

Nuaulu religious practices

The frequency and reproduction of rituals in a Moluccan society

Roy Ellen



NUAULU RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

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VAN HET KONINKLIJK INSTITUUT
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ROY ELLEN

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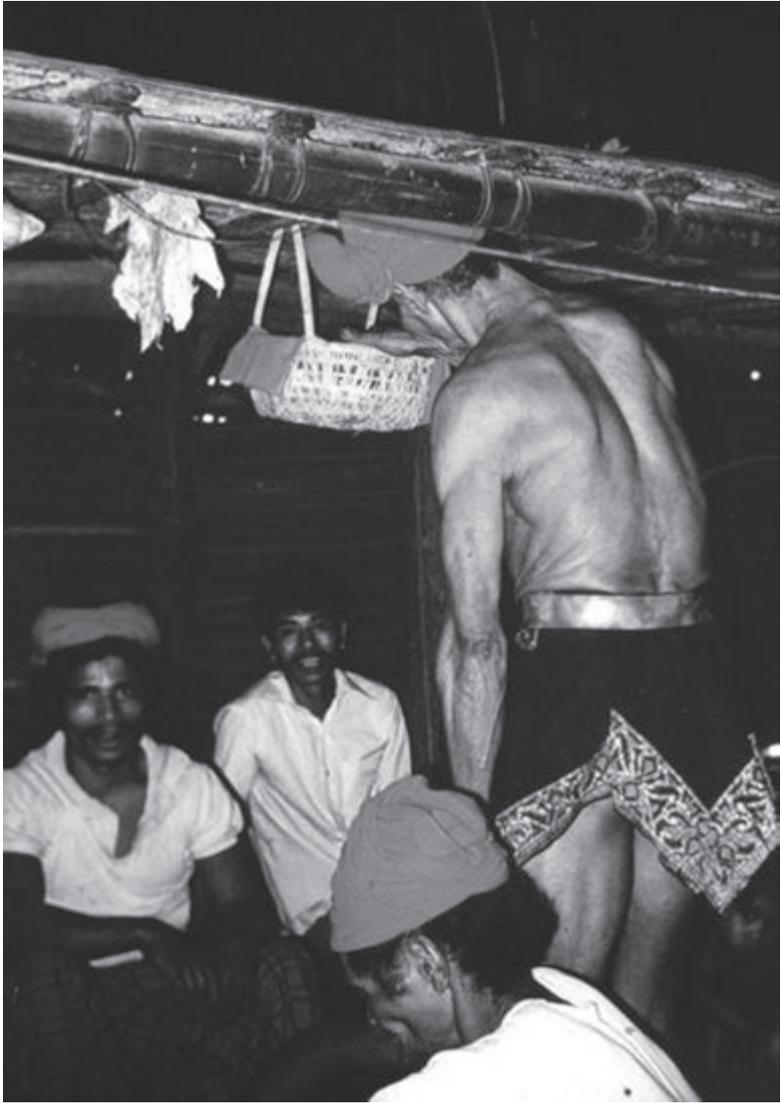
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Frontispiece. Hatarai making an invocation over the new *sokate* hanging beneath the *rine* shelf in Sounauc-ainakahata clan sacred house; Rouhua, August 1973.

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Preface

This monograph brings to completion a major and long-term study of the religious behaviour of the Nuaulu, a people numbering some 2,000 and living on the island of Seram in the eastern Indonesian province of Maluku (the Moluccas). Although there is much on the subject of Nuaulu traditional religion that is omitted here, I have aimed to provide a sufficiently extensive ethnographic account to illustrate the relationship between the frequency and periodicity of ritual performance, and the way in which these factors might influence the way systems of practices are reproduced. I explore themes, therefore, particularly with respect to ritual form and transmissive frequency, which have been independently developed by Whitehouse, McCauley and Lawson in a series of important and provocative recent works. Since the greater part of my research was conceived and executed in advance of their published work, and although there are convergences and divergences which merit some comment, I do not explicitly set out to test these theories, nor with hindsight could I properly do so. Neither do I think it appropriate to discuss the various criticisms these theorists have of each others' approaches, though my own data and analysis may allow others to draw inferences that have a bearing on this debate. I shall expand on these remarks in Chapter 1.

The main part of the project has involved the systematic organization and analysis of Nuaulu field data on different categories of ritual event collected mainly between 1970 and 1996. The frequency of these events in relation to the groups for which they were performed was computed on the basis of reports in my field diaries: recorded by date and ordered by month and year, with numbers of participants and the demographics of the groups for which they were held. The analysis of these data between 2002 and 2003 allowed the identification of patterns, trends and gaps in the data that were followed up during further fieldwork conducted in 2003, much delayed and shortened by political events. Beginning with the most frequently reported ritual events – birth

rituals – I reviewed all case material with a view to detecting patterns of repetition and variation in intervals.

Further ethnography was always envisaged as a secondary element of the work proposed, but I had not anticipated quite how difficult fieldwork at the beginning of the twenty-first century was to be. Indeed, at the time the most recent phase of the project was being prepared, the civil disturbances in the province of Maluku looked as though they would be coming to an end, and this was reflected in my optimistic plans. As it happened, the conflict persisted from 1999 to early 2003 and resulted in major population dislocation, infrastructure damage and many deaths throughout the Moluccan islands. As far as the Nuaulu themselves were concerned the consequences of all this were mercifully limited, affecting mainly Christian converts. I visited Indonesia in August 2001 in order to establish at first hand the situation in Maluku. Although I was unable to visit the province, I was able to talk to Moluccan refugees from Malang, Menado, Jakarta and Bandung, including members of staff from Pattimura University, Ambon. A second visit to Indonesia during August and September 2003 provided the main opportunity to re-establish my direct contact with the Nuaulu community. By early 2003 the disturbances were beginning to subside and, through the good offices of Bambang Wasito Adi, then of the Indonesian Embassy in London, the Rector of Pattimura University, then Mus Huliselan, and Vice Rector Dr. L. R. ('Robbie') Oszaer, I was able to acquire a special license to visit under provisions laid down by the Office of the Governor. In itself this was an achievement for an area until recently closed to academic and other foreign visitors following three years of communal conflict. I was the first UK researcher (and the second overseas researcher overall) to be readmitted to the province, in advance of UK diplomatic representatives.

The initial work in Canterbury involved setting up an effective field-note-retrieval system; the cataloguing, curation and proper storage of a photo collection of some 2,712 items; the copying and enhancement of audio data on 23 BASF reels of magnetic tape to 27 TDK MD Studio 74 mini-discs; the transcription of a paper-based field catalogue of audio records to an e-database; the creation of an annotated catalogue of video records of rituals for 1990, 1996 and 2003; the copying of all audio and video records to CD; sorting of photographic, audio and video data into analytic categories as required; and establishing a chronological record

of all ritual events recorded in my field notes between 1970 and 2003. On the basis of the analysis of these retrospective documents, and of new information collected in 2003, I have been able to produce a data set for rituals in selected categories actually observed and (from secondary reports and inferences based on informant judgements) of overall frequency.

The description provided above refers specifically to the circumstances surrounding my own research. When I first embarked on this programme of work as a doctoral student at the London School of Economics, the only other twentieth-century ethnographic works on the Nuauulu available to me were the limited and general reports of Edwin Stresemann (1923) and G. L. Tichelman (1931). The situation has altered dramatically since the 1980s. It is, therefore, worth saying a few words here about two other modern ethnographers of the Nuauulu, particularly because in this analysis I am trying to be as transparent as possible as to how time, place and approach in fieldwork has had a material effect on what was recorded, and because both offer interesting insights into Nuauulu religion that I have been unable to access independently, and upon which I have drawn. The first is Urbanus Tongli, who worked between 1988 and 1991, mainly among the resettled Nuauulu in the Ruatan transmigration zone, but specifically with clans who had claim to ritual precedence arising from the circumstances reflected in the use of the name Niane Monae, 'old village'. Tongli had a Nuauulu mother (Laurentina Pia), though his father was from Tana Toraja in Sulawesi. He studied in Yogyakarta, Mainz and Paris, where he worked with Daniel de Coppet and adopted a Dumontian perspective 'that assumed an encompassing whole consisting of hierarchical layers of ideas and values' (Sugishima 1999:10). In particular, Tongli's (1994) analysis is concerned with the metaphor of siblingship, both same sex and opposite sex, in the context of marriage – the crossing of sibling relations between clans, and how in ritual the same kinship categories establish the relationship between the living and the dead. Clans unified by descent, Tongli notes, make offerings to the dead while 'outsider' affines prepare ritual for the clan. Ritual in general, and marriage in particular, show that brothers and sisters are separated by marriage and unified by ritual. With its emphasis on a coherent and logical system, reading Tongli is rather like reading Marcel Griaule and Germaine Dieterlen on the Dogon. Carefully set out is an impressively homogeneous pattern of thought and

conduct, its totality interpreted through an omniscient speaker-hearer after the fashion of some eponymous Ogotomméli (Richards 1967; Griaule 1965; Griaule and Dieterlen 1954). Although this has provided me with an informed commentary to interpret my own data, we are rather handicapped by not knowing where the voices of the subjects so scrutinized end and that of the ethnographer begins. Tongli's is an abstract account, with a tendency to generalize. There are few descriptions of specific rituals he attended and it is not clear how the account might relate to the observation of particular events. Sometimes the Tongli version of ritual practice in general terms only maps on to my own data with difficulty. Of course, it is possible that in places his accounts represent genuine variation and different views of the same ritual, and where this is so I have said so. In this monograph I have tended to use Tongli as part of the interpretation, and only occasionally as a primary source for data unavailable elsewhere. Tongli died quite suddenly, and tragically young, in 1999, while a visiting professor at the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka.

The second ethnographer is Rosemary Bolton, who has worked mainly in the Nuaulu village of Rouhua between 1987 and 1999. Her fieldwork was interrupted by the political instability in Maluku from 1999 onwards, and she has subsequently worked in Rouhua Baru in the Wai Pia area north of Elpautih Bay. During this entire period Bolton was employed by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and in this capacity has been responsible for the first full analytic descriptions of Nuaulu language, for the creation of a working orthography, for the first dictionary (with Hunanatu Matoke 2005) and for the first publications in the language. Her PhD dissertation (Bolton 1999) is partly a reasoned analysis of the Nuaulu struggle for health and life as reflected in ritual practices, and partly applied missiology. In contrast to Tongli, her work is scrupulously empirical and inductive, making it a rich source to extend the ethnographic base for my own comparison of ritual events. I owe a particular personal debt to Rosemary Bolton, who has generously shared with me her own observations and permitted me to use unpublished materials. I try in the analysis that follows to acknowledge where data are specifically drawn from her unpublished work, but although we have barely overlapped in the field, we have over the period 1987-2003 observed many of the same categories of ritual and our data are largely mutually supportive and confirming. While our interpretations of

practices and events sometimes differ, we rarely disagree on descriptions, and where we do, this is in some part explained through variation in the practices themselves, the informants who we have relied upon and the gaps in our empirical data on events we have actually witnessed. There are also places where my own earlier data have been shown by Bolton's subsequent work to be mistaken.

Finally, I should say a word about data and consent. I have always been encouraged by Nuaulu to tell their story and to write their history. This I have tried to do accurately and responsibly, aware that there are differences between individuals and clans in the content of those stories – something that in itself is particularly germane to the subject of this book. Some data are especially sensitive. In some instances, Nuaulu have solved the problem by deciding that I should not be privy to certain matters. For example, most of the activities described here that relate to females may not be discussed or performed when men are present, as they involve female menstrual or parturient blood that Nuaulu view as polluting to males. Even mentioning them in the presence of males is forbidden and constitutes a serious embarrassment. Likewise, male ceremonies, in particular the *matahenne* puberty ceremonies, are supposed to be secret, not only for women, but also for un-inducted men, while the heat in female blood is said to detract from the effectiveness of the ritual. In these and other cases, I have had to be circumspect and exercise judicious editorial judgement. There are other occasions when Nuaulu withhold information on their ritual to several categories of outsider to avoid offending ancestors. Indeed, recent reports in the Indonesian media suggest a deliberate garbling of sacred knowledge on the part of Nuaulu interlocutors to protect themselves from the ancestral displeasure that is believed to follow unauthorized or inappropriate disclosure (Ellen 2002).

A note on spelling

Indonesian and Ambonese Malay words, unless they have a special meaning in the context of this study, are in plain text. Nuaulu words are italicized and use the orthographic conventions recommended in Bolton and Matoke's (2005) *Kamus Sou Naunue-Sou Manai, Bahasa Indonesia-Nuaulu*. In addition, the spelling of toponyms now follows the transcription adopted by Bolton. Thus, Ruhuwa or Rohoa becomes Rouhua, and so on. This is the case even where the transcription differs from that appearing in official Indonesian records.

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Chapter 1

Things, cycles and exchanges

Liturgical sequences differ not only in shape, length, mode of regulation and bases for the occurrence of the rituals composing them, but also in the frequency of the rituals composing them, in the regularity with which those rituals occur, and in the length of individual rituals. Little thought has been given by anthropologists to such differences, and I can do no more here than speculate upon some of their possible correlates and concomitants. (Rappaport 1999:196.)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Ritual episodes are self-evidently central to the acquisition and transmission of religious representations (Boyer 1994:186), and this monograph seeks to make an ethnographic contribution to the development of a general theory of the way in which rituals are reproduced. It will especially address issues of frequency and periodicity that I believe are important, but which are still much neglected in existing descriptions of ritual corpora. Frequency is a theme that has recently become central to certain cognitive theories of ritual transmission (for instance, Lawson and McCauley 1990; McCauley and Lawson 2002; Whitehouse 2000, 2004), but as yet there are few full-length ethnographic accounts that examine the relationship between events, memory and transmissive frequency in a single connected body of ritual. Like Lawson, McCauley and Whitehouse, I ascribe a causal role to ‘ritual form’ in driving ‘frequency’, but it is not clear to me that I am using either concepts of frequency or ritual form in a way that is entirely consistent with their theories, nor do I think it sensible to claim to have done so. Moreover, I am less concerned with cognition at the individual level than with the

connection between cognition and the emergent properties of a system of rituals in a particular place and population.

By frequency in this context is understood the total number of ritual events of a particular kind during a specified period; by periodicity, the time lapses between them. The work is based on the systematic analysis of data on ritual events collected between 1970 and 2003 (cumulatively, approximately 31 months of fieldwork) amongst an eastern Indonesian animist population.¹ It compares different categories of ritual event (comprising different ritual forms) in terms of how frequently they occur and the length of the interval that elapses between one event and the next. It tries to determine those factors influencing the temporal distribution of such events and the consequences of this distribution for the effective reproduction – through ritual – of traditional Nuauulu life. From this, I hope, emerges an analysis of ritual reproduction that properly integrates the themes of frequency and periodicity, and the way in which systems comprising religious ideas and practices persist, replicate and change over time.

The empirical focus of the study is the Nuauulu, a people of the island of Seram in the Indonesian province of Maluku (the Moluccas)

¹ It might be thought necessary to defend my apparent typological use of the term ‘animism’ given current debates. How we describe peoples who adhere to local sets of beliefs and practices that are not parts of institutionalised domains of social activity of the kind we describe as ‘religion’ remains problematic. Moreover, there is a particular issue when such people coexist with populations who have converted (sometimes several centuries previously) to institutionalized world religions. In the Dutch colonial literature (say, in lists of population figures) such populations are described as heathen (Heidenen), Alifuru (Alfoerische), or even Hindu (see for instance Tichelman 1925). In Indonesian government documents and dictionaries, the terms ‘animis’ and ‘animisma’ are also sometimes found. None of these terms are entirely appropriate, and some are positively misleading. They are discussed further in Chapter 9 in terms of their contemporary ramifications.

We may agree with Boyer (1994) that animism – the attribution of human characteristics to non-human objects and forces in the environment – is an intrinsic way in which the human mind uses social cognition to understand the natural world; or we may agree with Descola (1996:87-8) that it constitutes ‘a fundamental modality’ of human thought (an ontology, in other words) found almost everywhere. However, the balance – to use Descola’s categories – of ‘animistic’, ‘totemic’ and ‘naturalistic’ modalities varies. In the Nuauulu case all three are found in a distinctive combination, but because the main beliefs inherent and motivating Nuauulu rituals involve the recognition of spirits associated with non-human natural objects, and of the activity of spirits of dead humans, it is convenient to refer to the whole package, and to the people in whose way of life they are instantiated, as ‘animist’. This does not mean that Christian and Muslim peoples with whom Nuauulu interact do not also share, to a considerable extent, parts of that same ontology, nor should it imply any Tylorian evolutionist or, indeed, ethnocentric assumptions (Viveiros de Castro 1998). Moreover, to use the term ‘animist’ in this sense is at the same time to admit that, comparatively, those populations we so describe may exhibit extraordinary diversity in the social presentation of those beliefs; as much, if not more so, than the more institutionally constrained and centralized ‘world religions’.

(figures 1.1 and 1.2). From a regional and ethnographic viewpoint, the data presented here are important for three reasons: because the Nuaulu are virtually the only viable animist society on the island of Seram; because Nuaulu data permit a historically unfashionable focus on practice and performance in a part of Indonesia where previous studies have emphasized metaphoricity, symbolism and social structure; and because Nuaulu live in an area where the dominant political tension is between two non-animist confessional groups: Christians and Muslims. Let me expand on each of these a bit more.

Firstly, the Nuaulu are the only animist group in Maluku where a general account of the kind described could still be credibly undertaken. Elsewhere, where animist groups still exist, demographic decline has led to the severe erosion and disarticulation of ritual cycles (for instance, Huaulu; see Valeri 2000). In the Nuaulu case, although there has been a steady rate of conversion to both Christianity and Islam since 1970, the number of practising animists – at the beginning of the twenty-first century – has actually increased. This makes the Nuaulu probably the largest single group of this kind in Maluku.

Secondly, the principal focus amongst those working on traditional religion in eastern Indonesia has historically tended to be the association between symbolism and social structure, following the influential work of the Leiden school of structuralism (see for example De Josselin de Jong 1977), and that of Rodney Needham at Oxford and several decades of his research students (for instance, Barnes 1974). Such work has tended to emphasize an ‘all-embracing classification’, ‘an essential interconnection’, a ‘discussion of categories and relations’ (Barnes 1974:245), an ‘order of a “total” kind’ (Van Wouden 1968:2; Needham in Barnes 1974:vii), or what Lévi-Strauss has called an ‘*ordre des ordres*’. Although the Leiden and Oxford variants of this structuralism were always more empirically grounded, this approach was absolutely consistent with the French philosophical approach identified by Audrey Richards (1967), speaking of the francophone anthropology of West Africa. It was through this type of anthropology that Lévi-Strauss – its most distinguished exponent – had somehow inverted the Durkheimian sociology of religion (see for instance Leach 1965). By contrast, I wish to do the opposite: to emphasize ritual practice and performance (Tambiah 1979) and, to some extent, exemplify the stereotypical British approach identified by Richards. She was sceptical of convenient homogeneities

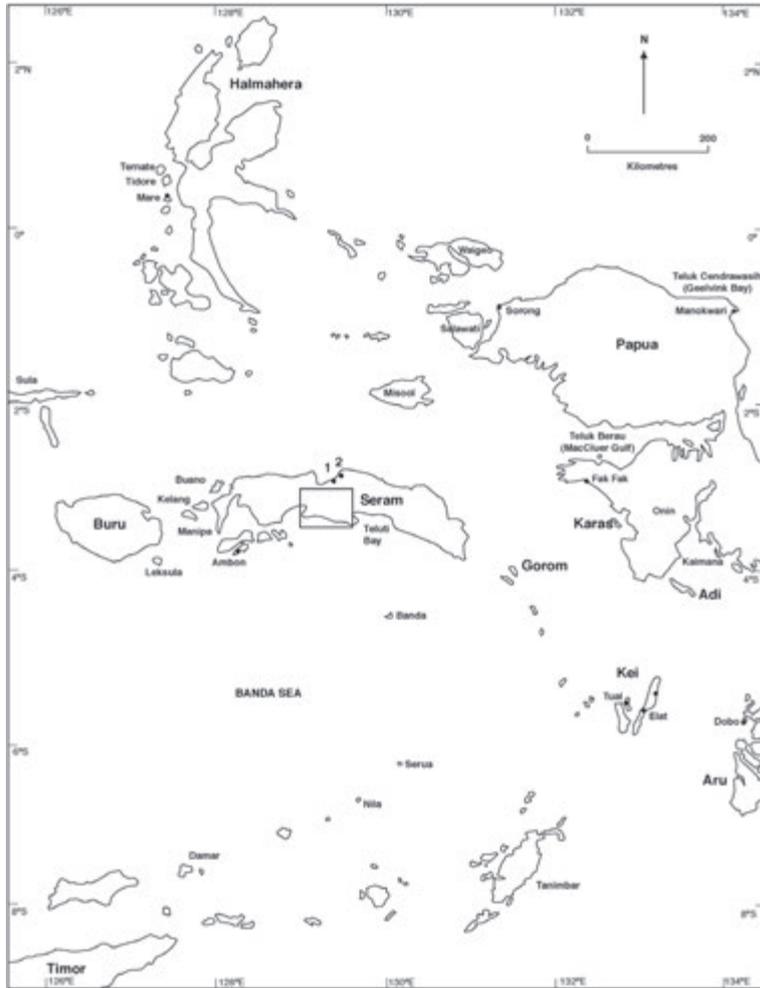


Figure 1.1. The geographic location of the Nuauulu area in relation to Maluku as a whole and Seram in particular.

Key: The boxed area is reproduced in more detail as Figure 1.2. Key: 1. Sawai; 2. Rumah Olat.

and consistencies in patterns of belief, and of overly elegant systems of ideas. There are still few studies for Maluku which conform to this approach, though there are a growing number for eastern Indonesia more generally which display particular features of the approach advocated here (for instance, Atkinson 1989; Kuipers 1990; E. Lewis 1988; Traube 1986). I follow Barth (1987:84) in his advocacy of studying a living tradition of ritual knowledge rather than the abstract ideas held in ‘collective representations’ – an emphasis not on ‘mentation’, but rather on what people do.

Thirdly, the research reported here is of additional pertinence given the civil unrest in Maluku between early 1998 and 2003, unrest largely expressed in confessional terms. As events unfolded from 1999 onwards, local populations that had previously been religiously mixed began to fragment. That they had mostly lived in peaceful coexistence was in part accounted for by the fact that they shared a common syncretist worldview: ‘agama Nunusaku’ (the religion of Nunusaku) (Bartels 2000). Christian minorities fled to areas where Christians were in the majority, and Muslim minorities fled to the safety of areas with a Muslim majority. Nuaulu Christians fled from the Muslim domain of Sepa, though the animist majority remained, partly out of a traditional loyalty to the raja of Sepa, but most importantly because no pressure was put upon them to flee. Caught in the middle, they were able to continue their rituals relatively free of disturbance. I shall have more to say about the consequences for ritual performance and religious continuity of these disturbances in Chapter 9. Although they mainly involved conflict between Muslims and Christians in the provincial capital of Ambon, in North Maluku and in Banda, there were also disturbances on Seram, accompanied by much population displacement. The destruction of effective infrastructure at the political and economic centre of the province led to increased administrative and economic independence on the periphery, reinforcing traditional Nuaulu practices and the security people find in them. As Nuaulu animists do not belong to either of the two main confessional groups involved in the conflict, it is an open question as to how they perceive it and the extent to which they are caught up in it. Historically, Nuaulu have maintained equally strong allegiances with the Muslim settlement of Sepa, the domain of which they are formally a constituent part, and with Christian villages such as Nuelitetu, Hatuheno and Rouhua-Kristen, with which there has been most intermarriage and conversion.

1.2 IN RELATION TO THEORIES OF RITUAL

I have never been amongst those who subscribe to the view that theories of ritual are, or should be, mutually exclusive. Ritual behaviour is complex and varied enough to admit many explanations, on different occasions and in different contexts, and, indeed, simultaneously at different levels, without any one being fatally falsified through mutual exclusion. So, if I have little to say here about existing general theories, it is not that I reject them or fail to see their relevance to the Nuaulu case, but rather because I see it as my task to concentrate on previously lightly considered aspects: on ritual as process, on the connection between ritual and demography, on the interlocking and interpenetration of ritual cycles, on the importance of ‘ritual form’ at the expense of ritual content and on the notion that people work with ritual models (kinds of cultural schema) based on some familiarity with the general structure of all ritual. The increasing tendency in ethnography to describe and examine in minute detail the dynamics of a particular ritual, while important in its own right, does tend to detract from an overview of the relationship between the totality of rituals and their systemic properties. It is upon this that I seek to focus.

Precise definitions of ritual have proved elusive, though anthropologists generally agree that whatever else they may be, they are minimally stereotypic and scripted forms of collective action recognizable through combinations of acts, gestures and utterances (Gluckman 1975; see also Goody 1977a; Rappaport 1999:24-68; Lawson and McCauley 1990; McCauley and Lawson 2002). But although the boundaries of ritual as a category of social or cultural practice may evade us, the psychological salience of ‘ritualized behaviour’ is somewhat easier to understand. Many definitions of ritual are unsatisfactory because they anticipate content and function (Tambiah 1979:119) or ‘aspects of the representations attached to rituals’ (Boyer 1994:189). I follow Boyer and Lienard (2006:2-3) in accepting that rituals in this sense are a ‘behavioural modality’ intuitively recognized by their compulsion, stereotypy, rigidity, internal repetition and redundancy, and by a restricted range of themes and an apparent lack of rational motivation. This definition in turn follows Rappaport (1979) in permitting us to accept as ritual: (a) actions divorced from their usual goals, or for which there is no clear empirical goal (as in washing or wiping things that are evidently already clean, as

occurs in many Nuauulu ceremonies); (b) compulsory and rigidly scripted actions in which deviations are seen as life-threatening (most major Nuauulu rituals described in this book); and (c) actions that create an orderly environment quite different from that of everyday interaction (for example, constructing the platform used in Nuauulu male puberty ceremonies), but nevertheless generally involve a modification of everyday practice through formalization. This is evident in the Nuauulu case, for example, in the use of the betel quid, where normal rituals of politeness, deference and exchange are accentuated (Feuchtwang 2007). Ritual is not simply the translation of a world of meaning into practical action (Turner 1967:50), nor simply the making explicit of social structure (Leach 1964:15). I agree with Whitehouse (2004:3-4) that rituals do not have intrinsic meanings and with Sperber (1975) that most rituals do not need to convey coded meanings except in the vaguest sense, and that it is probably a mistake to try and find meaning in sacred propositions. For Paul (2002:525), this latter is because ‘it is essential to their success as ultimate propositions that [rituals] are without discursive meaning, so that (a) no one actually understands them and (b) they are not refutable’ (cf. also Bloch 1974; G. Lewis 1980; Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994). Thus, paradoxically, ‘the meaning of ritual’s informationlessness is certainty’ (Rappaport 1999:285). Indeed, ritual actions often seem to reduce the likelihood of providing crucial information, acting like some kind of ‘tunnel’ in which each action only points to the next in a prescribed sequence (Bloch 1974; Staal 1990). However, as I argue later, rituals can instantiate almost any number of meanings, but must at least encode meaning sufficiently to replicate an action on a subsequent occasion, or to ensure successful transmission. In making these claims I depart from the orthodox approach adopted by many students of eastern Indonesian religion, in which ‘coherent’ and internally consistent shared codes are everything, whether established through semantic inter-reference (e.g. Geertz), as evinced through structuralist analysis (e.g. Needham) or through Dumontian ‘ideology’ (Bowen 1995:1049).

But although we might understand ritualization as some kind of evolved precaution system, ceremonial rituals are not simply the elaboration of ‘ritualization’. Thus, I am here not concerned with any disembodied underlying function of ritualized behaviour to which all rituals must conform; rather, I take this for granted. I am much more interested in observing that the consequences of ritualization are culturally

transmitted collections of interconnected actions and events that obtain a certain integration over time through the dynamic properties of the systems of which they are part, and by virtue of which they themselves display certain emergent epigenetic characteristics. Over time this process may be understood and represented by actors as a stable system, an equilibrium. It is of course a ‘false equilibrium’ in the sense that it is only assumed to exist in order to make sense of the world and to make planning easier. Assumptions about the equilibrium status of cultural practices may, therefore, themselves impact on the character of ritualized behaviours.

People performing and consuming the ceremonies and ritual actions described in this monograph have, like all humans, mental systems designed to respond to stimuli that are characteristic of ritualized behaviour. But people, on the whole, do not hold a ‘theory’ of their own rituals, and it is precisely this that makes ethnography both indispensable and difficult (Boyer and Lienard 2006:34). Neither do people participate on the basis of mere imitation; rather, they respond in a psychologically evolved way to some of its features, activating a ‘hazard-precaution system’ resulting in cognitive capture of ritualized behaviours that are important in other contexts. In other words, the disposition to participate in coordinated action may be maturationally natural, encouraged by the cognitive evolution of ritualization proclivities, and appearing according to a relatively fixed developmental schedule.

1.3 THE CONCEPT OF RITUAL REPRODUCTION

I wish to emphasize here dimensions of Nuauulu ceremonial ritual that other theories have less to say about, organized around the vital statistics of frequency and periodicity. For example, birth rites of passage are those rituals which occur most frequently and for which I have the most complete data. Female puberty rituals generally only occur at an individual level, and therefore more frequently than collective male puberty rituals. By comparison, male puberty ceremonies are collective ‘mega-rituals’ (cf. Bemba *chisungu*; see Richards 1956), with a salience that makes them historical reference points, not only for dividing time into socially meaningful stretches, but also as symbolically charged moments through which to articulate the synchronic relations of Nuauulu society. Most death rituals,

being of un-inducted minors, are perfunctory; and those of inducted old people are not on the whole socially visible beyond the circle of close kin. As frequent as birth rituals are those rites concerned with the construction of particular parts of houses (Ellen 1986) and their contents, such as sacred shields (Ellen 1988a, 1990), though the most infrequent of all rituals are those in the cycle reproducing the *suane* (a sacred house shared by several clans constituting a ritual community), where the intervals may be 30 years or more. I am concerned, therefore, to compare rituals in terms of their frequency and periodicity and to examine the consequences of any emerging patterns of difference. I want to explore how periodicity and frequency serve to connect rituals into a series of interlocking cycles, and to determine channels of information flow. I also want to explore the tension between the extent to which frequent rituals provide a performative and interpretative guide to more infrequent rituals, and the extent to which (increasingly) infrequently performed but culturally more important rituals provide a ‘virtual’ organizational grid of which more frequent rituals are simplified exemplars. To what extent can these salient rituals provide a framework for understanding key beliefs and practices more generally? We can see that here we have an idea that resembles McCauley and Lawson’s (2002:6) ‘ritual form hypothesis’, in which they propose that ‘aspects of the representation of ritual form explain and predict levels of sensory pageantry’, and which determines frequency of performance.

Using the approach outlined in the previous paragraph, I shall examine a series of themes: (1) variation in practice and interpretation; (2) order and disorder in ritual practice, especially ‘disorder’ deriving from opportunities, or absence of opportunities, for performance; (3) how rituals change through frequency and periodicity of performance, and through the dependency on material and social conditions, such as the availability of people to participate in rituals and the scarcity of sacred valuables. I shall also examine: (4) the temporal connections between rituals of different kinds and their dependency on each other, the way they interlock and work as cycles and how such cycles might or might not interconnect in an overall ritual process. Finally (5), I shall consider the coherence of rituals, particularly that coherence arising from frequency of performance, the notion that people work with a ‘model ritual’ as a default script for other rituals, and the extent to which such models are based on the temporal distribution of experience as opposed to the

salience attached to one kind of ritual over another in local or expert exegesis. What all these themes share – and none are, really, mutually exclusive – is a concern for form at the expense of content, and an emphasis on the materiality, physical constraints on and embodiment of ritual practice (but see McCauley and Lawson 2002:10; Whitehouse 2004:7).

The first of these issues, variation, has been addressed before, most conspicuously perhaps by Firth (1970:233-60), who characteristically offers meticulous illustrations of different kinds of variation in Tikopia ritual practice, distinguishing ‘circumstantial’, ‘systemic’ (or ‘structural’), and ‘personal’ variation, noting the absence of fixed formulas in ritual phraseology and showing how a rite as basic as the *kava* is subject to change between individual performances. Also, there is a long-standing Indonesianist interest in the subject of ritual variation, found for example in Geertz’s critique (for example, Geertz 1961) of the Leiden School, and in scepticism displayed towards the idea of ‘total structural analyses’ (Ellen 1980, 1986). The second issue, disorder, which in a sense is the moral and practical consequence of variation, revisits debates in the Melanesianist literature of the 1980s (Barth 1975, 1987; G. Lewis 1980; Juillerat, Brunton and Gell 1980; but see also Whitehouse 2000:81-98). I examine what need Nuaulu have for coherence in their ritual practices and to what degree they can tolerate ambiguity, contradiction and uncertainty as constant features of their belief systems. I shall argue that practical, consistent frameworks for reproducing ritual practices are important, but that Nuaulu can tolerate ambiguity and contradiction in the content. The third issue, change, addresses the way in which ritual performances are constrained materially and ecologically (Whitehouse 2004:7); it also examines the question of the resilience of religious systems to innovation and the depletion of their parts, and, ultimately, the conditions for their collapse.

Two material conditions that influence the ability to perform rituals, and which I will analyse in detail, are the availability of concrete valuables upon which ritual depends and the demography of participating groups. For Nuaulu, objects are regularly the currency, and sometimes the explicit focus, of rituals: Chinese porcelain and European plates are offered to ancestors in certain rituals, and circulate between clans as bridewealth and other payments. Imported Asian textiles are important for the effective accomplishment of female puberty ceremonies. If these items cannot be obtained, or are in short supply, problems emerge and

the ritual may not take place. Thus, Nuaulu have been under pressure to sell porcelain over the years to itinerant traders. Most of the plates in non-animist villages have already been sold, mostly disappearing into the international antique market. The traditional source of plates has long dried up. Nuaulu have until recently resisted such pressures, but there is a loss through breakage. The replacement of such items represents a real problem. Some plates are available for sale in the provincial capital of Ambon – the very ones acquired from people like the Nuaulu – but, because of national and international market pressure, these are now at prices that the Nuaulu cannot afford. Timorese textiles, also in demand, are obtainable with difficulty, but the much-coveted ‘patola’ cloths of Indian origin are not available at all. Where objects are locally produced, delays arise mainly through lack of time to engage in ritual production; where objects are imported, even where resources are available to acquire them, their availability is ultimately not under local control. The problems posed by the unavailability of textiles for exchange rituals in the Bird’s Head of New Guinea is well documented by Elmsberg (1968) and Miedema (1984). Such concerns emphasize the primacy of things in ritual (Ellen 1988a, 1990; cf. Appadurai 1986).

In the same way that the availability of material things influences the distribution of ritual and its relative density through time, so, too, does the availability of people to participate in, or contribute to, them. If the sex ratio is such that a clan produces few female offspring, it may be many years between first-menstruation rituals; if there are insufficient young men of an age to warrant performance of a *matahenne* male puberty ritual, it will not happen. In other words, the demography of individual and exchanging clans will have an impact on the frequency and periodicity of rituals. This can lead to various paradoxes, such as a clan – let us say, Matoke – being on the verge of demographic collapse, but rich in terms of valuables. If there are lots of females they will bring in material things, but in a patrilineal society it is males that are needed to effectively reproduce the house and clan. I shall consider sex ratios for each clan and the implications in each case. Tensions arise because rituals cannot happen unless certain material conditions are satisfied, and yet if they do not happen, there is a risk that non-performance will incur ancestral wrath and increase the likelihood of misfortune. In other words, there is a necessary trade-off between one kind of risk and another (Howe 2000).

The fourth theme, that of temporal connections between rituals of different kinds, explores the sequencing of ritual events, and the assertion that few are really free-standing. There cannot, for example, be a death ritual without there first having been a birth ritual. Many major rituals depend on the prior accomplishment of other rituals that enable them to take place, such as rituals connected with the preparation of barkcloth in male puberty ceremonies. The analogous case is also true for those non-human things that are the focus of ritual, such as houses or sacred objects, and most ritual is based on the model of the human developmental cycle. I shall examine how the availability of people and objects affects the problems of coordination between celebrating groups, and the differences between rituals that must be performed immediately and those that can be delayed. Thus, while the performance of some rituals is forced by natural events – birth, death and first menstruation – others can be delayed for inordinate amounts of time. Thus, as many have argued before, rituals provide a framework for the cultural construction of notions of time, its division and direction, and these may in turn entail different and contradictory experiences of duration related to periodicity.

Finally, in identifying model rituals, I hypothesize that these will derive from what people experience first as they mature and emerge into adult persons, reinforced by what they experience most frequently thereafter. It is these rituals that we might suppose to be the most stable and to have the greatest influence in instantiating people's performative knowledge, and which they most readily recollect and retain (McCauley and Lawson 2002:48-50). The Nuaulu data suggest that both semantic and episodic features of ritual memory may compensate for simple repetition in making them memorable. I shall draw on the schema and cultural models literature to suggest that models of ritual performance are generated by the mind from the accumulated experiences of those participating in ritual, both passively and actively. I suggest that cognitive patterns emerge which specify the relationship between elements of a ritual not so much in terms of symbolic meanings, as in terms of related actions and practices. These models are unconsciously constructed out of repeated experience, in a language-like way, and only to a lesser extent learned through direct verbal instruction. In this respect, I concur with Whitehouse (2000:10) when he observes that 'scholars since Durkheim have often projected mnemonic properties of doctrinal religion on to

the sorts of imagistic practices with which Durkheim was concerned'. Indeed, ritual is intrinsically a form of knowledge that is difficult to express explicitly and verbally. Schemas themselves are not rigid but flexible constructs, such that wherever there is doubt about an appropriate procedure, a default mode will normally be brought into play (Bloch 1998; Shore 1996).

As individuals grow older, they learn more about the ritual system, attach new meanings to practices, rearrange elements and shift emphasis. But however young the participants, however much changes, the ritual world will always appear as 'sufficiently' coherent. Thus, from the point of view of experience, socialization is a constant restructuring, a reassembling of the ritual world, with coherence arising in part from frequency and the regularity of occurrence. Looked at this way, the most frequent rituals, such as those accompanying birth or house-building, act as templates for less frequent rituals. Set against this is the widespread view that the plethora of lesser rituals is somehow evident in the depleted and partial variants of some less frequently occurring but culturally salient and complex mega-rituals. In the Nuauulu case, the most obvious candidate for this is the male puberty ceremony, and I will examine this case in order to gauge the extent to which such an interpretation is plausible.

Underlying these various themes is an enquiry into the primacy of practice – the observation that rituals are events with both social causes and effects – and a predisposition to privilege action and material experience over inner meanings, words and semantic webs. Ritual is performance and bodily action (G. Lewis 1980), something that has to be done because the consequences of not doing it are potentially life-threatening. In this respect, I rely on the work of a number of recent ethnographers and theorists, though I mention here only those from which I have drawn most inspiration. Thus, for Gibson (1986:63) 'rituals are stable forms of collective action to which ever changing meanings and uses are attached over the course of history [...] what is interesting about them is how they constrain individual action rather than what they mean'. For James Fox (1979:147), the Savu ceremonial system is about ostensive acts rather than oratorical acts. Similarly, Rappaport (1979, 1999) has observed that the eagerness of anthropologists to explore the symbolic depths of ritual often leads them to overlook its 'obvious' surface forms. Symbols, for Rappaport, are the problem to which ritual is the solution, not the other way around. The problem with symbols and signs is that their very

arbitrariness, which gives them such great adaptive value and power, also makes them untrustworthy as a means of organizing collective action. Ritual can much better establish ‘collective acceptance of fundamental postulates so that orderly social life can proceed as if there were in fact ultimate and absolute truths’ (Paul 2002:525). What I am proposing might, in some ways, be described as a neo-Durkheimian theory, and indeed this is what in some important respects Rappaport offers us, though perhaps without the underlying notion that religion is the subliminal worship of society. For both Durkheim and Rappaport (1999:31), ritual is ‘the social act basic to humanity’, and it is ‘through ritual that society is able to perpetuate itself and ward off the chaotic tendency to entropy that is intrinsic to life by overcoming the threats to order implicit in the human capacity for language’ (Paul 2002:525).

1.4 A POINT OF METHODOLOGY

I depart from classic ethnographies of ritual also by focussing on the activities of ordinary participants and their knowledge, as much as on ritual experts. In this sense I seldom achieve a comprehensive account that would satisfy a local expert, or provide an account that plausibly reflects the authority of some omniscient speaker-hearer. My descriptions more closely reflect the outline knowledge of an ‘average’ participant, that is, a sufficiency of experience and understanding for them to play the roles demanded of them. It is a common occurrence for ethnographers to encounter participants in ritual who claim not to know much, and who refer the persistent enquirer to an elder or some main player in the ritual who, by virtue of their structural position, commands greater authority. But Nuaulu ritual performance is predicated on a perpetual and general anxiety about not knowing the correct script. Even the ritual experts may feel inadequate. I shall return to this theme in the final chapter, when I discuss the management of ritual activity.

There is, of course, no such thing as an ‘average’ participant in a ritual. This project, and the analysis that follows here, holds it as axiomatic that no two persons have exactly the same view of the ritual world that they inhabit, especially in the absence of generalizing written accounts. What we have instead is a complex set of interlinking and overlapping cycles, which individuals enter from different points depending on the

circumstances of their birth. When they are born will determine the order in which they experience certain rituals and the moment when they acquire certain knowledge. Their parentage will determine whether they participate in particular rituals and absorb particular bodies of knowledge. This is partly because there is variation between clans. This means that, in one sense, all individuals are unique in their experience, since they are born into the system at moments when the cycles are differently articulated. As an individual grows up, their model of the ritual world develops and changes because of their experience of new rituals and their acquisition of new knowledge; however, no one individual ever becomes as privileged as the anthropologists, who, though they may know less overall and be unable to appreciate many linguistic and cultural nuances, are relatively unconstrained by rules and opportunities for participation. Thus, I have undoubtedly participated in far more (collective) rituals of certain kinds for the periods I have spent in the field than many of my informants, or individuals in the settlements I was studying during the same periods. Whilst this can be the basis for interesting insights, it may also distort analysis in failing to grasp the multiplicity of restricted local experiences and understandings. This kind of misleading anthropological assumption, based on the privileged position of the ethnographer or analyst, is no better exemplified than in the problematic distillation of meanings into tables of symbolic contrasts critiqued by Goody (1977b).

In adopting the approach proposed above, and in exploring the particular issues specified, I am reacting not only to a widespread tendency in early anthropological fieldwork accounts to over-essentialize (and, in more recent studies, to privilege meaning over practice), but also to the tendency to generalize on the basis of partial evidence and from the vantage point of the ‘omniscient-speaker-hearer’. As Valeri (1994b:209) puts it, speaking of his own fieldwork on Seram, ‘anthropologists tend to generalize from a limited experience in a limited time and reify it by de-temporalizing and more generally decontextualizing it’. No one person has exactly the same view of the ritual world that they inhabit, especially in the absence of texts and records. Instead, experience is structured according to gender, locality, group affiliation and individual life-history. The oldest have acquired a structure to their ritual experience based on the largest number of events witnessed, and therefore the greatest redundancy. In this sense it is the most ‘complete’, although memory is always

fallible. By comparison, young adults may never have witnessed many rituals. But no one experience is any less real or valid in informing an account of ritual than any other. The elder's view is not necessarily the folk model from which all else is derived, or the least corrupt and more authentic of all possible versions.

I have spent 30 months conducting fieldwork amongst the Nuauulu over 34 years. One of the objectives of the project on which this book is based has been to investigate the effect of fieldwork phasing on the analysis of ritual events that, by their intrinsic character, do not always correspond to the opportunities available to observe them. My own periods in the field have been as follows: 1970-71, 15 months; 1973, three months; 1975, three months; 1981, one month; 1986, one month; 1990, two months; 1996, four months; and 2003, one month. This is low by the standards of other ethnographers at my career stage, but is probably more than most people who write on ritual (Foster 1979; Brown 1984).

The main part of the work involved in producing the book, which began with receipt of an ESRC grant in 2001, involved the systematic organization and analysis of Nuauulu field data on different categories of ritual event collected between 1970 and 1996. The frequency of these events in relation to the groups for which they were performed was computed, as reported in my field diaries: recorded by date and ordered by month and year, with numbers of participants and the demographics of the groups for which they were held. These data constitute the empirical starting point of the research, and have provided the framework for subsequent further analysis. They are the kind of data all anthropologists must acquire during the course of extended fieldwork, but which are seldom published (though see Conklin 1980:12).

Beginning with the most frequently reported ritual events – birth rituals – I will review all case material in order to detect patterns of variation in particular categories of ritual, and how we might account for the variation. I shall pay particular attention to the planning phase and to people's negotiation of problems that they encounter; for example, acquisition of materials required for ritual, problems of the absence of key specialists, or inauspicious impediments. I will dwell on why rituals were not held in particular instances, and on the discussion between key participants on the detailed conduct of rituals.

As with any other participant, how an anthropologist interprets a ritual and a ritual system depends on the point at which he or she enters

it. A second or a third event will be described in a different way from the first, and if a funeral has been described before a birth, or a birth before a funeral, this, too, may influence our interpretation, as will the preponderance of different kinds of rituals we have witnessed. If the events are generically the same, it will influence the analysis if we have described a Soumori event rather than a Matoke event, since there are differences between these clans. Moreover, individual rituals of any kind have particular historical valencies by virtue of the time of their occurrence. In other words, no two rituals are ever equal and interchangeable in the way in which statistical comparison might suggest. How we enter the field, the order in which we witness events, our growing familiarity with their generic features: all of this will influence our analysis. For example, there is a tendency to become lax when rituals become common. After my first few birth rituals, I often felt that I knew what was going on and could focus on other things. This downplays variation and privileges earlier events in analyses. Ideally, we need to describe as many events as possible in a particular category of rituals until we have exhausted all likely variation; only when we find ourselves repeating what we have earlier reported is it time to stop. Obviously, the longer you spend in field, the more likely you are to witness all types of ritual.

1.5 CLANS, HOUSES AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

In 2003 animist Nuauulu comprised in excess of 2000 individuals distributed between six settlements in the subdistrict of Amahai (Figure 1.2). In addition, Christian Nuauulu lived in the settlements of Waraka and Hatuheno in Wai Pia, following the communal conflict of 1999-2002. Two villages in the north-coast subdistrict of Wahai (Figure 1.1) also consist of Nuauulu speakers (though of a different dialect): Sawai and Rumah Olat. Although there has been a steady rate of conversion to both Christianity and Islam since 1970, the number of practising animists has actually increased along with the overall population, making the Nuauulu the largest single group of this kind on Seram, and perhaps in the province of Maluku as a whole. Quite apart from the implications of this demography for the political profile of the Nuauulu and their role as representatives of animism in the province, the upward growth in Nuauulu numbers has interesting implications for understanding the



Figure 1.2. The eastern part of Amahai subdistrict, Seram.

The map shows historical, recent and present Nuaulu settlements and other places mentioned in the text. Traditional clan areas are marked, for example, as *PELNISA* and other Nuaulu toponyms, for example, as *HATUHAHU*. The numbered locations are as follows (Nuaulu settlements in *italics*): 1. *Simalouw* (Kilo 9); 2. *Tahena Ukuna* (Kilo 12); 3. Hatuheno; 4. Nuelitetu; 5. *Bunara*; 6. *Watane*; 7. *Ahisuru*; 8. *Hahualan*; 9. *Rouhua*.

historical dynamics of their ritual cycles. I shall return to this issue in Chapter 9.

In order to understand anything connected with ritual it is important to recognize the autonomy of the Nuaulu patrilineal clan and variations between clans in terms of demography, history and cultural practice. Indeed, in many ways, Nuaulu identity as a whole might most accurately be expressed as ‘a consensual federation of originally separate and autonomous groups’ (Valeri 2001 [1990a]:293). Throughout the period of my fieldwork there have been 12 Nuaulu clans (*ipane* or *ipan*; ‘soa’ in Ambonese Malay), all resident in the South Seram area. At the time of my fieldwork in 1970-71, these were distributed between five main physical settlements (Table 1.1): Watane, Aihisuru, Bunara, Hahualan and Rouhua. By 2003 Aihisuru had been abandoned and there were new settlements at Kilo Sembilan (Simalouw) and Kilo Duabelas (Tahena Ukuna) in the Ruatan transmigration zone.

As can be seen from Table 1.1, there is considerable variation in clan size, and over time, where they have grown and their members moved, clans have segmented – though segmentation is not simply a mechanical function of demographic growth. Evidence of segmentation is found in the construction of clan (or subclan) names. For example, Matoke-hanaie and Matoke-pina, Sounaue-aipura and Sounaue-ainakahata, and Neipane-tomoién, Neipane-nesinopu and Neipane-nahatue all derive from Matoke, Sounaue and Neipane, respectively. We can assume that these clans date from a period before 1882² as the suffixes (except in the case of Matoke) indicate the names of long-abandoned settlement sites in the mountains. We might also suppose that these suffixes once referred to physically autonomous ‘houses’ (*numa*). However, despite these historical lineages, the concepts of ‘clan’, ‘subclan’ and ‘segmentation’ are of little relevance here – indeed Bolton (1999) prefers to avoid the terminology of descent altogether, preferring ‘affiliation group’ – and all of the named groups for the purpose of this analysis at least can be accorded a rough functional equivalence.

Though Table 1.1 lists the main clans relevant to this analysis, it is pertinent to note the existence, until historically recent times, of a few others. Thus, between 1970 and 2003 two clans were resident in

* This date refers to the establishment of the first formal administrative districts by the Dutch (Sachse 1907:33). For summaries of Nuaulu history as best we can reconstruct this, see Ellen 1988b:118-19, 1993:6, 1999:131-36.

	Bunara		Watane		Ahisuru		Hahualan		Rouhua		Simalouw and Tahena Ukuna		Ancestral Settlement
	1971	2001	1971	2001	1971	2001	1971	2001	1971	2001	1971	2001	
Clans													
Huni	15	<i>66</i>											
Kamama		00	12	<i>27</i>							00	<i>28</i>	Samahua
Matoke-hamate					24	00					00	<i>66</i>	Maavoti
Matoke-pina									28	<i>94</i>			Maavoti
Neipane-nesinopu							61	<i>180</i>					Nesinopu
Neipane-tomoien	40	<i>142</i>	09	<i>37</i>					54	<i>180</i>			Tomoien
Numamaeta	08	00									00	<i>16</i>	Enihumane
Peinisa	11	00	22	<i>67</i>					13	<i>60</i>			Penemusa
Pia	11	<i>55</i>											
Sopamani	06	<i>40</i>											Wara-wara
Soumaue-aipura		28	<i>106</i>										Aipura
Soumaue-ainakahata			18	<i>54</i>	20	00			54	<i>180</i>	00	<i>52</i>	Ainakahata
Soumori	31	<i>46</i>							31	<i>110</i>	00	<i>80</i>	Atanupu
Total	150	<i>455</i>	61	<i>185</i>	44	00	61	<i>180</i>	180	624	00	<i>242</i>	
Total Nuaulu 1971: 496 , 2001: 1686													

Table 1.1. Distribution and size of Nuaulu clans by settlement: 1971 and 2001 compared.

Note: Figures in bold are taken from my 1971 field census, from the official local census of 2001 (based on data held in Watane and Rouhua), or otherwise confirmed by inference. Figures in italics are best estimates based on house counts and projections derived from aggregated totals. The geographic locations of ancestral settlements listed in column 14 are shown in figure 1.2.

the North Seram settlement of Rumah Olat: Nakana and Makuana. One very small clan – Neipane-nahatue (with its ancestral settlement at Lekatuele) – had by 1970 merged with Neipani-tomoien in Bunara. Tapinunue, though possibly still present in North Seram, in the south had been absorbed into Kamama. Kunie, through conversion to Islam, had long become part of the settlement of Sepa, while Nasinuante is now part of Yalahatani, east of Tamilau. Sapanani-putie is extinct altogether, leaving only Sapanani-metene. Finally, Matoke-maseke moved to Waraka during the late colonial period, and this, interestingly, provided the genealogical link that was crucial in Waraka becoming a refuge for Christian Nuaulu fleeing the Sepa area in 2000. Thus, merging is a kind of structural counterbalance to segmentation. For the Nuaulu its occurrence is a vivid reminder, reflected in much of their ritual, that clans are the victims of low birth rates and high mortality. It is partly this that drives the desire for more children. In Nuaulu representations, clans and the houses that comprise them are more than the sum of their biological parts: their essence lies in the sacred houses that they maintain and in the objects (*monne*) and ancestral spirits that the houses protect. But when the last individual person dies, so does the *monne*, and the spirits of the clan become homeless. Thus, the imminence of clan or sacred-house ‘death’ stresses the importance of individual biological reproduction to ensure social continuity. I shall return to this idea in later chapters.

All Nuaulu agree that the first clans to arrive in the area around the Nua River, and in the central part of Seram that they presently inhabit, were Matoke-hanaie and Matoke-pina (as set out in a shared creation myth), followed by Neipane-tomoien and Sounaue-ainakahata. After this, there is much variation in the order supplied by authorities from different clans, though a widely shared sequence is: Soumori, Peinisa, Huni, Sapanani, Pia, Numanaeta, Tapinunue and Kamama. For a period of almost 100 years there has been little physical movement or change. Some clans were absorbed into other, non-Nuaulu settlements (such as Sepa), some may have become effectively invisible through conversion, and some have disappeared entirely through demographic extinction. Except for the disturbances occasioned by the Second World War (1942-1945) and the Republik Maluku Selatan (RMS) period (approximately 1950-1966), the Pax Neerlandica, followed by the effective writ of the Sukarno and Soeharto administrations, froze the distribution of clans between 1882 and the late 1980s. Transmigration policy, com-

bined with road-building, led to the movement of some Nuaulu clans (Matoke, Sounaue-aipura, Kamama and Peinisa) from the area around Sepa to the settlements of Simalouw and Tahena Ukuna (Tana Mera). These two settlements, in fact, structurally replicate the old relationship between Watane and Aihisuru (Asuru). Another clan – Numanaeta (Rumah Lait) – also moved to Rumah Olat at this period. The fall of the New Order regime and the administrative chaos and communal conflict that ensued in Maluku has only exacerbated this. Thus, looked at historically, not only are Nuaulu clans exercising considerable autonomy in matters of settlement, showing evidence of segmentation and division, but to some extent the data also indicate the category ‘Nuaulu’ to be flexible over the long term, despite evidence of use of the ethnonym by Sepa and other outsiders as early as the late seventeenth century (Ellen 1988b).

I shall have much to say regarding variation between clans in subsequent chapters, as we consider different categories of ritual. For example, not all clans have to seek a mat and dish from Sepa at the time of a death, and a corpse taken to the cemetery at Hatu Nohue does not always have to be covered with sago palm leaves. Suffice to say here, we have to be careful in claiming that the belief or practice of one clan, for example, the *primus inter pares* Matoke-hanaie, is somehow more ‘authentic’, ‘correct’ or ‘true’ than that of any other clan – even though the elders of this clan may say that it is. Claims of this kind depend on who is the source of data, and this is why I am here primarily concerned with rituals that I have actually observed, rather than some ideal construction in the minds of ritual experts. The reasons underlying different interpretation are various, from trivial cultural ‘drift’ to the ever-present tension between those Nuaulu who seek a unified settlement – perhaps under a raja of their own – and those who do not. However, the default position is the considerable autonomy that individual clans have, not only in matters regarding ritual (though particularly in regard to such matters), but in regard to other forms of social action and cultural practice as well – a situation well summed up in the proverb *ipane osa nene, mansia panesi*, ‘one clan, many people’.

Each Nuaulu clan is a diarchy, ideally divided into two equal, reciprocally exchanging sections or ‘houses’, and Nuaulu religion can be summarily characterized as ancestor-worship focussed on clan houses (*numa*). These latter are moiety-like groups based on descent and affiliation to either the *numa onate* (large or main house) or the *numa kapitane* (house of the war leader). The two houses are, therefore, simultaneously

complementary and hierarchic. The *numa onate*, alternatively called the *numa mainae*, meaning ‘very large’ (sometimes glossed ‘rumah pusaka’ in Ambonese Malay), takes precedence in ritual matters and is therefore senior, but only as a kind of *primus inter pares*. Urbanus Tongli (1994) translates the term as ‘mother-house’. I have never heard this folk etymology from Nuauulu themselves, and neither does Bolton use it; but certainly all ritual houses are ‘mother-houses’ in the sense that they are a focus for a series of ordinary households which look to them as so many children. It is possible that this description arises from a misunderstanding: the interpretation of the term *ina*, meaning ‘mother’ as an independent lexeme and as an infix carrying the same meaning; or it may be that *mainae* also conveys the sense of ‘mother of all’ as in ‘greatest, most encompassing’. By contrast, *numa kapitane* is associated with the brothers of the wife and the brothers of the mother, who are outsiders to all ritual held in the *numa mainae*. The distinction between houses corresponds to an important distinction in Nuauulu kinship, namely that between the children of the brother and the children of the sister.

Each *numa* has a name (and, in some cases, several names); for example, the clan Pia comprises Neginusa and Neinisa, and Kamama, Hatupika and Hatunaka. Peinisa (in Rouhua) comprises Numanohi and Numatopi, Sounaue-ainakahata Ainaka and Numasopite (house of the hornbill), and Soumori Atanupa (a toponym) and Ninita (meaning ‘mirror’). Other Soumori house names include Ainana and Numapate (this latter referring to a species of *Ficus* associated with the snake totem). Neipane-tomoien names include Pinawasa (bamboo roofing piece), Tomone (a kind of bamboo), Sianana and Namanusa. Each *numa* is linked to an identifiable historic settlement site in the mountains (sometimes reflected in the name, as in Soumori ‘Atanupa’; see Table 1.1), which in the past may well have been focussed on a single physical ‘house’. But the relationship between clan and *numa* is fluid over time and, as we have seen, clans may segment and *numa* separate, eventually becoming clans in their own right. This appears to be what has happened with Sounawe-ainakahata and Sounawe-aipura, and much more recently – over the last 50 years – with Matoke-hanaie and Matoke-pina. In the latter case, Matoke divided into two independent clans – *hanaie* (male) and *pina* (female) – at the time of the split in clan allegiances during the 1930s that led to the founding of the settlement of Rouhua, and where Matoke-pina now performs the ‘lord of the land’ role. As a

result, neither Matoke-pina in Rouhua nor Matoke-hanaie (formerly in Aihisuru and now in Tahena Ukuna) have a *numa kapitane*. The second Matoke sacred house in Rouhua is a *numa nuhune*, used for birth ritual (Chapter 3). During fieldwork in 1996 and 2003 there was evidence that Matoke-hanaie and Matoke-pina were seeking to come together again to reinforce Nuaulu collective political identity, legitimated by a claim that this was the wish of the ancestors, reflected in a string of misfortune for as long as the houses had been separate. In 1970 Rouhua had only two clans described as having true *kapitane*, ‘war leaders’ (Neipane-tomoién and Sounaue-ainakahata), the *kapitane* of the other clans living in Bunara or Niamonai. By the time Bolton reported Rouhua clans in the 1990s four were said to possess *numa kapitane*. Where a clan does not have a *kapitane* other persons carry out the role until a new one is appointed. Thus, in 2003 Retaone was the acting *kapitane* for Soumori, but it was agreed that Soiile would take over once he was married. No wonder, therefore, that despite a general cultural expectation that clans are composed of two exchanging *numa*, there are often complex and idiosyncratic exceptions to this rule for good historical reasons.

Clan houses, as we shall discover in Chapter 7, are more than the people they contain and have a quasi-independent existence; when the descent line dies out, however, the clan house and the traditions (*monne*) it physically embodies dies with it. With reference to the sacred items they contain, and because they are themselves the subject of ritual, these physical entities are sometimes collectively called *numa monne*. Nuaulu are conscious of the mortality of their houses in much the same way as they are conscious of the mortality of their clans, and they actively seek to maintain demographic viability to ensure the perpetuation of physical houses and the *monne* that they protect.

Both clans and houses are linked together through exchange. Nuaulu ritual life is permeated by constant gift transactions between the (usually) two houses of the same clan and between clans, through intermarriage and other relations of dependency. The division of the clan into two houses and their symmetrical relationship is evident in most major rituals of the cycles described in this monograph. Thus, the exchange that accompanies marriage (*mahu*) forms part of a continuous flow between wife-givers (*hanahanai*) and wife-takers (*tanaite*). All clans are both wife-takers and wife-givers for other clans, a relationship underpinned by a complex series of prescriptions and prohibitions, though patterns of marital

exchange (a temporary exchange for the lifetime of the partners) and alliance (a perpetual relationship: cf. Valeri 2001 [1980]:143) between pairs of clans varies. Exchange is conspicuously symmetrical and egalitarian, with the aligned groups losing their hierarchical connotations and paired clans locked into expectations of role mutuality. Each clan as a whole is also engaged in reciprocal exchanges with other clans through marital alliance and puberty ceremonial. Although Nuauulu bridewealth is small compared with some other eastern Indonesian cultural groups, it must be understood in the context of other exchanges that occur at the birth of children: plates from wife-takers to wife-givers, betel-chewing items from wife-givers to wife-takers, and food from wife-takers to wife-givers that returns to wife-takers in the form of feasts. Nuauulu relationship terminology is consistent with bilateral cross-cousin marriage. However, such *nemakae*, or ‘strong’, alliances with a clan of a spouse are, in practice, more pronounced in the marriages of clan heads.

The exchanges between clans and the houses that compose them become socially visible, and theatrically expressed, in ritual. For example, in certain life-cycle rituals one house – that is, one half of the clan – will carry out rituals for the other: washing a newborn baby and its mother when both emerge from post-partum seclusion, or cutting the first hair of an infant. In other life-cycle rituals it is clans that perform this reciprocal function: at male puberty, or when an elder receives a decorated bark-cloth. In other rituals focussed on the communal (village) sacred house, or *suane*, clans share distributed ritual duties and collectively participate.

Most collective ritual is, therefore, about exchange. It cannot take place without it, and cycles of rituals are therefore in an important sense ‘cycles of exchange’. Valeri (1990a) speaks of a tension between autonomy and heteronomy amongst the Huauulu. A similar tension can be seen in Nuauulu society in terms of, on the one hand, the clan and *numa* assertion of independent identity through descent, and on the other (as reflected in the complementarities of ritual), in the evident periodic need to ally with other *numa* and clans to reproduce themselves.

1.6 NUAULU RITUALS AS EVENTS

Any analysis claiming to speak of the periodicity or frequency of rituals, and to address how they might be reproduced, must begin by defining

the unit of analysis. In my own work on ritual, I have always been influenced in a general way by the work of that group of American anthropologists, inspired by Ward Goodenough, Harold Conklin and Charles Frake, attached to the label ‘ethnosemantics’. In rereading Frake’s famous essay, first published in 1964, on the description of Subanun religious behaviour, I now realize just how much my own thinking on analytical protocols is consistent with what he has to say, and so now, more explicitly, I have used his guidelines as a beginning point. Subsequently, ethnosemantics has had a bad press (Berreman 1966; Harris 1969) or been ghettoized in cognitive anthropology, but one of its merits has been a methodological insistence on precision in defining units of analysis and terms of reference, and its systematicity as ‘the science of cultural description’ (Frake 1980:144).

One of the persistent problems in understanding ritual generally, but certainly in animist societies where the category is often absent (Frake 1980:148), is how to define ‘religion’. Nowadays, Nuaulu are compelled to think of their ritual practices and beliefs as religion, and will use the Indonesian word ‘agama’ to describe them. Historically they have accepted the description of what they do and believe as ‘agama Hindu’, deriving from the older, and mistaken, colonial-period designation of Moluccan animism as a variant of Balinese Hinduism, but convenient under the post-independence government where ‘agama Hindu’ allowed them for a time to be accepted as a religion under the terms of the doctrine of Pancasila. It is a constant and very practical problem for young, modernist Nuaulu who seek jobs in the army and civil service that their apparent lack of religion is seen as an official impediment to their progress, echoing an older view that they are ‘belum beragama’, not yet with religion. However, despite the desire to see what they do as religion, they also struggle with the fact that their religion diffuses throughout their cultural practice – their kinship and subsistence – in a way that provides for no separate institutional existence other than being Nuaulu. Their ritual practices, therefore, merge with their overall ethnic identity, such that those who convert to Christianity or Islam effectively cease to be Nuaulu at all.

If religion has only a weak and ambiguous existence as a cultural category, then what about ‘ritual’? I accept, following Frake, that the best way to start is with units of practice rather than of belief, but there is no Nuaulu word for ritual either. The nearest we get is *mainsie*, which might be translated as ‘invocation’, ‘prayer’ or ‘request’; or *karisaa*, a ceremony,

a formal public event involving the preparation of food. However, the events described in this monograph are organizationally more complex than invocations, many of which may occur during a ritual event. They are also more than secular ‘public events’, since they connect with things sacred and supernatural (*monne*) and are considered to be *monne* themselves. Now, *monne* is a portmanteau term, referring to the same sacred conceptual space as Polynesian ‘tabu’: simultaneously sacred and prohibited (forbidden). But *monne* may also refer to a passage, relation or movement, as in ancestral will achieved through performing the *kahuae* circle dance. Thus, all sacred objects, practices and knowledge are *monne*, while it is also *monne* (in the sense of being proscribed) for a boy to marry before he undergoes his puberty ritual, and it is *monne* (in the sense of being proscribed) to honour individual clan prohibitions (*peneu*). For Frake, ceremonies of the kind to which Nuauulu would attach the label *monne* may be simple or complex (that is, more than one offering), scheduled or unscheduled ceremonies. In this monograph I am concerned only with scheduled ceremonies. As Frake (1980:159) puts it, drawing an analogy with grammar: ‘the occurrence of a scheduled ceremony is, in effect, a structural marker of the anticipatable sequence of scenes in Subanun culture. It signals that events are unfolding as scheduled’ and ‘is also necessary if future anticipations of probable events are to be fulfilled’. For it not to happen is a crisis, just like a crop failure. ‘Correspondingly [...] the failure properly to stage the correct ceremony on schedule can only lead to crisis’ so ‘the explicit rationale for performing scheduled offerings is to prevent the occurrence of crises, to ensure the proper unfolding of events’ (Frake 1980:160). I also follow Rappaport (1999:24) in accepting an individual ritual as ‘the performance of more or less invariant sequences of acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers’, implying that, by performing in a liturgical order, performers publically communicate their acceptance of a social order. In this analysis a ritual is a set of practices that can plausibly be described as an event and whose purpose is to employ symbolic and supernatural means to achieve a material end.

Another problem of conceptualizing ritual as a particular kind of event is what constitutes its boundaries (Ardener 1989). In one sense, no ritual is autonomous, semantically or behaviourally: its performance depends on the performance of previous rituals, while in turn its performance is the necessary precursor of other rituals which in turn depend upon it. In particular, where we are dealing with cycles of events, one

ritual may merge into another; in a series of smaller, constituent or ‘embedded’ (McCauley and Lawson 2002:28) rituals, it is not always clear where one ends and the other begins, or, indeed, whether one small ritual should be treated as free-standing, or whether it is simply part of a larger sequence of events we might better group together. This is especially perplexing given that the anthropological orthodoxy is that rituals mark transitions and boundaries in normal life rather than themselves raising issues about their own boundaries.

For the purposes of this monograph, I have focussed on a particular group of rituals. This is partly to reduce the total number so as to make monographic treatment manageable, partly dictated by my theoretical interest in periodicity, and partly to better ensure commensurability. I therefore focus on what Frake would call ‘scheduled’ rituals: those rituals planned in advance. I have little to say about ‘unscheduled’ rituals, such as those prompted by illness episodes. Within the category of scheduled rituals, I have decided to largely ignore rituals linked to production. In some ways this might seem curious given that such rituals conventionally adhere to clear cycles, dictated by biological rhythms, most obviously those of the agricultural year. Such rituals occur in the Nuaulu case, for example those conducted when first clearing forest, or prior to harvesting, but they are inwardly focussed, not connected to other rituals. Moreover, many of the rituals, such as those conducted when extracting sago or hunting, are minimal, approaching Frake’s definition for unscheduled ritual. By ignoring these I am not denying that many of the observations I make here might also apply to other rituals, only reducing the corpus size in a way that is methodologically plausible.

1.7 RITUALS AS WORK AND WORK AS RITUAL

That ritual is about ‘work’ and bodily action is something anthropologists have appreciated for a long time (Firth 1967; Rappaport 1999:46-50), but what we mean by ‘work’ in this context is by no means merely metaphorical or restricted only to moments of performance. In the lives of all animist Nuaulu, the experience of ritual is for the most part the experience of preparing for ritual, which can take up enormous amounts of time (Firth 1965:184). Geertz (1975:176, 179) has made similar comments about the Balinese, who seem forever to be preparing

for the next ritual and clearing up after the last, ‘much too busy practicing their religion to think [...] too much about it’. By comparison, performance for the Nuaulu, though less I suspect for the Balinese, is relatively perfunctory. In one sense, all the activity involved in preparation might be perceived as interfering with productive economic activity, but in another, it is absolutely intrinsic to it. This sense is perfectly evoked in that old structural Marxist notion of the ‘ritual means of production’, or in the Malinowskian claim of the integrity of magic to Trobriand gardening. Either way, the ramifications of ritual activity through social networks and over time properly allow us to speak in the Nuaulu case of a political economy of ritual-related activity.

The most commonly encountered Nuaulu word for work is *nana* (to work, to make). This can apply equally to mundane work in the swiddens as to ritually directly work, as in *au nana pinamou tau manananau* (‘I work for the *pinamou* ceremony’). Such a conflation is hardly confined to the Nuaulu. According to Astuti (1995:123), the Malagasy Vezo word ‘asa’ is used for ordinary work and also for the ritual work that the living undertake for the dead – building tombs ‘out of a sense of duty and under duress’, work providing a blessing. By way of contrast, *akanana* refers specifically to work involved in seeking meat or sago or resin for a major ritual, and may refer to a period of more than a month. *Tanei* is to work or provide a service for a specific task, as in *woi niane hohoka mai naunanma tane* (‘call the village here for work’); *tita* is also a kind of service. The word that comes closest to distinguishing hard, physical labour from more spiritual kind of work is *sona* or *msonae*, which refers to light work.

For Nuaulu, ritual is no less ‘work’ than hunting or extracting sago. To say so conveys both its ordinariness and its importance. Ritual work is conceived by them as an integral part of the production process, no less essential than carrying, planting or cutting, and something that has to be done because the consequences of it not being done are so awesome. Although Nuaulu do not use any phrase cognate with ‘The work of the gods’, the title of Raymond Firth’s classic (1967[1939]) study of Tikopia, this is certainly the sense in which they understand this activity. Ritual is work, sometimes very hard work, and its preparation in particular can take an inordinate amount of time. It may interfere with other economic activities and for this reason may sometimes be postponed. Ritual involves the expenditure of calories; it occupies time that competes with time available for other activities. It involves work that is identical to that

Categories of work allocation used in survey	Number of work-day equivalents over a 4-month period	Percentage
A. Subsistence activities		
1. fishing	018	01.10
2. activities connected with cash-cropping	027	01.70
3. hunting and trapping	278	17.20
4. gardening	284	17.50
5. sago extraction	275	17.00
6. various secondary gathering activities	153	09.50
B. Non-subsistence activities		
7. communal labour	218	13.40
8. house building (other than classified under 7)	012	01.00
9. travel, 'visiting'	162	10.00
10. meetings, disputes	009	00.50
11. ritual	038	02.40
12. miscellaneous village tasks	022	01.40
13. other recreational activities, sickness	123	07.50
TOTAL	1,619 days	100.00

Table 1.2. 1970-71 survey of work allocation for selected adult males (modified with additional data from Ellen 1978: 227).

which is not designated ritual, and can therefore be measured in ecological terms, or using work diaries (Rappaport 1968). I conducted time and motion studies as part of my work on Nuulu subsistence ecology in 1970-71. Between April and November 1970, I kept records of work allocation for 46 adult males in Rouhua. From these data I was able to calculate average times devoted to activities. The data and methodology for this survey are discussed elsewhere (Ellen 1978:226-8), but the categories and aggregate values for each category are shown in Table 1.2. The data were computed for these categories to serve a different purpose than we are concerned with here (the measurement of physical activity in relation to subsistence behaviour). I have retained the original categories, but in the context of the present study, I might have drawn the boundaries rather differently. Thus, on the basis of these data, 2.40% of the time is

labelled 'ritual performance', though much work directed towards ritual comes under 'hunting', 'sago extraction' and, particularly, 'communal labour'. Conservatively, I would estimate that at least another 10% needs to be added to this, making the overall contribution of ritually directed work more like 13%. In a smaller survey of 82 work-day equivalents for five adult married women conducted in August-September 1973, about 18 days (22%) were devoted to ritual itself and to preparation for ritual, or was time out in menstrual seclusion (7.5 days).

Rather differently, from Figure 1.3 (e) we can see that, over time, ritual performance activity seems to peak in July, whether we rely on the six-month time-allocation survey or on the numbers of events reported in my field notes for the twelve months starting 1 April 1970. This occurs at about the same time as a peak in hunting, after sago and communal labour peaks in June, and before the gardening peak in August and a second sago peak in September, showing a strong correlation between cycles of work and economic exchange activity and the occurrence of rituals of a kind that have been well reported elsewhere (Davis 1972; Rappaport 1968). The only odd thing about these data is that the peaks also coincide with the height of the rainy season, suggesting that, where choices are possible in the timing of ritual, heavy rainfall and the practical problems this entails in terms of work and transport have little impact.

As a data set, these time-and-motion records additionally raise some issues about how we classify physical activity and work. Thus, ritual is not only a kind of work to be contrasted with managing, harvesting and processing material things; it is also work in the sense that it relies on activities that are unambiguously classed as labour: collecting thatch or cutting wood. Such activities can be, and largely are, outside the domain of ritual, but when they are directed towards a ritual objective, such as the thatching of a clan sacred house, they are incorporated into ritual. This is clear from the way in which men engaged in building sacred houses are required to wear clothes that are worn for ritual generally, and have to prepare themselves spiritually, abstaining from other things. It is as if in undertaking these activities, though they do not differ technologically from the same activity performed on other occasions, they are different because they take place in an alternatively configured conceptual space. Clearly, there is a fine line to be drawn between the way in which subsistence activity is ritualized by virtue of it being necessary for events of ritual consumption, and the way in which subsistence activity involves

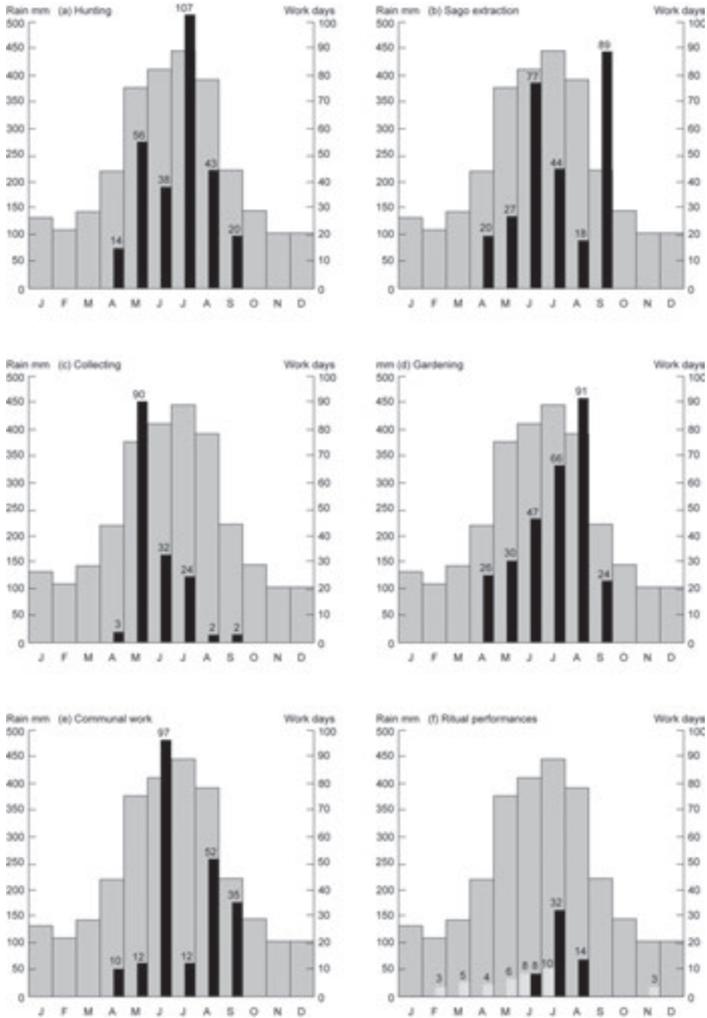


Figure 1.3. Bar charts for six categories of activity.

Source: Data are based on the six-month 1970-71 work-allocation survey in Rouhua, in relation to aggregated rainfall data: (a) hunting; (b) sago extraction; (c) collecting; (d) gardening; (e) communal work; (f) ritual performance. Number of work-day equivalents for each activity appear on the top of each black bar. Bar chart (f) additionally displays (in white) the number of days for which I have field-note data on reported rituals in the categories described in this monograph.

For further discussion of the original data, see Ellen 1978:212-4, 226-8.

ritual as part of its own successful accomplishment, such as those rites performed before hunting or extracting sago.

1.8 THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ANALYSIS

It is obvious that I cannot here examine all Nuaulu rituals over a particular time, or indeed all categories of ritual. I do not, for example, examine what Durkheim (1915:389) calls ‘piacular’ ritual, what Frake calls ‘unscheduled’ rituals, or what Turner calls ‘rituals of affliction’, and which in some societies represent the main focus of ritual activity. To ensure focus, coherence and comparability, I have selected – as I have mentioned already – rituals that are obviously parts of cycles rather than one-off, spontaneous events; amongst these, I have focussed on the human life-cycle and the rituals of sacred houses. This distinction is not entirely arbitrary. True, from a purely statistical point of view agricultural, hunting or sago rituals are more frequent than life-crisis rituals, and some are part of well-defined cycles (such as the swidden cycle). Indeed, in an average lifetime a person will have seen about 60 agricultural cycle rituals, and a mature male will have seen about 20 before he first performs one. These occur, therefore, with a frequency that matches birth rituals. However, they are very much underplayed culturally compared to other agricultural societies where cycles of agricultural ritual dominate the entire shape of the ritual practice and provide its framework (see for instance Iskandar and Ellen 1999). I cannot make this claim for the Nuaulu, and this is at least in part because their mode of subsistence and economic production is much more broadly based. I shall return to the relationship between different kinds of ritual cycle in Chapter 9.

I have decided to start with rituals rooted in bodily transformation, and move to those that are more encompassing and abstract, and that find their dynamic in cycles that are more under the control of collective human will. However, I certainly do not wish to imply from the order of the analysis that, in any sequential sense at all, rituals in the earlier chapters preceded in their development and elaboration those in the later chapters. Indeed, historically, all have constantly interacted to reinforce commonalities and to disseminate innovation. Rather, I am suggesting that by their frequency of occurrence (and, perhaps, comparative simplicity measured in terms of component parts) the earlier rituals

are reinforced more frequently and thereby are more likely to serve as cognitive models for the larger rituals of house and *suane*. In a sense, this is reminiscent of the observation that the ‘slametan’ represents a basic module of which all other Javanist rituals are no more than transformations (Geertz 1964a; Beatty 1999).

For each ritual series, I provide a description based on those events that Rosemary Bolton and myself have actually observed, and on general, second-hand accounts that to this extent must necessarily merge the variants of some of the individual clans. There is an important place for analyses of verbatim performance and language use in particular rituals on particular occasions. However, here I am deliberately seeking general aggregate and preponderant patterns, and descriptions of unique ritual events would be an impediment to this objective. Each ritual described is itself an analytical description in which I have attempted to separate out – on the basis of unique events that I have witnessed, those witnessed by others, and general Nuaulu descriptions – the main elements. This is not because I believe that there exists some statistically normal or ideal form of the ritual, of which all others are variants, but because it is self-evidently convenient to follow this procedure. These model descriptions are then followed by a summary of the major axes of variation in the ritual, as these occur between different clans and according to different circumstances – for example, mortuary rituals for different categories of ‘bad death’. This, in turn, is followed by a section on what can be said of the frequency and periodicity of the ritual based on the evidence available. Overall, I try to show how theory and ethnography seem to reinforce each other, by focussing on the practical engagements shaping (and, in turn, shaped by) Nuaulu ritual life.

Chapter 2

Components of ritual performance

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Any analysis seeking to show how rituals vary in their content and distribution, that attempts to explain how ritual practice is reproduced, and to identify some kind of cultural model serving as a basis for the conduct and local understanding of all rituals, might be thought to require some specification of the basic elements of which rituals are composed. Of course, reducing rituals to their supposed 'elementary parts' is ultimately an unachievable objective. Indeed, attempts to reduce any cultural domain to lists of discrete parts will fail to capture its complete range of properties. Even if there were some objective way in which we could confidently specify an 'etic grid' of parts, we have no way of easily matching this to how people perceive the structure of a ritual. Who is to know, on first participating in a ceremony, which part is more important than any other, or which part is a generic script that appears in countless other kinds of ceremony, and which is quite specific to the present ceremony? Human cultural cognition is fundamentally flexible, able to work with alternative classifications of the same input data and to constantly rearrange those classifications to meet new circumstances. The boundaries between the parts are in a constant state of flux depending on context, on the vagaries of transmission and communication between individual minds, and on the level of interpretation adopted.

Nevertheless, actors engaged in ritual performance, no less than in any other kind of cultural action – such as, say, cooking – employ models or scripts to guide their physical actions, thinking and speaking. At the same time, the process of preparation usually involves some image or images of the successfully completed output (Frake 1980:158; Shore 1996), based on previous personal experience or the experiences of oth-

ers. Without claiming that this reflects the way Nuauulu themselves make and use such models, or that the order of presentation adopted reflects any particular cultural or cognitive logic, in this chapter I shall outline the components necessary for successful performance. I begin with those recurrent symbolic patterns, routines and sequences that enable people to memorize and thereby reproduce rituals, to organize and predict patterns, and to see connections between different rituals. I shall then describe how this enables the organization of material paraphernalia, food, movement, language and spiritual forces, and will follow with some preliminary references to the ritual division of labour.

2.2 COGNITIVE ARCHITECTURE

One well-understood function of culture amongst *Homo sapiens* is the provision of markers that help us organize the continuous input from perception into chunks of information that can be most effectively stored in memory and retrieved and used when needed. This is managed through category formation, by imposing boundaries on otherwise continuous or ambiguously discontinuous data. Category formation works by recognizing salience of particular parts of the world through simplification, and by generally providing a ‘cognitive architecture’ conducive to the attribution of meaning. In turn, meaning reinforces our ability to effectively use that shared architecture created through the interaction of numerous minds over successive generations. All this applies to ritual no less than to other things, though, interestingly, it is with respect to the domain of ritual activity that we have come to understand much about the generic anthropological properties of cultural logics. By ‘cognitive architecture’ in this context I am not referring to anything that is ‘genetically pre-specified’ (Boyd and Richerson 1985), but I do acknowledge that we are born with cognitive limitations, coordinates and potentials (what Boyd and Richerson call patterns of ‘learning enhancement’), which develop and are applied in an emerging cultural context. It is the resulting dynamic apparatus that in turn is the basis for ‘cultural recurrence’ and for how we organize the world. Cultural architecture understood in this sense gradually accumulates over many generations, and whatever ‘architecture’ is encoded is highly modified as an individual developmental process unfolds through the

gaining of physical and cultural experience, and through social interaction. So, for example, any proclivity for ‘binary opposition’ is reinforced (or, indeed, undermined) through particular bio-culturally experienced modalities.

In the Nuaulu context it is easiest to understand how this kind of cultural cognition works by stating the basic material prototypes from which different kinds of logic derive. These are: (a) bodily form; (b) bodily orientation; (c) sensory qualities; and (d) geographic deixis. I want to make it clear that we cannot expect to find some total ‘order of orders’ by integrating such schemes, nor can we expect to find some elegant overarching scheme of meta-classification. To the extent that we do find this, it will be an interesting consequence of the property of all un-disturbed cultural systems over time. More importantly, we might better recognize an ‘underarching’ (rather than an overarching) structure, all exemplifications providing evidence of classifying as a process mining and re-organizing cultural inputs, and working through an existing cognitive disposition. Dualism, for example, is a linguistic and semantic convention (Fox 1980b:333; also Forth 2001:2-12, 288-309), a language of opposition and pairing rather than a classification of things, intrinsic to the way in which all people think, essential to the transmission of cultural knowledge, no less in certain societies than in others. Even monistic ontologies are necessarily grounded in ‘some prior duality’ (Viveiros de Castro 1998:482). However, the general cognitive disposition to dualism must be distinguished from its cultural embeddedness. Certainly, acculturated, shared adult views of the world, reinforced through social exchange, may differ from the intuitive responses of children. In some societies dualism is elaborated more than in others, and is a more paraded feature of ‘symbolic systems’. In such societies dualism may become an endless source of self-conscious aesthetic possibilities, no less than a set of ‘traps’ that constrain our thinking about the world (Astuti 2001; Gell 1998:126-7).

2.2.1 BODILY FORM AND ORIENTATION

Since Mauss (1973 [1934]), we have come to recognize the primacy of the body as a model for making sense of the world around us (Ellen 2006:90-116). It provides a basis for our projection of symmetry in other things, and for quantification and geometry. The very notion

of contrast is embedded in the experience of the duality of the body. Indeed, although we must beware of the temptation of finding convenient binary oppositions in all that the subjects of our research say and do – what has been described as the ‘ping-pong’ version of structuralism (G. Lewis 1980:5, following Gombrich 1962:312-51) – there is no doubt that repeated dualisms present convenient mnemonics and a framework for memory. In addition, in the Nuaulu case, the re-construction and memorizing of events is made easier by the standard numerical formulae for procedures, objects and time spans being units of five (the number of anatomical digits on each limb). This is ultimately congruent with Nuaulu also being part of the ‘Patalima’ (*nima*, ‘five’) grouping of peoples on Seram (Valeri 1989). Thus, the *asinokoe*, a structure composed of branches and vines, is erected five days after birth; and the platform on which neophytes stand for the male puberty ceremony consists of five logs, and so on.

The most prominent example of the use of bodily form as a classifier in ritual is the physical distinction between male and female. Following Traube (1986:17), we could say that ritual as a whole has amongst its logical purposes the regulation of relations between male and female, aiming both to keep them separate and to bring them together, as occasion demands. Thus, while rituals of birth emphasize androgeny, with the head-shaving ceremony we see the emerging of a gender distinction through the covering of male, and not female, children with red cloth (both rituals are discussed in Chapter 3). Gender is thus, in a sense, produced through ritual. By the time they reach puberty, male and female are fully gendered ceremonially. When giving birth or menstruating, women must be separated from men at the risk of ancestral retribution in the form of sickness. Contamination makes men cold, which prevents successful hunting and invites defeat in warfare. If a man spits on the ground and a woman steps over the spittle, he may be defiled. A man’s saliva must always be hot in order to ensure successful hunting, fishing or warfare, but most importantly in order to perform ritual (*monne*). It is, therefore, especially important for a clan chief, who conducts ritual, and for sacred houses, which are the main sites of ritual, to avoid female pollution. The regulation of gender relations requires the correct quantum of heat or coolness at the right time in an individual life cycle, whether male or female. Life-cycle ceremonies, in particular, provide an opportunity to redress the balance. Even the *suane*, which is generally described as

a quintessentially male space, generating the heat necessary for success in male activities, may admit females to find that balance required between the sexes to perpetuate health and life.

But human bodies are not only physical entities providing a material template for measuring the world, or physiological entities divided by reproductive function that wax and wane in terms of their gendered identity over the course of a lifespan. They are sentient objects capable of motion, moving around in three-dimensional space and time. So, bodily actions may exist before or after the actions of others; bodies may move up (to the above) and down (to the below), backwards and forwards, to the right or to the left, inside some space or outside another space. Such relative bodily orientations are not only, as we shall see in a moment, linked to geographic absolutes; they are also congruent with gender distinctions and moral values. Thus, males are associated with the outside (hunting, warfare) and women with the inside (domestic spaces, food preparation); upwards is a source of prosperity, and downwards a source of misfortune, while earth is linked to bodily below (female) and sky to bodily above (male), joined in myth by an umbilical cord that was subsequently separated.

2.2.2 SENSORY QUALITIES

By sensory qualities, I am referring to temperature (hot and cold), tactile weight (light and heavy), sound (loud and silent), light (brightness and darkness) and smell (sweet and fecal). Thus, brightness, sweetness and loudness all have a positive valency, reflected (quite literally) in, for example, the ornamental features of a female headpiece and the male betel container in their respective puberty rituals. The combination of each of these sensory dimensions defines the character and purpose of a ritual. Each provides a way of speaking of the other, and none could be said to be of lesser significance, though in the language of ritual action and exegesis it is notions of hot and cold that appear to provide the predominant means of describing how ritual works. Hot and cold act in conjunction with other pairs of symbolic oppositions (such as father, sky and sun, as opposed to mother, earth and coolness) to order the Nuaulu cosmos.

One requirement of ritual is evident above all others in the way Nuaulu talk about it: the necessity of heat for its effective performance, to attract the ancestors, and to ensure this through the separation of males

from females. Heat is almost, quite literally, the fuel of effective ritual, analogous to the physical energy and activity of subsistence. For children, excessive heat can be dangerous, but adult men need heat generated through ritual for successful hunting, fishing and warfare. By contrast, coolness is necessary for female activities, for instance for fertility, growth in the womb, for activities in the gardens and in the houses. It is also associated with menstruation, parturient blood and death, the reason why it must be kept separate from males. Too much heat is dangerous, impairing fertility and nurturing abilities by incapacitating the *nuhune* spirit (associated with female-centred ritual) that forms the foetus. Heat is associated with the sacred house, where it is produced by the performance of ritual, but if the house is unoccupied and only occasionally the site for ritual, its heat must be maintained by the regular lighting of a fire to prevent the flight of ancestral spirits. By contrast, death is associated with cold, and so ritual specialists such as mediums, who must be hot to attract spirits, avoid contact with a corpse when visiting a cemetery. Similarly, the *sokate* (a container, usually a basket, in which ancestral spirits reside), located in each clan sacred house, is covered with a red cloth for four days following a death to prevent any coldness in the corpse from disturbing the spirits. Whether something is hot or cold, and its location along some putative continuum between one and the other extreme, is basic to Nuauulu understanding of ritual action, while ritual itself generates heat and cold. For example, on the second day of the bathing ceremony for a newborn child, a group of women, holding a *mauna* charm, carry the baby around the *nuhune* house covered with a red cloth. The red cloth and the charm are associated with heat as well as maleness, and therefore help reduce the coolness in both sexes. In the male puberty ceremony, the red cloth that the neophytes receive reflects the heat necessary for killing the sacrificial cuscus and for headhunting, as does the earth-anointing and the chicken sacrifice at the *suane*. Dance, too, increases heat and is associated with maleness, as we shall see later in this chapter. The reduction of heat in old age anticipates the approaching coldness of the corpse.

2.2.3 GEOGRAPHIC DEIXIS

All Nuauulu settlements, the physical structures of which they are composed, and the behaviour patterns enacted within them, are oriented according to a kind of symbolic geography or cosmography, well described

for other parts of eastern Indonesia (see for instance Forth 1981). The basic coordinates are mountain-sea and sunset-sunrise. Congruent with the mountain-sea opposition is one between upstream (*suria*) and downstream (*sunau*), which, as Tongli (1994) explains, is used metaphorically to refer to superior and inferior positions when conducting a ritual. Thus, *posune* (birthing and menstruation huts) are located on the seaward side, the place of birth, while *numa nuhune* (the structures to which newborn babies are taken when they leave the birthing hut) and the *numa onate*, which they enter next, and the houses in which they thereafter live, lie mountainward. Thus, there is an overall movement in ritual from sea to mountain, and in most houses and on most ritual occasions you enter through the seaward door and leave by the mountainward door. Only in death do you exit through the seaward door, and then as a corpse. On ceremonial occasions, women can only use the seaward entrance.

All objects associated with death (*sinohiu*, and the waringin tree *nunue*, *Ficus rumphii*) are located in a sunrise (east) direction; those with birth, in a sunset (west) direction (the *posune* and *numa nuhune*). Similarly, Nuaulu sleep with their head to the east (rising sun) and feet to the west (setting sun). Where houses (Figure 2.1) provide the internal spaces for the performance of ritual, women and children congregate towards the sunset and seaward sides, and men at the sunrise and mountain sides, the arrangement suggesting an abstract understanding of how symbolic potency follows from the intersection of lines along which the degree of sanctity varies, and where the ends of these lines are in conceptual opposition (Figure 2.2). Cutting across these linear coordinates is a further opposition between centre and periphery expressed at the village level, such that the *suane* is at the centre of the settlement and the *posune* and middens along the periphery, reflecting a distinction between purity and pollution. Between the extremes lie ordinary living spaces, dwellings and associated structures.

Although most houses are aligned so that their two doors are on the mountainward and seaward faces, there are two exceptions. In Sounaue-aiapura all houses (known as *numa kahai*) have doors in an east-west direction. Consequently, as clan members sleep with their bodies lying from east to west, they also lie from door to door. The houses of Sounaue-ainakahata are oriented in the usual way. The other exception is with the *posune*, where the two doors are also positioned along the sunset-sunrise

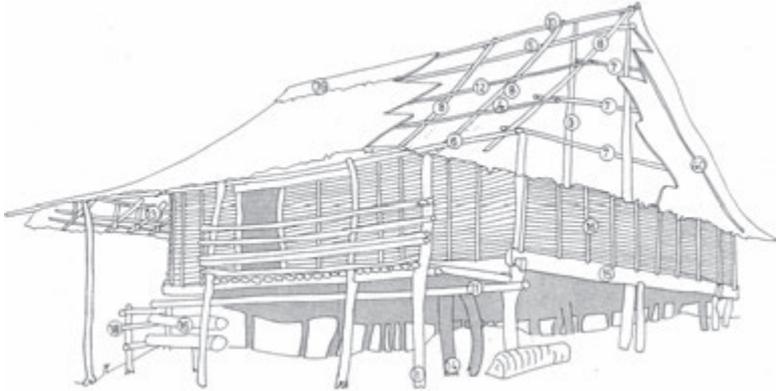


Figure 2.1. Outline structure of the Nuaulu house, showing relative position of selected components mentioned in the text.

Key: 1. *hini* (main uprights); 3. *hini monne* (sacred *hini*); 4. *papanate* (purlins); 5. *makareta mnaha* (lit. ‘cuscus-rat’: pole running length of house beneath ridge pole); 6. *maran etute* (lit. ‘cuscus tail’, lowest purlin); 7. *papana pukune* (short *papanate*); 8. *wasu* (rafters); 10. *mamweti wasu* (ridge pole); 11. *mnutune* (underfloor joists); 12. *wasu ai weti* (purlin nearest ridge pole); 13. *wasu hinai* (sprockets; short inclined bamboo pieces under projecting eaves); 14. *tatuete* (piles supporting floor); 15. *sakanae* (boards along base of each wall); 16. *suntanae kalotatae* (uprights forming frame for wall pieces); 36. *hantetane* (house steps); 38. *hantetane nene nutune* (side of steps); 39. *humuhatae* (ornamental ridge thatch); 40. *kalota man kihen* (bird’s wing *kalota*; rattan strip pinning thatch). For more detail on house paronymy, see Ellen 1986:8-10.

axis. Here, entering rituals take place on the sunset side, and leaving rituals on the sunrise side.

Not only are there differences between clans in matters relating to physical orientation, but also between groups of clans in particular settlements, and between settlements. During the long period between approximately 1880 and 1980, when most Nuaulu clans were located around Sepa, the higher, mountainward settlement of Aihisuru embodied values of ancestry and *monne*, while the lower, seaward settlement of Watane embodied the specific values of ancestry associated with each kin group. This relationship was reflected in the roles of the *ia onate Matoke-hanaie* (the ‘male’ Matoke clan chief, primus inter pares of all clan ritual chiefs, located in Aihisuru), and the *ia onate aia* (the head of all

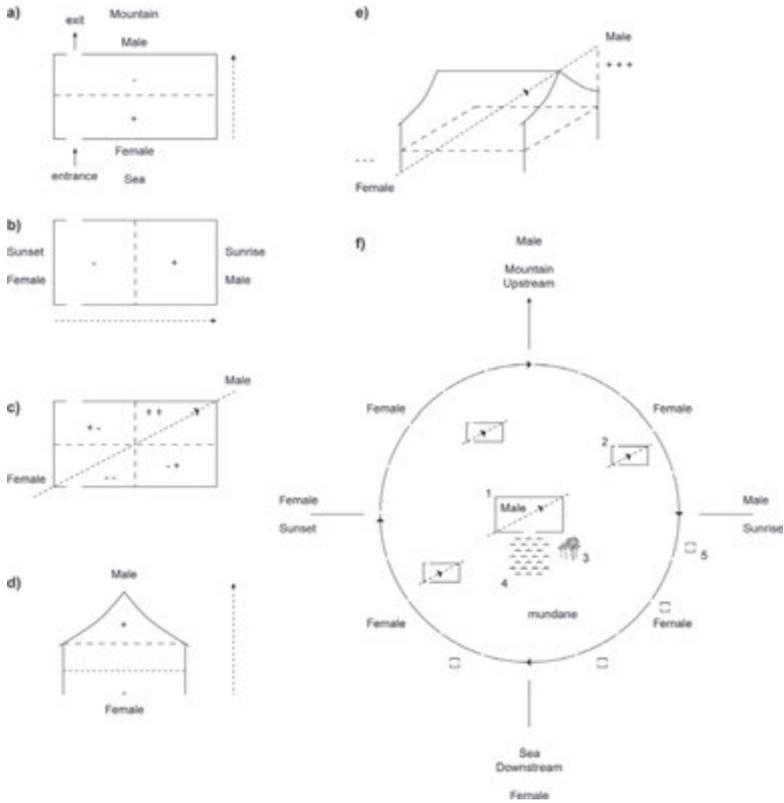


Figure 2.2. Basic cognitive geometry of the Nuauulu sacred house and village space.

Key: (a) house plan, mountain-sea axis; (b) house plan, sunset-sunrise axis; (c) house plan, showing two-dimensional diagonal axis; (d) house-end elevation, upper-lower axis; (e) house isometric projection, showing three-dimensional diagonal axis; (e) village plan, incorporating mountain-sea, sunset-sunrise and core-periphery axes. 1. *suane*, communal ritual house; 2. *numa onale* Matoke, house of the 'lord of the land'; 3. sacred bushes; 4. *tuaman tiai*, dancing ground; 5. *posune*, menstruation huts. Arrows indicate direction of ritual movement, and a symbolic movement from negativity to positivity.

Nuaulu in matters relating to political interaction with the outside world, located in Watane). This unity and complementarity between Aihisuru and Watane is still known as *nuhune sainikane*, and although relocation of settlements since 1980 has resulted in a disjunction between symbolic orientation and physical location, the complementarity is preserved in relations between the relocated Aihisuru at Tahena Ukuna and the settlement of Watane remaining near Sepa (Figure 1.2).

I have described above the basic settlement orientation in terms of mountain-sea, sunset-sunrise and centre-periphery axes. This is certainly correct for the settlements of Rouhua, Bunara and Watane, but in the historic village of Aihisuru and, as far as I can see, in its reincarnation at Tahena Ukuna, the material features that reflect these coordinates are different. For one thing, there is no *suane*. Instead, the sacred centre (*tuaman tia*) is positioned in front of the Matoke-hanaie sacred house (the *numa onate*, residence of the *ia onate*, or ‘chief’), which itself functions as a kind of *suane*, as exemplified in the performance of the *kahuae* dance in front of the *numa onate*. Complementarily, the house of the *ia onate aia* is the *numa kapitane* Kamama in Watane, on the mountain side of the *suane*; the house of the *maritihanna* (the guardian of the *suane*; see section 2.7), the *numa kapitane* Sounaue-aipura, is located on the seaward side of the *suane*, while the house of the *ia onate anakarua* (second in command to the *ia onate aia* in secular matters) lies at the entrance to Watane village. Another difference in Aihisuru, compared with other places, is that the settlement as a whole has one seaward entrance used by both men and women and two mountainward exits, one each for males (to the sunrise), and females (to the sunset).

In addition to these matters of internal symbolic geometry, the notion of ‘island’ – set, as it were in the ‘sea’ of forest – features centrally in Nuaulu conceptions of the village: *nusa niane* (village island) as opposed to *nusa ina* (mother island), the name used for Seram and also for the domain of the living more generally. In this latter sense, *nusa ina* complements *nusa ama*, the ‘father island’ and the domain of the dead. Tongli (1994) interprets this slightly differently, seeing *nusa ina* and *nusa ama* as two islands connected through the encompassing complementarity of *hanaie/hanahanai* (standing for male, brother, wife-giver and *ia onate*) and *pina/tanaite* (standing for female, sister, wife-taker and *kapitane*); and of *kaka* (standing for the elders and the dead) and *wani* (standing for the

young and the living). Together, these constitute the totality of society and cosmos.

These coordinates not only provide the parameters within which major spatial movements take place for individual acts in life cycle, house cycle and other ritual cycles, but they also define the use of space within particular places, most obviously in terms of seating arrangements. Thus, by way of example, Figure 2.3 illustrates the seating plan for the first hair-cutting ceremony of Sounaue-ainakahata held in September 1970. The arrangement in a sacred house is for men to generally sit on the inland and sunrise sides and for women to sit on the seaward and sunset sides. On the seaward side there is a mixture or whatever sex is in the majority at the ceremony in question. Similarly, in moving ritual objects around a house interior, and in their storage, there is a similar spatial logic. Thus, on completion of a new clan sacred shield (*aniaue monne*) for the *numa onate* Sounaue-ainakahata on 26 December 1970,

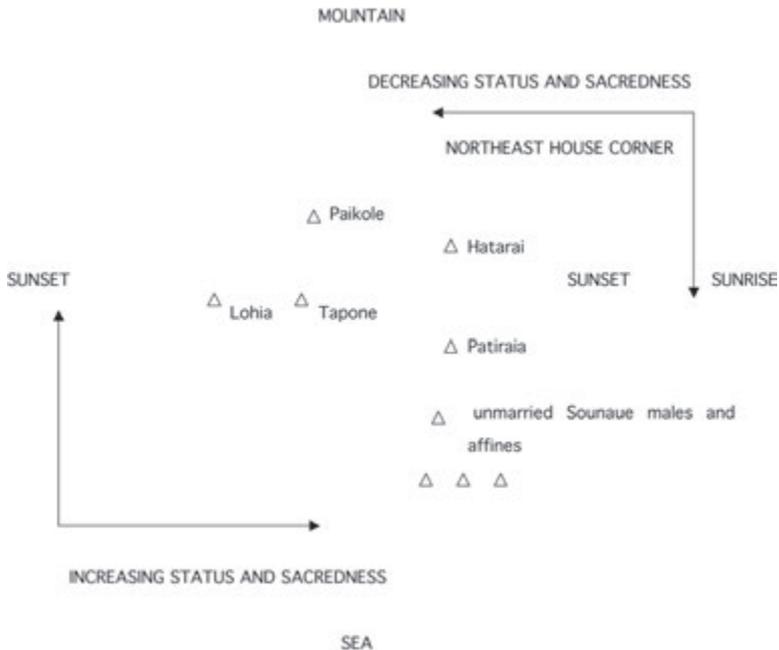


Figure 2.3. Seating plan for a first hair cutting ritual, Sounaue-ainakahata, September 1970.

the shield was placed in the extreme north-east corner, replacing the old shield which was relocated to the mid-point of the mountain-side wall alongside an old sacred spear (*atia monne*). Between these old items and the new shield were stored the bark-cloth rolls. Old objects, therefore, are not simply sacred because they are old – indeed, their sacred power may diminish with age – and eventually have to be replaced with something new to serve as a vehicle for reinvigorated power.

2.2.4 IMPLICATE COORDINATION

We shall come to the strictly real-time and real geographic consequences of such coordinates in a moment, but while I have warned against simple tabulations of symbolic oppositions and linkages, each of these sets of coordinates are repeatedly implicated in each other and, though not in any tidy way, with other symbolic qualities: maleness versus femaleness, our clan versus another clan, descent versus alliance, hot versus cold, and so on. The Nuaulu struggle to keep these opposites separate, and to preserve the orderliness of the universe that the ancestors require. In this context, form is more important than symbolic content, for cognitive frameworks only become symbolic when semantic values are attached to the coordinates, and when the coordinates become self-conscious ends in themselves. Symbolic contrasts, however, provide a means of structuring, discoursing and justifying the doing of ritual. Moreover, we may question how the participant separates a ritual action from its ‘symbolic’ meaning. Elsewhere (Ellen 1980, 1986) I have cautioned against the risk of taking a reductionist view of symbolic components, and I am strongly reinforcing that view here. Tongli (1994) has illustrated well the importance Nuaulu attach to patterns of movement within these coordinates, and it is tempting to interpret them as an agreed set of rules and as contexts generating a fixed and formal set of analogies. I argue that such an approach is misleading, and we can see from the evidence presented here that the particular circumstances of a ritual may have a critical influence on the relationship between the different formal dimensions of orientation. The emphasis is on balance and combination rather than on absolute dichotomies.

For example, as Tongli explains, in certain ceremonies value moves between the female or mother’s side of a house or clan, to the male or father’s side, a process in which the female takes precedence. This latter

idea is reflected in birth ritual (Chapter 3). In the marriage ritual the contract of marriage is made in the ‘mother-house’ of the bridegroom in front of the main post, while the funeral service is held in the father’s ‘mother-house’ and the guardian of this house utters the invocation (Chapter 6). For the transformation of the spirit the guardian of the father’s mother-house takes responsibility. The aim is to have union with the dead and to accompany the spirit of the ‘mother-house’ to the summit of Mount Binaiya. In these movements and relations, the male side and ancestors take precedence. To express this notion of precedence in particular contexts, Nuauulu use the senior-junior relationship, *kaka-wani*.

Life is always in movement, flux or entelechy (Fox 1980a, 1980b), and for Tongli, Nuauulu *monne* too is about passage and relationship. It addresses the inter-relation between prosperity and misfortune that is expressed through a balance between the living and the dead. Thus, *mahu* (affinity, or the relationship between those who have intermarried) is constituted through relations of blood, marital alliance and the performance of rituals, all effected through the ancestral relationship called *nuhune sainikane*. In this sense death is the beginning of life outside the body and birth, the beginning of the life inside the body. Therefore, prosperity (*tunumunie*) and misfortune (*kahatane*) are two manifestations of the same entity that moves downward (literally downstream, to the sea) and upward (literally upstream, to the mountains), and vice versa. Upward movement is the foundation of ancestral society, prosperity and birth, while downward movement is the foundation of mortal society, misfortune and death. The integration of misfortune and prosperity, death and birth, prescription and prohibition is achieved through ritual performance, and especially through *kahuae*. It can be no coincidence that so many of these symbolic actions are physically and bodily instantiated, as reflected in Tongli’s insistence on providing numerous diagrams of spatial movements for the ritual episodes that he describes, for scripts embedded in repeated physical actions are so much easier to remember and reassemble when required. They, therefore, facilitate effective knowledge transmission.

2.3 MATERIAL PARAPHERNALIA

In order to instantiate the physical, sensory and conceptual coordinates used to think about, organize and enact ritual, and to demonstrate the

movements and regulations that I have spoken about, a repertoire of physical ingredients is necessary, both human and non-human. Indeed, we now recognize that an earlier generation of analysts underestimated the significance of the materiality of objects used in ritual and the extent to which they are important in themselves, making them, perversely, somehow subservient to symbols and abstract social relations (Appadurai 1986). Many of these objects are not merely the currency of ritual, through the movement of which ritual is actually recognized, but may themselves be the object of ritual, in their making, and in their life histories. Moreover, much of the time taken to prepare for rituals is time taken in obtaining and manufacturing material objects required for ritual. I was able to illustrate this in an earlier article with respect to sacred shields (Ellen 1990). Indeed, when we come to consider obstacles to the effective reproduction of Nuaulu rituals in Chapter 9, we will see that problems and failure often surround the unavailability of appropriate ritual objects. Table 2.1 shows the distribution of sacred items (that is, those labelled *monne*) stored in five sacred houses in Rouhua at a sequence of census dates in 1971. It does not include the contents of baskets, little of which I was allowed to see, but these generally contained ornamental trinkets, red cloths, and such like.

Physical objects vary in the degree to which they are used in ritual, and in the significance attached to them. Thus, perishables (especially cooked food) are more appropriate for some phases of a ritual, and durables (imported objects) more appropriate for other phases (Valeri 2001 [1994a]:159-60). Some items are rarely used, but others are essential for almost all events that are described as ritual, to such an extent that they resemble some kind of universal means of exchange. Thus, Saete, in defending Nuaulu religious practices against charges that it was still focussed on the taking of heads (Ellen 2002), could plead that, on the contrary, it was more ‘about plates and red cloth’. Here he is alluding to perhaps the most general and widespread objects used in ritual. Use of, and transactions involving, these objects are simultaneously, and on different occasions, both the main focus of ritual and the fine-tuning in the regulation of human-cosmic relations. For example, Timor cloth and special baskets are the main focus of female puberty ceremonies, while red cloth and barkcloth are the main focus of male puberty ceremonies. Plates in profusion are exchanged at both birth and death, while both plates and red cloth are required for the payment of certain fines, such

	Sounaue <i>numa onate</i>	Sounaue <i>numa maritihanna</i>	Peinisa <i>numa kapitane</i>	Maroke-pina <i>(numa onate)</i>	Neipane-tomoi'en <i>(numa onate)</i>
<i>aniuae mome</i> (in thatch)	1	-	-	-	-
<i>mome spear</i> (in thatch)	1	-	-	-	-
<i>karanua</i> (on line)	4	-	6	12	5
barkcloths	21	-	8	3	15
<i>sokate</i>	2	-	1	-	1
<i>koce</i>	1	-	4	5	-
baskets (<i>akamas</i>)	8	4	5	3	4
large plates	2	-	2	3	3
plates	4	-	23	15	7
porcelain bowls	10	-	1	5	2
headdress	-	1	-	-	-
cup	-	-	1	1	1
betel pouch	-	-	2	-	-
gong	-	-	1	1	3
ritual spears	-	-	-	2	-
other baskets	-	-	-	7	-
<i>umae</i> (large 'belangan' type vessel, red porcelain, probably of Chinese origin: <i>umae mome</i>)	-	-	-	1	-
'kain timor'	-	-	-	-	1
barkcloth beater	-	-	-	-	1

Table 2.1. Distribution of ritual objects in five sacred clan houses in Rouhua, 1971.

as infringements against the sanctity of totemic species. Other objects are important in individual rituals, but are not a common connecting currency. All of these objects may occur in different combinations and contexts. Thus, red cloth may play a role by itself, or it may combine in a particular form of attire. Some objects are sacred from the moment they are produced (such as special barkcloths and shields), but what distinguishes all objects is that once they have been used in a ritual they become in themselves sacred and cannot be destroyed. Most are stored on a shelf (*rine*) at the sunrise side of an appropriate sacred house (see frontispiece), the most sacred protected by an *ainatae erenele*, a piece of thatch that conceals them from the line of vision of women and outsiders. Some *monne* items, however (for instance, plates), are stored elsewhere, such as in a garden house, while a new sacred house is being built.

Before looking at particular kinds of object, it is important to make one further distinction, namely between physical objects acquired through exchange and those made specifically for the occasion. Where this latter occurs, the process of manufacture itself becomes ritualized, and accomplishment of the ritual of production must be satisfactorily undertaken before the ceremony to which it contributes can take place. In terms of the mechanics and reproduction of ritual, both pose problems of availability. This may delay or prevent rituals being undertaken, but the problems are different. With exchange goods, the problems are availability and cash cost; with locally manufactured objects, the problems are due to time-budgeting and, in certain cases, non-availability. We will return to these issues, and to the sense of dependency that exchange goods pose for the performance of ritual, later. Here I will begin with a short description of first, those objects acquired in outside exchange, and then, of those produced by the consumers of the ritual. Objects produced from the resources within the clan signify descent, while those that can only be obtained through exchange denote alliance.

2.3.1 RED CLOTH AND KARANUNU

The most ubiquitous object in Nuaulu ritual, and the one that has come to signify the realm of the ancestors, animist and, in particular, Nuaulu identity in a wider Moluccan context, is red cloth: the *karanunu*, or ‘kain belang’ in Ambonese Malay. The default *karanunu* is always red; these are the cloths that all adult Nuaulu males wear on the head, that are worn

round the loins over barkcloth at the male puberty ceremony and when performing rituals, and during the *kahuae* and *auwoti* dances. In addition, red cloth is a part of the basic offering made to ancestors in recompense for violating prohibitions. The colour red is associated with males, and red cloth may not be taken to places where it might be subject to gender pollution; in particular, it must be kept out of menstruation huts. The prominence of red cloth stands as a striking difference between male and female rituals, representing as it does the male values of bravery and head-taking. Red bands are also worn by a boy when his head is shaved, but not by girls; it is also draped over the corpse of a male elder, but not female elders. The only red cloth used in female puberty ceremonies is the strip tied around the neck as a protective amulet.

As a normal head cloth, the *karanunu* must always be worn by adult males, especially when eating, and except when sleeping. However, officiants in major rituals must in addition tie their cloth to one side over a wooden block around which the hair is twisted (*ahutu neine*). This gives the appearance of a single horn on the side opposite the hand used to hold a parang. Thus, a right-handed person has the *ahutu neine* on his left hand side, and a left-handed person on his right side. *Karanunu* of great age are stored on the *rine*, may never be destroyed and will eventually disintegrate. As a manufactured item, red cloth has rarely been in short supply, and so its value is not connected, like some other textiles, with rarity or expense. It can usually be purchased from local stores in Sepa or Amahai. However, Nuaulu distinguish different qualities of ‘kain berang’ and occasionally may insist on obtaining it from further afield, such as from Ambon, so as to guarantee the desired quality. But as if to reinforce the norm through exceptionality, a few *karanunu* are not red at all, including the *karanunu onate*, a dark-blue and patterned batik worn by certain men, both on the head and around the waist. In Rouhua this is the custom of Neipane-tomoién, whose chief can gift it to other senior males. As a commodity, it is more expensive and more difficult to obtain than ‘kain berang’.

2.3.2 PLATES

Plates function in rituals in three ways. First, there are those that have a purpose in ceremonies, but are not in themselves sacred, nor do they become so. The most obvious example of this is the *papuae*, the plate

containing betel-chewing requisites and tobacco, which is an obligatory part of most rituals. Each plate consists of a portion of tobacco, about three trade or locally-made cigarettes, five betel pepper fruits, a cup of lime and about eight betel fruits.

Secondly, there are old heirloom plates of various kinds that are intrinsically *monne*, and which are exchanged and used at major rituals. There are different kinds of plates in this category. Although the most valuable plates are old Chinese porcelain (*hanainae*) and Dutch and English glazed ware, by 1986 much had either been sold to traders or disappeared through breakage. Modern plates have become increasingly acceptable as long as they are the right size, shape and colour. Plates are an important part of the currency of marriage payments, the payment of fines and to release individuals from prohibitions, and as offerings to clan ancestors in the context of ritual performance. In these ways plates circulate between individuals and between houses and clans and beyond. In marriage women move in one direction, plates in the other, both being in a reciprocal relationship.

Thirdly, old porcelain may be the residence of particular ancestral spirits, and some Nuauulu claim that in the past a head of each ancestor was kept and placed on the plate. Spirits of older siblings (*sio manaoneta*) reside in two-tiered porcelain plates (*hanainae*), middle siblings (*sio autihue*) in either cups, deep bowls or plates (*hanaina monae*), and younger siblings (*sio muia*) in a cup or plate (*hanainae*) (Bolton 1977b:36-7). At any rate, spirits of male and female, elder, middle and younger siblings are not permitted to mix on the same kind of plate. While it is true that plates also have to be ‘alive’ themselves in some sense if they are to represent life in transactions, and have – as Valeri (1980:189) puts it – a ‘voice’, his claim for the Huauulu that plates are themselves living beings, with a voice (*lio*), cannot be substantiated for the Nuauulu. Although the role of plates as the residence of certain spirits and their stated purpose in replacing a human head in certain rituals suggests something similar, Nuauulu use *enene* for the sound of a plate when hit, the same word used when hitting other inanimate objects, rather than the cognate *nio*.

2.3.3 BETEL

Of all the plants or plant products used in ritual by Nuauulu (Table 2.2), the most important are those associated with betel-chewing, usually the

Nuauulu name	Taxonomic Family	Scientific binomial
<i>akunin</i> <i>a. pina</i> <i>a. hanaie</i>	LEGUMINOSAE SEE <i>kawasa</i> LAURACEAE	Archidendron clypaeria Actinodaphne sp.
<i>asinokoe</i>	SEE <i>akunin</i>	
<i>kam</i>	PIPERACEAE	Piper betle
<i>kamane</i>	ARAUCARIACEAE	Agathis dammara
<i>kanai</i>	ARECACEAE	Areca catechu
<i>kananukue</i>	LAMIACEAE	Ocimum americanum
<i>kasipehe</i>	CANNACEAE	Canna indica
<i>kawasa</i>	SEE <i>akunin pina</i>	
<i>koae</i>	PANDANACEAE	Pandanus sp.
<i>kokine</i>	MUSACEAE	Musa sp.
<i>kokune</i>	VERBENACEAE	Callicarpa longifolia
<i>kunie</i>	ZINGIBERACEAE	Curcuma aurantiaca Curcuma viridiflora
<i>makanitu</i>	FLAGELLARIACEAE	Flagellaria indica
<i>masahanate</i>	ARALIACEAE	Polyscias cumingiana
<i>monone</i>	ARACEAE	Scindapsus sp.
<i>nana</i>	LEGUMINOSAE	Pterocarpus indicus
<i>nasinana</i>	ARECACEAE	Caryota rumphiana
<i>nione</i>	ARECACEAE	Cocos nucifera
<i>nisoae</i>	LEGUMINOSAE	probl. Paraserianthes falcataria
<i>nonanae</i>	MARANTACEAE	Donax canniformis
<i>puni</i>	ARACEAE	Homalomena pendula
<i>sinsinte</i> (6 kinds)	EUPHORBIACEAE	Codiaeum variegatum
<i>sonae</i> <i>s. msinae</i> <i>s. totu ikine</i>	AGAVACEAE	Cordyline terminalis
<i>tapako</i>	SOLANACEAE	Nicotiana tabacum
<i>wainite</i> <i>w. maka notue</i>	MARANTACEAE	Phrynium pubinerve
<i>w. manu aia</i>	MARANTACEAE	Phrynium sp.
<i>w. totu nanue</i>	MARANTACEAE	Phrynium sp.
<i>w. totu nauae</i>	MARANTACEAE	Phrynium macrocephalum
<i>w. totu onate</i>	MARANTACEAE	Phrynium capitatum

Nuulu name	Taxonomic Family	Scientific binomial
<i>waronone</i>	MORACEAE	<i>Ficus pubinervis</i>
<i>waruuae</i>	MORACEAE	<i>Ficus</i> sp.

Table 2.2. Selected plant species significant in Nuulu ritual cycles described in this book.

nut of *Areca catechu* and the fruit of *Piper betle*. Chewed with mineral lime, these have a psychoactive effect that is an important accompaniment of most rituals. The commensal chewing of the betel quid and its giving is the essential ingredient of social sharing (Plate 2.1a). Like food, betel and tobacco pass between participating groups in a way that gives coherence and structure to ritual events. I have discussed elsewhere betel exchange and consumption as a ritual marker (Ellen 1991), so will not say much here.

However, it should be noted that in rites of passage, betel is significant in three respects: (i) in its absence during the initial and central phases of the rite; (ii) in the prominence attached to its consumption by receiving participants as a mark of reintegration into normal life; and (iii) in the abstinence from chewing honoured by the structural hosts of a ritual event. In these last two roles it articulates the key social exchanges that underpin the ritual. Thus, in the birth ritual (as in menstrual seclusion) a woman is denied betel for the duration of her confinement. Only when she emerges and when mother and baby have been reintegrated into the house does the mother consume betel. The same applies to smoking. In the ceremony, the mother is offered betel (supplied by her eldest brother) by the wife of the head of the complementary clan sacred house. Thus, the officiant is the wife of the *kapitane* if the recipient comes from the house of the chief, and the officiant is the wife of the chief if the recipient is from the house of the *kapitane*. The officiant does not share in the rite, but indicates (‘...*pota, pota, pota...*’) when the others should begin. All guests present share in the rite, but most of the betel requisites prepared for each guest – as with food provided at a feast – remain untouched and are distributed to the households of the guests for later private consumption.

The pattern of betel use at birth rituals provides us with a model for what takes place at other life-crisis rituals. In both male and female puberty ceremonies, neophytes are denied betel while in ritual seclusion

(a)



(b)

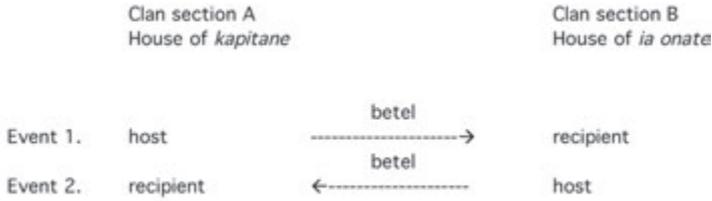


(c)



Plate 2.1. (a) Elders chewing betel after Soumori totemic ritual, Rouhua, August 1973; (b) two kinds of sacred plant recently planted on the seaward side of the *numa onate* Matoke (to the left, *Codium variegatum*, *sinsin naue*, and to the right, *Cordyline terminalis*, *sonae msinae*), Rouhua, July 1975; (c) elders feasting following Hatarai's *so saruana*, Rouhua, August 1973.

A. Birth



B. Male puberty

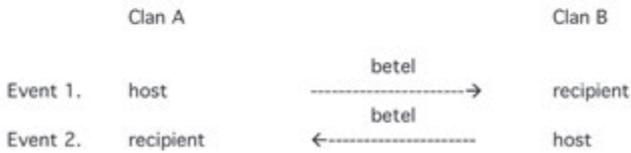


Figure 2.4. The social passage of betel in ritual.

or in a liminal condition, but are ostentatiously reintegrated into social life by being administered betel under ceremonial conditions, in a way which enforces clan and house interdependence, and which highlights the sharing involved in taking betel. In male rituals, for example, betel passes not between houses, but between clans; in addition, the relationship established between officiant and neophyte (*morite*) is one that continues throughout life, is reproduced in subsequent generations, and parallels the ideal symmetric movement of women between clans. This reciprocal social passage of betel at birth and the onset of male adulthood is summarily diagrammed in Figure 2.4. In death, the ritual abstinence is not that of the subject, but rather that of the pallbearers who accompany the corpse to the cemetery, and who then have to be reintegrated following their exposure to mystical danger. In this context, the betel is provided by the affines of the deceased and administered by the head of the opposite clan section.

What is significant about Nuaulu rituals in which the betel quid features (which means, in some sense or another, virtually all rituals), is the

movement from chewing to non-chewing, and back to chewing again. Since chewing is ubiquitous, its cessation and denial become the more remarkable. Moreover, the chewing in ordinary communion is unstructured and unrestricted, while ritual intermission leads to chewing that is structured and restricted, pre-meditated and reflexive. Thus, in practical terms, it is crucial to know when to chew and when not to chew. The structural significance of breaks in an otherwise continuous consumption of betel through time – a kind of symbolic punctuation – is complemented by its periodic passage in ritual between clans and houses, thus integrating social life both diachronically and synchronically.

2.3.4 BARKCLOTH AND TEXTILES

There are four types of barkcloth, named after the trees from which they are derived: *waruae*, *waronone*, *supa* and *tulane*. Two of these, *waruae* and *waronone*, are reddish in colour and have a special ritual status; they are, as Nuauulu say, *monne*. At a male puberty ceremony *waruae* (*Ficus* sp) is the first to be given to neophytes, who are forbidden to touch it before they are inducted. It is only worn once and then placed on the ritual shelf. That used to install elders, the *tupue*, is made from *waronone* (*Ficus pubinervis*), and needs to be boiled prior to completion. Other barkcloths are not *monne*, or ‘objects from the past’; these are generally white and derived from other species of *Ficus*, *Artocarpus*, *Trema* (*sapane*) and *Lansium domesticum* (*nasate*).

There are two other main kinds of textile important in Nuauulu ritual, but unlike the *karanunu* these are not exchanged to reinforce the virtues of alliance; rather, they are the permanent property of particular clans and their possession reinforces the virtues of descent. Thus, ‘kain Timor’, or *nipa kanne*, are important in Sounaue female puberty ceremonies (Plate 4.1c), whereas ‘kain patola’, or *patona aie*, Indian printed and painted cloth from Gujerat, are ‘for the house’ and worn when planting the first post. We shall see in Chapter 9 that decreasing availability of these textiles is a factor threatening the persistence of certain kinds of ritual.

2.3.5 OTHER ATTIRE

Attire varies according to ceremony. In any ritual, or in those activities preparatory to a ritual, such as hunting, minimal ritual attire must be

worn by post-pubertal men. As we have seen, this involves a red cloth tied in a horn at the side of the head (*ahutu neine*). Full male ceremonial attire (Plate 2.2a and b) involves barkcloth and, for officiants, a batik cloth worn at the front as an apron with the point just below the knees (*karanunu onate*). Male officiants also generally wear a cloth army-belt and a red, cotton collarless shirt (*naku*). Women wear a ‘sarong-kebaya’, and Matoke and Soumori women in particular wear the conical *nasa* hat made from pandanus leaves. I have heard Nuaulu explain that these items reflect what the ancestors wore at the time of creation, which is why they are important in ritual, but they also distinguish – in males, at least – the sacred from the secular. Ornaments are important parts of ritual attire: for males there are anklets (*masima tana*) and armbands (*honi*), earrings of yellow-dyed leaf (*sinsin wainite*), mainly restricted to *kahuae* and major rituals; and for females *nitiana*, metal bracelets, and *pinae*, shell bracelets, which are also used as small change in the payment of fines for violations against female *nuhune* spirits. Finally, rings are important in many Nuaulu rituals, being either exchanged, used in the payment of fines, or by contributing their potency through shaving small amounts into ritual admixtures. The fines include those required for women who do not follow menstrual restrictions and men who are already married at their puberty ceremony, and whose wives must then *iapusaa nahai* ‘raise his breath/spirit’ with a ring. Rings are central to male puberty rituals, and are placed over the eyes of a corpse when laid out in a clan sacred house.

2.3.6 OTHER PLANT PRODUCTS

In addition to the plants already mentioned, several other types are of significance in ritual: coconuts, mainly through the use of coconut oil (*wekatisie*), particularly aromatic oil containing *Ocimum americanum* (*wekatisie akaronae*). Then there is *wainite* (*Phrynium* spp.) and three especially salient species: *sinsinte* (*Codiaeum variegatum*, of which six types are recognized, and of which *sinsin naue* is especially important), *kokine* (a species of *Musa*) and *sonae* (*Cordyline terminalis*), especially *sonae msinae*. These are planted on both the seaward side of the *numa onate* Matoke (Plate 2.1b), and on the seaward side of the *suane*. A type of pandanus, *koae*, also gives its name to a kind of mat primarily associated with male puberty rites, though it may be used in a variety of other circumstances, where it acts

(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



Plate 2.2. (a) Male ceremonial attire, Aihisuru February 1970: Hatua, chief of Matoke-hanaie (centre), and Manue Matoke and Sumoei Sounaue-aipura (either side, both unmarried); (b) male ceremonial attire, Aihisuru, February 1970: as (a) but rear view; (c) male *kahuae* dancers in *numa onate* Matoke, Aihisuru, February 1970: Sekanima Sounaue-aipura, Saniau Matoke-hanaie, Kawasa Peinisa and Ipinua Matoke-hanaie; (d) unmarried post-pubertal female dancers performing around torch of *kamane* (*Agathis dammara*) resin within the circle of male *kahuae* dancers, Aihisuru, February 1970.

to separate some object (such as sacred shields) from a contaminating substrate. The kind of pandan used depends on clan affiliation: thus *ko msinae* is the prerogative of Matoke and Sounaue-ainakahata. The insides of sacred houses and other spaces where ritual is conducted can only be illuminated with resin (*kamane*) lamps. The resin used for such lamps is preferably from the conifer *Agathis dammara*, but also from *Shorea*.

Then there is the timber, thatch, rattan and sago-leafstalk walling required for rituals focussed on sacred houses. These and other plant resources used in rituals (such as sago) are often, though by no means exclusively, derived from *sin wesie*, areas of specially protected forest. Such areas are particularly reserved for the growing of *hini* (the main uprights) of sacred houses, and until the *hini* have been taken it is forbidden to extract other resources. Even hunting is excluded. Each clan has a *sin wesie* in a different location. For example, in Rouhua, Soumori has a *sin wesie* at Mnunu above Isonaue in the headwaters of the Upa, Neipane-tomoien at Wakakau, Sounaue-ainakahata at Sonukunesi, Matoke on the River Awao, and Peinisa in the headwaters of the River Mon.

2.3.7 OTHER MANUFACTURED OBJECTS

All clan sacred houses display a *sokate*, sometimes several. These are usually a distinctive style of openwork basket, and the default *soka sionata* is made from a species of rattan of the genus *Calamus*, usually *meu nunte*, but also *meu wasa ura* and *meu hahu ikae*. It hangs from the central part of the *rine*, the shelf where sacred objects are stored, and it is here that ancestral spirits are said to reside. *Sokate* are a key focus for invocations made to spirits during rituals, in shamanic seances (*makawana saruana*) used for curing and divination, and are the subject of ritual themselves during their making and installation. *Sokate* contain red cloth, bracelets, plates, cups and other items presented to the *saruana* (ancestral spirits) so that they may enjoy all the comforts of the after life, which are of course the comforts of Nuaulu life.

In the Sounaue clan house in Rouhua in 1971 there were three *sokate*: one for the *saruana sionata* (spirits of dead humans) and one each made from sago leafstalk for the spirits of the pig (*soka hahu*) and the cassowary (*soka asuan*). These animals are *monne* for Sounaue-ainakahata, but only in their spirit form, and so are not prohibited as food. Nuaulu believe that the spirits of animals can enter the bodies of mediums in just the same

way as spirits of humans, and sometimes they may be stronger. In the Rouhua Neipane clan house there were also three *sokate* in 1971: two for the immediate ancestors (*sionata*) in the *kapitane* and chiefly lines, respectively, and the third for the *saruana enu* (the spirits of the turtle, the totem of Neipane-tomoien). This last *enu nene sokate* is made from the wood of *Archidendron clypaeria*, the same species used to make sacred shields, and is shaped like a turtle's back. A line (*ane*) made from *meu hehue* (cuscus rattan) stretches the width of the *rine* and just above it, and therefore the width of the house. On the line are hung those *karanunu* that serve as vehicles for *sionata*.

The number of plates, red cloths and other objects at any one time accumulating on the *rine*, along the *ane*, or in the *sokate*, will depend on acquisitions and depletions arising through exchange at key ritual events, and also through the receipt and payment of fines (*sakati*) to clan ancestors in compensation for various offences. These latter are often connected with the non-performance of ritual. As red cloth eventually rots and decomposes, and plates break, this is a necessary means of replenishment. The significance of physical objects lies in the extent to which they are a necessary requirement for effective ritual reproduction, and in the extent to which their significance in rituals means that their production in turn becomes ritualized. Thus, the timing and articulation of major rituals depends on having conducted those 'enabling' rituals in which certain essential objects are made. We can see this in the sequence of events involved in making ritual shields (Ellen 1990). Similarly, the process of making barkcloth for male puberty ceremonies, or for the installation of elders, is itself a ritually elaborated process. Another example is the preparation of *tobako nikate*, 'patterned tobacco', for the same ceremonies, in which *waimite* (*Phrynium* spp.) leaves are dyed with turmeric root and then cut into various stylized patterns with a small knife. The completed items are used to wrap tobacco for festive occasions. The making of such objects by women, because the objects are themselves sacred, must take place in a clan sacred house.

2.4 FOOD AND FEASTING

Nuaulu ritual feasts (*nasae*) are not massive or spectacular compared with, say, those of the Balinese, but they do require careful planning and

logistics, often involving provisioning of up to 50 guests. Indeed, the production, exchange and consumption of food is no less an essential component of ritual performance than the manufacture, manipulation and exchange of material objects. The pathways and destinations involving food are often the same, but food differs fundamentally in that it is physically ingested, and most participants share at this process of commensal ingestion at some point. It is not simply the ingestion of food, however, that is significant, but also its denial, and indeed the ritual process might be characterized as constituting a pattern of alternating fasting and feasting. Thus, the parents of a new baby, male and female puberty-ceremony candidates, or an elder receiving *tupu-tupue* barkcloth will all fast before and during a ceremony. Those who fast eat sago porridge and cuscus before daybreak and then nothing until the feast. There are also spirit participants in the feast who, although consuming only the ‘intangible essence of the food’ (Frake 1980:149), are provided for on a scale equalling that of mortals. It is believed by most people that ancestors take only ‘the soul of the food’ and leave the visible part for the living.

Food, generically, is always important, but many foods are effectively (if not proactively) unused at moments of ritually important consumption. Some of the essential foods are also the foods of everyday consumption, but some (*sikenae*, *maea* and *karatupa utue*) are only ever produced for ritual consumption. Sago is an important constituent, mostly in the form of *sona* (porridge), but also in two ritually marked forms: sago biscuits (*sikenae*) and (mixed with kenari nuts) as *maea*. The third important ritual food is *karatupa utue*, crushed kenari nuts mixed with chilli. Meat (never fish) is also an essential ingredient, but especially meats in the *peni* category (that is pig, deer and cassowary). The meat of cuscus may be consumed on certain specific occasions. Bananas are a necessary and constant feature, but never other kinds of fruit, even those otherwise most esteemed, such as durian.

Structurally, the main locus for the consumption of food is towards the end of a segment of ritual, at the point of social reintegration. Feasts generally take place in a clan house structurally appropriate for the ritual concerned, the food arranged on banana leaves along the inland-seaward axis. Plate 2.1c, for example, depicts elders feasting following a ceremony hosted by Hatarai to honour the *saruana*. There are two kinds of feast: *nasae sona man* (sago-only feasts), for minor ritual occasions such as childbirth; and the *nasae mamanai* for important occasions, such as

the ritual washing of a girl following first menstruation. In these rituals, foods such as *maea* are important in addition to sago and the other items mentioned above. But ingestion in a more specific way may be an earlier requirement in a ritual sequence. I speak here of ‘ingestion’ rather than ‘eating’ or ‘food’. Thus, as we have seen in the previous section, the termination of a particular sub-sequence in a ritual may be marked by the chewing of betel or smoking (partial reintegration), while chewing betel may be an accompaniment of certain rituals of production, as in the manufacture of *tapako nikate*. All these forms of consumption constitute ingestion. In the same way that the production of material objects required in ritual itself becomes part of the ritual process, and these rituals feed into and contribute towards determining the frequency and timing of major ritual cycles, so too with the collecting and making of food. We can see this in particular in ceremonial hunts (*matueu*) and collecting expeditions, often accompanied by constant drumming.

How much food is actually ingested at a particular event is highly variable, and more important than physical ingestion is the symbolization of its production, and the process by which food is visibly redistributed to reinforce kinship, affinal and – increasingly – community bonds. Only a small piece of betel, tobacco or food will be consumed by most participants at the ceremony or feast itself, the remainder being taken home to be subsequently consumed by men; for if eaten by women it is thought to bring barrenness caused by the heat of the ancestors so honoured.

2.5 WORDS AND MOVEMENTS: KAHUAE

Nuaulu *kahuae* in itself is not a ritual or a feast in the way described by Valeri (1990a) for the Huaulu; rather, it accompanies important rituals of various kinds, such as those required to build clan sacred houses or a *suane*. *Kahuae* may be celebratory and take place after a successful hunt or at a male puberty ceremony, or it may be a response to accumulated misfortunes, such as illness attributed to the ancestors as a punishment for failing to perform ritual. Depending on the importance of the ritual, or the other reasons for performing it, a *kahuae* may last just one night or continue for many. During my periods in the field I have never known it persist for longer than five nights. In former times *kahuae* were linked to

head-taking, a head brought back to the village being probably placed in the centre of the dance space. Even today, if dull, incessant drum beats and chanting of a *kahuae* are heard by outsiders, for example in Sepa, it may be assumed that a head has been taken.

A *kahuae* is an obligatory performance led by elders who have already received the *tupu-tupue* (ceremonial barkcloths given to senior men in ascribed positions of authority). It usually starts at about midnight and will continue until dawn, when it is followed by the *auwoti* dance, which was originally the prelude to headhunting. The *kahuae* and *auwoti* are complementary in emotional and symbolic terms. The first occurs at night, the second in the day time; both collectively reflect social vitality and strength, and separately, the oscillation between social harmony and the integration of men and women (*kahuae*), and violent individualism (*auwoti*), or as Valeri (1990a) puts it for the Huulu, between centripetal heteronymy and autonomy.

Kahuae is technically a circle dance performed by men with inter-linked arms (Plate 2.2c), moving in a clockwise direction around a torch made from *kamane* (*Agathis dammara*) resin. The basic choreography consists of four steps forward and four steps back, with the stamping of the feet in unison on the final step in each direction, the overall effect being a swaying motion. It involves a series of simultaneous physical movements and sounds, comprising five sections, performed in the following order:

<i>sana</i>	slow, no drum
<i>inaiki</i>	slow, no drum
<i>atinai</i>	fast, drum
<i>aineu</i>	fast, drum
<i>saiki</i>	fast, drum

Tongli (1994) has suggested that we can better understand the function of these sections by sequencing them into three movements. The first, a default movement (*sana* and *inaiki*), runs from about nine o'clock in the evening until midnight, and is said to constitute a call by the living participants to the dead to come to the house or *suane* in order to perform *kahuae* with the living, echoing an earlier summons during the preceding afternoon with a drum (Chapter 8, paragraph 4). The second movement (*atinai*, *aineu* and *saiki*) is more energetic and intense, and lasts from between midnight and one o'clock until around three o'clock in the

morning, the expenditure of energy signifying that the dead from the mountains and from each mother-house are now in the house or *suane* and are dancing with the living. As dawn approaches the *kahuae* moves into its third phase (a repeat of the *sanai* and *inaiki*), which is slow and (for Tongli) melancholic, signifying that the dead have gone away: the dead of the mountains returning to Mount Binaya accompanied now by the dead of each mother-house, making them *sio saruana*. (ancestors of the mountains). At dawn, the *kahuae* stops altogether.

During those intervals in the *kahuae* when the drumming ceases and there is a slow chant, the dance step is reduced to a slow, rhythmic walking. The slower elements involve deliberate sideways steps, each foot meeting the other after each step. These are the parts of the dance that involve the participation of young, unmarried but sexually mature girls, who place themselves in between pairs of males who link arms behind their back, encircling the torch five times. The girls, who wear a sarong and kebaya, have whitened faces and, in some instances, special head pieces (*simia* or *sirinasa*) made from coconut leaves. They wear anklets and armlets of copper wire, keep their hands by their sides and remain silent, apart from the jangling of their anklets. At other times three or four girls position themselves in the centre of the circle around the resin torch and perform the slow, circular, backwards and forwards hand movements known as *mara* (Plate 2.2d), a version of the more widely distributed ‘menari’ of Island Southeast Asia. Girls participate in the dance only after it has been going on for several hours, as sufficient heat must be generated by the men to balance the ‘cold’ introduced by the girls. The girls participate intermittently, perhaps two or three times during the night, and not always in every *kahuae*.

The *kahuae* is accompanied by the instrumental sounds of the drum, stamping and jangling of female anklets, but most importantly by the traditional sung verse linked to particular sections and led by a chanter who sings a verse to which the others reply in unison. These are known as *ahinae*, of which there are two kinds. The first (*ahinae monne*) are sacred narratives, usually in archaic Nuauulu language and based on history and myth. There are many different named sequences, such as the *ahinae Numusaku*, each of considerable length and each consisting of a ‘root’ or ‘trunk’ and a ‘tip’, respectively long and short elements. Those that are acknowledged to refer to head-taking (either specific events, or generically) are known as *ahinae tinahane*. These are seldom fully understood by

modern Nuaulu, especially younger people without the knowledge that comes with ritual authority. While to sing *ahinae monne* does not require understanding, the second kind – *ahinae masinaie* – are narratives chanted in modern Nuaulu. These concern recent events, and are still being consciously invented. They may be about dreams, dead persons, and stories from life, such as disputes between individuals. I have recorded 47 different *ahinae* overall, each constituting between 30 and 100 stanzas, and each the intellectual property of particular clans and individuals. One example is as follows:

Nima onima nima

Of the Nuaulu [*'nima'* alludes to Patalima]

Eretui nunue inai nunue

Cut the banyan tree, cut the banyan tree

Ire sapai waru ina Makuana

Mock mother Makuana (name of village)

Ina maranu misine

Mother brings the betel container

Sio ma keke tasiu

They bring the betel shoulder bag

When a *kahuae* is to take place, people gather up to three weeks beforehand to recite the *ahinae* that will be sung. Such a long preparation is required in order to remember the longer and less familiar verses.

By contrast, the *auwoiti* was formerly performed before a raid or headhunt, and then only rarely. Heads were necessary at various stages in the building of sacred houses, including planting of the first post and for the ceremony that marks the culmination of the great sacred-house cycle. They were also taken prior to other important rituals that terminate with a *kahuae mainae*, that is, a great circle dance, and for marriage. In what I suspect was an attempt to reinvent the *auwoiti*, Komisi Soumori once explained to me that it had nothing directly to do with either warfare or headhunting, and then commented (which I can well believe) that since coming to the coast performances of it had increased in number. *Auwoiti* is essentially a mimetic dance, referring to conventional stances in fighting. It is performed at dawn by men descending from the house or *suane*, on the seaward side. Dancers face each other; if there is only one dancer, he will face the two croton bushes seaward of the *suane*, though formerly

the dance would have been performed facing a human head. It consists of three parts – the *marā* (already described) performed by young women; a part involving a series of (often three) dancers; and an individual performance by the chief of the clan Matoke around the dance ground. In the second part, each performer charges towards the other alternately, with parangs raised and horizontally held. The beginning and end of the *auwoti* are signified by the participants walking in a skipping motion, from and then back to the ‘*kahuāe* house’, carrying a shield under the left arm with the parang laid flat across it with the right hand. The *auwoti* is not accompanied by sung verse, but by a drum. It never occurs without a preceding *kahuāe*, of which it can be seen as the terminal phase.

Sound accompanies other rituals: percussive sound, particularly at male puberty ceremonies, and the jaw harp and, sometimes, gongs are part of the acoustic technology used to summon the ancestors in healing rituals. Words do not have the same illocutionary force for Nuaulu as often claimed for rituals elsewhere. Words are important and they have to be correct, but they have no primacy. We might distinguish two kinds of words: participatory public utterance and specialist private utterance. The first are exemplified in the *ahinae* verses that accompany the *kahuāe*; the second are the quiet words of the invocations uttered by ritual specialists, which accompany key ritual actions. It is not that Nuaulu rituals are unaccompanied by words, but rather, that they are few, often in archaic language and not for public display. The only exceptions are the words that accompany the *kahuāe*, and here they are in a sense an intrinsic part of the dance. As Valeri (1994b:208) reports for the Huaulu, ancestors ‘say little’. Knowledge is, therefore, in a sense, beyond words. Those words that are used in ritual, and which are not in ordinary speech relating to the objective of achieving the correct performance, are invocations or requests (*ainisi*). Some ritual leaders address the earth as ‘my mother down there’ while looking down, or ‘my father up there’ when looking up. Invocations may be made when facing the intersection of the sunrise and inland directions. When making an invocation towards the *rine* an officiant first acknowledges the spirits by touching his chin and the top of his head five times. For Nuaulu, it is objects and actions rather than words that are the primary focus of ritual. In this respect they are like the Baktaman, as described by Barth (1987:5, 47), in their relationship to linguistic formulae.

Like many rituals, those of the Nuaulu are often explained and legitimated with reference to episodes in myths, particularly myths of

creation. These certainly give meaning to performance, and provide a mnemonic for remembering what has to be done at different stages in a ritual. However, there is no accompanying oral narrative that makes the linkages between myth and performance obvious. In fact, apart from the senior participants, whose job it is to know the myths, many participants do not know the myths – or, at least, they claim not to know or to understand them. Words, though they are always the accompaniment of ritual in some form, and may be heard as background utterance by participants other than the speaker, are for the spirits and not for listening to. This, along with the pre-eminence of ‘things’ (Hoskins 1993:9), places Nuaulu rituals very much in the category of rituals of ‘ostension’, a term borrowed by Fox (1979:147) from linguistics and applied to eastern Indonesian ethnographic data, in contrast to rituals of ‘oration’, which rely largely on linguistic sound and are well exemplified in the work of Fox himself on the Rotinese, or in that of Kuipers (1990) on Sumbanese ritual speech (see also Fox 1988). Nuaulu rituals are more like those Fox (1979) describes for Savu, without elaborate oratorical forms or long invocations, and with an emphasis on physical action. Sung ritual verse is part of the dance that accompanies the ritual; it is important for its effectiveness, but is not its primary focus. Although my primary purpose in this study is not to attribute meaning to Nuaulu rituals and their components – and certainly not in any holistic sense, in so far as myths do serve as a medium through which to perpetuate ritual practice, they are relevant. Moreover, it is helpful to provide occasional references to mythic components, especially in the puberty ceremonies, to assist the reader in making sufficient sense of the narrative of the ritual to follow my argument concerning its reproduction. Mythic narratives, for example, are very obviously part of oral performance in their role in *kahuae*.

2.6 SPIRIT PARTICIPANTS

Transactions with spirits or, to be more precise, some ‘culturally postulated superhuman (CPS) agent’ (McCauley and Lawson 2002:8) is a requirement for any Nuaulu ritual performance, or of any competent religious ritual anywhere. In the Nuaulu case, this is either as the force to be supplicated or honoured, or as the agent to be recruited to achieve

some objective. Indeed, spirits might well be said to be part of clan and community governance, and certainly part of a system of social control.

Such spiritual forces can initially be divided into those ancestors that have been (recently) human (*sionata*) and those spirits who have not (*saruana*). Cross-cutting this is a distinction between malevolent spirits (*sakahatene*) and spirits that are mostly benign (*saruana*, again). In Nuaulu language verbs distinguish between human and non-human subjects in the third person: thus, *sakahatene* are marked with a non-human prefix, while actions of *saruana* are marked with a human prefix. As with much in Nuaulu cosmology, there are exceptions and irregularities, and distinctions are not always clear. There is much disagreement as to how spirits should be classified – partly reflecting variations between clans – but in their different ways, they are all important. Spirits are constantly referred to and invoked through prayer and, generally, they are actively involved in people’s daily lives. Thus, *saruana* are sometimes oppressively malevolent, and while most are deep ancestral spirits, the term is also applied to some benign forest-dwelling spirits, to distinguish them from other malevolent forest spirits. Of those spirits who have once been humans, some will be the lineal descendents of participants in ritual and some will be the ancestors of others. Ancestors are just like humans, in the sense that they are morally capricious, but they are also like parents (because, in many cases, they are parents) and command respect. Most of these spirits are believed by the Nuaulu to be visible if they wish to be seen, which makes the boundary between spirit and human sometimes ambiguous. The Nuaulu word for person is *tumata* or *mansia*, but the term *maiapane*, ‘human’, is used specifically when referring to people rather than spirits. In short, it would be inappropriate to describe the collectivity of Nuaulu spirits as a ‘pantheon’, fully-formed in people’s minds. Knowledge is always tentative; individuals are constantly learning new things and experiencing fresh relationships with the spirit world, working out relations with spirits through ritual practices.

The spirits of the recent dead, the immediate jural superiors rather than the founding ancestors, are often addressed as *sionata*, ‘the elders’, or as *wea upu*, ‘my lord’, terms bestowing respect. They are part of daily life, preventing and healing sickness, warning of danger, frightening enemies, foretelling the future, and directing people where to hunt. This is often channelled through shamans or mediums. However, ancestors can also be malevolent and angry, mainly because they demand adherence to

monne, both prescriptive ritual observances and proscriptions. Ancestral spirits in a seance will not enter the body of a shaman if he or she is incorrectly dressed, or if paraffin lamps are being used rather than resin torches. However, ancestral displeasure is not only reflected in a refusal to participate in rituals; it is also positively enforced through natural forces, such as storms, and through punishment by sickness and, ultimately, death, for failure to honour *monne*. The number of proscriptions and prescriptions to which Nuaulu have to adhere is extremely large; it is often seen as the ‘burden’ of being an animist, and sometimes mentioned as a reason for religious conversion. The number and variety of taboos varies depending on the clan (Ellen 1998; Valeri 2000), but the range is not static. Thus, one Peinisa ancestral spirit on one occasion manifested as a mouse, and the mouse was thereafter respected. Overall, ancestral spirits of different kinds are crucial in determining whether people are healthy and whether they survive to reproduce themselves and their houses; Nuaulu see their fate as being entirely in their hands.

Ancestral spirits usually physically reside in a piece of red cloth (*sanneha*) hanging over a rattan cord above the *rine* shelf in a clan house, but some of these red cloths are also placed in the *sokate* basket. The number of active spirits located in the *sokate* varies: for Soumori, in 1970, it was ten. We have already seen how certain spirits may also reside in porcelain plates. But despite their various physical embodiments and locations, individual spirits may still accompany clan members when they travel, hovering over their head. When they interact with the living through a medium, they are the ‘soft voices’ (*nio manna*); usually they are long-dead spirits, such as children of a founding ancestor.

Nuaulu also classify *saruana* into three kinds, depending on the mode of death. First, there are the *sarua msinaea*, the ‘red ancestral spirits’. These are the spirits or souls of those who have recently died a good death as a *nimo mata kinoe*, a ‘mat-death corpse’, and who have gone through the prescribed mortuary rites. On completion of these rites, the spirits take up residence in one of the red cloths and the soul is said to have undergone *sainiku*, and is thereafter a *sarua msinaea* (red ancestral spirit). A second group are the lords of the forest (*wesie upua*). These include those who have died a bad death, or who have drowned at sea (‘elders of the sea bottom’, *sio ona nua nosite*). These spirits have not been subject to the normal mortuary rites, and, although they reside in the *sokate*, they travel about more than *sarua msinaea*. A woman who dies

in childbirth resides underneath the house. A third group of ancestral spirits are the *sarua supu-supu*, ‘found ancestral spirits’, also known as ‘soft-voice spirits’, *sarua nio manna*. These are people who got lost going into the forest and have never returned, or people who at the beginning of the world almost became people, but who did not quite make it.

Sarua msinaea may also be grouped functionally, for example as *nusa upua*, ‘lords of the island’, a husband-and-wife couple whose souls reside in the *suane*, the male from Matoke-hanaie and the female from Matoke-pina. Each clan also has its own male and female lords of the *nuhune* (*nuhune upue*), concerned with birth ritual and fertility, though there are historical variations between the clans and in the mythic histories connected with their origin. For example, in one myth a woman gives birth to a banana shoot. According to the myth, 15 days after the woman has planted it, the heart turns into a *pinamou* (post-menstrual virgin) dressed for puberty ritual, while the bunches of bananas have turned into six boys dressed for *matahenne*, the eldest of which is the *nuhune upua* male. *Nuhune* are said to oversee the forest and the outside, especially the hunting and food collecting for *nuhune* ceremonies, such as those of childbirth and female puberty. Such gendered spirits therefore complement and reflect the roles of the living, males being associated with the outside and hunting, and females with the inside, families and nurturing. But for Tongli, *nuhune* is more than this, extending to affinal alliance between clans, and encompassing the spiritual power necessary for human reproduction, physical survival and the maintenance of stable social relations.

Each clan has a founding ancestor (*numa upue*). The Matoke-clan spirits are identified with the two brothers who descended from the sky at the beginning of the Nuaulu creation myth, and are considered ‘lords of the island’ (*nusa upua*), or identified as the ‘red ones’ (*sio msinaea*), but they are not *saruana*. Each clan also has a female spirit, the ‘lord of the hearth’ (*otue upue*), the wife of the founding ancestor, whose soul lives in the fireplace.

Other *saruana* include the male and female chicken that resurrected the younger brother at creation. They later proliferated and are now the *saruana* who enter the bodies of Matoke mediums. Bad deaths (*nimo painakite*), particularly women who die in childbirth (*pina mnotune*), are described as ‘outside lords’ (*upu nau manahane*), who protect the living and enter the bodies of mediums. They are identified with the clans Peinisa, Sounaue and Matoke. Soumori has ‘lords of the Yoko River’ that resemble ‘lords of the forest’ of other clans. The Yoko was created by the

urination of the Soumori founding ancestor, so that one of his two wives who was thirsty could drink. The Yoko and the rocks around it gave rise to the ‘lords of the river’ spirits. These continue to live here instead of in the sacred house like other *saruana*. The area is therefore sacred, and an offering must be made to the spirits prior to hunting in the area. Females who have married Soumori men must wear the conical *nasa* when in the area. The spirits come to the house and enter a medium if they wish to chew betel. Some founding-clan ancestral spirits are described as *saruana*, but as recent dead are nevertheless referred to as *sio msinaea*. They play an important role, influencing numerous events and receiving a portion of the kill after a successful hunt.

The clans Soumori and Sounaue each have a resident *numa hanoe upue*, an ‘under-the-house lord’, the Soumori clan spirit being that of a woman who died in childbirth (*pina mnotune*), whilst the Sounaue spirit is of a woman who died during menstrual seclusion (*nimo muisukane*). For these clans, the tail of all pigs killed by members of the clan must be offered to these spirits. Similarly, when a new sacred house is built, the spirits must be fed the end of a pig’s intestine and a red yam, *hueni nante* (*Dioscorea* sp.) through a funnel. These female clan spirits may enter mediums during a seance, but only after male *saruana* have departed; they arrive rather violently through the split-bamboo flooring.

Finally, though not in a strict sense a spirit participant in ritual, there is the Nuauulu cosmic final cause, Anahatana, ‘the supreme being’, referred to in ritual invocations, but otherwise too remote and awesome to be approached other than through the ancestors. Nuauulu maintain that Anahatana is first and the ancestors second, but it is possible (like the name ‘Anahatana’ itself, and its cognates ‘Alahatana’ and ‘Allah’) that this idea has developed through contact with Christian and Muslim beliefs over several centuries.

2.7 DIVISIONS OF LABOUR

All Nuauulu are participants in rituals throughout their life and acquire competence in acting the roles required of them as they mature; how they participate, however, varies from one occasion to the next, on a scale from passive involvement to integral and active leadership. In many cases their relative structural position will determine what they contribute to

rituals, as, say, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters or siblings. In other cases, ritual involvement is determined by ascribed positions: being head of one clan rather than another, or head of a house, whether as chief or *kapitane*, or as the wife of either. It is this couple who, for each sacred house ‘hold’ the *nuhune*, officiating at female birth and puberty ceremonies, and who are therefore also referred to as the *nuhune upua*.

All clan heads carry onerous duties as ritual specialists, but – at least formally – the greatest burden falls on the shoulders of the chief of the Matoke clan, who has a role comparable to that described widely in Ambonese Malay as ‘tuan tanah’. Matoke takes precedence on earth, the chief of Matoke-hanaie in Aihisuru and the chief of Matoke-pina in Rouhua. But to complicate matters, the title *ia onate Matoke* Sounaue was given to the chief of Sounaue-aipura in Bunara by the Matoke-hanaie in Aihisuru, as the clan Matoke is not found there. In 1970, during my first fieldwork phase, there had been a quarrel between these clans over ritual matters, and the title and all sacred objects pertaining to the position had been returned to the Matoke-hanaie. Such quarrels between clans over ritual matters are by no means uncommon.

In addition, there are other quite specific ritual specialists, such as the *maritihanna* (‘titirima’ in Ambonese Malay), in Rouhua a title given by the chief of Matoke to a sacred house of the clan Sounaue with responsibility for organizing the *suane* ritual and leading the *kahuae*, re-bestowed on the death of each incumbent. Somewhat differently, those who perform as spirit mediums, though typically heads of houses or their wives, must also be qualified by virtue of their ability to enter into a trance and call down ancestral spirits, a skill that does not come to all of those in the preferred structural position, and is sometimes executed best by those who have acquired the role by dint of achievement.

2.8 SCRIPTS, SCHEMAS AND SEQUENCES: THE SYNTAX OF RITUAL COMPOSITION

The account of different kinds of component in the Nuaulu ritual toolkit presented in this chapter serves to provide a general background that may be helpful for understanding the descriptions of particular groups of rituals that follow. In the process of writing, it has become very clear to me that it would have been impossible to provide an emic account of the kind

given by Frake for various routines in Subanun socio-cultural behaviour, or comparable to a logical account of the ‘if x then y variety’, or even to provide something analogous to a recipe book with the list of all ingredients (Ingold 2001). Such a mechanistic approach would fail to predict the cultural forms described in this book other than retrospectively. Given a particular outcome it might be possible to draw a decision-making tree that would generate the outcome already known, but even this would be of limited help when attempting to interpret other ritual. One of the reasons for this is that the various cultural items described are not commensurable bounded entities of equal kind. How we define them depends of what degree of cultural specification is required, and this depends on context. Equally, performers and participants come to a ritual with different degrees of prior knowledge and experience, and displaying varying degrees of explicitness and consciousness. What they need to know to perform a ritual will vary. Having said as much, there is no denying that although Nuaulu begin with some kind of prototype of a ritual to be conducted or participated in, based on their own previous experience and knowledge, they will check its adequacy or completeness in a way that suggests that they think about it in terms analogous to a recipe. Thus, when addressing ancestors the *sinu onari hohua* – the sign of respect to the ancestors involving touching the forehead and chin five times with the right hand – is always required. When participants in a ritual move amongst other participants, they must stoop low to avoid being discourteous to those of higher status. Likewise, the formulaic *ainisi*, the invocation addressed to Anahatana and the *sionata*, is needed for almost anything. The right-hand index finger is blown upon and held skywards, signifying the making of the request, which is uttered according to the formula *upuku Anahatana, tuamane mai*, followed by the request. The same finger then touches the faulty object, be it arrow, spear or tape recorder. Names of ancestors may only be said softly and as part of an invocation, not loudly as in everyday speech or political rhetoric, and with the proper authority. The same is true of the precise foot movements repeated five times (the *yeukone*) that are required in many ritual sequences, especially those in sacred houses and the *suane*, when approaching *monne*, the ancestors or their signifiers.

So, we could say that performing a ritual involves, from a cognitive point of view, the foregrounding of a prototype, based on previous knowledge and physical experience of practice; its augmentation through checking against a list of elements that are generally expected

to be present; and a kind of ‘thinking it through’ in terms of the cultural logic described in section 2.2. While the repetition of basic elements within rituals, and their transfer between rituals, may certainly be tedious (Whitehouse 2000:44), the tedium and compulsiveness strongly reinforces memory and therefore is an important means of instantiating, and thereafter reinforcing, soft cognitive architecture. We can reject the plausibility of an analysis, and certainly a claim to emic representation, based on fixed symbolic values attached to each object and action found in Nuauulu ritual. This is also the view adopted by both Bolton and Tongli, for whom it is more helpful to see ritual primarily as the re-enactment of myth, of what the ancestors did, a means of maintaining contact with the ancestors, of strengthening the bond between the living and dead. My view is that, while Nuauulu may generalize and, indeed, claim themselves that in important respects ritual is the re-enactment of mythic events, few who participate in them have other than a fragmentary knowledge of those myths. This is equally true of some of the principal actors – or, at least, they themselves think they have a deficient knowledge, because in part they see in the misfortune that follows or accompanies rituals a failure of their own knowledge that in turn has led to a failure of correct ritual performance. Because of the reality and perception of ignorance, I believe myths serve only a limited function in determining how ritual is conducted. The stories provide a useful mnemonic to remember particular features and overall structures, an interpretative aid where that is necessary and, of course, some ultimate legitimation.

Nuauulu themselves are well aware of the cyclicity of their rituals, and that there are strict rules of priority and sequence. The performance of ritual is like the working of a perpetual-motion machine, whereby in order to maintain life they must constantly reproduce what has been done before, ever since the creation of their world. What gives individual rituals wider coherence is the idea of interacting twin cycles: of, on the one hand, misfortune (*kahatane*) and, on the other, prosperity (*tunumunie*), and of cycles of death (*nunimo ia*) and birth (*yamdae*), through which movements of interiority and exteriority, body and spirit, natural and supernatural, the immanent and the transcendent are unified. Indeed, Nuauulu place a high value on harmony, complementarity and interdependence, in order to integrate different aspects of *monne*. We shall see how these very general ideas provide semantic coherence in the Nuauulu ritual system as the particular cycles unfold in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3

Life-cycle rituals: birth

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As a category, participatory rituals marking life-cycle transitions are the most structurally salient of those performed by the Nuauulu. Although there is no word in the vernacular to describe them as a collectivity, their cyclical character and connections are evident to those who take part in them. Both subjectively and objectively, the different rituals merge into each other over time (birth ritual into first hair-shaving; first female menstruation into marriage; male puberty into elder investiture; elder investiture into death) – just so many phases of a never-ending process. For these reasons it is perhaps not surprising that, as a corpus, they might be regarded as providing a core model to help the analyst understand the structure of the rest, and that for Nuauulu they might constitute a corpus of practice informing and determining the frequency and timing of other, less frequent categories of ritual. It is not only a temporal continuity that links the rituals together, but also the interrelationship of their parts (that is, of their constitutive ritual actions), especially in their role in articulating the relations between groups and individuals. In most life-cycle rituals these relations are those between wife-givers (*hanahanaï*) and the wife-takers (*tanaite*). In the context of birth ritual, this entails relations between the clan of the child's mother (who are 'guests' at the birth ritual, and recipients of feasts) and the clan of the child's father (who are the hosts at the birth ritual, and the providers of feasts). Within this structure of clan alliance, the rituals also articulate relations between the two houses of the wife-taking clan, between the house of the chief (*numa onate*) and that of the *kapitane* (*numa kapitane*), who provide ritual services for each other depending on the house into which the child has been born. Finally, within and between clans and houses, there is a gender

articulation. Thus, while male heads of a clan or house are responsible for male ritual, their wives are responsible for supervising ritual involving females. But in birth ritual men are still ultimately precedent over women, the house of the chief over the house of the *kapitane*, and the husband's clan over the wife's clan.

3.2 BIRTH RITUAL

Lambek (2007) has suggested that we find a place for 'beginnings' in human ritual practice. I would like to argue that while for participating individuals there may well be beginnings, for example, the first time a person participates in a ritual, beginnings are systemically and ultimately all relative, as they are always prompted by some previous event, which for some significant others may be more of a beginning than the last. This is certainly so for Nuaulu birth ritual.

Nuaulu rituals surrounding birth (*makasusue*) constitute a series of linked events that most Nuaulu describe as *nuhune sio ikina*. They are often best known and referred to by that sub-event in which both mother and baby are ceremonially washed (*iriti inai runa anai*). Indeed, this focal rite is well known outside the Nuaulu community, where in Ambonese Malay it is called 'kasimandi anak kecil'. In this degree of outside recognition it is paired with the female puberty ritual, 'kasimandi pinamou', and may be linked to general Moluccan folk generalizations of a pattern of animist practice that was once more widespread, and that preceded conversion to Islam and Christianity. Together with those relating to the monthly menstrual seclusion of women, these rituals constitute a category that is almost entirely female-centered, and, indeed, where any contact with men is regarded as threatening, not only to the health of individual males, but to the order of society in general. In this sense, the dominant and default model of society is male-centered.

There are three physical loci connected with birth rituals: the *posune*, or menstruation and birthing hut; the *numa nuhune*, the special house used by some clans to accommodate the mother and newly born child between coming out of the *posune* and full reintegration into society; and the sacred house of the child's father. The mythology and beliefs associated with birth practices need only be treated lightly here, but each of these loci effectively mark a different stage in the ritual. The general

term linking birth and other female-centred ritual is *nuhune*. Thus, there is *nuhune sio ikina* for birth, and *nuhune pinamou* for first menstruation. In brief, Nuauulu say that a baby is constituted by Anahatana and the female *nuhune* spirit from two kinds of white blood (*sakakau*), one from the female and the other from the male, which then mix (*nehu*) forming an ungendered, androgynous interuterine being. The *nuhune* spirit protects the developing foetus and even massages it to ensure that it is well formed. It is the male *nuhune* spirit, however, who accompanies hunters seeking meat for the birth ritual. The female spirit protects the *posune*, as *saruana* may not go near for fear of gender pollution. In the third part of the ritual sequence, the new life is introduced to his or her male ancestors at the clan sacred house. There is thus a structural tension between the maternal and paternal elements, reflecting material tensions that arise from the dangers that surround birth. This ceremony is significant because it reaffirms an ancestral union (*nuhune sainikane*), the relationship through descent between the paternal and maternal side, between female and male, between wife-givers and wife-takers, and between outside and inside.

3.3 THE POSUNE

When a woman goes into labour she enters the *posune* (Plate 3.1), where she gives birth (*amrae*). Although it is usually the regular *posune* that is used for birthing, Rosemary Bolton reports that the hut where babies are born is alternatively known by a separate word, *karoua*. The *posune* is also the same structure that a woman enters when she has her menstruation, and the main focal location for ritual surrounding a girl's first menstruation. No wonder the semantic linkage between these three events is so significant in the geo-symbolism of femaleness. The *posune* physically ensures the separation of men from women who are menstruating or in labour, and for several weeks after birth.

The *posune* were once located some distance from the settlement, but for at least 50 years they have been constructed on the immediate periphery of the village, just a few metres from the nearest houses. Women in menstrual seclusion are prohibited from entering the village, even when there is a death of a close relative, but other women or children often sleep with them in the hut as they express fears about being alone.

Nowadays, menstruating women are allowed to go to the gardens but may not enter a garden hut, and must ensure that no blood is seen by men. When their household is sleeping in the gardens, a makeshift *posune* must be constructed. If such a structure is used by women from another clan, the first time they use it they must present the man who built it with a ring to compensate for any potential defilement. Similarly, if a woman from another clan uses it to give birth, or a girl uses it when she has her first menstruation, she must also provide compensation, in these circumstances a plate or a cup in addition to a ring.

Females confined to a *posune*, for menstruation or birth, are prohibited from eating food prepared in the normal way in an ordinary household. All sago flour is cooked in bamboo internodes. Meat in the category *peni* (pork, deer or cassowary) is prohibited, although nowadays many menstruating women contravene this rule. The logic of this prohibition is seen in the fact that when a hunter kills *peni*, part must be offered to the ancestral spirits. Neither may male clothing, or any red cloth (particularly associated with males), be brought into a hut. Young men are not permitted once they have been through their puberty ceremonies, nor may they be seen by a woman in the *posune*. Utensils used in a hut may not afterwards be used in the main house, where they might come into contact with men. Elder men who have received their *tupu-tupue* barkcloth are especially vulnerable to contamination from items such as plates and clothing that have been inside a hut, as it is they who are responsible for performing ritual, the effectiveness of which will be influenced by the loss of heat that occurs when a male item is made cold through contamination. The consequences of not observing these prohibitions is sickness and failure in hunting and fishing, and in the case of birth, the death of the child or mother through ancestral retribution. While the mother and baby are in the *posune* they may not be seen by the men who work in the gardens, collect sago and hunt. Women in the birth *posune* are subject to the same dietary and contamination restrictions as a menstruating woman. They cannot cook using modern utensils, but cook and boil water in green bamboo. Calabashes or cocunut shells are used as plates, and sago porridge is prepared in a container (*topae*) made from the base of a sago-frond midrib. Use of paraffin is prohibited and the traditional resin torch is used instead, although some women now improperly use candles. Sexual intercourse is not allowed while the woman is confined. Women and female children may visit a *posune*, as may young boys.

Birth huts are made of sago thatch on a wooden frame (Plate 3.1), the internal uprights being of hard wood and the external battens holding the thatch in place generally of *suenie* (*Schizostachyum* sp.). Internally, the roof consists of seven bamboo trusses. Like the sacred houses of most clans, the orientation of the ridge is east to west (or rather, sunset to sunrise), though the doors are at the sunset and sunrise end, rather than on the sea and mountain sides. In size, the *posune* varies between two and three metres square, and is occasionally larger. One *posune* measured in 1970 was 225 cm wide at the gable end, with walls each 150 cm high, 400 cm wide and 300 cm long. The doors were about 70 cm wide. The back (sunrise end) is identical to the front (sunset end). The internal structure is much the same as an ordinary house: a raised platform of split bamboo occupying about half the area, on which the occupants eat, sleep and engage in general everyday activities. In contrast to an ordinary house platform, though, this is on the inland rather than the sunrise side. On the opposite side is suspended a shelf (*hotune*), and above the platform on the inland side often hang bamboo containers used when bathing a new born baby. A shallow fire pit about 30 cm wide is used for heating water during the birthing process. The *posune*, like a sacred house, may not be destroyed, and it and its contents are left to rot when they are no longer needed. If a woman goes into labour while she is away from the village working in the gardens a *posune nisi* (garden *posune*) will be constructed by the garden hut, where she will remain until the coming-out or washing ceremony.

As the time of her confinement draws near, there will be discussions as to where the mother will give birth. Especially in the case of a first child, a husband will build a new menstruation hut, though other women often use an empty hut that has been used by someone else. A hut already occupied by a girl awaiting her puberty ceremony is prohibited. The husband goes to the male *nuhune* guardian to inform him that his wife is giving birth and asks him to construct the birth hut. The *nuhune* guardian is the head of the opposite and complementary clan house, either *kapitane* or clan chief. If either of these individuals is dead or incapacitated, a younger brother takes over the functions until the son is of age. The guardian orders the men of the father's clan to construct the birth hut towards the seaward and sunset sides of the village, the same location as the menstruation hut.

(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



Plate 3.1. Birth ritual in Rouhua: (a) man and woman building *posune*, February 1981; (b) midwife placing hand on head of baby and praying before cutting the umbilical cord, 1993; (c) mother burying afterbirth outside *posune*, 1991; (d) *posune* with newly-erected *asinokoe*, May 1970. Photographs (b) and (c) by Rosemary Bolton.

3.4 BIRTH AND POST-NATAL CARE

While a first pregnancy (*tia tinipae*) is thought to last ten months, subsequent pregnancies (*tia ineue*) are regarded as being nine months in duration. As labour pains intensify and contractions become more frequent, a woman will enter a menstruation hut and she or her husband calls the midwife to assist with the delivery. When the birth hut is ready, the female *nuhune* guardian conducts the mother there accompanied by the midwife, who protects her during the birth. Other women on hand may include the woman's mother, her sisters, her brother's wives and her aunts. For a detailed and graphic ethnographic account of the birthing process, see Bolton (1997a:12-23). Here my main purpose is to concentrate on the ritual actions, many of which focus on the recognition that childbirth is an inherently risk-prone and dangerous process, and a cultural belief that it is by far the worst way to die, especially where both mother and baby die together. These dangers are seen to derive in part from misbehaviour, failure to satisfy the ancestors and irregular human relationships. It is not surprising, therefore, that in order to minimize problems this is a time when ancestral spirits are much consulted. Bolton recalls how she once saw someone go and ask a father to release a tight bow string, as this was making his wife, who was giving birth, tight, and complicating delivery.

The woman in labour sits or lies on the sunset side of the *posune* platform, prohibited from wearing jewellery by the *nuhune* spirit. To encourage the delivery, women bring containers of water that have been made sacred by speaking words of ancestral invocation, by the midwife or others, which they sprinkle over the abdomen, sometimes feet and head, and then drink a little. Used containers must be placed facing upward and not downwards to avoid misfortune. Mediums may be consulted, who come near but not into the hut; if the birth is not imminent, the mother may be taken to the house of a medium. To ease pain a birthing mother may rub *sina* leaf (the nettle *Laportea decumana*) on her body, while a midwife will massage the abdomen with water or coconut oil, pushing downward (*rati*), blowing and spitting ginger, and invoking Anahatana, ancestral spirits and the midwife spirit (*pian upue*), imploring the baby to 'step on to the island' (*heta nusa*) quickly. Midwives administer to the mother a drink of crushed *puku* leaves in water, over which an invocation is made, to turn the baby in the uterus, and hit the split bamboo of the

platform between the legs of the mother to urge the baby to come out. A delayed birth will prompt the women present to loudly call upon both maternal and paternal ancestors.

Once the baby has cried and is clearly alive, the focus shifts to the mother and removal of the placenta. After the placenta has been evacuated, the tension and danger pass, and a fire is lit to warm the mother. The bamboo knife (*kaitimane*) for cutting the umbilical cord is made from *wana hatu* (*Dendrocalamus* poss. *asper*) by the father. The bamboo is first split into two short pieces (*weni*). A knife is cut from one of these by the midwife, and fashioned by the mother of the new child's father. After a name has been decided, the mother supports the baby on her lap using her right hand, while the midwife determines where the umbilical cord is to be severed. This is done by spreading the thumb and index finger (*autuhe*) five times, beginning from the navel. The cord is held at this point and pushed five times towards the baby, and then tied using five pieces of palm leaf, nowadays strands of a plastic rice sack. Placing the right hand on the baby's head (*ahusie*) (Plate 3.1b), the midwife invokes Anahatana and the ancestors (*sopa sau*) to make the child healthy, and give it a long life. The midwife utters the name of the baby, five times waves the bamboo knife over the cord, audibly counting to five, and then cuts it. Directly after the cut is made there follows the *apusaa nahai*, 'the raising of breath', in which the end of the umbilical cord attached to the baby is held to the baby's mouth and then to its heart, while an invocation is made asking for a long life to continue the clan. This is the moment at which the soul (*wanui*) is thought to enter the body. The word for 'breath' is often used for 'soul', and it is significant that the soul is believed to leave the body of a dying person as they stop breathing (*nahai tewa*).

Four small bamboo tubes, specially cut for the purpose and containing cold water, are used for washing the baby during birth ritual. To do this, the baby is held face up and bathed from one of the tubes and then turned over and bathed from another. The mother is then washed with hot water, which is said to encourage the elimination of any blood remaining inside her, making her stomach hard. But from this moment until she is ritually bathed she is said to be 'living under the *nuhune*', and may not bathe at all. Any contact with water may prompt the *nuhune* spirit to stop protecting her, resulting in possible serious illness. Finally, the midwife performs techniques to heal any damage done to internal organs and to manipulate the uterus, vagina and abdomen back into

their usual shape. One technique involves warming a *tahola* leaf (*Ficus cf. septica*) over the fire and then rubbing it over the mother's stomach to reduce the swelling. Another is to heat white stones in a fire and then pour water over them as the mother stoops so that the steam encompasses her stomach. After these procedures a piece of cloth is tied around the mother's abdomen to provide support. Up until the 1970s the bamboo knife used to cut the umbilicus was wrapped in a small, plaited palm-leaf mat by the midwife. By the time Rosemary Bolton was describing the ritual this had been replaced by a piece of plastic rice sack. The bamboo knife, within its sheath, is then placed in the rafters, or in the thatched wall, and the bamboos used to wash the baby are hung on either side, all on the inland (mountain) wall of the *posune*.

The final ritual action of the birthing process is to bury the afterbirth (Plate 3.1c), which takes place directly if day time, or first thing in the morning if the child is born at night. The placenta is referred to as *nahate*, or *kakai*, 'older same-sex sibling', the child being the younger sibling. The reason for this is said to be because the afterbirth provides protection for the growing embryo and must die first for the child to be born. It is washed by the mother with help from the midwife and wrapped in plastic sacking, formerly a piece of plaited leaf. It is 'planted' in a hole about 30 cm deep previously dug by the midwife, together with the first faeces and the leaves used to cleanse the baby. This is located towards the sea, on the right-hand side of the entrance to the *posune*, just inland of the door on the sunrise side of the hut, in the north-east – life-affirming – direction. The mother, or someone else if she is weak, then takes the package outside, places it carefully in the hole, and covers it with soil five times using the right hand. The midwife finishes filling the hole and marks the place with a semi-circular 'wall' of about 12 bamboo sticks (*puku*) against the outside of the hut. For her services, a midwife nowadays receives a small ceramic bowl or cup (*isikotol*) and – in 1990 at least – 10,000 rupiah for a boy, and half as much for a girl.

It is important to avoid pollution caused by parturitional blood. Bolton once observed a dog contaminated with blood from a *posune* platform. Fortunately, the women present noticed it and washed the blood off before it was chased out of the *posune*, afraid that men might see the blood or that the dog would enter a sacred house. A dog contaminated in this way may sometimes be ritually purified so as not to negatively influence success in hunting.

The child is washed in coconut oil shortly after birth, and placed over leaves of the *monone* vine (*Scindapsus* sp.), which in turn is placed over the fire. The vapour rises from the plant and is said to give it a strong backbone. When the umbilical cord falls away, about three days after birth, it is placed in the sheath with the bamboo knife in the roof thatch on the inland side of the hut. At this point the baby is bathed again and a mixture of ground, baked nutmeg and turmeric rubbed on the navel by the mother. The fingers are warmed over the fire and pressed several times over the navel each day to assist in healing the wound.

3.5 ERECTING THE ASINOKOE

The *asinokoe*, or ‘crying post’, is so-called because it is supposed to prevent crying, to protect a mother and baby from sickness, and to keep away evil spirits. It embodies the protective spirit of a female ancestor invoked by the person who erects it, and is made five days after birth, at the *posune*, in a ritual described as ‘placing the *asinokoe*’ (*nona asinokoe*) and undertaken by the male *nuhune* guardian.

The *asinokoe* is usually made from *akunin* (*hanaie*) (*Actinodaphne* sp.), but for Soumori, and perhaps for some other clans, it can be *akunin pina* or *kawasa* (*Archidendron clypaeria*, also used for sacred shields). The term *asinokoe* is also used to refer to the tree species, making it a synonym for *kawasa* or *akunin*. Bolton reports that, at least for some clans, it formerly involved placing a branch on either side of the *puku*, which surrounds the buried placenta. For Matoke-pina it consisted of a single sapling just inside the door of the *posune*. However, in most examples that I have seen – as in the case of Sounaue-ainakahata – it is now a frame construction of branches around the entrance of the birth *posune*, and consists of two young saplings, 180-250 cm in height, which still retain their leaves (Plate 3.1d). These are planted outside the door (that is, on the sunrise side) of the *posune*, one on each side, about 150 cm apart. A third sapling, generally without side branches, is placed in the fork of the branch joining each standing sapling. Over each corner joint of the ‘gateway’ so formed is placed a double ring of liana (*pepe*) made from *awane metene*, and on the bottom of each *pepe* are bound some leaves. On completion, five leaves from the *asinokoe* are placed in the thatch of the *posune* door, three above and two below.

As soon as possible (on the same or on the following day) the male *nuhune* guardian, having finished erecting the *asinokoe*, must hunt cuscus (of any type or sex), sometimes accompanied by the child's father or, failing that, his brother or wife's brother. If a cuscus is not killed that day he must try the next day, and so on, until successful. The cuscus must be skinned and the skin thrown away whilst in the forest. It cannot be cooked in the normal way, that is, baked in its skin. The entire animal is cooked in green bamboo in the forest (not in the village), discarding only a few internal organs, such as the intestines, and ensuring that there is no spillage during cooking. The guardian then returns to the *posune* carrying the bamboo on a pole over his shoulder. Because he is not permitted to enter the village, he circumnavigates its periphery until he comes to the right place. Holding out the bamboo on the pole, he gives the mother the cuscus, together with the juice used for cooking in the bamboo. The mother is expected to consume the whole cuscus, though in practice she may be helped by other women present. On no account, however, may she drink the blood, which would make her barren; neither should the food be in contact with men or be distributed outside the *posune*. Cuscus prepared in this way are described as *mara susu ntone* (milk-sap cuscus), consumption of which is thought to produce a plentiful supply of breast milk. If a number of cuscus have been killed, only the first is the *mara susu ntone*, the remainder being available as food in the normal way. The bones left from this meal are stored in the *posune*.

Mother and baby remain secluded for another week or two after consuming the *mara susu ntone*. During this time preparations are made for the bathing ceremony, and for the feast or feasts that accompany it. These preparations entail the father hunting and collecting sago, generally with some relatives from his clan. After the mother and child have been ritually bathed and leave the *posune*, the *asinokoe* goes with them to the relevant sacred house, or sometimes into the *numa nuhune* (see below), where it is placed along the inland wall. It is quite usual to keep all *asinokoe*, and to tie them under the eaves of the house, to promote the health of the children for whom they were first erected. In some instances the *asinokoe* of an earlier child may be replaced by that for the next child, and so ad infinitum.

3.6 THE WASHING CEREMONY AT THE POSUNE

The event of birth is something over which humans have little control, but the subsequent rituals can be, and are, manipulated. Once the mother's 'blood is dry', or, as Nuaulu figuratively put it, when 'the leaf tips lighten' (*ai totu haha karahirina*), a day is determined for the bathing ceremony (*sohu sio ikina*). This decision is taken in the clan house of the father, and the ceremony is usually performed two to four weeks after birth. If the child is born into the house of the chief, then it is the *kapitane* and his wife who officiate as *nuhune* guardians; if the child is born into the house of the *kapitane*, then it is the chief and his wife who perform this function. This structural logic can be seen in Figure 3.1 as it applied to the ritual held for Kaune Sounaue-ainakahata in 1971. The preparations include men and women going to the forest to collect kenari nuts, to extract sago starch and to hunt. Meanwhile the women weave baskets for carrying the food gifts for the new mother's sacred house. The male and female *nuhune* guardians, together with the men who will go hunting for the feast, assemble before leaving, and the male *nuhune* guardian informs Anahatana and the ancestors about what they are to do and asks for their help in securing a kill, admitting to any contravention of *monne* by the mother while in the *posune*, such as using a paraffin lamp rather than a resin torch. Failure to do so may mean that hunting will be unsuccessful. The male *nuhune* spirit accompanies the men.

The evening prior to the washing ceremony, the female *nuhune* guardian presents the mother with sago flour and part of a cuscus. These she eats before first light and then fasts until the feast the next evening. Before daybreak the father and the *nuhune* guardians also eat part of the cuscus (the *mara nuhune*), fasting until the feast. If there is no cuscus, *peni* (that is pig, deer, or cassowary) may be an acceptable substitute (except for the mother, for whom eating *peni* in the *posune* is prohibited), as may be – increasingly – fish. When the men return from the forest, they present what they have collected to the baby's mother's sacred house.

On the morning of the ceremony, unmarried women cut two lengths of bamboo (a large one and a smaller one) and carry them along the beach to the point where fresh water enters the village. One length is kept separate and prepared just before the washing of the child. The chips and shavings are collected in a basket and later buried near the *posune*. The filled bamboos are then taken round the outside of the village to the

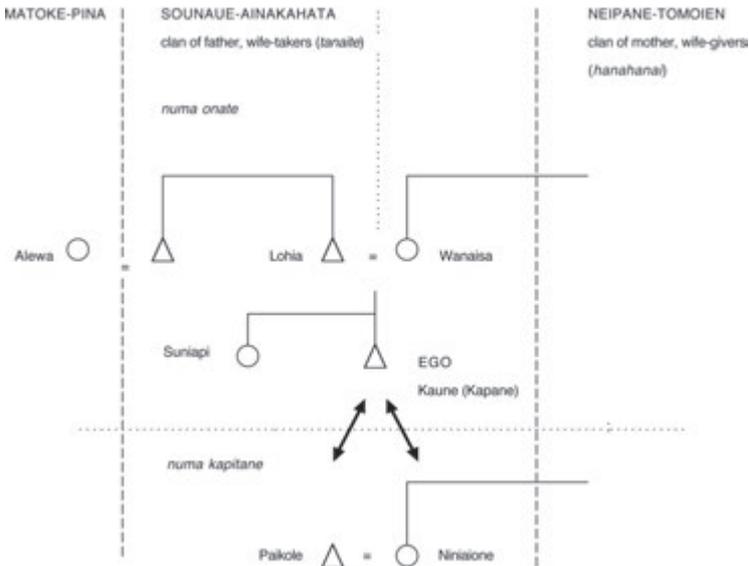


Figure 3.1. Genealogical connections between main actors in the bathing ceremony for Kaune Sounaue-ainakahata, 1 March 1971.

The thick, two-ended arrows indicate the reciprocal and life-long *nuhune* relationship.

relevant *posune*. Women from the clan, or who have husbands from the clan, of the baby’s father, congregate at the sacred house of the father or at the *numa nuhune* (see below) after midday, each bringing a plate, bowl or cup (*isikotol*), which they deposit on the house verandah. At the ceremony for Pikamaru, the daughter of Tapone Sounaue-ainakahata, in July 1986, each married and unmarried adult woman presented a small *isikotol* wrapped in a cloth. When everyone is present the female *nuhune* guardian departs by the inland door, and the other women by the seaward door. Accompanied by the women of her group, the female *nuhune* guardian goes to the birth hut where the mother is waiting, neither of whom will have eaten since the previous night. The newborn child is termed *nuhun upue* (*upu* being a term of respect) by the elder and his wife who perform the ritual, and the child (and his mother) will use the same term reciprocally for the couple.

The mother emerges through the sunrise door of the *posune*. As she does so, the leaves used to wipe the first faeces from the baby (*ai nahana*) are pulled through the side of the sago thatch wall behind the *puku* and placed inside. The mother is washed just outside the door, kneeling on banana leaves, a coconut frond or a piece of sago thatch, and surrounded by all the females present. The woman crouches as she is washed. The female *nuhune* guardian invokes the ancestors (*sopa sau*) to ensure the health and life of mother and baby, by speaking into a notched bamboo container addressed as the *tihu tinipae*, ‘first water’, or *tihu nuhune*. The water is poured over the mother five times, and the rest emptied over her. She then pours water from a second notched bamboo (the *tihu mampusue*, the ‘following water’) and continues to wash the mother in front of the birth hut. Certain close relatives help by pouring water over her and washing her with soap, and with grated coconut for her hair (Plates 3.2a and b).

All materials associated with the washing – such as dirty water, soiled clothes and used coconut – are not permitted to touch the ground, which they would contaminate. Instead they are thrown onto the *posune* roof. The clothes the baby has worn in the *posune* are subsequently burned, and those of the mother washed the following day at the river. All who have assisted at the *posune* must wash their hands and feet before leaving to signify removal of potential pollution. The two bamboo containers used for washing the child, along with the bamboo used to cut the cord and the piece of the cord left attached to the baby, are tied to the inside of the *posune* roof by the mother or her proxy, to ensure the health of the child. Many such containers are to be found in existing huts and serve as a reminder of the births with which they are associated.

When the bathing is complete the *nuhune* guardian opens a new sarong, usually the gift of her brother, moves it five times towards the mother, and on the fifth movement places it over the mother’s head. Because a new child cannot be exposed to the sky until it has undergone a ritual in the clan sacred house or *numa nuhune* the following day, a second sarong or red cloth is placed by the father, so that it entirely covers the baby and the woman who cradles it. This is the *nipa nahate*, which represents and replaces the placenta buried at the *posune*. It is eventually given to the clan of the mother as compensation for the blood lost in childbirth, and in acknowledgement that the receptacle for the developing child was of a different clan. The party then processes in a mountainward direction

from the birth hut to the special *numa nuhune* or the sacred house serving as such, accompanied by the female *nuhune* spirit, where the baby will be presented to the gathered guests.

(a)



(b)



(d)



(c)



Plate 3.2. Birth ritual: (a) group of women and children assembling outside *posune* for ceremonial washing of the new mother, Niamonai June 1986; (b) ceremonial washing of new mother at door of *posune*, Rouhua March 1990; (c) *numa nuhune*. Aihisuru, September 1970; (d) Pinasapa Soumori bringing plate as part of the *nuhune* ritual for Pikamaru Sounaue, Rouhua June 1986. Photograph (b) courtesy of Rosemary Bolton.

3.7 REINTEGRATION RITUAL: FIRST DAY

Many Nuauulu clans have a *numa nuhune* (Plate 3.2c), a house used specifically during parts of the birthing ritual, the importance of which varies between clans. For most clans this means no more than carrying out the birth ritual in a house designated for the purpose, and the place where the *asinokoe* erected at the *posune* are eventually stored. In Rouhua, Matoke-pina and Soumori have a special *numa nuhune*, while Sounaue and Neipani use existing sacred houses, either the house of the chief or that of the *kapitane*, depending on which is providing the *nuhune* guardians. But in every case where it is used, the *numa nuhune* symbolically reproduces the features of a regular sacred house, with fireplace, *rine* and, in ground-level houses, a raised platform. For some clans, from the time the new child enters the house until it leaves the following day, no fire is lit, lest it ‘overheat’ the proceedings and adversely affect the ritual.

After the ceremony at the *posune*, the women proceed to the seaward door of the *numa nuhune* or its proxy, where they wait for the men to arrive, especially the baby’s mother’s brothers. The mother and child enter the house, where the father is waiting, and turn towards the sunrise end. The baby and the person holding it enters first, then the mother and then the female *nuhune* guardian. The mother rejoins her husband, who remains in the house unless he later accompanies men hunting. Inside, near the main post, the male *nuhune* guardian lays two parangs, one woven sarong, and five porcelain dishes containing betel. This latter is destined for the baby’s mother’s house as a gift in exchange for the baby. Both *nuhune* guardians sit with the baby’s father, and invite the women and the baby’s mother to sit down. The baby is then presented to the *nuhune* guardian, who in turn re-presents it to the mother, who in turn presents it to the father, who holds it for the first time for a few minutes before passing it to another male, generally the father or paternal grandfather of the mother. After this, other women may take the child and fondle it. This signals that the child has now entered the father’s clan. After that, the young men of the father’s house distribute betel requisites (*papuae*) to the women who will take part in the feast that night.

Up until this point both the *nuhune* guardians and the mother have abstained from betel since dawn. The female *nuhune* guardian cuts open a young areca fruit of a small variety, holds the right hand of the mother, makes an invocation to the ancestors, moves it forward and backward

five times, and finally lets the fruit drop into the hand of the mother. Alternatively, she may chew the betel quid and then drop the juice from her mouth into the right palm of the mother. The remainder of the participants then chew betel, but take most of it home when they leave. A gift of the betel requisites is made to the Matoke chief, the *onate ankarua* (the secular village headman of Rouhua), and to other clans, if there is sufficient to go round. Plates containing betel-chewing requisites from the mother's clan are given to the *nuhune* guardians, and afterwards the men, and then women and children of the *tanaite*. In the ceremony for Kaune Sounaue, 32 *papuae* were prepared, but only a few actually used. Quite quickly the guests shift the contents of the plates on to the others in order to retrieve their loaned property. Most of the requisites are taken away by the guests and consumed later. Meanwhile, the women of the mother's group return to their own households to prepare the feast for the women of the father's group. Later that night the young men of the father's group visit the other houses to summon the women to the sacred house for feasting. There are two feasts: the first for the women of the father's clan; the second, which follows it, for the baby's mother and father and his parents.

After the opening ceremony, each woman from the father's house receives a dish containing 500 rupiah from the mother's house. The gifts must be clearly visible and not obscured during the ceremony. On the occasion of the birth of Nekaiea Sounaue, daughter of Numapena Sounaue, in June 1970, I observed a total of about six plates. On the occasion of Pinaroi Neipane's birth, in July 1970, the gifts consisted of five plates or bowls and one sarong. At the ceremony for Pikamaru Sounaue, in June 1986, 80 plates were accumulated, and this was thought to be very good. When most of the participants have departed, the wife-takers count the plates brought by the women attending the washing ritual. The total of the two types of plate must come to a multiple of twenty (hence also of five), and if they are short of this number they will add more. A first child commands more plates (about 100) than a subsequent child (about 40-60). The *nipa nahate*, the cloth used to cover the baby, is placed with the plates, and these are collectively called the *aratae*. If the wife-takers agree that there are sufficient plates, then the women who have counted them take the *aratae* to the child's mother's brothers or mother's parents, or whoever is preparing the feast to be served the following evening. The plates are then divided up between the recipients. While at

the wife-givers house, the wife-takers share betel, and, if available, drink liquor made from the aren palm (*sopi*). When they return all share betel once again.

The afternoon begins with the wife-givers preparing the sago and meat given by the father, and later the wife-takers are invited to the feast held in the sacred house or *numa nuhune*, which the child's mother's brother hosts. The food is prepared by the mother's brothers or parents, but if a mother has no brothers, or if they are unmarried, then other siblings of the mother's parents substitute. The food includes sago porridge, rice, and meat or fish with vegetables. Meat (pig, deer or cuscus) is preferred over fish, as this is regarded as the food of the ancestors. Most guests are women and women eat first, though the father and male *nuhune* guardian, and sometimes a few other men, also eat. The couple who own the *nuhune* sit at the head and eat first. As with the betel, the leftovers from the feast are taken home, and later shared with members of the domestic group and other relatives who were not present at the feast. This is followed by

(a)



(b)



Plate 3.3. Birth ritual, Rouhua: (a) encircling *nuhune* house during ritual for the birth of Kaune Sounauc: the mother Wanaisa is followed by the female *nuhune* guardian Niniaione carrying the baby, March 1971; (b) ceremonial receiving of betel quid by Heteiane, mother of Sahuraka Neipane, as part of the process of reintegration, Mon, February 1990.

a feast at which men and women eat together. Those who hunted the meat (which includes the father) and those who host the feast (that is, the mother and her brother's clan), however, do not eat. After the meal, the women go home and the guardian on the father's side remains to mind the baby, which is wrapped in a sarong and hung from the roof. Though there is no lit fire, on its seaward side a resin lamp burns continuously.

Thus there are two exchanges on the first day: plates (and betel) are brought from the house of the baby's father to the natal house of the baby's mother, while food moves from the mother's house to the father's house. The making of these prestations and counter-prestations consolidate the ancestral union, or *nuhune sainikane*. The baby stays in the house for a number of days, though nowadays the child usually comes out of the *nuhune* house the day following that which it entered. Its parents, however, are allowed out as necessary.

3.8 REINTEGRATION RITUAL: SECOND DAY

The morning following the washing and feast (that is, on the second day), the *nuhune* guardians, the new child and its parents, and several other women assemble once again at the *numa nuhune*. The women on the father's side gather together in the sacred house with gifts of food (bananas, sago porridge and sago biscuits) placed in the newly woven baskets. This is a gift to the baby's mother's house.

During the afternoon, the women of the two sides gather together in the *nuhune* house to conclude the birth ritual with the encircling of the house. This begins with the sharing of betel, which is first given to both *nuhune* guardians; it is the male guardian, though, who gives the sign for betel to be chewed. The women circulate five times round the house. They exit on the first round by the inland male mountain door, keeping the sacred house on the right-hand side, and re-enter on the fifth round by the seaward (female) door. During the procession all smoke tobacco leaves and carry fire from the resin lamp. This procession is led by the female *nuhune* guardian. The mother or younger sister of the mother carries the baby, who is entirely covered in a red cloth. In some clans, for example Neipane, as the party leaves the house the male *nuhune* guardian blows and sprinkles mineral lime (*nosa*) over the red cloth to protect the baby, and as they perambulate the mother holds in her right hand a red

bead necklace made from bamboo and leaves from the *asinokoe*, and a *mauna* charm to protect the baby from sickness. The *mauna* is made by the clan chief and given to a newborn child after it comes out of the *posune*, guarding it from malevolent spirits for the next three or four months, after which it is lodged on the *rine* shelf. It consists of leaves of *sinsinte* and leaves from the *asinokoe*. These are wrapped in red cloth and bound with twine made from pineapple fibre. As this is the first prolonged perambulation outside the *posune*, the baby is considered especially vulnerable to attack from malevolent spirits. Betel is shared again once they are inside the house and later everyone departs for a feast in the house of the *nuhune* guardians.

The next day the mother goes to the clan sacred house where the baby is presented. After this, the male *nuhune* guardian and the father take the baby to the clan sacred house of the father (*siha*), accompanied by everyone else. Here the ancestral spirits reside, and here it is that the clan leader and his wife greet them on their arrival. The baby is covered with a red cloth and the mother holds the beads and *mauna*. They chew betel on arrival and after the lapse of an appropriate time return home. The red cloth is removed from the baby, and the beads are left at the sacred house, which is where they usually originate. The *mauna* continues to accompany the baby wherever it goes for some while afterwards, providing protection.

An important ritual item in some *nuhune* houses is the *oha kokune*. This is a ramp made from *kokune* stem (*Callicarpa longifolia*), which the mother and child must use when ascending and descending from the house-platform. When the party have re-entered the house after encircling it, the ramp is removed and placed on the *rine*. It is thereafter taken to the clan sacred house if the *nuhune* house is not a permanent fixture. The bead necklaces, the bamboo internodes used in washing the child, and other paraphernalia are placed in the south-east corner of the *nuhune* house, while the *asinokoe* is laid along the outside of the house under the sunrise eaves, until they also are eventually re-moved to the clan sacred house.

In those clans where the *nuhune* house is a temporary structure, after the ritual is complete the materials of the house are given – ordinarily – to the sister’s husband or to the father, in exchange for a small offering to the ancestors of the house of the *nuhune* guardians. This comprises, variously, one small plate and a red cloth, one red cloth, one plate and two bracelets, or two *nitiana*e anklets. The thatch and the wood are used

to repair existing dwellings, and in so doing ensure the well-being of those living within, especially their children. If the *nuhune* house is not exchanged in this way, it is believed that the child will be continually sick.

3.9 FIRST HAIR-CUTTING CEREMONY

After birth, it is forbidden to cut the first growth of hair (*koma unue*) until a special ceremony (*isa nuhune*) has been held. The hair-cutting ceremony is not strictly part of the suite of birth rituals, but, then, neither does it belong to the rituals of puberty. It exemplifies well the point made in Chapter 1 about the difficulties of placing boundaries around parts of ritual processes that are continuous sequences. However, given that the name and focus of the hair-cutting ritual relate to the *nuhune* spirits, it is better considered here than in Chapters 4 or 5.

A day is fixed for the hair-cutting, and preparations are made. These involve the mother or paternal grandmother making a basket (*nuite*) for each child, except in the case of the clan Sounaue-ainakahata. Although an accompanying feast is not a prerequisite, when held it is primarily for women, especially for the mothers of the children involved. In this case a preparatory hunt will be organized to secure pig, deer or cuscus meat, while sago must be processed.

Participants assemble in the clan sacred house in the afternoon of the day of the ceremony. This must not start any later, as daylight is required to penetrate into the sacred house where the first cutting is undertaken. For each clan, children of the *kapitane* house have their hair cut by the head or *nuhune* guardian of the house of the chief, and children of the house of the chief by the head or *nuhune* guardian of the *kapitane* house. The hair of *numa onate* children is cut before that of *numa kapitane* children; boys are cut before girls and, within gendered groups, cutting takes place in birth order – older before younger. This is a matter of *manaoneta*, ‘precedence’, and reflects the unfolding of events in Nuauulu creation mythology. This is the first ritual in which the sexes are differentiated and therefore the point at which we might say that gender is first ascribed. Apart from the matter of precedence, males are generally distinguished by the wearing of a red *karanumu*, or a piece of such, around the chest, in anticipation of the role this will play when they reach puberty.

I observed two hair-cutting ceremonies between 1970 and 1971, for Soumori and Sounaue-ainakahata. In the 1980s and 1990s Bolton observed the ceremony performed for Neipani-tomoien, Peinisa and Sounaue-ainakahata. It is instructive to compare our descriptions of these events, the first recorded by me for the Soumori ceremony conducted in August 1970, and the second for Neipani-tomoien recorded by Bolton (1997a, 1999) in April 1995:

1. 7 August 1970: Soumori (Ellen):

11.30 Five Soumori children, who are the focus of the ceremony, sit in the middle of the floor of the Soumori sacred house: two girls – Urai and Amnacia – and three boys – Saete, Tukanesi, and Sakaso. The three boys have a *karanunu* tied round their chest. Komisi – the clan chief – sits on a stool wearing ritual attire. He takes the first cup containing coconut oil, a plate and a knife (there is one set for each child) and holds the knife. The first child, Saete, his own son, sits in front of him and both Komisi and Retaone (the *kapitane* Soumori) hold the handle of the knife and slowly cut a piece of hair from the very top of the child’s head. Komisi softly utters an invocation as the knife is drawn across the head five times.

Upuku Anahatana
Spirits of our ancestors
Hear us!
This is the birth hair which is cut.
Make the body of this child strong.
May he suffer little illness.

And when the hair is placed on the shelf:
Spirits of our ancestors.
This hair which is placed here
Is that of the clan Soumori, and of no other clan.
Guard it diligently and never let it leave this place.

Retaone then completes cutting Saete’s hair by himself. As the hair is cut it is carefully placed on the plate. When Saete’s head has been completely shaved he sits in front of Komisi again, and he and Re-

taone together place their right hands on Saete's head while pouring coconut oil over the head and massaging it into the scalp. Komisi makes another short invocation and Retaone completes the massage. A little coconut oil is also poured over the hair in the plate and each portion is wrapped in a *wainite* leaf and tied with bamboo slivers.

Komisi then goes through the same procedure for the eldest girl, Urai, but this time by himself. He then passes her on to another individual to complete the shaving. The same procedure is repeated for the remaining children. Not all are as passive as the first two. Tukanesi puts up considerable resistance and cries, but is restrained and the hair is cut forcibly. When the hair of all children has been cut, Komisi takes all the packages of hair to the *rine* shelf. Retaone stands on his right-hand side and hands Komisi the packages. He then places them in a small basket with a lid (*takanasi*), gestures to the ancestral spirits that inhabit the shelf and makes another invocation. In the afternoon there is a feast which relatives and affines attend. No women, the hosts, or the children who have had their hair cut are allowed to participate. A basket is given to the mother's brother of the child.

2 14 April 1995: Neipane-tomoiien (Bolton 1999:160-1):¹

Hotena, the Neipane *kapitane* sat on a *katira* stool inland side of the sacred house facing seaward. A piece of red cloth folded several times in a square shape was placed on the sunrise side of him on the flooring and then a metal plate was taken from the *rine* (ritual shelf) and placed on top of it. The father of the oldest boy sits in front of Hotena who parted the child's hair in the middle, looked at the corner of the ritual shelf located in the direction where the inland and sunrise directions intersect, and prayed

He, he. My Lord God. Lord of the island. My mother down there, my father up there. My red lords of *suite* house, *para* rock, *marue* rock. My *nuhune* lord with white hands, white feet. I will put this knife on the child's head wanting to shave his original hairs. O, these hairs will come away from his head,

¹ The entire indented subsection based on Rosemary Bolton's account is reproduced here almost verbatim (with her permission), including the translation of the invocation. A few small changes have been made to enhance readability.

he will grow healthy and firm. He will be healthy and live long, be strong and guard *suite* house, *para* rock, *marue* rock. His face will be red. He will be strong. His hands, his feet will be strong so that he will take care of *suite* house, *para* rock, *marue* rock and all the Nuauulu people. He will be strong working and speaking sunsetward, sunriseward. He will govern like a slave sunsetward, sunriseward (transcribed by Bolton from S. Matoke in 1994).

A *nuite* basket containing a *wainite* leaf on a plate and a glass of water is taken from the platform and placed beside Hotena who takes some water and rubs it on the spot to be cut. It is said this makes it soft and easier to shave. Before shaving he takes a knife, moves it forward five times, and scrapes some hair from the top of the child's head five times, moving the knife from the crown of the head towards the forehead. He puts the hair on the *wainite* leaf in the basket. Hotena then does the same to each of the other children in turn in order of precedence. One child from the house of the *kapitane*, and who is shaved last, has this done by Nesia, the *muhune* guardian of the big house.

Although Hotena starts the cutting for the first child, this is completed by someone else, often the child's mother's brother doing at least some of it. The father continues to hold the child and may even do some of the shaving which may be finished outside where there is more light but only on the porch or under the overhanging roof. The child's head must not be exposed to the sky. The child's *nuite* basket and its contents are taken by the person continuing the shaving who also uses the water and places the hair on the *wainite* leaf. A razor is used to finish the shaving although it is not permitted for the initial shaving. Only men do the shaving.

Once the first child's head was bald he was brought back to Hotena. His hair was wrapped in the *wainite* leaf, tied up, and placed back on the plate in the *nuite* basket. Hotena then took coconut oil mixed with basil and other fragrant herbs (*weketisi akaronae*) from a bottle and poured it into an ornate cup. He put some oil on the palms of both hands and held a hand near each side of the child's head. He prayed

and then moved his hands towards the head, touching it the fifth time. He rubbed the head up the sides, then in the front and back, and then up the sides again. He then did the same with the other children from the *numa onate* in order. Nesia then did the same for the child from the house of the *kapitane*.

When each child's head had been rubbed with coconut oil the bundles of hair were gathered and tied together. This bundle was placed on the metal plate on the red cloth and the red cloth folded over it. It was put on the platform in a *nuite* basket until the next day when it is placed in a basket on the ritual shelf. Any water remaining in the glasses or bowls is poured on the fireplace as it is forbidden to pour it outside, even through the split bamboo flooring so that it falls under the house. There is a feast that evening.

Until the ceremony is held, cutting a child's hair is forbidden. If this occurs, a *sakati* fine comprising a plate, a *pinæ* bracelet and a *nitianæ* anklet are given to the offended *nuhune* spirits as compensation, and the hair kept until the next ceremony is performed, when it, too, is placed on the *rine*. After the ceremony, the hair may be cut as many times as might be necessary for the convenience of the child and its parents. However, as puberty approaches, the hair must be left to grow long again. In the case of a male approaching his puberty ceremony, this long hair is described as his *haha'ume*.

3.10 VARIATION AND CHANGE

There are circumstances which prompt ritualized birthing practices to deviate from the normative arrangements described in this chapter. Thus, if a baby is born illegitimate it is not bathed in the way described; rather, after a week or so, when the mother's discharge of blood has ceased, she and the baby will bathe in the hut and then go home without ceremony. Other examples include where premature births are treated by rubbing milk from a young coconut fruit on the anterior fontanelle (*nori-nori nione*), and where a father has yet to go through the puberty ceremony, when the child is not given first to him but instead to the paternal grandfather. Similarly, in those clans requiring a special *nuhune* house, this

may have to be constructed away from the village if this is where a child is born, for example, in garden areas.

In addition to those variations dictated by circumstance, which are common to most clans in some form or another, many default practices vary between clans, some of which have already been mentioned. These may relate to the form of the *asinokoe*, and how and when it is later stored. Then there is the presence or absence of the *nuhune* house. Not only is the *nuhune* house constructed for some clans and not for others; for those clans that have them there may be specific, but nonetheless significant, construction differences. Most are built directly on the ground (for example, Soumori), though that for Matoke-pina in Rouhua is raised on piles, and is used exclusively for birth ritual. Some have the permanency of sago-leafstalk walls, while temporary structures may have a frame that is almost wholly bamboo, with walls of either thatch or roughly arranged coconut fronds, giving only rudimentary protection from the elements. The more permanent *nuhune* houses contain sacred objects associated with birth ritual, but may also accommodate a living space for a family between ceremonies, while others are only used at times of ritual. In Rouhua during the 1990s, the Matoke *nuhune* house was inhabited and guarded by the unmarried adult Lihuta; that of Soumori, by Masoli and his family; the Neipani *nuhune* house, by Retanusa and his family. There is variation also in terms of whether the *nuhune* house is used for one or for all births, or just the first birth for a particular mother, or the first birth of a particular gender.

Another area of variation between clans is in relation to ritual procedures for entering and encircling the *nuhune* house after the ceremony at the *posune*. In Matoke a *koa msinae* mat is held over the baby by the male *nuhune* guardian before entering, and the steps into the house are made from a piece of *kokune* with cut notches, up which the baby has to be carried, followed by the mother and the *nuhune* guardian. In the perambulation of the house some clans have two bead necklaces rather than one, and vary in the practice of sprinkling lime. In some clans, after encircling the house, there is another procession to a *Ficus (nunu)* tree in the forest, where the party sit down under the tree, rest and share in the chewing of betel, in communion with the ancestors, after which they return to the village. The women go home while the baby remains with his father and his mother, who enter their sacred house, where they stay for a few days.

There is variation in the gifts received by *nuhune* guardians (the *aratae*), which in the case of Matoke must include a parang. On the day of the washing ceremony most clans usually hold two feasts – the first shortly after the ceremony and the other in the evening – given by the father, prepared by the wife-givers and eaten by wife-takers for the mother and father of the baby, for the sisters of the mother, the wives of her brothers, and the men assisting the father in the hunt. But not all clans have an accompanying feast, Sounaue and Neipani not appearing to do so.

In Soumori, five days after a birth, in the morning, the male *nuhune* guardian puts on his ceremonial attire and goes to the clan *nuhune* house to greet the father of the child by sharing tobacco and betel. From there he goes to the *posune* and, while holding a parang in his left hand, puts his right hand on the closed sunrise door of the hut. He requests the female *nuhune* spirit to accompany him from the hut so she can protect the child, who is in danger from malevolent spirits who hear it crying. He then returns to the *nuhune* or clan sacred house and awaits the father.

Of those variations in birth ritual between clans, and between individuals within clans, the most salient, however, and the one most often and voluntarily discussed, is the duration of seclusion – both in the *posune* and in the *nuhune* house. Thus, for Matoke, seclusion in the *nuhune* house is five days; for Soumori, it is one, three or five days. The status previously associated with long birth seclusion has over the last 40 years eroded in the face of persuasive competing economic and practical reasons for minimizing the period. In 1970 birth seclusion was on average of one month's duration; by the 1990s, Rosemary Bolton was reporting it to be around two weeks. In addition to the negative economics of seclusion, under contemporary conditions the work involved in building a special *nuhune* house is regarded as excessive. In some cases the practice has been abandoned entirely, with an increasing number of ordinary residential dwellings being used instead. Alternatively, where in the past a *nuhune* house was built for each birth, nowadays it may be shared between several. But there are cases of considerable resistance to change. Thus, as recently as January 1990, the Soumori clan in Rouhua required a *nuhune* house for every birth, one for each child (except in the case of twins); in Matoke and Peinisa, however, where this was also formerly the case, it is now only required for the first birth of each union. There have also been small changes in the material paraphernalia accompanying birth ritual,

the replacement of the vegetable fibres used to tie the umbilicus and to weave small mats in which are wrapped the used bamboo knife and after-birth, with strands and pieces of polypropylene rice sacking. There have also been changes in clothing at the *posune*. Until the 1990s, both Matoke and Soumori in Rouhua held a second feast, prepared on four or five low tables (*anau*). This has since been discontinued because of the work involved, and because of the refusal of Neipane wife-givers to cook when their women had babies. Average attendance is also declining, especially where relatives have to travel from other settlements.

Thus, some of the birth-related practices that started as co-variation between clans, and those that apply generally in special situations, appear to have formed the basis for more permanent changes. By comparison, haircutting is historically a relatively new ritual, introduced as a result of outside governmental pressure to have children's hair short. In the past hair was not cut, except for some clans where a patch (*saneo*) was removed from young males. Since hair must now be cut, so the ritualization of the ceremony, the exchanges and gifts to the ancestors associated with pre-pubertal haircutting, constitute a major innovation, drawing on familiar elements from other rituals – a kind of compensation for infringing the ancestral will. When the hair of an illegitimate child is shaved, his or her hair will not be stored with that of other children.

3.11 FREQUENCY AND PERIODICITY

Birth rituals occur most frequently during periods of rising fertility and decreasing mortality. For obvious reasons, of all Nuaulu life-cycle rituals it is these that I have observed more than any other, have heard discussed most often, and which I can fairly claim to have described most fully. By contrast, a hair-cutting ceremony is held for each clan at irregular intervals, when there is a sufficiently large group of children who are ready and who have been born since the last ceremony was held. The children may, therefore, range in age from a few months to three or more years. At a ceremony that I attended in 1970 most children were four or five years old. As with other rituals it may often be postponed if other, more pressing rituals are imminent, or where subsistence demands intervene. For most clans, the ceremony does not require the preparation or resources typical of other life-cycle rituals, and is more easily delayed than birth

or female puberty ceremonies if there are other commitments. However, this degree of permitted freedom in planning can sometimes result in difficulties in finding a suitable time slot at all. As we shall see, numbers of participating children, frequency and periodicity, therefore, resemble that for male puberty ceremonies, without quite the same urgency or degree of prescription.

Chapter 4

Life-cycle rituals: female puberty (*nuhune pinamou*)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Although there is no generic term for ‘puberty ceremony’ or ‘initiation’ in Nuaulu language, there is a clear conceptual affinity in the minds of all participants between the ceremonies for males (*matahenne*) and those for females (*nuhune pinamou*). The two ceremonies well exemplify the respective roles of the two clan sacred houses, that of the chief and that of the *kapitane* – the first being the locus for female puberty rites, and the second the locus for male rites. As in the birth ceremonies, ritual unifies the two halves of the clan – the two houses – and intertwines the two lines of descent. In particular the male ritual stresses descent and ancestral continuity (reflected in a mountain focus), while female ritual emphasizes continuity in the role of the ancestors through biological reproduction. These symbolically complex ideas are embodied and physically constituted in movements and relations along the geographic mountain-seaward axis, and for most participants it is these actions that have a memorate primacy and significance over words and meanings. Both sets of ritual show that life is a movement to and from ancestral union: the neophytes receive ancestral approval, which establishes their role in society as potential vehicles for reproduction – *pinamou* in the case of a girl, who becomes a *tanaite* (taken wife) in her father’s house; and *matahenne* in the case of a boy, who becomes a *hanahanai* (given husband) in his father’s house. I describe these ceremonies as ‘puberty’ rather than ‘initiation’ rituals, mindful of the strictures made by Allen (1967:5), but it will be evident that the male ceremonies do provide an opportunity for peer-bonding and display features of collective age-set behaviour reminiscent of some of the descriptions in the Melanesian ethnography.

I have witnessed two full sets of female seclusion rituals, and recorded some secondary descriptions. Rosemary Bolton provides an account of the ritual for Hunahatu Matoke (1992) and a full description of the combined ceremonies for Maleha and Wanaa Soumori held in Rouhua in February 1992.

4.2 FIRST MENSTRUAL SECLUSION

It is usual for a girl to mention to her mother when she has her first menstruation and then go to a menstrual hut (*posune*) on the edge of the village, an action that is not otherwise ceremonialized. Before she is formally ‘entered’ into a special hut, the *posune pinamou*, she can only consume uncooked food. This biological event is sometimes referred to as the time from which a girl needs a *rembetai*, or menstrual cloth, traditionally attached to the *kaponte*, or girdle, of a first-menses female. From this moment onwards, until she marries, a girl is referred to and addressed as *pinamou*. Her personal name is not used, and she becomes the special responsibility of her *nuhune upue*, or guardian, who mediates between her and her *nuhune* spirit. The female guardian is usually the wife of the head of the complementary clan section or ‘house’, or what Tongli calls her ‘mother-house’. Although the term *nuhune upue* may refer to both male head and his wife, it is also used here to refer to the wife alone. Structurally, this is the female equivalent of the *morite* relationship in male puberty ceremonies, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. What this amounts to in experiential terms is perhaps best captured in my fieldnotes from 1973:

On 31 August Pinaone had her first menstruation. When she recognized it she immediately went to a tree behind the *posune* and sat there. Young children came and mocked and joked with her that she had had her first menstruation and was now a *pinamou*, no longer a child. The first period is known as *wo niai*, short for *worono nihahai* or *worono niane nihahai*, which refers to the inside of the ancient village of Ouh, located on a ridge behind Rouhua and marked by stones. This appears to be a euphemism for the inside of the vagina, the contents of which have come out – the first menstrual blood. A temporary shelter has been erected around Pinaone

in which she must stay until a proper *posune* is constructed. She eats young coconut flesh until other food can be arranged for her.

As soon as possible after first menstruation a mother will approach the *nuhune* guardian in order to seek permission to construct the menstruation hut where the girl will be secluded until her kin are ready to conduct a formal puberty rite. But before that, a temporary hut must be found or built, generally one that has not already been used by a birthing mother or another girl for her first menstruation. They may be from another clan or from the opposing house within the girl's clan. Where the hut has been built by someone from another clan, the person responsible must be given a plate in advance of the 'entering ritual'.

The permanent hut occupied by a first-menses girl is constructed by her sister's husband or his son, in other words, men from a different clan, though it is often the case that a girl's sister or other female relatives will assist (Plate 4.1a). The hut is built in a seaward and sunset direction, and is generally larger than a conventional *posune*, with a surrounding wall (*koka*) of up to two metres from the hut on each side, creating a kind of yard. This provides extra space for cooking and exercise during seclusion. One that I measured in 1971 was 720 cm long by 540 cm wide, and about 150 cm high. The wall may be made of prepared sections of sago thatch, or in some cases of unprepared sago leaves or coconut fronds. The important feature is that adult men cannot see in, and thereby be contaminated by menstrual pollution.

4.3 ENTERING RITUAL

When the *posune pinamou* is complete, or a suitable hut has been found and relevant kin been informed and gathered in, a girl is formally 'entered'. This ideally occurs on the same day as her menstrual period starts, but may be delayed if a hut has to be built, or if the necessary participants are not available.

The *nuhune* guardian goes to the sacred house accompanied by her husband, the brothers of the girl's mother, other siblings of the parents, the girl's parents, grandparents, siblings, the wives of her brothers, the clan chief or *kapitane* and their wives (if these are not also the *nuhune* guardians), and other women who have taken their husbands from the

(a)



(b)



(c)



Plate 4.1 Female puberty ceremony, Rouhua: (a) Suniapi and Mariam constructing Pinaonai's first menstrual *posune*, September 1973; (b) female kin assembling at door of *posune* for the washing ceremony for *pinamou* Unsa, July 1970; (c) *pinamou* Unsa in ceremonial attire after the washing ceremony at the *posune*, July 1970.

clan. The guardian cuts a *kokune* (*Callicarpa longifolia*) branch as firewood, prepares sago fibre (*hatane nene upone*), or nowadays often a plastic sack. In the case of Matoke and Soumori, a ring is also taken. A fire is lit in the fireplace, which is then used to ignite five pieces of firewood. When Pinaone was entered in September 1973, her *nuhune* guardian (Niniaione Neipane-tomoién) took fire from the clan sacred house to the *posune* where Pinaone herself lit the fire, cooked and ate *sonar monne*, ‘sacred sago porridge’.

When all are ready, the women accompany the *nuhune* guardian who, carrying the lit bundle of firewood and other items, leaves by the inland door of the sacred house for the *posune*. The girl squats just inside the sunset door of the *posune*, and her guardian stands just outside in front of the other women. Invoking the female *nuhune* spirit, she moves the lit firewood forward five times towards the girl, who places the bundle down inside the *posune*. The guardian then moves the ring forward five times, and gives it to the girl, who threads through it a slither of bamboo epiderm which she uses to attach it to the roof of the *posune* above the fireplace. The ring will protect the girl for the duration of her seclusion, and echoes an episode in the creation myth where two women, discovered by the younger brother of the clan founder, wore rings and other items still used in female rituals. The *pinamou* again squats just inside the sunset door of the *posune* and the guardian moves the piece of sago fibre (or plastic sack) forward five times and places it on her head. The *pinamou* makes a fire with the embers she has been given; she prepares to boil water in green bamboo and makes sago porridge. The women present advise her to ensure that the sago doesn’t turn white and that she sleep lightly so that the fire burns continuously for five days. Most of the women, including the guardian, then return to the sacred house and soon afterwards disperse to their separate dwellings.

After five days, the *nuhune* guardian returns to the *posune* to blacken the *pinamou*. This action is the most obvious – though not the only – reason why the girl is described as a ‘black maiden’, *pinamou metene*, in contrast to the *pinamou putie*, ‘white maiden’ she will become once fully reintegrated into society, and covered instead with white lime or pomade on her face. The blackening involves crushing *munie* vine leaves in the dry, woody husk of a coconut, and mixing this paste with water and soot or charcoal made from *kokune* (*Callicarpa longifolia*) wood. The guardian then methodically rubs the mixture over the body of the girl, starting with the

right arm, each action being performed five times, and proceeding to the left arm, upper chest, and finally the face. The process of blackening is completed by the girl herself who must ensure that her entire body, except underneath the sarong, is covered. She must check and redo this until the day of her bathing ceremony, and must continue to maintain her fire lest the *nuhune* spirit be angered.

While a girl is secluded she is subject to various other prohibitions and prescriptions. Many of these concern food and food preparation. It is not permitted to eat *peni*; this is said to be because *peni* killed by members of her clan becomes sacred when part is given to the ancestral spirits. Consequently, *peni* taken into a menstruation hut would be polluting. During this time she is prohibited also from eating cuscus, sago biscuits, kenari or *maea* (made from sago and kenari) and chewing betel, as all these will be fed to her at the feast following her coming-out ceremony. Bananas, however, which she will also be fed, are exempt. Women confined to the *posune* (whether as *pinamou*, new mothers or menstruating women) are not allowed to use paraffin lamps or modern utensils, and neither can they use coconut oil. Fried food is, therefore, out of the question. All cooking and food preparation must be undertaken using green bamboo or basketwork and utensils specially made for use in the *posune*. Ordinary utensils must not be contaminated. A new *pinamou* is not allowed to wash for the entire period of her seclusion, nor brush her teeth, and must wear the same sarong until she is bathed.

Human contact is also problematic, and in certain cases prohibited, lest she defile the *nuhune* spirits. She is not allowed outside the compound except for defecation and urination, which must be done discretely, and usually at night. For the whole period of seclusion the *pinamou metene* is not allowed to speak or laugh, except in whispers under her breath (*yarahuhu*), so that people in nearby houses are unable to hear her. It is believed that if an evil spirit were to hear her voice, she would be sick. Also, women within the *posune* must not be seen by the opposite sex, in particular by the sons of her father's unmarried sisters. No friends who have already reached puberty and who have experienced sex are permitted near the *posune*, as this would damage the hunting success of the men they have slept with. No male is allowed to see her and she should not see any male.

If the *pinamou* leaves the *posune* for long she will be teased by her *nuhune* spirit, who will make her believe she is being attacked by a ma-

levolent spirit (*sakahatene*) or, even worse, murderers (*atoria*). Outside the *posune* the *pinamou* must always cover her head so as not to expose it to the (male) sky. Traditionally, this covering was a piece of *Pandanus connoideus* leaf, known as *koku*, though this is usually nowadays a piece of plastic sacking tied with a strip of cloth. The penalty for not doing this is that her hair will fall out. She is brought firewood, water and raw food by members of her clan and other relatives. Some younger girls generally sleep with her in the *posune*, often sisters. They, too, bring food and water, and wash her dishes.

The period of seclusion may last between five days and five months, though on average two to three months has become the norm. In the past the prestige attached to a long seclusion, and the symbolic significance of the five-month period, was compelling. However, the practical requirements of preparing for the coming-out ritual determine the minimum period, and in contemporary circumstances the scale of the preparation may be reduced to cut both time and cost. Since the early 1970s the requirements of most girls to attend school has also cut the duration of seclusion.

While in seclusion, *pinamou* have both top and bottom teeth levelled, a visible sign of marriageability. This is done with a smooth stone by other females, often older clan women such as grandmothers. Bolton, however, reports that in the cases she observed teeth were filed several days after the puberty ritual, usually in the clan sacred house. The pain is said to have been excruciating and girls would often flee the house, though they cannot, of course, flee the *posune*. When girls resist they are told that with long teeth they resemble malevolent spirits. Afterwards it is said to make the mouth taste sour. When novices complain of this sourness, Bolton reports Hunanatu Matoke saying in 1992, a mother and the older women tell a *pinamou*: ‘Control your inside. Don’t cry.’ If a *pinamou* cries, it is said that when she marries her oldest child will die. It is believed that if teeth are not levelled there will later be difficulties when in labour with the first child. In addition to filing teeth, special attention may be paid to breasts and hair, if these are not thought to be developing correctly. The confinement is also an opportunity for others to discuss marriage arrangements and particularly the details of the coming ceremony.

4.4 PREPARATIONS FOR COMING-OUT CEREMONY

The *nuhune pinamou* occurs when everything is ready, which may take between two and seven months. The performance of rituals upon which the female puberty ceremony is contingent, or for which there is greater urgency, take priority. Logistics are also a crucial determinant. Indeed, one of the main factors determining the duration of a seclusion is less the prestige attached to a longer length of time, or an overriding necessity to achieve the symbolically salient five months, than the time and resources it takes for her immediate kin to gather the necessary materials. Sago needs to be processed preparatory to making biscuits; kenari nuts need to be collected, dried, opened and crushed prior to baking *maea*; bananas need to be harvested, certain items purchased, and objects made that are necessary for the ritual.

Amongst these latter are two red and yellow *nuite* baskets: a *nui mamsiu kuni wekete*, a ‘basket for carrying turmeric and coconut’, and a *nui kakopae*, ‘hand-feeding basket’. Both must be made either by a grandmother of the *pinamou* or by some other older female relative. An ornate headpiece (*senie*) is made by a senior male relative by decorating a special bamboo comb with shell, beads, silver paper, broken pieces of mirror and such like, all strung together on a thin piece of wire. Nowadays these items may be made by non-clan members noted for their skills in such crafts.

Between five and eight days before the actual event, the girl’s parents, her clan chief and his wife, together with other clan members gather at the sacred house to set a date for the bathing. By this time the baskets and headpiece must be ready and are brought to the sacred house, where they are covered with red cloth and stored until the bathing takes place. At the same time, the men check that there is sufficient sago and bananas, and determine when to cut them. It is usually the case that in the previous month or two, members of the clan have also been preparing sago biscuits, which store easily. Most importantly, they discuss hunting cassowary, pig or cuscus: who will go and for how long. On such ritual hunts men generally sleep in the forest for three to – ideally – five nights. When a hunting strategy has been decided the clan chief addresses the male *nuhune* spirit located on the *rine* shelf; afterwards, where there is a *sokate* spirit basket hanging under the shelf, he addresses the spirits residing there, too. In his address the chief explains the plan, specifying by name each of the hunters. On returning from the hunt the catch is brought

to the sacred house and reported to the clan chief. The same evening women bake the mixture of crushed kenari nuts and sago (*maea*) between banana leaves and hot stones.

Having prepared the *maea*, the clan chief visits the *posune* and presents the *pinamou* with sago flour and half a cuscus, saying: ‘Tonight sleep lightly and do not sleep until dawn and do not fast. Don’t get up at dawn but sleep lightly and get up. Get up and cook. Make your sago porridge. Cook that cuscus. Cook your wrapped sago. Eat it so that it holds your stomach. If not, you will be hungry quickly. We *nuhune* guardians will also act quickly’ (Hunanatu Matoke to Rosemary Bolton, 1992). The *pinamou* must eat the cuscus and sago before dawn on that day, and then fast until about midnight, when she is ritually fed.

Finally, baskets are prepared with all the requisites necessary for washing and dressing the *pinamou* (*noi mauweie*) the next day. For the ceremony held in 1971 for Unsa Sounaue the basket contained sandals wrapped in cloth; a comb; a hairpiece; four special cigarettes (made from the leaves of *Rhodamnia cinera*, homegrown tobacco, and tied with red thread); and a bottle of coconut oil with a cup. A rectangular red (sometimes red-and- yellow) pandanus-leaf box (*takanasi*) contained rings and, sometimes, bracelets and other jewellery are found; also, five hair combs, one large ‘kain timor’, betel nut, one batik sarong, one small cloth, seven turmeric leaves, ground turmeric, five or more portions of shredded coconut pulp wrapped in green banana leaves, one bar of soap, a cup, 24 anklets, an ordinary *senie* comb, the *senie pinamou*. Sometimes, there is an additional knotted piece of red cloth. Over the years since 1970, and confirmed by Bolton’s observations from the 1990s, some of the objects have varied. For a week or so prior to the coming-out ceremony these objects are stored in the sacred house, the headpiece and basket being covered with a red cloth. The *takanasi*, *nuite* and the hats (*nasa*) worn by women are dyed red and yellow.

4.5 AT THE POSUNE: THE WASHING CEREMONY

The following morning, preparations begin for the washing ceremony to be performed later that afternoon. Plates of betel-chewing requisites (*papuae*) are brought to the sacred house. Each contains six to eight betel nuts, four betel pepper fruits, four cigarettes, some lime in a glass or cup,

and chewing tobacco. These are placed on both platforms and on the *rine* of the sacred house. The two *nuite* baskets woven over the previous weeks by a grandmother or other female relative are made ready. One hangs on the east wall of the sacred house and one on the east platform. The latter contain the headpieces that the *pinamou* will later wear. All participants, including *nuhune* guardians, assemble in the sacred house and sit in the positions prescribed by the symbolic geometry of the house (Figure 4.1). Each person brings trinkets, which are loaned to the *pinamou*.

While this is happening, and at around midday, a number of younger people go to the forest behind the village to cut long bamboo internodes to use as water containers for washing the *pinamou*. They first report to the sacred house to inform the *nuhune* guardians what they are about to do. In the 1970s, when I was observing these ceremonies, this activity was always undertaken by women, usually unmarried, but by the time Rosemary Bolton was witnessing the same rituals the groups were often of both sexes. In the early afternoon male relatives prepare between 15 and 20 internodes of between 1.5 and 2 metres each in length, and wash them inside and outside. Two internodes are cut longer than the rest and notches made to identify them. These will hold the ‘first water’ (*tihu tinipae*) and the ‘following water’ (*tihu mampusue*).

The sisters or other young female relatives of the *pinamou* fetch water in the newly cut bamboo lengths from the river or conduit. Each woman and the older girls carry two lengths of bamboo, one resting on each shoulder and crossed behind the head. The procession is headed by married women carrying the ‘first water’ and the ‘following water’. When the *posune* is on the far side of the village from the source of water they are required to carry the bamboos along the edge of the village (in Rouhua often along the beach) until they reach the *posune*, as it is prohibited to bring water connected with the *posune* into the village. The full bamboo lengths are left outside the *posune*, leaning against the wall, those with notched internodes placed closest to the door.

While the water is being collected, the *nuhune* guardians remain in the sacred house. Here the two ornamental baskets with the headpieces are uncovered and a number of other items for dressing the *pinamou*, placed inside, including (Bolton 1997a) shoes, socks and a *takanasi*. The women of the clan, including most especially women who have married into the clan, the mother of the girl and her sisters, gather in the relevant sacred house. At about three in the afternoon, when the female *nuhune*

guardian is satisfied that everybody is ready, she leaves by the inland door, followed by women married into the girl's clan, who carry one of the ornamental *nuite* baskets containing items of attire to be used at the washing ceremony, including the headpiece. They are in turn followed by other female affines. The party processes round the east end of the house and, thereafter, to the menstruation hut on the southern periphery of the village. The remaining women leave the sacred house by the seaward door and follow the close female relatives to the *posune*, where the girl awaits their arrival.

Other women and children have already assembled at the menstruation hut (Plate 4.1b). These are often most of the women and children in the village, as the ceremonies are regarded as important general social events to be shared. When the women arrive from the sacred house the fence of coconut fronds surrounding the *posune* is adjusted to accommodate the ceremony, but deliberately not removed altogether. The *nuhune* guardian goes to the sunrise door and the girl emerges. Banana or taro leaves are placed just outside the sunrise door and the girl squats on them. When there is enough water, the female *nuhune* guardian washes the novice in front of the menstruation hut. She takes the bamboo internode marked as the first water and, with her mouth over one of the notches, softly intones an invocation to the *nuhune* spirits. A little water is poured onto the girl's head five times, after which the remainder is emptied over her, and then the contents of the second notched bamboo length. Bolton (1999:178) was provided with the words of the invocation by Tuisa Matoke, which she translates as follows:

I will pour this water on this *pinamou* five times. This *pinamou*, Lord Anahatana and all of you, every one of you my ancestors move aside [trouble], prevent, change, move away, watch over this *pinamou* and me and my whole clan. All of us, every one of us. I will pour this water five times, may it take care of her. May she be healthy and live long. May her heart be well, her liver be well.

The accompanying women, including especially any other girls who have recently gone through a puberty ritual, then assist by washing the *pinamou* vigorously with soap, adding more water as required. Her hair is then washed with grated coconut. Bolton reports that for Maleha, the hair was first washed with shampoo and then with grated coconut. The

unused coconut, any soap and the old clothes are thrown on top of the *posune* as in the birth ritual, as it would be polluting to throw these on the ground. The *nuhune* guardian rubs coconut oil and turmeric on the face and upper body of the *pinamou*, giving the skin a yellow and shiny appearance, a treatment extended also to the necklaces which they wear. More mixture is rubbed over her body, including by younger, unmarried girls, even while she is being clothed. This parallels the oil rubbing in the second day of the male puberty ceremony, and, as is the case on that occasion, is accompanied by some fooling around, with the female participants chasing one other and rubbing the mixture on each other, and also on watching guests, pursuing those who try to escape. However, this is a (somewhat) dangerous activity, as it is prohibited to rub the mixture on pregnant women, or for pregnant women to rub the mixture on others. Similarly, while only women who have reached puberty can have it rubbed in their faces, girls who have not reached puberty may rub on coconut oil, but not turmeric.

With the washing complete, the *pinamou* is technically no longer a source of pollution, and the coconut-frond fence surrounding the *posune* may be removed. It is sometimes the case that excited children try to dismantle the fence while a girl is still being bathed – as Rosemary Bolton witnessed – for which they will be reprimanded. A new sarong is placed over the girl and the old one slipped off underneath; the new sarong is worn around the waist rather than over the breasts. The *nuhune* guardian takes a woven sarong (*kanne*, *kan nuhune* or *nipa kanne*: usually a ‘kain timor’), owned by the clan of the *pinamou* and only used when females in the clan reach puberty. The sarong is moved forward five times towards the head of the *pinamou*, finally placing it over the head. A knotted piece of red cloth containing ginger is tied around the neck to protect her from the sorcery of people jealous of her beauty and status, who might want to embarrass her during the ritual by causing her to fall. One or more belts (*kaponte*), some with bells, and some with other pieces of metal, are placed around the waist.

A number of people participating in the ritual lend multicoloured bead necklaces, which are placed around the neck or across the shoulders of the *pinamou*, several strings at a time, and she may accumulate as many as 50. Some consist of *nuhune* beads (*wenu nuhuna*) belonging to the clan, some of which were formerly pearls, some with white bracelets attached, and some with bells on the end which are tied around her waist. She is

ornamented with *pinæ* shell and *nitianæ* metal bracelets on her upper and lower arms, rings on her fingers, earrings and anklets.

The hair is combed, parted in the middle and tied in a bun at the back of the head. Plastic hair slides or other hair ornaments are put in the front of the girl's hair and silver or gold-coloured leaf decorations placed in the bun. Finally, the headpiece (*senie pinamou*) is attached by the *nuhune* guardian and adjusted by other women present until it is securely attached. It hangs towards the front of the head resembling, it is said, the bunch of bananas that metamorphosed into the seven children of the Nuaulu creation myth, a repetition of the imagery of the headcloth of a male initiate hanging down the back (Plate 4.1c). Certain items, including the *pinæ*, the *nitianæ* and the *senie pinamou* are acknowledged by elders as part of the *nuhune*, but any 'meanings' they might have are not readily divulged; all items, though, make references to events in the creation myth. *Pinæ* and *nitianæ* are used to pay fines when *nuhune* are violated.

4.6 AT THE CLAN SACRED HOUSE

After the novice *pinamou* has been washed and clothed she processes with the female *nuhune* guardian from the *posune* to the clan sacred house, followed by the watching crowd. The male guardian, who has been waiting at the house, receives her at the entrance. Entering through the door on the seaward side, she climbs a ladder made of a *kokune* tree trunk with five carved steps made by *tanaite* men, and steps into the house placing her right foot first. The *pinamou* does not talk throughout the proceedings which follow. Once inside the house she is conducted by the guardian to a place, under the centre of the *rine* shelf, in front of the main house post, where she sits on a special mat, flanked by two younger sisters who ring her bells and assist her generally, as her attire is very weighty and it is difficult for her to move. The *pinamou* has two handkerchieves which she alternately holds in her hands or places over her breasts to protect them from the heavy necklaces. During Unsa's ceremony, which I witnessed in 1971, she was very moody, spiteful to her little sisters and looked thoroughly fed up with the whole proceedings, sitting with her elbows on her knees and legs apart. Bolton reports that other girls present at the puberty ceremonies she attended, and who had had their washing

ceremonies between several days and several months previously, wore the attire which they had worn at that occasion.

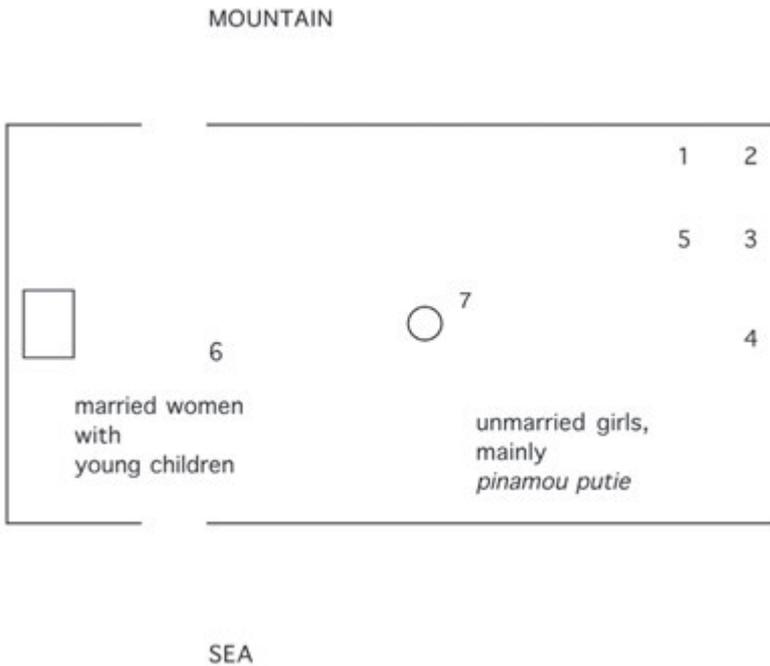


Figure 4.1. Seating arrangement for *pinamou* reintegration ceremony in clan sacred house: Unsa Sounaue-ainakahata, Rouhua, July 1970.

Key: 1. Paikole Sounaue-ainakahata (standing-in for clan chief Tapone as male *nuhune* guardian; 2. Patiraia Sounaue-ainakahata (*marilihanna*); 3. Lohia Sounaue-ainakahata; 4. *ia onate*; 5. Unsa (*pinamou metene*); 6. female *nuhune* guardian; 7. *noi kakapai* (ceremonial stack of food).

4.6.1 MOUTH-CLEANING

The male *nuhune* guardian takes the right hand of the *pinamou* and invokes the ancestral spirits; he moves a chewing stick (*asikikite*) and a curved, wooden toothpick towards the hand of the *pinamou* five times,

and then presents them to her. Both the chewing stick and the toothpick are made from *ai pono* wood (prob. *Homalium* sp.). She moves the toothpick down the right side of her mouth to her back teeth three times, and then two times down the left side (five times in all), taking care to pass it entirely round her mouth, and finally spits it out. The guardian continues to address her and splits the toothpick with his fingers. She takes one half and rubs it down her tongue five times in order to clean it (*ikone meri*). The male *nuhune* guardian then invokes the ancestors again over a bowl (variously of brown glass or white porcelain) of water placed in front of the *pinamou* before the ceremony. He moves it towards her hand five times, and presents it to her. She picks up the bowl, takes five mouthfuls of water and spits each out five times through the slatted bamboo flooring. Any water remaining is emptied over the fireplace.

4.6.2 BETEL-CHEWING

After the *pinamou* has finished cleaning her mouth, the plates with betel-chewing requisites brought earlier are distributed, starting with both *nuhune* guardians. The female guardian sits facing the *pinamou*, invokes the ancestral spirits and cuts open an areca fruit. The *pinamou* holds out her hand and the guardian moves a piece of betel over the girl's hand five times. The girl then places it in her mouth. The guardian then gives her some betel pepper and puts some lime in her own hand, which the *pinamou* takes with the betel. Not until the *pinamou* has started to chew can the other participants, including both male and female guardians, chew some of what they have been given. This is the first time since before dawn that both the girl and guardians have been able to chew betel, though they may not eat food until the feast that night. As is usual on such occasions, most is taken home soon afterwards. Thus, betel sanctified by the occasion is distributed widely within the community through both immediate and delayed consumption. Immediate consumption indicates that those that partake will participate in the feast later that night. The ritual actions of giving the *pinamou* betel follow closely those actions involved in giving a mother betel at a birth ritual.

4.6.3 PREPARING THE FEAST

After the betel-chewing, when most people have returned home, the novice rests in the mother-house accompanied by both male and female guardians, while the general women of the clan prepare the feast. The feast on this occasion is the gift of the paternal grandfather of the *pinamou*, and is for the women. The afternoon is spent in building the *noi kakapai*, a ceremonial stack of food for the evening feast. Food prepared in other clan households is brought to the sacred house for this purpose as preparations begin, and the ornamental baskets are removed from the walls where they have been hanging since they were made. The stack consists of a basal basket, walls made from sheets of *maea* and secured with rattan, and inside layers of sago biscuits, *maea*, banana and pork. The whole structure is tied to the underside of the *rine* shelf with four lengths of rattan to keep it erect and stable. A separate pile of sago biscuits and bananas for the feast are placed under the middle of the *rine*, and the second *nuite* is placed on top, containing some *tamnou* bananas, one sago biscuit and pieces of skewered pork on a dried white *wainite* leaf.

At dusk, both clan males and females start to set out the feast in the sacred house and, depending on the number of guests anticipated, in other clan houses as well. The feast is laid out on banana leaves running in two rows from the seaward wall to the inland platform, the entire width of the sacred house floor, in front of the novice. This is done by the *tanaite*. Large earthenware bowls of sago porridge are placed in the centre of the banana leaves, and places are set each with five bananas, a number of sago biscuits, and a wrapped packet of *karatupa utue* (crushed kenari nuts with chilli). Each place setting also includes a small plate of meat (preferably pork, but sometimes some other meat, or fish) and vegetables, and another larger plate containing sauce to accompany the sago.

4.6.4 FEEDING THE PINAMOU

Although the *pinamou* has, by this stage, taken some water and chewed betel, she has had no food since eating the cuscus before dawn and most likely since the previous night. Young children sit around trying to keep the *pinamou* awake, and other principles are also often asleep. Guests arrive about midnight and both *nuhune* guardians are amongst the first to do so. Once all the guests are in place the male guardian moves in front

of the *pinamou* and takes her *nuite* from the rattan receptacle. It is about three o'clock in the morning when the guardian feeds the novice. At Unsa's ceremony Paikole Sounaue, standing in for the indisposed clan chief Tapone, put the leaf containing the pork on a plate, together with a piece of sago biscuit, a banana, a strip of *maea* and a packet of *karatupa utue*. A plate is also used at this point in Neipane ceremonies, though it is by no means standard. Most other clans use *wainite* leaf, though in Peinisa this is prohibited and a banana leaf is used instead. Using a parang, the male guardian cuts into five small pieces, first the pork, then the banana and then the *karatupa utue*, and places them on the leaf, all the while uttering an invocation to the ancestral spirits. Similarly, he crumbles some of the sago biscuit and sago nut mixture, adds a few slices of banana, and places it all on the leaf, which is re-placed in the *nuite*. The male guardian then kneels on the floor and takes the leaf and its contents. Once the food is ready, and with the hands of the *pinamou* outstretched in front of her breasts, and her right palm placed on top of the left, he raises the leaf, offers an invocation to the ancestors, moves it slowly towards and over the palms of the *pinamou* five times, and places it in her hand and lifts it to her mouth. He only releases his hold once she has taken her first mouthful. The *pinamou* then eats all the contents of the leaf without removing it from her mouth, without using her hands and taking care that no food falls to the floor, which would be an omen that her first child will die. The male guardian then takes the leaf and puts it back on the plate and re-places it in the *nuite*. At this point oil may be rubbed on to the body of the *pinamou* again. As the girl is fed, there is a great deal of noise, often including the firing of rifles, if available.

4.6.5 THE FEAST

After the *pinamou* has finished eating she must sit to the rear of the other participants, at the inland sunrise end of the house. In contrast, the *nuhune* guardians sit at the head of the feast on the inland side. The *tanaite* men then invite the women who received the betel earlier to partake of the feast, and they eat with the children while the men are excluded. As with birth ritual, everybody eats just a little and takes the remainder home, to be distributed more widely. As in all feasts linked to major rituals, the intention is that the hosts should put on a show of ostentatious generosity, while the guests should partake modestly. There is a second

sitting for the givers of the feast. When the feast is over, the *tanaite* men remove the dishes and banana leaves and the women occupy themselves chewing betel. Once everyone has gone home, the *pinamou* removes her ceremonial attire; the necklaces are hung on the wall and the headpieces and other ornaments returned to the baskets. She sleeps for that night in the sacred house.

4.7 THE SECOND DAY

First thing in the morning of the following day the girl fetches water for the first time as a *pinamou*, but she still is not fully reincorporated into the house. Though she is the centre of the ritual, everybody, for much of the time, forgets this and disregards her comfort. It is as though she is just an excuse for something else. By noon she is again dressed in ceremonial attire and waiting in the sacred house. During the morning she may visit the house of the *ia onate aia*, the village headman, and then returns. Early in the afternoon clan women and some other women, including the girls' married sister and their father's sisters, assemble in the sacred house. They take apart the rattan receptacles still hanging under the *rine* and put the contents into baskets or on plates. The bananas, sago biscuits and *maea* are divided into portions for various other households, and those individuals who made the baskets and headpiece. Once the shares have been distributed, the *pinamou*, together with some others, accompanies the male and female *nuhune* guardians (their *nuhune upue*) to their house. With them are a number of young men carrying the food baskets in pairs, a gift for the *nuhune* guardians, who may keep or dispose of them as they wish. On arriving at the house the girl sits on the mat provided and is invited by the female guardian to chew betel. She is given three plates in return.

What is noticeable about these practices, as for other major ritual events, is the way food and objects pass forwards and backwards between clan members and others. Non-members of the clan contribute bananas or sago biscuits and are also compensated when the receptacle is divided-up, with part of what they contributed. By dividing these food items as well as the feast of the previous night the girl's family show their generosity, especially to the clan sacred houses which receive particularly generous portions. Clan members ensure that non-clan members par-

ticipate in the feast and that they too receive an equal share when the receptable is divided. Only the male and female *nuhune* guardians receive a larger portion, together with the baskets themselves, in recognition of their ritual services during the ceremony. But they, in turn, must share this larger portion with members of their own clan, who were the very same who contributed towards it.

The shares are distributed to the houses by young men and boys, starting with each clan chief and *kapitane*. Soumori men, sometimes including those from other villages, the girls' sister's husband, and their father's brother then arrange portions of the bananas, sago and *maea* on banana leaves, and afterwards distribute them to guests from other clans, beginning with two portions each for the clan sacred houses, and not ending until everyone in the village has received something. Two larger piles are placed on the ornamental baskets for the *nuhune* guardians by some of the women. Even those who have converted to Christianity and Islam may contribute, and they too receive portions.

After the division and distribution of the food, the *nuhune* guardians leave with the *pinamou*, and perambulate the village receiving gifts from the same people who have just received food. They visit a number of houses accompanied by other young girls, and led by an older unmarried girl or young married woman, who, with one or more male youths, carry the *nuite* used the previous night for the jewellery and the food fed to the neophyte. The *nuite* are deliberately overloaded with bananas, sago biscuits and *maea* to ensure that the *pinamou* will not be short, and are given to the *nuhune* guardians, who share the food with clan members the following night. They begin with the clan sacred houses, and during the 1980s and 1990s often included the Christian section of the village. At each house the girls are given betel to chew, and sometimes a small amount of palm spirit (*sopi*) to drink. They receive gifts (*atoana*), including plates, glasses, soap and clothing, which the girls and their families may keep. As they process through the village the bells around the waist of the *pinamou* jingle. As people, especially children, hear them coming they emerge from their houses to watch. Children take advantage of the (often mock) shyness of the *pinamou*, walking ahead, hiding and ambushing her as she proceeds, the surprise resulting in her crying out loudly. The visiting and parading through the village is a visible sign of her reincorporation, and may go on until dark. Afterwards, the *pinamou* returns to her natal sacred house.

4.8 AT THE HATU PINAMOU

For Matoke, Soumori and Sounaue in Rouhua the perambulation through the village is followed by a further ritual in which the girl novice accompanies the female *nuhune* guardian to the *hatu pinamou* (the *pinamou* stone) on the river, sunrisesward and upstream of the village. By this time it is often already dusk. In the procession to the *hatu pinamou*, the female guardian is followed by the *pinamou*, flanked by her younger sisters. Behind comes the basket carried usually by the wife of the opposite clan house, other unmarried women and other females who wish to attend.

At the *hatu pinamou* the girl removes, or has removed, all her clothes. She continues to wear, however, her various hair and body ornaments and also the red cloth with the ginger around her neck. Once undressed she squats in the stream, facing upstream, but downstream of her father's sister (*maka'e*) or mother's brother's daughter. One or other of these floats a pumice stone (*akiakae*) down to the girl which she must throw back. After this has been done five times, she uses it to scrub her limbs so that all body hair is removed. As she washes, the female *nuhune* guardian splashes her five times. Turmeric, and sometimes also coconut oil mixture, is rubbed over her body by the guardian, washed off and that remaining squeezed out and thrown on the *hatu pinamou* to hasten the puberty of another *pinamou*. The female guardian splashes her again from a distance and the remaining residues are washed off. After the washing is complete the *pinamou* is dressed on top of the *hatu pinamou* and replastered with turmeric and oil.

Back in the village the *pinamou* returns to the sacred house. Later that evening the participants in the ritual from her own clan go to the house of the *nuhune* guardians who share with them the food received in the basket. The girl removes ornaments such as necklaces, which are claimed by those who lent them to her the previous day. She replaces the ritual clothes with a batik sarong and kebaya, and returns to her own house. The rite is concluded by the male guardian sending the people home. However, the *pinamou* will wear the red cloth necklace for several days following the ceremony. When another ceremony for a new *pinamou* occurs within the next few months, she attends wearing the sarong and kebaya, some bead necklaces, and the headpiece. She sits with the new *pinamou* throughout the ritual in the house to support and reassure her.

4.9 VARIATION, CHANGE AND PERIODICITY IN FEMALE PUBERTY RITES

Female puberty rituals, as we have seen, vary between clans, in terms of material components, contexts and procedures. Thus, the *posune* (and more especially, the *posune pinamou*) may depart from the most common form of an east-west aligned hut with half the interior occupied by a split-bamboo platform. For example, the entire inside area of the Matoke hut used for childbirth or first menstrual seclusion is occupied by a split-bamboo platform. The fireplace in most *posune* is on the ground, though in the case of Matoke it is actually on the bamboo platform. Neipani-tomoién girls are only secluded for between five and ten days, charcoal is not rubbed over them for the duration of their seclusion, and the subsequent bathing is not accompanied by much ritual or collective participation.

Also, in the Matoke and Soumori clans a ring is used in the ceremonial accompanying a girl's entry into the *posune*. Before she is washed, the girl first takes down the ring that was put in the roof above the fireplace when she first entered. She gives the ring to the female *nuhune* guardian through the east door of the hut. The guardian washes the ring using water from one of the bamboo internodes and then places it in the *nuite* basket. In the case of Soumori in particular there are some practices linked to the prohibition on exposing the female head to the sky. Thus, key Soumori female actors wear a *nasa*, the yellow-and-red cone-shaped pandanus-leaf hat. A Soumori female *pinamou* wears a cloth, a piece of pandanus matting or (nowadays) a piece of plastic sack when she ventures out of the *posune* during her seclusion, and as she emerges on the day of her ceremony this is removed from her head and washed by the female *nuhune* guardian. Cleansed, this is placed in the basket containing the other items of attire used to dress her.

In the Matoke clan the *pinamou* enters the sacred house on returning from the *posune* by climbing up a *kokune* branch while the male *nuhune* guardian holds a *koa msinae* mat over the threshold, moving it forward five times. The way in which the *pinamou* is fed also varies between clans. In Neipane, *pinamou* are now dressed in their clan sacred house rather than at the *posune*, to simplify things for both the organizers and the organized. Bolton says how several women (at least one Neipani) tried to do things as in other clans, with a longer seclusion, but afterwards suffered from

menstrual dysfunction. In the 1980s and 1990s, two other Neipani girls had longer seclusions. The second ritual washing at the *hatu pinamou* was in the past observed by all clans, but in Rouhua at least, Neipani and Peinisa no longer practice it.

The *senie pinamou* headpiece varies between clans – as for example between Soumori and Neipane – in the overall shape of its branches and beaded loops, and certainly in the detail of items attached to it. The terminal finial often takes on the schematic form of a totemic animal. Peinisa girls wear a different kind of headpiece, called a *kahahite*, which hangs down the back of the neck and is similar to the headdress used in some male puberty ceremonies. There has also been change over time, with more plastic beads and shiny paper being used in 1996 than 1971.

Separate from the patterned differences between clans, are variations in the conduct of rituals determined by special circumstances regardless of clan affiliation. Thus, occasionally, two girls may be washed together if their first menstruations have occurred synchronously, as was the case for Wanaa and Maleha Soumori, reported by Bolton for 1992. This does not appear to require special arrangements, only that at each stage, the actions must be repeated for the second girl, each undertaking the various parts of the ritual in the order in which their menstruation occurred, that is, the ‘older’ taking precedence. Thus, when the first girl has been washed at the *posune*, the female *nuhune* guardian requests her to move to the inland side of the leaves on which she is kneeling to allow space for the second girl, who then goes through the same process. Similarly, at the feast in the sacred house, there are two rattan receptacles, one for each girl, each hanging under the middle of the *rine*. Although order of occurrence of menstruation appears to be determinant on such occasions, it is not entirely clear what would happen where birth order and order of first menstruation are widely discrepant. It is clear, however, that it is important to separate the various foods and artefacts, as they are specially prepared for each girl. There may be other variations linked to the needs of particular individuals. Thus, at the ceremony for Unsa Sounaue, in July 1970, her elder half-brother, Napuae Soumori, had to cut a portion of his hair early in the morning before the coming-out ceremony to supplement her own meagre frizzy crop, which would not support the *senie pinamou*. Ordinarily, the cutting of adult male hair would be prohibited, though since this was a necessity for *monne*, and since Napuae was

kin and shared a mother with Unsa (despite being a half-brother from another clan), it had been permitted.

The main change over time has been the shortening of the period of seclusion, partly in response to the need to minimize disruption in the schooling of teenage girls. However, teeth filing, while still undertaken in most clans for all women after their ceremony, is no longer done in Peinisa. At *pinamou* ceremonies that I attended in 1970, through to the 1980s, the girls would be barefoot, or sometimes wear flip-flops, but by the time Rosemary Bolton was recording ceremonies in the 1990s, the clothing items provided for the dressing at the *posune* included socks and shoes. Changing conceptions of appropriate female modesty were already apparent in 1970, and throughout her ceremony Unsa kept her arms folded across her breasts. Nowadays, girls wear a bra – unknown in even the early 1970s – and at the *hatu pinamou* girls sometimes wear undergarments, though it is still widely thought that they should not.

The onset of female puberty is triggered by a definite biological event and – unlike male puberty, which we will examine in the next chapter – the ritual cannot be delayed. Nuaulu sometimes say *rura runa ruai*, that a female puberty ritual ‘starts itself’, a kind of self-ignition. However, a degree of control is possible by manipulating the timing of the coming-out ritual, and we have above examined the conflicting pressures influencing the duration of seclusion. Thus, in one case described by Bolton, that of Maleha Soumori, the coming-out ceremony was delayed so that it could be combined with that of her sister, thus saving time, planning effort, and – no small consideration for the hosts – creating a much more conspicuous event.

Chapter 5

Life-cycle rituals: male puberty ceremonies (*matahenne*)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In many ways the *matahenne*, held to mark male puberty, is the most spectacular of Nuaulu rituals, for outsiders and insiders alike. Its saliency is evident in the way it punctuates the Nuaulu ritual calendar; of their canon of ritual events, it is that most frequently referred to. Even with the advent of the Western calendar, it is the periodicity of *matahenne* that organizes time beyond the duration of one year, even though the gaps between each event are irregular. Each *matahenne* becomes a unique historical event, defining bonds between those inducted at the same time in the manner best described for East African age-set systems (La Fontaine 1978; Baxter and Almagor 1978). A *matahenne* in preparation or execution at any one time is known as the *matahenne honua*, the one previous the *matahenne monae*, and the one previous to that the *matahenne mtuae*, enabling the use of male puberty ceremonies as a long-term relative chronometer. However, *matahenne* cohorts do not bear individual names, unlike African age-sets, nor do they have any of the functions of age-sets.

Of the three ethnographers who have reported *matahenne*, Tongli's (1994:230-7) account is the most abstract, and it is not entirely clear what he actually witnessed. Rosemary Bolton's (1997a:27-40) account, by contrast, is very empirical, but she is aware that being female restricted direct access. The explanations, given by the older Sounaue men she spoke to, for not permitting her to witness forest ceremonies was often on the grounds that she was female. There were no problems in her visiting the site several days after the ritual with Nuaulu women, where everything was apparently still in place and with boys willing to answer questions about what had taken place. Her main firsthand accounts are of those parts of the ceremonies that take place in the village. She

has photographs and video footage of both the early-morning bathing of novices and the part that takes place in the forest, from a Neipani ceremony held in October 1995, and obtained from film-maker Chris Tamaela. Otherwise, Bolton's account is based on detailed descriptive texts given by both male and female informants of particular events, general statements, and discussions with me. Her knowledge relates to *matahenne* held between 1986 and 1999. She has data on Sounaue and Peinisa *matahenne*, and also on the Neipane ceremony held in October 1995. I have witnessed three *matahenne* at first hand (two in February 1971 and one in February 1996); I have fairly complete audio-recordings and photographic coverage of the first two, and a videotape of the third.

5.2 THE MORITE RELATIONSHIP

In the same way that the *nuhune* guardians, who sponsor female novices, come from the opposing *numa* of a clan and establish a relationship for life, so the male novice has a male sponsor (*morite*) for life, who comes from a complementary and opposite descent group. Many Nuaulu claim that in former times the senior *morite* were indeed drawn from the complementary *numa* of the parental generation, making for a symmetrical exchange between the *numa onate* and the *numa kapitane*. Nowadays, however, most are drawn from an entirely different clan, usually from the *numa* of the wife-givers (that is, the clan of a novice's mother). But *morite* is not merely a designation; it also denotes the relationship between novice and sponsor, the term being used reciprocally, both in reference and in address. In fact, the *morite* relationship continues until the death of either partner. The senior partner in a *morite* relationship – who Tongli (1994:230) calls the 'initiation master' – must also be someone who has received his *tupu-tupue* barkcloth, and hence is sometimes referred to metonymically as the *tupu-tupue*. He may, in theory, come from the clan of those being inducted, but in this case must therefore be from the opposing *numa*; or he may come from another clan entirely. If the *morite* is from the same clan there may be several, if there are novices from two or more houses in the clan. In puberty ceremonies that I have witnessed, and in those that I have been told about, no clan has inducted its own novices, and there are understandings between pairs of clans as to which

may serve as senior *morite* to their own novices. The acceptable directions of service for induction reported to me were as follows:

- Sounaue > Matoke
- Matoke > Sounaue
- Sounaue > Soumori
- Matoke > Neipane
- Sounaue > Neipane
- Neipane > Peinisa
- Matoke > Pia
- Matoke > Kamama
- Sounaue > Sopanani
- Sounaue > Huri

If the direction of these relationships is plotted in a flow-diagram (Figure 5.1), it can be seen that they are by no means equally distributed or reciprocal. The only reciprocal relationship is between Sounaue and Matoke, who can only be senior *morite* to each other. Sounaue serves as senior

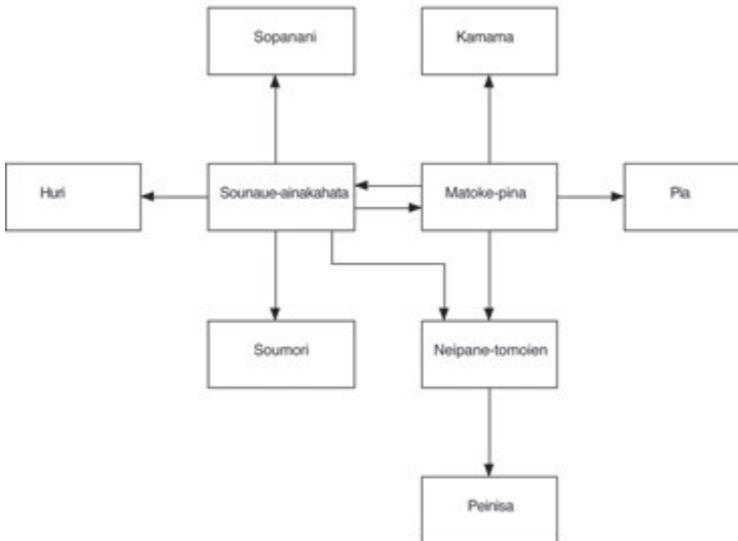


Figure 5.1. Male puberty ceremony: the flow of *morite* services between clans in Rouhua.

morite to five and Matoke to four other clans. Of the rest, only Neipane-tomoiien can serve as a senior *morite* to another clan, namely to Peinisa. All other clans can only be junior partners in an inter-clan *morite* relationship. To some extent, this pattern reflects mythic histories of arrival, with Matoke being *primus inter pares*. Indeed, the *matahenne* is seen as the gift of the clan Matoke, both in the mythic past and now. So, although Matoke does not enter into a *morite* relationship with every novice, it does so indirectly. So, in Figure 5.1, in those cases where Matoke does not directly induct a clan's novices, it does so by proxy, through – mostly – Sounaue and Neipane. In return, other clans must make payment, in the form of *koae* (*Pandanus*) boxes used for betel requisites, *koae* mats and the large, red *karanunu* cloth. Though presented to the person of the *ia onate* Matoke, they are later distributed amongst all members of the clan, or go to *morite*, whatever the clan.

5.3 PREPARATIONS

There is no specific point marked by ritual at which the hair of males is not allowed to be cut, but this probably occurs between 12-15 years, nowadays sometimes later. At the present time, schooling or absence on visits away from the village will delay the growing of hair. Allowing the hair to grow is usually the first indication that parents and a clan head think the time has come for an individual boy to be inducted, something also indicated by their taking an interest in girls. But the readiness of individual boys is insufficient in itself to trigger the making of preparations for a clan *matahenne*. Ideally, there needs to be a group of adolescent males of sufficient size to make it cost-effective and to send the right symbolic messages concerning the fecundity of the clan. When the signs are right, a clan head will hold a meeting of all male elders to set the date for a *matahenne* for any clan boys older than about 12 who might be dangerously mature if their induction is delayed to the next occasion. However, the need to perform other rituals – either those more urgent but not directly connected, or rituals whose performance is necessary for the effective staging of a *matahenne* – may delay the event. Often, it is other life-cycle events that lead to postponing a *matahenne*. For example, someone will give birth, so the ritual for that event will take priority for some people in the clan, or a girl will have her first menstruation, the preparation for

which will also take several months. Such rituals are prompted by biology and cannot be delayed. They may cause delays of several months and, cumulatively, sometimes years. Nuaulu say that because of this, females initiate their own puberty and childbirth rituals (*rura runa ruai*). Secular events, such as a national election, a clove harvest (once a year) and copra harvests (twice a year), not to mention the exigencies of the subsistence agricultural calendar may also influence timing.

Once a decision has been made by the clan elders to hold a *matahenne*, or perhaps to hold a joint *matahenne* for several clans, specific preparations can be made, usually beginning a month or more before the actual event. Things have to be done in a particular order and some things can only be done the night before.

5.3.1 BARKCLOTH-MAKING

The key item to be prepared for the *matahenne* is barkcloth. This involves most men of the clan, but must exclude the *ia onate* and the *kapitane*. After these and other senior individuals have received their *tupu-tupue*, they are not permitted to beat barkcloth themselves, or to collect *Canarium* nuts or to make mineral lime (used in betel-chewing), as these will harm the body of the founding ancestor and, by extension, the clan itself, who's chief will be punished with sickness.

During February 1996 I witnessed long strips of bark being gathered along the headwaters of River Yoko, which next day were beaten into cloth. These strips were for a Sounaue puberty ceremony, and all Sounaue inducted men, plus Retaone and Latulesi as persons who were related affinally (that is, were wife-takers), were involved. Strips of the inner bark of *waronone rapa* (*Ficus* sp) were cut on the first day, separated from most of the outer bark, soaked in flowing water to retain moisture, and stored overnight in the *numa onate*. The first task on the second day was to cut large trunks of *iane* (*Canarium commune*) and *ai polo* (*Antiaris* sp.) and place these in the river to use as smooth working surfaces. Banana, coconut and other leaves were placed in the water on either side of the logs to provide a cushion for the barkcloth as it was prepared. The stripped bark continued to be kept in running water as work proceeded. The next step was to continue removing traces of outer bark and to soften up hard areas. The bark was then systematically beaten while at-

tempting to keep the unbeaten and already beaten sections in the water, occasionally wetting the wooden beater.

The day before, men from the clan gather in the sacred house to make the barkcloth, together with the clan head. It took from about half past nine to four thirty in the afternoon to produce about six pieces, one piece taking about two hours to finish. Two cloths are made for each novice – one for the first day’s ceremonies and one for the second day – and one for each of those people officiating. Barkcloth is made so that the bottom (*aikune*) and top (*atue*) can be subsequently identified. In addition, two pieces of barkcloth are prepared for the novices: ritual barkcloth that is red and made from *waruai* bark, and white barkcloth for ordinary wear. If *waruai* (red) barkcloth is boiled, it becomes very nearly white and unuseable. The pieces prepared the previous day are trimmed on both sides. The barkcloth worn on day one is described as *tuhui* ‘his barkcloth’, and that on day two, as *ai uni pake* ‘wearing tree bark’, and to this latter a small ring (*pina utone*) is attached to the lower front end (*aikune*). This must be done in the presence of the novices and the wives of senior *morite*, together with other senior females of the clan. The women sit behind the door where they cannot be seen – though they are permitted to watch – and leave as soon as the work is finished. Barkcloth for the officiants or senior *morite* is prepared following the design of *tupu-tupue* barkcloth: decorated three times with a pattern inscribed using a thin piece of bamboo (*tapi nanae*). The curved waistband or *kapakate*, over which the barkcloth is stretched, is made from the inner bark of the *auna-sate* tree (*Prunus javanica*). It is shaped by bending into a circle and clamped in a split piece of wood, where it is left to dry as long as possible, with the rough side of the bark on the interior face.

5.3.2 FOOD PREPARATION

While making barkcloth and collecting food for feasting is the responsibility of men, food preparation is handled by women. Women make *sikenae* after men have harvested the sago. Women will have gathered, dried and cracked open *iane* nuts (*Canarium commune*) over a period of time before the ceremonies. It is only on the night before the ceremonies, however, that the *iane* are ground into flour and mixed with the sago to make *maea* (Plate 5.1).



Plate 5.1. Male puberty ceremony: Napuae's wife cooking *maea* in preparation for the Peinisa clan *matahenne*. Rouhua, February 1996.

5.3.3 MAKING OTHER OBJECTS

Some clans make *koa msinae* mats for novices to sit on, and boxes and baskets to contain paraphernalia used in the ceremonies. Men who have taken wives from the clan (*msahana*) make bags for betel requisites, decorated with glittering paper, beads and hair ornaments – shining in imitation of the gold bag of the first ancestor who descended from the sky. On the evening preceding the feast, kin gather in the *numa onate*, to prepare body decorations and other smaller items which will be needed, and to request the participation of the senior *morite*.

5.3.4 HUNTING CUSCUS

The night preceding the ceremony a party of men hunt cuscus. At least one cuscus is required for each novice. These must be caught alive and tied to a stick by their tail. This can be time-consuming and may take the entire night. It is also bound by strict prohibitions, the infringement

of which may influence hunting success. The most important of these prohibitions is not to mention the name of the animal being hunted. Instead, the hunters say they are looking for grasshoppers. A hunting party of this kind mounted in January 1971 comprised Inane, Hotena, Nepinama, Sahunete, Sekaranane (from Hahualan), Paikole, and Soile Soumori. This party managed to secure six cuscus between eleven o'clock at night and three o'clock in the morning, two of which were *mara kokowe* and four *mara isa*, all caught on the Lata, tied in the traditional way and brought to a spot between the village and the proposed site for the ritual. On this occasion it was a *kaiane* tree (*Terminalia catappa*) near the beach between the Sunukune and the Awao rivers. Here the cuscus were tied to branches, and the trees guarded by young boys from dawn until the time they were required. A taboo sign of *nasinana* leaves (*Caryota rumphiana*) was erected on the seaward side, and between the River Awao and the village of Rouhua, to warn people that the place was *monne*, and to be avoided.

Those who have hunted the cuscus or know anything about the plans for the ritual are not allowed to tell the novices anything about what has been happening, what kinds of cuscus have been caught, and where they are located. Least of all should it be revealed that the animals are alive, as they would normally expect them dead. Of course, this is all a pretence and the novices know it, having witnessed the entire procedure themselves as younger boys. Nevertheless, the charade and the pretend trickery has to be played out each time, a process of mock deception which is reminiscent of initiation rituals in New Guinea (Allen 1967) and the Alune 'kakian' from West Seram as described by Deacon (1925). As Whitehouse (2000:63) has noted, in the context of male puberty ceremonies in New Guinea, knowledge seems to be arrived at by withholding explanations, and through the cultivation of mystery

5.3.5 BUILDING THE HANTETANE

During the early morning, a party of males not directly involved in other activities go to a previously identified location in the forest to build the platform for the ceremony (*hantetane wemane*) from logs or bamboo. For the first *matahenne* held in February 1971, this was built some way inland from the mouth of the Awao, on land belonging to the chief of Matoke. By this usage the land becomes sacred, but it was generally agreed that

the land could become available for gardens again, as long as this was not immediately after the event. The February 1971 Awao *hantetane* was about 370 cm wide at the front, 330 cm long (sea-mountainward axis) and 140 cm high. It was erected on six uprights with a supporting timber along the front and back across which were placed some 25 logs, to form a floor. At the front and rear there was a 'ladder', *oane*, made from two timbers laid diagonally across each other, one end resting on the ground and the other on the corner of the platform. These dimensions are fairly standard. The whole was said to resemble the basic plan of a house, of which indeed it is a symbolic evocation. This is indicated most clearly in its orientation, entrance and exit, which lie along a sea (entrance) – mountain (exit) axis. Along the sunrise side is a rack, or *ai rimai*, upon which will later be hung ceremonial bags, bows, arrows, and so on. After the construction is complete, a taboo sign (*nona nepe*) made from two pieces of stripped bamboo, about one metre apart and tied at the top to form an arch, is placed in the ground on the seaward side to protect the site from evil spirits. The workers return to the village and tell the chief of the Matoke clan and the *maritihanna* (on this occasion, Patiraiia Sounaue-ainakahata) that everything is ready.

5.4 FIRST DAY: BATHING

Having spent the night in the clan sacred house with their *morite*, the novices rise before daybreak and eat sago porridge and cuscus. After this they fast until the feast the following night. This fast is known as *iama oni*, and extends to the smoking of tobacco and the chewing of betel. There is some variation between clans, and at least during the Matoke *matahenne* held in 1971 the three novices – Latulesi, Lihuta and Tuisa – had eaten no food since the previous night. At first light on the day of the ceremony the novices and other men gather in the house of the *morite*, who then leads them inland to a stream near the village. Before they bathe they are asked by their *morite* whether they have slept with any girls, except those few who are already married. An invocation is then uttered by the *morite*, this version of which was recorded by Bolton from Tuisa Matoke in 1995:

I will splash Tuane's father and Houa's father, the two of them, I will splash away their heavinesses troubles, their menstruation hut defilement

will go down leaving them. In a while on the five pieces of red wood may they not see darkness. May he not be dizzy. May he climb hills agilely. May he climb to the tops of mountains, the heads of rivers. May his hands and feet not be heavy. Let it not be so. Let his breath be long. Then he moves his hands toward that stream five times ... and then splashes him. He moves his hands toward that stream five times, ‘One, two, three, four, five.’ Then he splashes that water right into the two of them’s faces and then ... he says, ‘Yes. Go and bathe.’ Then the two of them bathe, wash their hair, and then return here [to the sacred house].

5.5 FIRST DAY: DRESSING

After bathing in the stream, the *morite* and novices return to the clan sacred house, where later the same morning they are dressed. At the Matoke *matahenne* held in February 1971 novices wore a *karanunu* loin-cloth (or rather, a red cloth cut into a thin strip worn between the legs and around the waist), which was later replaced in the ceremony by barkcloth. Over this was placed a blue batik *karanunu* (the most popular) or a batik cloth of some other design. After the loins it is the hair that receives most attention. This is parted down the middle and combed with a *senie* so that it flares out at the sides, a style known as *ahukakine-ahukaki hua*. Five or ten barrettes, hairgrips or combs are placed in the hair. Prior to the *matahenne* nothing is allowed to be worn on the male head except a sweat band.

Each novice also wears earrings (in some cases the *bua-buane matahenne*, an old type of silver earring), one or more *nitianae* on each arm and one or two chains with pendants around the neck. Also around the neck is placed a piece of red fabric, twisted into a chain and of 16 cm maximum diameter (the *karanunu sinte*; see British Museum specimen BM 1972 As 1.241), which contains a piece of red ginger (*soi msinae*: *Zingiber* sp.). Puberty ceremonies are considered to be times of personal danger, not least, it is said, because of a heightened propensity for sorcery accusations from those envious of the attention and sacred power which novices receive. The *karanunu sinte*, too, is said to ward off malevolent spirits and also to protect the sacred objects that novices wear. It is properly worn, as is the headdress and associated ornaments, until the wearer attends his first *kahuae* as an adult. At the 1971 Matoke *matahenne*, Lihuta and

Latulesi wore the *karanunu sinte*, whereas Tuisa did not; it was explained to me that he was protected by *saruana* alone.

While the dressing is taking place it is usual, if they are on good terms with the host clan, for all five clan chiefs to be present at the sacred house. In this crowded and largely male gathering, the *morite*, standing towards the north-east corner, is assisted in putting on his ritual attire, though there is nowadays a tendency for this to be delayed until the party arrives at the *hantetane*. The attire is the same as worn at the time he received his *tupu-tupue* (Chapter 6.3), the main items being a decorated barkcloth, made the previous day, covered with a red cloth, and a headcloth tied on the side with a 'horn' to which is attached a *pinæ* shell bracelet. The rim of the headcloth is decorated with a band of shells, buttons or beads (*katehete*). The *morite* also wears necklaces of red or multicoloured beads and with more *pinæ* bracelets across the chest, upper-arm bands of cassowary-wing quills (*nonie*) decorated with yellow *wainite* leaves, earrings, rings and *nitianæ*.

The wives of married novices, before their husbands leave the sacred house, 'raise their breath' (*apusaa nahai*). Beginning with the oldest, each married novice in turn removes a finger ring and presents it to his wife. Five times she pushes it along the length of her husband's hand in a medial direction, and on the fifth attempt raises it to his chest. The ring is then circulated five times between his breasts, placed on his head, and then returned by the wife to her husband who replaces it on his finger. The raising of the breath in this way is required, as a male who marries before his *matahenne* – that is, who has controverted the correct order in which rituals should take place – is at increased risk of pollution. One of the consequences of this is shortness of breath, a handicap during hunting. It is necessary to counter this risk before receiving the barkcloth, as the intensity of the *matahenne* in particular exposes the novice to sorcery attacks and attacks from malevolent spirits, and to the dangerous excesses of heat produced during the ritual.

5.6 WALK TO THE HANTETANE

For the first *matahenne* in February 1971 the party gathered in the Matoke sacred house where the novices put on their initial ceremonial attire. Before leaving they hang ornate betel pouchs over their right shoulder;



Plate 5.2. Male puberty ceremony, Rouhua: (a) assembling at the *hantetane* on the Awao river, waiting for the *matahenne* for Soumori and Sounaue-ainakahata to begin, February 1971; (b) cutting logs from *ai msinae* wood to make *ai otua* (standing blocks) for novices at the Peinisa *matahenne*, February 1996; (c) *ia onate* Matoke kneeling before the *ai otua* prior to the *matahenne* ceremony, February 1971; (d) Anarima and Soiile Sounaue-ainakahata receiving their barkcloth. Rouhua, February 1971; (e) *ia onate* Matoke presenting Soiile Sounaue-ainakahata with ring, February 1971; (f) Soiile Sounaue-ainakahata killing sacrificial cuscus, February 1971.

and are given parangs and bows and arrows tied in a bundle. These latter are the *henue matahenne*: normal bows tied with *sinsinte*, *wainite* leaf dyed with turmeric and strips of red cloth, or some combination of these items depending on individual clan traditions. In 1971 rifles, rented from the police, were also available. The Matoke chief explained to the novices the importance of the *matahenne* ritual and of exactitude in performance, warning that errors would lead to a devastating flood. The sacred spear stored in the clan house (Chapter 7.6) is said to date from the time of such a flood.

The ceremonial party leave by the mountain door, the novices following their *morite* out of the village to the site where the *hantetane* has been prepared. They are followed by other adult men, who carry wooden boxes and suitcases containing the items in which the novices will be dressed, and, in the rear, trail most of the men and boys of the village. As they leave, the regalia of the novices is admired by watching women. During the journey, those who have already been through the *matahenne* mock the novices and point to imaginary cuscus in the trees as an indication of what is to come. When the *hantetane* is reached the *nona nepe* is removed. The most important part of the *matahenne* ritual – what Tongli (1994:233) calls the *irui ena*, the giving of ancestral blessing – may then begin.

5.7 AT THE HANTETANE

When the party arrives at the *hantetane* the novices ascend seaward and sit on the mountain side facing the small arena which has been earlier prepared. Here they remain for the duration of the ceremony, descending only to participate in the ritual. The *hantetane* is always ascended from the seaward side and descended from the mountain side. The ornamental betel pouchs and weaponry are hung on the rack (Plate 5.2a). The novices rest for some minutes while the final preparations are made, for example, the fetching of *sinsinte* (*Codiaeum variegatum* leaves for decoration), and the dressing of the *morite* in their regalia, if this was not done in the village. An invocation is made to the spirits of the land on which the ritual is to be performed, asking that no harm should come to the novices from any malevolent *sakahatene*.

Earlier in the morning, when the *hantetane* was being constructed and the ground on the mountain side being cleared of all growth, branches

of *ai msinae* (lit. ‘red wood’ (*Syzygium* sp.) had been cut, a species selected precisely because it is ‘red, like the *karanunu*’. Each branch – one for each novice – had been cut by their *morite* into five pieces, each of about 40 cm long and 6-7 cm in diameter. The pieces in each bundle of five were now carefully arranged and placed side by side to form a standing block, the *ai otua nima*, ‘five pieces of wood’, for each novice, the whole ensemble held in place with four pegs (Plate 5.2b). The exact dimensions are important, as reflected in the use of a measuring stick. The standing blocks form a curved row of as many blocks as there are novices, oriented in a sunrise-sunset direction on the mountain side and parallel to the platform to encompass a semi-circular arena cleared of overgrowth.

With the blocks completed the novices are led away from the clearing, to much teasing and joking, a short distance into the forest where they are instructed to remove the *karanunu* strips they have been wearing between their legs. The Sounaue *morite* (Patiraia) then approaches the first *ai otua nima* (standing block) and takes a silver ring (the *sapao tuhuku* or *sapao putie*) wrapped in a piece of *wainite* leaf. A ring has been given to each novice before the ceremony, and is now carefully placed under the front of the block and any remaining dust on the leaf that might have inadvertently rubbed off from the ring is gently brushed over it. The leaf is then also placed under the front of the block. After the same procedure has been undertaken with a different ring for each block, and thereby for each novice, the *morite* squats in front of the block at the sunrise end of the row and makes an offering (*pokue*) to the spirits of the earth (Plate 5.2c). He makes a shallow depression in the soil and pours into it ring scrapings from another *wainite* leaf, over which he places another ring, at the same time asking Anahatana and the ancestors to intercede with any malevolent spirits in the area, so that they will not bring sickness to the novice.

5.8 INVESTITURE WITH BARKCLOTH

The novices are invested in order of seniority. The eldest is the first to step down from the *hantetane* and moves to the side of the *ai otua nima*, at the sunrise end, facing the sea. The remaining novices follow and stand by their own block. The *morite* helps the eldest novice onto the *ai otua nima* at the sunrise end, so that the right foot is the first to ascend moving from the seaward side inland. Once the novice is on the block he turns round

to face the sea, where he remains for the duration of the investiture, his feet not being permitted to touch the ground until he has received all his ritual attire (*api hanaie*, lit. ‘male clothing’). The other novices follow in turn, each holding forward both hands, with the right on top of the left. The novice places a ring on the right-hand middle finger of the *morite*, who in return moves the folded barkcloth that has been prepared for him towards the novice five times. The *morite* utters another invocation to Anahatana and the ancestors asking them to – as Bolton translates it – *usi ne wakene*, ‘redeem his uninitiation’. Receipt of the barkcloth is therefore, in a sense, synonymous with accepting the burden of *monne* (that is, of all rules relating to sacredness), but at the same time the exchange also somehow cancels previously accumulated *monne* (in the sense of historical ritual transgressions). With this invocation the novice, in effect, becomes an adult and is able to marry (Plate 5.2d). The *morite* asks the ancestors to protect the novice from sickness, to bring him many healthy children and a long life. He then utters ‘*araroue, araroue tuhui*’, ‘threaten, threaten the barkcloth’, after which the barkcloth is thrust against the loins of the novice five times, who cries out ‘*ahu...u...u!*’ Great importance is attached to the correct handling of the barkcloth, which must be held by the *morite* with two hands, one on either side with the inside uppermost. The novice takes the barkcloth in the same way and pulls it over his genitals, at which point the response ‘*hioi, hioi, hioi, hioi, hioi!*’ is uttered. The batik sarong that the novice has been wearing until this moment is now removed, and the barkcloth is arranged in the prescribed manner around the waist and buttocks, by other adult males present. This responsibility is largely assumed by men who have taken wives from the clan of the novice, especially the husbands of his sisters. Great attention is paid to the arrangement of the barkcloth, particularly to the lower tip (*aikune*), which must hang down in front, while the top (*atue*) must be placed in the pit of the back. Once this is complete a red cloth (*karanunu*) is placed over the barkcloth, hanging down in front though exposing the buttocks.

The next stage is the removal of any head ornaments that the novices might be wearing, the back-combing of their hair so that it stands upright, and the presentation of the red headcloth (*karanunu*). This first headcloth is given to the novice by his father, adopted father or stepfather. The *morite* moves the *karanunu* towards the novice five times and ties it round the head, arranging it in the form of an inverted cone held up by the hair. In this manifestation it is known as the *matahenne*, the en-

ture ritual thereby being metonymically known by one of its most salient features. Nuauulu say that this shape, with the top hanging backwards, alludes to the comb of bananas referred to in the Nuauulu creation myth and which turned into seven children. A band of carved, small white-shell rings secured with pineapple fibre (*pina utone*) is tied around the rim of the headcloth, and necklaces hung across the chest, often displaying attached Goromese shell bracelets. Bands of cassowary quill are placed on the upper arms in which *sinsinte* leaves are inserted, earrings are attached, and the decorated *tasi matahenne* slung over the shoulder. Finally, aromatic coconut oil (*wekatisie akaronae*) is smeared over the body to make it shine. As this is taking place there is much noise from the onlooking crowd, and, when available, from firecrackers and rifle fire.

During the investiture of a novice, the spirits of the land on which the *matahenne* is held (*tiunuei*) are thought to capture his soul through the ring previously placed on the leaf in front of the *ai otua*. Once the investiture is over the *morite* takes the ring again and uses it to ‘raise the breath’ (*apusaa nahai*) of the novice (Plate 5.2e). For each novice in turn, the ring is held over the palm of the right hand by his *morite* and an invocation offered to the clan ancestors as the ring is moved forward five times. On the fifth time the ring is run up to the top of the right arm, then placed in the middle of the chest and then to the middle of the forehead, before it is finally placed on the novice’s finger. This action is said to effect the return of the novice’s soul transferred earlier, temporarily, through the ring to the spirits of the land.

5.9 SACRIFICING THE CUSCUS

Once the investiture of the novices is complete, they step off the *ai otoa nima* towards the seaward side, placing the right foot first and taking two steps forward. They then walk round and ascend the *hantetane* from the sea side and sit down, as if to consume the betel requisites and tobacco which have already been laid out on *koa* mats. But at this point the cuscus that were caught the previous night arrive, still tied by the tail to the branches to which they had been earlier attached. They are brought to the space between the *hantetane* and *ai otua*, a number of men having gone moments earlier to fetch them. Until this point they have been hidden, and their appearance is supposed to surprise the novices, while it is

believed that if the novices see them before they are supposed to, then the cuscus will die. The novices, indeed, affect surprise, and they are once more directed to the mountain side of the *hantetane*, this time to prove their strength in killing a cuscus.

The first cuscus to be caught the previous night is brought out and placed on the ground before the *hantetane*. The eldest novice is then required to kill it with a single, crushing blow to the neck using the blunt back of a parang, an act known as *kekui*. He moves his parang forward five times and, as he hits the cuscus, shouts ‘*nima manesia*’ (Plate 5.2f), which - following Bolton - derives from the old headhunting cry meaning ‘five defeats you’, used when someone from a Patalima group had killed someone from a Patasiwa group. The novice then shouts (the *asakonu* or *una waahuhu*), ‘*waahuhuu* or *uhu...u..u!*’, while all those watching respond with ‘*hioe*’, five times (the *una hioe*). A volley of rifle fire or firecrackers accompanies this action if the necessary items are available, and the general cacophony is said to ‘deafen the forest’. This happens for each novice: the second cuscus to be caught is brought out for the second eldest novice, the third cuscus for the third eldest novice, and so on, until all novices have killed their cuscus. Although a single blow is not always sufficient to kill the cuscus, the novice is not blamed or subject to supernatural sanction, and others present will kill it for him.

The novices now return to the *hantetane* platform to chew betel and smoke tobacco (Plate 5.3a), though some *tobako nikate*, wrapped in *wainite* leaves and tied with a piece of red cloth, is not actually smoked and will eventually be stored in the clan sacred house and consumed by the *sio-nata*. The used *wainite* leaves, too, are eventually hung in the sacred house until they rot, and on no account may be discarded. The betel quid for each novice (betel, pepper, tobacco and lime) is spread out on a *koa msinae* mat, and the dishes on the mats arranged in a sunrise-sunset orientation. The *morite* sits on the mountainside and the novices on the seaside; the *kapitane* on the mountainside, the guardian on the seaside. During the betel-chewing, the *tanaite* present disembowel the cuscus ready to take back to the village and firmly tie each to the branch on which it was brought alive to the ceremonial site. This is the time when the entrails of the cuscus are sometimes examined to divine the fortune of the novices who have killed them.

5.10 RETURN TO THE VILLAGE

At the instruction of the *morite*, the novices and other participants process back to the village (Plate 5.3b), carrying their betel pouches and weapons over the shoulder. These accessories are carried – it is said – in re-enactment of the founding myth in which the younger founding ancestor of the Matoke clan descends from the sky similarly equipped. Some of the younger children carry the dead cuscus on long branches, possibly evoking similar practices connected with headhunting. Before leaving the *matahenne* site, two long thin pieces of bamboo are placed in the form of a diagonal cross over the *ai otua*, and another over the *hantetane*. This is said to prevent ghosts and other malevolent spirits from contaminating the site and causing sickness.

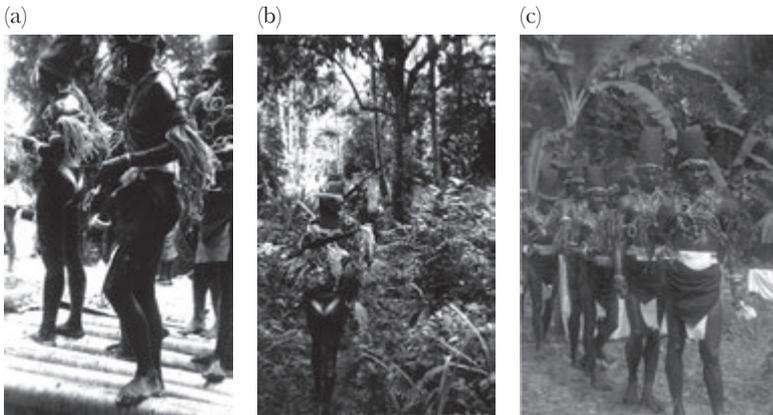


Plate 5.3. Male puberty ceremony, Rouhua: (a) inducted males standing on *hantetane* during celebratory feast, February 1971; (b) inducted males returning from *matahenne* on the Awao. Note rifles rented from police, February 1971; (c) *morite* descending from *numa onate* Matoke after presenting barkcloths to ancestral spirits of the *rine*, February 1971.

As time approaches for the novices to arrive back in the village, the women and children begin to watch out for them, often warned by someone who has run ahead. As the *matahenne* party enters the village, the novices and their attire are the subject of much admiration. They return to their sacred house where the elders of those clans otherwise uninvolved are

waiting. Meanwhile women of the clan prepare food for the feast to be held that night, including filling two large *nuite* baskets with bananas, sago biscuits and *maea* for each of the novices. The first basket, the *nui maweie*, is for the novice himself. The second, the *nui tuhuo*, or 'barkcloth basket', is presented by the novice to their *morite* on the second day, and it is believed that the novice will be permanently short of breath unless it is generously filled.

Once the novices have entered the clan sacred house they are not allowed to descend again until the next day. Smoking and chewing of betel continues. The cuscus are boiled in bamboo lengths on fires outside by pre-pubescent boys termed *manorina*, meaning servants. Between late afternoon and midnight – the timing may vary between clans and depending on circumstances – a feast is held at which the novices eat, apart from other males, but with the clan chief and *morite*. This is a feast for men alone. The young, wife-taking men prepare the eating area, the arrangement of which is the same as for the female puberty ceremony. Banana leaves are laid on the floor along the mountain-sea axis with the mountain end representing 'the head'. At the head sits the *morite* and the chief or *kapitane* at the sunset side, while the guardian of the house and the novice sit at the sunrise side. Each novice has a large *takanasi matahenne* (a lidded basket) of food, from which each consumes and from which they are fed. The eating of sago porridge is prohibited at this feast. Instead, a thin soup is extracted from the cuscus cooked in bamboo (*marane sonaute*), drunk and used as a sauce for the sago biscuits. The cuscus are consumed, together with vegetables, bananas, and the *maea* baked the previous night. After the feast is over the bones of the sacrificed cuscus are collected and placed in the same bamboo lengths used to cook the meat. The men retire and the novices sleep in the sacred house until the following morning, when they remove their cumbersome regalia and replace the ritual red barkcloth (which is not allowed to be fouled or wetted when a person urinates) with another of white bark.

5.11 THE SECOND DAY

After a specified number of days or, more generally now, the following day, men gather in the sacred houses of those clans which have performed the *matahenne*. The novices wear the ritual attire with which they

were recently invested, but this time the red barkcloth has been removed, replaced with the white barkcloth. As women are present, this is done under sarongs to protect the modesty of the novices and to dampen the lust of the women. Coconut oil is rubbed on their bodies again and the other adult men then go around having fun rubbing it on each other's faces. After midday the women of the clan assemble in the clan sacred house with gifts of food for the house of the *morite*. Later in the afternoon the kin of the novices bring gifts to the house of the *morite*, and the ceremony concludes with the *morite* visiting the clan sacred house of the novices with a gift of an ancient porcelain dish.

In the afternoon the novices visit each sacred house in the village, both *numa onate* and *numa kapitane* of each clan. As they proceed they are followed by most of the men in the village, some carrying gifts and others, residues of food. They start from the sacred house of the novice and then progress to that of their *morite*, accompanied by several men carrying a round board (*anau*) on which are placed the right thigh of each cuscus killed by the novices the previous day, together with a heap of bananas, sago biscuits, *maca* and nut mixture. After the sacred house of the *morite*, they go to the Matoke sacred house, and then visit the others. Someone who has taken his wife from their clan leads them from one house to the next, and other men from the clan whose house they will go to next run ahead and make preparations to receive them.

At each house the novices enter through the seaward and leave by the inland door. They sit along the platform towards the north-east corner, where the lines nearest the mountains and nearest the sunrise intersect. The gifts brought are placed in front of them and new gifts placed on top. Each novice receives gifts (*aratae*) from those houses that are not of their clan, usually several plates, plus betel and tobacco, with some also receiving a glass, bowl, soap, or sometimes money or a *karanumu*. The novices eat, chew betel and smoke moderately, and say little. By contrast, the hosts encourage other guests to eat, smoke, chew betel, drink alcohol (in 1971 *sopi*, an *Areca* palm distillate from the Christian village of Nuelitetu), and to rub coconut oil on their own body and on the bodies of the novices. There is much hilarity and fooling around and, after the first few houses, much drunkenness. At the 1996 Peinisa *matahene*, the progressive ostentatious consumption started in the Peinisa clan house, then moved to the *numa kapitane* Peinisa, then to the *numa onate* Matoke, and, after that, the sacred houses of the clans Neipane, Sounaue and

Soumori, in that order, and with the *numa onate* always preceding the *numa kapitane*. The *ia onate* (either chief or *kapitane*) in each house made a speech addressed to the novices and, in the case of the *numa kapitane* Peinisa, the fathers of the novices. This is entirely a male affair, the women merely watching as the party moves between houses, apparently much amused by their progressive drunkenness.

Usually, after the novices have visited all the sacred houses, but also at other times – and in some clans several days later – the red barkcloth worn by each novice on the first day, together with the bones of the cuscus which he killed, is hung by the *morite* at the inland end of the *rine* shelf in the clan sacred house (Plate 5.3c). The *morite* first offers a general invocation for all barkcloths, and then, taking each in turn from a basket, places it against the *ane* line, invoking the ancestors. The barkcloth is then pushed five times against the line and tied in place. The red barkcloth is regarded as the ‘soul’ of the novice and must remain forever protected and undamaged, simultaneously a gift to, and guarded by, the ancestral spirits. The cuscus bones presented to the *morite* are also placed on the *rine* by their clan leader, who invokes Anahatana and the ancestors and – naming each novice – asks them to always accompany their now-adult charges, protect them from illness and give them a life long enough to care for their sacred house and its traditions. The *koa*e mats and other regalia used in the ceremony are also given to the *morite*.

This complete, the *matahenne* head covering is removed by most of the novices, and certainly by those already married. Instead, they wear the headcloth in the usual fashion and return to ordinary clothes once more. This effectively marks the end of the male puberty ritual, though some may continue to wear their *matahenne* for a few days longer. Some ornaments, such as the *kipasai* decorations of *waimite* leaf hanging from the armbands, and the *sokona*, the barkcloth decorations worn as armbands, may continue to be worn until the first *kahuae erereta* (or *kahuae mainae*), the ‘great circle dance’. This suggests a prolonged state of ritual ambiguity, of transition and of slower reintegration into adult life. Although taking place in the *suane*, in the past the *kahuae erereta* was usually associated with a *matahenne* ceremony. However, especially now, it can occur separately. Both are regarded as rituals of and for ‘people’ rather than for the *suane*, for which *kahuae* will also be performed as part of its completion rituals. This distinction between rituals belonging to mortal humans and those

of things independent of human mortality is an important distinction in Nuaulu cosmology, to which we will return.

5.12 VARIATION AND CHANGE IN MATAHENNE

There is no evidence, and a low probability too, that the *matahenne* has ever remained constant in form and content for long periods of time. Nevertheless, there can be even less doubt that it has undergone significant change over the last 150 years, perhaps most extensively at that time when Nuaulu first settled on the coast. Thus, while the Nuaulu still engaged in systematic headhunting, the narratives of oral history suggest that a novice killed a person prior to the ceremony, taking a human head instead of a cuscus. Also, formerly, the shouting of ‘*waahuhuu*’ (the *asakonu*) and the *wana hioi* response occurred either when the head was taken, or after a headhunting raid, once the victor had returned to the village with a head (Ellen 1972, 2002). The heads were then apparently taken to the place where the ceremony was held and each novice ritually made a cut on top of the head with a parang after which the *hioi* cry was uttered, supposedly to make the body strong and give courage. The heads were then hung in the *suane*. These resonances are still present for some Nuaulu, and we may wonder how they might relate symbolically to recent, unanticipated head-taking episodes, albeit in a very different context (see Chapter 9).

Less dramatic, but nevertheless significant in terms of my argument regarding the role of practice in relation to knowledge erosion and reproduction, is the evidence that *matahenne* ritual varies between clans, and likely within clans as well, on different occasions. There is variation in the timing of events, for example, in the length of the fast the preceding night and of the first feast, and in the particular accoutrements used. Novices in Rouhua clans generally carry bows and arrows, whereas in Aihisuru it is spears and shields. However, at times in the past rifles have replaced bows and arrows, only to revert to bow and arrow following a government prohibition on renting firearms from police and military. Even the eponymous *matahenne* head covering is not uniform across clans, and traditionally each clan has a different form of headdress. For Matoke this includes fibre from *uri bunau* (a kind of banana) that projects from the back of the headdress. The myth associated with the origin of this

tells how the *uri bunau* was once a human and how a woman of the clan Matoke gave birth to the *uri bunau*. For the clan Soumori, the *matahenne* includes wood from the *unuhutu* tree (*Clerodendrum rumphiana*). Both *uri bunau* and *ununuhutu* are *monne* for their respective clans and may not be eaten or cut. Formerly, Peinisa wore the *kahahite*, a kind of frame slung from a band around the head and hanging down the back of the neck. This has now been adopted by other descent groups, for example, the *numa kapitane* Sounaue-aipura in Aihisuru, while Peinisa have adopted the *matahenne*.

The construction of the *hantetane* varies between clans and also according to the number of novices it must accommodate. The Rouhua Neipani platform in 1971 was made from bamboo, and was raised only some 20 or 30 centimetres off the ground. The Peinisa platform, by contrast, was made from whole lengths of timber raised about 100 to 150 centimetres from the ground. The platform for the 1971 ceremony was twice as large as that constructed in 1970, with three large uprights and two sets of diagonal cross pieces rather than just two. In 1996 the Peinisa *ai otua* were made from *ai msinae*, but for Neipane from *tomone*, a kind of bamboo. It is possible that there is a link here between materials used for *hantetane* and *ai otua*.

Other changes are reported by various subjects, but are not particularly linked to clan differences. Most significant amongst these - especially because it is as much imagistic as liturgical - is perhaps the omission of the *asakonu* at the moment when the barkcloth is placed on the loins, which by 1996 was seemingly only uttered when the cuscus is killed. At a more mundane level, in some instances it is turmeric that is rubbed on the bodies of novices (as in female ceremonies) rather than coconut oil. For men, tooth-levelling (still important for girls in the 1970s) is now less in evidence. While the burden of the overall number and complexity of such practices may have led to their decline, other changes are more specifically related to the exigencies of modern life, and especially associated with issues of time-management. Thus, in the past it is said that the *matahenne* was conducted deep in the forest, though nowadays the site is usually no more than a kilometre from the village, while the *matahenne* of younger boys may be delayed until they are out of school.

We have already noted variation and change at an organizational level in terms of where novices find their *morite*. It is widely believed that the former pattern was one of symmetrical exchange between clan sections,

linked to a regular pattern of marital exchange; according to Komisi Soumori, however, the clans Soumori and Matoke-pina in Rouhua have always had a *morite* relationship, even when the two clans were at war with each other and taking heads. Today, as we have seen, the position is much more mixed. Peinisa (unusually) even find *morite* from within their own clan, Sounaue-ainakahata from Matoke, and Matoke from Sounaue-ainakahata. Soumori sometimes find *morite* from their own clan, and sometimes from Sounaue. The social origin of the *morite* is also related to which clan sacred house is used. As has been noted in Chapter 1, although the default number of sacred houses per clan is two, the actual number varies depending on the history of segmentation and convergence, as this relates to demography. In the accounts of both Bolton and Ellen, based on *matahenne* held in Rouhua, the house providing the *morite* is always described as a *numa onate*, though Tongli (1994:232) speaks consistently of *numa kapitane*. It is likely that in his description this reflects the practice for the clan from which he obtained the description of the ceremony.

A major variation, still claimed by several clans to be the ideal, and most likely the former general practice for most clans, was in 1971 still said to sometimes occur, especially in Bunara. This is where men and novices are required to sleep in the forest for about ten days and for at least seven days after the ceremony, and hunt meat, which is then exchanged with the women for *maea* (for example, in Peinisa and Neipane-tomoien). Preparations are made in the village and all food and other items are taken to a pre-determined area in the forest in *takanasi* baskets. A shelter (*wanane*) or *numa matahenne*, depending on accounts, is built in the forest when the men and novices first arrive, and in 1972 a previous shelter could still be seen high up on the Pia River near Bunara. Here novices slept, held a feast the first evening, and hunted for up to seven nights, looking for cuscus, and utilizing only forest resources. In Rouhua, such an event is reported for the Neipani-tomoien *matahenne* held on the Wakakau River, the occasion of Kaiisa's *matahenne* in 1971, who by 2003 was village headman. The rest of the ritual is said to be similar, though there is no *hantetane*, and after the ritual the men hunt for several days in order to fill the *takanasi* with game to repay the women for the *maea*, sago and nut mixture put in the baskets before the ceremony. Ideally, the *takanasi* will be full to overflowing with excess game carried into the village on yokes. The day following their return to the village the nov-

ices visit each of the sacred houses in the way described in section 5.11. Despite claiming that these practices are ideal and theoretically still current, neither Bolton nor myself have witnessed their occurrence, and the repeated explanation for their neglect was difficulties in undertaking and coordinating the necessary work.

Adjustments also have to be made to the ceremony where two or more clans are participating (as was the case in the February 1971 *matahenne* for Sounaue and Soumori), and there may be problems at the initial planning stage in reconciling views of elders from different clans about when to hold the ceremony and when certain intervening events are inauspicious and require postponement. There are also issues regarding precedence of various clans at different stages of the ceremony.

5.13 PERIODICITY AND FREQUENCY OF MATAHENNE

Each clan has a *matahenne* approximately every five to six years. Frequency depends on how many boys in the clan are of the right age, and how busy people are with other things. For even if the time is generally considered right in terms of the accumulation of boys of the right age, the specific timing can be influenced by general circumstances (communal conflict, El Niño, and so on) or the specific circumstances of individuals. Ideally, boys should be inducted before they start courting or marry.

As the male population rises, we might expect the number of novices at a *matahenne* to increase and for the ceremonies to become more frequent, putting pressure on resources. Thus, the frequency of *matahenne* in a crude way reflects male birth rate. My most detailed census data are for 1971 Rouhua, and Figure 5.2 indicates the numbers of individuals eligible for *matahenne* on the basis of age cohort data collected in that year. From these data it would seem that *matahenne* have occurred with increasing frequency and size from 1945 onwards, reflecting the growth in the Nuaulu population. The number of boys actually inducted will have been less than these figures suggest, because of intervening deaths, migration and conversion. However, this is unlikely to account for many eligible individuals, partly because conversion tends to happen more with post-pubertal males. The major complicating factor in terms of issues relevant to understanding ritual reproduction is how these figures translate into clan membership, since the number of eligible novices per clan

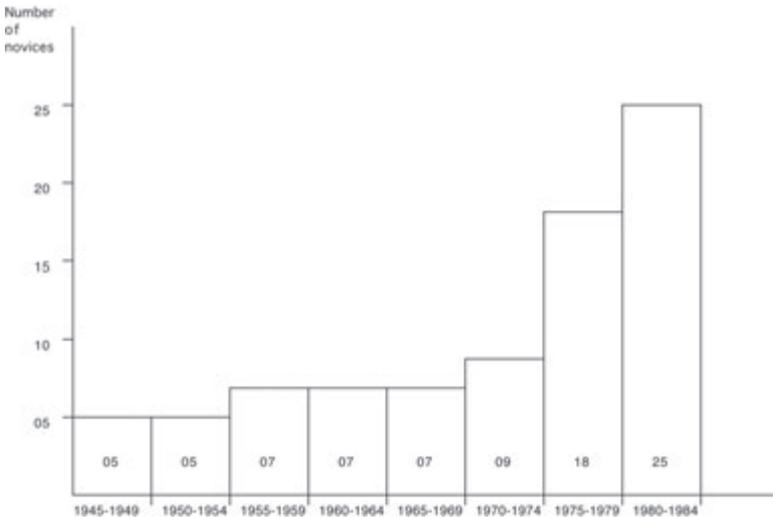


Figure 5.2. Male puberty ceremony: projected estimates for numbers of novices for five-year periods between 1945 and 1985

Source: 1971 Rouhua census data (Source: Ellen 1978: Figure 14).

will determine the urgency of a *matahenne*. Table 5.1, therefore, attempts to segregate the actual figures of participating novices by clan, while at the same time noting periodicity and location. We can immediately see that this is a much more complicated picture than that predicted in Figure 5.2, with a great deal of asymmetry in timing which seems to derive from complex calculations about when to hold ceremonies and for whom. Thus, although we know that aggregate numbers of males being inducted must have risen in line with population growth, this is not reflected in the spacing of events and in the numbers involved at particular events. Thus, 1971 was a rich year for *matahenne*, but there were fewer individuals involved, while the period 1980-88 saw no *matahenne* in Rouhua whatsoever. There has been a dramatic increase in numbers since then.

One factor that can delay a *matahenne* beyond the time that the ages and number of potential novices might otherwise normally dictate, is the availability of elders qualified to serve as *morite*. This was the case in February 1990 in Rouhua. At this time Matoke was anxious to hold a *matahenne*, but was prevented from doing so because neither the chief nor the *kapitane* of Sounaue-ainakahata, the clan traditionally provid-

	Year	Location	Clan	Number of novices
1.	1971	Awao	Soumori	4
			Sounaue	4
2.	1971	Awao	Matoke	3
3.	1972	Wakakau	Neipane	3
4.			Matoke	1
5.		Mon	Sounaue	1
6.	1973	Sunukune	Sounaue	1
7.			Peinisa	1
8.			Neipane	3
9.			Matoke	1
10.	1975	Wakakau	Neipane	3
11.	1977	Samna ukuna	Matoke	1
12.	1979	Samna ukuna	Matoke	2
13.	1989		Soumori	4
14.	1990		Sounaue	10
15.	1995		Neipane	8
16.	1996	Sunukune	Peinisa	6
17.	1999		Neipane	4
18.	2000		Sounaue	11
19.	2001		Matoke	8
20.	2003		Neipane	15-16

Table 5.1. Male puberty ceremonies: correspondence between year, location, clan and number of individuals inducted, Rouhua 1971-2003.

ing their *morite*, had received their *tupu-tupue*, an essential precondition. Paradoxically, Sounaue-ainakahata received their decorated barkcloths from Matoke, so the log-jam in the ritual process was reciprocally compounded, illustrating how the whole complex of interrelated cycles can grind to a standstill, or at least move extremely slowly, because of a blockage in one part of the system. Eventually, the problem was ‘fixed’ by investing four Soumori elders as Sounaue-ainakahata *morite* for Matoke puberty ceremonies: Sakaso, Seipati, Tukanesi and Amaeia.

Even when the *matahenne* is theoretically underway, there may be matters that delay or alter the proceedings. Thus, in 1996, the journey

to Sunukune, where the ceremony was being held, did not begin until after four o'clock in the afternoon. This was initially due to rain, followed by the late arrival of the *morite*, and finally to a fractured bamboo in the floor of the Peinisa sacred house. This latter was judged a bad omen, and a seance was held to consult the ancestral spirits, who insisted that the *morite* change into ritual attire in the village rather than at the *hantetane*, a question that had divided the elders up until that point.

5.14 THE CONNECTING LOGIC IN RITUALS OF SEXUAL MATURATION

The *matahenne* seclusion is openly compared with the seclusion of the *pinamou*. Both rituals involve the presentation of a young person to Nuauulu society as fully gendered and social beings, involving the formal ascription of maleness and femaleness through separation and reintegration of the sexes (spatially and by attire). Both display the physical attractiveness of sexually mature and, therefore, marriageable males and females. This sexual display is evident in the women watching and admiring the male novices as these process to and from the *hantetane*, in the rubbing of odiferous coconut oil on the bodies of both males and females, in the synaesthetic pleasure keenly felt by onlookers as a *pinamou* perambulates between houses with her prominent headpiece, tinkling bells and unguent smells. Both male and female novices have long hair, a girl's in a bun to hold her headpiece, and a boy's to hold up his headcloth. Although I have made it clear that I am not primarily concerned with meaning, it is worth adding – since it has a bearing on what people actually do – that the dress code of both ceremonies and sexes reflects aspects of Nuauulu myths of creation: the girl's headpiece leaning forward and the boy's headpiece folded over backwards beings imitations of the comb of bananas hanging from the plant from which the seven children came. This is more evident in the male head piece specific to the clan Matoke-hanaie.

The sexual aura of male novices is made more apparent by their appearance and demeanour at the beginning of the ceremonies, when they seem to adopt female characteristics. They act demurely, and the way the hair is dressed with female combs gives them an androgynous appearance (cf. Baldwin 1991:13). Until puberty, boys may enter men-

stration huts, although as they near puberty they tend to avoid them. Even a father who has never gone through the *matahenne* (itself a ritual offence), may enter to see his child by virtue of his un-inducted status. Once he has received his *karanunu* his sexuality is formally fixed and he must strenuously avoid gender pollution or risk lack of success in hunting and fishing, and ill health.

Once puberty ceremonies have been concluded, both males and females are prohibited from cutting their hair, as this will lead to sickness of both the novice and probably their offspring. The giving by the *morite* of the barkcloth and red cloth for the head and the sacrifice establishes the novice in his proper sacred house as an official *hanaie*, and in the house of his brother-in-law as a *tanaie*.

Following Tongli's scheme, the male puberty ceremony, despite the many variations and changes, entails three kinds of physical movement: (1) of novice and *morite* from a clan sacred house upstream and from village to forest to bathe, and then returning to the clan sacred house; (2) the procession mountainward to the *hantetane*, and then returning to the clan sacred house; and (3) a movement mountainward to visit the house of the *morite* to offer food, followed by a *morite* gift to the house of the novice involving movement seaward. This movement involves the novice giving food to his *morite* to fulfill a duty to the ancestors by assuring the life of the dead. The porcelain counter-gift from the *morite* to the house represents the ancestor's presence in the sacred house protecting the living and bringing prosperity. These same movements are also between spaces that are differently gendered: from mixed gender (potentially polluting spaces), to male spaces (forest, hunting, killing) and back again. There is, however, some ambiguity in the imagery, as the five pieces of wood create a cultural island in the forest while the *hantetane* is a proxy house. There is symmetry here between males and females, the latter also involving a ceremony outside the village (at the menstruation hut) where the opposite sex is excluded, and ceremonies in the village that include both sexes. But there is also asymmetry, in that while the sexes are separated for the most important parts of both rituals, in both cases it is to prevent menstrual contamination of males from females, rather than, depending on the gender, mutual cross-contamination. The overall structure of the actions of the ceremonies, therefore, provides a model of movement which makes them easy to remember, transmit and if necessary reconstruct and reinvent.

Chapter 6

Life-cycle rituals: adulthood and death

6.1 INTRODUCTION

After puberty, gender, clan affiliation and descent position complicate the remaining Nuaulu life-cycle rituals, up to and including death. Marriage affects both male and female equally, but the ritual is a strangely attenuated and secular affair compared with the extravagance of puberty ceremonies. Nuaulu males are additionally subject to certain *suane* rituals that complete processes begun in the *matahenne*, and these will be discussed again in Chapter 8. Moreover, adult men who become heads of sacred houses (clan heads, *kapitane* and the *maritihanna*) must also undertake a ceremony in which they are invested with *tupu-tupue*. This gives them the authority to officiate at major rituals, such as those relating to male puberty and to the life cycles of sacred houses, and to lead the *kahuae*.

In a sense, marriage (*ausahata*) is an extension and completion of the ceremonies held at puberty, as individuals of either sex are regarded as being incomplete without a partner and children. It is only by virtue of this condition that they are able to occupy hereditary leadership positions such as clan chief and *nuhune* guardian. Indeed, it is necessary to produce children before individuals have the maturity, experience and patience to undertake certain responsibilities, before ‘one’s inside sits’ (*anoi ereruei*). These developmental trajectories are reflected in changes in terms of reference and address used upon reaching marriage, and following the birth of a first child, and of a first grandchild (Ellen 1983). By using metaphors evoking puberty – ‘bow-string’ (*hune onote*) for a boy and ‘*nuhune* clothing basket’ (*kasunte okia*) for a girl – people allude to whether an individual is ritually prepared for marriage. After marriage there may be various rituals, depending on the clan and the individual status of the husband and wife, which supplement the exchange asserted on the

occasion of the wedding itself. These supplementary rituals include the presentation to post-pubertal girls of the *nasa*, the conical head covering of pandanas leaves worn only by women of the clan Soumori, who are required to constantly cover their heads outside of the house. Other clans conduct different rituals, which induct newly married women into clan prescriptions and proscriptions, and which sometimes also involve the payment of fines to ancestral spirits where these have already – as is often the case – been infringed. Such ceremonies may be combined with the payment of any residual bridewealth not transferred at the time of the wedding, ‘buying the name of the bride’ (*makahane sihuru*); for final payment signifies transfer not only of control by the groom’s clan over the woman, but also her complete subjection to its prescriptions and proscriptions. The way in which rituals of this kind are assembled is, therefore, flexible, depending on what is needed at a particular time; often the combinations are novel for many of those participating. Thus, Aharena – the new wife of Masoli, the second eldest son of Komisi, the clan head of Soumori in Rouhua, who received her *nasa* at a ceremony I attended in January 1971 – had never previously even witnessed this ceremony in any capacity. More surprisingly, neither had Patima, her mother-in-law and Komisi’s wife.

6.2 INVESTITURE WITH TUPU-TUPUE

The *tupu-tupue*, or decorated barkcloth, is given to elders in certain positions to enable them to officiate in the more important matters of ritual. I witnessed a Neipane ceremony in April 1970, and one for Matokehanaie in Bunara in December of the same year. Bolton witnessed barkcloth prepared for two Sounaue elders, *kapitane* Patioka and clan chief Numapena, in March 1996. The following account is therefore based on data from just two first-hand observations, and one secondary source.

The investiture of a *kapitane*, *ia onate* or *maritihanna* with the *tupu-tupue* has the general purpose of confirming and announcing to all concerned that certain persons have inherited particular duties and special positions. The *tupu-tupue* is said to have been incorporated into common ritual practice from the clan Matoke. Receiving decorated barkcloth is like any life-cycle ceremony in terms of food, sharing of betel, fasting, adornment, and gender separation. Although the ceremony is only performed

for men, women are present while men prepare for it (though male modesty is discretely protected). Throughout, it is important that women witness the ceremony, in the same way as they witness post-pubertal males returning from the forest at the time of *matahenne*. It includes a gendered feast for males where the four ritual foods – bananas, sago biscuits, *maea* and *karatupa utue* – are consumed. After receiving the *tupu-tupue*, elders are not allowed to beat barkcloth themselves, nor gather kenari or bake lime for the betel quid, as these actions will harm the founding-clan ancestral spirits, while infractions of the rule will be visited with sickness. If a man has attended ten *kahuae erereta* (Chapter 8.11), that is, he has witnessed ten new *suane*, he may receive a special *tupu-tupue*, the *sanu-sanu*. No one alive during the period 1970-2003 achieved this status, but it is said that in the past men regularly did so.

Investiture rituals are said to have their origin in the mythic banana tree which produced seven children and from which came the *nuhune* relationship uniting all Nuauulu: the *nuhu sainikane* officiated by the clan Matoke. When the different clans first arrived on the coast they performed their rituals under *nuhu sainikane*, but since the founding of Rouhua, clans living there have had their own *nuhune*. However, in both male puberty ceremonies and in *tupu-tupue* investiture, clans are required to combine. Indeed, as Rosemary Bolton notes, in an investiture performed in March 1996, Sounaue-ainakahata decided to perform under their own *nuhune*, and consequently the clan chief of Matoke did not attend. The *tupu-tupue* pairings of donor and recipient clans are usually as follows:

Peinisa	>	Peinisa
Matoke	>	Soumori
Matoke	>	Sounaue-ainakahata
Sounaue-ainakahata	>	Soumori
Sounaue-ainakahata	>	Matoke
Neipane-tomoien	>	Neipane-tomoien

The asymmetries in this pattern might be thought to require some explanation, as we have two clans that receive the *tupu-tupue* from an elder in their own clan (Peinisa and Neipane-tomoien), and are therefore not dependent on any other for this ritual service; moreover, we have one (Soumori) that has no donor rights in *tupu-tupue* at all. However, as the

accumulated evidence for exceptions to general rules is beginning to show, nothing can be taken for granted in Nuulu ritual arrangements. At the present time – and for at least the last three generations – the clan Soumori has returned its *tupu-tupue* to Sounaue-ainakahata in order for it to be used by the *maritihanna*, who's role it is to supervise the *suane* ritual of behalf of Soumori, the responsibility for which had historically been devolved by Matoke (Chapter 8.2).

6.2.1 PREPARATION

As for the male puberty ceremony, barkcloth is prepared some time in advance using the same methods. Indeed, for both events it may be prepared simultaneously, as Bolton reports for a Sounaue-ainakahata ceremony held in March 1996. However, for one Sounaue ceremony that Bolton witnessed barkcloth was prepared and decorated in the clan sacred house only the day before.

Preparing barkcloth is of course ritual work, and more exacting than the production of the barkcloth itself (though not as strenuous) is the completion of the particular item and the execution of the *tupu-tupue* design. I have notes for work on the barkcloth for Konane Neipane in early 1970, undertaken in the house of the *maritihanna*, at that time Patiraia, with the assistance of his son Wairisa, Inane, and Sahunete. Making the design is always a joint effort with a senior overseer, often the man for whom the *tupu-tupue* is being made.

The ancestors are first invoked and then the chief or *kapitane* inscribes a circle with the *tapi nanae*, a piece of thin, pointed bamboo. Others complete the design. Black paint is obtained from fire soot, yellow from *kunie* (turmeric, *Curcuma aurantiaca*) and red from the resin of *nana* (*lengua*, *Pterocarpus indicus*). The black must be fixed using resinous *koi otai* leaves, but the red, which is applied with a sago-leafstalk brush directly from a piece of wood bleeding the exudate, contains its own adhesive. The fine work is executed using the *tapi nanae*, mythically said to be that implement kept by the elder Matoke brother when the younger brother guided White People (who took a pen) to Europe. A stencil prepared earlier is dipped in the paint and applied to the barkcloth in the appropriate places. During the whole period of design application the old *tupu-tupue* lies alongside, so that the new design is a precise copy of the old, including the measurements, that are meticulously transposed using

fingers and pieces of bamboo. The tassel or *kupako* (flower) at the end of the barkcloth hanging in front is also painted with turmeric. The design is inscribed three times on each barkcloth. When complete it is wrapped around a bark girdle (*kapakate*) that supports it when worn. The clan chief then informs the ancestors what is about to take place.

Each clan has its own distinctive design and colour scheme (*matae*), as sometimes do different sacred houses. The Soumori *tupu-tupue* is red and yellow; that of Neipane, black and yellow; that of Matoke (called Kinanahana), red, black and yellow. Sounaue has two designs (both red and yellow): Asasuniaia for the sacred houses of the chief and *kapitane*, and Oinesite for the *maritihanna*. If a clan has two or more designs all must be worn during ceremonies. Peinisa also has two designs, one for each sacred house, and both star-shaped. That for the chief's house has four points around a circle, and that for the *kapitane* seven points around an outer circle with a smaller inner circle. There is just one Sounaue-ainakahata design: a number of lines coming out of the circle around an inner circle. For Sounaue, red (being from the *nana* tree) alludes to a myth where someone metamorphoses into a *nana*, and is generally linked to males. Black is linked to Neipani and Matoke; yellow, to female puberty, as the girl is rubbed with yellow oil. White, the background of the barkcloth, is said to constitute a fourth colour. The Peinisa design includes a *nafu* (*Cucurbita moschata*), a totemic motif of the sacred house Numa Utone. An informant told Bolton that the female *nuhune* spirit is also represented in the designs.

Although the ceremony is known, metonymically, by one of its parts – *tupu-tupue* (barkcloth) – this is also the occasion when elders receive the *orane* (headdress). This is constructed from a small piece of wood with white cockatoo feathers attached, the tips of which are in turn decorated with black cassowary plumes and either purple-naped lory (*kihoke* or *Lorius domicella*) feathers or small pieces of red cloth. The *orane* is made by men in the forest. Formerly, Soumori possessed a smaller version known as the *ora kapasehute*. Women were reported by Bolton to make male earrings (*pua-puane*) and arm-band decorations (*sokana*) from yellow-dyed *wainite* leaves.

6.2.2 THE CEREMONY

In April 1970 Konane, the Neipane clan chief, received his barkcloth from Kotahatu, the *kapitane* Neipane. At around quarter to eleven in the

morning there was an assembly of all Neipane males in the house of the *kapitane*, and there took place a brief rehearsal and the robing of the *kapitane*. All Neipane males then went to the clan house. Before leaving, the cockatoo headdress (*orane*) was taken from a basket, where it was laid on red cloth together with two armlets, and placed on the head of the *kapitane* with ceremony and great solemnity, after which he looked up towards the *rine* and offered an invocation. Early in the afternoon Kotahatu put on his ritual attire with the help of other men. Although his wife, sisters, and daughters are present, the men block the view. The main part of the barkcloth hangs down the front with the design made the previous day towards the bottom, and with a triangle of red cloth over the top. The other decoration is visible on the back of the waistband. Decorated strips of barkcloth (*timane*) hang down on both sides. Strings of beads are strung across his chest, several bracelets worn on each upper-arm band (*nonie*) with hanging yellow decorations, and leg bands (*masina tanaï*) below the knees. The red head cloth is tied to one side (*ahutu neine*) and a decorative band (*katehete*) of buttons, beads or shells wound round the head and horn. The *katehete* design varies between clans and individuals. It was explained to Bolton that the red stood for the *karanunu* head cloth and for the bloodshed and bravery that the males wearing it display when hunting, and, formerly, in head taking.

In the Neipane ceremony that I witnessed in 1970, at about noon, *kapitane* Kotahatu followed by the other males, first stands outside the *kapitane* house and looks in the direction of the clan sacred house, and then proceeds to the latter. Two males follow with the barkcloth, headpiece and other regalia. Halfway, Kotahatu faces the site of the *suane* and informs the lords of the cordyline bush (*sonae nene upua*) what is happening, as seeing the decorated barkcloth they might assume that a *kahuae* circle dance is about to begin.

Kapitane Kotahatu enters the clan sacred house through the seaward door and walks to the centre of the house, facing Konane, who is sitting on a small stool at a point furthest from the female door. Here Kotahatu stops, touches his forehead and chin several times, then steps forward five times, the fifth time stamping hard with his foot (*eu kone*). Following this he invokes the ancestors over a leaf and empties the contents over the floor, squatting. The barkcloth is moved forward five times by the officiant, on the fifth time touching the recipients forehead; then the officiant offers up an invocation. Konane is assisted into the barkcloth and then

the red cloth. The process is long and solemn and the work is repeated several times until there is a consensus that it is right. The men stand between Konane to prevent the gaze of the women as the barkcloth and other items are put on. The same happens with the beads and armbands. Once Konane is dressed the men move back so the women can admire the recipient. In 1970 coconut oil was also rubbed on the body. Finally, the *orane* is removed from its red cloth and placed on the recipient. At Patioka's investiture that Rosemary Bolton witnessed in March 1996, Numapena addresses the ancestors, informing them what he is doing, moving the *orane* forward five times. The officiant does this, touching the forehead of the recipient four times with the headdress, and on the fifth time securing it to the forehead with the *katehete* band. In 1970, the recipient then continued to stand while the officiant sat (a reversal of the initial positions).

Betel is offered first to the clan chief and *kapitane*, then to the rest of the men present, and then to the women; cigarettes and tobacco are handed round. The proceedings are over by late afternoon when the participants and onlookers disperse; the men remove their barkcloth. There is a feast the following evening for men. The officiant and the recipient fast from dawn on the day of the ritual and are each given large portions of food (sago biscuits, *maea*, bananas, vegetables, pork and, sometimes, sago porridge) placed in *nuite* baskets, which they share with several other elders to honour them.

In December 1970 I witnessed another *tupu-tupue* investiture, this time in Bunara. The past few days had seen the investiture of three persons, all in Bunara: the Soumori clan chief (Wanate), the Sounaue-aipura clan chief (Nepionai) and then, two days later, the *ia onate Matoke*, Sounaue-aipura (Manesi). This quick succession of investitures was in itself revealing and indicative of the problems of accumulated unperformed ritual. In this case the elders in the former clans had to be invested in order to invest the others, and the investiture of all of them was precipitated by the demands of upcoming male puberty rituals.

The clan chief and his party emerge from the Sounaue sacred house by the east door (this being Aipura, with its differing house orientation). They carry the newly made *tupu-tupue* and other regalia wrapped in red cloth over the right arm. They approach the west door of the Sounaue sacred house in which the *ia onate Matoke* Sounaue lives. When the Sounaue clan chief is just inside the door he stops. Beginning with both

feet together, he then takes five precise steps towards the *ia onate Matoke* Sounaue. This latter is sitting on a sago-leafstalk stool, dressed simply with a red cloth on his head and on his loins. Each time both feet are drawn together. Both participants then make the gesture of respect to each other. No women are present throughout this ritual episode.

The red-cloth container is laid on the floor, the *tupu-tupue* removed and handed to the Sounaue clan chief. He holds the *tupu-tupue* and utters a prolonged invocation. Both men lay their hands on the *tupu-tupue* and it is placed over the loins of the *ia onate Matoke* Sounaue, who simultaneously cries out ‘*ai-ee-o!*’, to which the assembled male company responds ‘*hio!*’, five times. This is the *asakonu*, which is also a central part of the male puberty ceremony. With the assistance of others present the *tupu-tupue* is fitted, followed by the red cloth, necklaces, armbands, legbands, earrings and finally the *orane*. The fitting of this last item is accompanied by a lengthy, quietly spoken invocation. The Sounaue chief then takes a cockerel and holds it with one hand grasping the legs, and the other round the neck, with the legs pointing into the cupped hands of the *ia onate Matoke* Sounaue. He offers up an invocation. The *ia onate Matoke* Sounaue then walks to the east door and offers a further invocation, moves the cockerel five times towards the north door post and finally flings the head against it with the intention of killing the bird by breaking its neck. The bird is then throttled until dead, and the throat cut with a knife. The chief utters an invocation, and as blood drips on to the right lower leg and foot of the *ia onate Matoke* Sounaue, he again emits the *asakonu*: ‘*ai..ee..o!*’ followed by the response of ‘*hio!*’ (five times). The *ia onate Matoke* Sounaue then sits down and a bowl of water and a pumice stone are fetched. An invocation is offered up as the pumice stone is rubbed across his teeth and lips five times by the Sounaue chief, each time consisting of five rubbing motions, in an evocation of the process of teeth filing (*sai nesiri*). The mouth is rinsed several times and the contents spat out. This signifies the completion and culmination of all *monne* concerned with life as far as a male individual is concerned. It is followed by the sharing of betel, a feast in the evening and a *kahuae* at night. In former times, the sacrificial animal was not a cockerel but a man captured and ritually slain, who’s blood was dripped on the right leg of a neophyte at puberty, representing the renewal of life through blood.

6.3 VARIATION AND PERIODICITY OF TUPU-TUPUE CEREMONIES

At any one time the number of persons invested with *tupu-tupue* is small, and logically always less than the number of persons occupying the formal positions of clan chief or *kapitane*. This makes for highly precarious transmission, especially given the rules for inter-clan flow of knowledge listed above. In Rouhua, during 1970, there were just four elders possessing the *tupu-tupue* – Iako, Konane, Kotahatu and Patiraia – distributed between the clans Matoke, Neipane and Sounaue, respectively. The rest had not taken part in a *kahuae erereta* since they had succeeded to their title on the death of their father, and on that account were ineligible. The *kahuae erereta* is usually associated with a male puberty ceremony or *suane* completion, but in recent times had been performed less and less. In the meantime other rituals have to be performed, and in such exceptional circumstances other individuals sometimes officiate, at the risk of incurring ancestral displeasure.

By 1981 the number of holders of *tupu-tupue* had remained at four, though two previous holders had died, leaving Matoke without a current holder and with the status still distributed between just three clans, though this time the distribution had shifted to Soumori, Neipane and Sounaue. At that time I was told that Hitinesi and Tapone Sounaue were ‘soon’ to receive theirs. Some are never invested with a *tupu-tupue* before they die, as was the case with Tapone. The reason for this is partly because, like all other important rituals, it must await the performance of other rituals that take priority in the queue, and like all less time-dependent rituals, it must await the performance of others that are more urgent. There is also the matter of auspiciousness, and in the case of Tapone issues in his personal life and the need to compensate for previous misconduct, on the advice of the ancestors. All of this conspired to delay the investiture until it was just too late. Another constraint is the holding of two or more offices concurrently. So, Komisi explained to me that to hold two offices was inappropriate and that he must first relinquish his secular title of *ia onate ankarua* (village headman), which he assumed would eventually succeed to one of his sons; only then could he receive the *tupu-tupue*. In 1981 Hatarai Sounaue had not received his *tupu-tupue* either, because, as he explained, he had been working too hard for the puberty ceremony of his daughter, *pinamou* Unsa, in 1970 and missed

his opportunity then. Hatarai was anyway widely regarded as a special case, as when the previous incumbent of the title *kapitane* Sounaue had died, his son and heir, Nauhua, had pre-deceased him. Instead, Hatarai, a younger brother, was called from Niamonai to inherit the *kapitane* title.

By February 1990 Maloku had become Neipane clan chief and Sahunete *kapitane* Peinisa, both having received their *tupu-tupue*. However, while Hitinesi had succeeded Tapone as Sounaue chief, and Soile had become *kapitane* Soumori, neither had yet received their *tupu-tupue*. Tuisa Matoke, who since my previous visit had succeeded his father Iako as clan chief and ‘tuan tanah’, was preoccupied with planning a ceremony for Sounaue, but was frustrated that Sounaue had not yet begun making baskets and preparing food, which was necessary before he or Matoke could consider making *tupu-tupue*. Tuisa thought it would be about two years before the Matoke *matahenne* would be held, for which it would be essential to have more elders invested with *tupu-tupue*. We can see from Table 5.1 that another Matoke *matahenne* was, in fact, apparently not held until 2001.

6.4 MORTUARY RITUALS

The rituals accompanying death (*autotu nimoe*) come to everyone, but the manner of dying influences the rituals conducted, each with its own prescribed way of attending to the corpse. Nuaulu recognize different kinds of death, and all deaths have causes embedded in the failure of people to behave in appropriate ways, or in the failure to respond correctly to such misbehaviour. However, we can categorize deaths at the first level, if not between ‘good’ and ‘bad’, then between the ‘default death’ and the rest. A default death is simply dying in your own house (a ‘mat death’, or *mata kinoe*), when persons appear to be at the right time to die (*ne ukuro hasae rei*). The practices accompanying ‘mat deaths’ provide the template for all mortuary ritual: they are those where circumstances do not prompt special kinds of action. On death, the spirit of a person, his or her *nimati* (*ni matiunu* or *matiunu*), is released from the body (*patane*) and will in the normal way return to the clan sacred house in the village. By contrast, the *inaha* is that part of the soul that goes to Nunusaku, the land of the dead. The *matiunu* is said to resemble the shade of a corpse, being ‘like an *onori*’ or shadow.

Compared to other rituals described in this book, the disadvantage of those associated with death is that advance preparations can only be made to a very limited extent. Whereas a *matahenne* may be planned years in advance, and even the timing of a female puberty ceremony can be manipulated by adjusting the period of seclusion, the preparations for funerary ritual usually take place in less than 24 hours. In other societies the problem posed by death as a sudden biological event is resolved by having an elaborate secondary burial (as found in some other animist groups on Seram, such as Ekano above Teluti Bay), or holding a mortuary feast at a much later date to allow for organization. This is not the case for the Nuauulu.

6.5 DEFAULT DEATH – PREPARATION OF THE CORPSE

When someone dies, after some initial weeping and pained expressions of grief, the first activity is for the women to inform residents and kin of the death, especially the guardians of the relevant sacred house. These are informed by the senior woman of the house of the deceased. The male guardian (clan chief or *kapitane*) then announces the death formally, as he or his predecessor would have announced the birth of the person through giving it a name. So death is not simply a matter for the immediate household; it is properly a matter for the *numa* and for the clan. If the death is in the evening or during the night relatives will sit with the corpse until morning.

On death a person is taken to a sacred house by the husbands of the dead person's sisters, either to the clan house or that of the *kapitane*, depending on proximity, family wishes and genealogical affiliation. Sometimes, however, a corpse will remain in the house where it died, especially if it would otherwise be required to travel some distance. Either way, it is here that relatives gather for the rituals of death.

In a sacred house the corpse is laid on the floor, on a mat, though in an ordinary house the corpse lies on the raised split-bamboo platform. The corpse is laid with the head in the mountain direction, though in some cases it is laid diagonally with the head towards the north-east corner, and the feet towards the opposite seaward door. The arms are laid alongside the body with the palms upright. The head is supported and hair combed straight backwards from the head.

The corpse is visited by relatives as they hear of the death, and they pay their respects, sometime sitting by it and taking its hands. Close members of the kinship group of the deceased bring gifts of plates (*sente matae* or *sinohi*) for the dead person that are placed in the sacred house in two piles, one mountainward, at the head of the corpse (*piku unui*) and one seaward, at the foot (*piku aini*). Those at the head are for the family, and those at the feet are later placed at the mouth of the Upa or Yoko rivers after the corpse has been taken to the cemetery. Before the body is removed to the cemetery, all plates at the head of the corpse are broken and taken to a place seaward and sunriseward of the village, while the plates at the foot of the corpse remain in the sacred house. A plate and red cloth must also be placed in the sacred house to provide a place for the departed spirit to inhabit once it has returned from the cemetery. In addition, other gifts are presented from which the dead person takes only the soul (*tiunue*). These include plates, but extend also to luxury exchange items, such as spoons, glasses, parangs, spears, soap, sarongs and other clothing or textile items, all for the afterlife. The age and status of the dead person will determine the volume and value of gifts.

While this is happening men are organized to carry the corpse to the cemetery. Once selected, a stick is fetched to measure the corpse for the bier and the men go to the forest to cut bamboo. Meanwhile the female guardian (or two women from, or married into, the dead person's clan) go to Sepa, to the clan group Polumahu to request a mat and a plate for the corpse. This is requested from either the Pia, Uwene, or Tihunua clans, and should be a gift, a tradition based on an agreement made with Sepa when the Nuaulu first settled on the coast.

When all relevant kin and affines are present, the *tanaite*, male or female, depending on the gender of the deceased, dress the corpse in new attire, but do not wash it. In the case of men the clothing comprises the ritual costume (*api hanaie*), echoing the attire of the *matahenne*: a red cloth is placed over the head and barkcloth and a second red cloth over the pubic region, and sometimes nowadays a new sarong or shirt. If the dead male has achieved the status of *tupu-tupue*, a decorated barkcloth will be placed under the back. In the case of a female, the clothing in which the corpse is dressed echoes that of a *pinamou*: a batik 'kain' is laid over the body, or it is dressed in a new sarong and sometimes a 'kebaya', traditionally with a barkcloth strip over the genitals, with a few token ornaments, such as hair grips, earrings, a bead necklace, a napkin or

chain necklace in the right hand and *nitianae* on each wrist. Coins, or, if these are not available, rings, are placed over both eyes of the departed so that it will be able to see in the afterworld, and a betel nut over the mouth, ‘for the soul must chew betel’. On the right side of the body of a male is laid a short parang and a plate, two plates if it is an elder who has died (*kari-karine*). Other gifts accompany the corpse on its right-hand side, to sustain, placate and encourage the spirit to return to the village, including equipment for fire-making and food. The food consists of a small portion of baked sago (*nesene*), a coconut and a small portion of pig meat, all placed in the right hand. In addition, there is also a container for water – a coconut shell, calabash or, sometimes nowadays, a cup – and a container for sago porridge, sometimes a small plate and, nowadays, occasionally a spoon.

The prepared corpse is laid on a plain *kinoi* (*Pandanus*) mat, on its back with its arms alongside the body and wrapped by the *tanaite* men, who bind it with the liana *makanitu*, otherwise known as *awane nimoe* or ‘corpse vine’ (*Flagellaria indica*). A woman from the dead person’s wife-taking clan (*tanaite*), such as a sister or father’s sister, removes the bracelets from the wrists and the rings from the eyes. The rings are placed in the roof over the seaward door of the sacred house through which the corpse passes when it exits. These are taken down again when the bearers return from the cemetery and will be worn by the woman. The mat is first folded over the head and feet and then the sides are folded in and secured. If it is a female corpse, preparation of the body is the task of females, though the bier and transport remains the work of males. The construction of the bier (*enete*) and the carrying of the corpse to the cemetery must be undertaken by male non-relatives who wear the obligatory ritual attire of a batik loincloth. The bier is carried by two persons, one at the front and one at the back, with two others serving as guards who alternate with the bearers when they tire. These will usually be brothers of the deceased or, when these are not available, other close male patrilineal kin. Certain categories of person are excluded, such as husbands of pregnant wives and spirit mediums. These latter are the vehicles for *nio manne*, the ‘soft-speaking spirits’ who, like clan chiefs, *kapitane* and other senior men involved in conducting ritual, would be harmed by diluting the heat of their potency with the coldness of the cemetery.

When the bier is complete and the *tanaite* men are waiting outside, the clan chief removes the ‘empty spirit’ (*matimunu huie*) basket (sometimes

called *paku pukune*, ‘short basket’) from the *rine*, and, standing to the right of the corpse, partially lifts the lid. He offers an invocation and moves the basket in a clockwise circular motion five times (*auwai sunte kanne*). The spirits of the many ancestors who are believed to congregate when a death occurs are thereby summoned to join the spirit of the dead person in the basket, instead of following the corpse to the cemetery, which can lead to misfortune and death amongst the living. The closed basket is returned to the *rine*. When a person dies away from home a betel pouch (*tasi*) can substitute for the *paku pukune* and this will eventually be brought with the soul to the sacred house.

The corpse is removed through the seaward door and secured to the bier. The door is significant because in most other rituals living performers or subjects of ritual leave using the inland (male) door. Only in removing a corpse is the seaward (female) door used, as death is an inversion of life. Outside, the bracelets earlier removed from the corpse are tied to the liana binding it to the bier. A small basket containing chert and steel for firemaking, an old parang, a piece of cooked sago and pig meat are also attached, wrapped in leaves, for the use of the deceased. A male of high status may also have kenari and coconut.

6.6 AT HATU NOHUE

Once the corpse has been securely wrapped and the various packages attached, it is taken to the cemetery (Plate 6.1a), feet first. The destination is what Tongli (1994:267) calls ‘the village of the dead’, a few kilometres west and mountainward from each Nuaulu village on the left bank of a major river, at a place Nuaulu call Hatu Nohue (literally, ‘cave’). In the case of Rouhua this is on the left bank of the Upa in an area inundated with rock shelters and small caves and covered with primary forest vegetation on its sides and top, but surrounded by a substantial buffer zone of bamboo. Such sites are sacred and no cultivation can take place near them. They are an island of untouched vegetation in an area largely claimed for gardens and plantations. Male corpses are placed towards the mountain side on higher ground (nearer the river and upstream), while females are placed towards the sea on lower ground (further from the river and downstream). The older bodies lie on the upper slopes and inland to the north, and the newer ones to the north-west and on the lower slopes.

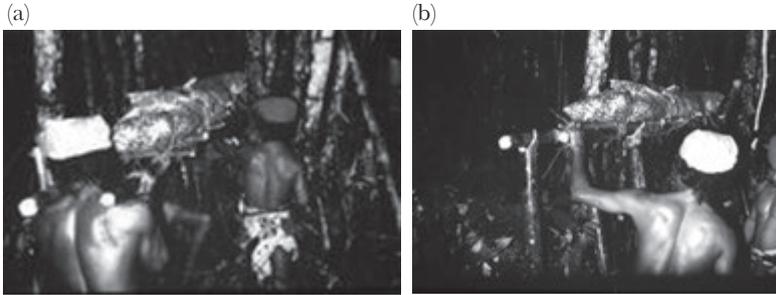


Plate 6.1. Death ritual for Sanakamura at Hatu Nohue, near Rouhua, February 1975: (a) carrying wrapped corpse on bamboo bier; (b) placing wrapped corpse on funeral platform.

On arrival at Hatu Nohue the bearers stand with the corpse while those accompanying them make a platform of bamboo. These mortuary platforms are generally about two metres high, and one that I measured was approximately 180 cm, 250 cm long and 120 cm broad. The ground is generally rocky with little depth of humus, and Sanakamura's bier that I accompanied in 1971 was actually placed over a limestone outcrop and in the shadow of a large rock overhang. The bier is placed on the finished platform with the head of the corpse towards the north-east and its feet towards the south-west (plate 6.1b). Sometimes a resin torch, similar to that used during the birth ritual, is lit near the head. Four or eight leaves of *kikuni werane* (the ginger *Amomum aculeatum*) are collected and laid on the corpse, and the whole is covered with sago leaves. The platform is fenced in with bamboo stakes and the land surrounding it cleared. The staking begins at the right hand of the corpse where the insertion of smaller stakes is said to represent a door. This is important if it has been agreed that there should be a prohibition on washing, sweeping and eating coconut and kenari amongst close kin in the village. The bearers each cut a piece of vegetation that one of them places at the right hand of the corpse as a 'sign'. These serve as a kind of omen (*tamneane*) to remind the spirit of the dead person and to warn the living whenever danger looms by showing them the individual sign. After this each bearer takes the wood from a sapling and draws a circle around the bier five times, invoking the spirit of the dead not to leave and play tricks on, or harm, the living. At the same time, the bearers will deliberately look out for

encounters with animals, especially when the encounter is reminiscent of human behaviour, and will remember this and tell the elders about it when they return. These are interpreted as signs of the causes of a death due to infringement of *monne* or upsetting an ancestor. When they do not occur this is regarded as a good omen.

The mortuary party return to the village, but lay a stick across the path at some point or points, to prevent the corpse from following. Alternatively, just before they reach the main Sepa-Rouhua path, about halfway between the village of the dead and the village of the living, each bearer 'cuts the earth' (*tana kena*) behind them with a parang, marking a barrier between the dead and the living. The dead person is addressed, explaining that the barrier is drawn to prevent the ghost or shade of the corpse (rather than the *inaha*) from entering the village for as long as it is still intact on the platform. This is an additional safeguard against the ghost, which, if this failed to be carried out, would return to the village, play tricks and harm people. It is believed that ghosts do, nevertheless, come to the village and play around like children, throwing stones at people and calling out. Sometimes their voice can be heard and identified. The deceased, when they are recently dead, are believed to walk about at night in search of food. In 1975 Napuae showed me a patch of muddy ground where the earth had been considerably turned-over and which I thought was the work of pigs, but which he assured me was due to the dead walking about at night. Once they have been dead some time they are no longer able to do this.

Back at the village of the living, the senior member of the mortuary party goes to the sacred house of the dead person to inform the clan chief or *kapitane* of the completion of the ritual and to report any incidents or omens. On entering the house he faces the place where the corpse lay earlier and walks its length from foot to head. If it has been agreed that there should be a prohibition on eating coconut and kenari, on bathing and sweeping, and perhaps in some cases where this is not so, the members of other clans who accompanied the corpse are each given a plate (*mahana*). In at least some Niamonai clans, a sago-cake made by the Sepa Polumahu clan group is also given in this situation. The two women who earlier brought the mat from Sepa remove the gifts placed at the foot of the corpse, together with the used resin torch, and take them to the mouth of the River Yoko, being careful to follow the same path as the men took earlier. These items are left in a clump of bamboo

for the deceased. The plate is said to eventually return with the spirit to the sacred house.

6.7 TWO CASE STUDIES

To see how the general account of mortuary practices associated with default death complies with what actually occurs, it is useful to consider two particular instances as reported in my fieldnotes. The excerpts here are edited.

The funeral of Aharena Pia. Aharena Pia, the wife of Inane Matoke, died from pneumonia on 18 March 1971. Her brother and father had earlier travelled from Bunara in anticipation of the event. After the usual expressions of grief, the body was arranged with the head towards the mountain and the feet towards the sea, bent about the knee, and supported in an upright position by a piece of bamboo. Nehana Matoke, the mother of Inane and Lemino Neipane, went to Sepa to obtain a mat. The body was temporarily covered in the sarong in which Aharena had died, so that it covered the knees and breasts. The chief male mourners – Inane, Iako (the Matoke clan chief), Tuisa his eldest son, and Aharena's father Natuniane – sit around the sides of the house and look on while Nehana, Lemino and other close female relatives attend to the business of sewing a new sarong and kebaya. Young girls are engaged to keep flies off the corpse. Aharena died early in the morning and will be buried later the same day to avoid the stench of putrefaction. Silo Matoke (from Aihisuru) and Kemai were also in attendance. It is believed that if a person dies, heavy rain will follow, and sure enough it did. Once the rudimentary kebaya is made it is laid over the breasts and the new sarong is put on the corpse, with rings over the eyes and betel in the mouth. Rings are also placed on the fingers and bangles laid by the side of each arm. Other funerary gifts are laid along the sides on the mat on which the corpse has already been laid. Then Inane, his brother-in-law Lihuta, and Tuisa go to fetch bamboo for the bier; this is brought back to the village. Meanwhile, the corpse has been wrapped. A large package wrapped in sago leafstalk is laid over the knees and a smaller one over the breasts, which contain, amongst other things, kenari. Children are quite unmoved by the event and eagerly watch all the preparations, including the dressing of

the corpse. Villagers other than the immediate kin take no interest apart from speculating as to the cause of death. As the corpse is carried away Nehana cries, but there is no wailing. As soon as the party returns from Hatu Nohue, Naupate's mother and the wife of the Matoke clan head take the plate embodying the soul and throw it into the Yoko River. After they return, Inane's affines, with the exception of one, return to Bunara. In the morning Masoli Soumori and Nepinama Sounaue go out to hunt game. Neither of them caught anything and Masoli believed this to be due to the fact that they did not know the death had occurred. If they had known, they would have caught something.

Sanakamura Sounaue. I first heard about the death of Sanakamura early in the morning of 26 July 1975, from Komisi, who said she died in the middle of the night. A widow who had previously been married to Kawasia Huni from Bunara, she had been very ill the previous evening. Two boys were sent to Bunara in the morning to fetch her relatives, but they did not return with them until very late in the afternoon, after Wairisa had been sent to hurry them along. Meanwhile the body had been prepared, laid out on a mat with a new sarong and kebaya on top. A betel fruit was placed in her mouth and rings over her eyes. In her right hand was a piece of red cloth and some bangles. Some plates and glasses were laid at her feet and women wept and stroked the corpse's hair. When I went over to her house shortly before leaving for Hatu Nohue there was a large crowd, and the walling had been removed to allow more space for mourners. After death no one is allowed to enter the house from the sea side, and everyone had to enter from the rear. Only a resin torch was burned for lighting. Wairisa Sounaue, Latulesi Matoke and Soiile Sounaue went out to get the bier and did not return until it was beginning to get dark. As a corpse should be taken to the cemetery on the day of death, before it begins to decompose, the chief mourners were annoyed that there had been such a delay. When the empty bier arrived, the wrapped corpse with a little pouch on top containing food was removed from the house by the seaward door, strapped to the bier and taken to Hatu Nohue by Soiile and Wairisa with Latulesi in front. As we walked through the village there was silence, except from the house from which we had departed, from which emanated intense wailing.

At Hatu Nohue, the site selected seemed only to be just inside the bamboo thicket, and the party worked quickly, lodging the corpse in

a clump of bamboo and propping it up with roughly cut haulms. The whole process must have taken about ten minutes. The arrangements were completed by putting leafy stalks of bamboo over the corpse. The journey back was undertaken more slowly and when we got to the main path things seemed more relaxed. Wairisa invoked the ancestors and drew a boundary mark across the path with his parang. On returning to the village we came directly to the seaward door of Sanakamura's house and waited for all the relatives to assemble – Bau'uta called them – and then walked in and sat down along the east wall in the order in which the cortege had processed. There was some waiting and a woman took the plates and glasses to another house in the village – gifts for the bearers who carried the bier. A stick of dried sago cooked in leaves (*nesene*) was split into three pieces by Peliasa Huni, Sanakamura's son, and given to each member of the mortuary party to eat, each time accompanied by a short invocation to the ancestors. A betel quid was shared until one whole fruit had been consumed, and then sago was handed round on white *waimite* leaves, after which smoking – prohibited following death until this point – resumed. There was much talk after the ritual of the journey to Hatu Nohue and of the corpse: that it had big eyes, that they were afraid of spirits, and that one torch went out. The spirit of Sanakamura having presumably been secured, ordinary daily life resumed, though with additional precautions. The following morning the house seemed thoroughly shut up.

6.8 POST-FUNERAL MORTUARY PRACTICES

On completion of the funeral rituals the house guardian pronounces the mourning period, which takes eight nights. Early on in this period, if it is a man who had died, one of his sons will fell some trees that his father first planted, for his enjoyment in the afterlife. These usually include *Areca* and coconut palm, a clove tree, and several kinds of fruit tree. Whenever the living cut down a tree planted by a dead person, they make an offering of betel to the spirit. When sago a dead person has planted from a sucker is to be harvested, the contents of a betel fruit is rolled into an *aikau* leaf (*Rhodammia cinerea*) with betel pepper, lime and tobacco, and placed in the roof of the living person's house, accompanied by an invocation to that ancestral spirit, informing the spirit of his intention

and asking for protection and health. Sometimes people also make an offering of the first starch to be extracted from the palm together with the liver of a recently killed cuscus.

For eight days after death the entire clan must not beat a drum or hold a *kahuae*, or eat coconut or kenari, and when the eight days are over they must all go to the stream and wash in coconut oil, and give portions of coconut and kenari to all clan heads. Only then may they resume eating coconut and kenari. With a high-status death, where kenari and coconut are part of the foods taken to the cemetery, kin and those who were in close contact with the corpse are forbidden to bathe, sweep, eat pork, coconut and kenari for four days, or sweep underneath the clan sacred house for another four days. For the first three (according to Bolton, four) days after death, the female guardian, accompanied by her alternate in the complementary clan sacred house, bring food (betel, sago, pork, coconut and kenari) to the plates left on the sunset side of the village for the dead.

Nuulu believe that the soul of a dead person hovers around the corpse for the first three days in the cemetery. However, afterwards it goes to the mouth of the Yoko or some other river (*waene aie*) to retrieve the plates and any other gifts left there, and takes them back to the cemetery where they can be used. During this period the vicinity of the river mouth is regarded as dangerous. At the same time the *sokate* spirit basket, which hangs beneath the *rine*, is covered with red cloth for four days to prevent contamination from the coldness emanating from the corpse.

On the third night of mourning, the spirit goes to the source of the Nua River to present itself for the judgement of the dead. Here the spirit learns of its destiny outside the body. There are two forms of life after death. The first is as *upu* spirits that dwell benignly with the living. The second is as spirits that interact malignly with the living: spirits of people who died a bad death during childbirth, death without sickness, and death through murder. Following judgement, the good-death spirit, free of the body, returns to a waringin or banyan tree (*nunue*) mountainward and sunriseward of the village until the seventh night of mourning. During this time it may enter the house to recover the spirit of the clothes it was wearing when it died, which are for this reason placed at the seaward entrance of the sacred house. As the family at that time will be sleeping in the sacred house, they say that the dead person can sometimes be heard entering.

On the fourth day the mourning group bathe early (elders first, and others afterwards) at a stream behind the village, where they share kenari with the spirit of the deceased. Those involved in washing the corpse bathe wearing their clothes to remove the ‘heaviness’ that results from death. The hair is washed with coconut, the first use of this fruit since the death occurred. Four days after this, late in the afternoon, betel fruit and kenari are placed under the eaves of the sacred house, as an offering to the spirit of the dead person. Even when these bathing and other post-mortem prohibitions are not respected, no fines are payable, though failure to do so may lead to ancestral retribution later.

On the seventh day the near kin of the dead person gather in the sacred house of the deceased to conclude the mourning process. First, the guardian of the house fetches from the garden a red coconut and seven kenari nuts and places them on the ground with the nuts upward on the surface of the ground. He returns and informs those present that the ritual is ready. The mourning group go to the river sunsetward and seaward from the village, and again bathe – the men upstream and the women downstream. Each mourner receives a piece of the coconut, which they chew and after that throw over their heads. By chewing the coconut the prohibitions associated with mourning cease. They return to the sacred house. Meanwhile the wife of the guardian enters the sacred house and prepares a meal for the dead, placing five pieces of pig meat, *maea* and sago biscuits on a white porcelain dish and offering it to the sacred house guardian. The guardian receives it and puts it on a plate under the roof of the house, mountainward. As he places the dish he calls the *upu* spirit to enter, eat and to remain permanently in the house. Its spatial position in the roof space depends on social rank. Though most souls, both men and women, live in the basket (*sokate*), other spirits reside in a red cloth (*sanneha*) hanging over the rattan line. Once in the house it dwells under the roof, joining a community of *reha upu* who protect and serve the living. The communal chewing of betel signals that the mourning period is over.

After the second four days (meaning, on the eighth day following death) the mourners of a high-status death, and those mourners who have not honoured the prohibition on bathing, sweeping and eating, sweep under the house and acquire a plate (*sente matae*) for the deceased from one of three Sepa clans. The clan chief makes an invocation to the ancestors and then places it on the *rine* of the sacred house to which

the deceased belonged. The eighth day is significant, as by this time it is reckoned the corpse will have decomposed and the soul released to the upperworld (*sainiku*). In the upperworld the person confesses their wrongdoings until they are all erased (*atipusi*), a process that may take several months, when the deceased officially becomes ‘a red one’ (*saruane msinae*, *sio msinaea*, or *ia msinae*). By contrast, the unrighteous reside at the river mouth (*waene aie*).

After a time, and depending on the rituals performed and on the appearance of new generations in the sacred house, the *upu* become *nusi*, and the *nusi* become *towa*, by which time they are ready to vacate the under-roof space for the top of Mount Binaya. Tongli (1994) reports that following a funeral, *kahuae* may be performed to facilitate the upward movement of the dead, enabling increased fertility and virility by making possible a downward movement of a new generation of the living. Neither Bolton nor I can confirm this from our work, though we note that in Yalahatan the *kahuae* is performed on death.

6.9 THE SYMBOLIC GEOGRAPHY OF DEATH AS A RITUAL MNEMONIC

I emphasized in Chapter 2 how I regarded the binary logics and semantic parallelism much reported for eastern Indonesia as providing a kind of cognitive toolkit for the performance of ritual. In conventional structuralist terms, the serried lists of oppositions are part of some ‘general concordance’, in many ways an end in itself that reflects an overarching cosmology. Whether or not this is the case is debatable, but what is undeniable is that in the enaction of ritual, and in encoding these actions in individual and devolved intersubjective memories, the oppositions and the movements between them provide a basis for a very practical mnemonic to assist participants in the conduct of ritual. This is evident for all Nuaulu practices described in this monograph, but, as Tongli (1994:264-80) demonstrates, it is particularly clear – even though the matrix of oppositions and movements is complex – in the instance of mortuary practices.

Spatially, all Nuaulu ritual activities associated with birth take place in a sunrise (east) direction, in contrast to funerals, which are sunsetward. While birth rituals begin in the afternoon, funerals take place in the

morning. Moreover, from the beginning of the birth ritual until the act of entering the sacred house all activity takes place on the periphery of the village. The birth hut is to the seaward and sunrisesward side, and the sacred house to the mountain and sunset side, while the procession at the end of the ritual is oriented towards the forest. All these movements are outward, as opposed to the sacred house, which is inward. The constitutive movements that Tongli identifies are: child's mother leaves her natal house, and stays for some time in the birth hut after giving birth. At the birth ritual, the women gather together around the birth hut to wash the baby and the mother, then move to the sacred house towards the mountains for the celebratory ritual. The mother's act of giving the baby to its father completes the movement of going away from the village and the sacred house.

Funerals follow the same logic as birth ritual, but contrast in accentuating upstream-downstream relations, as demonstrated in movements between the cemeteries at Yoko and Hatu Nohue and the village, in the case of Rouhua, and the physical movements between sunrise and sunset. We can distinguish two kinds of movement in the mortuary rituals: the movement of the living and the movement of the spirits. The first consists in the physical movement from the living house to the sacred house; the meeting of the mourning kinship group in the sacred house; the act of taking the body to the cemetery; the returning to the sacred house of the living; going to the river to bathe to complete the mourning; returning to the sacred house to offer food to the dead; and, finally, the act of going back from the sacred house to the ordinary dwelling house. Each is either a movement upstream (*suria*) or downstream (*sunau*). If we examine female movements, the word *suria* is used in relation to the movement of the mother (*ina*) from the dwelling house to the sacred house to inform the guardian of the death, and the journey of the guardian's wife to Sepa to obtain a mat to cover the body. Sepa is sunsetward of the village of Rouhua. Thus, going upstream (or mountainward or sunrisesward) is expressed by the term *suria*, while in this context *sunau* expresses the act of returning. The same notions are also expressed in the movement of the group of mourning kin as a whole. Firstly, the act of going to the village of the dead to 'hide the body' (*autotu nimoe*) is sunsetward, mountainward and upstream. Secondly, the act of bathing at the conclusion of the mourning also involves movement in a sunrise direction, expressed in the use of the word *suria*, but the bathing place is

seaward of the village, involving a *sunau* movement. Thus, the concluding rituals of mourning are simultaneously mountainward and seaward.

Living involves the alternation of *suria* and *sunau*, but the movements of the spirit world also involve the two directions. Each discrete movement represents a stage of life after death. The journey of the spirit of the dead over seven nights shows the passage of life from ‘inside the body of life’ to ‘outside the body of life’. During the seven nights of mourning the spirit is referred to using two names: *matiumu* and *reha upu*. *Matiumu* means literally the ‘head of death’. The spirit of the dead person adopts the form of the *matiumu* for three nights following the funeral. The spirit of a dead person is addressed as *upu* (the kin term for great-grandparents) after presenting itself at the source of the Nua River for judgement of the dead, which is guarded by five ancestors of the clans Matoke, Kamama, Sounaue, Soumori and Neipane. It is they who decide which life the spirit will undergo. In the case of good death, the *matiumu* becomes *upu* and returns to the village. In the case of bad death, the *matiumu* becomes a bad spirit and goes to the mouth of the Nua River to begin a new life in the form of a plant or animal. The journey made by the spirit over seven nights reflects the passage of life in two directions: seaward, indicating danger, and mountainward, indicating safety. The two stages and directions are always seen in relation to the living, who are situated on the surface between two poles of life: downward (danger) and upward (safety).

6.10 VARIATION IN MORTUARY RITUALS

We might distinguish two kinds of variation: variants on the procedures for ritualizing default death to cope with special circumstances, and variation in the practices for default death enshrined in the custom of different clans. Mortuary rituals have varied historically between settlements to accommodate the symbolic and orientational requirements of different physical geographies. In addition, there are longstanding clan differences. For example, the bending of a corpse at the knee before rigor mortis sets in (as described for the funeral of Aharena Pia) is found for the clan Matoke (into which Aharena had married and who’s *monne* she was expected to respect). Following a stillbirth, Matoke and Soumori women return to the house of their parents rather than to that of their

husband, where they cook *maea*, bananas and sago biscuits, place them in a *nuite* basket, along with sago porridge, meat or fish and vegetables, and present them to their husband on a low wooden board (*anau*) carried on the head. This is part of a wider *nuhune* only followed by these clans. However, I have omitted reference in this chapter to other rituals that occur in connection with death, such as those required for the expiation of offences committed against a dead person. While these might rightly be seen as variants of core practices, they are not in themselves part of a cycle and are non-mandatory.

6.10.1 STILLBIRTH, EARLY POST-PARTUM DEATH AND EARLY CHILD DEATH

Surprisingly, given their relative frequency, I have never witnessed the ritual surrounding the death of a child while in the field. My data on deaths of females and children in the *posune*, and the *hitamuna*, (the ceremony performed eight days following the death of a mother or child) are largely derived from Rosemary Bolton's accounts, with some secondary material of my own. Death of either a mother or her baby in the *posune*, during or soon after birth, is regarded as a bad death (*mata kahatene*), and the child, stillbirth or aborted embryo a *sakahatene anai* (bad spirit child). The corpse is first positioned diagonally on the platform in the *posune*, the head oriented towards the north-east corner, that is, at the intersection of the inland and sunrise directions. It is wrapped in four leaves of forest taro *puni* (the aroid *Homalomena pendula*), or in four leaves of the wild banana *uri poi* (*Musa acuminata* subsp. *banksii*, or *M. lolodensis*). What is significant about both species is that neither are cultivars, but rather, the wild equivalents of domesticated plants: the taro and the banana. Both are used to protect people from spirits of children who have died in childbirth, and are sometimes called 'cloth of the *sakahatene*'. The leaves are bound with the *awane notule* vine (a species of Rubiaceae which emits a foul smell when crushed). In Rouhua, the leaves and vine are collected by the midwife and the mother's mother from a place near the child burial site on the Yoko River, 500 metres to the west, on the sunset side of the village. Here they also prepare a shallow grave with a digging stick that they mark with two *kokoio* leaves (a kind of *Pandanus*). In doing this, they exit the *posune* and return using the sunset door, avoiding any route that might pass through the village, often using the beach.

Children who die this way, before puberty, must be buried. For this reason the death of a mother or baby in the *posune* is described as *matane poe hue*, ‘death below ground’. In Rouhua, the corpse is taken directly to the River Yoko by the mother, if she is well enough, usually with the maternal grandmother. They leave the *posune* by the sunrise door and travel by the coastal beach route so as to avoid the main path along which ordinary people travel. After the burial the mother washes herself, but she must not return to her husband’s house directly; instead, she goes to that of her own parents, where she lives until a compensatory ritual (*otomata matahae*) has been performed. If she is too weak for this she moves into another *posune*. Whatever the case, she must have no contact with her husband. He must fetch a red variety of coconut (*nione msinae*), collected from the palm by cutting it carefully and placing it in a red cloth before descending. The top is removed and the juice poured into a cone made from a *mosone* leaf (*Gendarussa vulgaris*). The contents are sprinkled over the *posune* and inside the husband’s house. The used coconut shell and fibre must not be thrown away, but must be kept on the *rine* of the house. Meanwhile, the parents of the mother prepare a meal of *maea*, bananas and sago biscuits, large quantities of which must be given to the husband together with a number of other objects. These latter vary slightly between clans, but generally include one ring, one metal bracelet, one *pinai* and one plate. However, when Numapena’s newborn child died in August 1973, the objects consisted of one necklace, one red cloth and one plate. These objects are all placed together in a basket (generally a *takanasi*) and taken to the house of the husband and his parents. Here the *maea* and bananas are eaten and the other items presented to the ancestral spirits. The offering is accompanied by an appropriate invocation – *upuku anahatana, wai’upu ona’ Soumori*, ‘Don’t make this man ill, make his hunting successful’ – and the husband places the basket on the *rine* and informs the *sionata* about what has occurred. In some clans this is followed by another ceremony, the *kiha tihu*, but in 1973, only Numapena’s mother had this ritual knowledge in Rouhua. Five small bamboo internodes are filled with water and stoppered with *mosone* leaves. These are placed against a specially constructed rack. The woman takes the first bamboo and sprinkles the contents over the husband together with the leaves, at the same time uttering an invocation to the ancestral spirits. The first bamboo is placed back against the rack and the same sequence is performed for the remaining four bamboos. On the next occasion

when the husband goes out hunting, if he succeeds in killing one cuscus he must not eat it, but if he kills two, he may eat one and not the other; if he kills a deer, pig or cassowary (that is, any animal in the *peni* category) he must not eat the meat of the upper part of the hind leg.

Stillbirths and young children are buried at a place on the River Yoko, very near the coast. In the case of a stillbirth, the umbilical cord remains uncut and the placenta is buried by the midwife and other senior women with the corpse, which is not named. Stillbirths are commonly explained either physically, by observing that a mother has fallen while pregnant, or morally, by implying that the father has committed adultery. At the cemetery a burial site is selected. One of two *kokoio* leaves placed earlier with the digging stick is laid across the path, the *arena maiapane*, or 'people's path', to the cemetery. The other is laid near the actual burial site, the *arena mata metene*, the 'black death path'.

Using digging stick and parangs, the women create a grave, and hand-scoop earth out until it is about half a metre deep, and oriented towards the intersection of sunrise and mountain, in which direction the baby's head will point. The body is positioned in the grave, covered with earth; rocks are placed on top to prevent disturbance by dogs, pigs or other animals, and to identify it. Any disturbance will be punished (*pamasele*) by the dead individual with sickness. The *kokoio* leaf is placed on the right-hand side with the digging stick, the base of which (*aikune*) is at the head and the top (*atue*) at the feet. If the digging stick later sprouts this is taken as an omen that other women and babies will die in childbirth. The *kokoio* leaf laid across the path serves as a *mareha*, a barrier to deter the baby returning to the village to disturb the living. At the main path, one member of the party cuts the path with a parang three times (*tanakena*), and says to the spirit of the dead child: 'If you pass this point, you will carry your misfortune.' It is generally thought that the spirits of stillbirths may pester the living by throwing dirt, and worse. The women return to the village along the beach, pausing at the end of the water conduit to ensure that all the *tuamane kahatene* (bad dirt) is removed from their bodies and from the parangs, as contamination is believed to cause yet more death.

The mother of a stillborn child remains in a second menstruation hut until her discharge of blood dries, and bathes in a nearby river, though not the Rouhua, which lies north-east of the Matoke clan house and would therefore be *monne*. Women of all clans are supposed to pay

an *otumata matahae* fine to compensate for the absence of the woman, which thereby 'leaves the fireplace cold' during the confinement and death, and because the expectation of offspring following the payment of bridewealth has not been met. The fine comprises a plate, a *pinae* and a *nitianaie*, all placed on the *rine* of the sacred house of her husband for his *nuhune* spirit. The *otumata matahae* is also paid when a woman returns to her parents following a matrimonial dispute, and which also 'leaves the fireplace cold'.

Children who die after leaving the birth *posune* must be buried at Hatu Nohue.

6.10.2 DEATH OF A MOTHER IN CHILDBIRTH

If a woman is having a difficult birth, attempts will be made to revive her by massaging her feet and hands. When this fails, and the woman dies, the younger women leave the corpse to older women. Death in childbirth is believed to be contagious and dangerous to those of childbearing age, particularly if pregnant. The corpse may not be seen by her husband or by any male relative.

If a woman dies in childbirth or soon after in the birth hut (*amnotu*), older women first massage the stomach to determine whether it is hard or soft. If hard, this constitutes evidence of the cause of death, such as a snake having entered her vagina as a result of adultery (as believed by Soumori, for whom the snake is the primary totem). To avoid contaminating the men who later carry the corpse with parturitional fluids, the women are careful to wash it thoroughly. Meanwhile, male relatives collect *makanitu* vine. They fell a *nisoae* (salawaku) tree and remove the bark, which they give to the older women and onto which they move the corpse. Eight *puni* leaves (*Homalomena pendula*) are placed on the genital area and chest, after which the bark is wrapped around the corpse, and secured with *makanitu*. The wrapped corpse is passed through the sunset door to the awaiting men, and suspended from a bamboo pole with more *makanitu*. It is then carried on the shoulders of two men to the cemetery used only for women who have died in childbirth. They are accompanied by other men, who assist with the burial, one of which is her *sau monne* (in this case, her husband's brother) with whom she otherwise has a strict avoidance relationship. This is to ensure that her spirit will not bother the other members of the burial party. Using a digging stick, a grave is

dug that is about waist height, deep enough to prevent the predations of carrion-eating animals. The procedure then followed is identical to that for a stillborn child. A line (*kisoe*) is also drawn across the path to prevent the ghost of the dead woman from returning to the village, invoking the ghost not to cross the line lest she contaminate the village.

The *posune* where one of these deaths occurs is regarded as polluted (*posu kahatene*) and must be abandoned directly and destroyed eight days after the burial. Prior to this, it is left with the doors open to allow any accumulation of negativity inside, which might lead to sickness in others, to dissipate. Following a death of this kind there is an acute fear of the ghost for about eight days, particularly in places previously frequented by the dead woman, and it is believed that contact may result in fever and swelling. People living near a *posu kahatene* will sleep in more distant houses.

Where a baby has survived a mother's death in childbirth, it is washed unceremoniously and removed from the *posune*; the baby then becomes the responsibility of her mother's brother, or some other relative who agrees to take over the burden of care. If a woman dies in childbirth (*sakahatene pina mnotune*), or if a female dies under other circumstances in the *posune*, whether married or not (*nimoe muisukane*), the corpse is carried by two males, but with two accompanying females. The most feared kind of death is the simultaneous death of mother and child in the act of giving birth (*pina mnotune*). This is often thought to be a result of the mother having committed adultery, and those around her will persuade her to admit this lest she die. Death is confirmation of her guilt, and simultaneously of a physical and moral failure. If stillborn, the foetus is placed on top of the maternal corpse, wrapped in *nisoae* bark and buried with the mother at Hatu Nohue. Women who die in a menstruation hut for any other reason – such as during their monthly period, as a *pinamou metene* awaiting her washing ceremony, or through miscarriage – are treated in a similar way. These kinds of death are generically described as *muisukane*. A *nimoe muisukane* is not buried, but taken to Hatu Nohue.

6.10.3 HITAMUNA

Nuaulu say that eight days after the death of a mother or baby, the soul moves to the afterworld (*sainiku*). It is at this point that the *hita muna* must be performed by the father of the child or the husband of the mother. It was he who constructed the *posune* where death took

place, and his parang that cut the bamboo to make the platform that the woman subsequently defiled and made cold. The *hitamuna* removes the coldness caused by both parturitional fluid and by death. The day before the *hitamuna* the responsible male finds a red coconut growing in a sunrise direction. Before dawn next day he removes the coconut and wraps it in a red cloth before descending from the tree, after which he collects some *munanea* leaves. All women who have had any contact with the corpse gather at the hut or send an item of clothing to be held by a proxy. Before sunrise the male breaks open the coconut on the sunset side of the hut, using the *munanea* leaves to ladle the milk over the roof of the hut on to the women standing on the sunrise side. This is done five times, the women raising their arms to ensure that they receive some of the milk, and ensuring that some also falls on their clothing. The residue of the coconut and the *munanea* leaves then ‘follow the corpse’ by being taken by the significant male along the path which the corpse had previously travelled, in a sunset direction, and disposed of in a way that ensures they ‘decompose like the corpse’ and will not re-grow and invite further death. Finally, the hut is destroyed, which prevents the ghost of mother or child from returning to cause trouble, and reduces the likelihood of hearing the crying of the dead child or the weeping of its mother.

6.10.4 OTHER KINDS OF BAD DEATH

Bad death also occurs when a man dies falling from a tree (*kamanahune*), a kind of death paired with that of a woman who has died in childbirth (*pina mnotune*), and which is regarded in some sense as its ‘spouse’. When these names are uttered together in moments of anger they constitute a powerful curse. It is men who generally die by falling, as it is they who climb trees to hunt cuscus and collect fruit such as kenari, coconut and durian; but only women can die in childbirth. The corpse of a *kamanahune* is wrapped in split bamboo (*humisane*) rather than a pandanus mat, and, as with a *pina mnotune*, is carried tied under a bamboo pole on the shoulders of two men rather than on a bier. However, it is deposited at Hatu Nohue rather than at a river mouth, and placed on a platform oriented in the usual diagonal direction, but with the legs raised higher than the head. The souls of those who have died badly come back to a village to claim their possessions and may interfere with the living for a

time, for example, by throwing stones. After a month or so they seldom trouble the living again.

In the case of murder, because the spirit of the victim is highly dangerous, the body is buried without mortuary ritual, in the forest towards the sea. Through the act of burying the body, Nuaulu say that the snake of the underworld receives the body and the spirit of the victim will provoke misfortune in the killer's group until blood compensation is paid.

6.11 PERIODICITY AND CHANGE

Given the complex variations in ritual practices associated with different kinds of death, and the duration of mourning in the case of default death, one might reasonably expect admissions and accusations of error and omission in actual delivery. Under modern conditions one might expect there to be pressure to simplify. There is some evidence for this. For example, nowadays purification ritual involving washing and fasting is so rarely performed that many younger people are not clear how many days it must stay in force. Moreover, Bolton reports that in the case of a funeral for an eight-month old baby she witnessed, no *otumatae* fines were paid, and instead the father's mother sent one of her daughters to get a large and small plate, a glass and a spoon from the house, which were placed at the baby's feet.

On the other hand, death is no less frequent than it has ever been, in the sense that everyone eventually dies. However, since 1970 the population has exponentially risen and life-expectancy increased, resulting in a reduction in the performance of mortuary rituals in the short term, and in overall mortality. Although the relevant demographic data are difficult to obtain in any systematic fashion, child death is less common, though infant mortality at birth and the rate of stillbirths is still high by comparative standards. Access to medical attention may have had a slight influence on the rate of death of women in childbirth. So, in considering the transmission of knowledge about death rituals, we would need to take into account the clear gender division apparent at different stages of the ritual, and gendered responsibilities with respect to different kinds of death. Moreover, the supernatural sanctions associated with incorrect performance are more immediate and obvious to people than for many other rituals.

If you ask for a general description of what happens in a death ritual the default position is a good death, of one who has died of old age on a mat. However, although such rituals are regarded as a standard from which others deviate (in other words, they have high cultural saliency regardless of how often they are performed), in the experience of ordinary people, and especially of mothers and their immediate adult female kin, other kinds of death, and therefore their ritual, have more statistical preponderance than the prominence of this standard account might suggest. With high levels of infant mortality in particular, young women (indeed, younger people in general) may be more familiar with these rituals through experience than with those that follow death from old age. Death of a mother during childbirth and death through other unnatural causes are less frequent, but sufficiently so to make us wonder about the role of the standard mortuary ritual in transmitting knowledge.

Finally, we need to note the consequences of the interruption which death has on the performance of other rituals. As death cannot easily be planned for, it may arrive at times of considerable inconvenience in preparing, and holding, other major rituals. These have to be postponed, both for pragmatic reasons and because death at a time when other ritual is being conducted would be regarded as highly inauspicious. Moreover, the delay caused by a death in the continuous unfolding of other parts of the ritual process is not simply due to the immediate funeral arrangements, but to lengthy post-mortuary practices as well.

Chapter 7

Rituals of the house

7.1 THE HOUSE DEFINED

Sacred houses are the dwelling place of Nuauulu ancestral spirits, as well as providing protection for those sacred objects constituting the material continuity of the clan (*ipane*) or constituent social house (*numa*). It is the responsibility of the living chief (*ia onate*) or *kapitane* to guard the contents, and in particular the *saruana* of their own fathers. To this end, all sacred houses are the focus of a series of life-cycle ceremonies that resemble those of people. Indeed, houses themselves and their physical components are conceptualized as living entities, and this is reflected in the language used to describe them. The ritual cycle of the house does not merely mirror that of the human life-cycle, though; rather, both are fundamentally intertwined and mutually constitutive. As with human life-cycles, house cycles take many years to complete and at any one moment only a few houses will have completed their cycles. It is a relentless process of ritual work that never finishes, and, although there have been increasing complications in recent years due to intervening secular events, there is no reason to think that this has not always been so.

The house is where life is typically nurtured and matures, and building a new house requires and generates that ‘coolness’ necessary to foster an appropriate environment. All precautions must be taken, therefore, to ensure that heat is minimized, lest ancestors are angered. Ritual must be undertaken and must be performed correctly, if death is not to be the ultimate punishment. Ritual is involved at every stage in the process of building clan sacred houses and every physical action is ritualized, from collecting wood for the main uprights posts, and rattan for cordage, to completion of the roof, installation of the fireplace, and transfer of sacred objects. As we shall see in Chapter 8, in many respects the rituals

undertaken for sacred houses are the same as those for the *suane*, reflecting a similarity in physical structure. One of the main differences, however, is that ritual for a new sacred house is not accompanied by *kahuae*, other than for those belonging to the clan Matoke, or in other extremely exceptional circumstances. In ceremonies involving a clan sacred house, wife-takers acknowledge the help given by wife-givers and are in turn acknowledged by wife-givers through mutual gift-giving. Because the houses themselves are the product of ritual performance, the focus of religious veneration and the subject of complex proscriptions and prescriptions (in a word, *monne*), I describe them here as ‘sacred houses’ rather than as ‘ritual houses’, to avoid the implication that they are merely sites for the conduct of ritual.

We have already encountered the way in which houses are constituted, both socially and physically, and how, at a clan level, sacred houses are differentiated. They are sometimes collectively described as *numa onate* or *numa monne*, but beyond this we can distinguish two complementary types which match the two halves, or *numa*, of each clan. The first of these is the ‘great house’ (*numa onate*), also sometimes called *numa mainae* (greatest house) or *numa mai inai* (mother-house), and officiated by the *ia onate* or chief. By way of shorthand I have sometimes referred to this as the ‘clan house’. The second is the ‘warlord’s house’ (*numa kapitane*), officiated over by the *kapitane*, which, because of the structural presumption to bilaterally exchange cross-cousins, is sometimes said to represent the sister’s husband for a male ego. Not all clans have a *numa kapitane*, though the conceptual space for one – and for a *kapitane* to complement functionally the chief – always exists. Thus, in Rouhua there has been no *numa kapitane* Matoke-pina since the death of Patetu Matoke, whose son, Teliam, converted to Christianity. When such a house is required, there is an arrangement to use that belonging to the Sounaue-ainakahata *kapitane*, given his role in Matoke male puberty and *tupu-tupue* rituals. By comparison, Matoke-hanaie in 2001 had both a *numa onate* and *numa kapitane* at Tahena Ukuna.

In addition to complementary houses of clan chief and warlord, there may be other kinds of sacred house officiated over by other ritual specialists. Thus, Soumori, Neipane-tomoien and Matoke-pina in Rouhua have a permanent *numa nuhune* for birth rituals and to protect the relevant sacra (see Chapter 3), Neipane-tomoien has a *numa asi nioni* (or *numa saruana*) which protects the totemic turtle spirit, and there is the

Clan	Type of sacred house	Watane	Aihisuru	Hahualan	Bumara	Rouhua	Tahena Ukuna
Huni	numa kapitane numa onate				1(1) 1(1)		
Kamama	numa onate	1(0)	1(0)				0(1)
Matoke-hanaie						1(1)	0(1)
Matoke-pina							
Neipane-kahatue	numa kapitane				2(0)		
Neipani-nesinopu	numa onate numa kapitane			2(2) 1(1) 1(1)			
Neipane-omoién	numa kapitane numa onate	1(0) 1(0)			1(1) 1(1)	1(1) 1(1)	
Numanaeta	numa onate numa kapitane				1(0) 1(0)		0(1)
Peinisa	numa kapitane	1(1)			1(0)	1(1)	
	numa onate	1(1)			1(0)	1(1)	
Pia	numa onate				1(1)		
Sopapani	numa kapitane				1(1)		
	numa onate				1(1)		
Soumori	numa kapitane numa onate				1(0) 1(0)	0(1) 1(1)	0(1)
Soumauc-ainakahata	numa kapitane numa onate numa nahate	1(0) 1(1)	1(0) 1(0)			1(1) 1(1) 1(1)	0(1)
Soumauc-aipura	numa kapitane				1(1)		
	numa onate				1(1)		
TOTALS		7(3)	3(0)	4(4)	17(10)	9(10)	0(5)
							40 (32)

Table 7.1. Distribution of clan sacred houses in different Nuauulu settlements, 1971 and 2001 compared (2001 figures in parenthesis).

numa nahate (discussed further in Chapter 8), which occupies a special role in relation to *suane* rituals. The number of such houses in these categories for 1971 and 2001 is set out in Table 7.1. For Rouhua in 1971 there was a total of nine. By the time Rosemary Bolton worked there in the 1990s, of the five clans represented, four had two paired sacred houses each plus an additional sacred house, and one (Matoke) had only one sacred house, a *numa onate*: that is fourteen in all. In 2001 there were ten sacred houses. At any one time, of course, the number of physical houses will tend to be larger than the number of descent groups hosting or serving them, as new houses near completion are partially occupied before old houses have been destroyed. As one might expect, rituals focussing on the two symbolically paired houses tend to emphasize their complementariness. So, for example, while the chief must fast at all rituals for a *numa onate*, it is the *kapitane* who fasts for *numa kapitane* rituals.

7.2 THE PRE-LIFE OF HOUSES

A clan sacred house begins to physically deteriorate at the moment of its creation, and certainly before its ritual cycle has been completed it will have become necessary to carry out running repairs, for example replacing thatch. As the delays in performing rituals for new houses lengthen, so repair work on both existing houses and those under construction becomes more frequent, such as replacing posts and other timbers. Failure to undertake such repair work can have profound consequences, as when the roof leaks over sacred paraphernalia. Some of these repairs may be relatively perfunctory, though others may extend over many months and involve extensive ritual work. At every step, the ancestors must be placated. But despite repeated exertions to maintain them in a habitable condition, just like old people, old houses eventually die and must be replaced.

Renovation of sacred houses is the responsibility of the whole clan, assisted by their wife-takers. The work is led by two foremen, the *matue*, identified during the periods they are engaged in ritual work by the wearing of a batik loincloth and the *ahutu neine*. They are supported by others, men from the clan and men with wives taken from the clan, who in return receive *papuae* of betel nuts, and feasts. First thing in the morning of those days when work is undertaken, *matue* are presented with betel

placed on old ceramic plates. *Matue* need not necessarily be members of the clan to which the house belongs, but in this case they must assume the prohibitions of that clan until all work on the house is complete. This may be many years later, and sometimes not in their lifetime. At the same time, they must present the house with a large porcelain plate (*hanainae*), which is returned to them on completion of the ritual cycle, and which rewards and celebrates their work.

At the same time as old sacred houses are being repaired, preparations for new houses are underway. In this programme of work, priority is given to creating a food surplus. This is not simply because workers require feeding and ritual requires feasting, but because time taken out in performing ritual work is time taken away from normal food-getting activity. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the supply of food will cover all these demands. Such food-gathering activity involves collective pig hunts (*kasare*) or sago extraction expeditions that take place in areas of forest (*sin wesie*) specially designated for the purpose of providing for rituals of a particular clan, where normal extraction is prohibited (Ellen 2010:129-32). As the work proceeds, a shelter is built in the *sin wesie* to serve as a base for processing sago required to feed the workers, and for gathering other consumables, such as meat and resin for *kamane* torches. During this period one *matue* sleeps at the sunrise end of the shelter to guard the sago, and the other at the sunset end, and it is he who tends the fire and cures the meat obtained while hunting. The processed sago is brought back wrapped in a red cloth slung on bamboo poles or yokes over the shoulder. In the village it is stored in a large *ukura* (or cask) of sago leaves, after first removing a handful of flour, invoking the ancestors while moving it in and out of the *ukura* five times. It is then deposited inside the house.

With the bulking of food complete, work on collecting building materials for the house can begin, starting with the main posts. The *matue* select the area of forest that will provide the timber; on the day when the felling begins, they put on their ceremonial attire and are given betel to chew. When the working party returns from the forest the prepared timbers are placed in a *heute*, a timber store constructed along the sunrise side of the existing sacred house. The *heute* (more precisely, *heute monne*; Plate 7.1a) comprises a long, thatched structure in which posts are placed so that their tops (*atue*) are inland and their bases (*aikune*) seaward. While in the forest, a tree is selected by the *matue* that will provide the first post

to be inserted at the north-east corner of the proposed house. From this a chip is taken, wrapped in a red cloth, and, on returning to the village, presented to the *ia onate*, who puts it in a lidded basket (*takanasi*) on the *rine*.

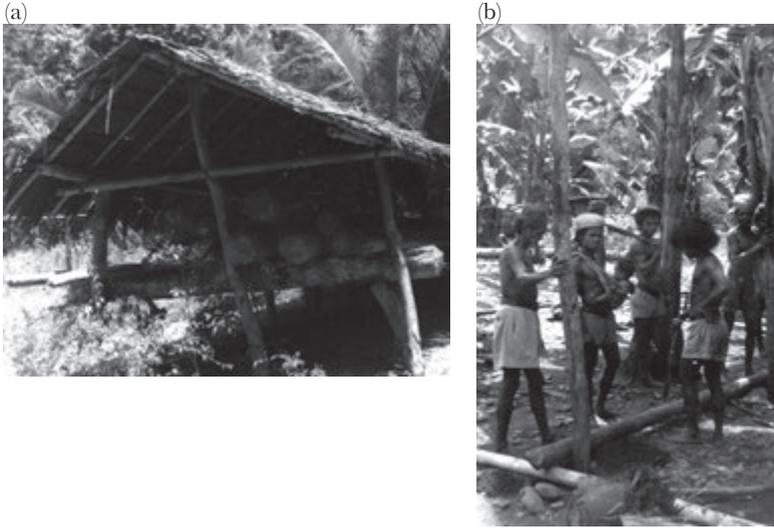


Plate 7.1 House ritual: (a) *heute*, timber store for posts of sacred houses, Niamonai, March 1970; (b) erecting *hini* for new house for Kaiisa and his elder brother, Rouhua, May 1970.

If the *hini* (main uprights) for a new sacred house get wet, it is believed disaster will follow. Therefore, the *heute* itself is constantly being mended. Numerous ritual episodes of this kind occurred while I was in the field. For example, in February 1971, on a day previously decided by the *kapitane* himself, the *heute* attached to the old *numa kapitane* Neipane-tomoién was completely replaced by a new one. The relationships between those involved on this occasion, and on another that took place for the clan Soumori in the same month 20 years later, are illustrated in Figure 7.1. Understandably, the most frequently replaced building material is thatch, which has an effective life of about one year, but may have to be changed in places more often. As a result, rituals connected with making thatch and its refurbishment are the most common of those connected

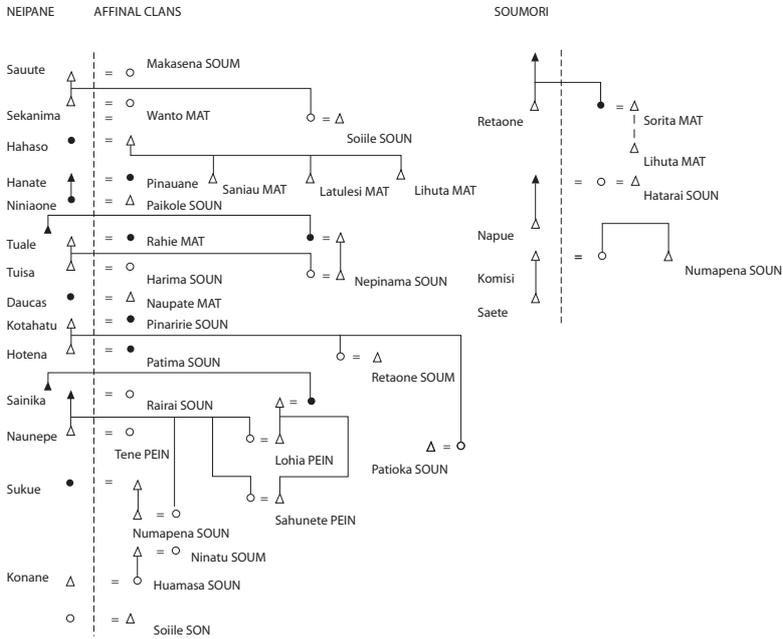


Figure 7.1. Comparison of relationships between those involved in repairing ritual *heute* belonging to the *numa kapitane* Neipane and those belonging to *numa onate* Soumori.

Names of individuals engaged in the work are placed in bold. On the left: those belonging to the *numa kapitane* Neipane in February 1971(event 3, table 7.2), on the right: those belonging to *numa onate* Soumori in February 1990 (event 7, Table 7.2). Note that abbreviations are used for clan names.

with the house generally, as well as those connected more generally with *heute* (Appendix 1). However, the work reported during February 1971 involved replacing an entire *heute*. The pattern had not changed by February 1990, when I observed a repair to the roof of the *heute* for the Soumori sacred house. The helpers assembled around quarter past eight in the morning, beginning at about nine o'clock to collect bamboo lengths for the spines of sections of thatch, and with the stockpiling of sago palm leaves for the thatch itself. By about eleven o'clock helpers had started to weave pieces of thatch, work that went on until about six thirty in the evening, followed by a feast. The work continued into a sec-

ond day, followed by a second feast in the evening, and into the morning of a third day. On the second day, large uprights to support the stored timbers had also been cut, and by the evening much of the roof and the new uprights were in place. The old *himi* and other timbers had been temporarily removed. Although this was sacred work, during the entire two days that I observed there were no actual invocations to ancestral spirits. Apart from preparing for the feast, the Soumori male hosts sat on the verandah watching, the recipients of the labour of others. By the time the work was completed, Soumori had hosted four feasts in two days, and at the feast held at the end of the second day there had been 58 guests (including children, but excluding male hosts and all women), and this only for routine repair work.

7.3 PLANTING THE FIRST POSTS AND ERECTING THE FRAME

The siting of a new house is of crucial significance. Not only must it be aligned correctly in terms of general symbolic geometry (Chapter 2.2), but the sacred houses of particular clans are oriented in relation to those of other clans as well. Thus, Matoke sacred houses are always oriented towards the north-east, and Sounaue-ainakahata and Peinisa houses always inland because they have *saruana* ‘who are afraid of the sea’. Within these geo-symbolic constraints, clan elders may also seek to satisfy other conditions. Thus, as non-Nuaulu increasingly began to settle in Rouhua from the 1980s, and there was continuous passing traffic along the newly metalled road between Sepa and Tamilou, so sacred houses were sited further inland, away from the prying eyes of outsiders. Thus, over a period of some 30 years, the Sounaue-ainakahata clan house in Rouhua (named ‘Kamna ukuna’) has moved incrementally to the north, away from the road. By 2003 two village loci had effectively begun to appear, one pertaining to ‘adat’, situated towards the mountain, and one pertaining to government requirements, situated towards the sea. This almost precisely replicates what had happened when Nuaulu first settled at Niamonai near Sepa at the end of the nineteenth century, with Watane located towards the sea and Aihisuru towards the mountain, and as recorded by Tichelman (1960:188-9).

When a new sacred house is to be built, a large working party is typically organized to cut sago and to collect meat. For the new Neipane-

tomoien clan house being built during 1971 about 30 people were involved for one month, collecting upwards of 300 animal carcasses and harvesting 30 casks of sago (from three mature palms). For each day of ritual work on the house there is a feast, the sago and *maea* being prepared the previous evening. The feast is like most others, except that the sago porridge is presented on a large porcelain dish (*hanainae*) to the *matue*, who are seated on the mountain side of the house, and at the head of the strips of banana leaf (*ria uae*). Each worker eats from the same plate at every feast throughout the cycle, and on completion the plate is gifted to his own (wife-taking) house.

On the day of the ceremony, the head of the house under (re)construction – chief or *kapitane* – abstains from eating and taking betel. A hole is excavated for the first of the posts (*hini*) to be inserted in the ground. This post is placed at the point that will become the north-east corner, or ‘head’, of the house (Plate 7.1b); it is rubbed with coconut oil, wrapped in red cloth (said to resemble the wrapping of a red cloth around the waist of a founding clan ancestor) and planted in the hole by the relevant clan head holding the base. It is important that the post is planted so that the root end (*aikune*) is downwards and the tip end (*atue*) is facing upwards. The post is placed in the hole and withdrawn five times by the *matue* with some help from others, and then placed in the bottom. It is accompanied by a *pokue* offering to the (mother) earth, comprising shavings from a ring wrapped, depending on the clan involved, in a *wainite* or banana leaf, or (as with the case of Matoke and Sounaue-ainakahata), a pandanus-leaf mat dyed red and yellow (*koa msinae*), accompanied by an invocation to ancestral spirits of the house:

Upuku Anahatana

Lord Anahatana

Nante tuamane

The sky and the earth

Wae upu wae momom

Ancestral spirit of the river, grandparent of the river

Hini reini ereroru

These houseposts are placed

Tuamane peni

The land becomes cool

kupue inae tau moie wanie

The sharpened sickness is still young

ipane tauē

The clan is full

With this, breath (*ai nahai, ai mhaine*) is given to the house. The post is named Pinawasa Inai, because Neipane originated from *wasa* or *maikasu*. The name of the equivalent post in the *numa kapitane* Neipane in Rouhua is ‘Tomoiē’.

The next post to be inserted is that on the sunset side of the fireplace, the female *hini otumatae* (fireplace post), complementing the first (male) post to the sunrise and north-east; both are regarded as *hini monne*. After this, a third post is inserted on the sunrise side of the fireplace, and the next two on the sunrise side of the house overall. These four tall uprights are along the line of the central ridge – the *hunone* – and will support the roof. Four shorter posts are then planted in a line inland of the *hunone*, which align with the first post at the north-east corner to form the mountainward side, and a second row, seaward of the *hunone*, to form the front of the house, the so-called ‘hands and feet’ (*hana-aīne*). Once the main posts are sunk, the construction of the rest of the house frame is relatively straightforward, though it may take several months. It is also relatively free of ritual, though Rosemary Bolton reports that according to Numapena Soumori, *ana nusa inae* (local rice), *menipa* (millet) and *manae* (wheat) are fed to the ancestral spirits when installing the final roof timber.

7.4 ROOFING, WALLS AND FLOORS

The next stage of the cycle consists of constructing the roof frame, followed by thatching. As we have seen, even repairs to the thatch entail ceremony, and where an entire new roof is to be constructed the guardian of the house must fast in the prescribed way, followed by a feast in which *hanainae* plates feature. Once the roof is on, the wall-base boards (*sakanae*) are placed along the sides of the house at a level that will support the walls. In the case of the clan Matoke-hanaie in Aihisuru, and more recently in Tahena Ukuna, when sacred houses are complete save for the walls, leaves of *nasinana* (*Caryota rumphiana*) must be hung in the spaces where the walls will be inserted. The leaves remain until they are in tat-

ters, at which point they are replaced by rigid walling made from sago leafstalk (*tope*). In Aihisuru, in September 1970, construction of both the Matoke clan house and that of the *kapitane* Matoke had reached this stage.

In December 1970 I recorded that the greater part of a morning had been spent by most of the village preparing sago-leafstalk walling and rattan for the new Neipane-tomoien *numa kapitane* in Rouhua. At about 11.30 am a party of about 15 adult males assembled in the Neipane clan house and *kapitane* Kotahatu was decked out in regalia. A short invocation was made to the ancestors on the *rine* followed by the gesture of respect, the *sinu onari hohua*. Then the procession, led by Kotahatu, and followed by Sekanima and others, descended from the house and proceeded along the path leading past the *suane*. At the point nearest the *suane* the party stopped and Kotahatu gestured a sign of reverence and respect towards the ancestral spirits of the *suane*:

Oh, ancestors of the *suane*
 We are going to the new *numa kapitane* Neipane-tomoien
 Do not hinder us on our way.

The party then proceeded to the seaward side of the new house where it was formally greeted by the Neipane-tomoien clan chief. As the party entered, firecrackers were set off to mark the transition. They made a gesture of reverence to the *hini otumatae* (fireplace post) from the centre of the house and then walked to behind the fireplace, where two lengths of leafstalk had already been put in place, one on each side of the post. Kotahatu and the Neipane-tomoien clan chief knelt in front of the post and, with both right hands, clasped a braddle held just above the leafstalk on the mountain side, as if to pierce it (Figure 7.2). An invocation was uttered and then the braddle was pushed towards the top of the leafstalk five times, on the final time piercing it:

Lord Anahatana, Oh, ancestors,
 We ask you to guard this house
 The walls of which we are now assembling
 We ask you that you should not send too much sickness to its occupants
 And allow that they will bring home many pigs.

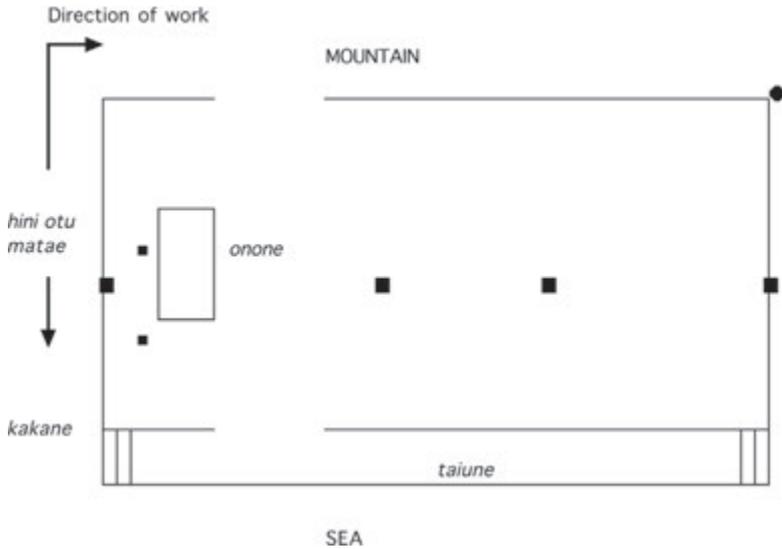


Figure 7.2. Plan illustrating spatial aspects of ritual for insertion of first walling in new Neipane-tomoien clan sacred house, Rouhua, December 1970.

The leafstalk on the other (seaward) side of the post was then pierced and rattan inserted to bind the whole together. In doing this Kotahatu and Sekanima were assisted by other elders, after which younger workers began to slot the remaining leafstalk walling into place. They worked outwards from both sides of the fireplace post until they reached the most sacred point of the house: its north-east corner. As work progressed, betel and smoking requisites appeared and those working were invited to imbibe. Work continued until midday, at which point there was a general assembly in the house, accompanied by the chewing of betel. Afterwards, the presiding elders led by Kotahatu left by the mountain-side door and walked to the exterior north-east corner of the house. Here, assisted by Konane on the inside, the leafstalk walling on the sunrise side of the corner was pierced by Kotahatu, with another invocation and the five point movement of the braddle. The leafstalk on the mountain side was then pierced and the whole bound with rattan. Others then assisted in putting the remaining walling in place. While this was happening further firecrackers were set off. The party returned inside via the seaward door and chewed betel and smoked. Later in the afternoon another feast was held.

In this, as in other examples of ritual work, it is important to distinguish those who participate by virtue of their ritual expertise, and the much larger number that actually undertake the labour. The former group generally comprises elders, and a relatively small group at that (including the host for whom the work is being conducted and who will later provide the feast), and the latter includes the *matue* who supervise the actual work. On this occasion a total of 35 adult males (Table 7.2, E1) were eventually involved, but, of these, four were there in non-labouring roles. Moreover, participation as a worker and as an expert involve roles that come at different stages in a human life-cycle, which offer a different perspective on what is involved, release different levels of access to ritual knowledge, and come with different implications for the process by which knowledge is acquired and transmitted.

I have been present at comparable episodes of ritual work where the pattern of activity, division of labour and ritual actions were essentially similar, such as the installation of new doors for the Neipane-tomoién clan house in January 1981. This involved 25 persons collecting wood in the Mon Valley for five days. The solid wooden doors were taken into the house to the accompaniment of drums and left inside to dry, and were not hung until some months later. A *kahuae* was performed the following night which not only celebrated the arrival of the doors, but heralded work on the ceiling that was to take place the following day. The ceiling of a sacred house, like the walling, consists of slats of sago leafstalk. These had been collected during the previous days along the Mon, and their installation the morning after the *kahuae* was heralded by drumming. The cut lengths were taken into the house and passed up to a person perched in the roof space who put several lengths in place at a time, securing each batch with a bamboo pin. The pattern of work, as with the walling, moved from south-west to north-east. By February, the building work on the same house was still being undertaken, but now involved inserting permanent house steps (*hantetane nene huae*) to replace a temporary ladder, and also the installation of the *rine* loft.

7.5 TRANSFER OF VALUABLES INTO A NEW HOUSE

In view of the intrinsic potency of the kinds of object located in clan sacred houses, and the link between them and the physical house that

protects them, it is no wonder that the rituals for transferring objects from an old to a new house (*paki apia*) acquire a particular significance. Moreover, it is important to make an offering to the ancestral spirits of the house before entering a new house (*sama numa*), to cool it and to promote life. Indeed, the time of entering a new house, and of transferring sacred contents from the old, is perhaps the most critical and delicate stage in the entire cycle.

In January 1971 I witnessed the transfer of valuables into the new Neipane *numa onate*. At around 12.30 in the afternoon 27 adult males and 12 women, mostly wives, plus children and a handful of visitors from Sepa and Nuelitetu, assembled in the old clan house. Konane removed the sacred objects from the *rine*, including heirloom plates wrapped in red cloth, first honouring the ancestors of the *rine* and making the sign of respect five times. He then took the first of a series of large *karanunu*, knotted to form bags, which were given to Hotena and in which were placed the smallest and oldest *karanunu* (the *sanneha*, in which the ancestral spirit of the house founder are said to reside). These were taken from the rattan line strung across the width of the house underneath the *rine*. Then the baskets containing the hair of young children were put in a similar *karanunu* and given to Maineo, plates were put in another and given to Sahukone, and further baskets given to Naunepe. This continued until most of the people in the house were carrying something, whether it be *monne* or not. It was then the role of the female head of the house (usually the wife of the male guardian) to remove a stone and some ash from the fireplace, which the spirit of the founding ancestor's wife is said to inhabit. This is destined for the new hearth and marks the continuity between old and new houses of female ancestral spirits. On the occasion on which this account is based, Hotena's wife took a stone and a coconut shell full of earth from the old fireplace and carried it in a female back basket. Finally, the Neipane chief, Konane, called upon the ancestors of the house to accompany him, beckoning them with a gesture similar to that used in seances, and placing his right hand across the chest. The company descended from the old house on the mountain side and made its way to the new house, carrying the sacred paraphernalia (Plate 7.2c), with the chief in front, followed by the *kapitane*. They paused on the path at the point nearest the *suane* and honoured the ancestors of the *suane* (Plate 7.2a).

Birth name	Clan	Approx.	1970	1971	1971	1973	1973	1973	1990	1996
		Birth yr	E 1	E 2	E 3	E4	E 5	E6	E7	E8
Anarima	SOUN	1957	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Beda	nna	1950	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-
Bisara	NEIP	1953	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Elias	nna	1933	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hatarai	SOUN	1900	+	-	-	-	+	+	-	-
Hatu	NEIP	1927	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Hitinesi	SOUN	1947	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hotena	NEIP	1937	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
Inane	MAT	1945	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	+
Kaiisa	NEIP	1952	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Komisi	SOUN	1930	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	-
Makasena	SOUN	1930	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Konane	NEIP	1930	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	-
Koprel	NEIP	1965	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Kotahatu	NEIP	1910	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
Latulesi	MAT	1955	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Lihuta	MAT	1947	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-
Lohia	PEIN	1937	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
Lohia	SOUN	1923	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-
Maineo	NEIP	1943	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-
Maloku	NEIP	1957	+	-	-	+	-	-	+	+
Masoli	SOUN	1945	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-
Napuc	SOUN	1945	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-
Naunepe	NEIP	1950	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Naupane	NEIP	1965	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Naupate	MAT	1940	-	-	+	+	-	+	-	-
Nepinama	SOUN	1952	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	-
Numapena	SOUN	1947	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+
Paikole	SOUN	1930	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
Patioka	SOUN	1940	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
Patiraia	SOUN	1900	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	-
Retanusa	SOUN	1968	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Retaone	SOUN	1945	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	-
Sahukone	NEIP	1947	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	-

Birth name	Clan	Approx.	1970	1971	1971	1973	1973	1973	1990	1996
		Birth yr	E 1	E 2	E 3	E4	E 5	E6	E7	E8
Sahunete	PEIN	1943	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	+
Saete	SOUM	1965	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Saniau	MAT	1937	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	-
Sauute	NEIP	1920	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Sekanima	NEIP	1942	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-
Soile	SOUM	1952	-	-	+	+	-	+	-	-
Soile	SOUN	1950	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	+
Sorita	MAT	1920	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	-
Tapone	SOUN	1940	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	-
Teliam	MAT	1930	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tuale	NEIP	1920	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Tuisa	MAT	1952	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	-
Tuisa	NEIP	1934	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
Wairisa	SOUN	1934	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-
Wasale	NEIP	1958	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-
Wata	PEIN	1964	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+

Table 7.2. Participation in selected house-building rituals by adult males between 1970 and 1996.

Key: Event 1: erecting house walls, *numa onate* Neipane, Rouhua, December 1970; Event 2: entering new *numa onate* Neipane-tomoien, January 1971; Event 3: repairing *heute* belonging to the *numa kapitane* Neipane-tomoien, February 1971; Event 4: installation of walling in *numa onate* Sounaue-ainakahata, August 1973; Event 5: installation of *sokate* in *numa onate* Sounaue-ainakahata, August 1973; Event 6: Soumori snake totem ritual, August 1973; Event 7: repairing roof of *heute* belonging to *numa onate* Soumori, March 1990; Event 8: installation of *sokate* in *numa onate* Peinisa, February 1996; nna = non-Nuaulu affine.

The party stops at the seaward door of the new house and Konane utters an invocation and takes five deliberate paces which bring him to the north-east corner of the house interior. As he enters, he makes a gesture of respect to the ancestors (Plate 7.2b). The new rattan line for the *karanunu* is taken and, mounting the *katira* (a small stool of sago leafstalk), he places it at the point where one end is to be secured against the wall, above the sunsetward edge of the shelf from the inland side to the centre,

and at the sunrise end. An invocation is made with the right hand and he pushes the line five times towards the point where it is to be secured, and then ties it at both ends. The old line is taken and held against the new, an invocation is made, and the old line is drawn along the new five times. The oldest *karanunu* is then taken from its bundle, and held against the new line. An invocation is made, and it is pushed against the line five times and placed over it with great deliberation. The baskets, the shield, plates, bowls, *sokate* and the line for the ordinary *karanunu* are then all put in their proper place, and in that order. Another group of items transferred are the jawbones of pig, deer and cassowary (*penesite*) which are deposited in a sacred house after every successful hunt to ensure further hunting success, and which are usually strung across the sunset side of the roofspace or stored in baskets. It is claimed that these jawbones replaced human heads after the cessation of headhunting. The *penesite* are then placed on the shelf above the fire at the sunset end. Finally, a banana stem is split and the sections laid across the fireplace. This is filled with the earth taken from the mountainside of the new house. Hotena's



Plate 7.2. House ritual: (a) a halt during the process of transferring sacred paraphernalia from the old to the new *numa kapitane* Neipane-tomoien to pay respects to the ancestors of the *suane*, Rouhua, January 1971; (b) entering the new *numa kapitane* Neipane-tomoien, Rouhua, January 1971, Konane making a gesture of respect to the ancestors; (c) heirlooms in the form of plates being transferred to new *numa kapitane*, Rouhua, May 1970.

wife, the female guardian, takes a small parang and digs a hole to the rear of the new fireplace. In it she places earth from the old fireplace; the stone she has brought is placed on top. The other stones are then arranged, and the female spirit of the house (*otue upue*) 'fed', a small food offering being placed on the new hearth.

The transfer of all these items ensures continuity in the life of both the physical and social house, reflected also in a chip from the old north-east post being taken to the new house in a basket containing chips from the posts of all previous sacred houses. While these actions were taking place some of the pre-*matahenne* adolescents were releasing firecrackers and firing rifles outside. Betel is shared and a feast follows in the evening.

7.6 RITUALS OF THINGS

As we have seen from the preceding section, for Nuauulu, sacred houses are as much about hosting sacred objects and ancestral spirits as they are about providing habitation for living people. Indeed, it sometimes seems that their primary purpose is as vehicles for the preservation of sacra, and there is an undeniable and intrinsic link between the objects themselves, clan ancestral spirits and the physical houses of which they are part. The motivation, therefore, to complete house ritual cycles as quickly and as effectively as possible is the need to find a new home for objects and ancestors lest they be damaged or disrespected by the condition of their current accommodation. Such a cultural complex has been described for other parts of Island Southeast Asia, one in which houses appear to 'serve' valuables in the same way as the broader social house perpetrates itself through its local physical manifestation (Errington 1989:242).

The sacred objects for which sacred houses are the justification are, as we have seen, various, but in the context of the argument pursued in this book they are relevant because their existence (a) involves ritual processes focussed on their creation and maintenance; (b) because these sequences necessarily feed into and demand the progression of rituals in the house cycle; and (c) because at the same time their delay would impact on progression in that same cycle. If progression is slow or ceases altogether, then that in turn runs the risk of ancestral disapproval.

I distinguished in Chapter 2 between objects used in ritual over which Nuauulu have almost complete production control (such as houses, sacred

shields and baskets) and objects necessary for ritual that can only be acquired through exchange with non-Nuauulu (red cloth, ceramic bowls, textiles, metal objects, brass gongs, shell ornaments, bells, et cetera). Although not all objects used in ritual are necessarily sacred (for example, not all shields are sacred shields), both these categories extend to objects that are intrinsically sacred and which are protected in sacred houses. Elsewhere (Ellen 1990) I have provided a detailed description of the ritual production of sacred shields (*aniaue monne*). I have exemplified the idea of ritual ‘work’ developed further in this book, have provided time and motion data for stages in the process of their production, and shown how these processes constitute a cycle of ritual reproduction which articulates with the reproduction of the houses that contain them. The ritual process for making a new shield will begin when elders in a particular sacred house judge that an old one needs to be replaced. This point will generally have been reached when the shield shows advanced signs of rot or insect infestation, or once it has become self-evidently fragile. That point will often be prompted by some other ritual event for which shields are required, for example, the phase in the ritual cycle of a house when sacred objects have to be transferred from an old to a new house. That ritual of transfer may not take place until the new shield has been made, a process that itself may take many months, from the moment when a tree has been identified and felled to the adding of the final decoration. Once installed, the new shield, to which has been transferred the spirit of the old, will have a life of maybe 50 to a hundred years before it needs to be replaced again. Thus, since there has been a life cycle for each shield (each time one replacing an earlier shield, and so ad infinitum) a line of descent can in theory be traced back to some scenario described in a myth that accounts for its origin.

But not all sacred objects are ritualized in the same way, or have similar life cycles. Take, for example, sacred spears. The spirit of such a spear in the house of the chief of the clan Matoke-pina in Rouhua is regularly invoked in the event of natural disasters and epidemics. This spear (the metal head of which is about 13 cm long, accompanied by a length of rattan), is paired with a sacred shield kept in the Matoke-hanaie clan house in Aihisuru until that house, and presumably the shield, moved to Tahena Ukuna in the 1980s. When Matoke-pina split away from Matoke-hanaie in the 1930s, at the time when the village of Rouhua was being established, the spear and rattan came to Rouhua and the shield

stayed in Aihisuru. It was in connection with hearing this story that Iako, the chief of Matoke-pina in 1970, told me the following myth:

When the earth was still young, when it was soft, Anahatana presented our ancestors [meaning the first Matoke] with a cockerel and a chicken. The cockerel was named Munanea (meaning Sun) and the chicken was named Sihunane (meaning moon). The cockerel changed into the [metal part of the] spear and the hen into the rattan [that binds it to the shaft]. The parts still bear these names today. Since that time – which was a long time ago – the wood of the spear has grown rotten and has had to be changed many times, but the old shafts are still kept on the *rine*. When my father died I made the present shaft and tied a new *karanunu* to it. It is still quite strong and need not be changed for a long time yet. The old shafts – see here [showing me] – are still on the *rine*. The rattan, however, is now represented only by a short length kept with the spear. The present line (*ane*) in the house along which *karanunu* are hung does not possess this special name and is made from a different kind of rattan.¹

Each time the haft of the sacred spear is replaced, the family of the head of the clan Matoke must drink water from a sacred porcelain jar also in the possession of the clan. Thus, although the metal spear head has had a continuous physical existence from the time recorded in the myth to the present day, its accompanying hafting and binding have had serial life cycles that might be more or less of the same order as a sacred shield; say, 50 years. Other objects may not be regarded as having mythic origins, but may nevertheless have histories that can be traced back to particular exchange events in the past.

Other examples of rituals for a sacred object that feed into or are dependent on the cycle of ritual activity for sacred houses, include the installation of new *sokate* baskets (*apasa sokate*) in which dwell the *saruana* spirits summoned during seances (see frontispiece), and the installation of other containers stored on the *rine*, the sacred shelf. One such is the *takanasi anai*, the repository for the totemic snake spirit of the clan Soumori, an installation ritual for which was held in August 1973. In this case, the making of the basket by an older female in the clan was not in itself a ritualized process, only its installation. A new red cloth

¹ Personal communication with Iako, 8 November 1970; note 70-12-98.

was taken down from the line by Komisi (the clan chief) and the new basket (also wrapped in red cloth) removed from the wall. A small stool was taken from the north-east corner and placed carefully in front of the *rine*. The red cloth was laid out on the floor and the lid removed from the basket and its surfaces carefully wiped with the red cloth. Another cloth was taken down from the line, folded and put inside the basket. On the cloth within the basket was placed a large porcelain plate for ‘washing the snake’; for if a reticulate python is mistakenly killed, a fine must be paid and then water placed in the plate overnight for the snake to bathe itself and so regain its life force. The lid was then replaced firmly and slowly on the basket, and the whole wrapped up in the red cloth. Komisi climbed on to the stool and, with his right hand, rearranged the ritual objects. Soile Soumori wrapped the basket and handed it to Komisi, who placed it on the shelf. Komisi put his right hand on the shelf and made an invocation to the ancestral totemic spirit. After chewing betel for a short while, Komisi departed by the sea door with a red cloth over his right shoulder and went to the south-west corner of the dancing ground where he stood facing the sacred *sonae* and *wainite* bushes uttering a further invocation. He then walked purposefully towards the bushes and wiped the red cloth over the leaves and returned to the house by the mountain door. A feast was held in the evening. In the morning the children of the clan are washed so that they, too, may regain their strength, like the snake.

7.7 COMPLETION CEREMONIES

The completion ceremony for a sacred house is preceded by many days of preparation. Several weeks before the ceremony men collect sago and place it in a large cask (called a *teune*) on the verandah of the sacred house. Bolton witnessed the ceremony for Neipani-tomoi in December 1990, when a *kahuae* had been performed most nights for the previous few months. The *kahuae* is not generally performed for a clan sacred house and is usually reserved for the *suane*. However, owing to bad feeling between Neipani and other clan leaders, rather than build a *suane* just for Neipane, a *kahuae* for the clan house was performed with participation from some of the other clans. This was a controversial move, even though, as we have seen (Chapter 2), when clans lived in separate moun-

tain hamlets the *kahuae* was performed in the clan sacred house, and this is still the case for some clans (but see Ellen 1990:8).

Men with wives from the clan undertake most preparatory labour. First is the *hunu hata nikata*, the ‘patterned ridge’, in which the old thatch from the ridge is replaced with new thatch decorated with a design made by criss-crossing two rows of bamboo strips across the length of the ridge. The ceremony begins in the morning with the placing of flags (*saene*) on the ridge: red, black or white, the number and colour reflecting the clan and its spirits. The men construct two ladders from bamboo, which reach almost to the ridge on the inland side; these are placed to the sunrise and sunset ends and joined by a bamboo haulm across the roof. A notched length of bamboo of a suitable thickness is also leant against the sunset side of the house to assist climbing.

About noon a ceremony, known as the *hunahata otue* ‘ridge hearth’, is performed. It completes the hearth by removing earth from the base and laying five banana leaves inside, on which the wife of the house guardian places a *sikeue* (taro) corm and a cuscus claw as an offering to the wife of the founding ancestor of the clan, referred to here as the *otue upue*, ‘respected of the hearth’. The offering is covered with further banana leaves followed by earth. This is mostly a female ritual, involving only the wives of the clan chief, the wife of his eldest son (that is, her eventual successor), plus the *kapitane*. After most of the construction is finished, another offering, the *sama numa*, the ‘house sharing’, is placed in the roof thatch to the sunset side of the fifth rafter. This consists of a piece of sago biscuit and cuscus claw wrapped in a *wainite* leaf. It is accompanied by an invocation to the ancestral spirits, and followed by a feast in which the sharing of food cools the heat accumulated through excess ritual work, ensuring health, fertility, growth and hunting success for members of the house.

Halfway through the afternoon two husbands of wives of the house climb to the roof, remove the flags and descend the ladders synchronously. Up to ten other men then ascend to the ridge, remove the old thatch and put new thatch in its place, followed by decorated sections of roofing. One piece of thatch has on it a snake head made from *Ficus* fibre, tied with some red cloth; a second, a tail. These represent the snake that metamorphosed into the island of Seram in the creation myth, and the first is taken by the *matue* for the sunrise side ascending the bamboo pole on the sunset end. Walking across the roof to the sunrise end, he holds the thatch above his head while the others bring further sections

of thatch. When all are on the ridge, the section of thatch is five times moved forward and downward and thereafter placed on the sunrise end, followed by the other pieces of thatch; finally, the tail piece at the sunset end is put in place by the other *matue*. The workers then descend and enter the house, where *papue* of betel are distributed to all those participating in the work.

The following evening *penesite* stored in all clan households are brought to the new house and placed in the roofspace along with those already hanging in the sacred house at the fireplace end. A ritual is performed for the founding ancestor of the house (*numa upue*) and the spirits of the dead members of the clan (*sio msinaea*). This is ‘the feeding of the ancestors’ (*rui sio onata muaio*), in which the right thigh and claw of a cuscus and sago cooked in bamboo (*ute-ute*) forms an offering. A sago biscuit, *maea*, sago-chilli mix and banana are given to the other spirits. All these things are placed on a porcelain dish on the *rine* by the clan chief who calls upon the spirits to eat, asking that they not bring sickness to the clan nor cause hunting to be unsuccessful; that they bring health to enable the living to feed the spirits once again. Other offerings are sometimes made to spirits in different parts of the house, such as those in the *sokate* suspended from the *rine*. A feast follows in the evening, at which the clan chief breaks the fast he has been keeping since dawn. The next day the food provided for the ancestors is consumed by the men, the spirits having taken only its soul (*matiumu*). As the food is full of spiritual heat it cannot be consumed by women, in whom it would cause barrenness.

Five days later the clan chief rubs coconut oil on the walls, the wall-base boards and on the house posts. This is said to relieve the pain caused to the house during building, especially where wood has been hit by mallets.

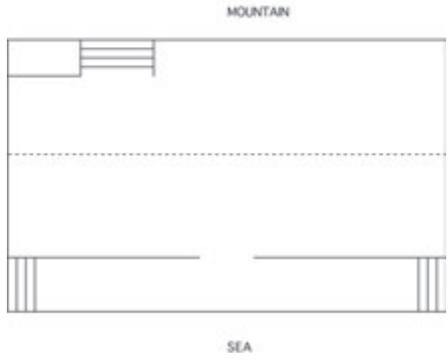
7.8 VARIATION AND CHANGE

With so many house ritual cycles in process at any one time throughout the Nuaulu area the opportunities for variation are in theory considerable. However, this potential frequency also provides multiple opportunities to reinforce common practice and, therefore, we might assume, effective cultural transmission. As with other categories of ritual, there are differences between the clans. Some of these are quite major, for example, the practice of Neipane-tomoien in Rouhua of erecting a *numa*

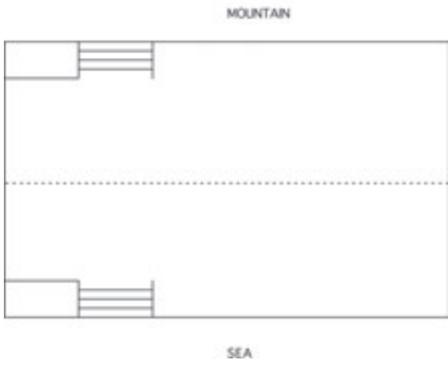
nuhune directly on the ground, that is, without *hini*; or the mountain-sea axis of the Sounaue-aipura ridge pole compared with the sunrise-sunset axis found for all other clans. We have already noted that although the default pattern is for a clan to have two complementary sacred houses, this does not always apply (Table 7.1). In addition, there are smaller variations in the gross physical structure of houses between clans, as we can see from Figure 7.3 and Plate 7.3. There are also differences in the detail: for example, the storing of large wooden yokes used to carry festive sago in a special *heute* along the sunrise wall of Kamama houses; and in the clans Pia and Numanaeta in Tahena Ukuna, and in Matoke-pina in Rouhua, the placing of cowrie shells of the *nuu hun* species (*Cypraea arabica*, *C. carneola* or *C. lynx*) underneath the gables, three at the back and two at the front (therefore totalling five in all).

There is inter-clan variation in ritual sequences as well. In planting the first post, the wrapper for the ring varies depending on the clan involved: a *wainite* or banana leaf in the case of Neipane-tomoien, or a pandanus-leaf mat dyed red and yellow (*koa msinae*) in the case of Matoke and Sounaue-ainakahata. For the completion ceremony, Neipane-tomoien, but no other clan, constructs a platform (*hantetane*) for the lord-of-the-forest spirits (*wesie upue*) to the seaward side of the house, where an offering is placed and where the *kapitane* sits in a state of trance while work is being undertaken. Because Sounaue-ainakahata and Matoke clans in Rouhua have historical priority over others in the mythological creation narrative, their completion ceremonies can only take place after similar ceremonies have been performed for the *suane*. Thus, the founding ancestral spirit of Matoke, being the first person to walk the earth, must oversee construction not only of the Matoke sacred house, but also of the *suane*. For this reason, elaborate coordination is required, and completion of house rituals may be delayed many years if there is no *suane*, or if the *suane* is at the wrong stage of its cycle. When the *suane* cycle is finished except for the final ceremonies, the rituals for, first, the Sounaue sacred house and, second, the Matoke sacred house may be undertaken. At this point the male participants form pairs and the group visits the *hatu pinamou* (Chapter 4.8). Using juice from a green coconut and water from the stream, each partner bathes the other to remove the ‘heat’ that accumulates during the completion ceremonies of the *suane*, to reinstate the coolness necessary for health and the regeneration of life, and to bring redemption from misbehaviour.

(a) Neipane-tomoiien, numa kapitane: August 1975



(b) Pia, numa onate: Bunara, February 1990



(c) Sounue-alpura, numa onate: Bunara, February 1990

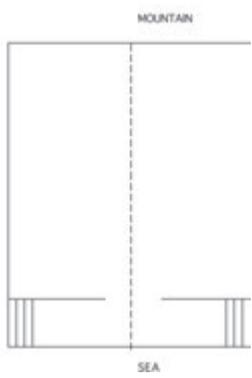


Figure 7.3. Variation in clan sacred house design as evident from floor-level plan.

(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)



Plate 7.3. House ritual: (a) new *numa onate*: Kamama, Niamonai, June 1986; (b) *numa onate*: Sounaue-aipura, Bunara, January 1990; (c) new *numa onate* on the Samna-ukuna: Sounaue-ainakahata, Rouhua, July 1975; (d) *numa onate*: Soumori, Rouhua, September 1970; (e) *numa onate*: Neipane-tomoien, Rouhua, February 1990; (f) new *numa onate*: Neipane-tomoien, Rouhua, February 1990.

Apart from such longstanding variations in ritual practice between clans as those just described, the 1980s began to see changes in terms of what was deemed acceptable in sacred house construction, changes that for the most part were motivated by clan resettlement in the Ruatan transmigration zone. By February 1990 Kamama had erected the first

sacred house in Simalouw using planked walls and sawn uprights. This was initially seen as a temporary measure unacceptable to the ancestral spirits. During the mid 1990s, a second sacred house was erected which I was able to see in 1996. This had reverted to the use of sago-leafstalk walling, but later other plank-boarded sacred houses appeared, combining non-standard materials with traditional elements, such as designs taken from those appearing on barkcloth, and novel colour combinations, such as red with green (hitherto unavailable from the range of traditional paint sources). In Rouhua, there were changes in what was regarded as the acceptable accompaniments of ritual work practices, for example, the innovation by Bisara of alcohol consumption (in this instance, Balinese brandy), though following the communal conflict of 1998-2002, the fleeing of the Christian population, and the more rigorous enforcement of shariah law in Sepa, this may have subsequently fallen into abeyance.

Another change has been connected with the growth of existing coastal settlements and the arrival of spontaneous Butonese settlers and migrants from Sepa, following the completion of a metalled road from Amahai. Thus, as we saw in the discussion of house-siting decisions earlier in this chapter (7.3), while Nuaulu in the villages of Bunara and Rouhua still theoretically model their village in terms of the symbolic spatial coordinates outlined in Chapter 2, by the 1980s there began a trend to locate new sacred houses inland. The places chosen were away from sources of external disturbance and pollution, away from Muslim houses, and away from daily secular life in which Nuaulu come into contact with people from Sepa, Tamilau and further afield. One consequence of this has been an increasing mismatch between physical orientation of different clan houses, the symbolic ideal and the language of geographic deixis. Thus, when the Sounaue clan house in Rouhua was rebuilt further inland, it stood to the north-west of the Matoke house. Despite this orientation, the occupants continued to use the terms for moving in a north-easterly direction (in fact, towards the point where the sunrise direction and mountainward direction meet) when indicating that they were going to the Matoke house, rather than the phrases that would be semantically correct for moving in a south-easterly direction (that is, rather, towards where sunrise and sea meet).

Although clan sacred houses are the main focus of ritual action, other houses may in principle be subject to ritual work. It is likely that

formerly it was impossible to distinguish between clan sacred houses and ordinary dwellings, as all members of a 'house' were literally under the same roof. Certainly, over a period of almost 40 years, I have been able to observe an increasing proportion of clan members living in dwellings not subject to any sustained kind of ritual process, leaving sacred houses either unoccupied by human inhabitants, or places where clan elders relax away from the heat of the day, or hosting only those whose responsibility it is to guard the sacred objects that they contain. However, 'secular' houses of particular significance may still involve some elements of the ritual cycle in their construction. For example, in February 1971 it was decided by Komisi (the *ia onate ankarua* in Rouhua) that a new government house (*numa pemerintah* or *numa insi*) was required in which to conduct the official business of the Indonesian state, and in which to receive visitors. When the wood had been prepared and seasoned, the first length to be worked, the *hini hunone*, the post for the north-east corner, was taken and laid across the floor of the old *numa pemerintah* and a place marked where the first joint was to be cut. A chisel was held at this point by the hired non-Nuaulu carpenter, while Komisi placed a red cloth on the north (seaward) side of the joint and his right hand on the joint, the chisel and red cloth, and made an invocation to previous, ancestral government headmen. The carpenter then hit the chisel five times. The red cloth was wrapped around the first chip and hung in the north-east corner of the old *numa pemerintah*. When the new *numa pemerintah* was completed this was transferred to the same place in the new house. A feast was held in the evening for all those in the village working on the house, hosted by all elders. A few days after the event Komisi visited each clan chief and requested one red cloth for the *sionata* of each clan, to compensate for the intrusion of the state into the Nuaulu domain. In all, seven cloths were required: one for each clan, one for the *suane*, and one for the cutting of the first chip. By participating in construction rituals of this kind, both Nuaulu workers and the non-Nuaulu carpenter were sharing in a common symbolic culture, a widespread set of practices still common in much of the central Moluccas, but which, by comparison with the cycles of Nuaulu sacred houses, are much attenuated.

7.9 FREQUENCY AND PERIODICITY

We have already seen that the process of building a new sacred house may take many months, and completion of the ritual cycle may occur some years after the first work has been initiated. But even where activity is at its most concentrated, it is punctuated by breaks of at least several days or a month to replenish food supplies to support further work. The general pattern of activity, therefore, is of bursts of intense physical effort accompanied by ritual, separated by long periods of inactivity. However, during these latter periods there may be work that can be undertaken at a slower pace by a smaller number of individuals: preparation of replacement sacred objects, for example, or carving patterns on verandah walls.

During my periods in the field, ritual work connected with sacred houses was amongst the most common that I recorded in my notebooks. For one thing, the houses themselves and the accompanying ritual is very public; for another, with around ten sacred houses in all, there are always several at different stages of replacement, and others requiring running repairs. And yet, for Bolton, the major significance of these ceremonies is the failure of people to perform them. I think we can explain this apparent discrepancy in two ways. Firstly, I believe it must be the case that my periods in the field corresponded with periods of particular activity in this area. Most of my data arose from direct observation and subsequent follow-up interviews, while most of the material collected by Bolton comes from texts and longer interview sessions with, in particular, Numapena, chief of Sounaue-ainakahata in the 1990s. Secondly, the programme of work to be undertaken is so vast that Nuaulu always complain that it is behind schedule, and work behind schedule provides plenty of excuses for the many misfortunes that befall them. Moreover, given the pressure to perform other, even more pressing, rituals of the life cycle, those relating to houses are often the easiest to postpone. This is particularly so for the *suane* (about which more in Chapter 8), but it applies as much to clan sacred houses. The constant backlog of ritual leads to social tensions within the clan, tensions which in turn make coordinating and performing the ritual work difficult. In addition, there are those completely unforeseen and worrisome events that affect the smooth progression of ceremonies. For example, in February 1990 the *rine* in the Sounaue-ainakahata *numa onate* collapsed, breaking two large plates and many small ones. One of the former was a large porcelain *hanainae* of

the kind given to *matue* to compensate them symbolically for the work of construction. I was presented by Hitinesi with a knotted *karanunu* into which all the pieces had been carefully placed for safe keeping and asked if I could replace it with a new plate. This case is interesting for several reasons. In the first place, it is a dramatic example of the demise of an object necessary for the completion of ritual cycles, but nowadays impossible to replace. In this respect it is unlike a worm-eaten *sokate*, basket or shield. In the second place, the collapse of the *rine* exemplifies the kind of disaster that leads to long delays, throws ritual cycles out of kilter, and involves the spiritually 'heavy' work of restitution necessary to satisfy ancestral spirits who would otherwise seek to penalize the living for the gravity of the offence caused.

The frequency and periodicity of house rituals is reflected in the number of houses and their state of completion at any one time. These data are compared for 1971 and 2001 in Table 7.1. Thus, in 2001, the number of sacred houses in Hahualan was the same as in 1971; the number in Rouhua had risen from eight to ten; all of the nine sacred houses that had existed in Aihisuru in 1971 had moved, while in Watane and Bunara, the number had declined from eight to two, and from eleven to eight, respectively. By contrast, there were, by 2001, six sacred houses in Tahena Ukuna that had not existed there in 1971. Overall, between 1971 and 2001, there was a slight decline. Thus, the number of clan sacred houses in a settlement varies as clans come and go, and as they find the wherewithal to build anew. As we have seen, despite an ideology of clan autonomy, for a long time, in fact until the 1980s, there was little movement in clans and, therefore, in clan houses. The new opportunities that opened up in the Ruatan transmigration zone saw the movement of individual clans away from the Sepa settlements and, therefore, a redistribution in the location of clan sacred houses.

Underpinning all the factors determining the number of sacred houses at any one time, and the speed with which cycles are completed, is the demographic bottom line. For clans with small numbers it is more difficult to find the time, and to recruit the labour, to replace the houses, though this is offset to some extent by the way in which labour is recruited – through distributed affinal ties that draw in the additional adult males from outside the clan to do the actual building, and females to supply the feasts (Figure 7.1). Nuauulu generally have a keen sense of the importance of acting collectively through traditional alliances

Clan	Settlement	1971 population	1971 number of sacred houses	2001 population	2001 number of sacred houses
Huni	Bunara	15	2	66	2
Kamama	Watane	12	1	27	1
Kamama	Tabena Ukuna	--	--	28	1
Matoke-hanaic	Aihisuru	24	1	--	1
Matoke-hanaic	Tabena Ukuna	--	--	66	1
Matoke-pina	Rouhua	28	1	94	1
Neipane-tomoicn	Bunara	46	2	142	2
Neipane-tomoicn	Watane	09	2	37	--
Neipane-tomoicn	Rouhua	54	2	180	2
Neipane-nesinopu	Hahulan	61	3	180	3
Neipane-kahatuc	Bunara	?	2	--	--
Numanaeta	Bunara	08	2	--	--
Numanaeta	Tabena Ukuna	--	0	16	1
Peimisa	Bunara	11	2	--	--
Peimisa	Rouhua	13	2	60	2
Peimisa	Watane	22	2	67	2
Pia	Bunara	11	1	55	1
Sopanani	Bunara	06	2	40	2
Soumori	Rouhua	31	1	110	2
Soumori	Bunara	32	2	46	--
Soumori	Tabena Ukuna	--	--	80	1
Soumaue-ainakahata	Watane	18	2	54	1
Soumaue-ainakahata	Aihisuru	20	2	--	--
Soumaue-ainakahata	Rouhua	54	3	180	3
Soumaue-ainakahata	Tabena Ukuna	--	--	52	1
Soumaue-aipura	Bunara	28	2	106	2
Total		503	39	1686	32

Table 7.3. Nuaulu clan population figures in relation to number of sacred houses: 1971 and 2001 compared. Data for houses and population in 1971 and houses in 2001 are based on my own fieldwork data. Population estimates for 2001 are estimates (in *italics*) based on an official aggregate census figure held in Sepa, and adjusted in the light of interview data.

between clans to reproduce individual clan houses. Indeed, if we look at Table 7.3, what is remarkable is the apparent ability of the smallest local clans (some of them very small indeed) to sustain the ritual and technical load required to effectively complete cycles. Although with such small numbers demographic continuity is highly precarious, the overall population increase between 1971 and 2001 might be assumed to have given rise to a situation that is less precarious now than it once was, though the steady aggregate threefold rise of the population is not reflected in the histories of every clan. The implications of demography are further explored in Chapter 9.

Chapter 8

Rituals of the *suane*

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Of all Nuaulu rituals, those focussed on the *suane* are the most contingent. Moreover, the component rites of the *suane* cycle are the most infrequently performed, the periodicity between events is the longest, and the time taken to fulfill them the slowest. Despite the similarities between rites of the house and those of the *suane*, emphasis in the former is on place and lineal descent, while with the *suane* the focus is not just on the activity of individual clans, but on all clans and the relationships between them. *Suane* ritual depends on the performance of endless other rituals: those of the individual human person; of the agricultural year; of the clan houses and of sacred objects; and of the ability and willingness of different clans to coordinate and to subordinate their ritual interests to those of the collectivity. Given that all other rituals are also dependent on the hard facts of subsistence, demography and socio-political events, those of the *suane* are, in turn, and maximally, constrained by such imponderabilia, making effective completion and reproduction of the cycle the most precarious of all.

Because of the rarity of *suane* ritual events, I have myself witnessed only two: that involving the opening of the fireplace, and that for the transplanting of the *kokine* (an inedible species of *Musa*). All other descriptions provided here are based on what people have told me happens, or what they have told Rosemary Bolton or Urbanus Tongli; and from their descriptions, it is not at all clear whether either had first hand experience of *suane* ritual. Thus, the accounts of all outside observers are inevitably fragmentary, and must be treated as provisional. But while the direct experience of outside observers is partial, so, and more significantly, is that of the Nuaulu themselves. I have already raised this issue

for scrutiny in Chapter 1, and shall return to its implications again in Chapter 9, but first it is necessary to present what data we have.

8.2 THE SUANE DEFINED

In earlier publications I have described the *suane* as a ‘village (or communal) sacred house’, meaning that it plays a ceremonial and symbolic role in the lives of all clans located in a particular place. It is usually located in the middle of the village where it is visible, accessible and focal – in important respects a microcosm of the entire village. Indeed, another name for the *suane* is *nusa*, meaning ‘island’, a term you will recall is also used to describe the individual clan sacred house, as well as the *hantetane* platform that features during male puberty ceremonies. The symbolism accompanying the location of the *suane* is certainly arresting, and I have elsewhere (Ellen 1978:40) paid attention to how it becomes the central reference point in a concentric spatial symbolism which has as its antithesis the structures of the village periphery, in particular the menstruation hut. However, there is a tension between this concentric symbolism and the symbolic geometry of the individual house – and, by extension, the *suane* – which locates the most sacred orientation to the north-east, rather than to the centre.

As a physical structure, the *suane* is cognate with the building known generally in the central Moluccas as the ‘baileo’.¹ However, simple comparisons with the baileo in other Moluccan (particularly Muslim and Christian) villages may be misleading, as may be the shorthand characterization of the *suane* as a ‘village sacred house’, or even – as we

¹ Cooley (1962:8-13, 93) describes the ‘baileo’ (or ‘baileu’; a word probably derived from Malay ‘bale’ or ‘balai’, a village meeting place) as the most important structure in the centre of a Moluccan village. Not all villages in Ambon-Lease had a baileo, even in the early 1960s. It is also widely found in West and Central Seram, and takes various physical forms, sometimes being built out of traditional, locally available, materials, sometimes from planked timber, cement, stone or brick with wood shingle, thatch or zinc roofs, or a combination of these. In many places it effectively serves the purpose of a secular village meeting place, but it is also still widely considered as a ‘rumah adat’, where clan heirlooms are stored and where adat matters are still discussed. Symbolically and spatially it may be seen to complement or contrast the church or mosque; in addition, it may be associated with sacred stones. In many Christian and Muslim villages where a baileo is found it is as if all matters relating to animist and ancestral devotion concentrate on the physicality of the building. I hope to show that this is a reification of a set of functions that, in the Nuaulu case, are much more distributed and variable, and that it is important not to interpret the Nuaulu *suane* and its rituals simply as a special case of an Ambonese baileo.

shall see – the assumption that it is a necessary and intrinsic part of the ritual of all Nuauulu.

In terms of the cycle of its rituals, and its position in Nuauulu thought, the *suane* is best treated as a special case of the clan sacred house, since its ritual is considered a fulfilment of a process that begins in the individual clan house. Indeed, physically the *suane* and clan sacred houses have the same basic structure, and must go through many of the same stages in their making. In addition, in the same way that the house is in some respects no more than a receptacle for the ritual objects that it protects, so the *suane* is quintessentially the necessary space in which the *kahuae* is performed. However, while clan sacred houses are androgynous in terms of their gendered symbolism, containing complementary male and female spaces and elements and having life-cycle ceremonies where men and women play complementary roles, the *suane* is unequivocally male.

Though I have heard this disputed, the first *suane* in the mountains was said by Komisi Soumori to have been built by Sounaue-aipura, other clans performing the *kahuae* in their own sacred house and only subsequently adopting the *suane* into their ritual practices. Before this, the *kahuae* was performed on the ground. In the mountains the *suane* was known as the *numa rinane* (lit. ‘radiant’ or ‘shining house’), but on coming to the coast it assumed the name *suane*. In this way, the *suane* cycle became part of the customary repertoire of Kamama, Sounaue and Soumori. Indeed, the Watane *suane* (Plates 8.1a-b) belongs to Kamama, guarded by the house Panakeke, even though others may use it. In Aihisuru, and subsequently in Tahena Ukuna, it is the sacred house of the Matoke-hanaie ‘lord of the land’ (called Pinawasa) that is used for *kahuae*. The Bunara *suane* (Plate 8.1c) belongs to Sounaue-aipura, and the Rouhua *suane* (Plate 8.1d) to Matoke-pina. Thus, despite the *suane* apparently transcending clan difference, each belongs to a particular clan, while some clans do not have one at all. It is for this reason that ancestral spirits dwelling in the *suane* vary depending on the village. In Rouhua they are the younger brothers in each generation of the clan Matoke-pina – the so-called ‘lords of the island’ (*nusa upua*) or the ‘red ones’ (*sio msinaea*) – while the souls of elder brothers (*saruana*) dwell in the Matoke clan house. No female spirits dwell in the *suane*. This fits well with what we know about Nuauulu settlement history, as before approximately 1880 all Nuauulu lived in clan-hamlets distributed throughout the central highlands of Seram, and it is difficult to see how the *suane* could have fulfilled the kind

of multiple clan role it now has. Indeed, a *suane* separate from a clan sacred house would hardly have been necessary. With the movement to the coast, its function, like so many other things in Nuulu life, radically shifted. With multi-clan villages, the *suane* could begin to serve as a focus for rituals that different clans found appropriate to conduct collectively, while in part its construction may have been in keeping with what other coastal villages already had. Therefore, wherever we find a ‘village’ *baileo* in West Seram or in the Ambon-Lease area, it may have its origins as a structure associated with an individual descent group.

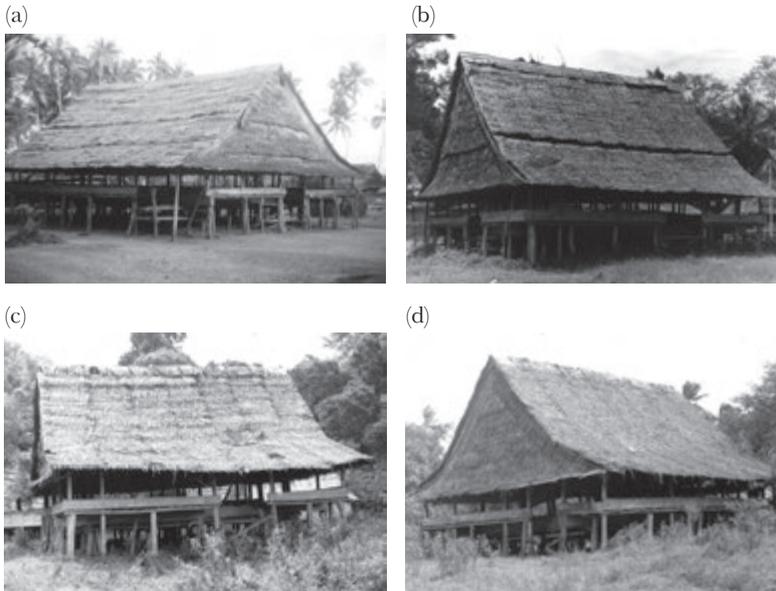


Plate 8.1. The completed *suane*: (a) Niamonai (Watane), from the south, June 1986; (b) Niamonai (Watane), from the northeast, June 1986; (c) Bunara, from the southwest, August 1975; (d) Rouhua, from the northwest, September 1970.

Clans that do not have a *suane*, and do not use the *suane* owned by other clans, may, when performing the *kahuae*, use a clan sacred house with the walling removed. This is then described as a *numa rinane* (see above) and the ‘radiance’ may allude quite specifically to the light that shines in once the walling is removed. Similarly, in settlements where a *suane* is

part of the ideal ritual life, but where it is physically absent, is in ruins or uncompleted, the *kahuae* will be performed in the house of the clan to which it belongs. In the case of Rouhua, as we have seen, this is the clan Matoke-pina. Alternatively, performances may take place in the sacred house of the clan to which *suane* responsibilities have been devolved by the owning clan. Such a house, especially when it is specifically built to serve the *suane*, is known as a *numa nahate*. If even this does not exist, or is too small for the *kahuae*, a temporary shelter without walls (*tainane*) may be constructed, sometimes known by the Ambonese Malay word ‘*sabua*’.

Where a *suane* is owned by one clan and used by others, some supporting functions for maintaining the cycle may be devolved by the owning clan to other clans, who will then sometimes build an additional sacred house, the *numa nahate*, to support this role. The *numa nahate* serves as the assembly point for anything to do with the *suane*, such as the organization of work parties and performances of the *kahuae*. It is also the repository for any valuables and ritual paraphernalia associated with the *suane* (*numa pakanana suane*), such as shields for the *auwoti*, the *sirimasa* (women’s hair ornaments used in *kahuae*), and plates and rings received in compensation for violations against the *suane*. As we have noted the *numa nahate* is also where the *kahuae* may be performed when the *suane* is unavailable. In this latter sense it is the proxy for the *suane* over those long periods when it is either under construction or physically non-existent.

In Rouhua, many of these functions have been devolved by the chief of Matoke-pina to Soumori, thus conferring upon this clan a major responsibility for the *suane* in addition to that which it performs with respect to secular matters affecting all clans. Thus, the Soumori sacred house may serve as the *numa nahate*, though throughout the period that I have worked in Rouhua the *numa nahate* has been the sacred house to the immediate south-east of the *suane* site, belonging to Sounaue-ainakahata. It is here that the *ia onate nahate* or *maritihanna*, the custodian of the *suane*, resides. In 1970 the *maritihanna* was Patiraia Sounaue-ainakahata, a role and status which by 1990 had been inherited by his eldest son, Wairisa. In addition, in Rouhua, the clan Peinisa has a special responsibility for the *suane* fireplace. Thus, ritual responsibilities regarding the *suane* are divided between Nuaulu clans for particular historic reasons and have changed as separate villages have formed with different clan compositions. Indeed, the responsibilities continue to change as adjustments are made following the geographical movement of individual clans.

During the entire time span of my field visits to the Nuaulu area there have only ever been three settlement units conducting *suane* ritual cycles, and even in these, for much of the time, a physical *suane* has not existed. In order to understand what this means, it is necessary to distinguish between physical settlements and ritual groupings. Thus, as far as we know, the original Nuaulu settlement that relocated to Sepa from the mountains in the 1880s consisted of two physical settlements: Watane, on the flat land immediately to the west of Sepa, and Aihisuru, on a hill up a steep incline north-west of Sepa. This was one of the so-called ‘Potemkin’ villages described by Tichelman (1960:188-9), to which Nuaulu would flee the authorities to avoid the census, vaccination, taxation, forced schooling, the missions, the imposition of colonial law and other forms of interference. But it is also clear from more recent construction activity that Nuaulu often prefer to locate their sacred houses away from areas frequented by non-Nuaulu, and as far mountainwards as is sensibly possible – a matter I shall return to later, in the context of a consideration of periodicity. Despite this, and as we have already noted, the first Nuaulu *suane* on the coast was built in Watane and not Aihisuru, and not by the mythologically legitimate primus-inter-pares clan Matoke.

My fieldwork began in 1970, some time after a series of population movements, disturbances and relocations associated with the destabilization brought about by the Second World War (1941-45), and, after that, the Republik Maluku Selatan (RMS) insurrection between 1955 and 1965. Although at this time there were only three multi-clan ritual groupings for which a *suane* served as a focus, there were five physical settlements which also had an administrative status within the *kerajaan* and *desa* of Sepa (Figure 1.2): Hahualan had been added to Aihisuru and Watane, to become Nuaulu Lama (the ‘old village’ or ‘original village’; what the Nuaulu themselves called Niamonai); in addition, two quite separate villages had been created on the Bunara River, by 1914, and on the Rouhua River, by the 1930s, each with their own *suane*. Indeed, in Rouhua, as we have seen, the *suane* is owned by Matoke-pina, which had split from Matoke-hanaie and distanced itself sufficiently from the parent clan to consider innovating its own *suane*. In a sense, the creation of a Rouhua *suane* was an assertion of political autonomy of the clans who had moved there. By 1996 Aihisuru had been abandoned, Watane had been partially vacated, and the clans which had once lived there for up to 120 years had moved to Rumah Olat (on the north coast), and Simalouw

and Tahena Ukuna in the Ruatan Valley government resettlement area. Despite these physical movements, *suane* cycles were still associated with Watane, Bunara and Rouhua, thus demonstrating the constancy of *suane* activity, despite physical changes in house distribution.

8.3 THE SUANE AS A PHYSICAL STRUCTURE

Each Nuauulu *suane* has the same basic plan and elevation, best understood as a partial modification of the standard clan sacred house. The parts are homologous and the names are the same as in a clan sacred house (Table 7.1), with *sakanae* (the heavy boards along the base of each raised side), *nutune* (under-floor supports), *hini* (main corner supports), *kakarane* (the sitting platform along the sides), *numanoi* (floor), *ainatae* (roof), and so on. The similarity even extends to the inclusion of a fireplace (*otumatae*), about which more later. The orientation of the *suane* also follows that of the clan house, with the ridge running from east (rising sun) to west (setting sun). The east and west walls are, like those of the house termed *sine*, and the north (mountain) and south (sea) walls, *milanunue*, even though *milanunue* is, polysemously, ‘door’, and there are no doors on the *suane*. In contrast with individual clan houses, the primary orientation for ritual purposes is sunset-sunrise rather than mountain-sea. *Suane* are devoid of figurative decoration, unlike, for example, the equivalent structure in the non-Nuauulu animist settlement of Yalahatan, which has carved crocodile, cassowaries and other animals protruding from the corners and along the sides.

The average *suane* is 10-11 metres east to west and north to south, about two metres longer in either dimension than the average Nuauulu clan sacred house. The central *sakanae* are about 54 cm wide, and the main roof supports about 13 cm in diameter, with at least 40 uprights supporting the floor and surrounding the sitting platform. Unlike an ordinary clan sacred house, and because of its size, the *suane* also has an additional *sakanae* which runs from the centre of the mountain side to the centre of the seaward side, and a central post (*hini hunone*), always immediately to the west (sunrise) side of the central *sakanae*. With reference to the Niamonai *suane*, Tongli (1994:173) tells us that the five main (and named) posts are each guarded by a different clan. Moving from sunrise to sunset these are: Panenatu, guarded by a clan from a neighbouring

village; Panenaka, guarded by Sounaue; Paneisa (the central upright), guarded by Soumori, the clan of the *ankarua*; Yarimau, guarded by the *aia*; and Lewaka, guarded by the *ankatika*. These latter (*ankarua*, *aia* and *ankatika*) are the three ranks of hereditary secular power recognized by the Nuaulu in their dealings with Sepa and the outside world; each is vested in a different clan. The central upright in Rouhua is also termed Paneisa, but in Bunara, where there is no Matoke clan, the post is named Panenaka and guarded by Sounaue-aipura.

The metrical differences between clan house and *suane* are, however, less significant than a number of qualitative structural differences. The absence of walls (and, therefore, of doors) I have mentioned. In addition, whereas the clan sacred house has two doors facing each other on the mountain and sea aspects, and therefore two ladders (*hantetane*, also meaning ‘platform’), the *suane* always has four entrances and ladders. One entrance is set in the centre of the seaward side; a second is located on the west side, between the fireplace and the south-west corner; a third is located in the north-west corner; and a fourth, in the north-east corner. On either side of the entrances are special timbers known as *ai inate*. The *atikanae* (or *sasana*) is a wooden shelf between 160 and 180 cm high, located in the north-east corner (Plate 8.2a-c) and analogous to the *rine* at the east end of a regular clan sacred house. It is here that ‘food for the souls of the dead’ is placed at the great festival accompanying completion of the *suane*: the bones of cuscus (wrapped in *wainite* leaves), the bamboo in which the sago has been cooked and the *asanate* (skewers) used for cooking the cuscus. On the west side of the seaward entrance is a large drum (*tihane*). In 1970 the drum in the Niamonai *suane* had a diameter of 41 cm at its greatest width (the interior timpanum end), narrowing to 37 cm, a rim 2.54 cm wide, and an overall length of 198 cm. Made of *nahane* (*Syzygium* sp.) wood (*monne* for the clan Soumori, whose permission must first be asked to use it), it carried a snake motif below a *tupu-tupue* motif (Plate 8.2d). When rituals are not being conducted the drum is hung high in the thatch.

There are three sacred places in the village associated with the *suane*. The first, called *amane*, is at the intersection of the seaward and sunset directions, marked by a round stone where Matoke first reached the earth after descending from the sky, and is associated with the younger wife of the supreme deity Pina Muiye (Tongli 1994:58). It signifies the first stage of life, and the first separation of land and water. The second is at the

(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



Plate 8.2. (a) *Atikanae* shelf at northeast corner of Niamonai *suane*, February 1970 (Note carved sun motif, which also - and most importantly - appears on the bark loincloth of elders who have received the *tupu-tupue*); (b) *atikanae* shelf at northeast corner of Bunara *suane*, August 1975 (Note star motif analogous to sun motif in plate 7.5); (c) interior of Bunara *suane*, looking towards the northeast corner and *atikanae*, February 1990; (d) drum (*tihane*) in Niamonai *suane*, February 1970 (Note carved snake and sun motifs).

exterior corner of the *suane*, in the direction where the seaward and sunset lines of both the *suane* and the village as a whole intersect, and where are planted two types of bush: *sonae* (*Cordyline fruticosa*), with red and green leaves, and a variety of *sinsinte* (*Codiaeum variegatum*), with long yellow and green leaves. This area is the *tuaman tiai*, the ‘stomach of the earth’, and the vegetation that grows on it is only cut before a performance of the *auwoti*, and then only to a moderate length. It is here that the chief of the Matoke dances, evoking the special relationship between this clan and the earth, in his role as ‘lord of the land’. The *tuaman tiai* not only represents the centre of the village but the centre of the island of Seram, and is associated with the supreme deity, Anahatana. Members of both sexes who have not undergone the earth-anointing ritual as part of their puberty ceremony (see below, Chapter 8.10) are prohibited from entering this area. The third place, called *soue*, is at the intersection between the inland and sunrise directions of both the *suane* and the village. Here are planted *kokine* and *wainite*. Tongli (1994: 61) says that the *soue* is associated with the eldest wife of the supreme deity, Pinaaia, signifying prosperity. All four ritual plants are sometimes also collectively referred to as *soue*, and during the course of building a new *suane* they are moved from their old location to a new location geosymbolically appropriate to the new *suane*. Thus, when the location of a *suane* moves, so the symbolic coordinates of the entire village shift to accommodate the new topography.

8.4 THE SUANE AND KAHUAE

What distinguishes the rituals of the *suane* from those of most other cycles is their intrinsic linkage with *kahuae* and *auwoti* performances. These dances accompany each stage in the building of a *suane*, the ceremony of first entrance, and all subsequent rituals. Though they may be performed in clan sacred houses where there is no *suane*, and were performed regularly in clan houses before the Nuaulu moved to the coast, they are now seen as fundamentally connected with the *suane*.

The morning before a *kahuae* is performed the men involved bathe, after which they must avoid women and even their own children in case they violate pollution rules. The first night of the *kahuae*, in which males only perform, is referred to as *kahua monne*, ‘sacred *kahuae*’. The next morning the males bathe again, this time at the stream where the inland

and sunrise directions intersect north-east of the village, the same place where female puberty celebrants bathe, and where, following a death, some clans bathe on the fourth day. During the afternoon the *maritihanna* or one of his sons beats the ceremonial drum on the *suane* to signify that the *kahuae* will begin that night, and in order to summon both living participants and the dead (*sio saruana*, the dead of the mountain, and *nemusi-netowa*, the dead of the clan-house roofs).

The *kahuae* actually begins towards midnight, outside the *suane*, on the village periphery, at the *amane* (see below), where men dress in the correct attire: batik aprons over barkcloth, strings of beads, armbands festooned with *sinsinte*, and head cloths tied to the side. Precise costume varies between ritual contexts and individuals. Thus, some senior men wear the *tupu-tupue* (such as the Rouhua *maritihanna* from Sounaue-ainakahata), while others who have yet to undergo the earth-anointing ritual secure their hair at the back of the neck with a ring (*tope*) before assuming the usual head cloth. The men dance in single file from the village perimeter to the *suane*, where the elders have been waiting.

If a *kahuae* is for one night only then it may sometimes involve women, but usually it is only on the second and subsequent nights of a longer *kahuae* that women participate. The *sirimasa* hangs down the back of the neck, and contains areca nut, betel pepper and cigarettes for their partner (*tihanane*), who in return exchanges a ring. When not in use, the *sirimasa* are stored in the thatch of the *suane* and removed the following night for the next *kahuae*. *Senie pinamou* (the headdresses used in female puberty ceremonies, but also in some *kahuae*) and *sinsinte* armbands are also stored in the same way, but always on the mountain side.

As dawn approaches, the *kahuae* itself stops and the participants descend through the female (seaward) exit to perform the *auwoti* around the sacred plants of the *tuaman tiaï*. The performers come from different Nuaulu clans, with the young men dancing seaward, and women separate from men; wives representing different clans dancing towards the sunrise and young women on the seaward side of the *tuaman tiaï*. The dance involves an initial movement symbolizing the union of living and dead, and, secondly (the dance at dawn on the *tuaman tiaï*), the protection and prosperity that is the consequence of this union.

8.5 THE PRE-LIFE OF THE SUANE

I have called this section the ‘pre-life’ of the *suane*, but in a sense it is best approached from its after-life. Because the time period involved in constructing a *suane* is so long, some of the materials begin to deteriorate even before it is completed, and in this case, as might be expected, old thatch and split-bamboo flooring may be replaced with new, as required. Once a *suane* is finished, it will also be repaired in part over a number of years, through, say, the replacement of rattan bindings. Similarly, the pegs or deer-drum skin of the *tihane* may be replaced several times during the life of a *suane*, while taking the appropriate ritual precautions. After 10 to 15 years, when small minor repairs are insufficient to maintain it as a viable structure, a *suane* will be allowed to quietly deteriorate (Plate 8.3a). It is easy to conclude, on seeing such structures decaying, that this is evidence of a religion in terminal decline. However, the way in which the *suane* decays is seen by Nuauulu themselves as a natural part of its life cycle. During my period of research I have seen two *suane* in Niamonai decay in this way, only to be resurrected within a matter of years. There comes a time, however, when it is generally agreed by the elders, at the suggestion of the chief of the owning clan, that the dilapidated *suane* be dismantled, and the *tihane* or other major serviceable parts, such as *hini*, be stored until they can be used for a new structure. Sound timbers are placed in a *heute* (Plate 8.4a; see Chapter 7.2), which itself replicates the life of the *suane* by falling into disrepair and eventually crumbling away altogether (Plate 8.3c). Exceptionally, some *hini* may actually be left in situ (Plate 8.3b), but whatever happens to them, they may never be destroyed. The ring that was placed under the *suane* at its birth is not recovered, but left where it lies; the old *suane* is said to be ‘dead’, like a human, and a new one must be erected in its place.

A new *suane* begins life with a meeting (*loue*) of all diarchic clan heads in the sacred house of its owning clan, or of the clan to which responsibility has been devolved by the owning clan. It is usually the chief rather than *kapitane* who takes the initiative to convene such a meeting, who mobilizes support and who is thereafter eponymously associated with that particular *suane* and accepted as its builder (cf. Valeri 1990a:69). This is not always a straightforward process. We have an example of this in a text collected by Rosemary Bolton in Rouhua that describes how, in the 1950s, ‘Nauhua planned to build a *suane* [...] but [...] ran away to the

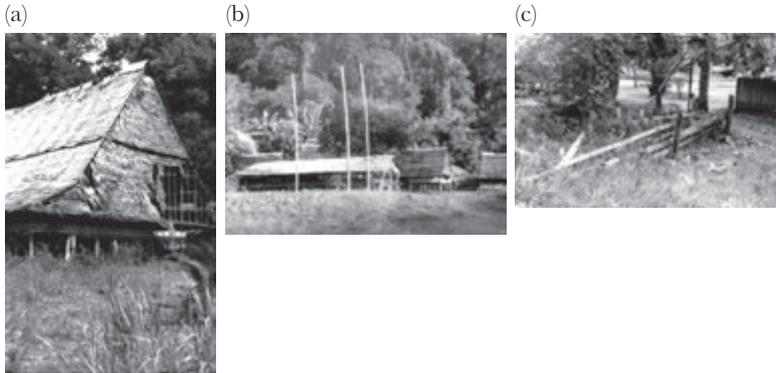


Plate 8.3. (a) Niamonai *suane* at initial stage of decline, from the southeast, February 1970; (b) site of the dismantled *suane* in Niamonai from the south, January 1971 (Note the three tall uprights remaining standing and the store (*heute*) of old retrievable timbers immediately behind); (c) old *heute suane* in Rouhua in an advanced state of decay, together with the *himi* it originally contained and felled in the early 1960s, February 1990.

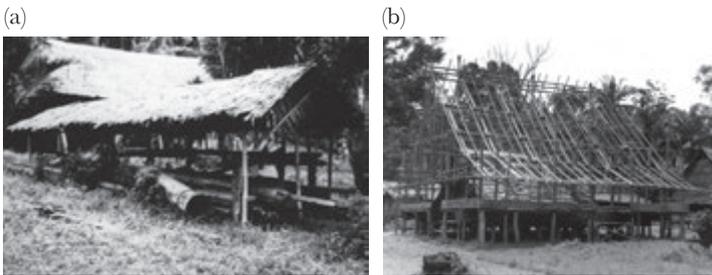


Plate 8.4 (a) *Heute suane* in Rouhua, February 1981; (b) *Bunara suane* from the southwest, immediately prior to roofing, August 1973. Note young bushes of *sinsinte* (*Codiaeum*) and *sonae* (*Cordyline*) to right.

forest [this was during the RMS period], and on returning Iako built a *suane*. But while building it he was not able to finish and ran away and became a Muslim.’

The same planning meeting determines the responsibilities of the various clans. In Rouhua, for example, it is customary that, though Matoke owns (and through the person of the Matoke chief provides masters of) the *suane*, it is the clan Soumori that undertakes much of the

ceremonial work. This is because the authority possessed by Soumori with respect to secular matters (providing the *ankarua*) also confers a major responsibility for the *suane*. It is Sounaue-ainakahata, however, which, as we have seen, has the greater ritual responsibility for the *suane*, and which provides the *maritihanna* (who Bolton calls the ‘overseer’). It is the *maritihanna* who leads the *kahuae*, maintains and operates the drum, and who guards a sacred house (*numa nahate*) situated close to and particularly associated with the *suane*. At *suane* ceremonies in Rouhua the chief of Soumori and the *maritihanna* Sounaue-ainakahata wear, in addition to *tupu-tupue*, a red sash (*amahate* or *nahate*) diagonally across the chest, or a ‘patola’ worn around the waist (as in the *kahuae*), to indicate their authority in relation to matters to do with the *suane*. Moreover, from the time the first ritual is performed for a new *suane* – the harvesting of the *hini* – until the big *kahuae* that terminates the ritual cycle, those officiating must wear the blue batik *karanunu*, after which they resume wearing the usual red *karanunu naka*. As with a clan sacred house, two supervisors (*matue*) are selected to oversee construction and maintenance: *matue uai*, ‘the one who walks in front’, and *matu emuye*, ‘the one who walks behind’. Both offices are inherited, passing from father to son.² Between them they are responsible for the physical well-being of the *suane*. It is they who decide when repairs are necessary and who will organize the work, and they who cannot rest until it is completed.

A *kahuae* is performed over a number of nights prior to gathering the main supporting posts (*hini*) and other building materials from the forest, and even the activities themselves are accompanied by special shouts (*seki*), drumming and singing, in which one person responds to another (*nohi*). As with the house ritual-cycle, materials are gathered from an area of forest protected by a *sin wesie* prohibition, which provides resources especially for use in building the *suane*. Such areas ensure the availability of sufficient materials and are often established many years in advance (Ellen 2010). In addition to the timbers themselves, materials (most usually sago, rattan and *Canarium* nuts) are transported on a kind of stretcher (*semane*), and the work parties often incorporate people from nearby non-Nuaulu settlements, such as Sepa, Nueletetu (before 2000) and Yalahatan, or from villages in ‘pela’ relationships (see for instance

² In Rouhua, in 1970, the *matue uai* was Sauute Neipane-tomoien and the *matu emuye*, Sahunete Peinisa.

Bartels 1977). Once in the village, the *hini* are stored in a covered *heute* similar to that used for a clan sacred house.

8.6 PLANTING THE FIRST POST

As with a clan sacred house, when a new *suane* is erected, a ring is buried by the chief of the clan Matoke, together with *wainite* leaves, under the first post in the north-east corner. The spot was described to me as being on the left side of the entrance, entering the *suane*. This puzzled me until I discovered that when the ring is planted the chief is facing the sun, and the ring is thus on his right hand side. On no account may the chief ever enter the *suane* with the sun behind him; he must always face the sun and thereby Anahatana. This side, facing the rising sun, is regarded as the front. The chief must approach the spot from the west (sunset direction), taking five paces in the prescribed manner. As we have seen, performance according to exact detail is very important and ritual specialists cannot afford – literally – to put a foot wrong. The left foot is placed directly behind the right, the one touching the other. First, the right foot moves forward one pace, followed by the left foot, until the feet are back in their initial position. This movement (the *yeukone*) is repeated five times. The chief kneels and lays a betel pouch to his right, in front of the hole that is to take the right-hand entrance post. He then takes a *wainite* leaf, places the ring on the leaf, touches the earth in the hole five times with the ring, and then places it in the hole with the leaf on top.

On other ritual occasions involving the *suane* the seaward entrance is used. On these occasions the Matoke chief takes five paces towards the entrance in the manner described above, makes a gesture of respect to the ancestors by touching his head and chest five times, takes five further steps to the central point of the *suane* and offers up an invocation to Anahatana and the ancestors (the *sionata* Matoke). The invocation involves asking permission to enter the *suane* and to use it, and appeals to the ancestors to bring those who use it health.

Following installation of the first post, work on the *suane* proceeds intermittently, as time and materials are available, under the direction of the *matue*. The organization and sequence of work follows the pattern of construction for a clan sacred house: first the frame, then the roof, followed by the floor. All work in itself is treated as ritual activity, and all

those participating must wear the correct clothing, undertake the correct preparatory purification rites and maintain all appropriate prohibitions. However, beyond this, the actual ritual performance involved is minimal and perfunctory, but on all days devoted to working on the *suane*, a feast is held in the evening to reward those doing the work.

Work on the *suane* is obligatory. If a person fails to work when expected to do so, or does not attend an accompanying *kahuae*, he must pay a fine of one ring, effectively to the *sionata* of the *suane*, who he has thereby offended. However, the rings are not considered *monne* and, when all work has been completed, will be returned to the houses of the clans involved in the construction process.

8.7 INSTALLING THE FIREPLACE

The series of rituals for completing a *suane* are known collectively as *sa suane* (or *onon ate*, literally ‘four nights’). These begin with the installation of the fireplace (*otumatae*). This involves a set of actions in which earth is taken from an area just seaward of the *tuaman tiai* and placed in the wooden fire base of the *suane*, at the west end. The earth is spoken of as a ‘gift of the Matoke’, to whom it belongs, affirming the literal translation of *ia onate* Matoke as ‘tuan tanah’ in Ambonese Malay. The fire of the *suane* is only used once, in the festival of ‘raising the fireplace’, *hunuhatae otue*, which perhaps occurs every five to ten years. It is lit each night by the chief of the clan Soumori, during the ritual sequence, and its extinction (*hunu usa*) signals the end of any ritual.

The occasion I witnessed, in February 1970, began at about two o’clock in the afternoon with the greeting of visiting dignitaries and guests from Sepa at the entrance to the village by the *ia onate* Matoke, the *maritihanna*, the *ia onate ankarua* (who is also the chief of the clan Soumori) and the heads of the other clans (Plate 8.5a). The assembly gathered in the temporary open meeting house with raised platforms on all sides (*tainane*) to a drum accompaniment and the chanting of *ahinae*. A slow procession was led by the *maritihanna* to the *suane*, who stood at the seaward entrance for a few moments before entering (Plate 8.5b-d). He walked over to the opposite side and placed a red cloth on the rafters and uttered an invocation to the ancestors, performing the usual *sinu onari hohua* (Plate 8.5e). The same procedure was followed for a stick

(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



Plate 8.5. Installing the *suane* fireplace, Rouhua February 1970: (a) greeting distinguished visitors from Sepa; (b) preparing to enter the *suane*; (c) *maritihanna* entering *suane*; (d) *maritihanna* offering invocation to ancestors of *suane*; and (e) young men removing earth from surface of main village thoroughfare on seaward side of *suane*.

with rings attached (the *sapauu kananamate*, ‘fine rings’). This hangs in the *suane*, at the middle of the mountain side, until the cycle is complete. The procedure was repeated for two sacred betel pouches provided by the Matoke chief for each *matue*, containing all the necessary chewing and smoking requisites for the *sionata suane*. They are hung alongside the cloth and rings; and if ever removed, a *kahuae* may never be performed in the *suane* again.

All sit down, following the example of the *maritihanna*. At this point the drumming and chanting stops and the ‘tuan tanah’ of Sepa addresses the *maritihanna* and presents him with a red cloth. A male who has yet to go through the *matahenne* puberty ceremony brings a basket with smoking requisites to the guests and dignitaries. The *ia onate ankarua* gives orders and his assistant supervises a group of five uninducted but ceremonially clad younger men, who remove their beads and armlets, and proceed to break a patch of earth with hoes on the seaward side of the *suane* (Plate 8.5e). The loosened earth is brought into the *suane* and laid on top of the split banana leaves that form the base of the fireplace. Other banana leaves are laid out in rows, parallel to the seaward side, on the floor, for a meal that will later be eaten. Meanwhile, plates and cups containing betel requisites are arranged on the sitting platform on the mountain side.

The next element of the ritual is the washing of the *suane* drum (the *tihā onate*). According to Iako, the chief of the clan Matoke in 1971, before the drum can be used it must be purified with *sinsinte* leaves and coconut oil, to placate potentially malevolent spirits from the forest where the wood was hewn. A red cloth is placed on top of the drum which is approached by the Matoke chief. A second man picks *wainite* leaves and gives them to the *maritihanna*, who places them in the open, mountainward end of the drum. The *maritihanna* offers an invocation to the ancestors, performs the *sinu onari hohua* and, taking the leaves, wipes round the inside of the drum several times, finally wedging them under the rattan holding the skin to the top of the drum. He takes the red cloth from the drum together with the drumstick. One man hits the stick on the platform (da-didi-da-didi-da-didi-da) and then holds the sticks while the *maritihanna* takes the same hand and offers another invocation. The drum is beaten and, at the same time, another man chants an *ahinae*. The main drum, and a series of smaller hand drums also made specifically for the *suane*, are then beaten in unison, and the assembled men chant fur-

ther *ahinae* verses. Betel requisites and food are handed round to guests. The ritual is complete by three o'clock in the afternoon, occupying one hour in all.

Throughout the remainder of the afternoon active preparations are made for the evening feast. Sago porridge is brought to the *suane* from all houses by unmarried, uninducted men, and periodically the *suane* drum is beaten to forewarn participants of the approaching feast and *kahuae*. The feast over, the *kahuae* begins at about quarter past ten in the evening and continues until six thirty the following morning, extending over four nights. This is a *kahuae* in which women are permitted to participate, and they begin to arrive just before midnight, sitting along the seaward side. Firecrackers are set off at various points during the dancing.

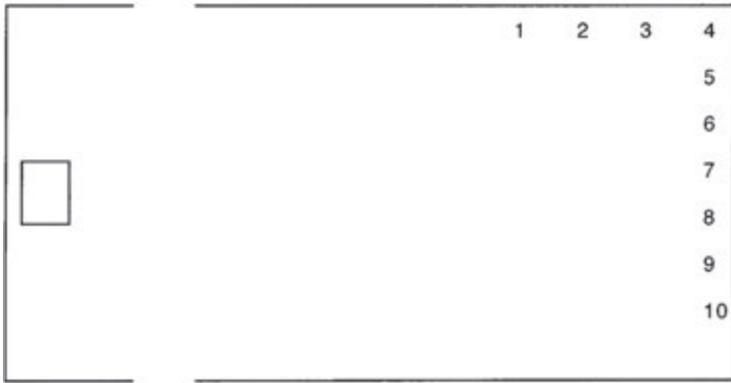
8.8 PLANTING AND TRANSPLANTING KOKINE

As we have seen, associated with each *suane* are growing clumps of four ritual plants (Plate 8.6), the gift of ancestral Matoke: *sinsinte* (a sign of maturity), *sonae* (a sign of virility), *kokine* (a sign of fertility) and *wainite* (a sign of purity). If these plants do not already exist adjacent to the *suane*, they have to be planted; if older plants already exist in this location, but are in poor condition, they must be replaced. I have witnessed one ceremony involved in this process, in January 1971.

The ceremony begins at the Matoke clan house, the owners of the Rouhua *suane*. As this is a ritual in which all clans participate there are a large number of adult men present, 35 on my calculation. Seating arrangements, as we have learned from accounts of other rituals, are scripts that can usually be relatively easily enacted, and on this occasion (Figure 8.1) reflect the special requirements of precedence that might be expected given the roles of individual clans in the maintenance of *suane* ritual.

After a general discussion of procedures, most of the assembled party walk to a point on the Santapi Nunu stream where a sacred *kokine* (*Musa* sp.) had been planted by Nauhua, the father of the Sounaue-ainakahata clan chief in 1971. It is the responsibility of the two senior *kapitane*, from the clans Sounaue-ainakahata and Neipane-tomoién (on this occasion Hatarai and Kotahatu, respectively) to transplant the *kokine*, and before departing for Santapi Nunu they go to the River Yoko where Sounaue

MOUNTAIN



SEA

Figure 8.1. Seating arrangement in the Matoke clan sacred house for principal actors involved in the *kokine* transplanting ceremony, Rouhua, January 1971.

Key: 1. Inane Matoke-pina; 2. Kotahatu Neipane-tomien; 3. Iako Matoke-pina (*ia onate* Matoke-pina); 4. Hatarai Sounaue-ainakahata; 5. Komisi Soumori (*ia onate* Soumori, and *ia onate ankarua*); 6. Tapone Sounaue-ainakahata (*ia onate* Sounaue-ainakahata); 7. Konane Nepane-tomoiien (*ia onate* Nepane-tomoiien); 8. Patiraia Sounaue-ainakahata (*maritihanna*); 9. Lohia Peinisa (*ia onate* Peinisa); 10. Paikole Sounaue-ainakahata.

have an old *soue*.³ Earth is taken from the old *soue*. At the point on the Santapi Nunu where the *kokine* had been planted, the immediate undergrowth is cut back and Hatarai takes the dibble; he utters an invocation, moves the dibble five times towards the ground and, on the fifth time, breaks the earth. The plant and its offshoots are lifted and taken in

³ Prior to Pacification, each Nuauulu clan hamlet had a small piece of land near the village on which was built a structure to contain the skulls of enemies taken during headhunting. Both the structure and the land upon which it was erected was – and still is – known as a *soue*. At the present time, its purpose is to host ceremonially important shrubs required for ritual activities associated with the *suane*. The *soue* is in the guardianship of, and maintained by, Matoke.



Plate 8.6. (a) Sacred plants growing to the Southeast of the Rouhua *suane*, July 1975; (b) Hatarai Sounaue-ainakahata replanting *kokine* in the *soue* northeast of the Matoke clan house in Rouhua, January 1971; (c) Inane Matoke uprooting *wainite* from a place northeast of the Matoke clan house to be replanted near the Rouhua *suane*, January 1971; (d) Hatarai Sounaue-ainakahata planting *wainite* near the Rouhua *suane* that has been moved from northeast of the Matoke clan house, January 1971.

procession to the site of the new *soue*, on Matoke land near the Rouhua River. Here the undergrowth is cleared, a pit dug and an invocation offered. The plant is moved in and out of the pit five times and on the fifth time placed firmly within it (Plate 8.6b). Earth from the old *soue* on the Yoko is sprinkled around it and the rest of the soil placed firmly on top. Water is diverted from the conduit to irrigate the plant.

The party then moves to another location on the Rouhua stream, where there are some self-planted *wainite* (*Phrynium* sp.). These are uprooted (Plate 8.6c) and taken to the *suane*, where they are planted with the other sacred plants. An invocation is offered and the plants moved up and down five times before they are inserted (Plate 8.6d-e). The opportunity is taken to clear the grass round the clump of sacred plants. The participants then retire to the Matoke clan house to chew betel.

8.9 ENTERING THE SUANE FOR THE FIRST TIME

The *suane* is officially entered for the first time through the performance of a ceremony in which the Soumori clan chief shares food with the ancestral spirits that protect it, consisting of a sago biscuit and a cuscus claw, again following the pattern of the clan sacred house. The items associated with the *suane* that have been temporarily stored in the *numa nahate* or in the Soumori sacred house are then taken to the *suane*. Portions of betel-chewing requisites are given to those present; later that evening a feast is held, the most significant comestible of which is *maea*.

Before the *suane* can be used for a *kahuae*, an offering must be made to the ancestors who protect it. Formerly this was the head of a young, non-Nuaulu male taken by a *kapitane*, and it was around this that the dancers were reputed to circle. The head could be from Manusela, Kanikeh, Sepa, Ruta, Amahai or Tamilau, but never from Huaulu. Other heads were formerly hung in the roof space. Since Pacification the head has been replaced by a large porcelain plate (*hanainae*) and a red cloth, which in Rouhua the *kapitane* Sounaue-ainakahata and Neipane-tomoien must fetch from the raja of Sepa. Other *kapitane* accompany them, but, as with the responsibilities regarding sacred plants, these are the two prescribed by *monne*. Although, in terms of the operation of the Indonesian state, the raja of Sepa is administratively superior, his 'adat' status in this con-

text is an inversion of secular status, and he is required to give a plate that represents the head of one of his subjects. This is still referred to as ‘taking a head from the raja of Sepa’. The plate is placed on the sitting platform around the perimeter of the *suane*.

Later the same night a *kahuae* is performed. The circle dance begins at the *numa nahate* and then moves to the *suane*, where it continues until morning, when the *auwoti* is performed for the first time as part of *suane* ritual, first by the older men and then by inducted younger men. For the five nights over which the *kahuae* and *auwoti* are performed, the chief of the clan Soumori lights the fire in the *suane* fireplace. Thereafter, throughout the life of the *suane*, the *kahuae* will be performed periodically. The barkcloth (*kasopete*) worn by men involved in *suane* ritual differs from that used in male puberty ceremonies in that a black waist band (*iene*) is worn over it.

8.10 COMPLETING THE CYCLE

From the time the new *suane* is first entered to the time of the first *kahuae erereta* the *auwoti* may not be performed. Sekanima, whom I questioned on this, had never witnessed such an occasion, but said he was familiar with the details from what others had told him. The *maritihanna* takes a lead in *suane* ritual and it is his role to smear the blood of a cockerel on the forearms and hands of participants (as in the *tupu-tupue* ceremony) at the beginning of a great *kahuae*, and to remove the same with water after five days. During this period the blood may not be removed, there must be no contact with females and all meals are taken in the *suane*. This final event is preceded by the performance of a *kahuae* for a period of up to five nights, held to introduce the newly inducted men to the *auwoti*. Up until this time young, uninducted men wear the *karanunu onate (marae)*, but after this they revert to the normal red *karanunu*. The first night of the *kahuae* is followed the next day by an offering made by the clan chief of Soumori in the fireplace (*hunu hata otue*), in which the Matoke ancestors are fed a meal of cockerel bones saved from previous cockerel sacrifices, the right leg of a cuscus, a *sikenae* and baked sago (*ute-ute monne*). As we have seen, during the completion ritual for a clan sacred house it is a woman who makes the fireplace offering, but in the case of the *suane* it involves cooperative work between clans, just as in the making of the

fireplace itself. The chief of the clan Peinisa directs these proceedings, as to him is delegated overall authority for the fireplace.

In an echo of the male puberty ceremony, the other main part of the festival is the capture of ten live cuscus of any description and their sacrifice in the *suane* by the men using the back of a parang blade. The cuscus are then cooked in green bamboo on the *suane* fireplace and consumed as a *marane sonaute* (thin stew) together with *maea* and other ceremonial foods during a feast held the same night. The food is spread out, not on banana leaves, but on leaves from the *kokine* transplanted when the *suane* was being constructed. Similarly, the cuscus bones are placed in *waimite* leaves from the bush planted on the inland side of the *suane*, and stored carefully on the *atikanae*, the shelf located above the sunrise entrance to the *suane*. The following night unmarried girls join the men in the *kahuae*.

This ritual marks the completion of the *suane* cycle, and the completion of the puberty ceremonies of those males who have gone through them since the last time the *suane* cycle has reached this point. Completion transforms the village from a state of ‘heaviness’ to one of ‘lightness’. Indeed, *kahuae* and *auwoti* can only re-commence in a completed *suane* once ‘lightness’ is achieved for all clans of the village, through expiation or atonement (*usi*) for behaviour that gives offence to the ancestors (*rosa*). This includes certain violations of gender-pollution prohibitions, such as women admitting to having had an illegitimate child or having menstruated while outside the *posune*. The expiation ritual involves collecting kindling sticks and lighting a small fire, with the help of menopausal women, underneath the *suane* while the men sit above. Women making the fire mock and humiliate those still in violation of the prohibition, shouting at them, and warning them not to remain in the house having broken a pollution rule, an action that might likely result in their death. The fire allows the smoke to purify the men, removing any ‘heaviness’ induced by pollution violations and bringing health and hunting success. The wind then carries the smoke and pollution out to sea. Heaviness due to gender pollution also falls away from men during the *kahuae* as they stamp their feet, falling under the house to where the fire has been lit. As a result, the inside of the *suane* acquires lightness.

Another self-referential role of the *suane* is as a site for making recompense for offences against the founding Matoke ancestors (*sio onata roe nusa*, ‘elders of the island’), including mistakes incurred during *suane*

construction. Such violations require that a red plate and metre of red cloth be given either to the Soumori chief or *matue*. The objects are kept in the relevant clan sacred house until the next *kahuae* performance, when the objects are placed in the *suane* on two sections of coconut palm trunk, and when the offences are verbally reported to the ancestors. Once these sources of heaviness have been removed, the *suane* is open for other rituals, including several associated with the male life-cycle ceremonies, such as the *ahurara tapuna* (earth-anointing) ritual (not described here) or the cuscus sacrifice. In the past, the teeth of men were filed during the ceremony to complete the *suane*. But, as noted in Chapter 4, because the *suane* is so often absent or incomplete, few men have undergone these rituals. In Rouhua, in 2001, only one man had undergone them.

Concluding symbolic actions which reinforce this condition of lightness include, as with the clan sacred house, the rubbing of coconut oil on the upright posts of the *suane*, and the sweeping by women of all rubbish around the village space and throwing it (together with heaviness, pollution, accumulated infringement of ancestral prescriptions and proscription, and the sickness which has resulted from them) beyond the village perimeter. These actions resemble those found in ‘adat cuci negeri’ ceremonies described by Cooley (1962:60) for Ambonese villages. The festival ends with the ‘killing’ of the fire (‘kasimati api’ in Ambonese Malay) in the *suane*, the clearing away of the ashes (*hunu usa*), the silencing of the large drum and the return of the smaller drums to the houses of their owners. This latter signifies that a *kahuae* cannot be held in the *suane* again until the big *kahuae* festival, approximately three months later.

8.11 THE GREAT KAHUAE FESTIVAL

In August 1973 the great *suane* festival to complete the cycle was being actively discussed and planned. It was explained to me that it was similar to that described for clan sacred houses, involving the placing of decorative elements along the roof ridge (*hunu hata nikata*). Patterns of bamboo latticework are arranged along the roof apex, augmented by the feathers of cassowary, parrot (usually *Lorius domicella*) and cockatoo (*Cacatua moluccensis*). Five white cloths hang from beneath the bamboo latticework at the west (sunset) end and five red cloths at the east (sunrise) end (traditionally, silk ‘kain Sorong’). On the ridge, at the west end, is placed a

white flag (signifying Sepa); at the east end, a flag made from a 'kain Timor'; in the middle, a red flag.

One of the important features of this ritual is that all men from outside the village who have married women from the village (bride-takers) must return with their wives and families. The men must pay a fine to the *suane* of the following: five red *karanunu* (representing the original coastal settlement of Watane), five *nipai putie* (representing the raja of Sepa) and one 'kain Timor' (representing Matoke and Aihisuru). This is said to be payment to the village for taking away its women, and is analogous to the payment of 'kain berikat' in Ambonese villages. From amongst the gifts of cloth given by the bride-takers, two red and two white cloths and a 'kain Timor' are taken by the husband, who must climb to the top of the *suane* and make a pendant from them (*saene*). The affines of the men who have taken women from the village participate in a large *kahuae*, in which they hold a large plate against the backside of their brother-in-law. This is known as *nehe ain* (*ain* being the term for the pelvic area and loins (*ain ain sisane*). The plate is then presented to the wives' brothers by the exogamous husbands.

After the great *kahuae suane* has been performed over five nights, the soles of the feet and the palms of the hands of those men involved are placed over a fire of *kokine* leaves to signify the end of the period of ritual separation. They can then return to everyday affairs.

8.12 VARIATION, CHANGE AND PERIODICITY

The fact that *suane* are so few in number and that the cycles progress so slowly, suggests considerable opportunity for incomplete transmission of knowledge and practices, for change and even for widespread 'reinvention'. Indeed, the parallel that comes to mind is of the way in which British coronation ritual was reinvented after the long reigns of Elizabeth I and Victoria, in part because it had been forgotten (Cannadine 1983). It is, of course, very difficult to test this hypothesis, particularly as the same empirical features might be thought to result in some convergence between villages, as those involved seek appropriate models, clues and precedents in order to conduct their own rituals.

One feature we can measure is the main physical dimensions of different *suane* existing at various times between 1970 and 2003. The

derelict Watane *suane* that I measured in 1970 was 8.7 metres long (west-east) and 8.6 metres wide (north-south), while that which had been constructed by my return in 1975 was 11.25 by 11.25 metres. The Rouhua *suane* that was being completed in 1970 was 13.3 metres long by 12.7 metres wide, and that completed in Bunara around 1973, 9.7 by 9.6 metres. Thus, while there is little variation in the ratio of length to width, there is variation of up to four metres along both dimensions between the old and new Watane *suane*, and of over three metres in any dimension between the smallest (Watane in 1970) and the largest (Rouhua). All have basically the same elevations and ground plan, though there are some small differences. For example, the roof of the Rouhua *suane* is not nearly as steeply pitched as that of Niamonai, and the joinery of the *atikanae* (a kind of shelf) in Niamonai is quite different from that of Bunara. While such small differences may be within a range of acceptable variation, we should set this inference against the importance – one might almost say, compulsion – of ensuring that a new *suane*, like a new house, replicates the one it replaces in every detail, and that any difference serves to mark its uniqueness in contrast to the *suane* of other villages. Some physical differences relate to the clans who are masters of the *suane*. Thus, the snake, a reticulate python (*Python reticulatus*), depicted on Niamonai and Rouhua *suane* drums (Plate 8.2d) represents one of the totems of both the clans Kamama and Soumori. There is variation in ritual content, too. Thus, Tongli's account of the ritual transplantings, obtained in Tahena Ukuna, not only involves visiting three sacred places in the village and planting the sacred plants, but also the accompaniment of the beating of drums and recitation of the Nunusaku Paratama, an enactment of the creation myth.

Those connected with the *suane* are the most infrequent of all Nuaulu rituals (Figure 8.2). Maximally, there can only ever be as many *suane* as there are Nuaulu ritual communities – in modern times, three. We do not know for sure the situation in the mountain settlements occupied before circa 1880, but when Nuaulu first came to the coast the only *suane* in existence was at Niamonai. With the expansion of Nuaulu coastal settlement and the growth in the population, the number of potential *suane* increased. But one limit on the number was that they were ritually proscribed in two settlements: Aihisuru and Hahualan. So, we may assume that before the foundation of Bunara, there was one, which increased to two with the founding of Bunara, and to three with the founding of

Rouhua in the 1930s. This was the situation I encountered on arriving in 1970. Since the founding of new settlements in Tahena Ukuna and Simalouw in the 1980s there had been talk of building a new *suane* there, which actually materialized after 1996.

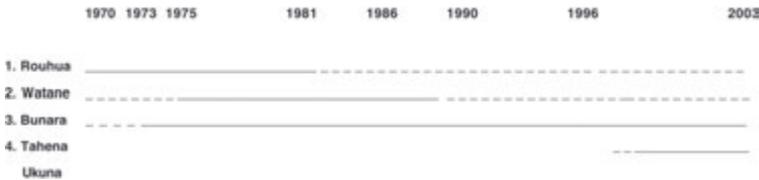


Figure 8.2. *Suane* cycles for three Nuauulu settlements, 1970-1996. The continuous line indicates the period during which all stages in the building cycle occur, from the planting of the first post to the removal of the last post.

One may wonder what the purpose is of a building which is itself the focus of ritual, but which has no shrine within it that is the focus of daily, or even monthly, attention; which is regarded as inessential by some clans; which stands empty for most of its life; and which is in decay for the second half of its life. However, the number of possible *suane* is not the same as the actual number at any one time. This is because a *suane* has to be built, and it is the ritual work of the building which itself is in large part its purpose. The *suane*, if you will, is the end product, or artefact, of ritual process, which it materializes and reifies.

Reconstructing the histories of individual *suane* is not easy. The Rouhua *suane* that I first encountered in 1970 was ‘new’, in the sense of having had its first posts inserted in 1964, that is, six years previously. We can be confident about the accuracy of this date. The first *suane* ritual that I witnessed was, as we have seen, during 1970: the installation of the fireplace. At this time, the *suane* in Watane was in a state of total disrepair, having reached the end of the cycle some years previously, while in Bunara the *suane* was at an early stage of construction (Ellen 1978:34-5, Map 6, Figure 3). By 1975 there was a new *suane* in Watane, and a complete *suane* in Bunara. By 1981 the Watane *suane* was fully operational, but there was no longer a *suane* in Rouhua. In 1986, following the move of the clan Kamama to Kilo Sembilan, the *kapitane* Peinisa who had planted the first post of the *suane* had to remain in Watane to guard it. By January 1990, the Watane *suane* was decomposing, and in Rouhua all

that remained was a rotting *heute suane* (Plate 8.3c) and the sacred bushes that I had seen transplanted in 1971. By contrast, in the same year, the Bunara *suane* was in good order, some fresh timbers indicating recent repair work. By 1996 there was still no Rouhua *suane*. In 2003 I witnessed a new *suane* at Kilo Duabelas (Tahena Ukuna), in good condition, which was said to have been completed two years previously. In the same year there was still a *suane* in Bunara (though with a missing drum skin), but not in Rouhua, where the posts covered by the repaired *heute* were already rotten.

What is typical of the whole process are the inordinate and continual delays. The process of building may be delayed because other, contributory, rituals have not been performed, or because the circumstances for work are not auspicious, or because the work itself requires the coordination of large numbers of people who must, therefore, cease other, often more pressing, work. There is much more resistance these days to the demands of ritual work than there used to be, which in turn slows down the process. Organizational problems may mean that a village may go for many years without a *suane* at all; though perhaps, with a virtual *suane* of the mind, the empty physical space being a constant reminder of its conceptual continuity.

This is what we would expect given the fact that *suane* ritual is contingent upon the performance of virtually all other rituals, which also have priority in terms of perceived urgency. But it is reasonable to wonder whether there has also been a historical increase in the length of such delays due to new economic and political pressures. Thus, in March 1990 Komisi told me of the plans that were at that time afoot for the new Rouhua *suane*, to be built west of the present Soumori clan house, and south of the Sounaue-ainakahata clan house, on land that was otherwise empty and reserved for this purpose. I was solemnly informed that the first ceremonies would take place in about two months. When I returned in 1996 the plans had not progressed. Indeed, many times during the last 20 years there has been talk of building a new *suane* in Rouhua. In 1996 the explanation for further delay was that priority had to be given to completion of a new clan sacred house, and the proposed site of the new *suane* had shifted to an area east of the new Peinisa clan house and south of the Sounaue-ainakahata clan house. The political instability that gripped Maluku between 1998 and 2002 was perhaps obvious grounds for further delay, though, as we shall see in the final chapter, in

other respects these events did not seem to impact on Nuaulu ritual life to the extent that one might have expected. What is more likely is that delay was exacerbated by the long-running dispute between Soumori and other clans regarding succession to the position of village headman following the death of Komisi. In August 2003 Kaiisa told me that a *kahuae* was imminent for the new *suane*, now apparently to be constructed in front of the Matoke clan house – perhaps in a few weeks time. By the time I left at the end of the month they had still not begun to collect any timber. At the same time Tuisa, the current chief of the clan Matoke, had said that a new *suane* would be built in Rouhua when all elders agreed. During a brief visit in 2009, there had still been no agreement.

The absence of a *suane* altogether might well be thought a major cause of misfortune by Nuaulu – and so, in a sense, it is – but there are theological as well as social and economic reasons for delaying. People say that since it is so closely connected with headhunting, it can no longer be built effectively. The substitutes for human heads are not regarded as efficacious as real heads, leading to neglect of the rituals and delay in construction. In 1992 Nuaulu from Rouhua who were arrested for murdering transmigrants near Somau were first suspected of being motivated by the need to obtain heads for a new *suane*, since the heads of the victims were removed and taken to the village where they were buried (Ellen 2002). Moreover, the inability of clans and their leaderships to live amicably impacts on *suane* affairs and has resulted in delays in making decisions, even though the delay itself is often presented as having been responsible for sickness visited by the ancestors during the period 1985-1995.

Calculating the length of a *suane* cycle is hazardous, as with just three *suane*-making groupings there are so little data to go on. However, looking at the cycle of building and decline since 1970, one may conclude that the life of a *suane*, from first post to the onset of permanent decline, is optimally about 15 years, a lot longer than the 7-8 years suggested by Tongli. The gap between destruction and the onset of rebuilding probably varies much more, since, without the presence of physical structures, there is less incentive to undertake the work. Though the Niamonai *suane* was dilapidated in 1970, at the time of my first visit, it had been substantially rebuilt by 1975, a period of less than five years. Given other time pressures, this is a remarkable achievement. Bunara was never without a *suane* during my visits between 1970 and 1996, though a *suane* must have

been absent briefly at some time between 1982 and 1990. By comparison, the Rouhua *suane* that I had seen installed in 1970, was no longer there in 1981, and has not been rebuilt since, a period of some 30 years. The talk is always that it will be rebuilt, and, indeed, the timbers are collected and stored – but whether historical change has made this more difficult, only time will tell.

As has been suggested, the *suane*, in good Durkheimian fashion, can be said to represent the coming together of Nuaulu clans, as when members of living clans collaborate in its construction, and when the spirits of the dead are gathered in from different mother-houses to perform the *kahuae*. In the present circumstances the absence of *suane* in some villages stands as a powerful symbol of the inability of contemporary Nuaulu to come together politically as a single body. While the rotting *suane heute* in Rouhua says something important about the fact that anything sacred can never be destroyed, it also makes one wonder whether the collective effort will ever be found again to replace it.

What are the consequences of the infrequency of *suane* rituals for their effective reproduction? Whereas life-cycle and house rituals occur with sufficient frequency for many people to remember the correct actions and their sequences, and, to a lesser extent, the invocations, for the *suane* many residents in Rouhua less than 40 years old have never seen the rituals for that phase of the cycle prior to the insertion of the fireplace; despite occasional invitations, they may never have seen these rituals performed in other settlements, where there have been full cycles over the last 40 years. If they are younger than 30, they may never have seen a *suane* ritual at all in their own village. Of those in Rouhua who witnessed a *suane* ritual before 1980 – say, those between 10 and 80 at the time – half are now dead, so that those with direct memories and knowledge comprise no more than ten men and ten women. Of course, the knowledge transmission and experience that really matters for *suane* rituals in Rouhua is that associated with Matoke-pina, Soumori and Sounaue-ainakahata, which even further restricts the likelihood of effective reproduction. Though most other rituals are sufficiently frequent to ensure that the knowledge base and experience needed to perpetuate them is sufficiently shared for us to conclude that they are culturally robust, we cannot be so sure about *suane* rituals. Of course, the basic components comprise many of the elements of other rituals: the *yeukone*; the *sinu onari hohua* sequences, physical movements and gestures; the spatial

movements within the village area; a common overall cognitive infrastructure; the way *suane* rituals mirror or complement other rituals (such as the cockerel sacrifice and cuscus offerings that we find in clan-sacred-house rituals and male puberty ceremonies, respectively). But some of the key elements are unique. The consequences of this are twofold. On the one hand, in practice elders are reluctant to entertain performing rituals where there is room for error, and this will lead to further delay. On the other hand, if the pressure to perform them is overwhelming, then there is a greater likelihood that the parts of the ritual will be reinvented. Fortunately, that reinvention takes place in the context of a habitus of rules and practices that increases the likelihood that the rituals will have some logical resemblance to what they replace.

Chapter 9

Managing ritual

9.1 QUANTIFYING AND COMPARING RITUAL EVENTS

In this monograph I aim to compare different categories of ritual event in terms of their frequency and periodicity. The purpose of this is to determine factors influencing the temporal distribution of such events, and the consequences of all these for the effective reproduction of traditional Nuaulu life. This requires a methodology that the conventional organization of ethnographic field research cannot easily accommodate. For example, I have shown the effect of phasing fieldwork inputs on the analysis of categories of event that, by their very character, do not always correspond to the opportunities available to observe them. Apart from a brief visit in 2009, my own Nuaulu fieldwork has so far been spread over a period of 33 years, but was conducted in only nine of those years (27%), for a total of 31 months (8%). I was in the field for only one year when I was able to witness a complete, continuous, twelve-month cycle, and for the rest there were fieldwork stretches of between one and a maximum of four months spread over different times of the year (Table 9.1). The seasonal timing of these episodes has been such that there are periods of the year that have been sampled better than others; and even when I have been physically present in the field, I have not always been in the right place at the right time. Although I have been fortunate in being able to supplement my data with detailed descriptions of events witnessed by Rosemary Bolton, and have heard endless accounts of other specific ritual events at second hand from Nuaulu research subjects and friends, the account is still uneven in terms of categories of ritual observed and reported.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total	months	
1970	_____														12
1971	_____														03
1973	_____														03
1975	_____														03
1981	_____														01
1986	_____														01
1990	_____														02
1996	_____														05
2003	_____														01
	Total												Total	31	

Table 9.1. Nuaulu Fieldwork episodes conducted by Ellen, 1970-2003.

Despite these problems of representativeness, I have been able to produce a corpus of data for events actually observed in selected categories and (from secondary reports and inferences based on demographic data and informant judgements) of overall frequency. We therefore have fairly reliable figures for actual occurrences for the period January 1970-December 2003, mainly for the village of Rouhua. Thus, for birth rituals the number observed was 20 of an approximate total of 400 occurring during the period; for group male puberty ceremonies, three observed compared with about 20 known to have occurred; one female puberty ceremony observed compared with about 45 known to have occurred; two funerals observed compared with about 60 having taken place; one completed house cycle observed (aggregated from separate stages in different cycles) compared with 20 known to have taken place; and one partial *suane* cycle compared with the four known to have taken place (again, aggregated from separate stages in different cycles).

On the basis of these accumulated data from various fieldwork phases, including work diaries from 1970-71, I have also been able to calculate that the time spent conducting rituals as defined for the project purposes (see Chapter 1) was a minimum of 2.47% of all working time (38 days of 1,538 person-days surveyed), which, when adjusted for seasonality and ritually directed work, probably works out at up to 10% of total activity time. In terms of the annual seasonal cycle, ritual activity peaked during this period on average in July, at about the same time as a peak in hunting, after sago extraction and communal labour peaks in June. The peak in ritual activity also followed peak travel activity in June, and occurred before the agricultural peak in August and a second sago extraction peak in September. I have no reason to think that the seasonal distribution of rituals has altered markedly since 1971, since the environmental constraints on collecting food and construction still apply. However, one might predict some modification due to the growing significance of harvest times for marketable crops (mainly copra and clove) and, between 1999 and 2002, due to political instability preventing most kinds of access to normal markets. Despite modest improvements in the transport infrastructure – mainly metalled roads and bridges – seasonal rain and the conditions it spawns (flooding, surface erosion, rock falls and mud) are a major constraining factor in the preparation of ritual and travelling to ceremonies. Thus, most major rituals are scheduled for

the drier months, if at all possible. El Niño effects no doubt skew the influence of seasonality in particular years, though inferring this from the data is not easy.

I explained in Chapter 1 why the definition of ritual used here must include labour expended on making objects and preparation for events that have a ritual purpose, and each of the chapters has provided evidence to show how much effort goes into the organization of individual events. This is not only because the effort expended in these ways reflects the energy costs of performing ritual, but also because this is how the Nuaulu see it: as ritual. Moreover, the work involved in harvesting sago for a feast or cutting trees for *suane* support-posts is no more or less work than the ‘work’ involved in the conduct of the rituals themselves, such as invoking spirits or sacrificing cuscus. It is ‘work’ in the sense that it is all equally necessary in the struggle for life, and Nuaulu often excuse themselves from participation in some government-directed activity – such as clearing a ‘kebun sosial’ – on the grounds that their time is fully occupied in attending to ritual. Like other forms of work, it is often perceived as banal and tedious, something no less or more important than preparing a meal. This may explain to some extent a matter-of-fact approach to performance, and what might seem, to over-sensitive outsiders used to a more reverential approach to ritual, as complete indifference on the part of the many participants and onlookers.

So, if we were to summarize and outrageously simplify a comparative account of the frequency and periodicity of different categories of Nuaulu ritual, we might conclude with the following observations: (1) The most frequently reported ritual events are for birth. Indeed, it is birth rituals that I have observed most frequently, and can fairly claim to have described most fully. (2) Female puberty rituals (like birth rituals) are conducted for individuals and, because they are also triggered by biological events and cannot be delayed, are more frequent than male puberty rituals, which are collective. (3) By contrast, male puberty rituals (*mata-henne*) are collective mega-rituals (both objectively, and in the reflexive perceptions of all Nuaulu), rituals of reference that not only divide time into socially meaningful stretches, but also articulate the synchronic relations of Nuaulu society at such symbolically charged moments. (4) Most death rituals, being those of pre-pubertal minors, are perfunctory, and

those of inducted old people are not socially visible beyond the circle of close kin.

As frequent as birth rituals – though for quite different reasons – are those rites concerned with the construction of particular parts of houses and their contents, such as sacred shields. At any one time there is at least one house-ritual cycle in play for each clan, and for the larger clans perhaps several. The most infrequent rituals are those of the *suane* cycle, where the intervals may be 30 years or more. Indeed, to repeat what I said in Chapter 8, the *suane* cycle is the most contingent of all cycles,

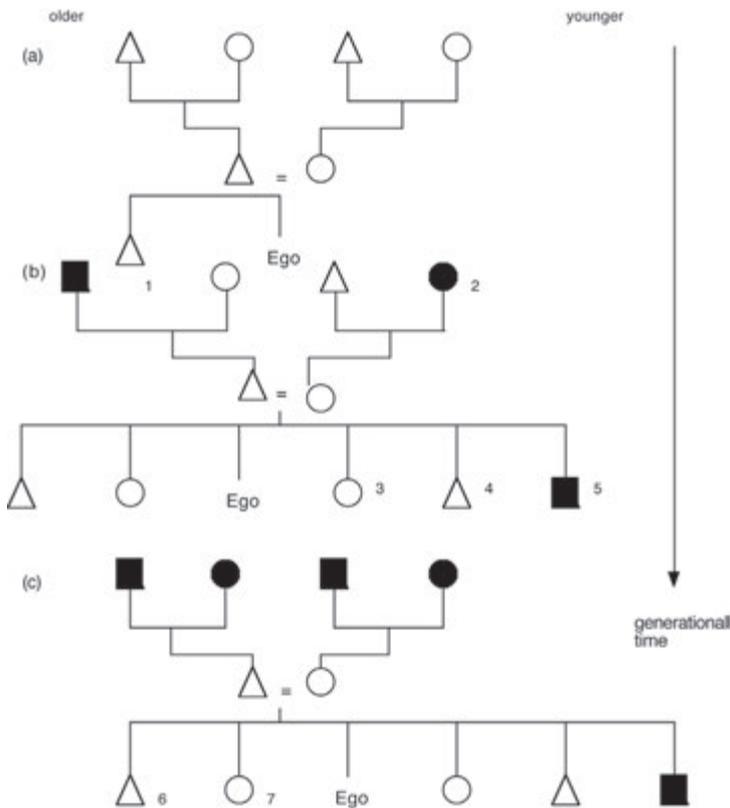


Figure 9.1. How change in the composition of domestic groups influences the experience of different categories of ritual.

the periodicity between events the greatest, and general temporal duration the slowest. Its contingency determines all these other features, as it depends on the performance of endless other rituals – of the human life-cycle, of the clan houses and of sacred objects – for it to happen at all. Given that all other rituals are dependent on the hard facts of subsistence, demography and socio-political events, so *suane* construction is in turn influenced by all these imponderabilia and more, making its effective completion and reproduction the most precarious of all Nuulu rituals.

These statements of differential frequency relate to the population as a whole, either a specific local population comprising an individual settlement, or the total Nuulu population as a group of practising animists. If, however, we look at the experience of a particular household, or an individual person, the opportunities for participating or witnessing particular rituals will vary depending on the overall size of a clan or household, both of which will determine the number of potential events occurring in a particular year. Opportunities will also vary with the age profile of a particular group as determined by the developmental structure, as classically established by Goody (1966) and others. This idea is indicated in Figure 9.1. Thus, in a household at stage (b) a hypothesized ten-year-old ego will have had opportunities to experience intimately funeral events (of grandparents) and birth events (of other, younger siblings). As elder siblings grow older, that same ego (c) will also experience puberty rites of elder siblings. How this works out will depend very much on the particular composition of a household, and the household in the context of the generational demography of a particular *numa* and clan, or village.

9.2 THE COHERENCE OF RITUAL AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF DIFFERENTIAL FREQUENCY

The consequences of performing different kinds of ritual at different intervals, with varying frequencies, are simultaneously structural, cognitive and semantic. The coherence of ritual, particularly that arising from frequency of performance, suggests the hypothesis that people work with a ‘model ritual’ as a kind of recipe for action. Indeed, there is a view that the plethora of lesser rituals are somehow the depleted and partial vari-

ants of some less frequently occurring but culturally salient and complex mega-rituals (such as Nuaulu *matahene*, Bemba ‘chisungu’ or Javanese ‘slametan’). The extent to which model rituals – if they exist – are based on a temporal distribution of general experience rather than on one type of ritual, less frequently occurring but supremely salient, is a matter I have sought to investigate.

I initially hypothesized that model rituals would derive from what people experience first, as emergent adult persons, reinforced by what they experience most frequently thereafter. Drawing on the schema and cultural model literature (for instance, Shore 1996), it seemed to me that models of ritual performance are formed in the mind through the accumulated experiences of participating in ritual, passively and actively. It is most likely, therefore, that cognitive patterns thereby emerge that specify the relationship between elements of a ritual not so much in terms of symbolic meanings, but as related actions and practices. Such models are unconsciously constructed out of repeated experience, in a language-like way, and only to a lesser extent learned through direct verbal instruction. Indeed, ritual is intrinsically a form of knowledge difficult to express explicitly and verbally in most circumstances, while schemas themselves are flexible constructions and normally will have a default setting. This latter means that whenever there is any doubt about an appropriate procedure, the default mode will be brought into play. As individuals grow older, they learn more about the ritual system, attach new meanings to practices, rearrange elements and alter emphasis. But however young, however much changes, the ritual world will always appear as ‘sufficiently’ coherent. Thus, from the point of view of experience, socialization is a constant restructuring, a reassembling of the ritual world, coherence arising in part from frequency and regularity of occurrence. Goldberg (2005) has argued that what others call schemas in fact free us from the requirement to continually rethink the cognitive practices of life – such as whether or not to brush our teeth in the morning, and how to do it. Indeed, he argues that as we grow older, pattern-recognition as the cognitive response to a decision situation replaces working things out; in other words, we know more templates.

As is now well known, Harvey Whitehouse’s ‘modes of religiosity’ model contrasts two types of ritual transmission: the first (doctrinal) associated with semantic memory; the second (imagistic), with episodic

memory.¹ Although, for Whitehouse (2000:11), both are ubiquitous, he argues that they have different ramifications. The Nuulu data that I have presented here suggest less contrast in terms of the role of ‘semantic’ and ‘episodic’ memories and in the other features of his model. Thus, routinized rituals (such as those we might assume Nuulu house-building rituals to be) are mainly encoded in semantic memory, following familiar repetitive scripts, in which people do not easily remember specific previous performances, inferring only from general semantic knowledge what must be accomplished. Whitehouse contrasts these kinds of ritual with the more traumatic kind, best exemplified here by Nuulu puberty rituals, which engage with episodic memory, and which may actually violate existing semantic knowledge. What is crucial in this imagistic mode for Whitehouse (2000:8, 119, 2004:106) is that ‘in a flash’ of emotional excitement existing assumptions are challenged, and that intense religious revelations are later recalled as autobiographical events, resulting in the re-structuring of neural circuitry (on the history of this idea, see also McCauley and Lawson 2002:47).

For Whitehouse (2002), frequently occurring rituals are unlikely to involve spontaneous components since they are quasi-automatic and fixed by ‘masters of authority’, such as Nuulu male and female house guardians, and do not concern the ordinary subject. This ‘doctrinal mode’ refers exactly to the role of frequency in creating schematic knowledge.

¹ The model is conveniently summarized in a table of opposites of doctrinal and imagistic modes (Whitehouse 2004:74, Table 4.1), where the first is associated with high transmissive frequency and a low level of arousal, and the latter the opposite; where memory is operationalized in the first in the semantic form, and in the second in episodic form; where meanings are formally learned and acquired in the first, but internally generated in the second; where revelation is rhetorical or narrative or logical. In the first, rituals are multivocal; in the second, iconic and multivalent (Whitehouse 2000:9). A central characteristic of the doctrinal mode is frequent repetition of both ritual and dogma (Whitehouse 2000:112), where routinization is associated with a distinctive style of cognition, specifically, schema-based memory for repetitive observances. In contrast, the experiential quality of imagistic rites is founded on extreme sensual and emotional stimulation.

Whitehouse emphasizes that these modes, as theorized, are ‘attractor positions’, and that in the real world particular rituals cannot be necessarily specified as one or the other, or conform to a particular string of associated cognitive and socio-political features (Whitehouse 2000:1). Modes of religiosity constitute tendencies towards particular patterns of codification, transmission, cognitive processing and association. The imagistic mode consists of the tendency within certain small-scale or regionally fragmented ritual traditions and cults, for revelations to be transmitted through sporadic collective action, evoking multivocal iconic imagery, encoded in memory as distinct episodes. The doctrinal mode, on the other hand, consists of a tendency, within many regional and world religions, for revelations to be codified as a body of doctrines, transmitted through routinized forms of worship and memorized as part of ‘general knowledge’ (Whitehouse 2000:125). It is not that religions gravitate towards either the doctrinal or the imagistic mode, but rather that transmission mode is different from type (Whitehouse 2000:135).

However, it may be that it is not the frequency of an event that is important in making it a model, and providing it with long-lasting impact, but rather its salience. Salience might be purely visual, related to size, or complexly synaesthetic; it might be the amount it is talked about, or its refractions in other events, but also its psychological significance for individuals. Nuaulu male puberty ceremonies are, at least superficially, like the Melanesian initiations that Whitehouse describes (2001:218)² in being frightening, and supposedly previously unknown to the neophytes themselves. However, in practice the form of the ritual is well known, as young pre-pubescent boys witness them from an early age, and even women know much more than they will let on. Although a ritual may only take place once in a lifetime for an individual subject, that same subject may have many opportunities to witness the life-crisis rituals of other individuals. Where local populations are small, imagistic transmission may be more important as initiations occur less frequently and are witnessed by fewer (especially pre-pubescent) males. Where there are larger numbers, transmission is more easily accomplished in its liturgical mode.

It is, of course, possible that the *matahenne* that I witnessed between 1970 and 2003 were eroded forms, and that in the past male ceremonies were much more secretive and frightening, especially where they involved severed heads. However, I somehow doubt this. Moreover, we need to distinguish the ritual experience of the subject from that of the other participants. For the former, the ritual may well be episodic and traumatic, while for the other participants it is memorable, certainly, but otherwise routine. Krige (1943) describes how Lovedu girls are not considered fully initiated until they have witnessed six female initiations, and certainly the meanings of Nuaulu puberty ceremonies (both for males and for females) that children experience as they grow older change and become more complex. These features, of course, are by no means incompatible with Whitehouse's (2004) account of 'spontaneous exegetical reflection', and he has made similar points.

Since rituals are first encountered in childhood, both by children as the subjects of ritual (say, hair-cutting) and as onlookers, just how they experience them and what they remember of their formal structure will have a crucial role in subsequent adult encounters with ritual. It is very difficult to disagree with Toren (2002) when she argues in favour of the

² On some formal ethnographic similarities between puberty-ceremony practices on Seram and New Guinea, see Deacon 1925.

importance of the ethnographic study of children for understanding social organization and cultural values more generally, and we have certainly no reason to think that this would be any different with respect to ritual. It is thus childhood encounters that shape subsequent transmission, and earliest memories must establish a template that, for good neurological reasons, is difficult to dislodge (Ellen 2006:14). Nevertheless, the mind is not immune to modification through subsequent experience and we might suppose that second, third and later experiences of the same event will serve to reinforce certain repeated features and modify others. Though unlikely, if subsequent experiences are so different from initial experiences, the template will alter accordingly. The template will also be adjusted by indirect inputs from other individuals between the experience of actual events, so that (just as with the processing of ethnographic learning by the anthropologist), the template itself is the outcome of an interplay between experience of particular events and generalized, detached and semi-detached accounts (Figure 9.2). A crucial additional factor in fixing a template, schema or script is derived from so-called deference theory, namely, acceptance both of the motivations for meaning provided by others (both organizers and co-participants) that less experienced participants can trust, and trust in the authority of the knowledge of the actions, regardless of meaning (Bloch 2004).

I have explored the extent to which frequent rituals provide a performative and interpretative guide to more infrequent rituals. I have also discussed the extent to which (increasingly) infrequently performed but culturally more important rituals provide a 'virtual' organizational grid of potential components and actions, of which commoner rituals are simplified versions, and knowledge of which provides a crucial framework for understanding key beliefs and practices more generally. I conclude that, historically and in the lives of individuals, all rituals constantly interact to reinforce commonalities and disseminate innovation, but that by their frequency of occurrence (and perhaps also, their relative simplicity) certain rituals are reinforced more effectively than others. It is these frequently performed rituals that inevitably serve as cognitive models for the larger rituals of house and *suane*. In a sense, this is reminiscent of the observation that the 'slametan' represents a basic module of which all other Javanese folk rituals are no more than transformations (Beatty 1999). So, in asserting that the most frequent rituals become the models for others, we return to Whitehouse's (2000) argument that routine prac-

Memorate knowledge or model of a notional ritual type:

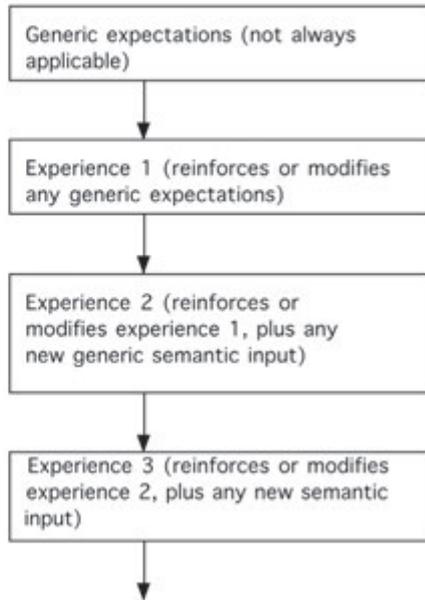


Figure 9.2. How individual cultural models are reinforced and modified over time through the interplay of repeated experience and generic information inputs.

tices of ritual are substantially encoded in semantic memory and that through endless repetition participants find it difficult to remember individual performances. My view, based on the Nuauulu evidence, is that, although rituals in different categories constantly interact to reinforce commonalities and to disseminate innovation, the early life-cycle and minor house-construction rituals are reinforced more frequently and, therefore, inevitably serve as models for the larger rituals of the human life-cycle and of ceremonial houses. If this process is one for which we have evidence at the level of the participating and engaging mind, then it will be reflected in the shared generic recollections of particular events, and of particular categories of event, that move between minds underpinned by a shared material and representational experience. Knowledge of how to do technical things, whether it is participating in a ritual or acquir-

ing the skills involved in knot-tying or making baskets (Ellen 2009), is rarely transmitted as a complete package of rules and representations, ‘independently and in advance of their practical application’ (Ingold 2001:358). We might say that the process occurs more through ‘abductions’ than through inductions or deductions (Vayda 2007).

Overall, my data suggest that in a Nuaulu context a strong contrast between liturgical and imagistic modes is difficult to justify, especially when there is evidence to suggest (Neisser 1982) that, apparently, imagistic events may be less spontaneous than we think, as they are sometimes the artefact of repeated rehearsal and narration. This is not necessarily to refute Whitehouse’s thesis, since he himself (2000:149) admits that in some cases the two modes become so enmeshed as to undermine the analytical power of the distinction. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that the theory is now so qualified, and so expanded to include such a wide nexus of interconnected variables, that his original hypotheses cannot be ‘sufficiently specified to submit to the kinds of tests he would like’ (Bloch 2004:65).

9.3 SUBSISTENCE RITUALS AS DEFAULT MODELS

If we are concerned to take the longer view and see how certain rituals cohere, are reproduced and serve as models for others, we must look at the frequency of particular events in relation to the generational cycle. The most commonly produced Nuaulu rituals are those associated with hunting episodes (Ellen 1996), but these are not widely shared – only between hunters. Much more visible are agricultural rituals, which children will witness from an early age and with which women will also have much familiarity. These occur with a frequency that matches birth rituals, but they are very understated compared with, say, those of the rice-cultivating Kasepuhan (Soemarwoto 2007) or Baduy (Iskandar and Ellen 1999), or indeed some other eastern Indonesian populations (for instance, Barraud 1985; Barraud and Platenkamp 1990; Van Dijk and De Jonge 1990; Fox 1979; Friedberg 1980; Pauwels 1990; Traube 1986:155-99; Visser 1989:74-89, 145-68). In these examples the character of a large part of an entire ritual practice is shaped by a cycle of agricultural activities, which in turn give meaning to calendrical categories. The under-development of Nuaulu agricultural ritual (Ellen 1988c,

and elsewhere), which we might also observe amongst the Huauulu (Valeri 2000:13, n19) and, perhaps to a lesser extent, on Buru (Grimes 1993), can be mostly accounted for by the importance of sago extraction and hunting. However, we need to additionally note the context of a history in which endemic swidden crops, demanding specific rituals (taro and yam), are being replaced by crops that do not (cassava, sweet potato and *Xanthosoma*). It is tempting to infer from this a history in which in the past Nuauulu relied even more on hunting and collecting, but this history cannot be a reason for excluding gardening as a statistically prominent experiential mode for transmitting some basic scripts involved in the performance of ritual.³

The basic Nuauulu agricultural rite is the *seute*. The cultivation cycle itself begins with a *pokue*, in which, prior to clearing, spirits are politely asked whether the land is available for cultivation and, if so, to vacate the land before it is cut (Ellen 1973:186-7). A *pokue*, therefore, occurs within the context of a *seute*. It is generally performed by the individual who is about to establish a garden, but in cases where the threat of supernatural interference is regarded as being severe, a more senior figure will conduct the ritual. It may occur when clearing new forest for gardens, or between the stages of clearing and planting. The following was performed on 26 February 1990, when clearing a collective plot for cash crops as instructed by the government. In the absence of the village head, who had business elsewhere, the *kapitane* Sounaue officiated:

The *kapitane* Sounaue (10.20) located the middle point of the projected garden and we gathered round for the ritual. He first cut a length of *nanae* wood (*Heritiera littoralis*) and chopped it into five pieces (*ai otua nima*), placing them into a kind of *hantetane* [the platform used in the male puberty ceremony] on the ground. Behind them on the sunset side were placed five smaller sticks, stuck upright in the ground with a notch in the top of each. A *kau* leaf (*Rhodamnia cinerea*) was cut into five pieces and on each of

³ We can see allusions to the swidden cycle and its rituals in the ceremony conducted periodically to ‘wash the village’, in Ambonese Malay ‘adat cuci negori’ (in Nuauulu, *aunene usa kotua rerehomi niane haha*, ‘to burn the back of the village’). In this ritual all areas covered in grass are cut and burned, simulating the cutting and burning of a garden. The remaining ash must be washed away to prevent the village remaining hot, and all clan chiefs walk around the village sprinkling water from large bamboo internodes on all structures, including the *suane*. When the bamboo is cut, an invocation is made and *sinsinte* wiped round the lip of each container by the chief of the clan on whose territory the village stands, in the case of Rouhua, Neipane-tomoién.

them was placed some betel nut, pepper, mineral lime and tobacco. The leaves were then wrapped and placed in each of the notches. The invocation then began. The ritual finished about 11.10 and we started cutting trees towards the bottom half of the garden. A small *nasae* was consumed on the fringes of the partly cleared area at 13.00.

The performance, therefore, involves placating the spirits with gifts of betel-chewing requisites and fine scrapings from a gold ring invested with the magical properties of the house of the officiant. In some versions (yellow) turmeric replaces the ring shavings and *wainite*, the *kau* leaf. Bolton says the gold makes the garden cool, a condition conducive to growth, perhaps because of the connection between shining and coolness. An invocation is uttered by the senior elder present, which is said to ‘buy’ the land from the spirit that inhabits it (*hehane otoi re*), and the scrapings are scattered over the ground for about 300 square centimetres at the centre of the proposed garden. Thus, the elements are those common to many other rituals; in particular the *ai otua nima* are the parallel of the five logs used in the male puberty ceremony.

The invocation itself is addressed to Anahatana and the ‘lords of the forest’ (*wesie upua*), ancestors of the clan for whom the land is traditional territory, and any malevolent spirits in the area. The spirit with jurisdiction over the area where the garden is to be planted is said to vacate the immediate vicinity of the area to be cut, and move to the head of a nearby stream, or even to some convenient tree or stone. More specifically it is said to protect the person or persons clearing the land, ensuring that he will not be bodily damaged or fall sick, that the crops will flourish and that they will not be harmed by pigs or other pests and predators. One invocation recorded for Rouhua is as follows:

Lord Anahatana, sky and earth,
Ancestors of the clan Neipane-tomoien;
Give strength of speech.
This land is being cleared for *wasi*.
Do not hinder him that works it
Do not endanger in any way the crops he plants.

The entire ritual lasts less than an hour and, in cases where there are a number of persons engaged in clearing, most of those present simply

ignore it. Its importance lies not in the fact that people are involved, but in the fact that it takes place at all. In this respect, it is like most Nuaulu ritual concerning economic activities: collectively necessary, but performatively asocial.

A second ceremony is held at the point of first harvest, when an offering of some produce is made to the ‘lords of the forest’, who in return agree to protect the garden from pigs and ensure an abundant yield. Following this, a small feast (*nasae nisi*) is held in the garden. The content of the offering varies depending on the spirits controlling the area, but will always include three kinds of tuber: the yams *hueni* (*Dioscorea alata*) and *siahue* (*Dioscorea esculenta*) and the taro *sikeue* (*Colocasia* spp.), as well as cassava, other types of taro and sweet potato.⁴ The first three tubers were those familiar to the Nuaulu long before the arrival of the latter tubers of American origin. In addition, those who are ‘lords of the forest’ associated with a Nuaulu clan will be given cuscus or pig meat, depending on the outcome of a hunt immediately preceding the ritual. If, however, the relevant ancestral spirits are from Sepa or Tamilau, only items not ‘haram’ to Muslims are used, usually including salt and coconut, and maybe fresh-water shrimp. Nuaulu ‘lords of the forest’ may also receive all of these things if meat is unavailable. The food is cooked in bamboo, spread out on banana leaves and placed on a shelf in a garden hut. With a laying on of hands the benevolent *saruana* are invoked, including the ‘lords of the forest’: to come and consume the first fruits, to continue to guard the garden from the depredations of pigs and other pests that make the produce bad, and to guard those who will continue to harvest the garden. In return, the harvesters undertake to share the produce with the spirits when a new garden is made; they warn, though, that if the spirits do not honour their side of the contract, they may not receive future offerings. Those who planted the garden then consume the food. The consumption of food, consequently, takes on a form reminiscent of rituals performed as part of the cycles for both sacred houses and for humans.

In the 1970s these rituals were common and obligatory. I knew of no one who did not perform them, even if they posed practical problems in

⁴ It should be noted, however, that there are many named folk-varieties of *siahue*, *hueni* and *sikeue* recognized, and from which to select for a pre-planting offering. Moreover, there are other endemic species of *Dioscorea* (for instance, *loloino*, *akae* and *kawasine*), some of which are further subdivided, and which are not prescribed for such offerings.

terms of scheduling what to plant. Bolton, reporting on the late 1980s and 1990s, says that the offerings are rarely made. She suggests that a reason given for this is that obligatory tubers mature later than some other crops and therefore restrict planting options and the maximization of yields. By the late 1990s the clan Neipani-tomoien had started to plant a ritual garden (*nisi monne*), following demands made by clan ‘lords of the forest’ for whom the *kapitane* is medium, and where offerings can be properly made. In this case, the final offerings were presented to the *numa kapitane* and involved rubbing the *sokate* where the spirits resided with coconut oil and placing a food offering for them on top. A larger feast was held for both men and women in the house, with a smaller feast spread out for the spirits and eaten by the elders after the women – who, if they had eaten it, would have become barren – had departed. This is an interesting innovation for several reasons. Firstly, it inverts the older pattern where ordinary gardens were all subject to ritual with a few gardens occasionally foregoing the ritual, with a pattern whereby most gardens forego the ritual except for one, where in a sense it is performed on behalf of the rest. Secondly, it brings the rituals of the gardens much closer, physically, within the orbit of other rituals performed in the house. Finally, it demonstrates how Nuaulu can pragmatically manipulate their ritual to adjust to the requirements of new crops, planting constraints and other exigencies of the modern world.

In a single lifetime most individuals will, from the age of about five, generally witness as many agricultural cycles as they experience years, and certainly at least one first-fruits ceremony a year. Although a swidden cycle might take 15-20 years, assuming at least one new plot is cleared by each household each year (each with a *seute*), then perhaps 130 will be performed in a whole village over the cycle. In addition, there will nowadays be other agricultural rites undertaken for collective gardens or orchards orchestrated at village level, often as a result of government initiatives. Therefore, in an average lifetime a person will have seen in excess of 60 such rituals, and a mature male might have seen about 20 before he first performs one.

Subsistence rituals such as these, performed in otherwise mundane contexts, thus provide a site in which many of the scripts, the formulaic patterns of words and physical procedures will first be encountered. For example, most invocations begin with the generic honorific greeting *Upuku Anahatana nante tuamane mo* (‘Lord Anahatana, of sky and earth’); or

there are requests (*ainisi*) uttered in the forest when things are not going well: *Upuku Anahatana ruiwai marane, esa mai* ('Lord Anahatana, give cuscus [or some other specified game animal] to us'). Similarly, *hokamu mai, bota kanai, ruku matapako* ('come hither, chew this betel') is the formulaic beginning to many invocations. Many of the phrases occur in invocations used in a wide number of different kinds of context, large ceremonies as well as subsistence ritual, providing many opportunities for people to acquire them, in the same way that other language elements are acquired.

9.4 PLANNING, SEQUENCING AND COORDINATING INTERLOCKING CYCLES

Transmission of repeated symbolic conventions, physical actions and linguistic phrases, individually or in variously composed schemata incorporating parts of each of them, tends to be influenced by exposure to the most frequently occurring rituals. This is the case whether these are subsistence rituals or the more frequent life-cycle and house-cycle rituals. However, a major practical problem for those Nuaulu who have to organize ceremonies – and a theoretical problem for anthropologists who seek to understand them – is just how the experience of the performance feeds into other events. This is because rituals must take place in a particular order that reflects their perceived urgency, organizational possibilities and accepted notions of precedence. The timing of some rituals is determined by the stars and by the agricultural situation. Some rituals seem to flow almost imperceptibly and mechanically from subsistence events. A Nuaulu *seute*, for example, is triggered at some point between August and November as it becomes necessary for land to be cleared for a swidden. A first-fruits ceremony will then automatically follow about eight months later, the taro being ready to harvest at about 150-200 days and various kinds of yam at 200-250 days.

If the agricultural year provides the most readily accessible potential template for ritual organization, by virtue of its physicality, frequency and predictability of occurrence, in terms of the wider picture, and on the basis of the language used to describe it, most cycles of ritual are more obviously modelled on the developmental cycle of the human body. Each human developmental cycle takes 50-60 years. When we group individual cycles together and overlay them, we generally speak of

‘generations’ as some kind of bounded unit of reproduction. However, since human births do not normally occur in steps or spurts of a kind that would generate real cohorts of similar individuals, but are staggered and continuous, generations have to be created, and imposed on that reality of virtual continuity. We can see this in the generational groups formed at male puberty ceremonies. In this respect, males are different from females in forming these virtual generational collectivities, whereas women are isolated as individuals, or, at best, form groups of siblings and cousins of a similar age.

As Sillitoe (2006:136) notes, the very term ‘life cycle’ can be misleading – or, we might add, any cycle in the context of successions of interconnected rituals – if we wish to best represent how the system is working. Each generation of lifespans is perhaps more appropriately represented as one full turn of a helix or a spiral, achieving a circulation of similar events without returning to the same real-time starting point. And, of course, each turn will overlap the other, so that such a model captures both repetitions and non-repetitions. Nevertheless, and overall, we envisage what could be described as a ‘clockwork’ model of ritual coordination, in which – metaphorically speaking – the bigger cycle will not turn until it is triggered by an event in a smaller cycle, and vice versa. We can see this idea expressed graphically in Figure 9.3. The clockwork metaphor is apposite in another respect, for like a clock the mechanism can run fast or slow, break down, or stop altogether when it is not wound.

Rituals, therefore, follow each other in sequence. There cannot be a death ritual without there first having been a birth ritual. This may seem obvious with respect to life-cycle rituals, but the same is true for non-human things that are the focus of ritual, such as houses or sacred objects, and most ritual is based on the model of the human developmental cycle. Few ritual events are really freestanding, and the necessity for correct sequencing may sometimes lead to problems. People may wish to hold a *matahenne*, but certain other preparatory rituals (the responsibility of perhaps another clan) will not yet have taken place. We can, therefore, trace unique ‘causal histories’ (Vayda 2007) for particular events, one of which is set out in Figure 9.4. The evidence for variation and for irregularity in frequency and periodicity presented in some Melanesian ethnographies (Barth 1975, 1987; G. Lewis 1980) has suggested a kind of anti-structuralist ‘disorder’, which is what might be thought to be found in the Nuulu case also. However, these manifest opportunities for disorder arise only as

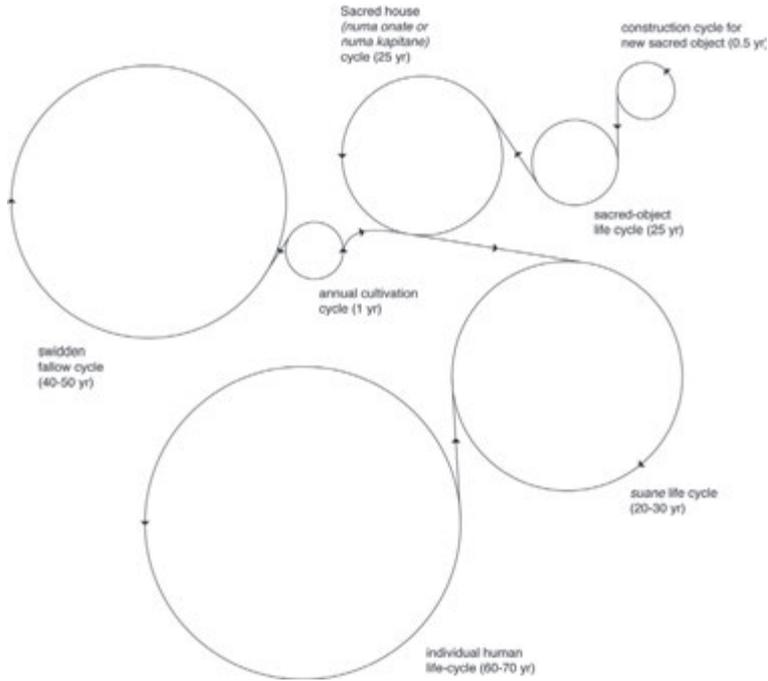


Figure 9.3. The interconnections between different cycles of Nuauulu ritual activity. Note that the cycles are not indicated on a scale commensurate with the stated durations, while the durations are mostly highly approximate.

a consequence of attention to an underlying kind of order, namely, the importance attached to the correct sequencing. The apparent disorder is the outcome of causal histories which themselves arise from the strict adherence to a different kind of order.

Apart from rituals that cannot be avoided – for example, those for birth and death – elders have a responsibility to determine the order in which ritual events occur and the detail of the timing. Most effort will be put into arranging those regarded as having top priority. Once these are complete, those that make decisions about rituals can begin all over again with the next event. Amongst the problems that they have to juggle are those of scheduling and of provisioning. Thus, although plans for a puberty ceremony may begin at a particular point, there are many other competing ritual demands, as well as the demands of everyday life,

which tend to delay the ceremony, sometimes for years at a time. For example, someone will have a baby. The consequence of this is that the accompanying birth ritual will take priority for some people in the clan. And then a girl will get her first menstrual period and require a *pinamou* ritual, preparation for which will take several months; then more babies, a national election, a clove season once a year and the copra season twice a year, and the exigencies of the subsistence agricultural calendar.

Problems in scheduling can arise from the need for particular clans to coordinate their activity. Thus, in March 1996 Numapena and Patioka of the clan Sounaue-ainakahata were due to receive their *tupu-tupue*. However, while Numapena could serve as an officiant for Patioka, it would have been taboo for Patioka to have received his barkcloth from Numapena. Instead, Numapena received his from the chief of Matoke, and this in turn led to further delay. The long delay in holding certain rituals, especially *suane* rituals, can also be attributed to beliefs in the necessity of taking heads for them to be successful. Head-taking had been ostensibly defunct for 50 years or more, until incidents occurred in 1996 and 2005 (Ellen 2002). In retrospect, one can see a delay between the cessation of head-taking activity and the loss of the belief. As problems accumulated (bad death, illness, infertility, poor harvests) these were attributed to not having taken heads. Rituals were thus delayed, but eventually a head was seen as the only way of perpetuating the cycle. Substitutes, modifications or depleted practices were not seen as good enough.

Scheduling problems can also arise due to external events. Thus, in February 1996 there were problems with the appointment of the new raja of the Muslim 'desa' of Sepa, to which the Nuaulu are collectively subject. Adat leaders were complaining that the correct customary procedures were not being followed. The whole process was challenged. The inability to settle this matter was, in turn, delaying the appointment of the *ia onate ankarua* ('kepala dusun' in Ambonese Malay) in Rouhua, leaving the secular governance of the Nuaulu village in abeyance. The result was a slowing down in the organization of all events that required village-wide coordination, with the creation of a considerable backlog.

Planning for ritual is a constant process, and the general frameworks people use provide a context in which this can be done. We can distinguish two phases in the planning: the first, often implicit; the second, much more explicit. To begin with, since every ritual is part of a

sequence, so in conducting one ritual what comes next in the sequence is somehow implicit, even though the precise timing may be very indeterminate, depending on endless other variables. The performance of one ritual, therefore, will provide the opportunity to agree on what is to follow. Thus, Bolton describes how, in the case of the puberty ceremonies for the two girls described in Chapter 4, the clan chief had explained to her some time before the ritual washing that the elders had agreed that the clan ceremony to follow would be for a first hair-cutting ceremony. Such decisions trigger the mid-term activity of collecting the materials necessary for performance and making objects such as baskets, barkcloth and mats. The second phase takes place at much shorter notice. A date is only set for ceremonies four or five days before the actual event. This is to ensure that all the necessary preparations have been made, and allows men to hunt and women to collect sufficient firewood and to prepare food. A large festival, such as a male puberty ceremony, is preceded by a period of preparation or prelude (*aunutu muelene*), sometimes described using the Ambonese Malay phrase ‘taro hari’, ‘placing the day’. The declaration of an *aunutu muelene* signals that the preparation of food must now begin in earnest for the festival. It may involve a period of preparation from as little as five days (*onona nima*) to as long as one month (*onona hulane*), or even more.

So, if the first consideration in planning ritual is that an event occurs at the correct point in a sequence, preparation becomes mainly a matter of managing material and human resources – though we should not underestimate the often physically demanding and extensive labour involved. Material factors can play a crucial role, and the sheer economic outlay required for some Nuaulu rituals may delay them, or prevent them entirely. But others require long planning horizons, often spanning several generations, such as setting up a *sin wesie* or a *heute* for building a *suane* (Figure 9.4). Nuaulu rituals, like those in the New Guinea highlands or in Bali (Howe 2001:105, following Strathern 1969:43), depend on a combination of production and resourcing strategies. The production involves the accumulation of food and materials and is the easiest to manage, as it can be for the most part distributed over a long period. More difficult are the labour-mobilization strategies, as one household can only provide a small proportion of labour needed. I have plenty of evidence in my field notes of delays in the occurrence of rituals for provisioning rather than scheduling reasons. The earliest of these is from 3 March

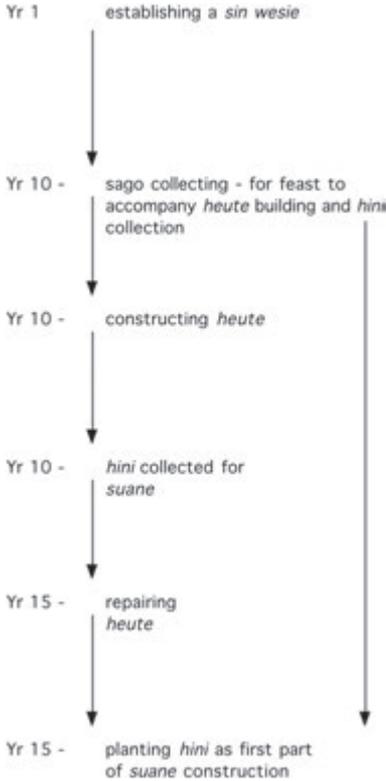


Figure 9.4. The causal history of a ritual event:
planting the first posts for a *suane*.

1970, when I noted that a *kahuae* at Bunara had been delayed because not every man had returned from the forest. Eighteen days later, on 21 March, the *kahuae* was held for two nights, but then had to be postponed for another four nights so men could fetch more sago for the accompanying feasts. Labour, in other words, is more uncertain than materials.

Thus, to summarize and reiterate, the availability of people and objects influences coordination between celebrating groups, and the differences between rituals that must be performed immediately and those that can be delayed. While the performance of some rituals is forced by natural events – birth and death, or first menstruation – and cannot be delayed, others can be delayed for inordinate amounts of time. A major

ritual, such as a male puberty ceremony, requires complex sequences of contributory rituals (and other rituals in turn contributing to them) in which material preparations are made. These, therefore, might all be described as ‘enabling rituals’, though not quite in the sense specified by McCauley and Lawson (2002:27-8). Moreover, because I am concerned with the emergent properties of entire systems of interlocking rituals, reference to any role for their ‘principle of superhuman immediacy (PSI)’ or ‘a CPS-agent’ is not obviously relevant. Whether or not it should be, the number of enabling rituals necessary to permit another ritual to happen is some measure of the centrality of the ritual in an overall system of rituals, and also of its relative dispensability. The fewer enabling rituals it presupposes, the more fundamental and indispensable the ritual might be supposed to be.

To summarize, I have not only compared rituals in terms of their frequency and periodicity and examined the consequences of any emerging patterns of difference, but have also explored how periodicity and frequency serve to connect rituals into a series of interlocking cycles, cycles that determine channels of information flow required to reproduce the ritual. I have been concerned with the sequencing of ritual events, and have suggested that correct sequencing might be more important than other aspects of performative content. I have demonstrated that, because of the necessity of rituals to follow particular sequences, those further down the line are more vulnerable and more at risk of delay, modification and erosion. I have also demonstrated that the more frequent ritual events tend to be those most effectively transmitted in terms of content, and that their frequency informs the interpretation of less frequent types of ritual.

Finally, we must remember that ritual cycles are sequences of real flows of energy and information, with a measurable valency and trajectory in the physical world, and connecting with other real world events and processes. They have material consequences. Ever since Rappaport rather overstated the case, we have tended to shy away from saying as much, lest we be accused of being cultural materialists, or worse, neo-functionalists. More recently, Lansing (2006) has shown us how in Bali ritual performance is part of a complex system where ritual determines physical outcomes through particular events, literally inscribed in the landscape, while any one ritual is determined by the performance of another ritual elsewhere in the system. Although it might not be appro-

priate to speak of this as ‘a system of rituals’ (since ritual is not a separate sub-system of the totality), it is a social system in which cycles of rituals articulate and define the whole. Indeed, it has become an anthropological commonplace to see ritual as a way of providing a framework for understanding the passing of time; but, once in place, that framework is the basis for planning and coordinating other specific rituals that contribute towards that framework, simultaneously both agency and structure.

9.5 THE PRECISION OF PERFORMANCE: SOCIAL TENSION, RETRIBUTION AND REDEMPTION

More than anything else, the efficacy of Nuulu ritual depends on correct performance. In the first instance rituals must be performed. In the second instance all the elements must be performed in the correct order, at the correct time, in the correct place and in the correct context. This correctness guarantees a direct line of transmission from those ancestors who initiated the ritual and who therefore legitimate it. The same might be said to apply to words, but these do not have the same collective visibility in Nuulu rituals, and it is difficult to judge when they are uttered incorrectly and, if so, what the consequences might be. Writing of the Huulu, Valeri (1994b:207) states: ‘The truth of a story or of any other piece of knowledge [...] depends on its faithful transmission. Any change or embellishment would make it less true. The condition of truth for mythical tradition thus makes it officially untouchable and discourages elaboration. Furthermore, the parsimoniousness with which the tradition is handed down produces losses, as the Huulu constantly note.’ Emphasis on the importance of correct ritual physical performance, down to the smallest detail, is what Geertz (1964a:288) has called ‘orthopraxy’, rather than ‘orthodoxy’, where the accent is on the correctness of belief (cf. Staal 1990). But this attention to correctness of performance, precise choreography, counterpoint of direction and sequence, relationship between objects and words, is itself the cause for much delay.

Failure to perform a ritual, or failure to perform it correctly, or the intervention of some confounding factor, such as gender pollution, are described by Nuulu as *sana monne*. The root *sana*, from *isanae*, is cognate with Indonesian ‘salah’ and refers to any kind of mistake, but a concatenation of circumstances may in turn result in *siraka*, cognate with

Indonesian ‘celaka’. *Siraka* may refer to a mundane disaster, such as a fight (particularly with a neighbouring village), the death of someone, a serious wound and, more rarely, stealing. Bolton takes the view that sickness or failure to catch anything when hunting or fishing are not *siraka*, but the word is used in the context of the failure of ritual. A similar meaning attaches to *rosa*, used, say, for not filing a girl’s teeth before she falls pregnant, or not handling a corpse in the correct fashion. While in some cases the consequences of failed ritual appear simply to be understood as the mechanistic outcome of some cosmological causal logic, like an engineering failure resulting from a faulty calculation, the most usual explanation is that such failure is noted by ancestral spirits and that their anger results in retributive action. In order to understand the force of retribution it is useful to refer to some specific cases:

Case 1: Totemic infringement – 1 (June 1970):

When a snake prohibition is violated, one metre of red cloth and one medium-size plate (*piru mane*) must be paid to the chief of the appropriate local clan, otherwise women will be barren. This morning at about 7.30 Hotena (the *kapitane*), Naunepe and Konane (the chief) gathered in the *numa kapitane* Neipane-tomoien. Only Konane was in ceremonial dress. Before the latter had arrived, Naunepe had placed one medium-size plate and one metre of red cloth on the *rine* shelf. When Konane arrived he stood in front of the shelf and took the plate containing the cloth, and laid the cloth over his right shoulder. He then replaced the plate on the shelf and hung the cloth over the rattan line running parallel to the shelf, where it joined a series of other cloths put there on previous occasions. He offers up an invocation to the ancestors. This completed the ritual. The reason for this short ceremony was that some time previously (and the time lapse is significant), one of Naunepe’s sons had killed a snake, *monne* for Neipane. Naunepe’s son is now ill, on account of the fact, they believe, that he killed a snake. Last night the clan met in the *numa kapitane* to witness Naunepe paying the fine, which was placed on the shelf. This morning the cloth was moved to the abode of the ancestors.

Case 2: Totemic infringement – 2 (August 1970):

After the evening meal was over I (RFE) went to the *numa onate* Soumori to pay Komisi a fine for having kept snakes in the house I had borrowed, which had – amongst other things – been divined as the cause for the loss

of some money. As instructed by Masoli, I entered the house carrying one metre of folded red cloth on a plate underneath my right arm, both of which I had previously purchased at Ince Sun's store in Sepa. I walked towards Komisi, who was sitting down cross-legged, wearing ceremonial costume. I took one deliberate pace towards him with my right foot, took the plate and cloth from under my arm and with both hands presented it to Komisi. He received it with due reverence and put it to one side. Then the normal evening conversation continued. I discovered that two other similar fines were being paid at the same time by Soumori males from Bunara, who had also killed snakes. I asked Komisi why the fines could not be paid in Bunara and he said that the chief of Soumori there did not know the appropriate ritual for snake fines. After a short while, Komisi took my plate and cloth and came towards where I sat cross-legged on the floor. He placed the plate on my head with his right hand and offered up an invocation:

O [spirit of the] snake [which dwells within this plate], thou has witnessed that Tuan Roy has paid a fine of one *karanumu* and one *piruna msinae*. Let this be a sign that no ill should befall him again on account of snakes present in the house of Soumori. If it is the snake [spirit] that has hidden the money from us return it soon. If not we shall know it was a human who thieved. Send him [RFE] health and may the snake not trouble him again.

He then touched my head with the plate five times, blew in my right ear and then in my left and moved away. After blowing in my ear I had been instructed to exclaim *hae!*, meaning 'I hear' or 'I understand'. Standing on a small stool, Komisi then placed all three plates on the *rine* and hung the red cloths over the rattan line under the shelf. He made the traditional gesture of respect to the ancestors (*sinu onari hohua*) by bowing and touching the forehead and chin five times, uttered another long invocation, this time on behalf of the men from Bunara, and terminated the proceedings with another *sinu onari hohua*.

Case 3: Incorrect status of ritual officiant (March 1971):

Komisi thought that the cause of death of Aharena, the wife of Inane Matoke, was *monne sana*, in that previously Inane had assumed the ritual responsibilities of a *kapitane* (for example, in planting the *kokine*) though

he had not yet received the *tupu-tupue*. Earlier, Inane had maintained in a fit of grief that it was Iako, the chief of Matoke, who was responsible for her death by not performing ritual correctly during her preceding illness. He was annoyed that as soon as she had died the chief did not visit the corpse. Inane went round hitting the house, shouting insults and crying. He threatened to kill the chief and wielded his parang as if to give substance to the threat. He also threatened to destroy the sacred house. He said that he no longer wished to live under the jurisdiction of Iako and went to live in Aihisuru. (But in Aihisuru the problems of ensuring correct transmission of the title were also mounting, and by 2003 the old chief of Matoke-hanaie from Aihisuru had handed over to Sahune in the new settlement of Tahena Ukuna.)

Case 4: Delay in the performance of post-natal ceremony (February 1971):

Mariam is angry with her husband Retaone Soumori because she believes she has been in the *posune* too long after having a child – almost exactly one month. Retaone is reciprocally angry with Mariam because she is complaining. He maintains it is he alone who must do all the work, collecting the food and building the *numa nuhune* required to satisfy Soumori *monne*. Because his heart was angry he did not attend a clan *matahenne* or the subsequent feast.

As was explained to Bolton, the living are the limbs of the *nuhune*, responsible for carrying out *monne*, and failure to do it at all, or failure to perform it correctly (*sana nuhune*) can result in elbow or knee pains in an offender. Ritual failure, omission or incorrect actions can, in a pregnant female, make the uterus hot, causing birth defects such as a cleft palette, deafness or muteness. Such conditions may be triggered by a female marrying into a clan where women from other clans are expected to maintain their prohibitions, by religious conversion (*amanu nuhune*) or by failure to perform ceremonies that originate from the clan Matoke, which are incumbent upon all women. Using items banned in the menstruation hut, removing a baby from the birthing hut before the appropriate ritual has been undertaken or washing the old cloth in which it is wrapped may all lead to hunting failure for the men preparing for a feast, unless the women admit their wrongdoing beforehand.

A sickness deemed to be caused by spirit entities in this way must be expiated (*nahu*) with an appropriate invocation, confessing the wrong done and requesting healing to enable the protagonists to continue the performance of *monne*. This often involves ‘uplifting’ (*apusaa*) a fine (*sakati*), in the sense of raising the objects involved to the *rine* of a clan sacred house to appease those ancestral spirits who have been offended. Though fines are considered appropriate for minor violations, their form and size depend on the failure of performance involved. Minimally, they consist of an ordinary plate for the *rine* and a metre of red cloth, though for more serious breaches a large porcelain plate (*hanainae*) is necessary. Sometimes the plate, with the cloth upon it, is circulated five times over the head of an offender before being placed on the *rine*. The sickness is said to move away as the plate and cloth are moved away. Red cloth is appropriate where the violation is against a male founding ancestor of a clan. Minor offences against female *nuhune* spirits require two kinds or bracelet, a *piniae* made from shell and a *nitianae* made from metal. Such fines are the small currency of redemption, but increasingly they may also be acceptable – at least as an interim measure – when ancestors are displeased by land sales, or when children are sent to school. When it comes to the trade-off between short-term material advantage and mid-to-long-term disadvantage, Nuaulu are utterly pragmatic, in that they often take a calculated risk of offending the ancestors, but are prepared to make amends once the consequences of ancestral disapproval begin to kick in. They take the view that it is sometimes possible that the ancestors will ignore a minor violation.

There are common complaints about how young males fail to perform the rituals of hospitality traditionally accorded them, and are negligent in ensuring that all people in the village are invited to ceremonies. In one case, Bolton records how a ceremony at the *hatu pinamou* did not begin until almost six thirty in the evening, by which time it was getting dark. There are perceptions that such casualness and laziness is more common than it used to be, resulting in poor hunting returns.

Contrary to the functionalist axiom that rituals integrate social groups, Nuaulu ritual, seemingly, often has the opposite short-term effect; its preparation, organization and performance providing plenty of opportunities for tension and disagreement over who should be doing what, and when. The conflict may be evident both within and between clans. Tensions arise because rituals cannot happen unless certain ma-

terial conditions are satisfied, and yet, if they do not happen there is a risk that non-performance will incur ancestral wrath and increase the likelihood of misfortune. There is no reason to think that this is a particularly recent phenomenon, but on several occasions during the 1980s and 1990s tensions between clans increased, as when Neipani-tomoiin performed a *kahuae* in a clan sacred house rather than in the *suane*, as stipulated by Matoke; and in the failure of the chief of Sounaue to allow the Matoke chief to present the *kapitane* Sounaue with his *tupu-tupue*. Attempts are made to resolve problems of this kind in the long-term interest of all clans, and in this case there were extensive negotiations several months later about performing the ritual required to make amends. Such conflicts are often presented in terms of tensions between the living, who are not averse to change, and the ancestral dead, who are.

9.6 HOW AND WHY RITUALS CHANGE

Anthropologists have paid some attention to how rituals change over the long term. For example, Fardon (2006) has looked at the changes in the 'lela' ritual in Cameroon over a period of 100 years, while we have Bloch's (1986) celebrated study of Merina circumcision ceremonies for a period of some 200 years. There has also been some attention to the erosion of rituals under contemporary conditions, utilizing notions such as Jensen's (1951) concept of semantic depletion. Though I do not have the time depth that Bloch was able to access in his analysis, it will come as no particular surprise that in this study I am inclined to endorse his argument that to understand the properties of ritual it is helpful to view them over a longer timescale than that afforded by conventional ethnographic study. However, I cannot, on the basis of my material, also follow Bloch in asserting the stability of symbolic content despite changing social contexts. In fact, I rather think that if content changes, for whatever reason, then so must the structure, and vice versa; for context and content are always part of what Ardener (1989:171-3, 207-8) called a 'simultaneity'. Having said as much, the kind of 'cognitive architecture' that I described in Chapter 2 as the 'underarching structure of ritual' – bodily form and orientation, sensory qualities and movements in accordance with a specific geographic deixis – has, rather remarkably, endured over a period of 30 years, despite many changes of other kinds, including the physical

structure of villages, population movement and conflict. There is no doubt that Nuaulu ritual has changed over the course of two hundred years. Nuaulu are themselves aware of this and discuss it. It is recognized, for example, that the suite of rituals relating to the *suane* were not shared by all people calling themselves Nuaulu until the period after the 1880s, when clans began to congregate in the vicinity of Sepa.

Permanent and measurable changes are rooted in variation in the practice and interpretation of particular performances, and changes in the frequency and periodicity of events. I have reviewed all case material in order to detect patterns of variation in practice for particular categories of ritual, and how we might account for this. I have paid special attention to variation between clans and the toleration of inconsistency, and also to the planning phase and to people's negotiation of problems which they encounter, for example, acquisition of materials required for ritual, problems arising from the absence of key specialists, and inauspicious impediments. I have tried to explain why rituals were not held in particular cases, and to monitor negotiations between key participants on the detailed conduct of rituals, on why and how they might be permitted to vary, or why the status quo should be respected.

In examining the kinds of factors underlying change in Nuaulu ritual, influencing the distribution of events and their relative density through time, the first and most obvious must surely relate to time-budgeting. We have noted how the Nuaulu themselves see the rituals they have to perform as work and as a 'burden', increasingly so as governments, markets and new activities put pressure on existing time budgets. The temptation is always, therefore, to delay or simplify. Another factor is the availability of sacred valuables and other materials, and also the labour necessary to stage certain complex kinds of performance, including the building of sacred houses, and the demography and mobility of participating and contributing groups.

9.6.1 SIMPLIFICATION, SUBSTITUTION AND ELABORATION

It would be misleading to represent change in Nuaulu ritual as persistent erosion and depletion. New technologies require new rituals, as with the ceremonies now performed for outboard motors on adapted canoes. Similarly, various forms of content substitution have not been the consequence of the kind of short supply I will discuss below, but have

rather been encouraged because of their increased symbolic effect. For example, this is what is happening when bows and arrows were partially replaced, for a short time, by rifles in the *matahenne*, sometimes with the addition of firecrackers. Similarly, while in 1970 absolutely no alcohol was consumed on the second day of male puberty festivities, it has now – subject to availability – become almost a standard feature, characterized by displays of affable male drunkenness. Moreover, short-term changes due to the exigencies of particular situations – such as the movement of clans to Simalouw and Tahena Ukuna – have led to changes in the use of materials, such as planked boards for clan sacred houses and even for *posune*, that have subsequently reverted to traditional materials once these and the time to collect them have become available. In such cases it is clear that the time was found partly due to perceptions of ancestral displeasure

But the overall trend is admittedly one of simplification. At the present time the number of nights over which a *kahuae* is performed is much reduced, due to pressure of other work, and sometimes it has been dropped altogether for rituals where it was previously *de rigueur*. It was once standard for men's teeth to be filed as part of the *suane* completion ceremony, but this now rarely happens – partly because *suane* completion itself is such a rare event. Here we have an example of the simplification of ritual not only because of the difficulty in finding time to perform all of it, but also due to the unpleasantness of the experience for participants. When Bolton asked why sleeping out for the *matahenne* was no longer done in Rouhua, one informant told her that people were 'lazy'; again, it would seem a case of ritual changing because the pressure to perform all that is required has eased under conditions of modernization.

There is a pressure to homogenize ritual when several clans live together. There is a tension between different clans who live together with slightly differing rituals. Sharing social space and cooperation in ritual has led to convergence in performance. This has been an issue in recent years in regard to birth ritual and, as far as I am aware, has not been completely resolved. For example, the clan chief of Neipani-tomoién, Konane, was attempting during the last decade to simplify birth ritual, so that Neipane women need not spend all their time cooking for women who have married out. Many rituals once performed by individual clans for their separate hamlets (Ellen 1988b:120), with their slightly different symbolic and expressive content, are now shared and performed col-

lectively, having accommodated the practice of different clans, adopted the practice of one clan or arrived at some compromise between these two – an accommodation that continues as complications occur in Nuaulu attempts to strive for health and life.

There are constant attempts to simplify ceremonies or even abandon them. However, this is not always successful and can result in conflict between participants and perceived retribution from ancestral spirits. Thus, Neipani-tomoién have frequently tried to simplify practices, but have been thwarted by the anger of the ancestors who chastised them for not performing essential rituals. Thus, Bolton reports that in the mid 1990s, Neipani reverted to performing female puberty ceremonies in the same way as other clans, having previously attempted to simplify them. More recently the same clan has considered reinstating the feast following first-hair shaving due to increased sickness. They are thus caught in a dilemma: on the one hand, ritual is burdensome and time-consuming and people are under pressure to simplify and fast-track it; on the other hand, this risks social and supernatural displeasure, which may be reflected in higher levels of misfortune. As the population continues to increase, ceremonies furthermore have to be performed more frequently. In this respect we might be seeing an intensification of traditional activity as a result of a self-amplifying loop that can only culminate in an undermining of the system itself.

9.6.2 EXTERNAL EVENTS AND CONVERSION

Political and regional events have also impacted on ritual occurrence and form. The first ten years of my association with the Nuaulu were years of continued stability, reflected in regular, increasing and confident ritual cycles, with small changes in content to accommodate new possibilities and constraints. During the 1980s, however, there was much in-migration of non-local Butonese and, during the 1990s, the movement of Nuaulu to inland resettlement sites. This led to some disruption of cycles and modifications of practice. Intercommunal conflict beginning in 1999 led to the fleeing of Christian Nuaulu from old villages to settlements in West Seram. I shall return to these events below. Conversion to Islam or to Christianity generally means the cessation of involvement in animist rituals. However, because of continuing kinship ties with animists, Christians (and, to a lesser extent, Muslims) may continue to participate

in the life-cycle rituals of animist kin. In addition, Christian women residing in animist villages are still expected to enter the *posune* at childbirth. I have also witnessed an occasion – in 1971 – when Muslims returned and participated in *kahuae*, something barely imaginable by 2000.

9.6.3 AVAILABILITY OF OBJECTS

For Nuaulu, objects are regularly the currency, and sometimes the explicit focus, of rituals: Chinese porcelain, European plates, Asian cloth. If these items cannot be obtained, or are in short supply, problems emerge and the ritual may not take place. Timorese textiles, also in demand, are obtainable with difficulty; but the much-coveted ‘patola’ cloths of Indian origin are now not available at all. Where objects are locally produced, delays arise mainly through lack of time to engage in ritual production; where objects are imported, even where resources are available to acquire them, their availability is ultimately not under local control.

Thus, some changes take place because the material objects required are in short supply or unavailable altogether. This is especially the case when it comes to objects derived from trade. Nuaulu exchange and religion is very much historically dependent on the circulation of trade objects, and the symbolic value accorded them is reflected in myth and stories about the relationship between insiders and outsiders. They are very much the currency of ritual and vital for their effective execution. The main objects in this category are textiles and plates and, to a lesser extent, objects made from metal, pottery and shell.

Of the textiles, *karanunu* has not so far been a problem. Although not always of the desired quality, red cotton cloth, usually manufactured in Java, is available in local shops, and as Nuaulu become more mobile through the improvement of the transport infrastructure and the availability of cash, so increasingly red cloth can be bought in Ambon. ‘Kain Timor’ are available from itinerant sellers, but their price has been inflated by the tourist demand and the quality is not always thought to be appropriate given the increasing use of cheap imported thread and commercial dyes. ‘Kain patola’ (*patona aie*), however, are a much greater problem. In 1990 there were only perhaps six in the entire Nuaulu area, as follows: Rouhua: Matoke (1); Sounaue (2); Bunara: Sopanane (1); Sounaue-aipura (1); Tahena Ukuna: Kamama (1). Unlike other trade textiles, *patona aie* are not exchanged between clans, but are for a clan

sacred house alone, inalienable, and necessary for initiating the building rituals of the clan house and *suane*. The present tattered Matoke cloth in Rouhua was acquired by Solatu, grandfather of Tuisa, the chief of the clan in 2003, and both Tuisa and his father before him have been concerned that the inability to acquire replacement cloths will threaten their ability to undertake the rituals.

There is a similar issue relating to large porcelain plates. The Nuaulu have been under pressure to sell these over the years to itinerant traders, and most of the plates in non-animist villages have long been sold. At the same time there is loss through breakage. The plates that have been sold disappear into middle-class Indonesian homes and on to the international antique market. The traditional source of such plates has long dried up, and replacement of such items represents a real problem. Some are available for sale in Ambon – the very ones acquired from people like the Nuaulu – but because of market pressure these are now available only at prices that Nuaulu cannot afford.

The consequence of the unavailability of a particular category of item has been, in the short term, delay in executing ritual and, therefore, ancestral wrath on account of tardiness. In the long term, objects can be substituted with others, or the ritual requirement may be abandoned altogether. The ease of the process of substitution, though, depends very much on the importance of the item in the ritual. It is thus easier to substitute plastic bracelets on a headdress for the traditional Goromese shell bracelets, than to replace the ‘kain patola’ with a second rate piece of ‘ikat’ or printed cloth. In addition, a social system articulated through the circulation of red cloth and plates is lubricated and inflated by the entry of new objects into the system through the increasing willingness to pay fines as a way of relieving the immediate and growing burden of ritual work. This means that infractions of the rules underlying the system are, paradoxically, required to maintain it.

9.7 SIZE MATTERS: DEMOGRAPHY, MOBILITY AND VIABILITY

I have provided numerous hints at various points in this analysis as to how demography impacts on the performance of ritual. It is, of course, self-evident that it must, but there have been few attempts to show exactly how it might work in particular ethnographic cases, and I shall

now provide an overview for the Nuaulu. Barth (1975:260) reports a case where almost an entire senior generation died in a very short time, resulting in the extinction of the final three stages of a male initiation ritual. Depending on the range of age included, small numbers can make for extremely infrequent performance and thereby risk extinction, and in the Baktaman case we are talking extremely small numbers (183 in 1968). For this reason it is not at all surprising that Barth should be drawn to frequency as a phenomenon, especially as he claims that what shapes a performance is the ability of seniors responsible for staging initiations to recall events. In a sense, demography shows us how a form of natural selection impacts on the Nuaulu cultural population, leading to the extinction of certain rituals due to the inability of the performing units to conduct them and, indeed, in some cases the extinction of ritual-performing units themselves. Countering this tendency is the ability of other clans, through demographic growth, to increase the frequency of production and their material ability to resource rituals and, therefore, to more effectively reproduce cycles and social groups.

In 1972 the population of the island of Seram was 164,626; by 1983 it had risen to 247,990; by 2000, it was 346,391 – a doubling over a 30 year period. The high percentage increase for the subdistrict of Amahai (and also for Kairatu), and within that the *desa* of Sepa, and within that the population of ethnic Nuaulu, are all broadly comparable (Figure 9.5, Table 9.2). We can attribute this to a combination of rising fertility, decreasing mortality due to improved medical attention, and in-migration through both spontaneous and government-planned transmigration. In the Wahai and Kairatu subdistricts the transmigration programmes had brought in over 31,000 Javanese and other peoples from outside the province by 1990 (Kantor Statistik Provinsi Maluku 1989:155). Since 1980 there has been a major programme of transmigration, which has opened up, in particular, the lower reaches of the Ruatan and Nua valleys to local migrants from Ambon-Lease and from other parts of the Moluccas. Indeed, an entire new administrative subdistrict with a population, in 1983, of 6,421 has been created on the Wae Siru tributary of the Nua to accommodate the inhabitants of the islands of Teon, Nila and Serua, displaced by chronic seismic activity (Kantor Statistik Kabupaten Maluku Tengah 1984:24). The difference between the subdistrict and Seram as a whole is therefore largely accounted for by it being the destination of large numbers of in-migrants from the 1980s onwards. In the

case of Sepa, the desa absorbed some of this increase as a result of the re-drawing of boundaries to incorporate part of the new transmigration zones, but it was also on the receiving end of high levels of spontaneous immigration. Nuaulu areas, too, have received immigrants, but these are not included in the figures used for the graph.

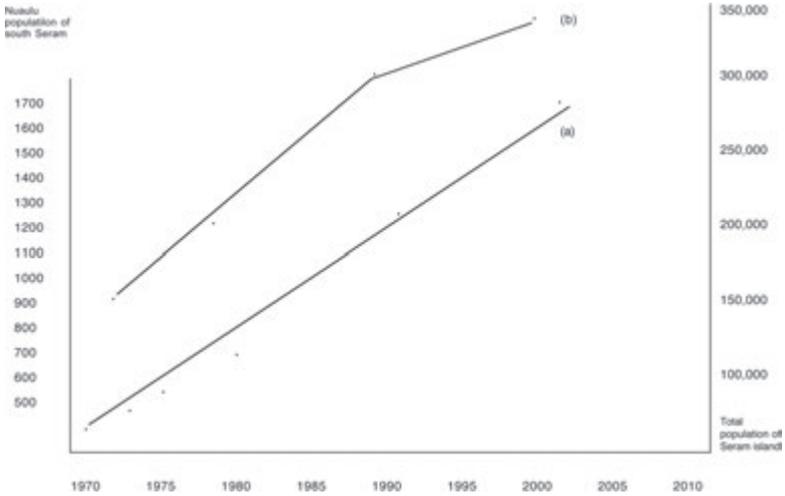


Figure 9.5. Growth in Nuaulu population compared with Seram as a whole, 1970-2000.

Key: a = Nuaulu population; b = Seram as a whole.

Our particular interest is with the Nuaulu, but also with the sub-set of animists as a whole. I explained in Chapter 1 how use of the term ‘Nuaulu’ in South Seram tends to focus on animists, but may also include some convert Christians – though rarely Muslims. Of the 1983 population figures for Seram as a whole, about 67% were Muslim, well over half of which were distributed between the subdistricts of West Seram and East Seram. Official figures at this time place the number of animists at 312. Even if we confine ourselves to those individuals who self-report as animists (using terms such as ‘animisma’, ‘suku adat’, ‘hindu’) – that is, ignoring the large number of persons effectively engaged in various animist practices alongside formal confession to a canonical religion – this is a gross underestimate. Looking at central Seram alone, although in 1969

	Rouhua	Nuauulu	Sepa (local unit)	Amahai (subdistrict)	Seram Island
1971	180	496	2667	18,538	
1972					164,626
1973		544			
1975		575			
1980				30,693	
1981		747			
1983					247,990
1985			5955		
1986	218	744	5976		
1987			5989		
1988			6081		
1990		1256			312,839
1993			6902		
1994				53,928	
1996					
1998					
2000					346,391
2001	624 ¹	1686 ²		61,185	

Table 9.2. Growth of Nuauulu population in south Seram compared with that at other levels of administrative grouping, 1970-2001.

Sources: Rouhua and Nuauulu data: Ellen, field surveys; Sepa (desa) data: Kantor Camat, 9 March 1990 (unpublished), Kantor Wilayah Kecamatan Seram Selatan 1993; Amahai (kecamatan) data: Kantor Sensus dan Statistik Propinsi Maluku 1971; Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Maluku Tengah 2001, 2002; Seram data: Ellen 1978: 10; Kantor Statistik Kabupaten Maluku Tengah 1984: 24; Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Maluku Tengah 2001.

Notes: 1: includes 350 animists, 147 Muslims, 100 Protestants and 27 Catholics. 2: estimate based on projection of Rouhua figures.

the number of animist Huauulu was reported at 139 (Valeri 1980:180), a number hardly viable for the reproduction of most traditional rituals, south-coast Nuauulu numbered 496 in 1970, and I estimate that since then the population of animists alone has probably doubled. In 1971

the population of Rouhua was 180, which included no more than two or three Christian households. Muslim converts, of whom there were a few, had moved out of the village altogether, as had some Nuaulu who had married Christians. By 1998 the overall figure for Rouhua had risen to 624 inhabitants, 350 of which were animists. Of the 147 Muslims, most were incoming Butonese, a few of which had married animist women. The 100 Protestant and 27 Catholics were all Nuaulu animist converts. In 2003 I was able to consult the raw data for the 2000 census for all Nuaulu animist villages other than Rouhua, thanks to Hunimora Neipane-tomoi in Nuaulu Lama, though the figures were not disaggregated according to village. I was able to add to this the official figures for Nuaulu animists (350), giving a total of 2,200. Since 2000 the population will have increased still further. But despite local resistance, the underlying trend suggests continuing decline and eventual extinction of non-syncretic animist beliefs. The paradox faced by Nuaulu is that, despite their desire to remain neutral in terms of religious politics, their children continue to marry Christians and Muslims, and are therefore marrying into potential demographic trouble.

Table 9.3 summarizes population figures in relation to different Nuaulu settlements, indicating village abandonment and the establishment of new settlements. As we have seen, the period 1970-1980 saw the first major influx of transmigrants into Seram, mostly to West Seram, though the first ten years of my fieldwork was one of continued stability for Nuaulu in terms of settlement. By the early 1980s, transmigration was becoming important in the Amahai subdistrict. In addition, there was much in-migration of non-local Butonese to the Sepa area, and a movement of Nuaulu to the transmigration sites of Kilo Sembilan and Kilo Duabelas. The first permanent residents of Simalouw (the Nuaulu section of Kilo Sembilan) arrived in 1983. By 2003 there were over 56 Nuaulu households in the transmigration area.

It is important to note that this movement was in terms of clans (see Table 1.1). Firstly, the clans in Aihisuru – including, crucially, Matokehanaie – moved to Kilo Sembilan, eventually moving in 1985 to Tahena Ukuna. This is a Nuaulu settlement within the large, ethnically and religiously mixed transmigration complex of Kilo Duabelas, comprising also Bandanese and Bugis. When I visited Aihisuru in 1990, all that remained were fruit trees, charred and rotting house timbers and other debris. One Niamonai clan, Numanaeta, moved away to the north coast, though it

had returned to Kilo Duabelas by 2001. Other Nuaulu in other villages followed between 1996 and 2003, though the intercommunal conflict of 2000 led to the fleeing of Christian Nuaulu from Rouhua, Hatuheno, Nuelitetu and Kilo Sembilan to Waraka and Wai Pia. Some of the living space vacated in the vicinity of Sepa led to the re-establishment of a settlement at Iha, of refugees from Saparua, with whom Sepa has a special relationship. More Nuaulu drifted from Kilo Sembilan to Kilo Duabelas, such that Simalouw was eventually incorporated into Tahena Ukuna. In 2003 there had been less movement from clans and households formerly in Rouhua, though two Matoke-pina households (Saniau and Saune) were already there, partly reflecting an ongoing and long-term dispute between Soumori, Neipane-tomoien and Matoke-pina concerning the succession of secular leadership in Rouhua. There was talk of the rest of the village moving, though an alternative scenario envisaged moving to a site on the River Mon, where there is more space, away from the complications of interactions with migrants. This is reminiscent of what the Dutch colonial officer Tichelman (1960:188-9) reported for the early twentieth century, of Nuaulu establishing 'Potemkin villages' inland from Sepa, where they could practise their rituals undisturbed.

Geographical movement and dispersal of clans has proved to be a major impediment to ritual reproduction. Historically, we know that Nuaulu before 1880 lived in clan hamlets distributed throughout the highlands. Sometimes these may have been individual *numa*. After 1880 Nuaulu moved to Sepa, and we have seen that this process of concentration had major implications for Nuaulu ritual: cessation of headhunting, more cooperation between clans (perhaps more convergence between clans) and the increasing importance of the shared *suana*. Thus, by 1980 a certain stability of settlement had been achieved, and people had come to rely on the close proximity of different houses and clans for the performance of ritual. They were interdependent, yet continuing to assert a theoretical autonomy. As we have seen, an entire village is often involved in certain categories of ritual performance, and even more so in the preparation of rituals for other clans (for example, in matters regarding food and ritual objects), partly because some of the smaller clans do not have the internal resources. This drawing in of other clans is practically effected and socially legitimated through emphasis on the morality of kinship and affinal linkage, and the injunction that 'all must help' is felt binding. When the clan Numanaeta moved to Rumah Olat

it faced major problems in arranging those rituals that required the involvement of other clans, and its return by 2003 was attributed partly to the logistical difficulties the separation created for ritual performance. The position was similar with the movement of clans to Simalouw and Tahena Ukuna.

Administrative unit	Local settlement	Year							
		1971	1973	1975	1981	1986	1990	1996	2001
Niamonai (Nuaulu Lama)		166							
	Watane	61	+	+	+	+	+	+	185
	Aihisuru	44	+	+					
	Hahualan	61	+	+	+	+	+	+	180
Bunara		150	+	+	+	+	+	+	455
Rouhua		180	+	+	+	218	+	+	624
Simalouw (Kilo Sembilan) Tahena Ukuna (Kilo Duabelas)									242
Total		496	544	575	747	744	1256	+	1686

Table 9.3. Population of different Nuaulu settlements, indicating mobility between settlements and the creation and abandonment of settlements.

Source: Figures are taken from field censuses conducted in 1971 and 1986, and official local census figures held in Watane and Rouhua; + indicates habitation at named settlement location where figures are unavailable.

So, the overall size of a clan may be crucial for effective reproduction of rituals and, therefore, for the ritual reproduction of the clan itself. Nuaulu are well aware of the importance of clan fecundity. Elders of Sounaue-ainakahata and Soumori, for example, note that once they were both large clans, but now they are much smaller. Napuae attributes this decline to less effective *monne*. A clan on the verge of demographic collapse may not be able to afford the luxury of a *nemakae* marriage between cross-cousins. However, Nuaulu measure the importance of a clan partly in terms of the fecundity of its imported women, but also in terms of its symbolic standing in mythic history, as shared with other clans. Serious loss of absolute numbers has historically led to incorporation by

others through the merging of descent groups, most recently Neipane-nahatue with Neipane-nesinopu in Bunara.

I have examined the sex ratios for each clan and the implications in each case. If the sex ratio is such that a clan produces few female offspring, it may be many years between first-menstruation rituals; if there are insufficient young men of an age to warrant performance of a male puberty ritual, then it will not happen. In other words, the demography of individual and exchanging clans will have an impact on the frequency and periodicity of rituals. This can lead to various paradoxes, such as a clan being on the verge of demographic collapse (such as Matoke-pina) but rich in terms of valuables. If there are lots of females these will bring in wealth, but it is males that are needed to effectively reproduce the house and clan. Tensions arise because rituals cannot happen unless certain material conditions are satisfied; yet, if they do not happen, there is a risk that non-performance will incur ancestral wrath and increase the likelihood of misfortune (Howe 2000).

What is crucial for a clan is not simply its total size at any one moment, but the age and sex profile. Figure 9.6 shows the sex ratios for different Rouhua clans in 1971; note, however, that the females are those for which the clan is their natal home and not those who provide offspring to perpetuate their natal clan. This accounts for the discrepancy with the total population published earlier (Ellen 1978:224), as in 1971 there were two additional females who had natal clans (Sopanani and Pia) from outside the village. As the male population grows, *matahenne* become more frequent (Figure 9.7), their performance is witnessed by more people and performers are more confident. Also, the age range of neophytes shortens, as there are more youths of a suitable age. There is also less necessity to hold joint ceremonies with other clans. The frequency of *matahenne*, therefore, in a crude way, reflects male birth rate. I have been able to show, on the basis of Nuaulu recall, census data and demographic extrapolation, that numbers of individuals inducted, and the ceremonies themselves, doubled for the village of Rouhua between 1945 and 1975; while numbers rose steeply to a high point of 25 individuals for the most recent five-year interval, that is, up to 2003. A complicating factor, however, is how these figures translate into clan membership, since the number of eligible neophytes per clan tends to determine the urgency of the ritual.

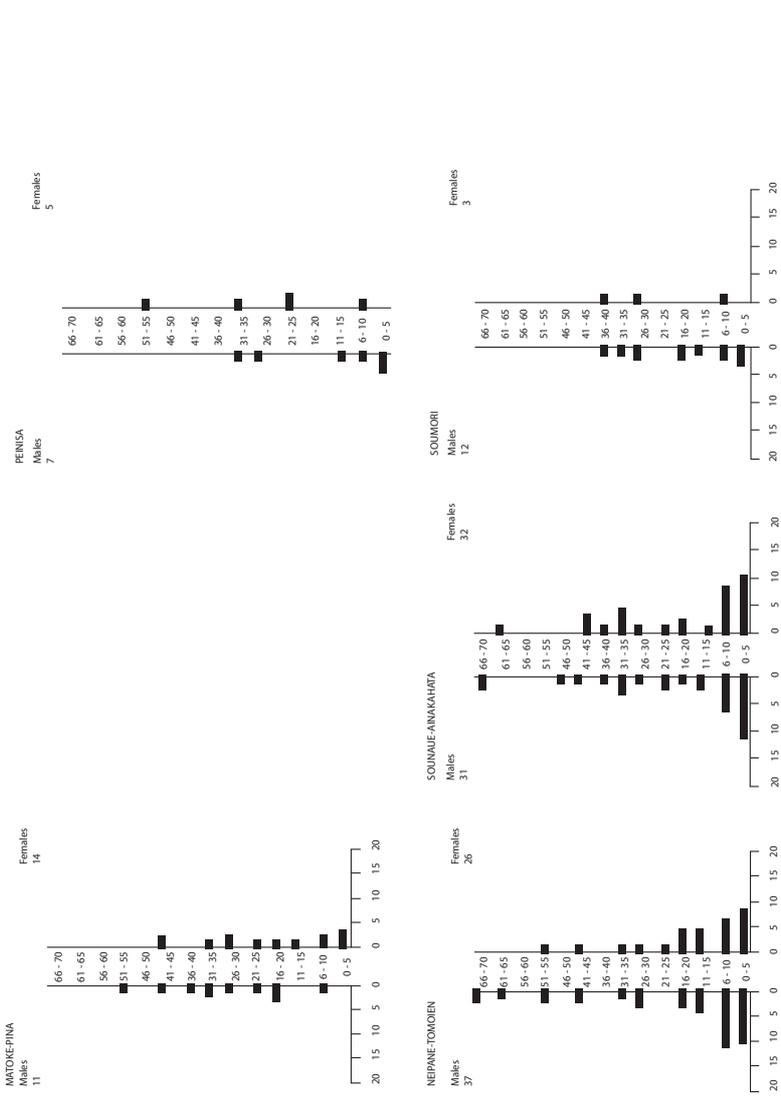


Figure 9.6. Population pyramids for five clans in Routhua, 1971.

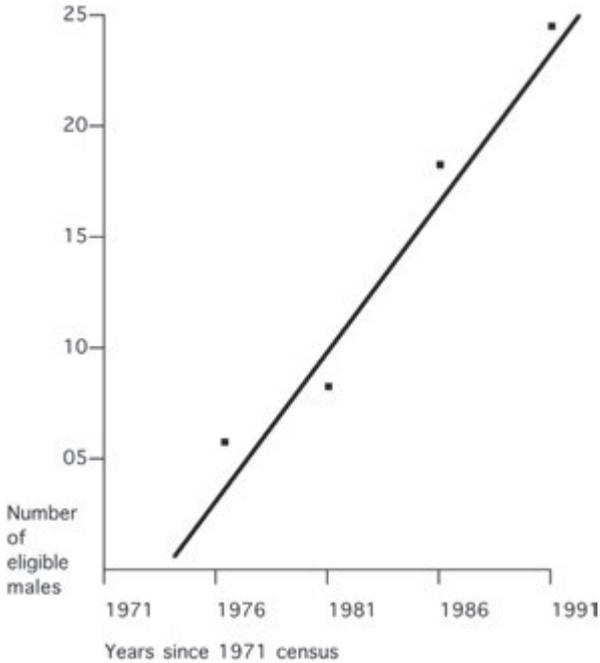


Figure 9.7. Number of males available for puberty ceremonies in successive generations 1971-1991.

Source: Projection of figures from 1971 Rouhua census. The figures assume no child mortality after the age of 5.

Clan women, of course, do not contribute to the reproductive success of their natal clan, but to that of other clans. Nevertheless, females are important for regenerating the material and symbolic wealth of the clan and, therefore, its effective reproduction. Only through distributing women can you accumulate wealth in plates and red cloth. As I have already noted, though numerous females provide more opportunities for acquiring symbolic wealth, only males can ultimately reproduce the clan, as it is constituted around a patriline. The problems faced by individual clans are therefore due to sex ratio rather than overall size. There has also been a growing tension between women, who increasingly prefer to

curb their unrestrained fecundity through birth control, and the ancestors (voiced through the elders), who want the clans to grow. Indeed, the side effects of birth control technology are sometimes blamed on the ancestors. The 1971 census figures for Rouhua indicate little difference between males, at 93, and females, at 87. Early mortality of females must surely be largely accounted for in terms of death in childbirth or complications of female reproductive health. The figure of 22 females and 25 males between 0 and 5 might just be explained through differential neglect of female babies, though there is no evidence of selective female infanticide, and – as we have seen – there is an incentive to maximize the number of clan women in order to obtain those valuables necessary to reproduce the clan. The slightly lower number of females would not appear to influence performance in rituals overall, though skewed ratios in particular clans may be an issue. The most frequently reported ritual events – birth rituals – occur with equal frequency for male and female offspring, suggesting that gender-specific induced natal mortality is not an issue. Birth rituals are also, as one might predict, most common during periods of rising fertility.

Finally, the overall demographic health of a clan may conceal differences between its constituent sacred houses, and these may have consequences for ritual reproduction. Thus, some houses are more fecund and resource-rich than others and will be able more easily to mobilize for house-oriented ceremonies, including the building of new physical houses. I showed in Chapter 7 how the number and pattern of clan houses has varied between 1971 and 2003. Thus, individual sacred houses may, and indeed have, suffered from demographic collapse, while clans as a whole have prospered.

So, these are the kinds of observations we can make about how demographic factors influence the transmission of ritual practice for a period of approximately 30 years at the end of the twentieth century. We can only speculate about how demography impacted on ritual reproduction at an earlier period, though we can be sure that it had a significant – if not a more significant – effect. Early reports of Nuaulu population figures are clearly speculative, although what we know of the history of Nuaulu interaction with the Muslim domain of Sepa, and in particular oral histories of absorption of Nuaulu clans into the domain of Sepa, suggest a decline from the late seventeenth century onwards. By the nineteenth century the numbers mentioned in official reports

are very low; for example, Van der Crab (1862:188-9) gives 164 Nuaulu compared with 588 Muslims in Sepa. However, this was before Nuaulu concentration on the coast and, therefore, given the wide distribution of Nuaulu clans at this time in hamlets throughout the central highlands, may be a considerable underestimation. After 1880, with most Nuaulu close to Sepa, the occasional figures provided continue to be low. Perhaps we should therefore infer from this that, with such small numbers, ritual reproduction was even more problematic than observed for the period after 1970. Indeed, the period since 1970 may be extremely atypical given the substantial expansion of population that characterised it.

9.8 THE CONSEQUENCES OF CIVIL DISTURBANCE, 1999-2003

I have noted above the pattern of in-migration, both of spontaneous migrants and of migrants settling in the new Ruatan transmigration zone. The former have tended to arrive as individual families and settle in the Nuaulu areas through a process of negotiation with the desa of Sepa and the relevant Nuaulu village and clan heads. They have bought or rented Nuaulu land and, although there has been some friction over resource issues, a *modus vivendi* was established during this period, with settlers adopting some Nuaulu customs and subsistence practices and generally respecting their traditions. The situation with the government migrants in the transmigration zones is very different. While the zones themselves were created with some degree of recognition that they were on Nuaulu traditional land, and Nuaulu were compensated financially and by being offered plots and houses in the various transmigration areas along the Ruatan Valley, the relations they have established with particular groups of newcomers have not always proved to be smooth, particularly with Christian settlers from the nearby islands of Ambon, Haruku, Saparua and Nusalaut. I have reported in detail on a head-taking incident that occurred in 1993 (Ellen 2003) which received a lot of distorted publicity at the provincial level, and which followed at least 50 years of apparent abstinence from the taking of heads. I was able to show that whatever else this episode tells us about the latency of head-taking beliefs, it had at its roots a quarrel over resources, in this case regarding access to sago groves between people from Rouhua and Christian Saparuans. It is clear that resource-access issues have a bearing on the performance of ritual,

but equally we might argue that, in some way, the events influenced the ritual practice more directly, since the decapitated heads that were returned to the village had to be dealt with in the context of a 'semantically depleted' tradition and led to some rapid reformulation of appropriate ritual management, in this case burying the heads in the post-hole of the north-east corner of a clan sacred house. At the time, and certainly during my subsequent field visits of 1996 and 2003, it was assumed that this was a one-off incident erupting as some kind of cultural default mechanism or aberration, and that, as Saete said, Nuaulu are now committed to 'a religion of plates and red cloth'. However, in July 2005 a second incident occurred, this time not involving Nuaulu from Rouhua, but instead, from Tahena Ukuna. Two mutilated bodies of Ambonese men from Holoa village were found in the Ruatan River, with their heads, hearts, tongues and hands removed. The three culprits (Patti Sounaue, Sekeranane Soumori and Nusi Sounaue) were said by the prosecution at their trial to have been instructed to bring back two heads required for a sacrifice connected with the repair of a Sounaue sacred house. They were subsequently sentenced to death for murder by the Masohi district court, while three others (Saniau Sounaue, Tohonu Soumori and Sumon Sounaue) were sentenced to long prison sentences. My information on the 2005 incident is entirely based on press reports⁵ and in comparing these reports with those of the 1993 incident it is clear that certain information on the motivations of the culprits is inaccurate. Nevertheless, the incident, again, reflects Nuaulu existential angst as to their vulnerability as a group – being not only a material vulnerability, but also a fear that their ritual cycles will not be reproduced.

I have examined above, some general kinds of change in Nuaulu ritual practice, though the special circumstances of fieldwork, planned for 2002 and postponed until 2003, invite some comment on how the events that precipitated the postponement have influenced Nuaulu ritual cycles. In 2003 I was able to examine at first hand the consequences for ritual performance and religious continuity of communal unrest in the province of Maluku since early 1998. These disturbances mainly involved (and continue to involve to a lesser degree, at the time of writing) conflict between Muslims and Christians. The destruction of much effective infrastructure at the provincial centre in Ambon led to increased

⁵ *Jakarta Post*, Ambon; Radio Vox Populi, Ambon, 1 February 2006. I am grateful to Watze Kamstra (personal communication, 14 February 2006) for drawing my attention to these reports.

administrative and economic independence on the periphery, reinforcing traditional practices and the security people find in them (see for instance Soselisa 2007). As Nuaulu animists do not belong to either of the two main confessional groups involved in the conflict, it is an open question as to how they perceive it, and the extent to which they are caught up in it. Animists in Rouhua were not affected directly, though those married into Christian or Muslim families were drawn in more than others. Historically, Nuaulu have maintained equally strong allegiances with the Muslim settlement of Sepa (the domain of which they are formally a constituent part) and with Christian villages, with which there has been most intermarriage and conversion. One sacred house was burned down in Kilo Duabelas, probably by aggrieved migrants from the village of Porto on Saparua, following the 1993 head-taking affair, but the house had been rebuilt by 2003. The conflict has, therefore, raised intriguing identity issues for the Nuaulu who, as animists, claim to be neutral, and which I have discussed elsewhere (Ellen 2004). Nevertheless, the events might also have been thought to have had severe repercussions on the effective reproduction of ritual cycles.

As the conflict unfolded from 1999 onwards, local populations which had previously been religiously mixed, and which in part accounted for their peaceful coexistence in terms of a shared underlying symbolic world view ('agama Nunusaku'; see Bartels 1977, 1978, 1979), began to fragment, with Christian minorities fleeing to areas where Christians were in the majority, and Muslim minorities fleeing to the safety of areas with a Muslim majority. Nuaulu Christians fled from the Muslim *kerajaan* of Sepa to Waraka and Wai Pia, although the animist majority remained, most importantly because no pressure was put upon them by either side. Caught in the middle, they were able to continue their rituals. Population displacement had an obvious impact on timing and on mobilizing potential participants from different settlements separated by militia and government activity, while market disruption affected the ability to acquire materials necessary for ritual and feasting. Contrary to what might be expected, the frequency of male puberty rituals did not decline during the period 1999 and 2003, but remained stable.

The religious conflict between 1999 and 2003 was a kind of interlude for Nuaulu, in which they were able to observe some of the advantages of not being embroiled in one kind of intercommunal violence. But the events themselves took place against a backdrop of what Nuaulu have

long regarded as government discrimination against their religion and ritual practices that found its ideological roots in the requirement to observe the national doctrine of Pancasila (for similar accounts, see Tsing 1987). Nuaulu regularly complain that this results in them finding work (by which they mainly mean office work) only with difficulty. The same applies to recruitment to the armed services, access to tertiary education, and to obtaining government documents such as identity cards, marriage and birth certificates, and certificates of land entitlement. This they widely attribute to their religion not being recognized under the rubric of Pancasila, but this has not always been such a pressing issue for them as it has become in recent years. One reason for this is that Nuaulu were for a long time mistakenly described by the Dutch and by some fellow Indonesians as ‘orang Hindu’, bracketing them with Hindu Balinese. As Geertz (1964b) observes, being Hindu Bali has been a major problem for the Balinese in the context of Pancasila, with its emphasis on monotheism and religions of the book, but as Geertz (1972) was also able to subsequently point out, Balinese Hinduism was finally admitted as an official religion in 1962. I have described elsewhere (Ellen 1988b) how this recognition and the conflation of ‘Hindu Bali’ with ‘orang Hindu’ had the unintended and unexpected consequence in certain contexts of granting privileges to Nuaulu during the 1970s. By the 1980s, however, Pancasila had become an impediment for animists in the subdistrict of Amahai in particular, as well as in the religious politics of Indonesia more generally. The situation resembled that evoked by Atkinson (1987:172) in her characterization of Pancasila as being, paradoxically, a model of cultural inclusiveness, but one of exclusiveness in its application.

Nuaulu have long interacted with Christians and Muslims – a recorded history that we can at least push back to the late seventeenth century. However, the period since has seen a gradual decline in the number of animists, a decline that accelerated after the 1880s. As the Nuaulu population has declined, certain of their rituals have come to play an increasingly important role in their identity. Thus, Nuaulu are widely renowned for their puberty rituals, known in Ambonese Malay as ‘kasimandi pinamou’ and ‘adat cidako’. With the outbreak of unrest between Maluku’s Muslim and Christian populations these rituals, like the wearing of distinctive red turbans by adult males which had long been an ethnic marker (Ellen 1988b), began to actually afford some degree of protection against physical harassment.

9.9 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this monograph I have been able to demonstrate frequency and periodicity in ritual performance using data acquired over a period of almost 40 years of intermittent ethnographic research in the same place. I have demonstrated that ritual is a material activity that operates and is scheduled within a framework of constraints that include ecological factors (both seasonal and historical), limitations imposed by time-budgeting for a range of other activities, and changing economic circumstances. In this chapter in particular, I have reviewed the way in which frequency and periodicity vary according to different categories of ritual activity, and how individual life cycles – the developmental cycles of domestic groups, clans and wider collectivities – influence occurrences and opportunities and, thereby, the fidelity of transmission. I have also reviewed how differential frequency impacts on the coherence of ritual, whether learning rituals is based on the continual reassembling of quasi-modular elements, or whether there are ‘model rituals’ which serve as templates for the reproduction of others, with more frequent influencing less frequent categories of event. Reproducing ritual, it would seem, is not simply a matter of vertical transmission within a particular category of event, but of oblique experience of both subjects and observers in witnessing rituals throughout their lives, and of the transfer of generic ‘schemes’ (or scripts or recipes) of ritual performance from one ritual to another – as much a ‘tangled web’ as descent with modification. In this context, the ‘modes of religiosity’ distinction, while helpful in thinking things through, becomes rather fuzzy.

I have examined how ritual cycles interlock, how they are sequenced in terms of series of ‘enabling’ rituals, and how a blockage in one part of the system can have ramifying repercussions. Timing issues are critical. I have also tried to show how all this is relevant to understanding how and why rituals change, and how viability of ritual transmission is affected by simplification, substitution, elaboration, external impact and conversion, the availability of what we might call ‘*materia ritualis*’, and the importance of demography and population mobility. Finally, I have suggested that the civil disturbances on Seram between 1998 and 2001 provide us with some unexpected insights into the resilience of the Nuaulu ritual system.

My main concern throughout has been primarily with the emergent properties of ritual systems rather than with the cognition of ritual on its own account. However, there are moments when these properties can only be explained in relation to the effectiveness of ‘soft’ cognitive architecture. Whitehouse on the one hand, and McCauley and Lawson on the other, have over a period of years engaged in an exchange of ideas on this subject, with qualified acceptance and rejection of the other, such that their disentanglement is not always easy for the interested outsider. Although my work converges with some of the theoretical work of both, it does not set out to test their ideas as a coherent body, and certainly does not try to fit data into one or the other of their frameworks, or resolve the differences between the two. I concur with both in ascribing paramount importance to frequency as a general explanatory concept (Whitehouse 2004:142-4, McCauley and Lawson 2002:16) – a major theme of this monograph. However, the formulation offered by Lawson and McCauley (1990), perhaps both because and in spite of their initial attempt at multiple-variable algebraic formalization, does not account adequately for variations in transmissive frequency, while their proposed causal pathways are difficult to operationalize ethnographically. The more complex the model becomes, the less explaining it seems to do.

9.10 POSTSCRIPT: THE END OF RITUAL?

How can we generalize about the resilience of systems of ritual practices to innovation, about the depletion of their parts and, ultimately, about the conditions for their collapse? The sequence of events that lead to the extinction of traditional religious systems has been discussed often enough, and one way of looking at it is in the context of themes developed in this book, as collapse is the failure to reproduce ritual effectively through the infrequency of its performance. One model involves a gradualist process of attrition and conversion to some world religion – what we might call ‘the cultural depletion’ model. Opposed to this is the ‘cultural collapse’ model, in which there may be an initial period of attrition, but where this inevitably leads to collapse, either because of the cultural contradictions that build up through some encounter between the old and new regime of ideas and power, or because of an accumulation of practical problems related to the performance of traditional rituals to an unbearable level.

The moderate version of this model is provided by Firth (1970:304-406) for Tikopia, in which gradual attrition culminates in a 'tipping point', followed by a shorter period of further depletion until 'final conversion'. Firth (1970:305) illustrates this using demographic data on the relative numbers of traditionalists and converts for a series of years between 1901 and 1956. The more extreme version of the 'collapse' model is presented by Sahlins (1981:55) for Hawaii, quoting Kroeber (1948:403), for whom the cause was 'cultural fatigue':

Abruptly, so it has seemed to students of Hawaiian history: a whole religion destroyed in a day, the nineteenth of November 1819.

One can appreciate that in such remote Oceanic systems, long separated from exposure to other systems of alternative ideas and practices, the collapse model is an understandable response. What is interesting and different about Seram and other traditional religious systems in many parts of eastern Indonesia is that they have been part of, or on the fringes of, the world system of commodities and ideas for a long time (Ellen 2003). The Nuaulu first came into contact with the Dutch in the late seventeenth century, and we might reasonably assume that this was preceded by a long period of contact with other traders with whom they exchanged local products for textiles and metals. In the case of those animist populations and ritual systems that have survived there has been, therefore, a long period of accommodation. We can see in the Huaulu (described by Valeri) and in the Nuaulu (described by Ellen) two radically different responses to increased pressures on traditional ritual practices.

Nuaulu, since the late seventeenth century, have sometimes responded to cultural contact through conversion. Conversion for Nuaulu has always been of two kinds: pragmatic and confessional. Nuaulu have quite regularly married non-Nuaulu or Nuaulu Muslims and Christians, and part of the contract in such cases is conversion. But then, equally, I have known cases where Christian girls have married animist men and 'converted' to animism for much the same reason. Acknowledgement of a broader consensual 'agama Nunusaku', embracing Christians, Muslims and animists (Bartels 1977, 1978, 1979, 2000), had, until the events of 1999-2002, made these shifts in ritual practice and belief relatively easy and flexible. Before 1999, both Christian and animist residents of Yalahatan assisted in the building of the new mosque in Tamilau, while

during the 1970s Nuaulu visitors to North Seram helped build a mosque in Rumah Olat. I have described some other aspects of how Nuaulu participate in the rituals of other religions elsewhere, and how non-Nuaulu reciprocally participate in Nuaulu rituals (Ellen 1988b).

The second strategy has been what Geertz (1964b), speaking of Bali, has called ‘internal conversion’, that is, the adjustment of practices to a degree that makes them acceptable within the wider sphere of contemporary ‘Indonesian civil religion’ (Atkinson 1987:174). But well before the advent of Pancasila, Nuaulu religion was engaged in a process of accommodation: with the local Muslim *kerajaan* in Sepa, and under the Pax Neerlandica. The most obvious accommodation was the suppression of head-taking, but Nuaulu religion also adopted a shared Indonesian culture of modesty, and truncated ceremonies and their organization to fit the convenience of new economic and political necessities. Over the last four decades, this accommodation has taken a more subtle and bureaucratic form, with the Nuaulu drawn into the world of education, politics and electronic media that places them in touch with people of their own kind (‘masyarakat adat’) elsewhere in the country. Although there has been nothing like the process of ritual rationalization that Geertz has described for Bali, or of the kind that others have described for different animist traditions elsewhere in Indonesia, and no ‘conceptual sorting out of “agama” from “adat”’ (Kipp and Rodgers 1987:23), there is clearly a process of internal and very evident external negotiation, which indicates a movement in this direction. By 2003 Kaiisa could assert in a conversation with me that Nuaulu were not animists (‘animis’), and neither were they ‘Hindu’, and that the ‘ulu’ (conventionally meaning ‘upriver’) rather means ‘dulu’ (formerly, ancient), and that what Nuaulu practised was an ‘agama sendiri’ (‘a religion by itself’).

The third option is not a collective response, but reflects what has happened elsewhere amongst traditional peoples of Seram: individuals have simply converted in a gradual fashion, leading to the serial erosion and eventual disappearance of animism, whether for pragmatic or for confessional reasons. In travelling around the island of Seram between 1970 and 2000 it was common to find individual ‘animists’ surviving amongst groups of younger people who were otherwise Christian. Grzimek (1991:37) reports this for the Wemale. However, there is a social resistance to conversion amongst Nuaulu, since for many it represents a kind of weakness. Napuae, for example, once told me, in reference to

Menai (who had converted following an episode in which he was not prepared to work on a sacred house) that those who convert are usually 'lazy'. Menai later reverted to animism.

The final option is accelerated collapse of the ritual system, as the completion and perpetuation of cycles becomes ever more difficult for material reasons, and as internal contradictions increase. Thus, Nuaulu are under pressure to alienate land as a means of income, and to delay ritual in order to prioritize economic activity. But the consequence of both is an increased accumulation of dissatisfaction amongst the ancestors, reflected in illness and other forms of misfortune. Until now, what has distinguished Nuaulu from the Huaulu of the Manusela area has been a willingness to compromise in order to maintain a traditional way of life. For Valeri (2000), Huaulu had always explained to him that there could be no compromise, and although Huaulu are known not to have taken heads for many decades, the logic of head-taking was intrinsic to their ritual practice, particularly the *kahuae*. The Nuaulu by contrast, have – at least for the period of time I have been living amongst them – always stressed that they are now a religion of 'plates and cloth'. And yet, within the space of ten years, six individuals have been convicted for acts of violence that involved the removal of heads followed by the enactment of associated ritual processes. These contradictions and the accumulation of misfortune uncompensated by ritual action might elsewhere provide the conditions for collapse of the kind that Sahlins reports for Hawaii, and that Valeri predicts for the Huaulu. The fact that this has not so far materialized for the Nuaulu is largely due to the demographic trend that keeps reproducing large numbers of animist Nuaulu. This, more than anything else, is a vindication of the view that the reproduction of religious ideas, and the ritual cycles through which they are reinforced, are only viable where the population profile of the social groups that generate the cycles is compliant.

Anything involving head-taking and violence must, by any stretch, be regarded as 'imagistic'. 'Emotional provocation' no doubt increases the probability that rituals will prove more memorable than might otherwise be the case, and increase the likelihood of the transmission of their representations to others (McCauley and Lawson 2002:103). However, it also seems that when traditional systems of ritual do collapse, it is those rituals that are more 'imagistic' that are – on the whole – the first to go, leaving the more routinized procedures encoded in semantic memory to

persist and hybridize – in the Nuaulu case – with Christianity and Islam. And this has been the pattern for some four hundred years.

I visited the Nuaulu area for ten days in August 2009. The clan Kamama had moved from Watane to Tahena Ukuna since my last visit in 2003, and part of the clan Sounaue-ainakahata from Rouhua to Tahena Ukuna, taking two sacred houses with them, with one remaining in Rouhua. The animist population of Rouhua stood at 402, a reduction on the 2003 figure, accounted for largely through the clan movements indicated and through conversion, mainly to Christianity. The number of sacred houses in Rouhua currently stands at 11, and there is still no *suane*. Nuaulu have continued to perform their rituals through varied and adverse socio-economic and political conditions for over 40 years, and although the number of animists is no longer increasing, there is equally no evidence that their ritual cycles overall are under immediate threat.

Glossary

AM	Ambonese Malay
Ind.	Indonesian
ahinae	traditional sung verse
ahinae masinaie	narratives chanted in modern Nuauulu concerning recent events
ahinae monne	traditional sung verse comprising sacred narratives, usually in archaic Nuauulu language and based on history and myth
ahurara tapuna	earth anointing ritual
ahutu neine	a red cloth tied in a horn at the side of the head
aikune	bottom; base; root end
ai msinae	red wood
ainisi	invocation addressed to Anahatana and the <i>sionata</i> ; request
ai otoa nima	‘five pieces of wood’, a standing block for each novice at the <i>matahenne</i> ritual; also, the five pieces of wood used during the <i>seute</i> ritual.
amane	one of three sacred places in the village associated with the <i>suane</i>
Anahatana	the Nuauulu supreme being
anau	flat table; low wooden board
ane	rattan line under the <i>rine</i> shelf
aniaue monne	clan sacred shield
api hanaie	ritual attire handed out to novices after <i>matahenne</i> ritual
apusaa	raise; uplift
apusaa nahai	the raising of breath
aratae	gifts of valuables exchanged during major rituals, and for bridewealth

asakonu	name of cry made when killing cuscus in male puberty ceremonies (and formerly when taking a human head)
asinokoe	crying post; a structure composed of branches and vines to protect mother and child in a <i>posune</i>
atikanae (alt. sasana)	wooden shelf between 160 and 180 cm high, located in the north-east corner of the suane and analogous to the <i>rine</i> at the east end of a regular clan sacred house.
atue	top; tip end
aunutu muetene	period of preparation or prelude for a large festival (cf. AM ‘taro hari’, placing the day)
autotu nimoe	rituals accompanying death
auwoti	ritual dance, formerly performed before a raid or head-hunt
hanahanai	wife-giver; given husband
hanaie	male
hanainae	Chinese porcelain; porcelain plate or dish
hantetane	platform; ladder
hantetane wemane	platform that features during male puberty ceremonies
hatu pinamou	the <i>pinamou</i> stone; the place where females bathe on the second day of their puberty ceremony
heute	timber store
hini	main supporting posts of sacred house
hini hunone	central post
hini otumatae	fireplace post
hitamuna	the ceremony performed eight days following the death of a mother or child
hunone	the central ridge of a house
hunu hata nikata	‘patterned ridge’; the placing of decorative elements along the roof ridge
hunu usa	extinguishing the fire to mark the end of a ritual
ia onate	clan chief
ia onate aia	the head of all Nuauulu in matters relating to political interaction with the outside world; village headman
ia onate anakarua	village headman; government headman (AM ‘kepala dusun’); second in command to the <i>ia onate aia</i> in secular matters
ia onate nahate	see <i>maritihanna</i>
ina	mother

inaha	part of the soul or spirit of a dead person that resides in Nunusaku, the land of the dead
ipan, ipane	clan (cf. AM 'soa')
isikotol	small ceramic bowl or cup
kahahite	an ornamental frame slung from a band around the head and hanging down the back of the neck used in the rituals of some clans
kahatane	misfortune
kahuac	circle dance; an obligatory performance led by elders who have already received the <i>tupu-tupue</i>
kahuac erereta	great circle dance
kaka	elder; dead
kaka-wani	senior-junior relationship
kamane	resin
kapakate	curved bark girdle
kapitane	war leader
kaponte	girdle; belt
karanunu	red cloth (AM 'kain berang')
karanunu marac	see <i>karanunu onate</i>
karanunu onate	a dark-blue and patterned batik worn by certain men, both on the head and around the waist; a batik cloth worn as an apron with the point just below the knees
karanunu sinte	piece of red fabric, twisted into a chain and of 16 cm maximum diameter, worn by <i>matahenne</i> novices for protection
karatupa utue	kenari nut mixed with chilli
kasari	ritual hunt
katehete	decorative band of buttons, beads or shells
katira	a small stool of sago leafstalk
koac	type of pandanus
koa msinae	pandanus-leaf mat dyed red and yellow associated with male puberty rites
kokine	a sacred plant associated with the <i>suane</i> , signifying fertility
loue	meeting to discuss preparations for ritual and communal work
maca	sago mixed with kenari nuts

mahu	marriage; affinity, or the relationship between those who have intermarried
makanitu	corpse vine
mara	slow, circular, backwards and forwards hand movements performed by young women in certain dances
mara susu ntonc	milk-sap cuscus; cuscus ritually killed and consumed after the birth of a child
maritihanna	guardian of the suane (cf. AM ‘tūirima’)
matahenne	male puberty ritual; style of red head cloth worn by neophytes
mata kahatene	bad death
mata kinoc	Lit. ‘mat death’: a good death from old age
matiuun	‘head of death’; part of the soul or spirit of a dead person that lingers with the corpse and that eventually resides in the sacred clan house
matuc	foreman; supervisor
mauna	kind of charm
monne	all sacred objects, practices and knowledge; all rules related to sacredness, prescriptions and proscriptions
morite	sponsor of a novice at a male puberty ritual; the relationship between a male novice and his sponsor
nahate	red sash; red cloth; placenta
nana	to work, to make; a type of tree
nasa	conical hat made from pandanus leaves
nasac	Nuaulu ritual feast
nemakac	‘strong’ alliance with a clan of a spouse; marriage between bilateral cross-cousins
nima	five
nipa kanne	attire important in Sounauc female puberty ceremonies (AM ‘kain timor’)
nipa nahate	sarong or red cloth used to cover baby at birth ritual
nitianac	metal anklet or bracelet
nona nepe	taboo sign
nonie	upper-arm bands made of cassowary-wing quills
nuhunc	female-centred ritual
nuhunc pinamou	female-centred ritual held on occasion of first menstruation

nuhune sainikane	ancestral union; cosmological <i>nuhune</i> relationship uniting all Nuaulu
nuhune sio ikina	series of rituals surrounding birth
nuhune upue	guardian of post-menstrual virgin
nuite	type of ceremonial basket
numa	clan sacred house; the complementary houses of clan chief and war lord that make up the two halves of a clan
numa kapitane	war lord's house
numa mainae	see <i>numa onate</i>
numa nahate	additional sacred house of clan to which <i>suane</i> responsibilities have been devolved by clan Matoke, especially when this house is specifically built to serve the <i>suane</i>
numa nuhune	house used specifically during parts of the birthing ritual; the structure to which newborn babies are taken when they leave the birthing hut
numa onate	'great house'; house of the clan chief; large or main house
numa rinane	'radiant' or 'shining house'; another name for <i>suane</i>
numa upue	a clan's founding ancestor
nunue	banyan tree
nusa ama	'father island'; domain of the dead
nusa ina	'mother island'; domain of the living
nusa upua	'lords of the island'
orane	cockatoo headdress
otue upue	'lord of the hearth'; a female spirit
otumatae	fireplace
otumata matahae	fine to compensate for the absence of a woman, which thereby 'leaves the fireplace cold'
papuae	platter of betel-chewing requisites
penesite	the jawbones of pig, deer and cassowary
peni	meat in the category of pig, deer and cassowary
pepe	(a double ring of) liana on <i>asinokoe</i>
pina	female
pinac	shell bracelet
pina mnotunc	woman who dies during the act of giving birth
pinamou	post-menstrual virgin

pinamou metene	black maiden
pinamou putic	white maiden
pina utone	ornamental band of carved, small white-shell rings secured with pineapple fibre
piru mane	medium-size plate
pokue	offering to the spirits of the earth; offering as part of the <i>seute</i> ritual, in which spirits are asked to vacate the land before clearing commences
posune	birthing and menstruation hut
posune nisi	garden <i>posune</i>
posune pinamou	first menstruation hut
puku	circle of bamboo sticks marking where placenta of newborn baby is buried
reha upu	ancestral spirits who protect and serve the living
rine	sacred shelf; shelf where sacred objects are stored
rosa	behaviour that gives offence to the ancestors
rura runa ruai	expression used when referring to the way that the female puberty ritual ‘starts itself’
saene	pendant or flag
sainiku	release of the soul to the upperworld
sakahatene	malevolent spirits
sakanac	wall-base boards
sakati	fine
sama numa	‘sharing with the house’; an offering made to the ancestral spirits of the house before entering a new house
sana	mistake (Ind. ‘salah’)
sanneha	a piece of red cloth hanging over a rattan cord above the <i>rine</i> shelf in a clan house in which the ancestral spirit of the house founder is said to reside
sarua msinaea	‘red ancestral spirits’
saruana	benign spirits; those ancestors who have not been (recently) human
saruana enu	spirits of the turtle, the totem of Neipane-tomoien
saruana sionata	spirits of dead humans
saruane msinae	see <i>sarua msinaea</i>
senie	comb; headpiece
senie pinamou	ornate headpiece worn on occasion of <i>pinamou</i> ritual

sente matae	plate
seute	the basic Nuaulu agricultural rite
sikenae	sago biscuits
sinohi	gifts, usually plates, given to dead person as part of mortuary ritual
sinsinte	sacred plant associated with the <i>suane</i> , signifying maturity
sinu onari hohua	the sign of respect to the ancestors, which involves touching the forehead and chin five times with the right hand
sin wesie	area of specially protected forest
sio msinaea	red ones; spirits of the dead members of the clan; see also <i>sarua msinaea</i>
sionata	ancestral spirits; those ancestors that have been (recently) human; the elders
sio saruana	the dead of the mountain
siraka	disaster; failure of ritual
sirimasa	women's hair ornaments used in <i>kahuae</i>
sokate	receptacle for ancestral spirits called upon during seances, hanging under shelf in clan sacred house, usually openwork basket
sonae	ritual plant associated with <i>suane</i> , signifying virility
sopa sau	ancestors
sopi	an <i>Areca</i> palm distillate; palm spirit
soue	structure where ceremonially important shrubs required for ritual activities associated with the <i>suane</i> are kept; also, a small piece of land near the village on which was built a structure for containing the skulls of enemies taken during headhunting
suane	village (or communal) sacred house; a sacred house shared by several clans constituting a ritual community
sunau	downstream
suria	upstream
tainane	temporary shelter without walls (cf. AM 'sabua')
takanasi	lidded rectangular pandanus-leaf box or basket
tanaite	wife-taker; given wife
tapako nikate	patterned tobacco leaves used in ritual
tapi nanac	a piece of thin, pointed bamboo

tihane	drum
tiha onate	<i>suane</i> drum
tihu mampusue	'following water', as used in female washing rituals
tihu tinipae	'first water', as used in female washing rituals
tope	rigid walling made from sago leafstalk; kind of ring
tuaman tiai	'stomach of the earth'; sacred centre; dancing ground
tunumunie	prosperity
tupu-tupue	ceremonial barkcloths given to senior men in ascribed positions of authority
upu	spirits that dwell benignly with the living; term of respect
waene aie	river; river mouth
wainite	type of leaf used in offerings
wani	younger; living
wekatisie	coconut oil
wesie upue	lord of the forest; lord-of-the-forest spirit
yeukone	precise foot movements which are repeated five times and are required in many ritual sequences

Appendix

LOG OF NUAULU RITUAL EVENTS ATTENDED AND DESCRIBED,
1970-2003

Date	Location	Clan	Category of event	Notes
07-02-70	Rouhua	All clans	Installing <i>suane</i> fireplace	
23-03-70	Aihisuru	Matoke-hanaic	<i>kahuae</i>	
05-04-70	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	<i>tupu-tupuae</i>	
05-04-70	Rouhua	Sounauc-ainakahata	Making ritual shields	
07-04-70	Aihisuru	Matoke-hanaic	<i>kahuae</i>	
08-04-70	Aihisuru	Matoke-hanaic	<i>kahuae</i>	
09-04-70	Aihisuru	Matoke-hanaic	<i>kahuae</i>	
10-04-70	Aihisuru	Matoke-hanaic	<i>kahuae</i>	
13-04-70	Aihisuru	Matoke-hanaic	<i>kahuae</i>	
	Rouhua		<i>kahuae</i>	
14-04-70	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	Construction of sacred house	
15-04-70	Rouhua		<i>kasari</i>	Ritual hunt in preparation for <i>kahuae</i>
15-04-70	Aihisuru, Bunara	<i>kahuae</i>		
16-04-70	Aihisuru, Bunara	<i>kahuae</i>		
27-04-70	Aihisuru, Bunara	<i>kahuae</i>		
28-04-70	Aihisuru, Bunara	<i>kahuae</i>		
29-04-70	Aihisuru, Bunara	<i>kahuae</i>		
30-04-70	Aihisuru, Bunara	<i>kahuae</i>		
01-05-70	Aihisuru, Bunara	Sounauc-aipura	<i>kahuae</i>	Linked to collection of sago for rituals to complete new <i>numa kapitane</i> ; collection and cutting of wood for new <i>numa onate</i>
02-05-70	Bunara	<i>kahuae</i>		

Date	Location	Clan	Category of event	Notes
04-05-70	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	Repairing sacred house	
09-05-70	Rouhua	Matoke-pina	<i>kasari</i>	Ritual hunt
21-05-70	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	<i>loue</i>	Meeting to discuss communal work on sacred house
22-05-70	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	<i>loue</i>	Meeting to discuss communal work on sacred house
27-05-70	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	Construction of sacred house Collecting materials for sacred house <i>kahuae</i>	
30-05-70	Rouhua		<i>kasari</i>	Ritual hunt
07-06-70	Rouhua	Sounauc-ainakahata	Birth: washing ceremony	
10-06-70	Rouhua	Soumori	Swidden first-fruits ceremony	
15-06-70	Rouhua	Matoke-pina	Construction of sacred house	
16-06-70	Rouhua		<i>loue</i>	Meeting to discuss collecting housebuilding materials
20-06-70	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	Birth: erection of <i>asinokoe</i>	
20-06-70	Rouhua	All clans	Repairing <i>suane</i> thatch	
22-06-70	Rouhua	All clans	Construction of <i>suane</i>	
23-06-70	Rouhua	All clans	Construction of <i>suane</i>	
24-06-70	Rouhua	All clans	Repairing <i>suane</i> thatch	
03-07-70	Rouhua		<i>kasari</i>	Ritual hunt
05-07-70	Rouhua	Sounauc-ainakahata	Construction of sacred house	
06-07-70	Rouhua	Sounauc-ainakahata	Repairing thatch on sacred house	

Date	Location	Clan	Category of event	Notes
07-07-70	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	Birth ritual	Hunting for feast
08-07-70	Rouhua	Sounauc-ainakahata	Female puberty: preparation	Hunting for feast
09-07-70	Rouhua	Sounauc-ainakahata	Female puberty: preparation	Hunting for feast
13-07-70	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	Birth: washing ceremony	
14-07-70	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	Birth: encircling ceremony	
08-07-70	Rouhua	Sounauc-ainakahata	Female puberty: preparation	Hunting for feast
07-08-70	Rouhua	Soumori	Hair-cutting ritual	
19-11-70	Rouhua		Male puberty: preparation	Making <i>koae</i> mats
20-11-70	Rouhua		Male puberty: preparation	Making <i>koae</i> mats
21-11-70	Rouhua		Male puberty: preparation	Making <i>koae</i> mats
10-01-71	Rouhua	Soumori	Ritual for presentation of <i>nasa</i> head-covering for females	
11-02-71	Rouhua	Matoke-pina	Male puberty: ceremony	
12-02-71	Rouhua	Matoke-pina	Male puberty: ceremony	
13-02-71	Rouhua	Sounauc-ainakahata, Soumori and others	Male puberty: ceremony	
14-02-71	Rouhua	Sounauc-ainakahata, Soumori and others	Male puberty: ceremony	
17-02-71	Rouhua		Repairing <i>heite suane</i>	
18-02-71	Rouhua		Male puberty: preparation	Making betel bags for neophytes
28-02-71	Rouhua		Ritual for new government house	
01-03-71	Rouhua	Sounauc-ainakahata	Re-thatching sacred house <i>heite</i>	

Date	Location	Clan	Category of event	Notes
01-03-71	Rouhua		Birth: washing ceremony	
02-03-71	Rouhua		Birth: encircling ceremony	
14-03-71	Alhisuru	Matoke-hanaic	Construction of <i>nima nuhane</i>	
18-03-71	Rouhua	Matoke-pina	Death	
10-08-73	Rouhua	Sounauc-aimakahata	Sacred-house ritual: <i>sokate</i>	
11-08-73	Rouhua	Sounauc-aimakahata	Sacred house: <i>sokate</i>	
12-08-73	Rouhua	Sounauc-aimakahata	Sacred house: <i>sokate</i>	
13-08-73	Rouhua	Sounauc-aimakahata	Sacred house: <i>sokate</i>	
13-08-73	Rouhua	Soumori	Snake-spirit ritual	
14-08-73	Rouhua	Peimisa	Sacred house: repairing <i>heate</i> roof	
15-08-73	Rouhua	Peimisa	Construction of sacred house	Collecting timber
29-08-73	Rouhua	Sounauc-aimakahata	Construction of sacred house	Erecting walls
15-07-75	Watane	All clans	<i>Suane</i> completion	
30-01-81	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	Construction of sacred house	Installation of new doors
30-01-81	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	<i>kahuac</i>	
01-02-81	Rouhua	Matoke-pina	Construction of sacred house	
02-02-81	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	Construction of sacred house	<i>Rine</i> shelf and entrance ladder
02-02-81	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	<i>kahuac</i>	
04-02-81	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	Construction of sacred house	<i>Rine</i> shelf and entrance ladder
15-06-86	Rouhua	Sounauc-aimakahata	Birth: washing ceremony	
16-06-86	Watane	Kamama	Birth: washing ceremony	
07-02-90	Rouhua	Soumori	Repairing of sacred house	Roof of <i>heate</i>

Date	Location	Clan	Category of event	Notes
18-02-90	Rouhua	Soumori	Repairing of sacred house	Roof of <i>heute</i>
26-02-90	Rouhua	All clans	Forest-clearance ritual	
27-02-90	Rouhua	Sounauc-aimakahata	Birth: washing ceremony	
28-02-90	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	Birth: washing ceremony	
01-03-90	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	Birth: encircling house	
06-03-90	Rouhua		Construction of sacred house	
05-02-96	Rouhua	Sounauc-aimakahata	Construction of sacred house	
06-02-96	Rouhua	Neipane-tomoien	Construction of sacred house	
16-02-96	Rouhua	Peimisa	Sacred house: <i>sokate</i>	
18-02-96	Rouhua	Peimisa	Sacred house: <i>sokate</i>	
18-02-96	Rouhua	Sounauc-aimakahata	Male puberty: preparation	Making barkcloth
28-02-96	Rouhua	Peimisa	Male puberty: ceremony	
29-02-96	Rouhua	Peimisa	Male puberty: ceremony	
08-08-03	Rouhua	Peimisa	Birth: washing ceremony	

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