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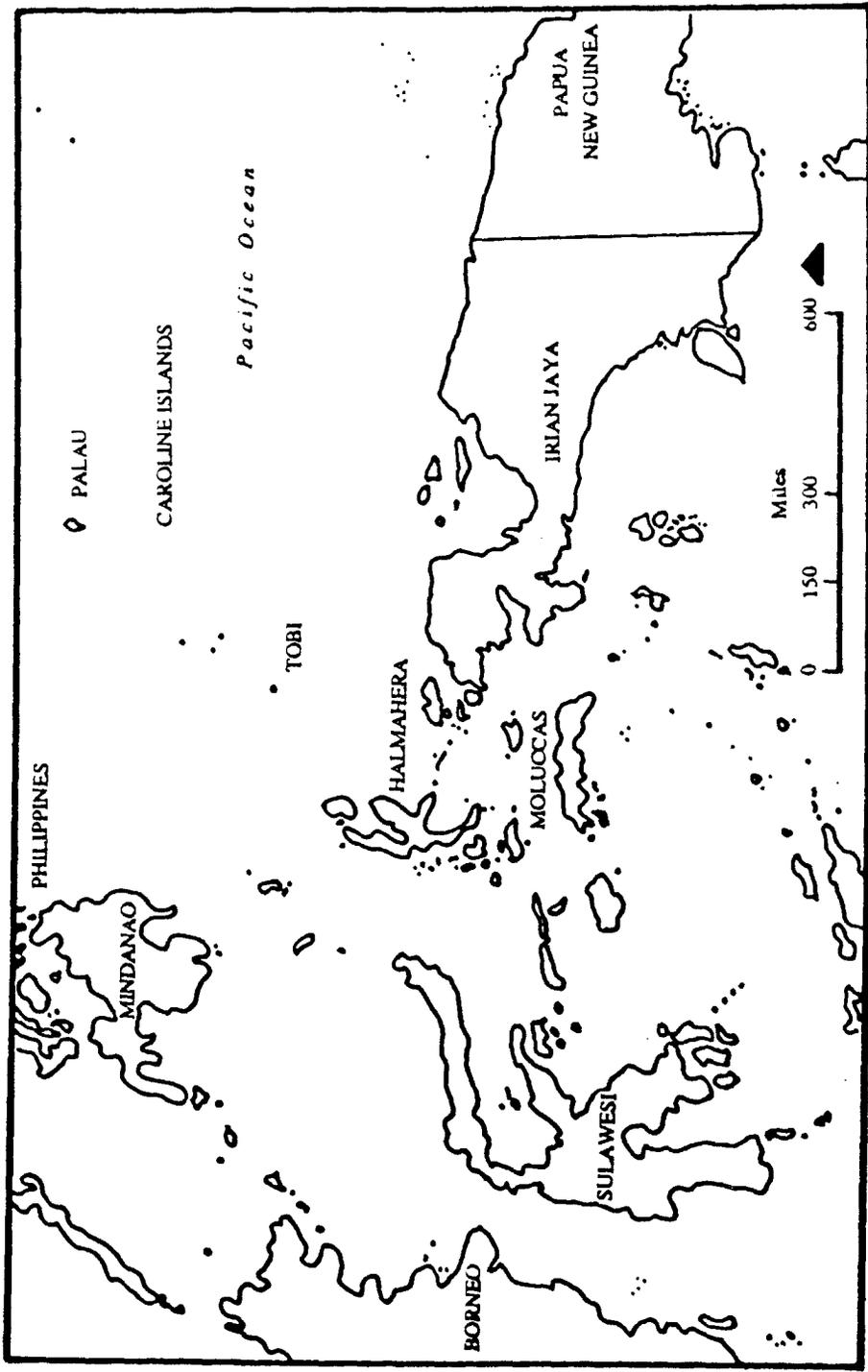
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The Apotheosis of Father Marino: Foundations of Tobian Catholicism

PETER WESTON BLACK

The people of Tobi, a small remote coral island in the western Pacific, were converted to Roman Catholicism in the early 1930s. This event—an en masse conversion—occurred during the brief sojourn of a Spanish Jesuit priest, Father Marino, the first missionary known to have visited the island. Apparently Father Marino made only this one short but extremely successful visit from his mission headquarters in Palau. At the time of my work with them in the early 1970s, the Tobians continued to be a religious people and faithfully adhered to the beliefs and practices of their new religion as they understood them. To all appearances, Tobian religion conformed to worldwide Catholic patterns. It rested, however, on a foundation that was highly idiosyncratic and that is revealed in seven remembered teachings of Father Marino.

If questioned about their beliefs most Tobians were able to present reasonable versions of traditional Catholic thought. They were familiar with such concepts as the human soul, divine love, hell, purgatory, and heaven. Quite orthodox explanations of the Trinity, the Virgin, the Fall of Man, and the nature of Christ's mission were also common knowledge. Young people who had attended mission school in Koror were the recognized local experts in these topics, and the older people had learned much from them. Episodes from the Bible had become part of the storyteller's repertoire, and the exploits of Adam and Eve, Noah, and various other Old and New Testament figures were often told. Each day at dawn and at dusk everyone gathered in the church to say the rosary. Every three or four months a priest came to their island for a few hours and Tobians flocked to the church to hear mass and to confess sins committed in his absence. All pre-Christian religious and magical rituals had been abandoned and the old sacred chants were heard no more. The Catholic rituals for birth, marriage, and death were thought to be of great importance and were performed with enthusiasm. The high festivals of Christmas and Easter were the focus of much preparation and enjoyment. A number of women belonged to sodalities,



Tobi Island, Western Micronesia

special church organizations that required dietary restrictions and extra prayer. In general, Christian prayer marked many kinds of behavior. Meetings were begun and ended with prayer, as were formal meals. Individuals could often be observed sitting apart with hands clasped and heads bowed silently in prayer. Sundays were marked by an absence of work and a more elaborate church service, attended by the people in their best clothes. In short, the conversion of the islanders seemed to have been strikingly successful. The perception shared by the Tobians and their priests of the island as a Christian place seemed to be quite accurate.

Why was Father Marino, in the absence of either force or prior missionary activity, so successful? Why did people continue to be so conscientious in the practice of their new religion? These questions involve issues of importance to anthropology as well as to an understanding of the missionary enterprise. The religion of a given people is seldom, if ever, an isolated phenomenon. It is instead a part of their culture and as such is at least in part a response to the exigencies of their situation. From this perspective, aboriginal Tobian religion was Tobi-specific and, like Tobian culture, can be seen as one of many local adaptations of a general, pan-Pacific pattern. Roman Catholicism, inasmuch as it can be said to be unitary, is one of several adaptations of the Judeo-Christian pattern. Aboriginal Tobian religion probably traced its roots back to neolithic Southeast Asia and was influenced in its development by events summed up as "the peopling of the Pacific." It reached its full development on a tiny island isolated from political and economic centers of power. Roman Catholicism is a worldwide religion, and its history is interwoven with the history of various European power centers and, more generally, with the development of Western culture over the last two thousand years. The differences between the two religious forms are the result of two discrete cultural traditions lived in two very different environments.

The symbols of a religion are one of the ways private psychological states and public social forms are united into a more or less coherent whole. Religious symbols are channels through which private meanings flow into shared forms and, conversely, order is offered to the individual in assigning meaning to private states. Both the private and the public poles are, in part at least, determined by experience. Thus whatever the origin of the religious impulse, the symbols used in its expression must be shaped by the physical, social, and historical environment in which they were formed. Why then would a people exchange their indigenous religious symbols for a set that arose in radically different circumstances? Specifically, why did the Tobians replace the miniature canoe and wooden phallus of their old religion with the crucifix and sacred heart? The same question could be asked about the Tobian acquisition of other aspects of Catholic religious life. The shallow acquaintance the islanders seem to have had with Roman Catholicism before they adopted it makes the Tobian case particularly interesting, as does Tobian Catholicism's subsequent resistance to change. The Tobians seemed to have made an alien religion their own without

significant modification, and to have maintained a close involvement with those unmodified forms.

When Father Marino stepped ashore on Tobi, he encountered a people who had recently embarked on an experiment in secularism. They had abruptly dropped the practice of all their communal religious ritual. Although scattered individuals may have continued to interact with supernatural forces, the islanders no longer acted as a community *vis-à-vis* the sacred. Even the buildings in which communal ritual had taken place were destroyed, along with all the religious paraphernalia they contained. This attempt at secularism failed, and the Tobians became firm Catholics.

The background of the attempt at secularism is important for three reasons: its failure to meet certain needs of the Tobian population was probably the most important reason for the speed and success of the original mass conversion; people's feelings about the attempt provided some of the most compelling reasons for their adherence to Catholicism; and the complex of cultural beliefs, personality attributes, and sociological factors that gave rise to both the attempt and its failure continued in play and gave Father Marino's teachings their special Tobian meanings.

PROLOGUE TO SECULARISM

In an earlier publication, I have recounted in some detail what I have been able to recover of Tobian postcontact history (Black 1978). The overall theme of this history is a rising tide of Western influence and the simultaneous ebbing of Tobian confidence in their indigenous religious and political institutions, but there were several distinct phases. In the first, early in the nineteenth century, Tobians began to interact with powerful strangers who arrived in ships. As an island with neither lagoon for safe anchorage nor commodities of any special interest, Tobi was never more than a brief stop for passing ships until well into the twentieth century. Despite the transient nature of this contact, Tobians saw enough of the size and complexity of the vessels, the extraordinary materials on board, such as metal and cloth, and, of course, the weapons they commanded to be overwhelmed with wonder. Early encounters of Pacific low-islands populations with European vessels are, from the perspective of the islands, strikingly similar in this regard to contemporary tales of encounters with extraterrestrial beings.

In the second stage, an attempt was made to control the strangers and their vessels. A group of sorcerers emerged specializing in the mystical ability to call ships to the island and detain them for trading purposes. The sorcerers used this claimed ability to extract a hefty percentage of the wealth that flowed onto the island in the form of metal, cloth, and tobacco. This enterprise lasted until the nonmystical nature of the foreigners was conclusively demonstrated. In 1832 the remnants of the crew of a shipwrecked American whaler were cast away on Tobi's beach (see Holden 1836). It rapidly became apparent to the Tobians

that these people were mortal, powerless, and, in fact, rather ignorant. Never again would Tobians view the West with quite the same astonishment and wonder. In fact, the brutality with which these castaways were treated indicates, perhaps, an attempt to deny the power of men who come on ships.

A more realistic approach to dealing with the outside world emerged as Tobians began to learn ways to exploit the strangers for their wealth. This took two main forms: the development of products for trade (especially locally produced cordage) and the exchange of labor (especially as sailors) for goods. But the experience of working on the ships revealed to Tobians the extent of the discrepancy between the scope and power of their institutions and those of the Westerners; thus the next stage, which can be characterized as one of submission. This stage and the next require a more extended treatment.

In 1909 a German ethnological expedition arrived at Tobi (Eilers 1936). The scientists set up their headquarters in the main spirit house, the building where the chief performed the rituals associated with his office. These rituals centered on the chief as spokesman for and, in some senses, a personification of the entire Tobian community. It was here that people came to participate in the communal rites, and now it was here that they came to have their skulls measured by the anthropologists. A census was conducted and it was found that 968 people were living on the island. The area of Tobi is only fifty-nine hectares; thus the population density at this time was 16.4 people per hectare, which even for the Pacific is quite high. This figure is even more striking when it is compared with an estimate of two hundred Tobians when the remaining castaways escaped from the island seventy-five years earlier (Holden 1836). Even if we allow for a considerable margin of error in that estimate, it is apparent that the island had experienced a dramatic population increase.

This upward trend was soon reversed. An epidemic broke out after the visit of the German expedition, and six months later, upon the arrival of a German government vessel, it was found that 200 people had died. The doctor on the ship attempted to evacuate the island, but the people hid in the bush and he was able to convince only fifty-one men and one woman to go with him to Yap. Tobians remember the epidemic but do not recall the doctor's "rescue" of fifty-two people. Possibly this is the same event that lies at the core of a story relating how the Germans took hundreds of men from the island to work in the phosphate mines on Angaur, a Palauan island. Although the mines were opened in 1909 (Grattan 1963:351), I have found no documents to substantiate the Tobian claim. The need for mine workers may explain the imbalance in the sex ratio of those "saved" by the Germans in the same year the Angaur mine opened. In any case, it is certain that some Tobians went to Angaur at this time because the report of the ethnological expedition contains several photographs of Tobian men there.

The Tobians say that when the Germans ordered the chief of Tobi to accompany the men to Angaur, he delegated some of his functions to a younger man who remained on the island. This assistant was forbidden by the departing

chief to carry out at least one of the important rites, but disobeyed his instructions and did so anyway, thus causing the death of the absent chief. The younger man then assumed the chieftainship. This is a crucial event in the evolution of modern Tobian society. It precipitated political quarrels and gave rise to two parties—the descendants of the original chief and those of his assistant. Everyone agrees that these events took place but there is disagreement about their interpretation.

The factionalism arising out of these events is a key element in all that followed, including the attempt at secularism, the conversion to Roman Catholicism, and the interpretations of some of Father Marino's teachings. The argument between the two parties hinges on the legitimacy of the assistant's links to the chiefly genealogy. The assistant occupied the office of chief for only a few years and his title then passed to his son. When that son died, the title went to a descendant of the chief who had died on Angaur. This person was the chief at the time of my research, while the passed-over grandson of the assistant was the contender for the title. The chief described the assistant as a usurper who committed acts that he knew would lead to the death of the "true" chief hundreds of miles away on Angaur. The contender claimed that his grandfather knew that the chief was already dead at the time he took over the title.

There is no way at this point to reconcile the three versions offered of this one event: the Germans said that there was an epidemic and a rescue; the current chief said that the title had been usurped by the assistant; the contender said that there had been a legitimate but incomplete succession. Yet in certain fundamentals the versions agree. For some reason the Germans did remove a number of men from the island. The chief accompanied them and later died without passing on to his heir in the prescribed manner the esoteric lore attached to his office. The present chief draws a link between these facts and the island's depopulation, claiming that the illegitimate succession cursed the island by disrupting the flow of *mana*. There probably is a connection between depopulation and the flawed succession, but the order is most likely the reverse of that claimed by the present chief. The chaos surrounding the rapid depopulation demanded a response. Leadership was necessary and the assistant attempted to provide it.

In the aboriginal order the chief performed a number of rituals through which the community related to the supernatural, and the sacred and secular worlds were inextricably connected. Most profane behavior had a "religious" aspect, and even the most arcane of rituals was thought to have important effects on the course of everyday events. This pragmatic aspect of ritual life is quite clear in the minds of the islanders. The overall function of religion both then and now is to protect the island and its inhabitants from disaster, and the islanders would certainly have resorted to ritual when faced with the epidemic reported by the Germans. Perhaps to them it appeared better in that time of crisis to have an imperfect chief than no chief at all. This decision may have eased the

psychic distress of the Tobians but it did nothing to halt the population decline, which continued until recently. The nature of the decline did change, however, and that change played a certain role in the events that followed. There was never again a murderous epidemic. The next population crisis was much slower in becoming apparent.

The Germans lost their Pacific island possessions, including Tobi, during World War I. The island passed to the Japanese along with the rest of Micronesia. Sometime in the 1920s Yoshino, an agent for a Japanese commercial company, came to live on Tobi. He was the first outsider to live on the island for an extended period of time since the castaways of 1832, and the circumstances of his stay were quite different from theirs. Yoshino arrived on a Japanese government vessel with the full weight of the vigorously expanding Japanese imperial order behind him. The Tobians had experienced a century of intermittent contact with the power of men who arrived on ships and thus it is not difficult to understand the profound discrepancy in the fates of the two parties. The castaways had undergone an ordeal from which few emerged alive, whereas Yoshino was treated with great respect and Tobians submitted to his influence.

Yoshino drew into his orbit the chief who was the son of the ex-assistant and a landless Tobian named Johannes, who had recently been returned to the island from Yap by his departing German master. With their support, Yoshino forced a division of a sacred parcel of chiefly controlled land into separately owned plots to place more land into production, despite considerable opposition. Once more, Tobian society accommodated itself to outside pressure through submission. Forces were at work, however, that would call forth an active response. Foremost among those forces were demographic processes.

Apparently the demographic decline had halted by this time. The epidemic of 1909 had run its course and the population had stabilized; however, probably unknown to the islanders, a new and equally dangerous threat had appeared. Just as the Germans had brought a "plague" (probably influenza), the Japanese brought venereal disease (most likely gonorrhea). Though not fatal, this disease led to barrenness in the women. Thus the stability of the demographic structure in the early years of the Yoshino era was only illusory. From about 1925 onward the birth rate plummeted until only one woman was bearing children by the time Father Marino arrived. The illusion that further disasters had been averted also must have been shattered by then.

By the early 1930s a Tobian community had been established in Palau. The Spanish Jesuit mission there had successfully converted several Tobian families, one of which subsequently returned to Tobi. This family included a young man who explained to the chief—Yoshino's ally—the power of the Jesuits. The factionalism surrounding his legitimacy must have played some role in the chief's agreement to what followed. Armed with the chief's blessing, the young man joined with the youths from a school established by Yoshino and Yoshino's friend, Johannes, and on a dark night they burned down the chief's spirit house, the women's menstrual house, and the sorcerers' canoe house—the entire set

of buildings with religious associations. This event, rather than the conversions that took place a year or two later, marks the end of the traditional Tobian order. The old rituals were scrapped, the chief abandoned his exclusive rights to certain foodstuffs, and the great majority of prohibitions associated with everyday life were no longer observed.

A new stage in the Tobian response to Western influence was about to begin. The burning of the sacred structures was, in a literal sense, a clearing away of the debris of old and apparently inadequate forms so that the incorporation of Western forms could begin. The subsequent acquisition of Christianity was the first act in a process that continues to this day: the creation of neo-Tobian culture through the integration of Western forms into a Tobian setting.

The motives of the people involved bear some examination because it is through them that we can distinguish the historical processes that had been gathering force for some time. Several of the young men who participated in the burning were still living in 1972, and I have talked with them about their activities on that night. What emerges from their accounts is that they, and others of their generation, had come to view the many restrictions or taboos that hedged their activities as onerous. This was especially true of the food and sexual avoidances associated with many types of fishing. These taboos were essentially religious, and by doing away with the religious structures on the island the young men hoped to liberate themselves from them.

The young man from Palau died during World War II, so we can only speculate about his motives. No doubt he also felt the taboos to be a burden. He had lived in Palau for a number of years, in the ferment and excitement of the creation of a new Southwest Island community. The prohibitions upon his behavior he found when he returned to Tobi must have seemed even more difficult and meaningless to him than to the other young men. Perhaps he hoped that destruction of the old order would allow him access to land and other resources. His genealogy shows that he was only marginally integrated into Tobian society. Finally, of course, there is the motivation mentioned in the story. Perhaps the religious practices of the island seemed especially futile to him after his exposure to the political and economic power of the Catholic mission in Palau.

We can also only speculate about the motives that led the chief to give his blessing to the destruction of the sacred structures. Perhaps the same factors that led to his agreement to the division of the sacred parcel of land operated here. It should be remembered that the chief and his opponents were all agreed that the flow of ritual power had terminated with the death of the old chief on Angaur. The sacred buildings were unusable because the ritual knowledge and power associated with them had been lost. The chief's attempt to use the buildings was bound to be both clumsy and presumptuous; yet failing to use them while they stood was a reminder of his irregular rise to power. More generally, the ongoing demographic crisis was inescapable evidence that traditional religious forms of behavior were no longer protecting the island; they

had become empty as well as burdensome. This withdrawal of confidence led to their abandonment and the destruction of the structures and equipment associated with them. This break was not accompanied by radical transformations of other areas of the Tobian order. Life apparently went on much as before but without the ritual underpinning that had given it meaning.

The secular experiment by the Tobians failed and led to great anxiety. The fortuitous arrival of Father Marino a year or so later offered the people a chance to relieve that anxiety by adopting a new religion. Tobians believed that communal religious behavior has consequences for society as a whole. The most important of these is the prevention of disaster, and the failure of the rituals to prevent the catastrophic depopulation was probably one reason for abandoning the aboriginal religion. Ritual is thought to function in the prevention not only of physical disasters such as depopulation and typhoons but also supernatural disasters, especially the activities of ghosts or *yarus*, the most feared of supernatural manifestations. Ghosts are the essence of malicious evil and are hated and feared as a constant threat. Tobi and its surrounding seas are thought to be infested with them, but the correct performance of ritual can render the ghosts powerless.

Tobian belief in ghosts serves the same functions of displacing antisocial aggression and focusing free-floating anxiety as belief in beings called by a cognate name serves on the distant but culturally and linguistically related atoll of Ifaluk (Spiro 1952). In an environment in which forced intimacy is unavoidable and the ethics of nonaggression and cooperation very highly developed, the Tobians, like the people of Ifaluk, displace aggressive feeling onto supernatural beings. Ghosts offer both peoples an acceptable focus for anxieties that have as their actual cause consciously unacceptable drives. With complete approval by both the self and others, a Tobian can hate and fear ghosts. By abandoning the aboriginal rituals, however, the Tobians denied themselves power over those ghosts. They were caught in a psychosocial trap of their own devising.

Social and intrapsychic tensions were almost surely at a high point during the year or so of the secular experiment on Tobi. The recent population decline seems to have given rise to a great deal of covert conflict. Each family tried to expand its holdings by moving into the vacuum left by extinct groups. Land claims were made by reference to genealogical links, but in many cases two or more groups with equally tenuous grounds claimed the same estate. In some cases there were still one or two members of the original group whose title to the land was clear but who could not mobilize sufficient support to defend it. There were other sources of tension, too, making this an extremely uncomfortable period. The establishment of the Tobian settlement in Palau, the acquisition and retention of new forms of wealth, the continuing failure of the women to bear children—all were important factors.

Because belief in ghosts had not been abandoned, all these antagonisms and anxieties contributed to a high rate of ghostly activity and a great number of ghost sightings. And since the Tobians had lost faith in the ability of traditional

religion to control these hated and feared apparitions, the sightings in turn gave rise to more anxiety. A vicious cycle had developed that was not broken until Father Marino was able to offer an escape through new prophylactic ritual.

It is possible at this point to provide a rough answer to two of the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter. Father Marino's success derived from the frightening and powerless state the Tobians felt themselves to be in due to the absence of control over ghosts; he offered them an alternative. The conscientiousness with which the Tobians practiced their religion was a result of their understanding of the connections between religious ritual and disaster. Father Marino gave them mechanisms for preventing disaster, and they dared not abandon them lest they again be overwhelmed by either physical or supernatural catastrophe. Thus it is not surprising that, despite all the time they spent praying, the Tobians seemed remarkably unconcerned about their ignorance of the literal meaning of their prayers.

Catholicism was appropriated to play the role of the discredited old religion; therefore there was no need to transform or even to think very much about the elements that make up Catholic belief and practice. The beliefs were simply subscribed to and the practices simply followed. In fact the elements became resistant to transformation because their success in preventing disaster lay not in their inner meaning but in their correct performance. Change, generated either internally or externally, was potentially disastrous. Once the Tobians became convinced of the utility of Catholicism, their self-perceived task was to learn the correct rituals and practice them.

THE TEACHINGS OF FATHER MARINO

If cultures are functionally integrated, then the acquisition of an institution as fundamental as religion must be accompanied by transformations in that institution so that it fits with the rest of the borrowing culture. The ethnographic literature is rich with examples of precisely this process. The Islam of some sub-Saharan Africans (Greenberg 1946), the Catholicism of some of the Yucatecan Mayans (Vogt 1964), and the Protestantism of some of the native American groups around Puget Sound (Barnett 1957) are end products of such transformations—the syncretic results of adapting the borrowed religion to local needs and understandings. Tobian religious behavior, however, did not appear to exhibit this dimension. The great bulk of their specifically religious beliefs also appeared to be quite orthodox. One of the key institutions in neo-Tobian culture appeared to have almost no Tobian coloring. If, however, we do not examine the religious beliefs and practices of the Tobians *per se*, but rather inquire into the islanders' beliefs about religion, then "Tobianness" begins to emerge. The functional orientation toward Catholicism, for example, is clearly a carry-over from the pre-Christian past; religion must be practiced in order to keep ghosts and other disasters at bay.

Marino arrived at Tobi on a Japanese government steamer. At that time, Japanese imperial policy was to encourage, within strict limits, the Christian missionaries in Micronesia. Marino was accompanied by a Spanish-speaking convert from Merir—an atoll 240 kilometers north of Tobi with a similar language and culture—who acted as his interpreter. Also accompanying the priest were several of his Tobian converts from Eang, the settlement in Palau. All surviving witnesses agree that Father Marino baptized all the people on the island and that he attempted to bring all existing marriages into line with Catholic law. These are the only acts that are universally attributed to him. It is generally held that Marino made four statements—a threat to raise the dead, a promise that he would be their judge in heaven, a warning that they should not give credence to any outsider who came to the island claiming to be a priest unless he was wearing the Roman collar, and a pronouncement that marriage within a clan was incestuous. The chief and his allies claim an additional statement was made, involving the destroyed spirit house. This is virtually all that was remembered about this crucial event that occurred some fifty years ago. There are no traditions about the responses of the chief, Yoshino, the young man who had burned the sacred buildings, or any of the other people who had been so important in shaping the course of Tobian events up to this time, though some of the narratives do contain hints of Tobian response. Here a sorcerer or shaman challenges the priest, there a woman tricks him into agreeing to her marriage to her lover. Yet these few scraps do not make possible a confident reconstruction of the full history of the conversion.

Father Marino, as an evangelist, must have said and done more than is remembered. Nor are the seven things that are remembered entirely congruent with what he would have stressed as fundamental. Christ, the Trinity, and the Virgin are all absent from the remembered teachings. Moreover, some of the teachings seem to be quite improbable. Finally, it is apparent from internal evidence that the baptism probably did not take place as the Tobians described it. In other words, the preservation of the seven teachings is a result of a process of selective retention in which there has been some distortion. Perhaps, then, the transformation that the notion of functional integration tells us to expect took place not in the borrowed religion itself but in the words and deeds of the man who brought it. The words and deeds of Father Marino have been subjected to systematic pressure over the last fifty years to make them congruent with Tobian culture. The most direct test of this proposition would be to compare the actual deeds and words of Marino with what is remembered today. Since the only source for his deeds and words is the remembrances themselves, this procedure is impossible. The approach taken here is to examine carefully each of the remembered teachings for the meanings they convey to Tobians. It will be shown that these meanings are congruent with other Tobian beliefs and values. It will then be shown that the memories of Marino are not merely bits and pieces but a coherent corpus that will repay analysis.

Baptism

While only vague outlines of the mass baptism are remembered, it is possible to reconstruct a more detailed picture from other sources. For example, census data show that two of the Merir converts from Palau who accompanied the priest stood as godparents to all the initiates. However, this fact was only confirmed in response to direct questioning; it was never part of the narrative itself. The initial baptism was usually recounted as follows: "*He called the people together and they were baptized.*" Some of the younger people could explain this rite in orthodox Christian terms, but their knowledge came from postwar mission schools in Palau and is not an interpretation that survived from Marino's time. The fundamental and for many people the only meaning of the baptism involved the notion of the island as a whole becoming a Christian place. Emphasis was placed on the collective nature of the ritual. Marino sanctified marriages during his visit, a process that necessarily took place after the baptism of the partners. Baptism involved assigning new Christian (that is, Spanish) names to each individual. Apparently in the interest of symmetry, married couples received similar names (Juan and Juana, Terso and Teresa, Marino and Marina). This symmetry in the Spanish names of the newlyweds can only be explained by assuming that Marino knew who was to wed whom before he baptized them. From this it follows that he must have done the genealogical research necessary for making "good" marriages before he christened them. It is difficult to imagine that the sequence Marino followed was investigation of all potential spouses, mass baptism, and then marriage. It makes more sense to posit an individual sequence for each couple, including individual baptism. The distortion that led to the baptism being remembered as a single collective rite is probably based on a similar event in which all children and those few adults who for one reason or another did not wish to be married were baptized together. Such distortion supports the hypothesis that a key meaning of the original baptism lies in its total nature—it included all those actors in the Tobian sociocultural system who called themselves Tobians and thus, in a sense, the system itself. The fact that the christening of each convert with a new name was not stressed, and seldom even mentioned, indicates that the individual aspect of the baptism was not important. If it is seen as speaking to the nature of the sociocultural order, then it is necessary to inquire into the content of the message as understood by present-day Tobians.

The word used in Tobian for "baptize" usually refers to bathing (both swimming and washing), but it has two other meanings—one for the traditional cure for insanity, the other for a traditional disciplinary measure. Fathers punished their misbehaving sons by taking them to the sea and holding their heads underwater until they lost consciousness. Shamans chanting incantations used a similar technique to treat the insane. This similarity of treatment illustrates one of the fundamental Tobian concepts of behavior: the similarity between "crazy" and "bad" behavior.

It is no accident, I think, that the word for these techniques was extended to cover baptism. When people discussed the pre-Christian era, and especially the years immediately preceding the coming of the priest, it was commonly said that people were both crazy and bad. In recent times, the brief attempt at secularism after the spirit house was burned and before the arrival of the priest has been viewed in an extremely negative light even by the men who helped instigate it. The times were perceived as having been out of joint and Father Marino was viewed as having acted to put things right. Combining the role of father, because he insisted that he be called by this term, with that of shaman by reciting ritual formulas, Marino linked together in one rite the cure for insanity and the punishment for transgression, thus putting the system back in order through the ritual of baptism. It is also notable that the two traditional techniques involved rendering the subject unconscious through near drowning, whereas Tobians say the baptism involved merely tracing a watery cross on the penitent's forehead and pouring a little water over his head. The former experience was undoubtedly terrifying; the latter, especially in contrast, was not. From that contrast emerged the perception of Marino as the good father-shaman whose corrective abilities embraced a whole society but involved no unpleasantness.

The baptism thus emerges as a fundamental event and its retention in the corpus of remembered teachings becomes understandable. As a communication it has two messages, one of which deals with the contrast between pre-Christian Tobi and the present and the other with the nature of Father Marino.

Remarriage

Pre-Christian Tobian marriage patterns were characterized by a wide variety of arrangements. Men were permitted a number of wives and women could have one or two husbands. Cross-cousin marriage was preferred and serial polygamy with frequent divorces was the rule for both sexes. Since all these practices are frowned upon by the Church, one would expect that Marino would have acted to eliminate them. All that is remembered, however, is that he forced each married person to go back to his or her earliest living spouse and then sanctified that marriage. A number of points of interest arise in this connection.

It is only in stories surrounding this incident that the Tobians are seen as more than passive targets of some item of priestly behavior. This fact is due to the impossible nature of the task Marino apparently set himself. While newly christened Roberto may have been Fausta's first husband, for example, she could well have been his second, third, or even seventh wife. The opportunities this created for the type of manipulation at which the Tobians are so skilled were not lost and many people succeeded in marrying their lovers, who may have been neither a previous nor current spouse. More important, no one was forced to marry someone he or she detested. This proved to be highly adaptive since the marriage ceremonies performed by Father Marino wrote finis to the aboriginal

pattern of frequent divorce and remarriage. Tobians typically said: "He made everyone who had been divorced go back to their first spouse." That this was their only interpretation of his behavior brings us to a seeming anomaly.

If the body of stories about Marino is in fact the locus of the processing Catholicism has undergone at the hands of the Tobians, we would expect each story to speak to important issues facing the islanders. We would also expect that most serious sociocultural problems on the island would be reflected in the stories. It is this latter point that is at issue here. Why did the corpus of remembered teachings not deal with changes in such practices as cross-cousin marriage and polygamy? From Marino's point of view the unions that existed prior to his visit were not marriages at all. It is quite likely, therefore, that the recollections were accurate and he did not deal directly with these practices in the limited time at his disposal. However, if these changes were viewed later as significant one would expect them to be reflected in the stories, whether based on fact or not. From the observer's perspective these changes certainly seem to have contributed to a major dilemma facing Tobian society.

In recent times a Tobian, especially a man, had a rather narrow range of options concerning marriage. Church prohibitions against polygamy (especially polyandry) and divorce and remarriage contributed to this restriction, but the fundamental problem was demographic. Only a few women of recent generations have proven fertile. Moreover, most of these women have given birth to many more males than females, leading to a disparity in the sex ratio that would have been unlikely in a larger population. On Tobi, however, the fate of the predominantly male children was to compete for the few available women. The situation was made worse by the fact that a male remained in the marriage market much longer than a female and so there were a number of widowers also searching for mates among the young women. The combination of Church marriage regulations with the retention of pre-Christian rules forbidding clan endogamy exacerbated the problem. This was quite apparent to the Tobians who ponder these matters. However, the most significant of the Church's marriage prohibitions seemed to be the one against divorce. This is particularly striking because divorce, in the usual sense of the term, did occur on the island.

Marriages did break up, and some spouses set up or joined separate households or even formed semisecret liaisons with third parties. The liaisons could not be sanctified, however, nor could they result in the joint households characteristic of Church-sanctified unions until the legitimate spouses of the lovers were deceased. The rule seemed to operate as follows: no one could remarry until his previous spouse had died. The factors that led to the instability of marriage in the pre-Christian era were still operative, yet the expression of those tensions (frequent divorce and remarriage) was no longer a possibility. Objectively, prohibiting remarriage while a previous spouse is still living created the most difficulty, and can also be seen as an indirect prohibition of polygamy. It stresses the exclusive nature of the marriage tie between a man and woman.

Cross-cousin marriage is not spoken of in the story of the remarriages. In

recent times there have been no people on Tobi who would be eligible mates even if the rule against cross-cousin marriage were to be waived. Therefore, although a significant change had taken place with respect to the cross-cousin rule, that change was not an issue, and was not reflected in any of the stories told about Marino.

At this point it might be asked why a story had not been invented to revalidate the aboriginal practice of frequent divorce and remarriage. As we shall see, this is evidently what happened with respect to clan endogamy. But the priests who have followed Marino refused to preside at second marriages when the first spouse was still living. It was not possible for people simply to set up joint households without the Church's blessing. By concerning himself with marriage in the way that he did, Father Marino firmly set the instruction of marriage within the realm of the sacred, in marked contrast to aboriginal unions.

Power over Ghosts

While walking through the cemetery Father Marino is supposed to have said, "My power is from Dios and it is true. Shall I call the dead people here in this ground to stand up?" The cemetery had only recently come into use, as a result of Japanese pressure. Previously the dead had been set adrift. The cemetery is located at the northern end of the island, within the bounds of the old sacred grounds. This continuity in the spiritual geography of the island may or may not be accidental, but the fearful attitude of the Christian islanders toward this plot was probably similar to that of their ancestors. At night the area was avoided if at all possible. If a visit was necessary, as during turtle hunting season, people only went there in parties of three or more. The area was dangerous and frightening because it was the haunt of ghosts, and there is no reason to suppose that the situation was different in Marino's time. The setting in which the words were spoken thus conveyed to the minds of the islanders an aura of supernatural power.

Among the several versions of this story the most widely accepted had the missionary uttering his words in response to a challenge from a shaman. There was unanimity on two points: the wording of the phrase quoted above and the response of the audience. Everyone took Marino's utterance as a threat, since in the Tobian view a resurrection of the dead would be an unmitigated disaster for the living. The newly risen would not be mortals bound by the physical and moral restraints of the normal world but Lazarus-like beings who had passed beyond that world and returned, eerie and frightening. Whatever Marino's intentions when he uttered these words, they are felt to have been designed to impress the people with his power and the dire consequences in store for any who would not follow him. He did not, so the stories go, actually have to raise the dead since people, in begging him not to, conceded his power to carry out the threat.

This leads to an important message contained in this saying: the unique and

liminal position of Father Marino. Clearly the resurrection of the dead is no task for an ordinary mortal; only a man in close touch with the supernatural could do that. The claim of power to raise the dead is a claim over the processes of life and death. The statement makes clear the source of that power. The emphasis is on the concrete and the immediate. It is not a vague statement about the omnipotence of Marino's god, but a claim to be a channel through which that power can enter the affairs of this world. The theme of Marino's special spiritual abilities runs through most of the stories told of his visit. To a people accustomed to the idea of human-ghostly dialogue, as in the pre-Christian trance states of the shamans, Marino's assertion of the power to call up a whole new population of ghosts did not appear farfetched. The claim was plausible but awe inspiring, representing a level of spiritual power unparalleled in Tobian thought.

The second message contained in the statement is that ghosts exist and, furthermore, that there is a close connection between ghosts and religion. The threat can be paraphrased: "Do what I say or there will be many ghosts on the island." The first half of this warning can only refer to the necessity of conforming to Roman Catholicism; the second half refers not only to ghosts as such but, by inference, to all disasters that are likely to strike the fragile Tobian ecosystem. And finally, the statement is congruent with the traditional Tobian notion of religion as a set of techniques necessary to ward off disasters in general and ghosts in particular.

Power to Judge the Dead

Father Marino was said to have made the following statement as he was about to leave the island: "*Don't forget that I am in charge of you and when you die I, and no one else, shall be the one to decide where you go.*" When questioned about its meaning, informants argued that Marino was saying that he, and not Christ, was the one to decide whether heaven or hell would be each Tobian's ultimate destination. Obviously this statement strengthened Marino's unique cosmological position vis-à-vis the islanders. Of all Marino's remembered acts and sayings, this one speaks most directly to that point, and it does so via an idiom of power, that is, the concept of *hosuar*, "in charge" (Black 1982).

In the Tobian view of things, the only true adults were men between middle age and senility. They alone fully possessed the prime virtues of self-restraint, competence, and independence. Females and other males were thought to be capable of exhibiting these characteristics only in varying degrees. People without self-restraint and competence lost the third virtue, independence, by having someone, usually an adult male, placed "in charge" of them. All major decisions were made only with this person's consent; he had the power of reward and punishment over his wards, especially if they were children.

Tobians said that in pre-Christian times the chief, who wielded political

power and acted on the island's behalf in exchanges with the spiritual world, was "in charge" of the whole island. Marino's claim to be "in charge" is a similar metaphor. As a metaphor it implies that the population of the island as a whole is deficient in the three prime virtues and a superordinate must interfere in its affairs. Marino's claim is considerably more extensive than that attributed to pre-Christian chiefs because it is thought to transcend both his and his congregation's morality. Although Father Marino was beheaded by the Japanese about ten years after he converted Tobi, thirty years later it was thought that he was still in charge of the island and watched from on high the behavior of its inhabitants. The belief that Marino would judge the dead firmly established his unique position in Tobian cosmology. The islanders' belief that they would be either rewarded or punished according to their earthly conduct was an important moral sanction that acquired its force from Tobian attitudes toward authority and, ultimately, the father.

The Tobian father was a remote and threatening figure in the life of the child. Stories told about childhood commonly included beatings by the father and stressed the respect and fear in which he was held. This attitude had been institutionalized in the custom of avoiding, where possible, the mention of one's dead father's name. When this was not possible, as for example during some of my interviews with them, Tobians made a great show of whispering the name into the listener's ear.

Evidence that this attitude extended to other figures was not hard to find, especially among the old people. Traditional behavior toward the chief was also apparently marked by fear and respect, as was behavior toward Americans or Palauans invested with some power over the islanders. No human figure was more frightening to old people, especially old women, than the Palauan policemen occasionally called to Tobi to investigate some problem.

This fear of authority was seen as highly functional by the more thoughtful people on the island. It was conventional Tobian wisdom that only fear keeps people, particularly those who are not fully autonomous adults, from dangerous and antisocial acts. This conception was demonstrated during a meeting held to determine the culprit in a possible homicide attempt. The question arose as to whether the matter should be reported to the administration in Palau. An affirmative consensus was quickly reached on the basis that no one's life would be safe and the island would be uninhabitable unless the young people were given an immediate object lesson by seeing the criminal brought to justice and punished. A policeman was sent to the island on the next field trip some months later but was unable to make any progress in his investigation. Commenting on this, one young man made a statement that clearly expresses the shared belief in the importance of Father Marino in sanctioning moral behavior. "Maybe that guy who did it," he said, referring to the person who attempted the murder, "is really proud and happy now, but when he dies and meets Father Marino I think he will be very sorry."

Other Missionaries

Father Marino's person was firmly embedded within the structure of Tobian theology. The beliefs that endowed him with this status made it extremely difficult for exponents of other versions of Christianity to make any headway at all among the Tobians. The source of their difficulty can be found in the third statement Marino was alleged to have made: "*If any person comes here and tries to say mass but is not wearing the same thing around his neck that I am, do not listen to him.*" This statement was related to me in an anecdote about the first priest to visit the island after World War II, who as a navy chaplain was wearing a uniform without a Roman collar.

The statement is a part of the corpus of remembered teachings. Everyone was aware of it and there was no disagreement about its authenticity. It seems preadapted to the possibility, of which the people were keenly aware, that a non-Catholic missionary might visit the island. Since this was not a current issue the saying did not form part of the active narration, though in a negative sense it was of current importance. It was felt to be a warning against falling away from the religion revealed by Marino. It is important to note that it is primarily a warning against non-Catholic missionaries and not a direct admonition to pay heed to the other Catholic priests who over the years have followed Marino to the island. This accounts for the ease with which teachings of subsequent priests were ignored when they contradicted Marino's word. It is notable that the Marino corpus was structured in such a way that the process of ignoring more recent Church teachings in order not to violate the corpus did not in itself contradict a teaching of Marino.

Clan Incest

The next saying attributed to Marino conveys a limited message. It forbids clan endogamy, but it does so in an elliptical manner. The actual wording is as follows: "*It is as impossible to marry a clan sister as it is to marry an angel.*" The wording was that given by Tobian English-speakers, some of whom have achieved a fair degree of fluency. If one talked to an old person who had been present at the crucial meeting when Marino is thought to have said this, he would quote a statement that can be rendered: "Intercourse with a sibling of opposite sex is like intercourse with a ghost. You cannot." The problem of interpretation lies in the fact that the words translated by the English-speakers as "marriage," "clan sister," and "angel" can with equal accuracy be translated as "intercourse," "sibling of opposite sex," and "ghost."

Tobian clans were named, unranked, matrilineal, exogamous groups in which genealogical connections between all members were felt to exist even though they could not be traced by any one individual. In recent times clans were the only recognized structural unit between households on the one hand and the collectivity known as "the people of the island" on the other. Exogamous clans

have apparently existed on Tobi since shortly after the initial settlement. They possess a mythological charter in the epic that tells of the island's discovery, having been constituted by the original ancestress. If we assume that the clan exogamy rule was felt to be so important that it required supernatural justification, it is not surprising that the original pre-Christian charter had been reinforced by one bearing Marino's stamp. This was the only instance in which a pre-Christian rule had been revalidated in such an overt manner.

The simile expressed in the statement that marrying a clan sister is like marrying an angel acquires its force from the Tobian notion of an angel as a kind of benevolent ghost. Ghosts were frightening because they could flout with impunity the laws governing the normal world. Angels shared this characteristic and thus aroused the same reaction of horror in Tobians. The use of the word "angel" instead of the usual word for ghost was primarily a device to give the statement a Christian cast; the benevolent aspect of angelic nature is beside the point.

Acting like a ghost and being crazy were forms of behavior that shared important attributes: both were dangerous, uncanny, unpredictable, and gave rise to a great deal of fear. One important difference between ghostly behavior and insane behavior was that the fear of the former was directed outward while fear connected with insanity was directed toward the self. This is summed up nicely in the conventional wisdom that ghosts were harmful to other people whereas the insane were prone to suicide. The unknown person who was thought to have attempted murder was said to be a ghost; a man who repeatedly tried to kill himself was said to be insane (Black 1985). The fear of insanity and subsequent suicide was an important component of the sanctions against clan incest, and Marino's teaching speaks to this point by drawing attention to the ghostly nature of such an act. To a Tobian, what seems ghostly in others must seem to be insanity in the self. Recognizing the immense social pressure brought to bear on anyone attempting an incestuous match, a Tobian was likely to feel that he would have to be crazy to try such ghostly behavior.

Violation of the incest regulations, then, produced a rupture in the fabric of the normal universe as dramatic and shocking as the flouting of the laws of the physical world by a ghost. Both acts were beyond the capacity of normal men but well within the power of ghosts. Thus it is not surprising that in the only two instances of clan incest I know of, both men were described as ghosts. The fact that only the men were so described is a product of the Tobian view of adulthood discussed earlier. The belief that people are capable of anything and that only fear keeps them from behaving in immoral ways formed a counterpoint to this attitude. A normal man was one who was, among other things, sufficiently afraid of the consequences of immoral acts. In the two attempts at endogamous clan marriage of which I am aware, the primary reaction of the people seemed to consist of a mixture of wonder and horror. Wonder seemed to arise from the perception that a fundamental law had been flouted; horror originated from the people's feelings about incest. They were aghast.

In both cases the men were treated, within limits, as ghosts. People did not

run shrieking from their presence, but they were avoided as much as was consistent with the obligations of civility, which minimally require a cheerful response to any social initiative of another. Eventually, they were pressured into leaving the island. The gossip that continued to swirl about these two marriages stressed the men's frightening boldness and their untrustworthiness. These men were referred to directly as ghosts. This was, of course, a metaphor; everyone recognized that they were human. However, it was a metaphor that contained a strong element of truth for the people of Tobi, since these two men did indeed act like ghosts.

Part of the strangeness of the statement when viewed from a Christian perspective is that it does not speak directly of morality; marriage to a clan sister is not said to be evil but rather impossible. To Tobians, however, the word "impossible" pointed to a greater truth about men and morality—the notion that there was essentially no difference between certain moral and physical laws. In the Western tradition the two were clearly distinguished, primarily on the basis that violation of moral laws, although bad, is possible, whereas physical laws are such that their violation is impossible without supernatural intervention. In this sense moral laws are less absolute in the West than are physical laws. In the Tobian view of things the two are indistinguishable along this axis. The word "impossible" in Marino's teaching is congruent with the Tobian idea that men are as bound by incest regulations as, for example, they are by gravity; *neither can be violated by a normal person.*

There is one final point to be made in connection with this statement. The word translated as "marry" refers both to intercourse and to marriage, depending on the context in which it is used. The fact that the English speakers chose the former and not the latter is significant. Sexual intercourse with a clan mate (providing that the genealogical connection was no closer than first cousin) was forbidden but aroused no great reaction when it became known. It was expected that young people would make love as often as possible and with very little regard for the amenities, and while it was bad for clan mates to sleep together, there was usually a good deal of resigned tolerance for what was perceived as weakness of the flesh. Parents or guardians would try to break up such liaisons and ensure that the act was not repeated. It was only when the parties tried to formalize the union that the full complex of wonder and horror, ghosts and insanity, was triggered. The dramatic difference in the reaction to incestuous intercourse and endogamous clan marriage lies in the nature of Tobian marriages, which involved the establishment of long-term economic exchange relations between spouses and, to a lesser extent, among their families. Marriage involved the formation of a household, the fundamental unit in Tobian society, and it involved the filiation of children to the mother's and father's kin in different ways and for different ends. Embarking on such a project with a woman of the same clan publicly flaunted one's immorality, suggesting disregard for the respect of others and for the conventions that govern the conduct of normal men. These are the actions and statements of a ghost or a madman.

Chief and Church

The final remembered teaching of Father Marino differs from the others because the Tobians were not unanimous about its authenticity. This fact provides an important clue to the workings of the entire Marino complex. Referring to the chief's spirit house, the priest was alleged by some to have said, "*It is too bad you burned this place down. It would have made a good church.*" Before the collapse of the old order the chief exercised ultimate spiritual and political power, and his spirit house was the site of most of the important rituals. This statement was an attempt to charter a role for the chief in the new religion.

The chief and his allies began a campaign some time ago to infiltrate the church's activities both on the island and in Palau. They achieved a degree of success in certain minor areas, but overall direction of the church remained firmly in the hands of the Mission. The chief's objective was to be recognized formally as leader of the congregation, especially for the rituals (novenas for the dead, for instance, and twice daily *rosarios*) that constituted the religious life of the island, except for the services held by the priest on the four or five days a year that he visited the island. The chief also would have liked to be the sole intermediary between the people and the priest on all matters pertaining to church business and ritual. Although the Mission treated the chief with great respect, it refused to fall in with his plans. The American and Palauan priests were unimpressed with his appeal to the authority of Marino, but it was obvious that the islanders understood the implications of the statement that the chief and his partisans attributed to Father Marino (Black 1983).

This, then, is all that is remembered about Father Marino: out of a much wider range of potential memories the Tobians have chosen these seven items. There is no way to tell at this late date whether they are grounded in fact or fantasy, though it is certain that they all contain particularly Tobian meanings. The understandings that arose about them were remote from orthodox Catholicism but fit with the rest of Tobian culture. Transformation took place not in the borrowed religious practices, but in the words and deeds of its conveyor.

Further analysis reveals that these seven items formed a coherent ideological complex with definite properties. The complex was nonfalsifiable, possessed a certain dynamic, and had both positive and negative functions for the people who used it. It was also an idiom that expressed certain Tobian truths about man, society, and the supernatural. The system had two major tenets: first, religion is necessary, and second, Tobian religion must be Father Marino's. The former is supported by the baptism and by the threat to raise the dead, which teach that society is bad and crazy without religion and further that religion is necessary to prevent disasters. That the religion of Tobi must be Marino's is supported by belief in his special powers over ghosts, over the individual soul, and over society. These beliefs derive, at least in a cognitive sense, from Father Marino's remembered teachings. His power over ghosts is spoken of in the threat to raise the dead; his power over individual souls is asserted in his claim to be

their postmortal judge. His power over Tobian society is taught in the baptism, in the statement about being "in charge," and in the threat to raise the dead.

The other four items—remarriage and statements about clan incest, other missionaries, and the chief's spirit house—perform a different function. They speak to specific issues that have been given a religious coloring. These teachings are adhered to because Marino's power to dictate them is validated by the major tenets about religion and his place in it. On a more general level, the whole corpus of Father Marino's teaching can be seen as a revalidation of the entire Tobian ethical and moral system. Acts ranging from hoarding to murder were thought to be evil both before and after the conversion. Since then, they have also been taken to be sins that Father Marino will punish.

For both sides in the succession dispute, the argument about whether Marino actually made the statement was the only argument that mattered. It is a property of this system, and perhaps of all ideological systems, that once an issue has been framed in its terms only those terms are relevant. Arguments based on other grounds, such as personal interest or pragmatism, simply did not apply. This did not mean that the solutions it offered were permanent, but it did mean that as long as the two general tenets were accepted, change in the solutions required change in the Marino corpus. Those solutions were adjustments made to cope with past realities. When those realities changed, the solutions became maladaptive. This led to considerable tension and pressure to modify the system. A number of factors made this a difficult and slow process.

This intrinsic resistance to change could be most clearly seen in disputes over clan endogamy. A young Tobian might wish to marry a clan sister. He could point out his present unhappy, wifeless situation. He could assure the girl and her guardians of his deep love. He could offer the guardians tobacco and money and tell them of the land he owned or stood to inherit. All these arguments based on his, the girl's, and her guardians' personal interest would tempt but not persuade those guardians to give their blessing to the match (a blessing that was absolutely necessary if the young man was to succeed). He could raise the argument to a more general level and point out the scarcity of eligible women on the island and the dearth of babies. He could also claim that he and his followers would have to seek non-Tobian spouses if the rule was not waived. The guardians would agree that this was a shame and might even complete his arguments for him, pointing out the relatively large number of such marriages that had already taken place, resulting in many children with no Tobian clan. At this point someone was sure to say that if this kept up eventually there would be no more Tobians but only half-caste Palauans (most non-Tobian wives are Palauan). This was not a compelling argument, however, and the guardians would still not agree to let their ward marry within the clan. Their refusal would be framed in terms of the Marino ideology: "*It is as impossible to marry a clan sister as it is to marry an angel.*" The young man could counter this by telling how he was taught at the Catholic mission school that the Church does not forbid clan endogamy. He could even remind his elders of the many sermons

the American priest had preached on just this topic during his visits to the island. The guardians would probably respond along these lines: "You know what the Americans are like. They are very nice but they want everyone to like them. The priest just tells us that to make things easy for us. But we are strong enough to follow the true law, the one of Marino."

Tobians operated in two other social systems besides that of their island. One of these was the community that grew up in Eang, composed of people from all four of the Southwest Islands. These people were but one or two generations removed from their natal islands of Sonsorol, Pulo Ana, Merir, and Tobi. They created a village and a social system based on linguistic and cultural similarities, and like the people of Tobi were all Catholic. The other social system in which Tobians operated was that of Palau. Although there was religious diversity in Palau, one of the strongest elements of Palauan social organization was the Catholic church, which had considerable economic and political power. Tobians used their Catholicism as a major dimension of identity in their interactions with both Palauans and other Southwest Islanders. As fellow communicants of a universal church, they had a basis for meeting with these people that is not founded on invidious distinctions. This was particularly true of their interactions with Palauans. Just as a reasonable existence on Tobi demanded the cooperation of one's kinsmen, a reasonable existence in Palau depended on overcoming the prejudice some Palauans exhibit toward Southwest Islanders. Education, health care, and employment were concentrated in Palauan hands. The Catholic church was virtually the only institution in which people from the Southwest Islands could make meaningful contacts with the people who controlled the levers of power and service. The church also directly bound the Southwest Islanders to herself by providing employment and education and by helping them when they ran into difficulties with Palauan institutions. All these factors meant that a young man wishing to marry a clan mate could not simply take her to Eang and marry her outside the church. He needed his identity as a Catholic to function adequately in the greater society in which Eang is embedded.

In effect young men had no option but to comply with the clan exogamy rule. The old people controlled both the women and the priests. As trusted elders of the congregation, they could convince the priest that the proposed match was inappropriate. In recent years, as the priests gained more familiarity with the islanders, guardians resorted to camouflaging their efforts by using agents to explain why the priest should not marry their ward to her clan mate. That their control of the priest was slipping was evidenced by the recent completion of one of the two intraclan marriages attempted since Marino's visit. However, this was not really a very hopeful precedent for the young men; it took a number of contention-filled years for two middle-aged clan mates to persuade the priest to marry them. They then moved to Palau and had very little to do with any of their relatives. None of the specifics of this case was likely to be repeated soon. Indeed, the total dependency of this couple on the husband's meager cash

income became something of an object lesson for the young people. The problem of maintaining the clan exogamy rule thus hinged on the motives of the old. Why did they persist in enforcing this rule when by doing so they threatened the extinction of the very institution it was designed to preserve?

There was no great commitment on the part of any Tobian, young or old, to the integrity of Tobian society. People were interested in their own fate and, to a lesser extent, that of their families. The future course of their society was a matter of little concern. Therefore, when the young men pointed out to a clan mate's guardians the number of Palauan women who married into Tobian society and the fact that their children had no Tobian clan, their arguments carried little weight. A girl's guardians knew that she would eventually marry someone, so commitment to family was not a factor either. Finally, as people already in control of the island's resources, there was not much that a girl's guardians stood to gain personally from allowing their ward to marry a clan mate. Indeed, for these firm believers in Marino's word, they stood to lose paradise, the only reward ahead of them. As people close to death they were much concerned with their fate after death. And Marino not only ruled out clan endogamy but also proclaimed himself the judge of that fate. The young men were armed only with statements from current, unmythologized missionaries, who could offer no arguments powerful enough to counter those drawn from the Marino corpus. Change in the marriage rule required change in the Marino corpus, and, as survivors of the original conversion, the old people controlled that corpus. It was their memories upon which it was based. And these memories were a resource in the struggle between the generations just as surely as the women, land, and specialized knowledge were also controlled by the elders.

It should be pointed out that the preservation of the clan exogamy rule has certain unique characteristics. The observation that the clans would become extinct if foreign women were continually incorporated into the population was a truism for the Tobians, yet does not appear well founded. The continuity of a clan depends not on the social identity of the women married by its men but rather on the production of female children by its own women. Further, it must be noted that even if all the clans were to become extinct there would be few if any repercussions. The clans functioned only in the regulation of marriage, and as such were complemented by Catholic incest regulations. Clans have had no other function in recent times, regardless of the role they may have played in the past. The clans had no estates and no significant role in the ritual life of the island.

If clan exogamy were not unique in these ways the dispute over its maintenance might have been considerably different. Changes in the Marino system and the behavior it justified depended on the survivors of the original conversion. If they decided, either consciously or unconsciously, to remember things differently, then the system could be adapted to meet changed circumstances. Failing that decision, change awaited their death.

CONCLUSION

The questions of why the Tobians converted so rapidly to Catholicism, why they appeared so orthodox in their observance of Catholicism, and why they were so active in its practice are three aspects of but a single question: Why is contemporary Tobian religion as it is?

Past events reveal the fundamental and increasing pressures to which the Tobians have been subjected. Their world view helps to explain their response to those pressures. The religious nature of the reaction to depopulation follows from the islanders' definitions of both disasters and religious ritual and the connection assumed to exist between them. This combination of history and world view promoted rapid and unanimous conversion to Catholicism.

The apparent orthodoxy of current Tobian religious behavior can best be understood as an epiphenomenon. The meaning of these behavioral forms is to be found not in their content but in their status as validated procedures for preventing disasters and maintaining Catholic identity. Mourning rites provided the single exception to this. They were Christian in that they were the occasion of endless prayer and at least three church services, but they did not follow orthodox Catholic practice. From the canoe in which the deceased was buried and the elaborate food presentations after his funeral to the rigorous year-long taboos placed upon his close female kin, these practices seemed to be an amalgamation of aboriginal and Catholic ritual. It is not surprising, considering what we know about Tobian ghosts, that the one area of ritual activity where syncretistic forces have clearly been at work is that concerned with death.

Validation of this and other (less transparently hybrid) ritual is provided by the precepts of the system constructed out of the remembered work of the evangelist, Father Marino. Each fragment conveyed meanings to the Tobians. They created a system that justified and even compelled close adherence to the new religion in an unmodified form. This adherence extended to the frequency with which religious ritual is performed—a result of a combination of ideas about the function of religion with faith in the Marino system.

In both behavior and belief there were some departures from the faith propagated by the Vatican. To understand these differences it is necessary to distinguish between knowledge of religious beliefs, personal commitment to those beliefs, and beliefs about religion. Tobians had knowledge of most traditional Catholic beliefs. They knew of the Virgin, the Trinity, papal infallibility, and other Roman Catholic dogma. They had little personal involvement with those beliefs, and in this sense they were different from many other Catholics. Such involvement as they did show is as much an epiphenomenon of the Marino system as the constant attention to prayers, the words of which also conveyed no meaning to them. Tobians also had a set of beliefs about religion not shared by most other Catholics. These ideas about the nature and function of religion led them to give great weight to those several idiosyncratic beliefs they did not share with other Catholics. Their faith in Father Marino as a personal savior

with power over ghosts is obviously out of line with mainstream Catholic thought, but is basic to the Catholicism of the islanders. The highly personalized view of the church held by the islanders, which was so evident in the manner in which they dismissed the American priest's efforts to withdraw church sanctions from the clan exogamy rule, made any attempt to force a change in their beliefs a contest between the present missionaries and the ever-present Marino. The islanders' refusal to grant the American priest equal status with Father Marino rested on their failure to grasp the institutional nature of the church. To them any contradiction of the Marino system by a missionary could be resolved only by weighing one priest's words against another's. Even with the support of a considerable segment of the Tobian population, missionaries have failed to modify behavior based on the Marino system. This was particularly striking in the use of the Marino system to validate the prohibition of marriage between clan mates, thus perpetuating a rule felt to be a burden by some and a blessing by no one.

Father Marino was an agent of change for the Tobians. He converted them to Christianity by offering them an escape from the dangers and anxieties of formal secularism without a concomitant secularization of world view. Yet by mythologizing him the islanders created new difficulties. In constructing an ideology out of his teachings, the Tobians invented a system that responded only minimally to change and made of Father Marino an agent of conservation. By choosing to ground solutions to pressing social problems in a supernaturally based ideology, Tobians traded anxiety for security, but in the process gave up the flexibility to meet new and equally pressing problems in the future.