THE WORK OF THE GODS IN TIKOPIA

RAYMOND FIRTH

ROUTLEDGE

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Ariki Kafika and Ariki Fangarere at Takerere (1952). The Ariki Kafika, wearing his ritual necklet of coconut fronds, is reaching back for areca nut to chew after the kava rite. His spear, used as a staff, stands behind.

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PREFACE

By the passage of time this book has now acquired the character of an historical document in Polynesian ethnography. The Tikopia religious cycle which, adopting a title from the vernacular, I termed 'Work of the Gods' and which I observed in 1928–9 and again (with James Spillius) in 1952, has now been completely abandoned for more than ten years. That small sector of the Tikopia community which in 1952 still carried out the pagan rites converted to Christianity soon after a disastrous epidemic in 1955. This book then describes a vanished past, a set of institutions not known to many of the younger Tikopia themselves.

On the second expedition to Tikopia in 1952 my observations, confirmed and enlarged by those of Spillius, paralleled very closely those made on my first expedition. The degree of similarity and variation noted in 1952 was examined in *Study in Ritual Modification: The Work of the Gods in Tikopia in 1929 and 1952* (Royal Anthropological Institute, Occasional Paper no. 19), 1963, by Firth and Spillius. (This work is referred to as RM in the postscripts to chapters and elsewhere in this book.)

In 1966 I was able to make a third visit to Tikopia, accompanied by Dr Torben Monberg, and together we studied the effects of abandonment of the pagan Tikopia religion.

Material from the original monograph has been cited by various writers and in particular has been used extensively by William J. Goode (*Religion Among the Primitives*, Glencoe, Ill., 1951). In the light of these circumstances the main body of the work has been left almost exactly in its original form, though it has had to be re-paginated. Postscripts to some chapters indicate points of comparative interest which I observed on the 1952 expedition, and an Epilogue describes the aftermath of the Work of the Gods by 1966. A new Introduction indicates the significance of the religious cycle in more general terms than did the original treatment, which was primarily empirical. In order to reduce the volume of the work much Tikopia vernacular text has been eliminated, since this can be of interest only to linguistic specialists. A few small

corrections have been made to the spelling but in the absence of a systematic study of Tikopia language, inconsistencies still remain occasionally. For better reproduction the diagrams have been redrawn and some new Plates have been substituted. I have retained the present tense throughout the book although all rites have now been abandoned.

The Work of the Gods can be regarded as Volume I of my studies of Tikopia religion. Volume II consists of a series of collected papers to be published with the title of *Tikopia Ritual and Belief* (Allen & Unwin, 1967); Volume III will be *Rank and Religion in Tikopia*, a general account which was originally intended as a companion work to the present ethnographic study, but which has been long delayed, partly in order that I might complete the analysis after the major change from paganism to Christianity.

In addition to the acknowledgments made in the first edition of this work, I should like to express my recognition of the great help I received from James Spillius on my second expedition to Tikopia. Together we participated in a number of rites of the Work of the Gods, and his comments and further observations after I left reinforced my own findings. I would like to acknowledge here too my recent companionship with Torben Monberg, which helped me greatly in my inquiries in 1966.

I am indebted for finance of my first expedition to the Australian National Research Council, of my second to the Australian National University, and of my third to the University of London, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research; to all these bodies I express my gratitude. I wish to acknowledge particularly the generous help received from the Wenner-Gren Foundation in the pursuit of my Tikopia studies as a whole. For many facilities in the field I am very grateful to members of the Melanesian Mission and to government officials of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. I also owe thanks to Mrs D. H. Alfandary for help in preparing this work for publication.

Finally, I am much indebted to Anthony Forge, not only for his technical advice in the preparation of this new edition, but also for several helpful suggestions of substance in the Introduction.

London RAYMOND FIRTH
October 1966

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Introduction to First Edition

The Tikopia ritual cycle known as the Work of the Gods was the most spectacular of my discoveries in this isolated community in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. Although a few of the rites had been briefly mentioned by the Rev. W. J. Durrad, and by Dr W. H. R. Rivers, who used Durrad's valuable material, there was no hint in these accounts that the rites were anything but isolated performances. It was only indeed some months after my arrival in Tikopia that I realized the complexity and highly organized character of the ritual.

A knowledge of the cycle of the Work of the Gods is of basic significance for the understanding of Tikopia culture. It is one of the most elaborate expressions of the system of rank and of the religious beliefs of the people; it has important economic aspects; it is related to their institutions of marriage; it sets the formal seal on their most fundamental form of recreation; and provides sanctions for many of their most basic values. From the point of view of comparison with other Polynesian cultures the Work of the Gods is of great interest since its analogies with such rites as the *makahiki* of Hawaii and *inasi* of Tonga suggest interpretations of them which cannot be inferred from the existing fragmentary and obscure accounts.

In this monograph I have concentrated on giving an ethnographical account of the phenomena, leaving for later publication the major part of the theoretical interpretation. This course has been dictated by the bulk of my material.

In the account I have drawn a distinction between the events which I witnessed, those which took place during my stay but which through other occupation I could not see, and those which were formerly part of the cycle but have now been abandoned. Those rites which I did not see I discussed with a number of informants, particularly with the Ariki Kafika, the Ariki Tafua, and their sons. Since it was only a decade after the abandonment of the

rites of Tafua, the reconstruction of them by the original participants may be regarded as substantially accurate.

It will be seen from the account that I was a participant and not merely an observer when I attended the Work of the Gods. This naturally facilitated my investigations, though in a few cases the rules of *tapu* by which I was bound prevented me from examining closely the material objects used. In addition to my personal observation, I had many conversations about the organization and the meaning of the ritual with the most prominent participants. My principal informants here were the chiefs and members of their families, and the elders Pa Rarovi, Pae Sao, and Pa Fetauta. I also had many discussions with other men not in positions of rank, who gave me therefore other points of view. But in particular I owed a great deal to the premier chief, the Ariki Kafika, who after his initial suspicion had been allayed invited me to participate in all his ritual and imparted to me a great deal of his unique knowledge. Without his co-operation and that of his eldest son Pa Fenuatara my work would not have been possible. This is particularly the case in regard to the texts of the formulae used. I obtained these from each chief and elder who was responsible for a rite and checked them from other informants, but since so many of them were recited by the Ariki Kafika alone it was only with his help that I could obtain a full account. Most of these formulae were recited during the ritual in tones too low for the audience to hear. The correspondence between the different versions I obtained, however, leaves no doubt as to their substantial correctness. But it must be emphasized that all these formulae quoted are *representative* since they are recited as *free formulae*, absolute adhesion to a traditional set of words not being required. To save space I have not given the original Tikopia text in cases where it is substantially the same in several successive formulae; in such cases the translation is taken from a native text in my notebooks. All material in quotation marks throughout the account is a translation of native statements recorded on the spot, in nearly every case in the vernacular. It may be noted that the first draft of this monograph was written in 1929–30, soon after I returned from Tikopia when the events were still fresh in my mind.

The account presents a great mass of detail. This has been included because it is most significant to the people themselves, and to the structure of the ritual cycle as a whole. In particular it shows

the degree to which small items of behaviour have been integrated into a consistent scheme, and also how this integration still allows of the exercise of individual and small-unit privileges within the workings of the major institution. This involves a theoretical problem which I hope to discuss in a later publication.

I am indebted greatly to Mr E. R. Leach for making the drawings from my original sketches. I am grateful also to the Rockfeller Research Fund Committee of the London School of Economics for a grant which has assisted materially in the preparation and publication of the manuscript.

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Introduction to Second Edition

SOME THEORETICAL OBSERVATIONS

I take this opportunity of re-publication of this account of the Tikopia Work of the Gods to expand some of the theoretical aspects referred to only briefly at the beginning and end of the original study. I wrote this monograph originally because, as I explained, so much had been reconstruction and hypothesis in the study of Polynesian religion that it seemed important to describe in a systematic way, from personal observation, just how some Polynesians did carry out their traditional religious rites. Moreover, so much discussion of religion in anthropology had relied on analysis of isolated items of belief or ritual that it seemed also important to give as detailed account as possible of a long-continued and complex *sequence* of rites, in their social setting. Now, while we need much more systematic theory in the anthropological study of religion it is still my conviction that such theory needs to go hand in hand with more meticulous and more refined empirical observation.

There is something of a paradox here. It is often assumed that having more data will make interpretation easier. I think that on the contrary it will often make interpretation more difficult because more variations will have to be fitted in. And no claim for 'abstraction' will help us here; uncomfortable exceptions to our theories cannot be dismissed. All the more should we not burke the facts if we suspect that they may render our task of explanation harder; we should indeed seek them on such account. This lesson in scientific methodology, which we should have known since at least the days of T. H. Huxley, and which Boas, Goldenweiser, Malinowski and their contemporaries held before us, has recently been pressed upon us from another angle by Karl Popper and I. C. Jarvie.

It may be argued that empiricism in the ritual field is fallacious,

that we can never get the 'facts' of a religious situation in their completeness, if only because the presence of an observer in itself conditions the situation, and his record of what he observes is distorted by his personal vision. There are no final answers here. But granted that every anthropologist refracts what he sees through his personal prism, the more closely and the more often he records what he thinks he sees, the more chance have others of judging the validity of his interpretations. At the end of this introduction I offer some general propositions about the nature of ritual; it will be for the reader to judge how far they conform to the detailed descriptions in the body of the book.

The first problem is to try to deepen our understanding of the significance of the ritual cycle. During the last half-century, the existence of a growing body of Christian Tikopia has provided a kind of foil against which the sincerity and depth of conviction of the pagan Tikopia could be tested. To the pagan Tikopia the meaning of the Work of the Gods was clear: in major outline the performances were a formal traditionalized means of maintaining contact with powerful spiritual beings and inducing them to look with favour upon the Tikopia by the grant of food and health. The spiritual beings were conceived as being in reciprocal relationship with the leaders of particular lineages and clans, though the benefits to be derived from them were regarded as spread rather indifferently over the whole population. Contact with them was to be maintained partly on the same pattern as contact with powerful human beings, that is, by presentation of gifts and conduct of abasement. But they had to be treated with even more deference and even more formality. In particular, they had to be addressed by special titles not necessarily known to ordinary men and in much more elaborate set phraseology. To render their benefits specific and reinforce the material claims made upon them, these spiritual beings were associated individually with material equipment or resources such as canoes, temples and foodstuffs. This was the significance of the Work of the Gods as presented by the pagan Tikopia. In their own eyes they validated this interpretation by reference to traditional stories of the doings of these spiritual beings in past times, especially in relation to their own experience.

But the acceptance of Christianity by some Tikopia before 1928, and still more by 1952, meant that there were Tikopia who

did not accept this interpretation. Many Christian Tikopia still did so. They believed in the reality of the spiritual beings and in the significance of rite and formula in attempting to secure material benefits from them. But such Christian Tikopia believed – on the evidence of their own statements – that the traditional spirits had lost much of their power in the confrontation with the Christian God; consequently the validity of the performances to obtain benefits from them was materially lessened. Judgments were expressed comparing the prosperity accruing to the traditional rites unfavourably with that accruing to Christian church services. Another Christian view which appears to have gained greatly in strength during the last couple of decades or so, as the number of people who once participated in the traditional rites grew very small, was that the very conceptions of these traditional spirits were false. Ritual performances such as those in the Work of the Gods were regarded then as not merely inefficient but entirely misdirected and vain.

An anthropologist, whatever be his own personal attitude to an experience of spiritual reality, presumably adopts neither of these major viewpoints. If he holds that spiritual experience is real, in the sense of being autonomously generated by external influences, he still will hardly argue that the spirit conceptions of the Tikopia can simply be taken at face value. The 'spirits' they recognize do not exist independently under the names and forms assigned to them by the Tikopia. On the other hand, if an anthropologist holds, as I do, that such spirit concepts are ultimately part of human attempts to envisage modes of order and mobilize support in the world around, he will still not argue that the phenomena are purely illusory. His concern is with the relationship of these beliefs to other features of the social life. Whatever be his conception of functional theory in anthropology, he tends to assume that the character of these beliefs and associated rites can be correlated in a broad way with some significant features of the local society. He will also tend to regard these beliefs as ways of representing significant issues in the confrontation of the individual man with his own nature, with the necessities of life and with the demands of an external social world.[1] From this point of view such spirit concepts in their systematic interrelationship serve to provide a

[1] See my 'Religious Belief and Personal Adjustment' (1948) in *Essays on Social Organization and Values*, 1964, pp. 257–93.

framework by reference to which human activities can take a definite, regular and planned form.

These beliefs are expressed in many ways, informally as well as formally. What we term ritual is in part a formal expression of beliefs and translation of them into social action. But ritual, because of its purposive orientation, has a requirement of spatial and temporal sequence. Spirit beliefs may be systematic in the sense that the different items of belief, when formulated and considered, can be envisaged as a logical, ordered arrangement, the various elements being consistent with one another. I think it will be clear from the account in this book that most of the Tikopia belief about gods and spirits is of such systematic type.[1] But in belief there is no necessary progression or development of the same ordered sequential character as must occur in ritual. Tikopia spirit belief is not without its developmental side – a great deal of statement about spirits made by spirit mediums is of this kind and some of it might be classed as almost free fantasy. But the development of this material is not promoted or hampered by space-time requirements and can occur in any order. Ritual on the other hand is bound by these requirements.

My point here is that while belief systems are relatively freer to develop personal variants, ritual systems involve a definite framework of progression, the activities comprised therein being regulated accordingly in the time and energy expended. For any set of ritual operations to be even moderately efficient, a considerable amount of organization of men and materials is needed.

I am not concerned here with Tikopia spirit beliefs 'as such', i.e. as a framework for the organization of experience, by 'making sense' of the Tikopia relation to their own society and the external world.[2] Here I am concerned with the problems of the integration of belief and activity in this particular religious cycle of the Work of the Gods, both internally and in relation to Tikopia society. I am also concerned to demonstrate the significance of variation within it.

First let us consider the programme of the Work of the Gods. The cyclical nature of these performances is a consideration of

[1] Detailed issues of the character of the Tikopia spirit world will be dealt with in *Rank and Religion in Tikopia.*

[2] This will be treated elsewhere - see *Tikopia Ritual and Belief*, 1967, and *Rank and Religion in Tikopia.*

cardinal importance here. It must be reckoned as a very considerable feat for members of a society without a calendar to plan and maintain such a highly intricate system of performances for six weeks twice a year. Despite the Tikopia belief that the rites were instituted by a single culture-hero at a far-off point in time, it is probable that they were constructed piecemeal, with accretions over a long period. But in 1928–9 and again in 1952 it was clear that ordinarily well-informed Tikopia kept the sequence of rites of the Work of the Gods 'in their heads' so to speak. That is, they were capable of outlining the programme in a single description and of relating different parts of it to one another in sequence. This they could do without calendrical dates but using a combination of natural changes in vegetation, moon and stars with small numbered sequences of nights. The result was a remarkable degree of integration at the time-sequence level and also at the level of human activity. Not only was the programme intellectually conceived, it was also physically carried out. Day by day numbers of men and women assembled in various places, produced food and engaged in technical operations, fitting in their activities in a highly complex manner.

What enabled them to preserve this integration and maintain the elaborate programme with such effectiveness? In conceptual terms undoubtedly the traditional beliefs that upon the power of gods and spirits depended the prosperity and indeed the life of the people provided a very important sanction for the regular repetition of the rites. But another important factor making for preservation of the traditional scheme was the economic involvement of the participants. The performance of the rites in due sequence was regarded as an obligation, a duty laid upon the performers by their overall religious ideology. But the performance of each major rite was normally accompanied by the presentation of offerings of food to the gods and spirits thought to be concerned. Only a minute fraction of these offerings was thrown away, the bulk being retained and put back into circulation, as it were, for ordinary human consumption. Hence the correct performance of rites necessarily brought with it the achievement of the day's meals. From this point of view, what was dedicated to the gods and spirits apart from the miniscule sacrifice of food morsels to them, was a certain amount of time and energy in assembling and going through the ritual motions. Most of the technical operations

involved in the ritual programme were also of value from a utilitarian point of view. In a way then the performance of the ritual programme was just another kind of projection of economic activity and as such carried with it the ordinary sanctions of economic motivation.

Another type of sanction tending to promote the maintenance of the ritual programme was that of the status involvement of the participants. Performance of the ritual was a duty, but its accomplishment was normally a matter if not of self-congratulation at least of self-justification. It will be apparent how often in the course of the Work of the Gods leading individuals and their family, lineage or clan took pride in the fact that they alone carried out a specific rite or played a unique, specific part in a rite. The ingenious way whereby obligation was interpreted as privilege and the status of the individuals concerned maintained or enhanced by ritual performance gave very important backing to carrying out the ritual cycle in prescribed form. Each individual might not care too much about what happened to others, but he was very intent that proper recognition should be given to his own 'day', his own 'rite', 'formula' or 'role'. For each to say that he occupied his own prescribed place in the scheme meant that all were concerned to operate the scheme as a whole. Moreover, each main participant kept a jealous eye on the contributions of those who were in a sense his rivals as well as his co-operators, and knowledge of this helped to keep each contributor up to the mark.

One final factor which I think helped to maintain the programme was the attention aroused by its flexibility. The main framework arranged the major groups of rites in a set order, and within each major group the sequence of rites too was normally invariable. But there was room for some variation. There was some discretion for the leading chief as to when the whole sequence should begin and at various points in it how many nights should elapse before a new ritual should be undertaken. There were also possibilities of aggregating or separating rites for different items such as sacred canoes according to the state of the food supply. All this tended to introduce an element of uncertainty and speculation into the conduct of affairs, and so tended to keep interest in these affairs alive, since people might have to revise their plans in accordance with the turn of events. There was also

another important source of variation – what may be termed the institutionalized decision of men who controlled certain phases of the ritual. This was usually linked with a change in personnel. When a new ritual elder succeeded in his office he marked his new role by altering the day on which his predecessor had celebrated his sacred canoe or temple.[1] When a chief died, to signalize his passing and to serve as a memorial to him one of his elders might allow a sacred canoe to drop out of the ritual programme for a season or so. Such happenings were part of the very stuff of the ritual cycle and tended to focus the interest of people more strongly upon it.

A striking feature of the conduct of the Work of the Gods was the intricate commingling of esoteric and exoteric features in it. This occurred in several ways. Ritual and economic activity were linked together in the very construction of the whole cycle since one manifest intent of the ritual was the promotion and sanctification of economic process.[2] Work and rite tended therefore to alternate, each as it were supporting and leading to the performance of the other. But within what can be properly regarded as a ritual performance the sacerdotal and mundane elements intermingled. The performance of the ritual made such demands upon the principal officiants that they equated these with ordinary work and used the same term (*fekau*) to describe them. The provision of the ritual materials for offering required a considerable expenditure of time and energy not only in obtaining them from the sea and the cultivations, but also in preparing them for consumption. The conceptualization of offering was such that once the ritual materials had been presented to the gods and ancestors they could be for the most part withdrawn and used as food. Again, the 'atmosphere' of the ritual occasion allowed of quite rapid oscillation between recognition of the sacred by silence and obeisance, and recognition of the profane by allowance for human error or by response to the humorous suggestion of incongruity.

My argument from this is that the sacred and profane elements did not merely exist side by side as aspects of ritual, as Leach has pointed out,[3] but *necessarily* did so in a ritual cycle of this kind.

[1] See *Social Change in Tikopia*, 1959, pp. 239–40.

[2] This has been brought out and re-examined very effectively by Goode, *Religion among the Primitives*, 1951, pp. 106–20.

[3] *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, 1954, p. 13.

This was in part a function of time span and degree of commitment to enterprise. If a rite takes place as an isolated item, then it can be a focus of high sacredness to a degree of intensity which may bar almost completely the entry of exoteric elements. But if the rite is one of a series demanding concentration of energy day after day for weeks or even months, then the climax needs to be relieved by some process of alternation. As I see it the relation between the sacred and the profane is one of reinforcement in a kind of pulsation necessary for refreshment and restoration of expended energies. Sociologically this applies not merely to the energies of individuals but to the maintenance of relations of co-operation between individuals in group arrangements. Mechanically, allowance for the exoteric aspect is necessary for the provision of food and other resources. Sociologically it is necessary to retain the interest and co-operation of individual and group participants.

The high level of integration attained in this ritual cycle was based only in part then upon mystical elements; it rested also upon the interlocking of these elements with others in the mundane field.

This interlocking varied in content at different phases of the ritual cycle and assumed various forms. For maximum social effect it was concerned with groups of some scale, either major lineages or clans. An interlocking mechanism of fairly simple form dealing with large-scale groups was of the type where the groups combined, as in the dances of Marae, to provide a *sequence* of days' or nights' performance. The place of each social group in the series was determined by the place of the others, and the contribution of each group thus tended to be defined by comparison with that of the others. This occurred on the material plane, as in comparison of each clan's or lineage's provision of coconuts or areca nut. It also occurred on the social plane, as when the Ariki Kafika objected to a special dance of Taumako (p. 322) on the grounds that his own clan had not been warned and given a similar opportunity. Moreover, the significance of splitting up the festival into days or nights on a clan basis was that of necessity this established a ritual precedence. The people all danced together at various points in each day or night, but the convention that each day and night 'belonged' to one or other clan meant that the *order of physical performance* was correlated also with an *order of ritual*

grading. It could have been that the Tikopia graded the days or nights in reverse order, beginning with the clan of lowest rank and ending with that of highest rank. (They did at times use such a process of ritual ascent – 'grading from the rear' – in some kava formulae.) But for the dance festival the convention was one of ritual descent – grading from top to bottom – so that the clan of lowest rank ended the series. Further interlocking was obtained by the process of symmetrical food exchange.

An analogous type of interlocking was where one group provided the materials for the ritual performance by another. Traditionally when the sacred mound in the temple of Kafika was renewed each season, the sand was drawn from the canoe court of either Tafua or Taumako. These three clans were thus maintained in a relationship of interdependence such that each season saw Kafika dependent upon Tafua and Taumako alternately for the proper accomplishment of its rite, and Tafua or Taumako obliged to furnish the material. But this also helped to define the relationship of Tafua and Taumako to each other since the alternation between them helped to establish their ritual equivalence in this respect as against other circumstances in which one or other had ritual precedence.

Another type of interlocking was of a more particularistic kind, since it was regarded as resting upon the recognition of an historical situation created by genealogical ties between two persons. The *Ara o Pu* (p. 131) was an example of a relationship between two clans based upon that between two chiefly lineages alleged to have been created by an ancient marriage. As a result the chiefly lineage of Taumako stood in a relationship of grandson to grandfather *vis-à-vis* that of Kafika. This representative status[1] involved a transaction of food exchange, generation after generation. This was primarily a relation of equality since, while grandparent may be regarded as senior to grandchild, the presumed antiquity of the original relationship was such that the original grandchild in his turn was treated as a revered ancestor by the grandparent's modern descendants. The gift of food from Taumako to Kafika

[1] Cf. *We, the Tikopia*, pp. 268–70. Analogous phenomena have been described under the terms 'positional succession' (Audrey I. Richards, 'Some Types of Family Structure among the Central Bantu', *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, 1950, p. 224) and 'perpetual kinship' (Ian Cunnison, 'Perpetual Kinship: A Political Institution of the Luapula Peoples', *Rhodes-Livingstone Institute Journal*, no. XX, 1956, pp. 27–48.

was very substantial and recognized as an indication of wealth. But in its turn the reciprocal gift by Kafika was intended to match the original presentation. This ritual exchange, which was carried out in conditions of considerable anxiety and suspense, taboo and mystic contributions, was one of the items which helped to maintain the two clans in relationship.

A linkage of a theoretically more asymmetrical order was that indicated by the items of major value, such as temples or canoes, operated by one clan but regarded as the property of a god of another clan. Several canoes, ordinarily treated as owned by specific lineages with their leading men as responsible administrators of the property, were credited to the control of spiritual beings attached to other groups. The concept of 'ownership' here became a very complex one. At the mundane level the canoe was owned by the people who run it, and no-one else had any voice in the way it should be used. All that happened was that seasonally a bark-cloth vestment and a basket of food were taken to the head of the lineage concerned in the other clan. But this economic act was regarded as symbolic of a relationship at a mystical level, and was an acknowledgment of superiority in this particular respect. In theory at least the spiritual being could dictate what should be done with the canoe in practice. The situation with certain temples, notably that of Resiake of Taumako, was similar. And yet while the relationship was ordinarily treated as one in which the god of one group controlled the property of another group, at a sociological level the situation might be interpreted as one group controlling to some degree the god of another through his putative involvement in their property. Empirically for the purpose of ritual this was almost what seemed to occur. There was ostensibly subordination of men of one group to the *god* of another, but there was no subordination in this respect of the men of one group to the *men* of another. We have here a ritual relationship, not a political relationship.

A relationship which can be truly termed political, which involved the exercise of power to alter people's behaviour, was shown in other aspects of the ritual cycle.[1] There is no single office of centralized authority in Tikopia. The chiefs of the four clans are each autonomous and the constraints to which any of

[1] Cf. Goode, *op. cit.*, pp. 159 *et seq.* In Tikopia the politico-religious connection 'becomes almost an identification'.

them may be subject are imposed by the logic of practical circumstances, not by a theory of government. The chiefs are ranked, but this is a ranking of ritual and social precedence, not an order of political authority. The Tikopia system of government is a centralized, *conjoint* authority system (see *Social Change in Tikopia*, pp. 255–63). But pragmatically the conventions of the traditional ritual system did imply certain political effects. The religious primacy of the Ariki Kafika endowed him with the power of decision in regard to the major events of the programme of the ritual cycle. This meant that at his word, so long as the religious sanctions were operative, other chiefs and people had to apply their time and energy, and much of their material resources, along the channels which he laid down. Moreover, in so doing they made acknowledgment of his primacy. The ritual cycle itself was believed to have been instituted by his ancestor and prime god. Therefore, periodical acknowledgment of this recognition was made to the Ariki Kafika in material and symbolic kind. From this point of view, the major events of the ritual cycle operated in a kind of pyramid form with the critical acts of the Ariki Kafika at their apex. The clearest illustration of this was the system of control of the sacred canoes. Each chief and most of the ritual elders in each clan had one or more sacred canoes which were represented by eight or nine of their number, the *taumauri*, which served as a representative point of application of many of the most sacred rites. In their turn the *taumauri* were represented by Vakamanongi, the leading canoe of them all. This belonged to the Ariki Fangarere, last of the chiefs in ritual precedence. But it was dedicated to the Atua i Kafika, prime god of the leading chief in ritual precedence. This ritual inversion gave a status to the Ariki Fangarere which helped to maintain his 'parity of esteem' with the other chiefs. But it was the Ariki Kafika who gave the word as to when and how the leading canoe should be celebrated, and by implication assumed the role of speaking for all the sacred canoes throughout the community. In this way the sanctions of belief which maintained the ritual cycle served as a force of political integration.

It is clear that this Tikopia ritual cycle was preoccupied with technological and economic ends. One expressed object was the attainment of food not merely for the specific occasions but seasonally and generally. Moreover, the object was not simply to

provide for the wants of the person performing the ritual, but also in many cases to cater for the prosperity and well-being of the whole Tikopia community. From this point of view the element of representation or implied delegation was very strongly marked. On the personal side each chief spoke for his clan, each elder for his lineage. In many rites the Ariki Kafika spoke for the community as a whole. On the material side single objects stood for their species and items of one species could stand for a whole range of types. This was exemplified particularly by the role of the yam in the whole ritual cycle. Appeals were constantly made for food, for the breadfruit to fruit and for other crops to yield abundantly. Foods of various kinds were laid before the gods as offerings, but the only vegetable which was ritualized as part of the cycle of the Work of the Gods was the yam. The prime place given to the Work of the Yam puzzled me at first because the yam, though a useful and prized foodstuff, is not the most important in the Tikopia food provision – taro and breadfruit exceed it by far in volume of production. But from a Tikopia point of view the fact that the yam can symbolize all vegetable foodstuffs is independent of its precise place in the roster of food. It is its representative quality, not its bulk, that is being celebrated. Granted this, utilitarian considerations may be given some significance. From the point of view of ritual performances extending over more than a fortnight, a vegetable which has certain powers of durability is useful. The leaves of taro wilt very soon after it is dug, and the corm begins to decay in a few days. Breadfruit likewise does not last long. But the yam may be kept in good condition for a great length of time and can be thus ritualized with economy and ease.[1] Pragmatically in the formation of the ritual cycle the time schedule must have been adapted in a broad way to the material properties of the objects ritualized.

[1] A question is whether relative difficulty of cultivation and greater variability of yield may not have impressed upon the Tikopia the desirability of ritualizing the yam above all other vegetables. This is an interesting possibility, which I cannot fully check. In Tikopia, however, which lacks the large yams of mainland New Guinea, no great *technical* attention was given to the yam, and it is my impression that its variability of yield was no greater than that of breadfruit. The question of utilitarian factors combining with others as a basis for ritualization is of great interest, especially in the light of the treatment of this issue by Lévi-Strauss, who has used in part Tikopia material. (*Le Totémisme Aujourd'hui*, 1962, pp. 93–5; cf. Firth, *Primitive Polynesian Economy*, 1939, p. 65; Firth, 'Twins, Birds and Vegetables: Problems of Identification in Primitive Religious Thought', *Man* (N.S.), vol. 1, pp. 1–17, 1966.)

In some respects the ritual cycle of the Work of the Gods corresponds to the cults described by Frazer and by Durkheim. Frazer's account of the public functionary whose role it is to control the weather and especially to ensure an adequate fall of rain is very reminiscent of the role of the Tikopia chief, especially the Ariki Kafika, in the Work of the Gods. His account of the sacrament of first-fruits as being an act of communion with a deity or powerful spirit, allied to the notion that these fruits are a gift bestowed by the gods upon man, who is bound to express his homage to his divine benefactors by returning to them a portion of their bounty, is illustrated by the rite of the Hot Food.[1]

But although in some respect there are close analogies with the cults of vegetation and other practices which Durkheim categorizes as 'positive rites', the Tikopia Work of the Gods differs in many respects from the stereotype presented by the classical anthropological writers. This is partly because the stereotype is psychologically naïve. One difficulty in accepting Frazer's characterizations of priest and magician (either in opposition or in combination) is the lack of sophistication they show. The priest is characterized by an 'awful sense of the divine majesty' and a 'humble prostration in the presence of it', mingled with 'certain lower motives'; the magician by 'a haughty self-sufficiency and arrogant demeanour towards the higher powers'. And when priest and sorcerer were not yet differentiated, as Frazer saw the situation in some parts of Oceania, the ritual performer uttered 'prayers and incantations almost in the same breath, knowing or recking little of the theoretical inconsistency of his behaviour so long as by hook or crook he contrived to get what he wanted'. In the rites of homoeopathic or imitative magic the practitioner wishing to make rain is presented as simulating rain by sprinkling water or mimicking clouds, and so on. Now, in the conduct of Tikopia chief and ritual elders, elements of all these characteristics described by Frazer can be found. Yet they are not the most marked features and appear in combination with other more plausible attitudes. There was apt to be an intellectual awareness and an emotional sensitivity about the conduct of the Tikopia priest which made it both more intelligible and more sympathetic to me than Frazer's stereotype. The Ariki Kafika, in praying for rain to fertilize the crops, did not pour water on the ground or make motions to imitate clouds. He

[1] J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, abridged edition, 1925, pp. 62, 479–88.

spoke of rain and clouds by way of appeal, and where he symbolized them did so in verbal imagery and not by crude signs. So also in other respects the Tikopia pagan priest was much more complex, much more allusive, much more 'poetic' in his rite and formula than is the public functionary presented to us by Frazer. Even Durkheim, though much more subtle, gives an over-simplified presentation of the 'positive rites' concerned with the increase of Australian aboriginal food supply. According to him these positive rites have one common characteristic: 'They are all performed in a state of confidence, joy and even enthusiasm . . . men celebrate them with confidence, joyfully anticipating the happy event which they prepare and announce.' They are joyful feasts 'marked with the gravity which a religious solemnity always supposes, but this gravity excludes neither animation nor joy'. Durkheim distinguishes such rites very sharply from what he calls piacular ceremonies which suggest not only the idea of expiation but also of misfortune, and are therefore celebrated in a state of uneasiness or sadness.[1] As a prime example of this type of ritual he instances mortuary rites. Now from various phases of the Work of the Gods it will be clear that the notion of piacular in Durkheim's sense was to be found right at the heart of these 'positive cults' of fertility and care for prosperity. Durkheim states that 'everything of evil omen' necessitates a piaculum. In the Tikopia canoe rites the term *Anea Pariki*, the offering of fish to the adze-gods, itself denotes ill omen – 'evil things' – and the period immediately before the rite was celebrated was one of anxiety and even fear (p. 103). From time to time during every ritual sequence anxiety was apt to be displayed lest the offerings to the gods were insufficient or the gods failed to respond to the appeals made to them.

There has been a constant trend in anthropological and sociological studies of religion to classify rites as Durkheim suggested in terms of the ritual attitudes which characterize them. It is clear from the Tikopia ritual cycle that this contrast between the 'posi-

[1] Durkheim's usage differs to some degree from that of Robertson Smith, who introduced the term piacular to anthropology. Robertson Smith regarded piacular ritual as in its later form a sacrificial gift in atonement for sin and in its earlier form a sacrifice of the life of a victim representing in some way an analogy to communion with the life of god and worshippers. *Religion of the Semites*, rev. ed., 1907, pp. 397–401; 1st ed., 1889, pp. 378–82. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, translated by J. W. Swain, 1926, p. 389.

tive cult' of fertility rites and alimentary communion and the 'piacular rites' of anxiety and atonement is one of elements, not of whole ritual performance. As with the taboos of the 'negative cult', the opposed elements are closely associated together in one integral rite. The evidence of the Tikopia ritual cycle reinforces once again the trend towards the destruction of the classical dichotomies in anthropological religious thinking, except as analytical elements.

The aggregation of different kinds of ritual attitudes as elements in a common performance is brought out very clearly by examination of many of the ritual formulae uttered in the course of the Work of the Gods. Elements of propitiation and request in asking the gods for welfare; of acknowledgment with thanks for benefits and an eye on the future; of compulsion or at least command in that many phrases are in the form of instruction and hortation to the gods – all were present and intermingled. The distinction between private and public rituals also appears as an empirical separation only, not one which can be taken at face value in sociological interpretation. Most of the important rites of the Work of the Gods traditionally involved large numbers of men and women, the latter usually occupied behind the scenes. But many other rites attended by only a handful of men, such as most of those for the yam, were not valid only for the participants. They had representative status for the community as a whole.

In examining the Tikopia ritual cycle, then, we find that the ordinary criteria of interpretation of ritual cannot be applied in any very simple way. We are concerned with the intentions and attitudes of the participants, but in a relatively complex and sophisticated form. We are concerned also with the significance of the ritual for the status of the individuals concerned and for the general structure of the society. Here too no euphoric mood of Durkheimian collectivity will serve. Tikopia ritual relations are highly complex and involve status assertion, competition and even conflict within the general framework of a balanced adjustment of roles in an hierarchical system.

It is clear that the Work of the Gods was performed as much for the sake of society as for that of religion. Social integration was maintained by various devices. These included the recognition of the opposition of sectors of the society – those in the traditional temple area, Uta, and those in the beach villages, Tai; those within

the turmeric-making sphere and those without – the 'hot food' and the 'cold food'; those opposed and yet linked together by the formal food exchanges at the dance and other periods. They included also the device of conceiving a religious pyramid of gods which validated a ritual pyramid of precedence of chiefs and so gave a special tone to their political quality. On the other hand, relations of equality and autonomy were emphasized at many points in the rites performed separately by the four chiefs and even by some of the leading ritual elders. Moreover, the device of associating chiefs and leading elders as individual representatives of their groups with specific items of the ritual cycle gave each at certain points in the cycle an outstanding role in the performance. Each of the major personages had then a species of hereditary ritual capital upon which he could pride himself and which marked him out individually from all other participants. Inducement was thus given to him and his associated kin to assist in the perpetuation of the rites, in order to continue to validate his own status and not merely because of loyalty to the system as a whole. It was by this intricate combination of esoteric and exoteric, taboos and inducements, fear and respect, penalties and rewards, loyalty to lineage and to clan leaders and opportunity of self-assertion and status validation that I believe the ritual implementation of the religious beliefs of the Tikopia was maintained.

The traditional Tikopia religious system with its cycle of the Work of the Gods has now been abandoned. Alternative pressures and inducements, and the evidence of prosperity attainable by means other than the traditional pursuit of ritual, stimulated the move to change. But modification of pattern had already resulted from personal suggestibility at one period and the effects of disaster at another. To Tikopia themselves the process of modification was not seen as a challenge which would necessarily destroy the ritual fabric at one blow. They recognized that changes had taken place in the past, that adaptations had been made, often consciously and purposely. They saw that adaptations could continue to be made then while they still preserved the essence of the ritual system. Indeed by some instructed Tikopia themselves far-reaching modifications were suggested to meet the new situation and still keep the major ritual purpose intact.[1] In short, what destroyed the

[1] In 1952 Pa Raropuka suggested in a talk with me that because of the famine the work of the canoes, and of Somosomo and certain other rites, should be

Work of the Gods was not the successive modifications which the Tikopia religious attitudes showed every capacity to absorb. It was the series of competing pressures and inducements which led them individually and in groups to abandon the whole traditional ritual system for the alternative system of Christianity. With their steady conversion to the new religion the number of pagan ritual participants dropped so low that continuance of their ritual system became increasingly difficult. In the end it was the superiority of the alternative system in the social and economic sphere which facilitated the change of religious conviction and the abandonment of traditional religious practice. What was evident throughout the history of the Work of the Gods over nearly half a century was the flexibility of this practice and the power of adaptation inherent in this aspect of the 'primitive' religious system.

I now want to raise a few general issues about the nature of primitive ritual. It is useful to take as a starting-point Leach's view that ritual is a form of symbolic statement which 'says' something about the individuals involved in the action – particularly by expressing their social status – and so makes explicit the social structure.[1]

It will be obvious to a reader of this book that Leach's essential propositions are fully borne out by the Tikopia ritual cycle of the Work of the Gods. Chiefs, ritual elders and many other participants, including women, were enabled to demonstrate their social position thereby. But ritual usually involves *critical acts* which are the core of the performance and upon the performers of which public attention is focused; often, as with the Throwing the Fire-stick, the rite is named by the participants accordingly. Now in the 'language' of ritual the critical act may 'say' something different according to circumstances. In one type of ritual status, emphasis may be upon personal action – he who *does* the critical thing is not only the focus of public attention but also is socially recognized as the legitimate holder of the status achievement. Such was the position of Pa Rarovi, bearer of the sacred Fire to the dances of Marae – he continually revalidated his status by this critical ritual

dropped, and only the work of the yam, the re-carpeting of Kafika temple and the turmeric manufacture be retained – in other words, only those rites immediately under the aegis of the major deity of Kafika. 'Look at the Ariki Tafua,' he said, 'he has abandoned his rites and he has not been struck by famine.'

[1] E. R. Leach, *op. cit.*, 1954, pp. 11–16, 174.

act (p. 349). But a status mark of another kind is when a person is recognized not as the doer of the act but the *controller* of it – to be able to say that it is *his*, and to dictate when, how and by whom it shall be performed, as the Ariki Kafika controlled the Work of the Yam (Chapter 4). Still other status indicators may be given by being allowed to *participate* in ritual, though having neither a controlling voice nor a critical role – as was the case with the cupbearer in a kava rite. Hence it may not necessarily be the ritual performance in itself which makes the symbolic statement about status; it is the fact of performance, the role of performer or controller, which is recognized as a privilege and which is the structural expression. Ritual may 'say' something, but in a sense it may not matter precisely *what* is 'said'; it is the act of 'saying', the *when* and *how* that matter, from the social point of view. I think that perhaps Leach has had this in mind in stating how the *pattern* (my italic) of ritual 'represents' or describes status relations within the community (p. 174). For while ritual 'says' something to the participant individuals, its significance comes in no small degree from the fact that it is not just a simple, single free symbolic utterance; it is a formalized piece of behaviour, repetitive, even routinized. It has 'said' the same thing before and will say the same thing again. It expresses social status by reaffirmation, and by expectation of future performance of the same type.

If ritual 'says' something about individuals, to whom are the things said? Presumably, unless one accepts the reality of postulated spirit powers, the symbolic statements are being made to other members of the society. But as a mode of symbolic communication ritual is not of a very refined order; it is gross and imprecise, as compared with spoken language. This is why the bodily acts of ritual have so often subjoined to them a spoken formula. As a mode of communication in a society, then, ritual may say relatively few things about the social order, and say mostly what people already know. Granted that this is so, the things that it conveys may be of cardinal importance. Rites are of many kinds, and different kinds communicate different symbolic messages. Rites of initiation not only mark the accession of novices to new social position and privilege; they also may convey information of educational value. Mortuary rites assist the survivors to adjust to the final absence of a member of the group;

they may also serve as a means of social control. Installation rites of a chief or king not only emphasize the importance of the office, but also notify to the participants the assumption of a moral commitment by the office-holder.[1]

In such ways ritual not only represents, describes and maintains the social order; it may also help in the formation and development of the social order. It can have an adaptive and even creative function. By giving occasion for the public assumption of roles it also gives occasion for interpreting and modifying them, and so for re-shaping the social order. But as it does these things, by the very messages of status-involvement and exercise of initiative that it conveys it may also be a source of competition and disunity; one man's ritual asset may become another man's social affront.

With this is linked the fact that ritual may serve as a mode of personal expression as well as a mode of social communication. Its expressive function may be re-phrased as being a mode of communication to the self, but such a rendering does not do justice to its values. On the expressive side, ritual may provide a preface or an accompaniment or a stimulus to technical action; it may even be a substitute for action where the technical basis is not firmly assured. This is in line with Malinowski's view. Moreover, as he also has argued, one can assume that every individual has emotional dispositions and tensions arising from his relation to the external world, including members of his own society. This seems to me to be evident from a great deal of Tikopia verbal and non-verbal behaviour, and that what ritual has done is to provide a routinization and canalization for such tensions. These are not left for random expression, but are assigned their time and place for explicit mention and acting-out.

In Tikopia the verbal concomitant of ritual, the formula of address to gods and ancestors, is prescribed in general form, but has a considerable degree of flexibility when it is repeated. Such *free formulae* allow of a combination of conventional patterned statement with individual, idiosyncratic modes of expression. In this sense ritual thus enables something to be 'said' about the

[1] These various aspects have been well brought out in recent works by Audrey I. Richards, *Chisungu: A Girl's Initiation Ceremony among the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia*, 1956; M. Fortes, 'Ritual and Office in Tribal Society', and C. D. Forde, 'Death and Succession: An Analysis of Yakö Mortuary Ceremonial', both in *Essays on the Ritual of Social Relations*, edited by M. Gluckman, 1962.

personal order as well as about the social order. It may be asked – what about the participants who do not take the lead in ritual procedures, or those members of the group concerned who do not even participate in the ritual? (Though anthropological descriptions do not always point this out, such non-participating members of social groups are not at all uncommon.) Here one can postulate that ritual performance operates vicariously, through identification. A theory of assignment of responsibility to lineage head or other status leader means that a junior member of the group can have the expressive function of ritual performed for him on a representative basis. That this does not necessarily completely dispose of his tensions *vis-à-vis* the external world is revealed by the fact that sometimes a ritual leader is criticized by such junior members for performing the rites 'inefficiently' – too late, in wrong order, with insufficient attention to detail, etc.

There is a further point related to the level of scrutiny or of dissection of ritual procedures. Holistically, the communicative and the expressive functions of ritual seem to be well borne out. But at the level of detailed procedures many 'ritual' actions cannot be regarded as in themselves 'saying' anything – or at least anything significant – about the social order. A lot of ritual actions must be regarded as essentially *contributory* to a final symbolic statement – part of the 'build-up' necessary to completion of the pattern. But as separate items each may be 'saying' something about the state of mind of the person who performs it. Here the line between technical and ritual is once again not easy to draw. Even apart from this what may be conceded as a ritual act without technical significance may still have only a minimal symbolic significance, if indeed its symbolism can be discerned at all. When in the Work of the Canoes the sacred canoe adzes were lifted down from their shelf in the temple (p. 69) this was an act without technical implication. It might be regarded as an indication that they were being removed from a quiescent state to one of nascent activity, and therefore the gods associated with them had to be placated. But the action seemed to be regarded as having a quality of danger in itself; it was a 'marker' or 'indicator' action, one which was significant in the general context rather than one which stood for something other than itself.

This leads to a further point. Most ritual involves a commitment of resources, even if only of time and energy. Its significance as a

symbolizer of social status tends to lie essentially in this fact. But such a commitment means that whatever be the function of ritual as a symbolic re-statement of some aspects of social structure, a most important focus for the whole ritual scheme is upon the efficient use of resources. Even where no very obvious apparatus or items of wealth are involved there is still the notion that a rite can be well or badly performed. This means that relation of means to ends in terms of concepts of neatness, speed, appropriateness of spoken word or bodily act is regarded as relevant to the ritual situation. This seems to be so apart from aesthetic elements of judgment, and apart from the notion that errors in ritual are deleterious to the results. In short, concepts of efficiency lie at the heart of ritual as at that of technical procedures. It is from this point of view that an apparent antinomy can be once more resolved. 'Ritual' and 'technical' are in many contexts opposed. 'Work' is normally a technical concept, yet we are dealing here with the 'Work' of the Gods. My analysis shows, I hope conclusively, that not only are technical and ritual interwoven as differentiated but linked procedures, but they share some of the same qualities through being expressive of the commitment of the persons who perform them.

But why these two modes of expression – why must some things be said indirectly, in symbolic statement, about social structure? As I see it, anthropologists provide the answer in some such terms as these. In any society, ritual follows a certain idiom, a cultural convention of sequences of behaviour. This idiom provides a code for expression and communication of ideas and emotions in terms which are at some remove from the ordinary speech and other behavioural conventions. Hence 'statements' can be made in a manner less brusque, more protracted, more behaviourally involved, than with ordinary language. The indirect form of 'statement' which the coded expressions of ritual provide also allows of extensive commitment of time and energy with great scope for variation to which values can be attached. Moreover, the endowment of ritual with positive moral values strengthens its acceptability as symbolic statement.

But there is a general point which relates to our understanding of the whole concept of ritual: the sequences pursued in it are in a sense self-validating; the achievement of its ends is in the last resort a matter of faith. It is not just a lack of observation of the

processes involved – the chemical and biological changes that take place when a yam put into soil starts to grow are no less 'mysterious' to most of us than are the relations between spoken formula and yam growth to the Tikopia. But whereas the yam ritual is for the most part a non-experimental closed system, the yam technology is capable of a very great degree of modification and experiment. Moreover, an alternative faith-system may be accepted in replacement of the traditional ritual system, as justification of a set of technical procedures. Hence while a people such as the Tikopia may lose confidence in the effectiveness of their traditional ritual they do not conceive of a similar abandonment of their technology; or at least such abandonment tends to be much slower. Some critical evidence in support of this view is given in the Epilogue.

I

General Character of the Work of the Gods

The aim of this chapter is to give a synoptic view of this Tikopia ritual cycle, with some general observations on its character. It will be realized from the detailed descriptions which follow that this synopsis is not merely an anthropological abstraction, but is a coherent scheme recognized by the Tikopia themselves.

To assist the reader it may be pointed out that the rites fall into several main divisions: a symbolic act to initiate the cycle; a re-sacralization of canoes; a re-consecration of temples; a series of harvest and planting rites for the yam; a sacred dance festival; several memorial rites on the sites of vanished temples; and in the trade-wind season, the ritual manufacture of turmeric.

All this ritual is integrated under the name of the Work of the Gods. This concrete title embodies two concepts, first that of a religious sanction behind the ritual, and secondly that of the ritual as a series of obligations, involving the expenditure of goods and of time. The religious sanction lies in the fact that the ritual cycle is believed to have been instituted primarily by one deity, the principal god of Kafika, who at the same time is worshipped by the chiefs of the other three clans. But into the scheme are drawn also other gods and chiefly ancestors. There is no elaborate system of mythology to explain how the ritual cycle came into being. The Tikopia state simply that the deity of Kafika instituted the rites, and that they themselves are perpetuating his traditional doings. But this attribution, slender as its foundation may seem, imbues them with a strong reverence for the ritual and the sacred objects connected with it. Such attitudes of respect are described in the later chapters. They are linked with definite beliefs that the rites are essential to maintain the fertility of crops and success in fishing, as well as the general welfare of the island as a whole. But apart from the reverence shown to specific objects and at specific

moments of the ritual, the Tikopia show a very matter-of-fact attitude. The ritual involves a great deal of preparation of food and other work in plaiting mats, making thatch, repairing canoes, and cleaning the scene of operations, and these tasks are carried out much as ordinary events are, with a great deal of talk, joking and grumbling, with some dilatoriness and evasion of obligations. The Ariki Kafika said to me 'It is truly work, friend.' He himself displayed considerable devotion to his duty, in staying for a long time in Uta, deprived of company, and in rising early to perform his rites. But associated with this 'business' attitude is an element of great interest and some pleasure; the people as a whole look forward to the time when the Work of the Gods will begin, and nowadays Christians as well as pagans inquire eagerly when the firestick will be thrown. From this point of view the most attractive aspect of the ritual is undoubtedly the sacred dance festival. Before I realized the full meaning of the Work of the Gods and had heard this title I was told about the *Taomatangi*, the dance to quell the wind, by people who were obviously looking forward to it, and I thought for a time that this was actually the name for the whole cycle and the centre of it. So strong is the inducement to participate that a few of the more daring young men who have joined the Christian faith sometimes let their hair grow – a sign of unregeneracy – and attend the dance. One such case occurred when I was there. The young man was then barred from church for several months, but was finally readmitted by making a formal apology to the Christian teacher, accompanying it in Tikopia style with a basket of food.

FIXING THE TIME FOR THE RITUAL

A question of some importance is the basis on which the decision to begin these seasonal rites on any given day is taken. The Tikopia have no fixed calendar and no names for the months or for the days or nights of the month. They count moons or nights of the moon for specific purposes, as in estimating pregnancy or periods between events, but they use no tallies to assist them in this (see Postscript). The term *tau*, meaning literally 'a measurement' or 'count', is used for a season and sometimes for a year as a whole, but has no great precision. It is said that some *tau* have six months and others seven, or that after six months have elapsed the *tau* goes on into the seventh. It is in fact a seasonal period rather than a

calendar period and refers primarily to the most marked climatic phenomenon in the island, namely the alternation of the trade-wind with the monsoon period.

This seasonal change, which is accompanied by changes in economic pursuits such as fishing, is the main basis for the seasonal ritual, as is shown by the fact that the ritual is called by the names of 'the Work of the Trade-Wind' and 'the Work of the Monsoon', respectively. About April the wind, after veering through several points, settles down to blow steadily with moderate force from the south-east or east-south-east and continues thus with hardly any intermission for about six months. (Since I was in Tikopia only twelve months I cannot say how much variation there is in the advent of the seasonal wind, but I gather that there may be several weeks.) During this period the temperature is often lower than in the other part of the year, clouds drift across the sky, and sometimes obscure it for hours together. During the turmeric manufacture, for instance, a day of bright sunshine was a novelty. About October the trade-wind dies away and is replaced by a variable period of normally light winds alternating with flat calms. The days are often very hot and cloudless. Occasionally the wind, which may have come from any direction from south-west to north, suddenly sets in strongly from the north-west and may rise to gale force for a few days. Rarely, perhaps once a decade, it becomes a hurricane which destroys houses and crops. Such a hurricane occurs only in the *raki* – the monsoon, and never in the *tonga* – the trade-wind season. This is alluded to in a traditional song, and it is said that though in the monsoon the noise of the rising wind makes a man wake and go out in anxiety to strengthen his house, in the trade-wind season he sleeps soundly.

Though the main index for the Work of the Gods is thus given by the seasonal change it is correlated with and corroborated by other factors. The Tikopia have no sidereal calendar but they do use astronomical observation to some extent as an aid in their time reckoning. Thus it is said that when the Pleiades rise then 'the ocean has begun to bite' – that is, the fish rise and are plentiful. At this time also birds and rats raid the food crops, man sets traps for them, and himself feels hunger. It is said that turmeric manufacture is sometimes regulated by the rising of the Pleiades but that it is usually arranged without such reference – 'it is made haphazard simply'. But the position of the stars is used as a general

guide. The Ariki Kafika said that when the Pleiades appeared above the sea in the east, in the dawn, then that was a signal for the Work of the Trade-Wind to begin. At this time Taro, another star, still stood high up at dawn, but by the time it had descended in the heavens then the work was in full swing. Again it was said that the rising of Taro gave a signal for the approach of the work.

The Work of the Monsoon is also so guided. When it is seen that Manu, a bright star, has passed the zenith in the evening, then the time to throw the firestick for this season's work has arrived. Saraporu, another prominent star, stands midway in the western heavens in the evening at this time; towards the end of the Work, when the dance festival begins, Saraporu has gone below the horizon in the evening.

The Tikopia thus do not use these stars as definite determinants for the beginning of their rites but as general indicators and controls; their most important function is in giving the signal to prepare for the work rather than actually to begin the work.

Another token of the approach of the Work in the monsoon season is given by the arrival of the migrant turnstone (*turi*). This bird comes from northern latitudes every year about October. The Tikopia are ignorant of the real nature of the migratory phenomenon and hold that the turnstone comes from the sky where it has been staying during the trade-wind season. Its habitation there is called the Heavens of the *Turi*. 'The *turi* come; they come down from the skies; an ancient tale in this land.' The Tikopia have observed that in the trade-wind season there are hardly any of these birds about, save a few who 'dwell constantly', staying all the year round; but that when the monsoon comes they arrive in crowds. I was told 'Now the *turi* is a token of the monsoon. As men sleep, the Ariki Kafika hears the *turi* crying from above. The *turi* have come down and fly wailing above in crowds. Then the Ariki Kafika says "Man of the monsoon has cried. Nights there you are also." Then he does the things in Uta here.' The 'nights' and the 'things' are the rites of the Work of the Gods.

The condition of vegetation is also an important guide. The *Erythrina*, known as *ngatae* or *kalokalo*, changes its appearance with the seasons. It is the tree of the principal deity of Kafika to whom most of the ritual is dedicated, and when its red flowers begin to appear then it is the time for the Work of the Trade-Wind to begin. When the flowers are fully out in a blaze of flame then this

is the correct time for turmeric-making. Since the blood-red turmeric is the pigment of the deity the symbolism is clear. A general token of the approach of the ritual season is given also by the maturity of the yam. When the first leaves which the vine has put forth, known as sacred leaves, have fallen, then the yam is ready for digging. Then, it is said, the Ariki Kafika goes and throws the firestick, and the Work proceeds. These factors all help to set the general time for the seasonal rites, but do not decide the actual day of commencement. This lies at the discretion of the Ariki Kafika. He is helped to his decision by the natural phenomena mentioned, but also by certain social phenomena. One of these is the confirmation of his intentions by his principal god, speaking through a human medium, and another is the general opinion of the other chiefs and the people. Thus before the Work of the Trade-Wind in June 1929 his medium Pa Motusio became possessed by the god during a rite held after a thunderstorm. He asked 'Will anything happen nowadays, or is it yet some way off?' The chief replied 'It is some way off, but it has arrived' – meaning that the time was near. The god answered 'Yes indeed, your moon there will stand' – he meant that the ritual should begin in the next month. There was some disagreement at this time between the Ariki Kafika and the Ariki Taumako. The latter had suggested that the Ariki Kafika should hurry up and get on with the Work, and held that the thunderstorm had come because the Ariki Kafika had been staying on in Faea instead of going to Uta to throw the firestick. The Ariki Kafika held that the thunder was simply a mark of the good nature of his deity in clearing up the sky (which is indeed the usual Tikopia interpretation) and pointed to the fine weather which we were then enjoying as proof. Moreover he pointed out to me very strongly that the time for the ritual is quite at the discretion of the Kafika chief. This is the position generally held. In this case he said he would have been willing to let the ritual begin earlier, but he could not do so for fear of the yam, which was not mature until then.

To sum up: there is no fixed date for the seasonal ritual, and the day on which it begins is governed by the decision of the Ariki Kafika who is guided in fixing the time by the various factors mentioned conjointly. It is probable also that the chief takes into account the phases of the moon in fixing the time when the rites should begin, though I did not record any statement on this point.

Since flying fish cannot be caught with the aid of torches when the full moon is up, the date is probably fixed so that the *faunga vaka* rites will coincide with a time of relative darkness. This would seem to explain statements relating to the moon such as that mentioned above.

PROGRAMME OF THE RITES

The order of the rites of the Work of the Gods is traditionally fixed, though the space between them lies to some extent at the discretion of the Ariki Kafika. But any ordinary Tikopia knows the sequence and can visualize it clearly. During the rites of the monsoon season I took down an account of those of the trade wind season from Pa Te Arairaki, a man of the chiefly house of Kafika, who however had no responsibility in the matter. I give this account here since by comparison with the programme as actually followed it shows that the sequence of rites is not simply a matter of dictation by the chiefs but is common knowledge to the people as a whole. The account was given to me in running form with no prompting on my part.

'In the nights of the trade-wind the firestick is thrown; we dwell and then pluck the *repa* (for the yam rites—there is no *faunga vaka*). The next morning make the kava of the yam; the next morning to Takerekere, the kava of Pu Ma. Waking on another day the seed tubers are prepared (*utu*), that is they are made sacred and the Work of the yam is made to them. After three or it may be four nights the yam cultivation is cleared; the morning after the tubers are cut; the morning after is *soani autaru*. The morning after the mat of Vaisakiri is cut, and the morning after the noonday rite of Vaisakiri is performed. The morning after the temples are re-carpeted, and the morning after come Nukuora and Taumako (temples). The yam is buried. It remains there while the chief dwells counting his nights, it may be two or three. Then the yam cultivation is burned. The morning after the *fakaora* is performed, and the morning after the yam is planted. The morning after is *soani to* (a secondary planting rite). Resiake is re-carpeted. On the morning of the next day the sacred digging stick is stood up and the noonday rite of Resiake is performed. On the morning of the next day, Kafika is re-carpeted. On the morning of the next day it is Somosomo; we go and clear. He who has prepared his *roi* carries it to Somosomo – he who marries into Kafika makes then his *roi*.

In the morning of the next day Pa Rarovi makes his noonday rite. The next morning we, sa Kafika, do so. The next morning it is sa Tavi. In the evening the *roi* is prepared. On the morning of another day the kava is made and we disperse, going then to cut new aqueducts, and go and turn over the sacred turmeric, the name of which is the *akoako*. In the morning we go and make a good head of water – we sa Kafika – while the people of Taumako and Tafua go and turn their turmeric. Then letting pass some days, whatever they may be, when the waters have been increased and the digging out of the turmeric from the woods is finished, then filter sheets are sewn.

'On the morning of the next day the turmeric is grated. When grated the next morning it is filtered and its *uruango* is made. The day on which it, the *akoako*, is filtered, is that on which the turmeric of the chiefs of Taumako and Tafua is grated; then on the morning of the next day the turmeric of the Ariki Fangarere and the other chiefs is filtered – they are another company. The next morning the turmeric sleeps in its enclosure. As the night descends it sleeps in the *rotoa*. The next morning the turmeric cylinders are prepared, and in the evening the *akoako* is baked. When the land is dark, it is brought out, and in the morning the chiefs ask if the *akoako* has fallen well or has fallen badly. If it has fallen well it is tied up and hung up above. And the turmeric of the Ariki Fangarere and the other chiefs is baked that night. In the morning, other companies bake theirs and take it out. In the morning it is carried to Kafika and we go and daub. We come then and in the evening set up the *uruango*. In the morning at dawn the spirits fly away, they are invited to go and we beat the canoes and whoop. Then the chiefs go and daub with their turmeric in their houses in Uta. Then we dwell and whatever may be the number of days that pass, Nukuora prepares *roi* – it is the house of the Ariki Fangarere in which the Ariki Kafika makes kava.

'The next morning daubing is also done, and in the evening the people go and prepare the *roi* of Marae. The next morning the Marae is cleared and Matangiaso and Rarofiroki are re-carpeted. Then in the evening the *vetu* is performed; it is the day of sa Kafika. The next morning the *vetu* is again performed – it is the day of sa Tafua and sa Taumako together. The next morning it is finished and we lay hands on the intervals between the temples (a rite known as *popo i a vasia fare*). The Ariki Kafika says to Tafua and

Taumako that Vakamanongi will fall singly, its *ururenga* will be performed alone. But if not it is done collectively. The canoes of the chiefs are done all together. Then we go to Tai to carry on with the canoes. The next morning the *maro* of the canoes are spread. When this is finished we go to Takarito. When its re-carpeting is finished we come and dwell. One man dwells and then makes the *ururenga* of his canoe, another man dwells and makes the *ururenga* of his canoe. Now it is finished.'

This account shows in the first place how a Tikopia man not responsible for the organization of the rites can carry in his memory a sequence of more than thirty separate days. Reference to the actual programme shows that this is a fairly accurate description of what occurs. Moreover it is a good illustration of the verbal symbolism of the Tikopia. The account is practically unintelligible to the reader—despite the fact that I have translated it to make the technical terms as clear as possible. For almost every ceremony the Tikopia have a cliché, a cryptic reference which cannot be understood without a very full knowledge of the actual procedure and the explanations given by the people themselves. The meaning of these statements will emerge in the following chapters.

To facilitate reference in the following chapters I give here the programmes for the Work of the Gods in the two seasons, on the basis of what I was told and what I observed. The numbers refer to the sequence of events on separate days though since in some cases the intervals between the rites are variable, the total number of days occupied is usually more than indicated here. The names of the clans given in each case show the chief under whose aegis the ritual is performed. It will be seen that the greatest share is taken by the Ariki Kafika.

A. The Work of the Monsoon

I.	Throwing the Firestick	Kafika
II.	Preparing *roi*	All clans
III.	Canoe rites. *Faunga vaka.* Day of the Chief	All clans
IV.	Canoe rites. *Faunga vaka.* Day of Elders	All clans
V.	Canoe rites. *Faunga vaka.* Day of *taurukuruku*	All clans
VI.	Canoe rites. 'Evil things'	All clans
VII.	Canoe rites. *Fainga vaka.* Vakamanongi	Fangarere
VIII.	Canoe rites. *Fainga vaka. Taumauri*	All clans
IX.	Canoe rites. *Fainga vaka.* Other sacred canoes	All clans
	Yam rites. Plucking *repa*	Kafika

x.	Yam rites. First-fruits	Kafika
xi.	Yam rites. Takerekere kava	Kafika
xii.	Yam rites. Seed tubers *utu*	Kafika
	(Ariki Kafika stays in Uta)	
xiii.	Yam rites. Yam kava	Kafika
xiv.	Yam rites. Yam kava	Kafika
xv.	Yam rites. Yam kava	Kafika
xvi.	Yam rites. *Autaru*; tubers cut	Kafika
xvii.	Yam rites. *Soani autaru*	Kafika
	Resiake perfumes	Taumako
xviii.	Yam rites.	Kafika
	Resiake re-carpeted	Taumako
xix.	Yam rites.	Kafika
	Resiake noonday rites	Taumako
	Vaisakiri mat	Fangarere
xx.	Yam rites.	Kafika
	Resiake, oil	Taumako
	Thatch of temples	Taumako and Tafua
	Vaisakiri, etc., re-carpeted	All clans
xxi.	Yam rites. Yam buried	Kafika
	1st night; premier temples re-carpeted	All clans
	Kafika thatch 'stolen'	Kafika
xxii.	Yam rites.	Kafika
	2nd night; Thatch of Kafika	Kafika
	Ara from Taumako	Taumako
xxiii.	Yam rites.	Kafika
	3rd night; Kafika re-carpeted	Kafika
xxiv.	Yam rites.	Kafika
	4th night; Noonday rites of Pa Rarovi	Kafika
xxv.	Yam rites.	Kafika
	5th night; Noonday rites of Taumako	Taumako
	Ara reciprocated	Kafika
xxvi.	Yam rites. Cultivation burned	Kafika
	Freeing the Land	All clans
	Temples re-carpeted in Tai	Taumako and Sao
xxvii.	Yam rites. *Fakaora* of yam	Kafika
	Temples re-carpeted in Tai	All clans
xxviii.	Yam rites. Yam planted	Kafika
xxix.	Yam rites. *Soani to*. Ariki Kafika visits Tai	Kafika
xxx.	Mapusanga re-carpeted. Messengers to chiefs	Kafika
xxxi.	Proclamation at Rarokoka. *Roi* made	All clans
xxxii.	Dance festival. *Taomatangi*; day sa Kafika	All clans
xxxiii.	Dance festival. *Taomatangi*; day sa Tafua	All clans
xxxiv.	Dance festival. *Taomatangi*; day sa Taumako	All clans
xxxv.	Dance festival. *Taomatangi*; day sa Fangarere	All clans
xxxvi.	Dance festival. *Uranga afi*; night sa Kafika	All clans
xxxvii.	Dance festival. *Uranga afi*; night sa Tafua	All clans
xxxviii.	Dance festival. *Uranga afi*; night sa Taumako	All clans

XXXIX. Dance festival. *Uranga afi*; night sa Fangarere	All clans
XL. *Popo i a vasia fare*	All clans
XLI. Takarito re-carpeted	Kafika

B. Work of the Trade-Wind

I. Throwing the Firestick	Kafika
(Interval of three days)	
II. Yam rites. Plucking *repa*	Kafika
III. Yam rites. First-fruits	Kafika
IV. Yam rites. Takerekere kava	Kafika
V. Yam rites. Seed tubers *utu*	Kafika
(Ariki Kafika stays in Uta)	
VI. Yam rites. Yam kava	Kafika
VII. Yam rites. Yam kava	Kafika
VIII. Yam rites. Yam kava	Kafika
IX. Yam rites. *Autaru*; tubers cut	Kafika
X. Yam rites. *Soani autaru*	Kafika
Mats of Vaisakiri and Sao plaited	Fangarere and Sao
XI. Yam rites. Yam kava	
Temples re-carpeted	All clans
XII. Yam rites. Yam buried	Kafika
1st night, Nukuora re-carpeted and lesser temples	Taumako, etc.
XIII. Yam rites	Kafika
2nd night; Mapusanga re-carpeted	Kafika
XIV. Yam rites	Kafika
3rd night; Mapusanga re-carpeted	Kafika
XV. Yam rites	Kafika
4th night; Mapusanga re-carpeted	Kafika
XVI. Yam rites. *Fakaora* of yam; cultivation burned	Kafika
XVII. Yam rites. Yam planted	Kafika
XVIII. Yam rites *Soani to*	Kafika
Tafua and Taumako re-carpeted	Tafua and Taumako
XIX. Fiora; thatch made	Tafua
XX. Fiora; day of mats	Tafua
XXI. Fiora; day of sa Tafua	Tafua
XXII. Fiora; day of sa Fusi	Tafua
XXIII. Fiora; day of sa Rarupe	Tafua
XXIV. Fiora; 'rubbish' cleared	Tafua
Resiake perfumes	Taumako
XXV. Kafika thatch 'stolen'	Kafika
Resiake re-carpeted	Taumako
XXVI. Kafika thatch	Kafika
Resiake noonday rite	Taumako
XXVII. Kafika re-carpeted	Kafika
Resiake oil	Taumako
XXVIII. Somosomo; day of mats. Marae cleared	Kafika

XXIX.	Somosomo; noonday rite Pa Rarovi	Kafika
XXX.	Somosomo; noonday rite Pa Kafika	Kafika
XXXI.	Somosomo; noonday rite Pa Tavi	Kafika
XXXII.	Turmeric rites. *Akoako* turned; aqueducts repaired	All clans
XXXIII.	Turmeric rites. *Akoako* dug	All clans
XXXIV.	Turmeric rites. Kafika turmeric begun	Kafika
XXXV.	Turmeric rites. Other chiefs' turmeric begun	Other clans
XXXVI.	Turmeric rites. Ariki Kafika daubs turmeric	Kafika
XXXVII.	Turmeric rites. Ariki Tafua daubs turmeric	Tafua
XXXVIII.	Turmeric rites. Ariki Taumako daubs turmeric	Taumako
XXXIX.	Turmeric rites. Ariki Fangarere in Nukuora	Fangarere
XL.	*Ururenga* of Marae. Kafika noonday rite	All clans
XLI.	*Ururenga* of Marae. Tafua and Taumako noonday rite	All clans
XLII.	Muafaitoka kava. *Popo i a vasia fare*	All clans
	Canoe rites. Vakamanongi rite	Fangarere
XLIII.	*Taumauri* rites	All clans
XLIV.	Takarito re-carpeted	Kafika
	Fainga vaka of sacred canoes	All clans

The programme as presented here represents the full cycle of rites in the traditional form, as they were carried out until about 1918,[1] that is about a decade before my arrival. At this time, however, the Ariki Tafua became a Christian and abandoned his participation in them. Moreover all the elders living in Faea followed his example. Thus in the ritual which I saw certain items were missing. These were principally the re-consecration of the canoes of Tafua and Marinoa, the re-carpeting of the temple of Tafua, the formal proclamation at Rarokoka, and the ritual of Fiora. All of these except the Rarokoka proclamation, however, had their analogies in the rites of the other chiefs and elders, so with the help of information from the Ariki Tafua and other people it was easy to see how the full cycle had operated. Moreover, the Ariki Tafua had not abandoned his manufacture of turmeric, and when I participated in it carried it through with the full set of rites in respect of his ancient gods, with the exception of the formal making of the kava. It will be noted that the other chiefs have made certain ingenious adjustments to meet this defection of Tafua, as at the dance festival.

The performance of the Work of the Gods is not purely an

[1] I gave this date originally from Tikopia accounts. From Melanesian Mission records, the date of the conversion of the Ariki Tafua was probably later, about 1923.

esoteric activity; it has a definitely exoteric side. The food provided for the ritual serves also the daily wants of the groups concerned, and its preparation is carried out as in ordinary domestic life. For conciseness I have omitted a great deal of this economic and domestic material from my account. Moreover during the ritual cycle family life and kinship relations go on much as usual. When the Ariki Kafika is living in Uta, kept there by his religious ties, his family accompany him. One difference is, however, that because of their comparative isolation these people are very eager for news. When I arrived in the morning I was usually asked at once 'Speech concerning Faea or not?' – meaning, was there any gossip abroad there? And people who came over to attend the rites were asked 'Did our village go out torchlight fishing? How many fish?' and so on.

The fact that the preparation of food is an important adjunct to most rites gives an interesting index for time correlation. As the fire in the oven house begins to burn a white column of smoke ascends from the roof peak and is seen by the people around the margin of the lake. They remark to one another 'The oven of the chief (or whoever it may be) has begun to smoke.' The houses themselves are hidden by the foliage but the Tikopia know well the location of each. When important rites are in progress a number of these smoke pillars are to be seen from afar and their sequence provides quite an efficient means of correlation when, as often happens, cooked food has to be assembled or exchanged by a number of different households. Other indices to the state of food preparation are the grating of coconut for puddings and the pounding of the pudding in a wooden bowl. Passers-by hear these sounds from a distance and so can advise other groups of comparative progress. Indices such as these obviate the need for any fine measurement of time during the day.

Most of the ritual practices in the Work of the Gods include a kava ceremony. A full analysis of this cannot be given here, but in its full form the kava rite consists of four elements:[1] the offering of bark-cloth to the deities and ancestors; the recital of a long formula to them individually with the stem of a kava plant as the medium; libations of cups of kava to them; and the throwing of offerings of food and betel materials to them. The performance of the kava has, however, many variants according to the ritual with

[1] Details will be given in my *Rank and Religion in Tikopia.*

which it is linked, and many of these variants are noted in the following chapters. In brief, they result from the fact that the rite is oriented to different gods and ancestors, or to the different functions which these fulfil in different places and on different occasions.

Certain theoretical problems are raised by the material of this book but their answer can be given here only in empirical terms. One such problem is the type of integration which exists in the relationship of the four clans and their component kinship groups. These clans are politically autonomous, each under its own chief, whose decisions are not governed by any higher authority. In the religious sphere they are ranged in an order of precedence as follows: Kafika, Tafua, Taumako, and Fangarere. But the Ariki Kafika is *primus inter pares* and not the sole controlling authority. The question is then how do the clans and the chiefs maintain effective co-operation when any one of them is theoretically free to break away from the system? The answer, it would seem, lies partly in the religious sanction which attaches to the performance of the Work of the Gods, backed up by the belief that the Atua i Kafika is supreme among the Tikopia deities. But this in itself is not enough. In a great measure integration is achieved by the concatenation of the daily events which, as it were, carry along with them the chief and people of each clan in the stream. To fail in co-operation at one point would have repercussions at many others, and it is clear that the Tikopia do look upon the Work of the Gods as a coherent system of activities. Moreover at specific points the chief of each clan and even the ritual elders of the most important component groups of each clan have specific privileges which for the time being elevate them to a position of pre-eminence and allow them opportunity for self-assertion and the expression of prestige. Apart from the Ariki Kafika the Ariki Tafua has his proclamation at Rarokoka and his utterance over the kava house in Marae. The Ariki Taumako has his Resiake rites which he dedicates to the Atua i Kafika, and his presentation of the large food basket of the *Ara o Pu* for which he receives compliments from Kafika. The Ariki Fangarere has his pride of place before the temple of Muafaitoka. And elders such as Pa Rarovi, Pa Marinoa, and Pa Tavi have each their specific 'days'. These special privileges are highly esteemed by the people of the group concerned.

In the traditional Tikopia system these forces were powerful enough to maintain co-operation. But nowadays it is true that the Ariki Tafua, under the influence of a powerful external thrust, has broken away from his fellow chiefs. But even in his case the factors mentioned still exert a pull. Though a Christian, he grew angry when told that only a few of the elders of the Ariki Kafika were in attendance on him in Uta; his sons told me with evident pride how their father used to recite the formula in Marae in tones that rang round the hills, and how even the Ariki Kafika had to bend his head in respect on that occasion. And at one point it became a serious question whether the old chief would not abandon his Christianity and go back to take up the rites which he had forsworn.

Another problem which emerges from the material is that of variation in Tikopia ritual. Broadly speaking one can distinguish four types of variation. Firstly there is that which is not culturally significant immediately, being a slight modification introduced by an individual performer, as in the amount of food accumulated or the time allowed to elapse between one performance and another. Secondly there is that which is culturally significant at once and is regarded as an error – as when the Ariki Kafika forgot to include the single 'stolen' thatch in the repairing of his temple or to plant the sacred yam tubers. The third type is a variation of cultural significance, but which is classed not as an error but as an improvement – as when the Ariki Tafua suggested the merging of two days of the canoe rites into one and this was agreed to by the other chiefs; or as when Pa Rarovi substituted certain phrases in his kava formula for others. A test here to the Tikopia is given by results. If the crops and the fishing are still successful and no illness or other disaster overtakes the land then the variant is a good one, presumably having received the approval of the gods. The fourth type of variant is that which has presumably occurred in the past and which is now culturally established – as when the house of Mapusanga tie leaves of cordyline on to their sacred canoe when it is being re-consecrated, or as when certain temples have particular sacred objects which must be washed or otherwise treated specially during their ritual. A function of this last type of variant is clearly in giving an individuality to that particular rite and an opportunity for differentiation and special prestige to the group responsible for it. The problem of what constitutes an error and what an accept-

able variant in ritual cannot be examined here. But it is plausible to infer that variations tend to be acceptable, first if they do not invalidate or threaten the whole ritual system of which they are a part; secondly if they do not involve a radical readjustment by other groups as well as that immediately concerned; and thirdly when they represent obvious economic and social advantages. There may be occasions on which variation is introduced on a large scale and cannot be effectively resisted, as in the defection of the Ariki Tafua. Here an attempt is made to meet it by adjustment which in itself involves a further variation. In the course of generations such variation may become part of the traditionally accepted practice. If, for instance, the heathen Tikopia can resist Christianity for another century then the anthropologist of A.D. 2028 may find that the simple assembly of the three chiefs at Rarokoka and the splitting of the clan Fangarere for reciprocal presentations at the dance festival may have come to be regarded as the 'original' forms of the ritual. It may be put forward as a proposition for the study of Polynesian cultures that these have been much more flexible in the past than has often been assumed, and that what we have to consider in any single island group is not merely a mixture or fusion of elements from other groups but a very high degree of local variation, arising in part from consciously motivated individual change, and in part from the establishment of errors and defections from traditional practice as recognized cultural forms. To put the point in another way, Polynesian cultures must be regarded not as static arrangements resting upon an original fusion of diverse elements, but as a dynamic arrangement with a tendency to variation perceptible in each generation, and with a selective process by which some at least of these variations are built into the cultural system.

Postscript

A comparative table of the programmes of 1928–9 and 1952 is given in RM, pp. 11–20.

According to Pa Motuata and Pa Panapa in 1952 the nights of the moon were reckoned as follows:

(*a*) 'The moon has disappeared' – about 4 nights when no moon visible; 'it has stood among the spirits'.