

Tikopia

Data source: eHRAF

Secondary source

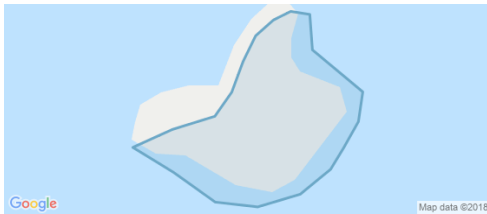
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** Secondary Source entry, prepared from a literature review by a Ph.D. RA*

Entry tags: Melanesia, Polynesia, Religion, Oceanic Religions

The Tikopia inhabit the island of Tikopia, which is a part of the Solomon Islands in Melanesia. Although geographically the Tikopia are Melanesian, they are linguistically and culturally Polynesian (Firth and Beierle, 1995). The Tikopia are organized into four essentially autonomous clans, with each clan containing several lineages. The island is divided into two districts: Faea and Ravenga. Tikopian contact with Christianity began in 1858 with the arrival of the Melanesian Mission, which was part of the Church of England abroad. The mission did not have a major influence until 1923, when Ariki Tafua (chief) converted and the whole district of Faea followed, effectively converting half the island (Firth, 1970:308). This entry focuses on the district of Ravenga circa 1930, which at the time predominantly followed traditional pagan beliefs and practices. This polytheistic religion centered on the spirits of deceased humans (including those of ancestors, the recently deceased, and deceased chiefs), as well as non-human gods and non-personalized spirits. An elaborate ritual calendar dictated when ceremonies were to be held. The clan chief acted simultaneously as the priest, and was assisted by ritual elders. The Tikopia religious group is coterminous with the society at large.



Date Range: 1905 CE - 1935 CE

Region: Island of Tikopia

Region tags: Oceania, Melanesia, Solomon Islands, Tikopia

Island of Tikopia, Solomon Islands, ca. 1930. Specifically, the district of Ravenga.

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Divale, W. 2004. Codebook of Variables for the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample. *World Cultures: The Journal of Cross-Cultural and Comparative Research*.
- Source 2: Murdock, G.P. & Wilson, S.F. (Jul., 1972). Settlement patterns and community organization: *Cross-Cultural Codes 3. Ethnology*, 11(3), 254-295.

Online sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ot11-003>
- Source 1 Description: Firth, R. (1940). *Work Of The Gods In Tikopia*. Monographs On Social Anthropology. London, England: The London School of Economics and Political Science.

- Source 2 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ot11-001>
- Source 2 Description: Firth, R. (1939). *Primitive Polynesian Economy*. London, England: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd.
- Source 3 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ot11-020>
- Source 3 Description: Firth, R. (1959). *Social Change In Tikopia*. New York, N.Y.: The Macmillan Company.
- Source 1 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ot11-000>
- Source 1 Description: Firth, R., & Beierle, J. (1995). *Culture Summary: Tikopia*. New Haven, Conn.: HRAF.
- Source 2 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ot11-026>
- Source 2 Description: Firth, R. (1970). *Rank And Religion In Tikopia: A Study In Paganism And Conversion To Christianity*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press.
- Source 3 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ot11-018>
- Source 3 Description: Firth, R. (1955). *Privilege Ceremonials In Tikopia: A Further Note*. *Oceania*, 26, 1-13.
- Source 1 URL: Retrieved from <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ot11-000>
- Source 1 Description: Firth, R., & Beierle, J. (1995). *Culture Summary: Tikopia*. New Haven, Conn.: HRAF.
- Source 2 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ot11-019>
- Source 2 Description: Firth, R. (1949). *Authority And Public Opinion In Tikopia*. *Social Structure : Studies Presented To A. R. Radcliffe-Brown*. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press.
- Source 3 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ot11-002>
- Source 3 Description: Firth, R. (1936). *We, The Tikopia: A Sociological Study Of Kinship In Primitive Polynesia*. London, England: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd.
- Source 1 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=ot11-025>
- Source 1 Description: Firth, R. (1960). *Succession To Chieftainship In Tikopia*. *Oceania*, 30, 161-180.

General Variables

Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

Notes: "...a major conversion of Tikopia to Christianity took place in 1918 embracing the whole of Faea and that the new faith has been advancing fairly steadily over the island until in 1952 there were only about 200 pagans out of a population of about 1,750" (Firth, 1955:1). "The only external religious body which has been effective so far in influencing the Tikopia towards Christianity has been the Melanesian Mission, an organization formed in the middle of the nineteenth century as part of the Church of England abroad" (Firth, 1970:305).



Is the cultural contact accommodating/pluralistic:

– Yes

Notes: "Socially, relations between pagan and Christian were hardly interrupted, even taking into account the intensification of district suspicion engendered by the conversions. Dart

matches, dance festivals, funerals and other social events saw commingling of Christian and pagan adherents. Moreover, the Christians still retained many elements of traditional Tikopia belief and practice" (Firth, 1970:309).

↳ Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1654, Pacification, indicates that the Tikopia were pacified before the 25 year ethnographic present (1915-1940), (Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1654, Pacification, indicates that the Tikopia were pacified before the 25 year ethnographic present (1915-1940), (Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Does the religious group have a general process/system for assigning religious affiliation:

– No

Notes: Because the religious group is coterminous with the society at large, there is not a concept of assigning religious affiliation other than being into specific lineages with corresponding deities.

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– No

Notes: The religious group is coterminous with the society itself; there is no concept of recruiting new members.

Does the religion have official political support

– Yes

Notes: "For the Tikopia head priests were not simply the representatives of the people in the religious sphere, they were also the leaders in economic and political affairs--they were the chiefs as well" (Firth, 1970:34).

↳ Are the head of the polity and the head of the religion the same figure:

– Yes

Notes: "For the Tikopia head priests were not simply the representatives of the people in the religious sphere, they were also the leaders in economic and political affairs--they were the chiefs as well" (Firth, 1970:34).

↳ Polity provides preferential economic treatment (e.g. tax, exemption)

– No

Notes: "What did the priest get from his role? His personal emoluments were few. He received no special gifts in his capacity as priest, nor did he get any special proportion of the offerings made to the gods. He simply took his share in the distribution as in non-ritual contexts" (Firth,

1970:37).

Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Estimated population, numeric: 635

Notes: "In 1929 of the total population of about 1,300, only half was Christian (643 Christians against 635 pagans by my census, with a few undefined)" (Firth, 1970:316).

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (% of sample region population, numerical):

– Estimated population, percentage of sample region: 48

Notes: "In 1929 of the total population of about 1,300, only half was Christian (643 Christians against 635 pagans by my census, with a few undefined)" (Firth, 1970:316).

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: "Tikopia ritual officiants, whether chiefs or elders, may be termed priests in so far as they were the persons primarily responsible for the conduct of ritual, the major performers and the ministers in the sacred places...The Tikopia priest not only served his gods; he also was believed to have the authority to make the power of his gods available to his people. More specifically, he superintended the organization of religious performances; he undertook the critical ritual acts; he bore the burden of ritual responsibility, including certain physical abstinences; he acted as interpreter for his people's needs and intermediary between them and the gods" (Firth, 1970:32).

↳ Is there a hierarchy among these leaders:

– No

Notes: "Structurally in social and political terms the Tikopia chiefs were autonomous and of equal status. There was no paramount chief, no suzerain; no chief could command the actions of another, he could only request" (Firth, 1970:49).

↳ Are leaders believed to possess supernatural powers or qualities:

– Yes

Notes: "All priests did not need the special quality or attribute of bodily sacredness--chiefs had it by definition, but their elders did not. What the priest had to have was a knowledge of the religious ideology and of the details of ritual performance. He also had to have the authority to decide when religious performances should take place, and with what resources" (Firth, 1970:37). "The Tikopia chief, though he might be thought to be an occasional harbourer of the god in his body, and might even speak of himself as the god for this period, was not a Divine King in the full sense of the term. But he was in a sacramental role. Even in modern times the Tikopia chief has been regarded as a sacred chief. While his secular functions are important and his personality is clearly recognized as human, he is believed to be permanently endowed

with the mystical quality of tapu" (Firth, 1970:43).

↳ Powers are culturally transmitted from another human (e.g. teacher):

– No

Notes: "Since election to chieftainship was never guaranteed in advance, no great education for the office usually took place. But the eldest son of a chief, as a putative heir, was ordinarily given some instruction by his father: (Firth, 1970:46).

↳ Powers are associated with leadership office they assume:

– Yes

Notes: "...the mystical quality of tapu with which a chief was endowed came to him in the very act of his creation as chief" (Firth, 1970:38).

↳ Are religious leaders chosen:

– No

Notes: "In Tikopia succession to chieftainship is generational, restricted to males, and hereditary. It normally takes place only on the death of the incumbent; there is no rotation of office and no recognized provision for retirement" (Firth, 1960:161).

– Yes

Notes: "He had to be created chief by a specific act of elevation, and accepted by popular will--at least nominally; he was an elected leader with responsibilities to the people, and not simply a god-given monarch with divine mandate to rule as he wished" (Firth, 1970:35).

↳ Are leaders considered fallible:

– I don't know

↳ Are close followers or disciples of a religious leader required to obediently and unquestionably accept the leader's pronouncements on all matters:

– Yes

Notes: "For the Tikopia head priests were not simply the representatives of the people in the religious sphere, they were also the leaders in economic and political affairs--they were the chiefs as well. Hence any challenge to the authority of such a head priest in the religious sphere would have been a challenge to his political power and might have had repercussions throughout the whole Tikopia social order" (Firth, 1970:34).

Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also "oral scriptures" (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– No

Notes: Written language was not present among the Tikopia at the time this entry focuses on. Mythology plays an important role in the transmission of stories and beliefs, but is not similar to an "oral scripture".

Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– Yes

Notes: According to Murdock and Wilson (1972, column 6) "the most impressive structure (or type of structure) is a temple, church, commemorative monument, or other essentially religious or ceremonial edifice" (note, equivalent to SCCS variable 66).

↳ In the average settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient information

↳ Size of largest single religious monument, square meters:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient information

↳ Height of largest single religious monument, meters:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient information

↳ Size of average monument, square meters:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient information

↳ Height of average monument, meters:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient information

↳ In the largest settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient information

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for information on different types of religious monumental architecture.



Temples:

– Yes

Notes: "This large building, known by the name of Kafika, is extremely sacred and is the ceremonial heart of the clan, erected by their ancestors in the time when men were as gods and gods were as men. Each clan has its temple of this type, lofty buildings bearing the clan name, sheltering the sacred adzes and other ritual objects, and serving as the scene for most esoterio rites" (Firth, 1940:33).



Mass gathering point [plazas, courtyard, square. Places permanently demarcated using visible objects or structures]:

– Yes

Notes: "The term noforanga refers generally to a dwelling place or home, but from its verbal nofo, sit down, refers more specifically to an actual seating place. Applied to spirits the term meant ordinarily either their dwelling, in the sky or under the sea, or their localization at some ritual site. The immaterial noforanga are described in chapter 5. The material noforanga with which spirits were identified were normally stones set in the ground in marae. A marae in Tikopia was an open area where ritual of importance was regularly performed...These stone noforanga in a marae were slabs of volcanic rock usually, of natural shape, several feet high, set up on end in the ground. Each represented an atua , occasionally more than one" (Firth, 1970:120).

Is iconography present:

– No

Notes: "Tikopia religion was not highly iconographic" (Firth, 1970:120).

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

– Yes

Notes: "...the island peak Reani (1,200 feet high) formed an alighting-point for gods on their way from heaven--naturally, since to the Tikopia it projected so far into the sky" (Firth, 1970:90).



Are sacred site oriented to environmental features:

"Environmental features" refers to features in the landscape, mountains, rivers, cardinal directions etc...

– Yes

Notes: (Firth, 1970:90)

Are pilgrimages present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of pilgrimages.

Beliefs

Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer “no” only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Notes: "Each living person, and in general any other living thing, was thought to have an invisible counterpart detachable from the physical body in some circumstances, and with some limited mobility of its own. This spirit counterpart or soul was known as the ora or mauri...So--'when a man dies and his body has been laid low, his mauri has risen up (floated away)'; 'we wail over what is simply the husk (body), the ora has gone, has gone among the spirits'..." (Firth, 1970:64).

↳ Spirit-mind is conceived of as non-material, ontologically distinct from body:

– Yes

Notes: "The Tikopia then conventionally conceived of the soul as an immaterial animating principle, separable from the body and to some extent antithetic to it, figuratively and physically, as in dreams or after death" (Firth, 1970:65).

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: "Traditional conceptions of the afterlife were vague, but had a notion of a series of Heavens on different levels or in different wind-points, each controlled by a major god. There was also an image of a Rubbish Pool, into which could be thrown the souls of those who had consistently misbehaved on earth. Life in the afterworld followed much the same pattern as on earth, but with dancing as the main activity" (Firth and Beierle, 1995).

↳ Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: Firth and Beierle, 1995

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined “above” space:

– Yes

Notes: "Traditional conceptions of the afterlife were vague, but had a notion of a series of Heavens on different levels or in different wind-points, each controlled by a major god. There was also an image of a Rubbish Pool, into which could be thrown the souls of those who had consistently misbehaved on earth. Life in the afterworld followed much the same pattern as on earth, but with dancing as the main activity" (Firth and

Beierle, 1995).

Reincarnation in this world:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of reincarnation.

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

Notes: "For five days after burial the body lies in the ground, mourned by its relatives, who also engage in a heavy series of exchange of valuables. On the fifth day, piles of bark cloth are set out in the house near the grave, food is brought in baskets and offerings made; it is then that the ancestors of the dead person are believed to come down from their abode, take up, not the corpse, but its ora , its spiritual counterpart, and one shouldering the food, another the valuables--in essence alone, of course--and another bearing the dead man before him on his hands, move off in procession to Rangji, the spirit-world" (Firth, 1967:27)

↳ Cremation:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of cremation.

↳ Mummification:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of mummification.

↳ Interment:

– Yes

Notes: "It is the custom of these natives--even of practically all the Christians--to bury their dead either within the dwelling-house or beneath the eaves just outside. The body, wrapped in mats and bark-cloth, is interred six feet or so beneath the surface of the soil" (Firth, 1936:77).

↳ Corpse is flexed (legs are bent or body is crouched):

– I don't know

Notes: Not specified-insufficient information.

↳ Corpse is extended (lying flat on front or back):

– I don't know

Notes: Not specified-insufficient information.

↳ Corpse is upright (where body is interred in standing position)::

– I don't know

Notes: Not specified-insufficient information.

↳ Cannibalism:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of cannibalism.

↳ Exposure to elements (e.g. air drying):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for exposing corpses to the elements.

↳ Feeding to animals:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for feeding corpses to animals.

↳ Secondary burial:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1850, Secondary bone/body treatment; original scale, indicates that "secondary contact with the body or bones of the deceased does not occur" (Schroeder, 2001; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of co-sacrifices in burials.

Are grave goods present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of grave goods. Food is placed on the grave temporarily, but then consumed by funeral attendees.

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

Notes: "A death is an occasion for great mourning. Tikopia funeral ceremonies continue after burial of the body with periodic wailing and massive exchanges of food and other goods between the kin groups concerned" (Firth and Beierle, 1995). See questions below for additional details.

↳ In cemetery:

– No

Notes: "Even with the coming of Christianity there are few cases of churchyard burial, and

cemeteries as such have hardly begun to exist" (Firth, 1936:77).

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

– Yes

Notes: "It is the custom of these natives--even of practically all the Christians--to bury their dead either within the dwelling-house or beneath the eaves just outside. The body, wrapped in mats and bark-cloth, is interred six feet or so beneath the surface of the soil" (Firth, 1936:77).

Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

Notes: "The pagan Tikopia conceptual universe was divided into two major spheres--the visible concrete sphere, including the domain of living things; and the invisible, immaterial sphere, that of spirits...To the latter category belonged the spirits of dead people, and other spirits which may be called extra-human, since they never belonged to living human beings, as well as a set of invisible counterparts or supplements to the visible islands, mountains and other topographical and social features" (Firth, 1970:64).

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– No

Notes: "In Tikopia there was no unified god concept, no single atua who encapsulated all others. The Tikopia pantheon was definitely polytheistic" (Firth, 1970:85).

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– Yes

Notes: "Spirits of dead Tikopia in general were regarded as leading a relatively ordered existence, quiet and for the most part anonymous. Once the funeral rites had been performed it was imagined that the soul of the dead person had been safely conveyed to its future home, and only in special circumstances would appear again to its kin in the living world, or would need to be called upon for ritual purposes" (Firth, 1970:74).

↳ Human spirits have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "The placing of the putu [food offering] on the grave was not simply a courteous gesture to the spirit of the dead in order to satisfy the reminiscent aesthetic taste of the bereaved. It was believed that if the taro and other food was not brought in from a dead man's orchard and gardens for the putu and other funeral preparations, then he would interpret this neglect as an effort of his sons or other kin to hide the food from him. His spirit would take shape as a swamp rail, a rat or other predatory creature and come to eat out the whole cultivation" (Firth, 1970:249).

↳ Human spirits communicate with the living:

– Yes

↳ In dreams:

– Yes

Notes: "The spirit of a dead person, usually that of a kinsman, might appear in a dream or through a spirit medium, in either neutral or morally active phase. Spirits of the dead were thought in this way to give information about their death abroad, to make demands upon their kin, or simply to participate in adventures of the living in sleep" (Firth, 1970:74).

↳ Only through specialists:

– No

Notes: "The spirit of a dead person, usually that of a kinsman, might appear in a dream or through a spirit medium, in either neutral or morally active phase. Spirits of the dead were thought in this way to give information about their death abroad, to make demands upon their kin, or simply to participate in adventures of the living in sleep" (Firth, 1970:74).

↳ Communicate with living through other means:

– Yes [specify]: Through rituals

Notes: "when the dead person had held office as chief or ritual elder; in this case his spirit (always male) was summoned in the kava rites of his successor" (Firth, 1970:74).

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: "...supernatural beings of olden times who had never been human beings, as opposed to the more recent spirits of dead men" (Firth, 1970:67).

↳ These supernatural beings can be seen:

– No

Notes: "The Tikopia conception of such atua was then of a set of immaterial entities, individualized but not identified personally, normally invisible but capable of materializing visibly briefly on occasion and then fading again into the void" (Firth, 1970:73).

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "They [the major spirits, or gods] had control of followers, and of major spheres or enterprises; they came and went at their own will; they could be terrible in anger; they dispensed benefits and punishments; their decisions, though conceived as

arbitrary, could be swayed by appeals to their sympathy..." (Firth, 1970:90).

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "Each major deity had his heaven or set of heavens located at a major wind point or eye of the wind--the Tikopia equivalent of our compass point; from this, it was believed, he controlled the weather. So, wind, rain, storm clouds, lightning from a given direction were interpreted as manifestations of anger or benignity of specific gods" (Firth, 1970:89).

↳ These supernatural beings possess/exhibit some other feature:

– Yes [specify]: Forces of back luck, illness, and accidents

Notes: "...these unnamed, non-personalized spirits...represented forces of ill luck, sickness, accident against which remedial action of a ritual kind could be taken, after identification of them by the ritual agents responsible for the therapeutic processes" (Firth, 1970:71).

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: "The pagan Tikopia conceptual universe was divided into two major spheres--the visible concrete sphere, including the domain of living things; and the invisible, immaterial sphere, that of spirits...To the latter category belonged the spirits of dead people, and other spirits which may be called extra-human, since they never belonged to living human beings, as well as a set of invisible counterparts or supplements to the visible islands, mountains and other topographical and social features" (Firth, 1970:64).

↳ Organized by kinship based on a family model:

– Yes

Notes: "The Tikopia had discrepant versions of [how to categorize the gods], each correlated for the most part with the particular social interests involved. But whoever were the specific major gods involved, one theme ran through most of these origin accounts--spontaneous generation of an original pair and generation of other major gods from them or from their offspring. In most accounts the original pair were the Atua i Raropuka and the Atua Fafine, the Female Deity of Kafika, who were discovered together, exercising the traditional craft roles of plaiting sinnet and beating bark-cloth respectively, when the land of Tikopia was pulled up from the bottom of the sea. To this account, which has clear parallels with other Polynesian origin tales, were extensions" (Firth, 1970:85).

↳ Power of beings is domain specific:

– Yes

Notes: "In understanding the Tikopia pantheon it is important to know how the relations of these gods to one another were conceptualized. Were they merely random or were there any organizing principles or categories employed by the Tikopia to

reduce the crowd to manageable proportions? From this point of view, and considering that the gods were conceived as never having been human, the question of their putative origin is relevant. The Tikopia had discrepant versions of this, each correlated for the most part with the particular social interests involved" (Firth, 1970:85).

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– No

Notes: "But in such spheres the spirits were largely non-moral. They were not concerned with the goodness or badness in the doings of men towards one another. Theft, adultery, evasion of obligation, cursing, physical violence, greed, anger, jealousy between men had as such no interest for them. They would interfere on behalf of the men with whom they were affiliated if invoked, but did so without reference to the merits of the case as a whole...The atua were not endowed then with any very general moral sensibilities, and they were not represented as the moral guardians of Tikopia society. What they were conceived as having was a moral attitude towards the behaviour of people of their own social group towards themselves" (Firth, 1970:110).

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for more specific details regarding supernatural punishment.



Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

Notes: Ethnographic evidence provides examples of several types of supernatural beings as the agents of punishment. (for examples, see Firth, 1970:24)



Done only by high god:

– No

Notes: "In Tikopia there was no unified god concept, no single atua who encapsulated all others. The Tikopia pantheon was definitely polytheistic" (Firth, 1970:85).



Done by many supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: Ethnographic evidence provides examples of several types of supernatural beings as the agents of punishment. (for examples, see Firth, 1970:24)



Is the reason for supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

Notes: "In the traditional scheme the gods were not associated with morality in any very specific way. In Tikopia eyes they did give a general sanction for right behaviour, but this was rather in the direction of protecting the interests of their own worshippers than promoting broad moral maxims as such. Even the cardinal offence of killing people would not necessarily withdraw from a man the favour of his gods unless by his killing he upset the balance of relationship between man and the gods. Theft and other anti-social behaviour could be punished, in Tikopia belief, by the gods, but primarily because specific rights had been infringed. The gods who punished a man were normally not his own, but those of someone else whom he had offended" (Firth, 1970:370).

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– Yes

Notes: "If the periodic acts of worship and offering to the spirits were not performed, then the spirits were believed to visit the offenders with punishment, by illness or by withholding from them economic benefits" (Firth, 1970:111).

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: "There was also a notion, perhaps, of punishment after death (Tikopia Ritual and Belief, 1967, p. 344)" (Firth, 1970:111).

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime:

– Yes

Notes: "...failure to perform religious rites, or inaccuracy in their performance, represented a breach with tradition which gods or ancestors might visit with punishment in the form of failure of crops or illness of participants or other members of the officiant's kin group" (Firth, 1970:24).

↳ Punishment in this life consists of crop failure or bad weather:

– Yes

Notes: "It was believed that if the taro and other food was not brought in from a dead man's orchard and gardens for the putu and other funeral preparations, then he would interpret this neglect as an effort of his sons or other kin to hide the food from him. His spirit would take shape as a swamp rail, a rat or other predatory creature and come to eat out the whole cultivation" (Firth, 1970:249).

↳ Punishment in this life consists of sickness or illness:

– Yes

Notes: "If the periodic acts of worship and offering to the spirits were not performed, then the spirits were believed to visit the offenders with punishment, by illness or by withholding from them economic benefits" (Firth, 1970:111).

↳ Other [specify]

– Yes

Notes: "If the periodic acts of worship and offering to the spirits were not performed, then the spirits were believed to visit the offenders with punishment, by illness or by withholding from them economic benefits" (Firth, 1970:111).

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient ethnographic evidence.

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of messianic beliefs.

Is an eschatology present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of an eschatology.

Norms and Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: Because the religious group is coterminous with the society at large, the religious group is subject to the general social norms prescribed by the Tikopia. For a discussion of norms and morality among the Tikopia, see Firth, 1970:24, 110.

Practices

Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the requirement of celibacy.

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the requirement of castration.

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

– No

Notes: The only ethnographic evidence for the presence of fasting is done voluntarily by priests before a major rite (Firth, 1970:62).

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the requirement of food taboos.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of property/valuable items:

– No

Notes: Ethnographic evidence of sacrificial items include food and drinks, as well as bark cloth.

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

I.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– Yes

Notes: While it is not explicitly stated that participation in rituals is required, ethnographic evidence describes the rituals as "a series of obligations" that are "essential to maintain the fertility of crops and success in fishing, as well as the general welfare of the island as a whole" (Firth, 1940:1).



Are there orthodoxy checks:

Orthodoxy checks are mechanisms used to ensure that rituals are interpreted in a standardized way, e.g. through the supervisory prominence of a professionalized priesthood or other system of governance, appeal to texts detailing the proper interpretation, etc.

– Yes

Notes: "The officiant or kava priest leading the ritual had to be of appropriate status, either a chief or a ritual elder, according to circumstances. Though heads of lineages or even households who were not office holders might recite formulae and make offerings, no man who had not been properly inducted by formal election or ordination as a chief or an elder could perform the kava rite..." (Firth, 1970:200).



Are there orthopraxy checks:

Orthopraxy checks are mechanisms used to ensure that rituals are performed in a standardized way, e.g. through the supervisory prominence of a professionalized priesthood or other system of governance, appeal to texts detailing the proper procedure, etc.

– Yes

Notes: "One type of Tikopia ritual basic to all major religious performances was the ritual of the kava. It was a standardized rite in two senses: it followed a recognized sequence of procedures; and as such a unitary sequence it was the regular and 'proper' way of approaching the gods" (Firth, 1970:200).

Society and Institutions

Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– A chiefdom

Notes: The Tikopia have one level of jurisdictional hierarchy beyond the local community, which is indicative of a petty chiefdom (Ethnographic Atlas column 33, Murdock, 1967; retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– No

Notes: "Since election to chieftainship was never guaranteed in advance, no great education for the office usually took place. But the eldest son of a chief, as a putative heir, was ordinarily given some instruction by his father: (Firth, 1970:46).

Is formal education available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: Government schools were not present, but Christian missionary-led schools were (see Firth,

1970:305-308, 312).



Is extra-religious education open to both males and females:

– I don't know

Notes: Ethnographic evidence does not explicitly state if missionary schools are open to both males and females, but examples only used the term "boys" when referring to students.

Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group:

– No

Notes: The Tikopia have one level of jurisdictional hierarchy beyond the local community, which is indicative of a petty chiefdom (Ethnographic Atlas column 33, Murdock, 1967; retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– No

Notes: According to SCCS Variable 20, Food Storage, food is stored in individual houses (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Is public food storage provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Notes: According to SCCS Variable 20, Food Storage, food is stored in individual houses (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

– No

Notes: It can be assumed that transportation infrastructure is not present, as routes of land transport are "unimproved trails", according to Murdock and Morrow (1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004; SCCS Variable 14).

Is transportation infrastructure provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Notes: It can be assumed that transportation infrastructure is not present, as routes of land transport are "unimproved trails", according to Murdock and Morrow (1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004; SCCS Variable 14).

Taxation

Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

– I don't know

Notes: The district of Faea levies tithes, but it is unclear if the district of Ravenga (which this entry focuses on), does as well. "On this day, all the orchards of Faea, without privilege of family or clan, were laid under contribution, and from each a few coconuts, or a bunch of bananas, or a couple of breadfruit were taken. This was in the nature of a levy on the produce of the district; it was termed te aru and was sanctified by tradition. The toll on each person's plantation was not heavy, and no owner interfered with the collecting party" (Firth, 1940:293).

Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– No

Notes: "The role of sustainers of public order is played primarily by the men of rank known as maru. These, broadly speaking, are the brothers of a chief and his closer cousins in the male line...The maru are essentially the executive officials of the chief; their function is to watch the land and to repress violence, to carry out the commands of the chief when sentence is passed on an offender, and in general to keep the peace of the community. The influence and importance of the elders depend on the gods over whom they have control; that of the maru almost wholly on their personality backed by their rank" (Firth, 1949:171).

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– No

Notes: "The major forces of social control are provided by the kinship organization--with which the religious organization is largely coincident--reinforcing authority to a considerable extent with ritual sanctions...The chief of each clan is supreme in authority as far as his own group is concerned, and autonomous" (Firth, 1949:169). "In ordinary quarrels of individuals about property or in family affairs the chief exercises no authority. The disputants settle the matter by themselves, or with the assistance of their kinsfolk, by wordy battle which sometimes, though rarely, ends in assault or the exchange of blows. The chief, in common with the rest of the community, displays a lively interest in the affair, and expresses his opinion freely as to the rights of the case; but it is not formally laid before him for judgement, nor is his opinion taken as a ruling by either side" (Firth, 1949:173).

Does the religious group in question enforce institutionalized punishment:

– No

Notes: "In the traditional Tikopia sphere of control, no public action necessarily followed in cases of assault, even if wounding or homicide resulted. Any subsequent action was at the incidence of the offended individual or his immediate kin. Organized or unorganized, this was unofficial. It was a sanction of retaliation rather than of punishment. In many cases, no overt action against the offender followed at all" (Firth, 1959:305).

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of a formal legal code among the Tikopia.

Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– No

Notes: "The absence of any well defined institutionalized transmission of knowledge must have meant considerable inefficiency in Tikopia life, since on many occasions elder relatives must have died before they had handed on to their descendants their own theoretical and practical equipment. These people must then have had to apply elsewhere. The Tikopia themselves are conscious of this defect and also of the liability of memory to failure. One of them, contrasting European accuracy with the native defects, said neatly: 'Tikopia here has its paper in lips,' meaning that the records were verbal only" (Firth, 1939:107).

Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– No

Notes: "The Tikopia have no fixed calendar and no names for the months or for the days or nights of the month" (Firth, 1940:2).

Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Yes

Notes: The Tikopia are horticulturalists with a secondary dependence on fishing. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.



Please characterize the forms/level of food production [choose all that apply]:

– Fishing

– Small-scale agriculture / horticultural gardens or orchards

Notes: "On the island, Tikopia are primarily agriculturalists and fishermen. Crops include taro (*Colocasia*), manioc (cassava, *Manihot*), giant taro (*Alocasia*), sago (*Metroxylon*)" (Firth and Beierle, 1995).