



I'O GOD OF CREATION



KĀNE GOD OF PROCREATION



KŪ GOD OF WAR



LONO GOD OF AGRICULTURE



KANALOA GOD OF THE SEA



WAKEA THE SKY FATHER



KĀMOHOALI'I SHARK GOD

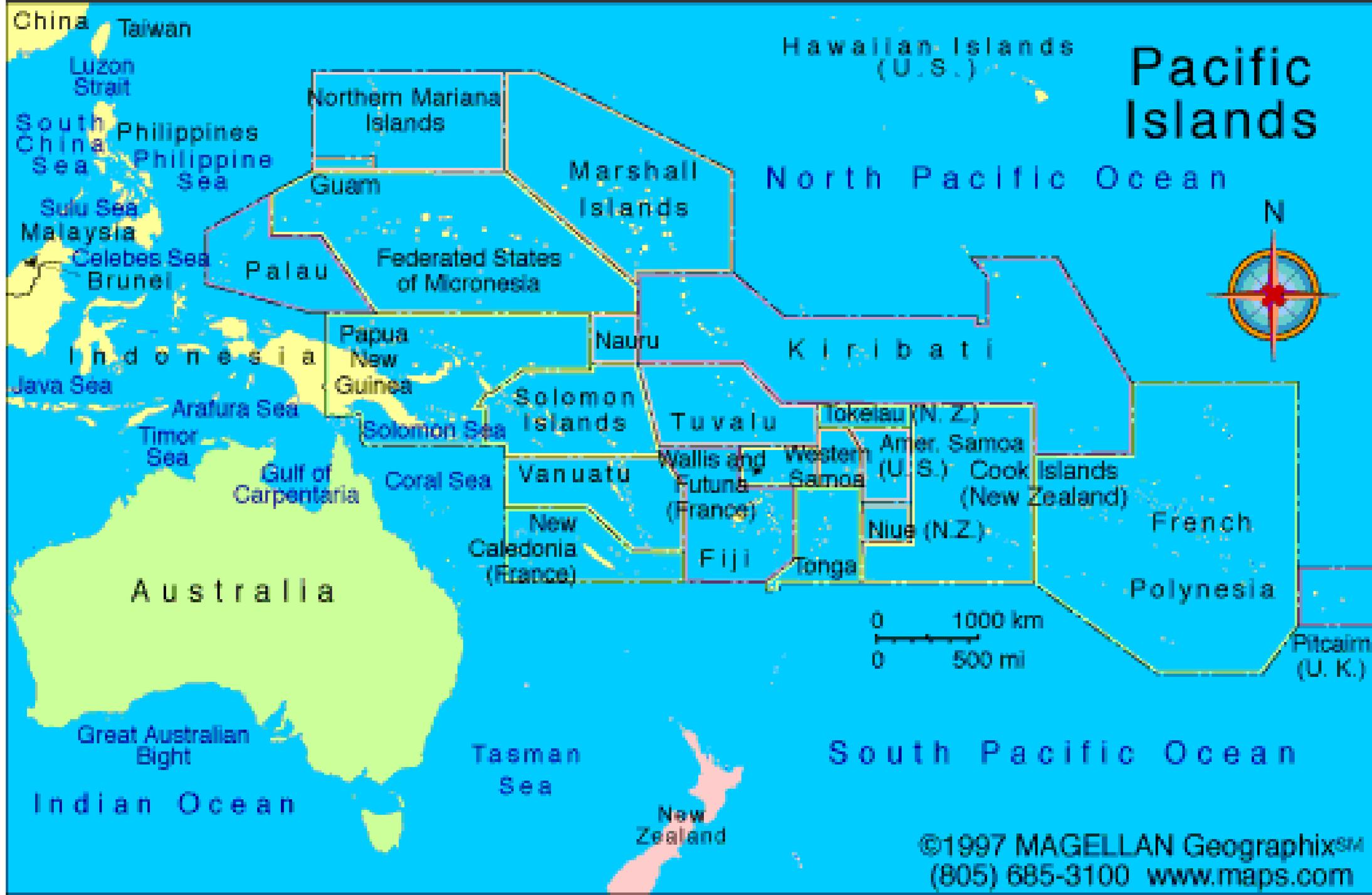


PAKA'A GOD OF WINDS

Religions of Oceania

Mark D. Harris,
MD, MPH, MBA, MDiv, PhD, ThM, DBA(C)
MD Harris Institute





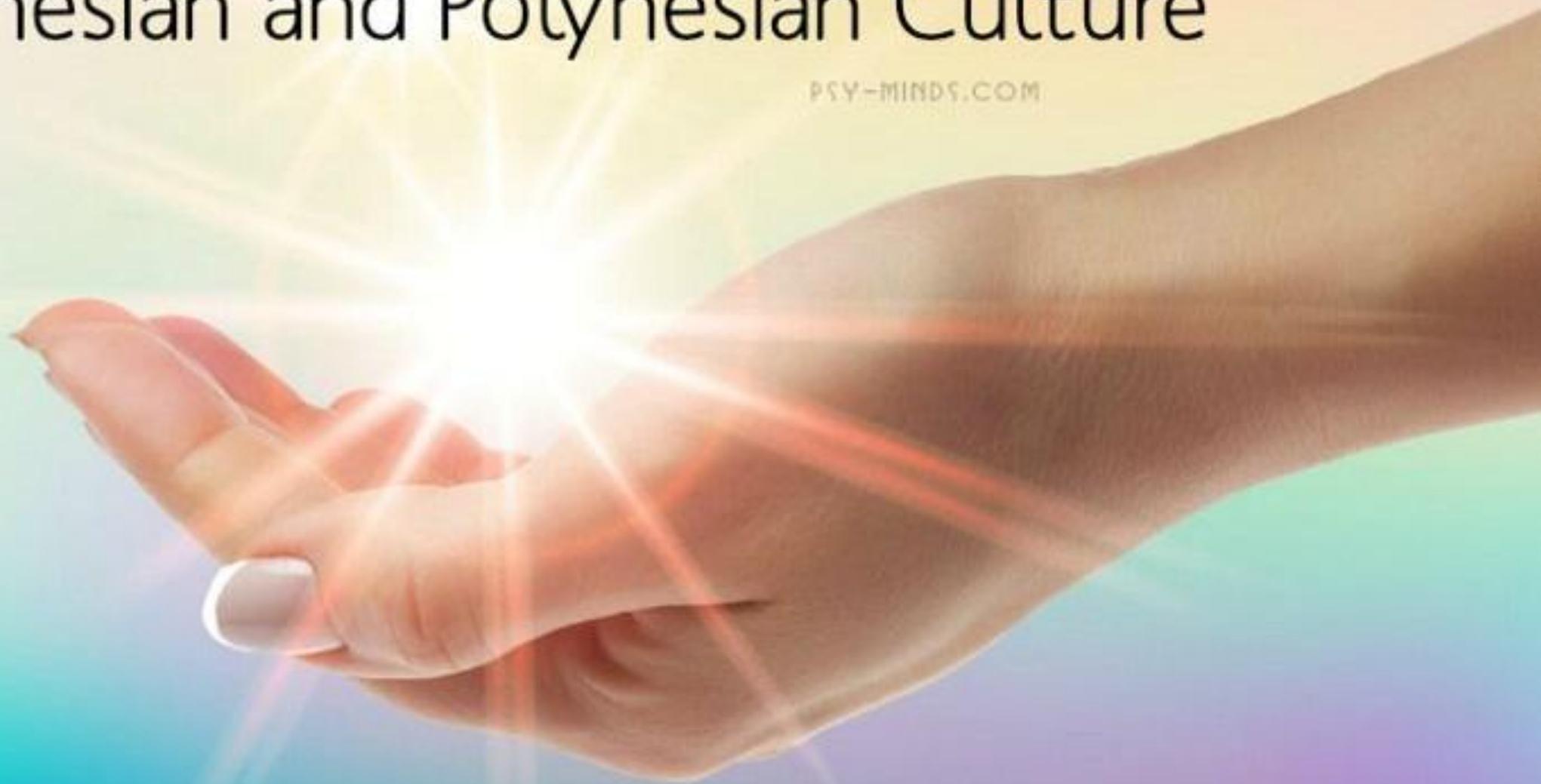
- Australia
- Pacific Islands

Common concepts

- Mana
 - Power or influence, not physical, and in a way supernatural; but shows itself in physical force, or in any kind of power or excellence which a man possesses. Mana is not fixed in any thing; but spirits, whether disembodied souls or supernatural beings, have it and can impart it.
 - A basic feeling of powerful awe, precedes and underlies any belief in spirits.
- Taboo
 - A prohibition against touching, saying, or doing something for fear of immediate harm from a supernatural force

Mana - The Life Force Energy in Melanesian and Polynesian Culture

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Australia and the Pacific Islands

- Aboriginal semi-nomadic band societies with lineages or small kin groups hunting and gathering in lands that they recognize as shared with peoples of the same ancestry or language
- Original people came from Asia
- Iron began to be used only after contact with Muslim traders
- By 1700, one million people in Australia. By 1700, 2 million people in the Pacific Islands
- Historical memory – only 2 generations, and no way of reckoning events such as a calendar. Sites and places are more important than time.
- Creation – something exists but there is no first creator



Aboriginal Australians



Australian Indigenous Religion (1)

- Land is more important than people, and space is more important than time. The cosmos must always stay in balance.
- Cosmic balance ritual - Aranda Intichiuma
 - A person visits a site inhabited by a spirit. The site may be a pile of stones or a rock painting
 - The song of the ancestor is sung.
 - A ritual act such as rubbing the stone is performed.
 - The supplicant may dress the object housing the spirit custodian in a red and white vegetable down and a headdress.
 - The “owners” of a site have a direct spiritual bond with the ancestor.
 - The managers or policemen of a site have a different patrimony. They can visit a site but do not have a spiritual connection.
- Children do not share the Ancestral essence with their mothers but they do with their fathers.

Australian Indigenous Religion (2)

- Women give birth, raise children, collect the majority of foodstuffs, and have a relatively immobile lifestyle.
- Menstruation marks the coming of age and is not considered polluting. Birth is a moment of extreme power and is also not polluted. Nonetheless, men must be guarded from both.
- The land, not the individual, is important. Life emerges from the land, not from the womb.
- Aboriginal nativity scene



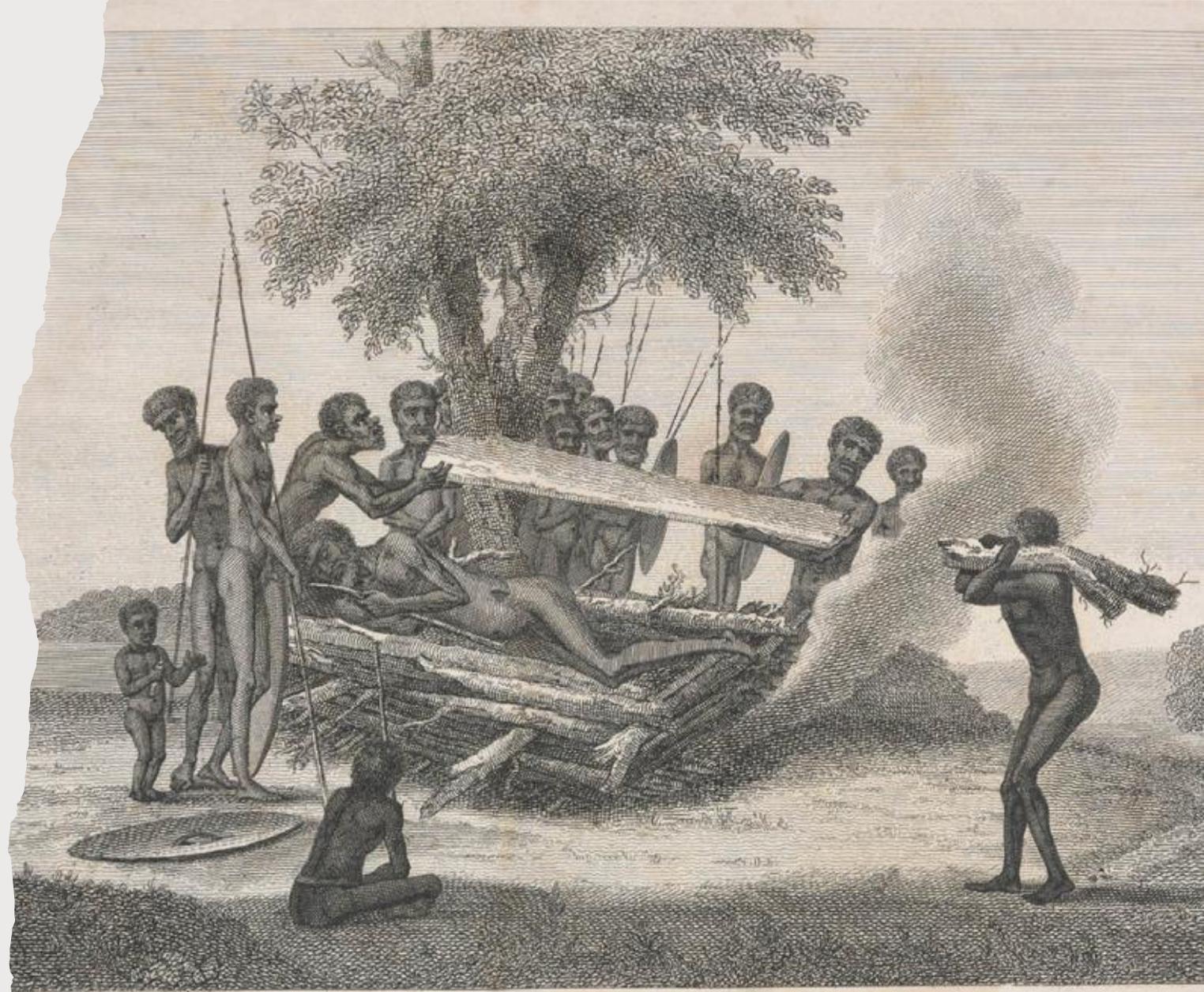
Australian Indigenous Religion (3)

- Men and women each have their own secret rituals to promote cosmic balance. Women's ceremonies focus on men more than men's focus on women. Polygyny was accepted.
- Men stress their creative power while women focus on nurturing.
- A boy's penis will be subincised.
 - Genitalia will look more like a woman's
 - He will have to squat to urinate



Australian Indigenous Religion (4)

- Sickness or death is assumed to come from sorcery and is investigated. Healing is not an occasion for religious celebration. The investigation is to root out sorcery, not aid in healing.
- At death, the now disembodied spirit returns to the place it came from. There is no reward or punishment for past deeds.
 - Death is normal and should not be avoided
 - An overemphasis on the body leads to a longing for freedom from death
 - The land matters, and the individual person...not so much.



Burning a Corpse.

Australian Indigenous Religion (5)

- Agriculturalism diminishes the ascendancy of land over people.
- In a hunter-gatherer society, the land literally provides all that you eat. You don't have to work for it. All you have to do is find it.
- In an agricultural society, you work for your food. Human effort takes precedence over the land's bounty.
- Ritual cannibalism in which relatives eat parts of the body of the corpse. What matters is not that your corpse was eaten, but who it was eaten by.
- Ritual songs regulate associations with outsiders.

Pacific Islands



Pacific Islands Indigenous Religions

- Melanesia – dark skinned
 - Priority of collective material welfare
 - Mostly landlocked cultures (consider Papua New Guinea)
- Micronesia – small islands, a mix of Melanesian and Polynesian characteristics.
- Polynesia – lighter skin of varying shades (poly)
 - Priority of order in the cosmos and personal and group protection
 - Exclusively island cultures
- Ritual cannibalism in which warriors consume parts of their enemies to gain their strength.

Islands by location

WHO ARE PACIFIC ISLANDERS?

The Indigenous people from these islands:

MELANESIA

- Fiji
- Makulu Islands
- New Caledonia
- Papua New Guinea
- Solomon Islands
- Vanuatu
- West Papua

POLYNESIA

- American Samoa
- Cook Islands
- Easter Island
- French Polynesia
- Hawai'i
- New Zealand
- Niue
- Pitcarin Islands
- Samoa
- Tokelau
- Tonga
- Tuvalu

MICRONESIA

- Guam
- Federated States of Micronesia
 - Chuuk
 - Kosrae
 - Pohnpei
 - Yap
- Kiribati
- Marshall Islands
- Nauru
- Northern Mariana Islands
- Palau



Melanesian Religions (1)

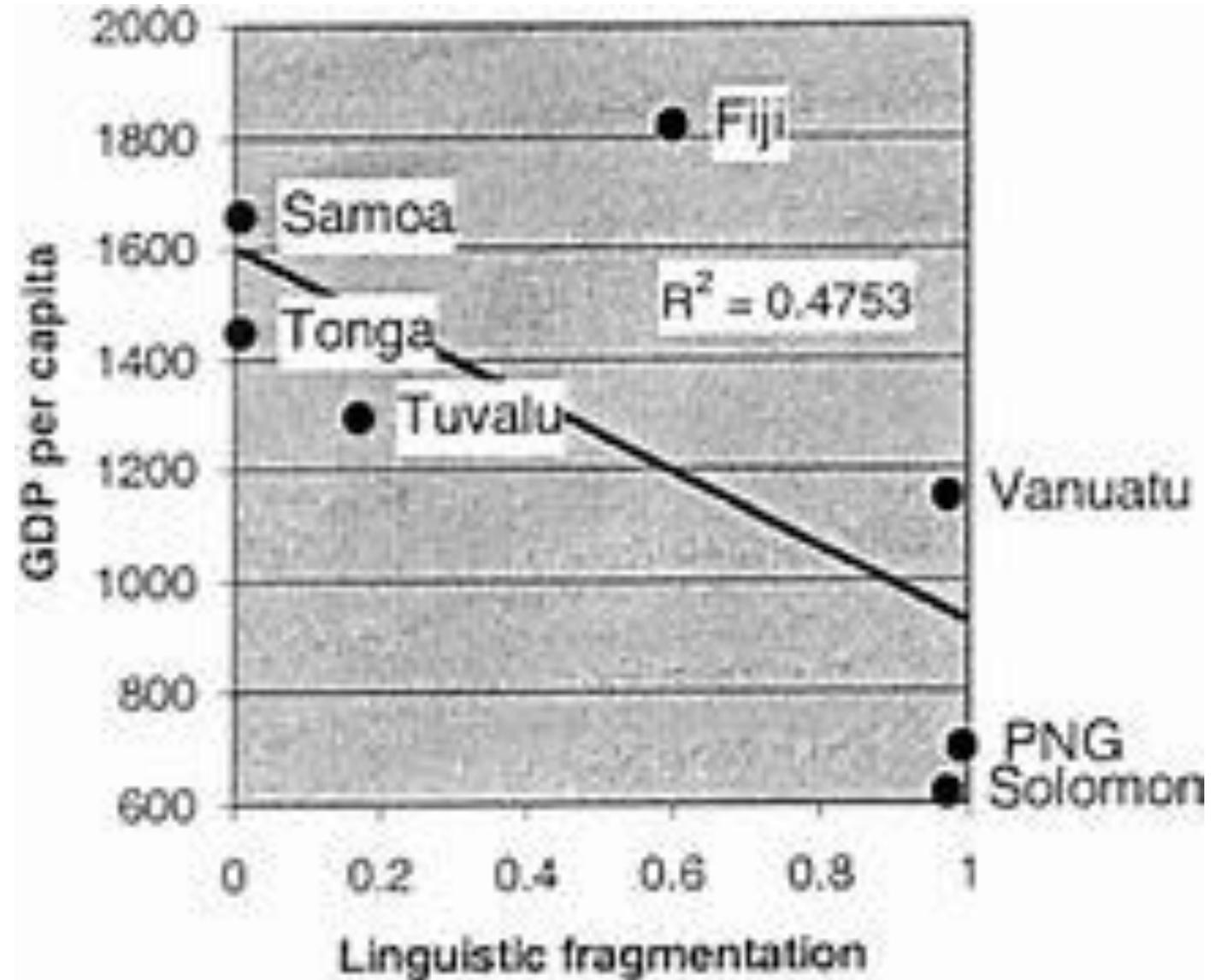
- Spirits and dangers
 - Security circle – hamlets near yours with relatives, family spirits, few predators (boars, snakes, crocodiles)
 - Mountains were dangerous because dead bodies were taken up into the mountains, and their spirits remained there.
 - Still pools of water were dangerous because of spirits of sickness.
 - Space spirits killed travelers taking a circuitous route through their areas
 - A solitary woman walking on a road was likely a demon or ghost. Nettles should be applied to her skin to ensure that she was not.
 - Melanesian cultures had a “high God” who dealt with the cosmos, but the local spirits were of more immediate consequence than He.

Melanesian Village and Security Circle



Melanesian Religions (2)

- Heroes are groups of beings passing through the land and teaching skills to their peoples.
- Men were not fully initiated until they took a life
- Boys were sodomized by warriors in “men’s houses” to make them strong at war.
- Melanesian kings had less power, in general, than Polynesian kings
 - Isolated island geography
 - Less opportunity to mix language, culture
 - More hierarchy



Melanesian Religions (3)

- God – powerful female deities are rare. Procreating between gods and goddesses is also unusual. Powerful male warrior gods abound.
 - Areop-Enap, the giant spider god
 - Dudugera, the sun deity
 - Agunua, the cosmic serpent
- Round stones, resembling eggs, are a symbol of fertility
- Sorcerers were valued human resources but also prime targets when things went wrong.
- Intertribal alliances were formed through marriage.
 - Witches, typically women who married in from another clan, were distrusted
 - Adulterers were killed – both, only the man, or only the woman
 - Women were more like property
- Melanesia had less hierarchy on earth and in “heaven”, and their religions tended to be earth-focused (magic).

Melanesian Religions (4)

- Spirit houses (temples, shrines, and male club houses)
 - Site for spiritual rituals
 - Agriculture, sculpture, design in wood carving and ochre, masks and body decoration, music, dance, and performance
 - Up to 40-50 meters high
- Music and dance tried to invoke the presence of a god.
 - Dances were almost always religious statements.
 - Art was never for art's sake but rather to accomplish something
 - A warrior may have his entire body tattooed to make him more fearsome in battle.

PACIFIC ARCHITECTURE

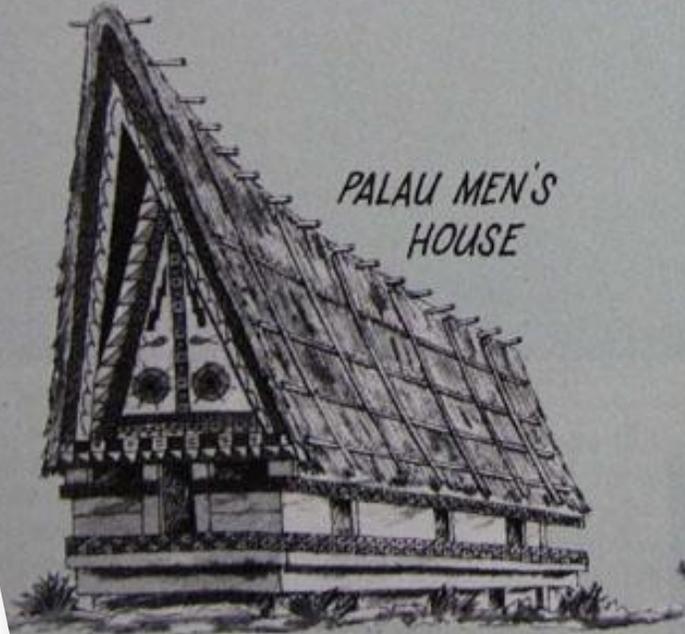
It's Eclectic



FIJIAN BURE



SAMOAN FALE



PALAU MEN'S HOUSE



NEW CALEDON HUT

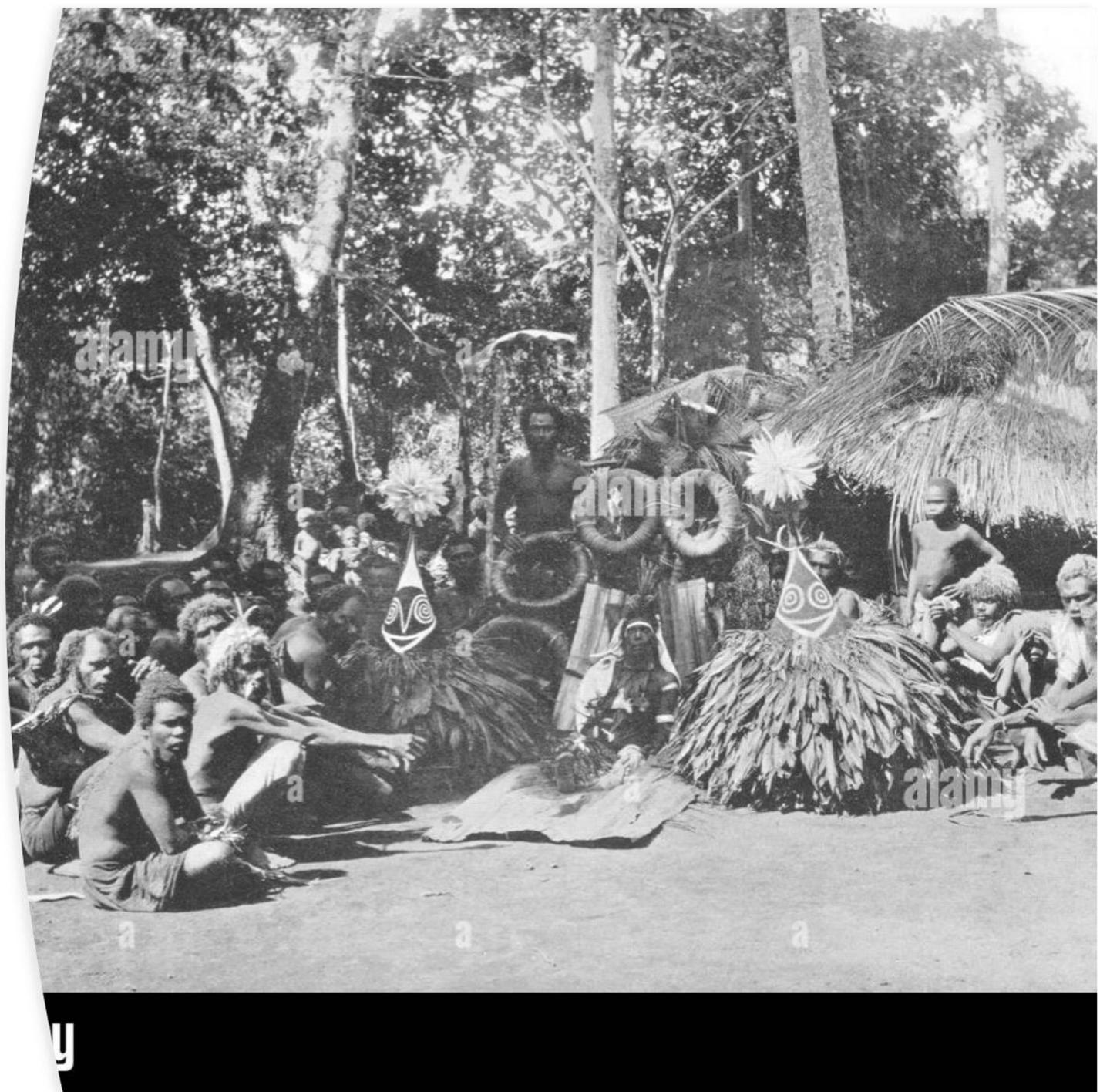
Melanesian Religions (4) – Sickness and Death

- Men should prepare themselves in life to become good spirits in death.
- Women and children - Died in childbirth, vulnerable to enemy raids
 - In some cultures, the widow of the dead man was strangled and burned on her husband's funeral pyre (cf. Hindu Satee).
 - Elderly widows of chiefs may be expected to hang themselves.
- Gaining confidence that sickness could be overcome was crucial. Many people succumbed because they thought that they could not escape the curse against them (someone "had their hair" or clothing).

Melanesian Religions (5)

– Death

- The most important witnesses to the funeral were the ghosts of those who had recently fallen. These ghosts had to ensure safe passage for the deceased.
- The loss of a warrior's mana made his side vulnerable to attack
- The dead continue their involvement with the living. They live in relative happiness, regardless of their individual conduct in life.
- No eschatological aspect of death

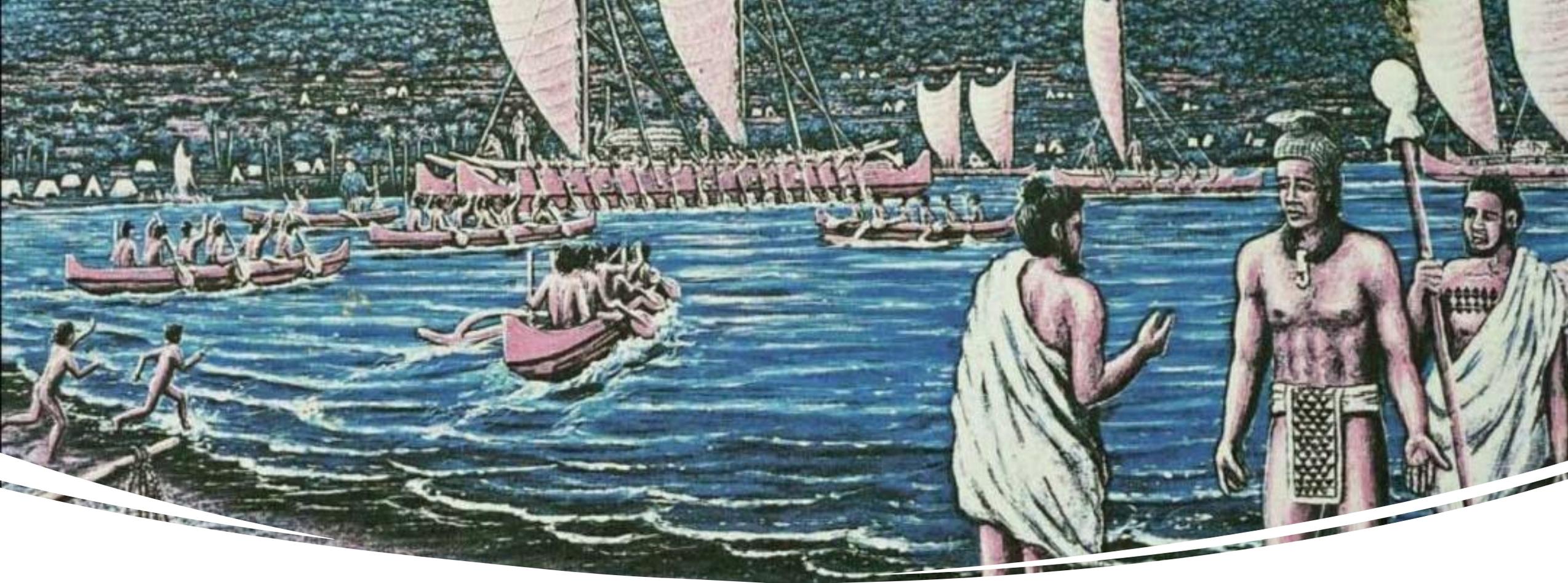


Polynesian and Micronesian Religion (1)

- Creation – sky gods pull up land from the earth
- Example - The Hero Maui
 - Nets the sun to prevent it moving too fast
 - Pulls up a great fish to provide more land
 - Extinguishes a volcano to bring fire back to the people
 - Tries to destroy the goddess of death, but is devoured
 - His death brings death to the whole world
- Ancestors
 - Are remembered for six generations
 - Can mediate between humans and the gods.
 - Are considered an active part of the community.
 - Are most powerful during and around ceremonies.
 - Ill-treated spirits cause harm, and well-treated spirits can help.

Polynesian and Micronesian Religion (2)

- Security circle – 2 or more clans
- Tribal warfare was endemic throughout Oceania.
- Hawaiian, Tongan, Tahitian, and Samoan societies had kings with nearly unlimited power.
 - Kings mediated the divine to humans in their role as sacrificers.
 - Kings redistributed resources
 - Kings were legitimized by the appeal that they had lots of “mana.”
 - The mandate to rule was confirmed by the spirit world (Divine Right of Kings)
- Slaves, captives, and even commoners could be ritually sacrificed to the good of the tribe.
- Polygyny was the rule among “big men.” Polyandry was exceedingly rare.
- Polynesia had more hierarchy on earth and in “heaven”, and their religions tended to be cosmos-focused (religion).



Poly and Micronesia Religion (3)

- The dead descend into the underworld, the gates of which were often on island shores.
- Death of King Kiwala'o (1760-1782)
- The dead were buried on land or sea depending upon caves and other space available



Cargo Cults (1)

- Cargo cults were diverse spiritual and political movements that arose among indigenous Melanesians following Western colonization of the region in the late 19th century.

Cargo Cults (2)

- They involve ritual activities that in some way imitate or mimic actions associated with whites/Europeans.
- These activities are aimed at effecting transformations and/or reversals in status (often associated with skin color), wealth and power for adherents.
- They involve stories of the 'loss' of skills, goods and knowledge to white people (often those who colonized them) through some moral failure or offence. Some of the rites or practices aim to redeem these failures to effect the transformation.
- They have (charismatic) local leaders.

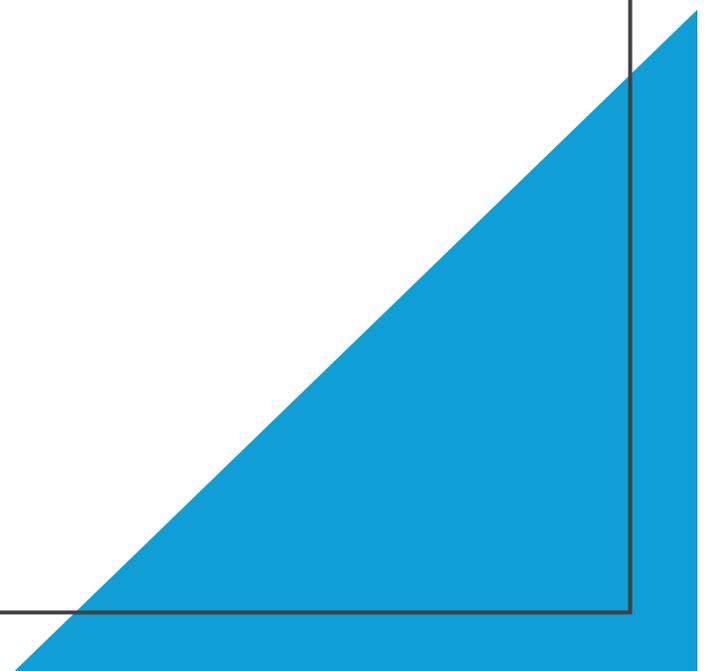


Cargo Cults (3)

- They have strong nativist elements – that is, they aim at advancing the political interests of local people by appealing to the reinstatement of specific ‘traditional’ practices and they see their movement as one that reclaims self-determination and independence from (white) foreign control.
- They entail beliefs in the return of ancestors bringing wealth in the form of money, European goods etc. –‘cargo’.
- They include utopian and/or millenarian ideas of a future in which people will not have to labor.
- They have continued over many decades, changing slightly, but maintaining core beliefs and practices.

Conclusion

Discussion



References