

PRAYERS OF THE PAST

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I. INTRODUCTION

Prayer is such a basic human exercise that people belonging to all religious traditions have used this kind of expression from the earliest times. There are hundreds of hymns and petitions, not only in our own Judeo-Christian tradition, but also in the tradition of Egypt, Babylonia, and the other people of classical antiquity.¹ Progress in human sciences has now led to collections from still-existing tribal societies. In this field, Africa has taken the lead with, e.g., the anthologies of John S. Mbiti, Aylward Shorter, and Anthony J. Gittins, and a few other more-specialised studies with a more-limited scope.² They prove to all that, in addition to the need of offerings and sacrifices, there is also a universal human need to communicate verbally with the world beyond.

1. Are There any Melanesian Prayers?

Several anthologies of “Prayers from all over the world” have nothing, or almost nothing, to offer when it comes to Melanesia.³ A case in point is the vast collection by Alfonso M. Di Nola, who manages to quote only one example. It comes from the Trobriand Islands, and part of it runs as follows:

His name be extinguished, His name be rejected;

Extinguished at sunset, rejected at sunrise;

Rejected at sunset, extinguished at sunrise.

A bird is on the *baku* (= village place),

A bird which is dainty about its food,

I make it rejected!

His mint-magic, I make it rejected.

His *kayro'iwa* magic, I make it rejected.

His *libomatu* magic, I make it rejected (etc.).

His caresses of love, I make it rejected.

His bodily embracing, I make it rejected.

My *kabisilova* spell, I make it rejected.

It worms its way within you,

The way of the earth heap in the bush gapes open

The way of the refuse heap in the village is closed.

This rather unusual text is the counterpart of the more-familiar love magic (*kayro'iwa* and *libomatu*), designed to attract a sexual partner. However,

the above formula has the purpose of “causing to reject” (hence the name of *kabisilova*) a desired person, or to make a girl, her paramour, or her husband, wiped out from one’s memory. Some may wonder whether the formula quoted is a prayer at all, even by the standards used by Di Nola, who says he limits himself to liturgical prayer only, and leaves out on purpose any home-made texts.

To our knowledge, there is, as yet, not one anthology of Melanesian prayers. Still one cannot say that there has been a lack of interest to document the pre-Christian religion. Bishop Andre Navarre and Revd G. H. Codrington are two missionaries of the first generation, who noted down some “pagan prayers”, but it was not easy for these foreigners to obtain the old formulas, and many a prayer specialist of the time has taken his or her secret to the tomb.⁴ Subsequent anthropologists like Gerhard Peekel, Joseph Meier, Bronislaw Malinowski, and a few others, have added to our store of information, but the results they obtained are often misfiled under such entries as “charms, spells, and magic”. The most-readily available sources, then, are two major collections of very disparate anthropological data made by Fr Heinrich Aufenanger. He was associated with a catechist school at Guyebe, near Bundi, and sat down, during the final years of his life, with many village people in North-east New Guinea, to ascertain, as far as possible, the earlier pagan ways of life.⁵

So far we have touched upon some of the difficulties met in describing the Melanesian prayer tradition. Some problems, for example, the reason why the Melanesian picture seems so different from the African one, do not necessarily require our further attention.⁶ One guess is that it has something to do with the prevalence of a high god in African religion, and also with the great degree of institutionalisation of cults in that continent, reasons which would apply also among Polynesian peoples. But, there remain other glaring questions. For instance, why are Melanesians, as such, so secretive about their prayers, when many modern societies have them printed in books for everyone to read?

Is there a difference between prayers, spells, and incantations? How much can one rely upon the information gathered in a haphazard way by scholars with different interests, or by others, who give their materials, without always adding the necessary details or guarantees?⁷

First, one should observe that it is only natural that prayers are **not** among the most obvious products of a human culture. They express such deep personal feelings that they often remain confined to the private sphere. Many times, too, they are “speechless”,⁸ or – unlike offerings and sacrifices – they are so short and different from one occasion to another that one might not recognise them at all. For instance, when a Simbu man says: “Sun, look at this”, while holding up a taboo marker, which he is going to tie on one of his fruit trees, or when the Nakanai people, in moments of greatest distress, call upon “or Father” (*Tamamiteu*), or when they say: “The Lord of heaven (*Tauna Salemo*) has sent it”, when the first rain falls.⁹ These exclamations express, indeed, a belief in a Supreme Being, who is called upon for help, and to whom even a prayer of thanksgiving is addressed. Still, because these words come from a totally-different realm, as the ritual formulas of, say, modern church services, they might easily be passed over.

A second reason why there is so much reluctance to reveal religious formulas is that, because of their origin, and nature, these words are sacred, and also very powerful.¹⁰ They were often revealed by spirit beings, and must remain secret. Their use in public robs them of their efficacy, with a consequent loss of the tangible advantages to the person who “owns” them. A powerful word, once spoken out of its proper context, has an independent existence, and can no longer be controlled. All this applies, in a particular way, to the divulging of secret names and titles, and to the identity of the spirit beings. In this case, then, the religious taboo merely enforces the way in which Melanesians behave towards their fellow human beings, both living and dead.¹¹ Modern people might not always be familiar with such an attitude, although many of them keep using the saying, “Speak of the devil, and you see his tail”, and still heed the biblical injunction that “God’s name is not to be taken in vain” (cf. Ex 20:7).

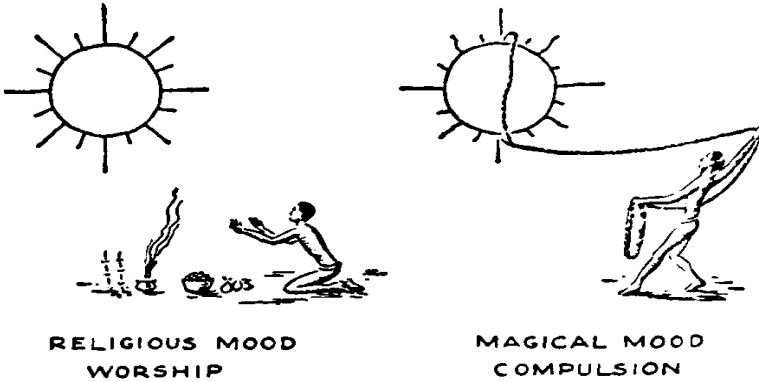
Yet, however hard it is to come by traditional Melanesian prayers, they do exist, and that for all spheres of life. It was noted by one critic of the missionary enterprise that it was, rather, the new faith, which was short in “prayers”, and had nothing more to offer than the *Sign of the cross*, the *Our Father*, and the *Hail Mary*, recited at Catholic church services. E. Rouga, an old Sulka philosopher, told Father Joseph Meier, sometime before World War 1, that his people had always been well equipped “to make the sick person well again, children grow strong and healthy, the fields yield good crops, to keep away illness and fire, make the pigs thrive, and the dogs become good at

hunting wild boars, to procure a rich catch for fishermen, to preserve sea-going persons from drowning, etc. But you,” he concluded his litany, “do not teach the people any such prayers, of which they stand in need so frequently” (Joseph Meier, *Reminiscences: a Memoir*, Aurora: Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, 1945, pp. 38-39).

2. What do we call “prayers”?

Before proceeding any further, we would need to refine our definition of what prayer is. Does it include improvised, home-made invocations, or only standardised, traditional texts? Is any appeal to spirits or deities essential, or do the words have any intrinsic power? Can we apply the name of prayers also to spells and incantations in ancient, and maybe foreign, tongues? And what about words of bargaining and flattery, commands and threats to the world beyond, humble petitions, individual laments and confessions of sins? The simple fact that some missionaries did introduce foreign words to designate their Christian prayers and services (e.g., the Tok Pisin *beten*, or the Polynesian *lotu*), whereas others managed to use local terms (e.g., the Solomons Islands *fagarafe*, or the Kuanua *raring*) clearly shows the extent of the confusion that reigns.

In our opinion, one should, from the start, realise that an acceptable definition of “prayer” is only *one* issue of a much-broader problem, viz., the distinction between “religion” and “magic”. In this regard, James G. Frazer submitted that the latter gives in to a mood of compulsion towards natural forces or agents, whereas the former manifests a sense of respect towards, and worship of, a supra-human element.¹² Some authors, with an evolutionistic frame of mind, have given priority to either the one or the other: that is, they either hold that religion did degenerate into magical practices, or that magic gradually evolved into a higher form, called religion.



The better answer is probably that it is impossible to reach, by historical means, the very origin of either magic or religion, and that manifestations of both, in the moods just described, do co-exist in every religious tradition. Samuel's "prayer" is definitely: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Sam 3:9), and not the command addressed to God: "Listen, Lord, your servant is speaking." Yet, there are innumerable psalm texts, which might not have exactly this second formula, but come very close to it (cf. Ps 4:2, 13:4, 17:1, 27:7, 39:13, . . .). There will hardly be anybody to disqualify these texts as true prayers.

What, indeed, matters in the debate about magic and religion is the purpose the petitioner has in mind, and the inner attitude, which inspires his human communications with the world beyond. Although not observable (and, therefore, insufficient to distinguish between "prayers" and "spells"), one has to concede that the intention, or mood, are integral parts of a person's dealings with the world beyond. To see "magic" and "charms" and "spells" only outside Christianity is sheer ethnocentrism, and not justified. Said one author: "The world is not divided into good Christians and bad pagans, but into good people and bad people. And God knows there are few enough of them in either rank" (Dagobert H. Runes).¹³

(a) The above open-ended approach leaves enough space for further questions, such as, the problem whether pagan prayers are directed to an impersonal power or to a supreme being, to a minor deity, or to an ancestor, to a localised spirit (*masalai*), or to one or another ghost (*tamberan*).¹⁴ Considering the nature of our information, it is often impossible to be sure. As a matter of

fact, the same people might use different prayer models, depending on the situation. H. Meyer has noted, e.g., that in the Aitape-Wewak area, prayers are usually directed to the ancestors, but that when nothing else proves to be helpful, they are directed to the supreme god Wunekau (Heinrich Meyer, “Wunekau, oder die Sonnenverehrung in Neuguinea”, in *Anthropos* 27 (1932), p. 854). In other places, it is believed that the lesser deities (*tibud*, *buga*, etc.) might be manipulated, but that the supreme god Anutu can not be deceived by human wiles (Rufus Pech, “Myth, dream, and drama: shapers of a people’s quest for salvation, illustrated by the devolution of the myth of the two brothers: Manub and Kilibob in New Guinea”, STM thesis, Columbus OH: Trinity Lutheran Seminary, 1979, pp. 77-78). Maybe it is good to realise that Christian prayers, too, are not always directed to the Godhead, or to the God-man, Jesus, and that it is unfair to demand from traditional religion a degree of precision, which is not found elsewhere. Again, there are from Melanesia quite a few prayer-like texts, which are transmitted without an explicit reference to any higher being. Some formulas just state the object of the request made, or do name a “natural” agent – maybe a force of nature, one or another animal, or even the person himself, who is speaking – to effect the desired result. We would feel that, even so, unless more-convincing proofs can be adduced, the said formulas are not disqualified from being true prayers. One valid argument to reject the latter texts *might* be that the people, themselves, categorise them differently.¹⁵ If one does agree that a religious mood or intention is essential to a prayer, or that the sense or meaning of a text does not follow slavishly its grammatical form (which might be archaic, commanding, repetitive, etc.), then some of the first-sight characteristics to single out true prayers might not be very convincing at all. Once again, one may observe that, in Christianity, too, certain “prayers” are said, e.g., before a community service – in order that the subsequent sacred action, such as, the proclamation of the gospel, or some other “prayers”, may be said worthily, and to the spiritual benefit of those attending. This fact warns us not to make irrelevant distinctions, or use extraneous standards, when it comes down to appreciating non-Christian religion.

(b) Another question, which could be asked, concerns the subject matter of the prayers: is it for purely material goods or even fame and status, or does it also express the need for spiritual salvation? The problem has been fully discussed, in relation to Melanesia, in some analyses of the so-called cargo cults. After various attempts, which stressed the foreignness and irrationality of these movements, a deeper understanding has emerged, which sees them,

instead, as a “search for salvation”.¹⁶ Apparently, neat distinctions, of an academic nature – as the one between physical salvation (cf. the German: *Wohl*) and spiritual salvation (German: *Heil*) – are probably not made by the New Guinea food gatherers, and subsistence farmers. Their first concern is with poverty and hunger, extinction and defeat, sickness and death. In this regard, they are not much different from the psalmists in Israel, and their requests for healing and survival, and for “food in due season” (Ps 104:27). These Old Testament people, too, were surrounded by threatening enemies, and they did not use to mince their words when they wanted to curse their Canaanite neighbours (cf. Ps 35, 109, 137, 9, etc.) Still, Israel did hope for a better life, for “integral human development”, in which the bodily well-being was only the starting point. Similarly, in Melanesia, there was a longing for justice and peace, for friendly relationships with the world beyond, and for a union with the spirits, which even went beyond the threshold of the tomb. It is to be expected that the concerns of traditional Melanesians will disconcert people with a technical, or urban, frame of mind. The latter will have little experience of, say, asking a spirit for forgiveness for having aimlessly wandered through the bush, and, so, possibly broken certain unknown taboos. Such a person is even less aware of the trespasses, which might have been committed by one of his or her domestic animals. Yet, these are some of the examples, which point beyond a mere physical outlook in Melanesian prayers.

(c) From here, we can go further, to a related issue, and that is whether Melanesian prayers show mainly self-interest, or pay also homage to the deity, or whatever supernatural agent is addressed. As with the problem of religion versus magic, one should again think of a whole gamut of possibilities, matching the ups and downs of the human soul. We, thus, arrive at distinguishing, at one end of the spectrum, the prayer of petition (sorrow, lament, etc.), and, at the other end, the prayer of praise (joy, thanksgiving, adoration). The borderline between these two is sometimes very thin indeed, just as the petitioner’s mood can easily change to trust and confidence in being answered. Then there is something like the *captatio benevolentiae*, even on the human level, which does not directly look for personal benefits, but still is a distant preparation to maintain good relationships, should there be a danger that dark clouds gather. There is no doubt a lesson in the fact that the Lord’s prayer starts with, “Hallowed be Thy Name”, and only, in the second half, asks, “Give us our daily bread” and “Forgive us our sins” (cf. Matt 6, 9:11-12). Finally, there is the distinct possibility that true prayers of praise are so sparingly found

in the sources because there are other ways to express this attitude, say, by offerings and sacrifices (e.g., to fulfil a vow after being saved from disaster at sea). Prayer is only one segment in the religious experience.

2. An unfinished, but useful, task

There are many more questions, which one would like to ask regarding the traditional prayer experience in Melanesia, but the state of our information just does not allow many definite answers. What we really would need are several in-depth studies of particular religious configurations, backed up with an arsenal of philosophy, anthropology, theology, liturgy, etc., which can do justice to what the respective human groups possess in their dealings with the world beyond. This type of study is hardly available for Africa,¹⁷ let alone for the hundreds of Melanesian societies. Hence the legitimate question, whether there is any use at all in having a selection of traditional Melanesian prayers made available to a wider audience.

One good reason for drawing attention to the riches of the indigenous prayer experience is that it shows one of the most-impressive aspects of pre-Christian religion, which, admittedly, had no developed priesthood, and was rather limited in formalised worship. Yet prayers were said for all occasions in life: “To give birth, to heal, to celebrate, to mourn, to hunt, to garden, to fish, to give thanks, and so on” (Bernard Narokobi, “A Concept of God in Melanesia”, in his *The Soul of Races*, Waigani PNG: Dept of Philosophy UPNG, 1981, p. 23). It is this material breadth of experience, which we shall follow in presenting, below, the many prayer formulas found in anthropological literature.

Let us add, however, that the selection made is no doubt biased, and falls short, for that matter, of the spectrum where indigenous “prayers” are used to harm and curse people. A few examples have been retained, but, as a rule, the selection has left out requests to reduce the appetite of the guests at a festival, many demands to mete out a deserved punishment to thieves and garden-pilferers, some petitions to make trade partners foolish, so that they misjudge their business deals, the invocations to cause earthquakes and landslides, so that the enemies’ gardens and crops are destroyed, an appeal to prolong a woman’s labour in revenge for her having spurned a magician’s advances, imprecations to kill sorcerers and abettors, and to annihilate, in the most cruel ways, the traditional enemies of a tribe.

It would appear that such an option is not completely arbitrary. In fact, people differentiate between what is good for them, and what will be less than a blessing, or also between words to be taken literally, and others, which are exaggerated fancifully. But such evidence would not be sufficient to separate “magic” from “religious”, or “spells” from “prayers”, or pre-Christian formulas from subsequent expressions. One could say that traditional morality is not guided by the principle of “the golden rule” (cf. Matt 7:12), but is more bound by the rules of survival for the individual and his group. Again, his age-old religion is full of ambiguities, and does not know – like Christianity – on one side, a good God, with His holy angels, and, on the other side, Satan and the evil devils. Instead – as a rule – the spirits are rather “neutral” or “ambivalent”, i.e., protecting and avenging, at the same time, according to the circumstances.¹⁸ And, whatever exceptional powers some individuals might possess (e.g., over the eyes, the fish, or the rain), they can use them either to heal or to hurt, to enrich people or also to disadvantage them. After all, what is harmful or helpful often depends on the respective viewpoints of its agent or its victim (Mary MacDonald, “Symbols of Life: Magic, Healing, and Sorcery in Mararoko” (conference paper), 1982, p. 6).

Another good reason for presenting the following collection is that it shows a different style of prayer than the one used in the bible, or by the church. The latter prayers have often lost in concreteness and realism what they have gained in conceptual clarity and theological precision. In other cases, the “new” prayers get entangled in some kind of emotionalism and verbosity, so that all touch is lost with the experience of every day. This also applies to the archaic usages of *thee* and *thou*. But, in the best cases, e.g., when using texts of the ancient psalms, the faithful are confronted with a culture of shepherds and sheep, which is utterly foreign to them. In Melanesia, from time immemorial, prayer language is shaped by a different climate and environment, by the reference to other animals and birds, by the nearness of other mountains and streams, by a freedom of expression that might be refreshing for many one-track people of modern society. Besides the speechless prayers, there are some which were whispered, and some which were chanted, and there was even loud “shouting up” to the sky.¹⁹ The accompanying actions, too, were very diverse, like touching and waving, and various forms of miming. There were solitary prayers, and others said in a responsive form. When there was a concern for rain or war, usually the whole community took part, but when the object was,

rather, food or children, the family unit prayed, and when one's own life was at stake, the individual cried out for help.²⁰

We realise that, especially in this regard, second-hand, and often third-hand, translations are not good enough. They, very much, lack the "genius" of any particular vernacular, the rhythmic cadence of the clauses, the figures of traditional rhetoric, the inimitable sound effects (cf. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, London UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922, pp. 428-452), the nuances of meaning, and the untold connotations of different expressions, say, their link with mythical stories and concepts (cf. Roy Wagner, *Habu: The Innovation of Meaning in Daribi Religion*, Chicago IL: Chicago University Press, 1972, pp. 59-68). Just to give one example for philology, English is not familiar with the inclusive and exclusive plural, that is, whether the person spoken to is included (as Tok Pisin: *yumi*, i.e., "you and me") or excluded (as Tok Pisin: *mipela*, i.e., "we, without you, the addressee"), but it is common in Melanesia. There is surely a different kind of intimacy implied when a petitioner identifies himself with the spirits (*yumi*), and when he does not. On the other hand, one may pray to "my" or "our" Father (cf. Matt 6:9) – instead of to "the" Father, without a personal pronoun (as in Luke 11:2) – and not show any particular intimacy. To be sure, the student should know whether the nature of a vernacular requires that all kinship terms must specify to whom they refer, or not. In the former case, the possibility of distinguishing between "Father" and "our Father" just would not exist! We have tried, therefore, to keep in our presentation, the useful hints found in the literature, not only regarding the place of origin (and whether the source also gives the vernacular formula), the indications of who says the prayer, to whom it is addressed, how it is executed, which gestures are made, and the like. The editing of texts from so many sources has been kept to a minimum, while exact references will always allow one to check the details.

A third reason for presenting the prayer formulas, which follow, is that they can help us to understand better some aspects of the bible, especially of the Old Testament. We have already made some observations about Melanesian attitudes toward the efficacy of the word, and the use of names (see page 30). This applies to the frequent anthropomorphisms of primal history, where God "said, and it was" (Gen 1), and, even more appropriately, to the so-called patriarchal blessings, where a word, once spoken, cannot be made void (cf. Gen 27:30-38, also Sir 3:8). As to the use of names, we have, in the book of Genesis, the story of Adam "naming" all the creatures of the earth: "and that is

how they all got their names” (Gen 2:19). Again, it is common knowledge that Israel has tabooed the name of Jahweh, and switched over to alternative designations, such as, “the Lord”. A similar attitude is no relic of the past in Melanesia, but still of daily application. Then, there is also the great concern in traditional prayers with war and survival. This can help us to gauge better the meaning of the “Holy war” in the scriptures, with Jahweh, the Warrior for Israel, to whom the people pray and sacrifice before engaging in a fight (1 Kings 8:44-45), to whom they shout loudly in their battle cries (Josh 6:5; Judg 7:18-20), and to whom they “dedicate” all the booty they obtain (Deut 20:10-18). As to Israelite prayers proper, the constant concern with magic and counter-magic in Melanesia, opens a new possibility for identifying “the doers of evil” in the “lamentation psalms”, whereas some of the petitions to destroy the people’s enemies will shed a useful light (as said, already) upon the so-called “imprecatory psalms” of the Jewish bible.

Maybe there is still a fourth reason for undertaking a job which is doomed to be unsatisfactory, as long as more professional monographs are not available, and that is that even the present collection might influence Melanesian worship. This is, again, not something completely new, for there are actually some “Christian” prayers around, which look very much like those of traditional religion, but “baptised” – somehow, in the way the New Testament has baptised “in the Lord” the household codes taken over from Hellenism (e.g., Col 3:18-4:1). An unusual example, which has even the accompanying “rubric” printed in red, is the following “prayer for a new garden”, used in the Yule Island Mission (cf. Andre Sorin, ed., *My Prayer Book*, Yule Island PNG: Catholic Mission, 1954, p. 54):

Make a wooden cross, and take it to the priest to be blessed. Then put it in your garden, and say the following prayer.

O Jesus Christ, You died on the cross to save me from the power of the devil. May this cross, which I now plant in my garden, remind me of that, and may it remind me that I have given my garden to You. Send down Your holy angel to watch over my garden. Keep far away from it all birds, pigs, rats, and other things that will do it harm. Protect it from the charms and spells of the sorcerers, which belong to the devil. Make all the things, which I plant in this garden, grow well. I ask this blessing from You, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

This type of “adaptation” is not the end of the road. The next area of immediate application is home-grown songs, which could replace the wholesale adoption of both old European and modern American hymns.²¹ This, too, is a matter of, say, para-liturgical nature, where there are less strictures than for the official liturgy of the church. But, in the public liturgy, too, there is scope for innovation. It would appear that, in matters of content, more attention should be given to the proper place of the ancestors in a Christian “communion of the saints”, and also to the real and down-to-earth concerns of grass-roots people. Finally, in matters of form – which will vary according to the different cultural groups – nobody can, as yet, predict what the eventual outcome will be. Maybe an example from Nigeria might exemplify what is meant here.

Speaking from a Roman Catholic background, it is safe to say that the Latin prayers at Mass were masterpieces of form and content. The 1974 version of the “collect” for Christmas, which was fairly literal, but, still cut up in four sentences, the one “period” of the Latin ran as follows:

O God, when You created man, You endowed him with wonderful dignity, and You restored it to him more perfect than before.

Your Son was willing to share in our manhood. Grant us to share in His Godhead. Through Christ, our Lord.

One study of sacral Igbo language and literature has led to the following proposal:²²

O Carrier of the universe! One-who-utters-and-it-happens! Your handiwork! When an elephant marches, (people) see its footprint! Man is all dignity! From origin, You stuck eagle feathers on him! The common folk and the king are sticking eagle feathers on You, for much You have already done, (now) You have done more on top of it! Jesus, Your Son, God in fact, looked at, and considered us, and came into our world! We and He became one blood! And became actually salt and palm oil! Thus you gave us a new status! O! One-who-does-one-good-on-top-of-another! That dignity, with whom mankind came out in the world, burst out! Burst out like the morning sun on the world! One-who-speaks-and-acts! If a hill is still ahead, does one rest behind? Well then, come on! Carry the stakes right to the farm. So that the dignity of Christ becomes ours; so that His life becomes ours; so that His power

becomes ours; so that His glory becomes ours! Becomes the man's and the woman's; becomes the child's and adult's; becomes the poor's and the noble's, too! So that the kite will perch; so that the eagle will perch. Listen to our voice, because we are asking through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the Name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. He, who with You and the Holy Spirit, are one God eternally.

If this is possible in Nigeria, it is not a vain hope that one day Papua New Guinea, too, will follow the lead. Our present purpose is only to give a first hint.

II. THE PRAYERS

1. House and home

1. Oh Sun! Come into the house!
I am really a child of the sun.

Prayer said by the Gende, in the Upper Ramu Valley (Northern Simbu), when the central post of a house is put in position (Heinrich Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", in *Anthropos* 57 (1962), p. 41).

2. Only when you (viz, spirits) move in with us
will this house be warm and pleasant.
Mount, therefore, on top of the posts,
and take up your place.
When you care, we will be doing well.

House blessing among the Mbowamb, addressed to the spirits, who earlier had been asked to decide the exact emplacement of the house (Georg Vicedom, "Die religiösen Voraussetzungen zur Aufnahme der biblischen Botschaft auf Neuginea", in *Evangelische Mission Zeitschrift* 3-6 (1942), p. 142).

3. O Father! Have mercy!
I wish my wife to deliver her baby safely. . . .
O Father! I am not strong.
You alone are strong. You can help us.

The prayer is said by the father, in the region of the Chambri Lakes, when his wife is about to give birth. The second part is added after the husband puts a bamboo, filled with water, near the woman (Heinrich Aufenanger, *The Great Inheritance in North-East New Guinea: A Collection of Anthropological Data*, St Augustin: Anthropos Institute, 1975, p. 85).

4. As *Nutu* is strong, Oh, let my baby be strong.
As *Nutu* is great, Oh, let my baby be great.
As *Nutu* is good, Oh, let my baby be good.

Formula used by a Mengen mother (East New Britain), when dedicating a new-born baby to *Nutu*, the master of all things (Tim O'Neill, *And We, the People: Ten Years with the Primitive Tribes of New Guinea*, London UK: Geoffrey Chapman, 1961, p. 44).

5. Oh Father! My wife has born a baby.
I do not know anything.
My Father! I wish the baby to grow up.

A similar prayer from the same area (with the original text added), which a father addressed to the sun, when a child has been born (Aufenanger, *The Great Inheritance in North-East New Guinea*, p. 84).

6. Grandfather Sun, while you are watching him,
this boy shall grow up nice and healthy.

Simbu invocation (with original text), spoken to accompany the dedication of a three-days-old baby. Afterwards, a special meal follows (Wilhelm Bergmann, *The Kamanuku: the Culture of the Cimbu [sic] Tribes*, 4 vols, Harrisville Qld: H. F. W. Bergmann, 1972, p. 5).

7. Oh Sun! You made this little child.
It may be taken ill, or may fall (and get hurt).
Oh watch! Oh watch! I am giving this child a name.

Invocation pronounced by the father, when sacrificing a pig at the name-giving ceremony (i.e., when the child is old enough to walk). Recorded

among the Pala-Damba of Northeast New Guinea (Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", p. 36).

8. Oh Sun! Our Father!
You see this baby.
Take care of it.

Common formula, which a Dom magician addresses to the sun, as the heavenly Father, to protect a small child. Meanwhile, the men stand outside the house (Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", p. 31).

9. Oh *Wonekau!* You hover, you look,
you see my wife, my children, my mother, my father,
my sisters, my brothers, my aunts, my uncles,
my cousins, my friends, my people.

This request for protection is said in a loud voice, and separately by each of the "priests (*kinau*), at the end of an initiation ceremony. Note that each time the female members of the family are mentioned before the male relations. The original Karesau version of the prayer is also given (Wilhelm Schmidt, "The Secret Initiation Ceremonies of the Karesau Islanders" (from *Anthropos* (1907)), in *Oral History* 7 (2/1979), p. 39).

2. **Sickness and death**

10. Oh Sun! The wind (or: the cold) acted fraudulently,
so the little girl fell ill.
Take this *ratan*-rope, and bind the wind.
It will try to come again; keep it tied up.

Prayer for healing among the Kulchkane people to accompany "the binding of the wind" (or: the cold), which has been diagnosed as cause of the sickness (Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", p. 63).

11. Yanigelua! I am hiding in my house.
Other people do not know about it.
You always used to help me greatly.
Why did you forsake me?

I had not called your name for a long time,
So now you have punished me.
I am giving you this pig.

Lament used among the Ndika people to accompany a secret sacrifice, which a husband offers in his wife's house, in order to restore well-being and success (Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", p. 33).

12. Oh Sun! You see I "found" (= gave birth to) a baby.
Will it live, or will it die?

Prayer of trust and confidence said by a mother, holding an open net bag, with her child, to her chest, and showing it to the sun. From among the Kondulchu people (Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", p. 36).

13. *Hintubehet* (Oh God)! Please, keep us alive!

or also:

My Ancestor! Have mercy on us, let us not die!

Two invocations to the creator deity venerated on Central New Ireland. They are said in cases of extreme need. The original text in the Pala language is also supplied (Gerhard Peekel, *Religion und Zauberei auf dem mittleren Neu-Mecklenberg, Bismark-Archipel, Sudsee*, Munster Neth: Aschendorf, 1910, pp. 6-7).

14. Kiyari, Kiyari (Oh sky)!
You fathered us, you put us here.
You must not be "hot" (= angry) with us.
Be easy with us.
Enough! Enough (lightnings)!

or also:

Kiyario (Oh sky)!
You put us here before.
You cannot kill us.

Two invocations of the Batainabara (Eastern Highlands), when the lightning strikes (J. B. Watson, and V. Watson, "The Batainabura of New Guinea", MA thesis, New Haven CT: Yale University, 1972, pp. 435 and 470).

15. Ancestor! Keep us alive!
Send sickness and disease far from us.

This invocation is addressed at Namatanai (New Ireland) to the ancestor *Tangrau*, in cases where all other magical means have failed (Neuhaus 1934, p. 15).

16. You who dwell on the *Rongmaya* mountain,
release this man and go away.
You who dwell on the *Sumale* mountain, release . . .
You who dwell on the *Wisa* mountain, release . . .
You who dwell on the *Rarapau* mountain, release . . .
You who dwell on the *karape*-tree, release . . .
You who dwell on the *pai*-tree, release . . .
You who dwell on the *walega*-tree, release . . .
You who dwell on the *yare*-tree, release . . .
You who dwell on the *muli*-tree, release . . ., etc.

South Kewa litany, which lists all the possible spirits in the environment, and bids them to loose hold from a sick person. The healer, who uses this formula, will continue calling the names of various grasses, canes, bananas, vegetables, and animals. He concludes with mentioning the *bolali*- and *keali*-trees, in which it is believed that the spirit has come to rest. Then he climbs into the tree to chase the spirit away, and concludes his prayer by walking around the tree (Mary MacDonald, "Traditional Healing Practices in Mararoko", in *Point* (2/1981), p. 115).

17. Oh Sun! We want to bury this man NN.
Oh watch! His soul is going up to you. You watch.
He used to stay with us, but now he is going up to you.

Recommendations of a deceased person, directed to *Yanigelua*, when the Ndika people are about to bury a corpse (Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", p. 32; for a Motuan

prayer, said at the same occasion, see B. J. Butcher, *We Lived with Headhunters*, London UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963, p. 34).

18. Father up there! Take me!

Short invocation, with original version, from Kapriman village in the Timbunke area, said when people are very sick (Aufenanger, *The Great Inheritance in North-East New Guinea*, p. 320).

3. General intercessions

19 *Agunua!* Take thou away fever and ague.
Take thou away headache.
Take thou away thieving,
so that our bodies may be light.
Take thou away a bad season, bring in a good.
Keep my feet when I climb an almond tree.
Preserve the taro so that, when planted, it may thrive,
and the banana, that it may bear good fruit.
Let none steal from my garden, none steal my pigs.
May the pigs increase; preserve the dogs.

Example of an intercessory prayer (*fagarafe*, literally: “to make one weary”), which is addressed to the creator spirit on San Cristoval, in the Southern Solomons. It is used when the first fruits of the harvest are offered in order to implore the divine protection for the coming year (C. E. Fox, *The Threshold of the Pacific*, London UK: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trubner, 1924, pp. 80-81).

20. *Tsinmari!* Help us catch fish and shoot pigs!
Send us rain! Kill our enemies!
Protect us! Cure our sick child!

Prayer of a headman, in the Chambri Lakes region, for various common and private needs. After saying this prayer, he offers to the Sun Man his black “sun stones”, some betel nuts, mother-of-pearl shells, etc. Later, he takes everything back again (Aufenanger, *The Great Inheritance in North-East New Guinea*, p. 53).

21. Ba-ba-ba-ba.

Protect us from sickness.
Bring us wild pigs in our snares.
Make the taro grow large.
...
Fip-fip-fip-fip.

Text from the Baktaman (near Kiunga), said by the cult leader, who, at a particular stage in the initiation ritual, addresses the ancestral spirit (*Yolam*). The initial words have no meaning, while during the brief prayer, which follows, part-cooked meat of a sacred animal is rubbed against the right-side bones of the ancestor. A similar formula and rite follows, with the skull and mandible, while the prayer concludes with other paralinguistic sounds (Fredrik Barth, *Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Guinea*, Oslo Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 1975, pp. 67-68).

22. I give you this, I cook it for you.
Give us many pigs!
Strengthen our taro gardens!
Make the taro tubers grow large!
Look after this set of men,
give them plenty of food, so they will be strong!

Another Baktaman formula, used during the initiation rituals. While saying it, a particular marsupial is first held up before the ancestral shrine, and then beaten with a stick till all the bones are broken. Finally, it is put over the sacred fire (Barth, *Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Guinea*, pp. 89-90).

23. Give us many warriors.
Give us many pigs.
Give us many children.
Give us many sweet potatoes, etc.
We make this request by the sun.
We make this request by the moon.

Some of the hopes and needs of the South Kewa, as expressed by a cult leader, while he rubs the spirit stones with blood and local oil. As in

other prayers of this area, the formula concludes with a special appeal to sun and moon (MacDonald, "Symbols of Life", p. 9; cf. also p. 6).

24. Powerful Spirit (*tataro*), Grandfather!
This is your lucky drop of *kava*.
Let boars come in to me;
let *rawe*-pigs come in to me.
Let the money I have spent come back to me;
let the food that is gone come back hither
to the house of you and me.

This invocation to the dead is called *tataro* (after the first word of the text, which also refers to "a ghost of power", as distinct from a *vui*, i.e., a spirit which never was in a human body). The text is pronounced among the Mota people of the Banks Islands, when making a libation of *kava*, and before taking part in this particular ritual (R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians: Studies in their Anthropology and Folklore*, Oxford UK: Clarendon Press, 1891, p. 147).

25. Oh Father *Konsel*! You are "sorry" for us!
You can help us. We have nothing,
no aircraft, no ships, no jeeps, nothing at all.
The Europeans steal our "cargo".
You will be sorry for us, and see that we get something.

Request addressed to an ancestor, that he might show "concern" (Tok Pisin: *sori*) with his people, and give them "cargo" (i.e., any goods the ancestors can supply). From the Madang area, circa 1947 (Peter Lawrence, "Cargo Cults and Politics", in P. Hastings, ed., *Papua New Guinea: Prospero's Other Island*, Sydney NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1971, p. 109).

26. *Bimbaio*! Give us all the good things,
and give all the bad things to the dogs.

General invocation, which is said, with outstretched hands, along the Mamberano coast in West Irian, when the full moon appears, or whenever an important work is about to begin (Max Moszkowski, "Bericht aus Neu-Guinea", in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 42 (1910), p.

951; see also “Die Volkerstamme am Mamberano in Hollandisch-Neu-Guinea . . .”, in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 43 (1911), pp. 324-325).

27. Do not be angry with us.
We are going forth to cut the cane.
Guard us from hurt –
from bite of snake,
from sting of wasp and centipede,
from sago-thorns, from falling tree,
from accident wife knife or hatchet.
Be kind to us.

Example of an *ivaiva*-prayer, said at Orokolo by the man responsible (*kariki haera*) for the men’s house, to safeguard the participants in an expedition, whether for hunting, sago-making, cane-cutting, or what not, from misadventure in the bush. It is accompanied by a food offering, but the beneficiary of this gesture is not always clear (F. E. Williams, *Drama of Orokoio: the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Elema*, Oxford UK: Clarendon Press, 1940, p. 231).

28. Partake, Oh Spirits, of your payment (*ula’ula*),
and make my magic thrive.

The above words, spoken by a Trobriand Island magician, when making a small food offering to the spirits, are especially interesting because they seem to distinguish the autonomous efficacy of magical rites and spells (in general: *megwa*) from the assistance requested of the spirits. The latter, we would normally call a “prayer”, whose object it is to perform a given act of “magic” in the proper way (Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, p. 422).

4. Gardening and husbandry

29. *Yabowaine* (Oh God)! Come down from above!
Come, break up the earth, my boundary catchers.
Break the earth in all directions.
Your breaking up the earth, letting light into it.
My breaking up the earth, letting light into it.
The *monolawa*-yams, the *gelaboi*-yams.
My breaking up the earth, letting light into it.

A Dobuan incantation, which is murmured under breath, i.e., spoken softly, and unlike everyday loud talk, so that the yams will listen to it. Meanwhile, the male ritualist plants some pegs (called Boundary Catchers) near the most centrally-located plot of the newly-made garden. The reference to two varieties of larger yams somehow anticipates the result hoped for. The whole ceremony includes still other formulas and actions, reserved for a female ritualist (R. F. Fortune, *Sorcerers of Dobu: The Social Anthropology of the Dobu Islanders of the Western Pacific*, London UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1932, p. 111).

30. *Dembine*, Great Man! Look at us!
We have prepared a big dinner.
We give it to you.
Help us, and give us a good yam crop!

Invocation said near Kaugia (West of Wewak) by the guardian of the yam-stones. Before planting, a dinner is prepared, and a pig slaughtered in front of the house in which the yam-stones are kept, and the Great Man is called upon. When *Dembine* has “seen” the food display, all help themselves, assured that they have “brought down” the Great Man (Heinrich Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea: A Documentation*, St Augustin: Anthropos Institute, 1972, p. 368).

31. *Nyamben Mbampo* (Sun and Moon)!
Come down and help me!
I wish to harvest large yams.
For a long time I have “eaten hungry”!
Now help me!

Prayer used by an important man in the Maprik area to forestall a rich harvest, and indicating that, for a long time, people have only been half satisfied (“eaten hungry”) (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, pp. 289-299).

32. Oh Father, Oh Grandfather! Do not abandon us!
We are working in our garden;
bring the crop to maturity,
that we may have something to eat.

Prayer for assistance, directed to an ancestral spirit (*buga*), from the Madang region (Emil Hannemann, *Village Life and Social Change in Madang Society*, Baitabag PNG: American Lutheran Mission, 1954, p. 18).

33. Oh Sun, Grandfather! Look at me (what I am doing).

...

As I do here (i.e., tottering and falling down),
so it shall happen to anyone

who steals this (garden produce).

I close (now) the door (i.e., obstruct the access).

Simbu formula (with original), used when a gardener prepares a taboo-sign to protect his property from theft (Bergmann, *The Kamanuku*, p. 54; also pp. 5 and 38).

34. Look, Big Father!

...

If you make the vegetables grow well,
I shall eat them.

I have killed some rats,

and have cooked *wamugl*-plants (as a sacrifice).

or also:

Look, Oh Sun!

We have planted sweet potatoes.

Make them grow.

Two addresses to the Sun, the first from Dengglagu, and the other from among the Vandeke people, before planting sweet potatoes in a new garden (Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", pp. 6 and 2; for a similar prayer from Maprik, see Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, p. 280).

35. Grandfather (Sun)! Before your eyes I plant my garden.

I planted it, but it has not grown well so far.

Shine, therefore nicely,

and when you have brought it ready for harvesting,

then I can eat from it.

Request for a good harvest among the Simbu people, recorded by Wilhelm Bergmann in the Kuman language (*The Kamanuku*, p. 4).

36. You are my Father, you gave me all.
Now I am ready to make a sacrifice to you,
and you will look after my garden and pigs.

Prayer to one's deceased father, from the Southern Highlands (Bernie Collins, ed., *Not to Destroy . . . But to Fulfil . . . Southern Highlands Cultures and Christian Faith*, Mendi PNG: 1983, p. 9).

37. Mother! We want to plant taro. Come!

Private prayer addressed to a deceased mother. The woman's collarbone is taken from the grave, wrapped up, and placed on a decorated table, with a litter of cooked food in front of it. Similar rituals are followed on the Schouten Islands, with the jawbones of a father, or another important man (Aufenanger, *The Great Inheritance in North-East New Guinea*, p. 237; note also p. 228).

38. *Uruave!* Look at my vegetables,
don't let them rot,
but, rather, make them increase.

Fuyughe prayer, said when the bright *Uruave*-star (i.e., *Aldebaran*) appears on the horizon. The people then hold all kinds of small vegetables to the sky, in order to persuade the heavenly body to be favourable towards them. After such an offering, the foodstuffs are either eaten, or given to the pigs (Paul Fastre, *Manners and Customs of the Fuyuges*, La Jolla CA: University of California, San Diego, 1987 (translation of *Moeurs et coutumes fuyougheses*, 1937), p. 219, see also p. 218).

39. My work is done, Big Father. I am going to rest.
You watch over the vegetables so that they may grow well.
...
Oh Sun! I can see you when you go down and when you rise.

Give my garden strength, so that it may grow well.
I am an old man, my teeth are broken;
I like to eat beans.
Watch over them, so that they may grow well.
...
Oh Sun! We have been working together.
I am now going to give you some meat as a reward.

Three-part prayer, said at successive stages during planting time, from Nauru village, in the New Guinea Highlands (Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", p. 19).

5. Harvesting

40. Watch, Oh Sun! We have planted sugar cane,
and provided it with sticks to support it.
We shall cut and eat it. May it grow well.
May the things we have planted grow well.
Oh Sun! Our Father! Keep watching!
we (too) keep watching.

Prayer from Nauru in New Guinea Highlands, to promote growth (Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", p. 19).

41. As thick as the *mengema*-caterpillar is,
as (fat as) the *kamama*-caterpillar is,
as (big as) the Simbu-rock is,
as (strong as) the *Tamba*-rock is,
so thick and fat you shall grow.

Simbu growing spell (with original formula added), spoken when rubbing a mother sow and her piglets with ashes, so that they may increase and be healthy (Bergmann, *The Kamanuku*, p. 99; see also pp. 36 and 98).

42. Look, Oh Sun!
I have planted sweet potatoes;
I will now eat the first ones.
The others may remain.

Oh Sun, keep on watching!
If you do, I shall eat them
when they have grown to a big size.

Prayer said by a Dengglagu husband, holding half a sweet potato, etc., in his hand. The wife repeats the same text, holding the other half. After the parents have eaten the first fruits, the children eat, too, and the remainder of the food is distributed to visitors (Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", p. 5).

43. Father! Come! Sit in the garden!
I wish to harvest large yams.
Give the staff you used to carry to the yams!
Watch well, that they grow as long as your staff!

Prayer from the Kaugia area (south of Maprik), used when people plant their yam garden (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, p. 325).

44. Oh Sun! Our Big Father!
Someone has stolen the vegetables that we had planted.
We do not know who it is. You saw it; you reveal it!
You are our Big Father.

or also:

Mininga!
If you watch, the man who took and ate it, will die.
I should like to see that . . .

Two requests to the deity to identify a vegetable thief, and work out the punishment he deserves. Used, respectively, among the Kuma people in the Western Highlands, and in the Wahgi Valley (Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", p. 20-21; see also pp. 11 and 36).

45. *Dembine*, Great Man! You have made us.
You are in the north, in the south,
in the east and in the west!

All of you (viz., my ancestors,) come hither!
Help me to take out large tubers.

Prayer of the Kaugia people, directed both to the “Great Man”, and to the ancestors, called by all their names, when the yam harvest is ready (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, p. 368).

46. Oh Sun! Watch over my garden,
least the vegetables should be eaten by insects,
and we suffer from hunger.

Formula used by the owner of a garden among the Komkare, after he has made a food-display to the sun (Aufenanger, “The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands”, p. 6).

47. Oh *Noabahagi*! Oh fish hawk!
Your claws are sharp,
your teeth are sharp.
Eat the thief’s face.
I place you on the leaves beneath the palms.
Eat the face of him who steals,
and make many holes in it.
He lies sleepless; he howls at night, he weeps at night.
Morning comes, and he still cannot sleep.
Your claws dig in! Tear away!
I place you on the road. Watch well!
A thief steals my things. They are not his but mine.
Eat blood, eat skin, eat nose.
The centipedes bite, the black ants bite,
the fish-hawk tears, the stingray stings. Eat his face.

Request directed to *Noabahagi*, the hero who first caused those who stole from his garden produce to be stricken with *gangosa*, a loathsome disease, which begins with a sore on the face, and ends with the nose entirely eaten away. From Wogeo Island (Ian Hogbin, *The Island of Menstruating Men: Religion in Wogeo, New Guinea*, Scranton PA: Chandler Publishing, 1970, pp. 185-186).

6. Hunting and fishing

48. Bush Spirit (*Wewa*)! I belong to this forest.
I am coming, you must not do me mischief.

The environment is, first and foremost, the domain of the spirits, so that one must make his presence known to them, as expressed in this prayer from among the Batainabura of the Southern Highlands (Watson and Watson, "The Batainabura of New Guinea", p. 452).

49. My Father! Come back to life!
Tomorrow I will start cutting my (new) canoe.

Ancestral assistance is sought for any work of importance, such as the felling of a tree to make a new canoe, as in this prayer collected in Kumwagea village, on Kitava Island (Giancarlo Scoditti, personal communication, 1974).

50. Oh *Wunekau*! Oh *Akurum*! Come down, help us!
We are about to cut this tree.
Take our offering, here, take it, eat this animal,
Oh you who dwell in the *lalal*-tree,
in the iron-wood-tree, in the *mera*-tree.
Ka-ka-ka-ka-ka-ka!

A similar invocation, made by a Yakomul priest (Northeast New Guinea), before he makes the first cut in a tree to be felled (Meyer, "Wunekau, oder die Sonnenverehrung in Neuguinea", p. 846).

51. If, in our work today, as we passed through the jungle,
we have disturbed anything belonging to you,
any stick, or stone, or flower,
we did it quite unintentionally.
Please, do not be angry with us.
We are foolish men, and do these things in ignorance.

Prayer for forgiveness, recorded on Paneati Island (Milne Bay), so that the spirits will take no revenge for unintentional transgressions (H. K. Bartlett, "Primitive Religion", in *The Missionary Review* 54-12 (1946), p. 5).

52. I intend to kill this pig.
Listen (You Spirits) and know it.

A similar prayer, from among Kamanuku Simbu, said before a pig killing, to propitiate for the unknown transgressions caused by a domestic animal, which might have interfered with the spirits' property (Bergmann, *The Kamanuku*, pp. 4 and 8).

53. Powerful (*Mana*) is the spirit of the net.

Words of praise, used with respect to a powerful ghost (*tindalo*) of a deceased man. They are said on Florida Island, after obtaining a good catch of fish (Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 146; for a similar text from the Marind-anim, see Hans Nevermann, *Sohne des totenden Vaters*, Eisenach: E. Roeth Verlag, 1957, p. 14).

54. If thou art powerful (*mana*), Oh Daula,
put a fish or two into this net,
and let them die there.

Another invocation of a Florida fisherman, to obtain assistance in his trade. Daula is a *tindalo*, generally known, and associated with, the frigate bird (Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 146; see also Ellison Suri, "Religious Experience in Traditional Melanesian Cultures", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 2-1 (1986), p. 33 with original).

55. May they (i.e., the hunting spears) find the wild pig.
May they fell him surely.

...

Khe-khe-khe-khe.

These Baktaman words follow a cryptic chant, which pleases the ancestors, and is sung by a cult leader, together with the senior initiates. After the above-quoted request, the leader rubs the smoking meat of a sacred animal down the arrow shafts, shouting at the same time the last unintelligible words, and moving to a squatting position. The whole congregation follows his movement, and finally collapses on the floor (Barth, *Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Guinea*, p. 70).

56. Look down (viz., *Vlisso*)!
We have only *kumu*-vegetables to eat,
We have no meat with it.
Please, send us game in the forest!

Another hunter's request, from Antefugoa (Lower Yuat River), to be successful in hunting (Karl Laumann, "Vlisso, der Kriegs", and "Jagd Gott am unteren Yuat River", in *Anthropos* 47 (1952), p. 902).

57. *Yaboaine* (Oh God), help us!
Take away this miserable pig we have caught,
and let us catch good ones.
You come down!

Typical understatement addressed to *Yaboaine*, the war-god on Normanby Island (Eastern Papua), after having caught a wild pig (Geza Roheim, "*Yaboaine*, a War God of Normanby Island", in *Oceania* 16 (1945-1946), p. 212; compare also the deceptions referred to in Bartlett, "Primitive Religion", p. 5).

58. Search and find.
The rope (of the snare) shall get you.
the stick (holding the snare) shall pull (and catch you).
(Tomorrow morning, you shall lie (dead) covered with dew.

Simbu enchantment, addressed to the game, and spoken when laying snares and slings (Bergmann, *The Kamanuku*, p. 44, with original).

59. Our family God NN!
Tomorrow, I am going to hunt pigs,
and will take the dogs with me.
You must direct the dogs to the pigs,
and help the dogs to kill them.
Make the pigs weak, when the dogs start fighting with them.
NN, this is all I have to tell you.
Come now and eat with us.
...
This is true, we all agree that you provide his request.

Prayer from Darapap (Murik Lakes), intoned by a huntsman before going out for wild pigs. All those present have to agree with the request, before partaking of the dedicated food. Any sign of discord would spoil the enterprise (Matthew Tamoane, “Kamoi of Darapap and the Legend of Jari”, in Garry Trompf, ed., *Prophets of Melanesia: six essays*, Port Moresby PNG: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, 1977, pp. 175-176).

7. On the sea

60. Powerful spirit (*tataro*)! Uncle! Father!
Plenty of boars for you,
Plenty of pigs, plenty of money.
Lucky food for your eating in the canoe.
I pray you with this, look down upon me,
let me go on a safe sea.

A prayer (*tataro*) from Mota, in the Banks Island, used before starting a sea-voyage (Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 148).

61. *Qate! Marawo!* Look down upon me!
Prepare the sea of you and me,
that I may go on it safely,
Beat down the head of the waves from me,
let the rip-tide sink down away from me.
Beat it down level, that it may go down, and roll away,
and I may come into a quiet landing-place.

Prayer for safety at sea, from Mota, in Vanuatu (Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 148; see also a shorter form from Florida on p. 146).

62. Please (*viz.*, *Wanekau*)! Have mercy on me!
I have a lot of people on board. Watch over us!

A captain's prayer, from Mushu, on the Schouten Islands, said when he senses that an evil person has boarded his craft, so that it will be in danger of hitting a reef, take a wrong direction, or also run very slowly (compare Jonah 1:4-7). (Aufenanger, *The Great Inheritance in North-East New Guinea*, p. 254).

63. *Qate! Marawo!* May it be –
let the canoe of you and me turn into a whale,
a flying fish, and eagle.
Let it leap on and on over the waves,
let it go, let it pass out to my land.

Another Mota invocation, directed to the *vul*-spirits, so that they may grant a safe journey. Note how the inclusive plural joins spirits and men together (Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 148).

64. Do thou (viz., *Daula*) draw the canoe,
that it may reach the land.
Speed my canoe, Grandfather,
that I may quickly reach the shore whither I am bound.
Do thou, Oh *Daula*, lighten the canoe,
that I may quickly gain the land, and rise upon the shore.

Prayer from Florida Island, to *Daula*, a spirit of the dead (*tindalo*), also called “Grandfather”, to assure a prosperous sea voyage (Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 145; see also Suri, “Religious Experience in Traditional Melanesian Cultures”, p. 33, with original).

65. Please (viz., *Sos*)! Send us a good land-wind
that our people may reach the islands safely.

Intercession, on behalf of his people on a journey, said by a chief-priest (*kokal*), from the Bolkin-Wewak area. Meanwhile, he offers a sacred dish (*kamunggu*), with food, to “the Great Man up there”, whose secret name is *Sos*. The dish is left standing in the spirit house during the time of the trip; and nobody, who has committed a crime is allowed to enter the house (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, p. 18).

66. My Father! Of all of us, there is not one safe at home.
We are all here. Send us to shore and safety.

Short Manus invocation, during disaster at sea (R. F. Fortune, *Manus Religion: an Ethnological Study of the Manus Natives of the Admiralty Islands*, Philadelphia PA: American Philosophical Society, 1935, p. 246).

67. *Qate!* You and *Marawa!*
Cover over with your hand the blowhole from me,
that I may come into a quiet landing-place.
Let it calm down, well away from me.
Let our canoe go up in a quiet landing-place.

Invocation, from the Banks Islands, that the spirits (of the sea) may come, steady the canoe, and speed it on its course till land is reached (Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 148).

8. Thanksgiving

68. Oh Sun! Come and see the vegetables that I have planted.
...
Oh Sun! You came and looked at me, according to my request
I am pleased.

Prayer of thanksgiving of the Tsiambugla for a good garden crop. The first part is said when planting; the second part when the vegetables have grown well (Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", p. 11).

69. *Ilufuna!* You have given us much food.
You are our "Great one"!

Maprik prayer of gratitude, after an abundant harvest (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, p. 290).

70. *Telhinime!* Look at me!
I have taken out plenty large vegetables.
I love you!

Words addressed by the Aresell people to "the Great Man up there" (in the sky), in order to thank him for a good harvest (Aufenanger, *The Great Inheritance in North-East New Guinea*, p. 1).

71. Sun! The bananas are good.
Sun! The *mamis* are good.
The sun is good.
The sun and the moon are good.

Another prayer of thanksgiving for good crops, from the Schouten Islands (Aufenanger, *The Great Inheritance in North-East New Guinea*, p. 302).

72. *Mande Tuo* (Great Man)! You have been watching,
and so the vegetables have grown well. I thank you.

Words directed to the Sun, by the owner of a garden, together with his wife, after they have made a display of the harvest they have made. From Rovundogun, in the Prince Alexander Mountains (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, p. 78).

73. *Saginduo* (Great Man)! Come! We will eat together.
We have planted our garden.
You have helped us.
...
Thank you.

Invitation, said by a father, in the proper attitude for prayer (i.e., crossing one's arms before one's breast, and looking up to the sun). Meanwhile, the rest of the family keeps quiet, before the dishes filled with food. After all have said "Thank you", they partake of the meal. The original version, recorded in Hambugai village (near Wewak) is also given (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, p. 119).

74. You have given us this food.
Give us again next year a good crop.

Prayer said by an officially-appointed man (*kumbu ndu*) at Kaugia (Torricelli Mountains), after the harvest of yams. While pronouncing the prayer, he holds a saucepan with cooked yams and meat in his hands, looks up and shows it to the sun (*wale ndu*). When the sun has seen the food, the man eats it (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, p. 326).

75. Now we are going to eat.
You have given us the food, *Wanakau!*

or also:

Oh Sun! We are going to eat together,
while you are looking at us.

Two prayers before a meal, respectively, from Mushu village (Schouten Island), and from Bundi, in the Upper Ramu Valley (Aufenanger, *The Great Inheritance in North-East New Guinea*, p. 255; and Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", p. 40).

9. Good weather

76. Great Father! Watch over me!
I intend to go into the bush!

Greeting to the rising sun, from Rovundogun, in the Turingi area, said before people go out to work, or to hunt (Aufenanger 1972, p. 78, with original; see also p. 299 n. 1 for a similar custom at Maprik).

77. Look down (Oh Sun)!
Then everything will get dry,
and we can fire our gardens and plant.

or also:

Sun! Send rain!
The (our) body is hot!

Two prayers to the sun, from the Kaugia area, to change the weather into a dry spell, or into a cool shower (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, p. 325, and p. 358 with original).

78. That today the sun may shine again
we have fetched this water,
and poured it out on the house tops.

Simbu sunshine charm (with original in the Kuman language), to end a period of drought (Bergmann, *The Kamanuku*, p. 43).

79. As I put these things in readiness on the ground,

so you make them ready up above.
As I break the coconut, so do you also.

A similar rain charm, directed to the heavenly Rainmaker-in-chief, from the Trans-Fly. It clearly states that the spell functions as the oral counterpart of the manual rite (F. E. Williams, *Papuans of the Trans-Fly*, Oxford UK: Clarendon Press, 1936, p. 328, who provides, on pp. 326-327, several other vernacular texts, with commentary).

80. *Saginduo* (Sun Man)! We cry out to you!
Saginduo! We cry out to you!

Public invocation to the Sun-man to send rain, said alternatively, and in a loud voice, by an important man, and by the people gathered in the spirit house. After these words, all stand quiet and motionless, some covering their faces with their hands, and others holding their arms on their chests, whereas the leader keeps his hands flat against both sides of his head. All think intensely of *Saginduo*, and observe one day's rest; next morning they all go to work. From Hambugal, to the South of Wewak (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, p. 118).

81. Oh Big Father!
The vegetables that I planted are burned;
I am not pleased with it.
Please, give us rain now.

In this prayer, a Kulchane magician first calls the names of the surrounding mountains, and then concludes with the words above. After the prayer, he dips some flowers in water, and throws them to the four points of the compass. The remaining water is poured on the ground, while the rest of the flowers and leaves are weighed down in a creek, till the time that the rain starts pouring down (Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", p. 9).

82. Now it is sunshine, day by day.

That shall stop, and rain shall come again.

Simbu rain charm, which was said aloud and shouted, while some men cried, with the tears running down their cheeks (Bergmann, *The Kamanuku*, p. 43).

83. *Nya Mben* (Sun Man)! Send us rain!

...

We are hungry. We shall die from hunger.

We cannot sleep (on account of being hungry).

Send us rain!

Traditional invocation, from Maprik, directed to the Sun-man, and said while the rainmaker pours water, originating from various springs, into one container. The second part of the text is pronounced while the ritual specialist breathes on the water. The whole action is performed in a small house, which only one man may enter (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, pp. 280-281).

84. What falls from the sky is not good.

It should return there, and not come back again.

Invocation, from among the Komengarega (New Guinea Highlands), addressed to *Yogauwe*, when making a sacrifice to stop the hail (Oswald Zaumsegel, and Piet Bogner, "Mythen und Erzählungen der Hochlandbewohner in Papua Neu Guinea", in *GEW News* 3 (1978), p. 11).

85. Oh Sun! Do not go down! Watch over us!

If you go down now, it will get dark.

You may go down when we have gone to our house.

or also:

Father Sun! Hold back the rain till I have reached home.

Then the rain may fall.

Two invocations used by the Komkane and Tsiambugla people, when returning from their gardens after a day's work, or after a pig kill

(Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", pp. 6 and 13).

10. Feasts and celebrations

86. Take away these sins!
Have pity on us!

At the beginning of an initiation ceremony in the Wewak-Bolkin area, there is a rite to "burn the crimes" of the candidates' fathers, so that no harm will befall their sons. The participants in this *membari*-ritual are requested to manipulate some betel nut and tobacco leaves, which, in the end, are burned to ashes. The above prayer is said by the man, who will perform the operations on the boys, while tending the fire and looking up to the sky (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, pp. 19-20).

87. Let the water carry away the dirt,
like leaves on the wind.
Let the dust be pinched off and carried from the eyes.
The contaminating things seen, let them be carried away,
here at the waters of the *Kupi*,
the waters called *Kupindaka*.

Enga prayer used at "the washing of the eyes", to purify them from having seen unseemly and tabooed things. This, or a similar text, is recited by the person who directs this part of the initiation rites, while the young novices lie on their backs, under a stream of water, which washes and cleanses them (Garry Teske, "Christianising the Sangai", in *Point* (2/1978), pp. 79-80, with original p. 97 n. 1, and a "Christian" substitute prayer on p. 92).

88. Oh Sun! Look at these children!
I gave them bows and axes.
You help them.

Another prayer, used among the Numa, New Guinea Highlands, at a certain moment in the initiation cycle, when the boys officially receive their first weapons (Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", p. 32).

89. We now put on our feather decorations,
and are going to make the *mur*-dance.
You, our Spirits, will look at us,
and be happy with us.
Only when you do this,
will we be really beautiful,
and will we be alright.

The only Melanesian prayer recorded in the anthologies of Paul-Werner Scheele, *Opfer des Wortes: Gebete der Heiden aus Fünf Jahrtausenden*, Paderborn: 1960, p. 172; and of Christopher Einiger, *Die schönste Gebete der Welt*, München Ger: Sudwest Verlag, 1964, p. 150. It was said among the Mbowamb of Mount Hagen, before starting the *mur*-dance (Vicedom, “Die religiösen Voraussetzungen zur Aufnahme der biblischen Botschaft auf Neuginea”, p. 142).

90. The water shall glide off and run down,
as it runs down from slippery stones (in the river),
as the drops fall from the *urumugi*-plant,
as the drops fall from the *waramugi*-plant,
as dew glitters and forms drops,
so even and smooth shall (the skin) be.

Free translation of a Simbu perfume charm (with original Kuman formula), said when rubbing the skin with oil or fat, to assure beauty and strength (Bergmann 1972, p. 47).

91. *Tsurun!* You take first this food.
We shall eat later after you.

or also:

Tsurun, you Mighty Man!
You have made all these things for us.
We call first your name.
We give you first a young coconut,
taro, meat and sago.

Two invocations, from the Yangoru area, directed to the great spirit *Tsurun* (dwelling on Mount Tsurun, Hurun, Turu, or Rurun), to whom the first morsel of food is reserved. A similar custom is also noted among the Chwaian people, in relation to *Sagi*, *Sainduo*, or *Saginduo* (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, pp. 173 and 185).

92. *Yaboaine* (Oh God), oh!
Come to take this pile of food.
Take it, and give us a real abundance,
so that our supplies might still be greater.

Prayer, from Normanby Island, on occasion of a food distribution feast (Roheim, “*Yaboaine*, a War God of Normanby Island”, p. 214).

93. You Great Man (viz., *Saginduo*)! *Tsurun*!
Have pity on us, and touch the livers of our relatives,
so that they bring many rings.
Make them “deaf” (= stupid)!
Help, that the bride may give her groom angry words,
so that he and his relatives give many rings as bride wealth.

or also:

Saginduo! Move the feelings of our relatives,
that they may become unwise,
and bring us many shell rings!
They shall lose their power of reasoning,
that our name may become famous.

Two requests, from the Negri area, to obtain traditional wealth, which makes the success of every festival. Here, too, “one man’s death is another man’s breath”! (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, pp. 188-189).

94. The tree, standing tall, fastened securely,
covered entirely with *waluo*- and *dabara*-vines.
My beloved village, fastened securely,
covered entirely, with *waluo*- and *dabara*-vines.

Old baskets are black,
black over the hearth, blackened by the smoke.
Food to eat, much food, fastened, secure, held tightly.

Although not specifically addressed to any supernatural being or culture hero, the above formula from Wogeo Island is designed to preserve peace and harmony at a festival, and to make all quarrelling cease. While chanting it, the headman stands firmly, with his feet apart “like an immovable rock”. The vines he refers to completely lock in the trees’ branches, while “the blackened baskets” are also a sign of undisturbed peace (Hogbin, *The Island of Menstruating Men*, p. 182).

11. Warfare

95. *Harumae*-ghost! Chief in war!
We sacrifice to you this pig,
that you might help us to smite that place;
and whatsoever we shall carry away
shall be your property,
and we also shall be yours.

Typical *fagarafe* addressed, with these or similar words, to a spirit (*adaro*), by the people of San Cristoval, when they make a sacrifice before engaging in warfare (Fox, *The Threshold of the Pacific*, p. 100). It recalls some Old Testament concepts of “ban” and “holy war” (cf. Josh 6:17; 1 Sam 7:9).

96. Father, stand behind me!
Make me strong, and help me!

Before a fight, the Mambe people (South of Wewak), used to scrape a little dust from the arm bone of a dead father and rub it on their hands to become strong (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, p. 69).

97. *Eaboahine* (Oh God)! Look down at my misery,
and strengthen my heavy body.
Eaboahine (Oh God)! Make me invisible,
help me in the attack, to run well, and to kill.

or also:

Oh *Eaboahine*! Help us!
Then we will be able to kill men.

Other warrior's prayers from Eastern Papua, requesting to become invisible, and superior in the attack (Roheim, "*Yaboaine*, a War God of Normanby Island", p. 211; original in C. G. Seligmann, *The Melanesians of British New Guinea*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1910, p. 650. See also Bartlett, "Primitive Religion", p. 5).

98. *Yaboaine* (Oh God)! Look down here,
so that we can see you take away our vanquished enemy.
Take him away, draw him up to you,
but send down to us the killer (instinct)
so that we will be successful in more killing.

or also:

Yaboaine (Oh God)! Come down, u u u!
Come down, and take these cowardly captives away.
Only you can defeat the strong warriors!

Humble recognition of divine assistance, after a successful battle, from Normanby Island (Roheim, "*Yaboaine*, a War God of Normanby Island", p. 210 with originals). This prayer recalls some Bible texts, which attribute victory only to Jahweh, and not to any human prowess or merit (e.g., Ps 20:7; 115:1 = Vg 113:9; Hosea 1:7).

99. You, *Tsurun*! You, Father!
I have always kept your commandment
and killed our enemies,
I am your son.

Another example of sacred war-ideology, from Northeast New Guinea, which states the divine command to kill all enemies (cf. Deut 20:16) (Aufenanger, *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea*, p. 173).

100. Let us live,

and let those who speak evil of us perish.
Let the enemy be clubbed, swept away,
utterly destroyed, piled in heaps.
Let their teeth be broken;
may they fall into a pit.
Let us live, and let our enemies perish.

Fijian prayers generally conclude with malignant requests to annihilate the enemies, which once again recall the “imprecatory psalms” of ancient Israel (Ps 137:9; also Hosea 14:1) (cf. Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 147 note).

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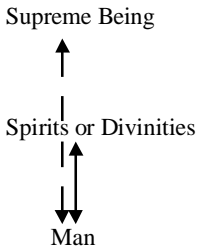
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1. A selection of ancient Egyptian, Akkadian, and Sumerian hymns and lamentations is readily available in J. B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East*, 2 vols., Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958 and 1975. A comparison with biblical prayers, and an analysis of the two major approaches to God, are found, e.g., in Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, Edinburgh UK: T. & T. Clark, 1977. One should be aware of the fact that narratives, too, often contain prayers. On these texts, outside the Book of Psalms, see, e.g., R. E. Clements, *The Prayers of the Bible*, London UK: SCM Press, 1986.
2. Prayers from traditional African societies are found in: L. V. Thomas, and R. Luneau, *Les religions de l'Afrique noire*, Paris: Fayard, 1969; Aylward Shorter, *Prayer in the religious traditions of Africa*, Nairobi Kenya: Oxford University Press, 1975; John S. Mbiti, *The Prayers of African Religion*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1976; Anthony J. Gittins, *Heart of Prayers: African, Jewish, and Biblical Prayers*, London UK: William Collins, 1985. Below (note 17), we add some more detailed studies. The well-known booklets by Fritz Pawelzik, *I lie on my mat and pray*, Ghana: Friendship Press, 1964, and *I sing Your praises all day long*, 1967, give "Christian" prayers from Ghana. The same goes for Namibia: Zephania Kameeta, *Gott in schwarzen Gettos*, Wuppertal: Vereinigten Evang. Mission, 1983.
For traditional Polynesia, one can consult E. S. Craighill Handy, *Polynesian Religion*, Honolulu HI: Bishop Museum, 1927 (Kraus reprint, 1978); and June Gutmanis, *Na Pule Kahiko. Ancient Hawaiian prayers*, Honolulu HI: Editions, 1983.
3. Not one example is quoted in George Appleton, *The Oxford Book of Prayer*, Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 1985; or in Barbara Greene, *God of a 100 Names*, London UK: Victor Gollancz, 1985, while there is only one example in Paul-Werner Scheele, *Opfer des Wortes: Gebete der Heiden aus Fünf Jahrtausenden*, Paderborn: 1960, and in Christopher Einiger, *Die schönste Gebete der Welt*, München Ger: Sudwest Verlag, 1964 (See prayer 89.) The text presented by Alfonso M. Di Nola, *The Prayers of Man: from Primitive Peoples to Present Times*, Patrick O'Connor, ed., London UK: Heinemann, 1962, pp. 75-76, was first published in Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Sexual Life of the Savages of North-Western Melanesia*, London UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1929, p. 320.
4. Bishop Andre Navarre, *Notes et historie de l'île Yule, June 1888-July 1889*, 1889, pp. 92-93, gives a Roro formula used when fishing. It lists, in a litany form, the names of some spirits, then of various ancestors, famous for their fishing qualities, and concludes with the names of the one who says the prayer. Prayers from the Solomons, Vanuatu, and Fiji were published by R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians: Studies in their Anthropology and Folklore*, Oxford UK: Clarendon Press, 1891, pp. 145-149, and some of them are reprinted below.
5. See Heinrich Aufenanger, "The Sun in the Life of the Natives in the New Guinea Highlands", in *Anthropos* 57 (1962); *The Passing Scene in North-East New Guinea: A Documentation*, St Augustin: Anthropos Institute, 1972; *The Great Inheritance in North-East New Guinea: A Collection of Anthropological Data*, St Augustin: Anthropos

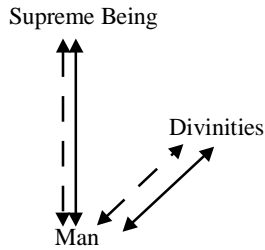
- Institute, 1975. It is surprising that several recent books, whose titles seem promising, do not add anything to the general information: so John Garrett, and John Mavor, *Worship: The Pacific Way*, Suva Fiji: Lotu Pasifika, 1973; W. A. Poort, *Pacific Between Indigenous Culture and Exegenous Worship*, Hilvarenbeek: 1983; Bernie Collins, ed., *Not to Destroy . . . But to Fulfil . . . Southern Highlands Cultures and Christian Faith*, Mendi PNG: 1983; Cliff Wright, and Leslie Boseto, eds, *Christ in South Pacific Cultures*, Suva Fiji: Lotu Pasifika, 1985; and Gweneth Deverall, and Bruce Deverell, eds, *Pacific Rituals: Living or Dying?*, Suva Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1986. As to indigenous "Christian" prayers, only a dozen or so have been published abroad (cf. Bayrischen Missionswerk, ed., *Materialsammlung Papua-Neuguinea: 90 Jahre Lutherische Mission und 20 Jahre Evang. Luth. Kirche*, (no place): 1976, pp. 10-12; and by Missio, ed., *Leben in Fuelle: Gebete aus den Jungen Kirchen*, Aachen Neth: Missio Aktuel Verlag (no year)), but neither of them quote their sources.
6. For the local scene, compare our: "Melanesian gods" in *Bikmaus* 4-2 (1983), pp. 1-54.
 7. Anthropologists often mention the occasions on which people pray, but do not always specify the content of such actions. Sometimes they quote a vernacular text, but omit to give the translation. In other instances, a translation is given, but falls short in explaining certain options taken. Thus, it is not clear whether Saginduo (or a variation of the name – cf. prayer 91) is really a personal name, or whether it is, rather, a title, now rendered by "Great Man" (prayer 73), now by "Sun Man" (prayer 80).
 8. An example of a silent prayer would be the repainting of sacred figures by Australian Aborigines. This situation is not unlike the one which occurs in social relations, where a symbolic gesture suffices to indicate formally the suppliant's need (cf. Jean Guiart, *The Arts of the South Pacific*, London: 1963, p. 124).
 9. Cf. Carl Laufer, "Blinkende Sterne in Tropennacht", in *Hiltruper Monatshefte* (1951), p. 9. Similar remarks are made by Aufenanger, *The Great Inheritance in North-East New Guinea*, 1975, p. 312; H. K. Bartlett, "Primitive Religion", in *The Missionary Review* 54-12 (1946), p. 5; F. E. Williams, *Papuans of the Trans-Fly*, Oxford UK: Clarendon Press, 1936, p. 327; Fredrik Barth, *Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Guinea*, Oslo Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 1975, pp. 17-18; and, in general, by Jan Van Baal, *Symbols for Communication: an Introduction to the Anthropological Study of Religion*, Assen: 1971; Van Gorcum, [publication details unknown], p. 261: "the formulas accompanying the ritual act often pass unnoticed".
 10. The thesis of Detlev K. H. Haude, *Das geistige Eigentum bei den Australier* (inaugural dissertation philosophie), Bonn, 1970, about the suprahuman origin and nature of incantations and spells applies also to the tunes of songs, movements of dances, designs on artifacts, and the like, and is as valid for Melanesians as for Aborigines.
 11. On name taboo at death among the Daribi in the Gulf Province of Papua New Guinea, see Roy Wagner, *Habu: The Innovation of Meaning in Daribi Religion*, Chicago IL: Chicago University Press, 1972, p. 98. On the prohibition on names between husband and wife among the Wiru (Southern Highlands), or between a person and his senior in-laws among Melpa speakers (Mt Hagen), see Andrew Strathern, "Wiru Pentonyms" in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-Land-en Volkenkunde* 126 (1970-1971), pp. 71 and 72. Further discussions in D'Arcy Ryan, "Names and Naming in Mendi" in *Oceania* 29 (1958-1959), pp. 109-116; Karl J. Franklin, "Names and Aliases in Kewa" in *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 76 (1967), pp. 76-81; etc.

12. On the classical problem of religion versus magic, compare – in the line of J. G. Frazer – the well-known booklet of Bronislaw Malinowski, *Science, Magic, and Religion, and Other Essays*, London UK: Souvenir Press, 1974, esp. pp. 17-92. For recent discussions, see Mischa Titiev, “A Fresh Approach to the Problem of Magic and Religion”, in *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 16 (1960), pp. 292-298; and Murray Wax, and Rosalie Wax, “The Notion of Magic” in *Current Anthropology* 4 (1963), pp. 495-513. The designs in the text, above, are taken from Felix M. Keesing, *Current Anthropology: the Science of Custom*, London UK: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1977, p. 332.
13. Quotation from H. E. Wedeck, and Wade Baskin, *Dictionary of Pagan Religions*, New York NY: Philosophical Library, 1971; see Shorter, *Prayer in the Religious Traditions of Africa*, (note 2, above), pp. 8-13, has worked out, for his African materials, six different typologies of prayer, ranging from strict deism to relative deism. It would appear that his fifth model (strict deism), and sixth model (relative deism), are particularly relevant for Melanesia. They allow both for formal and experiential prayer, i.e., prayer as communication or speech (indicated by a regular arrow), and prayer as a continuous mode of living of the believer (marked by dashed arrow line). His diagrams look as follows:

STRICT DEISM



RELATIVE DEISM



14. From this point of view, one can accept that “prayers”, said in an ancient sacral language, which is hardly understood any more, should not, necessarily, be degraded to mere magic. Incidentally, the same problem presents itself also for some Aramaic expressions of the New Testament (cf. *Abba, Maranatha*, but also *Talitha cumi* and *Ephphatha*, which some scholars believe to be the words used by early Christian healers and exorcists).
15. Solomon Islanders seem to distinguish clearly between “charms” (*feirunga*) and “prayers” (*fagarafe*). The former use set formulas, often containing archaic words, which are transmitted, e.g., from father to son, and are accompanied by particular actions, like the blowing of lime (Tok Pisin: *kabang*), or the use of special leaves. The latter are much freer in their expression, and can be said by anybody, and they are often accompanied by a sacrifice (C. E. Fox, *The Threshold of the Pacific*, London UK: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trubner, 1924, pp. 99-100, and, “blow”, prayer 95). Similarly, in the Trobriand Islands, people would distinguish between the autonomous efficacy of rites and spells (*megwa*) and the help given by the spirits to a prayer made (Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, p. 422, and prayer 28). Among the Mekeo, too, there are cases in which, in addition to the muttering or chanting of spells (*mega*), a separate invocation is said to call upon the assistance of the spirits (*isage e pamagogo*, cf. Michele Stephen, Master of Souls: the Mekeo Sorcerer”, in M. Stephen, ed., *Sorcerer and Witch in Melanesia*, Melbourne Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1987, p. 60).

16. Friedrich Steinbauer, *Melanesian Cargo Cults*, St Lucia Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1971, pp. 102-103, distinguishes five main categories of interpretation. Coming after his survey, one should particularly note: John G. Strelan, *Search for Salvation: Studies in the History and Theology of Cargo Cults*, Adelaide SA: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977.
17. Compare, e.g., for Cameroons: Barthelemy Nyom, "Priere biblique et priere Africaine" in *Bulletin of African Theology* 3-6 (July 1981), pp. 155-218; for Kenya: James Kihara, *Ngai, We Belong to You: Kenya's Kikuyu and Meru Prayer*, in *Spearhead* 89, Eldoret Kenya: Gaba Publications, 1985; and for Nigeria: the full thesis of Anthony O.U. Echiegu, part of which appeared as, *Translating the Collects of the Solemnities of the Lord in the Language of the African*, Munster: Verlag Regensberg, 1984.
18. It is reported, of the Koita people in the Central Province of Papua New Guinea, that they greeted the new moon by "yelling out", but it is not known what they actually said (cf. C. G. Seligman, *The Melanesians of British New Guinea*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1910, p. 193). Geza Roheim, "Yaboaine, a War God of Normanby Island", in *Oceania* 16 (1945-1946), p. 210, reports a similar custom for Normanby Island, while Aufenanger, *The Great Inheritance in North-East New Guinea*, p. 312, has documented how, in the Timbukne area, after a good harvest, all the people shouted "Nya Vuntuma has given us plenty of good vegetables."
19. Compared with African prayers (cf. note 2, above), the Melanesian examples to be quoted manage only half their length. One should be aware, however, of the possibility that, with prayers, as with myths or stories, there might be "long" and "short" versions. The latter is obvious when it is stated in the literature that some "litanies" have been cut short (cf. prayers 16 and 23). One author, for instance, has noted a non-repetitive spell, chanted very fast by a prayer specialist, which lasted about 20 minutes, and contained many names of rivers, places, paths, and mountains in the area, while the ghosts were asked to help the family whenever they visited any of these places (cf. Richard Feachem, "The Religious Belief and Ritual of the Raiapu Enga", in *Oceania* 43 (1972-1973), p. 278).
20. Some "Christian" indigenous hymns, from the Lutheran tradition, are presented by Rufus Pech, "An Early Indigenous Theology Expressed in Worship" in *Christ in Melanesia, Point* (1&2/1977), pp. 87-121.
21. Cf. Echiegu, *Translating the Collects of the Solemnities of the Lord* (note 17, above), pp. 305-307.
22. One suggestion for "A eucharistic prayer for the Pacific Islands" was made by W. J. Ryan; it refers, in particular, to the people's ancient migrations, and their present living "in these islands" (cf. *Amen* (Manila) 40 (1970), pp. 79-83). Another Papua New Guinean "canon" was prepared shortly before Independence, but it has never received official approval, or even wider publicity (cf. Henk te Maarssen, in "Catholic worship in Papua New Guinea" in *Worship in Melanesia, Point* (1/1980), pp. 82-88). There exists also a similar liturgy for Australian Aboriginals (cf. *Neue Zeitschrift fur Missionswissenschaft* (2/1974), pp. 112-115), and several canons were produced for the African continent (cf. *African Ecclesial Review*, 12-2 (1970), pp. 143-148; 15-2 (1973), pp. 152-160). For general comments, see Boniface, *Luykx, culte Christian en Afrique apres Vatican II*, Immensee: 1974; furthermore, AMECEA Pastoral Institute, "'Incarnating' Christian Worship in Africa", in *Living Worship in Africa Today, Spearhead* 62, Eldoret Kenya: Gaba Publications, 1980, pp. 59-63.