

## THE TEACHINGS OF FATHER MARINO: CHRISTIANITY ON TOBI ATOLL

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The people of Tobi, a small remote atoll in the Western Carolines, became Roman Catholic in the 1930s. The conversion occurred en masse during the brief sojourn of a Spanish Jesuit priest named 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 Koror, the capital of Palau District in which Tobi is located.

The Tobians are a religious people and faithfully adhere to the beliefs and practices of their new religion as they understand them. Each day at dawn and again at dusk they gather together in their church to say the rosary. Every three or four months a priest comes to their island for a few hours and they all earnestly confess sins committed in his absence and eagerly flock to the church to hear mass. All pre-Christian religious and magical rituals have been abandoned and the old sacred chants are heard no more. The Catholic rituals for birth, marriage, and death are thought to be of great importance and are performed with enthusiasm. The high festivals of Christmas and Easter are the focus of much preparation and enjoyment. A number of women belong to sodalities, special church organizations that require dietary restrictions and extra prayer. Prayer marks many kinds of behavior. Meetings are begun and ended with prayer, as are formal meals. Individuals can often be observed sitting apart with hands clasped and heads bowed in silent prayer. Sundays are marked by an

absence of work and a more elaborate church service which is attended by the people in their best clothes.

If questioned about their beliefs most people are able to present reasonably intact versions of traditional Catholic thought. They are familiar with such concepts as the human soul, divine love, hell, purgatory, and heaven. Quite accurate explanations of the Trinity, the Virgin, the Fall of Man, and the nature of Christ's mission are also common knowledge. Young people who have attended mission school in Koror are the recognized local experts in these topics and the older people have learned much from them. Many episodes from the Bible have become part of the storyteller's repertoire, and the exploits of Adam and Eve, Noah, and various other Old and New Testament figures are often told. In short, the conversion of the islanders seem to have been strikingly successful. The perception shared by the Tobians and their priests of the island as a Christian place seems to be quite accurate.

These observations of current religion and religiosity on Tobi give rise to three questions. Why was Father Marino, in the absence of either force or prior missionary activity, so successful? Why are the people so conscientious in the practice of their new religion? Why is there no local variation in Catholic belief and ritual? These questions involve issues of importance to anthropology as well as to an understanding of missionary activity in the Pacific. They are closely related and all three stem from the assumption that the religion of a given people is seldom, if ever, an isolated phenomenon. It is instead a part of their culture and as such both a response and a way of responding 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 European adaptations of the Judaic-Christian pattern. Aboriginal Tobian religion probably traced its roots back to Neolithic Southeast Asia and was influenced in its development by the largely obscure events which can be summed up as "the peopling of the Pacific." Roman Catholicism is ultimately rooted in the ancient Near East and has been influenced in its development by events summed up as "European history." Aboriginal

Tobian religion reached its full development on a tiny atoll isolated from the political and economic centers of power far to the northeast in the so-called Yap empire.<sup>1</sup> 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 cultures and, in particular, between the two sets of religious forms are the result of two discrete cultural traditions lived in two very different environments.

The symbols of a religion are one way private psychological states and public social forms are united into a more or less coherent whole. In this sense, religious symbols are channels through which private meanings are invested 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 set of religious symbols for a set that arose in radically different circumstances? Specifically, why did the Tobians replace the miniature canoe and wooden phalluses 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 such as myth or ritual. The shallow acquaintance the islanders seem to have had with Roman Catholicism before they adopted it makes the Tobian case particularly interesting. The resistance to change which the adopted forms have shown also makes this case intriguing. The Tobians seem to have made an alien religion their own without significant modification. The frequency with which they engage in "Catholic" behaviors indicates that they maintain 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 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-a-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. It is necessary to understand the background of this attempt at secularism for three reasons: 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; the feelings that people have about the experiment today are some of the most compelling reasons for their adherence to their new faith; and the complex of cultural beliefs, personality attributes, and sociological factors which triggered both the attempt and its failure is still operative today and gives the teachings of Father Marino their special Tobian meanings. Although the decision to make this radical break with the past was implemented literally overnight, the processes which led up to it had been set in motion years before. In act, if we are to understand the events of that night we must go back to the dawn of the modern age on Tobi.

#### BACKGROUND TO SECULARISM

There is no way to assess the impact of the first Western ship to visit Tobi. The first known sighting occurred in 1710 (Eilers 1936:1), and a clue to the impression it made can be found in the explanation which Tobians offer for *uafarug* 'ship'. This word, a compound formed of the nouns denoting 'canoe' and 'island,' has its origin traced to the first time a ship was seen. It is said that the islanders believed the ship to be an island which had been made into a gigantic canoe. They thought that huge sails had been attached to its trees (the masts) and that the crew observed entering and leaving the cabins were the island's inhabitants going in and out of their houses. This may or may not be an accurate derivation of the term for ship, but it does indicate the alien nature which the West first presented to the islanders.

Bartering soon sprang up between the gradually increasing ship traffic and the island. Tobi was never a port of call like other, better-endowed islands. Although an occasional ship stopped to take on coconuts or other provisions, the majority sailed by without stopping. If sea conditions were right and the ship passed

close enough to the atoll, the men would give chase in their canoes. If they succeeded in overtaking it they would barter for metal, that most prized of goods. A class of men arose who claimed to possess magical incantations which had the power to force the ships to come about and wait for the canoes to catch them. These men exercised their power in return for a share in the proceeds of the bartering.

In 1832, a small jerry-built boat with nine Americans and three Palauan castaways aboard drifted into Tobian waters. These men, adrift for fourteen days, were in very bad condition. The Americans were survivors of a whaling ship which had gone aground on a reef in Northern Palau. With their Palauan friends and their homemade craft they were trying to reach Ternate in the Dutch East Indies. The events which followed were forgotten by the Tobians, but fortunately one of the survivors has left us a record of his stay on Tobi (Holden 1836). The Palauans and Americans were allotted to various families as slaves and forced to work in the taro gardens. After four months several shamans, who decided that these men were the cause of the sickness and starvation which had decimated the island, persuaded elements of the population to do away with the strangers. Most of the men who had not already died of ill treatment or malnutrition were killed, but a few were protected by the families which had taken them in. After two years on the atoll, the surviving Americans persuaded their owners to release them to a passing ship by promising that they would help them obtain a large amount of metal. The exchange was made and the sailors departed, leaving the one surviving Palauan to his fate. The following year a United States naval vessel put into Tobi, landed a force of marines, and conducted an unsuccessful house-to-house search for this man.

These events gave Tobi a certain notoriety and, following the publication of Holden's book, foreign vessels were less willing to put into the island or even stop for barter. As late as 1900, some captains felt that allowing Tobians on their ships was simply too dangerous.<sup>2</sup> Others, however, either ignorant of the supposedly savage islanders or confident of their ability to control them, began in the late nineteenth century to recruit men from the island as workers. The population, after an approximate decrease of 50 percent during the two years the castaways were

on the island, had recovered its original size by this time and was still growing. Genealogical evidence shows that the men who were recruited by these captains all had many siblings. Most of them were young and single.

Some of these men worked for German functionaries on Yap, the administrative center of Wilhelmine possessions in Micronesia. Others worked for English and Australian shipmasters harvesting the bounty of Helen Reef, an uninhabited atoll 63 kilometers east of Tobi. There were probably no more than a dozen men away from the island at any one time and most of them never made it back to Tobi. A few did return, however, and stories of their adventures are told and retold with relish.

One of the captains who used Tobians for his crew was a man whose name was probably something like Borrie. Apparently Borrie was either English or Australian and was engaged in the *bêche-de-mer* trade between Helen Reef and Manila. The nickname given him by his Tobian crew was Botchor, which means 'gums'—the story is told that on the first day out from Tobi the captain went into his cabin and reappeared without his teeth. This was the period in which blackbirding or unofficial recruiting of forced labor was being suppressed. The Germans suspected Borrie of blackbirding and eventually tracked him down to Sydney. A trial was held and the Tobian crew, after admitting that they had not been paid by Borrie, were taken to Palau and forced to make rope for one year as "punishment." Afterward they were returned to Tobi to live out their days musing over the curious ways of the Europeans. By this time Europeans were known by a generic term which is still in use today and which translates as 'person of possessions' or 'rich man'.

In 1909, the Thilenius ethnological expedition arrived at Tobi (Eilers 1936). The scientists set up their headquarters in the main spirit house, the building where the chief performed rituals associated with his office. These rituals centered on the chief as spokesman for and, in some senses, as 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 59 hectares; thus the popula-

tion 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 Holden's estimate of two hundred Tobians when the castaways escaped from the island seventy five years before. Even if we allow for a considerable margin of error in Holden's estimate, it is apparent that the island had experienced a dramatic rate of increase.

This upward trend was soon reversed. An epidemic broke out after the visit of the Thilenius expedition, and six months later upon the arrival of a German government vessel, it was found that two hundred 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 the 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. I have found no documents to substantiate this claim, although the mines were opened in 1909 (Grattan 1963:351). The need for mine workers is a possible explanation for 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 Thilenius expedition contains several photographs of Tobian men there.

The Tobians say that the Germans ordered the chief of Tobi to accompany the men to Angaur. The chief delegated some of his functions to a younger man who remained on the island. This assistant was forbidden by the departing chief from carrying out at least one of the important rites. The assistant disobeyed his instructions and performed the ritual, thus, it is believed, causing the death of the absent chief and making himself chief. This is a crucial event in the evolution of modern Tobian society. It precipitated political quarrels and gave rise to two parties, that of the descendants of the original chief and that of his assistant and his descendants. All agree that these events took place but disagree on the interpretation which should be placed upon them.

This factionalism is a key element in all that followed, including

the attempt at secularism, the conversion to Roman Catholicism, and the interpretations of some of the missionary's teachings. The argument between the two parties hinges on the legitimacy of the assistant's links to the chiefly genealogy and the legitimacy of the present chief, the details of which are not relevant to the following discussion. The assistant occupied the office of chief for only a few years and his title then passed to his son. When the son died, the title did not go to his son but to a descendant of the chief who had died on Angaur. This person is the present chief of Tobi, and the passed-over grandson of the assistant is the contender for the title. The present chief and his followers attempt to blacken the memory of the assistant while the contender and his few remaining followers attempt to defend it. The chief presents the assistant as a usurper who committed acts which he knew would lead to the death of the "true" chief hundreds of miles away on Angaur. The contender claims that his grandfather knew that the chief was already dead at the time he took over the title.

The ritual performed against orders by the assistant involved the distribution of coconuts from a tabooed plot of land in the northern part of the island. This land was magically forbidden to all but the chief and a subdivision of one of the seven matrilineal clans which existed at that time. This subdivision was probably either a lineage or a lineage section, although today in less populous times there are no such units on the island. The men from this group were responsible for taking care of the land and harvesting its coconuts for an annual ritual. This is the ritual which the assistant performed against the wishes of the absent chief. The assistant somehow persuaded the caretakers to harvest the coconuts from the sacred land and float them down to the chief's spirit house. While performing the chiefly ritual, which always preceded the distribution of this annual harvest, he shouted out the names of all the chiefs of Tobi. He started with the name of the first chief, the son of the ancestress of the present population, and continued up to the name of the father of the man who had appointed him assistant. He did not stop there, as might have been expected, but proceeded to call out the name of the chief in Angaur. If he had stopped with the name of this man's father the ceremony would have been identical, in this respect

at least, to that which the absent chief would have performed. By extending the list to include this man's name, he asserted his claim to the chieftaincy, and, in the present chief's version, caused the death of the man who had appointed him.

It should be noted that the calling out of the list of all previous chiefs was a key part of another ritual which traditionally took place when an appointed successor to a recently deceased chief assumed office. In the opinion of the current chief and a large part of the present population, the assistant not only violated the taboos on the northern land and disobeyed the man who had appointed him, but converted the ceremony of distribution into one of accession. Their primary objection is that the assistant was not of the chiefly line, although the manner by which he is thought to have obtained the title also disqualifies him in their minds. According to the rule covering succession to the chieftaincy, the old chief should instruct his heir in both the sacred and the secular duties of office and pass on the ritual paraphernalia. It was most important that he should pass on the chants through which it was believed the chief could communicate with the spirits. Everyone except the contender and his few followers profess that the chief who went to Angaur had neither the time nor the inclination to provide such instruction to the man he asked to stand in for him. Therefore, they view the acquisition of the title by the assistant and the subsequent death of the "true" chief on Angaur as an irremediable break in the flow of sacred power through the chiefly line. This interruption is thought to have had disastrous consequences for Tobi.

The chief's story continues, recounting that the "true" chief found a coconut on Angaur beach. He examined it and identified it as Tobian in origin. Closer inspection revealed that it was a coconut from the tabooed northern plot. Studying it further the chief realized that it had not fallen naturally to the ground but had been cut from its tree. From these conclusions he correctly deduced that his assistant must have recently performed the distribution ceremony even though he had been told not to do so. He reasoned further and decided that the assistant had probably proclaimed himself chief. He announced to his Tobian companions that he would soon die. "It's too bad for Tobi now," he is supposed to have said. "The island will be covered by grass."

This sentence is a prediction that the population of the atoll was going to drop to a very low level, if not extinction. As house sites are abandoned on Tobi their neatly swept sand compounds are invaded by grass. As fewer and fewer people use the island's paths they also become grassy. Taro pits too become covered with grass as they are abandoned. The prediction was accurate; the population of Tobi today is a mere sixty people and grass covers much of the island. To visitors this lends a certain parklike charm to the atoll, but to its inhabitants it is a constant reminder of the tragic nature of their recent demographic history.

The contender's version of these events is much less elaborate. He and his followers simply say that when the assistant learned that the chief had died he took over the office even though he had not been taught the sacred chants.

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 chief says that there was a usurpation of the title; the contender says that there was a legitimate but incomplete succession. Yet in certain fundamentals the versions agree or at least do not contradict one another. For some reason the Germans did remove a number of men from the island. The chief accompanied them and died off the island without passing on to his heir in the prescribed manner the esoteric lore attached to his office. The present chief's version seems to be correct in drawing a link between these facts and the atoll's depopulation. It is probable, however, that his sequence is the reverse of the actual ordering of these events. That is, the performance of the ritual by the assistant is likely to have been the result, rather than the cause, of the population collapse.

In the aboriginal order the chief performed a number of rituals through which the community related to the supernatural. The sacred and secular worlds were not discrete and separate categories. 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. This pragmatic stance toward their religion would have led the islanders to resort to ritual when faced

with the epidemic reported by the Germans. Perhaps to them it appeared that it was 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 decline in the population which continued up until recent times. The nature of the decline did change, however, and this change played a certain role in the events which followed. There was never again a murderous epidemic. The next population crisis was much slower in becoming apparent.

The Germans lost control of Tobi during World War I when the island passed to the Japanese along with the rest of Micronesia. It did not take long for the new masters to contribute to the processes which were leading to secularism. Sometimes 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 Holden and his companions nearly one hundred years before. The circumstances of his stay were quite different from Holden's. The Americans had arrived lost, friendless, and starving in the remnants of a crude, hand-made lifeboat. Yoshino arrived on a Japanese government vessel with the full weight of the vigorously expanding Japanese imperial order behind him. Holden and his companions were under the authority of local household heads; Yoshino had at his disposal the labor of a number of men and women enrolled in a school where he had begun to teach literacy, carpentry, and copra production. Most important, of course, the Tobians had experienced a century of intermittent contact with the power of men who arrived on ships. Given these differences, it is not difficult to understand the profound discrepancy in the fates of the two parties. Holden and company underwent an ordeal from which few emerged alive, whereas Yoshino was treated with great respect and exerted considerable influence on the affairs of the island.

He exerted this influence to increase copra production and received cooperation from the chief, the son of the ex-assistant. Yoshino was also helped by a landless Tobian named Johannes, who had recently been returned to the island from Yap by his departing German master. With the support of the chief and Johannes, Yoshino forced a division of the sacred northern land

into separately owned plots in order to place more land into copra production, despite opposition from the people of the clan subdivision who were guardians of that land. Johannes wished to acquire an estate, while the chief not only acquired more land and buttressed his power by gaining Japanese support, but also succeeded in ending the annual distribution ceremony which had allegedly turned into a time of dissension and an opportunity for his opposition to deny his legitimacy. 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 gonorrhoea. Though not fatal to those infected, 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, the Spanish Jesuit mission in Koror was successfully established among the Tobians there, who had taken advantage of the opportunities offered by the regularly scheduled ships which now plied between Tobi and Koror to leave the atoll for varying lengths of time. Opportunities for cash income and the intense factionalism over chiefly succession probably played a large part in the growth of the expatriate community. Its inhabitants probably found themselves to be politically and socially peripheral to both Tobian and Palauan societies and must have found psychological and social advantages in adopting the mission religion. Eventually, one family from Eang near Koror left this community and returned to Tobi. This family included a young man who was probably a communicant of the church (all church records of this period have been lost). The elders' recollections are vague, confused, and contradictory on this point. The chief on Tobi at this time was the son of the man who had performed the forbidden ritual. The young islander from Eang explained to him the power of the Jesuits. The factionalism surrounding the legi-

timacy of his father's accession to the title must have played some role in the chief's agreement to what followed, but the stories do not mention this. Instead they stress the purely religious nature of the young man's arguments and imply that these are what compelled the chief's agreement. Armed with the chief's blessing, the young man joined with the youths from Yoshino's school and Yoshino's friend, Johannes, and on a dark night they attacked the chief's spirit house, the women's menstrual house, and the sorcerers' canoe house, and burned them all to the ground. This event, rather than the conversions which 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.

The motives of the people involved bear some examination because it is through them that we can distinguish the operation of the historical processes which had been gathering force for some time. Several of the young men who participated in the burning are still living, 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 which 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 structures which were the focus of religion on the island the young men hoped to liberate themselves from them.

The young man from Eang 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 Eang for a number of years, in the ferment and excitement of the creation of a new Southwest Island community.<sup>3</sup> The prohibitions upon his behavior which 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 only speculate about the motives which led the chief to give his blessing to the destruction of the sacred structures. Perhaps the same factors which led to his agreement to the division of the northern tract operated here. It may have been the case that all ritual activity was contested by his political opponents who denied him legitimacy. The chief's attempt to use the buildings was bound to be both clumsy and presumptuous; yet failing to use them while they still stood was a reminder of his irregular rise to power. It should be remembered that the chief and his opponents were all agreed that the flow of ritual power had been terminated with the death of the old chief of Angaur. The sacred buildings were unusable because the ritual knowledge and power associated with them had been lost. On a more general level, the ongoing demographic crisis was inescapable evidence that traditional religious forms of behavior were no longer protecting the island and had become empty as well as burdensome. The withdrawal of confidence from them 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 which had given it meaning.

This 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 believe that communal religious behavior has consequences for society as a whole. The most important of these is the prevention of disaster. It has been shown how the failure of the rituals to prevent the disaster of depopulation was probably one reason for abandoning the aboriginal religion. Ritual is thought to function in the prevention of both physical disasters such as depopulation and tsunami and also supernatural disasters, especially the activities of ghosts, the most feared of supernatural manifestations. Ghosts are hated as the essence of malicious evil and they are feared as a constant threat. Tobi is thought to be infested with them, and more are thought to live in the seas surrounding the island. The power of these ghosts to do

harm is dependent on human action; in particular, the correct performance of ritual is thought to render the ghosts powerless.

Tobian belief in ghosts serves the same functions of displacing antisocial aggression and focusing free-floating anxiety that belief in beings called by a cognate name serves on the distant but culturally and linguistically related atoll of Ifaluk (Spiro 1952). On Tobi these ghosts are called *yarus*; on Ifaluk they are called *alus*. Faced with an environment in which forced intimacy is unavoidable and in which the ethic of nonaggression and cooperation is very highly developed, the Tobians, like the people of Ifaluk, displace aggressive feelings onto supernatural beings. Ghosts offer both peoples an acceptable focus for anxieties which 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 trap of their own unconscious devising.

Social and intrapsychic tensions were almost surely at a high point during the year or so of the secular experiment on Tobi. The process of sorting out the consequences of the recent population decline seems to have given rise to a great deal of covert conflict. Genealogical evidence shows that not all landholding groups declined at the same rate. Some disappeared entirely, others declined to one or two members, still others came through intact. With the Japanese-induced drive to expand copra production, control over land resources became an important political issue. Each family tried to expand its holdings by moving into the vacuum left by extinct groups. Claims were made to lands of this type by reference to genealogical links. Many cases arose where 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 the support of a sufficient number of people to defend it. There were other sources of tension, too, making this an extremely uncomfortable period. The establishment of the Tobian settlement in Eang, 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, the antagonisms and anxieties contri-

buted to the perception of 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 circle had developed which 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 alternative he offered to the frightening powerless state which the Tobians felt themselves to be in due to the absence of control mechanisms over ghosts. The conscientiousness with which the Tobians practice their religion is 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 spend praying, the Tobians seem remarkably unconcerned about their ignorance of the literal meaning of their prayers.

Before turning to the events that are remembered about Marino's visit, it will be useful to summarize the chronology presented in this section. The series of events is offered not to abridge the last century or so of Tobian history but to illustrate the most significant theme which has marked that history: the response the Tobians have made to the West. The chronology is a graduated measuring device for estimating the rising tide of Western impact and the simultaneous decline of Tobian confidence in their own institutions. Six stages of response can be distinguished. First, the material power of the West elicited awe, as indicated by the word for ship. Second, an attempt was made to control the West in its local manifestations and ritual was evolved for this purpose. Third, an effort was made to deny the power of the aliens. Holden and his fellow castaways suffered the consequences of this attempt. Fourth, the islanders began to exploit the outsiders for the special rewards they seemed to control. By working for people such as Captain Borrie, Tobians learned at first hand the extent of alien power. The fifth response was submission. The events of the disputed ritual and the division of

the sacred plot of land indicate the direct impact which the West was beginning to have on Tobian autonomy. Tobian society, as a system, accommodated itself to the German and Japanese presences by passive submission.

The final episode in the chronology shows the system once more actively coming to terms with the West. The burning of the sacred structures was, in a literal sense, a necessary 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 which continues to this day. This process can most usefully be thought of as the creation of neo-Tobian culture and involves the integration of Western forms into a Tobian setting. Viewed in this perspective, the apparent orthodoxy of Tobian Catholicism is even more striking.

#### THE NATURE OF TOBIAN ORTHODOXY

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 histories of transformations. Such examples exhibit local features which can be interpreted only as the syncretic results of local attempts to adapt the borrowed religion to local needs and understandings. Tobian religious behavior does not appear to exhibit this dimension. The great bulk of their specifically religious beliefs also appear to be quite orthodox. One of the key institutions in neo-Tobian culture appears 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 "Tobian-ness" 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.

The functional integration of Catholicism into neo-Tobian culture thus occurs on a more general level than that of specific Catholic beliefs or practices.<sup>4</sup> Catholicism itself is appropriated to play the role of the discredited old religion; therefore there is no need to transform or even to think very much about the elements which make up Catholic belief and practice. The beliefs are simply subscribed to and the practices simply followed. In fact the elements become resistant to transformation since their success in preventing disaster lies not in their inner meaning but in their correct performance. Change, generated either internally or externally, is 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. How they were convinced, or perhaps how they convinced themselves, of the power of the new religion is, therefore, a topic worth investigating. To do this, it is necessary to examine what is remembered about Father Marino, the man who converted them.

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. The reasoning behind that policy is of no importance here except that the Micronesians were not considered fit material for the Japanese creed of Shinto. This meant that such people as Yoshino could not translate their personal influence into an institutionalized religious setting. If this had not been the case there is little doubt that the islanders would have converted to the religion of the powerful Japanese and not that of the long-departed Spanish administration. There is also little doubt that missionaries such as Father Marino benefited in their evangelical endeavors from the approval of the Japanese.

Marino was accompanied by a Spanish-speaking convert from Merir—an atoll 240 kilometers north of Tobi which has a similar language and culture—who acted as Marino's interpreter. Also accompanying the priest were several of his Tobian converts from Eang, the settlement in Koror.

Interviews about Marino's activities during his stay on the island, which is given as anywhere from a few days to a month, betray a great deal of confusion. All surviving witnesses agree that

Father Marino baptized all the people on the island; all agree that he attempted to bring all the marriage unions 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, but other people profess to know nothing about it. This denial is the equivalent to a statement that the chief and his allies are lying. The contested statement involves the destroyed spirit house, which the priest is alleged to have said would have made a good church. This is virtually all that is remembered today about this crucial event some forty years ago. There are no traditions about the responses of the chief, Yoshino, the young men 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. Some of the narratives telling of the acts and statements of Marino 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. Rather than speculate about the behavior of the various actors in the events of the conversion, it is more profitable to discuss the reasons for the preservation of the remembered teachings.

Father Marino as an evangelist must have said and done more than is remembered of him. Nor do the seven things which are remembered appear to reflect those elements he would have stressed as being 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 in the manner described today. In other words, the preservation of the seven teachings is a result of a process of selective retention in which some of the matter retained has been distorted. Perhaps, then, the transformation, which the theory 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. That is, the words and deeds of Father Marino may have been subjected to systematic pressure over the last forty years to make them congruent with Tobian culture. The most direct test of this statement 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. Another approach is to examine carefully each of the remembered teachings for the meanings they convey to Tobians. If these meanings are congruent with other Tobian beliefs and values transformations will have most likely taken place. Such evidence, combined with the facts that distortion is evident from the wording of some of the statements and that statements reflecting concerns much more central to orthodox Catholicism have not been retained, will be considered conclusive. If it can then be established that the memories of Marino are not merely bits and pieces but form a coherent corpus, that corpus would lend itself to systematic analysis.

#### BAPTISM

Only the vaguest outlines of the mass baptism are recalled today, but it is possible to reconstruct a more detailed picture from other data. For example, it is evident from census data that two of the Merir converts from Koror, who accompanied the priest, stood as godparents to all the initiates.<sup>5</sup> However, this fact was confirmed in interviews only in response to direct questioning and was never part of the narrative itself. The initial baptism is usually simply recounted as follows: "He called the people together and they were baptized." Some of the younger people can explain this rite in orthodox Christian terms, but their knowledge is the result of exposure to postwar mission schools in Koror and is not an interpretation surviving from the time of Marino. More fundamental and for many people the only meanings involve the notion of the island as a whole becoming a Christian place with emphasis on the mass nature of the act. This is a case where some distortion probably has occurred. Marino sanctified marriages during his visit, a process which 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 probable distortion involved in seeing the baptism as a single collective rite is most likely based on a smaller event in which all children and those few adults who, for one reason or another, did not wish to be married were baptized together. It is evidence for the hypothesis that a key component of the meaning of the original baptism lies in its total nature, including all those actors in the Tobian sociocultural system who call themselves Tobian, and thus, in a sense, the system itself. The fact that the christening of each convert with a new name is not stressed, and seldom even mentioned, indicates that the individual aspect of the initial rite is not important. If the baptism is viewed as speaking about the nature of the sociocultural order, then it is necessary to inquire into the content of the message as perceived by the present-day inhabitants of the island.

The word used in Tobian for "baptize" usually refers to bathing (both swimming and washing), but it also has two other meanings which describe both the traditional cure for insanity and a traditional disciplinary measure. Fathers punished their misbehaving sons in the following manner: they took them to the sea and held their heads under the water until they lost consciousness. Shamans chanting incantations used a similar technique to treat the insane. This convergence of treatments for insanity and misbehavior illustrates one of the fundamental tenets of Tobian concepts of behavior: the similarity between 'crazy' and 'bad' behavior. There is an additional element, 'ghost-like', which will be discussed below.

It is no accident, I think, that the word for these techniques has been extended to cover baptism. When people discuss the

pre-Christian era, and especially the years immediately preceding the coming of the priest, it is commonly said that people were both crazy and bad. The times are perceived as having been out of joint and Father Marino is viewed as having acted to put things right.

The symbolism is striking. 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. Obviously, there can be no correction without a previous malfunction. Therefore Tobians seem to see Marino as having said symbolically, by the act of mass baptism, that the system had been out of order. While this one rite certainly did not trigger the perception of pre-Christian Tobi as a bad, crazy place, it has reinforced that view so that today the brief attempt at secularism between the time the spirit house was burned and the arrival of the priest is viewed in an extremely negative light, even by the men who helped instigate it. An additional element in this interpretation is related to the fact that there are important differences between the two traditional techniques and baptism. 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 by contrast, was not. From the contrast emerged the perception of Marino as the good father-shaman whose corrective abilities embraced a whole society but involved no unpleasantness.

The baptism 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. In addition to intervention at the highly symbolic level of the baptism, priestly intervention is also remembered at the more focused level of marriage.

## REMARRIAGE

Pre-Christian Tobian marriage patterns are characterized by a wide variety of arrangements. Men were permitted a number of wives, and women could have one or two husbands. Cross-cousin marriages were 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 unions resulting from them. All that is remembered, however, is that he forced each married person to go back to their 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 which Marino apparently set himself. While newly christened Roberto may have been Fausta's first husband, for example, she could very 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. What emerges from these stories is that many people succeeded in marrying their lovers, who may not have been either a previous or 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 say: "He made everyone who had been divorced go back to their first spouse." That this is the 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 which the borrowed institution of 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 atoll would be reflected in the stories. It is this latter point which is at issue here. Why does 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 are accurate and he did not deal

directly with these practices in the limited time at his disposal. However, if these changes were viewed today 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 today.

A Tobian, especially a man, has a rather narrow range of options concerning marriage. The church prohibits the two possibilities of polygamy (especially polyandry), and divorce and remarriage contribute to this restriction. The fundamental problem is demographic. One of the consequences of severe underpopulation is that random reproductive asymmetries are not balanced by complementary asymmetries as they are in larger, more stable populations. Few women of recent generations have proved fertile. Moreover, most of these women have given birth to many more males than females. In a larger population, such a disparity in the sex ratio of the children of a few women would be more or less cancelled by an opposite disparity in the sex ratio of the offspring of other women. On Tobi, of course, there are no other women, and the fate of the predominately male children is to compete for the few available women. The situation is made worse by the fact that a male remains in the marriage market much longer than a female and so there are a number of widowers who also are searching for mates among the young women. The combination of church marriage regulations with the retention of pre-Christian rules forbidding clan endogamy exacerbates the problem by restricting the number of options open to the men. This is quite apparent to the Tobians who ponder these matters. To these people, however, the most significant of the church's marriage prohibitions would seem to be the one against divorce. This is particularly striking because divorce, in the usual sense of the term, does occur on the island.

Marriages do break up, and the spouses may set up or join separate households or even form semisecret liaisons with third parties. These liaisons cannot be sanctified, however, nor can they result in the joint households which are characteristic of church-sanctioned unions until the legitimate spouses of the lovers are deceased. The rule seems to operate as follows: no one can remarry until his previous spouse has died. The factors which led

to the instability of marriage in the pre-Christian era are still operative, yet the expression of those tensions (frequent divorce and remarriage) is no longer a possibility. It is not surprising that this is reflected in the stories. Objectively, prohibiting remarriage while a previous spouse is still living creates the most difficulty in terms of numbers of people involved. This rule can also be seen as an indirect prohibition of polygamy. It stresses the strength and exclusive nature of the marriage tie between a man and woman. This bond is so exclusive that a third party cannot be included in the equation even when the man and the woman are no longer living together. A relationship of such strength and exclusiveness rules out polygamy. One cannot marry a second spouse until the first is dead. Cross-cousin marriage is not spoken of in the story of the remarriages. There are no people on Tobi at the present time who would be eligible mates if the rule against cross-cousin marriage were to be waived. Therefore, although it is true that a significant change has taken place with respect to the cross-cousin rule, that change is not, currently, an issue.<sup>6</sup> Not being an issue it is not reflected in any of the stories told about Marino. At this point it might be asked why a story is not invented which would revalidate the aboriginal practice of frequent divorce and remarriage. As we shall see, this is evidently what has happened with respect to clan exogamy. But the priests who have followed Marino have refused to preside at second marriages when the first spouse was still living. It is 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 institution of marriage within the realm of the sacred. In marked contrast to aboriginal unions, a post conversion marriage is a sacred event.

To summarize, Father Marino baptized all the people and presided over a number of marriages. The baptism signals a change from the old, bad, and crazy society to a new, good, and sane one—a change accomplished by a good father-shaman, Father Marino. The marriages make matrimony a sacred concern and signify the prevention of various classes of people, particularly those seeking a second mate before the death of the first, from making legitimate matches.

## 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, under Japanese pressure, come into use. Previously the dead had been disposed of over the reef 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 islanders toward this plot today is probably similar to that of their ancestors. At night the area is avoided if at all possible. If a visit is necessary, as during turtle hunting season, people only go there in parties of three or more. The area is dangerous and frightening because it is 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 conveys to the minds of the islanders an aura of supernatural power.

Among the several versions of this story, the most widely accepted has the missionary uttering his words in response to a challenge from a shaman. There is 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 of things 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, assuming that he did, they are felt today to have been a stratagem designed to impress the people with the missionary's 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 the people begged him not to do so. The very act of pleading with him, of course, concedes his power to carry out the threat.

This leads to an important message contained in the 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 which is reported here 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 is one which runs through most of the stories told of his visit. In this instance, what is reflected is his power to create ghosts. To a people accustomed to the idea of human-ghostly dialogue, which is how the pre-Christian trance states of the shamans are remembered, Marino's assertion of the power to call up a whole new population of ghosts does not appear as farfetched as it would to a more secularly oriented audience. The claim is plausible but awe-inspiring. It represents a level of spiritual power for which there is no parallel in Tobian thought. The claim is an innovation but, like all innovations, it is built of preexisting elements. The most important of these elements is the belief in ghosts, which is itself reinforced by the statement under consideration.

The second message contained in that statement, then, 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 many ghosts on the island." The first half of this warning can only refer to the necessity of conforming with Roman Catholicism as understood by the islanders; 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. A final reading of the statement would emphasize its congruence 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 is 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 will be each Tobian's ultimate destination. Obviously this statement strengthened Marino's unique cosmological position vis-a-vis the islanders. Of all Marino's acts and sayings that are remembered, 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'.

In the Tobian view of human nature the only true adults are men between middle age and senility. Only individuals of this class fully possess the prime virtues of self-restraint, competence, and independence. Females and all other males are thought to be capable of exhibiting these characteristics only in varying degrees. In other words, there is a single model of the good person and men of middle age and older are thought to be the best examples. People lacking the first two virtues of self-restraint and competence are deprived of the third virtue of independence by having someone, usually an adult male, placed 'in charge' of them. All major decisions are made only with this person's consent; he has the power of reward and punishment over his wards, especially if they are children. Ideally, all women, children, and young and senile men are supposed to have someone 'in charge' of them. Exceptions do not vitiate the rule, which can become quite complex in operation. For example, an adult male, Roberto, is 'in charge' of both another adult, Honaria, and her daughter, Tina, while Honaria is 'in charge' of Tina. The rule also applies to temporary arrangements so that a woman in mourning will have another woman placed 'in charge' of her for the duration of the mourning period.

Women, children, and young and senile men are thought to have imperfect impulse control. It is therefore necessary for the well-being of everyone that people who do have this virtue be permitted to intervene in their affairs.<sup>7</sup> Tobians say 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 mortality. Father Marino was beheaded by the Japanese about ten years after he converted Tobi. Thirty years after his death, it is thought that he is still in charge of the island and is still watching from on high the behavior of its inhabitants. In addition, Marino is thought to have the responsibility for deciding the peoples' post mortal fate. The belief that Marino will judge the Tobian dead has firmly established his unique cosmological position. The islanders' belief that they will be judged and either rewarded or punished according to their earthly conduct is an important moral sanction that acquires its force from Tobian attitudes toward authority and, ultimately, the father.

The Tobian father is a remote and threatening figure in the life of the child. This relationship is now changing as other styles of childrearing are practiced, but for the old people and those raised by them the father was a figure to be treated with respect and fear. Stories told by other people of their childhood commonly include beatings by the father and stress the respect and fear in which the father was held. This attitude has been institutionalized in the custom of avoiding, where possible, the mention of one's dead father's name.<sup>8</sup> When this is not possible, as for example during some of my interviews with them, Tobians make a great show of whispering the name into the listener's ear.

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

This fear of authority is seen as highly functional by the more thoughtful people on the island. It is conventional Tobian wisdom that only fear keeps people, particularly those who are not fully autonomous adults, from dangerous and antisocial acts. Anyone who performs such acts is thus regarded as fearless. This attitude is congruent with the notion that ghosts are fearlessly antisocial beings unless kept in check by religious ritual.

This conception of the basis of compliance was shown during

a meeting held to determine the culprit in a possible attempt on the life of one of the men. During the meeting 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 which 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 is firmly embedded within the structure of Tobian theology. The beliefs which endow him with this status have also made it extremely difficult for religious personnel to deal with the islanders. Roman Catholic priests have little chance to introduce religious and social innovations, and exponents of other versions of Christianity can make no headway at all. This is made particularly clear in the third statement Marino is 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 not given to me as part of the stories about Marino, which include all the other material discussed here, but rather as the basis for an anecdote about the first priest to visit the island after World War II. He was a navy chaplain who was wearing a uniform without a Roman collar.

The fact that the statement is not contained in the usual narrative of the activities of Father Marino does not mean that it is not part of the corpus of remembered teachings. Everyone is aware of it and there is no disagreement about its authenticity. But I do think the statement has a separate status. It is as though it is preadapted to the possibility, of which the people are keenly

aware, that a non-Catholic missionary might visit the island. Since this is not a current issue, however, the saying does not form part of the active narration. In a negative sense, though, it is of current importance. While this statement is felt to be a warning against falling away from the religion revealed by Marino, it is primarily a warning against non-Catholic missionaries and not a direct admonition to pay heed to other Catholic priests who over the years have followed Marino to the island. The lack of a forceful direct admonition accounts for the ease with which teachings of subsequent priests have been ignored when they contradicted Marino's word.

It is notable that the Marino corpus is structured in such a way that the process of ignoring more recent church teachings in order not to violate that corpus does not in itself contradict a teaching of Marino. This would not be the case if the statement under consideration here were amended to read as follows: "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; but if he is wearing the same thing that I am you must do what he says."

#### 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 of the statement is that given by Tobian English-speakers, some of whom have achieved a high degree of fluency in English. If one talks to an old person who was at the crucial meeting when Marino is thought to have said this, he will quote a statement which 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'.

Before discussing the import of this complex statement about clan incest it is necessary to describe Tobian clans. These are

named, unranked, matrilineal, exogamous groups in which genealogical connections between all members are felt to exist even though they cannot be traced by any one individual.<sup>9</sup> At the present time clans are the only recognized structural unit between households on the one hand and the collectivity known as "the people of the island" on the other. The most populous of these clans were subdivided into lineages in the past. Currently there are five clans, one of which, consisting of a single male, is doomed to extinction. A similar fate has already overtaken two other clans within living memory.

Exogamous clans have apparently existed on Tobi since shortly after the initial settlement. They possess a mythological charter in the epic which tells of the island's discovery, having been constituted by the original ancestress. If we assume that the clan exogamy rule is felt to be so important or so problematical that it requires supernatural justification, it is not surprising, given the general attenuation in power of the aboriginal religious system, that the original pre-Christian charter has been reinforced by one bearing Marino's stamp. This is the only instance in which a pre-Christian rule has been revalidated in such an overt manner. On a more general level, of course, the entire corpus of Marino's teachings can be seen as revalidating the entire Tobian ethical and moral system. Acts ranging from hoarding to murder were all thought to be as evil in aboriginal times as they are today, and all are sins which the Tobians believe Father Marino will punish.

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.<sup>10</sup> Ghosts are frightening because they can flout with impunity the laws governing the normal world. Angels share this characteristic and thus arouse the same reaction of horror in Tobians as do traditional ghosts. The use of the word "angel" instead of the usual word for ghost is primarily a device to give the statement a Christian cast; the benevolent aspect of angelic nature is beside the point here.

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 a Tobian, however, the word "impossible" in the teaching speaks to a greater truth about men and morality—the notion that there is essentially no difference between certain moral and physical laws. In the West the two are 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. We occasionally show traces of the same attitude toward morality as, for example, when we speak of "unnatural acts." 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.

Violation of the incest regulations, then, produces 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 are 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 forms a counterpoint to this attitude. A normal man is one who is, among other things, sufficiently afraid of the consequences of immoral acts. Since people other than men are not thought to be sufficiently afraid, which is why they need someone 'in charge' of them to monitor their behavior, they are not normal or true adults and thus are not covered by statements about normal people.

If it is correct to say that marriage to a clan sister requires a man to act in a ghostly manner, what does this imply about the way that such a man is viewed? 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 that one give a cheerful response to any social initiative of another. Eventually, they were pressured into leaving the island. The gossip that continues to swirl about the two marriages stresses the men's frightening boldness and their untrustworthiness. These men are referred to directly as ghosts. This is, of course, a metaphor; everyone recognizes that they are human. However, it is a metaphor that contains a strong element of truth for the people of Tobi since these two men did indeed act like ghosts. One of the consequences for those who break the incest rule, then, is that people treat them like ghosts. The other and more severe threat implied by Marino's statement relates ghostly behavior to insanity.

Acting like a ghost and being crazy are forms of behavior which share important attributes: both are dangerous, uncanny, unpredictable, and give rise to a great deal of fear. One important difference between ghostly and insane behavior is that the fear of the former is directed outward while fear connected with insanity is directed toward the self. This is summed up nicely in the conventional wisdom that ghosts are harmful to other people whereas the insane are 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.

The fear of insanity and subsequent suicide are important components 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 which is brought to bear on anyone attempting an incestuous match, a Tobian is likely to feel that he would have to be crazy to try such ghostly behavior.

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 choose the former and not the latter is significant. Sexual intercourse with a clan mate (providing that the genealogical connection is no closer than first cousin) is forbidden but arouses no great reaction when it becomes

known. It is expected that young people will make love as often as possible and with very little regard for the amenities, and while it is bad for clan mates to sleep together, there is usually a good deal of resigned tolerance for what is perceived as weakness of the flesh. Parents or guardians will try to break up such liaisons and ensure that the act is not repeated. It is only when the parties try to formalize the union that the full complex of wonder and horror, ghosts and insanity, is triggered. The dramatic difference in the reaction to incestuous intercourse and endogamous clan marriage lies in the nature of Tobian marriages, which involve the establishment of long-term economic exchange relations between spouses and, to a lesser extent, among their families. Marriage involves the formation of a household, the fundamental unit in Tobian society, and it involves the filiation of children to the mother's and the father's kin in different ways and for different ends. Embarking on such a project with a woman of the same clan publicly flaunts one's immorality. It makes the statement that society's respect is held in no esteem. It places oneself outside the conventions which govern the conduct of normal men. These are the actions and statements of a ghost or a madman.

The teaching that marriage to a clan sister is as impossible as marriage to an angel may be transformed into the following statement: "Only a person like a ghost, unbound by moral laws, could marry a woman of the same clan. One who does such a thing will be treated with fear and loathing by his fellows and will die by his own hand."

#### CHIEF AND CHURCH

The final teaching of Father Marino which is remembered differs from the others because the Tobians are 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 is alleged by some to have said, "It is too bad you burned this place down. It would have made a good church." Prior to the collapse of the old order the chief exercised ultimate spiritual and political power. His spirit house was the site of most of the important rituals over which he presided. This statement is

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 Eang. They have achieved a degree of success in certain minor areas, but overall direction of the church remains firmly in the hands of the mission. The chief's objective is to be formally recognized as leader of the congregation. He means to achieve a position of leadership over the rituals (novenas for the dead, for instance, and twice daily *rosarios*) which constitute the religious life of the island, except for the services held by the priest on the four or five days a year that he visits the island. The chief also would like to be the sole intermediary between the people and the priest on all matters pertaining to church business and ritual. Although the mission treats the chief with great respect, it has refused to fall in with his plans. The American and Palauan priests are unimpressed with his appeal to the authority of Marino, but it is obvious that the islanders understand the implications of the statement which the chief and his partisans attribute to Father Marino.

Disagreement over the validity of the statement about the chief's spirit house follows the lines of cleavage over the chiefly succession. Those who accord the incumbent legitimacy believe that Marino actually made the statement; those who support his challenger do not. This denial can be taken as a measure of the lack of confidence which the contender and his allies have of success in the near future. If they believed themselves to be close to replacing the present chief with one of their own party, it would be in their interest to strengthen the office (as opposed to the person) of the chief. Marino's statement is viewed as a recognition that the chief's office has legitimate religious attributes which can be incorporated within the Christian system without harm to the church. For supporters of the chief the validity of this statement means that his effort to gain power within the church structure is entirely justified. For those who deny its validity that effort is simply another example of what they profess to view as his despotic and grasping nature.

This, then, is all the material 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. In this sense the alien missionary's teachings have been processed by the islanders so that they have become congruent with indigenous ideas. Understandings have arisen about them that are remote from the understandings of orthodox Catholicism but fit with the rest of Tobian culture. Transformation has taken place not in the borrowed religious practices, but in the words and deeds of its conveyor.

Further analysis reveals that these seven items form a coherent ideological complex with definite properties. The complex is nonfalsifiable, possesses a certain dynamic, and has both positive and negative functions for the people who use it. It is also an idiom which expresses certain Tobian truths about man, society, and the supernatural.

The system contains two major precepts: first, religion is necessary; second, Tobian religion must be Father Marino's. The former concept is supported by the baptism which teaches that society is bad and crazy without religion as well as the threat to raise the dead, which confirms the Tobian notion that religion is necessary to prevent disasters. The concept that the religion of Tobi must be Marino's religion 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 post mortal 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 which have been given a religious coloring. These issues are marriage (in particular clan marriage), the chief's power, and the contradiction of the system by other missionaries. There is unanimity about the authenticity of the three items dealing with marriage and other missionaries. Therefore the solutions to problems embodied in these items are adhered to since Marino's power to dictate them is validated by the precepts about religion and his place in it.

For both sides in the succession dispute the argument about whether Marino actually made the statement is, in an important sense, the only argument that matters. 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 do not apply. This does not mean that the solutions it offers are permanent, but it does mean that as long as the two general percepts are accepted, change in the solutions requires change in the Marino corpus. The solutions can be seen as adjustments made to cope with past realities. When the realities change, the solutions may become maladaptive. This leads to considerable tension and pressure to modify the system. A number of factors make this a difficult and slow process. These factors can be most clearly seen in the current disputes over clan endogamy. By examining this issue these factors can be isolated and the actual operation of the Marino system presented.

A young Tobian may wish to marry a clan sister. He can point out his present unhappy, wifeless situation. He can assure her and her guardians of his deep love for the girl. He can offer the guardians tobacco and money and tell them of the land he owns and the lands he stands to inherit. All these arguments based on his, the girl's, and her guardian's personal interest will tempt but not persuade those guardians to give their blessing to the match (a blessing which is absolutely necessary if the young man is to succeed). He can 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 can also claim that he and his fellows will have to seek non-Tobian spouses if the rule is not waived. The guardians will agree that this is a shame and will even complete his argument for him, pointing out the relatively large number of such marriages that have already taken place, resulting in many children with no Tobian clan. At this point someone is sure to say that if this keeps up eventually there will be no more Tobians but only half-caste Palauans, since most non-Tobian wives are Palauan. This is not a compelling argument, however, and the guardians will still not agree to let their ward marry within the clan. Their refusal will 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 can counter this by telling how he was taught at the Catholic mission school that the church does not forbid clan endogamy. He can even remind his elders of the many sermons which the American priest has preached on just this topic during his visits to the island. The guardians would probably respond along the lines of the following: "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."<sup>11</sup>

A full understanding of the reasons for maintaining the clan exogamy rule requires consideration of the structural positions of both the elders and the young men. The old people, who are guardians of the few unmarried women of childbearing age, are the ones who insist on the rule. They are in a position to enforce their wishes for a number of reasons. They control many other resources beside the young women: land, for example, and secret knowledge of medicinal recipes and fishing techniques. Therefore, it is not in the young men's interest to alienate the old people. Individual cases vary, of course. Sometimes the only thing a young man wishes from a guardian is the hand of the ward. Even then the young man's chances of success are not very good, for old people are central to the gossip network and therefore in a position to disrupt most proposed matches. Finally, if the guardians cannot succeed in provoking jealousy and dissension between the lovers by the use of rumors, they still have one other technique for preventing the match. As trusted elders of the congregation, they can attempt to convince the priest that the proposed match is inappropriate. In recent years, as the priests have gained more familiarity with the islanders, guardians have resorted to camouflaging their efforts by using agents to explain why the priest should not marry their ward to her clan mate.

The young men are in a difficult position. They cannot form a coalition against the old people. Not only do they hope to gain future property from the elders, but the very nature of Tobian marriage makes it a particularly difficult subject around which to unify. The subject of clan exogamy always arises in reference to particular cases. Someone wants to marry a clan mate and her guardians forbid the match. He cannot find any allies to help him

convince the guardians or at least to fight their rumors. The other single young men who might be his allies in a different context are his competitors. If he fails, then perhaps one of them can marry the girl; if the girl marries him, then there will be a permanent loss of one woman from the field in which all the young men operate. The rule against divorce and the imbalance in the sex ratio make the competition for a girl's hand an extreme example of a zero-sum game. Young married people have no stake in this contest. They have succeeded in winning their mates; the success of their unmarried brothers and sisters is of only academic interest to them. Seeing no benefit in helping the young man, they find it in their interest to remain neutral and thus preserve their status as moral persons following the way of Marino. The young man's elders are also of little help to him. It is the exceptional old person who will help a young man get married in any case—as long as he is single, his elders have no competitors for his labor and its fruits. Thus there is a natural tendency for a young man's elders to oppose his marriage and, in cases where it applies, the clan exogamy rule is a perfect peg on which to hang that opposition. The only assistance a young man can expect is from the girl herself, who is not likely to be of much help. Although she cannot be forced to marry someone against her will, neither can she marry someone against the will of her guardians. They have control of her person and can apply both verbal and physical pressure to keep her from marrying someone of whom they disapprove.

A young man needs a good deal of courage and self-confidence even to broach the topic of an endogamous marriage. Knowing that he will be called a ghost by his fellows and face eventual exile if he succeeds, he is most likely to search elsewhere for a wife. Even if he could outmaneuver the girl's guardians and convince the priest to perform the marriage, he would have to leave Tobi. Disowned by the girl's guardians and family and perhaps by his own as well he would have extreme difficulty in mobilizing the kinsmen upon whom a reasonable Tobian existence depends.

Tobians also operate in two other social systems besides that of their island. One of these is the community which has grown up in Eang composed of people from all four of the Southwest Islands. These people are but one or two generations removed

from their natal islands of Sonsorol, Pulo Ana, Merir, and Tobi. They have created a village and a social system based on linguistic and cultural similarities, and like the people of Tobi they are all Catholic. The other social system in which Tobians operate is that of Palau. Although there is religious diversity in Palau, one of the strongest elements in Palauan social organization is the Catholic church, which has considerable economic and political power. Tobians use 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 have a basis for meeting with these people that is not founded on invidious distinctions. This is particularly true of their interactions with Palauans. Just as a reasonable existence on Tobi demands the cooperation of one's kinsmen, a reasonable existence in Palau depends on overcoming the prejudice which Palauans exhibit toward Southwest Islanders. Education, health care, and employment are concentrated in Palauan hands. The Catholic church is virtually the only institution in which people from the Southwest Islands can make meaningful contacts with the people who control the levers of power and service. The church also directly binds the Southwest Islanders to herself by providing employment and education and by helping them when they run into difficulties with Palauan institutions. All these factors mean that a young man wishing to marry a clan mate cannot simply take her to Eang and marry her outside the church. He needs his identity as a Catholic to function adequately in the greater society in which Eang is embedded.

In effect, then, young men have no option but to comply with the clan exogamy rule. The old people control both the women and the priests. That their control of the latter is slipping is evidenced by the recent completion of one of the two intraclan marriages attempted since Marino's visit. However, this is not really a very hopeful precedent for the young men; it took a number of contention-filled years for the two middle-aged clan mates to persuade the priest to marry them. They now live in Palau and have very little to do with any of their relatives. None of the specifics of this case is likely to be repeated soon. Indeed, the total dependency of this couple on the husband's meager cash income has become something of an object lesson for the

young people. The problem of maintaining the clan exogamy rule thus hinges on the motives of the old. Why do they persist in enforcing this rule when by doing so they will cause the extinction of the very institution it is designed to persevere?

There is no great commitment on the part of any Tobian, young or old, to the integrity of Tobian society. People are interested in their own fate and, to a lesser extent, in the fate of their families. The future course of their society is a matter of little concern. Therefore, when the young men point out to a clan mate's guardians the number of Palauan women who have been brought into Tobian society and the fact that their children have no Tobian clan, their arguments carry no weight. A girl's guardians know that she will eventually marry someone, so commitment to family is not a factor either. Finally, as people already in control of the island's resources, there is not much that a girl's guardians would stand to gain personally from allowing their ward to marry a clan mate. Indeed, for these firm believers in Marino's word, they stand to lose paradise, the only reward which lies ahead of them. As people close to death they are naturally much concerned with their fate after death. And Marino not only ruled out clan exogamy but also proclaimed himself the judge of that fate. The young men are armed with statements from current, unmythologized missionaries, but these missionaries can offer no arguments powerful enough to counter those drawn from the Marino corpus. A change in the marriage rule would require a change in the Marino corpus, and, as survivors of the original conversion, the old people control that corpus. It is their memories upon which it is based. And these memories are a resource in the struggle between the generations just as surely as are the women, land, and specialized knowledge 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 will become extinct if foreign women are continually incorporated into the population has become a truism for the Tobians. This prediction does not appear to be well founded, however, at least with respect to the more populous clans. 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 women, something which the current population of Tobian young women has managed to do quite successfully. Thus far they have married only their fellow Tobians and given birth to a number of female children. All these children are full members of their mother's clan, of course, as are the few children who have been born to these women out of wedlock. Therefore the biological continuity of most clans is assured for at least one more generation, regardless of the fact that a number of Palauan women have married into them. The other fear, expressed by the young men in their attempt to persuade the elders to waive the rule, appears equally unrealistic. The foreign women who have married into Tobi have so far been mainly from inferior-ranked Palauan clans. Having relatively little to lose in Palau, they have been rapidly assimilated into Tobian society. These women have mastered the fundamentals of their adopted culture, even the Marino system. Although there is some difference in the speed and thoroughness of their integration, all appear to be quite at home with the islanders. Children of these unions are fluent in both Tobian and Palauan and are quite bicultural. Their mastery of Palauan culture is the only thing that combines with their lack of Tobian clan to distinguish these children from others of their generation. Although they are genealogically half-Palauan, there is certainly no evidence that they will cause Tobian culture to undergo any dramatic changes. Their social links to Palau through their mothers may help them when they participate in district institutions, and there may be a higher rate of movement out of Tobian society and into Palauan society from this group than from full-blooded Tobians. The prediction that "soon there will be no more Tobians but only half-caste Palauans" may or may not be accurate. The inference that Tobi will eventually be a mere appendage of Palau appears unlikely.

Finally, it must be noted that even if all the clans were to become extinct there would be few if any repercussions. The clans function only in the regulation of marriage. As regulators of who may marry whom, they are complemented by Catholic incest regulations. Clans have no other function today, regardless of the role they may have played in the past. This statement must be qualified by the exception offered by some of the old people for

whom clan affiliation provides a minor, though important, component of self-identity. For all except these two or three persons, who are, of course, the most adamant about the inviolable nature of the clans, these social units are simply groupings of people who may not marry one another. The clans have no estates and neither do they play a role in the ritual life of the island.

If clan exogamy was not unique in these ways, the dispute over its maintenance might have been considerably different. The incorporation of a number of Palauan women into Tobian society threatens neither the clans nor the society as a whole. If this were not so then the young men might be able to force an abandonment of the clan exogamy rule. However, the underlying factors, in particular the young people's need to remain Catholic and the old people's control of the Marino corpus, do mean that the outcome of this dispute will be dictated by the elders. This is true of all disputes between the two generations involving the teachings of Father Marino. The argument over the relationship of the chieftaincy to the church is an example of another type of dispute. Father Marino's teachings also are involved in this dispute, but the parties are not divided along generational lines. There can be no resolution of disputes of this sort because all parties have access to the Marino corpus through their older members.

Changes in the Marino system and the behavior it justifies depend on the survivors of the original conversion. If they decide, either consciously or unconsciously, to remember things differently, then the system can be adapted to meet changed circumstances. Failing that decision, change must wait upon their death.

## CONCLUSION

The questions of why the Tobians converted so rapidly to Catholicism, why they appear so orthodox in their observance of Catholicism, and why they are so active in its practice are three aspects of but a single problem: Why is Tobian religion the way it is today?

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. Thus 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. Their validation is provided by the system of precepts the Tobians have constructed out of the remembered fragments of events surrounding the work of their evangelist, Father Marino. Each fragment conveys meanings to the Tobians. Unlike the Kaliai of New Britain (see chapter 13), the Tobians have not seized upon similarities in Christian and native myths and symbols to adapt the religion to its new context. Instead Tobians have created a system which justifies and even compels close adherence to the new religion in an unmodified form. This adherence extends to the frequency with which religious ritual is performed. This frequency is a result of a combination of ideas about the function of religion with faith in the Marino system.

Of course in both behavior and belief there have been some departures from the faith propagated by the Vatican. To clarify these differences it is necessary to distinguish between knowledge of religious beliefs, personal commitment to those beliefs, and beliefs about religion. Tobians have knowledge of most traditional Catholic beliefs. They know of the Virgin, the Trinity, papal infallibility, and other Roman Catholic dogmas. They have little personal involvement with those beliefs, and in this sense they are different from many other Catholics. Such involvement as they do show is as much an epiphenomenon of the Marino system as the constant attention to prayers, the words of which also convey no meaning to them. Tobians also have a set of beliefs about religion which are not shared by most other Catholics. These ideas about the nature and function of religion lead them to give great weight to those few beliefs they do not share with other Catholics. Their faith in Father Marino as personal savior with power over ghosts would certainly be rejected by current missionaries were

they to learn of it; however, this belief is basic to the Catholicism of the islanders. The missionaries would have little success if they attempted to bring the Tobians into conformity on this point of doctrine and to eliminate Marino from his role as savior. The highly personalized view of the church taken by the islanders, which is so evident in the manner in which they dismiss the American priest's efforts to withdraw church sanctions from the clan exogamy rule, would make the attempt a contest between the present missionaries and the ever-present Marino. Refusal to grant the American priest equal status with Father Marino rests upon the islanders' failure to grasp the institutional nature of the church. To them a contradiction of the Marino system by a missionary can only be resolved by balancing one priest's words against another's. Even when missionaries have the support of a considerable segment of the Tobian population they may fail to modify behavior based on the Marino system. This is particularly striking because the use of the Marino system to validate the prohibition of marriage between clan mates perpetuates a rule which is 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 paradox of formal secularism without a concomitant secularization of world view. Yet by mythologizing him the islanders have become immersed in another difficulty. In constructing an ideology out of his teachings, the Tobians invented a system which responds only minimally to changes in its environment and makes of Father Marino an agent of conservation. The very institution that Marino served is powerless to adjust the system to changed realities. For the Tobians the missionary's stature does not derive from his status as a consecrated representative of the true faith. Rather, the stature of Catholicism is derived from its status as the religion of Father Marino.

#### NOTES

The research upon which this chapter is based was financed by a National Institute of Mental Health grant (MH 12766). Thirteen months were spent with the Tobians; of this, a little over three months were spent in Eang, the Tobi village in Palau, and

the remainder on the atoll. An additional thirteen months were spent with the people as a Peace Corps volunteer from 1967 to 1969. All but one of these earlier months was spent on the atoll. Comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this chapter were made by Decktor Korn, D. K. Jordan, R. Levy, R. McKnight, T. Schwartz, M. Spiro, and S. Tiffany.

1. Although administratively part of Palau District since the early years of this century, Tobi is linguistically and culturally much closer to the other atolls of the Western Carolines than it is to the high islands of Palau.
2. Captain Fred K. Klebingat (personal communication) informed me that he passed by Tobi on the vessel *Anna* in 1907. The vessel's master refused to stop for the canoes which set out from the island because he feared the Tobians' hostile intentions.
3. Eang village is located on Arakabesan Island, which is connected to the island of Koror by a causeway. The inhabitants of the village are derived from the populations of Tobi and three other small atolls south of Palau proper—Sonsorol, Merir, and Pulo Ana—which together with Tobi make up the Southwest Islands. The four atolls exhibit a great deal of uniformity in their cultures. Their peoples speak mutually intelligible dialects, and both culture and language are remote from those of Palau. About one-half of the approximately 150 people of Eang are permanent residents; the remainder compose a mobile population which commutes between the Southwest Islands and Palau. The culture of Eang differs significantly from that of each of the four home islands. These differences reflect the village's integration into the Palauan cash economy, the structurally marginal position of its permanent inhabitants to the societies of both their home islands and Palau, and the village's complex history.
4. Mourning rites provide the single exception to this. They are Christian in that they are the occasion of endless prayer and at least three church services, but they do not follow orthodox Catholic practice. From the canoe in which the deceased is buried and the elaborate food presentations after his funeral to the rigorous year-long taboos placed upon his close female kin, these practices seem 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 which is concerned with death.
5. The pattern set by the first baptism still holds to some extent; that is, many godparents of the present population are natives of the other three Southwest Islands. There is a competing pattern in which close relatives of one of the parents (usually the mother) stand as godparents. Tobians who are not closely related rarely act as godparents. Godparenthood is of no great importance in Tobian social life. The other church-introduced pseudo-kinship bonds—those of marriage parents, or people who stand surety for the two partners to a marriage—are occasionally activated when the priest seeks help in the reconciliation of a marital dispute.
6. This will not be the case fifteen or twenty years from now when children of recently married siblings come of age. It will be interesting to see what will happen then. The prediction, of course, is that a teaching which validates cross-cousin marriage will be remembered. As with all predictions of this sort, the caveat "all things being equal" applies. A much safer prediction is that all things will not be equal—that the Tobian universe will expand ever faster, that these children will have more exposure to the priests in Koror, and that unforeseen

events will occur.

7. This system of people being in charge of each other is much more complex than I have presented it here. Of importance is the high value placed on noninterference in other people's affairs. This is directly contrary to the ideology behind the 'in charge' system and leads to many contradictions. Some women, moreover, especially widows, occupy powerful political and economic positions with flair and vigor and are far from the incompetent creatures the system makes them out to be.
8. Shouting in public the name of a person's dead father is thought to drive that person insane. Even overhearing the name of one's dead father is thought to be dangerous and likely to lead to insanity. I take this to indicate highly ambivalent feelings toward the father.
9. The population as a whole, however, possesses the knowledge to trace the genealogies of most people in a given clan back to a common ancestress. This was demonstrated to me when I compared the various individual genealogies I had collected. It is possible for me, but for no individual Tobian who has not duplicated the work that I have done, to construct a series of clan genealogies.
10. This was graphically illustrated in the meeting held to find the perpetrator of the attempted homicide. The meeting was held on the front steps of the church so that the angels could help the people find the truth. The fact that only church services can be held within the church is all that prevented the meeting from being held inside. The realization that a class of ghosts is not necessarily closed for all time, and that additional types of beings can be added to it in the way that angels apparently were, was brought home to me at that same meeting when one of the younger women, a great fan of Classic Comics, bemoaned the remoteness of the island from America in the following words: "If only we weren't so far from the States probably those fairies and elves would help us now."
11. This is an actual quotation overheard in just this context. There is a certain element of truth here. The American priest, who periodically visits the island, told me that he considers life on the island difficult and will do anything he can to make it easier for the people. In the past this has led to his exercising a considerable degree of flexibility in permitting related people to marry. To this priest the clans are an interesting impediment in the path of the happiness of young lovers. To the occasional Palauan priest, raised in a culture which can almost be characterized as clan-ridden, the notion of clanship makes sense. A Palauan priest has told me that he would like to see the Tobi clans continue because they provide people with a bigger family than they ordinarily would have.

ERRATA

Page	310	line 17:	In fact
Page	317	line 13:	Sometime
Page	322	line 5:	Cycle
Page	323	line 4 & 5	<u>Add:</u> (Submission) instead of the more active mode employed in earlier times. The fact that various individuals were active in promoting this submission is important but does not negate the passive character of the response on the more general level of the society as a whole. The final..."
Page	330	line 8-10	<u>Delete:</u> The church...restriction. <u>Add:</u> Church prohibitions against polygamy (especially polyandry) and divorce and remarriage contribute to this restriction.
Page	332	line 5 & 6	<u>Delete:</u> (of) over the reef at the northern end of the island, <u>Add:</u> (of) over the reef. It is located at the northern end of the island,
Page	333	line 23	<u>Add:</u> (will) be
Page	339	line 9	<u>Add:</u> (indistinguishable) along this axis.
Page	348	line 4	Preserve