TOTEMIC NAMES ON ANEITYUM, VANUATU

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Tepahae, an influential Aneityumese elder, once told me, "If the younger generation does something with what I pass on, it will be good and I will be pleased." This simple statement did not strike me as surprising when I first heard it, but today these words provoke inquiry—not only because of the content, but also because of what transpired after Tepahae uttered them.

I met Tepahae in 2005. At that time, he was an Aneityum-based fieldworker for the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VCC) and an influential Aneityumese elder known for his local Aneityumese knowledge. Over the next four years we would collaborate on a number of projects with Frank Inhatasjinjap, another Aneityum-based VCC fieldworker, and Tepahae's son-in-law. Inhat, Tepahae, and I worked to support the VCC's effort to perpetuate and renew significant cultural practices in Vanuatu and strengthen the transmission of cultural knowledge. With the collaboration of many other Aneityumese, we produced documentaries, recorded Aneityumese music, and transcribed Aneityumese oral history. One such project involved the publication *Inyupal Uja Nisvitai Uhup* (Wood and Inhatasjinjap 2009), a collection of Aneityumese children's stories in *Anejom* (the Aneityumese vernacular) to promote literacy and cultural transmission.

The last time I saw Tepahae I was passing his Anpeke residence during a full-day walk around half of the island, which I undertook because there are no automobile roads on the mountainous island and transportation is

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invariably by foot, canoe, or boat. I can remember the scene vividly. Tepahae and I were sitting on the beach near his house. I was resting after a half-day walk in the sun. We talked about music, storytelling, and our collaborations over the previous four years. I reminded him that our progress was only the beginning and that I would return to Aneityum in the future to continue where we had left off. He looked pleased and reflective, and then he made the statement that begins this account: "If the younger generation does something with what I pass on, it will be good and I will be pleased." It was normal for Tepahae to talk like that, but what happened next was far from normal—a week later Tepahae was dead.

Tepahae performed *uwuñtap* (the Aneityumese customary practice of suicide). He was found on the land of his chiefly totemic district, a place where Tepahae felt he belonged. The night before he was found he told Steve, one of his grandsons, to meet him at that specific place the next day. When Steve arrived, he found his grandfather's dead body, badly burned. Tepahae had heaped dry wild cane over himself and ignited it. His body was in such bad shape that Steve immediately ran for the nearest help. The people who came had long been divided from Tepahae because of a land dispute that had lasted over two decades, which meant they had avoided any kind of contact with each other for the duration of this time. However, when they saw Tepahae's body, all of their quarrels were set aside. His body was so severely burned that he was immediately wrapped in a *napevak* (pandanus mat) and buried near where he was found. Tepahae's wife, children, and all other grandchildren did not see his corpse before he was buried.

Although Tepahae's body was badly burned, many Aneityumese say that the fire did not kill him, but rather the *natmas* (deity or spirit) of the totemic district did, and only after he was burned. They say that the ritual practice of uwuñtap requires one to eat half of a portion of food and leave the other half in the place of residence of the totemic deity. In Tepahae's case, after the deity had consumed the food that Tepahae had given it, Tepahae and the deity became united. The Aneityumese say that his body became a shell or corpse, but his *nesgan*[1] (soul-body) is not dead, since it fused itself with the deity and place. Tepahae's death came as a shock to everyone who knew him, since Tepahae was, like many ni-Vanuatu elders, a walking encyclopedia of Aneityumese oral history in a place where little is written down. His last words were still ringing in my ears, and I was faced with the difficult question: "Why did Tepahae perform uwuñtap?" (Why did Tepahae take his own life?) The answer to this question is complex, and I think the most appropriate starting point in formulating an informed response is the topic of Aneityumese totemic names—because one fact is undeniable: Tepahae's

"totemic name" and the related practice of "nomination" were key factors in his self-inflicted death.

This paper explores the meaning of Aneityumese names and how they relate to and play a significant role in Aneityum socio-political organization. Names are significant because name bestowal is an act of nomination (Lindstrom 1985, 2011, this volume). Nomination is a term that was first used by Lindstrom to discuss recruitment of members into local corporate groups with land and other rights on Tanna, the island directly north of Aneityum (ibid.), and the term is useful for understanding Aneityum social reproduction as well. On Aneityum, totemic names emplace actors in specific locations and initiate relationships between (1) person and place and (2) person and group. Names emplace actors doubly, (1) within the social order and a web of social relationships (the totemic group), and (2) spatially, with respect to a physical location (the totemic district). Hence Aneityum social reproduction is not automatic or rule governed—it is accomplished through acts of nomination. This paper attempts (1) to contribute to our understanding of nomination in social reproduction, namely, that action (not structure) reproduces the Aneityumese social order, and (2) to explore the phenomenological dimension of names, an approach that is important to understanding Tepahae's feeling of belonging to place and group.

Aneityum Colonial History Encapsulated

Aneityum, the southernmost island of the Republic of Vanuatu, is oval in shape and covers about 61 square miles in area. The island stretches 10 miles by 8 miles at its longest and widest points, respectively, and reaches 2,795 feet at its highest peak. The roughly 1,000 Aneityumese speak Anejom, an Austronesian language that is spoken only on Aneityum.[2]

Aneityum has a unique colonial history. European influence on the island began in 1841 with the discovery of sandalwood on the island and the nearby Isle of Pines (Spriggs 1985, 25). In 1844, Captain James Paddon established a sandalwood station and trading depot on adjacent *Iñec* islet (or "Mystery Island," as it is known to the thousands of tourists who call on the islet by cruise ship each year)—and later, Iñec and various stations on the main island of Aneityum were used as whaling depots (ibid.). Aneityum was also the first island to be missionized in Melanesia, an effort that roughly commenced in 1848 with the arrival of Reverend John Geddie, a Presbyterian missionary. Later, near the end of the nineteenth century, both Great Britain and France became interested in colonizing Aneityum and the rest of Vanuatu,[3] and they came to an unusual agreement, according to Miles (1998), "that both nations would exercise custodianship over the archipelago" (18). This

dual custodianship, which is known as the "Anglo-French" or British–French Condominium became official in 1914 and continued until independence in 1980 (ibid.).

This colonial history devastated the Aneityumese people, and it is estimated that 95 percent of the Aneityum population died from postcontact diseases (McArthur 1974, 8). As of 1940, less than 200 of the indigenous Aneityumese remained (ibid.). The Aneityumese retention of their language and many cultural practices in the face of this history and the ongoing globalization that caused it is a phenomenal feat—but this retention is not without struggle. Some Aneityumese have lost interest in their indigenous lifeways and prefer to participate in the global market economy. Some have either migrated to Port Vila (the capital of Vanuatu) or elsewhere, or now depend on market-based income from local tourist or forestry projects on Aneityum. However, most Aneityumese believe that the retention of their indigenous lifeways is essential for their well-being in this modern, global, and capital-driven world. In light of these realities, this paper is not only a contribution to our understanding of names and social reproduction, but also a basic outline of the "structure" of Aneityumese life—with the intent that it may be useful for future generations of Aneityumese as they resist globalization. Totemic names emplace actors within this structure, namely, within a totemic group/district that lies within a larger structure of chiefdoms and moieties. Therefore, before I go into depth about totemic names in particular, it is important to understand the larger structure within which totemic names function.

Aneityum Social and Political Organization[4]

Moieties and Chiefdoms

Aneityum society has four levels: moiety, chiefdom, totem, and household. Each level is both social and geographic, as the social categories designate geographic divisions of the island. The two moieties are the most comprehensive categories—they roughly divide the island down the center along a north–south axis. The western side of the island is known as the *Nelcau-sokou* or *Nelcau-Inpekeritinpeke* (Sunset Moiety), and the eastern side of the island is conversely the *Nelcau-jekou* or *Nelcau-Anejom* (Sunrise Moiety). The two moieties together are subdivided into seven chiefdoms, and chiefdoms are divided into districts, all of which (moieties, chiefdoms, and districts) are known as *nelcau* (canoes).[5] Six chiefdoms stretch from the coast to the interior and subdivide the island into wedge-shaped dominions like the pieces of a pie. The seventh chiefdom is located in the interior of the island

with no coastal access. The Sunset Moiety contains four chiefdoms—*Nelcau-Anijinwei*, *Anelcauhat*, *Nelcau-Anauonse*, and *Nelcau-Anejo*—and the Sunrise Moiety contains three—*Nelcau-Anijeganwei*, *Nelcau-u-Elpuincei*, and *Nelcau-Anauanjai*.[6]

Aneityum's moieties are similar to the ones recorded on Tanna, Futuna,[7] and Aniwa, as discussed by Lynch and Fakamuria (1994). The Aneityumese say that Aneityum has two "languages"—one for each moiety—by which I understand them to mean dialects, namely, differences in *norantas* (accents) and *icsipeke* (metaphors). Both sides are able to communicate with each other, and the two "languages" are mutually intelligible. These linguistic differences between the two sides of the island still exist, but they were apparently more distinct in the past. There are also personality differences: the people from the Sunset Moiety are known as being reserved and *momo* (quiet and conservative), while the members of the Sunrise Moiety are known as being flamboyant and *auyat* (flashy and liberal).[8]

In Aneityumese oral history there were originally two chiefdoms: the two moieties—one giving rise to the other. Those within the Sunset Moiety called themselves Nelcau-inpekeritinpeke, which Inhat describes as "the chiefdom that started everything [a system of thought, language, and governance]," an idiom that expresses the belief of the members of the Sunset Moiety that their canoe was the original chiefdom. Sunset Moiety people say that their success with a chiefly system influenced the Sunrise Moiety to adopt the same system. However, some members of the Sunrise Moiety reject this claim. For example, Neriam, a member of the *Anauonjai* chiefdom of the Sunrise Moiety, argues that his moiety was the first to adopt the chiefly system, and it was brought to Aneityum by *natimi-yag* (yellow-people), who they now believe to have been Polynesian.[9] Both of these claims, from Inhat and Neriam, respectively, reflect the social revolution that took place when the Aneityumese established the position of *natimared* (chief). Inhat says that as the population grew within the original two chiefdoms, they were subdivided into seven total smaller chiefdoms by the chiefs of the original chiefdoms, who then moved inland to govern the two inland chiefdoms and their respective moieties, and their halves of the island (see Fig. 1).

Natimared (Chiefs)

The leadership within each moiety is centered on the natimared of the inland chiefdom: the *Anijinwei* chief in the case of the Sunset Moiety and the *Anijeganwei* chief in the case of the Sunrise Moiety. Today these two chiefs exist ideologically but not actually, since there are currently no chiefly

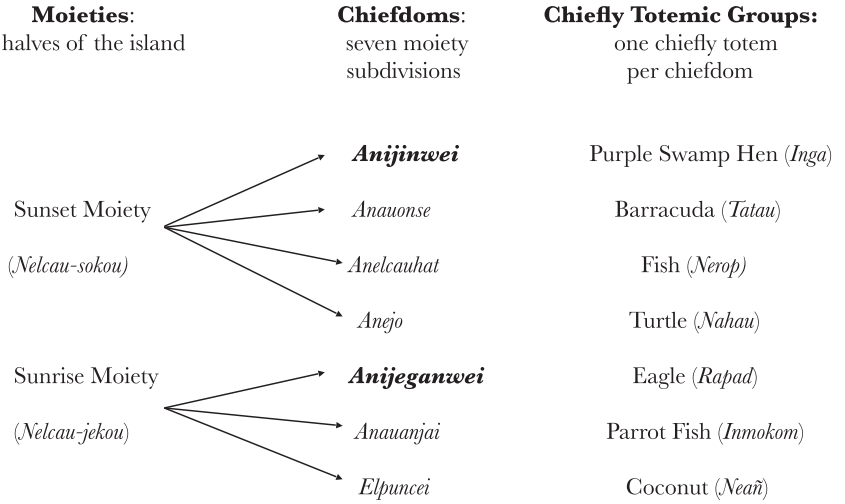

FIGURE 1. **Note that this is schematic. The stronger "inland" chiefdoms are in bold. The *Anijinwei* chiefdom is the only true inland chiefdom because its domain does not reach the coast. The *Anijeganwei* chiefdom—which is mostly inland—does reach the coast, but this is only a sliver of coastal land in relation to the other chiefdoms. Only the chiefly totemic group is mentioned per moiety subdivision (chiefdom), but there are many totemic groups within a chiefdom. As noted earlier, in Aneityum vernacular, the moieties, chiefdoms, and totemic groups are all referred to as *nelcau* (canoes).**

titleholders of the inland chiefdoms. However, these titles can *and will* be bestowed. The Aneityumese say it is just a matter of time.[10] Within this ideological structure—the chiefs of the inland chiefdoms are thought to be the strongest and most powerful of all the chiefs within their moiety, but every chiefdom has one natimared who governs his respective chiefdom within the moiety system.

Lindstrom (1997) argues that unlike other areas of Vanuatu, where the signifier *jif* (chief) has become a popular identity largely shaped by events associated with contact and colonialism, "the Aneityumese chiefly system was most likely something closer to ones found in Polynesia" (212, from Spriggs 1981).[11] The Aneityumese description of their chiefly system supports Lindstrom's claim, as they say this was a multilevel system with centralized leadership at the level of each moiety. In this system,

commands came from the higher-ranking inland chiefdoms of each moiety, and tribute flowed from lower ranking coastal chiefdoms to the inland chiefdoms.

The Aneityumese say that in the past every chiefdom was governed by four levels of leadership:[12] (1) the highest is the natimared, who was the *nijinelcau* (head of the canoe [chiefdom]), the most influential position within a moiety; (2) the second-level is the *nhakli-natimared* (small chief), who was the *nijininareneclau* (head of a large district within the canoe [chiefdom]) and exerted the next level of influence; (3) the third-level was also a nhakli-natimared, who was the *nijininararinelcau* (head of a small district within the canoe [chiefdom]) and had less influence; and (4) the *nijini-netec* (family-head), with the least influence, who looks after a hamlet within a totemic district. Every household had a family-head who was the "head of the household." The family-head was not considered a chief but played a significant role in the political system. First-level, second-level, and third-level chiefs were male titles belonging to different totemic groups within chiefdoms. The first-level chief (natimared) was a title belonging to the chiefly totemic group, of which there was only one per chiefdom (seven total for the whole island). Likewise, second-level and third-level chiefly titles belonged to other totemic groups within the chiefdom. Unlike first-level chiefly titles, there were many second-level and third-level titles within any one chiefdom. No *one* totemic group could have more than one chief (first-, second-, or third-level), and totemic groups took their rank, first, from the rank of the chiefdom of which they were a subdivision (inland, coastal), and second, from the rank of their chief (first-, second-, or third-level).[13]

In sum, the Aneityumese say that in the past their society was stratified into two status levels: those with chiefly titles and those without chiefly titles. Even though chiefly titles had various ranks, they were clearly differentiated from nonchiefly titleholders. Attaining one of these chiefly titles on Aneityum was not inherited automatically, but one was nominated to this title from a pool of possible titleholders by virtue of exemplifying shared Aneityumese values and by exemplifying those values through one's deeds, actions, and virtuous ways.

Nomination to Chiefly Title

In the past, before the demographic disaster, chiefly titleholders typically appointed their successors. Chiefly titles were often awarded patrifilially, as successors were commonly the sons of the incumbents. However, if the previous titleholder had no sons, a daughter's son, brother's son, or sister's son was also eligible for the title. Only males held these leadership positions for

any length of time. In rare cases a female is said to have assumed one of these leadership positions, even the role of chief (Lawrie 1892, 710), but she did so only temporarily, until such time as she was able to appoint a male to assume the title. Although chiefly titleholders typically chose their successors, this appointment had to be accepted by the collective of chiefs, family-heads, and elders of the respective chiefdom, who would collectively *alcause* (nominate or lift-up) a person to this title.

C. B. Humphreys, an anthropologist conducting ethnographic research in the 1920s on Tanna—the island north of Aneityum—learned from a few Aneityumese visiting the island that Aneityum chiefly titles were hereditary (Humphreys 1926, 107). The Aneityumese confirm this, and they say chiefly successors were chosen from a pool of possible titleholders who claimed a genealogical relationship with the chief. This system of nomination was flexible; when there were no available heirs for the title, a person from outside one's descent group could be nominated to the title. This flexibility became clear when the Aneityumese population dipped to its lowest levels during the demographic disaster, and succession took less common routes to reproduce the socio-political order. Patrifilial succession to title was difficult or impossible due to the lack of male heirs. When there were no blood-related heirs available (male or female), titleholders nominated successors from outside their descent group, namely, they adopted a male or female heir to be the steward of their entitlements.

Today, nomination to chiefly title ideally follows patrilineal lines of descent; however, if one is a hereditary descendant but does not exhibit the qualities necessary for the chiefly title, one will not be nominated to that title. Preferably, chiefs are nominated from a pool of candidates who share a common ancestor with the chief, but, as noted above, there is flexibility in nomination. When there are no available heirs, titles can be bestowed upon a person outside one's descent group. One is nominated to chiefly titles when one embodies *nedou u natimared* (the way of the chief). The descendants of previous chiefs are a case in point. A person can be a descendant of a previous chief, for example, the chief's son, but this does not automatically mean that the title will be conferred upon him. Today, descent only creates the potential for nomination because the attainment of chiefly title is based on a moral valuation of those members of the totemic group responsible for nominating a particular chief.

Tepahae emphasized that when nominating a chief in contemporary Aneityum society, the greatest concern is the issue of *ecen* (respect), a characteristic that must be embodied in the chief's *upopo* (low) ways—the actions of a stable, humble noncoercive person—in contrast to *ijiñis* (high) ways, which are divisive and aggressive. Today, a good leader is thought to embody

humility by staying low, and being grounded and respectful regardless of the situation—in contrast to someone who has a short temper, is hasty, and holds his head too high. Tepahae emphasized that a prospective chief must be able to *amenjinañ* (take care of) the members of his canoe and have the personal strength and stamina to lead and represent them in any and all situations. A chief should also be able to share, as exemplified in one's organization of *nakro* (communal feasts), which create the opportunity for sociality and the perpetuation and construction of relationships through "gift-exchange" and feasting.

Nomination to Totemic Group and District

In the past, chiefdoms were divided into a number of districts,[14] and every totemic group owned their respective totemic district. Districts were then divided into *intinei-niom* (hamlets) surrounded by gardening areas. There was a rank order among the chiefdom totemic groups that was structural, and the chiefly totemic group was the most influential of all totemic groups. As noted above, there were also second- and third-level chiefs who were the chiefs of less influential totemic groups within every chiefdom.

Today, even though many Aneityumese do not reside in their totemic districts, the social divisions between totemic groups have been maintained through the practice of name bestowal. These divisions have not been maintained geographically, but they have been maintained socially. Each totemic group has a finite set of names that belong to them. Lindstrom (1985) calls this finite set of names a "name-set" (28). Each name from the name-set is associated with the land of the totemic group's district. Totemic names are gendered, and both male and female names give the named person *intasmu* (totemic rights) of shared ownership over the whole totemic district. Hence, all members of a totemic group share the responsibility of stewardship of the totemic district and all totemic entitlements—ownership is collective, not individual. The totemic name "emplaces" the named person within the totemic group's district in the sense of designating the responsibilities for the stewardship of the land of the district. Bestowing one of these names constitutes nomination to "primary" affiliation with the totemic group.

Everyone has primary and "secondary" affiliation to totemic groups. Primary affiliation and membership in totemic groups is bestowed upon a person through nomination regardless of whether the actor can trace a genealogical relationship with the members of the totemic group with which the name is associated. Primary affiliation means that an actor has been

given a totemic name and the associated intasmu, which designates totemic group membership, and gives the named person rights to land, entitlements, responsibilities of stewardship, and access to chiefly title. In the local idiom, primary totemic affiliation is *opoc* (heavy), meaning the strongest, and most important of a person's affiliations. In contrast to one's primary affiliation, a person's other affiliations are secondary or *ahiecahiec* (light), meaning less important. All cognatic descendants who can trace a genealogical relationship with the totemic ancestor have secondary affiliation. Secondary affiliates are not entitled to proprietary totemic rights, but they are entitled to usufruct rights. Secondary affiliates have no responsibility of stewardship, and they do not have access to chiefly titles. An islander can only have one primary totemic affiliation, which is bestowed upon a person when one receives a totemic name, but one can have many secondary affiliations by virtue of cognatic descent.

A primary totemic affiliation is a male or female person's foremost *nefalañ* (path) in life, and an identity that will slowly become a part of that person as he or she participates as a member of that group. "Affiliation" is thought of as a path because a person's primary affiliation requires action and participation following the bestowal of the responsibilities of stewardship of land. In contrast, a secondary totemic affiliation is lighter and less important; it is a person's peripheral path or paths and does not require the same participation because one is not a member of the totemic group—one is only a secondary affiliate. These secondary paths remain open, regardless of whether a person chooses to follow them. A person's primary affiliation is typically to one's father's totemic group, since there is patrilineal bias in naming. However, one's primary affiliation can be either patrilateral or matrilateral because it is determined by nomination, not descent. In contrast, nomination is not necessary for secondary/light affiliation. Once a person is nominated to a totemic group, he or she will reside with his or her parents until marriage, after which men create a residence near the hamlet of their nominator, who is typically one's father. In contrast to men, a woman follows her husband and resides in a hamlet near her husband's parents. As a person receives primary affiliation in a totemic group, he or she also assumes the identity or *nedou* (ways) of the *inpulidwiñ* (totemic ancestor). The totemic ancestor is an animal from which all members of a totemic group are thought to "descend" or (in the vernacular) to follow the same *aced* (path).[15] People who are genealogically connected with the totem (and members of the totemic group) are the first to be considered for nomination because they have *inja* (totemic blood).

The members of a totemic group do not have a totemic appellative (like a last name in European traditions), but rather, the name they receive from the

name-set associates them with the totemic group that has the right to bestow the name and with its district. A name belongs to only one person at any one time and cannot be used by another person. At any one point in time, not all names in the name-set will be conferred. The unconferred totemic names are retained in a totemic "name-bank," which only totemic group members have access to. When a person dies, if he or she did not appoint a namesake, then the name will be deposited in the name-bank and remain in people's memory until it is bestowed again. The unconferred names in the "name-bank" continue to exist in the common memory of all totemic group members and in the memory of other Aneityumese elders, and it will eventually be bestowed by those who have the right to do so. However, there is often disagreement as to who has the right to bestow unconferred names from the name-bank. Name-sets themselves can be disputed, since totemic groups sometimes claim each other's names.

Unlike on Tanna, where women's names do not entitle a person to any rights in property (Lindstrom 1985, 34), women's totemic names on Aneityum bestow shared rights to all totemic entitlement. Aneityumese names not only entail rights to land or ground (*nopothan*) to men and women, but also accord the named person the social position of the previous holders of the name. This position is social and physical, but it is not fixed and depends on the previous holder of the name because the position changes with the reputations of previous namesakes. This is not only a social position but also a personality and unique skill, namely, how one's namesake acted and talked, and if he or she had an economic specialization (canoe building, fisher, mat weaving, midwifery, kava planting, taro planting, etc.). However, this social positioning does not include chiefly titles. When the name of a chief is bestowed upon a person, this simply confers the social personality of the chief to the named person. In order to attain the title, the named person must be nominated to the chiefly title. Nomination to chiefly name and nomination to chiefly title are two different actions. The name lays a path toward attaining the title, but the named person must actively follow the ways and embody the values of one's namesake to be nominated to the title.

The reputation of a name changes historically in accordance with the reputation incumbents have earned. A person can improve the name's reputation and prestige by using it in a positive way, most easily through sharing, unselfishness, or *nakro* (feasting). However, a name can suffer if its owner uses it negatively, most commonly for personal gain, or *meteg* (selfishness)—characteristics often attributed to *nedou itoga* (the ways of the outsider). The actions of the person nominated to that name will be associated with the name long after the person perishes. If the other members of a person's totemic group think that he or she is using the name

improperly, then the name will be disputed and, eventually, if the person in question does not modify his or her actions, removed. A person who has been stripped of his or her name belongs nowhere and is ejected from the group. One becomes a *netec-alo* (banished family),[16] a person with no land and no membership who must rely on secondary affiliation to find one's way.

One's name designates primary totemic affiliation and thus shared rights of totemic entitlement, because each totemic member is entitled to an equal share of proprietorship. All cognatic descendants of a totemic ancestor may potentially receive a totemic name, since totemic names are typically given to blood descendants, who are all secondary totemic affiliates.[17] A person's primary affiliation is typically to one's father's totemic group because male and female children usually receive names that affiliate them with their father's totem. However, it is not uncommon for a person to be nominated to his or her mother's totem. For example, Kadikau[18] and Numala have ten children. Nine of them have been nominated to their father's (Kadikau's) totemic group, and one has been nominated to their mother's (Numala's) totemic group. Hence, given that primary affiliation in a totemic group is through nomination, sibling sets may well be scattered among totemic groups. Even though there is a paternal bias in naming, anyone—in theory—can be nominated to totemic groups in need of custodians for the land owned by the totemic group.

Aneityum Naming and Marriage Practices

Naming Ceremony

Today, it is common for Aneityumese to bestow totemic names months or even years after the child's birth, but Inhat says this was not the case in the past, when all Aneityumese were named at birth. Today, naming commonly takes place later, as European-derived names are often bestowed first.[19] Today, some infants are bestowed totemic names at birth and others later in life, but in both cases the naming ceremonies are similar. Whether a person receives a name at birth or after birth, the naming ceremony takes place at the *indeptag* (central meeting place) of the totemic district.

Earlier on the naming day, households from within and outside the person's totem congregate to prepare food to be cooked in the ground oven. This includes a meat protein, usually pork (for non–Seventh-day Adventist communities) or beef, and *intal* (taro). Taro is a staple root crop and also an essential food for any Aneityum ceremony because of its cultural significance, since it is Aneityum's most valued item of exchange. Today there are many

other root crops and imported foods, for example, sweet potato, manioc, rice, and flour, but taro is thought to give strength, and as Aneityumese say, *Et ciñ intal elpuejom* (Taro is the food that Aneityumese eat).

The naming ceremony ideally takes place in the afternoon, when the sun is nearing the horizon. The food is then unearthed and set on leaves in bunches, in preparation for the *nakro* (feast), which will take place when the ceremony is complete. When the name is uttered for the first time, the meat and taro are shared equally among all those present. The name conveyer takes center stage among the audience with the receiver at his side. He then says the name for the first time among the constituents, after which, people are given the bundle of food that had been set out for them. A portion is set aside for all allied chiefs and family-heads outside of the totemic district who are not present. Representatives carry the bundles of food whose recipients are absent to all corners of the island. The men and women then congregate to drink *incacen* (kava) long into the night to mark the joyous and celebratory occasion. The nakrou and kava are essential parts of the naming ceremony. If a name is bestowed without the sharing of food or drinking of kava it is thought less significant by the members of the totemic group, chiefdom, and moiety.

Totem Endogamy and Exogamy

The bestowal of a totemic name prepares a person for marriage because the Aneityumese practice both totem endogamy and totem exogamy. In the Aneityum system of kinship, endogamy and exogamy are not mutually exclusive. Endogamy is used to retain the resources of the totemic group, and exogamy is used to acquire resources and create "roads" of exchange with other totemic groups. In totem endogamy, a person's ideal partner belongs to the same totem and resides within the same totemic district. In both endogamy and exogamy, all bilateral cross-cousins are eligible partners, who—in endogamy—belong to the same totemic group/district by virtue of nomination, and—in exogamy—belong to different totemic groups/districts. Today, bilateral cross-cousin marriage (endogamous or exogamous) continues to be the ideal form of partnership, and any form of parallel-cousin marriage is thought incestuous. This is structured linguistically in kinship terms: parallel cousins for males and females are *etwak-atamañ* or *natamañ erak* (brother) and *etwak-ataheñ* or *nataheñ erak* (sister), while cross-cousins for males are *nega uñek* (brother-in-law) and *egak-an-netec* or *incinap* (wife-in-the-family), and cross-cousins for females are *natamñ-uñek-an-netec* or *napap* (husband-in-the-family) and *nohod-uñek* (sister-in-law).

In the past, bilateral cross-cousin marriage within the totemic group (endogamy) was common because both sides of a person's family—maternal

and paternal—belonged to the same totemic group and resided in the same district. That is, with totem endogamy, one's mother and father received names from the same totemic group and resided in the same district. This system was clearly much easier when the Aneityumese population was larger and people resided in their totemic districts, rather than in today's villages, where people regularly come into contact with members of other totemic groups.

Today, many Aneityumese leaders openly prefer totem endogamy to exogamy. In totem endogamy, the resources of the totemic district are not shared and continue to be preserved in the way the ancestors of the totemic group intended. In totem endogamy, both husband and wife are stewards of the land of the totemic district, a responsibility that they both share, since they do not have totemic group responsibilities elsewhere. Totem endogamy is still valued because couples who marry endogamously belong to the same place, rather than two different places, which unifies the couple in a relationship with the place where they both belong.

Totem endogamy continues to be the preferred form of marriage from the perspective of many Aneityumese leaders, but it is not the most common, which is totem exogamy. The system of endogamy became impractical during the demographic disaster, when the population dropped to a level that made totem endogamy possible. However, as noted above, totem endogamy and exogamy are not mutually exclusive. In the past, the Aneityumese used exogamy to create nefalañ (roads) into other districts and chiefdoms to acquire resources. Nefalañ are pathways into areas that were normally insulated from each other by virtue of the practice of endogamy. In short, exogamy created relationships between totemic groups, chiefdoms, and moieties. In the past, exogamy was reportedly common among chiefs, who would marry outside the chiefdom to create routes of exchange and to acquire resources. This solidified alliances between totemic groups, chiefdoms, and moieties. Chiefs aside, in the past, it was common for non–chiefly titled Aneityumese to practice totem endogamy, exclusively marrying within the same totemic group to retain the resources of the group. However, today, given that exogamy has become more common, the Aneityumese have numerous "roads" throughout the island, and resources are shared among the population. Totem endogamy is rarely a rationale for marriage, and today it has become increasingly common to marry for romance, prestige, or money.

When a woman marries outside her totem, she still retains the land rights her totemic name accords her, and these rights could potentially be shared with her spouse's totem in the form of usufructuary rights. This is how totemic groups acquire resources through exogamy. By virtue of her name, the woman continues to be responsible for the land of her totemic district, and she is free to return to her district when she wishes. In this way,

intermarrying groups come to share land and its use. These types of alliances were important in the past and continue to be important today, but if the relationship goes awry, the alliance can easily turn hostile. Exogamy also complicates the couple's relationship because the two spouses are not stewards of the same place. In exogamous marriages, the couple is not grounded in one place but is divided between two places because of the different responsibilities they have received by virtue of nomination.

Today, most marriages are totem exogamous, but the logic of endogamy is often maintained by changing names. When a woman marries outside her totem, her name can be changed to match her husband's—unless the woman is the last member of a totemic group, or her family insists she keep her name to preserve a "road" for her kin to reside in more than one district. Either a woman's name is changed to preserve the rule of endogamy, or exogamy is upheld to ensure an alliance between totemic groups. For example, Inhat's wife, Nauwagi, was previously named Nauyan, a name Tepahae gave her from his totemic group, but her name and totemic membership changed when Inhat returned the name "Nauyan" to Tepahae and then bestowed Nauwagi, a name that emplaced her within his own totemic group—retaining the logic of totem endogamy.

When a female changes her name after a totem-exogamous marriage, most of her children will receive a name from their paternal totem, but typically at least one child, male or female, will receive a name from the child's maternal totemic group as a form of exchange. The child will belong to the maternal totemic group even if the child remains in the parent's household during childhood. The child is thought to replace the mother within her totemic group. "Sister exchange" is not common on Aneityum; instead, the Aneityumese prefer to nominate a female or male child in the next generation to assume the place of the mother in her original totemic group/district. Note that this is not always an "exchange of women" because male children are often part of this exchange. When a female keeps her totemic name after an exogamous marriage, this creates an alliance between totemic groups and a "road" between districts in the sense that the family members can move freely between districts because they have responsibilities in each district. As in the former case, at least one male or female child will receive a maternal totemic name as the general rule of exchange, but if the alliance is strong, the two totems will share totemic rights among all of the couple's children.

Created Vernacular Names

In rare cases persons receive vernacular names that do not have totemic associations. These names are *athai* (created or built).[20] Created vernacular names

do not imply membership in a totemic group and therefore also do not confer entitlements, such as stewardship of land. A person who has one of these names has no primary totemic affiliation and relies instead on his or her secondary totemic affiliation to find his or her way. Persons with created names do not have intasmu (totemic rights), which means they have no chance of attaining any leadership position. Hence, there is a hierarchical relationship between those few bearing created names and those bearing totemic names. However, while persons with created names can be seen as having no place in the social order because of a lack of rights, they are also recognized as having less responsibility and more freedom than a person with a totemic name.

Persons with created names and secondary affiliation are freely given usufruct rights to land, and so they are not landless. In this sense, a created vernacular name allows incorporation within the spatio-social Aneityum order, but without the responsibilities and entitlements that come with a totemic name.[21] Once married, a person with a created name will typically follow the primary affiliation of his or her spouse, and it is typical for the spouse's family to confer a totemic name on the person with a created name once the couple is married, fulfilling the logic of totemic endogamy.

European-Derived Names

It is typical for Aneityumese to have two names: one totemic and one European-derived. Inhat says that European-derived names lack the meaning that totemic names have because they are novel foreign indicators with little significance in Aneityumese social life. However, as noted above, European-derived names are typically bestowed first, before totemic names are bestowed. Inhat attributes this not to the preference for European-derived names, but rather to the Aneityumese preference to wait to see where to emplace the child.

Unlike the neighboring island of Tanna, where indigenous names become associated with European-derived appellatives and are reproduced through nomination (Lindstrom 2011, 149)—the Aneityumese keep European-derived names separate from their vernacular names. European-derived names are nonetheless essential when one ventures beyond the Aneityum social world. The European-derived name is an invitation to participate in the social world beyond Aneityum, and the name itself is associated with this outside world.

To illustrate this point I recall an experience I had a few weeks after my arrival on Aneityum, when an Aneityumese man participated with me in my "outside world" using his European-derived name. His "name" was Georgie, and I met him serendipitously at the indeptag (central meeting place) of

Anelcauhat. He was a friendly man who had spent some of his life living in the capital Port Vila. In Aneityumese fashion we shared a *nupu* (heap of chewed kava) infused with cold water and sieved into two coconut shells. The kava was particularly strong, and I was unable to walk after only one shell.[22] Georgie was also struggling to walk and stayed by my side the whole night. We had a long and complex conversation about life in Vanuatu. With the help of the kava I felt like I knew Georgie inside and out. The next day I told my host-mother that I shared some strong kava with a man name Georgie the night before, but she looked at me with confusion, and she said she did not know who that was. I described him in detail and she soon exclaimed, "Oh, that's my uncle Topam, I didn't know his name was Georgie." I realized that "Georgie" was using his European-derived name intentionally, and I didn't even know his "real" name. Topam, like many Aneityumese, use their European-derived name as a way of acting in accordance with the foreign world with which they come into contact, and their European-derived names allow them to do this. European-derived names do not become associated with a person's totemic name, which is evidenced by the fact that my host-mother had no idea who Georgie was, but rather, European-derived names are used to hide one's totemic name and the totemic group from the uncertainty of the outside world, which, for Topam, was embodied in my presence.

In the past, instead of using a foreign name as Topam did, the Aneityumese would physically hide their face and body from others when they were in the presence of strangers. Aneityumese also practice avoiding eye contact with strangers because they believe such contact is potentially dangerous. In the past, if they did not have a name that gave them access to a particular social world, they avoided visual contact with everyone who belonged there—for example, members of the opposite moiety or opposing chiefdoms. In this way, a name creates a phenomenological presence with those who are familiar to the named person, and likewise, a distance from strangers who are identified as members of the opposite moiety or other chiefdoms. With modernity came innovation. Instead of physically hiding themselves from others, the Aneityumese started using foreign names to mask their totemic identity while participating in foreign social worlds. They continue to be cautious of outsider unpredictability, particularly that of Westerners and other ni-Vanuatu with whom they are unfamiliar. Today, it is common practice to mask one's totemic identity from others, and the Aneityumese are now able to do this by using a European-derived name.

European-derived names are necessary when interacting with the outside world, and the name makes this interaction possible because it belongs there. Aneityumese do not fear that their totemic name will be stolen or ruined if they share it, but rather they mask their identity to maintain a division

between the two worlds, just as they maintained divisions between canoes (moieties, chiefdoms, and totemic districts/groups) in the past. For them, their totemic names have no place in foreign worlds, but their European-derived names do. European-derived names are useful in maintaining this division because when a person uses his or her European-derived name, he or she assumes the role that name evokes—a foreign identity belonging to an outside world. In other words, with any name—totemic, created, or European-derived—one is invited into the social world and physical space that the name belongs to, but without it, one remains outside.

Conclusion

Why Did Tepahae Uwuñtap (Commit Ritual Suicide)?

Let us return to Tepahae's case to understand how the history of land and Aneityum customary land tenure played a role in his conscious choice to uwuñtap. Early in Tepahae's life he created a close and lasting relationship with the place he was nominated[23] to. With the help of his wife, Wanipi, Tepahae actively sustained this relationship for decades, primarily by gardening and dwelling in that place. This relationship between Tepahae and the land was disrupted when Nauni, a mother's brother from the neighboring island of Futuna, disputed Tepahae's right to the land in question. In 1985, the dispute reached the Vanuatu Supreme Court.[24] Nauni was represented by his son, Navalak, who claimed that his father was the "custom owner" of the land in question and that Tepahae had no right to be there. Navalak was representing his father and all patrilineal descendants of Habina—Navalak's great-grandfather—an Aneityumese pastor and chief of Anejo who married a Futunese woman and moved to Futuna. Navalak's great-grandfather, Habina, never returned to Aneityum, but some of his descendants did, such as Navalak's father, Nauni. Tepahae was also related to Habina, but through his mother, Nauni's sister. Hence, Navalak and Tepahae both shared a common ancestor by descent, or inja (blood): Navalak was related to Habina by patrilineal descent and Tepahae by matrilineal descent.

In 1986, the Vanuatu Supreme Court ruled against Tepahae and awarded Navalak and his father proprietary rights by virtue of patrilineal descent. After the ruling, Navalak was declared the "custom owner" of the land. The judge ordered Tepahae to leave for one year, after which time he could return if Navalak granted him a lease. Tepahae lost the rights and access to land that he was nominated to, and for this reason he was de facto alienated from the land. He lost his rights and access on the basis of "custom," but there was a clear misinterpretation of "custom" because, as should now be clear,

Aneityum land is not automatically inherited through patrilineal or matrilineal descent, but is bestowed upon a person through nomination. In sum, Tepahae lost access to his land through a postcolonial system that privileged patrilineal descent over more complex forms of customary land tenure, such as the Aneityumese system of nomination.

Tepahae was not a nominated chief—he was only a nominated steward of the land in question. At the time he lost his rights he was the eldest male steward of the land, and one of the most influential members of the Anejo chiefdom. The Vanuatu Supreme Court awarded land rights to Navalak, who then became the registered owner. Before this time the land had no registered owner. The idea that there can be one individual owner of a parcel of land is a foreign idea, and from the perspective of many Aneityumese leaders, individual ownership is an unwanted colonial artifact that made it easy for foreigners to acquire land. Hence, an individual cannot own land—land can only be collectively owned.

From the perspective of most Aneityumese, the Aneityumese leadership should have resolved this dispute because they are the caretakers of the land of their own island—not the Vanuatu Supreme Court. This dispute was taken out of the hands of the Aneityumese and was resolved by a postcolonial system of law that did not take the practice of nomination into account. After the ruling, Tepahae moved from his totemic district to a neighboring district that was uninhabited and started a new temporary settlement at Anpeke, the place I had last seen him. After Navalak won the case he self-appointed himself as chief but, like Tepahae, he was never nominated to a chiefly position. Tepahae was devastated by the Supreme Court's ruling and clearly did not want to return to live under the self-appointed chief. In response, Tepahae started calling himself chief too, and even published a paper under the name "Chief Philip Tepahae" (1997). In my interpretation, the issues surrounding this land dispute are the principal reasons why Tepahae was never nominated to a chiefly position. This tension continued until 2008, when a *nasiñpa* (peace ceremony) was organized by Inhat and other influential leaders of Aneityum.

The peace ceremony was intended to heal the fractured relationship between Tepahae and Navalak, a dispute that epitomized the Aneityum/Futuna tension on the island that now involved a handful of other totemic groups. The ceremony was first thought to be a success; Navalak, with his lawyer by his side, signed a written agreement to give up his proprietary rights and to let the Aneityumese resolve the dispute. It had become clear to Navalak that the Aneityumese leaders wanted to establish collective ownership over the land in question, and they did not want to alienate him. Navalak agreed that the Aneityumese leadership should have determined

the "owner" before the Vanuatu Supreme Court made any ruling. This was an admirable move, since Navalak was giving up his proprietary rights to the land and allowing the Aneityumese leadership to determine if his right was valid. Tepahae was then allowed to return to the land in question as an equal to Navalak, who was no longer the registered owner. Tepahae wanted to return to his land immediately to renew his relationship by gardening and dwelling in that place. However, there was some resistance from Tepahae's totemic group to return, since they had lived at Anpeke, the temporary settlement, for much of their life. The thought of starting a new settlement again was overwhelming for many of them. Tepahae needed the support of his totemic group to successfully return. This was not something he could do alone, and he felt strongly that they needed to return together.

Tepahae was acting on an intention to pass something on, as his statement that opens this paper indicates. He wanted to make a statement about his life that would be impossible for people to forget. Tepahae was acting not only for himself, but also for the totemic group as a whole. He wanted to end his life in a way that would propel the rest of them into participation with the land. Tepahae wanted his totemic group to return to the place where they belong—to the place where they had been emplaced by virtue of nomination. Tepahae returned to the land of his totemic district and took his life in a way that symbolized what that place meant to him, as a way to ensure that future generations do not lose the vital relationship with the land. This was a contemporary act, but one that drew on empowering historical ancestral traditions and practices. From a national perspective, Tepahae's actions can be understood as a form of extreme activism in response to being alienated from the land for nearly two decades. However, this act was not just political, but also deeply phenomenological. The ritual suicide he performed emplaced his body, ensuring his presence in that district and chiefdom for generations to come. Today, years later, his presence has become an indelible feature of his totemic district, chiefdom, and moiety—and one that urges participation with the land by all those responsible for it. Tepahae's message to his totemic group was clear: follow my lead and return to where you belong.

NOTES

1. *Nesgan* means "soul" and "body."

2. Anejom is also spoken by the few Aneityumese speakers who reside elsewhere in Vanuatu and abroad.

3. At that time the archipelago was named the New Hebrides.

4. The structure that I describe in this paper is more ideological than actual. Given the demographic decline on Aneityum, many Aneityumese do not organize themselves in relation to it in actuality, since it disperses people evenly over the landscape. Today, most Aneityumese live clumped near a village (e.g., Anelcauhat, Umej, Port Patrick), where there are churches, stores, and schools. However, even though most Aneityumese are not organized by this structure in actuality—I have found that it persists in their reality as a phenomenological "phantom limb," since they feel its presence and know it is there. Many Aneityumese from different areas on the island described this structure, but the majority of the information in this paper comes from people like Tepahae and Inhat (Aneityumese VCC fieldworkers), with whom I worked closely during my time on Aneityum from December 2004 to July 2009 as a Peace Corps volunteer.

5. I use the terms moiety, chiefdom, and (totemic) district here, but the Aneityumese call all of these categories *nelcau* (canoes). However, this terminology is confusing because while all of the social categories are canoes, they are different levels of social organization. Hence, I introduce the terms moiety, chiefdom, and (totemic) district to differentiate them, but the reader should keep in mind that these categories are all canoes from the Aneityumese perspective.

6. For example, Tepahae is a member of the Anejo chiefdom and thus a member of the Sunset Moiety, while Inhat is a member of the Anauonse chiefdom and thus also a member of the Sunset Moiety.

7. The Futuna of Vanuatu is called "West Futuna" by Keller (2007) to differentiate it from the Futuna of Wallis and Futuna. However, in this paper for the sake of simplicity I will use the name that is commonly used in Vanuatu, "Futuna." Futuna is a Polynesian outlier, and the island is clearly visible from North Aneityum. There is a long history of interaction between the two islands, which continues today.

8. These characteristics parallel the differences between the endogamous moieties of Futuna (Lynch and Fakamuria 1994, 85).

9. Neriam also claims that there are only six chiefdoms, not seven, but other members of both moieties have not substantiated this claim.

10. The bestowal of chiefly titles will be discussed in depth below.

11. In support of this claim, Matthew Spriggs argues that the Aneityumese chiefly system was most likely the product of a developing economic infrastructure of irrigated taro fields (1981: 57–60). For Spriggs, the Aneityumese economic infrastructure of irrigated taro fields did not lead to an ecological disaster, but rather, to a complex system of social stratification.

12. This information comes from Inhat. He explained that there are three levels of chief and one family-head.

13. First-, second-, and third-level chiefs were all considered natimared in Anejom, but second- and third-level chiefs were referred to as nhakli-natimared (small chief). More research is need to determine the details of this system, for example, which totemic groups, specifically, have second- or third-level chiefs. The chiefly totemic groups (first-level)

are clear, but the details concerning the second and third levels of this system are not clear.

14. Spriggs estimates that there are fifty-one to fifty-five districts on the island and supports this claim with archaeological evidence and early missionary accounts (Spriggs 1985, 27; see fig. 3). However, there is no consensus among the Aneityumese as to the exact number of totemic districts. More research is needed to fill in the details of this system. The problem is that many districts are currently uninhabited and are waiting to be repopulated. Totemic districts are uninhabited for one of two reasons: (1) all of the members of the district have died out, in which case the Aneityumese call the district *nopothan mas* (dead land), or (2) the members of the totemic district live elsewhere on the island, most likely in one of the main villages: Anelcauhat, Umej, Port Patrick, or somewhere else in Vanuatu or beyond.

15. For example, the chiefly totemic group of *Anauonse* chiefdom is *tatau* (barracuda), who is known to have sharp teeth and remains stable even in the roughest weather. Likewise, the members of the barracuda chiefly totemic group have fierce fighting skills if needed, but they are also able to stay strong in times of adversity.

16. Literally, netec-alo means "family that has been vomited," in the sense that one has been ejected from a larger social body.

17. As I have argued, this system is flexible. If there are no blood descendants then anyone, in theory, can be nominated by virtue of name bestowal.

18. Kadikau has recently been nominated to the chiefly title (natimared) of *Anauonse* chiefdom.

19. European-derived names are described in depth below.

20. These names are often metaphorical, such as the name I was given: *Natauanumu* (help of life). The more metaphorical the name, the shorter the history associated with it. In contrast, the most important totemic names are esoteric and they have longer histories and are no longer metaphorical.

21. Created names are the only names given to foreigners who have been "unofficially" adopted into Aneityumese families, for example the name Yayaho gave to me. In bestowing this name, Yayaho was not nominating me to his totemic group, but simple inviting me to participate as a secondary affiliate. In contrast, "official" adoption requires totemic nomination—the conferring of a totemic name and associated responsibilities and entitlements.

22. The strength of the kava was intentional, as Georgie hoped to make me drunk.

23. As I have argued in this paper, nomination and emplacement to totemic groups/districts are accomplished by name bestowal. However, in respect for Tepahae and his family members, I will not discuss any specific details concerning Tepahae's name in particular. However, I will make it clear that he was nominated to the totemic group/district of the land in question. At the time of writing, this land dispute is still ongoing, and any specific claim concerning Tepahae's name should be made by the Aneityumese themselves—not

by a *nupu-toga* (an outsider) such as myself. To be clear, this dispute involves more than just two parties. Tepahae and Navalak are just two of the people involved, and it is the aim of the Aneityumese leadership not to exclude anyone who has been bestowed rights to the land in question. My main points in this paper are (1) that Aneityum customary land tenure is not automatically determined by descent, but rather by nomination, and (2) land on Aneityum is not owned by individuals, but rather, it is owned by groups. Hence, Tepahae is *not* the only nominated person to "look after" this land. Out of respect for all members of his group, I will not discuss any details concerning who the specific members are, or who has the responsibility of stewardship. Again, those details should only be disclosed by the people who have the right to do so, and I am not one of those people.

24. Tebahai v. Habina, Vanuatu Supreme Court 9; Land Appeal Case 007 of 1985.

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