

Chapter 4

Governance of the Island

The Pulefenua or Aliko of Nanumea serves as the representative of the Nanumean community, both legally and in a richly symbolic sense. While the position he occupies is a highly traditional one, these traditions have never been static. The events and personalities of the times have always helped to shape and define the role that the Pulefenua has played in the life of the community, as well as the mechanisms of his selection and dismissal, and the details of the traditional history that legitimates his authority. This is true not only in recent times but equally so in the past. Political institutions must always be alive and dynamic if they are to endure. It is this very quality of change that allows them to continue to meet the needs of the community as time passes.

The goal of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive picture of Nanumea's traditional governmental institutions. It begins by describing the legal and symbolic importance of the Pulefenua's role today. This is followed by several types of historical information which provide context for the current Pulefenua institution. One source of information is the writings of various visitors to Nanumea during the early contact era. Another is records kept by civil servants in the British colonial era (1892 until 1978). A third includes contemporary knowledge and documents about the re-instatement of traditional forms of local leadership after Tuvalu's independence.¹ Once this contextual background has been sketched, the chapter goes on to describe local customs and expectations regarding the work and demeanor of the Pulefenua, as well as the installation [fakahopoga] ceremony and the Po o te Taumalo. The chapter ends with an overview of some recent difficulties connected with the Pulefenua institution, and the resolution achieved by the Saavali delegation in May 2003.

The Importance of the Pulefenua/Aliko

The importance of "traditional authorities" such as the Pulefenua is encoded in the Constitution of Tuvalu, together with the provision that these local leaders and the central government will cooperate together with mutual respect. The Tuvalu Constitution specifically states the government's obligation to "maintain...traditional forms of communities" and

¹ Much of the information in the first sections of this chapter is abridged from *Heirs of Tefolaha* by Keith Chambers, and used with his permission.

asserts that the guiding principles of “agreement, courtesy and the search for consensus, in accordance with traditional Tuvaluan procedures” will be used in the reciprocal interactions of various levels of governing authority (Constitution of Tuvalu, Guiding Principles: 2-3). Beyond recognizing the continuing importance of each island’s traditional authorities, however, the Constitution specifies little about their actual role or organization.

The Falekaupule Act of 1997 provides some further guidelines. This new law specifies that the local government structure for outer island communities will consist of “the traditional assembly in each island of Tuvalu which...is composed in accordance with the *aganu* in each island” (Falekaupule Act Primer, Part II: 2). Community members elect six Kaupule representatives for each island, and they serve as the “executive arm” of the customary local governing structure traditional on that island. This latter customary organization, varying to fit the traditions of each Tuvalu community, is termed the Falekaupule.

In Nanumea, the Falekaupule includes the ahiga, the seven chiefly descent groups (Tokofitu or maga o aliki), and the Pulefenua or Aliko. The act does not provide clear guidance on how these traditional entities will interact or what the internal workings of the “Falekaupule” will be. (See the last section in this chapter for recent problems that have developed in the absence of more specific guidance.) However, the Act specifies that the responsibility of the Falekaupule is to “maintain order and good governance and promote development within the area of its authority” (Falekaupule Primer, Section II: 16). The structure provided for in the Falekaupule Act forms the context within which the Pulefenua, chosen according to customary procedures, currently performs his traditional work of leading the Nanumea community.

What exactly are the customary responsibilities and powers of the Pulefenua as symbolic head of the Nanumea community? First of all, he is the leader and the source of unity for the whole island. His signature is required to confirm any resolution made by the island. Thus, one of his key responsibilities is to affirm community acceptance of the rules and plans made by community leaders, including himself. Secondly, the Chief is held accountable in a very personal way for the well being of the community. Thus, he must devote himself to planning what will benefit the community. The well-being and the good fortune of the community are in the hands of the current High Chief, including abundance from the ocean, and the productivity of coconuts and the soil. Thus, it is important that the Chief value the behavioral restrictions that mark his identity and live a restricted life. He

must pray with all his heart for the well-being of every aspect of the community. From the good governance of the Chief comes the unity of his people.

Evidence from Historic Documents about Traditional Political Structure

Nanumean traditional history overwhelmingly shows that the role of the Pulefenua has always been dynamic and changing through time. For one thing, there are differences in the stories and genealogies recorded in the ledger books of different families. There are also differences in the interpretations that individual elders draw from this information. Secondly, times of difficulty and upheaval are part of the traditions themselves, as in the story of Taitai's invasion from Kiribati, the flight of the chiefs, and the resulting reorganization of the chieftainship. Clearly, individual personalities have had an effect from time to time, and as have the actions of particular families. But despite these inevitable processes of change, many basic aspects of Nanumean political structure have probably endured for centuries, allowing the island to function as a coherent and relatively unified community.

When European explorers, missionaries, traders and government officials arrived at Nanumea in the 19th century, they interacted with the government of the day. The Aliku/Pulefenua and heads of extended families were the ones who debated, planned and implemented responses to these newcomers. The political system of that time was connected with the ancient past, but it was also a unique creation reflecting the needs and constraints of that particular era. The writings produced by European visitors who interacted with the Nanumean political system in the 19th century offer a window into island life, though one that is colored by the interests and understandings of each particular writer. What can be seen through this window? And what insights can these writings offer about the Pulefenua/Aliku institution itself?

Before going on to describe these writings, it is important to consider the limitations inherent in this information. These visitors did not speak Nanumean and had to rely on interpreters, or even their own best guesses, to make sense of the rituals, leaders and activities that they saw. Many of them had special agendas which drove their interactions, and these certainly would have affected their interpretation of local traditions. The accounts written by different visitors sometimes conflict with each other, even about something as basic as the number of "chiefs." But with these limitations in mind, let's open the window offered by the writings of early visitors and see what it can show us about the organization and role of the Pulefenua.

The first mention of Nanumea's chieftainship is the richly descriptive account made

by whaling captain Henry Pease. He spent three days ashore in 1853 and, after complex welcome rituals had been complete, met repeatedly with "the king and his chiefs." Pease described the king as "about 35 years old" and estimated that the other chiefs were old men "from 80 to 100 years old" (Pease 1854). He said that people considered he himself to be a "chief" as well (unfortunately, he gives no Nanumean term), and that he was given an escort of four other chiefs during his entire three-day stay ashore. These men even slept in a rectangle completely surrounding him. Pease's description of the concern provoked by a scratch also illustrates the traditional linkage that persons in a chiefly position have with the powers of nature. He wrote:

they attended me in all of my movements, never losing sight of me during the time I was on the island. I accidentally got a small scratch on my face, so that the blood appeared, which gave them great alarm, the king in particular; he repeatedly referred to it, and it was very difficult to persuade him that it was of no consequence. It appeared to me that they were fearful if any harm should befall me while on the island, some great calamity would come upon them in consequence.

But whereas Pease believed that he had seen a single leader acting as spokesman for the assembled chiefs and the community during his three-day visit ashore, some later visitors presented a different picture of the political situation. In 1866, just a little more than a decade after Pease's visit, a trading vessel under charter to the London Missionary Society brought missionary A.W. Murray to Nanumea, in the first attempt to establish a mission station there. Murray was not successful in that effort but was able to meet briefly with "the chief and principal people." The chief, whom Murray names as Tuinanumea, refused to permit the missionary to go to his house, saying that it was "sacred" (Murray 1866). A German naturalist who also went ashore with Murray on this same visit concluded that the island had two chiefs, however. He wrote: "from the natives I learned that two chiefs, of whom only one, though, bore the name of Tui Nano-mea [sic], together with the priests, about seven of them, reigned over the people" (Graeffe 1867:1189).²

² In genealogies today, and in current naming practice, Tuinanumea is a name. It is also the name of one of the maga of Aliko and many aliki who have served Nanumea recently have come from this maga. Some Nanumeans have also pointed out that Tui is a title in Tonga (and in Fiji), and used for the high chiefs there. Could this have once been the case in Nanumea? Graeffe could be referring to a title here. However, missionary A.W. Murray, who was on the same voyage as Graeffe, seems to refer to Tuinanumea as a name. We do not know for sure.

As we prepared the February 2004 draft of this book, we discovered that here is a division of opinion between Keith and Anne and Tangisia on this topic. Tangisia's view is the word "Tui" is a special name for the chiefs of Nanumea, a title. Thus, it was not the personal name of the chief Graeffe and Murray met, but his title, "the chief of Nanumea." Tangisia notes the use of "Tui" as a title in Tonga and Fiji (Crocombe 2001:440) and says some other Nanumeans today share his view that this title also existed in Nanumea. He believes the information given to Keith and Anne in Nanumea in the 1970's about the word "tui" was mistaken, and that elders they

The next foreign visitor to Nanumea, missionary S. J. Murray in 1870, was also left with the impression that there were two "kings" or high chiefs. When he tried again to persuade Nanumeans to accept a Samoan mission teacher, Whitmee was led by an elderly man (whom he described as "the chief orator, a kind of prime minister") to a central square where the people were assembled around "two grave old men, who were pointed out as the kings" (Whitmee 1871). Whitmee later contrasted what he believed the Nanumean situation to be (i.e. "two kings on an equal footing") with the forms of government he encountered in the other Tuvalu islands. These included "one king exercising despotic authority; ... a king and a council of chiefs; ... and in one there is a king and a chief."

A year later, an LMS missionary named Powell visited Nanumea and sent ashore "presents for the two kings of the island whose names are Rie and Manatu." He later met them, describing Manatu as "a young man tall and with a very wild look." He believed that the other "agile old man of middle stature" had the greater authority, because he had been introduced with the words: "This is Rie the king" (Powell 1871). It was this older man (Lie in today's orthography) who "flew into a passion" at Powell's insistent requests to leave a teacher and ordered the missionary off the island.

Missionary reports for the next few years continue to offer conflicting information about Nanumean leadership. In 1873, for instance, the old man Rie was described as "one of the principal chiefs" rather than as a "king." Similarly, Powell's comment on the eventual acceptance of Christianity in February 1873 states that a single "king and chiefs passed a law allowing the teacher to observe the Sabbath" (Powell 1878). But in reporting on the

talked to then did not realize that "Tui" was a title. The many chiefs from the branch Tuinanumea (see Illustration 4.1 later in this chapter) show that this was a title, not a branch of chiefs. So, in Tangisia's opinion, the name Nanumea was attached to the prefix "Tui" indicating that Tuinanumea was the high chief.

Keith and Anne have a different view. We are well aware that "Tui" is an important title in Tonga and Fiji (as Crocombe notes, 2001:440). All Polynesian languages share many words, but those words do not always mean the same thing in one society as they do in another. It seems to us this is the case with the word "Tui," which we believe means something very different in Tonga and Fiji than it does in Nanumea. Tepou specifically told us the word referred to "tips" of the island, and that there were seven of these *tui* or "tips" (*mata hahake*, *mata hauma*, *folokounga*, etc), all of which were said to have been "owned" by the *aliki* of Nanumea.

Furthermore, Nanumeans today and in the past say that one chiefly branch is Tuinanumea. It is clear that they are not referring to a title, but to the name of their branch. We also find it hard to understand why, if Nanumea once had one or more titles for its chiefly branches, this knowledge had been lost so completely, when we specifically asked about this in 1973-75. At that time no elders referred to titles, and none indicated that "Tui" was a title. The chief of Nanumea is simply referred to as the *Pulefenua*, or the *aliki*, and branches refer to their candidates as their *hui*. We believe that today there are no branches of chiefs on Nanumea that use a title, or talk about a title.

This issue is interesting and all of us (Tangisia, Keith, Anne) hope that others will share their information and opinions. Perhaps one day we will be able to solve this puzzle.

conversion following his 1874 visit to Nanumea, missionary G.A. Turner again named both Manatu and Rie as the island leaders, specifying that "the two kings, eleven of the rulers and half the population have embraced Christianity" (Turner 1874). The last mention of there being two leaders is G. Turner's 1876 report, which noted that there were "two kings and 53 heads of families who deliberate and arrange political affairs." From this date on, whenever Nanumea's leaders are referred to, a single chief or "king" is mentioned.

These early reports are puzzling because they are so contradictory. Whereas Whitmee's summary says that there were "two kings upon equal footing," it seems clear from Powell's encounter that the older of the two kings he met had greater authority. The status of particular elders seems to change frequently as well. Three years after Powell's depiction of Lie as a "king," he was referred to simply as "one of the principal chiefs." Three more years after that, it was "old king Lie" again, when he and ten supporters were described as being taken on a missionary ship to Nui (G. Turner 1876).

Clearly, these reports of two "Kings" or chiefs contradict contemporary Nanumeans' understanding of the traditional political system. In 1974-75 when Keith and Anne asked Nanumean elders whether they believed it possible for Nanumea to have had "two kings" at any given time, their response was unequivocal. They all insisted that only a single high chief could hold office at a time. Could Nanumean political organization have altered so much in just a century that today's elders have misunderstood the "system" as it operated in the days of their grandfathers? Were some missionaries and other early reporters misled or mistaken in their descriptions? Was the Nanumean political system unstable at this time? How can the information in these early visitors' writings be related to contemporary local knowledge?

Perhaps an explanation can be found in the widely accepted principle that two chiefly lineages traditionally share responsibility for providing the ruling chief of the island.³ People say that while only one maga's representative reigns at a given time, these two lines should ideally "go in turn," *fakaholo*, in providing a chief. When one lineage's chief steps down or dies in office, it should normally be the turn of the other lineage to supply the next high chief, provided that a suitable leader was available from that side. Perhaps early visitors inquiring about Nanumea's leaders (through the imperfect medium of Samoan or other interpreters who

³ Of course, ideal rules and actual practice do not always correspond. As Table 2 shows, the reigning aliki was often drawn from maga other than the Aliko a Mua and Aliko a Muli over the last century. The chieftainship was certainly undergoing changes during this time, and these changes may have caused a shift away from dominance by the two lines of Tepaa and Teilo. It is also possible that the personal qualities of the person serving as high chief were viewed as more important than a "proper" alteration between the two main lines, or his selection only from these two main maga.

did not speak the language of Nanumea) were told about the existence of two "true" lineages of chiefs, and in some cases introduced to the leader of each of these groups. This could easily have led to the impression that the island had two "kings," even though a single chief acted as main spokesman for the community.⁴

Pease's 1853 account, the first and also the most detailed record of traditional life in Nanumea, affirms that a single high chief headed Nanumea. In most of the missionary descriptions too, "Rie" (the older of the two "kings"), seems to be depicted in ways that suit the island's reigning high chief. Not only is he referred to as such by several writers, but his actions also show that he wielded greater authority than the younger man, Manatu. Furthermore, by 1878, when Rie is no longer mentioned in missionary accounts, the island's chief is named as Manatu (Powell 1878). Manatu is the very man who Nanumeans today say succeeded Rie (or Lie, to use the correct spelling of his name). It is known from genealogies that Lie belonged to the lineage Te Aliko a Muli, while Manatu was from the lineage Tuinanumea, which has links with Te Aliko a Mua. (It is interesting that the Tuinanumea maga has continued to provide a large number of reigning aliki.)

Of course, it is impossible to document precisely the philosophical and religious thinking on which the chieftainship was based a century ago. However, it is very likely that Nanumean chiefly traditions have always seen the reigning chief as a moral intercessor between the island and the powers of the universe. As is still believed today, the upright behavior and sanctity of his person ensure the prosperity and well-being of the island, maintaining a balance within the elemental forces of nature. Because a primary function of the high chief was to maintain this ultimate moral order, his ceremonial and religious roles were probably as important traditionally as his political one.

Because so little is known today of religious rites in the pre-Christian period, it is difficult to know how to interpret early visitors' accounts regarding the role of "priests" or the chief's involvement in ceremonial and religious activities. Captain Pease's account of the lengthy welcome ceremony on his first day ashore 1853 is not colored by the usual missionary prejudice against traditional religion, but he clearly had to rely on his own cultural categories to make sense of local roles. His description notes the existence of "priests," but Pease also uses the terms "chief" and "priest" interchangeably in many instances. For

⁴ Another interesting interpretation was offered recently about this issue: Te Aliko o te Tai (maga Tumau) traditionally had the duty of protecting the reigning Aliko in times of war, taking control for the interim. Given the extent of upheaval and uncertainty in Nanumea in the 1870's, perhaps the Tumau representative was so prominently involved in Nanumean affairs that outsiders perceived him to occupy a position comparable to that of the reigning aliki?

example, not long after he arrived on shore, Pease said that he was required to sit on the beach for several hours while "the king with all his chiefs are engaged in religious ceremonies and consultations...to intercede with their deities. " In describing the approach of several people during this ceremony, Pease admitted: "I supposed [them] to be priests." At another point, he described ritual portions of food being placed "before the chiefs or priests." And in one of the last portions of this long ritual of incorporation, when words were uttered and water sprinkled over a skull (possibly Tefolaha's), Pease described this as being done by "the old chief."

Clearly Pease witnessed complex rituals of a religious nature (*i.e.*, dealing with spiritual beings). These seem to have focused on preventing any harm from the newcomer's presence, and involved ritual experts who propitiated ancestral spirits. (See Chapter 8 for more information on these ritual activities.) It is not really clear, however, whether a distinct role for priests really existed, or whether chiefs themselves played the key ritual roles. The latter is certainly probable, since family heads are also understood to have had similar responsibility for dealing with lineage *feao*. While some specialized religious roles may have existed, a clear demarcation between the roles of priests and chiefs does not emerge from early descriptions of Nanumean society. High ranking chiefs may have been main actors in communal rituals, also serving the community as mediators with the gods, *vakatua*.

Colonial Interference with Traditional Leadership Institutions

The traditional history describing how Nanumea came to be settled and how political roles developed, which was presented in Chapters 1 and 2, shows that Nanumea's chieftainship was transformed or reorganized several times after Tefolaha's arrival. Though these internal changes were important, they seem relatively minor compared to the massive disruptions brought about by a new religion and an imposed colonial government in the late 19th century. Nanumea's traditional leaders, its Pulefenua and the heads of extended families, undoubtedly directed the fenua's interaction with these powerful outsiders. Nonetheless, the sad result is that the island's chieftainship was nearly eradicated within a century. This section describes the pressures the chieftainship faced, and changes resulting from those pressures.

A good place to begin is with an overview of the changes in Nanumea's governmental structure since the time of intensive western contact. **Illustration 4.1** summarizes the information we have been able to gather about Nanumea's traditional and official government office holders since the first written mention of a chief's name in 1866. Sources for this table

Illustration 4.1**CHIEFS AND MAGISTRATES, 1866-1966**(Adapted from Keith Chambers, *Heirs of Tefolaha*, pp 325-8)

Date	Aliki/ Ulu Aliki¹	Aliki Maga	Chief Kaupule²	Aliki Maga	Magistrate	Kopiti
pre 1866- ca 1869	Tuinanumea ³	Tuinanumea	POSITION		POSITION	
ca 1870-1876	Lie ⁴	Aliki a Muli	NOT		NOT	
ca 1877-1879	Manatu	Tuinanumea	YET		YET	
ca 1880-1881	Heiloa	Fakavalevale	ESTABLISHED		ESTABLISHED	
ca 1882-1883	Maheu	Fakavalevale				
ca 1884-1885	Tauila	Fakavalevale				
ca 1886-1895	Vaetolo	Tuinanumea			Tupau	????
ca 1896-1903	Niti	Aliki a Muli			Tekalau or Moti	Maheku
ca 1904-1905	Pou	Aliki a Muli			????	
ca 1906-1907	Tukia	Aliki a Muli			????	

¹ This list includes the traditional position of Aliki (high chief) from the beginning of western contact until the Laws of 1917 refigured it as a salaried administrative position called Chief Kaubure (see second column). From about 1936 until 1956, Nanumea also had what the government termed an "unofficial high chief," the Ulu Aliki. In 1956, the colonial government banned the Ulu Aliki, leaving only the Chief Kaubure position until 1966 when it too was abolished and the Island Council system instituted.

² Instituted in 1917, this government position was secondary to the Magistrate.

³ Tuinanumea is the first aliki of which there is any written record (Murray 1866; Graeffe 1867:1189). No details are known about him, and he was not recalled by elders in 1974-75. It is likely that he was a member of the chiefly lineage Tuinanumea. Some 13 years earlier, in 1853, Pease (1854) met with Nanumea's chief, described him as about 35 years old, but did not give the man's name.

⁴ Lie is reported by Powell (1871) to be "an agile old man of middle stature." He is the first aliki to appear in a list of chiefs Takitua's ledger book.

Illustration 4.1**CHIEFS AND MAGISTRATES, 1866-1966**(Adapted from Keith Chambers, *Heirs of Tefolaha*, pp 325-8)

Date	Aliki/ Ulu Aliki	Aliki Maga	Chief Kaupule	Aliki Maga	Magistrate	Kopiti
ca 1908-1917	Sosene	Fakavalevale	POSITION NOT YET ESTABLISHED		Esela	????
1918-1928	-----		Metai ⁵	????	Lagitupu	Mahikava
1929-1931	-----		Malulu	Aliki a Mua	Paulu	Maheku
1931-1936	-----		Malesa	Aliki a Muli	Paulu	Mahelu
1936-1945	Maiiau ⁶	Fakavalevale	Malesa	Aliki a Muli	Fati	Falemua
1946-1947	Maiiau	Fakavalevale	Malesa	Aliki a Muli	Manuella	Lalofetau
1948-1951	Kaipati	Tuinanumea	Pito	Aliki a Mua	Pilitati	Mahikava
1951	Hepikia ⁷	Aliki a Tai	Pito	Aliki a Mua	Pilitati	Mahikava
1952	Esekia/ Hepikia	Aliki a Tai	Esekia	Taualepuku	Pito ⁸	Maheku

⁵ Metai, also known as Maika, was the first aliki to hold the salaried position of Chief Kaupule. It seems likely that the chieftainship was in disarray from 1918 until 1936.

⁶ Maiiau was the first individual to hold the newly established position of Head Chief, Ulu Aliki, in about 1936. Details about the events leading to this revitalized "unofficial" chieftainship are not available, but some note that it coincided closely with the Land Commission held late in 1936 under Administrative Officer Donald G. Kennedy. Whether Kennedy had any influence in this matter is not known.

⁷ Government touring diaries and Nanumean Council minutes complement informants' remarks to shed light on the succession here. From 1948 Kaipati served as Ulu Aliki. He left Nanumea early in 1951 and the community selected Hepikia to serve as a temporary replacement. noting that his maga, Tuumau, was by tradition not permitted to act as reigning chief. Esekia took over as the new Ulu Aliki in October of 1951 but a year later was appointed by a colonial government officer to the post of Chief Kaubure. The official only learned later that the man he had appointed was already serving as the "unofficial Head Chief" of Nanumea. Thus, Hepikia was again called to fill in as Ulu Aliki, serving from November 1952 until September 1954.

⁸ The same government officer mentioned in note 7 appointed Pito to the post of Magistrate in 1952, "promoting" him from the job of Chief Kaubure. This unusual move placed a man whose main lineage affiliation was with the aliki of Nanumea in the position of Magistrate, which had heretofore only been filled by men whose main affiliation was with the non-chiefly kopiti descent groups.

Illustration 4.1**CHIEFS AND MAGISTRATES, 1866-1966**(Adapted from Keith Chambers, *Heirs of Tefolaha*, pp 325-8)

Date	Aliki/ Ulu Aliki	Aliki Maga	Chief Kaupule	Aliki Maga	Magistrate	Kopiti
1953	Samuelu	Tuinanumea	Esekia	Taualepuku	Pito	Maheku ⁹
1954-1956	Samuelu	Tuinanumea	Esekia	Taualepuku	Pito	Maheku
1956-1957	Samuelu	Tuinanumea	Esekia	Taualepuku	Pito	Maheku
1958-1960	POSITION		Takitua ¹⁰	Aliki a Tai	Pito	Maheku
1961-1965	ABOLISHED		Uini	Fakavalevale	Niumalale	Fenuagogo
1966	BY GOVERNMENT		Paitela	Aliki a Muli	Niumalale	Fenuagogo

1966-onward	ABOVE POSITIONS REPLACED BY ISLAND COUNCIL FORM OF GOVERNMENT					

⁹ Pito's aliki maga was Aliki a Mua

¹⁰ Takitua's tenure as Administrative Chief was unusual in that Nanumeans (including members of Takitua's own lineage) all agree that members of the chiefly group Tuumau are not to serve as reigning chiefs. Takitua explained to Kiti and Ane in 1974-75 that he had only taken the job after colonial administrators insisted that he accept it as a promotion for his long service as Nanumea's Chief of Police.

include information from Nanumean elders, family ledger books, and archive records in Fiji, Funafuti and Tarawa. Dates that are only approximate are preceded by the abbreviation "ca." The distribution of these leadership positions among the aliki maga and kopiti is also summarized. **Illustration 4.2** tabulates the aliki maga of those who serving in a chiefly role, while **Illustration 4.3** tabulates the kopiti of men who held the position of Magistrate. It is clear that Nanumea's traditional chieftainship has been forced to accommodate a series of new leadership positions. These have undoubtedly weakened and contorted the chief's authority over the last century. The complicated chain of events described below has set the stage for the challenges and difficulties that beset the Pulefenua and the fenua of Nanumea today.

Influences from Missionaries and Pastors

The missions probably had the greatest impact on the chieftainship initially, even though Nanumea strongly rejected overtures from the missionaries at first. A.W. Murray was forcibly ejected in 1866 (Graeffe 1867:1189-90; Murray 1876:407ff.). Thomas Powell fared little better in 1871 when "with every mark of their contempt the chief and others positively refused to hold any consultation and in a very determined manner ordered him into the boat and told him to go away immediately" (Vivian 1871:101-102; also Powell 1871:467-51).

Nanumeans made it amply clear that they desired no change in their belief system or way of life. Lie, the elderly high chief whom Whitmee described as "a man of great size and noble bearing" in his 1870 visit to Nanumea, directly told the missionary: "I wish to worship the gods I have always worshipped" (Whitmee 1871:26). The chiefs may also have realized from the outset that their authority was in jeopardy, for the missionaries specifically reassured them that a teacher, if permitted to live on Nanumea, "would not interfere with their political rites or with [the king's] authority" but would "only teach them the truth about the True God" (Powell 1871:49). On each of these early visits, the missionaries presented gifts to the chief, hoping to break down their resistance. Thus, Murray said that he was hopeful after his unsuccessful 1866 visit that "yet something has been gained." He had given presents "with which they seemed pleased and surprised. It appeared specially to incite their wonder when told that I did not wish anything in return." He concluded his report with the hope that "the favourable impression made upon the chief and principal people... [and] especially the present will, I doubt not turn to account" (Murray 1866).

Ultimately, it was quite a different type of "persuasion" which did turn Nanumea "to account." Captain John Moresby, in command of the British naval vessel H.M.S. Basilisk,

Illustration 4.2**Aliki Maga of Chiefly Office Holders**

Lineage	Times Position was Held	Total Years
Aliki a Mua	2	6
Aliki a Muli	6	34
Aliki o te Tai	3	5
Faavalevale	7	31
Pologa	0	0
Taualepuku	1	6
Tuinanumea	5	1
Lineage uncertain	1	10

Illustration 4.3**Kopiti of Magistrate Office Holders**

Lineage	Times Position was Held	Total Years
Falemua	1	
Faletolu	0	0
Fenuaagogo	1	5
Kopiti haa Tonga	0	0
Kopiti Samoa	0	0
Lalofetau	1	2
Maheku	5	14
Mahikava	1	13
Te Malie	0	0
Uma	0	0
Maheku ¹	1	8
Lineage uncertain	2	9+

¹ This person was also a member of the Aliki a Mua.

visited Nanumea briefly in July of 1872 in the course of investigating areas in the Pacific which Britain regarded as troublesome. His official report to the British Government bluntly characterized the Nanumeans as "all Devil worshippers" (Moresby 1872: 165). What Moresby omitted to mention in this first report is that he vented his impatience that "they have never suffered any missionaries to come amongst them "by resorting to military might. He "persuaded some to come on board, and fired a few shots to give them an idea of the white man's power" (Moresby 1876:80). Less than six months later, in January 1873, Nanumeans did accept their first missionary (Powell 1878). Elders later told Keith and Anne that this decision had been made out of fear that more warships and further bombardment would follow if they continued to resist the foreign "teacher."⁵

In Nanumea, as in the rest of Tuvalu, the establishment of a mission station brought with it a new set of social relationships and resulted in significant changes in the position of traditional political leaders. Once the new religion gained a foothold, it was L.M.S. practice to insist that each local community support its "teacher," i.e., pastor. This required that people not only provide frequent gifts of local produce to this man and his family, but that members of the community assist in the construction and running of his household. Prerogatives such as these had traditionally been reserved for the reigning chief. Now the chief must share them, and some of the prestige that went with them, with the island's pastor. The issue was much more serious than just simple jealousy over resources. Instead, the ancient link between the chieftainship and the elemental powers of the universe made respect for the chief's authority essential for the well-being of the community.

People today say that the traditional *malu* of the reigning aliki was based on his *papa*, which provided a genealogical connection to the island's founder, Tefolaha. The chief's *malu* was expressed through three inter-related components: *te pule* (right to rule), *te fakamataku* (reverence/awe/fear), and *te kainaga* (provisioning by the community). Because the aliki's political office was so intimately connected with his ritual roles, the acceptance of the pastor as the new religious leader required change in the role of the aliki. Thus when the community finally agreed to accept the Christian teacher, people say, its leaders also agreed to give him some of the prerogatives belonging to the aliki (*ni kave a te lakei o te aliki*). People today explain that the aliki retained *te pule*, symbolized by the kaho necklace, for himself, and that his traditional right to make decisions (*ikuga*) for the community was in no

⁵ Information about Christianity was also being brought to Nanumea by other Tuvaluans, creating complex internal politics for a decade at least regarding the community's acceptance of a Teacher. One of these was the deacon Temumuni, a Nanumean who had already converted to Christianity, who returned from Nui in 1872. Temumuni probably helped in the decision to permit the new religion.

way diminished. The pastor was given both *fakamataku* (reverence) and *kainaga* (provisioning). What weighty decisions must have been involved in these changes! There must have been many disagreements as the elders discussed what to do. It is not surprising that full acceptance of the new religion took another fifty years, or that the aliki would have to struggle to maintain the powers that still remained to him (as described below).

Over the last portion of the 19th century, the status of Nanumea's traditional chiefs gradually weakened while the position of the pastor became stronger.⁶ The relative abilities of aliki and pastor to accumulate wealth by access to local resources undoubtedly fed some of this change. During the annual inspection visits from mission headquarters in Samoa, the pastor was expected to document both contributions to the church and those made to his own upkeep. The temptation to hide personal wealth seems to have been a problem for pastors from the start. For example, Nanumea's second pastor, Emosi, was censured for concealing contributions to his salary (Davies 1882). But it is also clear that mission officials pressured pastors to produce contributions and that their effectiveness was judged on this basis. Thus in 1885, the pastor was reprimanded for "want of energy" and that year's mission report noted that things were "still going badly" in Nanumea because there seemed to be little interest in the ship's visit, scarcely any contribution, and very little stipend for the pastor (Newell 1885).

Overt conflict between Nanumea's aliki and pastor finally developed in 1892, just after the establishment of the British Protectorate, when Vaetolo was Aliko. As recounted by L.M.S. representative William Goward (1892):

"I had here very grave troubles to enquire into and get right, owing to the high-handedness of the king & his family over the hoisting of the British Flag. The good man had quite misunderstood the meaning of the Flag, and had dismissed the chief, & had assumed a despotic power & authority hitherto unheard of on the island; he being a church member, I was able to use my influence to gather a large meeting & to thrash the whole question out & make all straight again; the king apologized to his chiefs...and the very anxious complication & diversion in the island was settled peacefully."

Vaetolo himself complained directly to British authorities. His version of the dispute shows

⁶ Nanumea's traditional political leaders do seem to have retained more of their prerogatives than did their counterparts in parts of southern Tuvalu. In Nukufetau in 1870, missionary Whitmee (1871:17; Powell 1871:21) had to restore powers of the chief which the mission teacher had usurped. Two years later on the same island, the annual missionary report noted that the king was no doubt jealous of the power and influence of the foreign teacher: "He, with his large stone houses, and retinue of 23 servants, altogether overtops the king" (Pratt 1872). And in 1897, a European woman resident in Funafuti commented: "I tried hard to see the advantage of being a King in Funafuti, but couldn't. The king's hut was not so good as the native pastor's...and [he] seemed to look up to the Samoan pastor as an authority in things temporal as well as spiritual" (David 1899: 118-119).

that Vaetolo saw the traditional authority of the Pulefenua as being challenged by the pastor.

Vaetolo's complaint was as follows:

On the 16th September, 1892 I went to the house of the Samoan teacher to arrange properly the conduct of the Samoan and myself the King, and inquire into peacefully and in a straightforward manner the work of the King, and the work of the Samoan, so that we could live amicably, in performing our respective duties. The Samoan worked himself into a fearful passion lifted up his hand to smite me, he also spoke haughtily and informed me that he the Samoan was the Ruler of the Land, and rudely drove me the King away to my own house. On Sunday 18th September 1892 The Samoan Teacher preached in the chapel he the Samoan mocks me the King violently and informed me before all the people that he would not obey my government (Vaetolo 1892).

Local traditions about this dispute, offered by Nanumean elders in 1974-75, provide additional information, especially about the continuing connection between the aliki and the powers of nature. When the aliki overstepped his authority, *te mala i aa Vaetolo* resulted. This was a drought of catastrophic proportions, said to have been precipitated when Vaetolo became jealous of the weekly *kainaga* contribution made to the pastor and ordered that these gifts be given to himself instead, as they always had traditionally. When people complied, a severe drought ensued. One of the effects of this was to devastate the tridacna clams which were abundant on coral outcrops inside the lagoon and provided an esteemed source of food. Once he saw the calamity his actions had caused, Vaetolo relented and the weekly feeding of the pastor resumed, continuing on to this day. Clams, however, have never returned to the lagoon.⁷

The new religion was not embraced immediately by all Nanumeans either. For example, in 1881 one hundred people declared that they had become Roman Catholics (Davies 1881). While they later rejoined the L.M.S., in 1897 three hundred people were said to have "returned to the worship of spirits and to other heathen ceremonies" (Marriot 1898).

⁷ Vaetolo was reigning aliki when the British protectorate was proclaimed (Gibson 1892). The drought mentioned is undoubtedly the severe one which struck northern Tuvalu following a hurricane in 1890, reducing many to near starvation. In a touring report dated September 1895, the British Resident noted that most islands in Tuvalu had recovered from the effects of the 1890 hurricane, except for Nanumaga and Nanumea which both still lacked rain. Of Nanumea he wrote: "In one house I found the people eating the dried seed pods of the mangrove" (Swayne 1895). Elderly Nanumeans described this time as one of great hunger and weakness, with children five and six years old still crawling like babies, so weak from hunger were they.

Another disaster resulting from chiefly misconduct took place about a decade later. Aliko Pou was, people say, known for being a womanizer. During his term in office the island's policeman would arrange secret meetings with attractive women for the chief. One of these women became pregnant and bore the chief's illegitimate child. It was at this time that the only tidal wave people had known or heard of to that time hit Nanumea, causing severe damage and inundating the entire village area from the ocean to the lagoon shore. No lives were lost but people inferred that the elemental powers were displeased with the high chief's transgression of the rules (*tulaafono*) governing the high chieftainship and Pou was replaced.

Nanumeans themselves say that it was not until the celebration of the church's Fifty-Year Jubilee in 1922 that the last of those worshipping Nanumea's ancient gods consented to become Christian.

Influences from the Colonial Government

But while the introduction of Christianity weakened the authority of the aliki, the control exerted by Great Britain beginning in 1892 had even greater effects in the long run. When the islands became a British Protectorate, legal codes were imposed which steadily diminished the role played by traditional chiefs in local government, even though this may not have been their stated intention. For example, the first legal code recognized the High Chief as the paramount authority of each island, but the British administration reserved the right to appoint this person and also to make future changes in the laws (Macdonald 1982:81; Munro 1982:302). Over the next seventy years, the powers of the chieftainship were further slowly eroded, until this position was finally removed completely from local government. These events have been described for Tuvalu as a whole by such authors as Barrie Macdonald (1982), Doug Munro (1982), and Tito Isala (1983b). Our description here focuses on the Nanumean situation.

The *Native Laws of the Ellice Islands (British Protectorate)* were formulated by the British in 1894. These specified the structure of island government and set out eighteen laws (Ellice Islands 1894). On each island, "the High Chief" was made responsible for the good order of the community. He was to preside at monthly meetings of a council of elders (termed KauPuli, a corruption of *kaupule*), appoint island policemen, and levy a land tax in consultation with the council. The 1894 laws did not specify the nature or number of people in the council of elders, apparently leaving this up to the traditions of each island. In 1893 Nanumea's council of elders comprised nine individuals (Tuvalu National Archives 1893). The second key figure in each island government was the Magistrate, "whose duty is to decide according to the law all matters brought before [him]." The Magistrate, along with a small group of elders he selected, held court and imposed fines in accordance with a schedule outlined in the laws. These monies went into an Island Fund, as did tax revenues, and were used to pay the salaries of the Magistrate, Scribe and Policeman. The High Chief and Kaupuli received no pay.

These laws had been drafted by Swayne, the first British Resident, based on his understanding of local custom and the rules enforced by the missions. They intended to recognize both the traditional hierarchy and egalitarian principles of Tuvalu social organization, but they also had to provide an efficient system of administration (based on

British ideas) that could be maintained for all the Gilbert and Ellice islands by only one or two British officials. This legal code hastened the process of decline of the chieftainship in the following ways.

Because both High Chiefs and Magistrates had to be approved by the British Resident (though not specified in the 1894 laws, this was the practice), the fenua lost its traditional power to recall leaders when they lost support or when natural events indicated this to be wise. Secondly, the British administrators treated the Magistrate, rather than the High Chief, as the head of local government. Also, as Isala (1983b:23-24) has pointed out, the first laws were printed in Samoan for distribution in Tuvalu so only people able to read Samoan could be considered for the Magistrate position. Thus younger, mission-educated men generally held this post, often recommended for the job by the pastor himself. By contrast, the Nanumean High Chief continued to be selected in the customary manner from among those delegates put forward by the chiefly lineages. These delegates were generally older or elderly men, most of whom lacked mission-taught skills of reading and writing.

In 1917, the revised Laws of Tuvalu (Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony 1917) formalized what had already become accepted practice: The Magistrate was legally the highest official in local government. It also instituted a separate government position of "Chief Kaubure," whose role was described as follows:

The "Chief Kaubure," in conjunction with the High Chief where there was one, the Magistrate and the members of the Kaubure, shall be responsible for the good order and cleanliness of the island; he shall also assist the Native Magistrate with his advice in the administration of the Natives [sic] Rules, Laws, and Regulations.

Thus, where the 1894 laws gave the High Chief an official role in local government, the new code made him only a possible assistant to the position of Chief Kaubure. Furthermore, all the government positions were to be appointed by the British administration. Even the Chief Kaubure position would receive a government salary like other government officers.

Regarding the crucial change which demoted the aliki to a figurehead status, Dickson wrote:

The position of High Chief is practically extinct, and I have therefore omitted [Rule] 1 (old) and instead replaced Rule 1 (proposed) whereby the Chief Kaubure (in conjunction with the High Chief if there be one) is responsible (Dickson 1912).

Nanumeans appear to have coped with these imposed changes by continuing to regard the Chief Kaubure post as equivalent to the High Chief of Nanumea. The traditional selection process was used, followed by the aliki's ritual of installation, though the colonial government's official approval was also duly secured. (There seem to have been no cases

where the person selected by the island was rejected by the central administration.) However, the authority and dignity of the chiefly office certainly diminished. Nanumeans were also upset that the distinction between affairs of the central government (*maalo*) and those of the island (*fenua*) was blurred. They expected to be allowed to handle community affairs in customary fashion, *faka te fenua*, through discussions in the island's community hall. While the Magistrate was also a Nanumean, often a person with considerable influence, he was not usually selected from the chiefly lineages (see **Illustration 4.3**). Furthermore, the Magistrate was viewed as the agent of the central government, paid to act in its name and use its power, thus responsible to it rather than to the local community (Macdonald 1982:78). The Chief Kaubure represented the ancient heritage of Nanumea, the *aliki* who had sprung from Tefolaha, and the *fenua* as an independent polity. But the Chief Kaubure had become an official government position too and when this leader began to receive a salary, it was no longer clear to Nanumeans that his interests were wholly those of the island. To be on the payroll also demeaned the traditional responsibility of the chief to serve the interests of the community without thought of personal benefit.

These concerns seem to led the community in about 1936⁸ to establish what amounted to a second *aliki* position, separate from the government salaried post of Chief Kaubure. Selected in traditional fashion from among the chiefly lineages, the new high chief was referred to as the Ulu Aliko (probably borrowed from southern Tuvalu dialects). He was installed with the customary rites, sat at the chief's central post in the community hall during *fenua* events, and also attended meetings of the island government. Since Nanumeans had already been using *aliki* ritual for the installation of the Chief Kaubure position, the establishment of this new "unofficial high chief" (as government reports would refer to the post), created two high chief positions in Nanumea. People remember both men sitting at the center landward side of the community hall, though some say that the Ulu Aliko sat at the exact center, flanked on one side by the Chief Kaubure and on the other by the Magistrate.

Clearly, the establishment of this "unofficial chief" in the 1930's was an effort to reclaim the chieftainship for the *fenua*. This continued in the early 1940's when Nanumeans were moved by U.S. troops to the islet of Lakena. Elders from the chiefly lineages reorganized the *aliki maga* (Council of Chiefs) and solicited donations from each *maga* to a

⁸ Recollections of the year in which elders appointed the "unofficial" chief are not entirely consistent. Some say this began in the 1940's, but others, including Iulia, whose father Maiiau was the first *aliki* appointed to the new position, recall that this happened in the mid-1930's. If the war time date is correct, then there was one reorganization rather than two.

central fund to be used for community benefit, perhaps as a scholarship fund to send students overseas. Energy was also directed to the Manafa Tapu. Several maga also coined new names at this time.

Nanumea continued to have both an official and an “unofficial” head chief from about 1936 to 1956, when the community’s appointment of a high chief to represent the island's interests was specifically forbidden. The colonial government cited interference in local government as rationale for this ruling. Major differences between the approaches of the community and the colonial government are revealed in the series of annual reports written by government officers. In his touring report for November 1956, the administrative officer, F. Penitala Teo, noted:

During this [meeting with the Island Council, an elder] talked in a manner which showed that the group of people who called themselves "chiefs" has the idea that they can do anything with any members of the Native Government. I made it clear to the three chiefs present in this meeting that they have no powers whatsoever over the Native Government or the Is. Council... I went further to tell this meeting that although Nanumea has in the past been in the habit of having an unrecognized High Chief in the Island Council, this is to stop from now on unless the Resident Commissioner recognizes their High Chief (Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony 1956, Nov 8 1956).

The following year another touring officer reported critically:

[The Magistrate] raised the question of a high chief and seemed to favour the idea since his is a member of the principle family involved and I suspect would be in the running. The government's views on Ellice Island High Chieftainship were reiterated as they had been last year... and the sad moral story of the so-called chiefly families meddling with administration on Nanumaga was related. I had the impression that the question will arise again later. (Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony 1957)

The matter did arise again the following year, when a delegation of chiefs requested that the Ulu Aliko be allowed to sit with the island government. The touring officer, again F. Penitala Teo, refused, his irritated report showing contempt for traditional leadership roles:

My reply to this [request] was in the negative. I explained to the Council that there used to be no administrative objection to their unofficial High Chief sitting in Native government Courts and other functions as long as he and the so-called chiefs knew that the Council was the ruling body or in other words was the only government on the island.... I told the meeting that they knew perfectly well that there is no paramount chief on Nanumea or in the Ellice Islands. If the so-called chiefs on Nanumea think that there is a high chief on Nanumea, I was sure if they were asked to point out who was the paramount chief, they would have a war between themselves as each one would like to be the paramount chief. To strengthen my statement that there is no paramount chief in the Ellice today, I asked the meeting whether anyone on Nanumea or any other island could if he/she wished disregard whatever a so-called chief asks him/her to do? "Yes," was the reply. I told the Council that is not the case in other places where they have real high chiefs (Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony

1958).

Nanumea's only possible option was to continue to select the Chief Kaubure from the chiefly lineages, ritually install him in office, and consider him as representing the island's aliki.

In 1966, a new local government ordinance abolished the Chief Kaubure position and instituted the Island Council form of local government. Councilors were to be elected by voters aged 18 and older, and then to allocate among themselves the positions of President and Vice-President. Any adult who wished to place his or her name in nomination could stand for election. Nanumeans interpreted the new Ordinance to mean that their traditional Aliko position could no longer exist, since no actual provision for the position of High Chief was included.⁹

Thus the aliki then serving as Chief Kaupule, though ceremonially installed only a few months beforehand, stepped down in 1966. While Nanumea's chieftainship was ostensibly no more, the traditional format for discussing aliki affairs, and selecting and installing new chiefs, still existed and the informal group of chiefly elders continued to meet from time to time. In about 1970, after island-wide discussions and consultation with the Island Council (some of whose members were members of the chiefly lineages), this group was given formal recognition and officially asked to assist the Council. The chiefly lineages appointed twelve members to this newly constituted group. It was known as the Kau Aliko, or more simply as "the twelve," *te tinongafulu mo toko lua*¹⁰.

"The Twelve," it was decided, would continue to ensure that customary Nanumean rules were obeyed. It was felt that these elders would be more successful at this than the Council since their traditional authority represented *te fenua* rather than the government. The Kau Aliko carried out these prescribed duties for three years, though tension existed between this group's role and that of the Island Council. In July 1973 the Kau Aliko was abolished at a meeting in the ahiga and its functions were assigned to a committee reporting to the Island Council.

Tuvalu's separation from the Gilbert Islands and its independence in 1978 offered an

⁹ No provision in the new laws actually banned the office of High Chief and Nanumea probably could have restored its Ulu Aliko ("unofficial high chief") position at this time. However, knowing the government's antagonism to this office in the past, the island itself believed this to be impossible.

¹⁰ This euphemism avoided any implication that the council of elders had official recognition as Nanumea's traditional leaders. Its use may have other roots as well. The word *Aliko* has been used to translate the Biblical word "Lord," referring to Jesus Christ. People say that using the same word to refer to human leaders seems inappropriate. Pulefenua has now become the preferred name for the traditional position of chief in Nanumea.

opportunity to reinstate traditional political institutions. Malulu, a long-serving member of the Kau Aliko, told Kiti and Ane in 1984 that he had talked with Tuvalu's new Governor-General Sir F. Penitala Teo during Independence celebrations in Funafuti about reinstating the chieftainship. Malulu said that the Governor-General urged him to assemble Nanumea's Kau Aliko again, emphasizing that Tuvalu needed its traditional chiefly organization to complement new forms of government¹¹. Thus in about 1979, the Kau Aliko was once again established in Nanumea. Its work, as before, was to represent the fenua and to be sure that Nanumean customs were followed in regard to feasts, newcomers, and communal lands. This new Kau Aliko had seven members instead of twelve, one from each of the seven chiefly lineages. While known officially as the Kau Aliko, it was usually called *te toko fitu*, following the indirect way to refer to the aliki that was now customary. Other Tuvalu communities were also reinstating high chief positions (Nukufetau in 1976/77, Niutao in 1978/79), while Vaitupu's chief had continued in office despite the 1966 Ordinance. In 1985, an ahiga meeting officially re-established Nanumea's Pulefenua/Aliko position and Mita was shortly after installed in that office. The new position of Speaker, *Tukumuna*, was also established at that time (see the last section of this chapter which explains the duties of the position and lists those who have held this office).

When a leadership institution that has not been allowed to function without outside interference for over a century is reinstated, some difficulties should be expected. This is exactly what has happened in Nanumea, especially in the last ten years. Disagreements have arisen about the qualities that a Pulefenua office holder must have, as well as the rules by which he should be selected and dismissed. These difficulties and the efforts made to resolve them will be described later in this chapter, but first we will turn our attention to the customs related to the Pulefenua role itself.

The Role and Expectations of the High Chief

The High Chief must continually work for the well-being and good fortune of the community. His leadership must benefit the community. He must ensure that his behaviour is appropriate to his position. The behavior of the High Chief influences the productivity of the ocean and reefs, as well as that of the coconuts and other produce of the land. Thus the

¹¹ Ironically, in earlier times while serving as an administrative officer in the Colony government, F. Penitala Teo had strongly opposed Nanumea's efforts to retain its high chief.

Chief must obey the special restrictions imposed by his position and live a restricted life.

Restrictions which bind the High Chief include:

- He must not show favoritism.
- He must not participate in activities of small groups.
- He should be clean and presentable when he goes to an island function and be well dressed whenever he leaves his house.
- He should not carry anything in his hands, nor should he carry a child in his arms or on his back while walking on the road.
- He shouldn't make friends, or stare at women either.
- He is not allowed to work in taro pits, climb for coconuts, fish or do any hard work. If he does any work, he must do it covertly.
- Any disagreements with his wife must be kept private.
- He should not eat in other peoples' houses, unless he has been formally invited.
- Visits by people to the high chief must be planned in advance.

All his activities should honor the position of respect he holds and be apparent not only to the people of the island but to newcomers as well.

Thus, the High Chief is restricted in his activities and in his interactions with others. Most of the subsistence needs of his household are met from food gifts received from his maternal nephews (those who had "fed" him at the installation ceremony) and from the other chiefs. He should not eat casually with other households but should eat at home with his family. He should not eat at his neighbor's houses either. The chief's house is effectively "off limits" to the general population, even though it is not separated from the village or different in appearance from other houses. The chief can entertain official visitors at home, but casual visits from relatives or others are prohibited. Especially important are restrictions relating to his person. He must not playfully toss his own grandchildren around, carry them on his back or shoulders, or take part in ordinary entertainments. He must conduct his personal toilet far from the village, out of sight of others.

These limitations support the view of the reigning chief as someone who was not only respected and honored, but who was also sacred. His sacred quality was demonstrated by the special *kata*, blessing which could descend on the island during the reign of either of the two main lineages of chiefs, the Alikia a Mua and the Alikia a Muli. Through an ancestral connection with the rightful order of things, representatives of these two lineages could bring the favor of powers that controlled the fish of the seas and the produce of the lands to Nanumea. Other chiefly branches lacked this special link to the universe. But the continued flow of these blessings depended on the exemplary behavior of the Pulefenua. There are many stories about the sufferings (*mala*) to Nanumea that were caused by the bad behavior of its Pulefenua.

Faults

Just like the first fruits of the pandanus cluster, which are sweeter and tastier than other segments because they ripen first, a person filling the role of High Chief must adhere to ideal rules of behavior. This consideration becomes very important when it is time to select a new person to hold the office of High Chief. Everyone thinks hard about the personal qualities of the people whose names have been proposed. They consider the contributions they have made to the community in the past and remember stories that reveal their character. Having negative qualities (*pona*) disqualifies a person from holding this office. It is essential that any person proposed as High Chief must have led a moral, law-abiding life. He must also have a history of generosity to the community. There are many formalized “faults” and the community will not knowingly allow someone with these character flaws to occupy the crucial role of High Chief.

The Council of Chiefs met on 27th October 2003 to discuss these faults. The following list was put forward by the chiefly branch Te Alikii a Muli. The other chiefly branches approved this list and did not add any further items.

1. He should not have any illegitimate children
2. He should not be married to a non-Nanumean
3. He must be on good terms with his family
4. He must be on good terms with the community
5. He must demonstrate community mindedness
6. He must have complied with island/community requests

The following faults were added by the Council of Chiefs at this meeting:

7. The wife of the person selected as High Chief must not have any illegitimate children
8. The person holding the office of High Chief must not be a member of a “different religion;” he must be a member of the Tuvalu Christian Church (EKT)
9. He must not have any criminal convictions in the Government Court. These crimes would include theft, assault, and other serious crimes which carry a prison sentence of a year or more.

Re-Seating Ceremony

Because of his connection with the elemental forces of nature, the person of the High Chief is considered sacred. If the High Chief were to be hurt or to suffer any accident or misfortune, the well-being of the community is threatened. For example, if the pulefenua were to trip and fall, or his canoe were to flip in a strong gust of wind, the natural balance that is upset by this event must be restored. A plague or misfortune could result if the sacredness of the High Chief is challenged in this way. The special ritual and feast that accomplishes

this is called a *fakanohonoho*.¹²

Installation of a High Chief

Installation of a new high chief takes place in the following circumstances: the death of the reigning chief, or when the island is no longer satisfied with a reigning chief because of inappropriate actions which might cause the island to be affected by a plague.¹³ If the community becomes dissatisfied with the high chief, the “Sea Chief” (Tūmau) is in charge of the selection of a new High Chief. The Tūmau branch convenes the chiefly branches to talk about the situation. If they agree that the High Chief should be removed, they notify the community and the High Chief. A member of Tūmau will caretake the chief’s position for a short time until a new High Chief can be chosen. The chiefly branches consider who among their members could fill the position of High Chief. At a general meeting of representatives from all the branches, names are put forward of those men proposed by their branch. The person who best meets the qualifications of the chiefly role is chosen. Once someone has been selected, the name is announced to the community, which gives the final approval for this person becoming the next High Chief.

The Aliko o te Tai (Tūmau) organizes the chiefly groups to prepare food (especially fish and poi) for the installation ceremony. The next morning, members of the chiefly groups gather together in the house of the man who will be the High Chief. They advise/discipline him about appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in the important position that has been given him. The High Chief-to-be bathes and shaves and then is adorned by his female relatives with these things: new hulu, new shirt, skirt and necklace of galegale, head wreath and leaf skirt that have been perfumed and made fragrant with ponu ponu, together with the identifying symbol of the High Chief, which is the kahoā paa – a necklace of pearl shell lure pieces. The members of the chiefly groups are now ready to lead the new High Chief to the āhiga, because lunch time is near.

¹² This custom is now extended to the Pastor as well. For example, in 1996 a fakanohonoho feast was held for Pastor Pentusi after his canoe overturned.

¹³ While the chief in office might not agree with the criticism behind the request to step down, but it was customary to step down if asked. It was impossible to hold the office without the continuing support of elders of the community. As Takitua, who had himself been asked to step down, phrased it: *Mana tino e t’teke, e t’tau o noho*. This issue becomes very complicated when opinion is divided about whether the Pulefenua should step down. Recently, a series of disputes focused on this issue have divided the community. These are discussed later in this chapter.

The High Chief's seat is prepared by his sisters and female cousins, and other female relatives. This seat consists of locally made woven items: first some kapau rough mats, next some papa sitting mats, and on top, some beautifully woven epa fine mats that have colored galegale decorations, to create a seat that is like a mattress in size, and about 18 inches high. Members of all the chiefly lineages lead the High Chief to the āhiga. One young man from Tūmau who is strong and well-built goes in front of the High Chief with his weapon in hand, like a bodyguard of the High Chief.¹⁴ When this group nears the āhiga, a sudden yell erupts from the rest of the community, while two warriors come forward doing a *maneanea* dance and a warrior from the chiefly group comes forward to meet him from the other side of the field.¹⁵ In the very center of the playing field the men clash in combat, in the kind of "play" challenge called Taulapalapa, in which a warrior (or even two or three) beat each other and hit each other directly on the head.¹⁶

Once the High Chief is seated on his dais, lunch is served, preceded by grace. The members of the chiefly group are sitting on the Haumaefa side, while the community is on the Lolua side. Next comes the distribution of food, poi and fish, which has been prepared by the chiefly group for the community.

First Mouthful of the Chief

No one eats until the chief has been given his first mouthful of food. One or two maternal nephews of the high chief are involved in the ceremonial feeding. From the many kinds of food on the chief's plate, the person giving the first mouthful chooses what will be used, perhaps fekei pudding, only one mouthful of which is put by spoon (since there are now spoons) into the mouth of the new High Chief. Everyone claps and calls out "manuia," blessing to the High Chief, and then the chief eats by himself. Everyone else eats too. The person who gave the first mouthful then sits beside him to fan away flies from his plate, and the other one readies hand washing water and takes away the chief's plate when he has finished eating. Families of the two maternal nephews who helped in the ceremonial feeding will also take turns in the future to prepare the Sunday noon meal for the High Chief.

¹⁴ It seems as though this ceremony enacts an opposition between chiefly and the non-chiefly groups. In 1974-75, however, Iulia maintained that only members of the chiefly lineages took part in the *taualapalapa* mock-battle.

¹⁵ The chiefly branch Taualepuku has the responsibility for reciting lautapatapa chants at this time, according to some elders.

¹⁶ Tepou said that while the chief normally did not fight in this battle himself, nothing prevented him from doing so. He was still *saoloto* ("free") because he had not yet assumed the office of high chief.

While the community eats, the warriors on the field continue their display of hitting with lapalapa sticks, until it is time to make speeches. Entertainment consisting of fātele dances, alternating between the chiefly group and the community, then follow, ending with an ano ball game in the afternoon. This description is based on the *fakahopoga* of Samueleu fifty years ago, but it is essentially identical to *fakahopoga* today.

The Day of the Taumalo

This is the second day of the installation of the High Chief. The Taumalo is the generation of young men who have reached the age of about sixteen, an age at which they should wear a “malo,” loincloth¹⁷ (but today, shorts or hulu.) They considered mature and are counted as men, able to be involved in men’s activities such as community work, care of their family, going to war, and they should not be afraid of anyone. On this day, only the High Chief and his adult men (not women) are involved. This is the time that the High Chief can assess the male strength of the island, as well as the whether each family is prepared with the necessities for a good life.

A cry rings out along the village roads that all men of the island should come to the āhiga to celebrate Taumalo day. The day’s chosen leader has specified the kinds of food to be used in this ceremony. If the first food is to be pulaka pieces baked with kaleve syrup in coconut shells (kao taufagogo pulaka), this is announced by the crier. Women from each family bring this food to their men in the Ahiga. When everything is ready, the leader calls out: “let’s start eating!” Everyone starts to eat his shell of pulaka, when a cry comes up again: “let’s exchange!” Immediately, each man puts the shell right down in front of them and runs over to sit down at the place of someone of the other side and start eating. Then the call comes

¹⁷ A loincloth (worn around the upper legs, crotch and buttocks) was the traditional dress of adult men. After his brief visit to Tuvalu in 1866, German naturalist Graeffe (1867:1187) noted: “[in Niutao] almost all the men wear the maro [sic], while adolescent boys and girls walk about in nature's costume.” Of Nanumea he noted: “the natives dress themselves like those on Niu-tao, although the maro is even narrower here, and entirely grown-up boys and girls go completely naked.” It is likely that there were formerly religious aspects to this ceremony. It was probably a formal rite of passage for young men. There was probably also a ritual to mark the transition of girls to womanhood. The term tautiti, parallel to taumalo, is known by older Nanumeans but is recalled as an age stage and not as a ceremony.

It also seems likely that tattooing was an important part of these coming of age ceremonies in ancient Nanumea, as was done in Vaitupu (Kennedy 1931) and other Tuvalu islands (Koch 1985). For example, Kennedy wrote: “a person who had not been tattooed was forbidden to speak at a gathering of his or her elders.” (Kennedy 1931:302). Tattooing was formerly done for both men and for women in ancient Tuvalu. A specialist in tattooing would place the tattoos on parts of the body such as the back, chest, sides, arms and legs. This practice, along with many others, was forbidden by the missionaries, as Kennedy describes (Kennedy 1931:285). Elderly Nanumeans were not able to comment on the existence of this practice when we asked in 1974-75, however.

again, “let’s exchange,” and everyone runs to another seat to take up another pulaka shell – until the time when the leader says “let’s take a rest.”

People then joke and laugh with each other, while the leader considers what the next food item, lagi, will be. The food could be something like this: kao likoliko, sun dried pulaka chips, crushed up and mixed with lolo cream and kaleve, then baked in coconut shells; ut’tanu sprouted coconut which has been aged in special storage pits; dried or salted fish, and other kinds of traditional foods that were kept stored for times of bad weather. The cry then goes up again, “the lagi food this time will be uttanu, sprouted coconut, which has been aged in storage pits.” These food choices demonstrate people’s readiness because ut’tanu of this type must have been aged in the special pit called the gutulua. This is a way to store it for a long time and to prevent its spoiling. Ut’tanu that has just been husked is not allowed to be used in responding to the call. What was done with the first lagi is then repeated again, until the time is reached when the leader says: “We’ll end here. We’re all out of breath from running around in the Ahiga.”

The High Chief is allowed to participate in this entertainment since although his time of freedom has ended, the serious obligations of his office have not yet begun. We can see that the normal honoring of the island has been disregarded in this activity – but this is only because of the behaviors and special customs that honored the installation of the High Chief, allowing the normal custom to be set aside. If any family was not prepared with the required foods announced for this day, they are reminded to keep themselves ready in the future. The installation ceremony for the High Chief is ended with a faatele dance in the evening.

Recent Difficulties and Government Delegations

In 1985 Nanumea took the opportunity to reinstate its traditional chieftainship. This leadership role was given the name of Pulefenua and partnered with a new position, the Tukumuna or “speaker.” The Pulefenua is recognized as the official head of local government in Nanumea. He works together with the Āhiga and the Tokofitu (both components of the official category “Falekaupule”), and also the elected Kaupule, to direct both local governance and development.

The Tukumuna is selected by the Tokofitu after the Pulefenua is appointed. He can be chosen from any of the chiefly branches, but in the first decade of this position’s existence (1985-1994), the Tukumuna was consistently drawn from the Tumau branch. Some people say that currently, the position should be filled by someone from Pologa branch, if possible. The role of the Tukumuna is to organize public events in the Ahiga, particularly to keep the

event flowing smoothly and harmoniously. He also articulates the chief's decisions in formal situations and serves as a link between the chief, the Tokofitu, Kaupule and the community as a whole. Nanumeans say that having a formal spokesperson for the Pulefenua is useful because people can respond freely to the decisions that are articulated and even criticize them. This would not be possible if the Pulefenua were stating the decisions himself, because of the great respect that should be shown to him in his chiefly role. See **Illustration 4.4** for the names, dates of office and chiefly branch maga of both these officeholders.

The Falekaupule Act of 1997 mandates that the political structure of island communities be based on traditional leadership groups and positions such as these. This Act also stipulates that the elected Kaupule, who connect Nanumea with national government services and personnel, serve as “the executive arm” of the traditional leaders and work under their direction in accessing the resources and meeting the requirements of the Tuvalu government.

During the last ten years especially, a series of unfortunate disagreements about the Pulefenua position have split the Nanumean community and destroyed its unity. These disagreements concern very fundamental issues. These include the role that the Pulefenua should play in local affairs, especially the processes appropriate for his selection and removal from office. The relationship between the Pulefenua and local religious groups has been at issue, as have been the personal qualities of persons selected to hold this position. The longstanding Nanumean tradition that leaders should step down when the local situation deteriorates has proven difficult to implement as well.

Two factors seem mainly responsible for creating a context in which these disagreements could develop. Undoubtedly, the current situation of very rapid social and economic change is involved as well.

One key factor is the destruction of traditional leadership positions and community autonomy during the past century of colonial control and missionization. As was described above, the Alik/Pulefenua has not been permitted to serve as the rightful leader of Nanumea for the last fifty years. Additionally, for at least the last century, the position of Alik/Pulefenua was regarded as of lower status than local government officials (the Magistrate and Chief Kaubure) whose appointments were controlled by the colonial administration. As a result, knowledge about the workings of the traditional political structure, especially the countless practical understandings and strategies needed to deal with leadership challenges and factional confrontations, was also lost. Nanumeans essentially

Illustration 4.4

Pulefenua and Tukumuna in Nanumea, 1985 to present
 (from the time of reinstatement of High Chief and Speaker in Nanumea)

HIGH CHIEF/PULEFENUA				SPEAKER/TUKUMUNA		
Name	Began	Branch	Notes	Name	Began	Branch
Mita	Jan 1985	Tuinanumea	Dismissed near end of his term by āhiga decision. Reason: inadequate preparation for island gifts to Funafuti; also, island plagued by sea urchins	Patiale	1985	Tūmau
Alesana	May 1988	Alikī a Mua	Two terms. Near end of second term, dismissed by āhiga decision. Reason: island plagued by dolphins	Palota Manoa	1988 1992	Tūmau Tūmau
Noa	1994	Alikī a Muli	Two terms. Disputes erupted after only three months into second term, but he served to 1999	Pou Patiale Pou	1994 1996 1996	Alikī a Muli Tūmau Tūmau
Noa/Siitia	Apr–May 1999 (1 month)	Tuinanumea (Siitia’s branch)	Noa continued, supported by one faction. Tiakono/Lolua faction put up Siitia as replacement but he was not formally installed. Both Noa and Siitia were dismissed after island meetings with the Gov’t delegation	was there any Tukumuna during this month?		
Falaile	1999	Tuinanumea	Falaile resigned towards end of his term because of his wife’s illness	Palota Sue Kaumoana Taumaheke Peue	1999 1999 1999 1999 2000	Tūmau Tūmau Pologa Te Alikī a Muli
Laina	Nov 2002– Jan 2003	Alikī a Mua	Community unrest; one faction upset at appointment. Dismissed after island meetings with Gov’t delegation	Euta	2002	Tūmau
Euta	Feb 2003	Tūmau	Serving as caretaker of High Chief’s position, after meetings with Gov’t delegation of 2003	Taumaheke	2003	Pologa

have had to re-create the operating rules of their traditional leadership. This daunting task cannot be expected to have proceeded smoothly, and it has not.

The second factor concerns the lack of specificity of the Falekaupule Act itself. Because this Act must encompass the many traditional political systems that exist in Tuvalu, many of which were still being re-instated when the Act was passed in 1997, the internal structures of Falekaupule authorized under the Act were not specified in it. As a result, relationships among the various components of Nanumea's traditional leadership structure (namely, the Pulefenua, the branch of Tumau, the Tokofitu, the Ahiga, and Elders) are not specified in the Act. The difficulties that have arisen in Nanumea regarding these very relationships thus have had to be resolved by some other means than by reference to the Falekaupule Act. Clearly, Nanumeans have been left to meet the challenge of re-instating their traditional leadership structure using their own resources, as best they could.

One recurrent and crucial point of contention has been selection of the island's Pulefenua. A second point of contention has been the conditions that warrant dismissal of the Pulefenua from office, who should decide this, and the process to be used. This has caused difficulties, from 1993 up until the present time. As a result, a series of three official Delegations have been sent to Nanumea from the capital over the last decade to try to clarify procedures to be used and to settle the intense arguments that split the community.

The first delegation went to Nanumea in March 1994.¹⁸ Despite the meetings this group held, and its efforts at mediation, no substantial agreement was reached about the points of dispute. Tensions in Nanumea continued to fester.

The second delegation was sent by the government in May 1999.¹⁹ This group tried to find ways to make it possible for the two sides of the island to negotiate and come to an agreement for the well-being of the community. The delegates worked with two groups of ten representatives from each of the two factions, that of Noa Monise on the one side, and of Siitia Iakopo on the other. After a week in which the delegation members met with members

¹⁸ This first delegation was led by Nanu-Futi's elected leader, Fili Homasi, who was accompanied by Nanumeans and Nanumean elders including Kokea Malua, Lagitupu Tuilimu, Tagisia Kilei, Annie Homasi and Katalaina Malua. Several chiefs from Nukufetau were in the group: Sefanaia Nelesone, Sauni Sefulu, and Secretary of the Nukufetau chiefs, Vaaia, Representing the Tuvalu Christian Church were Filoimea Telito and Suamalie Iosefa, and government representatives included the Secretary of Home Affairs Taukelina Finikaso and his assistant Vavao Saumanaia.

¹⁹ This delegation included the Secretary to Government, Saufato Sopoaga, Attorney General, Feleti P. Teo, the Secretary of Home Affairs, Seve Lausaveve, and the Commissioner of Police, Willy Telavi. Accompanying the delegation was Teleke Peleti, a member of Parliament from Funafuti who was also Special Ministerial Advisor (MSA) to the Ministry of Home Affairs at that time.

of the two factions many times, an agreement was reached and signed by the two leaders on 17th May 1999 and witnessed by the Secretary to Government. In this agreement the two factions accepted willingly that the two leaders, Noa Monise and Siitia Iakopo, would step down and that a new High Chief would be selected by the chiefly branch Tūmau, under provisions agreed to in the document.

The full provisions of the signed agreement are reproduced here:

**AGREEMENT ON ARRANGEMENTS
FOR THE
SITUATION OF UNREST AT NANUMEA**

THIS AGREEMENT is made between the party of **SITIA IAKOPO** and the party **NOA MONISE** and witnessed by the Delegation of the Government on 17 May 1999.

THIS AGREEMENT was prepared by these two groups following meetings between representatives of the two parties held in the School Building of the Nanumea Church, called **LOTOTAHI**, from 13th to the 17th of May, 1999, the meeting held under the direction of the Leader of the Government Delegation.

IN DRAWING UP THIS AGREEMENT the parties respectfully agreed that the customs and traditions of Nanumea are of enduring importance, and that they would find a way to remedy the divided situation of the community in a way both parties here could agree willingly to.

THEREFORE, the two parties willingly agree and consent to the following provisions: -

1. The dismissal of the High Chief of Nanumea is to be carried out using the following process.
 - (a) Anyone with a criticism or complaint about the High Chief should direct his complaint to the Leader of the Branch of Tumau ("Leader of Tumau"). The Leader of Tumau decides on the appropriate action to take on this complaint. If the complaint is made by more than ten people, the Leader of Tumau will call a timely meeting of the branch to consider the complaint.
 - (e) The Leader of Tumau or the entire Branch of Tumau is to investigate the complaint, deciding what response is appropriate, in keeping with the nature of the complaint.
 - (i) If Tumau decides to admonish the High Chief, Tumau is to prepare and undertake that admonishment. And if the decision of Tumau is that the High Chief be dismissed, this decision is to be communicated to the Seven Branches so they can respond. Once the Seven Branches have responded the Ahiga is to be notified.
2. The Selection of the High Chief is to follow the established and customary practices as understood by both parties here, which are: -
 - (a) If there is a vacancy in the office of the High Chief, and it is appropriate to choose a new High Chief, the Branch of Tumau is charged with the responsibility of this selection process.
 - (e) The Branch of Tumau will contact those Branches which can appropriately fill the position of High Chief requesting that they select a representative to serve as High Chief. If a Branch selects someone, Tumau will determine whether that person's qualifications are in accord with restrictions and regulations for the position of High Chief.
 - (i) If the Branch of Tumau agrees on the person [put forward], it will notify the Seven Branches so they can lodge any objections they have. If there are objections from the Seven Branches, Tumau will look into them.
 - (o) If the selection by the Branch of Tumau is accepted, notice is then provided to the Ahiga.

3. The two High Chiefs, Sitia Iakopo and Noa Monise are to step down from their positions and the Branch of Tūmau is to be notified to select a new High Chief in accord with provisions in paragraph 2.

4. Nanumea's Community Meeting Hall is [for the purposes of this agreement] to be based on Fakaua groups and Elders. This arrangement is to be implemented under the following rules: -

(a) Decisions of the Ahiga are to be made by Elders who are members of Fakaua groups, along with other Elders. Included as Elders are those who are 55 years of age or older.

(e) Any other person who is part of a Fakaua group and is 45 years of age but not yet 55 years old, may share his or her thoughts in Ahiga meetings, but shall not take part in the making of decisions.

(i) These provisions will apply for one year starting on the date of the agreement and upon notification to the Ahiga.

This agreement was made in the School Building of the Church at Nanumea, called Lototahi, on the 17th of May 1999, and is attested to by the signatures of the two parties below: -

SITIA IAKOPO

NOA MONISE

The two signatures above were witnessed by:

**SAUFATU SOPOAGA
SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT
LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT DELEGATION**

Shortly after the signing of the agreement, Falaile Pilitati was chosen as Nanumea's High Chief. He served as the island's high chief until he himself requested to be allowed to step down due to complications in his household, the illness of his wife. Falaile's request was accepted and the Tūmau lineage worked to find a new High Chief. Eventually Laina Teuea was chosen as High Chief. In its second attempt to put forward Laina Teuea as its chosen candidate, Tūmau simply informed the āhiga that he was to be the new High Chief. However, there was no clear agreement in the āhiga over the selection of Laina as High Chief. Tūmau knew that in the agreement signed by Noa Monise and Siitia Iakopo it was not enough for it to approve an individual, but that the concurrence (or not) of the āhiga was required, and a majority was concerned about this. One faction in the āhiga was upset by this situation and from that time onward the island was again in disarray.

Because the Prime Minister would soon be travelling abroad on government business, it was decided to try to do something quickly about the unrest in Nanumea. Another delegation from Funafuti was organized and went to Nanumea in January, 2003.²⁰ The

²⁰ This delegation included representatives of Nanumea living in Funafuti (from Nanu-Futi), led by the leader of Nanufuti Tanelua Viliamu, the third leader, Malaki Tihala, Nanu-Futi secretary Malie Lototele, Treasurer

delegates realized that of the two village sides, Haumaefa and Lolua, Haumaefa was in fairly strong support of the High Chief, Laina Teuea, while the people of the Lolua side were displeased by his selection as High Chief. That a few people from Haumaefa had joined the Lolua side, and some from Lolua had joined Haumaefa, also contributed to the unrest. Following discussions with the delegates in the āhiga, Nameana, an amicable decision was reached to have Laina Teuea step down from the chieftainship, and, at the request of the Haumaefa side, to have Vevea Tepou also step down from his position as Council President. It was also agreed that Tūmau would select one of its members to temporarily fill the role of high Chief. Tūmau first appointed Teaokili Likilua, then Lolesi Samuelu, and currently Euta Telolomi.

After the delegation's return to Funafuti, and at the request of the Nanumea home community, the Nanu-Futi community drafted provisional procedures for the selection of the ruling chief, to be sent to Nanumea with the hope that it would be possible to gain support for it.²¹ The "Provisional Procedures" give the power of approving the selection of the person chosen to be high chief to the āhiga. This means that once Tūmau has made its selection, the name is put forward to be approved by the āhiga. In addition to this, there is a provision specifying the number of people needed for a quorum for meetings to select the ruling chief (whether a meeting of chiefly branches and in the āhiga). Also specified are the ages of those allowed to join in these meetings. Provision was also made for a caretaker High Chief who would serve in any interim period before a new official High Chief could be agreed upon.

The text of these "Provisional Procedures" follows below:

**Provisional Procedures
Selection of the Ruling Chief of Nanumea**

1. The āhiga of the community of Nanumea is headed by a Pulefenua/High Chief selected in the following manner:
 - (a) The chiefly branch Tūmau contacts the chiefly groups who are eligible to provide a reigning chief;
 - (e) If Tūmau agrees with the person proposed, it is then to inform the six branches to allow them to lodge objections. If any objections are lodged, Tūmau is to investigate them;

Satalaka Faiva, and elders Fili Homasi, Semaia Petio, Manoa Tehulu and David Manuella. Also included were Nanu-Futi policemen Neemia Kaloga and Toagfiti Keakea and Nanumea's representatives to Parliament, Maatia Toafa and Sio Patiale. Central government members of the delegation included the Attorney General, Iakopa Taeia, Commissioner of Police Willy Telavi, and Iete Avaniatele from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

²¹ These "Provisional Procedures" for the selection of the ruling chief of Nanumea were prepared to resolve points left unclear in the agreement signed by Noa Monise and Siitia Iakopo (regarding which group has the right to approve the person selected to be high chief, Tūmau or the Āhiga) at discussions with the delegation and the Nanumean community in January 2003. These proposed procedures were discussed at the monthly meeting of Nanu-Futi in Seimeana in May 2003. They were also sent to Nanumea itself, but to date there has been no response.

- (i) If Tūmau is fully satisfied with its investigations, its leader then notifies the āhiga and seeks its approval;
 - (o) The person proposed by Tūmau under Section 1 (i) to serve as High Chief should have the support of all six branches.
 - (u) Tūmau branch is to organize and coordinate the installation ceremony for the new High Chief, with this installation to take place within 7 days after the High Chief has been approved by the āhiga.
 - (f) If at any time the position of High Chief becomes vacant, a representative from Tūmau is to serve as acting High Chief.
2. Each chiefly branch meeting for the selection of the High Chief must consist of a quorum of at least 6 men who are fakaua members and have reached the age of 40.
 3. Rule number 2 above also applies to Tūmau in its meetings to choose its representative under section 1 (f) above.
 4. The term fakaua in Section 2 means any Nanumean who has registered his fakaua membership with the community and complies with any request made by the community.
 5. In its meetings to select the High Chief, the Nanumea Ahiga is to have a quorum of at least 50 men and women who have reached the age of 45 or older. This selection is done according to Ahiga custom.
 6. The Pulefenua is the symbol of the unity of the Nanumean people. He also dignifies and duly authorizes decisions of the āhiga.
 7. Arrangements for selection of a new High Chief are to be made in accord with stipulations of Section 1 (a-o):
 - a) if the High Chief dies while in office;
 - e) if two years have passed since he began in the position;
 - i) if the ahiga agrees with the recommendation of Tūmau (in section 8), or if the Ahiga itself makes a resolution to this effect, as in section 7.
 8. The dismissal of the High Chief is to be carried out in accord with the following procedures:
 - a) if anyone lodges a complaint or accusation against the High Chief, it is to be lodged with the leader of the branch Tūmau for its consideration.
 - e) Tūmau must consider any complaint raised under section 8 (a). Those raising a complaint must have reached the age of 45, and be supported by ten people who are also aged at least 45.
 - i) Tūmau is required to investigate complaints raised under Section 8(a) within 2 weeks from the time Tūmau's leader receives the complaint. They are to decide the appropriate response in keeping with the nature of the complaint. They are also to convey to the person who made the complaint their decision.
 - (o) If Tūmau decides to reprimand the High Chief, they are to undertake this. If they decide to dismiss the High Chief, they are to notify the seven chiefly branches and allow them to lodge any objections. Once any objections have been lodged, the āhiga is informed. The Āhiga then responds to Tūmau with its decision.
 - u) Once any reprimand by Tūmau of the High Chief has been conducted, Tūmau is to inform the āhiga of this.
 - f) If Tūmau does not act on any complaint made under Section 8 (a), or under Section 8 (e, i), the complaint may be taken to the āhiga for its consideration.
 9. If the āhiga does not receive Tūmau's response to a complaint made under 8 (a) within two weeks, it may go make its own decision regarding the complaint first lodged with Tūmau.
 10. Arrangements regarding tradition and custom, and requests from the āhiga, are the duties of the Island Council (Kaupule), as directed by the the Council of Chiefs (Toko Fitu).

11. Each Chiefly Branch selects its representatives to the Council of Chiefs (Tokofitu) and sends their names forward to the āhiga for approval.
12. Each representative of a Chiefly Branch shall have reached the age of 45 years or more.
13. The responsibility of the Council of Chiefs is to assist the High Chief in his various duties.
14. These procedures for the selection of the government of Nanumea are to be in operation for two years, commencing from the time that these procedures are approved.
15. A review of the procedures listed in this document should be brought forward as a discussion item for the āhiga prior to the final three months of the validity of the procedures above.

As was hoped, the installation of a caretaker High Chief improved the relationship between the contending factions in Nanumea. The “Proposed Procedures” have not yet been brought to the community for public discussion, but some community members have concerns over a few of its stipulations, especially the clause which sends Tūmau’s decisions about a new High Chief back to the āhiga for ratification. One objection to this is that any decision taken in the āhiga under current rules allows adult residents of Nanumea to take part. The concern voiced is that this would allow non-Nanumeans to help select the High Chief. A second objection is that open assessment of the character of the proposed high chief in the āhiga would include discussion of his faults, *pona*, potentially within the hearing of his sisters and female cousins. These and other relatives would be embarrassed by a public discussion of his faults. Finally, another objection is that this re-approval process undermines Tūmau’s traditional prerogatives for overseeing the selection process. If the āhiga can give its approval or disapproval, Tūmau’s role is devalued and its authority invalidated.

Overcoming Difficult Times

We know that times of great community solidarity have alternated in the history of Nanumea with times of intense argument. Both conditions are part of the natural cycle in community life throughout the world. We also know that the community of Nanumea has managed to survive the many changes of the last 150 years, as well as many serious disagreements that have sometimes pitted family against family, relative against relative. Imagine the strong words, intense feelings, and heated arguments that must have shaken the Āhiga in the 1870s, when the fenua had to decide whether to accept or to reject the Christian teacher. Over fifty years passed before there was unity on the island over that issue. In the 1950’s there were intense arguments over whether a taro pit should be dug in Matagi (for Tafega school). In both these cases, decisions were made and they gradually came to be

accepted by the community as a whole. The troubles [fakalavelave] that currently plagues the community of Nanumea will certainly not last forever either. We must *all* do all that we can to move beyond these recent issues of argument and regain a community life that is characterized by unity, peace, and high accomplishment. Surely, that is what our ancestors would wish, and it is what our children need.