Chapter 6

Life-cycle rituals: adulthood and death

6.1 INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

6.2 INVESTITURE WITH TUPU-TUPUE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.2.1 PREPARATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.2.2 THE CEREMONY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.3 VARIATION AND PERIODICITY OF TUPU-TUPUE CEREMONIES

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

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

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

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

6.4 MORTUARY RITUALS

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

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

6.5 DEFAULT DEATH – PREPARATION OF THE CORPSE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.6 AT HATU NOHUE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.7 TWO CASE STUDIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.8 POST-FUNERAL MORTUARY PRACTICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.9 THE SYMBOLIC GEOGRAPHY OF DEATH AS A RITUAL MNEMONIC

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.10 VARIATION IN MORTUARY RITUALS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.10.2 DEATH OF A MOTHER IN CHILDBIRTH

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

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

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

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

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

6.10.3 HITAMUNA

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

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

6.10.4 OTHER KINDS OF BAD DEATH

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

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

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

6.11 PERIODICITY AND CHANGE

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

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

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

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