukan took over recording the names on another day, he seemed less decisive. If three or four different names were called out for a particular picture, he would turn to me for a resolution of the differences. I would then try to get people to agree. That is when confusion set in. If the teachers did not have to agree with one another, they seemed fairly certain of their answers (from what they said and how they acted).

Afterwards, I queried the second person recording names if he had been uncertain about the correct answers. No, he replied, he pretty much knew them. It was only because he knew I wanted a group consensus that he had not simply written down his own opinions.

Our different reactions to this situation had less to do with the fact that variant accounts existed than with how we handled these variations. We all agreed that there was probably only one correct answer (a statement which incidently is not necessarily true). It was mainly when I imposed my frame of reference on the discussion that a problem arose for the Pukapukans - how to harmonize differing accounts. Without this imposition, each seemed to have relatively little doubt as to the correct answers. They implied, in subsequent conversations with me, that no problem really existed - other than the one I had created.

In summary, ambiguous and discrepant accounts clearly exist and, in some cases, Pukapukans openly profess an interest in resolving them. A note of caution, however, has been added - that what was ambiguous to me was not necessarily ambiguous to Pukapukans. Another cautious note is also in order. Certainty, as well as uncertainty, of knowledge is prevalent on the island. In the above cases, for instance, in addition to ambiguity and diversity, considerable agreement and uniformity existed in people's knowledge. (The last chapter made this point too.) The reader should not get the impression that Pukapukan culture, as portrayed in this thesis, is simply a collection of shreds and patches (cf. Lowie 1920:441). While it is certainly not an harmonious, organic, functioning whole of equally knowledgeable individuals, the opposite is also not true. It

is neither one nor the other. Rather it is, in varying degrees, both. It depends on the topic and the context at hand. Pukapukan culture involves, to borrow Geertz's (1973:408) phrasing, partial integrations, partial incongruencies, and partial independencies.

With this general perspective, we can now turn to several basic questions. Given that Pukapukans perceive certain assertions as ambiguous and/or involving discrepancies, how do they go about determining the correct answer? How do these techniques relate to other aspects of their culture? And what do they imply about the organization of traditional knowledge in general?

#### REFERRING TO AN AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE

Often I would informally ask Pukapukans how they determined the validity of various assertions regarding their cultural traditions. Knowledge provided by certain authoritative sources, they frequently stated, played an important role. One can see confirmation for such statements in the fact that this was exactly what the form five school children did in resolving their argument regarding the destruction of Vakayala's testicles. They obtained "expert" opinion. Ula suggested the same approach to me for delineating the kawa boundaries in Yato village.

In more formal, interview situations, people asserted the same thing. Of the 91 responses regarding why people believed their statements to be true, 26 (or 29% of the sample) specifically referred

to older, more knowledgeable, Pukapukans as their source of information. Another 11 (or 12%) indirectly referred to what people had casually observed or heard from such authorities.

Properly speaking, the category authoritative sources does not simply involve people. It also includes Pukapukan chants and published material - such as the Beagleholes' (1938) ethnography. But the majority of Pukapukans clearly emphasized people in discussing authoritative sources. This relates, of course, to the oral nature of their culture - they possess few written records. Likewise, few historically relevant documents from outside sources are available to them. While chants are often cited as support for a particular knowledge claim, it should be emphasized that most chants are not fully comprehensible to the great majority of Pukapukans without explication by a knowledgeable elder. Thus people, rather than texts or chants, are the main reference points of knowledge.

If "a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know . . . in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members" (Goodenough 1957:522), then surely one of the things an anthropologist must learn in Pukapuka is to assert that his claims to knowledge derive from a knowledgeable elder. At times, what one states is less important than whom one cites. The following incident, which was similar to many others I experienced, illustrates what I mean.

One day, after doing some work in a public reserve, I stopped at a pule guard house to rest and talk to two of the guards. They were both woman, one in her late thirties and the other in her late twenties. One thing led to another and we started talking about whether it was the legendary figure Waletiale or Malangaatiale who possessed an enlarged penis. Both of them asserted that it was

Malangaatiale. They admitted uncertainty as to exactly who Waletiale was, but basically felt that he was another character entirely. I, on the other hand, asserted that Waletiale possessed the enlarged penis and that the legend of Malangaatiale concerned a man struck by lightning.

We discussed our differences of opinion for a while without coming to any agreement. Then the younger of the two women asked me how I knew my version of the two legends to be correct. I replied that this was what several old people, especially Veeti and Wakalua, had told me.

As I listened to them, they again discussed the whole issue between themselves. What I had said did not really seem right to them. But then they themselves, they admitted, were not that sure of either legend. Finally, they decided that I was probably right after all. Unlike them, I had discussed the issue with Veeti and Wakalua, both recognized experts on Pukapukan legends.

But a note of caution is appropriate in regard to this point.

While Pukapukans clearly emphasize the importance of authorities, it does not mean that they always in fact refer to them. Just to assert one's knowledge derives from an authoritative source, in a sense, strengthens one's knowledge claims. Reference to knowledgeable others is not just a means for determining the validity of claims. It constitutes a means for buttressing these claims as well (as it did in my discussion with the two women).

Still, it is clear from my observations that most Pukapukans do consult authoritative sources to resolve issues - though as already noted, they tend to go about it in an indirect manner. Having provided a partial answer to one question - regarding how Pukapukans validate knowledge claims - we are led to ask another. What constitutes an authoritative source? Or more precisely, since we are focusing on people, how do Pukapukans know that one person is more knowledgeable than another? A whole variety of data clearly indicate



that Pukapukans view a few individuals as possessing greater knowledge about certain traditional matters than the rest of the population.

The question is, how did Pukapukans reach such a conclusion.

Evaluating How an Individual Displays His Knowledge: In various surveys, I inquired about this matter - how people knew some Pukapukans were more knowledgeable than others. Of the 123 responses received (from 30 people aged 64 years and over), 80 (or 65%) laid stress on the knowledgeable individual's actions, on what he said or did.<sup>6</sup> Nine people (or 11% of the 80) simply implied that the perception of this superiority was intuitively obvious. For example, an old man in his seventies stated: "If they tell all the tales that (people) tell, all the tales they know, if you listen, (you know) they are correct."

But most people were more explicit. The majority of the responses, 42 (or 52% of the 80) stressed that these individuals knew things others did not. Here is a sample of what was said:

(Individuals like that know) all the things, all the words of earlier times . . . (what) we do not know. [A woman in her late sixties]

The reason I say Winangalo is (really) good in regard to chants is because he possesses (knowledge) of all the things that are gone (today, somethings) that I do not know perhaps. [A man in his late sixties]

They can tell all the old stories. Some other people just sit (around) like coral heads (when the time comes to tell tales). [A man in his mid-seventies]

Others emphasized that, because certain individuals taught them what they know, these individuals, as a result, must be knowledgeable. Eleven (or 14%) fit into this category.

(When) I listened to them talk at meetings, I learned new (or different) things . . . I learned the things we discussed about (in the interview). [A man in his late sixties]

When these people discussed (place names) of the olden days at their meetings, I learned things (from them). [A woman in her early seventies]

(From) their telling me things they knew, . . . (for example), weaving mats and mat designs (kave), they acquainted me with these things so I would know (them). [A woman in her mid-seventies]

An interesting variant of this theme is expressed by Veeti and Iakopo. (Their comments reinforce a point already made about not asking too many questions.)

(These knowledgeable people) have held on (or not forgotten) what they learned . . . But other people, who are ignorant, they have to ask questions (all the time). [Veeti]

(People) come to me (and) ask about something they have forgotten (that is how I know they are not knowledgeable). [Iakopo]

There are other ways of determining knowledgeability, too. According to Pukapukans, a knowledgeable person displays what he knows openly and coherently. He is not evasive or ambiguous in answering questions as if he were masking his ignorance. In the survey, 17 responses (or 21% of the 80) emphasized this aspect. People made such comments as:

In respect to these things, if you ask (the person) about something, (he) finds it extremely difficult (waingataa) to reply. That is how I know (he is not knowledgeable). [A man in late sixties]

But even more elucidating of this perspective is a comment made by Utalenga in an informal conversation we had one day about such matters.

Some people, they just talk (about nothing) (talatala wua). They do not put things in the right order (e ye akapapa wakalelei) inside their mind. If (the individual) talks about the subject (in question, the other) person will get angry. (The individual) just talks away . . . But the intelligent people, they do not talk like fools. He would look (or think) carefully about what to tell the person, he will seek out the appropriate words, so that the (other) person will be happy. So that (the other person) will listen carefully.

As stated, this is my analysis derived from a variety of people's responses to my questions. How does it compare with what various Pukapukans collectively formulated themselves? The Australian teacher asked his class of teenagers one day how they determined a person's knowledgeability. The first point to note is that the students had a difficult time in discussing the subject and tended to avoid concrete explications for vague abstractions. The teacher repeatedly had to encourage them to be more specific. The second noteworthy point is that their list overlaps with, but is not identical, to my own. The class stressed three main ways for determining knowledgeability:

- (1). If the person was good at the work he performed. By way of illustration, several students mentioned two men who were particularly skilled at carving.
- (2). If the person took a prominent role in discussions involving large groups of people and others seemed to accept what he said or defer to him. Perceptively the students noted that it was far less certain that a particular individual was knowledgeable if he only spoke up in small groups. The acid test was when many other people were present, when the individual opened himself up to a variety of criticisms from his peers.

(3). By how the individual answered questions. Did he answer the questions clearly and in detail? Or did the individual try to side step the questions and "brush off" the person asking them? A knowledgeable person not only answered a particular question in depth but also included other related points as well. When he told about a legend, for example, he included how the legend related to other tales not specifically asked about.

Different Perspectives on the Display of Knowledge: Both of these lists emphasize a variety of ways people display their knowledge to others. But in reflecting on this point, it is important to remember that different people (whether they be anthropologist or Pukapukan) may stress different aspects of these knowledge displays - depending on the problems they are facing, depending on their immediate concerns.

During an informal conversation we had one afternoon at his house, Winangalo and I discussed the people we viewed as particularly knowledgeable about Pukapukan traditions. We both agreed that Iakopo and Wakalua knew a great deal. But he viewed Iakopo as somewhat more knowledgeable about such things than Wakalua. I thought just the opposite was true.

In defending his assessment, Winangalo repeatedly gave examples of how Iakopo could take various pieces of land, list their original owners (pu mua) and then trace out the genealogical descendants of these people down to the present time. As already implied, this is just the type of knowledge one needs for defending claims to sections of land or taro swamp. Several of the pieces of land that Winangalo cited were ones he himself had a claim to and thus knew something about. Winangalo pointedly remarked that Wakalua did not really know about these particular sections of land.

I too was impressed by this criterion, for I too realized its importance in land disputes. But in my assessments of knowledgeability, I stressed certain other criteria as well. Wakalua knew a great deal about the traditional forms of social organization and could formulate this knowledge in a coherent way that let me readily grasp what she was talking about. Iakopo could not

do this as well. Moreover, she was one of only two people on the island who still insisted that previously matrilineages had owned taro swamps. This latter fact was of little concern to most people today since claims to swamp sections are now expressed in a cognatic idiom. (Many people even doubted the validity of what Wakalua asserted.) But this knowledge was of critical importance to me because of my interest in land tenure changes.

Examples like the above, were not uncommon. A variety of similar incidents reminded me, again and again, that while Pukapukans and I were both focusing on the display of knowledge, we were coming at the issue from slightly different perspectives based on slightly different concerns.

But what is at stake is not solely an inter-cultural problem. It is an intra-cultural problem as well. Pukapukans often disagree among themselves in applying these various criteria regarding knowledgeability - based on differing individual concerns. Other Pukapukans, for instance, disagreed with Winangalo's assessment of Iakopo - because they were interested in pieces of land Iakopo did not know well. For some of these people, Wakalua was clearly more knowledgeable about genealogies than Iakopo. Thus, given people's different concerns, the different problems they are facing, there is considerable room for disagreement and ambiguity regarding who is more knowledgeable than whom. Pukapukans themselves are often aware of this problem. Many, as a result, rely on other techniques as well in determining knowledgeability.

Comparing An Individual's Answers With What One Already Knows: One

afternoon, while sitting on the porch of Pakuu's house, Pakuu and I discussed some of these issues. A portion of the conversation went as follows:

[If you wanted to find out who was knowledgeable about a particular subject, what would you do?] I would go and ask an old person who I thought might know certain things. I could tell just by testing him.

[How would you know which questions to ask and how would you know if his answers were correct?] By just asking him some of the old tales (tala), or names that I personally know from the past. Some people you can ask them any names and they will tell you (the stories about these people). That means he is a knowledgeable person about the past.

[How do you know he is just not making them up?] Because I know about the names I ask (him). Say if it is the name of one of the people in one of the tales that I normally know, that everybody knows, if he tells me something different from what everybody (else) knows, then I know he does not know (it). That he is not a very clever person, that he has little knowledge.

In my survey on determining knowledgeability, 11 responses (or 9% of 123) emphasized comparing a person's answers to what one already knows.<sup>7</sup> Here is what some of the people said:

Sometimes, if we get together, if we discuss things, I listen to some of the discussion (and) it is correct (in terms of) comparing it to what I know. [A man in his mid-sixties]

Because of what he told me (about place names). They were correct . . . if I listened (to what he said) . . . if (I) examined (his answers), if I compare them (with what others have told me), what he said was correct. [Wakamaa]

Essentially Pukapukans are validating the whole corpus of a person's knowledge by the part they understand. This makes a good deal of sense. But obviously there are problems. How can you recognize a more knowledgeable account when you hear it, especially if

it differs from what you already know? How do you know that the person is not just making up his facts? While one must be cautious in overstating the point, there is certainly room here for ambiguity.

In a few particular cases, this ambiguity seems reduced. In three responses (or 27% of the 11), people asserted that when an individual mentioned a particular fact, they then recalled once having heard it too, when they were younger. Veeti, for example, in discussing Wakalua, told me "if I ask her about things that I have forgotten about, she sets me right, she tells me them (again). That is how I know" she is knowledgeable. But a problem exists here also. As will be pointed out in a later section, people's memories can be quite vague and fluid. Saying that a statement in the present corresponds to what a person learned in the past still allows considerable leeway for interpretation.

In my opinion, Pukapukans use this technique, of comparing people's knowledge claims to what they already know, far more than the tentative statistical data suggest. Pukapukans often reason out on their own who is and is not knowledgeable. I suspect so few people verbally emphasized this factor because as, discussed in the case of Waletiale's enlarged penis, it does not sound very authoritative. Yet, as will be noted below, some good reasons exist for Pukapukans utilizing their own deductions.

#### Using a Person's Background as a Basis for Determining

Knowledgeability: Sometime after their dispute over the legend of Vakayala, the Australian teacher asked his class how they resolved contradictory versions of a tale. Two of the points the students

emphasized relate to a person's background. They tended to believe versions coming (1) from older people and (2) from those residing longer on the island. Older people, they felt, had an opportunity, when they were children, to listen to still older people, people who had been in close contact with the past. And those who had been "contaminated" by Western ways, the students believed, seemed less reliable than those who had stayed on the island for their entire lives.

People in my survey took a similar view. Nine people (or 7% of 123) stressed a person's background, and particularly a person's age, in determining who was and was not knowledgeable. For example:

They are the ones who listened to the old people who lived a (really) long time ago. [A woman in her late sixties]

These are the old people, they know all about such things. [A woman in her mid-sixties]

In examining the various criteria for determining knowledgeability described up to this time, it becomes clear that very little has been said about ascribed positions. No one, for instance, is knowledgeable primarily because he is a chief (cf. Firth 1970:31-63, Oliver 1974:784). As this section indicates, age and experience are the primary criteria people consider in regard to a person's background.

Thus, we can see the manifestation of a theme already developed in chapter one. A definite egalitarian orientation pervades Pukapuka, especially in comparison to other higher Polynesian islands. Exploring further, one can also perceive a certain amount of the status rivalry in how the younger generation uses age in evaluating



the older generation's claims to knowledge. Veeti and Wakalua are viewed as the most knowledgeable people on the island. In survey after survey, they both always came out on top. But in these surveys they were also the people most criticized for being too old, for being senile! In a survey dealing with the traditional forms of social organization, for example, 17 people (out of a sample of 30 elderly informants) cited Veeti as being extremely knowledgeable. Ten cited Molingi. (The next closest individual was cited five times.) But five individuals in the sample criticized Veeti for being inaccurate, forgetful and just too old to remember things correctly. Four did the same for Wakalua. (The next closest person was cited twice).

Who did the criticizing? Mostly people who were slightly younger than they were - mostly people in their sixties who felt they knew just as much as Veeti and Wakalua. (Mitimoa's criticism of Veeti regarding the meanings of kula, kulu pupuni, and kula moemoe fits within this pattern.) In Pukapuka one can thus see how techniques for evaluating knowledgeability relate to larger cultural concerns. One can perceive the culture's egalitarian orientation not only in who can become knowledgeable but also in how knowledgeable people are criticized.

#### Referring to External Authorities in Determining Who is

Knowledgeable: One final factor cited as influencing people's determinations of who is and is not knowledgeable raises certain interesting questions for anthropology. In the surveys, eight

responses (7% of 123) emphasized that particular people must be knowledgeable because anthropologists had worked with them. For example, some stated:

Because of their cleverness in teaching (anthropologists) . . . from the time of Pearl and Ernest (Beaglehole) to the discussions of . . . Julia (Hecht) with them, (that is why) I believe they know a great deal about the past. [A woman in her early seventies]

They taught Ernest (Beaglehole so that he could write) a book, it is their knowledge that is inside this book. [Wakalua]

This raises the question of how and why the Beagleholes selected certain informants. In regard to informants they rejected, Ernest Beaglehole notes:

Our experience with Alaikonga as a reporter of times past was short-lived. I found very soon on checking his information with that provided by obviously more capable students of old Pukapukan customs that Alaikonga knew little about the past save what he could evolve from his own fertile imagination. He was never at loss for an answer, never in doubt, never bewildered . . .

The amusing part of [our conversations with Alaikonga] was that the villagers began to feel that perhaps, after all, he was something of a sage in disguise. Otherwise why would we talk with him? Later on when we had well decided that Alaikonga had more imagination than knowledge . . . I would occasionally question other men of Yato. They would tell nothing however. Their invariable answer was: 'Go ask Alaikonga, he knows everything.' (1944:191).

The issue involves certain complications. Alaikonga's organization of traditional Pukapukan cemeteries (po), for instance, does indeed differ from the list of the Beagleholes' "more capable" informants. But is it wrong; is it something evolved from his "own fertile imagination"? That depends on what wrong means. Alaikonga's list is closer in some ways to modern views of these cemeteries than

that provided by these other "more capable" informants (cf. Beaglehole 1938:229, ms. a). Also, data from the Beagleholes unpublished field census (ms. a) indicate that several other Pukapukans shared Alaikonga's views.

What makes one informant more knowledgeable than another to an anthropologist - especially when the anthropologist does not know the "correct" answers? To what degree should the anthropologist use native assessment of knowledgeability? And to what degree does his own assessments of these native assessments affect the community? Certainly there are issues here for anthropologists to ponder. One can now see additional implications to a point made earlier - people facing different problems, dealing with different concerns, do not always make, or even want to make, the same assessments of knowledgeability.

Other Authoritative Sources: In addition to knowledgeable elders, other authoritative sources exist and these should be mentioned for completeness. As the discussion of kula, kula pupuni, and kula moemoe indicates, people, at times, use chants (mako) to buttress their arguments. In a group discussion with several "key" informants, for example, Wakalua cited a chant to justify her analysis of the word matoyinga (or village - Beaglehole 1938:231). She noted: "all the (traditional) words of Pukapuka are in these (chants), they are all inserted in (the various) chants, there are none that are not." And when I doubted Te Kula's assertion that Pukapukans have always only

used the "missionary position" in sexual intercourse, he referred me to the old chants. He asserted no other position, to his knowledge, was ever mentioned in chants.

Occasionally texts are also cited. The Beagleholes' (1938) ethnography was referred to several times in my conversations with people as a valuable source of traditional information. Interestingly enough, Akalulu cited it one day as proof that the Akatawa organization had previously existed in the past. (When I explored the reference, to page 387, it turned out to involve a misinterpretation on his part.)

Also, group consensus - and especially hearing the same types of information more than once - often carries considerable weight in validating assertions. In the surveys on how people validated their knowledge, nine responses (or 10% of the 91 sample), stressed this point. Some said:

I am not really sure (on this point), is it correct or is it false. But here is what makes me certain, (when) the third person tells me this, I become certain. If it is only one person, I am not really sure. [Iakopo]

That is why I assert that something is correct, (what) these two people said is identical. It is certain. If someone else comes (along) (and) says "no, this place belongs to so and so", I find fault with what he says. Because only he himself (says that). The two (other people) said it belonged to someone (else). [Uia].

This was a point also made by the Australian teacher's class. If several people told you the same legend, most likely it was correct.

In elaborating on how he knew the genealogies Julia Hecht collected were accurate, Talainga commented:

At the time of Julia, (when certain people) told genealogies, all the genealogies were the same. Perhaps there was some small portion of the genealogy that one had been mistaken about, but someone else would correct him. That is the way we did it during the time Julia (was here). Because of Julia's work, she called us together (for a meeting) so we could tell her the genealogies of all the people (on the island).

Other people who had never even attended Julia's meetings, felt the same way. Because they were done in a group, and the people generally agreed on what was said (at least overtly), her work must be correct.

Complications in Referring to Authoritative Sources: In discussing how and why Pukapukans refer to authoritative sources, we have examined several reasonable, and in some cases rather astute, criteria for validating knowledge claims. But certain problems exist with these criteria and it is important to consider what they are. Because (as already noted) people can disagree on how to measure knowledgeability, two people citing two different authoritative sources can come to two markedly different conclusions. Take the following comparison as a case in point. The form five school children resolved (with some limited exceptions) the argument regarding Valayala's testicles. This was because most children by and large agreed that Wakalua was the most knowledgeable person queried on the matter. But what would have happened if more children had seriously challenged Wakalua's knowledgeability or other equally authoritative sources had disagreed with her? Examples, such as the following, occurred commonly. (This anecdote was told to me by the Australian teacher.)

One day after school two form five school boys had a dispute over the legendary character Lingutaemoa (see Beaglehole ms. b). The first asserted that Lingutaemoa was a man; the second claimed Lingutaemoa was a woman. They argued back and forth for a while without coming to any resolution.

The next day, when they again saw each other, they again continued their argument. But this time, they had each checked with certain authoritative sources. The first boy had discussed the matter with his father - someone he trusted because several people had asserted his father was knowledgeable about such things. The second boy had discussed it with his 'mother' - whom he felt was knowledgeable because she had lived with one of the Beagleholes' now deceased informants.

Yet again nothing was resolved in the argument. The two knowledgeable sources had disagreed. The first boy's father said Lingutaemoa was a man; the second boy's 'mother' claimed that Lingutaemoa was a woman. Both boys cited authoritative sources in the argument. But since neither source was viewed as overwhelmingly superior to the other, the matter was not resolved.

The same issue arose in the public discussion of kula, kula pupuni and kula moemoe. No clear consensus resulted because certain discussants did not accept Veeti as the undisputed authority on the matter. (It was some of these people, incidently, who viewed Veeti as somewhat senile.) In essence, whether and how such issues get resolved depends on whom the disputants accept as the ultimate authority on the question. Again one can perceive how Pukapuka's egalitarian orientation and the prevalence of status rivalries affect the validation of knowledge claims.

It is in the face of such difficulties that group discussions become particularly important. Because various authoritative individuals can collectively argue back and forth about an issue until some consensus develops, group discussions offer the best hope for

forming a general consensus on a matter. Most Pukapukans agree on this. That is why, for example, many of them viewed Julia Hecht's genealogies as accurate - even when they themselves had not heard them.

But again, problems exist. Ambiguity can clearly occur regarding what constitutes a consensus. Does the Pukapukans' lack of argument about a fish name constitute agreement among them? Or what should I make of the fact that Tiele asserted people agreed on certain answers to survey questions when objectively they had not? The issue moreover goes beyond such questions. Some people may agree overtly - to be amicable - while in fact covertly disagreeing. That is what Pau did, for example, in publicly agreeing with Akalulu during the kula, kula pupuni, and kula moemoe discussion. As previously emphasized, Pukapukans live on a small coral atoll and the maintenance of amicable social relations can be crucial for economic survival - far more crucial than winning a public debate.

Take, for instance, the following illustration. (Similar examples occurred several times during my field work.) After interviewing approximately 80 people on a particular topic, I would hold group meetings to iron out discrepancies in various informant's accounts. During one meeting concerning legends, the same type of status rivalry observed between Veeti and Mitimoa in the kula, kula pupuni and kula moemoe discussion arose. But this time Mitimoa, after several comments, tended to remain silent.

The next day I asked him why he had not said more, especially since I knew, from earlier conversations with him, that he clearly disagreed with what some others had stated. (Our discussion occurred in the presence of about three or four of his relatives.)

Mitimoa commented about how senile some of the people had been last night. They did not seem to know very much; they had made numerous mistakes. Throughout these criticisms, he kept his comments on a general level, never mentioning anyone by specific name.

When asked why he had not spoken up more in the meeting, he smiled. He replied that he had not wanted to interfere with the others. He had been curious to see what they actually knew. He had been content to simply observe their mistakes.

Thus a certain type of circularity, an almost "Catch-22" type of situation, can develop. Because of ambiguities and discrepancies in various individuals' accounts, it can be difficult, for both anthropologists and Pukapukans alike, to develop a coherent understanding of an issue - especially when no immediate consensus or closure is apparent. Having people come together in a formal discussion can bring about such a form of closure, especially if Pukapukans perceive the need for doing so. Everyone may then overtly agree about a particular matter. But there is a problem - the closure that develops may well be a false one. Underneath the surface, people may still disagree. Thus again one is reminded that traditional knowledge is not simply a product inherited from the past. It is also a process of interpretation within the present. It is not simply a matter of what certain people say. One still has to decide which version, or what parts of which versions, are correct.

#### EVALUATING THE SPEAKER AND HIS CONVERSATIONAL STYLE

Two other important means by which Pukapukans determine the validity of assertions are through evaluating the speaker and his manner of conversation. Though Pukapukans utilize these



techniques less in regard to their past traditions than in respect to issues involving sharing and competitions (other major areas where knowledge claims are brought into question), they are nonetheless still relevant to this discussion and need elaboration.

Evaluating the Information Source: Since Pukapukans often find it difficult to evaluate a person's assertion on face value alone, they tend to rely a great deal on the person's past performances, on the degree to which he had made valid statements in the past. Eliu made this point one evening in a conversation we had.

There are many ways (mataala) for us to determine (or know) the truth (tika) . . . (But initially) we do not know what is really inside the mind (manako) of the person. Perhaps it is something true, perhaps it is something false (pikikaa). Consequently, for the initial time, we do not agree (akatika) to what he says, (or really we hold in doubt the validity of his assertions).

The second of the times he (may) say . . . "Rob has said to me to tell you to go to his place." But I do not go. Because I do not trust (ilinaki) this person. Then I see you and you ask (me), "hey, why did you not come? I told so and so to go tell you to come." (I reply), "I thought that that was just some sort of joke (pikikaanga wua) what he said." This is the second time (the person) has said something like this to me.

Therefore I realize that he is an honest person. If he says to me a different time, "Akalulu told me to tell you to go to him, for you to talk," I will believe what that person has said. Because I am sure that he is an honest person (e tangata talatala tika). He is not a liar. But some other people . . . they just lie to you, (they) tell you lies.

Again and again I also heard Pukapukans in conversations among themselves and with me invalidate someone else's assertions, not because of what the person had said, but because of what he had done in the past.<sup>8</sup>

As I walked along with Veeti and Talainga one afternoon, Veeti asked a young man in his twenties sitting by the road why he was not helping a particular person out in the building of his house. The young man mumbled something about their having had a fight. The other person had promised him certain wages and had never paid him.

When we had walked further down the road, Veeti turned to Talainga with a sense of mild disgust. He told Talainga one could never believe a young man like that. Puzzled, I asked Veeti how he knew for sure that the young man had lied. He told me that the young man often lied about such things. The young man was just lazy, Veeti said. That is why the young man did not help out. Veeti had seen the same thing happen two or three times before.

Evaluating the Style and Nature of a Discussion: Pukapukans, in their informal conversations with me, often stressed the importance of the discussion itself in determining the validity of knowledge claims.<sup>8</sup> Something about the style in which a statement was made, or something about the topic, tipped off the listener about the truth of an assertion. Te Alo made a point many Pukapukans expressed to me.

Sometimes it will be hard for me to decide. But at other times, I will just look at his attitude (*tu*) (while he is talking) - the way he speaks, the tone of his voice, how he said it. Because I know when a person jokes (or lies), he might turn around sort of (i.e. not look you straight in the face). Or he might laugh slightly.

Students in the Australian teacher's class stressed the following points in this regard: (1) the way the person talks or his voice sounds, (2) the way he starts joking, or (3) the way he looks at you. What specific actions would actually tip off the listener that a person was lying? Pukapukans found it very hard to go beyond the above generalizations. It was just something they knew, they would tell me; just something they learned through experience.

Another aspect of this same topic - which no Pukapukans directly mentioned to me but which I observed several times - involves challenging the other person's comments to see how he defends them. Tiele, for instance, would often do this while assisting me in various interviews. When informants answered certain questions, he would jokingly respond in a way that implied they were fabricating their responses. I asked him why he did this. Smiling, he replied that it was his way of checking to see if the people were lying. He reasoned that if they did not defend themselves or did not elaborate on their answers, then probably they were unsure of the correct responses. Those people who strongly pushed back, more times than not Tiele felt, knew what they were talking about.

Closely related to this point is another one that several Pukapukans did explicitly mention to me. If a person did not challenge your assertion, they commented, it implied he agreed with it. The idea behind this is that since status rivalry is so prevalent in certain discussions, its absence often expresses an important message - a person is deferring to another's position, or at least, feels it is in his best interest to avoid coming in conflict with him. The following incident provides a sense of how this operates. (Several times during my 41 month stay I observed similar examples.)

One morning I heard an argument between Wakalua and a man in his late fifties about a particular genealogical relationship. The argument went on for about ten minutes until the man stopped defending his position. From my observation no one had really won. But that is not what Wakalua said the next day. She asserted that she had won. I inquired as to how she had drawn such a conclusion. Because the man had given up arguing with her, she stated.

In private conversations with various individuals, I raised the question of why certain knowledgeable individuals had been quiet during the group discussions I held. Those who talked a lot generally stated the silent ones were simply concurring with what was being said. (The fact that this was not what Mitimoa claimed to be doing in the group discussion mentioned above emphasizes that the situation may be far more complicated than this.) But such comments do fit with what Pukapukans assert about their own public meetings. Since any adult member is able to stand up and express an opinion at any public village discussion, not to implies a general agreement with what others are saying.

Overall, one can perceive throughout this section the importance of certain contextual factors mentioned in chapter two. As with words such as wua and taatii, it is not just what a person asserts that is important, but who says it, to whom, how, and when. Also one can see how certain Pukapukan cultural orientations affect techniques for validating knowledge claims. Allowing for qualifications of age and sex, people generally feel they are of equal status and need not defer to others without just cause.

#### RELYING ON ONE'S OWN EXPERIENCES AND REASONING

Adult Pukapukans, as already indicated, often prefer to rely on their own experiences and reasoning rather than explicitly direct questions to others. It is easier and less humiliating to do so. This emphasis on self-reliance partially comes out in the formal surveys. Of the 91 responses to questions about why people believed

what they had told me to be true, 37 (or 41% of the sample) referred to their own experiences - to what they had observed or indirectly heard people say.<sup>9</sup> Here is a sample of people's comments.

(What I have told you) is what the old people said . . . in their discussions that I listened to. [A woman in her early-seventies]

The (reason I am) certain about the things I am telling you (is because they are things) I saw with my own eyes . . . that is why I am telling you them because I saw them with my eyes and learned about them. The things I did not see, I am uncertain about. [Winangalo]

You have asked me several questions (implying you wanted to know the answers) and I have told to you what knowledge I have acquired during my lifetime. [A man in his mid-sixties]

These things I have actually seen with my own eyes, that is why I can tell you they are true. [A woman in her mid-seventies]

Only four responses (or 5% of 91) emphasized that individuals actually had reasoned out answers on their own. Within the contexts of a discussion, one must remember, it generally sounds more impressive if a person asserts his knowledge derives from an authority rather than from his own speculations. Authoritative sources, to put it succinctly, are more authoritative.

Yet if we examine how Pukapukans actually work out certain problems about the past, we can frequently see individuals reasoning things out on their own. Take the following example as a case in point. (Additional examples are provided later in the chapter.)

One day, after we had both heard Veeti, Wakalua, and Mitimoa jointly tell the matrilineal origin myth (see Beaglehole 1938:221-224), I listened to Iakopo trying to resolve out loud certain ambiguities in the story. He believed that the story was true - in the sense that it accurately portrayed events that had occurred in the past.

But he was confronted with a problem. The story asserted that people had changed into animals (such as crabs and sharks). He doubted this had ever actually occurred.

So he reasoned that the change of humans into animals was a matter of figurative language. He suggested that perhaps the survivors of the storm decided to commemorate the memory of their brethren who had drowned - by giving them special names. Since the survivors were physically small (in relation to those who drowned) they called their deceased brethren by the names of large sea creatures (such as whales and sharks). To commemorate their own survival, they named additional groups after small land creatures (such as rats and birds).

Later, when I heard Iakopo tell the story to some young children, this is the explanation he offered for the transformation of humans into animals.

Pukapukans often indirectly deduce something is true if no disputations arise among the various parties involved in the issue. (This point represents a slightly different twist to the focus on group consensus considered above.) The following two examples are representative of a theme heard many times on the atoll. One morning, while talking with a man in his thirties at his house, I raised the question of how he knew that the patrilineages (po), matrimoieties (wua), and Akatawa had actually worked in the past as people today claimed they had. That, he replied, was easy to explain. When modern Pukapukans revived these organizations (see chapter four), each one had turned out properly. There had been no disputes among the parties involved.<sup>10</sup>

Likewise this same perspective arose during a lengthy interview with Wakalua about the traditional matrilineal organization. I asked her why she believed that in former times woman had controlled the

taro swamps (loto-uwi) while the men controlled the regular (or "dry") land and coconut trees (lunga-wenua ma naa niu). She replied:

They did not like to fight (about rights in swamps in the olden days), fights did not erupt (over such issues). That is why I believe it to be so. It is really bad nowadays. The male children come (lay claim) to the sections that our mother (or woman) has taken care of. (That is why) fights erupt (today).

The point is that, to a certain degree, social harmony, agreement, implies truth. Conflict indicates that something is amiss. Thus again, one can see how certain cultural correlates, in this case the importance of maintaining harmony on a small coral atoll, affect the validation of knowledge.

#### A PROCESSUAL PERSPECTIVE ON VALIDATING KNOWLEDGE

The Question of Closure: In turning now from a general, abstract list of various criteria Pukapukans use for validating knowledge claims to how these criteria tend to operate in specific contexts, it is interesting to note that one of the major principles involved is not even included in the above list. It concerns allowing an issue to remain in doubt - not trying to bring it to a clear sense of closure, particularly group closure.

One day Lepuama and I were sitting down by the beach, discussing these general matters. He gave me a hypothetical example which illustrates this point.

Perhaps someone (comes and says), "Hey, so and so got a telegram (stating) that so and so died in Rarotonga." A Pukapukan (died in Rarotonga). He did not clarify the details about how this happened and so on. He does not know. He does not ascertain (all these things, e ye papu

meitaki) to you. Then after that, some other person comes and asks you, "Is this true that so and so died?" You say to him, "I am uncertain (kei). I do not know but so and so told me that this person had died." I do not really know. Perhaps he died, perhaps not . . . I wait until I am certain (papu). You heard it a long time before, (but) you are not sure if it is true or not.

But a long time after, you will discover that what was said was true. Likewise, a long time after you will discover that it was just a bunch of lies (pikikaa wua). That is the way it goes.

The following anecdote makes the same point. It also stresses an even more important theme - that many Pukapukans may have a different perspective on closure at times than I do.

In an effort to examine what changes certain tales had undergone since the Beagleholes' time (as well as organize a corpus of material that Pukapukans could use for preserving their own traditions), I had a group of Pukapukans collectively narrate and then tape-record the origin myth for their island (see Beaglehole 1938:375-377). When the transcript was typed up, I showed it to Pakuu. After reading it, he asserted that I had listened to a fool. The beginning of the story was Manihikian not Pukapukan.

Who, he asked, had told it to me. I explained that Pau had told the final version into the tape recorder. But it was based on what Wakalua, Veeti, Mitimoa, Talainga and Iakopo had all agreed on. Moreover, these people had listened to Pau tell the tale as it was being taped and had raised no objections to what Pau said. Pakuu, however, pointed out that some of Pau's ancestors had come from another island. As a result, he was not as well versed in traditional Pukapukan knowledge as he claimed to be.

Later, Pakuu, Pau, and Te Kula had a chance to discuss the origin myth among themselves. (My account of the meeting is second-hand based on what various individuals subsequently told me.) Pakuu asserted Pau was completely wrong about the section on Maui Mua, Maui Loto, and Maui Potiki. That section did not belong in the legend. (In passing, one should note that they did not disagree about the second part of the myth - how Mataaliki sprang forth from a rock.)

As proof, Pakuu asserted that he had seen the exact same myth - down to the exact same names and fish - put on by the island of Manihiki at the Constitution Day celebrations in Rarotonga a few years ago. He turned to Te Kula who confirmed this. Both of them had been in Rarotonga at the time. How could the legend be Pukapukan if it was Manihikian both of them had asked Pau?



Pau did not really know the answer to that question. Perhaps more than one island shared the same type of origin myth he suggested. But Pau did know that he had heard the same exact story from one of the Beagleholes' deceased informants and had seen it performed as a play. So he felt it must be correct.

The argument was never publicly resolved. All three participants went away thinking exactly what they had to begin with.

What did several people who had listened to the argument think? In asking them later, one took Pakuu's side. He based his argument on the fact that Pakuu's father was quite knowledgeable. The person assumed that Pakuu's information had originally come from his father. (It is interesting to note that Pakuu did not use this argument. I know from my own discussions with Pakuu that he did not believe his father was particularly knowledgeable about such things.) What the person did not add was that his family and Pau's had been at odds with each other for years.

As for the other people who had listened to the argument, most of them, while vaguely siding with one or the other faction, were basically uncertain as to who was exactly right. Each side made sense to a certain extent.

I got closure out of my group discussion with Veeti, Wakalua, Mitimoa, Talainga, Pau and Iakopo, because I had asked for it. But for the Pukapukans involved in the argument, no such group consensus resulted. Pakuu, Te Kula, and Pau certainly did not publicly resolve the argument except in the sense that each one went away believing that he was right. As for the observers, only one was persuaded. The others, while leaning one way or the other, still felt uncertain.

As previous discussions regarding fish names and working on the dictionary have indicated, Pukapukans can and do develop a sense of closure. But in cases involving disputed and/or ambiguous information, in cases concerning status rivalries, it tends to be on a personal, individual level rather than on a public, group level. Each individual brings about his own form of closure by resolving the discrepancies that he himself has heard or seen.

It would be incorrect, however, to assert Pukapukans do not, at times, also bring about a form of group closure regarding matters of traditional knowledge. Note has already been taken, for example, of the fact that they can bring about an artificial sense of closure for an outsider, for someone not directly involved in their status rivalries. They can also bring one about among themselves as well, without any outside influence. It is simply a matter that the way such group closures are reached makes them generally impractical for (1) situations involving intense status rivalries and/or (2) less than broad, cultural concerns. These group closures occur, as Howard suggests (personal communication), in a way that reinforces, rather than threatens, the egalitarian orientation of the culture. Through a long process of discussion - in which each concerned person expresses his opinion - a consensus gradually develops that is relatively unforced. Few people feel imposed upon in reaching a decision - since all have had a chance to make their opinions known at length. Such discussions, as Pukapukans are well aware, take several hours and often repeated meetings lasting over many days. Since the process is long and painstakingly sensitive to important people's opinions, it is often inappropriate for the give and take of everyday issues, particularly those regarding status rivalries.

As an anthropologist, I have a somewhat different perspective than Pukapukans do on group closure. I display my competence to my peers by providing a coherent description to those outside of Pukapukan culture (rather than, as many Pukapukans do, by emphasizing how two people within the culture subtly differ from one another on a point of traditional lore). I tend to stress

consensus rather than diversity of knowledge. It may be accurate to provide six different names for a particular Pukapukan fish (to take the example of various Pukapukans discussing Bagnis, Mazellier, Bennett and Christian 1972 mentioned above). But such an account lacks a certain coherence and elegance of style - it starts confusing readers. To present 40 different perceptions of Pukapukan traditional social organization (when I interviewed 80 people in a population of 750) can become even more so. Rather than stressing what makes each individual unique, I tend to stress general patterns that can be readily understood by Westerners who have not lived in the culture. For me, moreover, developing group closure regarding Pukapukan opinions is relatively unproblematic - especially in comparison to what Pukapukans go through. Ultimately I formulate it myself, based on what I see and hear. It does not involve as much patient, delicate negotiation with close relatives.

I am not particularly concerned about issues of status rivalry with other Pukapukans. Few would consider me as knowledgeable regarding traditional knowledge as they are and worth competing with. Nor am I overly concerned with appearing ignorant. The fact that I am ignorant explains why I am in Pukapuka in the first place and ask all sorts of questions. Likewise, the Pukapukans do not share my problems. The fact that Pukapukans possess a common fund of knowledge has not only been stressed in this thesis but is also perfectly obvious - for they can communicate and interact perfectly well with each other (n.b. Bilmes 1976). As a result, Pukapukans do not

generally feel as impelled as I do to make their fund of knowledge about Pukapuka intelligible to their peers. Much of it their peers already possess.

In a sense, both of our perspectives raise important issues for the ethnographic task of describing one culture to the people of another. The Pukapukan perspective means that some ambiguities and divergent opinions never get fully resolved by the group as a whole - unless it is really critical. My bringing Pukapukans together in a group or viewing Pukapukans as all sharing the same cultural knowledge, on the other hand, generates a sense of group closure. But it is a superficial consensus that well may be inaccurate.

Yet such difficulties do not negate the value of either perspective. Both of our perspectives work - for the purposes we each have set for them. I am describing another culture to the reader. The Pukapukans have no trouble interacting with each other. In fact, some of the disagreements mentioned in this thesis, which never get completely resolved as a group, provide a certain "joie de vivre" to Pukapukan lives. It gives them something to argue about; it makes their lives more exciting. It allows them to carry on their status rivalries. The validity of our different perspectives lies in the ends they each achieve. What is involved is a pragmatic, rather than correspondence, sense of truth. We are both successful at solving certain problems related to certain audiences. It is just that our different perspectives are not always successful at solving each other's problems.

Reasoning from Memories: As already implied, my observations indicate that people frequently use personal recollections in validating assertions about traditional knowledge. But how accurate are these memories? As D'Andrade (1974), Loftus (1979), Loftus and Loftus (1976, 1980), Yarmey (1979) and Hunter (1964) caution, there is reason to question them. Loftus and Loftus state:

a person often remembers only parts of the newly learned material, and he tends to construct other bits and pieces in order to have a coherent story. That is, given a few facts are remembered, other facts are constructed that are consistent with what is remembered (1976:118).

In my opinion, the memories Pukapukans use are often vague enough to allow for various alternative interpretations. People interpret ambiguous recollections from the past in light of what seems reasonable to them today.

Can I prove that all Pukapukans do this? No I cannot. But a detailed analysis of a few Pukapukans' behavior leads me to believe that the phenomenon is fairly prevalent. The following example illustrates the type of data that support this assertion.

The story of Wutu (see Beaglehole ms. b.:1021-1023) is a tale as popular today as it was during the Beagleholes field work.<sup>11</sup> It involves a character who (1) is captured by ghosts (or gods) and (2) gets carried off by them in a wooden bowl (kumete). The person (3) subsequently defecates in the bowl to such an extent that he fills it with feces. Finally, (4) the feces splash all over the ghosts when the bowl falls (or is thrown down). Stated in this form, the story could easily be recognized by both the Beagleholes' and my own informants.<sup>12</sup>

But there are two serious complications. First, the ghosts sing a chant as they carry Wutu along in the bowl. The chant, while generally intelligible to the Beagleholes' informants, has been altered to such an extent that only a few parts are understood by informants today. Second, the four basic events mentioned above are contextualized in vastly different ways today than in the Beagleholes' time. Where the exact location of the story was ambiguous before, today most people agree that it occurred at Motu Ko. Where before Wutu's fate was ambiguous, today everyone asserts he escaped. Where before the story vaguely implied Wutu was being punished for some sort of sexual impropriety, today the ghost's desire for food explicitly motivated his capture.

I asked Pau one day to tell me the story. He included the above four main elements plus the fact that Wutu escaped. He knew parts of the chant but not what they meant. During the next several weeks, we together listened to several tapes of people telling me their versions of the story. One of the first stories he heard was by a man in his sixties. This version, Pau said, was exactly how he had remembered the tale being told when he was young. Everything was correct - from Wutu being on Motu Ko, to the ghosts planning to eat Wutu, to all the words of the chant. The only thing the man had forgotten, Pau noted, was why Wutu had been on Motu Ko in the first place.

But as Pau listened to more and more versions, he became less sure that (1) the man's version was the right one and (2) that it was the version he had heard when he was young. There was a logical contradiction that the man had not explained. If Wutu had been at Matawea on Motu Ko, how could he have escaped and run to the main island (Wale)? He would have to run right past the ghosts to get there. It was a contradiction that occurred in many of the accounts. This part did not make sense to him. (He recalled the version he had heard when he was young had made sense.)

Eventually Pau decided that Mitimoa's version was the correct one because it explained (1) what Wutu was doing on Motu Ko and (2) how he ran back to Wale. (Mitimoa said Wutu had been staying at Matautu not Matawea.) It was this version, Pau came to believe, he probably had heard as a child.

What about the chant? That he admitted really puzzled him. In comparing the different versions, he decided that Wakalua's was the correct one because more of its words made sense to present-day Pukapukans. He vaguely remembered Wakalua, in fact, telling him the chant this way when he was young.

A similar pattern occurred with the story of Malangaatiale. In an initial interview, Winangalo had little recollection of the tale. But as he heard one or two people's accounts it all came back to him - until he began seeing the contradictions in the various versions. Then, based on what he remembered, he tried to reconstruct the correct one. After thinking about the various accounts, Winangalo decided that Veeti was correct on one issue because he provided a more detailed explanation than did several others. He decided that Wakalua was correct on another matter because what Veeti said did not make sense to him. Few people did that today. So why, he mused aloud to me, would they have done it in the past?

One can see how in both these cases informants' vague memories allowed for various interpretations. They were not completely free - Wutu capturing the ghosts certainly would not have been recognized as an aspect of the tale. But within limits, various interpretations were possible and allowed for variations in how one made sense out of the tales in present-day terms.

The fact that Pukapukans used their reasoning to resolve certain ambiguities - ambiguities existing in their memories and/or in the tales - raises two important issues. First, most of the ten and twenty year olds who told me the story of Wutu were not at all bothered by the already noted logical contradiction regarding Wutu's escape from the ghosts. I cannot say they did not see it. The few children I pointed it out to admitted its existence. But they rarely pointed it out to me and, from my observations, did not view it as something particularly requiring explanation. (I presume they felt that some aspects of the tale just did not make sense. After all, no

one, not even Pau, seemed particularly concerned about explaining how Wutu could have defecated to such a degree as to fill up the wooden bowl he was in.) And yet Pau, and some other Pukapukans who perceived the contradiction about Wutu's escape (e.g. Te Alo in the previous chapter), were bothered enough by this contradiction to try to resolve it. Had the initial version they learned made sense because it had not contained the contradiction or had they simply ignored it when they were younger? I do not know. But we can see that in trying to understand the tale today, these people were making new sense out of an old tale.

The placing of the legend's main elements, some of which may be rather vague and/or abstract, into a meaningful context raises another important issue. In the Beagleholes time, both Wutu and Malangaatiale were popular stories (Beaglehole ms. b:1021, 1143). Today only Wutu is. In the Beagleholes versions of these myths, it was Malangaatiale that made more sense. Behaviors were explained by fitting them into a meaningful context of traditional customs and generally understandable motivations. Wutu, on the other hand, raised as many questions as it answered. The complete tale was far from coherent. At its core, however, existed a certain joke that Pukapukans can appreciate as much today as they presumably did in the Beagleholes' time - Wutu getting back at the ghosts by having his feces splash over them. Today it is the tale of Wutu which is far more coherent. Malangaatiale contains aspects of traditional custom that puzzle the few individuals who know it. Could it be that the very process of contextualization that helps make something meaningful to those in the present hinders the persistence of a tale through time - because different generations in



different environments may not understand such information (cf. Irvine 1978)? It is an important question to ponder as we see people reinterpret the past in terms of the present.

Reasoning From Limited Cases: Reasoning from memories really constitutes part of a more generalized process. People in Pukapuka often extrapolate from a limited corpus of data, about which they possess some knowledge, to a far broader corpus of data about which they lack specific information. My field notes contain numerous examples of this process. But let one suffice to elucidate the point.

Most people believe that Yaalongo kawa, a strip of land reaching from the lagoon to the ocean in Yato village, was at one time owned by a single individual (cf. Beaglehole 1938:230). Yet no living Pukapukan can substantiate this assertion in toto. Many can substantiate part of it, however. Several people provided me with detailed genealogies which show how at one time various sections of the kawa did indeed belong to a single individual. Some accounts (particularly those related to the descendants of Lotoava or of Lakini) clearly illustrate how various children of a particular descendant divided up a piece of land. Based on these kinds of data, people extrapolated to the whole kawa.

There are good reasons for doing so. While abstract genealogies are not that hard to obtain, genealogies tied to particular land claims are. Few people casually describe in public the complete genealogical bases for their land claims for fear that others may dispute them or try to lay claim to the land themselves. As a result, most people's genealogical knowledge of a kawa beyond their own

sections is on a catch as catch can basis. So Pukapukans, in a way, have no reasonable alternative to using their limited, specialized knowledge to extrapolate to the larger whole.

Moving from what the Pukapukans assert to what I deduce (based on what they assert), one can clearly see the limitations of such a strategy. My data show that perhaps only three-fifths of the land roughly within the kawa follow such a pattern. Some sections of the kawa (such as Tetawa's descendants who include Lakini and Waiva) are ideal models of a fissioning process from a single original ancestor. But the other two-fifths either contradict the pattern or are so ambiguous as to provide no support for it.

Approximately one-fifth of the land and swamps in Yaalongo kawa, for example, can be traced to Koulangi. But Koulangi is the reputed founder of Tokelau cemetery (po) in Yayi kawa, the kawa next to Yaalongo. His connection to that particular location in Yaalongo kawa is problematic at best within the above model of explanation. Perhaps Koulangi shared some kinship relationship with Tualei (the person who reconstituted the Yaalongo patrilineage after a devastating tidal wave). But if he did, nobody that I have ever talked to knows about it. Except for Makilai's suggestion that some of Koulangi's ancestors lie buried under a frangipani tree in Walepia cemetery, Koulangi's ancestors are a complete mystery to everyone on the island. The other one-fifth of the kawa is so ambiguous that no coherent pattern can be made of it either by Pukapukans or by myself - at least not in a way that fits into the explanatory model of the other sections. The genealogical support within Yaalongo kawa for the Pukapukan model is thus uncertain at best and partially contradictory at worse.

The point is simply that limitations exist in generalizing from a limited sample - especially one that is not random. In the above case, numerous examples exist which beautifully illustrate most Pukapukans' abstract formulation of the kawa's organization. But there is too much ambiguity in the data to actually say the pattern fits the whole kawa.

Since Pukapukans cannot collect all the data I obtained, they make reasonable deductions. Based on what they do know, they make inferences about what the rest of the data are like. (They presume the unknown corresponds in some manner to the known.) It is, in my opinion, a rather reasonable assumption to make in such a situation. But the problem is that, based on the knowledge I was able to obtain, it turns out to be only partially correct. Making reasonable deductions does not always assure their validity.

Some Final Comments on the Validating Process: This chapter has emphasized certain limitations exist in the techniques Pukapukans use for validating assertions about traditional knowledge. It should be stressed, however, that several of the techniques described may also be quite effective at times - particularly in regard to present-day matters. Evaluating an individual's knowledgeability by what he produces, for example, makes a great deal of sense. Likewise, reasoning through problems based on one's own experiences makes sense if the issues dealt with have occurred within recent times. (A difficulty arises in the transference of these techniques to the more distant past.) Pukapukans, I would argue, many times do effectively use their validating techniques. I have simply taken a particular

tack based on the aims of the thesis - showing that (1) certain diverse and ambiguous opinions exist regarding Pukapukan traditions and (2) the way Pukapukans resolve these issues not only emphasizes the processual nature of traditional knowledge but also helps perpetuate a certain diversity of opinion.

Yet simply because the validating techniques possess certain limitations does not mean they are ineffective. Rather, as the thesis stresses, the validity of such techniques - and of the knowledge derived from using them - does not rest on some abstract, correspondence sense of truth. It rests on the achievement of certain pragmatic ends. As George Herbert Mead states, the "test of the truth of what we have discovered is our ability to so state the past that we can continue the conduct whose inhibition has set the problem to us" (1938:97). Based on this standard, the knowledge both Pukapukans and anthropologists gain is valid in that it allows them to resolve certain problems - whether they deal with status rivalry or with the explication of ethnographic material to one's peers outside the culture.

In examining how Pukapukans validate knowledge claims, we have gained an understanding not only of the specific techniques and processes involved but also of how they relate to other aspects of the culture. We have, in brief, expanded our knowledge of Pukapuka and Pukapukans. But we have done something beyond that as well. In the process we have gained knowledge about that knowledge (to follow Levi-Strauss's famous order of orders phraseology). We have seen that traditional knowledge is not simply a product but a process and that this effects the anthropological dialogue with people of other cultures.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

- 1 For a thoughtful critique of Radin's concept see Redfield (1969).
- 2 I will focus my comments on traditional knowledge, the main theme of this thesis. But the reader should be aware that ambiguities and discrepancies exist in numerous other areas as well, especially in matters related to sharing and organized competitions.
- 3 Given that land boundary disputes may go on for years, it is not safe to say that these kawa boundaries involve no disputes at all. But the people I discussed the subject with were not, to the best of my knowledge, party to any such disputes.
- 4 Awale is also sometimes viewed as a major cemetery though few people are buried there today.
- 5 I focus on responses rather than people because over the roughly two and a half years that I worked with the general sample of elderly informants, I asked each person the same question several times but in separate interviews on various topics - from social organization, to myths, to material culture. The reader should be cautious in over-interpreting these statistics. Some variation exists in certain people's interviews, for example, related to the material discussed. Moreover, people would not always give the same exact answer to the same exact question on all occasions. But these figures do provide a general sense of the nature and range of diversity involved in people's responses. The reason this question has a smaller number of responses than the question concerning knowledgeability below is because it was not repeated as many times in the various interviews. For further details on how the sample was collected and what percentage of the population it represents, see footnote one in the Preface.
- 6 The reader should again be cautious in over-interpreting these statistics. They are, essentially, meant to provide a sense of the nature and range of diversity involved in the responses to my questions. For further details on how the sample was collected and what percentage of the population it represents, see footnote one in the Preface.

7

It might be helpful for the reader if I restate that the sample of 80 refers only to those responses dealing with the open display of knowledge. The larger sample involves 123 responses and it is to this sample we are now returning to again.

8

Ideally, it would be helpful to specify in some rough statistical sense to what degree Pukapukans claim to use this technique in comparison to others. Unfortunately, the way the questions were phrased in the various surveys, did not prove particularly effective in isolating this technique. I therefore simply state my impression of its frequency of occurrence.

9

This is the figure of 26 plus 11 mentioned on pages 165-166 above.

10

He clarified the statement by saying that some people were uncertain about specific details - about whether a particular individual belonged in one group or another. They had problems, that is to say, in regard to certain people's ignorance. But there were no major disputes as to the general form of these organizations.

11

In the Beagleholes manuscript the main character is called Kutu not Wutu as he is today. This slight change in names raises some very interesting questions. The Rarotongan word for lice is kutu while the Pukapukan word is wutu. It is possible that the name was "Pukapukanized" from what was perceived to be a Rarotongan form. But to present the data in support of such a possibility would require going well beyond the confines of the present thesis. For the present, it suffices to simply know a slight name change has occurred for the main character.

12

The Beagleholes collected two variants of this myth so one can gain a general idea of what aspects of the tale were held in common and what aspects differed among informants.

## REFORMULATING THE PAST:

### The Akatawa as a Case Study

#### Chapter Four

The three previous chapters have emphasized that Pukapukan traditional knowledge, rather than being static is more of a process - continually undergoing change as each new generation acquires, interprets, and validates it in ways that make it meaningful to them. The current chapter provides a case study of this process at work. It discusses how a vaguely formulated and/or culturally marginal idea, the Akatawa, became in time a coherent, concrete, vital manifestation of Pukapukan tradition. The Akatawa, as the reader will recall, is the form of social organization temporarily established on the atoll in 1976. Rather than dwelling in three villages, the population lived in a bipartite social organization involving two tawa, Tawa Lalo and Tawa Ngake. For Pukapukans the 1976 Akatawa constituted a revival of the past. But various anthropological and historical data suggest that it was not; it was a creation of the present. The chapter helps unravel some of the circumstances surrounding this apparent contradiction.

## REVIVING THE WUA (OR MATRIMOIETY) ORGANIZATION

The story really begins in 1974 when the Kau Wowolo (or council of important people) decided to temporarily revive the former system of matrimoieties (or Wua). Minute number ten of its 1974 annual meeting provides the best record of what happened:

The meeting thinks (or has decided) to have some entertainment (tamataola) between the (Wua) Kati and the Wua Lulu. So the generation of young adults (maapu) of today can know (about this traditional form of organization). This is the form the games (talekaleka) (will take) - cricket for the men and the women . . . The cricket games between the two Wua (or matrimoieties) will take place the 27th of February to the 28th of February, 1974.

Numerous sources confirm the previous existence of a matrimoiety organization. In 1904, Hutchin notes "the people reckon their descent from the mother's side" (1904:174). The Beagleholes (1938:221-228 and ms. a.) provide a clear overall account of this organization. Julia Hecht (1976, 1977, 1981) insightfully describes the organization's symbolic correlates. Beckett (1964:417), MacGregor (1935:18) and Vayda (1959:128) all mention it in passing.

There were two overarching matrimoieties - Wua Kati and Wua Lulu. These in turn were each divided into smaller matrilineal units, called momo, keinanga, or manga, which the Beagleholes refer to as iincages or sublineages. The matrilineal units not only acted as corporate groups, but also established cross-cutting ties among the various localized patrilineal residential units.<sup>1</sup>



The head of the matrilineage (wakatauila or wakalulu) was the eldest male or female member of the group. He (or she) had several responsibilities.

He acts as gift-giver at the waele feasts for the first-born children in the families making up the descent group. He represents the lineage at inter-lineage and village meetings, arranges for the carrying out of its activities in games, competitions, and feasts (Beaglehole 1938:226-227).

Hecht makes the same basic point: "In inter-lineage and village meetings, these representatives made decisions about work to be done, particularly in regard to taro swamps, and the organization of games, competitions and feasts" (1976:73).

The Beagleholes note, "the maternal lineage functions as a unit in fishing and sporting contests and in certain types of food divisions" (1938:228). "Team membership for fishing and sporting contests was formerly always based on maternal lineage membership. One moiety contested against another moiety" (Beaglehole 1938:231). Food divisions following various competitions were previously always "in terms of either maternal or paternal organization . . . [and] food divisions at marriage and birth feasts were formerly . . . in terms of maternal units" (1938:231-232, see also ms. a. "Activities organized on Wua lines"). The matrilineal units, in addition, previously controlled certain taro swamps on the main islet (Wale) (Beaglehole 1938:44, 228, ms. a; Hecht 1976:73-73).

While this account only skims the surface of a rather complex topic, enough has been said to make a key point. Considerable evidence suggests that formerly certain matrilineal units did act as

corporate groups. They had their own leaders, their own food divisions, their own property. They competed against each other in sports.

As the Kau Wowolo's minutes make clear, the island did not revive the whole matrilineal system in toto nor was it revived for a very long period of time. The Wua Lulu and the Wua Kati only competed against each other in cricket for two days. But why did they even revive the system at all?

Reasons for the Revival: One day, while talking with the chairman of the Kau Wowolo (a man in his forties), I inquired about the reasons behind the council's decision. His answer was simple. "We wanted to revive these traditional things." Another council member (a man in his sixties) added: "we established [these things such as the matrimoieties] at the present time so that our children of today will know (about them)."

An outsider, interesting enough, played a role in this decision. The head of the Kau Wowolo went on to note: "The question was that we had to revive the traditions of our island . . . when the anthropologist Julia, Julia Hecht, was here, we talked about it too - that part of our traditions should be revived." A conversation with Julia Hecht, in 1982, indicated that she also felt that her research probably affected the council's decision.

The head of the Kau Wowolo observed though:

Yes Julia and I talked about this, but it (was) not only her. She advised me to revive such things. But also myself, I wanted the traditions of this island to be revived . . . (Because of) what I (had) gained from the

older people in my village . . . That is how I got the idea for this. When it came to our meeting, it was raised. And we all supported it.

Turning to a broader perspective - beyond what people simply asserted - certain other factors probably also played a role in the decision. The first has to do with the Kau Wowolo itself. In reviving the past, the Kau Wowolo was also, in a sense, strengthening its own authority. Technically, what it did was quite within its jurisdiction. But for almost two decades such authority had rarely been exercised. In breathing new life into some old powers, the Kau Wowolo was giving itself a new vitality (and also probably a greater stature to its relatively new chairman).

Other factors provided the context in which the reviving of past traditions constituted a culturally meaningful and valued act. The nature of Pukapuka's economic resources, the form of its traditional social organization, and its clear linguistic and cultural differences from other islands in the Cooks, all tend to encourage, to a certain extent, the conservation and perpetuation of its cultural traditions. Manihiki and Penrhyn, two other atolls in the northern Cooks, for example grow pearl shell in their lagoons and often derive a considerable income from this operation. Pukapuka cannot do so because of its lagoon's muddy bottom (Turner 1978:17-18). Pukapuka, on the other hand, has extensive taro swamps which allow for a certain degree of self-sufficiency in diet. Manihiki and Penrhyn, lacking such swamps, are far more dependent on imported foodstuffs. Manihiki and Penrhyn, thus, are drawn - by their valuable exports and domestic

needs - into modern Western commercialism to a far greater extent than is Pukapuka.

Andrew Vayda in comparing Pukapuka with Rakahanga, another atoll in the northern Cooks, observes that differences in traditional organization affected each's response to Western commercialism. The latter became increasingly more involved in the Western economy; the former was not as radically affected.

The achievement of success in trading in Rakahanga implied a very general renunciation of customary procedures, which were sanctioned primarily by kinship claims and allegiances. It was this kind of renunciation that was unnecessary in Pukapuka, where customary procedures were different. Commercialism begot more commercialism in Rakahanga, but it did not appear to do so in Pukapuka (1959:136).

Pukapukans moreover, when they do try to enter the modern Western economic system, often find themselves at a relative disadvantage (Beckett 1964:427-430, Hecht 1978:11). In Western-oriented Rarotonga:

Regular employment is not easily obtained and even in casual work, the Pukapukan is at a disadvantage, having a reputation for laziness and awkwardness which may be attributed to his inexperience in plantation work and, indeed, any work routine (Beckett 1964:428).

Being culturally distinct from most other Cook Islanders (Hecht 1978:11) and speaking an "incomprehensible" dialect (Beckett 1964:428), Pukapukans often find it difficult to assimilate into the national, Western-oriented economy and culture.

As a result, while other northern atolls, such as Manihiki, Penrhyn, and Rakahanga are pushed towards more and more Western commercialism, Pukapuka is not. Pukapukans, partially limited in their ability to assimilate into the modern Western economic system, often focus more on preserving the traditions they already possess.

The revival of traditional forms of social organization also fits with past changes on the atoll. Pukapuka, as discussed in chapter one, possesses a somewhat fluid, flexible form of social organization that, in gradually changing over time, has encouraged the periodic realignment of group structures. The fluidity appears functionally valuable in that such structural realignments discourages various social units from solidifying into antagonistic groupings (cf. Goldman 1970:549). Moreover, as Arno (personal communication) points out, since Pukapuka possesses relatively little economic value for the national government, they have comparatively little vested interest in maintaining the status quo. The 1974 cultural revival (as well as later ones) posed little threat to those in power. Overall, the 1974 revival thus represented a response to various events, pressures, and conditions.

Comments on the 1974 Revival: The main difference between the matrimoiety pattern revived in 1974 and the traditional form of matrilineal social organization - described by the Beagleholes and Julia Hecht - concerns the matrimoieties own internal organization. By 1974, the matrilineal units no longer acted as corporate groups with a clear set of leaders. Nor did they jointly own taro swamps. At best they now functioned as matrilineal categories. No clear designated representatives existed who could provide (in this egalitarian oriented culture) the authority and direction for organizing sporting competitions. The Kau Wowolo, not the matrimoieties, provided the organizational leadership for the cricket games.

The revival of the matrimoiety organization was not something revolutionary new; the same thing had occurred in the recent past. Andrew Vayda writes: "matrilineal moiety affiliations were said by one informant to have been the basis on which sides were chosen for island-wide sports competitions held as recently as 1954" (1959:128). (Note Andrew Vayda did his field work in 1957.) Julia Hecht, in our informal conversation in 1982, made this point too. People remembered having done it in recent times, she said - probably in the 1930's and again in the 1950's.

One might ponder why the Kau Wowolo chose to revive the matrimoieties in 1974 rather than the patrilineages or some other form of traditional social organization. I asked the chairman about this. "It just came into our minds to start it. We did not choose . . . well like this, we (did not say) we have to choose this first. But in our meeting it was (just) raised." This is the same impression that another person at the meeting had. "We did not set it all out in an orderly manner (akapapa) (that we) would learn about the Wua first." But then he went on to add "perhaps we began with the Wua because that was the earliest way (or work, angaanga)."

No one I talked to ever gave more than a vague, general opinion as to why people chose the matrimoieties. Nor did they seem particularly interested in explaining how and why the revival came about in the first place - beyond the fact that it was to teach the younger generation about the past. (This seemed to be an issue that interested me far more than them.) Yet, we can observe, following the comments of Julia Hecht and Andrew Vayda, that the matrimoieties were

the type of revival that had most recently been instituted on the island. In reviving the past, the council was really also, in a sense, thus continuing it.

The Kau Wowolo's efforts were clearly successful in one sense. The younger generation learned who belonged where in the matrimoiety organization. Rather than being simply told in words, they actually experienced the matrimoieties' in operation. They learned by participation. But certain difficulties arose that made the revival's continuation, beyond the two day period, problematic at best. People became better acquainted with the past. But it was at the cost of disrupting certain present-day social alignments. Ula explains:

(People) disliked (veliveli) staying by matrimoieties. With matrimoieties, (my wife) Tikeli, (she is) a Wua Lulu. I am a (Wua) Kati. Consequently, when the Kati gather together, I go with the Kati. When the Wua Lulu gathers together, Tikeli goes with the Wua Lulu. (I get) angry. "Perhaps Tikeli . . . (is) going off with (some) man. Tikeli thinks the same thing, "perhaps Ula is getting to be friendly (pili) to some of the women."

Many other people made similar comments. A male informant in his mid-sixties, for example, described an actual event reputed to have taken place during the 1974 revival.

Alaikonga and Iemima were married. Iemima went to the (Wua) Kati. Alaikonga went to the Wua Lulu. At night, we sat around talking, we sang songs. Alaikonga started befriending (pili) Panua. Iemima subsequently came (to get Alaikonga but) he was gone. He went off with Panua . . . that is what is bad about the matrimoieties because it causes fights between husbands and wife.

Julia Hecht also observed that people felt the frictions engendered by dividing into matrimoieties were particularly difficult.

But these problems, in a sense, were only the tip of the iceberg. If the island had continued the matrimoieties for more than a few weeks, even more serious problems would have arisen. Because the matrimoieties no longer acted as corporate groups with their own property and their own internal structures, they lacked the authority to regulate and distribute the island's food resources. Their former taro swamps, for instance, were now controlled by other social groupings (see Beaglehole 1938:32, ms. a. "names of ui keinanga and ui po", and pages 35-36 in "Social(7)" field notebook). Moreover, the matrimoieties had no authority regarding the public reserves - the main source of coconuts for making copra. As Eliu pointed out, continuing the matrimoieties would inhibit, if not seriously disrupt, the production of copra - thereby posing a threat to people's incomes.

In summary, the Pukapukans revived in 1974 a pattern of social organization that fairly closely resembled the traditional Pukapukan social pattern (as described by the Beagleholes and Julia Hecht). This pattern, moreover, had also been revived in the early 1950's. But the revival certainly had its drawbacks. It was one thing to revive the past. It was quite another to make the past work in the present - especially when the two differed in significant ways. Yet the matrimoiety revival did emphasize an important point - in spite of its brief duration, even with the problems it generated. It stressed that present-day alignments were neither the only forms of social organization nor beyond tampering with. The matrimoieties, by reviving the past, helped put the present in perspective.



## REVIVING THE PO (OR PATRILINEAL) ORGANIZATION

Early in 1975, at their next annual meeting, the Kau Wowolo revived another form of traditional social organization, but this time for approximately one week. The best record of what transpired again comes from the minutes of the Kau Wowolo:

There will be some games (talekaleka) on the land and in the ocean. First will be still-canoe fishing (yikakai). When that is done, cricket will be played. To round it off (or sweeten things up, akamalie), there will be mako chanting in the evening.

The organization of the cricket will be in terms of burial places (tanumanga). Ngake - Muliwutu and Maatanga, Loto - Tilotilowia and Tua, Yato - Yamaunga and Yaalongo. Three teams will, therefore, play cricket.

For the organization of the fishing, there will be four teams. The Aronga Nunui (i.e. the Rarotongan word for the Kau Wowolo), Ngake, Loto, Yato. Each team will have eleven members.

What the Kau Wowolo did in 1975 was to revive the traditional patrilineal organization. Maatanga, Muliwutu, Tilotilowia, Tua, Yamaunga and Yaalongo not only refer to certain cemeteries (po) but also to certain patrilineages (po). Tanumanga is simply the Rarotongan word for po. (The Kau Wowolo's minutes are customarily written in Rarotongan.)

Substantial data confirm the previous existence of these patrilineages. The Beagleholes and Hecht provide the most complete descriptions. But Wyatt Gill (Gill 1912), Beckett (1964:417), and Vayda (1959:128) also make brief references to such groupings.

The patrilineages, like the matrimoieties, were organized in a complex pattern. At least seven major patrilineages previously existed - Muliwutu, Maatanga, Yangalipule (or Tilotilowia), i Tua,

Yamaunga, Yayi, and Yaalongo (Beaglehole 1938:229, Hecht 1976:75). Each was affiliated with certain strips of land (kawa) (Beaglehole 1938:42, ms. a "Land boundaries and divisions" pages 1-3; Hecht 1976:32-33, 74-75). These strips existed not only for the various public reserves - Motu Uta, Motu Ko, Motu Kotawa and Motu Niua - but also for non-reserve lands as well. Each patrilineage was affiliated with a particular village - the villages within which its land strips (or kawa) existed. As the Kau Wowolo's minutes indicate, Ngake village included Muliwutu and Maatanga, Loto village Yangalipule (or Tilotilowia) and i Tua, and Yato village Yamaunga, Yayi, and Yaalongo.

The Beagleholes record that there were two distinct aspects to the patrilineages, the po (or common burial sites) and the yoolonga (or localized groupings).

When a man talks of his po, he means his paternal lineage and the piece of ground where he will be buried. The importance of the burial ground as giving a symbolic locus of reference for the varied functions of the lineage is shown by the fact that when asking the paternal lineage membership of a person one does not say: "What is his po?" but, "Where will he be buried?" (Ka tanu i wea?) The answer always provides the name of the burial ground. On the other hand, in narrative the name of the po is always used as an adjective to indicate paternal descent affiliation, as "Ko Pakula, e tane Ma[a]tanga" (Pakula was a man of Ma[a]tanga po) (Beaglehole 1938:229; cf. Hecht 1976:74 ff.).

On the other hand, the Yoolonga division:

is in terms of patrilocal residence. That is, all members of the same household or family organization living patrilocally are considered to belong to the same Yoolonga [sic.] organization. In food shares, the head of the family, usually the oldest male, receives a food share for and on behalf of the patrilocal grouping living with him.

The Yoolonga [sic.] group will thus exclude blood members of the family who are adopted elsewhere and are not in residence with the patrilocal group, but will include non-blood members who reside with the patrilocal group through marriage, or through adoption . . .

The Yolongo group may at times coincide with the paternal lineage or po group; but the two, paternal lineage group, and patrilocal group, do not coincide on all points owing to the fact of patrilocal residence in marriage, and women of other po taking up residence with the Yolongo group (Beaglehole ms. a., "Organization for [food] division and games, etc, Yolongo").

The patrilineage's leaders consisted mainly of a sub-chief (langatila) or chief (aliki) (depending on the lineage) and, in former times, a priest who directed the worship of the lineage's gods (Beaglehole 1938:231). Hecht notes, "most chiefly functions appear to have been at the village level. Essentially the chiefs are said to have implemented decisions passed on to them by the elders of the village" (1976:60). The Beagleholes indicate:

Village meetings (wakapono lulu), attended by the chiefs, sub-chiefs, and all adult males of the village discussed matters affecting the village and the reserves, and settled intra-village disputes . . . Meetings of the chiefs (wakapononga a te wui aliki) discussed island and inter-lineage matters (1938:245).

The present-day Kau Wowolo constitutes a perpetuation of these inter-lineage chiefly meetings.

The localized patrilineal groupings (yoolonga) formed the basis for certain food divisions and sporting contests. The Beagleholes state:

"Food divisions following fishing contests and other games are always in terms of either maternal or paternal organization . . . Before the division of food for a fishing contest (malama), the food dividers asked me how I wished the food to be divided. As I left the responsibility to them, they decided to make the division on the paternal (yolongo) [sic.] principle (Beaglehole 1938:232).

Long ago, the Beagleholes record, "team membership for fishing and sporting contests was . . . always based on maternal lineage membership . . . [But] at a later period [of Pukapukan history,] organization was in terms of either wua or yolongo [sic.] units. [Today] village membership is the rule." (1938:231-232, see also Hecht 1976:83). The Beagleholes' unpublished field notes make essentially the same point (see ms. a. "Activities organized on Yolongo lines").

Comments on the 1975 Revival: What the Kau Wowolo revived in 1975 was, consequently, something that anthropological sources amply confirm existed in the past. But a major complication exists. As the above quote indicates, previous competitions were in terms of localized patrilineal groupings (yoolonga) not in terms of burial locations (po). The Kau Wowolo's minutes clearly indicate the 1975 games were organized by people's future burial sites.

Interestingly enough, the difference between localized patrilineal groupings (yoolonga) and the patrilineages (po) as "burial categories" (to use Julia Hecht's term - 1976:74 ff.) escapes most Pukapukans today. My own investigations suggest Pukapukans now frequently confuse the two (or give the distinction between the two a somewhat different emphasis). The 1975 competitions, for instance, were interchangeably referred to by either appellation, po or yoolonga. Such confusion, in my opinion, is quite understandable because only the po, as a burial category, operates with any force today. Localized groupings now tend to be more in terms of cognatic kinship and village residence.

There is also one other difference between the 1975 revival and the earlier patrilineal organization as described by the Beagleholes and Hecht. The competitive spirit seems to have "caught up" the Kau Wowolo - for they too decided to compete. Nothing in any of the available anthropological reports indicate that patrilineal groupings ever before competed against the Kau Wowolo.

The 1975 patrilineal revival, consequently, represented a somewhat more radical departure from the traditional form of social organization - as we know it from both the Beagleholes' and Julia Hecht's data - than did the 1974 matrimoiety revival. For the patrilineages, two major changes occurred: (1) competitions were based on patrilineal burial categories (po) rather than on localized patrilineal groupings (yoolonga) and (2) burial categories and the Kau Wowolo competed against each other. Only in terms of the leadership necessary to organize the games could one say that the 1975 patrilineal groupings more closely corresponded to the traditional form of social organization than did the matrimoieties. Unlike with the latter, the patrilineages possessed the leadership and authority to reconstitute themselves. The Kau Wowolo, as noted, formed a continuation of the traditional inter-patrilineage meetings of the chiefs (wakapononga a te wui aliki).

The 1975 revival of the patrilineages, however, still faced the same difficulties as the 1974 matrimoieties. As in 1974, the younger generation was able to see first hand how a form of traditional social organization operated. People who were simply a category - in terms of sharing a common burial site - temporarily became a group as they

competed together in various sporting contests. But reviving the patrilineal form of organization also created problems. Ula explains, in his colorful way, a situation I heard many people express concern about.

It was the same with the yoolonga (as with the wua or matrimoieties). Tikeli and I, we are all right. We are both buried in Ngake (village), in the cemeteries of Ngake. So we go (together because) we (belong to the same) yoolonga.

But some other people, like Aleta. Aleta belongs to the yoolonga of Ngake. Pulotu (his wife) belongs to the yoolonga of Yato. If (people) gather according to yoolonga, Aleta goes to Ngake, Pulotu goes to Yato. Pulotu thinks, "ooh, Aleta will befriend the people of his yoolonga (because they will be together in the evenings - without her). He will leave me."

That is the same with Itaia. (His wife) Mulie belongs to the yoolonga of Ngake. Itaia belongs to the yoolonga of Loto. Mulie thinks "Itaia may leave me. Perhaps he will go (off) with the women of the yoolonga of Loto."

Again such statements are only the tip of the iceberg.

Continuing the patrilineal organization beyond a brief, temporary period would seriously disrupt present-day arrangements for regulating and distributing the island's economic resources - especially in the public reserves. To effectively produce copra by future burial sites (po), for example, would mean either (1) the villages would lose control over their reserves and/or (2) village membership would have to be dramatically altered.

Thus both the matrimoieties and the patrilineages - the two best known forms of traditional social organization by both Pukapukans and anthropologists alike - ran up against the same basic difficulties. Reviving traditional forms of social organization created new social alignments. They served a valuable purpose by putting present-day

social units in historical perspective. But they were impractical as semi-permanent forms of modern social organization. To continue "reliving" the past in the present simply caused too many problems - because the past and the present now differed in several significant ways.

#### REVIVING THE AKATAWA ORGANIZATION

It is within this context that at their next annual meeting, in 1976, the Kau Wowolo revived the Akatawa organization - the only form of traditional social organization for which corroborating data do not exist. Various anthropologists, with whom I have discussed the Akatawa, ask what exactly happened in 1976? How did the Akatawa come about? Most of the Pukapukans who attended the 1976 meeting of the Kau Wowolo have ambiguous ideas, at best, of what transpired - when I interviewed them in 1977 and 1978. While all these people stated they had supported the Akatawa's revival, for instance, none of them indicated that they had initiated the proposals themselves. Each person I talked to indicated someone else had raised the idea. The chairman, for example, vaguely suggested that perhaps it was Kuluea's idea. According to the chairman, Kuluea had experienced the Akatawa in his youth and consequently, knew all about it. "When it happened long ago," the chairman noted, these "old people were still alive, they saw it." But Kuluea did not recall experiencing it in his youth nor, he added, had he proposed the idea at the meeting. When I questioned him about the topic, he vaguely thought possibly Tuliayanga had suggested the idea. And so it went. Each person vaguely indicating, when I

inquired, that someone else might have had proposed the idea (based presumably on what on what they knew about that individual's background). The main point they seemed to all agree upon was that everyone had supported instituting the Akatawa in 1976 so today's youth could learn more about past forms of social organization. All of their discussions stressed keeping the past alive. But as to the details of who said what, when, or how, they had no consensus. Nor, from my observations, did they seem to be particularly concerned about the topic - certainly not to the degree that I, and several other outsiders, were. Who actually proposed the Akatawa was an idea that seemed to interest me far more than the members of the Kau Wowolo.

As a result, the best record of what was decided at this historic meeting again comes from the Kau Wowolo's written minutes. Number eight for 1976 reads:

We have decided to hold certain games (talekaleka) this year, when the meeting is over. There are (to be) two games - cricket for both men and women and still-canoe fishing (yikakai) for the men. This is the way they will be organized, it will be done by Akatawas - that is (there will be) two groupings (lulu lua). Ngake (village) with all the sections of Tawa Ngake of the village (oile) Loto. Yato (village) and all the sections of Tawa La'o of the village Loto. There are, therefore, two tawa (or sides) which (will be) called Tawa Ngake and Tawa La'o.

Staying like this will last for two weeks . . . The first week, in regard to what we have said, will be the week of February 12th. Following that will be the second week (directly after that). In the first week, on a Wednesday, the men will play cricket. On Thursday, the women will play cricket. On Friday, (there will be) still-canoe fishing (yikakai). On Saturday, singing (will occur).

For the second of the weeks, the teams that lost can rechallenge (imu-langa). If the Tawa La'o lost at cricket, then the second week they can rechallenge Tawa Ngake again. The same goes for the fishing. Everything will be brought to a close on Friday of this week with a picnic. The Akatawa will go to the two public reserves (motu) - Tawa La'o to Motu Kotawa, Tawa Ngake to Motu Ko.



In contrast to the two previous revivals few frictions arose with this new form of social organization. At least initially everyone seemed in favor of not terminating the Akatawa - of carrying on with it. The chairman of the Kau Wowolo explains. "When we tried the Akatawa, we set a limit of two weeks . . . we tried to limit the time to two weeks. But when they got into it, the people liked it." As a result, the Kau Wowolo agreed to extend the Akatawa through at least the beginning of 1979.

Various Pukapukans expressed various reasons to me why people enjoyed the Akatawa organization.

It was nice because we ate together (or shared our food together). (The group called Tawa Lalo) would go to Tawa Lalo in Motu Uta. They would eat the coconuts, the taro of Tawa Lalo (in Motu Uta). (When that was) finished, (they) would go to Motu Kotawa, the people of Loto (village) would go (too). If (we) stayed in villages, Loto would not go to Motu Kotawa (because it was Yato village's reserve).

But in staying by Akatawa, (they would) go to Motu Kotawa, they would eat (various types of foods found mainly there) - (birds like) the bobby (takupu), the noddy tern (ngongo), the black tern (lakia), (and also) papayas. That is why (people) liked it. [A man in his early seventies]

Several cricket players mentioned another reason to me. After the first match between the two sides, the losers rechallenged and defeated the winners. So then, a man in his early fifties stated, "we wanted to challenge again so we would know which was the stronger side. Then (we) kept on going (at it)" (a man in his early fifties). The chairman of the Kau Wowolo added, "I think that is one reason why the people like this system. Because we (can) compete between two sides in . . . (games) - such as cricket, volley ball, fishing."

Others suggested that it was something new, something different to try. They did not add, but one can infer they meant, that it was not simply something new, but rather something new that worked well -- something that did not create a lot of social frictions.<sup>2</sup>

Turning to a broader perspective, beyond simply what people said, one can perceive a perpetuation of certain general principles in Pukapukan social organization. The fluid pattern of restructuring social groupings continued -- not only in terms of the 1974 and 1975 revivals but, more pointedly, in regard to the general changes that had been occurring over the past century (or longer) on the atoll. The establishment of the Akatawa continued the trend toward bigger and bigger comparatively localized social units with control over the island's reserves (and hence its major resources). Where previously numerous patrilineages had become absorbed into three villages, now the villages were becoming merged into two tawa (or sides). What made the Akatawa revival special, in comparison to the two previous revivals, was that it worked comparatively well. The Akatawa was either conceptually vague enough and/or structurally similar enough to the three village organization that it could be laid on top of the present-day organization without causing serious realignments or disruptions.

The Akatawa's Demise: In the beginning of 1979, when the Akatawa had lasted three years, the Kau Wowolo took up the issue of whether to extend it further or to terminate it. The Kau Wowolo asked the general populace to vote privately on the matter. Because certain pressures brought to bear by the Akatawa's opponents, the voting (in

the form of secret ballots) was conducted by villages rather than by tawa (i.e. Tawa Ngake and Tawa Lalo). The results were as follows. Ngake and Loto villages, by close margins, opposed the Akatawa's continuation. Yato, by a wide margin, favored it. The total voting pattern for the whole island (which was made public but which, to my knowledge, only I wrote down) was 120 adults in favor of continuing the Akatawa and 80 adults opposed.

Consequently, it was debatable what the general population actually wanted. The populace, organized by villages, wanted to return to the village system. The populace as a whole, because of the strong support of Yato village, wanted to extend the Akatawa. After much discussion over the significance of these results, the Kau Wowolo decided to extend the Akatawa for another year. At the meeting, a formal vote was taken (which again was made public and again which only I apparently recorded): four voted to have the Akatawa for one final year; three to have it last at least one more year and perhaps much longer; one to set a definite time limit during the next year for its termination; and one to have it last for only another six months.

At the beginning of 1980, the issue of the Akatawa's termination was consequently raised once more. From my pre-meeting conversations with council members, I knew the decision might go either way. Approximately a third of the members I talked to strongly favored the Akatawa's continuation, a third strongly opposed it (for reasons implied in chapter one), and a third wavered in between these two poles. (Many members had the same assessment of the voting as I did.) It is not uncommon, incidently, for Pukapukan meetings to

reverse previous decisions on certain issues when new or different opinions come before it. Though the 1979 decision was discussed, it was not viewed as binding upon the council in the 1980 meeting.

The conversation on the Akatawa was generally cautious and tense. Initially a few people, who mostly favored extending the Akatawa indefinitely, dominated the discussion. But then after about 45 minutes, when there was a lull in the conversation, Kuluea spoke. (Before the meeting, most people I talked to felt he was leaning towards continuing the Akatawa.) He said that personally he saw many benefits to the Akatawa organization which he proceeded to list. But last year the meeting had decided to terminate the Akatawa and that is what should be done. He himself, he stated in a voice deep with emotion, had promised a close relative not to again support the extension of the Akatawa. Out of respect for what he had promised to this relative and out of respect for what the Kau Wowolo had promised the people last year, Kuluea felt the island should return to the village system - in spite of any personal feelings to the contrary. The manner in which the speech was spoken and the nature of the remarks seemed to galvanize the opposition. Several other people then came out in favor of terminating the Akatawa. From my reading of the situation, that speech was an important factor in tipping the balance towards returning to the village system. The flow of the conversation from then on was mostly in favor of the Akatawa's termination. (It should be noted, however, that most members of the Kau Wowolo did not subsequently agree with my analysis of the meeting. They generally stressed the consensual nature of the decision and how they had all participated in it.)

The termination of the Akatawa was gradual. It extended over a several week period. But by the end of March 1980, the whole island was again organized in a tripartite village structure. At least up to the present time, 1982, the revival of traditional forms of Pukapukan social organization seems to have run its course. At the Kau Wowolo's 1981 meeting, no mention was made of continuing the revivals. Nor is there any indication, in the correspondences I have recently received, of another revival occurring in the near future.

Comments on the 1976 Revival: As discussed in chapter one, a change occurred over time regarding Pukapukan knowledge of the Akatawa. Prior to 1976, the Akatawa, as a traditional form of social organization, was poorly known by most Pukapukans and/or perceived as of relatively small cultural significance by them. When I conducted my research, from 1977 to 1981, the situation was radically different. Many people told me about previous Akatawa. Some could even validate their assertions with personal experiences. It had become a major form of traditional social organization - well-known and of clear cultural importance.

What brought about this change, I believe, was a particular set of historical circumstances. The Akatawa became part of the Kau Wowolo's attempts to revive the past. A few individuals' private (and perhaps vague) conceptions became drawn into the public realm and gained the Kau Wowolo's and the general populace's stamp of validity. To call into question beliefs about earlier Akatawa now became a questioning of the authority and competency of these groups. Simply by successfully working, the Akatawa also gained a measure of

authenticity. As people experienced the Akatawa from 1976 onwards, as they publicly discussed it, as they reflected on its possible historical antecedents, marginal and/or vaguely formulated views regarding past Akatawa spread into the public domain and became more crystallized, enunciated, and accepted. A meaningful new tradition became established in the culture at large.

#### RECONCEPTUALIZING THE MATRIMOIETY ORGANIZATION

The process of reviving the past did not only give coherence and validity to the Akatawa, it also helped reconceptualize another form of traditional social organization as well. The change was nothing dramatic. It did not involve a clear break with the past. But people seemed to be conceptualizing the matrimoieties in a slightly different manner after these revivals than before them.

The Beagleholes make clear that the matrilineal units functioned as corporate groups in 1934-1935. They possessed leaders (1938:226-227), they owned property (1938:44, 228), and members came together on certain occasions (1938:228, 232). But gradually over time, as noted, these matrimoieties lost much of their corporate character and became mostly symbolic categories, representatives of certain symbolic principles. The matrilineal owned taro swamps, for example, became reconceptualized as belonging to cognatic kin groups (koputangata). After the competitions in the early fifties, the moiety did not come collectively together again until the 1974 revival. In 1964, Jeremy Beckett could report that the "matrilineal sublineages [were] . . . virtually defunct" (1964:417). But as Julia

Hecht's fine analysis makes clear, the matrilineal principle still continued to possess a certain symbolic importance (see especially Hecht 1976: 38 ff., 49-51, 72, and 117-142; 1977: 186-187, 195).

This symbolism currently manifests itself in two important ways. First, the complementarity between matrilineality and patrilineality is represented by an assertion that, in former times, the matrilineal principle operated during the individual's lifetime while the patrilineal principle operated at his death. Lepuama, for example, expressed a common opinion when he stated:

At the time of living (olaanga), all the children of the marriage, follow (or go to) the matrimoiety of the woman (or mother). If the (mother) is a (Wua) Kati or a Wua Lulu, (they) will follow behind (her). (At the time) of death, it is different . . . the bones from the living (person) will be taken to the place of the father.

Veeti made a similar comment in a group discussion I held at my house one evening about traditional forms of social organization.

(During) the life of the person, (he) belongs to his mother (or really mother's side). (He) belongs to her matrimoiety . . . Here is the meaning (or reason) . . . a woman (gives) birth, (provides) a child . . . At death, the right (mana) goes to the man (or father). Because the man perpetuates (or preserves, akakatili) the woman's seed (wua) (by his descendants).

Moreover, in former times people today believe, men controlled the land (lunga wenua) while women controlled the taro swamps (loto uwi). Mitimoa expressed a common opinion in asserting:

In regard to the control (akateleanga) of the taro swamps . . . the right (mana) is with the woman, but the right up on land (wenua) is with the man . . . Up on land is the male child, (he) controls (wakayaele) up on land. In the taro swamp, (the right) is with the female child.

In discussing with Pukapukans the details of how matrilineal groups operated in the past, people today now tend to conceptualize them as paralleling the Akatawa form of social organization in two important respects. First, most people now emphasize that the matrimoieties, as social groupings, were only called into being by the Kau Wowolo - to compete in certain games. They are not now conceptualized as having been unilineal corporate units with their own distinctive property and their own distinctive leaders. Second, the matrimoieties are now depicted as only having been temporary social groupings. While possessing enduring symbolic elements and genealogical ties, they only formed into collectivities, into groups, for transitory purposes such as for certain sport competitions.

Key informants described the matrimoieties as follows. (Many other informants made similar comments.)

The Kau Wowolo confirms (when) the matrimoieties will occur (or begin, tupu), when the work of the matrimoieties will be performed. Did you (i.e. me) see the establishment of the matrimoieties? That was from the (Kau Wowolo) . . . One matrimoiety did not just get it into its head to do it. [Wakalua]

If the (Kau Wowolo) of the island wants to (do this), in regard to (some) games, (they will say) "is it all right if we this year, live by matrimoieties?" They will discuss it . . . (then) the Wua Lulu will work together . . . (so will) the (Wua) Kati . . . This is how it operated, by notification of the Alonga Mana (i.e. the Rarotongan word for the Kau Wowolo). It was something just to show (people). "Is it bad," (the Kau Wowolo will say,) "if we do it this way (by matrimoieties) for this year, for one or two years?" [Veeti]

When the Kau Wowolo ascertains it, to (organize) by matrimoieties, to challenge (each other in sports in terms) of matrimoieties, like (what happens with) the Akatawa. (The decision) comes from the Kau Wowolo, "this year (we will do this), for two months, the island will stay (this way). [Lepuama]



Thus the traditional matrimoieties, as social groupings, are being conceptualized in a somewhat different manner today than that described by the Beagleholes or by Julia Hecht. What seems to have occurred is that (1) as certain knowledge got forgotten or altered regarding the traditional matrilineal organization (when it lost much of their corporate character) and (2) as certain symbolic abstractions got contextualized in a new situation - the 1974 through 1980 revivals (and perhaps the early 1950's games also) - the matrimoieties gradually became reinterpreted in terms of their modern-day operation. One can thus see another example of the processes described in chapters two and three - people reinterpreting ambiguous material from the past to make it meaningful in the present.

#### REFLECTIONS ON A PROCESS

Looking at the revivals as a whole, certain themes are perceivable. The revivals represent an increasing movement away from the traditional forms of social organization described by both the Beagleholes and Julia Hecht. The 1974 matrimoieties became dependent on the Kau Wowolo to establish them. The 1975 patrilineages confused the distinction between patrilocalized groupings (yoolonga) and patrilineal cemeteries (po). And the 1976 Akatawa's antecedents cannot be corroborated by earlier anthropological and historical reports. In the process of reviving the past, moreover, knowledge about the past was itself revised. The Akatawa acquired a new validity and wide-spread recognition that it formerly lacked. Today it constitutes a major form of traditional social organization, on par

with the matrimoieties and patrilineages. Likewise, the conceptualization of the traditional matrimoieties changed. Their traditional form of organization was reinterpreted in terms of present-day understandings.

The irony in this situation, if one wants to call it irony, is that in reviving the past, in preserving past traditions by making them come alive again, Pukapukans were really altering them. One might almost speculate, in fact, whether it is even possible to preserve certain traditions of the past today without altering them - if they are to be meaningful to those living in a period with different orientations and different knowledge.

Pukapuka and "Its Anthropologists": In helping to preserve past traditions, the various Western anthropologists who have conducted research on the island have also, in a sense, helped to alter them. Pearl and Ernest Beaglehole, Andrew Vayda, Jeremy Beckett, Julia Hecht, and myself have all assisted in the preservation of certain important aspects of traditional Pukapukan culture - by recording what people told us and did and by stimulating a greater indigenous concern for the past. And yet, we have also helped to change these cultural traditions as well.

Let me explain. The Beagleholes indicate their research encouraged a greater concern among Pukapukans for their own cultural heritage. Part of this involved the creation of certain Pukapukan plays. Before the Beagleholes' field work in 1934-35, each May Pukapukans had performed several biblical plays.

One morning early in April Makilai was idling round the house. I heard him mumbling something about going to a deacon's meeting to decide about 'the May'.

'What plays will the deacons decide on?' I asked him casually.

He pushed back his hat and scratched his head in doubt: 'Oh, . . . plays about the Bible, David and Goliath, Joseph and his coat, and the rest, I suppose. We do those every year.'

Now I am not prejudiced unduly against stories just because they are Biblical, but I looked ahead and visualized us sitting all day in the hot sun, perhaps for more than two days, and I felt that it needed something more than David and Goliath to keep interest alive. So I put it to Makilai: Why not play for a change old Pukapukan stories, the story of Malotini for example, or the Eight Men of Ngake, or the Slaughter of the Yayake people? Everyone knew these stories - we had talked about them many times with large groups of informants; and besides, the acting of them would help us to remember them more vividly when we came to write them down. Makilai promised to make the suggestion, but I doubted his ability to persuade the missionary of the value of reviving heathen stories. From his account that evening, however, it seemed that the suggestion had been enthusiastically received. Ve[e]ti, Talainga and Eliu and others had rallied a bloc and carried the voting. They were keenly interested in the future second book of Pukapuka and the more vivid our descriptions the more pleased they would be. Each village there upon decided to present two old Pukapukan legends on May Day, and great was the hurrying back and fro before conflicting claims to this story and that were arbitrated and final choices achieved (E. Beaglehole 1944:174).<sup>3</sup>

Today, these native legends (along with the biblical tales) are still performed. The date has been changed to the Cook Islands Congregational Church's Gospel Day and they are not always annual affairs, but they still certainly occur.

In the process of acting as anthropological advisor to the Wellington Hospital Research Unit during his stay on Pukapuka in 1964, Jeremy Beckett collected a series of Pukapukan genealogies (see Hecht 1976:iii). These he understandably took with him because they were part of his research. But after Jeremy Beckett left, the Resident

Agent during this period, Tipuia Tiro, began collecting similar genealogies for use in settling land disputes. Today his book constitutes one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Pukapukan genealogies in existence. From talking to Tipuia Tiro, it is clear that Jeremy Beckett's research was a major stimulus for his own work. It is difficult to state how many others were also stimulated by Jeremy Beckett (or by Tipuia Tiro) to collect extensive genealogies, but I do know there were some. Eliu, for example, mentioned one day this was the reason behind his own sizeable collection.

As already noted, Julia Hecht played a role in stimulating the 1974 matrimoiety revival (and thus indirectly the later revivals as well). Reference has previously been made to my work with the Pukapukan dictionary (Mataola, Tutai, Borofsky et al Ms.). I also financed a chanting competition among the various youth clubs on the island as a way of encouraging the preservation of traditional chants (mako).

It is important to note that many of these changes, brought about by outside anthropologists, are now instrumental in preserving valued aspects of Pukapukan traditional knowledge. Today, the plays allow Pukapukans to publicly watch various legends performed. Pau, in his argument with Pakuu and Te Kula regarding the Pukapukans origin myth, cited a play as one source of his information. The 1974 and 1975 revivals have helped a whole new generation of Pukapukans better understand the operation of the traditional matrimoieties and patrilineages. And the youth club chanting competitions offer a new avenue for greater formalized instruction in traditional knowledge.

Moreover, the impact of various anthropological reports should not be underestimated. Pukapukans cite the Beagleholes' book today as an authoritative source on past events and customs. Numerous people want this dissertation as well - so that they could pass on to their children the knowledge encoded in it.

But the traditional knowledge that is being preserved is also, to some extent, being altered in the process. By recording traditions in books, we are helping to make the knowledge less fluid and diverse than it in fact is (cf. Bohannan 1952, Goody 1977, Howard 1979). By encouraging public competitions and displays, we are helping to alter the informal patterns of education. In assisting in the preservation of Pukapukan traditional knowledge, we, as outside anthropologists, are also helping to transform it into a comparatively more static, uniform body of data.

The Pragmatic Utilization of Traditional Knowledge: But if there is irony in the fact that, in preserving traditional knowledge, both Pukapukans and anthropologists are altering it, there is even greater irony in another fact. Pukapukans and anthropologists basically succeed in their preservation efforts. Both preserve important aspects of traditional Pukapukan knowledge - in spite of the alterations they make in it. Today, for example, Pukapuka is, comparatively speaking, quite traditional. It is perhaps the most traditional island in the Cooks and one of the more traditional in all of Polynesia. Pukapukans not only carry on many of their past customs, but they revive, as we have seen, certain ones that are dying out.

For anthropologists, Pukapuka is one of the best studied atolls in the South Pacific. Six trained anthropologists have conducted research there between 1934 and 1981 and have written numerous publications on the island's traditions. (Pukapukans themselves even now cite these anthropologists as authorities on their customs.)

Thus, Pukapukan traditional knowledge, in being preserved, is being altered. But in being altered, it is also being preserved. The past is being made meaningful to those living in the present. In spite of their limitations, in spite of the changes they bring, both Pukapukans and anthropologists alike still help to preserve valuable information that might otherwise become lost. Perhaps they both preserve a past that never was. But they preserve it in a way that is meaningful to present-day audiences.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

1

There are, of course, various definitions of corporations (see e.g. Keesing 1975 and Tiffany 1975). The one I stress here follows Radcliffe-Brown's description:

A group may be spoken of as 'corporate' when it possesses any one of a certain number of characters: if its members, or its adult members, or a considerable proportion of them, come together occasionally to carry out some collective action - for example, the performance of rites; if it has a chief or council who are regarded as acting as representatives of the group as a whole; if it possesses or controls property which is collective, as when a clan or lineage is a land-owning group (1950:41).

In discussing the matrilineal units, I stress (1) common ownership of property and (2) designated representatives for the group.

2

Several people indicated that as a result of the Akatawa more boats would come because more copra was being made on the island. Certainly, it was true that more boats started coming during this period. (The national government had just entered into a new agreement with the shipping company to ensure more trips to the northern atolls.) But data from Turner (1978:17) does not suggest more copra was made under the Akatawa. There was sense, though, to what people said. By utilizing two reserves rather than one, copra could be made more frequently. The only catch though was that this also involved more people - so each reserve was depleted quicker. Copra prices, however, did rise during this time - supposedly because tropical storms had damaged copra plantations in the Philippines.

3

Makilai, Veeti, Talainga, and Elui all refer to the names of the Beagleholes' informants, not to mine. The second book refers to ms. b. which was never published.

UTILIZING PUKAPUKAN TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Chapter Five

Overall, this thesis emphasizes two related themes. First, it discusses the general character of Pukapukan traditional knowledge. Rather than being a set product passed down from generation to generation, traditional knowledge tends to be more of an on going process of interpretation in the present. The knowledge is continually being revised in various ways by diverse individuals as they acquire, validate, and utilize it. This means that while a common set of shared understandings certainly occurs, numerous elements of diversity, fluidity, and ambiguity exist as well.

Second, the thesis emphasizes that Pukapukans and anthropologists often utilize this diverse, ambiguous, fluid knowledge in different ways - because of their different purposes and the different contexts in which they operate. The contradiction surrounding the Akatawa's historical precedents, for example, basically derives from differing perspectives for ordering ambiguous accounts of past events.

It is important to note that these different orientations stem more from how Pukapukans and anthropologists utilize this knowledge in certain contexts than from how individual Pukapukans or anthropologists talk about such knowledge. In describing the knowledge to others, both Pukapukans and anthropologists alike tend to deemphasize its fluidity and diversity. Because of their concerns with status rivalry, for example, individual Pukapukans may talk as if



there was only one correct opinion - the one they themselves hold. As an affirmation of their own competence, they may stress the accuracy with which they, as individuals, have preserved knowledge passed on to them by informed elders.

Pukapukans Utilizing Their Traditional Knowledge: The real divergence between Pukapukan and anthropological accounts of Pukapukan traditional knowledge comes in how each group utilizes this knowledge in different contexts for different purposes. For Pukapukans, for instance, the fact that knowledge displays readily get caught up in cultural concerns over status and competence means that traditional knowledge is continually being reinterpreted in diverse ways by diverse individuals through time. The process, however, does not just operate in one direction - of certain cultural patterns, such as status rivalries, affecting the organization of knowledge. The knowledge itself, under the right conditions, can critically affect other aspects of the culture as well.

The previous chapters have made clear how various cultural patterns affect the acquisition and validation of traditional knowledge. The limited need for specialization on the atoll, the cultural homogeneity, the repetitiveness of everyday life, and above all the prevalence of status rivalries helps to orient people toward the informal pattern of education already described. The concern with interpersonal harmony, the emphasis on oral transmission, the atoll's egalitarian orientation all tend to emphasize using personal, individual reflection rather than public, group closure as a way of validating assertions about the past. And the fact that Pukapuka is

only of minor economic and political importance to the national government means that those in power have comparatively little vested interest in limiting the formulation of new knowledge or the challenging of old on the atoll - as long as it does not challenge the government's basic authority. Thus one can perceive numerous factors in the Pukapukan cultural environment that help to direct the organization of Pukapukan traditional knowledge toward the processual, diverse, ambiguous character already elaborated upon.

But just as certain cultural factors help mold the organization of traditional knowledge, this traditional knowledge, in turn, also helps to transform various aspects of the culture (cf. Sahlins 1981:8). This transformation works in two ways. In a continuous, gradual manner related to the knowledge itself, transformations pervade the very processes by which knowledge is acquired, validated, and utilized. It is a matter of making the past meaningful in the present.

But in certain circumstances in the solving of certain dilemmas, marginal and/or vaguely formulated ideas about the past can become the basis for more radical changes. They may carry the seeds for transforming the entire culture.<sup>1</sup> Drawn into questions of power, into questions of political action, they may become involved in social processes which trigger and facilitate, in Barth's terms, "collective expression" (1975:246).<sup>2</sup>

Mannheim makes this point in his analysis of romantic thought and its alliance with political conservatism during the last century.

The sociological significance of romanticism lies in its function as the historical opponent of the intellectual tendencies of the Enlightenment, in other words, against the philosophical exponents of bourgeois capitalism. It seized on the submerged ways of life and thought, snatched them from oblivion, consciously worked them out and

developed them further, and finally set them against the rational way of thought. Romanticism took up just those spheres of life and behavior which existed as mere undercurrents to the main stream of bourgeois rationalism. It made it its task to rescue these elements, to lend them new dignity and value and to save them from disappearance. 'Community' is set up against 'society' (to use Toennies' terminology), family against contract, intuitive certainty against reason, spiritual against material experience. All those partially hidden factors at the very basis of everyday life are suddenly laid bare by reflection and fought for (1953:89).

What makes these new forces, these new ideas, so unsettling is that they can take on a direction of their own - they can acquire their own dynamic (Burke 1955, 1960). Once set in motion they interact with practical circumstances in ways that can make them radically different from what may have been initially intended.

One can perceive this happening with the Akatawa. A marginal and/or vaguely formulated idea in a particular context takes on a new significance. It becomes the basis for temporarily reviving a form of traditional social organization. But then people like it. They extend it. Knowledge of the idea becomes wide spread. The Akatawa comes close to nearly supplanting the three village system - a central pillar of modern social organization. The idea, once allied with certain social forces, interacts with a particular set of events in a way that may radically transform both it and the broader culture.

Thus, implicit in the way Pukapukans utilize their knowledge for affirmations of themselves (through the medium of status rivalries vis-a-vis other Pukapukans) is the fact that this knowledge is constantly transforming both itself and the culture - in minor and/or major ways. And yet these transformations, interestingly enough, may not always be emphasized. As noted, Pukapukans seemed to down-play

the role of specific individuals in instituting the 1976 Akatawa. They focused on consensus and vague generalities regarding preserving the culture's heritage. The details of who actually said what when regarding instituting the Akatawa in 1976 seemed to be a set of questions that interested me (and several other outsiders) more than it did members of the Kau Wowolo. In addition, Pukapukans seem to deemphasize certain changes by tying them to the past. Changes may become revivals rather than innovations - as occurred with the 1976 Akatawa form of social organization. (In contrast, some of the changes in American anthropology - such as the "new ethnography" or the "new culture and personality" - which were viewed as innovations perhaps could also have been perceived as reviving certain past trends within the discipline.)

Thus though major changes may be going on in the culture, Pukapukans at times tend to deemphasize and integrate them into existing cultural patterns. This essentially is the point that Levi-Strauss suggests regarding "cold" societies. Some cultures tend to deemphasize the significance of certain changes.

It is tedious as well as useless . . . to amass arguments to prove that all societies are in history and change: that this is so is patent. But in getting embroiled in a superfluous demonstration, there is a risk of overlooking the fact that human societies react to this common condition in very different fashions. Some accept it, with good or ill grace, and its consequences . . . assume immense proportions through their attention to it. Others (which we call primitive for this reason) want to deny it and try, with a dexterity we underestimate, to make the states of their development which they consider as 'prior' as permanent as possible (1966:234).

While the breadth of the generalization is too sweeping (see e.g. Schieffelin 1982, Rosaldo 1980), it does make a valuable point. Changes are not always given as much emphasis in some cultures as they are in others.

Anthropologists Utilizing Pukapukan Traditional Knowledge: The anthropological presentation of Pukapukan traditional knowledge to outsiders comes up against a different set of issues. The anthropologist must make the culture he is studying intelligible to those who have not personally experienced it. Simply as a matter of expediency, he must frame his remarks so as to emphasize uniformity over diversity and stasis over fluidity - otherwise he may lose his audience. To describe a form of traditional social organization in forty different ways, or as constantly in flux, can confuse a person unacquainted with the culture on a day to day basis. (Since Pukapukans possess far more familiarity with the culture, they can more easily focus on subtle differences between individual accounts in discussing the material with each other.)

This is not to say that numerous anthropologists and other social scientists are not aware of the fluidity that exists in regard to cultural knowledge. They clearly are. One can see that in the quotes from George Herbert Mead cited in chapter one. Or in Frederick Jackson Turner's statement that "each age writes the history of the past anew with reference to the conditions uppermost in its own time" (cited in Merton 1968:548-549). Or in Blount's assertion that among the Luo "in effect, the genealogies as history were created by the elders in competition, cooperation, and occasionally by fiat within a

framework of Luo social interaction" (1975:118). Vansina (1978:227) asserts that Kuba history:

is the product of a consensus in the community of which it is a record. It is relative to the community that elaborates it . . . Absolute truth matters as little as does exact chronology. Myths and anecdotes become true by common agreement and can be altered by common agreement.

And as early as 1904, Kittredge in his introduction to the Child ballads observed:

As it [the ballad] passes from singer to singer it is changing unceasingly. Old stanzas are dropped and new ones are added; rhymes are altered; the names of the characters are varied; portions of other ballads work their way in (cited in Finnegan 1977:144).

In fact, given that so many have already made this point, it would be fairer to say the thesis' innovation, in this respect, is not in stating a new theme but in showing how the mechanics of an old theme operate within a particular context for a particular set of purposes.

Likewise, numerous anthropologists have discussed the existence and importance of intra-cultural diversity (e.g. American Ethnologist 1975, Swartz 1982, Hays 1976, Rose and Romney, Kay 1975, Sanjek 1977, and Wallace 1961). Sapir elaborated on the issue more than 40 years ago in his discussion of Dorsey's informant Two Crows.

Living as [Dorsey] did in close touch with the Omaha Indians, he knew that he was dealing, not with a society nor with a specimen of primitive man nor with a cross-section of the history of primitive culture, but with a finite, though indefinite, number of human beings who gave themselves the privilege of differing from each other not only in matters generally considered as "one's own business" but even on questions which clearly transcended the private individual's concern and were, by the anthropologist's definition, implied in the conception of a definitely delimited society with a definitely discoverable

culture. Apparently Two Crows, a perfectly good and authoritative Indian, could presume to rule out of court the very existence of a custom or attitude or belief vouched for by some other Indian, equally good and authoritative (Mandelbaum 1949:569-570).

But the point still remains valid. Though anthropologists may be aware of the fluidity and diversity of cultural knowledge, they still tend to deemphasize it in writing broad ethnographies - because of the contexts in which they operate and the purposes to which they put Pukapukan traditional knowledge. They are, in brief, trying to speak to a different audience than Pukapukans are.

Take, for instance, the anthropological tendency (sometimes much maligned) of deemphasizing cultural change through the use of the "ethnographic present." It derives, in part, from the anthropological aim of trying to describe (and thereby helping to preserve) the breadth of human diversity. Numerous anthropologists stress this purpose.

From the beginning, anthropologists studying myths or marriage customs or languages were concerned with the "primitive," the remote, the exotic . . . Their role among the academic disciplines has always been broadly comparative. They have sought out the widest ranges of human experience in other times and places. And they have challenged their academic colleagues who would generalize too glibly from Western experience to talk of "economic man," "the human mind," or "the processes of history" (Keesing 1976:3-4).

But, as is well known, many of the cultures anthropologists describe have been changing, are slowly being drawn into the Western world. If he is to preserve what is culturally distinct, what is culturally unique, the anthropologist is often forced into abstracting certain cultural traditions that are in the process of being altered. In so doing, he may unintentionally have to freeze certain general

orientations, certain abstractions, in time - into an unchanging "ethnographic present" - if for no other reason than that he lacks a full understanding of the pre-contact culture that is being transformed.

Moreover, the anthropologist must freeze the knowledge in time, to a certain degree, just in writing it down. How can one record something that is constantly in flux without in some way imposing an order on it? Goody suggests that literacy may encourage anthropologists to overly systematize knowledge - especially when they portray this knowledge with a series of tables and binary oppositions.

The construction of a Table of Opposites reduces oral complexity to graphic simplicity, aggregating different forms of relationships between 'pairs' into an all-embracing unity . . . this standardisation [sic.], especially as epitomized in the Table consisting of  $k$  columns and  $r$  rows, is essentially the result of applying graphic techniques to oral material. The result is often to freeze a contextual statement into a system of permanent oppositions, an outcome that may simplify reality for the observer but often at the expense of a real understanding of the actor's frame of reference (Goody 1977:70-73).

As already discussed, my perspective on group closure - based on my wanting to record certain data - can give a false sense of unanimity and coherence to the material.

Thus, in spite of anthropologists being aware of the distortions they may be creating, they still, to a certain degree, must present the material in a way that emphasizes stasis over fluidity and uniformity over diversity - especially if they are to deal with broad cultural patterns, especially if they are to write general ethnographies for those unfamiliar with the culture (particularly now



that anthropological monographs tend to be of shorter length). The orientation is dictated by the contexts in which they operate and the purposes for which they write.<sup>3</sup>

Explaining Additional Aspects of the Akatawa Contradiction: A

variety of scientific studies indicate, as mentioned, that recall of past events is rarely completely accurate (see e.g. Loftus and Loftus 1980, 1976, Loftus 1979, Hunter 1964, D'Andrade 1974, Yarmey 1979). According to Hunter, "there are omissions, transpositions, and additions resulting from interpretation, from the individual's making the account conform to his standards of intelligibility" (1964:183).

Anthropologists and sociologists, Loftus and Loftus warn us, may

query people about their past in the course of studying some particular problem of interest . . . [But] it is important to realize that the statements made during such interviews may not be particularly accurate as reports of prior events. The contents of an interview may not reflect a person's earlier experiences and attitudes so much as his or her current picture of the past (Loftus and Loftus 1980:419).

The research also indicates that numbers and dates tend to be remembered quite poorly (Hunter 1964:151, Vansina 1980:268, 276).

Long-term memory research thus suggests that various individual's recollections regarding former Akatawa may not be all that exact. In spite of the precise dates presented in chapter one, a considerable margin of error may exist as to just when previous Akatawa occurred or how long they actually lasted. The Akatawa recalled by the seven informants, for example, may have taken place before the 1914 hurricane. Or it could have lasted for a shorter period of time -

such as for a number of days (as the 1974 and 1975 revivals did). Either way, it is quite conceivable that the event would not have been recorded in the historical documents cited in chapter one.

In my opinion, the group consensus about the 1915 date and the former Akatawa's two year duration derives, in part, from the people who suggested it. Veeti and Wakalaua had well established reputations as knowledgeable authorities on traditional lore. Others could publicly contradict them, but only at the risk of losing status. The fact that Veeti provided the Akatawa date and that he and Wakalua provided its length of duration probably played an important role in stimulating a group consensus on the matter. These data also stem, I suspect, from my probing for specific dates, for a specific time duration. I wanted to make people's vague recollections more precise since the 1976 Akatawa's creation struck me as unusual. Not only did no written precedents exist for the change, but the event clearly showed the fluidity of social organization over time. I wanted to collect as many details about the transformation and its antecedents as possible. Yet as the above research indicates, numbers are very hard to recall, particularly if they are very rarely used in connection with a specific event, particularly if they refer to something that occurred more than 60 years ago. Asking for dates, for numbers, probably placed an unrealistic burden on various informants' memories.

What the Pukapukans provided - honestly trying to answer such questions, honestly trying to help an outsider in preserving their traditions - was probably more of an explanatory form for validating knowledge. It was a style of explanation - a typification of the

facts, in Schieffelin's terms, "in which a particular set of events could be narratively ordered and meaningfully understood" (1982:23). It was a matter of making an account conform to certain standards of intelligibility and validity (cf. Bilmes 1976). Clear reasons exist for claiming the Akatawa occurred in the 1914-1915 period. It fits with what Pukapukans already know about former hurricanes and how the atoll coped with past devastations. Hunter indicates, in summarizing various literature on memory research, that a person often appears to organize certain:

characteristics together into an arrangement which seems plausible. In doing this he is governed by his general notions regarding what is likely and what is unlikely . . . He seems to aim throughout at arranging his recalled characteristics into a story which is coherent and reasonable as he can make it, even if this means disregarding some features, exaggerating the importance of others, and rearranging their sequence (1964:158).

The data on the occurrence and duration of the former Akatawa that people gave me, thus probably stems from various Pukapukans trying to give coherent explanations to my probing questions. They provide as much insight into me and my concerns as into Pukapukans and theirs.

Contradictions and Understanding: Overall, the thesis focuses on two main themes. First, it stresses that Pukapukan traditional knowledge is really more of a process than a product - continually being reinterpreted as diverse individuals within each new generation acquire, validate, and utilize it. This means that while traditional knowledge possesses a common core of shared understandings, it also contains numerous elements of diversity, ambiguity, and fluidity as well. Second, Pukapukans and anthropologists often utilize this

knowledge in different ways to solve different problems related to different audiences. As a result, contradictions may arise concerning their interpretations of certain cultural traditions - as has occurred with the historical antecedents of the 1976 Akatawa.

These contradictions do not, in my opinion, cast doubt on the anthropological enterprise of writing ethnographic descriptions about other cultures. Rather they emphasize its value (in a pragmatic sense). In seeing how others perceive things differently, we learn about the cultural biases in our own perceptions. In understanding how Pukapukans make ambiguity intelligible, we come to a better understanding of how we do too. In describing other cultures, we come to grasp how we express some of our own perspectives in the process.<sup>4</sup> Out of the contradiction comes greater anthropological understanding - of others and of ourselves.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

1

Pelto and Pelto state:

In our view, all the ideas carried by individuals in a community, whether shared or not, are a pool of behavioral possibilities analogous to the pool of genetic possibilities carried in genes and chromosomes of these same individuals. Each individual idea . . . may become of adaptive behavioral significance depending on individual life histories in particular environments (American Ethnologist 1975:14)

2

Barth, in developing his analysis of creative and stagnant sectors of knowledge makes an interesting point about how new, individualistic and/or specialized ideas get generalized and integrated into a culture.

The comparison of fertility ritual with these more stagnant sectors of knowledge thus brings out the special features of the former which provide its conditions of creativity. To recapitulate: sorcery beliefs are cast in potentially very productive codes, but among the Baktaman involve a non-productive praxis of circumspection of speech and private secrecy of non-verbal expression . . . a praxis where collective action is rarely called for inhibits the development of shared criteria for diagnosis and indeed fora that aim at the production of agreement . . .

The temple cults, on the other hand, are organized in a unique way. They are linked to exogenous events, so these events trigger activity . . . They constitute fora for the production of collective and shared messages. They repeatedly require and produce the necessity of collective commitment and action (1975:246).

3

This orientation may also stem, in part, from certain cultural perspectives shared by many anthropologists and the audiences for which they write. Describing the modern rationalism of the Bourgeoisie, Mannheim notes:

One tries to exclude from knowledge everything that is bound up with particular personalities and that can be proved only to narrow social groups with common experiences, and to confine oneself to statements that are generally communicable and demonstrable . . . The new ideal of knowledge is that found in mathematics . . .

The characteristics of this conception of knowledge is that it ignores all concrete and particular aspects of the object and all those faculties of human perception which, while enabling the individual to grasp the world intuitively, do not permit him to communicate his knowledge to everybody. It eliminates the whole context of concrete relationships in which every piece of knowledge is embedded . . .

It has been pointed out that the rationalism of modern natural science has its parallel in the new economic system. With the substitution of a system of commodity production for a subsistence economy there takes place a similar change in the attitude towards things as in the change-over from qualitative to quantitative thinking about nature. Here too the quantitative conception of exchange replaces the qualitative conception of use value. In both cases therefore the abstract attitude of which we have been speaking prevails (1953:85-86).

Various others have also made similar observations regarding such orientations (see e.g. Weber 1958, 1968, Sahlins 1976, Wagner 1975, Howard 1974, Wright 1979, and Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961).

4

Geertz reminds us that "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to (1973:9). According to Clifford, "field work may be seen as a collective, reciprocal endeavor through which textualized translations are made" (Clifford 1980:518). And Denning tells us, "we are concerned to write the anthropology and the history of those moments when native and intruding cultures are conjoined. Neither can be known independently of that moment" (1980:43).

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