

Morality, Domination and Understandings of 'Justifiable Anger' among the Ifaluk

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The 'everyday understandings' of health, human development and psychological structure that are described in this volume are learned and most often culturally variable understandings. Learning clearly structures the field of commonsense or orthodox 'knowledge' no less than that of heterodox 'belief'. Anthropological concern with these issues came early in the field's development because the discipline's primary method, cross-cultural fieldwork, places the ethnographer in a social setting in which his or her own implicit understanding system often fails to work in interpreting others' actions and results in bungled social interaction. Otherwise implicit everyday understandings are made explicit, and demonstrate their critical importance for the entire range of social practices. Natural understandings are revealed to be cultural. The denaturalization of knowledge has proceeded in anthropology in many domains from economics (Gudeman, 1986), to gender (MacCormack and Strathern, 1980), to psychiatry (Gaines, 1982). Much work has also been done on cultural understandings of the person and personal processes such as emotion (for example, Abu-Lughod, 1986; M. Rosaldo, 1980; White and Kirkpatrick, 1985; see also Holland and Quinn, 1987).

This chapter considers an aspect of the emotional theories of the Ifaluk people of Micronesia, and focuses on the question of how those cultural understandings of an emotion related to 'anger' are evident, realized in and shaped by their everyday social practices. More particularly, the understandings of 'justifiable anger' shared by most Ifaluk are shown to have both moral and ideological force in social life. In other words, the everyday understanding of this emotion does not simply occur as a form of reflection on experience, but emerges as people justify and negotiate both cultural values and the prerogatives of power that some members of this society currently hold. The more general argument I make is that everyday understanding is a cultural and social process involving negotiation, interpersonal evaluation and power struggles.

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The 430 people of Ifaluk live on a half-square-mile atoll in the Western Pacific. Theirs is mainly a subsistence economy of fishing and taro gardening, and social relations are characterized by a hierarchical ranking of individuals and lineages as well as by a strong taboo on interpersonal violence or disrespect. While a group of hereditary chiefs enforce an informal code of law, most conflicts are handled within the household or lineage. A number of the features of life on Ifaluk condition the everyday understanding of emotion, including the island's high population density, precarious position in a typhoon belt which has often meant destruction of their food supply, the frequent adoption of children between living parents, and the strength of women's position in the economy and matrilineal inheritance system (for example, they control horticultural produce and are the owners of household land). These factors have been described elsewhere (Lutz, 1988), and can only be referred to rather than explained below as they relate to understandings of anger.

One of the most central concepts people on Ifaluk use is that of *song*, or 'justifiable anger', an idea that pervades everyday life on the atoll. The term can be heard daily in homes, canoe houses and taro gardens, and can be understood as an expression of the speaker's moral judgement. In lieu of describing the malicious gossipmonger or the aggressive child as bad, someone will often say, 'I am [or someone else is] "justifiably angry" [*song*] at that person.' When this emotional term is used, an assessment is being made; the speaker is saying, 'Something immoral or taboo has happened here, and it ought not to have happened.' As we will see, the moralizing uses to which the concept of *song* is put can also be characterized as ideological in nature; talk about *song* often reinforces the prerogatives of the more powerful members of Ifaluk society, as it is they who have most appropriated the right to be described, or to describe themselves, as 'justifiably angry'.

Whether the concept of *song* is approached as a moral or an ideological construct, we will also see that the term is not simply used to refer to an event (whether that event is seen as internal or external). The use of the word *song* most frequently involves an attempt on the part of the speaker to portray events *before others* in a particular way. Claims to 'justifiable anger' involve a characterization of the world that must be *negotiated* with the audience for those claims. Involving, as the term 'justifiable anger' does, such weighty matters of right and wrong, and of dominance and submission, things could hardly be otherwise.

To understand what people on Ifaluk meant when they said that they or someone they knew was *song*, I did what the reader will do

here, which is to move back and forth between my understandings of the concept of 'anger' as it is used in my own society and the concept of *song*. Approaching an adequate translation of the concept involved a process of comparison and contrast — at times unconscious — between my own emotional world and theirs. What immediately drew the world of 'anger' and the world of *song* together for me as an apt comparison is the sense that each of the two concepts is used to say, 'I hate what just happened. I want to move towards that thing or person, and stop it.' Like 'anger', *song* is considered an unpleasant emotion that is experienced in a situation of perceived injury to the self or to another.

The differences between the two concepts would also soon strike me. They were many and went to the root of the differences in our social experience, including our experience of self. Unlike 'anger', 'justifiable anger' is not used to talk about frustrating events that are simply unpleasant, rather than socially condemned. While the uses to which 'anger' is put may often involve the kind of moral appeal that *song* does, for many middle-class Americans 'anger' occurs as much or more in response to the restraint of one's desires or actions as to the violation of moral precept. Moreover, the Ifaluk emphasize, in the concept of *song*, the prosocial aspects of anger;¹ to become 'justifiably angry' is to advance the possibilities for peace and well-being on the island, for it is to identify instances of behaviour that threaten the moral order. This view contrasts with the prevalent view in the west that anger is primarily an anti-social emotion.

Moral Anger and Ifaluk Values

The Ifaluk speak about many types of anger. There is the irritability that often accompanies sickness (*tipmochmoch*), the anger that builds up slowly in the face of a succession of minor but unwanted happenings (*lingeringer*), the annoyance that occurs when relatives have failed to live up to their obligations (*nguch*), and, finally, there is the frustrated anger that occurs in the face of personal misfortunes and slights which one is helpless to overturn (*tang*). But each of these emotions is sharply distinguished from the anger which is righteous indignation, or justifiable anger (*song*), and it is only this anger which is morally approved. While the other forms of anger are attributed both to the self and to others, the person who experiences them does not gain — and often loses — moral force.² These amoral forms of anger, if they occur frequently enough, leave one's character open to question or even severe critique. The claim to be 'justifiably angry', on the other hand, is taken seriously as a

moral assertion; by identifying *song* in oneself or in others, the speaker advertises himself or herself as someone with a finely tuned and mature sense of island values.

Each word in a language evokes, for the native speaker, an elaborate 'scene' replete with actors, props and event sequences (Fillmore, 1977). The scene that the term *song*, or 'justifiable anger', paints is one in which (1) there is a rule or value violation; (2) it is pointed out by someone, (3) who simultaneously calls for the condemnation of the act, and (4) the perpetrator reacts in fear to that anger, (5) amending his or her ways. Almost all of the hundreds of uses of the term 'justifiable anger' that I recorded evoked this scene, making reference to the violation of some aspect of the widely shared Ifaluk value system. By examining the contexts in which 'justifiable anger' is used, therefore, it is possible to draw the outlines of the Ifaluk worldview; essentially, the term marks the existence of specific cultural values, and serves as an agent for their reproduction.

Chiefly Anger, the Taboo and the Law

It was an evening after the sun had set, and most men had left the drinking circles where they gather on a regular basis with kin and neighbours to drink the fermented coconut toddy collected from their trees each late afternoon. Some younger men of Mai village, however, had continued to drink into the night, and then decided to cross the channel to visit Bwaibwai.³ Once there, they walked along the village paths speaking in loud voices and occasionally shouting out.

This event was much in discussion the following day. Comment centred around the young men's violation of several standard Ifaluk expectations about how people ought to behave. In their interactions with each other, the Ifaluk value calm, quiet talk, so much so that my first impression of Ifaluk conversations was that of whispered exchanges. Shouting is considered not only a serious disturbance of this otherwise peaceable style, but is also seen as intensely frightening. In addition, people commented, these men were from Mai. They had crossed village boundaries in their escapades, and in so doing threatened inter-village harmony. This is something that the Ifaluk see as potentially more disruptive than misbehaviour whose negative consequences reverberate solely within the bounds of one of the four named communities on the island.

Although several people discussed their panicked fright (*rus*) on hearing the shouting the evening before, most emotional talk centred around the certainty that 'the chiefs will be "justifiably angry" (*song*)' at the young men. Indeed, the chiefs, it turned out,

were 'justifiably angry' (*song*), as evidenced by the fact that they soon met and decided to levy a fine (*gariya*) of 200 yards of rope on the men. The rope was to be given to the canoe house in Bwaibwai, where the shouting had taken place. This amount of rope, which represents hundreds of hours of work for the men, who make it from coconut-husk fibre, was a measure of the *song* of the chiefs.

This episode epitomizes one of the most common ways in which the concept of 'justifiable anger' is used; a taboo is violated, a traditional law is disobeyed, and people point not directly to the law but to the *song* of the chiefs. The traditional leaders of Ifaluk, who currently number one woman and three men, each represent the oldest appropriate member of the highest-ranked matrilineage of each of four of the island's seven clans. Their responsibilities are conceptualized as those of 'taking care of' (*gamwela*) the island and its people.⁴ Their role as moral leaders of the island is evidenced in the periodic island-wide meetings (*toi*) at which they frequently exhort people to behave properly — to take nothing from the taro gardens of others, to avoid gossip and all 'bad talk', and to work hard, particularly at community-level tasks such as village weeding.

The chiefs are seen as the primary stewards of the island's taboos (*taub*). These taboos forbid traffic in certain areas of the island; uttering certain words in mixed company, including particularly a set with sexual connotations; taking of turtle which belongs to the chief of Kovalu clan, or the taking of marine and other resources out of the season which it is the chiefs' prerogative to declare; walking on the land of the highest-ranked chief at Welipi (who is the leader of Kovalu clan, and is currently a woman) without good purpose and without deep waist-bent posture (*gabarog*); women entering the canoe houses, or riding in the large canoes (*waterog*) during fishing trips, or men entering the birth houses; women working in the taro gardens during their menstrual periods; and men, women or children eating the particular foods that are forbidden to each of them. Although violations of taboos appeared to occur rarely, the idiom of *song* (justifiable anger) was used to explain the consequences when they did occur.

On one such occasion, Ifaluk received a rare visit from a private yacht, whose passengers included several European men and a woman. When the yachters asked to be taken for a sail on one of the island's impressive ocean-going canoes, some men agreed to accommodate them. This event, which had occurred several years before my arrival on the island, was still being discussed. The narrative of this event invariably included, as its central point, the fact that the chiefs were 'justifiably angry' at the local men when they heard that they had violated the taboo against taking women

out (for anything but necessary inter-island travel) on the ocean canoes. While it may have been the case that the men who took the Europeans on the canoe had decided that a non-Ifaluk woman's presence would not constitute an instance to which the taboo would apply, the chiefs' 'justifiable anger' served as notice of the leaders' interpretation of the meaning of the taboos in these new social circumstances. The presence or absence of the chiefs' *song* was looked to in other encounters with new social phenomena (such as events at the island school, or new customs and attitudes brought back by young men who had been off-island); the emotional response of the chiefs could be used as an indication of how the rest of the island ought to feel about, and simultaneously morally react to, such social changes.

The emotion of 'justifiable anger' is strongly associated with Ifaluk's chiefs because it is they who stand as the final moral arbiters on the island, and it is *song* which symbolizes the perception of moral transgression. It is the traditional leaders' 'justifiable anger' that marks the violation of those aspects of the moral code which are seen as most crucial for both the harmony and the survival of the island as a whole. Although their authority is sometimes covertly challenged, the near universal concern with the *song* of the chiefs is an index both of the legitimacy that the latter enjoy and of the widespread sharing of values, at least on the explicit level, that obtains on Ifaluk. The intertwining of the political and the moral is seen on Ifaluk in the use of the moral emotion of *song* by the chiefs to maintain traditional value-orientations. Political and moral leadership are thus here, as in many other social systems, closely linked with emotional leadership. As we will see in a moment, the concept of *song* can also be seen as an ideological practice engaged in by the chiefs and others in positions of relative power on Ifaluk to control the behaviour of their subordinates and to bolster their claims to moral suzerainty.

Everyday Interaction and the Marking of Value

The chiefs are certainly not the only individuals on Ifaluk who may claim to be 'justifiably angry'. In an important sense, every person on Ifaluk from the oldest matriarch to the socially emergent toddler not only can be, but is *expected* to be, *song* at appropriate junctures. Since *song* is literally treated as the moral sensibility of a person, the total absence of *song* in an individual could be condemned by others. Let us look now at exactly how this moral sense operates in everyday interaction on Ifaluk.

One of the most frequent contexts in which people spoke about their 'justifiable anger' was when someone had failed to live up to

their obligation to share with others. People are expected to share everything, from their cigarettes, food and labour to their children. These expectations are reinforced by the daily sharing that does occur. A woman who smoked a cigarette by herself without sending it on complete rounds among the others with whom she is chatting or working would be considered incalculably thoughtless; a family eating outdoors and within sight of a village path is expected to call out 'Come and eat!' to anyone, kin or relative stranger, who passes by; a group of five people sitting down to eat after an unlucky day of fishing will break the few ounces of their single reef fish into five parts; certain household tasks, such as special food preparation, taro-garden weeding, or the periodic rethatching of a roof, will be done with the contribution of the extra-household labour of up to forty or fifty people; and, finally, the adoption of children from their living parents after about the age of three is valued as a sign of generosity in both adopter and adoptee, and has resulted in an adoption rate of 40 per cent for all children over the age of five. Both the sharing behaviour that occurs every day and the daily conflicts over such co-operation are an index of the extent to which sharing is an entrenched aspect of people's value-orientation on the island. Another index is the fact that the person whose behaviour earns him or her the label of 'stingy' (*farog*) is perhaps the most disliked type of person on Ifaluk, with the sole exception of the 'hot-tempered' (*sigsig*) individual.

What can be termed 'typhoon stories' are frequently told on Ifaluk, and their telling overflows with messages about most of the central emotions and values that occupy people on the island, including particularly the value of sharing. People tell of the entire village gathering together to eat whatever food items can be caught or salvaged after the storm's devastation. The stories draw an image of one coconut being split open by the chief and divided into equal but miniscule portions for the survivors. They also tell of the punishment meted out by the chiefs, again as a measure of their *song* (justifiable anger), for those caught eating alone (and hence not sharing what food they have found); a circle is drawn in the earth out in the direct sun, and the culprit is made to sit there for an extended period, a sanction that is notably harsh by comparison with those for other infractions of law and morality.

The anticipation of the 'justifiable anger' of others is often the explicit motivation for sharing. The consumption of pork and of sea turtle, which are relatively scarce and highly valued resources, is surrounded by careful attention to equity in the distribution of portions to neighbours and relatives. A representative of each of the families who is to receive a basket of turtle or pork pieces is usually

asked to assist in its preparation. Hence, I was sent one afternoon to help in the cooking of a large pig belonging to Lemangemar, the clan sister of Tamalekar (the man who was my 'adoptive father'). As we sat around the work area, it was clear that there were many more hands than tasks that required them. Most of those invited were implicitly there in order that each family might directly observe the equity of the division (*gamaku*) of the food, thereby preventing *song* at Lemangemar's household. After small baskets had been woven and set out, and as her daughter dropped pieces into each, Lemangemar supervised by calling out, 'Put more pork in that basket, or the people of [that household to whom the basket belongs] will be "justifiably angry".' The daily anticipation of the 'justifiable anger' of others is a fundamental regulator of the behaviour of individuals and a basic factor in the maintenance of the value of sharing.

What happens when the value of sharing is contravened? 'Justifiable anger' is declared, usually by the party or parties most directly injured by the failure to share; in some cases, an entire village may be 'justifiably angry'. In one such case, the women of two households attempted to circumvent the mandate that each household bring their traditional and clearly identified allotment of food (in this case, one bowl of taro or pot of breadfruit) to communal feasts or to households where there is a serious illness or recent death. These particular women came to a village feast with one pot of food which they had collected and cooked together, and so brought less than the amount expected. As soon as the feast was over and the women in question had left, people declared their 'justifiable anger' and reviewed the offenders' misbehaviour. As is often the case in emotion-attribution on Ifaluk, people spoke in the first person plural; 'We are *song* [justifiably angry]', one woman said, 'because those women did not bring their full allotment [*tub*] of food. Those people are bad.'

What was also typical about this incident was that confrontation between the angry parties and the offender was avoided. Gossip rather than head-to-head discussion is the usual means by which the fact of someone's 'justifiable anger' is communicated to the culprit, and this indirect communication is crucial for the prevention of future violations. The damage gossip can do to one's standing in the eyes of others is done by the accusation of wrongdoing that is central to the meaning of *song*.

Each time a person declares 'I am *song* [justifiably angry]' is an opening gambit or bid in an effort to install a particular interpretation of events as the definition of that situation to be accepted by others. In the above case, as in many others, the opening bid is accepted

and the force of public opinion sides with the person who first asserts that the situation is one of rule-violation, and hence one of 'justifiable anger'. In other instances, however, the violation of cultural norms is ambiguous or contested by others, and a more extended negotiation process must occur. This negotiation occurs over the aptness of, or justification for, someone's 'justifiable anger', in other words over the meaning to be assigned to an event. The process of negotiation may take a few moments, or it may continue over the course of many months.

Social Change and the Reconstruction of Emotional Understanding

Negotiation of emotional meaning often occurs where recent social changes have produced or exacerbated cleavages within the body politic or unsettled longstanding cultural agreements on the value or deviance of a particular behaviour. Attitudes towards aspects of particular social changes, and regulation of them, are constantly in process of formulation. The consequences for emotional understanding are intrapersonal ambivalence and interpersonal disagreement on how to reason about social events. Values in flux thus mean emotions in flux — emotions in process of cultural *reconstruction*.

This general principle can be illustrated by looking at several examples of extended interpersonal negotiation over the ascription of 'justifiable anger'. At the root of the negotiation in these cases is conflict over resources or ideas that have been relatively recently introduced to Ifaluk. Many of these changes stem from the American colonial administration of the island and the rest of Micronesia since the Second World War. Direct US government subsidies of a variety of social programmes have meant a sudden influx of cash to the island. This cash has, moreover, entered the island economy in a highly inequitable way; where money was once primarily acquired through each household's ability to prepare and sell small quantities of copra, most income is now channelled into the island via the small number of individuals who receive government salaries, including the teachers and health aides. Unlike Ifaluk's primary valuables, such as taro, fish and canoes, cash is both readily hidden and hoarded, and people have not yet decided how its sharing ought to be handled. Emotional ambiguity and conflict are the result.

Take the case of a young woman and her husband, whose government job gave him a salary and often kept him near his assignment on Yap. When the woman became pregnant, it was decided that she would give birth in the hospital on the distant island of Yap, and she was accompanied on her ship journey from

Ifaluk by her mother's sister and the latter's husband, who had business (which provided him with some cash) on Yap. During their several months' stay, the elder man made several requests of the young husband for cash for cigarettes and food items. After a point, the requests were ignored, and both parties privately declared their 'justifiable anger'. The young man and woman appealed to the notion that the elder couple had much cash of their own and, hence, should have used that rather than asking for the others' money. In explaining their *song*, the older couple spoke of how they had 'taken care of' the young woman through her travels and birth and of their *gashigshig* (state of being indebted to by others; literally, tiredness) on account of the young woman.

To some extent, each party to the conflict had appealed to a principle of proper behaviour to which other Ifaluk subscribe. On the one hand, this includes the idea that one should not ask for something which one already has in abundance, and, on the other, the expectation that there be reciprocity in relations with others such that one party to an exchange should not feel exploited or 'tired' in their efforts. Were cash not involved (nor, perhaps, the changes in attitude in the younger men whose deference to authority is tempered by their new power in the outside world), the issue would have been clear. The younger couple would have been expected to share any apparent abundance with the elder, and the elder would have had sole claim to 'justifiable anger' were such sharing not to take place.

A more dramatic example of the destruction of emotional meaning that has accompanied the social changes of the most recent colonial period was provided by the return of a 'prodigal son' to the island. I had heard Tamalekar speak often of his sister's son, Palemai, who had gone to school in Oregon many years prior, and not returned. Quite suddenly, however, Palemai appeared as a passenger on the field ship that connects the island with Yap. His family was overjoyed to see him alive and to think that he might have returned to stay. Their joy was quickly tempered by consternation, however, as Palemai, who had arrived drunk, proceeded to sing boisterously — as he careened between his relatives' homes — the *bwarug* (love songs) that should never be sung in the company of both men and women. Between his arrival and departure with the ship a day later, he remained very drunk and displayed the kinds of boastful and disrespectful behaviours which cause 'justifiable anger' in others, behaviours which I had never observed in such profusion in one person at one time. In talking with others, he declared that he needed to return to school to get a degree, and that he would return and get a 'high' (important, top-

ranking) job which would greatly help Ifaluk. The frequent repetition of these assertions came on an island where a very high value is placed on modesty and self-effacement.

In the evening, Palemai came to visit Tamalekar, to whom, as his mother's brother, he owed the greatest respect. Tamalekar, though nonplussed by his nephew's behaviour, began quietly to talk to him in the style that is used when someone is attempting to *garepiy* (instruct; cause to become intelligent) his or her social subordinate. Rather than taking the usual quiet listening stance that is expected in these contexts, however, Palemai would periodically interrupt him by breaking into 'love songs'. To Tamalekar's query as to why he had stayed away from the island for so long, he responded with the taunt, 'You [Tamalekar] are the one who gave me permission to go to school.' Palemai went so far at one point as 'playfully' to slap his uncle on the back, a move that is only appropriate between peers and then only when they are drinking together.

Tamalekar's pain at his nephew's disrespect, or more accurately his 'craziness', was palpable, and as the night wore on he looked more and more at the ground in front of him, his shoulders slumping. The tears that he began to shed marked his confusion, his inability to become 'justifiably angry' (or perhaps to feel anything with a name and an accompanying and effective behavioural script) in the face of inexplicably affronting behaviour in a man whom he loved and who ought to respect him. Palemai's horrendous response to his awkward position between two worlds was certainly idiosyncratic, but it was set up by the historical changes of the American colonial period. And so long as an individual's emotional experience in its fullest sense is a social achievement, reached only through some basic agreement between people on the terms in which life's problematic moments are to be defined, such dramatic social disjunctions can only result in emotional ambiguity or even chaos.

Renato Rosaldo (1984) points out that people often emotionally 'muddle through' traumatic life events — that each affecting event, such as a death, is a somewhat unique experience for which cultural scripts cannot completely prepare people, and that each emotional experience reflects the particularities of individual lives. Tamalekar's 'dark night' with his nephew reveals one source — historical social change — for both the rich diversity and the ambiguity of emotional understandings that appears here.

The Place of 'Justifiable Anger' in Moral Socialization

The explicitly moral purpose to which the concept of 'justifiable anger' is put gives it a particularly important role in the socialization of children. The prominent place of the Ought in all aspects of

Ifaluk everyday life is replicated in their approach to children, and contrasts dramatically with the view of socialization as a form of reprehensible coercion that occurs in several more radically egalitarian societies such as the Ilongot of the Philippines (M. Rosaldo, 1980). People told me on many different occasions that a parent *must* at times become 'justifiably angry' with his or her child, 'or the child will not know the difference between right and wrong'. All of the most undesirable characteristics that a child or an adult can display — laziness, loudness, disrespect, disobedience or badness — are explained as the result of the parents' failure to be 'justifiably angry' when those behaviours were first exhibited by the child. The adult's 'justifiable anger' is seen as *telling* the child that a value has been contravened; in one sense, *song* is seen as a clear and natural signal to the child about the nature of value and the characteristics of bad behaviour.

How children learn the uses to which *song* can be put is illustrated by an episode involving a five-year-old boy, Tachimangemar, who lived in the household where I stayed. The two of us had had some difficulty in adjusting to each other. In Tachimangemar's eyes, I was no doubt somewhat unpredictable, while the boy's aggressive style and attention-seeking seemed to me regressive. Although it was similar to the style of many island children between the ages of two and five, it was all the more difficult for me to deal with when contrasted with the soft-spoken co-operativeness of most children over the age of six. Children of Tachimangemar's years are considered by adults to be too old for solicitousness and not yet old enough to have developed the 'social intelligence' (*repiy*) that prevents unsocialized behaviour.

I was feeling charitably inclined as he entered on this particular afternoon, however. Noticing that he wore a flower wreath on his head of the sort that women often affectionately weave for their kin, I asked, with what I meant as a pleasant show of interest, whether the wreath were his. He replied, 'Ilefagomar [his mother] is not *song* [justifiably angry],' puffed out his chest and strode out into the coral-covered yard. Earlier in my stay on the island, this response would have mystified and perhaps depressed me. After six months on Ifaluk, I could make some sense of it. I remained alien enough, and committed enough to another way of seeing children, anger and authority, to need to be *reminded* of what was to the boy obvious, and to find the terms he used striking, both then and now, some years later.

Tachimangemar had drawn several inferences from my question, including the idea that I believed the wreath to belong to someone else. I also understood that, in stating that his mother was not *song*,

or justifiably angry, he was telling me that he had done nothing wrong in wearing the wreath, that only Ilefagomar and not I had the authority to make moral judgement of his behaviour, and that he would continue to wear the wreath as long as he pleased. Tachimangemar's statement takes much of its sense and rhetorical force from the fact that the Ifaluk elaborate and emphasize a distinction between moral and immoral anger and from the articulation of the concept of moral anger with the atoll's social hierarchy. It also indexed his knowledge that his mother would have communicated her 'justifiable anger' to him had he been doing something wrong in wearing the headpiece.

Time and again, children were reminded — most often by children a bit older than themselves — that some adult would be 'justifiably angry' if they continued to misbehave, or failed to do something they ought to have done. A girl tells her younger sibling to stop being uncooperative with the teacher at school, or their father will be *song*. A boy who uses a taboo word is warned by his older brother that his parents will be 'justifiably angry'. Sent on an errand by our 'mother', the teenaged foster daughter of my household and I go to the taro garden to gather leaves for soup. In response to my question as to how many taro leaves to collect, she tells me, 'Ilefagomar didn't say how much to take, but we'll fill up the basket so she will not be *song* [justifiably angry].'

The role of *song* in the generation of valued behaviour is thought to stem from the fact that 'justifiable anger' causes fear (*metagu*) in the person at whom it is directed (Lutz, 1983, 1987). *Song*, in fact, would not have its effect on the moral life of the community were fear not to be evoked by it. It is in this regard that the concept of *ker* (happiness/excitement) plays what is, from an American perspective, a paradoxical role. 'Happiness/excitement' is an emotion which people see as pleasant but amoral. It is often, in fact, immoral, insofar as someone who is 'happy/excited' is more likely to be unafraid of other people. While this lack of fear may make them laugh and talk with people, it may also make them misbehave or walk around 'showing off', or 'acting like a big shot' (*gabos fetal*). As 'happiness/excitement' (*ker*) dispels the individual's fearfulness, it disrupts the normal functioning of *song*, and with it the moral compass of this society. While American approaches to child-rearing and emotion elevate 'happiness' to an important position, setting it out as an absolute necessity for the good or healthy child (and adult), the Ifaluk view 'happiness/excitement' (*ker*) as something that must be carefully monitored and sometimes halted in children.

The concept of 'justifiable anger' marks the boundary between

acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, for both child and adult. Learning to become attuned to both explicit declarations and more subtle non-verbal demonstrations of that emotion is crucial to acquiring an Ifaluk soul and a favoured place in society.

Domination and the Ideological Role of the Concept of 'Justifiable Anger'

The moral ideas that prevail in any particular time and place come into being in the context of the configuration of power relationships existing in that society. In case after case, it has been observed that the unequal distribution of power in society carries with it the risk that the ideas of the dominant sectors will take precedence over other possible perspectives, and, moreover, that those ideas will be presented as the ideas of the entire group, and as natural rather than contrived or self-interested ideas. The power of some members of society to reinforce their prerogatives will include the power to 'sell' their ideas and their morality to the rest of the group.

By some definitions, the 'ideological' realm is not a purely mental one, but encompasses consciousness as it is used in everyday interactions between individuals. The concept is fruitfully used to describe processes rather than static structures; ideologies are consequently seen as in a constant state of production and reproduction through the actions of individuals (for example, Therborn, 1980). The ideological is not simply a rigid structure of domination, but is the arena of thought and practice in which groups and individuals struggle to assert control or to avoid subordination (for example, Corrigan and Willis, 1980; Myers, 1982; Taussig, 1980). We can thus expect to find in cultural understandings — including those aspects which can be termed emotional — both the outline of relations of dominance as well as the attempted appropriation or alteration of those meanings by the subordinate members of society in furtherance of their own interests.

In everything that has been said thus far about the notion of 'justifiable anger' on Ifaluk, it is clear that the concept, while explicitly moral, also has a role to play in the domination of one person by another. To the extent that an individual's claims to 'justifiable anger' are accepted by the community, that person exerts his or her will over others. The 'fear' that must result from 'justifiable anger' stops others in the pursuit of their immediate goals; 'justifiable anger' thereby controls them. In addition, the aura of moral superiority that inheres in the notion of 'justifiable anger' makes the concept a symbol of legitimate power which can further bolster the position of the person who claims to experience

the emotion. The claim to moral sense and rectitude which the 'justifiably angry' make is also, then, a claim to power and a crucial part of the ideological process.

As may already be apparent, the social hierarchy on Ifaluk is outlined, to an important extent, by the source of most assertions of 'justifiable anger' and by the direction in which that anger usually flows. It is much more often the case that persons of higher rank or status are 'justifiably angry' towards those of lower station than is the reverse the case. The chiefs are 'justifiably angry' at community members, adults are 'justifiably angry' at children, older women are 'justifiably angry' at younger women, and brothers are 'justifiably angry' at their younger sisters. The direction in which 'justifiable anger' flows is predominantly *down* the social scale.

Resistance to the structure of domination also occurs every day on Ifaluk, and the concept of *song* is used in attempts to alter that balance of power. Teenaged women sometimes resist their elders' attempts to marry them off, women attempt to push back the boundaries of the work men expect them to do, and people malign the actions of the Yapese and through them the whole colonial system. In each of these types of instances, the idea of 'justifiable anger' is marshalled as a source of legitimacy and a method for condemnation of the system as it exists.

The sites at which the regular exercise of power and power struggles occur on Ifaluk are revealed in uses of the term 'justifiable anger'. By looking carefully at the cases in which *song* is used, it is possible to observe the network of power relations on the island and to gain insight into political processes. The daily negotiations which occur over who is 'justifiably angry' and over the proper reasons for that anger lie at the heart of the politics of everyday life.

We can begin with the one most important area in which power relations are, however, non-negotiable. No one, in my observation, ever openly declared their 'justifiable anger' at the chiefs in their capacity as traditional leaders. As the ultimate seat of authority on Ifaluk, the chiefs are, in a fundamental sense, infallible; while their edicts and laws are not always obeyed, their judgement is never explicitly called into question. When the chiefs speak at all-island assemblies, their words are seen as having a fundamental importance. The secure place of the chiefs at the head of the Ifaluk social structure is both evidenced and further ensured by the failure of any of their subjects to direct 'justifiable anger' at them.

The relationship between a brother and sister is a central aspect of Carolinean social structure. Although brothers will marry out to another household, exchanges between them and their sisters will continue throughout their lifetimes and constitute the most im-

portant source of inter-household exchange. Sisters send their brothers the fruit of their gardens, and adopt their children. Brothers take an important interest in their sisters' children (natural and adopted), having in theory the ultimate responsibility for their proper upbringing and protection. The emotional tone of the relationship between brothers and sisters is often one of extraordinary affection, but it is also one in which the authority to make decisions about each other's lives rests much more heavily with the brother than the sister. Although this authority is generally only fully exercised by a man who is older than his sister, it forms a fundamental source of power in Ifaluk society.

An important index of how solid the authority charter of men over their sisters is can be found in the great extent to which women are at pains to avoid the 'justifiable anger' of their brothers. A woman who has done something improper or about whom a piece of gossip is started will as often worry out loud that 'my brother will be *song* [justifiably angry]' as she will worry about the anger of her parents or of other elders. These concerns are realistic ones; some of the most dramatic demonstrations of *song* were in fact carried out or threatened by brothers of women who had violated some code of conduct. In one such instance, a young woman got on the inter-island steamer with her husband to go to their Woleai household without asking permission of her Ifaluk classificatory brothers. When they heard that she had left, they were 'justifiably angry' and threatened, in a traditional gesture of extreme anger, to burn down her house.⁵

The relations between the generations on Ifaluk generally run smoothly. This is particularly the case when one looks at generations of women. Post-marital residence is matrilocal, so many women live with their mothers and grandmothers, and later their daughters, from birth to death, creating strong and deep bonds between them. The household hierarchy is clear, with the eldest women making the most fundamental decisions and delegating work and authority to the middle-aged women, who in turn direct teenaged and younger girls in work. It is the elder women who determine how to dispose of some of the most basic forms of household wealth. They decide the occasions for giving away the elaborately designed skirts woven by women in the household; they direct the sending of pots of taro and breadfruit to other households; they primarily decide when children are to be sent out as temporary help to another household or when more permanent adoptions are to occur; and they play what is sometimes a major role in arranging marriages for the sons and daughters of the household. And it is these powerful women who become 'justifiably angry' if their charges in the household disobey

their instructions, fail to play their role in the household's productive activities or behave in such a way as to become the object of well-founded gossip in the village.

Younger women more often than not anticipate the 'justifiable anger' of their elders in deciding how to behave. The fear that properly results from the anticipation of *song* usually acts to create obedient and deferential younger women.⁶ Young women, and particularly unmarried women in their teens and twenties, however, sometimes fly directly in the face of the expressed wishes of the dominant women of their household or wider kinship group. While the 'justifiable anger' of older women is assured by this defiance, it is also occasionally the case that a younger woman will attempt to ignore that anger by failing to become 'fearful' (*metagu*) or will even declare her own 'justifiable anger'.

One such case was that of Lesepemang. A sixteen-year-old girl, she was being temporarily fostered by Ilefagomar, the woman who headed the household in which I lived. She had been sent from her household primarily to help Ilefagomar through the later stages of a pregnancy, birth and confinement. While she was living in the household, a marriage was arranged between her and a young man from another island who was staying on Ifaluk. She did not want to marry, however, fearing the loss of her freedom and the increased likelihood of pregnancy. Her protest against this arranged marriage took many forms; she would be told to prepare a meal for her husband by one of the elder women, but would either silently refuse, giggle or take an inordinately long time to bring it to him. When no one but I was with her and her new husband, she would tease and 'speak badly' (or brusquely and impolitely) to him. The protest soon escalated to a general refusal to perform any and all assigned tasks except under heavy pressure.

All of the adults around her explained her behaviour as due to the fact that she, like all new spouses, was 'ashamed and embarrassed' (*ma*). In attempting to change her attitude and behaviour, she was frequently lectured, with one older woman expressing a common theme in telling her, 'What woman isn't ashamed and embarrassed [*ma*] around her new husband? But we [women] listen to our mothers and so take care of that man.' In private conversations with me and other young women, however, Lesepemang portrayed herself, not as 'ashamed and embarrassed' (*ma*), but as 'justifiably angry' (*song*) at her family (and especially her mother's brothers) for making her marry. In negotiating over the emotion term to be used, Lesepemang was not only denying the older women's definition of the situation, but was also saying that this was *not* a normal or usual marriage (one that produces *ma*) but rather one that should not

have occurred (one that produces *song*). Her choice of emotion terminology constituted a strategy of using this fundamental concept in the Ifaluk ideological system against that system.

A final and central arena within which the notion of 'justifiable anger' plays an ideological role is that of gender relations. With the important exception of their roles as brothers, mothers' brothers or chiefs, men did not declare 'justifiable anger' at women appreciably more often than did women at men. This is consistent with the fact that the classes of women and men are not seen as sharply distinguishable on the basis of their moral sense. The *reasons for* 'justifiable anger' did differ in men and women, however, and reflect the particular expectations which are held of each gender. The women frequently complain, for example, of 'justifiable anger' at men for failing to show up in great numbers or to put out much effort at the weekly (and theoretically coed) village weeding sessions. Women also say they are 'justifiably angry' when men become drunk and fail to fulfil their household obligations. Men's 'justifiable anger' at women is generated by what they see as a female propensity to gossip. Men also sometimes become 'justifiably angry' when they are hungry and the women of their household have not prepared food.

The context of women's use of the concept of 'justifiable anger' reveals the nature of what they expect from men. Take the example of Lemalesep, a woman in her late thirties, who answered my question as to when she had recently been 'justifiably angry' in the following way:

I was *song* when they were re-roofing the canoe house last week and [my husband] got drunk and didn't tell me beforehand [that he was going to drink]. [My adoptive son] came and told me. We had no more food [prepared at the household] and I had planned to give my husband our baby [to take care of so that I could make food]. I was really furious [*sig*] and ran away to my relative's house. Then he went over there to me and I was also still *song*. I didn't want him to come over there.

Lemalesep appeals here to the expectation that a woman with a small baby ought to be aided by other members of the household, including the husband, and most especially when she has an important task to perform, such as food-making. Her statement also draws on the common assumption that a man's drinking may be cause for 'justifiable anger' when it results in his irresponsible or uncooperative behaviour. Women in fact are seen as reasonable if they tell their husbands to stop drinking after they have had a baby, so that he will be better able to help tend the infant in the evenings.

While men dominate women as brothers and mothers' brothers and as the main holders of traditional office, they are not clearly

dominant over women in their capacities as wives or as females in general. The ideological struggle on the field of 'justifiable anger' reflects this relative gender balance. We have seen that only one party to a conflict may appropriately characterize themselves as 'justifiably angry', as only one general value system is accepted in most cases and thus only one party is absolutely in the right. While negotiation over the right to use the concept of *song* is absent or rare where one individual is of much higher rank than the other, it is more likely the more equally ranked two parties to a conflict are. In relations between men and women, and particularly between husbands and wives, there are frequent struggles over the use of the emotion term to describe the self and the situation.

The accusations and counter-accusations between men and women that their mutual 'justifiable anger' represents are not generally taken as seriously as are the other cases of 'justifiable anger' we have been looking at so far. Several women told me, for example, that the men are always 'justifiably angry' at the women when the inter-island steamer comes because the women don't make food. But, they said, the women do not listen to the men and just continue in their 'happiness/excitement' (*ker*), visiting with the new arrivals and gathering the news from other atolls.

This brief tour through some of the configurations of power in Ifaluk society has demonstrated that the concept of 'justifiable anger' can be seen as more than a central moral construct of this people, reflecting and constraining their structures of value. *Song* is simultaneously an emotional sign used by individuals and groups in the pursuit of power and legitimacy. As a powerful symbol of both dominance and morality, the appropriation of the right to use the concept can constitute both an ideological ploy and a subversive move. The uttering of the word *song* in everyday life rises like a red flag, marking the form of, and fissures in, Ifaluk socio-political structures.

The Scene that Constitutes 'justifiable Anger'

Thus far, we have been looking at the contexts in which the concept of *song* is used, or the events that precipitate or are structured by it. This constitutes, however, only a part of the more elaborate 'scene' that is evoked for the Ifaluk listener by the concept of 'justifiable anger'. Equally important are the scripts for subsequent action that are invoked by the concept. Central to these scripts are strategies for communicating one's view of the situation (as violating accepted community values), and for doing this as indirectly and non-violently as possible. The scene that follows 'justifiable anger'

involves, first and foremost, moral condemnation of one person by another. This condemnation is accomplished through one or several of the following manoeuvres, including a refusal to speak or, more dramatically, eat with the offending party; dropping of the markers of polite and 'calm' speech; running away from the household or refusing to eat at all; facial expressions associated with disapproval, including pouting or a 'locked' mouth, 'lit-up' or 'lantern' eyes; gestures, particularly brusque movements; declarations of *song* and the reasons for it to one's kin and neighbours; throwing or hitting material objects; and, in some cases, a failure to eat or the threat of suicide or other personal harm. In discussions with each other, people commonly use such behavioural cues in speculating about the emotional position of an individual. When people were asked explicitly by me what the indicators of 'justifiable anger' were, they mentioned most of the above factors, as well as the idea that the 'justifiably angry' person sometimes 'thinks of swatting' the person at whom he or she is *song*.

The expected scenario continues beyond this immediate communication of emotional position. The target of the 'justifiable anger' is subsequently expected to become *metagu*, or 'fearful/ anxious', as we have already noted. This occurs when word reaches him or her through the gossip network that the other is 'justifiably angry'. It is sometimes expected that there will be a later 'reciprocal payback' for the offence that caused the 'justifiable anger'. When a woman, Iefagomar, was not invited to the birth hut of another woman as she ought to have been, she later 'paid back' this woman by not calling her to her own labour and birth celebration several months later. An apology, the payment of a fine or the more informal sending of valued objects to the 'justifiably angry' person or family is also expected to occur on some occasions. It is said that the objects that are sent, such as cloth or tobacco, cause the recipients to become *ker* (happy/excited) and so forget their 'justifiable anger'.

Another important aspect of the scene that is implicit in the concept of 'justifiable anger' is the performance of a kind of semi-formal 'emotional counselling' by someone close to the 'angry' person. Individuals are said to vary in their ability to assist those who are 'justifiably angry', but there are some who take special pains and pride in their abilities in this regard. These people, who might be characterized as 'emotional advisers', are said to be those who are not 'hot-tempered' and who do not allow themselves also to be provoked into a parallel 'justifiable anger' by the counsellee's account of the event.

The most important thing that a person can do to help the

'justifiably angry' person is to calm down the other by speaking gently to her or him. This style of speech involves marked politeness and low volume. A solution to the problem which began the 'justifiable anger' may be suggested — if, for example, a theft has occurred, the adviser might offer to go to the household of the thief and ask for the return of the object (although it is likely that such a promise will not be carried out so as to avoid the confrontation it would possibly involve).

More commonly, however, the 'justifiably angry' person will be advised to 'forget it'. This counsel comes not out of the assumption that the 'justifiable anger' is not just, but rather from the sense that the offending person was at fault in the matter, and is not reasonable. This inference is drawn by the listener from the advisers' frequent statements that the person at whom the 'justifiable anger' is directed is in fact 'crazy and confused'.

When someone is 'justifiably angry', others often anticipate and fear the possibility of aggression against the violator of cultural values. On the other hand, it is expected that people who are 'justifiably angry' will *not* physically aggress against another. And in fact interpersonal violence is virtually non-existent on the island. The dual expectation of both violence and reflective self-control is evident in the kinds of advice that are typically given to those who are 'justifiably angry', as in the following, which represents a reconstruction of the stylized speech that the counsellor will make to a 'justifiably angry' person, in this case a man.

Sweetheart, you shouldn't fight because you are a man. If you fight people will laugh at you. Throw out your 'thoughts/feelings' about that person [at whom you are angry] because s/he is crazy and confused. We men divide our heads [separate the good from the bad] and then throw out the bad. We don't 'think/feel' so much so we won't be sick. You should *fago* [feel compassion/love/sadness for] me and follow my 'thoughts/feelings' and not be song. If you fight, your sister's children will be 'panicked/frightened' [*rus*].

Although the two expectations — of violence and of the lack of it — may appear contradictory, this approach to the angry person can instead be interpreted as the means by which the Ifaluk both remind each other of the possibility of violence while fully expecting that it will be prevented by the individual's maturity (including mature masculinity), and by feelings of *fago* (compassion/love/sadness) for others, of *ma* (shame/embarrassment) over the prospect of being violent before others, and of *metagu* (fear/anxiety) of the person who arrives to calm one down.

The various expectations for behaviours that are to follow the occurrence of *song* constitute emotional or interactional strategies

or scripts that are learned by the Ifaluk as they encounter their language in the course of growing up. The theory of 'justifiable anger' and the social course it follows is thus a script, creatively used, for use in achieving individual goals. The concept of *song* is particularly useful for organizing the control of social deviance and for protecting one's interests as they are damaged by such deviance. Simultaneously, the concept's behavioural entailments promote the reproduction of the gentle interpersonal relations that characterize the island. The various scripts that are encoded in the concept of 'justifiable anger' are also guides for predicting and interpreting the behaviour of others.

Conclusion

The concept of 'justifiable anger' plays both a moral and an ideological role in Ifaluk everyday life. The person who declares *song* is making, on the one hand, a moral assertion, a statement about how things ought to be otherwise. The concept is used to mark the violation of any of the number of values that people subscribe to, including the expectation that others will be cooperative, non-aggressive and respectful. As the primary concept in moral discourse, *song* links the person's sensibilities with the wider obligatory order, and thereby mediates between the two.

'Justifiable anger' is also an ideological mask for power and its exercise. With the more powerful factions in Ifaluk society — the chiefs, the brothers, the older women of a household — making more extensive use of the concept, their legitimacy and influence are enhanced. The more powerful are continually reinvested, through their manipulation of 'justifiable anger', with the moral superiority which is at once the source and the symptom of their power. Power is also subverted and appropriated, however, through this same concept when it is used in protest by the less powerful. The use of the term *song* in everyday discourse, then, both reinforces and undermines domination. Having both moral and ideological force, 'justifiable anger' maintains a vital position in the centre of Ifaluk social life. Like all everyday understandings, it responds to cultural values and power relations and helps to structure social practices.

Notes

1 Where the term anger is used without quotation marks, I am referring to both the American-English concept of 'anger' and the Ifaluk concept of *song* (justifiable anger). For a more extended discussion of the similarities and differences between 'anger' and *song*, see Lutz, 1988.

2 The emotion concept of *nguch* (sick and tired/bored/annoyed) may carry an implicit but mild criticism of someone else's behaviour, but it does not have the explicit moral weight of *song* (justifiable anger).

3 This name, as well as those used in all subsequent references to villages and people, is a pseudonym.

4 This turn of phrase is used to describe the responsibility of all people towards those who are more 'needy' than themselves, or, in other words, their subordinates.

5 This threat has not recently been carried out, to my knowledge.

6 Other factors also go into the deference younger women show to their elders, including cultural stress on respect for age and on the value of responding positively to the expressed desires of others, regardless of age.

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