1 Background to the Study of Pacific Islander Life-Ways

The Pacific Ocean covers a third of the earth's surface, and its island world is scattered asymmetrically across vast tracts of water. While acknowledging continuing debate, convention among ethnographers since the eighteenth century has classified the peoples of the Pacific Islands into three human types that also generally present in three distinct far-flung regions (cf. Thomas 1989; Ryan 2002; and see Figure 1). Famously, these are:

Melanesia or 'the Black Islands' (islands of the blacks), spanning across the southwest Pacific from the western parts of the great island of New Guinea (the second-largest island non-continental land mass after Greenland) over to Fiji in the central Pacific (at least to Fiji's western half).

Micronesia or 'the Small Islands', many being coral atolls, basically stretching across the north-central Pacific from the Palau group (3,200 km from Japan) to Kiribati (2,140 km north of Fiji).

Polynesia or 'the Many Islands', constituting an enormous oceanic triangle from Hawai'i in the north to Rapanui or Easter Island to the east and Aotearoa or New Zealand to the south-west, the latter's south and north islands being the twelfth- and fourteenth-largest islands on Earth.

The peoples of these great islander groups share certain physical features in common, especially crinkly hair, but Melanesians are distinctive through their darker skin beside the relatively lighter-skinned Micronesian and Polynesian populations, a matter of interest when we find members of the two latter groupings showing up as traditional inhabitants of various coastal and offshore islands of Melanesia. Whereas the linguistic profile of Melanesia is highly complex, with over 800 heartland languages in various families along with over 300 Austronesian (or Malayo-Polynesian) tongues on the perimeter, both Micronesia and Polynesia form an overwhelmingly Austronesian language block (Wurm and Hattori 1981; Lynch 1998).

There are of course many islands lying on the Pacific's outermost 'Rim'. These include the Bering Strait Islands to the far north, for instance, or islands close to the western coasts of the Americas (such as the Santa Cruz Islands off California and the fabled Galapagos group off Peru), or islands

close to eastern Australia (as in the Great Barrier Reef), and very significantly those off East and South-East Asia (from Japan, through Taiwan and the Philippines to Indonesia and Timor, especially west of the Wallace Line). But all these 'marginal spaces' can barely be discussed in this Element.

1.1 Pacific Island Religious Life in Broad Context

Around a quarter of the discrete religions of the world are known from the Pacific Islands, the traditional ones all expectedly small-scale. Over millennia the peopling of the vast region of Oceania has involved extraordinary voyaging and daring exploration into formidable jungles and mountainous terrain. Reading the archaeology as we have it at the moment, black (now usually called 'Papuan') island discoverers were first into the southwest Pacific, the first signs of migration by boat being located off Bougainville Island and dated to 33,000± BP (Wickler 2001).[1] If 'Papuans' or 'Proto-Oceanic' peoples prevailed in the large islands extending beyond the Indonesian archipelago for some 50,000 years, and from before New Guinea and its outliers were geologically separated from the Australian mainland (7,000–6,500 BCE) (White and Connell 1982), a new cultural element has reached further around 3,000 years ago. In common convention it was distinctly 'neolithic' (compared to 'pre-neolithic') in technological achievement (Schmitz 1962: 124). Usually named Lapita after their distinctive pottery ware, Lapita traders were expert seafarers (*flor*. 3,500–500 BCE) whose route into the Pacific skirted the northern New Guinea Islands and reached Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Fiji, and even Tonga and Samoa (by 850–800 BCE). Recent DNA research connects them to the Taiwanese Indigenes, lighter-skinned Austronesian people who at first apparently kept separate from Melanesians, though the very far-reaching dispersal of peoples, north to Hawai'i, south to Aotearoa, came only after a mixing of types occurred (Spriggs 1996; Oxenham and Buckley 2016: 803–

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[1] Excavations being at Kilu, Buka, island of the darkest-skinned people on earth. Here we concede, though, the archaeological implications of intentional voyaging by boat to Flores Island and the continental shelf of Sahul tens of thousands of years before.

811; Skogland et al. 2016; cf. Kirch 2010).[2] Micronesia, however, had its own separate influxes from eastern Asia from around 1,500 BCE (some hold 3,000 years earlier), probably mostly from the Philippines, with subsequent aspects from the New Guinea Islands and beyond, while Polynesia's human spread was from the central Pacific itself. The Hawai'ian Islands and Aotearoa were reached during the thirteenth century CE (Rainbird 2004; Kirch 2017: 107–212; cf. Green 1967; Shutler 1975: 8–25, 100).

The renowned theory of Norwegian adventurer Thor Heyerdahl (1952: 156–170) that some Polynesians diffused from north-west America cannot stand (Trompf [1964] 2012), though his postulation of South American maritime input into Rapanui's prehistory may be retrievable, as also the claim that 'Polynesians' brought sweet potatoes into Oceania from the Americas (Heyerdahl and Ferdon 1961: 327; Golson 1981; Chapman and Gill 1997). Blood group and DNA lineages uniformly connect the Austronesian islanders to eastern Asia (Cox 2013). The material and cultural contribution of these Austronesians involved more refined Neolithic stone and vessel wares, as well as evidently more hierarchical societies, with paramount chiefs, even monarchs, and well-organized priest-hoods and sacred architecture and sculpture. In the far east lie the great rows of Rapanui's giant *moai* statues of divinized chiefs overlooking ancestral lands, while much nearer the west lie Micronesian Pohnpe's *Soun Nan-leng* ('Reef of Heaven'), a mysterious 19-sq.-km stone-city-on-a-lagoon com-plex evidently serving as the royal cult center of the Saudeleur dynasty (*ca.* 1180–1630).[3] Among non-Austronesian 'Papuans' the material achieve-ments were more basic, and a greater struggle pertained between 'equals' competing for leadership; indeed, Melanesian societies were generally acephalous, that is, without '*high* chiefs' or any 'royal social summit' (Swain and Trompf 1995: 7–8, 140–145; Anderson et al., 2009; Cochrane

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[2] For the East Asian origins of Pacific Austronesians, work by Austrian archae-ologist R. Heine-Geldern (1932) is seminal.

[3] Note Rainbird (2004: 314–315) on Leluh as well as Nan Madol (Pohnpe) and Phear (2007) on Babeldaob (Palau). For the archaeology of social stratification, see p. 9 on Roy Mata, and consider the usefully indicative variation and sequence of funeral practices in Palau archaeology (Fitzpatrick and Nelson 2008).

and Hunt 2018; cf. Sahlins 1963; Godelier and Strathern 1991; Kelly 1993). Out of the mysteries of 'Proto-Oceanic' sociolinguistic complexities in the highlands of New Guinea, though, the earliest-known garden cultivation occurred (8,000+ BCE, in Kuk, near Mount Hagen), reinforced by the Ipomoean (sweet potato) 'revolution' (Golson 2008, 2017).[4] Metalworking was only known at the very far west of the island world we are now going to examine (especially in western New Guinea's Vogelkop or Bird's Head region, due to expansion by the Muslim Sultan of Tidore from the eighteenth century). Despite some curious theories to the contrary, the traditional cultures, languages and religions of Oceania were barely touched by the pressures of the world's great religions until the first Christian (Jesuit) missions to Guam and the Marianas, Micronesia (from 1668).[5] Inaccessibility made parts of the New Guinea inland the slowest to experience outside impact, yet the greatest numbers of Pacific peoples were there.

This Element pretends to meet the challenge of exploring the relationship between a huge array of traditional religions and different patterns of human violence expressed over an enormous, unevenly populated span of terrestrial life. I admit to researching cultures of Oceania for more than sixty years, but this gives barely enough time to skim over the top of my own storehouse of field notes, interactions with fellow investigators and personal reading. I still plod along trying to piece together the oral and documented religious history of the great highland Wahgi Valley (with its ancient garden drains at Kuk) and wonder how many lifetimes would be necessary to comprehend a single small-scale Pacific culture-complex. I dare say there is some value in ageing scholars summarizing their findings, drawing out salience and formulating mature conclusions, and this will be me doing so within more concentrated limits than usual and on a very sensitive subject.

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[4] The only contemporary interest in gently probing remnants of earlier religious strata (of supreme beings) and relating them to crop farming has come from Catholic theorists (partly affected by Wilhelm Schmidt and Adolf Jensen); see esp. T. Aerts (1998: 28–50); Mantovani (1984: 49–86).

[5] See Coella de la Rosa (2015). For a few signs of early Islam in Raja Ampat, as well as Moluccan–Biak Island trading voyaging and Biak wet-rice farming in the far west, see, for example, Kamma (1981: 92–93).

Because the rough population ratio in modern times seems to be around 16 to 1 in favor of the Melanesians over the Micronesians and Polynesians combined, more space will be devoted to the highly complex southwest Pacific scene (with which I am more familiar in any case), yet there is no neglecting both the historical significance and the achievements of more widely dispersed island peoples, especially the Polynesians.

For all the knowledge and careful consideration that should be brought to the topic at hand, might not a critical researcher of European heritage feel somewhat hesitant about probing violence in the stories of indigenous personages, even in long-past modes of existence, when it could fuel neocolonial and racially supremacist depreciation of marginalized peoples and disadvantaged groups? Why, how much in the history of classic European sociopolitical theory, deploying indigenous (including Pacific Islander) exemplars, has been devoted to express relief that the ways of savagery have been left behind for 'civilization'? The still-unexpunged stereotype of lives 'nasty, brutish and short', spent in hovels and filth, full of treachery, lies and vengeful bloodlust, is a patchwork of Western-documented 'native peoples' in their worst aspects, at the lowest stage before any 'progress' has begun (Trompf 1979: vol. 1: 15–25; vol. 2 [forthcoming, chs. 6–7]). In other words, it is an image of 'the violent-indigenous', basically the very same subject matter we address here! Of course the same tendencies to inferiorize have been appropriated and re-projected onto the very origins of religion in general, from the 'savage brutal clans of hunters', yet all too frequently with modern data on autochthonous, indigenous, small-scale traditional societies (in my youth so-called primitive peoples) called upon to fill in what the 'primary' or 'mother' or 'original' religion is supposed to have looked like (Anati 2020: 40–42; cf. Steinmetz 1892–1894). There are thorny issues to face and far too little space available, not just time, to do a proper job.

1.2 Dimensions of Violence and Religion in the Pacific Islands

Before addressing patterns of violence in Pacific Island religious histories, the whole question of the meanings put on violence and violent actions beckons immediate attention. For a start, intergroup (most often 'tribal')

conflict was endemic to Pacific indigenous cultures, yet some scholars would consider the scale and technological level of its most serious outbursts to be 'feuding', not 'war'. Metal weaponry and guns were not used until serious contact with the outside world (from the sixteenth century), yet the flow-on of intergroup antagonisms using stone, bone and wooden weaponry into the post-lithic order make a feud/war distinction somewhat facile (Tefft and Reinhardt 1974: 154; Turney-High [1949] 1991; Otterbein 1994; cf. Collins 2008). More important points concern the effects of environments on the playing out of hostilities, so that groups utilizing traditional 'fighting grounds' or living at the borders of their language areas would engage in open-field warfare, whereas in rugged terrain, commonly slippery conditions or treacherous jungle, we find quick raids preferred to 'formalized contests', and, on large rivers and between islands, engagements can involve canoes, whether in larger-scale clashes or snap 'pirate' attacks (Jochim 1981: 32–63, 148–203).[6] We shall leave the details as to how 'religion' and 'violent collective assaults' interrelate to the following sections, but we should make clear initially that Pacific societies cultivated brave warriorhood among their young men (see Figure 2) and relied on the loyal support of women, who would most commonly, through exogamous rules, marry into their husband's people from potentially enemy groups (Keesing 1975: 13, 102).

A complex range or spectrum of violent acts across Pacific Island contexts also has to be acknowledged. 'Violence', we concede, is a cultural construct (Stewart and Strathern 2002: 1–14); but a certain globalizing 'common sense' (*sensus communis*), especially in internationalist formulations about specifically human transactions, allows us to proceed with sufficient confidence. Anticipating most readers' presumptions, it would be sensible to conceive a 'spectrum' between open physical homicide at one end and violent verbal acts at the other, with various possibilities in between. Thus we would place the actual killing of enemies in pitched battle or in quick raids or sudden encounters (of any enemy or stranger) towards one end of a yardstick, and quite apart from whether one group

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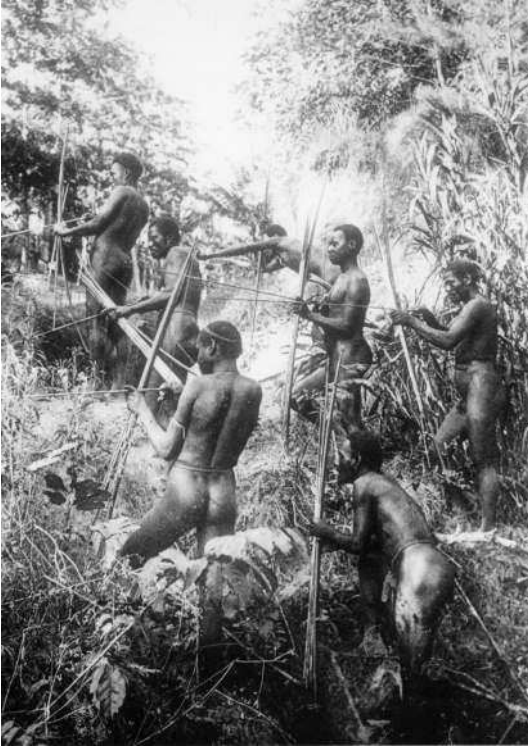[6] Note p. 198 of Jochim (1981) on border fighting – that is, between those of 'the same economy', even if their spoken tongues are not related.

Figure 2 Raiding party of Halia warriors, North Bougainville (*ca*. 1889).
Photograph staged: R. H. R. Parkinson for *Album von Papúa Typen* (1894).

seeks to exterminate another or just occasionally pick off one or two of their
foes. Academic quibbling might be had as to what best lies conceptually at
the very extremity of open violence, because some analysts might choose
'murder' or a daring act of one individual to despatch another quickly in full
public gaze, and questions of emotional ferocity, cruelty, cool ruthlessness,
zeal for elimination and so on might come into estimates. At the other end of

the scale would be verbal exchanges (aggressive words and gesticulations) or the percolating of malevolent rumours or accusations, which can bring two parties to the brink of emotionally charged physical jousting. It is possible that verbal altercations can stall physical fighting, even in shouting by leaders before a big battle, yet often close-encounter quarrelling can result in blows and thrusts, and of course in some cultures shame is felt like a mortal wound, demanding redress. Between the conceived 'polarities' lies a complex array of altercative possibilities. How to arrange them systematically will often depend on a scholar's choice of framing for educative or special hermeneutical purposes. There is no final or infallible approach. In my own work on revenge syndromes in Melanesia, I have naturally been interested in how kinds and degrees of violence reflect variations in group or personal propulsions to pay back others' perceived negative actions, threats or delicts – and thus in calculations and case-by-case or day-by-day reasoning lying behind action (Trompf 2008a).[7] Others have been interested in legitimacy: my late colleague Ronald Berndt (1962: 283, 414; 1964), for instance, defined war as '*justified* coercive action' by one unit over another 'to exact compensation or revenge for a real or imagined injury', with more stress on immediately knowing what is right (or that you are on the right side in an ongoing 'antagonistic game') than on probing cultural 'logics' of retribution (Berndt 1962: 283, 414; 1964). Other analysts again have psychoanalytic and sociobiological interests and thus explore the role of the unconscious or biological 'drives' (cf. Van der Dennen and Falger 1990: 149–271; Eibl-Eibesfelt 1991; Trompf 2005: 105–115, 133–143, 176–177, 215–224).

The archaeology of weapons in the island Pacific shows warfare and violent actions, and of course fortifications, definitely have a prehistory, yet with few exceptions the findings are as yet too scattered and limited to serve as anything more than a background to what we learn from oral and historical data. Weaponry is a consistent element in the record, yet of

[7] Note, in this approach, one cannot deduce that violence is always only for revenge or that revenge only involves physical violence. Group abstention from war, also, will discourage (yet does not rule out) the presence of other forms of violence (cf. Kelly 2000).

course weapons were also used for hunting, and we lack data from battle-grounds because instruments were mostly taken away (e.g., Bishop Museum 1892: Pt. II, 64–71; Golson 1959: 48–49, 55–58; Muke 1993; Otto et al. 2006: 75–88, 157–210 [including Brandt, Otto and Gosden]; cf. Knauft 1985). Earth- and stonework fortifications are better attested for Polynesia (Suggs 1960: 109–130; Green 1970; Daugherty 1979; Phillips 2001: 35–50, 105–158); there could have been more in Melanesia, but only isolated remnants of coral stone-walling have shown up (Dubois 1970: 55–60).[8] Because virtually everything in terms of belief gets lost to the four winds, it is tantalizing to know whether the digs and memories match sufficiently. A brilliant study of (largely open-air and stone-wall-enclosed) war temples in Hawai'i (especially at Kahikinui, Maui), together with a plotting of likely places of sanctuary, effectively uses corroborative evidence from oral traditions, including those on ritual human sacrifice at temple consecrations (Kolb and Dixon 2002: 520–521, 524). When the body of a chieftain was excavated on Eretoka Islet off Efate (Vanuatu), with his wife and twenty-two males and females buried as couples around him (*ca.* 1265 CE), we can only infer from local oral tradition that this was the great Roy Mata, who introduced the matrilineal kin system to an islander cluster and who was so honoured that men and women went willingly to their deaths to be with him in the thereafter. Whatever the precise circumstances, violence was done and revealed from beneath the sand (Bellwood 1978: 270–272; Garanger 1982).

Of meanings and actions in the spectrum between brutal homicides and vicious outcries, only minuscule bits survive archaeologically, and – as for almost all the material in this Element – reliance will be placed in subsequent pages on oral memories, printed records, and my own extensive fieldwork experiences and habitation in Oceania. All sorts of ' in-between' configurations of violence will appear in the following pages. Typical for Pacific Islands cultures – but also for most other traditions the world round, as readers will immediately recognize – males have an 'apparent right' to discipline their wives by force (often also children and younger siblings),

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[8] On defence-walling at Maré, Loyalty Islands (New Caledonia), *ca.* 250 CE, and deferring to oral tradition.

especially when issues of disloyalty and disobedience arise. And we are not to forget individual rivalries, so that *within* a group a one-on-one contest can occur, and whether through degree of bitterness or accident a death can follow. Such 'interpersonal violence' might be collateral damage in a dispute or perhaps amounting to 'an act of theft' (Younger 2015). Depending on the status of the perpetrator or the deceased, and if ferocious intent and culpability are plain, an intragroup killing would normally be rated as murder, usually punishable by death. Killing outsiders is forgivable (unless the target is a sensitive case) because it is equivalent on a small scale to 'serving one's nation', while scraps between personal enemies and smaller (lineage or clan) skirmishes within a wider tribe or grouping would be tolerated if non-lethal weapons were not used.

Mention of punishment already intimates that this Element will also have to account for violent sanctioning, especially executions, usually after decisions from the social apex (often monarchs and 'noble courts' in Polynesia, elders in Melanesia) have been made. Regulated measures of punitive violence will need some consideration (often as aspects of legal anthropology), with indigenous uses of imprisonment and prolonged torture virtually absent in traditional practice. Deployment of spirit powers (under names equivalent to magic, sorcery and witchcraft) can present as a form of punition if leaders call for it, yet, as we shall discover, how and when we can talk of violence with regard to the (negative) wielding of spirit power needs cautious analysis. There is also a rather messy range of special forms of 'violence' beckoning disentanglement, including socially accepted procedures bringing pain or temporary wounding to the body (tattooing, scarification etc.) or ambiguous or rejected acts (rape, unfriendly death-rites, suicide etc.). Mock violence and belligerence can form part of ceremonies with potential or former enemies, warning against treacherous behaviour. As we proceed, details as to how conflict is contained or halted will sometimes be noted, although (as we confess from time to time as well) the task of writing this Element carries the unfortunate side effect of neglecting peaceful energies.

Violent actions in Pacific Islander religions are not only between humans but include the killing of animals – sometimes spectacularly, as in the mass ceremonial slaughter of pigs. We can generally distinguish despatches in