

# Culture and History in the Pacific

Edited by Jukka Siikala



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EDITED BY JUKKA SIIKALA

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# PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

*Culture and History in the Pacific*, originally published by the Finnish Anthropological Society in 1990, has had a reputation among anthropologists studying the Pacific of being an excellent volume, but notoriously hard to get hold of. Around 2012, during a conference in Aarhus, Tuomas met a Danish anthropologist conducting research in Papua New Guinea and ended up in a conversation because of their shared research interests. After learning Tuomas came from Finland, the Danish anthropologist asked if Tuomas could access a copy of *Culture and History in the Pacific*, as it was, according to the Dane, “impossible to find”.

There was a small stash of the books in the storage of the Finnish Anthropological Society. When this space had to be emptied, Matti Eräsaari, also a scholar of the Pacific, saved the remaining copies, aware as he was of the value of the volume. Copies of the book were given as gifts or sent to institutions, such as the National Research Institution of Papua New Guinea, but otherwise, the volume remained difficult to come by outside Finland.

Heikki had noticed the book being cited often in material culture studies, especially Marilyn Strathern’s article “Artefacts of History”. So, we had both come to the conclusion that the book enjoyed continuing interest, but was not readily available for readers. In 2016, one spring afternoon at our shared office space, we started talking about the book and Heikki came up with the idea of republishing it as an open access version.

We asked The Finnish Anthropological Society what they thought of the idea, and the board gave us a thumbs-up. Next step was to contact the original authors (or estates), who graciously gave their permission for the project. Finally, after a scientific evaluation on the merits of a re-publication, Helsinki University Press agreed to be the publisher of this new edition, available now as print and open access digital version.

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So, what is the difference between the original edition and this one? Mainly, this edition has Petra Autio's new Foreword, which assesses the contemporary significance and reception history of the book. Additionally, we have corrected some typographical errors, and updated the references to reflect their current publication status. We have modernized the spelling of Tongan, Hawaiian and Cook Islands Māori names by substituting apostrophes with 'okina, fakau'a, and 'amata letters where appropriate and added missing diacritical marks. Aside from these changes, no additional language editing has been undertaken. All in all, readers should be confident that the new edition is as close to the original as possible. Due to careful typesetting by the Helsinki University Press, the page numbers of the new version match the original publication, allowing readers to follow up citations to the original volume.

We wish to thank Jukka Siikala, the original editor, and all the original authors for green-lighting this project, Petra Autio for recontextualizing the publication for a new audience as well as Aino Rajala and Leena Kaakinen from Helsinki University Press for all the assistance, encouragement and patience during the preparation of the manuscript. We are very grateful for the financial support of the Kone Foundation, which has funded both of us, at one point or another, during these past years.

Helsinki, 1 December 2020  
Tuomas Tammisto and Heikki Wilenius

# CROSSING BORDERS: Changing Contexts of This Book

*Culture and History in the Pacific* was first published in 1990, thirty years ago, by the Finnish Anthropological Society. Published by a small scholarly society in a remote European country, the original edition of the book was not particularly accessible elsewhere, least of all in the region it discusses, Oceania. Yet over the years some of its papers have continued to arouse interest in researchers. The Finnish Anthropological Society together with Helsinki University Press have now decided to republish it as both print and open access digital version, with the purpose of ensuring the papers stay available, and with the hope that it will reach a wider audience. The authors include prominent anthropologists of the Pacific, some of whom — such as Roger Keesing and Marilyn Strathern, to name but two — are also leading figures in the anthropology of the late 20th and early 21st century in general. On the other hand, as noted by Jukka Siikala in his introduction to the original publication, the authors represent several academic traditions and different areal discussions, which is one of the strengths of the book.

With the benefit of hindsight, one of the most interesting things is that in addition to the American, British and other European scholarly traditions, two of the authors came from the Soviet academia, which in fact relates to the whole context in which the book came into existence. Papers in this book were originally presented in a symposium organized in Helsinki, Finland, in 1987. The symposium took place in connection with an exhibition arranged by the Academy of Finland and the Soviet Academy of Sciences, where a collection of Pacific artefacts from the Leningrad Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography was displayed. Thus, the setting reflected both Finland's geopolitical position as some-

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thing of a mediator between the East and the West during the Cold War era and, and — again said in hindsight — the approaching end of that era. Although people may not have yet anticipated the fall of the Soviet Union a few years later, academic exchange between Soviet and Western scholars had already become easier during the Mikhail Gorbachev period.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the national academic traditions, Siikala referred to areal discussion dominant in the study of Oceania, the tendency of Polynesianists and Melanesianists to discuss among themselves much more than with each other. In *Culture and History in the Pacific*, the area specialists engage(d) in a discussion, in which “juxtapositioning of place-bound projects opened up new perspectives”<sup>2</sup>. It is the articles arising from the Polynesianist and Melanesianist traditions that, according to a contemporary reviewer, illustrated key theoretical trends in the historical anthropology of the Pacific at the time.<sup>3</sup>

At the time, there was a widespread anthropological interest in historical processes in Oceania; issues such as chieftainship and early contacts, or generally, the understanding of historical events<sup>4</sup>. In *Culture and History in the Pacific*, e.g., Anthony Hooper and Judith Huntsman, Valerio Valeri and Jukka Siikala engage with themes that were related to their other work in historical anthropology of the Pacific.<sup>5</sup>

Probably the most cited of the papers is the one by Marilyn Strathern on “Artefacts of History” which has also been published elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the anthropology of historical events, it has been of interest in, e.g., museology, and the paper has continued to gain mentions during the past fifteen years in various discussions in anthropology.

As theoretical interests have shifted and transformed, what might the value of *Culture and History in the Pacific* be to scholars of Oceania now? What is more, with open access republication making the book more easily available to people from the region itself, what is the value of the book to the indigenous people, be they scholars or the general public and perhaps people whose ancestors are discussed in the book, or both? Namely, compared to present-day scholarly writing about the Pacific, it is notable that as varied as the body of authors of *Culture and History in the Pacific* was, it did not have any scholars from the region itself. Considering the original time frame, it is hardly surprising, but it needs to be addressed, especially now that the republication of the book will make it easily available to anyone also in Oceania.

The aim of this preface is to place this book into perspective — or rather, some perspectives — in the hope that by contextualizing the book, it is possible for the reader to separate that which has withstood time or is

of value to him or her. This process of contextualizing is necessarily selective, including reference to some of the conditions of that time, as well as developments after the publication. I will be doing so particularly with reference to the borders and divisions referred to in the original preface, but also going beyond them.

Firstly, I will briefly describe one context in which the original papers were presented: the era approaching the end of the Cold War, and its effect on academia in general and anthropology in particular. While there lies a danger of Eurocentrism in bringing this up for a book on the Pacific, the particular historical juncture in which the original texts were produced requires some attention. For younger scholars who did not grow up in the Cold War era, who hopefully would also find this reprint useful, the impact of the era and its end on scholarship might be less well-known. While the majority of the contributors to the book belong to the Western scholarly tradition(s), two authors represent the Soviet academia, whose distinctive character is also reflected in their texts.

Secondly, I will comment on a scholarly context within Pacific anthropology which is explicitly present in the book. This is the context of areal discussions, and the division of the Pacific into the culture areas of Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia. I will consider the power of areal discussions in the anthropology of Oceania, and some of the ways in which the areal perspectives have been debated and complemented.

Thirdly, I will look at a further framework in which the papers were written, but which is only partly visible in the book. It is worth considering, however, because it is connected to important developments in the study of culture and history in the Pacific after the original publication and which will no doubt affect the reception of the new publication. The papers of the book represent traditional anthropology in the sense that there is a clear division between an outsider researcher and his or her topic. In the decades following the original publication, the border between outsider and insider has been challenged and transformed, particularly in the emerging field of Pacific studies,<sup>7</sup> but also in anthropology.<sup>8</sup>

## **Soviet anthropology, the end of Cold War and the Pacific**

Approaching the end of the 20th century, the exchange of ideas between American and British traditions of anthropology might have been slow to develop, but by comparison, the Soviet academia had been isolated in earnest for decades. Anthropology, or as it more frequently was called,

ethnography,<sup>9</sup> there had developed a distinctive character.<sup>10</sup> While Russian anthropology, ethnography or ethnology before the revolution and up until the early 1930s maintained links with the developing discipline of anthropology elsewhere in the world, Soviet anthropology gradually became isolated.<sup>11</sup> In other words, there were borders to be crossed on several levels. Meyer Fortes noted in 1980 that while many Soviet scholars were well-versed in Western anthropological research, Soviet anthropology was generally not well-known among Western scholars.<sup>12</sup>

Ernest Gellner wrote in 1980 that Soviet *etnografia* was significant not only for its content, but also “for the light it throws on Soviet thought and the manner in which social and philosophical problems are conceptualized in the Soviet Union.”<sup>13</sup> Gellner pointed out four examples of such problems: the relationship between economy and polity, the historical evaluation of human societies and the resulting typologies, the nature and role of ethnicity society, both historically and in the contemporary industrial society, and the study and interpretation of Soviet culture.<sup>14</sup> The concerns with historical evaluation and typologization of societies can be seen reflected in V. A. Shnirelman’s paper, which discusses class and social differentiation comparatively in a variety of Melanesian societies.

Areas of interest and research questions in Soviet anthropology were often directed by state ideology: There was, on the one hand, interest in the culture or *ethnos* of the various nationalities that lived in the Soviet Union, but preferably discussed historically, as things of the past. Research on contemporary practices should evince “the emergence of new pan-Soviet social forms and practices.”<sup>15</sup>

Thus, Soviet researchers working on the Pacific were likely to be very few, and possibilities for extended fieldwork limited. Research on the Pacific was mostly theoretical and/or historical, with material culture playing an important role.<sup>16</sup> It is no accident that both the papers by Soviet authors in *Culture and History in the Pacific* are historical in nature: the one by N. A. Butinov discussing the ancient Rapanui script in the *rongorongo* tablets; and the one by V. A. Shnirelman comparing Melanesian and Polynesian societies in terms of social differentiation in an evolutionary perspective. In the former, material objects, two *rongorongo* tablets acquired by the 19th-century Russian explorer N. N. Mikoucho-Maclay kept in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in Leningrad — and on display in Helsinki in 1987 — were a crucial incentive for research. The latter, on the other hand, illustrates well the theoretical orientation. In other words, neither paper was based on the type of extended fieldwork in one location, the practice of most Western anthropologists, but

on extensive literature review and the material objects themselves. When the Soviet Union fell apart and, more generally, the Eastern bloc ceased to exist, in the year following the first publication of *Culture and History in the Pacific*, research also changed drastically. Discussing Soviet and Post-Soviet anthropology, Albert Baiburin, Catriona Kelly and Nikolai Vakhtin<sup>17</sup> describe how, on the one hand, new possibilities opened up, but on the other, research infrastructure, including state funding, partly collapsed.<sup>18</sup> Former Soviet researchers turned their attention to topics previously unstudied because of state ideological restrictions, such as forms of Christianity and urban life. On the other hand, it became important to understand the processes going on in post-socialist societies, which demanded a significant amount of research attention.<sup>19</sup>

In present-day Russia, too, there are only a few scholars engaged in Pacific anthropology. Most research on Oceania is being undertaken at the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography — formerly known as the Leningrad Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography — the same institution that loaned items from its Pacific collection to Helsinki in 1987.<sup>20</sup> There is a continued interest in history and material culture, but also some new field research is carried out. Most of the research is published in Russian.<sup>21</sup>

## Regional discussions in Pacific scholarship

The majority of the papers were, however, written broadly speaking within the same Western academic tradition. Another division, or border to be crossed, explicitly discussed by Siikala in the original Preface and reading as commentary on a topical issue of that time was that between Melanesianists and Polynesianists. The background of these scholarly traditions is the tripartite division of Oceania on the basis of cultural and racial characteristics into Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia, commonly credited to Dumont d'Urville, a 19th-century French navigator, although it has a much longer intellectual history.<sup>22</sup>

While I do not want to equate the original outsider division with the intricate and specialized anthropological areal discussions, the division continues to persist. The Melanesia/Polynesia/Micronesia division had long been criticized for its racialized basis, and for its failure to take into account the cultural variation within an area, but it was particularly called into question from the mid-1970s and early 1990s<sup>23</sup> — at the time of the symposium and the first publication of this book.



The usage of the terms has nevertheless largely persisted, mainly, according to Paul D'Arcy,<sup>24</sup> because there have been no viable alternatives. Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia “continue to be useful general categories for the broad cultural similarities noted across the regions they encompass.”<sup>25</sup> It could be argued, by looking at conference panels and some — but certainly not all — publications on Oceania, that there is still a tendency for areal specialists to discuss more with one another than with specialists from other areas.

However, as someone who did graduate studies focusing on Micronesia in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the division felt less powerful. On the one hand, it was due to the fact that it was rather Micronesia which seemed to be left on the sidelines, compared to the strong Polynesianist and Melanesianist traditions.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, perhaps due precisely to the position of a relative outsider of a Micronesianist, I felt I was able to draw on both these rich intellectual traditions and discussions for comparison. Indeed, it might even be suggested that their richness might partly be due to the specialized nature of the discussions, the certain shared premises allowing the discussion to go into more detail.

Rena Lederman has remarked that culture area discourses, such as that on Melanesia about which she was writing, “remain one of the valuable social contexts in which anthropological research is accomplished.”<sup>27</sup> Its strength, to be acknowledged and amplified, lays in the “layering of perspectives and cross-purposes engendered by different anthropological observers”, which allows for depth and subtlety that an individual work cannot achieve.<sup>28</sup>

One can then see value in the accumulation of knowledge in restricted regional discussions even if a particular division of regions can be questioned. During the past thirty years, other comparative frameworks of reference have emerged, even though none of them has taken on the overarching quality of the tripartite division. One important frame of reference has been the Austronesian context, referring to the linguistic grouping of peoples speaking Austronesian languages. The Austronesian perspective crosscuts Oceania in the sense that it includes many Indonesian societies, which are not counted as Oceanian, but includes Polynesians, Micronesians and part — the Austronesian-speaking peoples — of Melanesian societies.

In fact, the Austronesian frame of reference is present in *Culture and History in the Pacific*, in Eija-Maija Kotilainen's article about bark cloth-making among Kaili-Pamona speakers, who are an Austronesian people in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. Bark cloth, known in many Poly-

nesian societies as *tapa*, is a shared feature of early Austronesian culture,<sup>29</sup> and in the Pacific continues to be important particularly in Tonga, Samoa and Fiji. Kotilainen argues that because of the shared features of bark cloth tradition in eastern Indonesia and Western Polynesia,<sup>30</sup> the study of bark cloth-making in Sulawesi can also throw light on the cultural history of the Pacific.

Generally speaking, the Austronesian research framework is best exemplified by the Comparative Austronesian project at the Australian National University, which has resulted in several publications.<sup>31</sup> As the concept of Austronesia leaves out ca. 800 Papuan language groups, very much part of Oceania, the Austronesian perspective cannot be seen as a replacement for the regions of Oceania. Rather, it has created a complementary discursive space, thus facilitating and diversifying discussion(s).

Other discursive spaces for regional comparisons within the Oceania division have been created based on the interaction between cultural patterns and environmental constraints.<sup>32</sup> Paul D'Arcy<sup>33</sup> discusses, e.g., the bio-geographical division between Near and Remote Oceania, stemming from archaeology and used in the study of history of human habitation (Green), the grouping of islands on the basis of their relative isolation and access to resources (Alkire, cf. early Sahlins) and the study of regional networks of interaction. According to D'Arcy, some of the most fruitful comparative discussions have been on regional history, studying "historically specific processes of interaction",<sup>34</sup> such as regional exchange networks like the Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. On the other hand, he points out work by Glenn Petersen,<sup>35</sup> in which the basis of comparison was not culture, but socio-political organization, and which cut across the conventional regions (Micronesia/Polynesia).

D'Arcy concludes that "different questions require different spatial and temporal perspectives",<sup>36</sup> affirming the value of multiple discursive spaces for discussing the Pacific. Nonetheless, detailed regional discussions invoke questions within that framework and provide answers that tend to remain within that framework. Inasmuch as there is value in discussing the wider region that is Oceania, and in asking many kinds of questions, the regional perspectives need to be complemented by other ways of framing research questions.

These can be analytical, such as in the case of Petersen's analysis, or pertaining to the whole region. For example, in the 21st century, environmental perspectives have become decidedly global, with the climate change affecting the whole Pacific region in both similar and varying ways. Other issues to examine that have affected the whole area are colo-

nialism, capitalism and Christianity. A further perspective, incipient at the time of the original publication of *Culture and History in the Pacific*, concerns the representations of culture and the power relations entailed in research, perhaps particularly within the discipline of anthropology.

## Problematizing culture and history in the Pacific

One of the contexts in which the book was originally written was the emerging discussion on the conceptualizations of culture and history variously called, e.g., tradition, custom, *kastom* or “way”, and the corresponding indigenous appellations — in the Pacific and the politics of cultural identity.<sup>37</sup> Yet the local traditions, *kastoms*, ways of being Fijian, Tongan and so on consist of both representation and living practice, and carry meanings to people themselves beyond their possible (but not inevitable) use in identity politics.<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, there was an increasing participation of Pacific islanders themselves in the scholarly discussion concerning their own heritage, as well as a critique of anthropological practice and its colonial features/heritage.<sup>39</sup> These discussions, expanding in the 1990s, are too broad to be reviewed here,<sup>40</sup> but they involved a juxtaposition of anthropologists working in the Pacific with indigenous scholars and activists. In the late 1980s, this discussion was only gaining momentum, and in a double-edged way it is both present in and absent from the book.

Roger Keesing starts out questioning anthropology’s Orientalist project and the place of Pacific ethnography in it (“representation of ethnographic areas in terms of prototypical institutions”), using the *kula* exchange as a case. Keesing acknowledges that his own work partakes in power asymmetries, but ends by critiquing the indigenous critique.<sup>41</sup> Roger Keesing was involved in some of the heated debates between Western anthropologists and indigenous scholars and activists, and parts of his contribution to the volume can be read as a commentary to those discussions.<sup>42</sup>

Anthony Hooper and Judith Huntsman, on the other hand, approach the issue of indigenous representation of culture and history from a different perspective, by examining the indigenous history writing in Polynesia. Considering the more “academic” type of history concerning the contact period (rather than traditional oral history and myth of older periods), they point out that “representations of the past by Polynesians have a long history”,<sup>43</sup> dating to the 19th century. Hooper and Huntsman examine the

relationships between Polynesian and European representations of Polynesian history. Thus, they demonstrate that indigenous representations of culture and history are not new, although they have sometimes been appropriated by Western scholars, shadowing the original Polynesian authors. Some more even collaborations<sup>44</sup> have also taken place.

A few of the other papers also cite indigenous researchers, yet most do not reflect these issues. What is more, and notable compared to present-day scholarship, none of the authors in the book is indigenous to the Pacific. While Pacific islands were long at the core of the development of anthropological theories (and practices, for that matter), there was at the time a notable scarcity of anthropologists among academically trained Pacific islanders.<sup>45</sup> Instead, as Geoffrey White and Ty Kawita Tengan have written, many Pacific scholars of culture and history of Oceania chose to write within other fields, such as Pacific studies/Indigenous studies or arts/literature, and were critical of anthropology (and history), pointing out its (their) entanglement with colonial forces.<sup>46</sup> White and Tengan argue that this new scholarship called into question the boundaries that had been at the heart of anthropological practice: outsider-anthropologist-author and insider-native-informant, as well as field/home.<sup>47</sup>

Critical discourses had also started within anthropology. The reflexive turn, and attention to the ways of “writing culture”,<sup>48</sup> and the power relations they entail were ways in which anthropologists began to examine some of the premises of their work. There was also an explicit call for a decolonization of anthropology,<sup>49</sup> although its ethnographic and institutional focus was not in the Pacific.

In the Pacific context, indigenous methodologies and epistemologies are increasingly taken seriously by many anthropologists.<sup>50</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s influential *Indigenous Methodologies* has also inspired some anthropologists working in the region.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, the new millennium has seen the growing importance of the repatriation of research materials to the communities where they were originally gathered; both in the sense of returning old material (both museum artefacts and fieldwork materials) and of ensuring that current research benefits the community. These are slow processes and far from complete. Yet I would suggest there is an increasing sensitivity to the fact that the oral histories and genealogies of anthropological and historical data are not mere abstractions, but feature somebody’s ancestors. During the past thirty years, the criticism and self-criticism of anthropology have brought to the fore the discussion about who has the right to represent whom. While there is no simple answer to that question, the

discussion makes it clear that people are concerned with how they and their traditions and culture are represented, and anthropologists need to take this into account.

To sum up, the relationship between anthropology — which the writers of this volume by and large represent — and indigenous scholarship of the Pacific has not always been an easy one, but during the 2000s and 2010s this relationship has grown closer. While a symposium in Northern Europe in 1987 was hardly expected to invite speakers from Oceania, the new millennium has seen an increasing intellectual exchange between scholars from the Pacific region and Europe. For example, the European Society for Oceanists conferences have in the past decade or more invited several Pacific scholars as keynote speakers, and at least in my personal experience the ESfO meetings have become stimulating meeting places for researchers of non-Pacific and Pacific background.

Of course, being a white person within European academia, it is easier — or more comforting — to see the advances in inclusiveness, whereas indigenous Pacific scholars still feel marginalized within the discipline.<sup>52</sup> The structures of academia change slowly, and work remains to be done. However, preconditions for a more inclusive dialogue exist, and they are also aided by communication technologies, which allow for scholars to interact with one another in their everyday practice, rather than just intermittently during visits or fieldwork. Technologies also enable the free flow of information, including making available older research — such as this book — whether used for their ethnographic content or theoretical insights, or subjected to critical scrutiny.

## Finally

Siikala ended his 1990 introduction by predicting that “if there is to be a future for ethnographic analysis, it is to be found in the crossing of the borders of scholarly traditions and areal discussions”.<sup>53</sup> I feel this holds true, while past decades have shown that even further borders have had to be crossed than perhaps imagined at the time, including those between disciplines, and implicit assumptions about outsider researchers and insider locals. There continue to exist methodological and theoretical differences between different approaches to culture and history of the Pacific, but this does not have to prevent the exchange of ideas across borders. The old areal and regional perspectives can continue to inspire and provide answers to certain questions, but they should be combined with

other perspectives, traditions, frameworks and contexts, also beyond anthropology, as the past thirty years have shown. Not necessarily in one and the same study, but in the collaborative and cumulative process of scholarship and science. In the study of the Pacific, this process ideally brings together scholars from many parts of the world, including Oceania, linked by “the belief that our enquiries matter”, to quote Teresia Teaiwa.<sup>54</sup>

Making these papers freely available through republication is to my mind an important contribution to this collaborative effort. The potential value of the book may not be the same for all readers, but hopefully the selective contextualizations above have given the reader some tools to assess it.

Helsinki, June 2020  
Petra Autio  
University of Helsinki

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## Notes

1. Baiburin, Kelly and Vakhtin 2012: 4.
2. J. Siikala 1990, 8, this volume
3. Kaplan 1992: 685.
4. See e.g. Sahlins 1985; 1991; Biersack 1991
5. See e.g. Valeri 1985; Siikala 1994; Hooper and Huntsman 1996.
6. Strathern 2013.
7. White and Tengan 2001.
8. See e.g. Hviding 2003.
9. In the Soviet academia, socio-cultural anthropology was usually called *etnografiya*, with “anthropology” commonly associated with physical anthropology.
10. Gellner 1980; J. Siikala 1990: 56, this volume; Sokolovskiy 2012: 29.

11. Sokolovskiy 2012: 29.
12. Fortes 1980: xix.
13. Gellner 1980: xiii.
14. Gellner 1980: xiv–xvi.
15. Baiburin, Kelly and Vakhtin 2012: 2.
16. Arina Lebedeva, personal communication by email November–December 2019.
17. 2012.
18. *Ibid.*: 6–7.
19. *Ibid.*: 15.
20. Arina Lebedeva, personal communication by email November–December 2019.
21. *Kunstkamera* n.d.
22. See Tcherkézoff 2003.
23. See e.g. Thomas 1989; D’Arcy 2003: 217–218.
24. D’Arcy 2003.
25. D’Arcy 2003: 218.
26. See Rainbird 2003.
27. Lederman 1998: 442.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Bellwood 1979: 151–152, cited in Kotilainen 1990: 211, this volume.
30. See Kooijman 1972: 431–432, cited in Kotilainen 1990: 202–203, this volume.
31. See e.g. Bellwood, Fox and Tryon 2006 [1995]; Fox and Sather 2006 [1996].
32. D’Arcy 2003.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*: 231.
35. Petersen 2000.
36. D’Arcy 2003: 234.
37. See e.g. Keesing and Tonkinson 1982; Jolly and Thomas 1992; Feinberg and Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1995a, 1995b.
38. See e.g. Otto 1992; A-L. Siikala 1997; Autio 1999.
39. See e.g. Hau’ofa 1975; Trask 1991; Hereniko and Teaiwa 1993; Mahina 1999.
40. For some contemporary assessments, see e.g. Friedman 1993; Inoue 2000; White and Tengan 2001.
41. Keesing 1990: 159, this volume.
42. See e.g. Linnekin 1983; Keesing 1989, 1991; Trask 1991.
43. Hooper and Huntsman 1990: 15, this volume.
44. See Hooper and Huntsman 1990: 17–18, this volume, on the collaboration between the anthropologist Elizabeth Bott and the Queen SĀlote of Tonga, also referred to by Biersack 1990, this volume.
45. Hau’ofa 1975; White and Tengan 2001: 382.
46. White and Tengan 2001: 384.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Clifford and Marcus 1986.
49. Harrison 2010 [1991].
50. See e.g. Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo 2001; Hviding 2003; see also Sillitoe 2015.
51. Tuhiwai Smith 1999.
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# INTRODUCTION

The articles in this volume are mainly based on the papers given in the symposium “Culture and History in the Pacific” organised by the Academy of Finland during the freezing January in 1987. The context for the symposium was provided by an exhibition arranged jointly by the Academy of Finland and the Soviet Academy of Sciences. In this exhibition a large collection of Pacific material from the Leningrad Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography was on display.

A symposium organised in connection with a museum exhibition naturally derives some of its topics from that context. The artefacts in the museum are detached objectifications of culture. The purpose of a museum to preserve these artefacts and thus to provide durability for some aspects of culture. Historical consciousness has always been part of the anthropological project and this consciousness has survived even the most extreme forms of ethnographic presentism. Anthropological history has consisted not of durable artefacts but of something else. The structures of action, features of social organisation, modes of ritual action and above all, the structures and transformations of meaning have been in the locus of anthropological discussions. However, the recent debate on ethnography has revealed the way in which ethnographic construction of culture in fact creates it as an artefact which has form and boundaries. Furthermore in the ideal case this artefact has a place which can be pinned on a map. In the evolutionistic project the map is superseded by the historical metanarrative and the construed culture has to have a place in the plot of this narrative — it becomes a stage instead of a place.

The place and the project determine each other in multiple ways. First anthropology is divided into areal discussions, and despite the geographical proximity of the research areas these discussions are often intellectually incommensurable. In the Pacific the interaction between the specialists on New Guinea, Melanesia and Polynesia

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has been surprisingly scant compared to the intensity of the areal discourse. The fragmentation of anthropology is further increased by the localities of the discussants. The national traditions of Britain have been slowly transmitted to the American academic field, but the contrary process has been even slower. Soviet ethnography has for a long time been isolated from the mainstream discussions and has developed a character of its own. In Europe the orientations have been determined in multiple ways by the specialisations of the individuals and their connections. Among the mixed group of determinants shaping the anthropological projects the objects of the research have preserved their nature as distinct objects with historical continuity.

The distinctiveness of the objects is, however, questioned, by the historical process itself. The localised cultures on the ethnographic map do not want to remain in the niches provided for them. The trespassing of boundaries leads to culture contacts of several kinds. The colonial era in the Pacific led not only to decline and fall but also to the establishment of such institutions as the Tongan Traditions Committee, as described by Hooper and Huntsman in their chapter. The Tongan traditions do, of course, serve a political purpose: they try to preserve or create something on the basis of the legitimating power of tradition. The power of tradition as a device of social stratification is also discussed in the Polynesian context by Valerio Valeri, Aletta Biersack and Jukka Siikala. Genealogical representation of the past is a typical feature of Polynesian cultures and as such has attracted the attention of generations of Polynesianists. In fact genealogies are a typical “collector’s items” in the Polynesian context, and the construction of more and more comprehensive genealogies has long been one of the main features of Polynesian studies. As legitimising devices, genealogies have provided anthropologists with solid ground for interpretation. Ascribed statuses can be derived from the positions of the individuals in the genealogical structure. The main problem of the above chapters is no longer the kind of derivation of prescribed statuses, but a more complex form of analysis of the interplay between different determinants of social hierarchy — or as Valeri puts it in the context of Hawaiian society:

History is at the core of kingship and the kingship is, in a sense, the condition of possibility, the source of legitimacy and acceptability, of history.

History consists of events in which the past structures are not stereotypically reproduced — it is a series of unexpected events.

The most unexpected event, not culturally provided for, was in the Pacific context of course the coming of the Europeans. The surprise on the appearance of the outsiders is contrasted by Marilyn Strathern with the way the people constantly take themselves by surprise. The surprises have effects, and the uniqueness of the surprise — the unexpected event — is transformed in the presentation of both the people themselves and the causes of surprise. The presentation requires images, and the presentation of surprises calls for new ones, something which had not existed before — i.e. history. From the Papua New Guinea perspective history thus is not durability and continuity but the emergence of something new. The relationship of this notion can be related to the Polynesian through the key concept “image”. As the people of New Guinea created new images because of the new images, so also the Polynesians created new representations — genealogical or annalistic — of their own society, and even in the form of historical monuments, which are not only illustrations of the events but the effects themselves.

The problem of historical representation makes sense in the context of local cultural discourse. One of the most important discursive cultural formations in the Pacific is without doubt Kula. The exchange systems of Melanesia are as ambivalent as the historical events of Polynesian polities. On the other hand exchange systems have articulated to political and economic forces of the modern world system, as is emphasised by John Liep and exemplified by David Lawrence. The modern world does not only enter the exchange systems of Melanesia, but also the music performances of Polynesia, as is told by Helen Reeves Lawrence. Both these performances and the exchange systems “represent a continuity and resiliency against the depersonalizing effects of the commercial and bureaucratic forces of capitalist states” (Liep). This problem of political economy and cultural meaning is introduced by Roger Keesing, who ends with an attempt at reconciliation. The “seducing” and “marrying” exchange goods attached to singular big men and acting as icons of past lives have to be analysed according to him not only through decoding attempts by symbolic anthropologists but also through the articulation of these symbolic systems with the perspectives of political economy. The meanings have place in the social formations of class, which cut across social societal borders.

The meanings, either given by the anthropological analysis or attached to artefacts or events by the people themselves are social and cultural constructions. The significance of some social or cultural feature can be derived not only from the inside perspective.

Broad historical perspectives, either evolutionistic ones or more historicist prehistoric projects have not lost their legitimacy in anthropology. The contrast between these projects can be seen in the chapters by V.A. Shnirelman and E-M. Kotilainen. The former analyses the differentiation of chiefdoms and big men systems from a principally evolutionistic point of view. The perspective reflects a shift in Soviet ethnography towards a more culturalistic approach. The interpretive scheme is general and comparative, aiming at a theory of social evolution. The other kind of general historical project is prehistory itself. Artefacts are, of course, one of the main sources of prehistory, and more so, if something can be known about their cultural context. Kotilainen follows this kind of approach in her attempt to analyse the use of bark cloth in Austronesian cultures in a cultural historical framework.

Form and meaning are closely connected. Be the artefact a Sabarl axe and the multiplicity of interpretations attached to it (Strathern) or an Easter Island script, the decoding has to be culturally informed and contextualised. Such of decoding is done by N.A. Butinov with interesting results. Butinov's approach is in direct contrast to G.M.G. Scoditti's analysis of Kitawa Island prowboards. Scoditti's analysis ends with the basic result: not all forms are based on meanings constructed culturally; cultural forms can have universal motivations in the form of harmony.

Bringing a group of Pacific experts to Finland in the middle of winter for discussion decontextualises not only their projects but also the people themselves. The result was a situation in which the juxtapositioning of place-bound projects opened up new perspectives. The Melanesianist, the New Guineanist and the Polynesianist were not only areal specialists but also represented a wide variety of scholarly traditions. My firm belief is that if there is a future for ethnographic analysis, it can be found by crossing the borders of these traditions and breaking the boundaries of areal discussions.

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Jukka Siikala

# HISTORY AND THE REPRESENTATION OF POLYNESIAN SOCIETIES

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Once upon a time, it seems reasonable to suppose, the only people aware of the Polynesian past were Polynesians themselves. Just who among them concerned themselves with it is now largely a matter for speculation; nor can we know for certain just how that past was represented, or how the representations themselves changed before those historic encounters with the expanding European world. From that point on, however, Polynesia became entangled in a vastly expanded social and political context which transformed, often with dramatic suddenness, the old certitudes and modes of historical practice. All that we can now know of the old ways is representations of them put together, for diverse and innovative purposes, either during or after the very circumstances that led to their transformation. The rest, one might say, is history.

If only it were, matters might be a lot more straightforward. The difficulties, of course, lie in the very categories by which we know and speak of such things, what Sahlins (1985: xvii) refers to as the “analytically debilitating” oppositions engendered by most discussions conjoining the notions of “Culture” and “History”. At an abstract level such debilitating can of course be overcome by ascending to cooler air and subjecting everyone to a bracing regime of theoretical argumentation. In the warm, moister regions round about sea level, however, where most of the people live, and indeed feel more comfortable, the oppositions are accepted as being as

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much a part of the order of things as other practical, commonsense distinctions — such as those between “inland” and “seaward”, “commoner” and “chief”. Far from inducing ennui and resignation, they give energy and bite to discussion about a lot of contemporary issues.

Our point is simply that both “Culture” and “History” are very much alive in the Polynesian world, nurtured by the economic and political changes which are integrating the island nations ever more closely with the outside metropolitan world. Nor is any of this particularly new. For at least the past couple of generations most people in island Polynesia, those from remote backwater villages as much as the Western-educated urban elites, have had a very acute sense of the direction in which their world is heading. “Development” is the prevalent ethos, willingly embraced not so much because it opposes “culture” or the “traditional” certainties, but because it carries a sense of historical inevitability — the next really major step in the direction which the island societies took when they stepped from “darkness” into the “light” of 19th century Christianity.

The position of “culture and traditions” in relation to this is shifting and, not infrequently, ambiguous. As we see it, the ambiguity is not at all extraneous. Nor is it the result of simple befuddlement. The whole point of the way in which “culture and tradition”, or more commonly and directly just “tradition”, is used in island Polynesia today, is precisely that it is an attempt to dissolve just those debilitating oppositions between system and event, past and present, which Sahlins draws attention to. Depending on the context in which it is used, it can be made to serve a host of conflicting interests.

The Tongan anthropologist and writer Epeli Hau‘ofa has few doubts about the direction in which the South Pacific is heading, and where this leaves the distinctive island cultures. His view is that,

...there already exists in our part of the world a single regional economy upon which has emerged a South Pacific society, the privileged groups of which share a single dominant culture with increasing marginalised local subcultures shared by the poorer classes (1987: 1).

Hau‘ofa goes on to point up the way in which the interlocking educated elites of the region increasingly share the same language, ideologies and material lifestyle, leaving the less fortunate to draw what comfort they can from their distinctive, more traditional ways

of doing things. There is much in this characterisation which is stimulating and novel. Throughout the South Pacific, “development” has led to new dimensions of stratification, greater diversity of occupations and growing disparities of wealth. It makes clear sense, in many places, to characterise this in class terms.

At the same time, however, much of this stratification depends upon notions of “culture” and “tradition” for its legitimacy and continued vitality. The *matai* system of Western Samoa, the monarchy and nobles of Tonga and the Fijian chiefly system are all modified traditional hierarchies. They maintain a fundamental relevance for contemporary political life in the countries concerned, and the ideologies supporting them have persistence and power, as much for “the people” as for “the chiefs”. Given the current impulses toward integration throughout the South Pacific it may indeed make sense to refer to these political forms as sub-cultures, but they cannot by any stretch of the imagination be seen as “marginalised” in any way.

This very point is one that underlies the interesting issue of the “Pacific Way”, which also hinges upon the way in which notions of traditional culture might be related to those of history, progress and development. The term itself was apparently used by Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara in a speech to the United Nations in 1970 (Crocombe 1976). From that point on it passed into more general usage in the region, coming to connote those aspects of local life (communalism, negotiated compromises, “brotherhood” and a common rejection of colonial rule) which were seen to set the people of the newly independent Pacific apart from others, and particularly Europeans. It was also general enough to gather in, for Polynesians at any rate, the notion of a unity based upon common descent and traditions. All in all, it was a serviceable enough doctrine, and it was not really until an outsider to the region (Howard 1983) drew attention to its obvious ideological aspects that local scholars began to pay much attention. Howard’s main point was that the Pacific Way very clearly supported the interests of traditional elites in places like Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa, using consensus to avoid substantive debate and subsuming chiefly status within the ideas of communalism “...in such a way as to hide the class basis of the system” (1983: 181). With the debate opened up in these terms, it rapidly expanded to embrace the broader issues of the interpretation of the post-colonial history of the region, and the appropriate models for national development. Meleisea and Schoeffel (1984) made what was certainly the most eloquent immediate reply, damning both Modernisation theorists and

“paleo Marxists” alike for their unilineal notions of progress based upon Eurocentric frames of reference, their views about the inevitability of class formation and the obsolescence of preindustrial societies. Against this, they pointed to the resilience, utility and adaptability of traditional institutions, their capacity to provide barriers to class formation and to effectively disable the exploitative aspects of development schemes.

In one form or another, the issues involved in the brief published debate over the Pacific Way are ubiquitous in the region — surfacing again and again in political debate, journalism, sermons and administrative reports of many sorts. In all of this “tradition” is clearly linked with issues of social stratification and differential privilege in ways which are only apparently contradictory. While “culture and tradition” are firmly associated with privilege and political authority in Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa, in Hawai‘i they form the central ideological principles of the Hawaiian radical movement (Trask 1987), concerned to speak for the underprivileged and dispossessed. Again, in French Polynesia, the urban *demi*, long assimilated to French ways and with privileged positions in the political establishment, urge their hinterland cousins to hold fast to “traditional” ways. Ironically though, what is meant by this in most cases is a way of life dominated by small-scale copra production, long the mainstay of the colonial economy.

In all of this argumentation it is probably irrelevant to try and clarify the ambiguities involved in “culture” and “tradition” by introducing further distinctions. Hau‘ofa, in another context (1984: 2–3), makes the eminently sensible suggestion that we, as scholars, should distinguish indigenous elements from introduced ones and simply accept that there are old traditions (“...those that have been well-established over a number of generations”) as well as new ones (“... [more] recently established but increasingly accepted and having potential for long-term growth and survival”). In many instances this might indeed be sufficient to shift discussions onto a different plane. But it would necessarily challenge the authority which many see as inherent in the very notion of tradition, and also lead off into lengthy considerations of what actually happened in the past. One would thus be back to History, which is not at all the point for those who argue from the rhetorical high ground of Culture and Tradition.

One could go on. But let that characterisation stand as an indication of some of the broad social and political trends in the South Pacific and the ways in which the notions of “History” and “Culture” are implicated and talked about in the region. We turn now to consider other less obviously *engage* academic works by

historians and anthropologists, relating them very broadly to the social contexts in which they were produced.

What particularly interest us are projects which seek to establish a relationship of some sort between Polynesian representations (from whatever period) and those formulated on the basis of European historical sources. This is by no means the same thing as the “insider versus outsider” perspective which crops up from time to time in discussions within the region, counterpoising “authentic” indigenes to foreigners using Pacific data for irrelevant foreign academic argumentation. The distinction is sometimes apt, but frequently it sheds no light at all, except perhaps that which illuminates special interests. More relevant to our concerns is a distinction that may be drawn between the “orally literate” and the “orally illiterate” (happy terms which we owe to our colleague Ross Clark). The point is that in many parts of island Polynesia there is still a lively representation of aspects of the past within ongoing oral traditions, generally not accessible to those who do not know the language. “Oral literacy” is by no means given to all. Insiders may be as ignorant of it as they are apt to portray all outsiders as being, and they may in fact have more difficulty in gaining access to it than those who cannot be so closely identified with local factions and concerns. There is, we shall argue, a complex and inherently problematic relationship between oral traditions and written historical accounts.

We begin our characterisations with the work of outsider academic historians. In the 1950s, Pacific historians distinguished themselves from Colonial and Commonwealth historians by writing “island oriented” histories about what had happened “on the ground” in the islands of the Pacific since European contact, and by using new kinds of documents (beachcomber narratives, missionary letters and journals, etc.). Their sleuthing has been formidable, their histories are fine-grained, but their projects have rarely been culturally informed. The actors have primarily been named European voyagers, traders, missionaries and colonial officials, for these are the persons who have written their sources or of whom their sources speak. Polynesians have tended to be shadowy figures; some have been sensitively portrayed, but few have spoken. Critics have labelled the Pacific historians as eurocentric, bereft of the “insider point of view”; it would, however, be difficult for them to be otherwise given the nature of their project and its context. But these works are nonetheless invaluable. We now have detailed and abundantly documented histories of diverse intrusions and developments in Pacific societies, telling of how the islands were incorporated into wider

political and economic systems (Davidson 1967; Gilson 1970). However, these virtues of the Pacific historians' works have latterly been viewed as faults by some among them, who call for comprehensive (or synthetic) histories of the whole Pacific rather than more "monograph myopia" devoted to particular islands or island groups (Howe 1979). But wide-ranging histories (such as Howe 1984) falter in trying to deal with diverse island histories and seem to end up as little more than a series of case studies. European intrusions may have much in common, but the ways of life they encountered in the separate islands were quite diverse. Therefore, it is difficult to connect the island-oriented histories with one another, especially when they pay no particular attention to gaining culturally informed insights into the nature of Polynesian reactions.

Ethnohistorians have set as their particular project the description of Pacific societies as they were at the time of European contact and their response to early European intrusions. While linked with Pacific history, rather than chronicling economic and political developments in the islands, they have traced the demise of indigenous systems (Denning 1980). Ethnohistory, by its nature, seems to be a rather disheartening project — inevitably a record of decline and fall. Furthermore, teasing out an ethnographic description from the diversely biased European documents according to the canons of historiography is both a tedious and problematic undertaking. Accordingly, among ethnohistorians a cleavage has developed between those who would restrict the evidence to "the description of illiterate societies by literate observers at the time when contact between the two had not changed or destroyed the illiterate society" (Denning 1966) and those who would listen to the "oral testimony" of latter-day Islanders, albeit with caution (Lātūkefu 1968).

Whether called Pacific history or ethnohistory, these academic projects aim to establish what actually happened in particular places at particular times. In recent years, practitioners of both have listened to "oral testimony" cautiously and have consulted indigenous texts judiciously as adjuncts to their usual sources. For good reason, those who have done so have usually been academically-trained Pacific Islanders. Even if they are not full "oral literates", they speak the language in which the texts are given.

This leads us to consider "insider history", in some ways an outgrowth of the ethnohistorians' work, though not so restricted and promoted as a quite different project. "Insider history" gives precedence to representations of the past as contemporary Pacific Islanders tell or write them. More often than not these are written

by insiders who, although knowing the language, are not wholly “orally literate”, and who seek to connect what they have heard from the “oral literates” with academic histories in order to construct a composite, factual “insider history”. In many instances, the distinction between oral and written texts, local and European texts, is either ignored or consciously elided. The projects are beset with other contradictions as well. We have historians strategically promoting “insider history” and politicians calling for truly national histories; we have the situation of insiders who are writing the histories being not only “orally illiterate” but also being denied texts simply because they are insiders, and editors and advisors reframing what is written to satisfy academic historical conventions. These apparently straightforward and laudable projects are beset with many special difficulties.

Ironically, representations of the past by Polynesians have a long history, though they have been somewhat ignored by historians. George Grey, Governor of New Zealand during the periods 1845–1853 and 1861–1868, employed a number of Māori scribes to assist him in learning the language and customs of their people. The most prominent among them was Te Rangikaheke, an Arawa chief from Rotorua, and his most renowned works are his comprehensive historical accounts telling of the creation of the universe, of the world and its beings, and of the origins of the ancestors and their migrations, settlement and subsequent history in New Zealand. These accounts appear as appendices in Grey’s *Ko nga Moteatea*, and are the basis of his *Polynesian Mythology* — all unacknowledged as to their true authorship. Jenifer Curnow (1983, 1985) has established that what Te Rangikaheke intended was two manuscripts, each covering essentially the same material, but addressed to different audiences. One manuscript (known as 81) was intended for the Governor; the other (which at some point got separated into two and is known as 43 and 44) was intended for the Hawaiians. This latter manuscript was inspired by a chance meeting with a visiting Hawaiian, one Maau Tione, who, as Te Rangikaheke envisioned, would take it to Hawai’i for the other descendants of the ancestors to check and correct (Curnow 1985: 121–22). This did not happen, so Grey ended up with two parallel, if not identical, historical accounts in his collection.

“Te Rangikaheke selected his material according to the needs and interests of its attended recipient” (Curnow 1985: 122). He was an accomplished orator with a fine sense of his audience. Thus the differences between the two accounts (which were written in the same year, 1849) indicate how he perceived his audiences. For Grey he is far more explicit, explaining the motivations and meanings of

various happenings; evidently he assumed that the Hawaiian would understand without being told (Curnow 1985: 127–28) — and they probably would have. For his Hawaiian audience he made comparisons between Māori and Pakeha beliefs, which would have had no purpose in writings intended for the Governor (Curnow 1985: 122). But both audiences, if in somewhat different ways, were to be impressed with the supremacy of Te Arawa, the tribe of which Te Rangikaheke was a chief. Te Arawa was the first canoe; Te Arawa were the most brave; Te Arawa were foremost leaders. “Te Arawa were the source from which all other tribes sprang... Te Arawa were the seeds scattered over the land, whose runners and branches stretched forth north and south” (Curnow 1985: 137). Schrempp, acknowledging Curnow’s characterisation of Te Rangikaheke’s histories as “Arawa-centric”, points to the parallel between Tu, precedence over his brothers, and the primacy attributed to Te Arawa — both “alone” are brave (Schrempp 1985: 24–25).

Both of Te Rangikaheke’s historical projects were collaborative in nature. The first collaboration was initiated by Grey, and in a real sense appropriated by him. Yet both men had a shared intention — that the Governor would learn Māori language and custom so as to govern more effectively. Te Rangikaheke’s separate project was his account for the Hawaiians, but presumably had the Hawaiians amplified and corrected his account as he planned they would, he would have passed these on to Grey, as he did other corrections (Curnow 1985: 123). We do not know whether Grey had in mind in 1849 to plunder Te Rangikaheke’s manuscripts for his own writing projects. But we can be quite certain that Te Rangikaheke had a further agenda in all his writing: “...to claim *mana* and land for his tribe” (Curnow 1985: 141).

The 19th century Hawaiian language historians of Hawai‘i were relatively numerous: roughly in birth-order, K. Kamakau, David Malo, John Papa ‘Ī‘ī, Samuel M. Kamakau, Kepelino (see Valeri 1985: xxiii–xxvii). We take as our example Samuel M. Kamakau, who was not an eye-witness but a prolific writer, thus an historian more than a reporter. Kamakau was one of the ten Lahainaluna Seminary students who, at the instigation of Sheldon Dibble in 1836–1837, collected and put together a manuscript history of Hawai‘i, which was attributed to David Malo. Dibble tells how they worked (1843: iv, cited in Borofsky and Howard MS):

At the time of... meeting each scholar read what he had written — discrepancies were reconciled and corrections made by each other, and then all the compositions were



handed to me, out of which I endeavored to make one connected and true account.

Dibble, like Grey after him, published his own *History of the Sandwich Islands* (1843) from the collections he instigated, but unlike Grey's work, his was a truly synthetic account. Malo also later wrote his own Hawaiian language history which bears many similarities with the earlier collective work. Kamakau was junior to Malo in both age and status, but nonetheless took it upon himself some years later to extend and amplify what had earlier been written by (or attributed to) Malo by interviewing people older than himself, e.g., his grandfather, and publishing his accounts in Hawaiian language newspapers (1865–1871). His stated aim was to “discover an independent Hawaiian antiquity” to counter the bizarre foreign speculations about Hawaiian origins — “foreigners only know so much and they are superficial!” (Denning 1988: 12). Though Kamakau was disdainful of foreigner interpretations, and was the most prolific of the Hawaiian historians of his era, he was not a romantic about the Hawaiian past — he did not approve of it all. Ending his accounts of *heiau* and sacrifice, he wrote (1976: 145):

...It is impossible to count the hundreds and thousands of years of sacrificing. It is well for the upright to ponder these things, and to thrust away the clouds from the nation, and to separate the nation from them. Then, to eat together with the nations of the world that eat without tabus without disassociating themselves from God. A kingdom that eats without tabus in a good kingdom.

Kamakau seems to have been primarily motivated by the desire to set the record of the Hawaiian past straight, in the face of fanciful notions of non-Hawaiians. This past, however, was not one that he celebrated; the present was the more desirable state.

The late Queen Sālote of Tonga was a historian of another time and place, of the 20th century and of an independent Kingdom, who attached importance “to the preservation of tradition” both on the record and in action. To this end she established the Tongan Traditions Committee in 1952, and at the time of its formation declared, “The customs of a people are its heritage” (Wood and Wood Ellem 1977: 194). The Queen wished to preserve her own knowledge of Tongan custom — “people regarded the Queen as the great authority on Tongan custom” (Bott 1981: 7) — and in the mid-50s sought an anthropologist-amanuensis (oral tradition at the University of Auckland has it that she contacted the newly established Department of Anthropology). She found her scribe in



Elizabeth Bott, who had gone to Tonga with another anthropological enterprise in mind but willingly assisted the Queen's project. This was by all accounts a most congenial collaboration and in 1960 Bott left for the Queen and the Tongan Traditions Committee a substantial manuscript based on extensive interviews with the Queen, which over 20 years later was published (Bott 1982) after slight revisions and meticulous checking, and with the blessing of the Queen's son and successor. Though the material presented therein is mostly from the Queen, Bott gives it a framework and form. She took as her point of entry, Tonga in the late 18th century as recorded, if not understood, by Cook, and explained and interpreted by the Queen — i.e., a European record with an informed Tongan exegesis. Then, on the basis of this, she gives a "generalised account of principles of Tongan political and social organisation in the 18th century" (1982: 8) — clearly the contribution of the anthropologist. Finally, in what is the major section of the book, there is the account of how Tongan society came to be as it was found in the 18th century. This is a "thick" account staying "fairly close to the content and tone of the account given to me by Queen Sālote" (Bott 1982: 8), or the Queen's representation of the Tongan past, which "presents a somewhat idealised picture of the classical period of Tongan society as visualised by... then the greatest... authority" (Bott 1982: 9). It would, we believe, be cynical to say that the Queen was only creating a dynastic document, legitimating by the past the real power of the Tupou dynasty created by her great-grandfather. Given the sources of her knowledge, her reputation and her pre-eminent position, she could not help but create a "new orthodoxy", one that has some decades later come to be challenged.

As these examples show, the projects of the "orally literate" are (like other projects) grounded in social situations. Outsiders cannot be "orally literate" since "oral literacy" implies a primary identification by and with particular representations of the past. Outsiders may, however, come to comprehend an oral literature by listening and recording, by reading and contemplating its texts. Furthermore, the "orally literate" do on occasion record their representations of the past in writing. Here we will not discuss the characteristic of oral versus written texts, except to note that texts written by the "orally literate" tend to have characteristics of orality (see Thornton 1985). It is vitally important to identify the social context and project of the representation by the "orally literate", for these should be discerned and appreciated by the "orally illiterate" who may use these representations in their own projects.

Take the incident related by Malama Meleisea (1980), which

though brief is telling and not at all extraordinary. In the course of recording oral history in Samoa he returned to a *matai* from whom he had previously recorded a text to clarify some points. The *matai* in “repeating” the text gave a different version with a significantly different outcome, though it was the “same story”. It transpired that the *matai* held two titles in two different villages, and both his location and social role had changed between the two tellings, and so appropriately had his rendering or representation of the past. Both tellings were “true” in the context he told them. Again, Torben Monberg (1975) recounts how his informants “fired back” after reading *From the Two Canoes* (1965) because the representations of the past therein were “one-sided” and derogatory, i.e., representing the interests of one faction of the population. Our examples could continue, but these two will suffice to make our point. Project and context should not be overlooked; the “oral literate” is well aware of them, but the “orally illiterate” may not always be.

The “orally literate” expect their representations to be challenged. They guard against challenges by telling them to audiences whose interests they represent, or, as in the case of the Samoan *matai*, adapting them to the interests of their particular audiences. Therein lies the great virtue of orality as well as a well-recognised paradox. Representations are attributed by their tellers to generalised or specific ancestors. These narrators portray themselves not as creators but as conduits transmitting “words of the ancestors” to their audiences and to future generations. The truly “orally literate”, that is, those who effectively relate these representations, do not take such assertions literally — they know what they are doing. Though their representations may promote their own projects, they must be phrased to accord with group projects if they are to be acceptable to their audiences. One cannot become an oral pundit by telling stories to oneself. The representations of the “orally literate” are both formed by a group’s perceptions of the past and inform that group’s perceptions, and they tacitly challenge other perceptions by asserting the authenticity and “truth” of their own. The point is that these representations are assertions — they do not debate them, they state them. The argument enters by way of other assertions, and what the real argument is recognised by the “orally literate”: but has to be discovered by the “orally illiterate”. Naïve “illiterates” tend either to dismiss the asserted representations as so much rubbish (if they do not conform to their own projects) or embrace them as true (if they do), whether they are insiders or outsiders. This is only to be expected. But when an elite intelligentsia implicates the representations of the “oral literates” by conflating their projects with their own, we should beware.

When oral traditions are combined and denatured to produce an “insider national history” by orally illiterate insiders abetted by orally illiterate outsiders, how many projects are conflated?

This is not to say that all “oral illiterates” are naïve — Bott certainly was not. Indeed, a good deal has been written about the projects and contexts of “orally literate” representations, but these are often not taken into account when the representations are used in other projects and contexts. Attending to them is not just necessary, it is worthwhile; as much insight may be gained from considering them as from the representations themselves. What is required is the analysis of multiple texts in terms of their specific contexts in order to identify their separate projects, and judicious use of all available texts (see, for example, Valeri 1985). We need to discern in their texts the projects of the “orally literate”: the issues they address and the questions they answer, before using them as sources for our own projects. When this has not been done, we need to untangle the projects.

As if all this were not enough, we now have anthropologists, professional muddlers of all sorts of distinctions, taking a new interest in the Polynesian past. Something of what they have been up to may be shown by reference to an intramural debate in which a number of them have been involved, about the work of a renowned elder. In his *History and Traditions of Tikopia*, Raymond Firth (1961) presented the texts he had recorded in the late 1920s as a “quasihistorical” chronicle of the Tikopian past, explaining the different renderings recorded were in the interests of particular tellers and groups. Edmund Leach (1962), in reviewing the volume, expressed surprise that Firth had not included texts concerning the doings of gods and spirits simply because he regarded them as unbelievable “myth”. Sceptical of Firth’s distinction between myth and quasihistory, Leach dismissed the whole enterprise, declaring that while significant things had undoubtedly happened in the island’s past, none of them were recorded between the covers of Firth’s book. What Leach was saying was that all Firth’s Tikopia texts (published and unpublished) were myth, not history, and should therefore be analysed as myth, in structural-symbolic terms. Hooper (1981) and McKinnon (1976) independently took up this point, treating the texts as expressions of Tikopian cultural concepts about their social order and linking them with the copious Tikopian ethnography. Though starting with different problems in mind, these two analyses have much in common. Finally, Kirch and Yen (1982) literally grounded some of Firth’s “quasi-history” by relating it to their archaeological findings. Here is a stark contrast between a literal reading of texts (Firth, Kirch and Yen) seeking to establish the

facts of Tikopia's past, and a structural-symbolic reading (Hooper and McKinnon) unravelling Tikopian statements about their social order. These are two very different projects, and while academic historians might rightly be suspicious of the literal readings, anthropologists have questioned the symbolic one.

What historians might make of the symbolic reading we are not at all sure. There are so few archival sources on Tikopia that we doubt that they would consider the question worthy of their attentions at all. (Tikopians, as far as we know, have not been consulted.) Matters are somewhat different, though, for larger Polynesian societies which have more copious historical documentation. Valeri's analysis of Hawaiian sacrifice (1985) shows perhaps better than any other recent work in the field the use of wholly historical sources for a characteristically anthropological project — the depiction of an alien cultural practice in terms of its motivating cultural logic. There are also other examples which more directly illuminate historical processes. Sahlins' recent studies (1985) of Hawai'i and Fiji use historically documented myth, ritual and tradition not simply to extend the historical record (in the manner of an older anthropological style and more recent insider histories) but to interpret it. The innovation, of course, is a structural- symbolic reading of Polynesian texts to provide accounts of the past which are both historical and culturally motivated. Siikala's as yet unpublished work is a project of the same kind, which promises to provide much richer Cook Island history, as well as Sissons's studies of New Zealand Māori (Sissons 1984, and Sissons, Wi Hongi and Hohepa 1987). There is also our own work in Tokelau (1985) which is part of a larger historical ethnography of the group. In all these accounts, Polynesians are not portrayed as simply the passive subjects of dominating intrusions of one sort or another, but as active agents harnessing the new situations to historical projects of their own.

Such anthropological projects, one might think, should sit comfortably with the insider ones, in spite of the fact that they have all been done by scholars outside the region. In many respects they do, more especially among insiders who are aware that the remote Polynesian past is as alien to their own historical and cultural context as it is to that of outsiders. Yet within the South Pacific, and especially in Fiji, a lot more attention is currently being paid to studies which fit in to one or another variety of "world system theory" (Narsey 1979; Howard *et al.* 1983; Narayan 1984). It is plain why this should be so, given the contemporary social and political context. (Note that we wrote this in early 1987, before the military coups in Fiji.) The historic changes wrought by the intrusions of the

capitalist world system can be connected very easily to the immediate concerns with issues of class and tradition. Yet it is also evident that the world system studies done so far within the region have been of a most general kind, ignoring much contrary evidence and giving little or no attention to the wide variety of specific outcomes (Meleisea and Schoeffel 1984). In the South Pacific, as elsewhere in the Third World, the advancing capitalist system has also been plainly modified and adapted to many local cultural and social circumstances, and it is this process the world system approach brutally elides. There is much more historical work to be done before this particular problem gets sorted out.

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# ARTEFACTS OF HISTORY: Events and the interpretation of Images

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It has been something of a surprise for Europeans to realise that their advent in the Pacific was something less than a surprise. A number of accounts give the sense that their coming had been expected; that they were previously known beings “returned” or manifest in new form. Such ideas certainly fuelled the millenarism of cargo cults in Papua New Guinea. A further return was indicated in the future. So the one event encapsulated both past and future time; indeed the two were conflated in so far as the second coming would bring not the generations unborn but generations already deceased, in the form of ancestors. Or if not the ancestors themselves, than their “cargo”.

What triggered this recovery of the past in the future was the actual advent itself: the appearance of Europeans, and the stories that circulated about them. In this chapter, I argue that at least as far as much of Melanesia is concerned, and especially Papua New Guinea, Europeans initially presented a particular kind of image. Images that contain within them both past and future time do not have to be placed into a historical context, for they embody history themselves. It follows that people do not therefore have to “explain” such images by reference to events outside them: the images “contain” events. And here we have a clue to the mixed reactions which early Europeans reported greeted their arrival in New Guinea. They were met with surprise, but the surprise was

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also tempered by nonchalance. As Lederman (1981) reported of her own arrival at Mendi in the New Guinea Highlands, people were eager to assure her that they had not been caught off guard. Their own accounts of themselves already contained these otherwise unexpected newcomers.

Images are presented through artefacts, and in cultures where artefacts are highly personalised (cf. Battaglia 1983) also through persons in their bodily form (O'Hanlon n.d.), and where it is equally the case that persons are objects of the regard of others, through performances of all kinds (Schieffelin 1985). People objectify or present themselves to themselves in innumerable ways, but must always do so through assuming a specific form. I suggest that Melanesians may have seen the advent of Europeans in the form of an artefact or a performance. The interesting question then becomes who the Melanesian thought was the maker of the artefact, the producer of the performance.

However, I do not present an ethnographically argued case. Rather, my intention is to raise some queries against anthropological perceptions of historical process. In evoking Melanesian "images", I present a set of perceptions which poses problems for the still current division of labour between social/cultural anthropologist and those concerned with material culture of the kind that finds its way to museums. The result of the division has been that we have hidden from ourselves possible sources of insight into the processes by which people such as the Melanesian of Papua New Guinea deal with social change, and change themselves.

## Events—two views of time

There is a connection between the study of artefacts and the study of time, and between the idea of historical context and of cultural or social context. A certain perception of event is implied in the way that Western anthropologists have often understood the work of historians which mirrors in the way they have also understood museologists and those interested in "material culture".

Contrary to the aspirations of many practising historians, anthropologists often take them to be interested in "events". The idea of a concrete, incidental event holds much the same place in the anthropological world view as does the idea of a concrete, incidental artefact. Events may be understood as the inevitable and thus "natural" outcomes of social arrangements, or even more

poignant, the chance encounter that has not been anticipated by those arrangements. These are the two forms of event with which Sahlins (1985) is concerned in the Pacific. They are taken as items which must be brought to account in our system of knowledge, like so much raw material, like so many facts to be systematised.

No account can recover the past, argues Lowenthal (1985: 215), “because the past was not an account; it was a set of events and situations”. But the account may well create a relation internal to itself between “events” and the organising process or “systems” which link/explain them. Indeed, Sahlins’ study of Cook’s sojourn in Hawai‘i exemplifies the interest of social/cultural anthropology in locating events as the raw materials of their systematising endeavours. For Sahlins approaches the interaction between the people of Hawai‘i and the adventurer Cook in terms of the alteration of meanings that occurs in the cultural interpretation of historical events and the impingements of history on culture. He dwells on the antinomy between “the contingency of events and the recurrence of structures” (1985: xiii), expanding “event” into a relation between happening and structure. Structure and event are then mediated by a third term, “the structure of the conjuncture”. A structure must be seen to coordinate events: he dismisses the “pernicious distinction” between them in favour of the realisation of structure in event and vice versa. There is no event without system, he proposes (1985: 154) and this, of course, has to be how anthropologists make knowledge for themselves. If Sahlins has displaced the pernicious distinction between event and structure with their irreducible relationship, this irreducible relationship can only be that between the knowing subject and the objects of knowledge.

Sahlins suggests that an event as such should be seen as a *relation* between a certain happening and a symbolic system, it is the “happening” which takes the place of a natural fact in his scheme. A happening is domesticated through cultural interpretation. “The event is a happening interpreted” (1985: 153). This definition of event replicates for Europeans and anthropologists what is also imputed to the people of Hawai‘i. Sahlins’ analysis of events turns on the manner in which the Hawaiian people interpreted and contextualised, placing concepts in correspondence with external objects. Hence his remark that

Everything happens as if nothing happened: as if there could be no history, as if there could be no unexpected event, no happening not already culturally provided for. (1985: 30–31.)

Social action is an “actualisation” or “realisation” of the relationship between the concepts of the actors and the objects of their existence (1985: 154). Hence Sahlins’ focus on the events as interpreted action, which utilises (I suggest) the idea of event much as anthropologists habitually think of artefact. It is cultural construction which our systematising interests force us to subsume under a further relation which also includes its social context, *viz* structure. “Structure” is a frame metaphor, so to speak. Thus an event is seen as a culturally interpreted happening; in the same way an artefact is said to have meaning, this meaning requiring anthropological elucidation by reference to the system which produces meanings. Happenings stand in an intransigent rather than reflecting or expressive relation to structure, but are nonetheless not explicable to the observer (Hawaiian or European) without reference to a context. A cultural event is thus perpetually created out of a natural happening. In turn, the anthropologists’ elucidation of structure takes *these interpretations* (culture) as the proper facts, the raw material, of systematic anthropological knowledge. Anthropology out-contextualises indigenous (Hawaiian or European) contextualising efforts.

Whether or not we can use Melanesian material to comment on Polynesian, this excursus suggests one caveat in the opening up of historical investigation into culture and history in the Pacific. What do we intend to recover as ethno-history? Thus we can, as I think Sahlins does, regard people’s interpretations as “their” history, a kind of ethnohistory: their version of what we do lies in their referential codes and contextualising practices. I do not know if this would work in Melanesia. To recover the knowledge which comes from perceiving structural relationships between events, we might have to seek the counterpart of our systematising endeavours in people’s artefacts and performances, in the images they strive to convey, and thereby in how they present the *effects* of social action to themselves. And this would not look like our “history” at all.

And it would not look like our history, because a quite different sense of time is at issue.

These two views of time, European and Melanesian, can be apprehended as two ways of “explaining” or “making manifest” the nature of things. An event taken as incidental *occurrence* in nature, chancy and idiosyncratic, particular to the moment, is to be explained by being into its historical (cultural) context. That is, its relations with other events is laid out, so that events are often seen in progression, one following another. An event taken as a *performance* is to be known by its effect: it is understood in terms of what it contains, the forms that conceals or reveals, registered in the

actions of those who witness it. A succession of forms (cf. Wagner 1986b: 210) is a succession of displacements, each a substitution for what has gone previously and thus in a sense containing it, as it contains the effects it will have on the witness. Every image is in this sense a new image. Consequently, time is not a line between happenings; it lies in the capacity of an image to evoke past and future simultaneously. If this is the case, then in so far as they are concerned with their own uniqueness, the problem the makers of such images set themselves is how to overcome the recursiveness of time: how indeed to create an event that will be unique, particular, innovatory. What is true of time is also true of space. Analogously, we might say, space is not an area between points, it is the effectiveness of an image in making the observer think of both here and there, of oneself and others. The problem becomes how people can grasp the other's perspective to make it reflect on themselves; artefacts are displayed and circulated in order to return that knowledge (Munn 1986).

## The advent of Europeans

Despite the uniqueness of the event in the European record, Miklouho-Maclay's initial experiences on the Rai coast of New Guinea were to be repeated elsewhere. Whereas only certain Melanesians came to develop cargo cults, it seems that everywhere they expressed a pragmatic interest in transactions with the newcomers, and Lawrence notes the extent to which Miklouho-Maclay had to satisfy local demand for his goods. He established his position by gift-giving, among other things, and "his gifts were always returned" (1964: 60). At the same time, his biographer gives dramatic emphasis to Miklouho-Maclay's surprise at being taken for "some kind of supernatural being" (Webster 1984: 72). The man who gave gifts was also a local deity (Lawrence 1964: 65; Webster 1984: 104).

On the part of many Europeans, both those involved at the time and anthropologists afterwards, common assumptions have been that (1) the coming of Europeans was a unique event; (2) it therefore stretched people's credulity, so that they had to find a place for the exotic strangers in their cognitive universe; so (3) it is no surprise that Melanesians regarded the first Europeans as spirits of deities; and (4) no surprise that in order to make sense of this untoward event, people reacted by trying to change their own lives and thus tap European power. Underlying these is the final assumption that

(5) the Europeans really were the powerful ones, not least because it was *they* who were the occurrence, who arrived in the Melanesian's midst. In short, within anthropological analysis, the advent of Europeans has the status of a historical fact. The people of Papua New Guinea were bought face to face with a unique moment in history.

I am sure people were taken by surprise. But should we interpret their reactions by assimilating that event to an event in history? Suppose it were not a unique moment, that it was not the case that only the Europeans had power, and that it did not require that people create new contexts for coping with the untoward. Let me produce a set of counter-suppositions, synthetic in that it is drawn from what we know of many times and places, but nonetheless potentially helpful in considering specific times and places — such as the exploration of the Highlands documented by Connolly and Anderson (1984). Suppose, then, we assimilate that event, the arrival of Europeans, to something that Melanesians were in fact already making. Uniqueness, power and context can all be put into a rather different light.

First, uniqueness. The Melanesian world is one where people constantly take *themselves* by surprise. And what takes them by surprise are the performances and artefacts they create. One thinks here of figures and carvings, and also of landmarks held to commemorate past events (Rubenstein 1981), tools taken as evidence of divine creation (Battaglia 1983), or shell valuables which carry a record of their exchange with them (Damon 1980). Accomplishment itself is celebrated. Melanesian politics are typified by the achieved nature of prestige — but the idea of achievement goes beyond politics, and inheres in the very constitution of collective activity such as ceremonial exchange, spirit cults or whatever. People amaze themselves by their capacity for collective action, as the men of Mt. Hagen are amazed when they decorate on exchange occasions. Their presentation evinces the power they hope to have encompassed, at once a divination of past success and an omen for the future (Strathern and Strathern 1971). We may borrow Kapferer's (1984: 193) observation from elsewhere, that rites are never mere repetition: acts and utterances constantly reassemble meanings. So however standard or traditional ways of doing things may be, the final configuration allows for the unexpected: a performance cannot be anticipated, for an image cannot be presented till the moment it is composed.

Moreover, on many occasions, Melanesians present themselves as other than their appearance normally suggests. One may instance the disguise of self-decoration that hides the outer skin

of the dancer by bringing his inner qualities to the surface (M. Strathern 1979); or the ambiguous displays of clans on the dancing ground that at once conceal their internal differences and reveal that no such conflicts exist (O'Hanlon 1983). Play may be made with man-spirit and other identities. Gell (1975: 243) observes of the Umeda that the identification of a masked dancer with the figure of a cassowary is only a disguise for the profounder identification of the cassowary with the man. The secret of the cassowary is that he is a man. Schwimmer encapsulates this dualism in his comment on how often Melanesian dancers play in pairs, both parties representing spirits, masked or in mask-like attire: "Each knows himself to be a man, but when he looks at his partner he can see a spirit" (1984: 253).

If they felt they were in the presence of an accomplishment of some kind, then Melanesians would not necessarily have to interpret the advent of Europeans as uniquely untoward. They were beings disguised: a surprise, but not a special surprise. And the identification of the men with spirits would be no more a special identification than the subsequent revelation that these were men.

Second, power. Specific to Melanesians' reactions is the way they sought out transactions with the Europeans. They appeared practical, even mercenary, despite the wonder and marvel with which Europeans frequently *reported* they were received. Indeed, some of the Europeans (though this could hardly be said of the sober Miklouho-Maclay) seem to have been taken by their own image as a cause of wonder. The extent to which they subsequently dwelt on the apparently irrational elements in the indigenous response (as evidenced in "cargo thinking") was a prop to this.

Yet what must be explained on the Melanesian side is people's simultaneous construction of Europeans as spirits and their nonchalant acceptance (also reported by Lawrence 1964: 233) of what Europeans regarded as technological marvels. Their capacity to interact with these beings and get things out of them became evident very early on. It was that interaction which revealed these beings were (also) human. In the example which Clark (n.d.) gives, the two perceptions existed side by side. People thus appear to have assumed that the Europeans' personal attributes, like other things they brought, were transferable, and the only problem was how to make the encounter work. Thus the Highlanders of Mt. Hagen sometimes think of themselves as turning "European" or else as remaining "Hagen", as though these were choices between domains of personal efficacy.

One might suppose it was the Melanesians who had a sense of power. If the advent were treated as performance, akin to that of the

masked dancer, then who was the producer of it? It cannot be the dancing assemblage of the mask itself. Performances are the artefacts of persons (whether human or not), contrivances, displays of artifice, even tricks. Indeed, it is arguable that many kinds of events we regard as historical contingencies in Melanesian's eyes have the character of improvisation (Wagner 1975). The makers of a performance are those who conceive it, fashion it in their diverse minds and finally accomplish the display. A performance becomes an index of people's capacities; an enactment of a feast "is an accomplishment, a kind of coup" (Wagner 1976b: 193). The inhabitants of the Rai Coast may well have been in terror when the Europeans first appeared, as Miklouho-Maclay's diaries (1975) attest.<sup>1</sup> But we cannot assume that it was simply terror of the powerful Europeans. My guess is that an initial component of people's terror may well have been at their own power — at what they had done to bring about an enactment of a quite extraordinary kind — or power they perhaps attributed to particular big men or neighbouring peoples (J. Liep, *pers. comm.*). *Someone* must have produced them.

There is a sense in which a witness is also an agent. A performance is completed by the audience (Schieffelin 1985), who may play an alternately passive and active role. In Melanesian cosmology, the agent or doer of an activity is often separated from the person (or happening) who compels the action. Thus under many patrilineal regimes, maternal kin are the "cause" of the prestations which flow to them as recipients by virtue of the health they bestow on their daughter's/sister's child; the active agents, those credited with the prestige which comes from taking action, are the paternal donors of the gifts. Donors show their power in accomplishing a prestation. In the same vein, to the extent that Europeans presented themselves as a cause for the people's response, then capacity to act lay on the side of those who responded. The Europeans would be an inert cause for all this activity.

Third, context. It is this question above all which dominates anthropological analyses of cargo cults. The assumption is that cults show people trying to adjust the cognitive disorientation, or psychic disturbance in Siikala's critical (1982) phrase, created by the unexpected arrival of strangers in their midst. Yet their unexpectedness was, as it were, of an expected kind, merely a strange artefact. Initial difficulties in talking may have played a part in this. Europeans came hardly as enemies or allies would, with talk and ambiguous motivations, but confronted the beholders with, if not an unintelligible, an ineffable visual presence. Motivation had



to be located in someone. I have suggested that the witnesses might know themselves as in some way the producers of the spectacle: if not themselves the makers of it, then themselves as the cause of their neighbours or enemies' actions directed at them. But the point about a spectacle is that it is disconnected from everyday events, is the result of motivations hidden until the moment of revelation. It is in this sense also to be taken for itself. It only works if it is untoward.

There is more here than simply the fact that there can be no happening that is not culturally provided for, that cannot be "coded" as a recognisable event of some sort (Sahlins 1985: 31). And more thus than simply the assimilation of the newcomers to an existing pantheon of supernatural beings. The point about the sequence I have described is its self-contained nature. We do not have to imagine the event as an "interpreted happening".

An artefact or performance grasped for itself is grasped as an image. An image definitively exists out of context; or, conversely, it contains its own prior context. The problems all lay in what was to be the future outcome of the performance, its consequences for the future, what would be revealed next, in short, its further effect. Consequently, the European advent did not have to be put into its "social context". Melanesians did not have to "make sense" of it: they did not have to evoke the wider cultural and social milieu from which the Europeans came since they were under no compulsion to "explain" them. And ignorance of this context did not put the Europeans beyond reach, as the Europeans may well have thought it did. (No doubt *they* would have liked to have felt beyond reach, till education had taught people about Western society and the historical significance of the moment of contact.) On the contrary, the very act of presentation constituted the only context that was relevant — if Melanesians were also inclined to open the image up to explanation, then the question would be concerned with motivation, to be elicited or tested by the kinds of relationships into which the strangers could be enticed to engage with the Melanesians themselves.

In short, we do not have to suppose a cognitive disorientation because we do not have to suppose that Melanesians thought they were dealing with beings whose decontextualisation presented a problem.



## Image and contexts

Melanesian responses are unlikely to have been stable. Indeed, what I have sketched here probably occupied only a point in a longer process which would turn these constructions inside-out, locate power on the Europeans' part and Melanesians as the inert causes of it, and eventually dismantle the constructions altogether. I imagine them merely in order to give pause to the kinds of constructions that Western anthropologists have in the past so easily imposed on historical events and the clash of cultures. It was suggested that such Western constructions often play on an analogy between putting artefacts into their social/cultural "context" and laying out events as sequences which appear as points "in time" to be connected up to one another. Let me advance the argument with reference to the Melanesian construction of artefacts perceived as images.

I draw on Wagner's analysis of artefacts created by the Barok of New Ireland (1986b) as well as his theorising on obviation (1986a and elsewhere). The artefacts include the spatial structure of their men's house, performances such as feasting, and in general the metaphors by which people construe ideas about power. In the minds of the Barok, such items evoke commonly held images. By "image" Wagner intends us to understand a particular type of trope. Perceptual image (or "point metaphor") exists in relationship to referential coding (or "frame metaphor") (Wagner 1986a: 31). Coding opens out a symbol with reference to its constituent parts and thus its relation to other symbols: it expands and obviates an image by interpreting it, by setting it within a context which thus becomes part of its meaning. An image on the other hand condenses or collapses context into itself in the sense that all points of reference are obviated or displaced by its single form.

The constructions at issue may be illustrated through an example of an artefact that circulated all over Melanesia: the ceremonial stone axe. Battaglia (1983) presents an illuminating exegesis for axes used on Sabarl in the Massim. The triangular shape provided by the angle of the blade and haft may be perceived "as image of action and directed movement" (1983: 296). It at once evokes past actions and foreshadows future ones. Sabarl comment that it has the shape of mortuary feasts, that is, a lateral movement of wealth items from the father's side (the left arm of a person) to the mother's side (the right arm), which commemorates the support that kin gave a person in life. The elbow thus represents "the joint in the socially vital movement of reciprocal giving...[and] the ideal route of valuable objects away from person, clan or village and...back again"

(1983: 297). But that explanation also covers (obviates) others. On the joint itself is the figure of a bird with a snake in its mouth, an image of a mythical challenge presented as sexual opposition. Battaglia argues that the ideal support relations between kin are transformed at death into individualistic conflict between them (over inheritance and such). Yet the simultaneity of ideas about support and conflict contained within the axe cannot be matched by the explanations which people give, for these must always place one perception in relation to another. An image is distinct from an element in a comprehensive coding or exegesis.

It is less the privileging of one interpretation over another that is pertinent than the relationship between interpretation (frame metaphor) and the apprehension of something that is only itself (point metaphor). An object at one juncture taken for granted, as an image “standing for itself”, at another may be coded through reference to further images (whose meanings must at that point be taken for granted). The bird-elbow intrinsic to the Sabarl axe has a shape that may also be explained as a map for kin relations; when these become points of reference for the axe, they take on assumed qualities of their own (are images of support, point metaphors). But the kin relations may then be opened to explanation, as happens in the give and take of the mortuary exchanges of which the axes are a part, in which case they cease to be taken for granted; and so on. The process of explanation by referencing or decoding deprives the image of its power to elicit taken-for-granted meanings. Conversely, by itself, the Sabarl axe is not a simple illustration of meanings describable in other terms: rather, it presents to perception a particular *form* that is its own. What the Sabarl Islander grasps in handling the axe that can be verbally explained as “the same as” kin relationships activated in exchange is not those kin relationships in fact. For when *they* become the focus of attention, kin are able to do things with their exchanges of valuables — including the axes themselves — which reinterpret the ideal route that valuables should take. In effect, in “explaining” or “acting out” their relationships to one another, kinsfolk subvert the taken-for-granted status of paternal support in the bird-elbow image. One relationship substitutes or displaces another.

An artefact, or a performance such as an exchange, perceived as an image, is not reducible to the coding explanations that accompany it, or vice versa. Albert (1986: 241) makes the point *apropos malanggan* for which other New Irelanders are famous: their expressivity “is to be found in the organisation of forms in the carvings, and not in some relation between particular forms and their referents”.

Referential coding is not only found in people's verbal explanations: Wagner's sequence between point metaphor and frame metaphor, between image and code, can be realised in the contraction and expansion of any kind of artefact. Images may substitute for one another in a succession of analogies. At the same time, images both contain and elicit interpretations. Any one image, he argues, may synthesise several meanings, and in provoking response elicits this synthesis in the perceiver; the synthesis is taken apart when those meanings become expanded (coded) in reference to other images. Thus the meanings of the Sabarl axe are de-synthesised when they are acted out with respect to the maternal and paternal kin who exchange axes as valuables. The coding is accomplished through further performance or assemblage of artefacts, as well as through verbal exegesis. It is significant, however, that exegesis is accorded a special place by Barok. The effect of description may be taken as contrary to the effect produced by an image (including a verbal image such as a metaphor), so image in turn is understood by Barok as a distinctive means of construing power or effectiveness: "An image can and must be witnessed or experienced, rather than merely described or summed up verbally" (1986:xiv), and if it must be experienced in order to be understood, "the experience of its effects is at once its meanings and its power" (1986b: 216). Barok remain suspicious of talk. Talk is always part of an effort to manipulate events and relationships, making motivation ambiguous, whereas — like the revelation of gift (Biersack 1982) — in producing images, people produce the effects by which they know what they themselves really are. For "producing an image" means that an artefact has assumed a specific form (the image) in the mind of the viewer.

Images are reflected self-knowledge. The way in which a person responds to a taboo or an injunction shows that person to be the kind of kinsman or kinswoman he/she is; similarly the visual figure of the men's house Barok build contains men's feasting activities and ancestral power in such a way as to make manifest their legitimated relationship with the dead. When the advent of Europeans created an affect similar to such "images", it would also provoke self-knowledge. It would present a particular form to the observer, known by the response it thereby elicited. As the carrier of bearer of its effects, the observer (in whose mind the image forms) was also in this sense, like all audiences, a producer of them.

I deliberately refer to the process of coding and referentiality in verbal explanation in order to draw a comparison with certain Western practices of knowledge. When Melanesians construct knowledge about themselves and their relations with others, they

may well draw on perceptions that have the status of image where a European scholar would deploy verbal concepts in a referential, coding manner. A European is likely to explicate any one relationship through reference to others, through his or her description creating systems by bringing different concepts into connection with one another. Above all, he or she will “make sense” of individual incidents by putting them into their social or cultural context: an encounter with strangers requires understanding in terms of the society from which the strangers come, as a happening must be interpreted as an event in history. One might imagine, however, that the Melanesian would understand encounters in terms of their effects. It is the effect which is created, and effects (images) are produced through the presentation of artefacts. A concept of “society” is not an explanatory context for people’s acts; rather sociality, as Wagner (1975) argues, consists in the implicit conventions against which people innovate and improvise. They construct further artefacts, such as cargo cults or wealth transactions to see what the further effects will be. And the revelation will always come as a surprise.

## A division of labour

The comparison throws light on certain assumptions held by social and cultural anthropologists over a recent period in anthropological history.

Ever since the 1920s, much of Western anthropology has been concerned with approaching “others” through the elucidation of “their” world views. Part of our knowledge about material artefacts, for instance, must be our knowledge of their knowledge: it is taken for granted that we study the significance which such artefacts have for the people who make them, and thus their interpretations of them. Anthropologists, therefore uncover meanings by putting people’s own meanings into their social and cultural context. One might call this the phase of modernism in English-speaking anthropology (Ardener 1985; M. Strathern 1987).

It gave rise to a division of labour in which the study of material culture became divorced from social or cultural anthropology. On the one hand were experts who looked at artefacts (museologists), while on the other hand were specialists in the study of society or culture (social and cultural anthropologists). Over this period in anthropological history, the latter explicitly conceived themselves as experts in the elucidation of social/cultural “contexts”. Items of

all kinds (not only artefacts but events and relationships) were to be understood by seeing how they related or referred to others. The compulsion applied equally to the artefacts of contemporary peoples and the remains or exemplars that found their way to museums. Indeed, I have suggested that there are strong parallels between anthropologists' attitudes towards history and towards the study of material culture. "Material culture" came to designate a kind of technological substrate by contrast with the abstraction "culture", which designated the values and modes of social life.

There were always notable exceptions, and current interest in the culture of consumption (see, for instance, Miller 1987) suggests we can refer to this period as a past epoch. Nevertheless, for the time to which I refer, much anthropological analysis was almost exclusively concerned with the elucidation of "systems" — making sense of items by relating them in a coherent manner. The meanings of artefacts were elucidated by their context, whether the context was open to indigenous reflection, to be contextualised in turn, or was presented as a model on the ethnographer's part. Making social (or cultural) context the frame of reference had one important result. It led to the position that one should really be studying the framework itself (the social context = society). The artefacts were *merely illustration*. For if one sets up social context as the frame of reference in relation to which meanings are to be elucidated, then explicating that frame of reference obviates or renders the illustrations superfluous: they are become exemplars or reflections of meanings which are produced elsewhere. It was in this sense that social anthropology could proceed independently of the study of material culture. Material culture became perceived as background information. Even when art forms were foregrounded for study, it was usually because they were made visible by some social process such as "ritual". In the many analyses of art or decoration undertaken in Melanesia, anthropologists often took as their task simply locating these objects within a frame *already described* in other terms (in terms of values and principles generated by the politico-religious system or embedded in kinship structure or gender relations or whatever).

Frames of reference are intrinsic to the modernist anthropological exercise. These are the relationships within which we place our discoveries about people's cultural lives. The reason that material objects appear so intransigent is precisely because they are not the framework itself. Rather, they occupy a dual position, both its raw material and illustrative of its principles and values (at once "nature" and "culture" in relation to system). This creates a problem for the understanding of Melanesian perceptions.

In supplying social context, the enquiring ethnographer does not merely translate other people's referencing into his or hers, but weights the perception of an object. An axe "explained" as the elbow of exchange partnerships is re-located within a framework which occludes *both* other frameworks *and* its significance as a synthetic image in itself. If decoding the meaning of an object makes certain presumptions about its referentiality, then putting them within their social context becomes a symbolic move analogous to the expansion of a frame metaphor from a point metaphor. Referentiality always introduces a further set of tropes. The whole perception is now the object *plus* its explanation, the interpreted happening indeed.

Keesing (1987) has commented on Melanesians' frequent reluctance to give exegesis — to explain things by expanding frames verbally. Professed agnosticism is a kind of double resistance — first to altering meaning by making out one image to be another and secondly to privileging one frame that would exclude others. For talk always creates its own versions and transformations of what is being discussed (e.g. Goldman 1983; Rumsey 1986). "Translation" from one medium to another (as giving literal explanation for a metaphor, or describing an object in words) alters the significance of what is being presented.

We might reflect again on the self-proclaimed distance of Western social and cultural anthropologists from their material-cultural counterparts. If anthropologists are specialists in social contexts, in constantly apprehending items through frame metaphors ("society", "culture") which provide points of reference for the meaning of artefacts or art productions, then what are museologists but conservers of images? The exploration of internal design, the attention to artefact *qua* artefact, the relating of one style to others, the preservation of exemplars, suggests a self-contained, self-referential universe. The move from classification to aesthetics in museum displays could be seen as one attempt to present a perception that consciously minimises reference to wider social or cultural contexts.

This is a controversial assertion; much museology is devoted to putting objects into their cultural context, producing functional and interpretative displays, objects as artefacts not art (Clifford 1985a; Williams 1985). At the same time, we may note Stocking's observation on the space in which museum pieces exist. Encompassing both object and viewer, it has a "complex three-dimensionality that distinguishes the museum archive from essentially two-dimensional repositories of linear texts" (Stocking 1985: 4). Because they are removed from their original contexts in

time and space (which can never be recovered), and recontextualised in others, the meanings of material forms preserved in museums are problematic. But, as a result, there must always be a perceived discontinuity between the image and its new context (cf. Clifford 1985b). We thus imagine that the material artefact cannot be domesticated in quite the same way as texts, verbal descriptions of events, are subordinated in anthropological accounts to an overall analysis of society or culture; it is after all the objects themselves that appear to be on display, not the analysis of society. Consequently, they command attention “in themselves”. In so far as we perceive this to be the case, they remain figures against the grounding “social context”. Thus Westerners apprehend the responses they evoke as inevitably having an element of the aesthetic to it. Whatever battery of meanings and uses are ascribed to the museum object, display draws attention to form, explicitly confronting the observer with his or her own perceptions, and thus his or her act of appropriation in looking at them.

Perhaps the museum that looks like an art gallery presents us with a certain analogy to the Melanesian construction of image. It is, of course, only a *partial* analogy. The objects both elicit a reaction on the part of the observer — in a manner analogous to the presentation of a Melanesian image — and as like as not will elicit an idiosyncratic reaction: that is, the self-knowledge so produced will necessarily be the self-knowledge of a Western kind, the aesthetics of personal appreciation. To recreate the elicitory power that Melanesian images had for the people who made them, one would have to be able to take for granted the cultural values and social relations of which they were composed. The paradox is that if it is taken for granted, such Melanesian knowledge of sociality is not referenced and coded. But *we* can only grasp that dimension through *our* referential and coding procedures.

This paradox is intractable, because for us there can be no resolution in favour of one kind of presentation over the other — our aesthetic and referential strategies bypass one another and all we can do is move between the two points and know that each is inadequate. But that movement is essential. The “trick” would be to make that movement itself at once an image and a code in the anthropologist’s mind. That might be approximated in the way we control our own metaphors in writing.

I have argued that we should extend our concept of artefact to performance and to event. We might get a closer approximation to Melanesians’ idea if we deliberately use that extension to switch metaphors. If we are prepared to see artefacts as the enactment of events, as memorials of and celebrations to past and future



contributions (cf. O’Hanlon n.d.) — if the axe blade really is an icon of exchange relationship — then we must be prepared to switch the metaphors the other way too — to empty our notion of history as the natural or chancy occurrence of events that present a problem for structure — to talk about people using an event the way they may use a knife, or creating an occasion the way they create a mask or demonstrate personal efficacy in laying out the phases of a feast according to strict social protocol. And that is why I chose the most *event-full*, *chance-full* occurrence in our own eyes as illustration, the arrival of Europeans. For we can extend the same metaphor — talking about events as artefacts — to visualise how people act as though they had power when confronted with the untoward.

Perhaps the elucidation of possible Melanesian responses to such historical events will throw light on the changeability of these cultures. Melanesians’ readiness to accommodate novelty and the unexpected has long been commented upon. A significant feature, and one that might have been important in processes of cultural differentiation, is that the *enactment* of social life was always a little unexpected. It was not the ground rules of sociality that people were concerned to represent to themselves, but the ability of persons to act in relation to these. This ability to act was captured in a performance or an artefact, improvisations which created events as achievements. In this sense, all events were staged to be innovatory. Melanesians’ own strategies of contextualisation necessarily included themselves as witnesses of such spectacles. If they sought explanation, it would be to account for motivation (who produced the spectacle and with what intent). That would then let them know who they themselves were, for in entering into relations with Europeans, they would interpret the European presence through the only meaningful reference possible, in terms of its effects upon themselves.

Let me rewrite an ethnographic vignette. A. Strathern (1971 :xii) reports the words of an old man from Hagen who told how his neighbours had reacted to the appearance of the first administrative patrol in the area. The white man was thought to be a pale-skinned cannibal ogre, but “then he gave us shell valuables in return for pigs, and we decided he was a human”. The unspoken side of this statement might read: “Then we gave him pigs in return for shell valuables, and we realised we were human still”.



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## Notes

1. However, any reader who wishes to pursue the details of Miklouho-Maclay’s reaction is advised to consult the translation published in Moscow 1982 (Progress Publishers). I am grateful to Daniil Tumarkin for his comments on the accuracy of the Madang version.

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# DIARCHY AND HISTORY IN HAWAII AND TONGA

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*For Tancredi, my sacred junior.*

## Kings on the chessboard

The chessboard fascinates the king: He plays on it military metaphors of all the battles that he fights; he can see himself in a piece that is their almost immobile centre, but whose continuous existence keeps the game going. In the relationship between king and bishops, knights or pawns he finds an equivalent of the social system that multiplies his power through the powers of all others, and thus makes him uniquely active while removing him from most particular actions. The *primum mobile* is also a *primum immobile*: it is by contemplating and enacting this paradox on all chessboards, literal and metaphorical, that kings become good chess players.

I know only one major exception to the royal reputation for good chess playing: Charles XII of Sweden. But it is a classical case of the exception confirming the rule. Charles never won a chess game because he played almost only with one single piece: the king (Voltaire 1957: 173). A champion of royal absolutism, he dreamed on the chessboard of being a king so absolute that he did not need his subjects' support to win, so intrinsically powerful that he did not have to stay behind the lines. This is how he ended up a solitary crowned piece on the chessboard of Europe, until a cannonball put an end to his life and to his fantasies.

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Charles' chess playing is thus a good metaphor of the dangers a king runs when he forgets the intrinsically paradoxical nature of his person: a concentrate of absolute, divinely ordained power, he nevertheless cannot act as if this power were really autonomous. Indeed, if he attempts to act on this premise, as Charles did on his chessboards, he usually reveals his individual powerlessness, and thus that the power supposed to reside in his body resides in fact in the social body. Kings beware not to take your metaphoric identification with society too seriously! Beware of the hybris of absolute power! For their own good, kings have always had to cut through the rhetoric of their position: It is not only to their servants that kings fail to appear as gods, but also, to some extent at least, to themselves. Indeed what familiarity breeds more contempt than familiarity with oneself?

But kings have protected themselves against the perverse consequences of royal ideology not only by realizing, in the privacy of their consciousness or half-consciousness, that their absolute power is a matter of representation and thus ultimately of appearance (see, for instance, Hopkins 1978, 1: 216). They have also had recourse to their usual method of divide and rule: They have applied it to royal power itself.

It is possible to separate various and equally necessary aspects of royal power to avoid their contradictory or conflictual coexistence in the same person. The easiest way to achieve this is to associate two princes: One narcissistically preoccupied with representing the absoluteness of royal power, but never confronted with the task of literally demonstrating it on the chessboard of history; the other, a true chess player, a man conscious of the fact that royal power does not exist by internal virtue alone, but only through the actions and reactions of other men. Of course the intrinsic heteronomy of power is demonstrated by his colleague as well, whose representation of absolute power would have no power if it did not powerfully affect his subjects; but it would have no power, also, if it indicated this fact.

The tragedy of Charles XII was that of a general with the mentality of a god; it seems that sometimes such tragedies can be avoided by separating the general from the god, the man who plays chess with all the pieces from the man who plays it with only one piece: himself. Indeed diarchy appears to be a perennial temptation of kingship: a temptation to be resisted as much as yielded to, because in resolving one tension it may create another — rivalry between the two rulers. This paper treats a well documented case of tension between diarchic and monarchic tendencies — that of ancient Hawaii. The instability of diarchy in Hawaii is contrasted

with its stability, until the late eighteenth century, in another Polynesian society, Tonga. These different solutions correlate with the different place that a properly historical representation of kingship — that is one that recognizes discontinuities in time, that does not abolish time by making the present identical to the past — have in the two societies. In Tonga, this historical representation was removed to the ideological periphery of kingship after its explicit or implicit subject matter, the contingencies of political negotiation and armed struggle, were removed from the sacred center and left to the care of a second, inferior ruler. At this point a ruler without history combined with a “historical” one.

In Hawaii, in contrast, where diarchy was never institutionalized, history remained — both as practice and as representation — at the center of kingship. There were rulers who approximated to the type of the history-less sovereign, but this type was realized in its purest form not so much by a separate person, as by the *representation* of the royal person in ritual contexts, that is in the temples and in the formal chanting of royal genealogical chants (see Valeri 1985, 1990). In sum, rather than a structural diarchy combining two separate offices, we find in Hawaii a polarity between the king as a fact (or perhaps an effect) of representation, existing by virtue of the “magical” powers of ritual representation, and the king as existing “on the chessboard”, that is by virtue of his involvement in the entire range of social action. Furthermore, the relationship between these two poles of kingship was conceived more in dialectical and transformational terms than in terms of complementarity (cf. Valeri 1982). In sum, the realization of kingship into two separate princes was contingent in Hawaii; only its realization in “the king’s two bodies” (cf. Kantorowicz 1957; Giese 1987) was structural.

## Sacred juniors and sacred seniors

“We noble ones, we good, beautiful, happy ones!” Few aristocracies illustrate better than the Polynesian Nietzsche’s “noble mode of evaluation”, for which vitality is the good, lifelessness the bad (Nietzsche 1969: 37). Nowhere else has the supreme good been identified to such an extent with the noble as the embodiment of life: a life that in the fullness of its strength is beautiful and takes pleasure in itself.

A corollary of this cult of the fullness of life is the importance given to the generative act. This importance is evident above all in Hawaii, where praise chants were composed for the aristocratic

genitalia (Handy and Pukui 1972: 84; Pukui 1949: 257–58). Genital chants and genealogical chants were closely related, as they should be, since genealogies demonstrate the generative potency of a founding ancestor and of all his descendants, and thus a life so full that it triumphs over time by continuing and developing. This is precisely why the possession of genealogies is the principal sign of noble status, that is a status indicating fullness of life (cf. Valeri 1990). Yet this genealogical view of what is noble is not without ambiguities. The most striking one, perhaps, concerns the relative evaluation of past and present and thus of ancestors and descendants.

On the one hand, since all life comes from the ancestors, the past is superior to the present and time is viewed as a process of decay, of loss of an original potency. But on the other hand, this potency is manifested by continuity and proliferation in the course of time: the latter can thus be viewed as progress, as adding rather than subtracting potency to a line. The first view underlies the “status lineage” system with its characteristic “sinking status” effect: the further away in time (and thus genealogically) one is from the ultimate ancestor, the lower in status (and thus, ideologically, in fullness of life) one is (cf. Valeri 1990). This ideology is exemplified by the Tongan title system (see below).

The second view is implicit in those Polynesian systems in which rank is supposed to grow with the passage of generations. Such growth may occur because of the idea that the combined ranks of father and mother inevitably produce a higher rank in their children (particularly in the first-born). The increase in rank may be obtained by a marriage that is either a combination of identicals (as in endogamous marriage) or a combination of different terms (as in the exogamous marriage of two high ranking nobles of different lines, cf. Valeri 1972). In both cases what comes after is superior to what comes before: parents are hierarchically subordinated to their children or at least to their firstborn.

But the idea that what comes after is superior to what comes before often exists independently of such mechanisms for the increase of rank through marriage: indeed in a number of cases youth seems to be closer than maturity or old age to the divine sources of life and to be raised accordingly in status. The most extreme manifestations of what could be called “the spiritual superiority of the child”, by analogy with the famous “spiritual superiority of the sister” in Western Polynesia, are found in the Marquesas and in Tahiti.

In the Marquesas “the first born son of a chief, the exemplar of genealogical succession, brought about at once, from the moment of

his birth, the demotion of his father" (Goldman 1970: 139). This resulted, however, in the formation of a diarchy, inasmuch as the father became his son's regent. Something analogous existed in Tahiti not only among the chiefs, but at almost all social levels. There, "the child from the moment of its birth [became] the head of the family" (Wilson 1799: 326; cf. Morrison 1935: 187), but his father retained the actual powers that went with the title he transmitted to him (Ellis 1829, 2: 346-47). These powers were then handed down piecemeal in the course of time until chiefly installation proper completed the process (Henry 1928: 185; Oliver 1974, 2: 644).

There are some similarities between the birth rite for the firstborn and the rite for welcoming a god in a temple. Furthermore the arrival of the child is explicitly referred to as the epiphany of a god (Oliver 1974, 1: 415, 416). Oliver speculates that the child received from both parents "a divine quality" which was "a portion of god himself" (Oliver 1974, 1: 443). Bligh (1789, 2: 24) reports a belief that the first born was sired by a god (presumably an ancestral one), not by his father directly. But can these beliefs really explain why the child was more divine than his parents? Supposing these to be themselves firstborns, are they not also sired by the god and have not they themselves received "a portion" of this god from their parents?

It seems to me that what makes the child more divine than his parents is partly that his birth signifies a further increase in the duration of their line, and thus embodies the increased prestige (that is reputation for vitality) that goes with it; partly the idea that by generating a child his parents lose to him some of their own divinely originated life. We thus confront the basic axiom that underlies these practices and beliefs: all other things (particularly first born status) being equal, youth is viewed as intrinsically superior to adulthood because it is richer in life and thus more divine for a religious thought that worships life.

This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that, although the firstborn is the most divine of children, his junior siblings are also in certain respects "mystically" superior to the members of their parents' generation. Morrison (1935: 184) reports that "a Child may curse its Father, Mother, Uncle or Aunt but it would be Blasphemy for them to curse it". We have here another remarkable parallel between the sacred child of Tahiti and the sacred sister (and paternal aunt) of Western Polynesia. For in both cases superior sanctity is associated with dangerous and in certain respects negative powers, such as those of cursing. In Tahiti, however, this dangerousness is much greater and must be neutralized by ritual means. Oliver thinks that it has a composite origin: the child is both



polluted by its mother's blood and in possession of a "divine part". He thus interprets some of the rites for eliminating the child's dangerousness as purifications and some (the *āmo'a* rites) as having the purpose of "either neutralizing or reducing the divinity of the child" (Oliver 1974, 1: 443). I am not convinced by this distinction. I think that the child is dangerous and thus polluting to his parents precisely because, being a child, he is superior to them in "raw" vitality.

If a ferdydurkian quotation may be forgiven here, the child's vitality makes it evident by contrast that his parents are "already poisoned by death". Furthermore, although this vitality is highly valued and thus divinized, its "rawness", the immaturity of the child, implies that it is in conflict with the cultural order represented by the parents. Thus the new "god" who has manifested himself at birth will have to lose some of his potency (and in time to become inferior to his own firstborn) to acquire a cultural form. He will have to be dedivinized or, rather, he will have to become a different kind of god: from a god outside culture, a polluting god superior in terms of raw vitality, he will have to become a god inside culture, a pure god superior in terms of order. This is, after all, the transformation undergone in ritual by all royal gods, in Tahiti as in Hawaii (cf. Valeri 1985a).

In less dramatic form, the sacred sister of Western Polynesia manifests an ambiguity similar to that of the sacred child of Tahiti. She is superior to her brother in the rank obtained at birth — the "natural" rank called "of the body" in Tonga (Biersack 1987) — and her powers are "black" (Rogers 1977), dangerous to her brothers and their agnatic descendants (cf. Valeri 1988). Are these similarities explained by the fact that the female members of the lineage incorporate, in their reproductive powers, the vital but "raw" aspect of the divine? Is not the dangerous sacredness of the sister, like that of the child, an expression of the ambivalences involved in the Polynesian cult of vitality? Finally, are these ambivalences not at the bottom of the sister/brother diarchy in Tonga and elsewhere as they are at the bottom of the firstborn/ father diarchy in Tahiti and the Marquesas?

Instead of attempting to answer these questions here, I want to concentrate on another, much more widespread and significant diarchic outcome of the relationship between immaturity and maturity, present and past, vitality and precedence, in Polynesian societies. I am alluding to the extremely widespread elder brother/younger brother diarchy (which, incidentally, may coexist with the forms discussed above). This diarchy is usually misconstrued as the association of the younger brother's "secular" power with the elder

brother's "spiritual" power. But I follow Hocart (1970: 163) in rejecting this contrast as inapplicable to traditional Polynesian thought. All chiefly power, in fact, is ultimately derived from or made possible by the gods in the Polynesian view (cf. Valeri 1989). Whatever its surface manifestations, the diarchic association of two brothers (real or classificatory) must therefore be recognized for what it actually is: the association of two complementary (but also partly contradictory) manifestations of what is most worshipped — life's plenitude (Valeri 1985a, 1990).

The elder brother manifests plenitude by his inertia. Being full of life he does not have to work to obtain life. Being axiomatically potent, he does not have to force people into subjection. They voluntarily yield to him, they find him irresistible. Food and service seem to flow effortlessly to him. No woman is supposed to resist him. Between his desire and satisfaction the interval is so minimal that the torment of desire, the undermining of being that goes with it, seems unknown to this supposedly happy being. The Tu'i Tonga, the sacred king of Tonga, is one of the Polynesian rulers who better approximate this ideal type, which finds its most perfect expression in myth. It represents the ideal of an established order that effortlessly sustains itself, the paradox of a person who activates the world without himself being active.

The younger brother, in contrast, manifests the plenitude of his life through *his own* activity. More precisely: he can make other people act for him only by himself acting on them. They support him less because of his position than because he successfully influences or constrains them. He is a "working king" — one of the definitions of the *Hau*, that is the active counterpart of the Tu'i Tonga (Gifford 1929: 55; Bott 1982: 123). That the *Hau* is considered junior and the Tu'i Tonga senior (they descend from an actual pair of brothers, cf. Thomson 1894: 304–05; Gifford 1929: 83, 87) clearly indicates that the "inactive" aspect of the divine is viewed as superior to the active one. This hierarchy is probably explained by the identification of activity with a lack (that of the thing or state that must be sought) and thus with an imperfection (cf. Valeri 1982, 1985a, 1985b). A corollary of this view is that the senior is ontologically fuller than the junior.

The Tu'i Tonga and similar "otiose kings" owe their fuller being to their greater genealogical closeness to the supreme gods that are the sources of life (see above my remarks on the status lineage). Their actions, then, are mostly aimed at preserving the purity of this connection, obtained exclusively by birth. However, as those among men who are closest to the gods, they are also the principal ritual intermediaries between the divine and human realms. They

are thus inevitably involved with society's most encompassing ritual. This gives them a "sacerdotal" identity. But it is illegitimate to conclude from this that, by contrast, the junior ruler is purely "secular". In fact, because there is hardly any activity that does not have ritual correlates and its presiding gods, the *Hau* and analogous active rulers have their own sacerdotal functions (cf. Valeri 1989 and below). The superior ruler is "sacerdotal", then, only in a relative sense: in the sense that he is in charge of the most encompassing rituals, and more generally, in the sense that his tasks, contrary to those of his active counterpart, are *only* sacerdotal.

However, there are cases in which the younger brother is entrusted with the ritual tasks and taboos that paradigmatically go to the elder (cf. Fornander 1878–1880, 2: 328). While these cases may theoretically be explained by the idea that, a bit like the sacred child of Tahiti, the younger brother is closer to the divine precisely because his birth is more recent, they are better explained, in my opinion, by his genealogical inferiority, which forces him to accept the servitudes and often intolerable constraints of the cult as a mere representative of his elder brother. This delegation of ritual servitudes to an inferior, without corresponding transfer of rights, is a common phenomenon. In certain parts of Indonesia, for instance, priestly duties go to junior lines (cf. Forth 1981: 254) or even to household slaves who act as representatives of their masters (cf. Forth 1981: 220; Hoskins 1987: 200).

A true reversal of the younger brother/elder brother hierarchy seems to be clearly attested only at the mythical level, where it is usually connected with the creation of some fundamental political institution. In these creations, which always imply the transcendence of an older order, and thus being for a while *outside* order, the superiority of the active type of vitality embodied by the younger brother is emphasized. Take, for instance, the origin of the Tu'i Tonga title. The first Tu'i Tonga is a man named 'Aho'eitu. As a small boy he goes to heaven in search of his father, the god 'Eitumatupua. When the god sees his son he is so overwhelmed by his beauty and strength, that he collapses to the ground (a sign of inferiority). Later 'Aho'eitu defeats his elder brothers at various games and, moreover, he is recognized as the most handsome by the spectators. In revenge, the brothers kill and eat him, but their father forces them to vomit and miraculously resuscitates 'Aho'eitu, sending him to earth as king of Tonga, Tu'i Tonga. The elder brothers are forced to follow him as his servants and are thus transformed into his juniors (Gifford 1924: 25–29, 38–43; Rutherford 1977; Bott 1982: 90–91).

This myth demonstrates the superiority not only of the younger

brother over his elder brothers, but also of the son over his father. Indeed 'Aho'eitu is the condensation of a sacred son and of a sacred younger brother: he demonstrates the superiority of youth, which is close to the creative sources of life, over established adulthood, even when the latter is represented by gods. But although the myth asserts the hierarchical superiority of the "immature" junior in the creation of order, that is *outside* it, it also reasserts the superiority of the senior *inside* the order. Indeed, once this order has been created, 'Aho'eitu ceases to be a younger brother, and exchanges his original hierarchical place with that of his defeated elder brothers (for a more detailed analysis see Valeri 1989).

We find something analogous in the creation of the Tu'i Kanokupolu title, historically the most important of the *Hau* titles. The myth tells that the superiority of this originally junior title over two originally senior titles is due to what happened during a kava ceremony. Ngata, the founder of the title, was such a little child that he did not know the proper ritual procedures and as a consequence he kept for himself a cup of kava which should have gone to his elder brothers, as a sign of their superior rank. Amused and impressed by this infantile transgression, Ngata's father decides to leave the privilege of the cup to him, thereby transforming his seniors into juniors (Gifford 1929: 102, for a more detailed analysis see Valeri 1989). Here again the father bows to a child whose very youth seems to give him the privilege of being above hierarchy. But once this transcendent youth has effected a change in the established order, the principle that the senior is superior to the junior is reasserted by transforming the junior into senior and the seniors into juniors. No hierarchical ambiguity is allowed to creep into the system: the reversal of the junior/senior hierarchy is only tolerated, indeed required, before the system and so that the system can be generated.<sup>2</sup>

This Tongan refusal to tolerate (or perhaps acknowledge) hierarchical ambiguities in the elder/younger relationship contrasts with a greater tolerance in Hawaii. Correlatively, the contrast between what counts as superior in the constituting moments of history and what counts as superior in the constituted system is not as sharp in Hawaiian traditions. This contrast between the two cultures can be illustrated by comparing the outcome of 'Aho'eitu's story with the outcome of a very similar story in Hawaii. Like 'Aho'eitu, 'Umi is born from the union of a father who comes from heaven and a terrestrial mother. Only, what appears as literal in the Tongan myth is openly metaphorical in the Hawaiian one: the "heaven" from which 'Umi's father comes is that of high rank — he is a king (called *lani* "heaven" in Hawaiian); the

“earthly” character of the mother is her commoner rank, which makes her a *maka‘āinana*, “a person who takes care of the land”. As in the Tongan myth, the father separates from the mother and returns to “heaven”, where the son eventually follows him in search of his heritage. Like ‘Aho‘eitu, ‘Umi forces himself on his father and is superior to Hākau, his elder brother, in every game of skill, in every sport and in popularity. A final parallel is that the younger brother is first attacked by the elder brother, then triumphs over him. But the parallels between the Tongan hero and the Hawaiian cease when we come to the resolution of the conflict with the elder brother. For ‘Umi does not exchange places, by paternal order, with Hākau: he defeats him with his own force and, moreover, sacrifices him to his own god (Kamakau 1961: 1–21; Fornander 1916–1920, 4: 178–235; Valeri 1985b).<sup>3</sup>

Thus in the Hawaiian transformation of this myth the junior takes power as junior and not because he has transformed into a senior by an authority, that of the father, which is itself senior. ‘Aho‘eitu’s usurpation is made to appear as an act of filial piety; it reconfirms the primacy of seniority and therefore does not constitute a charter for perennially questioning it. As a result, the ontological contrast between founding or “epic” past (cf. Bakhtin 1981) and subsequent time is much greater in Tonga than in Hawaii. In fact, one could argue that no such contrast really exists between ‘Umi’s time and subsequent times precisely because he furnishes a much followed precedent (see *infra*, and Valeri 1982, 1990).

A further proof of this ideological contrast between Tonga and Hawaii can be found in another feature of the legend of ‘Umi, one that makes it comparable, this time, to the origin myth of the Tu‘i Tonga/Hau diarchy. Seeing the impending conflict between ‘Umi and Hākau, their father, Līloa, attempts to avert it by associating them in his succession, each with a separate function. Hākau, as *keiki hiapo*, the eldest child from the highest ranking wife, inherits *ka ‘āina*, “the land”, whereas ‘Umi, who is inferior in rank, but strong and active, inherits *o ka hale akua a me ke akua*, “the house of the god and the god” (Fornander 1916–1920, 4: 183).

At first sight, it would seem that the younger brother is given here the function of priestly king. Indeed some have interpreted the ‘Umi/Hākau diarchy as one in which the elder brother holds the “secular” control of “the land” while the younger brother holds the “sacerdotal” functions of kingship (Fornander 1878–1880, 2: 75). It is easy to show, however, that this interpretation is wrong. Hākau’s control of the land has nothing secular about it, since it is a function of his superior sacredness, that is to say of his closer connection (genealogically given but validated through the performance of the

appropriate temple rituals) with the gods, through whom land is controlled. As for 'Umi's control of "the god", it is in fact the control of one god only: Kūkā'ilimoku. This is the active, warlike, conquering form of Kū, who is the supreme god of royalty in the island of Hawai'i. Indeed Kūkā'ilimoku's name means "Kū that snatches the island". This "land-grabbing god" is thus the perfect ritual counterpart of the younger brother as active, warlike figure. There is every indication that the elder brother, in contrast, is matched with Kū "in repose": Kūnuiākea, "Kū of the vast expanse", the god of inert encompassment (Valeri 1982, 1985b). We do not have here, then, a secular/spiritual (or sacerdotal) diarchy, but one in which the senior embodies the inert aspect of kingly power, while the junior is associated with its active aspect. Both these aspects have ritual correlates, so that in fact both rulers have "sacerdotal" functions (for Hākau's see Fornander 1916–1920, 4: 202–03).

As characterized in the legends, the Hākau/'Umi diarchy is strongly reminiscent of the Tu'i Tonga/Hau diarchy in Tonga. As Hākau's authority is said to have consisted of the supreme control of the land and of the temple sacrifices, so the Tu'i Tonga is said, in the origin myth of diarchy, to have been the "supreme lord of the soil only, and of the offerings" (Thomson 1894: 305). The same myth defines the Hau as a "chief over the people to govern it", which is reminiscent of 'Umi's characterization as "popular" king. This control of the people implies, in Hawaii as in Tonga (Hau means "champion, conqueror", Churchward 1959: 213), superiority in military force and the control of its divine correlates (such as Kūkā'ilimoku in Hawaii and Taliai Tupou in Tonga).

Where Tonga differs from Hawaii is in emphasizing that the relationship between the two rulers must be one of complementary opposition rather than one of rivalry. The Hau does not dream of taking the Tu'i Tonga's place: he is simply viewed as "working" for him, as having to furnish him with food and with his principal wife. Indeed, the origin myth of diarchy makes it clear that the Hau was introduced to protect the Tu'i Tonga and to remove him from the destabilizing effects of involvement in everyday political and military struggle (Thomson 1894: 304–05; Bott 1982: 109, 113). The instability of the Hau is thus the counterpart of the stability of the Tu'i Tonga.<sup>4</sup> A sign of this contrast is that while the Tu'i Tongaship is rigorously hereditary from father to son, the Hauship is not, but goes to the strongest, most successful chief (Thomson 1894: 207). Thus the structural diarchy of Tonga also includes a complementary (and strongly hierarchical — except, as I have indicated, in some founding moments) opposition between two

forms of temporality: time as eternal, identical repetition, as backward-oriented (of the “past in the present” type); and time as contingent, heterogeneous, forward-oriented. Continuity and discontinuity as two inevitable aspects of power are thus associated more than mediated in Tonga: continuity at the core of kingship is achieved by emptying it of anything that can threaten it, by expelling the very possibility of history into an institutionalized, if ideologically peripheral, position.

That this is not the Hawaiian solution of the continuity/ discontinuity contradiction is indicated by the contingent, non structural character of diarchy in the ‘Umi myth as in all other Hawaiian traditions. Hākau is so hostile to ‘Umi that the latter must flee the court: he returns to eliminate his half-brother and to reestablish the monarchic character of rule. He does not assume a higher rank than the one he is born to, but lays the grounds for reestablishing the dynastic continuity of kingship by marrying Kapukini, the high ranking full sister of Hākau and his own half-sister. Indeed, because rank is bilaterally transmitted and maternal rank is more important than paternal rank for a child born of an hypogamous union (Valeri 1972), ‘Umi’s marriage with Kapukini allows him to obtain children of higher rank than himself and thus closer, in intrinsic worth, to the senior whom he has displaced. Senior and junior, inactive and active aspects of power are thus mediated in a temporal process (the full reconstitution of the highest rank by the patrilineal descendants of the usurper requires that they marry hypogamously for a certain number of generations — the greater the lower his rank was, cf. Valeri 1972) thanks to marriage. History is not removed from the sacred center and focused on an achieved position by an institutionalized diarchy; it is not, by the same token, devalued by the hierarchical inferiority of that position: it remains at the core of an ideologically unitary power for which diarchy can never be structural, but only a contingent moment in the process of reconstituting monarchy.

These differences in the relationship of power and temporality, and in the very status, contingent or necessary, of diarchy, appear to correlate with other institutional differences. In Tonga, rank was bilateral (and thus dependent on marriage) as in Hawaii, but title was in theory transmitted patrilineally and very often did not harmonize with rank (sisters, for ones, ranked higher than their brothers but could not inherit their patrilineage’s title, Kaeppler 1971: 178). Furthermore, there was a system of “positional succession” which, by identifying all incumbents with the first possessor of the title, explicitly negated temporality (Bott 1981: 23; Valeri 1989). Tongan social structure thus generated a number of



dichotomies that often remained unmediated: between title and rank, between title (or rank) and power built on clientship and military prowess, etc. Diarchy at the top, then, was the most visible manifestation of a tendency to unmediated duality that existed at every level.

In Hawaii the normative patrilineal title system of Tonga, with its ideology of positional succession, did not occur. There were named ranks and these would ideally be matched by corresponding political titles which were granted by the ruling king, not inherited. The hierarchy of titles corresponded to a quasi-feudal hierarchy of seigneurial rights. Rank and title, however, often became disconnected because certain contractual and power (military and clientelary) relations among nobles could override their relations in terms of rank (Valeri 1985b). But the bilateral nature of rank offered, as I have mentioned, the possibility of mediating rank and power through hypogamous marriage and thus of insuring that the successor of whoever had acquired political title because of his power would be legitimate in terms of genealogical seniority. The disconnection of rank and power, of rank and title was thus always provisional in Hawaii; but by the same token their connection could be equally provisional. The reproduction of the authority structure was thus intrinsically historical.

Of course, a dialectics of rank, power and title, where marriage played a mediating role, also existed in Tonga, as Bott (1981: 40 ff.) has shown. Nevertheless the system was made much less flexible there by the rule of patrilineal succession to title.<sup>5</sup> Moreover it seems that this rule had more chances to be violated at the hierarchical and spatial periphery of the Tongan "Empire" than at its center. The junior siblings in a political center (that is the sons of mothers coming from lower titled groups) were encouraged to move away from it and to try their luck in their maternal districts. There, it could happen that they or their children were able to succeed to the title-holder, exploiting their superior rank as sister's sons (as Queen Sālote put it: "half commoner at court, half king in the bush", Bott 1981: 41). The next possible stage, when the power acquired at the periphery was used to obtain higher rank (and eventually higher title) by "marrying up" (Bott 1981: 43), was a much rarer option in Tonga than in Hawaii (cf. Gifford 1929: 99; Leach 1972: 246–47; Biersack 1982: 201). At the very center (or top) of Tongan society, hypogamous marriage was discouraged and thus the very opportunity of succeeding to a title through a maternal connection was removed. At best, a powerful holder of an inferior title might support in the succession a son of a sister hypergamosly married



to the incumbent against the latter's sons with other wives or against the incumbent's brothers.

Ultimately, we have here another manifestation of the Tongan propensity to resolve a conflict of principles more by hierarchically polarizing them than by mediating them. There is a tendency to push the most disruptive (from the point of view of patrilineal continuity) forms of the dialectics of power, rank and title to the periphery, in order to perpetuate the integrity of the center as much as it is possible. The most visible manifestation of this tendency was the creation of a diarchic system in which an often non-hereditary Hauship was the condition of possibility of a Tu'i Tongaship rigorously hereditary in the paternal line. No such radical contrast between the core and the outer part of society existed in Hawaii. Correlatively, a Tongan-type diarchy was never institutionalized but only existed as a provisional arrangement, a necessary compromise adopted by kingship in its constant, if often unsuccessful, striving for unity. Diarchy in Hawaii was thus a manifestation of monarchy's openness to history, not an attempt to limit history's impact by expelling it from society's core. To illustrate this point, let us now turn to the history of succession from 'Umi to Kamehameha.

## History to the core

A dual system of rule based on a sharp differentiation between ritual and "political-military" duties was found in Hawaii only at the administrative level, where a high priest was delegated by the king to take care of his religious duties and a functionary called *kālainmoku* ("island manager" Pukui and Elbert 1971: 112) was in charge of genealogical claims, land matters, tribute and the army — all on behalf of the king (Malo 1951: 187–89, 191–98). Kingship itself, although characterized by a duality of aspects (genealogical rank and control of clients and lands, ritual supremacy and military hegemony), was conceived as unitary. Thus these contrasting aspects tended to be articulated by a transformational scheme rather than by one in which they retained their separateness as complementary terms in a static opposition (cf. Valeri 1982, 1985a, 1985b). Furthermore these transformations were usually oriented: control of clients and land was transformed into genealogical rank, military hegemony into ritual one, more often than the other way round. The result was not only that any diarchic distribution of powers as might occur was unstable, but that its usual outcome was

the unification of kingship by the lower ranking diarch, who typically was the “popular” military champion. To speak like Weber, charismatic militarism appears to have been of paramount importance.

The precedent both for the dual monarchy and for its transcendence by the inferior but heroic ruler, was given by ‘Umi, as we have seen. Let us now consider how this precedent was used or transformed or ignored by his descendants and successors to the rule of Hawai‘i, the largest island of the Hawaiian archipelago. This dynastic history is the best known, because it belongs to the dynasty that, under Kamehameha and his successors, eliminated all others in the process of unifying the archipelago.<sup>6</sup>

According to the version followed by Fornander (1878–1880, 2: 103, 106) ‘Umi was succeeded by Keali‘iokāloa, his eldest son by Kapukini, who was Hākau’s sacred sister. Keali‘iokāloa was in turn succeeded by his younger brother, Keawenuia‘umi, a succession represented as an usurpation of the rights of Keali‘iokāloa’s son (Fornander 1878–1880, 2: 114).

According to the more complex account of ‘Umi’s succession given by a nineteenth century Hawaiian historian, Kamakau (1961: 34), ‘Umi created a new diarchic arrangement to settle his succession: he divided the rule between his wife Kapukini and their two sons (she seems to have reigned over the whole kingdom, while they ruled over one half of it each). This diarchy was in a sense a transformation of the ‘Umi/Hākau diarchy, because Kapukini was the highest ranking living noble of the line issued

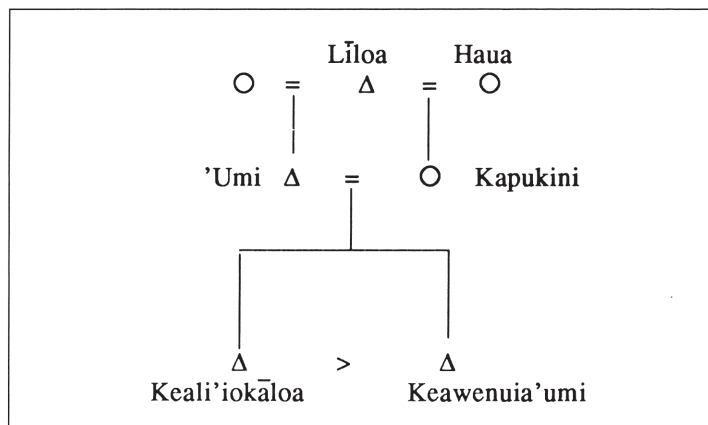


Figure 1. Genealogy of Keawenuia‘umi and Keali‘iokāloa.

from Līloa, while her sons by 'Umi were hierarchically inferior to her. Moreover she represented, like her brother Hākau, the superior but politically and militarily inactive or less active pole of kingship, whereas her sons were actively concerned with ruling. But there was an important difference between this diarchic arrangement and its antecedent. The Hākau/'Umi diarchy combined two individuals of the same sex; this made them too similar and as a result rivals (cf. Valeri 1985a: 168). In contrast, the other diarchy was characterized by the solidarity existing between consanguines of the opposite sex, particularly between mother and son. However, while this diarchic arrangement was stable with regard to the mother/son relationship, it was made unstable by the relationship between the two sons. Keali'iokāloa and Keawenuia'umi are characterized respectively like Hākau and 'Umi: the former was excessively proud of his seniority and cruelly abused it, while Keawenuia'umi was a popular and prolific ruler just like 'Umi. He "was a kind ruler who looked after the welfare of chiefs and commoners, and increased the number of chiefly children" (Kamakau, *ibid.*). He is said to have taken pity on his brother's subjects and to have defeated him in war. Thus, after all, the story of Hākau and 'Umi was exactly replicated: the younger popular brother became the only ruler by defeating the elder "unpopular" (Fornander 1878–1880, 2: 106) brother.

According to a tradition followed by Fornander (1878, 2: 114–15), Keawenuia'umi acknowledged on his deathbed his usurpation of the rights of the elder line issued from Keali'iokāloa, but instead of transferring the kingdom to Kūka'ilani, Keali'iokāloa's son, he transferred it to Kaikilani, Kūka'ilani's daughter and at the same time the joint wife of Kanaloakua'ana and Lonoikamakahiki, Keawenuia'umi's sons. A new diarchic arrangement was thus created, constituted by the complementary opposition between a wife and her two husbands: the wife embodied the genealogically superior but inactive aspect, while her husbands embodied the genealogically inferior but active aspect. This arrangement was clearly meant to offer a solution to the conflicts that preceded it: the conflict between elder and younger line and the conflict between elder and younger brother. Indeed this marriage reunited the two rival lines and made the two brothers solidary, since it allowed them to share the high ranking woman who was the fountainhead of genealogical legitimacy.

Kamakau's account (1961: 45–46) of this succession is again different and more complex than Fornander's. He says that the kingdom was divided by Keawenuia'umi into three parts:

- (1) The districts of Kona and Kohala were associated under two

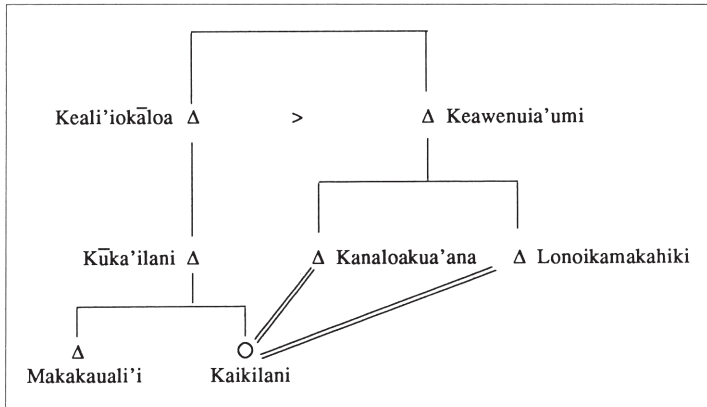


Figure 2. Genealogy of Kanaloakua'ana and Lonoikamakahiki.

sons of Keawenuia'umi: 'Umiokalani was supreme ruler and Kanaloakua'ana was his subordinate co-ruler. Incited by his priests, Kanaloakua'ana brought war to his brother, defeated him, and usurped his place. This was again a repetition of the Hākau/'Umi model: the inferior, but more active ruler, unified kingship by defeating the genealogically superior but less powerful ruler (Kamakau 1961: 45–46).

(2) The districts of Hilo and Hāmākua went to Keawenuia'umi's daughter Kapōhelemai and to her husband, Makua (to whom his father Kūmāla'e was associated). This kingdom was thus jointly ruled by an inactive Queen of superior rank and her active, but inferior as to rank, husband.

(3) The districts of Ka'ū and Puna were ruled by Lonoikamakahiki, another son of Keawenuia'umi, as we have seen.

According to Fornander (1878–1880, 2: 127), Kaikilani and Lonoikamakahiki were succeeded by Keakealanikāne, her son with Kanaloakua'ana. Keakealanikāne married his full sister Keali'iokalani and ruled over the districts of Kona, Kohala and Ka'ū in the Western half of Hawai'i (Kamakau 1961: 61).

Keakealanikāne's and Keali'iokalani's daughter Keakamahana ruled those districts after her father's death (Kamakau 1961: 61; Fornander 1878–1880, 2: 127). But her reckless and ambitious husband, Iwikauikaua, who belonged to the line issued from Kaikilani's junior brother, became her warlike co-ruler for a time. After his departure from Hawai'i, a period of intense, but unresolved, war between male chiefs began.

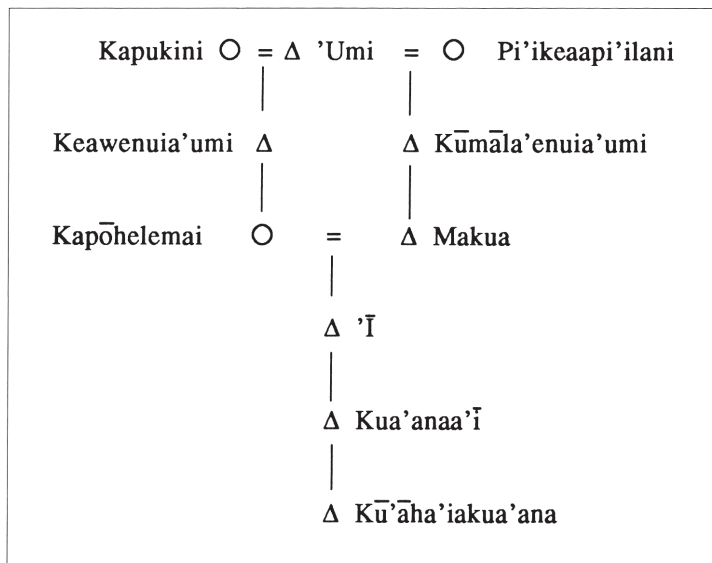


Figure 3. Genealogy of Kapōhelema'i and her 'Ī descendants.

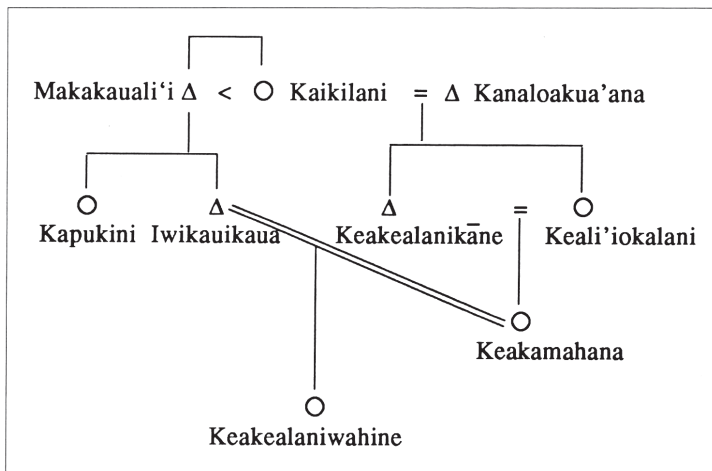


Figure 4. Genealogy of Keakealaniwahine.

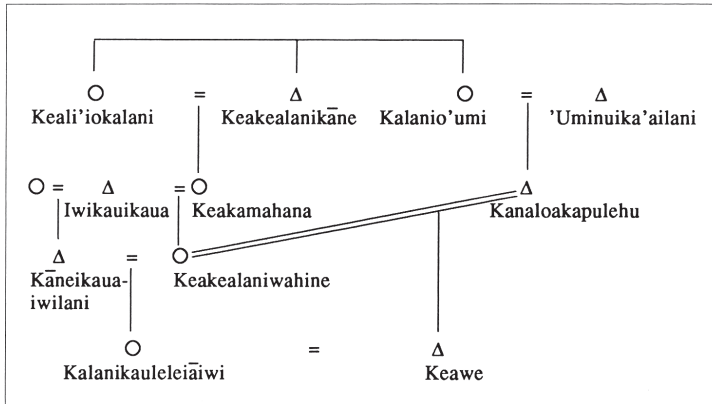


Figure 5. Genealogy of Keawe.

This war continued under Keakealaniwahine, who was Keakamahana's successor and her daughter by Iwikauikaua. Nothing is known of the prerogatives of this queen's two husbands, her half-brother Kāneikauaiwilani (Kāneikaiwilani according to Fornander 1878–1880, 2: 128) and her classificatory mother's brother Kanaloakapulehu. But it was Mahi'ololi, the father of Kauauanuiamahi, a husband of Kalanikauleleiāiwi, the queen's daughter (Fornander 1878–1880, 2: 129), who was the most influential chief. He was the *kuhina kaua nui* “general in chief” of Keakealaniwahine and the founder of a dynasty (the Mahi) which was able to control the district of Kohala for several generations (Kamakau 1961: 63, 76).

Keawe, Keakealaniwahine's son by Kanaloakapulehu, and Kalanikauleleiāiwi, her daughter by Kāneikauaiwilani, married and became another example of diarchic couple, with the wife in the usual genealogically superior position and the husband as administrator (Fornander 1878–1880, 2: 130). The two also contracted unions with members of the two most powerful dynasties of the island of Hawai'i after theirs. Keawe married a woman from the 'Ī dynasty, which controlled the districts of Hilo and Hamakua. As mentioned, Kalanikauleleiāiwi married a man from the Mahi dynasty, which controlled the district of Kohala.

Kalaninui'iamao (also called Ka'iimamao or Lonoikamakahiki), the son of Keawe and of the 'Ī chiefess, became king after his father. He was defeated and replaced by Alapa'i, the son of Kalanikauleleiāiwi and Kauauanuiamahi. It is probable that the

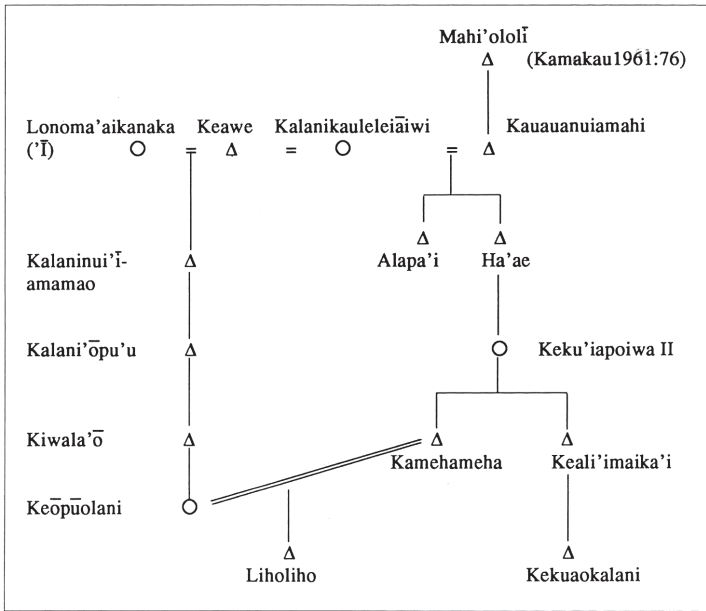


Figure 6. The 'Ī and Mahi lines.

rule of the son of the 'Ī princess corresponded to a period of political hegemony for the 'Ī and that the ascendancy of Alapa'i translated the ascendancy of his paternal line, the Mahi. After Alapa'i the rule went to Kalani'ōpu'u, the son of Kalaninui'iamamao: it thus reverted to a descendant of the 'Ī princess. This was the ruling prince at the time of Captain Cook's visit in 1778–1779.

The period of successorial history that spanned from Keawe to Kalani'ōpu'u appears to have ignored diarchy altogether. But kingship seems to have alternatively fallen to men who, while descending from the royal line of Keawe, nevertheless identified with either the 'Ī or the Mahi dynasties, which theoretically had vassal status. Thus Kalaninui'iamamao's genealogical chant, the *Kumulipo*, identifies him by his connection with his mother's patriline rather than with his father Keawe's, although he was his successor to kingship (Beckwith 1951; Valeri 1990). Presumably Kalani'ōpu'u used the same chant and the same identification with the 'Ī, as his son Kiwala'ō clearly did after him. Alapa'i and later Kamehameha, on the other hand, identified with the Mahi and the

Mahi-controlled district of Kohala (cf. Ii 1963: 4–6; Kamakau 1961: 117). Therefore it appears that, to some extent at least, the succession from Keawe to Kalani'ōpu'u was seen by the protagonists themselves as the alternation of the two most influential dynasties of district chiefs in the rule of the island of Hawai'i as a whole. This situation was the culmination of the unresolved conflict for influence between the two groups that had gone on since the time of Keakamahana. It seems as if this conflict allowed the two dynasties to graft, through marriages, onto the royal line, and to become identified with competing candidates to kingship.

The regular alternation of rulers identified with either Mahi of 'Ī strongly suggests an at least tacit sharing agreement between the two dynasties. If this interpretation is correct, then the period from Keawe to Kalani'ōpu'u (and to some extent, as we shall see in a moment, to the end of the traditional system in 1819) appears to have been characterized by a diarchic formula of its own. Indeed the Mahi and the 'Ī dynasties that alternated in power were characterized as, respectively, 'Umi-like and Hākau-like. The 'Ī were undoubtedly superior in genealogical rank, while the Mahi, a dynasty founded by a general in chief and with such strong men in his history as Alapa'i, Kamehameha and Kekuaokalani, were inferior in rank but superior in military prowess. Although the political importance of both dynasties was in fact steeped in military muscle, the 'Ī attempted legitimation (as their chant *Kumulipo* suggests) by claiming to instantiate the ideal of the ruler whose exalted rank is sufficient to bring people to submission. Indeed his rank reflects the fact that he instantiates the ordering power of the cosmos to its highest degree at the human level. The Mahi, in contrast, seem to have emphasized conquest, and thus military prowess as a legitimating device (cf. Ii 1963: 4). The two aspects of royal power, the genealogical-inactive and the military-active seem thus to have become at this time incarnate in two dynasties.

The interesting fact which requires some comment is the very existence of such named dynasties. The Hawaiian system was bilateral and the main principle of classification was personal rank. Genealogical lines were a posteriori constructs to justify the rank of individual nobles. A genealogical line identified a descent group only if it corresponded to a name (such as Mahi or 'Ī) transmitted, preferably, from father to son. Since such name went with seigneurial rights over some lands and their inhabitants, we may suppose (although our information is very scanty) that the genealogically related successors to it formed a core around which



a group of followers crystallized by using siblingship and marriage as links. Such groups would then be comparable to the famous Tongan *ha'a* (cf. Bott 1981).

However, contrary to what happens in Tonga, such groups are rare and contingent on a purely political fact: the ability to retain the control of the same lands (and thus people) under different kings. As a rule, there is no permanent tenure of land in Hawaii. Land is redistributed at each kingly succession. Each ruler gives land to his own clients and supporters and title to it is contingent upon the relation between individual ruler and individual beneficiary. The transfer of such relationships together with land to the children of their contractors is never automatic and indeed is exceptional (cf. Valeri 1985b). To be able to retain control of a piece of land and, moreover, to transmit it to a son or other kinsman, one must enjoy considerable pressure power on the rulers and even substantial autonomy. This power and autonomy, in turn, depend on the ability to retain control of a large group of clients and other subordinates. Since the continuity of such "lines" (so they are called in the literature) depends on the precarious continuity of their power position in between higher and lower hierarchical levels, which translates in the continuous control of a land, I prefer to call them "dynasties", accentuating the etymological meaning of the term (from Greek *dynastes*, "ruler", "dynast").

Clearly the Mahi and 'Ī dynasties could emerge as a consequence of the weakness of the royal dynasty (theoretically the only line that exists as a continuous social group rather than as a mere genealogical construct) since the time of Queen Keakamahana and her daughter Keakealaniwahine (who was even made a prisoner by the 'Ī. Kamakau 1961: 63). As a result of this weakness the royal line became unable to reproduce itself endogamously, and the rule passed to children by spouses from the 'Ī and Mahi lines. In a sense, these lines completed the consolidation of their power by "devouring", so to speak, the royal line through their alliance policy.

In deciding his succession, Kalani'ōpu'u took into account the 'Ī/Mahi rivalry while reverting to the Hākau/'Umi diarchy. He left "the land", with the supreme prerogatives of kingship, to his sacred son Kiwala'ō, who identified with the 'Ī and their ideology of legitimation, and the war god Kūkā'ilimoku to his nephew Kamehameha, inferior from the point of view of rank but a member of the warlike Mahi line. This diarchic arrangement was perhaps created to overcome the endemic conflict between the two lines, but it did so in the manner of its legendary prototype: Kamehameha, an 'Umi figure, defeated Kiwala'ō and unified the kingship. But later

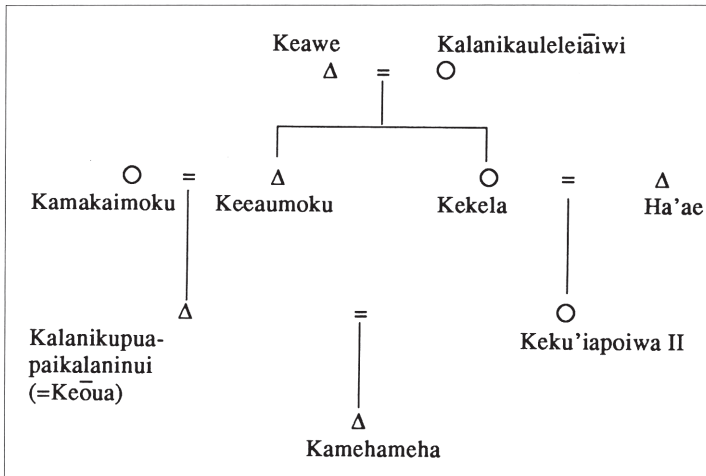


Figure 7. Kamehameha's paternal line (Source: *Moolelo Hawai'i* 1838).

he reproduced the same diarchic model by giving his sacred son Liholiho, whose mother was Kiwala'ō's daughter, the supreme religious prerogatives of kingship. He retained for himself the cult of the war god Kūkā'ilimoku and the effective administration of the kingdom (Valeri 1982). At his death he left these remaining prerogatives to his nephew Kekuaokalani, who was genealogically inferior to Liholiho but another representative of the Mahi line. The two co-rulers ended up making war to each other, but this time the original model was inverted: Liholiho, the genealogically superior king, thanks to the decisive help of Western firepower managed to defeat the genealogically inferior king associated with the war god Kūkā'ilimoku and became the only ruler.

To sum up: The narrative traditions summarized above depict a very complex concatenation of successorial events which cannot be defined by any single rule. The history began with the Hākau/'Umi diarchy, with its characteristic "monarchic" outcome. This formula was to some extent repeated, but also progressively weakened, in successive generations, when the wife/husband diarchy became frequent. This new diarchic arrangement gave way, in turn, to the one in which two lines alternated to kingship. Finally, the initial diarchic solution was repeated three times (Kamehameha/Kiwala'ō, Kamehameha/Liholiho, Kekuaokalani/Liholiho).

It is not my purpose here to attempt an explanation of these

changes and recursions. I only want to point out that their representation in the chronicles indicates that Hawaiians did not conceive of their history as mere stereotyped reproduction, but saw in the past potentialities for the present that could be actualized in many different forms. Because some at least of the types from the past were connected sequentially, the past did not appear simply as a timeless repertory of rules (which of course it also was) but as a process which invited and legitimated its creative continuation. To a certain institutionalization of kingly-originated change, then, corresponded a global image of history as a process that involves change and not simply repetition. This global image was certainly less evident than the images of its parts; but the use of the latter as precedents was ultimately inscribed in the use of the former. Indeed, to the extent that the past as a whole suggested the idea of change, it was possible to creatively select those precedents that best fitted changing situations in the present, instead of slavishly following an immediate past or an eternally repetitive, depthless one. Thus Kalani'ōpu'u could break with the system of succession that had been used for some time before him and go back to a much older model. But he could do so precisely because history taught him that the system had often changed.

All particular narratives, then, are inscribed in a global process which is defined in fundamentally processual terms. History is at the core of kingship and kingship is, in a sense, the condition of possibility, the source of legitimacy and acceptability, of history.

## Kings and queens

Among the many problems raised by the diarchic forms that we have passed in review two stand out. We have seen that the junior brother/senior brother diarchy was the most unstable form because it was the one that involved the least differentiation and thus the most rivalry (cf. Valeri 1985a: 166). But why was it always the junior diarch who, until Western intervention, was able to displace the senior one, never the other way round?

We have also seen that, since the husband/wife relation implied a greater difference and complementarity than the relationship between two male siblings, it was associated with a stabler form of diarchy. But why in this form was the genealogically superior ruler always the wife, never the husband?

Let me briefly answer the first question first. In part the answer lies in a fact that I have already noted: the inferiority in rank of the

junior implied that he was freer to act in pragmatically effective ways because he was less constrained by taboo and established precedent. But this greater freedom constituted a decisive advantage in the first place because interest seems to have had the last word in Hawaii. However great the respect, and thus the power, that accrued to high rank, it often yielded to interest in land, largesses, support against enemies, which the stronger and freer junior ruler was better able to satisfy. It is also obvious that the discontents and the hopefuls (always more numerous than those who have something to hold on to) tended to enlist with the junior ruler who, being less favoured, had more to gain from a change in the status quo.

In order to answer the second question, let us answer first another one: to what an extent was the higher ranking female ruler in a husband/wife diarchy equivalent to the higher ranking male ruler in all-male diarchy? Because genealogically determined rank was independent of gender (cf. Valeri 1972, 1985a: 113–14) it would seem that the case in which the superior ruler was female was not different from the case in which he was male: they both made it possible to associate the genealogical legitimacy they represented with the forms of legitimacy represented by the junior co-ruler. And since high genealogical rank was protected but also imprisoned by taboos that impeded action, another similarity between female and male supreme rulers was that both were condemned to relative inertia.<sup>7</sup>

The similarities between male and female supreme ruler ended here, however. A major difference was that, women being excluded, irrespective of rank, from royal sacrificial ritual, supreme female dynasts did not, as a rule, assume sacerdotal functions like their male equivalents. This had ambiguous consequences for their exercise of power. On the one hand, their exclusion freed them from additional constraints and made them somewhat better able to act pragmatically, in the manner of male junior rulers. But on the other hand, this exclusion was a political disadvantage which should not be underestimated. Not only did the role of supreme sacerdotal mediator between the gods and the people give an important supplement of sanctity and legitimacy not available to women rulers (who could only count on their rank and their political acumen), but participation in the temple ritual (which was also open to male junior rulers) gave access to the context in which the most important political decisions were taken. Indeed councils of state were held (four times a month for eight months a year) during the sacrificial meals taken in the temples by men of noble rank (cf. Valeri 1985a: 196; Wilkes 1845, 4: 508). While women could

participate in councils held outside this ritual context, it remains true that, however high-ranking and powerful they might be, they had no way of directly controlling what went on in these purely male occasions.

Even Keakealaniwahine, the only queen who is explicitly reported to have been given the prerogative of entering temples in order to consecrate human sacrifices like a male ruler, was excluded from participating in the sacrificial meals together with men and thus from the political discussions that took place there (Ii 1962: 159–69). That this exclusion was a serious political handicap for women, is moreover indicated by the fact that the most powerful Hawaiian women who ever existed, Ka'ahumanu and Keōpūolani, were extremely keen on abolishing the traditional system of temple cults in order to suffer no limitation in their political control of the situation that arose after their husband Kamehameha's death (cf. Daws 1974: 56). Keōpūolani, as mother of the extremely reluctant but young and weak king Liholiho, was able (with Ka'ahumanu's help) to persuade him to abolish an already undermined system of beliefs and practices that sanctioned male political, not merely "ritual", supremacy.<sup>8</sup>

While it is a fact that Hawaiian women of high rank could play important political roles even before 1819, there is little evidence that the four female rulers whom we have encountered in the dynastic history from 'Umi to Kamehameha were more than figureheads. Of Keakealaniwahine Kamakau explicitly says that she ruled "in name only" (Kamakau 1961: 63). Such political impotence is all the more striking because this queen was the only one reported to have enjoyed the usually male privilege of consecrating human sacrifices. Of Kalanikauleleiaiwi we are told that "she is not known to have been actively occupied in any matters of government" (Fornander 1878–1880, 2: 130). On the other hand her numerous and politically significant unions may suggest that she was quite active in alliance politics. But we should be wary to view all these alliances as due to her own decisions. For instance, we have seen that her union with Kauauaniamahi was probably due to his father's strong political and military grip on her mother: it was an important step in the Mahi's climbing to the top (Fornander 1878–1880, 2: 128–29; Kamakau 1961: 76).

Perhaps only Keakamahana was able to exercise some autonomous power for a while, if the fact that she had her husband's mother and his daughter from a previous marriage killed "and their bones mistreated" is any indication (Kamakau 1961: 62). But this act had the effect of revealing her fundamental weakness in a world characterized by male militarism. Having lost

her husband's support (his "mind became possessed with a desire to desert his wife and betray her government to the chiefs of Hilo [i.e. the 'Ī]", Kamakau 1961: 62), she became entangled in the interminable conflict which eventually reinforced the nominally subordinated lines of the Mahi and of the 'Ī at the expense of the royal line. Indeed, the existence of relatively powerless women at the top for three generations after the rule of King Keakealanikāne can be interpreted as a consequence of the weakening of the royal line, which was allowed to persist in the nominal form best insured by female rule, simply because neither of the two lines contending for kingship, the Mahi and the 'Ī, achieved a definite advantage over the other (cf. Kamakau 1961: 63). Neither was weak enough to let the other become king: thus they seem to have agreed to have queens "rule" over them as a compromise.

Even the earlier case of Kaikilani demonstrates that a woman in the position of superior ruler often was a creature of the inferior ruler. At least, this seems one reason why the actual holder of power preferred to have her, rather than her brother, as diarchic associate: contrary to him, she constituted no political threat or a lesser one (see above, section 3). In sum, it seems that the reason why women became queens was either that there were no clear male winners to take the throne, or that the winner, after having eliminated or neutralized the male incumbent, needed the rank embodied by the incumbent's sister or daughter in order to fully legitimate his rule and, as we have seen, in order to produce a heir whose rank would match his power. Thus, it is the fact that a queen was a queen only as a carrier of rank that explains why no woman who was inferior in rank to her husband was ever associated to him as a co-ruler. This would be incomprehensible if women had the same political power of men and if they became queens because of that. The dynastic history that we have considered seems to suggest, to the contrary, that female rule was a function of male antagonism and male competition for women as sources of the reproduction of rank. This opened to women opportunities for power perhaps unequaled elsewhere in Polynesia, but also created structural limits for it which were overcome only with the abolition of the traditional political-ritual system in 1819.

## Rituals and annals

In a famous chapter of *La cite antique* Fustel de Coulanges (1905: 194–202) noted that the Ancients related to the sacred through two equivalent means: rituals and annals. Ritual put in contact with a divine that revealed itself in past events, and the continuous efficacy of formulas that had proved successful at one point depended on their correct transmission over time. Narrating the past was thus establishing a contact with the divine which was both an equivalent and a condition of felicitous ritual action.

The equivalence of rituals and annals is rooted in the analogy between the synchronic transcendence of the gods, and more generally of the sacred, and the diachronic transcendence of the past. The connection is made explicit when gods and ancestors who continue to exist in the present appear as protagonists in the narratives about the transcendent past, or when the sphere of the divine is explicitly situated in a distant space which is also a distant time. In archaic Greece, for instance, Memory (Mnemosyne) gave access to primordial realities (say Gaia or Uranus), which continued to be the divine foundations of the present world:

Le passé ainsi dévoilé est beaucoup plus que l'antécédent du présent: il en est la source. En remontant jusqu'à lui, la remémoration cherche non à situer les événements dans un cadre temporel, mais à atteindre le fond de l'être, à découvrir l'originel, la réalité primordiale dont est issu le cosmos et qui permet de comprendre le devenir dans son ensemble (Vernant 1974, 1: 86).

That “*le passé apparait comme une dimension de l'au-delà*” (*ibid.* 87) could be said not only of Hesiod's *Theogony*, but also of the Hawaiian *Kumulipo*, the cosmogonic account which, by going back in time to the primordial *Pō*, the “night” (and therefore the “unseen” [Handy and Pukui 1972: 131], the “realm of the gods” [Pukui and Elbert 1971: 307]), connects with a realm that still coexists synchronically with that of the human present. The ordering power of history is thus analogous to the ordering power of ritual: both are based on making a transcendent reality metonymically present, one by connecting with it through time, the other through space. Or more exactly, both in sacred history and in ritual, time and space become one and the same: “*Zum Raum wird hierdie Zeit*” (Wagner 1888, 10: 339).

But Hawaiian annals were not all sacred history. Besides a text like the *Kumulipo* which was equivalent to ritual to such an extent

that it was itself performed ritually and had ritual effects, there was a different kind of annalistic tradition. In this prose (and prosaic) tradition the gods were largely absent (unless one considers the rulers as gods) and human action was described in its complexity, sometimes to the point of irreducibility to structural scheme (cf. Valeri 1989). It is in this non-ritualistic relationship with the past that we have found information on the dynastic history of Hawai'i.

The difference between the two types of tradition can be easily grasped when we compare the accounts of succession contained in the prose chronicles with the accounts of chanted, ritually significant texts such as the *Kumulipo*. The latter reduce the history of succession to the almost exclusively patrilinear form it should ideally have had. Women, who played a crucial role in the transmission of rank and rule according to the prose versions, are present in the genealogical annals almost exclusively as unrelated spouses of patrilineally related males. Indeed, it is only in these texts that they are reduced to the ideological status of mere appendixes of male power: to the mothers of their husband's male successor.<sup>9</sup>

By masking the complexities of actual history (or what appears as such in the prose annals), chanted genealogies attempted to suggest the idea that the ruler drew on the divine potency of the past<sup>10</sup> through the most direct, most unquestionable (because seemingly "natural": given, not chosen) channel: continuous descent (cf. Beckwith 1951: 143) along the supreme line or several prestigious lines converging on him. In thus inverting the true process by which they were constructed, namely by ascent from a political winner back to the apical ancestors through the most prestigious links available at each generation, these genealogical texts transformed the Hawaiian ruler into the equivalent of a Tu'i Tonga. But it was an equivalence valid only in the fictitious, ritual contexts in which the chants were performed. The apparent similarity between Tonga and Hawaii reveals a profound difference. For the continuity of patrilineal succession to the Tu'itongaship was real, it was valid in every context and relative to each piece of historical evidence available, whereas the same kind of continuity in Hawaiian kingship was not infrequently acceptable only in the framed and self-validating context of genealogies' ritual performance and was contradicted in other contexts and by other evidence known to at least part of the audience (cf. Valeri 1990).

One may say that in Tonga the supreme kingship was made perfectly stable at the price of making the king transcendent, of turning him away from the instability of social history (left to the Hau) to the stability of natural history, of reproduction through



mere descent: the Tu'i Tonga's great task was, in the end, to make love, not war.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, the historical immanence, and thus instability, of Hawaiian kingship implied that true genealogical continuity and stability could only be represented by a fictitious ritual double of the king's person. There were in fact two ritual realizations of the king's transcendent double: his genealogical body, that is his person as represented in the genealogical chants, and his effigy as god in the *luakini* temple. Indeed, the successful conqueror was metonymically associated with his predecessors by ritually reciting a royal genealogy with his name inserted at the end and by performing the temple ritual, which consisted of the production of his effigy in divine form (Valeri 1985a, 1985b, 1990).

The two methods of legitimation were partly redundant, partly complementary or even alternative. The most powerful was ultimately the temple ritual because it did not need to refer to descent in order to insert the king in the long line of his predecessors: it merely converted him into an effigy analogous to those constructed by them before his time. The basis for the analogy was that all effigies represented the king *as his species* — the god Kū: all kings were identical in Kū, a god representative of their kingship as generated in the temple, rather than “in the womb” (Kamakau 1964: 9) as implied by the genealogical justification of their legitimacy. Effigies were thus the “currency” of kingship, and as coins may be guaranteed by the image of a god imprinted on them, so royal effigies in Hawaii were guaranteed and made efficacious as a means of conversion by being in the image of the sovereign god.

Above and beyond the “immanent” (diarchic and matrimonial) means of reestablishing continuity in kingship, then, we find means that were “transcendent” (ritual), even when they deceptively do not look so, as in the case of genealogical chants. Indeed the latter counted less for their propositional content than for their status as regalia, more as repositories of accumulated *mam* than as texts. This *mana* went to those who were able to use the chants, either as birthright or as spoils of war (Valeri 1990).

One could say, in the end, that while the Tongan Hau ruled as the representative of a person, the Tu'i Tonga, precious as the embodiment of a genealogy that connected society with the gods of heaven, the Hawaiian king ruled as the representative of two objects that, because they embodied the connection with the divine, were implicitly the true rulers: the royal genealogy and the divine effigy.<sup>12</sup>

In sum, the Tu'i Tonga, as living effigy of kingship's connection with the supreme divine, is best compared, not with the impermanent high ranking associates of Hawaiian strong men, but

with a wooden effigy and a speech icon (the genealogical person of the king). That these visual and verbal icons could be transferred, with the divine qualities which they embodied, to whomever succeeded in controlling the land and the people, explains why Hawaiian kingship, contrary to the Tongan one, was frequently able to assume the monarchic form it strove for, although it often yielded to diarchy because it always yielded to history.

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For lack of space, I have kept references and discussion of sources to a minimum. References to my own previous work on Hawaii and Tonga have to be considered as indirect references to the sources discussed and interpreted there. "Hawaii" refers to the Hawaiian archipelago as a whole; "Hawai'i" refers to its largest island. The reader will find it interesting to refer to the comparison between Tongan and Hawaiian societies in Kirch 1984.

## Notes

1. Cf. the somewhat different view of Meleisea, who refers to Samoa: "As the conduits of the *mam* of their descent groups women represent the sacred moral attributes of their *'aiga* and control over their procreative powers was essential" (Meleisea 1979: 542).
2. Although the reversal is commemorated in the course of the kava ritual, as I have shown elsewhere (Valeri 1989).
3. The usurpation and violence components are even stronger — as should be expected — in the Fijian transformation of this mythological scheme (Fison 1904: 49–57).
4. This correlation is demonstrated by the events of Tongan history: while before diarchy was instituted the Tu'itongaship was the focus of

conflict, afterwards and particularly after the creation of the second and more powerful Hau title (the Tu'i Kanokupolu) "the life of the Tu'i Tonga was much more peaceful and settled. There was unbroken succession from father to son for seven generations down to the time of Paulaho [the Tu'i Tonga at the time of Captain Cook's visit]. There were no murders of Tu'i Tonga" (Bott 1982: 99).

5. "Succession was usually to a younger brother or a son of the previous title-holder" (Bott 1982: 72).
6. I shall consider the history of succession only until 1819, the year of Kamehameha's death and of the abolition of the traditional form of kingship. This does not mean that the subsequent history of the allocation of powers is not relevant for my analysis. Suffice it to say that a non-sexual male/female diarchy (associating the *Mo'i* "king" and a *kuhina nui*, a term referring to an authority "more active than the king" Kuykendall 1938: 64) existed for several decades. This new male/ female diarchy was the exact inverse of the traditional one, in which, as we shall see, the categorically more active ruler was always male and the higher ranking one was female.
7. Is it necessary to stress that this statement is no more a "denigration" of women than it is of high-ranking men? Indeed, as I have mentioned, inertia is highly valued in Polynesian ideology as a sign of plenitude. We should not superimpose our Western view of inertia to the Polynesian one.
8. Some critics have argued that this supremacy might have been true at the "categorical" level but not at the level of "action" (Linnekin 1986: 219–20), as if action were divorced from categories (or what they call "action" had not its own legitimating categories) and as if the categorical exclusion of women from certain crucial rituals did not have important consequences for political action! But they have also suggested that in fact women played an important "symbolic" role in the main royal cults, which took place in the *luakini* temple. They have adduced as proof the extent to which barkcloth, which was produced by women, was used for consecrating the images of gods in rituals (Linnekin 1986: 220; Weiner 1987: 159–60). With all due respect to these well-intentioned people, this is like arguing that bakers and vintners play an important symbolic role in the Catholic Mass because wafers and wine are used in the Eucharist. I must remind my critics that an object can be alienated from the producer and thus does not necessarily represent him or her: it may represent instead the person to whom it is destined or who consumes it (for a striking Polynesian example of the latter cases, see Thomas 1987: 137). Moreover, if the argument of Weiner and Linnekin were valid it should be extended, *a fortiori*, to commoners, since most of the offerings (pigs, plumes etc.) used in the temple were produced by them. But even if it were established that indeed barkcloth had female values in certain contexts, this would reinforce, rather than undermine, my interpretation that the *luakini* temple ritual symbolically excluded women. It will be recalled that this ritual consisted in the purely male creation of new instantiations of the gods

and of the god Kū in particular (Valeri 1985a). Most explicitly in Malo's version, this creation used the imagery of reproduction: the gods were given birth as children and transformed until, as adults, they became full instantiations of their prototypes. The ritual thus implied a male usurpation of the generative powers of women and it is possible that the generative use of barkcloth was part of the usurpation. The important point is that, whether the ritual generation of the godchildren by men involved the use of original male powers (such as prayers, the offerings of animals and humans) or the use of powers possibly alienated from women (such as those of barkcloth), it was conceived as a purely masculine affair and it was conceptually contrasted, as "pure reproduction" to the "impure reproduction" which combines men and women. Thus the use of barkcloth in the royal temples hardly justifies the optimistic view that there was a "critical and positive symbolic relation between women, sacrifice and divine rulers" (Weiner 1987: 160), whatever that might have been. Moreover Weiner's claim that cloth "became the ultimate object sacrificed by divine rulers" is not supported by the evidence. The most important object sacrificed was the body of a male human. Even if we wish to interpret Weiner's statement as referring to inanimate objects only, it cannot be accepted as true, since feathers were much more important than cloth.

9. See, for instance, the *Kumulipo* genealogy (Beckwith 1951), the genealogy published in *Kumu Hawaii* in 1835 (reprinted in McKinzie 1983), the *Moolelo Hawaii* (1838) genealogy, and the genealogies published by Kamakau (1961: 391–92; 433–36) and Fornander (1878–1880, 1: 181–96). I have discussed some of the discrepancies between purely genealogical texts and prose annals in Valeri 1990. Because a systematic comparison would take too much space, I must regrettably leave it out of the present paper.
10. "The mere recitation of names form a chain along which the accumulated *mana* of ages untold may be moved into the recipient shell" (Stokes 1930: 12–13).
11. "The Tu'i Tonga could command the person of any woman of lower rank" (Gifford 1929: 72, cf. 54–55); "so far as Tongan tradition goes there seems to be no record of a Tu'i Tonga engaging in warfare while in office" (Gifford 1929: 205).
12. The king's — or any high-ranking noble's — connection with his genealogy was effected ritually even when he was actually born from an individual listed in it: indeed he was not considered part of it until it was ritually performed with his name inserted in it. Hence the recitation of the genealogy had an illocutionary force: better than birth itself and sometimes in its stead, it made one a member of a line. It was generative to the point of substituting for the generative act proper (Valeri 1990). Genealogical chants are thus another instance of the Hawaiian propensity to complement the natural generative act with ritual, artificial (and thus politically manipulable) substitutes.

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# UNDER THE *TOA* TREE: The Genealogy of the Tongan Chiefs

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The redirection of Polynesian research — away from structural and structural-functional obsessions with the inert and toward an awareness of contradictions, heterogeneities, and system-based dynamics — is by now a matter of history. Not that descent has been forgotten. Rather, it has been subordinated to a more global, temporalized order grounded in dual dimensions of kingship.

Hocart's formulation of this duality in *Kings and Councillors* is the classic — albeit the most abstract and most opaque — one. There Hocart pairs two contrasting kinds of rulers: the one passive, senior, and associated with ritual, the other active, junior, and sometimes (though not necessarily) associated with war (Hocart 1970: 164). Since “He who acts holds the power” (*ibid.*), “it is not infrequent that the junior chief was the real master, leaving to his senior no more than a sacred precedence” (*ibid.*).

Sahlins' essay on the “stranger-king” elaborates Hocart's duality in critical ways. At the “State” pole, the king represents strangeness and divinity (the king originates from above or beyond), violence, excess, criminality, and *celeritas*, “the youthful, active, disorderly, magical, and creative violence of conquering princes” (Sahlins 1985: 90). At the “Society” pole, kingship rests on an accommodation to “the people's own moral order” (*ibid.*) — kinship, that is — and represents *gravitas*, “the venerable, staid, judicious, priestly, peaceful, and productive dispositions of an established people” (*ibid.*). Howard similarly notes the “paradoxes” (Howard 1985: 71) upon which Rotuman chieftaincy is founded: “that chiefs are gods,

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but are [also] human; that they are of the people, but are different from them; that they represent the unity of the polity, but have parochial interests...“ (*ibid.*). While Valeri’s formulation of the duality sometimes rests upon a distinction between a pacific and a war-mongering king (1989: 234–35, this volume; cf. Gunson 1979 and for Hawai‘i, Valeri 1982: 10–12), at other times he contrasts a genealogical mode, which legitimates the king as a god, with a contractual (Valeri 1985) and/or narrative (Valeri 1990) mode, which legitimates the ruler on the grounds of his exemplariness and/or heroism.

If contract and narrative cement ties between “overlord” and “vassal” in Valeri’s formulation (1985), in Marcus’ the audience for whom the performance side of chieftaincy matters is significantly widened. In his recent overview of chieftaincy in Polynesia (1989), Marcus elaborates Sahlins’ foreign/domestic polarity as a distinction between kingly (genealogical, divine) and populist modes of legitimation — an elaboration that immediately makes sense in light of the alignment in Polynesian cosmologies of divine/human, sky/earth, foreign (beyond the horizon)/domestic, and sea/land, given the identification of the land with commoners, “the people” (*kau kakai*). Chiefs are “powerful aliens in their own society. Yet however much this is recognized on ritual occasions, chiefs are also people” (*ibid.*: 150). On the one hand, paramounts legitimate themselves mythically and through a sometimes rapacious exertion of power as unbridled outsiders; on the other, they are subject to the routine moral evaluations of daily life. Chiefs “range... ambivalently between kingly glory... and a secular idiom and heroic populism...” (*ibid.*: 155), operating now as “mystified symbol” (*ibid.*: 170), now as exemplary human being.

The present paper examines the dualistic foundations of Tongan kingship by way of exploring the historicity of the Tongan polity. While paramounts allegedly descend “from the sky” and the god or gods living there, they are also kinsmen (*kāinga*) of the villagers or “the people” living under them (Bott 1958–59, 1: 66, 1981: 20–27; Gifford 1929: 113) and are appraised as such. The historicity of the Tongan polity follows from the necessity of negotiating the terms of sovereignty, a negotiation that embroils the entire polity, top to bottom. In this negotiation, scanting the contractual and populist side of the ledger imperils any regime. Diarchy, which institutionalizes the duality — ossification of any kind — is a sign of a breakdown in this negotiation. But the problem of center-formation and this negotiation remains. Usurpation may be viewed as a strategic intervention attempting to rescue and rehabilitate the polity by shifting negotiation to a more promising site within it. As



a chapter in the history of negotiation, usurpation is an implication of the duality itself, not only because genealogical precedence spawns “status rivalry” (Goldman 1970; cf. Sahlins 1981; Thomas 1986:chs. 3, 5) but because, unlike genealogical modes, contractual modes of legitimation allow no monopoly and offer a career open to the talents among juniors (who are also divine [Valeri this volume]) as well as seniors.

Whether by way of reproducing or transforming a political field, the mediation of duality requires human work, a practice and performance of kingship. Structure is *always* sedimented in and through events (Giddens 1979; Sahlins 1981; Thomas 1986: ch. 1). But as between reproduction and transformation, usurpation provides the more panoramic window on the symbolic and practical complexities of polity formation (Valeri 1982, 1985) and political pathologies, for acts of usurpation are condensed sites of breakdown and renewal, the betrayal yet resurgence of an ideal — ones, moreover, that open the political order to the entire world of events unfolding within and also lying without. Furthermore, if vindicated, usurpation is also a just reformation, one that is fully embedded within a populist politics of kinship. The study of usurpation exposes the voice of “the people” and provides a context for examining points of juncture between elite and commoner histories.

The word *genealogy* in the title bears the burden of the entire argument. Referring directly to history, it enters into tension with the patrilineal and structural models of the past. The history to which it refers, in turn, is set in motion by the dual foundations of kingship: idioms and ideologies of divinity but as these exist in tension with the “leveling forces” (Marcus 1980, 1989) of contractual modes of legitimation. The term also gestures toward a Foucaultian appreciation of the politics of representation — in particular, to the event-like, cause-like status of historical narrative, which, in justifying resistance and revolt, legitimates transformation. *Genealogy* is thus identified with Valeri’s anterior mode of legitimation: narratives of celebration and denigration that elevate and debase through the power of their rhetoric.

My aim is to develop a framework adequate to the task of interpreting the revolution of the 19th century, when Tāufa‘āhau, a secondary chief, suppressed the Tu‘i Tonga title of his superior; created a superordinate one, the royal title of the constitutional monarchy he in part designed; and converted to Christianity — sweeping reforms at once chiefly and populist (Marcus 1980). The third monarch of the Tupou dynasty Tāufa‘āhau founded, Queen Sālote Tupou III, figures prominently in these pages as an

ideologue. In the stories she tells about her Tupou forebearers and the chiefs whom they supplanted, she unwittingly discloses rhetorical strategies for defending and celebrating the conquests and reforms of the 19th century. In her often veiled and diplomatic disparagement of the leaders of the past, Queen Sālote provides a window upon the genealogical politics this paper addresses.

## 'Aho'eitu

According to legend, the first Tu'i Tonga is the son of the god 'Eitumatupu'a and an earth-mother named Va'epopua or 'Ilaheva. One day 'Eitumatupu'a descends from the sky and impregnates Va'epopua; then he withdraws. The mother rears 'Aho'eitu alone, presumably surrounded by her own people. As 'Aho'eitu matures, he wishes to meet his father; and his mother tells him to climb a *toa* or *casuarina* (ironwood) tree to find him. Up in the sky, 'Aho'eitu finds not only his father but his older brothers, who, jealous of him, murder and eat him. When he cannot find 'Aho'eitu, 'Eitumatupu'a suspects what has happened and orders his sons to vomit up the remains. He then revivifies 'Aho'eitu and names him the first Tu'i Tonga, sending him back home to govern. Four of his older brothers are sent along with him to serve him as his *matāpules* or ceremonial attendants (*falefā*, “the four houses”). The oldest brother is made the “king of the second house” (Tu'i Faleua) rather than the paramount because he murdered 'Aho'eitu. He is told, however, that his line will replace the Tu'i Tonga's line should that line falter (Bott 1982: 91; Gifford 1929: 59).

In the 'Aho'eitu myth, 'Eitumatupu'a descends but then quickly ascends, divinity being constituted as an absence. By virtue of his divine associations, 'Aho'eitu was “most sacred” (*toputapu*), and the *tapus* hedging contact with him effectively removed him from ordinary interaction and its time. Of the Tu'i Tonga, Her Majesty Queen Sālote wrote that his person (*sino* or “body”) was “truly sacred” (*toputapu*) (H.M. Queen Sālote, “Ko e Ngaahi Ha'a 'o Tonga,” from “Ko e Ngaahi Me'a mei he Tohi 'a 'Ene 'Afio,” BSP 11/2/7).<sup>1</sup> Because the body of a Tu'i Tonga could not be touched, his hair could not be cut, and he could not be circumcised once he had become a king. He also had to go to Samoa to be tattooed, since the Samoans, as foreigners, were able to shed the Tu'i Tonga's blood as Tongans could not (*ibid.*). By way of emphasizing the fearsome power the Tu'i Tonga had, the late Queen told the story of how the bodies of some of these Samoans swelled despite their alien status

and they died. “When anything touched the body of the Tu‘i Tonga, it became *tapu* and could not be used by anyone else. He was fed by someone else. He did not touch his own food, and even then the leftovers were *tapu-ed*” (*ibid.*: 7–8).

If the body is viewed as an interactional instrument rather than as a natural entity, then the *tapus* in effect disembodied the Tu‘i Tonga, constituting him (like ‘Eitumatupu‘a) as an absence rather than as a presence. Those who did approach the Tu‘i Tonga had to show their respect by performing the ceremony of *moemoe*. This involved touching the soles of the Tu‘i Tonga’s feet upon first entering his house, “so that one might be at liberty to sit down in the house, on the occasion of a kava party or other gathering. And when wishing to go outside of the house it was done again, after the completion of the kava ceremonies or entertainment...” (Gifford 1929: 118). Mariner provides a more detailed and more generalized description:

This ceremony consists in touching the soles of any superior chief’s feet with the hands, first applying the palm, then the back of each hand; after which the hands must be rinsed in a little water, or, if there be no water near, they may be rubbed with any part of the stem of the plantain or banana tree, the moisture of which will do instead of washing. He may then feed himself without danger of any disease, which would otherwise happen, as they think, from eating with tabooed hands (Martin’s Mariner 1981: 355).

*Matāpules* mark chiefly *proxemically*, through an exotic intimacy with the king. The personal attendants who surrounded the Tu‘i Tonga — the *falefā* and the “king of the second house” — were foreign, “from the sky.” Their descendants and the class of *matāpules* in general have tended to be Fijian, Samoan, Rotuman, and Tokelauan (Gifford 1929: 140). “The reason assigned for the employment of foreigners as *matāpules* is that they are exempt from *tapu* which separate a Tongan chief and his purely Tongan relatives” (*ibid.*: 141). Thus, *matāpules* served as companions (H.M. Queen Sālote, “Ko e Ngaahi Ha’a ‘o Tonga,” from “Ko e Ngaahi Me’a mei he Tohi ‘a ‘Ene ‘Afio,” BSP 11/2/7; see also Bott 1982: 118–19) as well as ceremonial attendants, being present at the king’s informal as well as at his formal kava ceremonies. The *matāpule* Soakai, Fijian in origin, had as his special privilege the right to eat and smoke with the Tu‘i Tonga, something others could not do (Gifford 1929: 65, 141). Her Majesty observed that “it didn’t matter who they [the *matāpules*] were but there had to be someone with the

king” (H.M. Queen Sālote, “Ko e Ngaahi Ha’a ’o Tonga,” from “Ko e Ngaahi Me’a mei he Tohi ’a ’Ene ’Afio,” BSP 11/2/7). *Matāpules* then and now create a cocoon of sociality insulating and isolating the king.

The divinity of the Tu’i Tonga was marked also by the burial practices of the Tu’i Tonga, said to be those of ‘Eitumatupu’a himself (Gifford 1924: 42), by the fact that the tomb the Tu’i Tonga was buried in was called *langi* or sky, and by the fact that the Tu’i Tonga himself could be referred to as *langi* (Gifford 1929: 74). *Langi* is also the royal word for “eye(s), face, mouth, ears, or head” (Churchward 1959: 282). When a paramount dies, it is said that the sun has set; when the Tu’i Tonga died, it was said, “The heavens are void” (*ibid.*: 74).

The Tu’i Tonga served a sacerdotal function as an intermediary between the toilers of the soil, on the one hand, and the source of its fertility, the god or goddess Hikule’o, on the other. In relation to this sacerdotal function, and also because the god ‘Eitumatupu’a had named him the high chief of Tonga, the Tu’i Tonga had “supreme control of the soil” (Valeri 1989: 234), of which ‘*inasi* tribute was the principal symbol (*ibid.*). First fruit ‘*inasi* tribute was given annually, to thank Hikule’o (identified sometimes as a male, sometimes as a female [Gifford 1924: 153, 1929: 291]) for the fecundity of the soil. Such tribute was believed essential to prosperity. “... failure to carry out the ‘*inasi* festival would result in national disaster” (Martin’s Mariner 1981: 67). The missionary John Thomas expounds upon the character of the exchange. First fruits were given

as an acknowledgment of their [the people’s] dependance [*sic*] upon him [Hikule’o] and the gods, as the owners of the earth — the sea, and all things, and to unite to supplicate the gods... to send them suitable weather of rain and sky, that the yam seeds may bring forth a crop, and that thus laboring may not be in vain (Thomas n.d.: 262; see also Farmer 1855: 96, 130; Lātūkefu 1980: 67).

This simple transaction — fertility downward for first fruit tributes upward — exercises (if it does not also constitute) the sky-earth axis of the ‘Aho’eitu myth. The gifts of the first yam and the soil to grow it in ‘Eitumatupu’a made to his earth-wife (Thomas 1879: 231) are precedents for this exchange, as well as for the Tu’i Tonga’s proprietorship of the soil and his position as an “intermediary between the people and the gods” (Bott 1982: 91). The yam and the soil, Thomas remarks, are seen as “favours from the good of the

sky” (*ibid.*). These favors were iterated annually in the harvest and reciprocated in annual *‘inasi* tributes.<sup>3</sup>

## Diarchy and usurpation

‘Aho‘eitu is more than divine. Through his mother he is also human. Descending from the sky to rule over his mother’s people, ‘Aho‘eitu’s kingship is constituted also as a *presence*.

The myth says relatively little about ‘Aho‘eitu’s duties as the chief of a *place* — the Tu‘i Tonga — and not just a divine abstraction. A transformation occurring somewhere in the 15th century provides some indications. The split was triggered when two “old men” assassinated the Tu‘i Tonga Takalaua.<sup>3</sup> The Tu‘i Tonga’s oldest son and heir, Kau‘ulufonua, pursued the assassins as they fled to other islands, catching them finally in Futuna. Not content simply to murder the assassins, Kau‘ulufonua extracted a crueler punishment. According to one of Gifford’s accounts, he ordered a kava ceremony to be held and served the assassins as the food or *fono*, telling those in attendance: “These two old men will furnish the relish to our kava. Each of us may take the part that he desires as his relis” (Gifford 1924: 67). Gifford continues: “The kava drinking proceeded and those who wished cut and tore from the living old men the parts that they desired as relish. Gradually the two men died a most painful death” (*ibid.*). According to another account, Kau‘ulufonua ordered the old men to prepare kava by chewing it, despite their having no teeth.

Now the murderers were old men and had no teeth, and when they were brought before Kau-ulu-fonua, he ordered hard dry kava to be brought, and made them chew it before him, so that their mouths were filled with blood. And he bade them pour water into the bowl, and knead and strain the kava, and he drank the draught alone. Therefore he was named Kau-ulu-fonua-fekai (Kau-ulu-fonua the savage); and he slew his father’s murderers in Futuna and returned to Tonga (Thomson 1894: 304).

The narrative the late Honorable Ve‘ehala and Tupou Posesi Fanua supplied Rutherford combines these two atrocities.

He knocked out the teeth of his captives and then forced them to chew with their bleeding gums the dry kava root which was to be used for the kava ceremony to celebrate their

capture; then they are dispatched and their bodies cut up to serve as the *fono* food for the same celebration (Ve'ehala and Tupou Posesi Fanua 1977: 35).

The assassination of the Tu'i Tonga Takalaua is deviant as much for the breach of the bodily *tapus* as for the murder. As Ve'ehala and Tupou Posesi Fanua diplomatically express the matter, "In spite of the sanctity and theoretical inviolability of the Tu'i Tonga's person it seems that he was often in danger of his life" (*ibid.*: 34).<sup>4</sup> Fearing a recurrence, Kau'ulufonua abdicated his administrative duties, reserving for himself the privileges of sanctity and the impregnability of divinity disincarnate.

"I am the chief [he told his brothers], but this people have dared to slay the Tui Tonga. What will they not dare? And how shall the land stand fast if the chief be slain? Now therefore it is my mind to set a chief over the people to govern them, and I will be supreme lord of the soil only, and of the offerings" (Thomson 1894: 304).

Then he made his younger brother, Mo'ungamotu'a, "lord over the people" (*ibid.*: 305), the Tu'i Tonga effectively retreating (like 'Eitumatupu'a) to the sky.

In contrast, the burdens (*fatongia*, "duties") and responsibilities of participating in the full range of social and political action and as its pivotal figure (Valeri this volume) fell to the Tu'i Ha'atalaua, who reigned as the "working chief" (*tu'i ngāue'*), present and not absent. Whereas the sacred chief held the land in trust from the gods, the "working chief" supervised the practices that unleashed its fertility. Loyal to the Tu'i Tonga, the Tu'i Ha'atalaua guarded and protected him (*ibid.*: 109) and also (since he mediated the relationship between the Tu'i Tonga and "the people") assumed crucial responsibilities toward commoners. In supervising agriculture, the "working chief" oversaw the generation of the surpluses that served as tribute for the Tu'i Tonga (through whom divine generative powers were channeled) and the god or gods he represented. Though not himself holding the land in trust from the gods, the "working chief," "entrusted with the running of the people and the land" (the Honorable Ve'ehala, personal communication), was a "popular" king (Valeri this volume). He also parcelled out the land; "... and because of this he was sometimes called Tu'i Kelekele 'Lord of the Lands'" (Bott 1982: 90; see H. M. Queen Sālote, "Ko e Ngaahi Ha'a 'o Tonga," from "Ko e Ngaahi Me'a mei he Tohi 'a 'Ene 'Afio," BSP 11/2/2). Bott expands upon her point:

The chief told his people what to plant and when. He informed them when contributions of food were needed, when a *tapu* was to be placed on certain foods so that they would have time to mature, when he needed labour for building his house or helping a senior chief or the king from whom his title and position were derived (Bott 1982: 71).

At the most mundane level, the “working chief” “supervised planting and other activities for the real king or Tui Tonga” (Gifford 1929: 98; also, *ibid.*: 84–5).

From then on, the Tu‘i Tongaship is described in almost wholly negative terms. Gifford was told, for example, that “The Tui Tongas were the spiritual rulers of the country and did not interest themselves with the ordinary government of the country” (Gifford 1929: 48). Thomas also described the Tu‘i Tonga’s functions as residual. His office became one “purely of a religious nature — he represented the god Hikuleo, as well as the other gods, and... he was treated more as a divinity than as a man...” (Thomas, n.d.: 259). Mariner, too, depicts the Tu‘i Tonga as a shadow of his former self. The Tu‘i Tonga was “a *divine* chief of the highest rank, but having no power or authority in affairs belonging to the king” (Martin’s Mariner 1981: 315–16). Collocott’s description is patronizing: “... to the Tui Tonga were reserved the dignity and prestige of supreme chiefs, with the material concomitants of abundant food and fair ladies, but little work” (Collocott 1924: 178). Futa Helu’s is openly disdainful. “In pre-contact time, all *fatongia*, in a real sense, were ultimately directed at the Tu‘i Tonga,” he writes (n.d.). But “after the Tu‘i Ha’atakalaua was instituted, the Tu‘i Tonga ceased to have any *fatongia* at all though he enjoyed every right under the sun including the right to deprive persons especially the *tu’a* [commoners] of their so-called inalienable rights” (*ibid.*).

Two centuries later and under less dramatic circumstances, the Tu‘i Ha’atakalaua himself yielded to a junior line headed by the Tu‘i Kanokupolu. Thomson recounts that the Tu‘i Ha’atakalaua

saw that [the people] did not honour the chief whom they obeyed [that is, the “working chief”], but only him to whom they gave the offerings; and he made his son Ngata lord over the people and his descendants, and called him Tui Kanokubolu, and he himself was content to receive the offerings only (Thomson 1894: 305)

The late Queen Sālote dated the demise of the Tu‘i Ha’atakalauaship from the appointment of the first Tu‘i Kanokupolu, attributing the appointment to an inexplicable



enervation of the Tu'i Ha'atala line ("Ko e Ngaahi Ha'a 'o Tonga," from "Ko e Ngaahi Me'a mei he Tohi 'a 'Ene 'Afio," BSP 11/2/2-3).

The orthodox interpretation of the origin of the "working chief" is that the Tu'i Tonga desired to place "a buffer between himself and his subjects" by way of securing "not only his own safety from popular outbreak, but an increased reverence for the rigid tabu that begins to environ him" (Thomson 1894: 306; see also Gifford 1929: 48, 85). The missionary Thomas West elaborates:

Ultimately the right of the Tuitogans, to the exercise of supreme government, was not only annulled by conquest, but by their own abnegation of it. This they did on condition that they should enjoy certain sacred honours and immunities, in perpetuity both from the ruling chiefs and the bulk of the people; whilst on their part they solemnly engaged never to intermeddle with the political administration of the country, or even in its civil affairs (West 1865: 55).

If the oral traditions are to be believed, a historical precedent for this retreat came in the reign of the eleventh Tu'i Tonga, Tu'itātui, who had two *langi* tombs — the *Langi Heketa* and the *Langi Mo'ungalafa*, both in eastern Tongatapu (Ve'ehala and Tupou Posesi Fanua 1977: 33) — and the famous trilithon *Ha'amonga a Maui* (*ibid.*) or "Burden of Maui" (Gifford 1924: 49) built. The labor for the trilithon — incredibly intensive (Dirk Spenneman, personal communication) — "was shared among the people of Tonga, Rotuma, Futuna, 'Uvea, Niuafo'ou, Niuatoputapu, and Samoa" (Gifford 1924: 49). Tu'itātui means "'king who strikes a knee,' referring to the Tui Tonga's custom of hitting with a long stick the knees of his *matāpule* when they came too close" (Gifford 1929: 53). The Tu'i Tonga did so out of a "fear of assassination, because several [*sic*] Tui Tonga had been killed at kava ceremonies by their *matāpule*" (*ibid.*; Gifford 1924: 47). That he is alleged to have committed incest with a half-sister (Gifford 1924: 46-47; see also Valeri 1989: 215, 236-37), possibly losing his life because of it (Ve'ehala and Tupou Posesi Fanua 1977: 33), feeds his notoriety. He was "feared by people throughout the archipelago" (Gifford 1924: 47).

Campbell argues that the account of the origin of the Tu'i Ha'atala should not be taken at face value. "If a king is simply weary of office he may abdicate, or delegate his powers; he does not need to establish a new dynasty and thus renounce power on the part of his heirs as well as himself" (Campbell 1982: 181). Moreover,



it is unlikely that twice in six generations “such an extraordinary event” would have happened (*ibid.*). While Campbell finds very little positive evidence to support this interpretation, positive evidence substantiating the orthodox view is also lacking. Campbell concludes that diarchy was the usurper’s rather than the senior’s strategy, a way of wresting control but without establishing the dangerous precedent of having done so (*ibid.* 1982: 180). The narrative is an “*ex post facto* [explanation] to validate an irregular transfer of power...” (*ibid.*; see also Herda 1988: 51–55). In retaining the practice of giving ‘*inasi* tribute to the Tu‘i Tonga, diarchy inscribes the usurper within a sky-rooted genealogy at the same time it renders unto Caesar only what is Caesar’s, affirming the Tu‘i Tonga’s *ritual* leadership while depriving him of *instrumental* control. Without “duties” (*fatongia*), the Tu‘i Tonga ceased to be a political agent and (whether coerced to do so or voluntarily) he yielded the historical stage to another.

Arguably, a diarchic form of government was reinstitutionalized, though weakly, at the time the constitutional monarchy was founded. The person who would be the last Tu‘i Tonga was defeated at the Battle of Velata (Ha‘apai) in 1826 (Lātūkefu 1974: 90). The *coup de grace*, however, concerned marriage and procreation. Tāufa‘āhau was to have given his sister to Laufilitonga as *moheofo*, his principal wife and the mother of his successor. The *moheofo* had to be a virgin; and wanting to deprive Laufilitonga of an heir, Tāufa‘āhau tendered his sister to another chief to bear a child before giving her to Laufilitonga (Ve‘ehala, personal communication; also: Bott 1958–59, 1: 31, Lātūkefu 1974: 90 and 90, n.; cf. Ellem 1981: 64–66). Without a successor, Laufilitonga capitulated his kava privileges — “the treasures of his position” (H.M. Queen Sālote, “Ko e Ngaahi Ha‘a ‘o Tonga,” from “Ko e Ngaahi Me‘a mei he Tohi ‘a ‘Ene ‘Afio,” BSP 11/2/8) — to the Tu‘i Pelehake Fatafahitoutai. Thus was the mythic injunction fulfilled: the Tu‘i Pelehake, descendant of ‘Aho‘eitu’s oldest brother and “king of the second house,” replaced the Tu‘i Tonga when the Tu‘i Tonga line failed (Bott 1981: 81–82, 1958–59, 1: 48; Gifford 1929: 62; H.M. Queen Sālote, “Ko e Ngaahi Ha‘a ‘o Tonga,” from “Ko e Ngaahi Me‘a mei he Tohi ‘a ‘Ene ‘Afio,” BSP 11/2/9). These kava privileges consisted in the right to have the side of the kava bowl from which the bowl was hung when it was not in use (the *taunga*) facing him, the right to receive the second cup of kava in silence, and the right to use the ‘*Ēi* (yes [Churchward 1959: 557]), which was spoken to the Tu‘i Tonga alone (Gifford 1929: 59, H.M. Queen Sālote, “Ko e Ngaahi Ha‘a ‘o Tonga,” from “Ko e Ngaahi Me‘a mei he Tohi ‘a ‘Ene ‘Afio,” BSP 11/2/9) rather than the *Ko e*. From that time on, the Tu‘i

Pelehake has represented the dignity of the Tu‘i Tonga (or Kauhala‘uta) side.

When the last Tu‘i Tonga died, the Tu‘i Pelehake, along with Soakai, entreated Tāufa‘āhau to take the Tu‘i Tonga’s kava *tapus*, but he refused, insisting upon ruling as a “working chief” (Ve‘ehala, personal communication; cf. Bott 1972: 224, 1958–59, 1: 48; Gifford 1929: 62) and having a “working kava” (*kava ngāue*) instead (Mafi Malanga, personal communication).

Tāufa‘āhau’s strategy is transparent. Diarchy emasculates the senior by way of honoring him, thereby upholding the crucial value of “respect” (*faka‘apa‘apa*) (Lātūkefu 1980: 65). More than one person has cited the deference Tāufa‘āhau showed to the Tu‘i Tonga in demonstrating his suitability for leadership to me. Diarchy makes available to a usurping line the “symbolic capital” of the vanquished. In acknowledging his senior’s greater prestige, Tāufa‘āhau could appropriate a symbolic resource and bask in a reflected glory. Simultaneously, Tāufa‘āhau undercut the symbolic strength of the Tu‘i Tonga by destroying the temples and idols of paganism and converting to Christianity (Lātūkefu 1974), thus subverting the diarchic dimensions of his own reforms and setting the stage for a renovated monarchy.

## Between privilege and responsibility

The story of Kau‘ulufonua’s revenge is deeply symbolic, reminiscent of the ‘Aho‘eitu myth (Herda 1988: 48–52, Valeri 1989: 231). ‘Aho‘eitu’s brothers kill and cannibalize him. Rejecting the act and the outcome, ‘Eitumatupu‘a, their father, makes ‘Aho‘eitu’s older brothers vomit into a kava bowl; and from these regurgitated remains ‘Aho‘eitu is reconstituted and crowned. In yet another story, cannibalism acquires this same connotation of a breach of kinship, albeit between leader and led. This is the story of the origin of kava. A high chief (identified in most versions as the Tu‘i Tonga) arrives unannounced at an offshore island ravaged by famine. To extend hospitality properly, despite a lack of resources, the couple living on the island kill their daughter, bake her in an earth oven, and serve her to the chief. The chief refuses to eat the daughter and instructs the couple to bury her instead. Out of her interred body grows the first kava plant, accompanied (in most versions) by sugar cane. A figure (usually identified as Lo‘au, soon to be discussed) invents the ceremony commemorative of Kava‘onau’s death.

As the kava ceremony is the ceremony of chiefly installation, the kava ritual can be said more generally to commemorate the pact between leader and led the Kava'onau story revolves around. In preparing a feast for the visiting high chief, Kava'onau's parents fulfilled their obligations to him. The chief, in turn, honored his obligations to them in refusing the gift his status entitled him to, thus exhibiting his unwillingness to press his advantages to the point of exploiting "the people" (Biersack 1991). In assassinating the Tu'i Tonga, the two murderers broke this pact. Consuming his kin back, as it were, Kau'ulufonua's revenge returns an eye for an eye as he indulges himself in the very excesses of privilege the high chief in the Kava'onau myth benevolently spurns. He kills and cannibalizes his people.

According to Thomson, the assassination triggering this revenge was motivated by a commensurate breach of kinship.

And as the years passed the Tui Tonga's face was changed towards his people, and he laid heavy tasks upon them, even in the planting-time, when every man should be in his own yam-garden. For he built a tomb for himself in the burying-place of his fathers; but he would surpass them all, and bade the people hew great stones from the reef, greater than any of his fathers had taken for their *malae*. And the stone-cutters hewed a huge stone upon the Liku, like an island for greatness; and the Tui Tonga sent to the people of Belehake, saying, "Go, and drag the stone for the side of my malae; so I shall not be forgotten hereafter."

They toiled at the stone all day, sore at heart, for it was planting-time, and in the evening they sent to Tui Tonga, praying that he would suffer them first to plant their yams; and afterwards return to drag the stone, for that it would take many days, and the time for yam-planting was far spent. But he returned answer that they were idle and dishonoured his commands. And the people were afraid when they heard his answer, and gathered together to the stone before it was yet day. And the sun rose on their toil, but the stone was so heavy that when it was low in the west they had only reached the cave Anameama, on the Liku, where there is fresh water. Their throats were dried up with thirst, and they crowded one upon the other in their haste to drink; but so many were they that when they had all drunk the pool was dry, and they licked the mud, and cursed their kin in their hearts.

Then one said, "How long shall we suffer this? He has other tasks in his mind for us, and who knows whether we shall live or die, and our wives be given to others? Shall we not take rest?" So they conspired that night to kill the Tui Tonga... (Thomson 1894: 300-01).

The net effect of these tales is to justify diarchy (as a transfer of agency to the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua) in terms of the deplorable performance of the line of rulers diarchy effectively retires from the historical stage (cf. Valeri 1990). More than chronicles, these narratives criticize and defame. The Tu'i Tonga Takalaua is represented as having placed his interests above those of his people, squandering on a monument to his own divinity — a *langi* (“sky”) or tomb — the labor his people required for agricultural production (see Mahina 1986: 103; Williamson 1924/1967: 143).

In her overview of Tongan history, the late Queen Sālote attributed the series of usurpations to the failure of these various kings to reciprocate the sacrifices of the people with sacrifices of their own, to exchange responsibility for responsibility, labor for labor, to govern as kin and not just as gods. Of the various holders of the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua title and the titles associated with it, Her Majesty said:

The beginning of their downfall is not known. It was from shirking their responsibilities... They tried to get others to shoulder them... The Ha'atakalauas were created by the Tu'i Tonga to help in safeguarding his regime and to bear the *fatongia*, not to lie down and give the burden to others... This group started to decline once they began to pay attention only to their own chiefly grandeur [*faka'ei'eiki*, “like or pertaining to a chief, chiefly in a chiefly or grandiose or formal manner” (Churchward 1959: 130)] and their duty to the country and the people came second (H. M. Queen Sālote, “Ko e Ngaahi Ha'a 'o Tonga,” from “Ko e Ngaahi Me'a mei he Tohi 'a 'Ene 'Afiō,” BSP 11/2/5).

Recognized in her own time as an expert on Tongan tradition, Her Majesty repeatedly acknowledged that effective governance was concentrated in the hands of chiefs who had responsibilities (*fatongia*) and not just privileges (*tapus*). Without duties, the *ha'as* (or titles and leaders clustering around a ranking title and its holder [Bott 1981: 28–32]) became weak.

In former times,... the people looked after the chiefs. That was a great mistake, and no wonder the destruction that ensued; the rulership was transferred to another line, and they declined very quickly. From Takalaua to Laufilitonga [the Tu'i Tongas of the diarchic era] the Tu'i Tongas were like that: they did no work. The Tu'i Ha'atakalauas tried to do that too, and they quickly deteriorated and came to their end (H.M. Queen Sālote, “Ko e Ngaahi Fatongia Kehekehe,” from “Ko e Ngaahi Me'a mei he Tohi 'a 'Ene 'Afiō,” BSP 11/2/1).

Then she pointed out that some Tu‘i Kanokupolus, her own forebearers, had failed to work as well and that the fourteenth holder of the title (“cruel and rapacious,” according to the late Honorable Ve‘ehala and Tupou Posesi Fanua [1977: 37]) was eventually assassinated (*ibid.*). But Tāufa‘āhau’s reign and that of his father’s, Tupouto‘a, were exemplary. Tupouto‘a

happily was not influenced by the bad ways of former chiefs, and his son Tupou I took after him. It was he who consolidated the lands and helped the people by dividing the land, introducing Christianity, and establishing various communications with the outside world. He had but one desire, which was to work diligently in cultivating the soil and in building and improving his house. He was wise and knew his rightful *fatongia*, which was to take care of and lead the people (H.M. Queen Sālote, “Ko e Ngaahi Fatongia Kehek-ehe,” from “Ko e Ngaahi Me‘a mei he Tohi ‘a ‘Ene ‘Afio,” BSP 11/2/1).

The late queen shared many of her thoughts about what constituted a “good chief” with Elizabeth Bott, who was employed in Tonga from 1958 to 1960 to facilitate the Tonga Traditions Committee’s collection of oral traditions. A “good chief” is a leader who involves himself in the daily life of the people and is himself on the scene whenever work he has assigned is done, supervising and encouraging “the people” (Bott 1958–59, 11: 287). (A “good chief” is present, not absent.<sup>5</sup>) A chief should also participate in funerals, making prestations along with others and being on hand to grieve with members of his village (*ibid.*). Tupou Posesi Fanua and the late Honorable Ve‘ehala also stressed the importance of a chief’s being “fully handed” (in Ve‘ehala’s words), generous (cf. Sahlins 1963), giving and not just receiving, and also his availability for consultation in everyday affairs. When I asked the late Honorable Ve‘ehala what his mandate as a chief was, he said it was to “look after [*tauhi*] the land and the people.” Bott summarizes what she learned about the good chief from these and other Tongans in saying that “Tongans never stress the duties of the chief to their people other than by saying that the chief led his people and looked after them. Any food received was divided among them. He attended their weddings and funerals” (Bott 1982: 71).

In return for the people’s manual labor, a good chief performs the supervisory tasks of leadership, entering into a contract of reciprocity with his people. Himself a Tongan, Sione Lātūkefu describes this contract, as true of today’s ideology as it was of the ideology of the past:

Good citizenship was marked by the way one performed one's *fatongia* 'obligations.' Members of each social class knew his or her *fatongia* to other members of his class and to the members of other classes, particularly those of higher status. The *fatongia* involved obedience and, at times, sacrifices. The chief's obligations were to protect the group from outside interference or attack, to settle their disputes and to provide conditions under which his people would work and enjoy peace and prosperity. In return the people performed their *fatongia* to him by working his garden, providing him with the best of everything they produced or possessed and attending to whatever they might want to do. At its best the whole *fatongia* relationship was governed by the principal of reciprocity. The royal dynasties had similar *fatongia* to the whole country, the chiefs had to their own group, and the chiefs and people brought tribute to the royalty (Lātūkefu 1980: 65–66).

If a chief did not fulfill his obligations to his people, "he would find their contributions were not as large as he needed, or his people would begin slipping away to live with their wives' or mothers' people" (Bott 1982: 71). Lātūkefu adds that "The mere fact that the members of a *kāinga* [village] loyally served their chief and carried out their *fatongia* made it difficult for him to deprive them of the land or in other ways abuse his authority" (Lātūkefu 1975: 9). A chief who neglects his people, or a chief who actively exploits them, no matter what his pedigree, may himself be abandoned — or, worse, assassinated. Chiefly power is as achieved as it is ascribed, as populist as it is kingly (Marcus 1989). We can speculate that the impetus toward usurpation would gather momentum only if disaffection among the rank and file grew and "the people" shifted their allegiance from village to village and chief to chief. The constellation of forces alleged to have been in play in the 15th century — a tyrant, together with his "savage" son; a disgruntled junior chief, "king of the second house" (Bott 1982: 95; Thomson 1894: 300; n.a.); two old men pushed to regicide by years of exploitation and determined to escape further oppression; and a narrativizing strategy that defames the *ancien regime* in the name of a new dispensation — is surely paradigmatic of moments of political catharsis.

If the divinity of 'Aho'eitu concerns his *tapu* privileges, his humanity concerns his morality as kinsman. He rules as his father's son but over his mother's people. Unlike his older brothers, who in cannibalizing their own brother violated kinship's law, 'Aho'eitu arrives on the scene as the innocent sovereign of a kingdom

dedicated to upholding kinship values. His reformed older brothers, once murderers, accompany him to practice a benign kinship ethic in the mundane world below (Biersack 1991). After a series of incidents exposing the unsuitability of 'Aho'eitu's older and wholly divine brothers for kingship, 'Aho'eitu's ascends to the Tu'i Tongaship not as oldest and most divine brother but as youngest and also human son.

This reversal (Valeri 1989: 229–30; this volume) grounds kingship in kinship no less than in divinity — that is, in a duality. To be merely divine is to operate independently of the moral constraints of kinship: to engage in unspeakably rapacious acts (Howard 1985: 71; Sahlins 1985: 79), out of privilege rather than commitment. In this regard, the description of the Tu'i Tonga Williamson develops on the basis of A. Monfat's *Les Tonga* is both sardonic and propagandistic:

... the *tuitonga* partake of the nature of the divinity and we are also his priests, the representatives and living temples. The image and incarnation. In them the Civil and political power is exalted and sanctified by the divine power; wherefore their authority is boundless. They dispose of the goods, the bodies, and the consciences of their subjects, without ceremony and without rendering account to anyone. *Tuitonga* appears, and all prostrate themselves and kiss his feet. He speaks, and all are silent, listening with the most respectful attention; and when he has finished, all cry *Koe! Koe!* (It is true). The Tongans refuse him nothing, exceeding his desires. If he wishes to satisfy his anger or some cruel fancy, he sends a messenger to his victim who, far from fleeing, goes to meet his death. You will see fathers tie the rope round the necks of their children, whose death is demanded to prolong the life of his divinity; more than once you will see the child smile as it is being killed (Williamson 1967: 151–52).

Similarly, to be merely human — or, at least, terrestrial and not celestial — is also problematic. In displacing his older brothers, 'Aho'eitu also displaces a dynasty of worms, earth- and *not* sky- associated (Gifford 1924: 25, 38; Valeri 1989: 212; Williamson 1967: 137–39).

Whereas the god 'Eitumatupu'a descended from the sky but then quickly ascended, 'Aho'eitu's journey reverses the direction, combining the divine with the human (Biersack 1990), the sanctity of a remote god with the efficacy of the god's historical instantiations, integrating symbolic with political aspects of kingship. This duality is cosmically encoded as a duality of sky



(with its remoteness) and earth, where humans live; and it is ritually encoded in the distinction between a passive presiding chief, in whose honor *tapus* are observed, and “the [active] people” of the “working” component of the kava ceremony. ‘Aho‘eitu thus represents the ideal: kingship founded on a duality of sacred/working and divine/human aspects of leadership and the benevolent practices that mediate this opposition.

## Lo‘au

Lo‘au has puzzled many commentators. He figures most notably in the story concerning the origin of kava, as the person who tells the couple to bury their daughter or innovates the ceremony (Bott 1972: 215–16; 1982: 92–93; Gifford 1924: 71–72). In one version, the Tu‘i Tonga and Lo‘au are said to be the same (Gifford 1924: 74, 139–40).

Lo‘au is first mentioned as the father-in-law of the tenth Tu‘i Tonga, Momo. According to oral tradition, Nua, his daughter, is the mother of the eleventh Tu‘i Tonga, Tu‘itātui (Bott 1972: 215–16; Gifford 1924: 43–46; see also Gifford 49–54). Lo‘au resurfaces in the 15th century to ratify Kau‘ulufonua’s diarchic arrangements.

Traditionally, it was a Loau who allotted stewards to all Tonga as far as Uvea [where Kau‘ulufonua had chased his father’s assassins], and who allotted the first tasks (*fatongia*) among the different peoples — for example, assigning to the people of Tofua the bringing of volcanic stones [for the burial of the Tu‘i Tonga]. The traditional organization of Loau persisted until the coming of the Europeans. King George I, in the Nineteenth Century, reallocated the land but with scant alteration in the old division (Gifford 1929: 131; see also *ibid.*: 68–69; Bott 1982: 97; Collocott 1924: 177–78).

Lo‘au also authorized the transfer to the Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua of the Tu‘i Tonga’s undertaker, Lauaki (Collocott 1924: 177–78, Gifford 1929: 68; see also Bott 1982: 97). He is associated as well with the founding of the second diarchy, after the reign of the 29th Tu‘i Tonga (Her Majesty Queen Sālote, “Ko e Ngaahi Ha‘a ‘o Tonga,” from “Ko e Ngaahi Me‘a mei he Tohi ‘a ‘Ene ‘Afio,” BSP 11/2/5; see also Bott 1982: 115, Herda 1988: 36–38). Her Majesty also named Lo‘au as the grandfather of the woman who married the third Tu‘i Kanokupolu and bore the fourth Tu‘i Kanokupolu (H.M. Queen Sālote, “Ko e Pongipongi ‘o e Hingoa,” from “Ko e Ngaahi Me‘a mei he Tohi ‘a ‘Ene ‘Afio,” BSP 11/2; Bott 1982: 92). Another tale



concerns a Lo'au who "searches for the sun" (Collocott 1928: 54) or journeys to the horizon (Gifford 1924: 139–52, 1929: 130), though his historical status varies from account to account (see also Collocott and Havea 1922: 162).

Lo'au's ubiquity — in space as well as time<sup>6</sup> — and his appearance in narratives that are quasi-mythic — the kava narrative, for example — frustrate any attempt to interpret him as a historical figure. "He" is, rather, a personification.

Common to most if not all accounts is Lo'au's role as an instigator of change. Bott writes that all Lo'aus

are said to have been *tufunga fonua*, literally 'carpenters of the country', meaning the founders of custom and the regulators of social life. Whenever a major reorganisation of the country took place, the name Lo'au crops up. All three Lo'au [I count more] are supposed to have disappeared when their tasks were completed. The name has come to be used for someone who establishes customs (Bott 1982: 92).

As the "carpenter of the land," Lo'au constructs (*fa'u*). Of the block of titles (*ha'a*) associated with the Tu'i Kanokupolu, Queen Sālote observed that: "The *fa'u* [building, structure] was well-organized. It is said that Lo'au had alot to do with the development and organizing of this *ha'a*" (H. M. Queen Sālote, "Ko e Ngaahi Ha'a 'o Tonga," from "Ko e Ngaahi Me'a mei he Tohi 'a 'Ene 'Afio," BSP 11/ 2/5; see also Bott 1982: 115). Organization, then, entails the shaping of titular hierarchies within an overarching structure (*fa'u*), along with a corresponding distribution of land to subalterns. Lo'au's "carpentry" constitutes and reconstitutes the Tongan polity, as history requires; and it also produces a ceremony of accommodation to commemorate this structuring process (Biersack 1991; Bott 1972: 231–32).

A formula Tongans self-consciously employ for generating and regulating novelty is this: to combine the old with the new. In the 19th century, Tāufa'āhau's reforms, including the Tongan Constitution, were monuments to the power of this formula. Though Tāufa'āhau, like any "working chief," "reallotted the land" (Gifford 1929: 131), he did so "with scant alteration in the old division" (*ibid.*; see Marcus 1980).

Apart from the marriage of Queen Sālote to Tungī Mailefihi (Ellem 1981), the best example of the use of this formula in the 20th century is the kava ceremony of 1959, which was organized by Her Majesty Queen Sālote to integrate the titles associated with the Tu'i Tonga and the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua, on the one hand, those associated

with the Tu‘i Kanokupolu and today’s monarchy, on the other (Bott to Spillius, Wed. August 16, 1961, BSP 5/5/8–9), thus aligning political representation with the historical achievements of the last hundred years (Bott 1982: 92). This kava ceremony was called Lo‘au, and so was the Queen. Writing to her then husband, James Spillius, Bott (who witnessed and recorded this event) said, “... remember how often we were told, ‘The Queen is our Lo‘au now’, and the way the people soon began to call this *taumafa kava* [the high, royal kava (Biersack 1991)] the ‘Lo‘au’” (Bott to Spillius, Wed. August 16, 1961, BSP 5/5/9; see also Bott 1982: 92). In the late monarch’s effort to aggregate (*fakataha*, “make one”) all titles, those representing older and those representing newer stock, the agenda of combining the old with the new was set. In the Queen’s kava, structure was openly represented as a royal artifact that absorbed changes historically accruing (Biersack 1991).

Not merely a contrivance of the present era, this formula was in operation in the 15th and 17th centuries as well. When the Tu‘i Tonga’s undertaker (Lauaki) was transferred first to the Tu‘i Ha‘atakalua, then to the Tu‘i Kanokupolu, the royal mortuary rites — in origin, ‘Eitumatupu‘a’s own (Gifford 1924: 42) — were preserved as usurpers appropriated the charisma of more ancient lines for their own purposes.

Since usurpation (or diarchy) entails symbolic conservation across political breaks, the shift from era to era and regime to regime, no matter how radical the initiative and the rhetoric, always involves continuities across discontinuities, a reaggregation of scattered elements, a mediation of the present by the past (cf. Valeri this volume). Lo‘au creates novel wholes by conserving elements of the past that consecrate but for a new order. It was “he” who ratified the transfer of Lauaki to the Tu‘i Ha‘atakalua (Gifford 1929: 68), “he” who reorganized the kava ceremony in 1959, “he” who intervenes again and again to deposit sacred vestiges at the threshold of the future. Positioned within the temporal flow and at its cathartic and revolutionary junctures, Lo‘au personifies the principles of Tongan history: that there is no structure without structuring practices (“carpentry”), that structure is honored in the breach as well as in the observance, that kingdoms themselves are performed into existence (Sahlins 1985: 26–31) and through conservative, reforming transformations (Herda 1988: 36–37; cf. Sahlins 1981).

## Myth and history

Sahlins derives the instabilities of Polynesia societies from the duality of kingship itself, arguing, as I have for Tonga, that sovereignty is only viable insofar as it partakes of both dimensions (1985: 90).

This duality of sovereignty is a condition of the “general sociology” of all such kingdoms... The sovereign is able to rule society, which is to say to mediate between its antithetical parts, insofar as the sovereign power itself partakes of the nature of the opposition, combines in itself the elementary antithesis... It is not so much the organization of the diarchy to which I call attention. More than a duality, this determination of sovereignty is an *ambiguity* that is never resolved. It becomes an historical destiny (*ibid.*: 90–91).

Ambiguated, each regime strives to locate itself compellingly *between* the poles by mediating them in a negotiation of its own legitimacy. The status of chiefs, Marcus writes,

must be negotiated situationally and depends on a trade-off between recognition of the chiefs identity within the official system of chiefly status attribution and his standing as an exemplary and powerful person among the particular collectivities who see themselves as the source of a chiefs capacity to be effective or powerful (Marcus 1989: 157; cf. Howard 1985: 71–72).

This negotiation — the performance of kingship itself — opens up the system to every contingency the duality of kingship and its mediation render relevant — in the 19th century, for example, to missionization and constitutional reform — and exposes the genealogy of the kings to pressures from below, which curtail autocratic tendencies at the top. In this negotiation, “symbolic capital” appreciates or is devalued depending upon historical performance (cf. Valeri 1985: 98, 1989). In the long if not the short run, divine kings cannot be tyrants, for those who rule by privilege and in their own interests so deplete their stock that the conceit of sanctity becomes intolerable and they are assassinated, the *tapu* broken. The duality of kingship makes action if not compulsory (the temptation to rule passively, as a god, should be resisted), then pragmatic.

The only possible guarantee of dynastic strength is a mediation of the dualities in and through the practice of chiefliness. But too

many factors, unforeseen and uncontrolled, supervene; ultimately there are no guarantees. If the attempt to perform kingship has either aborted or not been made, diarchy is a recourse. As a strategy of usurpation, diarchy disrupts the relationship between sanctity and virtue, privilege and responsibility, divinity and humanity, enabling a senior to beat a strategic retreat from the arena of action and its vulnerabilities and/or a junior to cripple that senior by way of celestializing and depoliticizing him. It also reconstitutes the bond between these antitheses (and the task of mediating them in practice) but at a more exemplary site.

In so doing, it produces a “most sacred” king that has no mythic precedent. ‘Aho‘eitu is a monarch, not the Tu‘i Tonga of the diarchic era. Diarchy creates the illusion of unbroken continuity and historyless structure, but it does so in the service of ambitious usurpers. This fiction of unbroken continuity, however, is a problematic dimension of the new actuality. Though diarchy contains within itself the embryo of a renovated monarchy (if it is not already a renovated monarchy), it also inhibits the stabilization of any new regime, for it creates a “submerged aristocracy” (Marcus 1980, 1989) as a latent counterrevolutionary force.

Diarchy inevitably establishes a tension between contradictory negations: the passive element as yet *symbolically* superordinate, the active element *politically* hegemonic. Though Tāufa‘āhau advanced the cause of recentralization in the 19th century, his descendants, still striving to consolidate the Tupou legacy, do so under a cloud of opposition (Marcus 1980). Diarchy inevitably reinstates “the elementary antithesis” (Sahlins 1985: 91) it was designed to dispel. Far from expelling history from the core and exiling it to an innocuous periphery (Valeri this volume), diarchy compounds all the problems of center formation the duality of kingship creates.

Both fragile, diarchy and monarchy are alternating moments of the history the duality of kingship inaugurates. In the monarchic episodes, the two dimensions of kingship are concentrated in the hands of a single person and ability no less than pedigree is the criterion of succession. Diarchy disperses the functions, producing a postmythic para-dynasty of first-born sons, who are *ipso facto* supplanted as the negotiators of chiefly legitimacy. In this alternation, diarchy is the necessary cathartic moment, for it purges the polity of a contaminant and readies it for renewal. But because it fails to combine the two dimensions of kingship in a single person, its foundations are flawed. As in Hawai‘i, so in Tonga: “...the diarchic solution is not durable; the unity of kingship demands the unicity of the king” (Valeri 1985: 94) and “Diarchy can never be

structural, but only a contingent moment in the process of the reconstitution of monarchy” (Valeri this volume). History is thus the constitutive arena (cf. Valeri 1990) within which the Tongan polity searches for the realization of its own political ideals. The polity remains restless, mobile, self-transforming; all centers emerge and are sustained — if they do emerge and if they are sustained — only amidst a flow of events shaped by challenges from the margins and counterchallenges from the center that necessarily embroil the rank and file. Political contestation is endemic.

The ‘Aho’eitu story models this search for the good chief and the just revolution at its heart, for ‘Aho’eitu ascends to the Tu‘i Tongaship as a fully vindicated, fully authorized usurper (Valeri 1989: 229, this volume): a good junior displacing very bad seniors. As the son of a divine father and a human mother, as the sacred but innocent king, he combines genealogical with contractual modes of legitimation, kingship and kinship. All revolutions that justify themselves in terms of the tyrannical character of the ousted regime — the ones of the 15th, 17th, and 19th centuries, for example — despite (or perhaps because of) a symbolic continuity, become Sahlins’ metaphors of a mythical reality (Sahlins 1981) because history, as the ground of kingship’s negotiation, is already mythologized. All stable regimes are located cosmically *under* the *toa* tree, where kingship and the polity-as-cosmos are delivered unto genealogical time.

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## Notes

1. Information culled from the Bott-Spillius Papers (BSP) at the University of Auckland are indexed according to box number, folder number, and page number: for example, 1/1/1 indicates first box, first folder, first page.
2. The Tu‘i Tonga appears also to have been a thaumatergic king. Gifford reports that all official and household servants living in the Tu‘i Tonga’s compound suffered the Tu‘i Tonga to rest his foot on their heads, as a form of *moemoe*. “This was supposed to cure those of this class who were sick” (Gifford 1929: 75).
3. Thomson names these Tamasia and Malofafa (Thomson 1894: 301), but Her Majesty Queen Sālote apparently recalled them as Tamasia and Lofafa (“Ko e Ngaahi Tala ‘oku Kau Kia,” BSP<sub>11/4/</sub>). Gifford lists them as Tamosia and Malofafa (Gifford 1929: 85), as does Valeri (Valeri 1988: 7).
4. According to Churchward, the word for “to assassinate” is *moemoepō* (Churchward 1959: 360). This translates as “night *moemoe*,” which suggests a “dark” *moemoe*, malignant rather than benign.
5. Queen Sālote observed that a chief who does not live among his people has difficulty marshalling support, but the faults of a chief who does live among his people will be readily overlooked (Bott 1958–59, 11: 301–02; see also Marcus 1980: 98–99).
6. Lo‘au is as difficult to pin down in space as in time. Usually Lo‘au is identified as the Tu‘i Ha‘amea, chief of Ha‘amea, a district in Vaha Loto in central Tongatapu (Gifford 1929: 130; H.M. Queen Sālote, “Ko e Pongipongi ‘o e Hingoa,” from Ko e Ngaahi Me‘a mei he Tohi ‘a ‘Ene ‘Afi,” BSP 11/2/2). However, some identify Lo‘au with Ha‘apai and in particular with a district on that island called Ha‘a Lo‘au, “although the people of that district claim no descent from Loau” (Gifford 1929: 130).

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# CHIEFS, GENDER AND HIERARCHY IN NGĀPŪTORU

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The famous male bias has played a prominent role in Polynesian studies. The first observers were male; and their eyes fixed above all on two particular aspects of the society: firstly, on chiefs and warriors, who were seen as the main representatives of the social and political order and whose roles were ethnocentrically interpreted; and, secondly, on women, portrayed (also ethnocentrically) as willingly swimming toward the approaching ships and eagerly giving themselves to the European sailors. “Here Venus is the goddess of hospitality,” claimed Bougainville in his account of his welcome in Tahiti (Bougainville 1772: 228). If the men were viewed as the pillars of society, the women were looked upon as mere objects of desire. While expeditions, empires, and official delegations approached the men, the women were left to the ordinary sailors, who satisfied their erotic needs through them.

The male bias of the expedition era has left its mark upon the anthropology of Polynesian culture in general. Until recently the objects of analysis have been almost exclusively the chiefly system and warriorhood. Polynesian societies were envisioned as organized into conical clans composed of patrilineal segments headed by senior males (see Ralston 1987). This picture was contradicted early on, however. De Bovis wrote of mid-nineteenth-century Tahiti, for example:

Although the woman was reduced to an inferior state, almost in some cases to servitude, and although she was excluded

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from the priesthood and the *marae*, she seemingly carried with herself a superior degree of nobility than that of a male (de Bovis 1980: 21).

Tahitian and Hawaiian women were willing to submit themselves sexually to foreigners not because of desire, however, but because of their own ability to transmit the high rank of the foreigners to their possible descendants (see Sahlins 1985). Viewed from the perspective of rank, women were as essential as men (see e.g. Bott 1981).

The chiefs even, as we very well know, were not always and everywhere men; Polynesian history provides examples of women who became important chiefs (Gunson 1987). The present-day situation is still more confusing. For example, in the southern group of the Cook Islands, a considerable number of the titleholders — along with household heads and the heads of larger kin groups — are women. The local people themselves explain this as the result of European influence. Almost all — especially men of chiefly families — claim that in precontact times, only men could be appointed to chiefly status and women were absolutely excluded. But one is left to wonder how nineteenth-century European society, where women's status was fairly low, could have had such an influence. The training the missionaries offered women in this area was aimed at making women suitable wives for teachers and pastors; and it included Bible studies, domestic arts, child care, and methods of leading women's church activities, but certainly nothing that would prepare women to be chiefs. The question then arises: what in traditional society explains the prominence some females achieved?

## The warrior and the chief

In the examination of male and female roles proper, the analysis of mythic narratives can be dangerous. As Mary Douglas has recently claimed, any one myth can be interpreted in many ways, none of which can be shown to be better than any of the others (Douglas 1987). In the case of Polynesian cultures, however, there is good reason to treat myths as sources for the study of society, for the line between myth and history is not sharply drawn in them. The whole cosmogonic process is usually regarded as a single unfolding, rooted in an undifferentiated *tumu* or source, which produces the various forms of life down to present-day populations. In these

cosmogonic myths, the world of humans remains undifferentiated from the natural order. Rather, a single “sacred history” encompasses both, the whole universe being charted on a single, comprehensive genealogy (see e.g. Valeri 1985; Sahlins 1985; Schrempp 1985).

In the southern group of the Cook Islands, the three islands of ‘Ātiu, Ma‘uke, and Mitiaro form a social unit called Ngāpūtoru. Historically Ngāpūtoru was also a political entity. On these islands there exists a rich oral tradition, which tells about the origin of the islands’ populations. In typical Cook Islands fashion, the narratives are migration myths rather than cosmogonies; but the migration myths have pronounced cosmogonic features. For example, not only do they tell us about the arrival of immigrants from beyond the horizon, but they also account for the origin of society and its basic institutions, including chieftainship. They therefore contain prototypic gender models. The Ma‘uke account for the origin of their island and society in the following way (shortened version):

The story of the beginning of ‘Uke. Avatea married a woman Pōuri and a son, Tangaroa-nui was born to them. He married a woman Kikiravai, and ‘Uke was born to them.

When this son was born a name was not given to him. Tangaroa decided to take this child to his *marae* at Manuka. The name he considered to bestow to the child was Teariki-tini-tini (Chief of thousands). Various foods which were suitable for honouring him were put into the *umu*, but when the oven was opened all the food was uncooked. Tangaroa bestowed a name for that boy according to the events of that day, that is “Opening of Tangaroa’s oven of raw food”. Then he gave the boy to the hands of his *ta‘unga*, so that he may dedicate him to the gods.

In those days many canoes travelled on the Great Blue Ocean. Tangaroa-Nui was one of those who travelled in those days. Among all islands he had visited he had chosen one and that was Ma‘uke. He inspected the land first to know where the womb of the land was. He decided to sail around to the side of the sunset and he looked to the land and saw the womb of the land because the land was open towards the sea. On his way ashore he stepped first on the reef and there were two rocks standing at the mouth of the passage. So he gave these rocks the names Toka-rukuruku and Toka-eaea. He looked at the goodness of the land. After staying on the island for a short time he returned to Avaiki and told his son to look for the island then when he would be grown-up. It will be his son alone who will conquer that island. And he informed his son about the signs on the island for finding the womb of the

land on the side of the sunset.

Now comes 'Uke's history. At this time 'Uke was standing on his own feet. He saw the land red with blood and the tribes at war. This is why he decided to sail over the Ocean with his people and look for an island for them to live on. So the canoe starts the sailing towards the sunrise. Because of a strong current they could not reach the island they were looking for. They turned towards the land in front of the canoe to give the canoe shelter.

This land was Vaerotā. The canoe was seen from the land. The warrior Manava ordered the tribes to prepare for a battle against the people coming from the sea. At this time the canoe has reached the land. Manava welcomed the warrior of the sea by saying that there will be no peace between them, many people will die and he will be but food for Manava's spear.

'Uke introduced himself saying he was son of Tangaroa Nui living on the island of men, and people travelling with him were 380. The battle began. The whole war party of the warrior of Vaerotā, Manava-tū-o-Rongo, was killed. 'Uke saw how the eel of Vaerotā fell and Vaerotā's sky was filled with sorrow when the foundation was smashed and the source and heaven were smashed. 'Uke's staff was a beauty to the open sky.

At this time the winds were favorable to leave Vaerotā. When the sun rose 'Uke told his people that they will sail to Avaiki in front of them and leave Avaiki behind.

They arrived on the side of the rising sun, but they paddled to the side of the sunset looking for the womb of the land by searching for the signs that had been given for 'Uke to recognise the land from the sea, the rocks at the opening of the harbour. These were Toka Rukuruku and Toka Eaea. They arrived at the main passage and a wave carried the canoe ashore.

A woman called te Niva-o-te-ra has come to my hands, said 'Uke, and the sun will move, the moon will move, the stars will move and Tangaroa-iti established the source of this land. While inspecting the island they arrived on the eastern side which people were very satisfied with and the district was named 'Ītaki. When 'Uke turned to the right he saw a place, which was ideal to be turned into a *marae*. He named that *marae* with the name Rangimanuka according to both his birth celebration *marae* in Avaiki as well as the beauty of the place. And when he looked down he saw a stream. This he called with the name Vai-roa, that is very long water. This is its meaning, how long it took for him to find this island so that he could drink water to wash the salty taste from his mouth. When he looked how round the island was and the lack of trouble, he decided that he would not sail the ocean again and

would rest on this island in peace until his death.

During their stay on the island, when he ruled over his people, there were no wars, no trouble, but they lived in peace. This is why he was then called by the name 'Au Ariki, which was Ariki-'Akamoeau (Peacemaking chief). He lived with the woman Te-niva-o-te-ra and six children were born to them, four daughters and two sons.

When these children were born 'Uke thought that he would take off his wife's first name, which was Te-niva-o-te-ra. He then bestowed the second name on her, Te-pua-i-'anga-uta. Meaning: the coming of gods through her.

This is clearly an important narrative. It not only recounts the arrival of the first people to the island, but it also tells of the establishment of the island's first *ariki* title, the title 'Uke. According to the narrative, the title is divinely rooted, since the father of the first holder of the title is Tangaroa. The genealogy traces even further backwards, to Atea and Papa, founders of the entire universe. 'Uke leaves his home in Avaiki in search of a new island to live on because Avaiki was "filled with blood" or at war. Simplified, the narrative's underlying scheme is the famous "lack — lack liquidated", beginning with the original strife and lack of land on Avaiki and ending with peace and land on Ma'uke. The means by which the original conflict is overcome has far-reaching consequences, for these are the very means by which the society is reproduced.

The opening passages of the narrative, which concern the ancestry of the principal actors, introduces the basic dualism of Polynesian cosmology. 'Uke is a descendant of Atea and Pōuri, who represent day and night. Descended from these primeval beings through Tangaroa, 'Uke can clearly claim divine origin. His divinity is further emphasised in the episode recounting how 'Uke was named. It is the gods who eat raw food, and the raw/cooked opposition of the episode corresponds to heaven/earth. The original unity of opposites in Avaiki is not stable, however, for the elements of the duality are eventually dispersed, leading to the expansion of the universe through the exploration and conquest of new lands. In Avaiki "status rivalry" (Goldman 1970) continually spawns conflict and conflict in turn spawns new waves of emigrants. The inability of equals (or near-equals) to coexist peacefully is a general feature of East Polynesian cosmology and has far-reaching implications. One of these reflects on gender roles. In the origin myth, it is a male who leaves the supranormal realm of Avaiki to find not only an island but a wife so that he can found a new society that is historically continuous. The male *toa* (warrior)

coming from the sea finds this woman on land, but she is already married. So the second conflict takes place in which the seagoing warrior has to beat the warrior of the land and take the slain enemy's wife as his own. This conflict again creates further oppositions typical of Polynesian cultures: male/female, sea/land, wife-taker/wife-giver. The correspondence between these binary oppositions inheres in the structure of the text's action, not in the "totemic" principle of the world-view (see Lévi-Strauss 1966: 223), however. This orientation toward action becomes clear if the transformation the central actors undergo in the text is examined. With his newly won wife, 'Uke finds the new land and settles there, and this warrior, now entrusted with land and wife, becomes a chief and peace-maker. Accordingly, a new unity and peace are created in a new place.

The status of the narrative — which is regarded as historically true, despite its mythic themes — provides a clue to its interpretation. Because there is no gap between the mythic and historical components of this narrative, they must be regarded as continuous, the story unfolding, so far as Cook Islanders are concerned, connecting together "the mythical time" and "the real time". The myth does not culminate in a structure and the subsequent history does not simply "stereotypically reproduce" that structure (cf. Sahlins 1985; Valeri, this volume). Instead 'Uke leaves Avaiki and "decides to become a man". The "structure" must be sought in this process itself. In his analysis of Māori cosmogony, Gregg Schrempp has expressed this principle, stating that an inherently temporal formulation, such as the coming-to-be of a cosmogony, can itself possess an underlying form." A genuine rethinking of structuralism would imply more than a recognition of underlying forms, or even repeating underlying forms within the span of the coming-to-be; it would mean learning to view the coming-to-be as form, and as indistinguishable from the 'ongoing' social life" (Schrempp 1985: 33). In order to analyse the way history unfolds and society reproduces itself on Ma'uke, it is also necessary to look at the "structure of action" in this foundation-laying narrative. And the action of basic importance in this narrative is the action of becoming a chief. I am arguing that a chief is a chief not because of any static relationship to his people but by virtue of the way he becomes a chief and behaves. If he does not act according to the script of the cosmic scheme, he simply is not a chief.

Clearly the warrior and the chief in the legend of 'Uke are transformations of the same male figure, both being necessary to establish a new order on a new island. What the warrior is lacking is land and a woman. Significantly in his fight for the female he

symbolically castrates his enemy and claims that “the eel of Vaerotā fell” and his own “staff is a beauty to the open sky.” The warrior’s virility is incomplete, however, because although he is the active transformation of the male figure, he lacks the female component of the reproductive pair — that is, wife and land. After acquiring both of these through warriorlike conquest, the male figure becomes a chief and transforms the initial chaos and emptiness (the missing female element) on Avaiki into a new chiefdom, complete with the female element, on Ma‘uke.

## Genealogy and continuity

But the history of Ma‘uke and even the way history is produced by male and female agents on the island is not explained by the way the island got its first chief and his wife. On the contrary, the legend of ‘Uke leaves the question open. According to the legend, ‘Uke and his wife gave birth to six children, the first four being daughters. Surprisingly enough, there are no traditions connecting the junior sons to the history of the island. So ‘Uke is left on Ma‘uke with his wife and four daughters; and from this genealogical situation begins the history of the island and the further formation of its social structure. Despite the fact that ‘Uke’s two sons disperse in search of “a new land to live on,” leaving behind the daughters, the genealogy of ‘Uke miraculously continues. ‘Uke’s first-born daughter is said to marry Temaru-‘enua-o-Avaiki, who is the son of the killed enemy from Vaerotā, Manava-tu-o-rongo. Marrying her own matrilineal half-brother, Kaitini Ariki is the first female link in the genealogy from ‘Uke onwards.

The second-born daughter, Taramatietoro, then marries Tura from the neighboring island of ‘Ātiu and, according to the information of William Wyatt Gill (1876), gives birth to the population of Ma‘uke and ‘Ātiu alike. This population has a double origin: on Ma‘uke, through an incestuous union between the firstborn daughter and her matrilineal half-brother, and in Ngāpūturu as a whole, through the marriage between the second-born daughter and Tura from ‘Ātiu. Taken together, these two origins have ambiguous implications, for while the one stresses the seniority and autochthonous character of the population of Ma‘uke, the other specifies a relationship between Ma‘uke and ‘Ātiu in which Ma‘uke acts as wife-giver connected to land, and is therefore junior while ‘Ātiu (through its ancestor, Tura) has divine properties and is connected to the heavens. With regard to the contrast



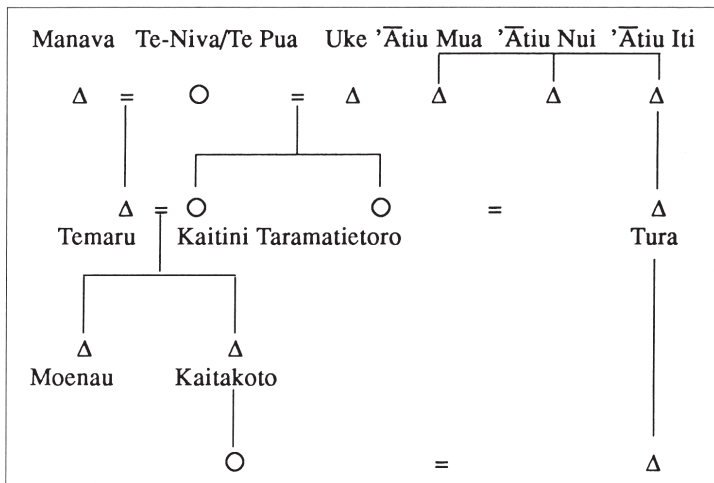


Figure 1. Genealogical connections of Ma'uke and 'Ātiu.

between the area 'Uke settled in, 'Ītaki, and Vaerotā, the island 'Uke conquered in battle and took a wife from, it can also be claimed that 'Ātiu is the masculine, warlike, 'Ītaki side while Ma'uke as a whole represents the feminine qualities of Vaerotā. In being the victor 'Uke is attributed with virility and power, while the island of Vaerotā is feminized as the loser who has then to give wives in tribute to the senior side. This diarchy has its direct counterpart on Ma'uke as well. This island is divided into two halves, distributed between the sons of Kaitini Ariki and her husband Temaru-Enua. These sides are named 'Ītaki and Vaerotā, and 'Ītaki is given to the older son, Moenau, while the younger son, Kaitakoto, receives Vaerotā. Figure 1 depicts the bipolar genealogical structure in its two modes, internal and external.

Though the legend of 'Uke establishes 'Ītaki as senior, chiefly, conqueror, male, and wife-taker, and Vaerotā as junior, loser, female, and wife-giver, in the larger political context, that of Ngāpūturu as a whole, Ma'uke stands as female and wife-giver to other elements within the configuration, although the question of seniority remains problematic. Tura's wife is not the first-born daughter of 'Uke and he himself can be said to be *teina* to 'Uke on two grounds. First, he is the youngest of Tangaroa's three sons and second, he is a generation younger than 'Uke. There also exist two kinds of systematic genealogical relationships: the one internal to Ma'uke and the other external. The first constitutes a closed system, as mentioned, and does not allow for the emergence of history of

Ma'uke society. Not admitting of outside relationships at the level of the system, it is doomed to eternal self-reproduction through incest. From this point of view, the name 'Uke gave his wife after she had given birth is an apt one: Te-pua-i-anga-uta means "the coming of gods through her." Though the gods are not inside the original system — they are, rather, outside it — they are nonetheless requisite for the continuation of life. The metaphoric richness of the name is not exhausted by this translation. *Pua* is "to blossom, bud forth" but it is also the name of a mythical tree whose flowers, when ordered as *'ei (lei)*, attract gods and life but also bring death through its branches, which grab souls and drag them along its path to the other world (see Gill 1876). The name also connotes transcendence of the existing system and the limits of the world-as-constituted — exogamy, for example. 'Uke's daughters are the "blossoms" of the *pua* tree attracting the gods from 'Ātiu and thus connecting Ma'uke not only to the political system of the Ngāpūtoru group but connecting the island with the realm of the gods. With respect to the original warrior's leaving his homeland in Avaiki and the constitution of the political order, the female position is decisive. The female is the mediator between warrior and land, transforming the male into a chief; and the female also mediates between the sacred ruler and his subjects, opening up the closed structure and inaugurating history.

## Ritual relationships in Ngāpūtoru

The relations of authority are manifest in the history of the islands in several ways. On the advent of Europeans, 'Ātiu dominance in Ngāpūtoru group was so marked that the chief of 'Ātiu was held as sole sovereign. According to Ron Crocombe's historical analysis, tire European influence had both consolidating and dissolving effects on 'Ātiu's dominance.

Before the arrival of the missionaries, political, religious, economic and judicial power tended to be less differentiated on 'Ātiu, and to be exerted by the same persons; but the mission period saw major adjustments in chiefly authority. The first was the loss of the islands of Ma'uke and Mitiaro which 'Ātiu had been accustomed to prey upon food and women. Sovereignty over the islands was not relinquished outright; but it had previously been maintained by military action and when this was opposed by L.M.S. agents, the people of Ma'uke stopped rendering tribute (Crocombe 1967: 101).

The “prey for food and women” and “tribute” paid by Ma‘uke and Mitiaro mentioned by Crocombe demand somewhat more precise analysis. What were the grounds and forms for the ‘Ātiu practice of demanding of and women and what kind of tribute did Ma‘uke and Mitiaro actually pay? Although the power relations making this kind of exchange chain possible are apparent, military action alone cannot have maintained it for long. Military conquest is an essential moment in the creation of interrelations, which are under normal conditions reproduced by other, above all ritual, means.

The missionary records — which, in the case of Mitiaro and Ma‘uke, are actually the first European documents — give some hints as to the nature of the ritual relations between the islands of Ngāpūturu. The chief of ‘Ātiu, at that time Rongomatāne Ngāka‘ara, is given in all accounts as the “principal priest” of the god Taringa Nui, who was an object of worship on all three islands (see Williams and Bourne 1823; Williams 1838: 88). There exists very little information about the god named Taringa Nui and the role of the chief of ‘Ātiu as its “principal priest.” In fact, almost all we know is that one of the idols collected by the missionaries and located in the LMS Museum was called Taringa Nui and it was said to be the fishermen’s god (Te Rangi Hiroa 1944). However, the role of the god becomes more clear when it is taken into account that its name not only refers to the “ear” but was also used in connection with *ara* as *taringa-ara*. The meaning of *taringa-ara* was, according to Savage, “the unloosening of, or the cutting off of sin or an offence: denotes: to confess the sins or offenses; to *propitiate*, as in *propitiating* to gods; to *expiate*” (Savage 1980: 356, emphasis mine). On the basis of this information, it is possible to offer a tentative interpretation bearing in mind the custom of *taringa motu* still practiced on Ma‘uke. The rite *taringa motu* is a pig offering compiled from individual household donations. The pigs are gathered together, marked, and slaughtered all at once. The best parts are then given to the *ariki* and *mata‘iapo* and the rest is divided among the commoners. One person has described the present-day custom as follows:

Right now we have to go to the male head of each household. If you have a small pig, you have to cut the right ear. There is a committee to do that for each household. If you and Tara are staying in one home, you will have two, one for you and one for Tara. We have to cut the right ear, no matter what *ngāti* you come from; then you feed the pig. just before New Year’s Day, one New Year’s Eve or in the morning, we have to kill

the pigs and then... there's our meeting house over there. Each home — by that time [New Year's eve] the pig will be that size or bigger than that, depending upon what size it was on the day the committee visited the home and cut the ear. You have to feed that pig until December 31st. Then, early in the morning you kill the pig and cook it in an oven and then bring it over there in the basket — the whole pig. Over there the pig is cut in half. You, the owner, will get one half, and the other half is divided among the chiefs and *mata'iafos* and... other important people on the island. My share, because we couldn't eat that at home, since there are three of us there, must be cut into pieces and shared out to our relatives living in other villages.

This prestation and grand distribution of *taringa motu* is structurally very close to first fruits offerings (see Valeri 1985). However, the Rarotongan rite of “biting the ear” in the installation of an *ariki* or *mata'iafo* suggests that the ear is a metonymy for chiefliness. *Taringa motu* can then be connected to the rituals of installation at large. In the Rarotongan case, the chief to be installed has to bite the ear of a special pig brought to him by his supporters. If he is unable to do this, he is retarded as unsuitable for the title. It may be surmised that biting the ear of the pig signifies the candidate's merit to receive the tribute of the tribe — his willingness, that is, to listen to his subjects, who, in turn, listen and obey him. Only through this mutual listening can he succeed, and “if the king is successful, his reign is legitimate” (Valeri 1985: 211). Ears are thus metonymies of the encompassing unity of chief and people, the way social groups are bound together. Accordingly, ears are symbolically loaded, as is the umbilical cord, which is also the object of complicated ritual practices. These body parts symbolize the two means by which the body social is constructed: through birth and common origin, exemplified by the umbilical cord, and through listening. Listening, in turn, is a two-way practice: the chiefs have to listen to their subjects to be able to fulfill their needs, and the subjects, in turn, have to listen to their chiefs and obey their orders.

In the Tahitian installation ceremony, the offerings are handled in a corresponding way — at least, symbolically. For an heir apparent to the throne, one or more human victims were offered by the priest at the national *marae*, while this rite was performed at the ancestral *marae*. Several human victims were suspended with sen- nit strings strung through the ears, as Oro's fish, as they were hung upon the *toa* tree around Tarahoi for Pomare II, under the direction of the high priest Tua-roa (Henry 1928: 188). These human offerings were bound together through the ears and the usual symbolic

equivalence of fish = man = pig = banana apparent in ritual offerings in general is apparent in the metaphor of Oro's fish. The essential here seems to be not the marking of the ears as a sign of *tapu* restricting the use of the marked species for other uses, but the symbolic "binding together," the aggregation of individual household pig prestations and their symbolic subjugation to the highest authority through the metonymic device of ear cutting. Collectively roasted, the pigs are butchered and the pork redistributed to the people, the chief keeping the first parts. The high chief thus manifests himself as the first man and leader of the collective tribes.

The 'Ātiu custom of getting "tribute" from Ma'uke and Mitiaro can be placed in this ritual context, especially since, in following the orders of the 'Ātiu chief and destroying the idols, the people of Ma'uke and Mitiaro identified Taringa Nui and no other gods as the supreme object of worship in these islands. With certainty it can be established that the chiefs of 'Ātiu received the first-fruit offerings in the beginning of the last century. At the arrival of the missionaries, it was Rongomatāne Ngāka'ara from 'Ātiu who acted as a guide to the missionaries in their cruise among the island group. According to the journal of Williams and Bourne, the people of Mitiaro and Ma'uke were in fact waiting for the arrival of Rongomatāne and preparing for two great ritual feasts, *taupitira* and *takuruua*. These are exactly rituals of first-fruits offerings. Rongomatāne had also given orders to build a house for him on both Ma'uke and Mitiaro for these rituals. As further evidence it can be added that the *marae* system of the whole southern group includes a Marae-O-Rongo on the north-west coast of all the islands and this *marae* was held in the position of "national *marae*," in which all occasions of importance to the whole island were held. This was also the place, where important guests were (and still are) welcomed and where not only 'Uke on his journey from Avaiki but also Ngāka'ara from LMS missionaries landed. From the point of view of the unity of the participating social groups, the first fruits offering and *Taringa motu* mark the gathering and dispersion of the tribes originating from the same *tumu*. This dispersion began with the original emigration out of Avaiki and the subsequent consolidation of larger political units. This dispersion and coming together in collective rituals is symbolized through signs of centrifugality and centripetality deployed in the corresponding ritual apparatus (see e.g. Salmond 1975). Special emphasis is given to the metonymic signs of unity: the cord with which the offerings are bound together, the marking of the ears, which signifies the aggregation of society as a whole. Even in the ritual feasts of *kainga manga*, the

collection and dividing of the food is emphasised and the *manga* actually separates something that is bound together: the tribal totality, each household participating as the contributor of a share. This totality is a combination of differentiated elements in which both the male and the female have their specialize roles.

## Female and the transformation of the hierarchy

As we have seen, a female is involved in every phase of the coming-into-being of a chief and in the building up of the genealogical bias of the political order. Even in mediating the relationship between the sacred ruler and his subjects, the female plays a prominent role. Ritual is usually looked upon as a purely male domain in which females are the objects of rituals, the means of ritual exchange, or even the producers of ritual paraphernalia, which males then alienate (see Valeri 1985). The female role seems to have been essential to ritual life, however; and it still is, even after the conversion to Christianity. The new Christian religion was brought to the island of Ma'uke in such a way as to perpetuate the role of the female mediator. Rongomatāne Ngāka'ara, the chief of 'Ātiu, introduced the religion, and he was married to the daughter of one of the Ma'uke chiefs. The way the Ma'uke church is built provides us with a clear case of how apparent novelty nonetheless perpetuates pre-existing structures. The church can be viewed as a fixed text in Ricoeur's sense (1976). Although it is not possible to know the original intentions of the original builders, it is possible to analyze the interpretations the islanders themselves make of the building. The narratives recounting the construction of the building, as well as the social activities connected with the building, are suggestive. The church is famous for the two distinctive styles of its ends, the pulpit dividing contrasting ends. Tire two ends of the church correspond to the halves of the traditional dual organization, which itself was conceptualized in terms of seniority and gender. One side is elder and male, the other side is junior and female. As in the building of a *mara'e*, so in the building of this church, the pillars of the church were and are of great importance. In building these pillars, each chief selected a tree from the forest. The importance of the pillars is emphasised in information given by Gill and obtained from Tinomana Ariki:

The principal thing of importance... were the posts of the house... When prepared the posts were brought, with great

ceremony, to the spot of the *mará'e*. Wide and deep pits were then dug, into which native cloth... and other articles were thrown. Then the posts were then erected by the priest, and placed with great care on those articles while the assembled crowd would shout the name of the god to whom the *mará'e* was dedicated. On some occasions one or more men were buried alive in the pit of the posts as an act of propitiation. (LMS, SSL, Gill, April 10th, 1845).

The narratives recounting the construction of the work provide elaborate details of the great ceremony with which the posts were brought from the forest to the building site. Significantly enough, the main theme in these narratives is the competition among the chiefs over the gender implications of certain architectural features. This was true particularly of the posts, but it was also true of the rafters of the roof. These were joined in such a way that neither end could acquire gender connotations. Neither side could then claim masculine superiority. Even so, what is most striking about the building is the incongruity of its ends, as if the building were a compound of two entirely different structures.

The significant differentiation connected to the hierarchical positioning of the social units seem to be eliminated from the interior of the church. The total transformation of the symbolic values of the duality become apparent only after looking at the cult grounds as whole. Beyond the church itself, the entire churchyard forms a complicated system of signs. At its foundation, the structure is clearly that of the traditional *mará'e*. The church itself is facing the sunset in the middle of the inland village, Oiretumu. Opposite the church on the other end of the yard at a distance of 200 meters lies the meetinghouse. The churchyard is surrounded by an upraised coral path 2 meters wide and about 70 centimetres high. The path leads from the meetinghouse to the church on both sides of the yard and forms a completely closed quadrangle. The churchyard must be analyzed as a whole, for the society in its totality is expressed in its structure. The path surrounding the churchyard is differentiated into sacred and secular elements in recognition of the multiple components of the society. Each half of the society has its own sides, and doors its members approach and enter the church on different sides as they pass from meeting house to church. But also the smaller social units have their signs of identity along the path surrounding the churchyard as well. Every sub-segment of the society has its own ramp to the upraised coral path. The churchyard of Ma'uke thus provides a map of society that, in its fixity, belies the underlying conflict engendered by the ambiguity in status between the two sides. Like the church itself,



which denies the ambiguity in denying the hierarchy, the churchyard is constituted as a solution to this underlying conflict, for the actors representing either path are separated as well as joined through its structure.

The two paths leading from the meetinghouse to the church pass through different gates. The path of the 'Ītaki side passes under two stone pillars 4 meters in height, and the path of Vaerotā passes under an arched stone gate. These stone structures are imbued with their own meanings, which are expressed in narratives, *pe'e* songs, etc. There is no artificial landmark on Ma'uke that does not have its historical traditions. So, too, with these gates. The path itself is called Takarakei, and the *pe'e* concerning the pillars tells about decorations of the church (*rakei* = decoration):

*Topa atu ra taku vāvia ki Tākaraķei  
karo atu ra au i ngā va'ine Peratāne  
nō tō raua kāka'u, 'akaperepere'ia  
titiro atu taku mata ki Ziona  
white paint, blue paint, yellow paint and green paint  
titiro roa atu ki Peritāne.*

(My feet have stepped on Takarakei  
then I looked at two women from Britain  
these two treasured dresses  
as I gazed at Ziona  
white paint, blue paint, yellow paint and green paint  
looking all the way to Britain.)

The posts are said to represent “two beautiful ladies from London, with dresses... who brought the paints with which the church is decorated”. The southern gate has three *ariki* on top of it instead. Taken together these posts represent the constituent elements of a new order. Were the female element eliminated entirely, Ma'uke society would lose its gender equilibrium and the basic and necessary sexual opposition for reproduction. As already noted, the female element has always functioned internally and externally, and it is in and through the female element that Ma'uke society has acquired its dynamics. So, also, in the nineteenth century, with missionization and conversion. Through the Ma'uke church, the female element predating Christianity is now absorbed within the new religion; for the two ladies of the *pe'e* are said to be the wives of two English missionaries who visited Ma'uke in the last century. Here, then, is a solution. Once again a feminine element intervenes between the sacred and Ma'uke chiefs, not just in myth but in



concrete historical artifact. But the female here is no longer the daughter who moves as tribute to 'Ātiu, as the mother of the heir to the 'Ātiu title, but English ladies. This means two things. First, Christianity was indigenized, brought within the symbolic fold of the traditional cosmology and social order. The cosmic aspect of the position of missionaries wives derives from the female's location between a male-identified humanity and a more undifferentiated divine sphere. In this way, through the female figures in the churchyard, the Ma'ukeans symbolically severed their ties with 'Ātiu. In indigenizing the English ladies, they transcended the previous political structure and created a new one. As symbols, the English ladies constitute a new departure, offering a new solution to the problem of structural ambivalence. The new religion opened up the world of the Ma'ukeans to new points of external attachment, here symbolized by these foreign ladies, who nonetheless had been fully incorporated into Ma'uke society. The female figures are still positioned between sacred and chiefs, and their role is said to be a "decorative" one. Through their decorative function, they attract the god of Christianity but not the 'Ātuan chiefs. The symbolic prototype of womanhood decorates the churchyard and through her decorations it is possible to see "all the way to Great Britain" and thus open the horizon and world to Ma'uke history. In this transformation, however, the autonomy Ma'uke acquired from the 'Ātiu domination was transformed into dependency on another "foreign" power; and here the efficacy of signs, deployed in "structures of the conjuncture" (Sahlins 1981) and under modified historical circumstances (Sahlins 1985:ix), comes into play. Acquiring autonomy from 'Ātiu, Ma'uke courted the hegemony of Western ideologies.

## Back to the problem: the female chiefs

As mediators between a bounded structure and what lay beyond it — be it political authority, supranormal spheres, or Western culture-bearers — the female played a decisive role. But they always did so as means to a male-devised end, whether as means of exchange, links in male-deployed genealogies, etc. But they were not only passive objects. They also acted as chiefs, sometimes even as warriors. This poses a paradox, for the structural position of women, cosmic in nature, does not allow for female chieftaincy. On the contrary, the coming-into-being of a chief requires the conquest and subordination of actual women. Men come to power through

women and the land that attaches to them. Women are vehicles for male ambition.

What is important here is a gendered category and not particular males and females. Thus, whole social groups and islands can be regarded as “warriors” or as “females.” Taken together, at whatever level and as instances of a category rather than as actual historical actors and actresses, these produce (reproduce) chiefs. Actual women who have historically achieved chieftaincy do so as sociological males, not as females, for, while women are a means to the end of chieftaincy, chieftaincy is still gendered as male. But becoming male for a female is as possible as becoming female is for a male, just add the causative prefix *‘aka* and act like one.

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# CLASS AND SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION IN OCEANIA\*

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The rise of cognitive anthropology has recently stimulated a growing interest in intercultural variation. However, the research is often based on individual factors. Meanwhile the intercultural variation based on some social factors, especially the division of a society into social groups and strata, seems to be more significant. Separate social groups and strata endowed with various ranks and statuses already appeared at the dawn of history when the socioeconomic classes were developing. Hence that was also the time when various distinct social subcultures were emerging.

Before an analysis can be made of these processes, it is necessary to deal with some theoretical issues concerning the internal differentiation of ethnic culture.<sup>1</sup> Some Soviet scholars conceptually divide culture in two related ways. The first is determined by the principle which claims that each cultural form includes both productive and reproductive activities (technic-technological aspects, according to M. S. Kagan) and the objectivized results of such activities (Markaryan 1973; Kagan 1974). The second one has

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\* When the republication was discussed, the author noted that there was a mistake in the original title. The correct title should have been: "Culture and Social Differentiation in Oceania." The author noted that this is important, because the core idea was to study how social differentiation is reflected by culture. (Eds.)

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to do with various real cultural forms: production culture, consumption culture, interaction culture (or etiquette), socionormative culture, physical culture, artistic culture and so on. It seems quite evident that the emerging social differentiation affected distinct forms of ethnic culture rather differently. In order to understand this process, an extensive survey of the ethnic cultures of New Guinea, Melanesia and Polynesia has been conducted.

Incipient social differentiation was revealed in New Guinea and some Melanesian regions, where it was closely connected with the coming of the so called big-men, the respected commoners' leaders. Here I use the term "big man" in the broad sense of the word in spite of Godelier's proposal (Godelier 1982) to preserve it only for informal leadership directly connected with material wealth. Such an approach seems to enlighten the evolutionary process leading to the big man as messenger (in Burridge's sense). In this perspective the latter appears not as a strict regional variant but as an evolutionary stage, which can be investigated not only in Melanesia, but in other different parts of the world, too. Big-man status and prestige were deeply rooted in everyday activities. His authority rested on oratorical, war-like, magical, technical and other important skills. However, personal participation in food production and the organization of communal activities was often the main road to renown. A big-man's influence and authority were determined by the size of his social network, i.e. they directly depended on the number of his following (kin relatives, affines, friends). Polygyny, hospitality, regular participation in gift exchanges and sponsoring feasts, frequent visits to other communities, aid to his agnates in collecting bride-price and the fulfillment of some other obligations served to strengthen and extend the effective range of the big-man social network. Therefore only a wealthy big man was able to display the generosity expected of him (Burridge 1975; Chowning 1979).

Deviations from the shared model were patterned according to the prosperity of any given society. Physical strength, aggressiveness, military skill and, less frequently, magical and oratorical abilities were the main attributes required to become a prominent leader in some impoverished societies of the New Guinea Highlands, the role of material wealth being only secondary. For instance, the status of a Maring big man was derived from magical strength, secret ritual knowledge and the keeping of the sacred stones. A big man intercommunicated regularly with the Fight Ancestor Spirits and played an important role in military actions and gift exchanges (Lowman-Vayda 1973). Among the

Tairora of the Eastern Highlands a big man kept his outstanding position due to his physical strength, aggressiveness, ability to terrify the commoners and military success.

There were no essential sociocultural differences between a big man and ordinary folk in the societies in question. According to J. Watson (1973: 273),

”The symbols of superordination are not well developed in Tairora life... There are no sharp differences of housing, clothing, utensils — although there may be some of diet. There are no status terms — other than those like ‘strong man’ — to match the terms of some Melanesian societies. There is no visible inheritance of superordinate status other than that which may accompany the differentiation of an older, resident sib from the members of an immigrant group whose outside origin is still remembered. Nevertheless among individual men there is a considerable range of behavior appropriate to the expression and the acknowledgement of prowess and strength ...”

J. Watson gave a detailed description of the behavior of a mighty Tairora big man, called Matoto, and other commoners. Matoto’s authority and the fear of him were so great that in his presence the commoners moved slowly, kept their eyes averted or on the ground and sometimes spoke with lowered voices. Conversely Matoto himself stood out by his imperious and proud bearing and threatened violence to enforce his demands on the ordinary people.

In the more developed societies of the Central and Western Highlands of New Guinea big man status was connected more with material wealth, the ability to speak eloquently and the sponsoring of feasts and gift exchanges. At the meetings the prominent orators were singled out among the others by their behavior and manner of speaking; moreover the style of talking was frequently of more importance than the words themselves. The most respected were those orators who were able to speak long before giving their ultimate opinion. The experienced orator was a man of fact, he could take the characters of his opponents into account and was equipped with vital knowledge of the clans’ histories and their interrelationships. Usually the big man in question made a speech at the end of a discussion when all the points of view had already been expressed and he could present the majority’s opinion instead of his own, hence increasing his authority. Among the Melpa the role of oratory was so great that a man could not claim the big man status if he possessed all the required qualities but one — the ability to speak (Strathern 1971, 1975).

The big men in question distinguished themselves from the commoners particularly by their behavior, and in some societies special rules had to be followed (special verbal expressions among the Dani) to make contact with them. However, local big men already had some unique features in their material culture. For instance, unlike ordinary houses, the Kapauka big man's habitats were large and multi-roomed. Besides, only the big men possessed certain precious adornments and bags of a particular type (Pospisil 1963: 272, 275, 276). The magnificent ceremonial dress of the Melpa big men differed from the commoners' both in quantity and quality. Here only a big man wore a pendant (*omak*) of bamboo sticks providing a record of successful exchanges (Gitlow 1966: 83–85; Brandewie 1971: 205–07).

Ancestor cult, known almost everywhere in the New Guinea Highlands, focused on worshiping most of all the late big men's spirits. When a big man died, care was traditionally taken to ensure the preservation of his skull and bones, which afforded their possessors strength and security. The skulls of the late big men were dug out and replaced in special shrines. The big man burial practice was like that of the commoners but the mortuary rites were on a larger scale. Big men were buried with most of their personal ornaments only in a few instances (among the Kuma) (Reay 1959). And only among the Kapauka were their bodies occasionally mummified (Pospisil 1963: 265).

The Papuans of the most prosperous Highland societies believed that the big men's spirits also dominated in after-life. Therefore the commoners treated them with great respect and appealed to them on behalf of the clan's prosperity.

It seems of great importance that a big man was allowed to ignore the traditional norms, and the more authority a big man had, the more resolute he was while violating the acknowledged custom and moral order.

Big man status was not inherited and the educational system was the same throughout the New Guinea Highlands. However, the big man system prompted Papuans to instill aggression and bravery into boys from an early age.

Hence the emergence of the big man system led to the incipient social differentiation of the single shared ethnic culture. At the beginning the process touched but a few cultural domains. It was only within the technic-technological (behavior, etiquette) and ritual (ancestor cult) ones that social differentiation became visible. Some socio-cultural distinctions appeared rather early in ceremonial life in the form of high material status symbols (adornment, clothing). Polygyny and some food taboos were

additional features of the emerging elite subculture. The big man activity led to changes in the socio-normative culture: it eased the acknowledged customs and opened the way to new social relations, while violating the established moral order. Finally, the big men were broad-minded and had fairly extensive environmental and social knowledge, especially of history, mythology, traditions etc.

In Melanesia the big man subculture was of almost the same character as in New Guinea, but more complex, and in some places the subculture connected with the real chiefs came into being instead of it. Some Solomon Island societies serve as an example. The existence of the secret men's clubs with their hierarchy and the appearance of the prestigious exotic shell valuables were distinct features of many local ethnic cultures. Everywhere only the wealthy men regularly participating in gift transactions and sponsoring feasts were vested with real authority, although the high status was hereditary in some places (among the Rugara of Bougainville). A considerable food surplus was required to fulfill these onerous responsibilities and only an industrious individual could become a leader. However, tillage of large plots was not possible without additional labor, and a successful man had many dependents who worked so he could present food and valuables to affines and rivals. Moreover, in some societies (among the Siuai of Bougainville) the leaders were already exempt from particularly hard kinds of manual labor (Oliver 1955, 1973).

Personal bravery was not an intimate leader's characteristic; he was just a leader who initiated war and head hunting. To keep their high social status the leaders had to be favored by their ancestors or some other demons, propitiating them through regular ritual sacrifices. The leaders themselves were conceived to have some magical strength, bringing success. As in New Guinea, the most powerful ancestor spirits were considered to be those of the late big men. The emerging trend towards high status inheritance had ideological roots in the folk belief that these ancestor spirits primarily supported their direct descendants (Oliver 1955; Ross 1973; Scheffler 1965).

The leaders were rather influential, and their opinions earned great respect at communal meetings. However, as in New Guinea, the local leaders were those who instigated activities rather than those who commanded and administrated. Therefore they had to be people of outstanding oratorical experience.

The emergence of hereditary high status succession strengthened an interest in genealogical knowledge. The most knowledgeable were the ambitious individuals because skillful manipulation of genealogical traditions was an effective way to gain high social



position. It does not appear to be a coincidence that big men were the best experts in their own and neighboring clans' genealogies and histories on Choiseul Island. While conducting politics they benefited from this extant knowledge (Scheffler 1965: 67).

As in New Guinea, the leaders were not necessarily subject to the rules which governed the commoners. One who abused his power, however, could be disposed of by force or even killed. At the same time, through their control of the male cult, the big men also had an important role in the maintenance of law and order.

As a rule, the leaders fulfilled their responsibilities themselves, though elsewhere they had some assistants (executors, sorcerers, messengers).

In everyday life the leaders distinguished themselves especially by their behavior. But unlike in New Guinea, the corresponding etiquette was rather complex: the commoners avoided touching the leaders, spoke to them only at their signals, sometimes glorified them in their presence, and so on.

Apart from some cultural variations alluded to above, the leadership had rather weak expressions in the ethnic culture. The leaders' houses were usually larger, and the polygynical leaders frequently possessed more than one house. When pork was distributed, the leaders usually received the best cuts of meat, and the first fruits of the new harvest were brought to them elsewhere. An ambitious Siuai man had to sponsor the building of a new clubhouse and make regular feastings in honor of the guardian spirit (Oliver 1955: 372-77; Oliver 1973: 282, 283). It was the leader who kept the prestige clan's valuables and disposed of them on Choiseul Island (Scheffler 1965: 122). On Guadalcanal Island, where the prestige valuables fell into the category of personal property, a leader had to give them up by burying them deep in the jungle; otherwise he would lose all his authority (Hogbin, 1964: 70).

In Guadalcanal a wealthy man engaged dancers and singers to participate in communal ceremonies, hence promoting the development of music and dance.

The leaders' interments were always distinguished by their richness. Sometimes they were arranged in special places or by special rite. The big men's skulls and bones were everywhere endowed with great magical strength. According to local beliefs, the big man's spirits lived more happily in the after-world than the commoners'.

The education of the big men's and commoners' children had no sharp differences. However, the rites of passage were sometimes more elaborate for the former. "The son or other close kinsman of a big man was likely to start off with many advantages ranging from

special attention on ceremonial occasions to education and inherited wealth" (Chowning 1979: 70). But as in New Guinea, individual personality and ability were ultimately of the most importance. The education of the elite was exceptionally complex on San Cristobal. However, unlike other Solomon Islands, the hereditary status succession dominated there; real chiefs existed and an elite subculture developed (Fox 1924).

Hereditary chieftainship existed in the Trobriand Islands, among the Rugara of Bougainville, in the Southern New Hebrides and in some other places in Melanesia. Throughout North-Western and Central Melanesia the chiefs co-existed with the leaders of achieved status, and sometimes rivalry developed between them.

These chiefs and leaders were not distinguished from each other by their social functions and cultural features. In both cases they had to carry out regular gift exchanges and organize communal labor and entertainment. The range of their power was closely connected with the prestige wealth they possessed. Both chiefs and leaders distinguished themselves by various cultural traits, especially by the size and quantity of their houses, ceremonial clothing, prestige personal belongings, some food customs (only the elite had the right to drink kava and to practice ritual cannibalism in the Southern New Hebrides), and, of course, by behavior. The interaction between people of high status and commoners was patterned according to the complex rules of conduct.

Especially fractioned cultural differentiation was disclosed in the Northern New Hebrides, where it was linked with the developed rank systems. Each rank had its own section in the men's house, its own plots, signs of ownership, ritual painting, adornments, etc. (Rivers 1914, 1: 61-63; Layard 1928: 186-89; Deschamps, Guiart 1957: 234, 235). The development of the rituals linked with the rank systems influenced the artistic and musical-choreographical cultural domains: the various ceremonies required the production of masks and statues, the building of mud or stone monuments, the performance of singers and dancers. In The New Hebrides the chiefs and big men had more power than in the Solomon Islands. In some places they were the ones who made crucial decisions, and community meetings became either fictitious or completely disappeared. Sometimes the chiefs had assistants and servants, and their plots were tilled by the commoners.

The after-world was believed to consist of two parts: for the good (wealthy and high-esteemed men) and for the bad (commoners). Some people thought that the spirits of those who had not sacrificed pigs could not get to the after-world at all and wandered around the settlement, bothering its residents.

Taking all these facts into consideration, the conclusion can be drawn that the social subcultures were developing primarily along the line of increasing ritual activities, resulting in particular in the emergence of the secret men's societies (Duke of Yorks, New Britain, Northern New Hebrides, Banks Islands and so on). The material peculiarities of the leaders' subculture were accumulated and developed only in the context of those rituals. However, in ordinary life their subculture was distinguished from that of the commoners by only a few traits (house size, etc.). The development of the potlatch-like feasts and exchanges led to the appearance of the special prestige wealth category, which was at the leaders' disposal. The sociocultural evolution tended to the formation of the executive and compulsory staff, the leaders monopolized the right to make decisions, and, the role of communal meetings diminished. Meanwhile the leaders became freed from heavy manual labor, and the etiquette connected with them became extremely complicated. The leaders' role increased in the intellectual cultural domain: being the most knowledgeable people, it was believed that they had mystical strength derived from the supernatural world. The big man spirit cult reached its apogee. The education of the future leaders required more attention; the role of hereditary succession increased and, accordingly, interest in the genealogies grew. The perfection and complication of the artistic cultural domain, bound with the big men directly or through the entertainment they sponsored, ran parallel with the processes alluded to above.

Analysis reveals that under the evolved leadership the ascribed status role tended to increase. This process led to the emergence of a hereditary elite which, by its subculture and social status, was in its primary form not unlike the leaders with achieved status. In this sense it would be inappropriate to oppose Melanesian societies, managed by the big men, and Polynesian ones, ruled by the chiefs, so forcefully as has been done by M. Sahlins (Sahlins 1963). More probably there was a dine between these types of political systems.

The process in question ran much further in South-Eastern Melanesia and some Polynesian regions (Samoa, Tonga, Society Islands, Hawai'i), where the domination of the hereditary succession called for the tendency of endogamy among the elite and caused the emergence of the incipient cast system (Guiart 1963; Hocart 1929; Oliver 1974; Stair 1897; Williamson 1924; Ellis 1831; Sahlins 1958). The processes culminated in the ultimate separation of the high status subculture, now expressed practically in every cultural domain. The formation of the elite consumption culture terminated only in the chiefdoms. The chiefs' houses were distinguished not only by size, but by location, construction and ornamentation. The

chief's household, including a number of wives, relatives and retainers, usually occupied the whole ward, and the chief's settlement stood out by its size and plan. It was not difficult to recognize the aristocrats by their clothing, headdress, adornments, tattoos, insignia of office (staff, fly flap, etc.) and, sometimes, by their hair style. Everywhere the elite diet was more balanced than that of the commoners: the chiefs ate dogs, pork and fish more regularly; they always received the best pieces of meat, and some kinds of food (for instance, turtle) were taboo for the general public in some regions. There were artificial fishponds in Hawai'i, where specialists bred fish for the chiefs' needs (Kikuchi 1976). The elite enjoyed the privilege of kava drinking. In some regions it used special dinner-sets.

The elite reproduction culture also had some peculiarities. High status persons tended to look for marriage partners in their own social habitat. This resulted in distinct intertribal marriage circles, based not upon ethnic, but social principles. Conversely, the commoners usually married inside their settlements, the latter being the basis for tribal endogamy.

The complexity of the chiefs' subculture and the growth of the social separation each required a special mechanism for intergenerational culture transmission: formal education, accompanied by teachers and actual schools for the elite, arose in some more evolved chiefdoms (Handy 1965).

The evolution of socio-political culture was mirrored in the further development of the chiefdom machinery, the increasingly numerous attendants and the despotic trends among the rulers. There were a number of hierarchical chiefs' categories in the most developed chiefdoms. Although everywhere the paramount chiefs were the initiators of wars and took an active part in ritual life, the warchief's and priest's offices were separated from that of a hereditary chief. The Fijian chiefs held such a sanctity that they were freed from secular and religious executive power (Thompson 1968: 61–62, Hocart 1952: 34). This trend took a step further in Tonga, where the paramount sacred chief, Tui Tonga, lost all genuine power. Public speeches displaying deep historical and mythological knowledge continued to be one of the important administrative functions. In New Caledonia these were made by the chiefs themselves, and the best examples of their oratorical art served for the young chiefs' education (Rau 1944: 57–59). However, in some regions the high chiefs were represented on public occasions by staff orators.

Hence the chiefs of the most evolved chiefdoms had a huge staff of assistants, managers and other attendants who were responsible

for various activities both in the chieftdom and in the chief's household. Besides the categories enumerated above, there were treasures, cooks, messengers, guards and so on. A council of nobles made decisions on all crucial problems, but sometimes the chiefs had great despotic power and changed the social rules and customs at will. The latter was a model for emulation by the retainers and servants and the order, dominated at the chief's court, was treated as "moral degradation" and "depravity" by the commoners. Actually it was a process of rejecting traditional customs which hindered further evolution, although it frequently took rather ugly forms, scaring the commoners away and making them conserve the traditional way of life.

The South-Eastern Melanesian and Polynesian chiefs were frequently exempt from agricultural labor at the commoners' expense. The latter were obliged to provide the chiefs with food in Hawai'i. Those who were slack in doing such work were expelled from their lands or even put to death (Malo 1951: 61). Unlike agriculture, some handicrafts were prestigious. Canoe-building, tapa production and whale tooth cutting were exceptionally elite occupations in Tonga.

Some kinds of sports and games were reserved mainly for the elite; archery in Tahiti, some kinds of hunting in Tonga and Hawai'i, cock fighting in Hawai'i, and so on.

Travelling a lot and participating in intertribal relations, the aristocracy had a wider mental outlook and intellectual interests than the ordinary folk. The former displayed deep knowledge of geography, military issues, history, mythology, ritual and ceremonial practice. The Polynesian elite tended to monopolize this kind of knowledge and keep it secret from the commoners. The genealogical traditions were kept secret, especially, serving as an important means of struggling for power.

The aristocratic concept was closely bound to one of supernatural "mana" power and stated that "rulers, chiefs and distinguished persons generally differ from the common people in the fundamental sense that they are believed to have been selected and endowed with a special quality of the highest worth" (Goldman 1970: 11).

The chief's personality was considered sacred, as was everything he touched. Therefore, so as not to step on the ground, the chiefs were carried in litters (in Tonga, Hawai'i, Samoa) or astride the shoulders of special retainers (Tahiti). The chief's etiquette was particularly complex in such conditions: elaborate rules were worked out for behavior in the chief's attendance or treatment of his personal property; one had to adopt a special method of speech

or form of address when speaking to a chief or about him (“chief’s language”).

After-life was imagined as reflecting the present state of social affairs. Almost everywhere the chiefs’ spirits were supposed to attain paradise, becoming deities. The poor commoners who could not pay the priest had a rather miserable afterlife in a kind of limbo. On Tonga the commoners’ souls, unlike those of the elite, were believed to perish at death. Everywhere religion supported the aristocracy, pointing out its closeness to divine descent. Most of the rituals and mysteries, consecrated to the supreme deities, were kept secret by the priests from the ordinary folk. The religious ideology even tried to found a hereditary status succession: for instance, on Fiji a violation of the order in question was perceived as the reason for a crop failure.

The high status individual’s outstanding position both in life and after death was pointed out in mortuary rites, distinguished from those of the commoners both in quantity and quality. Commoners’ corpses were bound and buried under the house floor, in the garden or cave, almost without any grave goods on Samoa, Tahiti and Hawaii. However, the chiefs’ interments were arranged in stone vaults, or huge stone monuments were set up above graves. Chiefs’ burials could be recognized by the richness of the burial equipment. Their bodies were subject to some preservative treatment and in some cases they were actually embalmed. The relatives dug out the chiefs’ skulls and bones after the decay was completed, and kept them in special shrines.

The rise of chieftainship stimulated the further evolution of the artistic cultural domain. Dancing and singing performances involving professional actors, the development of poetry, the erection of monumental buildings and statues, the perfection of other artistic forms were directly or indirectly connected with the chiefs’ activities.

To sum up, the origin of chiefdom was a crucial point in the process of ethnic culture social differentiation. Socio-cultural distinctions were expressed slightly and only in a few cultural domains of the typologically early cultural complexes connected with the big man. And only with the chiefdoms did the high status subculture first become definable as a fully distinct entity.

Both socio-political systems promoted the long-distance exchange of prestige valuables. But if the distribution of these items under the big man system conditions depended primarily on the distance from the place of their production, then only the chief’s settlements, or “central places” in archaeological terms, were supplied with them in the chiefdoms. The archaeologists

discovered these very distinctions in the Near East between the obsidian supplying zones in the Early Neolithic, on the one hand, and the Later Neolithic and Chalcolithic, on the other hand (Renfrew and Dixon 1976).

The implication of this analysis is that it is necessary to correct some points in the methodology of Melanesian and Polynesian ethnic culture studies, because evidence of ordinary folk culture is inappropriate for the description of elite culture, and vice versa (Butinov 1985: 207, 208). The marshalled data put the investigation of the social differentiation process in a new perspective, particularly concerning the interpretation of pre-historic cultural frontiers. Undoubtedly the Skythic animal style area in Eurasia or the Hopewellian interaction sphere in the American Mid-West mirrored the intertribal spread of the elite prestige valuables, while there were a number of separate ethnic cultures connected with ordinary folk within each of them. Meanwhile this line of research has its limits because it may be virtually impossible to discern the evolved big man system and early chiefdom by their cultural features.

## Notes

1. This paper is a shortened version of the author's article published as "Klassoobrazovaniye i differentsiatsiya kul'tury (po okeanijskim etnografitscheskim materialam)" / Class formation and culture differentiation (according to Oceanic ethnography). — In: *Etnografitsheskiye issledovaniya razvitiya kul'tury*. Ed. by A. I. Pershitz, N. B. Ter-Akopian: p. 64–122. Moscow; Nauka, 1985.



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# NEW LESSONS FROM OLD SHELLS: Changing Perspectives On The *Kula*

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Anthropology's project, in Western thought, has been to represent Otherness, as a counterpoint to and commentary on the civilization of its time.<sup>1</sup> "Primitive societies" were in the nineteenth century represented as evolutionarily prior, and inferior, to European society.<sup>2</sup> The rise of British functionalist social anthropology and American cultural anthropology led to rejection of the "conjectural history" and smug ethnocentrism of nineteenth-century evolutionism; yet it preserved the image of a world of "primitive societies." Anthropology's task remained squarely Orientalist, in Said's (1978, 1985) sense: to represent radical Alterity to, and provide philosophical commentary on, the West.

Anthropological discourse, typifying, essentializing, and exotizing the "primitive" world, has produced a series of quintessential images of Otherness. From Mead's adolescent Samoan girls to Chagnon's fierce Yanomamö, anthropology's key images of radical Alterity as commentaries on Ourselves and a Human Nature our discipline has simultaneously confirmed and denied have been instilled in students and consumed by an eager public. (In the past twenty years, Alterity has become even more radical, as chimpanzees and gorillas have become our Others and Ourselves, fur clad.)

One of anthropology's most compelling and influential and enduring images of Otherness, created both by Malinowski's rhetorical power and the sheer fascination they themselves

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engender, has been the *kula* partners of the Melanesian Massim, passionately engaged in trading useless armshells for useless necklaces, and then passing them on to other partners. Malinowski saw in the *kula* lessons for the social science of his time, as well as popular stereotypes. He sent his Trobriand *kula* participants and magicians off to do battle with *Homo oeconomicus* and other imagined universal humans of his day. Malinowski saw profound importance in the sense, and non-sense, of the endless exchange of armshells for necklaces, in the meanings of the meaningless, the value of the worthless.

Through decades when anthropology's fashions have changed, and what there ever was of a "primitive" world has been overturned, engulfed, obliterated, the fascination of the *kula* has endured. Indeed, this fascination has been a lure helping to attract further generations of fieldworkers to Malinowski's Trobriands and other islands of the *kula* "ring." The new evidence, presented in international conferences on Massim exchange and a major volume (Leach and Leach 1983) and comprehensive bibliography (Macintyre 1983b), has greatly expanded and enriched ethnographic knowledge of the area. However, partly because the original image was so compelling, and partly because the new evidence has so far (for a number of reasons<sup>3</sup>) attained limited diffusion within the anthropological community and beyond, the changing picture of Massim exchange has not displaced the classic image.

Assessing the new evidence, I will suggest that the emerging picture has important implications not only for our understanding of the region and the phenomenon, but for the way we think about Alterity, about "primitive society" a world that never existed<sup>4</sup> and about anthropology's Orientalist project of representing radical cultural difference to the West (Said 1978, 1985, 1987; Keesing n.d.).

## Problems in the classic model

Some of the old questions that puzzled Malinowski and those who pored over *Argonauts* have been answered; but a host of new questions have risen in their place.

The *kula*, as Malinowski saw it from his vantage point in the Trobriands, was a system in which, around islands roughly arranged in a giant ring (whose inhabitants spoke different languages, had different cultural traditions), partners exchanged armshells for necklaces. You got necklaces from partners in

communities to your right, as you faced the middle of the giant ring of islands; and you gave them to partners on your left. In return, you eventually got pairs of armshells from partners on your left to whom you had given necklaces; and you gave them to partners on your right from whom you had received necklaces all subject to an elaborate etiquette and carried out on dramatic communal expeditions by fleets of canoes whose occupants, at once in competition and cooperation with one another, braved the dangers of flying witches and treacherous seas. The armshells and necklaces went around and around, the armshells counterclockwise, the necklaces clockwise. The most important valuables, with names and known histories, gained fame as they passed through the hands of important men. These men had many partners, in each direction; lesser men had few, or took no part in the *kula*. You tried to get the best, most important, armshells you could, using magic and where necessary trickery to attract them. But once you got them, they were of no use except as tokens of your renown, which you passed on to your partners. It was a game that had no beginning, no end; and seemingly no point, except insofar as all games have an artificially constructed point, at once meaningful in the terms of the game and meaningless outside them. Yet in this *kula* game reputations were made and lost; enormous efforts were expended, dire dangers faced, to play the game across hostile seas with partners in alien communities.

What, then, were the problems in “The *Kula*” as described by Malinowski? There were questions of how such a system could have ever been created, how such a game could have been invented, with rules spanning boundaries of language, culture, and political community: but Malinowski’s warning against speculative culture history pushed this question under a rug from which it has protruded tantalizingly through the decades. *Kula* exchange lived in the timeless, endlessly self-perpetuating realm of functionalist explanation. But what functions did it then serve? Was *kula* exchange a kind of regional peace pact, a substitute for war? Was the barter of pottery, greenstone, and other raw materials and craft goods in which various islands and communities specialized a barter fraught with undignified haggling that was kept strictly separate from the elaborate and dignified courtship of *kula* partners and their valuables the real rationale, the covert function, of the ceremonial transactions? Other commentators have seen Malinowski’s *kula* as exchange of intrinsically useless objects invested with purely symbolic value that dramatized social bonds indeed, that dramatized sociality itself, in its transcendence of the boundaries of kin groups, communities, even societies.<sup>5</sup>

There were also questions about how *kula* exchange actually worked, and how it served to build one's prestige. If one's partners were lifelong and fixed, how did one forge new partnerships, and through them, expand one's influence? What was the relationship, if any, between the *kula* valuables used in exchange with overseas partners and the valuables presented in mortuary ritual and other prestations *within* communities? What were the sanctions, in the end, if one didn't play the game properly if one took armshells and never gave back a necklace? The partner who got left high and dry was, after all, on a different island.

Malinowski, and Mauss commenting on *Argonauts*, wondered about the motives that led participants to give away valuables they had worked so hard, with magic and guile and verbal seduction, to secure. I have long been puzzled by the other side of the coin. Elsewhere in Melanesia, you gain prestige not by receiving the most valuable valuables, the biggest pigs or the best yams, but by giving them away, in public demonstrations of strength. In other contexts, Trobrianders, too, acquire prestige and assert dominance by giving. He who receives is challenged, tested, potentially shamed. I wondered why, in the *kula*, the prestige went to the man who got a famous valuable, rather than the man who gave it to him.

Against the spectrum of Melanesian exchange systems, I and others have been led to wonder as well what sustains the connection of mutual obligation between partners once an initial transaction has been reciprocated by the counter-prestation of armshells or necklace of equivalent value — once everything is squared, the obligation to reciprocate cancelled out.

What makes *Argonauts* stand out so brilliantly from the ethnographies of Malinowski's time is the view he evokes of a primitive world whose boundaries are open, not closed what we would nowadays call a regional system, through which ideas and material objects flowed, a world of trade and exchange and warfare and diplomacy across boundaries of language and culture. The primitive world evoked by other early ethnographers was a mosaic of separate cultures, each a distinctive shape and color: the one under study was presented to Western readers as a separate little piece of human possibility. Malinowski's Trobrianders as he polemically presented them to scholarly and lay audiences in *The Sexual Life of Savages, Crime and Custom*, and other works were squarely in this genre. But in *Argonauts* we view the Trobrianders of Kiriwina as connected not only to their cultural cousins on Vakuta and Kaileuna and Kitava, the lesser islands of the Trobriand archipelago, but as articulated with neighboring peoples to the southwest the Amphetlets, Sanaroa — and southeast Gawa,

Woodlark; peoples from whom came the pottery, axeblades, canoes on which the Trobrianders depended, peoples at once enemies and friends through the wondrous medium of *kula* exchange, flag of truce for trade. To the south were the Dobuans, to become famous from Fortune's classic *Sorcerers of Dobu*, people Malinowski knew only from a distance; and beyond them, the southerners of Tubetube and Koyagaugau, feared for their warlike and cannibalistic ways. We glimpsed here for the first time the tribal world as economically and politically connected regional system. Malinowski and Fortune knew in detail only two nodes in this system; for the rest we had to guess.

## Revising the image

In the last twenty years a score of ethnographers have gone to the Massim. They have found *kula* exchange still flourishing despite capitalism and Christianity, outboard motors, cutter boats and airplanes. We now have detailed accounts of *kula* exchange from vantage points all around the "ring": from Kitava and Vakuta, from Gawa and Muyuw (Woodlark), from Normanby, from the once- feared southerners of Tubetube. We also have further accounts of Malinowski's Kiriwina by Powell and Jerry Leach and Weiner and Hutchins.

The character of *kula* exchange has changed since Malinowski's day. My colleague Michael Young was in Port Moresby entertaining a prominent Trobriand Islander when the latter noticed a local doctor backing his car out of his driveway: "He's Dobuan... He's got a famous necklace I want. I must ring him about it." Despite these changes, we now see the Massim as regional system, and *kula* exchanges within this system, more clearly than Malinowski could have, given his vantage point and the anthropological climate of the time. In assessing changing perspectives on *kula* exchange and their implications for anthropology, I will attempt to bring the rapidly changing picture up to date.

The new evidence on Massim exchange, and corrections to the picture drawn by Malinowski, range from very specific details mis-rendering of Kiriwina words, erroneous identifications of shell species to quite general points of system and interpretation. I will concentrate mainly on the latter, drawing an alternative picture of Massim exchange. Having done so, I will assess the newer picture in relation to the issues of contemporary anthropology, and more

general questions about anthropology's project of representing Otherness.

We have learned, first of all, that *kula* exchange operates in rather different ways, and is conceptualized in rather different ways, in different parts of the *kula*-ing network. In extrapolating from what he saw at the northern edge of the network, Malinowski created a "ring" that is in substantial measure a reification. So, indeed, is "The *Kula*" as a vast institution. Malinowski, seeing a small part of a regional exchange network and extrapolating to an inferred total "ring", depicted as a relatively simple and closed system governed by the "one-direction" principle always armshells in one direction, necklaces in the other connections that in reality are much more complex. Malinowski's inferences fit his northern corner of the *kula*-ing network much more clearly than they do elsewhere, especially in the south. (I say *kula*-ing because in most languages of the Massim, *kula* [*kune* in the southern Massim] is canonically a verb: one *kula*-s or *kune*-s. Indeed in the languages of the southern Bwanabwana area Tubetube, Koyagaugau *kune* is probably best translated simply as 'exchange'.)

Malinowski apparently missed two key concepts in Trobriand *kula*-ing which are turning out to be important in communities all around the exchange network. These concepts may have become more elaborated and more central since Malinowski's day: but their pervasiveness through the whole area, in varying linguistic forms, attests to their being old concepts, not new ones. The most important is the concept of *kitoma* (*kitoum*, *kitomwa*). Whereas Malinowski argued that *kula* valuables belong to no one, circulating endlessly, the new studies reveal that as a valuable circulates it passes from states of being encumbered by debt-obligation to being free from such obligation. When it is not encumbered, it becomes the *kitoma* of the person who holds it: he or she can use it for a further *kula* transaction, but need not do so. The person who has unencumbered title to the valuable can use it to buy a pig or a canoe, present it to an affine, use it in a mortuary rite or (contra Malinowski) simply keep it. When one manufactures a new necklace it is one's *kitoma*. But whereas C. A. Gregory (1982, 1983) has argued that objects given, in exchange systems such as those of the Massim, are inalienable and ultimately remain attached to the giver, in Massim logic the new necklace once given and reciprocated becomes the *kitoma* of the recipient. The concept is more subtle and complex in practice than my account suggests: the same valuable may be talked about in different contexts as at the same time being the *kitoma* of several people. Nor is its absence in Malinowski's and Fortune's accounts a simple matter.

It has been suggested that the *kitoma* concept may have become more pervasive and important since the period of early ethnography because of the democratization of an exchange economy once dominated by powerful leaders (see Macintyre 1983a). But the concept of valuables as *kitoma* seems to be an old one not simply because of its variant forms in the different languages but because it provides the missing connections, as we will see, between *kula* exchange, the domestic prestige economy, and more utilitarian trade.

A second important concept one less disruptive of the Malinowskian model, but important nonetheless is that of “roads” or “paths” (Kiriwian *keda*, Tubetube *kamwasa*) along which *kula* valuables flow. This notion of roads or paths is a dominant metaphor of *kula*-ing. Malinowski had depicted one’s *kula* partnerships as fixed, permanent, lifelong. Recent accounts, notably by Campbell, Weiner, Munn, Damon and Macintyre, have shown that partnerships are much less stable than this, with links to immediate partners, and beyond to their partners, forming, going through cycles as valuables pass back and forth along the links, then ending when the cycle is complete. New paths are created, replacing old ones: some paths are relatively enduring, others transitory; some are “big”, involving prominent transactors and stable political alliances, and others are “small” as well as temporary. Campbell shows particularly clearly how opening new paths places men in competition not with overseas partners but with their own fellow villagers:

*kula* is... a highly competitive exchange. But the real competition... is at the intra-community level with Vakutan men setting up *keda* [path] relationships outside their own communities. The *keda* can be viewed as an alliance between men from different social environments who work together to accomplish power and influence for each... Men break up partnerships, set up new *keda*, or reinstate old relationships in response to opportunities for enhancing personal power and influence within their own community (Campbell 1983: 203).

Another major respect in which the Malinowskian model of *kula*-ing requires revision is, as I have hinted, his insistence that the exchange of armshells for necklaces was entirely symbolic and ceremonial, that the valuables were not “convertible wealth”. Another quote from Campbell will serve to introduce this theme:

Contrary to Malinowski’s impression that shell valuables [are] regarded [as]... “supremely good in themselves, and not



as convertible wealth, or as potential ornaments or even as instruments of power” (Malinowski 1922: 512), the armshells and necklaces are indeed “convertible wealth” and used as “instruments of power”. From the vantage point of Vakuta, it is quite clear that shell valuables can be fed into the internal exchange system as wealth items, thereby securing other wealth in the form of yams, magic, land and women. The degree to which a man can manipulate his *kula keda* [paths], and consequently the internal exchange networks through his wealth in the form of shell valuables, determines his status in the power play of local politics. (Campbell 1983: 204.)

Macintyre and Young, taking the same quote from Malinowski about “convertible wealth” and “instruments of power” as text, argue that his claim

is contradicted by all the evidence, including that available to Malinowski himself. If one has a *Kula* valuable, one can use it in a wide range of internal exchanges: to marry, acquire pigs, canoes or land; to pay mortuary debts and compensation for injury; to purchase magic or the services of a curer or sorcerer (1982: 213).

*Kula* valuables, when they are one’s *kitomwa*, can be diverted into the internal prestige economy within the community:

It is as *kitomwa* that... valuables function as a flexible currency in internal exchanges for marriage, land transactions and mortuary payments (Macintyre and Young 1982: 214).

The purpose of *Kula* is to forge alliances through a sequence of indebtedness and to accumulate valuables which can be used for internal exchange (Macintyre and Young 1982: 214).

The connections between *kula* paths and affinal alliances, especially in the southern islands, emerge clearly in Macintyre’s research on Tubetube and Koyagaugau (1983a). Use of *kula* valuables in marriage prestations and mortuary prestations represent not so much diversion from *kula* paths as the multiple strands of connection that run along these paths.

Through much of the *kula*-ing network though not in the Trobriands *kula* valuables are diverted to buy canoes and pigs (these transactions, too, are called *kune*-ing, from the standpoint of those who produce the pigs and canoes and those who invest shell valuables to get them).

Particularly in these southern islands, *kula*-ing incorporates much wider range of valuables than armshells and necklaces, although in

Malinowski's day some of them had already dropped out. Wooden platters, lime spatulae and other items entered into *kula*-ing. In fact it seems only in the northernmost sector of the *kula*-ing network that the exchange of armshells and necklaces was clearly separated from exchanges of other wealth items. Through most of the circuit it was neither armshells nor necklaces that had the most general convertibility and most pervasive value as convertible wealth: in various contexts and places these honors would go either to pigs or to greenstone axe blades both items of practical as well as symbolic value, both items for which armshells and necklaces were exchanged. For Tubetube, Macintyre (1983a: 239) writes that:

Pigs were the most flexible media of exchange for they could be converted into *kitomwa* on any path. Like all *kune* valuables they could be used to acquire other valuables; they could be given in marriage, mortuary and land transactions, or to pay compensation.

Of the stone axe blades, Weiner writes for the Trobriands that

Stone ax blades can be converted through exchanges into a wide variety of objects and services (1976: 180).

Of all objects of exchange... within the internal exchange system of Kiriwina ax blades (*beku*) are the most valued. A man is called wealthy... if he owns such ax blades (1976: 179).

In the Trobriands the *beku* axe blades are classed with armshells and necklaces as *vaiguwa*<sup>6</sup>; but they are distinguished from *kula* valuables proper, and at least in this century have not been used in overseas *kula* exchanges in the Trobriands and immediately adjacent islands.<sup>7</sup>

In other parts of the network, again most strikingly in the southern islands, axe blades, canoes and even pigs are classed as *kula* valuables when they circulate on *kula* paths and are exchanged for armshells and necklaces. As Macintyre (1983a: 359) observes for the southern islands,

If we focus on the exchange of these items then *kune* can no longer be seen as the ceremonial exchange of useless objects. Rather it becomes the exchange of scarcest and most useful commodities. Viewed from this perspective, the prestige derived from *kune* no longer resides in the temporary possession of ornamental objects, but in the control over access to scarce essential commodities...

Another crucial connection between *kula* exchange and other intercommunity transactions which emerged in Macintyre's research on the southern islands is the link between *kula* valuables and homicide payments. Indeed the relationship between *kula* exchange and the endemic intercommunity warfare of the Massim is crucial in placing *kula*-ing in historical perspective, a point to which I shall shortly return. Macintyre notes (1983a: 143–49) that:

... if *kula* valuables defined and symbolized peaceful relations they also figured prominently in the transactions entailed in war and vengeance... On Tubetube, the modern use of valuables in all transactions associated with death is often explained with by their former function in exchanges for human lives, particularly in the context of war. ... It is likely that the number of valuables exchanged in the context of war exceeded the numbers normally involved in *kune* transactions... Each *susu* [matrilineage] needed *kitomwa* in order to wage war, redeem captives, pay compensation and appease enemies.

But homicide transactions and *kune* transactions were intimately connected. Macintyre (1983a: 162) notes that:

The *kitomwa* given to the warrior became his own possessions, he could use them in *kune* or other exchanges... The accumulation of *kitomwa* as homicide payments... was one means whereby men could become big *kune* traders.

Malinowski and Fortune had noted the relationship between *kula* and warfare. But Malinowski's observations about *kula* exchange being a substitute for warfare and head-hunting were set in an ahistorical frame of reference (in keeping with his rejection of speculative culture history); he apparently meant this as functionalist interpretation: the *kula* served functions which otherwise, and less positively, would have been served by intercommunity violence. Fortune noted the way *kula* exchange, conducted under a kind of flag of truce, constituted a sort of regional peace pact. While intercommunity raiding was more pervasive and more institutionalized among the cannibal traders of the south than Malinowski's prosperous gardeners of Kiriwina, the pervasiveness of warfare throughout the whole area in the precolonial era is largely missing from the early ethnographies.

## The symbolism of *kula-ing*

The new generation of ethnographers has not only clarified how *kula-ing* “works”; it has also clarified what and how it *means*. With anthropology’s deepening concerns with cultural symbolism and interpretation has come closer attention to the rich imagery of metaphor, the coherent structures of cosmology, the premises about maleness, femaleness and power that render *kula-ing* rituals, magic, and myth and *kula-ing* procedures and strategies meaningful.

In comparison with most of the ethnography of his time, Malinowski’s account provides considerable evidence on the symbolic structures that motivate Trobriand ritual and magic. The newer studies go beyond Malinowski’s account in showing global symbolic structures of which the original ethnography revealed fragments and partial patterns. (It is a tribute to Malinowski’s ethnography that we can retrospectively go further interpretively with his own material.)

The newer interpretations make clear how pervasively *gendered* are the symbolic universes of the Massim. For the Trobriands, we have not only Weiner’s (1977, 1978, 1979) accounts of the “reproductive model” of the Kiriwinan cosmos, but a less well known and widely available account by Shirley Campbell (1984) of the gender symbolism of *kula-ing* on Vakuta.

The entire process of preparing oneself, charming solicitory gifts, going to the villages where partners wait, and then, in the verbal discourse peculiar to *Kula*, seducing one’s partners into giving up their possessions parallels men’s behaviour in wooing and the seduction of women. In *Kula*, however, the actors are all male. Their roles alternate according to which group of men, at any given time, are in possession of the shell valuables and which group sets sail for the purpose of attracting and seducing partners (230–31).

When the seduction of a man has been accomplished and the two men enter into an exchange relationship through which shell valuables are passed, Vakutans say that a ‘marriage’ has been contracted. ... *Kula* facilitates the detachment of men from... relationships that bind men to women. ... The aim of [such a] ‘marriage’ is not only to initiate relationships between men in which women have no part, but also to reproduce male wealth... the means by which men achieve immortality for their names (233–34).

While women actually regenerate society, men act out their own regeneration by invoking their powers of attraction and seduction in the pursuit of *Kula* and the renown it affords (242).

In Nancy Munn's accounts (1983, 1986) of Gawan metaphors, magic, and the "spacetime" of *kula*-ing, we find further rich structures and webs of symbolism. Her account of the symbolic identification between shells and the men who exchange them is compelling:

It is as if both shells and men are seen as starting their "careers" without renown or memorability; as the transactions in which they participate multiply, they become increasingly famous and "beautiful", concentrating into themselves the continuous reproduction of their circulation and exchange (the shells) or the circulation of shells through their hands (the men) (1983: 304).

Face and name are the two centers of an actor's personal identity. ... When a man is widely known there are places where the people may have "never seen his face," but they "know his name"... because of his *kula* transactions, and the travels of named and especially well-known shells he has obtained and passed on. It is said that one's name travels with the shells (1986: 106).

The shell model of the process of becoming famous or climbing is... an icon of the same process for men (1986: 108-09).

## Conjectural history and documented history

Before going on to try to set *kula* exchange in historical perspective, in the light of recent research, let me pause to say something more positive about Malinowski as ethnographer. I have enormous admiration for the quality and character of his *kula* analysis an admiration I share with those who have done recent research in *kula*-ing communities. Malinowski's limited vision and skewed interpretations of the theoretical significance of *kula* exchange may have become clear after nearly seventy years of subsequent Melanesian ethnography and growing sophistication regarding exchange systems; but confronted as he was by a strange customary practice to which his hosts were passionately committed, and given the state of theory that prevailed at the time, his inferences were not unreasonable and his data regarding actual *kula* practice are remarkable and of enduring value. What he got wrong he got wrong partly, as I have argued, in extrapolating from the rather special forms of exchange in a particular corner of the *kula*-ing network to a picture of an entire "ring" governed by the same principles.

Malinowski also got some important aspects of *kula*-ing, viewed as a regional exchange system, wrong because of his overreaction against the speculative culture history of his time (exemplified by Rivers' reconstruction of the history Melanesian society and by the German *Kulturkreise* scholars.) There was no real evidence on the precolonial past, at least the ancient past, such as that unearthed by modern prehistorians such as Irwin, Allen, Specht, Lauer and Egloff; and Malinowski did not make the use he could have of oral-historical evidence or the documentary evidence of early European contact. Malinowski's *kula* is carried on timelessly in the eternal vacuum of functional explanation. Placing *kula*-ing in real time is the major challenge in reinterpreting Massim exchange.

First, there is the evidence of archaeology that *kula* exchange is a relatively recent development out of early trade systems. Irwin (1983: 70–71) observes that:

... even though armshells and necklace units are known to have an antiquity of nearly 2,000 years in the region, the *kula* as such probably developed only in the last 500 years.

Elsewhere Irwin comments (n.d.: 23) that:

Archaeology does not offer any assurance of time depth for Malinowski's *kula*... We can see it as... no more than selecting a random moment of time to freeze a fluid system.

The relationship between a relatively recent specialization in production of pottery for export in such nodes as Mailu and the Amphletts, trade in raw materials, and *kula* exchange is so far worked out only in the most tentative terms. We may expect a clearer picture of Massim prehistory to emerge in the next few years, and with it the means to situate *kula* exchange as a development from earlier systems of local exchange and trade between proximate communities. We cannot expect the prehistorians to give us clear answers to questions of a sociopolitical nature and the emergence of area-wide rules to the serious and economically and politically motivated game of *kula*-ing, and of something like a closed "ring", must have entailed complex, cumulative diplomacy. But these processes can, we may hope, be placed in a framework of time, space, and economic transformation and articulation of Massim communities.

Placing *kula*-ing as Malinowski saw it early in this century in a context of real time and process is most importantly a task of anthropological history or historical anthropology. This enterprise,

which Malinowski regarded as superfluous and eschewed in favor of functional explanation, has been pursued with particular skill and insight in Martha Macintyre's doctoral thesis on the southern Massim (1983a). Macintyre's work brings out strikingly the extent to which *kula* exchange as Malinowski saw it was a product of European penetration and colonial pacification. Macintyre introduces her historical argument in these terms:

Malinowski's... "closed circuit" model of *kula*... requires that the circulation be constant, that it have an historical depth of several generations and that none of the parties leave the network. In short, it requires that these islands maintain peaceful relations for generations. Throughout his analysis of *kula* Malinowski assumes an historical depth for the institution. The inheritance of *kula* valuables, the value of wealth items being viewed as cumulative over time, and the permanence of the circulation along time-honoured paths are essential features of Malinowski's *kula*. It is my contention that such incessant circulation could only occur after pacification. The *kula* as closed circuit is a modern institution (1983a: 132).

Macintyre, after a meticulous reconstruction of patterns of precolonial warfare in the southern Massim, sums the implications for Malinowskian model of "The *Kula*" as follows:

When Malinowski described the institution of *kula* alliances as "a relation not spasmodic or accidental but regulated and permanent" (1922: 515) he was generalizing from a specific point in time and from the Trobriand Islands. ... From a southern Massim perspective... the "Ring", as a series of alliances between people on different islands, [is] nothing more than a descriptive model based on actual relations... in the second decade of this century...

The pre-eminence of the *kula/kune* exchange as a political form of alliance has emerged only since pacification. Prior to that... in the south the patterns of alliance were [apparently] cyclical, with *kune* partnerships severed by war, reconstituted by appeasement and then liable to disruption...

Colonial intruders abolished war and... altered the social and political context of *kune* so that it became the focus for peaceful interaction over a wide area. *Kune* paths were stabilized... *Pax britannica* created a new political environment in which *kune* flourished... (Macintyre 1983a: 165-67).

Macintyre (1983a) and other ethnographers of the southern Massim, notably Stuart Berde (1974, 1983), have also documented the major economic changes in the Massim that followed the introduction of steel axes and other Western goods, and the penetration of the area by pearlers, traders, labor recruiters and missionaries. Inflationary processes, introduced technology and the decline of local craft industries, as a result of European penetration (and in some instances deliberate economic manipulation) had led to the disappearance of many wealth items from *kula* and related exchange: greenstone axe blades, lime spatulae, platters, belts and lime gourds had dropped out or become restricted in their circulation. European penetration and colonial control had also radically reduced the power of the *guyau*, the powerful leaders who had dominated exchange, trade and warfare in and between Massim communities. A process of change that had been going on for several decades when Malinowski arrived in the Massim has continued into the era of diesel-powered cutters and air travel. "The *Kula*" Malinowski saw was a temporary phase in the process of political and economic change since European penetration of the Massim; and *kula*-ing as it was practiced on the eve of the first European contact was itself a moment in a process of economic and political change.

The evidence I have cited fits well with new data from other parts of the Massim, both *kula*-ing areas such as Gawa, studied by Nancy Munn, and areas such as Sudest (studied by Maria Lepowsky), Panaeati (studied by Stuart Berde) and Sabarl (studied by Debbora Battaglia) that exchange *kula* valuables and trade with *kula*-ing communities but do not *kula* themselves.

## Reflections on *kula* and anthropology

Let me come back, then, to my promise at the outset to try to do what Malinowski did: to relate *kula* exchange to issues of contemporary social science. I shall be less bold than he in my claims: I shall not suggest that the *kula* reveals the crucial flaw in supply-side economics. What I do hope to show is that the new perspectives on Massim exchange exemplify directions in which contemporary anthropology has been moving, and provide some useful insights about where and how it needs now to move.

A first point is that the emerging picture of *kula* exchange exemplifies the need to view the tribal world as comprising regional systems, in a sense more profound than that prefigured so



brilliantly by Malinowski in *Argonauts*. Many parts of the precolonial tribal world comprised systems whose component “societies” had open, not closed, borders; systems characterized by centers and peripheries, specializations and interdependencies, warfare and diplomacy, trade and exchange, the flow of ideas as well as objects: and by change, often rapid change. Interpreting the dynamics of these regional systems is a challenge to both prehistorian and social anthropologist, and to their collaboration. Anthropologist-historian Martha Macintyre has recently collaborated with prehistorians Jim Allen and Geoffrey Irwin in separate projects that brought together with telling results the systems- and time-perspectives and formal modelling of one subdiscipline and the ethnographic and ethnohistorical sophistication and symbolic insights of the other.

A second point is that the bad, imaginary history Malinowski sought to expunge from anthropology is being reintroduced as careful and theoretically sophisticated historiography: informed by a knowledge of cultural process and structure (Sahlins 1981) and of the political economy of colonialism and the world system (see Wolf 1982). We now know that we ethnographers must be historians as best we can, whatever else we do.

The *kula* evidence presents a strong theoretical message to the cultural-symbolic anthropologist who would view cultures as relatively autonomous from their material conditions of existence. The success of formal models central place theory and related connectivity and graph-theoretical analyses (Irwin 1983; Brookfield and Hart 1971; Hage 1977) and Allen’s model of specialized sociopolitical orientation of particular islands in the Massim on the bases of their location and resources should give sobering pause to the culturologists among us.

But there is another side to this coin. *Kula*-ing, not only in its ceremonial and symbolic aspects but in the diplomacy and intercommunity negotiation that must have gone into its creation and preservation, ultimately defies reduction to materialist explanation. In the Massim, there may be need to trade and to make and keep the peace where possible: but there is certainly no need to *kula*. We need a more subtle and dialectical mode of theoretical interpretation, in which environmental constraints and material factors, political processes and powers, and the production and reproduction of cultural symbols are intricately interwoven: what the material world is, and what power and its tokens are, are culturally constructed, yet cultural construction itself is an ongoing process shaped by material exigencies and political<sup>8</sup> interests. Prehistorians too, inevitably starting on the material side, are

beginning to move in this direction: they too need a theory of sociopolitical process, ideology and cultural meaning more powerful than the techno-ecological determinisms of older models (see e.g. Spriggs 1984). *Kula-ing* shows us why.

For the social anthropologist the message, I think, needs further articulation. The new work on *kula-ing* shows that all social anthropology must now be symbolic anthropology. Nancy Munn's brilliant accounts (1983, 1986) of how the *keda*, the paths of *kula-ing*, symbolize the circulation of a man's name and fame, how the shells represent their transactors, her characterization of "the densely objectified spacetime formed in the islanders' experience through *kula*" (1983: 290) serve to illustrate the growing sophistication of symbolic anthropology.

We see in recent studies the complex symbolism of paths; we find *kula* valuables "marrying" one another, partners 'seducing' one another, transactors attracting valuables by magnetic powers; we find *kula* valuables not only identified with famous men and their deeds but conceived as instruments of their immortality, icons of past lives. These and other elaborations, skillfully interpreted by a new generation of ethnographers, show how and why we must see cultures as systems of socially constructed meanings, why all social anthropology must be symbolic anthropology.

But *kula-ing* teaches us, I think, that symbolist interpretations must be articulated with the perspectives of what I can perhaps best characterize as political economy. Cultural symbols do not emerge full blown, do not exist in a vacuum where only meanings matter. They are created, manipulated, used; they serve political ends, mystify and disguise. Cultures as symbolic systems are economically as well as politically grounded, serving to extract labor and its products, as well as to sustain power, through their hegemonic force. The "sharedness" of cultural meanings is always deeply problematic. Anthropological theories of culture have characteristically utilized a kind of sleight of hand whereby we have gone from the idea that cultural meanings are shared to the conclusions that seemingly follow: that they are collectively created (so that, as I have put it elsewhere, a culture grows by countless tiny accretions, like a coral reef) and collectively held, in the sense that all participants have essentially the same perspectives, a kind of consensus, vis-à-vis what is "shared." I have commented recently on this illusion (1987: 165) using sexually polarized New Guinea Highlands to illustrate:

Even in their domestic lives, such as they were with the [New Guinean] men in their men's houses plotting wars and

planning exchanges, the women and pigs and children in their separate little huts sexual and social relations were... fraught with anxiety and danger of pollution and betrayal. I have no doubt that husbands and wives constructed meanings together, even shared them; but there is surely more to that than collectively reading cultural texts.

Anthropological theory, like feminist theory, needs seriously to engage the hegemonic force (in Gramsci's sense) of cultures as symbolic systems; but this hegemonic and ideological aspect, an inescapable challenge and central problem for feminism, has remained submerged in most anthropological discourse. Perhaps the greatest theoretical challenge to social anthropology in the 1980s is to develop a framework that brings together the insights from Marxism and related theoretical approaches, and feminism, regarding the political situatedness and hegemonic ideological force of "culture" with the powerful insights of symbolic anthropology.

The *guyau* leaders of the precolonial Massim monopolizing exchange, controlling trade, forging military and political alliances, securing tribute will serve to illustrate the need for a politically critical perspective on culture-as-ideology. These leaders had interests and strategies not only very different from but directly in conflict with the interests of ordinary men not to mention women. In some areas, notably northern Kiriwina in the Trobriands, the domination of "chiefs" was dramatized in everyday rituals of ascendancy and deference: the "chief" sat on his platform, while commoners had to crawl in his presence. The "rules" of *kula*-ing, in the northern zone in particular, were constructed in such a way that they gave strong advantages to the *guyau*, in terms of the monopolization of culturally valued exchange and access to the most important objects. We can and should, I think, ask where cultural symbols come from (even if our answers must be speculative) and whose interests they serve, as well as what they mean. In this sense, "a culture" is not a seamless web; its elements are not all of a piece. We can guess that the Trobriand "custom" that commoners must crawl prostrate in the presence of a high ranking leader had a very different kind of history than a prow-board art motif or a noun-classifier in the Kiriwina language.

We can go on from this to make a further point. To understand the political dynamics and ideological nature of cultural forms may entail our looking across as well as within the "borders" of the societies connected in a regional system. The alliances between *guyau* in interisland *kula* will serve to illustrate. Those who create, define and change cultural forms are those with the political power

to do so. The evidence from the Massim suggests that *guyau* in different communities, linked together in alliances, had common interests in defining the rules of the game of exchange and manipulating the flow of valuables, so as to keep others out of the game and maintain their own power and prestige as a kind of regional political-economic elite; and they had common interests in what shells and paths signify and symbolize. In short, they had common interests in one another's "cultures". The rules and even the symbolism of exchange we find in particular communities may represent expressions of these quasi-class interests (recall shells as embodiments of human reputations, and icons of immortality) rather than the *consciences collectives* of the communities where we find them. A theoretical orientation that takes "cultures" to be shared, collectively held and valued, and discrete begins to fray noticeably at the edges where such class or quasi-class interests cut across societal borders (c.f. Asad 1979: 422–23; Keesing 1981: 188–89): focusing on cultural symbols may give us a view too narrow in space as well as too shallow and politically uncritical.

## ***Kula*-ing and anthropology's Orientalist project**

This leads to some final reflections on anthropology's project of representing Otherness.

A central theme in anthropology's creation of the "primitive" world has been the representation of ethnographic areas in terms of prototypical institutions: the Potlatch of the Northwest Coast, the cattle-complex and age-sets of east Africa, the sexual polarization and male aggression of Amazonia. In anthropology's representation of Melanesia, Malinowski's Trobrianders, and their *kula*, loom large.<sup>9</sup>

Melanesia has been typified and essentialized in anthropology largely in terms of exchange (and, of course, Big Men, contrasted with the Chiefs of Polynesia). Although we now have mountains of ethnographic documentation of exchange systems among Papuan- and Oceanic-speaking peoples of the southwestern Pacific, the Trobrianders and their armshells and necklaces continue to hold a central place.

We can well reflect on this typification process. First, it reflects a selective interpretive focus. Recent controversies about representations of the Yamomamö (Ramos 1987) underline the degree to which ideology and selective vision, as well as the observer's vantage point, shape this interpretive process.

The typification process is situated in time and space, as well as in ideology and the nature of ethnographic encounters. The new evidence of prehistory and ethnohistory suggests that had anthropologists seen various regions of “Melanesia,” including the “Massim,” a century earlier, they might have typified them in terms of warfare or trade systems rather than exchange or, in many areas, of chiefly political systems rather than Big Men. The Melanesia stereotypically represented by anthropology is a world created by pacification and colonial invasion just as the classic Potlatch was a short-lived efflorescence partly catalyzed by European presence.

A final meta-reflection on the representation of Melanesia through the Trobrianders and their shells incorporates my own project in this paper within the brackets of scrutiny. Since Malinowski’s *Argonauts* first brought the *kula* to the intellectual world, the Trobrianders have served as foils for Western social science. They have served to inform Us that cultures are tightly integrated as functional systems, that rationality and value are culturally constructed.

Trobriand Islanders have (with very limited exceptions)<sup>10</sup> never been in a position either to represent themselves or to critique what has been written about them. They certainly have never been in a position to reverse the asymmetries in power of the colonial situation. Like other tribal peoples the Trobrianders (and the Dobuans and the rest) have been anthropology’s subjects and objects. They have served as our inkblots as well, confirming the theories economic, ecological, semiotic, feminist, Freudian, sociobiological in terms of which we have invoked them.

My own project here partakes of the same asymmetries and presumptions: What have the Trobrianders now got to “tell” us, that corrects and extends what they “told” us before? That orientation was partly a response to the occasion for which the first version of my paper was written: as the first lecture in a University of California series observing the centenary of Malinowski’s birth. The final line of my original lecture expresses the orientation: “There are, I submit, lessons to be learned still from the old shells of Massim exchange.” Are there further lessons to be learned if we take another step backward to include Us in the picture?

The peoples of Milne Bay Province have in various ways been telling Western anthropologists to stop objectifying their cultures and using them to advance our arcane academic theories and our careers. The political injunctions, local, provincial and national, have been partial, selective, and sporadic. Those Western scholars who are perceived as genuinely serving the interests of Papua New Guinean communities seeking to develop and change as well as to

preserve what is most valued of the past have still been welcomed.

Although the indigenous critique of anthropological praxis in Milne Bay Province and other parts of the contemporary Pacific is often hollowly rhetorical and often wide of the mark,<sup>11</sup> some further elements of this critique bear pondering. One is a challenge to the way anthropologists filter out of their accounts what is not “traditional” — Christianity, cash crops, schools, tradestores, contemporary state politics, an absent elite and labor force — and concentrate on rituals, exchanges, and kinship, that may be of diminishing concern to local populations. Indeed, our own commitment to find what is “traditional” in the 1970s or 1980s has often led us to take too static a view of the past: to imagine an “ethnographic present” we can still reconstruct and reconstitute. The evidence of prehistory and ethnohistory I have touched not only suggests that what we want to cast as “traditional” may have developed or have been substantially changed during early decades of European penetration, but that even what existed on the eve of invasion was a passing moment in a process of change.

Another element in the indigenous critique is the way we characterize indigenous cultures and worldviews through a kind of lens of exoticism (see Keesing 1989a). Our vested interests and theories push us to characterize alterity in terms of radical Difference, of mystical world views and exotic logics. These interpretations often violate both the intuitions and the contemporary ideologies of those we study.<sup>12</sup> We may often be right: but their challenges can well catalyze our own self-reflexivity and skepticism. Some of the lessons we may finally learn from anthropology’s engagement with *kula* exchange may be lessons *about* us, not simply *for* us.

## Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented as a Malinowski Memorial Lecture at the University of California, Berkeley, on 19 November 1984, as part of a program in conjunction with “The Kula: A Bronislaw Malinowski Centennial Exhibition”. I am grateful to Professor William Shack and his colleagues for their hospitality, and to Dr. Maria Lepowsky for special assistance and helpful comments. For valuable suggestions toward revision of the original lecture, I am indebted to Debora Battaglia, Geoffrey Irwin, Martha Macintyre, and Michel Panoff. Helpful comments during the Helsinki conference, particularly assessments by John Liep and Annette Weiner, recent

researchers in the Massim, and subsequent suggestions by Jukka Siikala assisted me in further revision. An early version of the paper was published in the UNESCO journal *Human Rights Teaching* (Vol. VI, 1987).

2. On the use of evolutionary conceptions, and the invention of the “primitive” world in nineteenth century social thought, see Kuper (1988) and Fabian (1983).
3. These include an increasing specialization of the anthropological community, in terms of regional and topical interests, a vast outpouring of publications no one can now keep up with, and the high price of the main Cambridge University Press volume (Leach and Leach 1983). Even that has been partly superseded by subsequent evidence and debate.
4. See Kuper (1988) and Wolf (1982).
5. As Michel Panoff has pointed out to me, although Mauss’ work has often been cited in portrayals of “the *kula*” as a purely symbolic game involving the exchange of intrinsically useless valuables for purely semiotic ends, Mauss himself took a more critical perspective on *kula* exchange than most subsequent scholars, and perceived some of the gaps and problems in Malinowski’s account that have been explored and clarified in later work. See Panoff 1970.
6. The term Malinowski gives as referring generically to Trobriand exchange valuables, in the revised modern orthography.
7. Geoffrey Irwin tells me that his findings suggest that the beautiful polished axe blades so important in the northern Massim are themselves probably relatively recent — though presumably pre-European — introductions into the system of interisland trade and exchange, with an antiquity of at most several centuries: further evidence that we are dealing with a rapidly-changing system, not an ancient and stable one.
8. In a very broad sense.
9. In many ways, as Thomas (1989) has recently argued for Polynesia and Melanesia, the ethnographic- or culture-areas are themselves in many ways anthropology’s invention. In the case of “Melanesia,” I think it is no accident that it is dark skin color that continues implicitly to define the unity of a region transected by the gulf between Oceanic Austronesian and Papuan languages; I have noted the submerged racism that has run through a century of anthropological discourse on the Pacific (Keesing n.d.).
10. As in some of the writings of John Kasaipwalova and such young Trobriand scholars as Linus Digim’rina.
11. On the way indigenous challenges to anthropology characteristically incorporate Western categories and are derivative of Western ideologies, and often suffer from anthropology’s own conceptual “diseases” of essentialism and reification, see Keesing 1989b, 1992, and 1994.
12. Although sometimes they are congruent with such ideologies, which — derivative of Western critiques of Western culture — may seek to

portray indigenous ways of life in terms of mystical wisdom, holistic healing, etc..  
See Keesing 1989b.

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# GIFT EXCHANGE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

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*'Every man has his proper measure'*  
The Honorary Consul *Graham Greene*

One of the most outstanding features of Pacific cultures is their elaborate systems of gift exchange. Through the giving of gifts and counter-gifts Pacific Islanders affirm friendship, contract alliances and assert or challenge social eminence. Gifts of things are intimately involved in the cultural construction of persons and social relationships. Artifacts, which for centuries were the most prized objects of exchange, such as the fine mats of Samoa, Kula shell ornaments of the Massim and other 'great things', are icons which represent a legacy from gods or ancestors and tie living people to personalities or events from the past. The exchange of culturally encoded objects constitutes an entire social and political discourse. Traditional systems of exchange have for generations been articulated to political and economic forces of the modern world system. Yet, they represent a continuity and resiliency against the depersonalizing effects of the commercial and bureaucratic forces of capitalist states.

Pacific exchange systems early attracted the attention of anthropology. The nature of this gift exchange has preoccupied scholars from Malinowski (1922) and Mauss (1954 [1925]) to Lévi-Strauss (1969 [1949]) and Sahlins (1972). From accounts of Pacific exchange systems have been elaborated theories of the gift

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and reciprocity which are central to the discipline. The understanding of gift exchange has evolved in a dialectical confrontation with the commodity exchange of the researchers' own societies. As the peoples of the islands had to come to terms with industrial wealth and commercial relations, so anthropologists, on their side, had to accommodate observations of indigenous exchanges of things with practices of their own economic system, as they understood them. Gift exchange has been set against the background of commodity exchange — sometimes in contrast, sometimes as similar.

How people relate to things, and to each other by means of things, under different economic regimes, were issues which were central to earlier political economists. The 'confusion of personalities and things' was a problem which preoccupied Marx in his analysis of the commodity as much as Mauss in his essay on the gift. A central issue for both was the disassociation of people from their products with expanding commoditization of the economy. This is the notion of alienation which both Marx and Mauss saw as the pervasive condition of modern society (although Mauss did not explicitly employ the concept). Some recent discussions have stressed the opposite condition of inalienability as characterizing things exchanged as gifts (Gregory 1980, 1982; Weiner 1985; see also Feil, Damon and Gregory 1982). It is argued that in a gift society all, or some, things are so inseparably connected with their owners that their presentation as gifts ensures an equivalent return.

This essay explores these aspects of gift exchange in some Pacific exchange systems. I am especially concerned with the circulation of graded valuables in what I call systems of ranked exchange. With departure in some of my material from Rossel Island, I establish that in such systems one valuable thing often stands for another as its representation or *image*. This suggests a new solution to the famous puzzle of 'the spirit of the gift', the *hau* of the Māori. Such substitutions involve an ambiguous state of debt which gives rise to contradictory claims and strategies by the concerned parties. I show that both on Rossel and in the Kula 'the obligation to return' gifts fairly is stressed, while participants in the actual exchange process often have to accept terms which are far from equal.

As the association between persons and things as images is intimate this has consequences for our understanding of inalienability. In the critical part of the essay I place inalienability in the broader context of reciprocity. My query is especially with the implicit assumption of equivalence often embedded in this concept. I shall argue that the idea of equivalence in reciprocity results from

a transposition of a commodity model into our understanding. Here the notion of equivalent exchange presupposes a contract between equal, independent individuals. The practices of Pacific exchange systems question this simple model of reciprocity and equivalence. They demonstrate that what takes place is rather the negotiation of the personal status and identity of the participants than the assessment of the equivalence of things.

## The gift and its representation: the Rossel *kaa*

During my field work on Rossel Island (Louisiade Archipelago, Massim region at the east end of New Guinea) I did some collecting of artifacts for a Danish museum. Once on a patrol around the island I slept in the house of a certain big man. I there discovered a canoe prowboard, carved in the typical Massim style, which I wanted to buy. With the help of my assistants I tried to arrive at a reasonable price for the carving. Rossel people are normally reluctant to set a price. Their usual answer is: "Yourself!" When I, nevertheless, asked the big man to indicate how many dollars would be a fair estimate he, revealingly, connected the artifact to an earlier exchange. Many years ago a friend of his had acquired a canoe from a man on the neighboring island of Sudest. The canoe had been paid with traditional valuables and my big man had made a contribution of one ceremonial greenstone axe (of the kind generally exchanged in the Massim) to his friend's payment. As usual in such cases there was the expectation that this gift or loan should some time be returned. Some years after the man with the canoe died without having replaced the axe. My informant then took the prowboard from the dilapidating canoe and he had kept it ever since. It was the memory or 'picture' — *kaa* — of his stone axe. The axe had been of the size with "four inside" — i.e. equivalent to four of the smallest kind, worth a dollar each. So now I had the knowledge from which I could decide how much I would pay.

The case illustrates the difficulties in establishing prices in an economy where things are rarely bought and sold. It also illustrates the bonds established between things, and between people in terms of things, in an economy of what we may call the gift type. It is significant that the estimation of a rate of exchange between me and this man involved a reference to another exchange, one that took place a long time ago, and to a *third person*.

I shall attempt to elucidate what is involved in the notion of *kaa* which the Rosselese usually translate with the English word

'picture'. In this instance we may say that it denotes a *representation*. *Kaa* also means 'shadow', and 'reflection'. It enters into the word for mirror (*kaayiku*). We find it in the term for grandparent or ancestor, *kaakaa*, and in ancestress — *kaapya* (*kaa*-'female'). The connection may here be 'likeness', for children are said to resemble parents and grandparents. But there may be some deeper significance because *kaakaa* also means 'to be proud of something', and as a verb *kaa* stands for 'calling out', 'summoning people'.<sup>1</sup>

The notion of *kaa* on Rossel thus involves a range of meanings: 'picture', 'semblance', 'representation'. But it also seems to indicate a deeper bond between representation and the thing represented, something which involves 'participation', identity and, maybe, integrity and honour. Possibly the best translation would be 'image'.

## The spirit of the gift: the Māori *hau*

At this moment the reader may sense a feeling of *déjà-vu* and of course there is a striking resemblance between the *kaa* and the notion of the *hau*, the Māori spirit of the gift, made classic through Mauss' "*Essay on the Gift*" (1954). Mauss took his point of departure, when trying to explain the obligation to repay gifts, in a text written by the Māori Tamati Ranaipiri to Best. The interpretation of this quotation has occupied scholars ever since Mauss made it the basis of his explanation of gift return.

Ranaipiri was explaining a cycle of gift exchange of valuables (*taonga*):

"Now, you have a *taonga* which you give to me. We have no agreement about replacement (*uto*) of this *taonga*. Now, I give it to someone else, and, a long time passes, and that man thinks he has the *taonga*, he should give some replacement (*uto*) to me, and he does so. Now, that *taonga* which was given to me, that is the *hau* of the *taonga* which was given to me before. I must give that *taonga* to you. It would not be correct for me to keep it for myself, whether it be a very good *taonga*, or a bad *taonga*, that *taonga* must be given to you from me. Because that *taonga* is a *hau* of the other *taonga*. If I should hang onto that *taonga* for myself, I will become *mate*. So that is the *hau* — *hau* of *taonga*..." (This is a slightly edited version of Biggs' translation in Sahlins 1972: 152).

Mauss understood this to mean that the spirit (*hau*) of the gift

yearning to return to its homeland and owner (to whose spirit (*hau*) it was connected), was a dangerous power enforcing the recipient to return the gift, or its replacement. (Together with Best and subsequent commentators Mauss understood *mate* to refer to "... serious evil... even death" (Best 1909: 439)). Thus, the gift was a spiritual extension of the giver (1954: 9–10). Subsequent discussions have tended progressively to rationalize Ranaipiri's statement. For Firth the force behind returning gifts is economic self-interest and social sanction. He argued that Mauss confused the spirits of things and persons. What people feared, in case of default on a debt, was not the *hau* of the gift but sorcery from the debtor (1959: 418–21). For Sahlins the *hau* in this case just meant the return or product of the first gift, although the meaning was embedded in a broad spiritual concept of productiveness or fertility (1972: 157, 168).

Recently Weiner has argued that Mauss was right. Mauss distinguished ordinary moveable property from immovable property. The latter is closely associated with the person and the descent group, with ancestry, history and rank. Ranaipiri talked explicitly about *taonga*, Māori valuables, property of the immovable kind. *Taonga* were associated with name- and *hau*-bestowing ceremonies, with death and immortality. Therefore, they were intimately associated with, and took part, in their owner's personality. There was a *hau* of persons, things and land, as Mauss had argued, a force securing the return of presents of *taonga* (Weiner 1985). Now, it appears clearly from her information that some kinds of *taonga* were extensively traded and others were exchanged as presents in kinship ceremonies. Only very high-ranking ones seem to have been truly immovable or inalienable property attached to chiefs and their descent groups (*ibid.* 19–20). As there is nothing to indicate that one of these specific family treasures was involved I find that the meaning of the word *hau* in this context could very well be the same as *kaa* in my Rossel case. The *taonga* returned was a 'representation' or 'image' (in the form of a replacement) of the first valuable. I agree that in Māori understanding this would also have implied an identity of a more spiritual kind, a deeper attachment between the gift, the owner and the return gift. But in this case there need not have been an idea of a dangerous soul-force of donor and gift involved.

Moreover, the word *mate*, which Ranaipiri used about the consequence of defaulting on a debt, has probably been misunderstood in the context. Like *hau*, the term *mate* covers a range of connotations. According to Johansen the basic meaning is 'weakened', denoting "...everything from a slight indisposition to death" (1954: 48). But Johansen notes that in the context of gift

exchange *mate* meant ‘embarrassed’: “... a weakening to the receiver if he cannot assert himself by counter-gifts” (*ibid.* 115). What Ranaipiri referred to was thus *shame*, a condition as serious as physical injury. If he failed to return the second *taonga*, *hau* of the first, he would be ‘finished’ — a dishonoured man. Thus, what in Ranaipiri’s statement was a play on metaphors, one *taonga* standing for another, physical illness for social damage, was interpreted at the same time in a more substantial and a more mystical sense.<sup>2</sup>

It seems that the *hau* is an amorphous concept with a range of meanings from (vital) ‘essence’ over ‘representation’ to ‘extension’. By the last term I allude to the several instances referred to by Sahlins and Weiner of a contagious aspect of the *hau*. Substances like hair, fingernails, etc., used to work sorcery on a person, were *hau* (Sahlins 1972: 154–55, n.3). Threads of flax from cloak *taonga* were ritually used to transmit *hau* (Weiner 1985: 216–17). It is to this metonymic *pars pro toto* aspect of Rossel valuables I shall now turn.

## Ranked exchange of Rossel valuables

Various kinds of valuables are used on Rossel Island. In addition to the greenstone axes mentioned there are several kinds of shell necklaces and, finally, the *kö* and *ndap* — the famous ‘Rossel Island money’. The latter are highly ranked shell valuables. There are more than 20 categories, from commonplace ‘small cash’ to exalted treasures. The ‘shell-money’ is used (sometimes in combination with other valuables) in many kinds of exchanges or payments: as payment for some customary labour services, for houses and canoes, in pig feasts, as bridewealth, in mortuary compensations and, formerly, in compensations to relatives of victims of cannibalism.

The *kö* and *ndap* share many characteristics with valuables elsewhere. The higher ranks derive from mythical deities. They have individual names and histories of past ownership. In olden days they were treated with reverence. The souls (*ghö*) of cannibal victims were supposed somehow to enter the high rank *ndap* paid in compensation. These shells are sometimes referred to by the name of a victim. When they were solemnly displayed at feasts many men held their hands under them to protect them. When a circle of big men were once handing high rank shells around between them at the arrangement of the principal presentation at a pig feast I witnessed, they talked as if the shells were the actors: the top shell “calling out” to ensure that everything was properly done.



Thus, these objects are to some extent treated as persons, they are relics of a mythical past and document personal history.

In many regards these valuables thus resemble the Māori *taonga* although, as a rule, they are not regarded as descent group property and are not associated with descent rank, which is absent on Rossel. Characteristically, they are also progressively inalienable the higher their rank. From about midway up the rank scale *ndap* are now out of open circulation. The upper rank *ndap* are owned individually, they circulate only through inheritance and although some categories are still nominally entering prestations, they are soon returned to their owners again. This immobilization of high rank *ndap* is, however, fairly recent. People say that before the advent of the Europeans all ranks except the very highest were in circulation. The sinister 'man-eating *ndap*' went out of use when the government banned homicide and the ranks lower on the scale followed soon after.<sup>3</sup>

The exchange of the Rossel 'shell-money' is a characteristic instance of what I call *ranked* exchange. I define this as a form of exchange of valuables where, firstly, the objects involved are differentiated into a number of ranks and, secondly, although notions of equivalence are relevant, the exchange practice involves a complex play of debt relationships with gifts and counter-gifts which *do not* balance. As we shall see the Kula is another instance of ranked exchange.

On Rossel prestations of valuables are amassed with contributions from many 'helpers'. Persons who contribute shells of all but the lowest ranks usually do so only on the deposit of another shell of lower rank. This shell is referred to as the *ngmaa* of the higher-ranking shell (the meaning of the word *ngmaa* will be explained later). Thus, we have a notion of links between ranks. For each rank of shell there is a customary expectation as to what rank below should be a proper *ngmaa* for the first one.<sup>4</sup> This procedure is used in organizing chains of debt between several participants who each contribute a higher-ranking shell and receive a lower-ranking *ngmaa*. In this way shells of high rank may be released through a series of shell movements, each involving only one or a few levels of rank. When Rossel people explained about these shell movements stepwise up the ladder of rank they talked as if the same shell was 'turning' each time, transforming itself into successive higher ranks.

Thus, chains of debt are formed, successively shells of higher rank are involved, each being released on the deposit as *ngmaa* of a shell a step below on the ladder. Informants stressed that the holder of a *ngmaa* can present it to the person who gave it to him and get his original shell, or a replacement, back. According to such

statements the *ngmaa* is a 'pledge'. This happens quite often. Recipients of medium to higher rank shells frequently have to return the shell they received at a prestation and must accept a lower rank substitute because the contributor of the original shell wants it back. The substitute is often the next shell in the chain but sometimes they have to 'step' down several steps. This substituting of a 'reduced replacement' must of course always take place in the case of the high rank *ndap* which are now out of open circulation. But it is also frequent with *kö* where all ranks (except the very highest) may still change ownership.

The word *kaa* (which I compared to the *hau*) appears also in connection with these rank metamorphoses. The substitute, just mentioned, which is given in replacement of a high rank shell is called *kaa-pee* (*pee* = 'half, 'side', 'piece') — a 'part representation'. Lower again on the chain is *kaa-wo-ndap* (*wo* = 'stalk').<sup>5</sup> The lowest shell is *kpa-wu* ('on top' — 'seed'). Thus from a higher-ranking valuable there is a stepwise series of progressively more reduced 'images'. It is like the Russian doll which contains a series of diminishing dolls, each inside the other. But note also that seen the other way round, from bottom to top, there is a metaphor of plant growth employed about transformations across ascending ranks. There seems to be a notion of some intimate relationship between the shells in such a series. As already mentioned, there is also the idea that a lower-ranking shell given as *ngmaa* to the former possessor of a higher-ranking shell represents a claim on its higher-ranking associate. It is a part of a whole that should later be restored.

I observed a dramatic illustration of these notions when I once participated in a house-paying feast on Rossel. I caught sight of a man who was sitting on the ground occupied with crushing his basket with a stone while he gave vent to loud expostulations. When I asked what was the matter I was told that the man had given a medium rank *ndap* several years back to a certain big man and received a lower rank shell as *ngmaa*. Some time before he had presented this shell to the big man and told him that he now was in need of his former shell and wanted it back.<sup>6</sup> Since then he had repeated this claim on several occasions but the big man had neglected to repay him. It should be noted that the basket of a man or woman on Rossel is a personal possession which is usually close to the possessor and is carried around everywhere. People carry shell money and small necessities such as tobacco and betel ingredients in their baskets. The basket may thus be regarded as a 'projection of the self' of the owner (cf. Evans-Pritchard on Nuer spear symbolism, 1956: 233). Through the public destruction of this

intimate belonging the man was, as I see it, announcing that he himself was being damaged, just like his basket, through the fault of the big man. When he intermittently had been pounding away on the basket for about an hour the big man, very annoyed, made arrangements with another big man friend of his to produce the shell. He then showed it around for all to touch as witnesses. Finally, he angrily tossed it on the ground towards his creditor who afterwards showed it to several people, asking: "Was it the one he ate?" (His satisfaction was only to last for a pitiful while. The big man went on scheming with his cronies and they succeeded in locating a new debt — this time of a *kō* and with 'the man with the basket' as the debtor! Thus, shortly after, he found himself presented with the *ngmaa* of the *kō* and urged to procure that shell).

This happening illustrates several important points. Firstly, it shows how a 'reduced image' of a shell, given as *ngmaa* or pledge, may actually be used to reclaim a former possession. Secondly, it also shows that this is not an automatic procedure. The claim had been only a claim if it had not been dramatically pressed through. Thirdly, it shows the intimate 'participation' of these valuables with the identity of people. The big man had incorporated the shell like food. The creditor's image had, through want of a replacement of his valuable, been crushed like his basket.

The Rossel valuables are clearly not freely alienable. Thus, the instance of a pig feast, where one may observe the exchange of slices of pork against pieces of shell, cannot be regarded, in isolation, as a complex way of selling pork. Although each contributor of a piece of 'shell-money' is given a piece of pork corresponding in size to the rank of his contribution, the participants will assert that their contributions are not 'squared' with the meat. They say that they have a right to have their shells returned some time in the future. Indeed, pig transactions are often arranged on a reciprocal basis with a delay of some years. The former sponsor of the payment of the first pig will now fatten a pig, and the former pig's owner who, together with his associates, received the payment, will organize the second payment. In this way the flow of valuables goes the opposite way and everybody should, ideally, be 'squared'. Similarly, there are prestations among the mortuary compensations which are returned when the surviving spouse of a couple dies. But, on the other hand, there are many other occasions, such as bridewealth payments and payments of houses or canoes, where there is no reciprocation of the prestations.<sup>7</sup> Here the shells tend to 'go for good' and if a contributor demands a return a replacement must be found. As the shells have often been engaged in transactions with third parties

it becomes 'hard work' to regain them.

The confused ethnographer, therefore, finds himself confronted with a welter of contradictory statements about these shell 'loans'. On the one hand, my informants asserted that on presentation of the *ngmaa* a debtor must return the original shell contributed, or, if that is unobtainable, a replacement. If he is 'a good man' this should be a shell of slightly higher rank. On the other hand, the original shell is often 'lost' and debtors are often reluctant to find a replacement.

I shall now reveal the true meaning of the word *ngmaa*. It means 'a dodge' or 'to dodge' — such as one would do to avoid a spear (the word *nuö*, 'point', is used about a debt). Thus, from the point of view of a shell 'borrower', the *ngmaa* he has given a contributor is a dodge by means of which he may keep his creditor 'floating', as they say, for an indefinite period. Many informants told me about contributions which they had tried for years to retrieve. The same men would (at other occasions) grinningly tell me that a man, who had obtained a shell and given *ngmaa*, did not need to worry about his creditor: he had the *ngmaa*! In this connection I was told about an alternative strategy for seeking replacement. One may lend the *ngmaa*-shell to a third person. In this case the borrower should return a higher-ranking shell. By two, or three, such transactions one should be able to regain a shell of the rank of the original contribution — or an even better one. Careful inquiries showed that this does indeed sometimes succeed. But, as often as not, even the *ngmaa* was lost in this way. Again, the person who has had a higher-ranking shell in a payment replaced by a lower-ranking substitute claims that he can take this kind of *ngmaa* (or *kaapee*) and lend it. If the identical shell is not returned he must be repaid a shell of the rank of the initial high-ranking shell. But how could such a claim be effective in the case of the higher echelon *ndap* which have passed entirely out of circulation?

In any case, people often grumble about the complexity of the exchange system with its withdrawals, substitutes etc. Some say that in the old times exchange was simple and easy: "Just like store". I often heard men complain about debts which were not met, shells they had lost etc. One also hears bitter remarks about the tricks and 'joking' of the big men, the elders who are skilled exchangers.

In summary, the interpretation of the Rossel exchange system gives rise to ambiguity and contradiction both to its participants and to the researcher. Several conflicting models of the system may be constructed. To a superficial observer it looks as market exchange of commodities with a monetary medium. This was

Armstrong's interpretation (1924, 1928, for a refutation see Liep 1983b). Another, hierarchical, model represents the system as one where generous repayment allows one to 'climb' the ladder of shell ranks or, as they say, one may let a shell 'grow itself'. A third model sees the system as one of delayed reciprocity in kind: the movement forth and back of identical shells. This is the model of true inalienability which becomes increasingly adequate towards the top of the *ndap* rank scale. Here the individual and common interests of controllers of high rank valuables have resulted in an 'enclavement', so that these shells are only nominally engaged in prestations. The only strategy available to obtain these shells for young men is to make themselves so attractive to the owners that they may hope to *inherit* them. Finally, there is the 'statistical model', so to speak, which reveals the underlying 'leak' of shell alienation as some men find themselves losing shells and retreating down the rank scale while others advance. A look at the classic Kula exchange will serve to stress the same *problématique*.

## Kula, *kitoum* and inalienability

In the following I shall assume some familiarity with the basic features of the Kula: the ceremonial exchange between partners on a ring of island communities of armshells passing one way around the ring and necklaces the opposite way. Like Rossel and Māori valuables, these objects are to some extent personalized: the higher-ranking ones all have a name and a history.

Although he wrote a book of more than 500 pages about it, Malinowski regarded the actual Kula exchange as "... a very simple affair" (1922: 86) — a delayed exchange of items of equivalent value. He pictured the ceremonial Kula as a closed-off circuit. He described partnerships as lifelong relationships and the valuables as incessantly moving around the Kula ring: "once in the Kula, always in the Kula" applied to valuables and Kula partners alike (*ibid.* 83). Recent research (especially Leach and Leach 1983) has questioned this model and shown that the Kula, in fact, is a very complex phenomenon. I sum up our contemporary knowledge of the Kula in the following points:

1. Kula valuables continually pass in and out of the Kula to enter internal exchanges in the Kula communities where they are instrumental in kinship payments, transfers of rights to land, pigs etc. This means that they are essential in the manoeuvring

- for power and status in the local context.
2. Outside the Kula the valuables may thus be directly exchanged for other items (e.g. pigs) or be acquired in kinship exchanges. But even in the Kula there are conversions (such as Kula valuables for canoes).
  3. Conversions upwards in the Kula may also be engineered through *pokala* ('offering') of pigs or solicitory gifts between partners.
  4. The Kula is an instance of ranked exchange as defined above: there is a ranked order of valuables, and debt relations are created through gifts and counter-gifts of different rank.
  5. The aim of Kula participants is to produce a 'name' (fame and renown) by advancing in the Kula — i.e. by handling valuables of increasing rank.

Through series of gifts Kula partners aim to build up lasting chains of debt relationship ("paths") by expanding the volume of valuables flowing between them. Very important in this process are the subsidiary gifts (*basi* or *logit*) — lesser-ranking valuables given to attract higher-ranking ones into paths or, as gifts of acknowledgement, signifying that one is "working" to find a high rank counter-gift for a gift received earlier (Campbell 1983: 210–11; Damon 1980: 279). As Damon points out (*ibid.*) the aim is not just to meet an 'opening' gift with a 'closing' gift (this would mean a closing of the path) but to keep the path open through continuous mutual gift giving.

Although the overall structures of the Kula and the internal Rossel exchange system are different there are significant similarities, especially in the techniques of forming debt chains and in the feature of lower-ranking 'images' of higher-ranking valuables (respectively *basi/logit* and *ngmaa/kaa*). Another parallel is the increasing inalienability of the valuables towards the top of the rank scale. Although the highest-ranking Kula shells are not completely immobilized as are the high-ranking Rossel *ndap*, their movement is "tight" and restricted to a very narrow circle of outstanding big men (Munn 1983: 304; Weiner 1987).

A very important feature of the Kula, the notion of *kitoum*, was overlooked by Malinowski and Fortune (1932) but has been stressed by modern researchers (see especially Weiner 1976: 129, 1983; Munn 1977; Damon 1980, 1983). A *kitoum* is a valuable (armshell or necklace), usually acquired outside the Kula. It may have been bought for cash or acquired in exchange for a pig or in a kinship exchange. The valuable is an individual property of the owner who may do what he wants with it. If he invests it in the

Kula, as an opening gift, the closing gift eventually replacing it will now be his *kitoum*. This valuable may be 'thrown' as a new opening gift (in the opposite direction of the first), or it may be withdrawn from the Kula and used in internal exchange. Damon reports that in Muyuw (Woodlark) they regard all Kula valuables as somebody's *kitoum* (1983: 324). Owners of large *kitoums* tend to hold on to them for a long time. They want to build a 'strong' path with reliable debt relationships before they release them against a pre-arranged counter-gift (*ibid.* 331). Informants assert that a *kitoum* is the owner's possession until he has received an equivalent replacement and that he has the right to get it back if this should not succeed (Damon 1980: 282).

Gregory argues that the concept of *kitoum* shows that a person has an inalienable right over a thing when it is circulated as a gift (1982: 197). The reality is that many, especially inexperienced, Kula participants lose their *kitoums*. This happens because shells are diverted off established paths by men who become attracted, through soliciting, by other partners or by the lure of tempting high rank valuables (see e.g. Campbell 1983: 211). Damon (1983: 322) explains how, in Muyuw, Kula valuables may be acquired as *kitoums* through gifts of large pigs to possessors of shells, if the possessor is not able to replace the pig. This applies even if these valuables are not the possessor's *kitoums*. This evidence shows that the concept of *kitoum* indicates a claim to possession of a Kula valuable, rather than an inalienable right. The notion implies contradiction. It could with as much right be seen as expressing alienability: the exclusive claim to individual property which one is free to dispose of at will. In my opinion *kitoum* is a concomitant phenomenon of the risk and speculation in Kula exchange. An increasing stress on *kitoum* claims by Kula participants — such as may probably have developed during this century — reveals increased competition about advanced position in the Kula, more attempts to enter the Kula by conversion of cash or pigs etc. into *kitoums* and more attempts to divert shells from existing paths.

Thus, we find in the Kula the same double-standards as on Rossel; also in the Kula there are contradictory models of reality. On the one hand, a model of restricted exchange: the give-and-take of equivalent values. On the other, a model of generalized exchange implying expansion and hierarchy, as men 'climb' to higher renown and shells accumulate history and worth (see Damon 1980 and Munn 1983). In both systems we find the insistence on equivalent replacement, or even the generous incremental return from the "good man" (Munn *ibid.*), but all authors, since Fortune, also stress the amount of manoeuvring, deception and default going on in the



Kula. As Damon's informants said: "The only way to get ahead in the Kula is to lie!" (1980: 278).

## A critique of the concepts of reciprocity and inalienability

The preceding analyses have, I hope, revealed the naivety and simplicity of the concept of reciprocity as Malinowski formulated it: "...a chain of reciprocal gifts and counter-gifts, which in the long run balance, benefiting both sides equally" (1926: 40). Moreover we can discern a curious paradox in Malinowski's analytical construction of the Kula.

In "*Argonauts of the Western Pacific*" (1922) Malinowski set out to disprove what he regarded as current fallacious theories of primitive man. He attacked notions of 'primitive economic man' (*ibid.* 60, 96, 166) of 'primitive communism' (*ibid.* 97, 167) and of the 'materialistic conception of history' (*ibid.* 516). But in his continuum of forms of exchange (*ibid.* 177–91) we find the Kula classified under "Ceremonial barter with deferred payment," next to "Trade, pure and simple". And, as referred to above, to him the Kula was "a simple affair" — a deferred exchange of gifts of equivalent value. So, in spite of the romantic version of an economically irrational savage in this early work, is this model of the Kula not similar to the model of commodity exchange of bourgeois society: the exchange of value equivalents?<sup>8</sup> In this respect it's "... all same bloody market", as Malinowski's trader-friend said about another Trobriand institution (1967: 147).

Thus, notions derived from the researcher's own background of a commodity economy have repeatedly intruded themselves into theories of gift exchange, even though the researcher had the best intention of demonstrating the 'otherness' of the object. There is an instructive example of this problem in Gregory's recent book "*Gifts and Commodities*" (1982). Gregory's method is an abstract logical derivation of the character of the gift in contrast to that of the commodity. As commodity exchange is the exchange of alienable property between independent individuals, gift exchange is by assumption, the exchange of inalienable property between persons in a relationship of interdependence. Therefore the exchangers of gifts retain a lien on their possession. Reception of a gift involves the recipient in a debt which must sooner or later be discharged. Gregory, therefore, regards all forms of gift exchange as 'forms of equality' (1982: 64–66). There is no alienation of value in gift



economies and no possibility of accumulation and capital formation (1980: 641, 1982: 61).<sup>9</sup>

The model from our own commodity economy here distorts the analysis in two ways. Firstly, it enters into the construction of the gift as an antithesis to the commodity. By the construction of the properties of the concept 'gift' as mere inversions of the properties of the concept 'commodity', the object of investigation remains analytically bound to the conception of the researcher's own categories. The gift economy just becomes the commodity economy stood on its head. Secondly, although Gregory perceives that gift exchange "...establishes an unequal relationship of *domination* between the transactors" (1982: 41) he does not develop the consequences of this insight. Instead, the commodity model sneaks back into his view of gift exchange as establishing 'forms of equality'. Here Gregory's view comes near to Malinowski's simple model of reciprocity. Indeed, Mauss' discussion of the gift takes account of much more complexity. As "a kind of hybrid" (1954: 70) he placed *gift exchange* developmentally between an almost hypothetical category of collective *simple total* prestations and the market of individual contract (*ibid.* 4-5, 33-34, 45, 73). He compared the Trobriand or Tsimshian chief to a capitalist (*ibid.* 72) and noted the ambiguous mixture of interest and disinterestedness in gift exchange (*ibid.* 70ff.). What is needed now is a grasp of gift exchange, neither as a primitive version of commodity exchange, nor as its antithetical opposition, and neither also as some kind of 'hybrid' in between, but in a 'third position', which acknowledges its complex character and takes account of it as a process unfolding through time.

Some years ago Bourdieu criticized the 'objective' structural model of reciprocity (1977). He stressed the temporal structure of gift exchange and argued that "... cycles of reciprocity are not the irresistible gearing of obligatory practices..." (*ibid.* 9). Attention to the time factor, he suggested, introduces *strategy* and *calculation* as distinct from *rule* and reveals the contradiction, the "two opposing truths" inherent in the gift (*ibid.* 5).<sup>10</sup>

Another important critique of the notion of reciprocity has been advanced by Weiner (1980). She argues that the complexities of exchange as an ongoing process are distorted by collapsing it into a timeless 'norm of reciprocity' involving equivalent gifts and counter-gifts. She suggests an approach where gift acts are seen as moments in a long-term process of reproduction during which a *negotiation* of the social relationships of the parties involved takes place.

In a recent paper Weiner has again questioned the 'received'

interpretation of reciprocity as an alliance maintaining 'norm' with the function of promoting social solidarity (Weiner 1985).<sup>11</sup> Weiner points out that it is important to 'keep while giving'. As mentioned above in connection with the *hau* she is especially concerned with the kind of immoveable property which embodies the history, rank and identity of the owner(s). To give away such valuables is to part with oneself. Gift exchange is thus not unproblematic but carries serious risks for the *persona* of the giver — thus the many limitations to the circulation of wealth objects with a historical connotation — inalienable wealth — in gift societies. Weiner has proposed a concept of replacement instead of reciprocity. This indicates the long-term investment and eventual reclamation of important wealth (1980). Yet, I find that the notion of replacement does not entirely save us from the idea of equality or equilibrium inherent in the concept of reciprocity. However, most recently Weiner has acknowledged the risk of loss in the practice of exchange (1988, ch.9, this vol.).

## Conclusion: the negotiation of identity

Through this reconnaissance into some concrete systems of gift exchange and theoretical discussions of the field I have attempted to show the inadequacy of simple models of gift exchange. I have pointed out their affiliation with a commodity model of social exchange as transactions of equivalents by parties who remain equal. Instead, I have demonstrated the complexity of gift exchange and sketched a model of ranked exchange involving long-term debt relations which are continuously bargained about and renegotiated.

I have also tried to bring out the symbolic significance of valuables and the personal and life-like qualities attributed to them. We can discern how they intermingle with the identity of their possessors and are involved in their personal destinies. This explains the many restrictions to their exchange and their increasing inalienability, the higher their rank. The forces producing inalienability are however complex (in the Rossel case we saw how the higher ranking *ndap* were immobilized as a result of the historical process of colonialism). If objects of wealth are entirely withdrawn from circulation they may tend to lose their significance. I would therefore argue that in most cases wealth, to maintain its relevance, must be made *social* through entering, however guardedly, in *some* circulation (cf. Weiner 1987).

If valuable objects are so significant to the image and integrity of their possessors, it is not surprising that the natives themselves invoke notions of inalienability (such as are involved in the concepts of *ngmaa* and *kitoum*) and express rules of just return or replacement. There is a model of equal exchange upheld, not only by anthropologists but by the participants themselves. On the other hand, we have seen the amount of manipulations, diversions and deceptions which is part of exchange practices. It is not only us who are mystified. As Bourdieu says: "... the economy... is forced to devote as much time to concealing the reality of economic acts as it expends in carrying them out..." (*op.cit.* 172). I shall therefore advocate that we devote more attention to the aspects of contradiction in our informants' statements, as well as in the process of exchange itself.<sup>12</sup>

Instead of constituting 'forms of equality' gift exchange systems involve subtle processes of *unequalizing*. As M. Strathern notes: "... people affect, influence, and create one another through exchanging material items" (1984: 44). Through the ongoing process of exchange the 'name', substance and status of some men (and to a varying extent women) 'grow' as they come to control more and higher-ranking valuables and establish and expand their networks of reliable exchange friends. But other men find themselves loosing shells, connections and esteem. In the 'tournaments of value' (Appadurai 1986: 21) 'big men' as well as 'rubbish men' are created. And, moreover, as the images of persons wax and wane, the value of things is influenced as well. As Munn notes: "Shells and men 'valorize each other'" (1983: 284). This means also that the value of a debt is influenced by the relative and changing statuses of creditor and debtor. The obligation to return gifts is therefore not a fundamental law, although we and our informants subscribe to it. In the real world it is situationally determined. Your decision concerning when to return a gift, how generous the return should be, or, whether or not the debt should be met at all, depends on whether your creditor has become a greater or lesser man in the meantime. And the result of your decision will further reflect on your identity as well as his. Thus Firth's old dictum: "From each according to his status obligations in the social system, to each according to his rights in that system" (1963: 142) still holds — but with the proviso that rights and obligations are not expressions of fixed statuses but the outcome of negotiation in an unstable status field.

## Notes

1. In working out these glosses I have made use of an unpublished word list compiled by Jim and Anne Henderson of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. The Hendersons have worked since 1971 on Rossel Island. I did not acquire fluency in the difficult Rossel language myself. My field work was carried out from 1971 to 1973 and in 1980. It was generously supported by the Danish Social Science Research Council, the Australian National University and the University of Copenhagen. I thank Michael Whyte for correction of my English.
2. Keesing (1984) has performed a similar 'demetaphorization' of the concept of *mana* which he shows generally referred to a condition of 'efficacy' or 'potency' but was substantivized by early researchers as a thinglike 'spiritual energy'.
3. I have described the changes in the exchange system caused by colonialism in Liep 1983a.
4. I have published such a list in Liep 1983b.
5. These are specific terms for customary steps in the chain. Generally, each step is also the *ngmaa* of the next higher. In an earlier publication I erroneously glossed *kaa-pee* = 'hold-half' (Liep 1983b: 521).
6. I was told that a man would only ask for the return of a 'loan' when he, himself, needed the shell for some definite purpose. My informants said that this way of publicly remonstrating with a debtor was an "old custom". However, I only saw it this one time.
7. I leave aside in this connection the stated preference for patrilateral (classificatory FZ or FZD) marriage as this, in effect, does not lead to any simple reciprocation of prestations. The matter is too complex to take up here.
8. I owe this insight to Michael Harbsmeier, now at the Center for Humanistic Research, University of Copenhagen, who pointed it out at a seminar on an earlier paper of mine.
9. Gregory makes an exception in the case of the destruction of wealth in 'gifts to gods' (1980, 1982: 61).
10. The elements of calculation and interest in gift exchange have also been underlined in a recent essay by Appadurai although he goes too far by regarding gift exchange as "a particular form of the circulation of commodities" (1986: 12).
11. Sahlins (1972, ch. 4, 5), and to some extent Lévi-Strauss (1969), are the most prominent representatives of this 'received' view.
12. Compare LiPuma's stimulating discussion of contradictory Maring marriage rules which he sees as ideological statements or rationalizations after the fact produced by decontextualized ethnographic interviewing (1983).

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# 'CANOE TRAFFIC' OF THE TORRES STRAIT AND FLY ESTUARY

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This research<sup>1</sup> concentrates on the material aspects of the interaction between Torres Strait Islanders and the Papuan peoples of the Fly estuary and the southwest coastal region of Papua New Guinea. The Torres Strait is generally described as the area of sea and islands between the Cape York Peninsula of Australia and the southwestern coast of Papua New Guinea, west of the Fly River. It is a little over 150 Km wide and contains over 100 islands. At present only about 17 are inhabited although in the recent historic period approximately 30 were continuously or periodically inhabited. To some extent the islands of the Torres Strait can be divided, geographically as well as culturally, into four groups. These groups are; the volcanic eastern islands; the low sandy central islands; the high, rocky western islands, and the top western or low swampy coastal islands along the Papua New Guinea coast.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to the islands of the Torres Strait, the Oriomo-Bituri area of Papua New Guinea, which extends from between the Fly River in the north, to the Torres Strait in the south, is mostly savannah country with small areas of forest. The coastal region is generally featureless, flat swampy flood plains bordered by coastal mangroves and narrow sandy beaches, subject to tidal changes. The off-shore waters are dangerous, with numerous reefs, sandbars and strong currents.<sup>3</sup>

In the Fly estuary, southwest coast and Torres Strait region not only is linguistic diversity evident, but subsistence patterns across the region also vary significantly. Subsistence and ecological

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patterns in this region have recently been studied by Harris (1980, 1979, 1977) and Ohtsuka (1983 (a) and (b) and 1985). However, in spite of these differences or perhaps because of them, interaction between peoples of the region has a long history. Such patterns of interaction between linguistic and culturally diverse groups of peoples is well known in the Melanesian region.

In the context of most Melanesian trading or exchange practices, goods passed between hands over short distances. According to Brookfield and Hart (1971: 314), this was supplemented by, and integrated with, long distance movement of goods through what has generally been termed 'trading networks'. In this context the term 'network' is taken to mean a series of elements or socioeconomic linkages between individuals, groups or societies, linked by specific exchanges of goods, or services (Plog 1977: 128, and Irwin-Williams 1977: 142). Exchange is essentially a form of distribution by which goods and services move from the hands of those who produce them to be used or consumed by those who do not. In small scale societies, such as those of the Torres Strait and Fly estuary region, exchange is a form of transfer with strong individual and social aspects. Exchange transactions operated on two levels, internal or intra-ethnic, within the kinship system, and external, or inter-ethnic, between exchange partners and others.

Exchange in such small scale societies is a concept that refers specifically to the embeddedness of social obligations within the economic system. In this paper, therefore, exchange will be used in preference to the term 'trade' which carries with it Eurocentric notions of commercial activity involving persons whose principal economic activity is buying, selling and the movement of goods and services.

Historically, one of the most important cultural links between Papuans and Islanders has been regular and sustained contact maintained by voyages in large ocean going canoes. The interesting aspect of this relationship from an economic point of view has been not only the exchange *by* canoes, that is, using canoes as a means of exchange, but also exchange *in* canoes, where the canoe itself has been the principal object of exchange. Exchange relations between Torres Strait Islanders, coastal Papuans and Australian Aboriginal groups at Cape York were facilitated by means of a sophisticated maritime technology and operated within the confines of well established real and fictive kinship ties.

The artefacts of this 'canoe traffic', as it was termed by both Haddon (1904, V: 296-97, and 1908, VI: 186-87) and Landtman (1927: 213-16), therefore, offer an interesting study in the material culture of exchange. As material culture research is concerned with



change over time, an understanding of how these patterns of exchange have become altered by the differing and unequal levels of acculturation, social and economic development in both the Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea must be understood.

Material culture involves the study of those tangible objects of human society that are the products of learned rather than instinctive behaviour (Reynolds 1984: 63). Material culture surrounds us and, as one of the aims of ethnographic museums has been to collect the *objects* of mankind, the museum is an ideal place in which to study material culture. However, material culture research involves more than typological research for, as Evans-Pritchard stated (1940: 89): 'Material culture may be regarded as part of social relations, for material objects are chains along which social relationships run...' It is therefore essential that material culture be understood within its cultural context.

In common with most anthropological research, material culture research should involve an understanding of all relevant archival and historical documentation, as well as ethnohistorical evidence obtained during extended field work. However, material culture research involves an added dimension: the use of museum collections and their associated documentation. This additional source of information is an invaluable reference filter through which historical documentation and contemporary field work can be sublimated. An additional layer of information is gained from the examination of such objects together with the associated information available in museums concerning collection documentation and records.

The Gunnar Landtman collection of Kiwai Papuan material culture housed at the National Museum of Finland (Suomen Kansallismuseo) both in Helsinki, and at the central store house at Niinikoski, is an excellent example of a well preserved, well documented collection with extensive photographic resources and sound recordings (see Landtman 1917, 1927 and 1933). This collection of over 1300 artefacts principally from the Fly estuary and southwest coastal Papuan peoples noted earlier, contains not only exchange items but also many objects which show evidence of incorporating items exchanged between the Kiwai and other coastal peoples and the Torres Strait Islanders. As a collection it is probably the most comprehensive single collection of southwest Papuan material culture, available for research, and complements the extensive Haddon collections of Torres Strait Islander material culture housed in the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge (see Moore 1984) made in 1888 by Alfred Cort Haddon and in 1898 by the Cambridge

Anthropological Expedition to Torres Strait under the direction of Haddon (Haddon 1901–1935). These collections are the most important historical collections of coastal Papuan and Islander material culture and, together with supporting documentation, are primary sources for anthropological research in the region.

The Torres Strait and Fly estuary region is one area of Melanesia rich in both historical documentary sources and artefactual material. First recorded European contacts with Islanders date from 1606, when Torres sailed through the Torres Strait. Cook in 1770 passed close to Cape York and the south western islands. Later the numerous British scientific expeditions of the 1840s and 1850s (Jukes 1847, Sweatman's journals (Allen and Corris 1977) and Macgillivray 1852) left valuable records of both the natural and cultural history of the region. This ethnographic literature contains important source material, not only of social life but also descriptions of material culture, at the time of first sustained contact between Europeans, Islanders, Aborigines and Papuans.

Missionary activity commenced in 1871 with the arrival of the London Missionary Society pastors who established a base first on Erub in the eastern Torres Strait, and later, in 1872, at Mawatta on the southwest Papuan coast. Colonial administration followed the establishment of Thursday Island in 1877 and Daru after 1895.

Historical documentary sources, notably reports by seamen, navigators and scientists, traders, missionaries and government officials report on the long history of 'canoe traffic' across the region (see especially Jear (1904/05), Beaver (1920) and McCarthy (1939).

This early and sustained contact between the indigenous people and Europeans, particularly following establishment of the valuable pearling and beche-de-mer industries, led to the gradual introduction of European trade-store goods and foodstuffs into the customary exchange system. By the last decade of the 19th century European tools, clothing and maritime technology had been substituted for many items of customary material culture particularly in the Torres Strait islands. In the islands, settlement patterns were also altered by mission and government attempts at consolidation of villages for religious, legal and labour control.

The logical substitution of European trade-store goods into the customary exchange system was particularly noted by Jear (1904/ 1905). Thus, by the time of Landtman's research on the Papuan side of Torres Strait, undertaken between 1910 and 1912, the people of coastal Papua had been subjected to considerable outside influence both from Europeans and non-Europeans. Items of material culture described in literature and in museum collections of both Torres

Strait Islander and Papuan artefacts shows evidence of these external influences.

The patterns of exchange as presented in the historical documentary sources, can be broadly divided into three areas: exchange between Islanders and Cape York Aborigines; exchange between coastal Papuans and Islanders; and, inter-island exchange among Islanders. Historical sources detail items of exchange, however, there was little attempt, even in the writings of Landtman (1927 and 1933) and Haddon (1901–1935), at analysing exchange from the perspective of individual cultural groups within the region.

The following list of exchange items, noted during the early contact period from 1840 to 1900, was obtained from the early ethnographic literature discussed in this paper. From the studies by both Landtman (1927: 213–16) and Haddon (1904, V: 293–97 and 1908, VI: 185–88) this list can be confirmed.

*Exchange items originating from the Torres Strait:*

harpoons shafts  
all forms of shell [the most valuable being pearl (*Pinctada* sp.) and cone shell (*Conus* sp.), but other shells, such as olive shell (*Oliva* sp.), trumpet shells (*Fusus* sp.), and baler shells (*Melo* sp.) were also important exchange items]  
stone for axes, adzes and clubs  
ochre  
plaitwork, baskets and mats  
feathers (Torres Strait pigeon and heron)  
bamboo-knives, water containers and tobacco pipes garden foods  
dugong and turtle meat and fish (fresh and smoked)  
turtle shell  
stingray spines  
masks  
human heads and skulls  
iron (European tools)  
calico (European cloth)  
European trade-store goods — inc. rice, flour and stick tobacco

Many of these items circulated in inter-island exchange. Particularly important was the exchange of fish from the central islands for garden foods from the fertile eastern islands.

*Exchange items originating from Papua New Guinea:*

garden foods  
wild animal meat  
sago

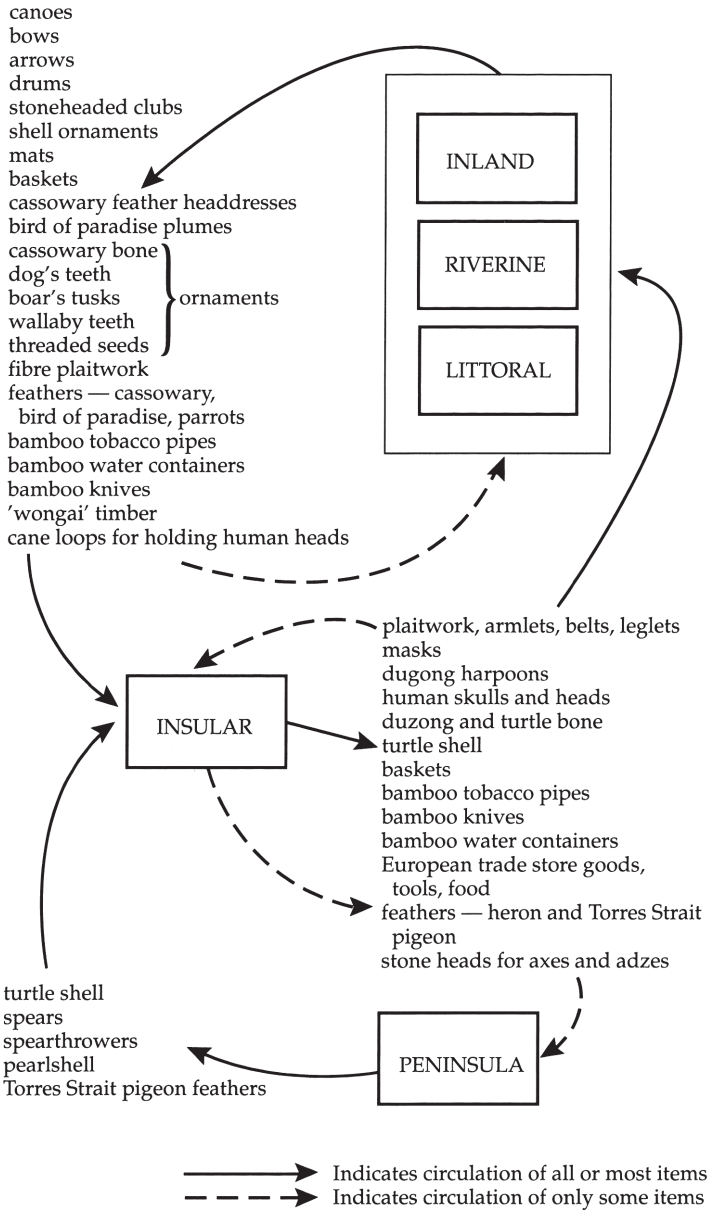
bamboo knives  
bamboo tobacco pipes  
feathers (cassowary and bird of paradise)  
cassowary feather headdresses  
canoes  
canoe hulls  
bows and arrows  
drums  
stonehead clubs  
shell ornaments  
mats and baskets  
cuscus (*Phalanger* sp.)  
cassowary bone  
ornaments (dogs' teeth, boars' tusks, wallaby teeth)  
threaded seeds  
fibre and plaitwork  
'wongai' timber  
cane loops for holding human heads  
native tobacco

*Exchange items originating from Cape York:*

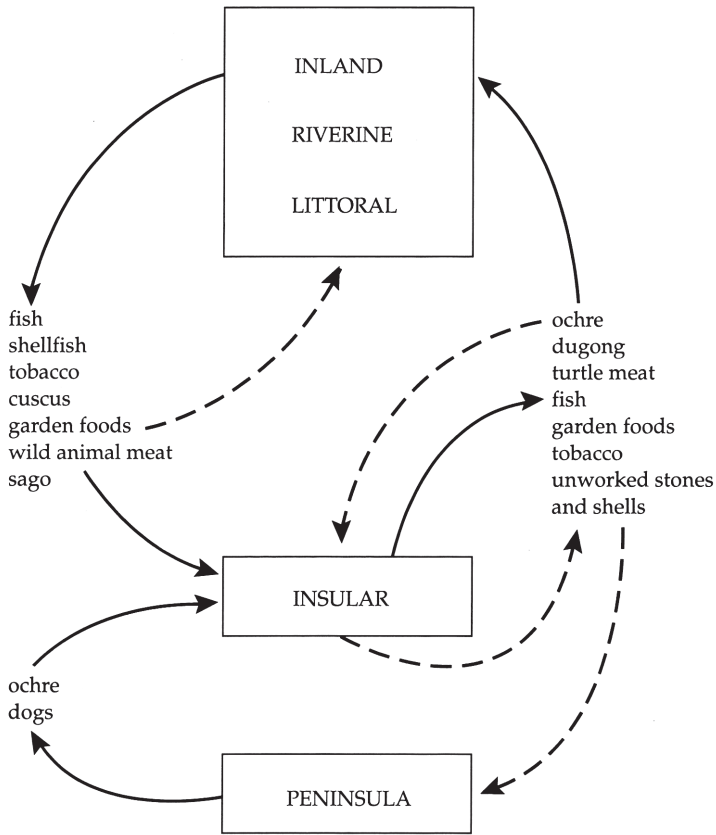
ochre  
turtle shell  
spears and spearthrowers  
dogs  
pearl shell  
feathers (Torres Strait pigeon)

Differences in subsistence strategies and access to natural resources, for both Islanders and Papuans, are reflected in the variety of materials used in artefacts found in museum collections. It is possible, on the basis of differing ecological and subsistence patterns, to categorize those items of material culture used in exchange into ecological zones of origin. Because linguistic and cultural differences show strong correlation with these ecological differences, assumptions can be made concerning the cultural origins of material culture items noted in both the historical documentary sources as well as in oral testimony. The patterns of exchange of material culture items can be shown diagrammatically (Figure 1). The exchange of raw materials, foodstuffs and animals, as noted in the historical documentary literature, can also be shown diagrammatically (Figure 2).

Oral evidence obtained from field work amongst the Torres Strait Islanders and coastal Papuan peoples also confirms many of the items listed above. However, in contrast to the generalized and culturally nonspecific descriptions of exchange patterns obtained



**Figure 1.** Patterns of exchange of material culture items as noted in the Historical Documentary Evidence.



**Figure 2.** Patterns of exchange of raw materials, foodstuffs and animals as noted in Historical Documentary Literature.

from the historical documentary sources, the oral testimony of exchange is culturally specific in detailing the origin of exchange items and emphasises that the key to the maintenance of close exchange relationships was strong real and fictive kinship ties.

The Torres Strait and Fly estuary exchange system was open ended. The coastal Papuan people were engaged in exchange with nearby riverine dwelling people who, in turn, exchanged with those groups living inland. Islanders exchanged, both externally

with coastal Papuans and internally between Eastern and Central Islanders and between Central and Western Islanders. On the Australian mainland a number of Aboriginal groups maintained exchange relations with Islanders as well as with each other. The result was widespread geographical dispersal of material culture items originating from not only the Islands but the Papuan and Australian mainlands.

A diagrammatic representation of the patterns of exchange of material culture items, emphasising the position of the coastal Kiwai speaking peoples is shown in Figure 3. Figure 4 is a diagrammatic representation of patterns of exchange of raw materials and foodstuffs as noted in oral history collected from the littoral dwelling Kiwai speaking people.

The legends and stories detailing the peoples' own historical perspective of the origin of the 'canoe traffic' between Torres Strait Islanders and Papuans were collected by Landtman (1917: 148–52 and 1927: 211–12). This evidence emphasised the long history of inter-ethnic contact. The principal story concerning the introduction of the dugout canoe and the start of traffic in canoes stated how two men, Nimo and Puipui, who lived at Ait on the eastern end of Saibai Island, journeyed along the southwest coast of Papua in a bowl made from coconut shell. On their way east they named many islands, points and creeks until they arrived at Old Mawatta, near the Oriomo River, opposite Daru. There they met a man who, seeing their coconut bowl vessel, gave them a dugout canoe each. They lashed the canoes side by side, and eventually returned to Saibai. Two men from Mabuiag Island in the western Torres Strait came to Saibai in a solid log canoe with two outriggers. Nimo gave them one dugout canoe and they returned to Mabuiag, where they added wash-strakes, two outriggers, ornamented sides and also added mat sails. They sailed to nearby Badu where the people put down valuables, stone axes and harpoon handles in payment for a similar canoe. The people of Moa did the same. The two Mabuiag men returned to Saibai and taught the people there how to improve their canoes. They obtained other canoe hulls and brought them back to the Badu and Moa people. Since then canoes have been 'traded' along the coast in exchange for shell valuables. Nimo and Puipui remained on the coast at Saibai and did not return to Ait.

A second story also collected at Mawatta by Landtman (1917: 361–64) told how the Central Islanders first obtained their outrigger canoes. The people of Yam Island first learnt of canoes when a model canoe drifted away from Daru and landed on Yam. Men constructed a solid log canoe with two outriggers, a small

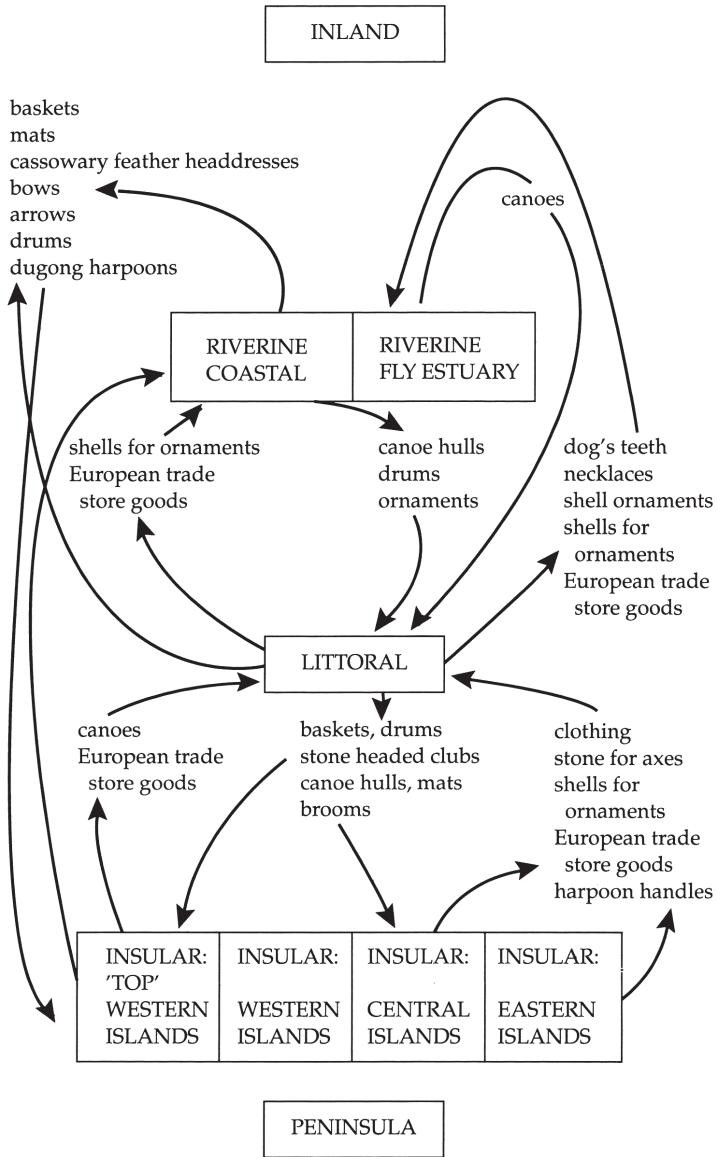
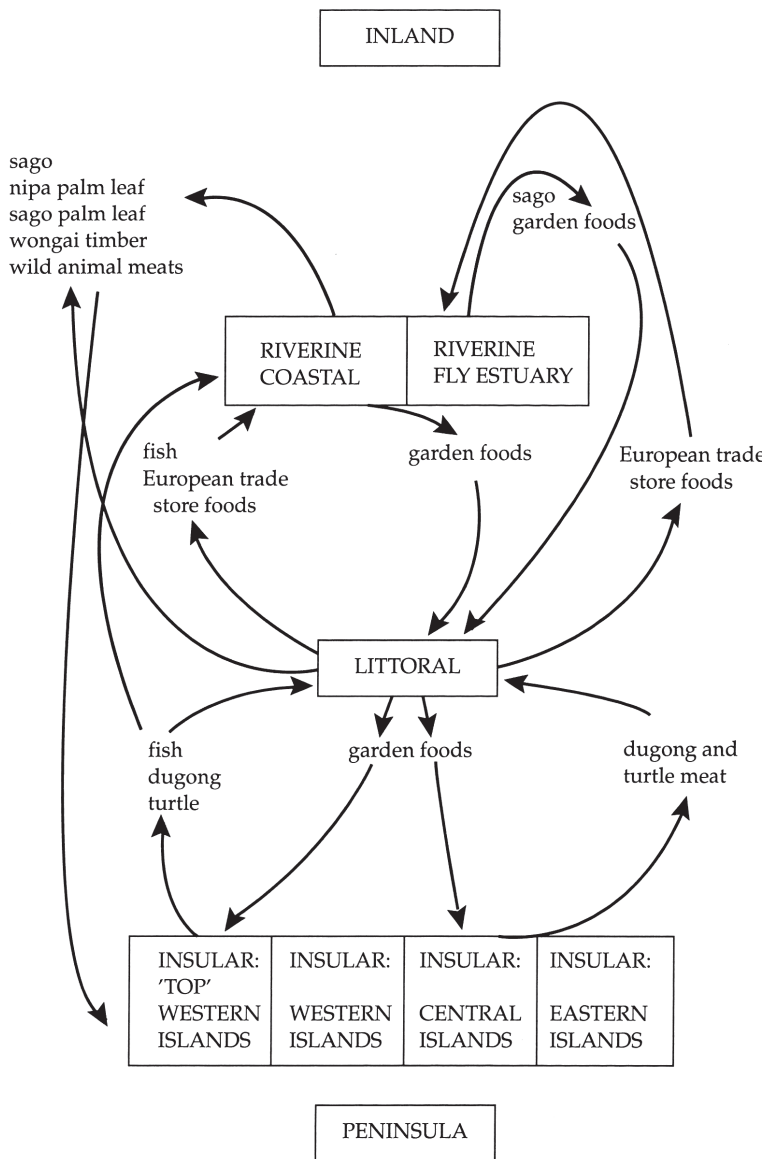


Figure 3. Patterns of exchange of material culture items from the perspective of coastal Kiwai speaking people.





**Figure 4.** Patterns of exchange of raw materials and foodstuffs from the perspective of coastal Kiwai speaking people.

platform and mat sails in imitation of this toy canoe, and went to Daru. The people of Daru showed them their dugout canoes, and the Yam Islanders learnt that canoes originated from the northern part of the Fly estuary and were obtained in exchange for shells and valuables. This led to the extension of the 'canoe traffic' into the central Torres Strait islands.

Prior to European colonial intrusion into the economic life of the Torres Strait Islanders and the Papuan people of the southwest coast and Fly estuary, the principal economic transaction concerned the exchange of armshells (*Conus* sp.) obtained from the waters of the Torres Strait for canoe hulls obtained from the Fly estuary.

Canoe hulls originated in the villages on the northern side of the Fly estuary, notably Daumori, Lewada, Baramura, Tirio and Wariabodoro (near Teapopo) villages, as well as in the Dibiri and Bamu River region. Canoes were then exchanged down the Fly estuary or across the islands of the estuary to the southern coastal Kiwai villages and from there into the Torres Strait. It appears that the eastern Islanders of Torres Strait obtained canoes through Parama, while the central and western Islanders obtained canoes via the coastal village of Tureture, and then through Saibai. Thus the actual path of canoes followed the legendary paths established by the ancestors.

Canoes are no longer used in the Torres Strait islands. However, due to lower economic standards, and difficulties in obtaining goods such as outboard motors and petrol, sail canoes are still extensively utilized by the coastal Papuan people. Canoe hulls can be made into a variety of canoe types depending on the size of the hull, the requirements of the purchasers and the needs of the community. Generally, the larger the hull the larger the canoe. Small canoes may also be made in local communities where sufficient timber could be obtained. If obtained through the exchange system, small canoe hulls are generally made into single outrigger, single masted canoes, called in Kiwai *tataku*. These are used in-shore along the coast and in the Fly estuary, where large canoes are seldom seen. The general sail shape seems an inverted triangle. In former times river canoes seldom had sails. In the Kadawa and Daru areas the small coastal canoes had a square sail, which, in former times, was made from strips of pandanus leaf stitched together, rather like a large mat.

The second form is a large canoe, with planked sides, full platform, two outriggers and one mast with two sails, called in Kiwai a *puputo*. This is still the common form of canoe used near Daru by the coastal Kiwai peoples. These canoes are still used for reef fishing, travel to the Torres Strait Islands and for community

transport. The church women of Kadawa, for example, have their own canoe used for transportation to markets, inter-church meetings and fishing trips, as well as for extended visiting and exchange journeys into the eastern and central Torres Strait. This canoe is used and sailed almost exclusively by the women.

A third form is called *motomoto*. This was the largest canoe type, with two outriggers, planked sides, full platform, two masts with three sails. While comparatively slow and heavy, it is very safe in open water and can be used to transport large cargoes, and even dugong and turtles, as well as many people over long distances. *Motomoto* are now used only in the more western villages of Mawatta, Masingara and Mabudawan. The use of the *motomoto* is still necessary in these villages for distances to markets are long and waters near these villages are dangerous. It is generally accepted by both Papuans and Islanders that the Torres Strait Islanders on Saibai first developed the use of the large double outrigger canoe. This was essentially for practical reasons, heavy loads of goods and people required the use of large sails and a substantial number of crew. Thus the generally accepted version of the origin of the double outrigger canoe conforms to the oral traditions collected by Landtman and noted earlier. According to oral evidence and historical photographic evidence, the present form of masts and sails used on the *motomoto* appears to be derived from the old European pearling lugger, common in Torres Strait waters during the first quarter of this century.

Oral testimony collected by the author during field work in 1984 and 1985 also emphasises the long history of inter-ethnic contact between Papuan and Islanders established well before the coming of Europeans. The following story told by Sair Buia of Kulalae village describes first contacts between the Gizra speaking people and the eastern Islanders of the Torres Strait:

Our people were going to Gida (on the western side of the Pahoturi River) for initiation ceremonies, on the land where we learnt our lore. During this time people used rafts to cross rivers and at this time the wind was blowing from the northwest and the current was very strong. On the raft were many people, including a pregnant woman named Agor. They could not cross the river and began to be washed down the river. They had fruit and nuts from the bush, because this was the lean time for food, before full fruiting and before the good taro and bananas were ripe. The wind and current took them out into the sea, and right over to Murray Island (in the eastern Torres Strait). Their fire went out while they were travelling. There were people on Murray Island, and they

asked the people on the raft : “Where do you come from?” The people told them that they were Gizra people. The pregnant woman gave birth there, and the raft people mixed and married into the Murray Island people. On Murray Island there were no breadfruit trees, or nuts, etc., but now these islands are full of fruit trees that the Gizra people took over with them.

As has been stated, the Meriam language of the Eastern Islanders of the Torres Strait is structurally similar to the Bine, Gidra and Gizra languages of the people of the riverine regions along the southwest coast of Papua New Guinea.

The establishment of exchange partnerships through the principal exchange process of ‘traffic’ in canoes permitted the distribution of the wide variety of exchange items noted earlier. The principal objects of exchange, that is *Conus* sp. armshells for canoe hulls, persisted until the early part of this century. For a maritime people, such as the Islanders and the coastal Papuan People, the canoe was an essential item of material culture. Large canoes were always owned by clan or community groups and were functionally important as the means of transportation, subsistence and the maintenance of kinship ties. However, the Papuan and Islander people are now divided by many social, economic and political barriers.

The decline in the extent and vitality of the Torres Strait and Fly estuary ‘canoe traffic’ was noted by writers earlier this century. There are a number of factors which influenced this decline. With the introduction of European goods into the exchange system, stick tobacco, calico, knives and axes were also exchanged for canoes. The introduction of a cash economy based on employment for wages on plantations, boats, in domestic and administrative service, also led to the significant change in the customary exchange system. As well as this, customs and quarantine regulations concerning the transport of people, food and other goods, especially alcohol, had been in force since early this century. Political divisions, firmly established after the independence of Papua New Guinea in 1975, divide the peoples of Torres Strait from their cousins in Papua New Guinea. The use of different currencies only compounded the sense of separation felt by Islanders and Papuans. Confusion over access to land, reefs, fishing grounds and maritime resources in the Torres Strait prompted the proposal for the establishment of a ‘traditional economic zone’ in the Torres Strait (Australia, Treaties 1978). This was formally ratified in 1985. The treaty protects, under the title of ‘barter and market trade’,

those broadly defined 'traditional' economic activities performed by the inhabitants of the region in accordance with local tradition. However, while in theory such customary exchange rights are recognised, in practice the full extent of the Treaty is little understood in the isolated villages of the southwest coast of Papua New Guinea.

Since Landtman's time, 'canoe traffic' has undergone some radical restructuring. While kinship ties still form the basis for understanding customary exchange patterns, these kinship ties have been weakened by the immigration and quarantine restrictions. Exchange of food stuffs is mostly prohibited by Australian quarantine laws. Following a concerted and notably successful conservation campaign, restrictions on dugong hunting have had an impact on communal hunting and feasting practices. Store goods have largely supplanted those pre-World War I items previously mentioned, although drums and mats are still important artefacts of daily use in both Papua New Guinea and the Torres Strait Islands.

The Torres Strait Islanders changed from the use of canoes to use of European boats early this century. This was supported by mission and governments who encouraged boat building and commercial enterprise. Largely for economic reasons, the Papuan people still make, exchange and use small and large canoes, which are finely crafted and expertly sailed. Canoes, however, are no longer exchanged across Torres Strait.

## Summary

The people of the Torres Strait and neighbouring coastal regions are neither politically united nor culturally homogeneous. However, in former times even the most widely separated communities had mediated contact with each other, while closer communities had stronger ties, the closest ties being kinship relations which were both strengthened and maintained by formal and informal exchange relations. Communities were tied to each other through raiding, ritual and trade, and through exchange were able to exploit the resources of the wider region (Beckett 1972: 308). The primary economic purpose of exchange was to distribute resources among diverse groups of peoples. The integration of small, generally economically independent households and clans was a requirement of economic survival. The result was that the communities of the region co-existed with limited but necessary interchange.

At a local level contact was thus frequent and informal, at the intermediate level, less frequent and more formalized and in a regional context it took the form of systematized exchange. The principal purpose of exchange was the movement of products manufactured from resources obtained in environments where such resources were maximized.

The results were objects of exchange, whose sources varied according to environmental factors and the skills of the people. Such objects exist within museum collections such as Landtman's collection.

These objects can tell us a great deal about the life of the people who both made and used them. At a time when field work is becoming increasingly difficult, both politically and economically, the value of museum collections must surely gain in importance. They are an important research tool, in most cases generally underutilized by anthropologists.

With the development of social anthropology after World War II, the study of material culture became increasingly unfashionable. This aspect is examined in some detail by Marilyn Strathern (in this volume).

The study of material culture has particular relevance in Australia and the Pacific. Large collections of culturally significant Melanesian, Polynesian and Australian Aboriginal material culture exist in museums far removed from their cultural homelands. Artefactual documents are still 'read' by the people of the Pacific who remain the subjects of continuing anthropological research.

At a time when the people of the Pacific are actively reseeking their cultural heritage, and are neither culturally nor politically unaware, the research, display and revival of the material culture of these peoples of the Pacific has received positive encouragement from the people themselves.

## Notes

1. This paper is a brief study of some aspects of my doctoral research at the Material Culture Unit, James Cook University of North Queensland, Australia, on the material culture of the Torres Strait and Fly estuary 'canoe traffic.'
2. The Meriam-mer speaking peoples of the eastern islands inhabit the Murray, Darnley and Stephen Islands group while the Kala Lagaw Ya (Kala Lagau Langgus) speakers inhabit the central islands, the western islands and the top western islands. Kala Lagaw Ya speakers can at present, be further divided into three sub-groupings; the people

of the central islands speak Kriol, a mixture of English, Kala Lagaw Ya and Polyne-  
sian, especially Samoan, languages; while the western islanders speak Mabuiai dia-  
lect; and the top western islanders speak Saibai dialect. Kala Langaw Ya belongs to  
the Pama-Nyungan group of Australian languages while Saibai language is related  
to Gizra, the language of the inhabitants of the Pahoturi River region of coastal  
Papua New Guinea. Meriam is a member of the non-Austronesian (Papuan) lan-  
guage family of the Trans-Fly language stock (Wurm 1975). Its closest linguistic  
relations are to the Papuan mainland languages of Bine, Gidra and Gizra spoken  
by people inhabiting the lands between the Papuan coast and the Fly River. While  
it shows strong influence from Southern Kiwai language, it also shows evidence of  
contact with Kala Lagaw Ya.

3. In this region of Papua New Guinea a number of Papuan, non-Austronesian speak-  
ing people inhabit the narrow coastal strip and numerous islands of the Fly estuary  
as well as the swampy riverine areas. The Agob speaking people live on the main-  
land between the Mai Kussa and the Pahoturi River. The Gizra speaking people live  
along the Pahoturi River and east towards the Binaturi River. The Bine speaking  
people live along the Binaturi River and inland. The Gidra speaking people live  
along the Oriomo River and inland along the Oriomo Plateau, while the Kiwai  
speaking people, who dwell in the Fly estuary, on Daru and Parama Islands, also  
inhabit the small, isolated littoral communities at the mouths of the Oriomo, Bina-  
turi and Pahoturi Rivers. At present, varieties of the Kiwai language are spoken as  
far as the Papuan Gulf to the east, although Wurm (1972: 363) stated that the origin  
of the Kiwai speaking people was in the Upper Fly and that the present distribution  
of Kiwai speaking peoples results from migrations down the Fly River over many  
generations.

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# CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE PACIFIC AND THE BARK CLOTH MAKING IN CENTRAL SULAWESI

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Archaeologists, anthropologists and linguists are now in general agreement about the prehistory of the Austronesian-speakers, but most details are still obscure. The Philippines and the eastern part of Indonesia (Sulawesi, Ceram, Halmahera, Irian Jaya) in particular have received very little attention in research into the cultures of the Pacific region and the settling of the area by the Austronesian peoples.

Using ethnographical and linguistic evidence bark cloth making has generally been considered a common feature of the Austronesian-speakers who spread from Southeast Asia into Pacific (see Bellwood 1978, 1985). In this paper I examine in some detail the bark cloth production of the Kaili-Pamona speakers<sup>1</sup> in Central Sulawesi (Celebes) and discuss how the study of their bark cloth may add to research into the cultural history of the Austronesian peoples.

Simon Kooijman (1972: 431–32) has extensively compared the bark cloth tradition of the Eastern Indonesian peoples with Polynesian *tapa* complex and has found a number of common features. His research clearly indicates that the techniques used and results gained in the Central Sulawesi bark cloth tradition were far superior to those of other areas, approaching paper in their

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fineness. This is one reason why the Kaili-Pamona speakers of Central Sulawesi are an interesting group as regards the cultural history of the Pacific, and the origin of bark cloth manufacture in particular. In addition, Kaili-Pamona bark cloth making is well documented by descriptions and objects in museum collections.

Kaili-Pamona speakers have preserved in their culture until this century a number of features which were present within linguistically reconstructed Proto-Malayo-Polynesian society. The preservation of these cultural features among them was aided by the fact that the region they inhabited in the mountains in the centre of the island was difficult to traverse, and by the nature of their culture. Their religion was based on ancestor worship, and the will of the deceased ancestors determined the fate of people. According to Adriani and Kruyt (1951 II:2) the life of the To Pamona (the East Toraja) in the 1890's was dominated above all by the thought of doing nothing that the ancestors had not done before in order to avoid their displeasure. These ancestors watched over the continuing observation of the ancient customs, and they punished everyone who went against them.

This "way of the ancestors" coincided well with the reconstructed culture of Proto-Malayo-Polynesian society. According to their tradition Job's-tears and millet were known to the To Pamona earlier than rice. Many old To Pamonas told Adriani and Kruyt that, before rice, people ate only Job's-tears and millet. At the end of the 19th century people still planted Job's-tears and millet in small amounts "so that the food of the ancestors may not be lost, inasmuch as they have handed it down to us so that we might preserve it" (Adriani and Kruyt 1951 III:152-53). Some To Pamonas claimed that their ancestors ate only yam and taro. Before the arrival of the Dutch Government in Central Sulawesi, the To Pamona cultivated their rice solely in dry fields. (Adriani and Kruyt 1951 III:3, 7.)

Adriani and Kruyt (1951 III:253) also suggested that the To Pamona did not become familiar with buffaloes until relatively recent times. Pigs, chickens and dogs were commonly kept as domesticated animals, and they also played a central role as sacrificial animals. Most reconstructed features of early Austronesian tribal societies mentioned by Bellwood (1985: 150-58), such as headhunting, bark cloth making, betel chewing, megalith constructions, secondary burial rituals, shamanism, beliefs centered on spirit animism and ancestor cults were all still present in the culture of the Kaili-Pamona speakers at the end of the 19th century.

Bark cloth is still made in some parts of western Central Sulawesi. The Swedish zoologist and ethnologist Walter Kaudern wrote

(1921 II:5) that traditional handicrafts still flourished in the southwestern parts of Central Sulawesi when he visited the region in 1917–1920, and local products still had not been ousted by European or Japanese goods. True, factory-made cotton fabrics had already spread among the highlanders, but the people there still had not assimilated the manner of clothing of the coastal region and made clothes of cotton according to the traditional designs used for bark cloth garments.

## Bark cloth in Central Sulawesi at the beginning of the 20th century

When Kaudern visited Sulawesi in 1917–1920, bark cloth (*fuya*,<sup>2</sup> as the Dutch called it) was still being made by the To Lore, To Kulawi and To Pipikoro living in the centre of the island. Along the coasts where Buginese culture had long been influential the making of bark cloth had been discontinued much earlier, even in the Palu Valley. Only in a couple of villages further south did people still make thin, white bark cloth; the inhabitants did not use it themselves, however, but sold it.

Large quantities of bark cloth were bought by the Chinese, who took it to China where it was used to enshroud corpses and as a protective layer inside wooden vessels when they lined them with a layer of sheet copper. Also the Gorontaloese and the Minahassans bought bark cloth from Central Sulawesi and traded it further. Adriani and Kruyt (1912 II:326, 1951 III:301) wrote that a representative of the Chinese firm Sie Boen Tjong in Gorontalo, who had been engaged in extensive trade in the Gulf of Tomini since 1857, said that during the last century bark cloth was an important item for export to Surabaya and Singapore, where it was used as an underlayer in connection with the coppering of vessels. This indicates that bark cloth might earlier have been a significant article of commerce in some areas.

By the time Kaudern visited Lindu (the West Torajas) the local people were no longer making bark cloth and bought it from Kulawi instead. But when the missionaries Adriani and Kruyt visited area in 1897, three out of nine villages were still making bark cloth (Kaudern 1921 II:7). The making of bark cloth enjoyed a revival during the slump of the 1920s in Central Sulawesi, when there were no other fabrics available (Adriani and Kruyt 1951 III:273).

The garment traditionally worn by To Kaili men, and still worn by Tole men when the Finnish missionary Edvard Rosenlund stayed in the area in the 1920s, consisted of a shoulder cloth (*kumu*) made of bark cloth. The *kumu* is a cylinder-like garment about two metres long usually worn folded over the shoulder. Even at the beginning of the 20th century it was still a vital element of clothing, but by that time it was made of cotton. In addition men also wore trousers, a head cloth, a knife, and a bag containing tobacco, lime and betel, and a fur *palape* which was a little mat attached by a tie around the waist. The knee-length trousers like swimming trunks generally worn by men were also made of cotton. (Kaudern 1921 II:37–39; Rosenlund, n.d.(a))

At the beginning of the 20th century women were still wearing their traditional costumes in Central Sulawesi (Kaudern 1921 II:39). Adriani and Kruyt also reported (1951 III:273) meeting women who as late as the 1890s did not wish to wear cotton clothes, preferring bark cloth. And for sacrificial festivals, in particular, all women would wear bark clothes.

The fact that the bark cloth garments remained in ceremonial use after being replaced by cotton and other manufactured fabrics for everyday wear is an indication of the religious and magic connotations given to the bark cloth. White, painted bark cloth played a particularly important role in rituals. The bark cloth blouses also reflect the gradual penetration of the area by the outside world. The first sign was the use of cotton thread and pieces of single-coloured cotton cloth in the ornamentation of the blouses, then the use of patterned cotton fabrics and imported colours instead of natural ones. Finally the imported fabrics superseded the bark cloth altogether, first in men's and then in women's wear.

In speaking of the influence of Christianity on the use of bark cloth Adriani and Kruyt (1951 III:273–74) wrote that, following their conversion to Christianity, the To Pamona ceased to use it during their sacrificial rites and other events where man came into contact with the God. However, they continued to believe that the female leader of the harvest should be dressed in bark cloth, that the corpse of a deceased person should be wrapped in at least one piece of bark cloth, and that a widow should wear a headband, jacket or a shawl *of fuya* as a sign of her widowhood.

## Special features of bark cloth making in Central Sulawesi

In speaking of bark cloth making in Central Sulawesi I refer chiefly to the accounts given by Adriani and Kruyt (1901: 441–, 1912 II:314–, 1951 III:301–), which mainly described the making of bark cloth by the To Pamona. The brief descriptions by Edvard Rosenlund (*Catalogue of the National Museum of Finland* VK 5002: 1) and H.C. Raven (1932: 372–79) support the assumption that the process by which bark cloth was made was virtually the same throughout the area inhabited by the Kaili-Pamona speakers. Raymond Kennedy, Walter Kaudern and Simon Kooijman did not personally witness the making of bark cloth in this area and referred to the reports of Adriani and Kruyt.

The raw material for making *fuya* was mainly taken from species of trees in the *Broussonetia*, *Artocarpus*, *Ficus*, *Antiaris* and *Brosimum* families. The following species of tree were used in Central Sulawesi: *umayo* (*Trema amboinensis*), *ambo* (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), *tea* (*Artocarpus blumei*), *impo* (*Antiaris toxicaria*), *bunta* (*Sloetia minahassae*), *leboni* (*Ficus leucantatoma*), *kampendo* (*Ficus* sp.), *nunu* (*Urostigma* sp.), *Hibiscus tiliacea* and two botanically unidentified species called *wanca* and *wowoli*. The ones most commonly used were *ambo*, *tea*, and *umayo*. (Adriani and Kruyt 1901: 140, 1951 III:302; Kooijman 1963: 56–57; Kennedy 1934: 242.)

One special feature of bark cloth making in this district was that the bark was boiled before beating to remove all juices and sap. To aid the process wood ash was also added. It seems that the only other area where bark was boiled before beating was Central Mexico (Hunter 1957: 26–27; Tolstoy 1963: 653). This enabled the people of Central Sulawesi to make white bark cloth from species of tree other than the paper mulberry, which did not require to be boiled.

Once it had been boiled the bark was softened by beating. The strips were then placed in water, where they were washed, and wrung dry. Then they were wrapped in palm leaves and left to ferment for one to twelve days, depending on whether the bark had been boiled and from which species of tree it was taken. This fermentation process is also known to have been used in Java, Halmahera, Buru and Borneo, in addition to Sulawesi (Kooijman 1963: 66).

Fermentation was also known in Eastern Polynesia, but not in Western Polynesia (Kooijman 1972: 415). The fermentation process may at one time have been used in Western Polynesia, but is no

longer practiced. I have not found any mention of fermentation as a preliminary stage in working bark cloth in the accounts of manufacturing in other areas, though most bark cloth makers did wet the strips of bark before working them.

For beating the bark cloth the To Kaili and To Pamona either erected a cabin outside the village or else they beat the bark under a rice storehouse. Bark cloth was never beaten in the home because of the noise. Nor could it be beaten during the harvest or death feasts. Before the women set to work, one of the older women made a sacrifice. She placed a *bomba* stick in the ground and tied to it a piece of bark cloth, spread betel in the grooves and chanted to the spirits of the earth (Adriani and Kruyt 1951 III:304):

Be not afraid, we are going to make a noise: in any case we are going to give you *fuya*.

Beating was started with an ebony tool (*pombobaki*), the same which they used to soften the finished cloth. The beating proper was done with a stone mallet (*ike<sup>3</sup>*), a tool with a cane handle round a grooved stone beater. The first mallet to be used (*pombayowo*) had three deep, wide grooves. Work then continued with a *pondeapi*, which had about five grooves, and then a *po'opi*, which had 11–15 grooves. (Adriani and Kruyt 1901: 153–55, 1951 III: 304.)

Kennedy wrote (1934: 237) that the stone bark cloth mallet was probably invented in Central Sulawesi. This cannot be true, however, for similar tools were already in wide use over Southeast Asia as part of the prehistoric “Neolithic tradition” (Heekeren 1972: 165; Ling 1962). Hunter also wrote (1957: 28) that around 1910 he observed Otomi Indians in Mexico making paper-like bark cloth with a tool similar to the bark cloth mallet of the Kaili-Pamona speakers. Elsewhere in Indonesia bark cloth was usually beaten with a square wooden mallet similar to that used in Polynesia. Copper-headed clubs were a specialty of the Javanese and Madurese and were assumed by Kennedy (1934: 237) to be a Javanese invention. In Africa, too, bark cloth was most commonly made with wooden clubs that varied considerably in their shape and material (Picton and Mack 1979).

The pieces of bark cloth could be joined together in three ways: by sewing, by pasting or by felting. The felting technique was known for certain to have been used in Java and in Central Sulawesi. According to Kennedy (1934: 231) the pasting technique was unknown in Indonesia as a way of joining pieces of bark cloth. To generalise somewhat we may say that in Eastern Polynesia the

pieces of bark cloth were joined by felting and in Western Polynesia by pasting. The division was not, however, always as clear as this, for in Tahiti, for example, pasting was to be found alongside felting, and in Tonga, where the pasting techniques dominated, felting was used to some extent. Pieces were sewn together only on Easter Island and in Hawai'i, where this technique was used alongside felting (Kooijman 1972: 415–16).

## The ornamentation of bark cloth and products made from it

Bark cloth for everyday use was seldom decorated by painting in Central Sulawesi, and decorated cloths were reserved for ritual and festive use. In some areas the painting of bark cloth was regarded as sacred. Among the To Lore living in the western highlands (Bada, Besoa, Napu) bark cloth was painted by shamans. They were extremely clever at it, compared with the women living on the plains.

In teaching a beginner the art of painting bark cloth, the older woman would take her hand and place it on the cloth seven times<sup>4</sup>, chanting: “Nothing evil will befall so-and-so if she paints”. She would then blow on the hand four times. The beginner was thus initiated and presented to the spirits so that they would not regard her as an intruder and cause her harm.

There were also some restrictions on the painting of the bark cloth: a widow might not paint while in mourning or a woman during menstruation, for her colours would be not bright but watery. The times when painting was permissible were also clearly stated and adhered to, for anyone violating the rules might fall ill. These precautions and restrictions prove that while painting bark cloth the painter was in close contact with the spirits, and that the act of painting bore some religious significance. (Adriani and Kruyt 1951 III:307; Kooijman 1963: 68–69.)

Bark cloth was also decorated by stamping. The To Kaili and To Pamona also decorated their bark cloth with applique work as well as painting. There was applique work on the blouses for both festive and everyday wear, but this ornamentation technique did not bear the ceremonial significance of painting. There were no precautionary measures attached to applique work aimed at seeking protection against supernatural beings.

Embroidery was also used to some extent to decorate garments of

bark cloth, most often combined with applique work, but it was used far more widely to decorate cotton clothing. Embroidery was probably a late innovation in the handicraft tradition of Central Sulawesi. Embroidery did not look natural on bark clothes, especially if the artist only had light brown, untreated bast instead of colorful cotton thread.

## The social and ritual significance of bark cloth

Indonesian textiles are heavily weighted with symbolic meanings and bear symbolic value in both the religious and the social spheres. Many scholars have recently been playing more attention to the Indonesian textile tradition and especially to woven textiles (see e.g. Adams 1980; Gittinger 1979). Bark cloth and other objects have received far less study.

As Mattibelle Gittinger (1979: 20) writes concerning Indonesian textiles in general: “Life-crisis periods such as marriage, birth, circumcision, and death are recognized times of exchange, and the ceremonies often centre on the moment when textiles are transferred”. The woven textiles and bark cloth were also an essential part of the gift exchange systems among the To Kaili and To Pamona, too. They had both symbolic and economic meanings in ritualistic exchanges between men and women, and between kin groups.

A ritualistic exchange between the sexes took place during the harvest feast (*mopasangke*) when two poles up to 3 or 4 meters high were erected. These poles were called *toko mpayope* (pole of descent) or *toko sora* (decorated pole). On one pole the girls hung home-made sleeping mats, *sirih* baskets, betel bags, rain mats, *fuya* head and shoulder cloths for men; on the other the men placed their gifts for the girls: pieces of cotton for jacket, skirts, large beads, waist bands. Finally, both poles were decorated with the consecrated clothes (*ayapa lamo*): one with the clothes that women wore when they appeared as shamans and leaders in field labour; the other with the consecrated clothes that the men wore at temple feasts. Before the presents were exchanged a man walked around the men’s pole seven times and boasted of his heroic deeds as a head-hunter. A woman did the same around the women’s pole singing of her trips to the Upperworld. (Adriani and Kruyt 1951 III:133; Downs 1956: 98.)

As far as I can see this act symbolizes the different but complementary roles of men and women in the To Pamona society.



A Pamona woman maintained the well-being of her village as a cultivator, by giving birth and, in the celestial sphere, as a shaman. A Pamona man took care of his co-villagers by headhunting, there being a general idea that the health of the villagers and their crops depended on the taking of heads. The *anitus*, a distinct group of ancestors of great importance who lived under the roof of the temple, were fed with the scalps and heads of enemies.

It seems likely that woven textiles have now largely replaced bark cloth in these gift exchange systems as marriage portions, where they represent both the ritual and economic wealth controlled by kin groups. However, bark cloth which carried great religious meaning preserved until this century an important role in all religious rituals. It was present during shamanistic healing rites, sacrifices, girls' consecration rites, festivals following a death, headhunting, and fertility rites; in other words, at all rituals where the To Pamonas were closely connected with the gods, deified ancestors, and other supernatural beings.

In several rituals bark cloth was used symbolically as a bridge between the human sphere and the world of the supernatural. Ritual surroundings were commonly decorated with strips of *fuya*. To each leg of an offering table was fastened a stalk to which a strip of bark cloth was tied; nearby was placed a wooden pole with a piece of *fuya* attached. During the invocation to the village spirits in the headhunting ritual the members of the family put their hands on the lower end of a rice pounder, or hold on to *fuya* strips in order to take part in the invocation. (Adriani and Kruyt 1950 I:363.)

The sacredness of bark cloth is indicated also by the fact that, in the old days, girls were not allowed to come into contact with cotton at the consecration feast for shamans. At the end of the feast a piece of cotton was counted off from one to seven on the hand of the girls by a shaman, after which they were again allowed to touch this material. (Adriani and Kruyt 1951 III:273.)

A couple of times during their stay in Central Sulawesi at the end of the 19th century Adriani and Kruyt came across old people who protested against the fact that cotton was increasingly being given to the dead to take into the afterlife. *Fuya* had been the clothing of the ancestors, and one person even claimed that the soul was not admitted into the Underworld if it arrived there clothed in cotton. (Adriani and Kruyt 1951 II:492.)

Textile hangings placed around a ritual area may also serve a spiritually protective function among the To Pamona. For example, a widow or widower was surrounded by a small cubicle of rain mats and pieces of bark cloth in which she or he remained as a rule for three days, sometimes less, until the shaman had finished her

work. Also a corpse was laid on a mat in the most appropriate part of the house and a canopy of cotton or bark cloth (*batuwali*) was built over it. (Downs 1956: 78, 84.)

Costumes may also express social role and rank. Among the Kaili-Pamona speakers, shamans, headhunters and initiated girls had special costumes. Information on the social significance of the men's headdress (*sig*) is given by Adriani and Kruyt, according to whom the patterns on the *sig* were connected with head-hunting. Kaudern (1944: 176–77) however, pointed out that the *sig*s in his collection could not be classified according to the criteria laid down by Adriani and Kruyt. Kooijman (1963: 19–20) regarded the vagueness of Kruyt's information the biggest problem when it came to classification, mainly due to the absence of illustrations.

## Cultural history of the Pacific and the making of bark cloth

Using ethnographical and linguistic evidence, bark cloth making has generally been regarded as a common feature of early Austronesian culture (Bellwood 1985: 151–52). Ethnography informs us that bark cloth making was known in large areas of Southeast Asia and Oceania, and also in Africa and Central and South America. The importance and position of bark cloth as part of the culture of the Austronesian people is illustrated by the persistence of its manufacture in many places. As in Central Sulawesi, bark cloth played an important role in rituals and religious practices in Polynesia too.

In Eastern Polynesia *tapa* played a large part in traditional religious rituals and magical practices. In the religious context *tapa* was often associated with or used for wrapping figures and symbolic representations of gods. The skulls of deceased priests and chiefs were provided with a new *tapa* skin, thus making them symbols and carriers of an almost divine power in the social and religious life of the community. In Western Polynesia bark cloth was made and ornamented primarily for socially important ceremonial presentations. Also, decorated *tapa* in particular often served to indicate the high social status of wearer as well as to mark special occasions. (Kooijman 1972.)

Certainly, we are not able to say anything about the age and the origin of bark cloth making from ethnographic sources alone. But I consider it relevant to study ethnographical material in order to

discover interesting problems and to make suggestions about the techniques of making bark cloth, and the social and ritual roles of bark cloth in early Austronesian societies. We may leave the linguists and archaeologists to search for indisputable proof of the use of bark cloth in prehistoric times.

According to Blust (1984: 235) the linguistic evidence for the presence of bark cloth is restricted to Oceanic and eastern Indonesian languages<sup>5</sup>, but it is likely that bark cloth has history going back to at least Proto-Oceanic times.

The problem in defining the antiquity of bark cloth production has been to put a date on the archaeological finds of beaters. This is partly due to the poor conditions of archaeological preservation in Southeast Asia, since wooden bark cloth implements have not been preserved. Although bark cloth beaters probably dating from prehistoric times have been found in South China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Borneo and Sulawesi, there are only a few to which a date can be applied (Beyer 1949; Kennedy 1934; Ling 1962; Lynch and Ewing 1968; Sieveking 1956).

In Taiwan, where the Initial and Proto-Austronesian cultures were probably located, several types of stone bark cloth beaters have been found. These include oval pebble beaters, straight-backed beaters, stone beaters with a separate handle, and horned stone beaters. Unfortunately, almost all lack accurate dating.

On the western coast of Taiwan there has been found sites belonging to a culture with corded-marked pottery, termed the Ta-p'en-k'eng culture by Chang. The artefacts of the Ta-p'en-k'eng culture possibly include a stone bark cloth beater. These sites are probably dated between 4300 BC and 2500 BC (Chang 1970: 63–64). By the late third millennium BC the Ta-p'en-k'eng culture had apparently differentiated into two separate archaeological complexes; (1) The Yuan-shan culture in North and East Taiwan, and the (2) "The Lungshanoid" cultures of mainland Chinese type in the west and south. A fragment of a stone bark cloth beater with a polished and grooved surface was discovered from the corded ware stratum of the Yuan-shan shell mound in Taipei in 1953.

Yuan-shan items included also spindle whorls of clay, which suggests that a knowledge of weaving, perhaps using hemp fibers on a backstrap loom, was present (Bellwood 1985: 216). But clay spindle whorls do not occur archaeologically south of Luzon. According to linguists (Blust 1984: 233) the loom was known to speakers of a language ancestral to at least Malay, the Batak languages and various languages of northern Luzon. Blust suggests that a minimum time depth of 4000 years would have to be implied.

The most important archaeological sites in the territory of the

Kaili-Pamona culture are Kalumpang and Minanga Sipakko, on the middle course of the Karama river in west-central Sulawesi. According to Bellwood (1985: 247) these have produced the most remarkable Late Neolithic assemblages of any sites in Indonesia. The assemblages include quadrangular and lenticular-sectioned stone adzes, ground slate projectile points, a stone bark cloth beater, pottery, and some possible stone reaping knives. Unfortunately, these sites are not dated, but Bellwood (1985: 248) suggests an age of perhaps 3000 years. The decoration of this Kalumpang pottery resembles both the decoration of Lapita ceramics found in Melanesia, and the ornamentation of Central Sulawesi and Western Polynesian (Samoa, Tonga, Fiji) bark cloth.<sup>6</sup>

On the Southeast Asian mainland bark cloth beaters have been discovered in Malaya, Vietnam and Thailand.<sup>7</sup> It is probable that Austronesian-speakers did not settle the Malay Peninsula before 1000 BC, and it is perhaps best described as a point of overlap for both the earlier mainland Ban Kao Neolithic culture and the later north-western limits of Austronesian settlement. (Bellwood 1985: 258, 265.)

Accordingly our present archaeological and linguistic knowledge suggests that early Austronesian-speakers manufactured and used both woven textiles and bark cloth. If the dates for the Taiwanese stone bark cloth implements are correct, it seems likely that the Austronesians were familiar with bark cloth as early as the time span of reconstructed Proto-Austronesian. The bark cloth and woven textile techniques are not exclusive but may exist side by side in the same area, or at the same time in different areas. Both of them underwent their own independent technical developments, which in some areas may have reached very high qualities.

It seems that rather significant changes were taking place as Austronesians expanded southward into tropical regions of the Philippines and Eastern Indonesia. Although some material culture traditions, for example pottery making, an economy based firmly on agriculture, fishing, and perhaps also bark cloth production were continuous, the activities of cereal cultivation, forest clearance and weaving received temporary setbacks during and after the period of Proto-Malayo-Polynesian culture.

One interesting detail with respect to the cultural history of the Pacific is the surprising similarity between bark cloth ornamentation in Central Sulawesi and Western Polynesia (Samoa, Tonga, Fiji), for which no exhaustive explanation has been found. In Kooijman's view the similarities are so specific and numerous that they could not have developed independently, so he concludes that they must have had a common cultural origin. The same decorative

motifs also appear on Kalumpang and Lapita pottery.

To my mind the vitality and important position of bark cloth as part of the culture of the Austronesian peoples is largely due to its central role in religious rituals and social practices. Bark cloth often indicates symbolically a bridge between the human sphere and the world of supernatural beings, or a bridge between human beings and their deified ancestors. Thus, it is associated with the most sacred powers which represent the continuity and immortality of the society.

## Notes

1. In this paper I deal with the To Kaili and To Pamona, or the East and West Torajas as they were earlier called by Western scholars, but excluding the better-known Sa'dan-Toraja. I have not found any reference to bark cloth making by the Sa'dan-Torajas. I use here To Kaili to refer to all Kaili-speaking groups including To Lore, To Kulawi, and To Pipikoro.
2. Dealing with bark cloth making I have adopted terms used by Adriani and Kruyt (1901). Other native terms are equivalent to ones used by Adriani (1928), and Adriani and Kruyt (1950–51). I have, however, followed modern Indonesian spelling, which differs in certain regards from the spelling introduced by the Dutch, *oe = u*, *dj = j*, *j = y*, and *tj = c*.
3. The bark cloth beater was called *ike* all over Polynesia too. The anvil was called *totua* in Sulawesi and Polynesia. Both have been reconstructed as Proto-Central Pacific and Proto-Polynesian forms (Biggs, Walsh, and Waqa 1972).
4. Seven was the sacred number for the Kaili-Pamona speakers.
5. Buli (eastern Halmahera) *mal*, Proto-Oceanic *malo* = the paper mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), cloth of same.
6. Roger Green (1979: 14) has studied the relationship between the decoration on Early Lapita pottery, and the tattoo and bark cloth designs of Polynesia. He argues “that a number of the elements and motifs present in the surface decorative patterns had their origins in a decorative system once applied to pottery and probably to bark cloth, tattooing, and other items as well. The explanation offered is that certain elements, motifs, and structural combinations present as surface decorations on protohistoric and historic bark cloth, human skin, and wooden objects from various of the Polynesian islands are inheritances from an ancestral decorative style once applied to pottery”.
7. During his excavations in the cave of Gua Cha, Kelantan Province, northern Malay, Gale Sieveking found in 1954 a cylindrical stone bark cloth beater (Sieveking 1956: 83). According to carbon dates the Neolithic burials at Gua Cha were laid at an unknown time between

1250 BC and AD 1000, but possibly around 1000 BC according to parallels in southern Thailand.

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# THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF MUSIC PERFORMANCE ON MANIHIKI

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The material culture of music performance in Polynesia has been relatively neglected as an area of study. This is somewhat puzzling, especially when one considers that Polynesian music and dance performances perhaps represent the most obvious audible/visible expressions of Polynesian culture and are the cultural forms most widely known and appreciated by non-Polynesians. Whilst the musicological and choreological aspects are now being studied more closely, the material culture associated with music and dance performances has been little studied and is deserving of more attention in contemporary anthropological research.

In studying the material culture of music performance on Manihiki, northern Cook Islands, I have attempted to take an interdisciplinary approach.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, this approach provides a framework within which the material culture may be interpreted in its cultural context; where each example may be viewed as part of a wider material system and not simply as an isolated item, disconnected from the people and their culture. In this way, I am seeking to present a balanced view of the material anthropology of the people of Manihiki, focussing upon music and dance activities.

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## Music and dance forms on Manihiki

The music of the people of Manihiki takes several forms, both religious and secular. Religious music, which may be performed either inside or outside the church building, is always performed unaccompanied, that is, without dancing and without musical instruments. It consists of purely vocal forms. The simple harmonic style of singing the European type of Protestant hymn is known as *himene apii sabati* (Sunday School hymns), whereas the more complex, polyphonic, local style of hymn singing is termed *himene tuki*.<sup>2</sup> *Himene apii sabati* use Rarotongan texts from the hymn book published by the Cook Islands Christian Church (C.I.C.C.) whereas *himene tuki* are usually sung in Manihikian. The texts of these are usually adapted directly from the Bible and are most often taken from verses in the Old Testament, the Book of Psalms being most favoured. This style of hymn is sung by all denominations at important occasions, such as a welcoming ceremony for an important visitor, or at a funeral, but are not performed within the Roman Catholic Church in Tauhunu or Seventh Day Adventist Church during regular Sunday services.

Secular music consists of drum or drum dance music, and a more Westernised form of music which is based upon stringed instruments; the guitar and the ukelele. The drum dance, called on Manihiki *hupahupa*, (see Figure 1) may be accompanied by skin drums (*pahu matatahi* and *pahu matarua*), wooden slit drums (*koriro*), metal drums (*tini*, cabin bread tins), (see Figure 2), chanting, calling and, less often, singing. The drum group (*pupu pahu*) consists of male performers only. A third form of secular music, which is an unaccompanied vocal form, is called *ute*. This is generally believed by Manihiki people to have been introduced in the early part of the 20th century from Tahiti. It would appear to be more popular and more frequently performed in the southern Cook Islands but is not such a popular form on Manihiki. The chant or *pehe* is also an unaccompanied vocal form (an example of which is given later), as is the lullaby recorded by Moyle (1985: 24). On Manihiki, the *pehe* proper would appear to be performed on formal occasions only as nowadays the *pehe* may be sung, rather than chanted. The contemporary sung type of *pehe* is referred to as *atu pehe* (a 'composed' *pehe*) and is often used as an introduction to the *kaparima* (see below), being accompanied by guitar, ukelele and skin drum. The melody, however, is usually based on voice inflexions from the older, chanted *pehe* and the rhythm, too, is based upon chanted rhythms (Ben Ellis, pers.comm. 1986).

Music performed on guitar and ukelele is nearly always



Figure 1. Tauhunu Rua group performing *hupahupa* at a wedding.

accompanied by rhythmic beating on a skin drum (usually the double-headed skin drum, *pahu matarua*, although on occasions the single-headed skin drum *pahu matatahi*, may also be used) and by singing. It may or may not be intended for dancing. If there is dancing to this type of music, the dance style is quite different from that of the *hupahupa* and is termed an 'action song' or *kaparima*.

Another form of dance is the *fotea*, which combines the elements of *hupahupa* and *kaparima* but, apart from the dancers' use of decorated boxes during *fotea* performance, the material culture associated with this dance form does not differ greatly from that associated with the dance forms already mentioned. The *fotea* would appear to be peculiar to the northern atolls of the Cook Islands but is rarely performed nowadays. One reason for this may be that it cannot be used in national competition with dancers from the southern group.<sup>3</sup>

'Social' dancing on Manihiki is based on European/American forms, such as the waltz and the square dance, and more modern popular rock forms, danced in pairs and accompanied by recorded music. However, the more modern style of dancing, where couples dance apart from one another, contains strong elements of *hupahupa* movements and could thus be described as an acculturated form, whereas earlier dance styles, like the waltz and quickstep, are danced in Western ballroom style. The recorded music used at social dances is either on disc or cassette tape. On special occasions,



a.



b.



c.



d.

**Figure 2.** Members of drum group rehearsing in Sunday School building, Tauhunu: a. *Pahu matatahi* b. *Pahu matarua* c. *Koriro* d. *Tini*.

such as weddings and Gospel Day, live music is provided for accompaniment to social dancing. These groups of musicians are referred to as 'bands' and normally consist of guitars, ukeleles, *pahu matarua* and singers. Some bands also include a mouth organ or button accordion, and occasionally metal spoons are added.

Another Western secular form of music found on Manihiki is that performed by the brass band. This small band is the Boys' Brigade Band and thus consists entirely of male members of the community. The instruments are all imported and consist of cornets, tenor horns, euphoniums, a side drum and a bass drum. The Boys' Brigade Band performs regularly each month at a C.I.C.C. service known as 'church parade' where all youth groups are expected to attend. Those groups which have uniforms, for example, the Girl Guides, are required to wear them to this service. However, the role of the Band is not to accompany religious music during the church service, but to play both before and after the service, to accompany the youth groups, who march a short distance to and from the church. The Band also performs on special occasions, such as accompanying a wedding procession to and from the church (see Figure 3).

## Material culture : Theoretical aspects

The material culture associated with music and dance performance may be divided into two distinct areas, and I have termed these divisions, 'primary' material culture and 'secondary' material culture. By 'material culture' I mean the tangible phenomena of a human society which are the purposive products of ideas and patterns of behaviour which are learned, not instinctive (Reynolds 1984: 4). By 'primary' material culture I refer, in this context, to those items of material culture which are *essential* to music performance, that is, without which a particular form of music or dance performance could not take place. An example of this would be the musical instruments in the drum group (see Figure 4) without which a drum dance performance could not take place.

'Secondary' material culture falls into two categories:

1. Material culture items closely associated with but not necessarily essential to music/dance performance, such as dance costume, the built environment, and so on, and
2. Material culture items which are directly or indirectly referred to either by words (for example, in song texts) or by actions (for example, in dance movement).

This second category of 'secondary' material culture requires further clarification and I present here two examples by way of illustration.

A distinguished visitor to Manihiki on arrival by boat at the small wharf at Tauhunu (see Figure 5) is greeted with the old form of welcome. This consists of an *aumohi* or welcome chant (*pehe*), led by a man who is the chant leader (*tangata aumohi*) but who is supported by a small number of people making up a welcoming group. This group provides a chorus for the chant.

Leader: Tau mai! Tau mai!  
Tau mai na runga i te mata i te po-ra  
Maringi te pu-re.

Chorus: Hui-a!

Leader: Maringi te pu-re.

Chorus: Hui-a!

(Whole verse repeated and followed by a short performance by a drum group.)

In this chant, the *pōra* referred to is a coconut palm branch which has been split longitudinally down the main rib, the leaflets being plaited to form a type of mat. In former times the landing place would have been covered in *pōra* (Nehemia Tauira, pers.comm. 1986), thus providing an area of covered ground on to which the visitor was expected to step, '*Tau mai na runga i te mata i te pōra*' meaning to alight at the end of the *pōra*. The visitor would then have been conducted along the *pōra* pathway to the *marae* where the official welcome would be made, incorporating speeches, prayers and singing. Nowadays, however, the ground is not covered with *pōra* but the *tangata aumohi* carries a *pōra* in one hand, symbolising the *pōra* pathway of former times. In the accompanying illustration (see Figure 6), a young schoolboy, Principal Tauira, has been chosen as *tangata aumohi* to welcome the local member of Parliament for Manihiki who was paying a visit from Rarotonga. He is wearing a costume of fern leaves (*maire*) and carrying a plaited palm branch (*pōra*) in one hand. (In his other hand he carries a staff, also made from part of a coconut palm branch.) This example demonstrates a relationship between text and an item of material culture.

The second example demonstrates how dance movement may also relate to material culture. A drum dance (*hupahupa*) composed and choreographed for a Manihiki dance team in 1975 begins with a chant '*Koai teia e reo aroha tona?*' (Who is the person whom we love/respect?). The main section of the dance (*taki*) was composed by Papa Mehau Karaponga and in this section the dancers' movements



**Figure 3.** Boys Brigade Band marching in a wedding procession, Tauhunu.



**Figure 4.** Tauhunu Rua drum group.





**Figure 5.** Small wharf, facing entrance through reef (*avanui*), and *fare kako*, Tauhunu, where welcoming ceremonies are conducted for important visitors to Manihiki.

correspond to the actions used by Manihiki people when carrying out their work, for example, husking coconuts, making copra, preparing pandanus leaves and coconut palm leaves. The music and the dance thus portray the preparation of materials for the manufacture of different items of material culture.

## Music performance and the built environment

Whilst it is not feasible to present a detailed survey of all primary and secondary material culture associated with contemporary music performance on Manihiki, I have selected some examples of the built environment (in this case, place of performance) for further discussion. The built environment is defined here as the human use of materials or activities to arrange the environment into purposeful structures.

From research undertaken to date, it is evident that the type of music performance varies according to the place of performance. The built environment may also act as a catalyst for music performance. An example of this would be the restoration and opening in 1986 of the *fare ariki* (chief's house) which stimulated the



**Figure 6.** Schoolboy, Principal Tauira, is dressed in fern leaves (*maire*) for his part as *aumohi tangata*. The plaited coconut palm branch (*pora*) is carried in his left hand as he awaits the arrival of the Member of Parliament at Tauhunu wharf.



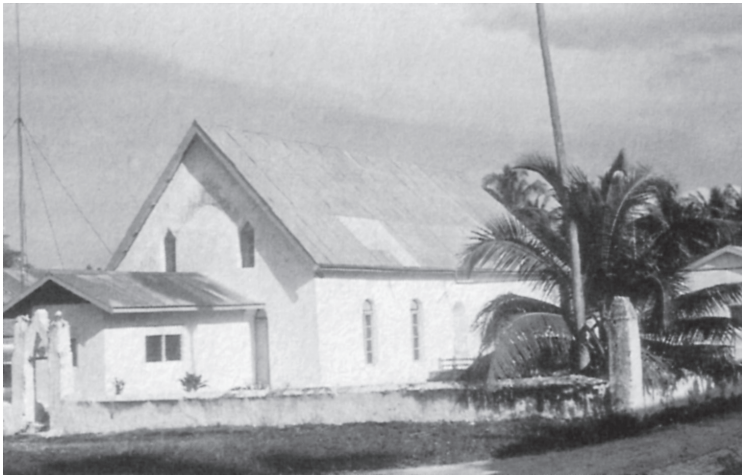


**Figure 7.** Secular *marae* in centre of Tauhunu village. Partly restored *fare ariki* on the left; administration building on the right.

composition and preparation of new musical works. So too, the place of performance may enforce limitations on the physical aspects of musical performance, for example, the size and shape of the wharf at Tauhunu (see Figure 5) limited the number of people who could be comfortably accommodated on the wharf and provided one factor in determining the number of people forming the chorus for the welcoming chant.

In Figure 7 the centre of Tauhunu village is shown. On the left is the *fare ariki* under restoration, and the building shown behind the open space is the main Government or administration building. This area is a secular *marae* or meeting place known as *marae opari*. The verandah of the administration building is an area where music and dance performances take place. Social dancing is held here at night time as this is convenient to the electricity supply, the court room being used to accommodate the stereo equipment for playing recorded music, and overhead electric lights on the verandah providing light for the dancers. *Umukai* or feasts to welcome and entertain important visitors are also held here. Guests are presented with special gifts, speeches are given, and dances, both *hupahupa* and *kaparima*, are performed.

The *fare ariki*, administration building and C.I.C.C. buildings in Tauhunu village were all constructed during the late 19th century. Two early buildings, now restored, are the Mission House and the



**Figure 8.** Area of the old sacred *marae*, ‘Pou tuteru’, which now has C.I.C.C. buildings erected on its site in Tauhunuu; Church building in centre, mission house on the far right.

church building of the C.I.C.C. (see Figure 8). These buildings were constructed on the site of an old sacred *marae* called ‘Pou tuteru’ and the area is still known by that name. The corrugated iron roofs of the church and Mission House replace what were originally pandanus roofs. It is in these structures, inside the church itself and on the large back verandah of the Mission House, that *himene tuki* and *himene apii sabati* may be heard.

As mentioned earlier, *himene tuki*, may be performed outside the church at special functions and ceremonies. An example of this is the singing which takes place as part of the ceremonies associated with death. After the burial, it is customary for the bereaved family to be comforted by the enthusiastic singing of hymns, especially *himene tuki*. This part of the death ceremony is called *apare heva*, and both young and old participate, although the young people usually sing *himene apii sabati*. In Tukao village there is a structure not unlike the old eastern Polynesian form of house of entertainment (*fare karioi*). This particular building is known as ‘Tukao Veravera Hall’ (see Figure 9), and is the building where singing and social dancing take place, as well as some indoor games. As it also houses two water tanks, it is referred to colloquially as the *fare vai* (lit. ‘water house’). It is in this building that *apare heva* are conducted in Tukao village. The ceremony usually takes place at night (see Figure 10); the burial itself and the burial services having



**Figure 9.** Tukao Veravera Hall, Tukao village.

taken place during the day.

An old coral and lime building in Tukao village, known as the *fare ture*, was used for many years as a house of entertainment and as a court house. Since the building of the new Tukao Veravera Hall, the *fare ture* is no longer used for music and dance performances and has been re-roofed in corrugated iron (see Figure 11) in an attempt to preserve the building until such time as proper restoration can be carried out.

## Conclusion

From these few examples, it is possible to gain some idea of the different musical styles, both sacred and secular, and the types of places where performances may be held. Performances take place in the open (such as at the wharf at Tauhunu village), in semi-open constructions (such as a large verandah or the Tukao Veravera Hall), or inside a closed building (such as a church).

It could be argued that the type of *music* performance is directly related to the type of *place* at which the performance is held. This is not to say that the built environment is the *only* determining factor in the type of music or dance selected for performance. Music performance and place of performance (as well as other associated



**Figure 10.** Performing *himene tuki* at *apare heva* to comfort the bereaved family, Tukao Veravera Hall.

items of material culture) must be perceived as being selected from within the cultural constraints of Manihiki society and must be accepted as being fitting and proper to the social occasion. The social behaviour appropriate to the occasion ultimately determines the type of musical performance and places it in an appropriate setting.

The built environment may, however, influence music performance by providing cues for certain types of culturally acceptable behaviour: ‘... when physical cues identify a setting, people are reminded of the context, the situation and hence the expected, and culturally appropriate behaviour’ (Rapoport 1980: 299). An example of this has been provided where the C.I.C.C. building served as a cue to remind the Boys’ Brigade Band not to enter the church where the culturally appropriate musical behaviour was the performance of unaccompanied sacred songs. Socially acceptable behaviour, within the Manihiki cultural system, determines the selection of music and the environmental setting, but the built environment itself acts as a cue to remind the musicians of the appropriate behaviour. From the examples studied, it is possible to say that there is indeed a correlation between musical styles and the built environment.

Although this paper has touched only superficially on one aspect of the material culture of Manihiki, that is, the built environment associated with music and dance performance, I have sought to



**Figure 11.** Old courthouse, *fare ture*, formerly used for music/dance performances, Tukao village.

demonstrate the rich and varied types of musical styles which may be heard on Manihiki today and to show some of the settings in which music is performed. Further research is needed on the manufacture and usage of musical instruments and dance costume, the history and construction of the built environment, the influence of electrical equipment on contemporary music and dance performance, and other material items associated with these aspects of Manihiki culture. In this way, I shall eventually be able to analyse a comprehensive material system surrounding music performance in this area of Polynesia, and to place this analysis in an historical and cultural perspective. It is to be hoped that this study will therefore be of benefit to the people of Manihiki as well as to other scholars and researchers.

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## Notes

1. This paper is a revised version of a paper presented at the symposium 'History and Culture of the Pacific', Helsinki, January 1987. The original presentation contained much visual and aural material which cannot be reproduced here. As explained at the symposium, further fieldwork has yet to be carried out and this paper should therefore be regarded as a presentation of work in progress. The correlation between the built environment and music performance is advanced as a working hypothesis.
2. For a more detailed discussion of this form, including its composition and performance, see Moyle 1985: 5–13, 22–23, 30–31.
3. The main categories for national competition, such as that held annually at the Constitution Day celebrations in Rarotonga, are *nuku henua* (dramatic presentation of a myth or legend, termed *peu tupuna* in Rarotonga), *kaparima*, *hupahupa* (termed '*urn pa'u*' in Rarotonga), *himene tuki*, and *ute*.



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# THE 'GOLDEN SECTION' ON KITAWA ISLAND

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When one first looks at the *lagimu* and *tabuya* (Figs. 1 and 2), the two multicoloured prowboards placed symmetrically, like mirror-images of one another, on the ceremonial canoe (*masawa*) used for the Kula Ring exchanges (Malinowski 1922; Leach and Leach 1983), one is struck by the delicate visual balance between the graphic signs carved in the surface of the wood. The concept of randomness, in the sense of lack of 'order', as absence of planning, must, one feels sure, have been foreign to the person who carved these two prowboards: his hand and his eye must have been guided by precise rules of composition. In what follows I shall try to identify some of the aesthetic principles which determine these rules of composition and the technique which realizes them on a *lagimu* and *tabuya*. My exposition is based, as far as the aesthetic principles are concerned, on a series of conversations with Towitara Buyoyu — regarded as one of the greatest woodcarvers in Milne Bay — and Tonori Kiririyei and Siyakwakwa Teitei. Of these last two the former is a young carver of multicoloured prowboards, and the latter a carver and builder of hulls for ceremonial canoes.

These conversations, which I have called *Aesthetic Conversations*, were recorded on Kitawa<sup>1</sup> in 1976.<sup>2</sup> The texts thus transcribed constitute a veritable treatise in which it is possible to single out certain fundamental concepts, expressed in pertinent language, relating to the way of dealing with an aesthetic problem and realizing it at the visual level: for instance, the problem of realizing the graphic harmony of a *lagimu*. An example of this problem occurs when a carver finds himself having to distribute some

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graphic signs over the surface of the wood, which is roughly triangular (an isosceles triangle) in shape.<sup>3</sup> The distribution has to take account of the 'triangular' shape of the prowboard and cannot contradict it in the 'formal', visual sense: a carver, for instance, cannot carve on it rectangular or square graphic signs, or graphic signs which, in order to be meaningful, and therefore harmonious, require a different, larger surface. It is laid down, then, that all the graphic signs must 'harmonise' with the triangular shape of the *lagimu*.

Harmony is therefore defined in this specific case as respect for the 'principle of non-contradiction': two elements, (a) the triangular surface of the wood, (b) the graphic signs carved on it with their curvilinear, spiral form, complement each other; the one seems to flow from the other. At the level of perception it is difficult to distinguish which of the two elements determines which. Indeed, they appear to the eye as a harmonious whole: the texture of the graphic signs is perceived as the very structure of the wooden surface. To use a linguistic metaphor, it might be said that 'form' and 'content' coincide. Thus harmony is understood on Kitawa as respect for the principle of 'non-contradiction' between two or more elements. It seems to me an acceptable definition. Open to debate but acceptable, because it has been defined. However, this definition of harmony is not static, because it is valid only if we are considering the relationship between the shape of the *lagimu* (which is triangular) and the form of the graphic signs carved on it and their distribution over the surface. It may still be valid when we consider the perfect bilateral symmetry of the graphic signs carved to the right and left of the vertical axis (which is realized on the *lagimu* by the graphic sign *karawa*, cf. Fig. 1): we may say that the graphic signs are harmonious because they respect the bilateral symmetry.

Harmony may further be produced by the mirror-relationship between the graphic signs: for example, the *weku* (carved on the left, when the *lagimu* is viewed from the front, with the canoe's outrigger on one's right) is a mirror-image of the *kwaisaruwi* carved on the right (cf. Fig. 1). Hence respect both for bilateral symmetry and for specularity produces harmony: the eye looks at and transmits to the mind a sense of calm. But in the very act of looking at the *weku* and *kwaisaruwi* one perceives their non-equality: the former is represented by two oblong holes inscribed in two whorls; the latter is encarved on a plane surface coloured black and inscribed in two whorls which are equal in size and colour to the first two. We have, then, two graphic signs which, while respecting the principles of bilateral symmetry and specularity, and therefore

producing harmony, are not equal.

Now this non-equality (lack of visual balance) ‘disturbs’ the harmonious texture of the entire surface: the *lagimu* ‘seems’ to hang to the right owing to the counterpoise between empty, light-weight and light-coloured (left) and plane, heavy and dark (right). It would seem to be, and indeed visually is, a loss of harmony, and hence produces a contradiction, at least at the visual level.

All this is valid if the *lagimu* is seen as an object ‘in itself’, independent of the whole ensemble ‘ceremonial canoe’. If this ‘ensemble’ is now considered as a whole, as indeed it must be, we see that the contradiction, and therefore the loss of harmony, is eliminated, and harmony re-established. For because of the weight-relationship between the canoe’s hull and the outrigger, when the canoe is in the water the outrigger rises to the right (Fig. 3). With respect to the floating-line (parallel to the eye’s horizontal line of perception), the relationship between the respective weights of the hull and the outrigger produces an unbalanced perceptual line: it is as if the eye saw the hull sinking into the water. It is as if the line of the horizon (which coincides with the floating-line parallel to the water) were bending to the left, sinking into the sea. It constitutes a loss of visual balance. And the loss of visual balance means the loss of harmony too.

But the eye, especially an eye trained to ‘see’ forms, does not, almost for physiological reasons, accept this disharmony situation, which is eliminated thanks to the internal ‘disharmony-contradiction’ of the *lagimu*. For once the multicoloured prowboard is inserted in the hull of the canoe, the *kwaisaruvi* (cf. Figs. 1 and 3) always appears on the right, on the side of the outrigger, thus causing the following play of ‘visual counterpoises’:

a) on the left is a heavy, ‘physical’, objective weight (the hull), and a light-weight ‘visual’ mass (the *weku* — cf. Figs. 1 and 3 — which is a light-coloured, empty graphic sign);

b) on the right is a light-weight, ‘physical’, objective mass (the outrigger) and a heavy visual mass (the *kwaisaruvi*, which is plane and dark).

But since the hull of the canoe is hardly visible when it is in the water, and what we see is the *lagimu*, owing to the predominance within the field of vision of the *kwaisaruvi*, the eye has the impression that this graphic sign pushes the outrigger itself downwards, and the outrigger therefore appears ‘visually’ on the same line as the hull. Thus equilibrium is restored, harmony regained, and the contradiction eliminated (Fig. 4 and cf. Fig. 3).

Of course we are here only talking about visual Harmony, Equilibrium and Non-contradiction. These are visual stratagems

which presuppose a theoretical elaboration, the formulation of an interpretative hypothesis, and the drawing-up of a rule or set of rules which resolves or demonstrates the correctness of the hypothesis. This is only one example of how the problem of visual balance, of harmony, has been raised and solved. But the same problem is solved in a different 'way' by the School, or Workshop, of Lalela (one of the Kitawa villages): by enlarging the part of the *lagimu* protruding on the right.

Thus we have two solutions to one and the same problem, though the first is adjudged more 'beautiful', 'correct', and 'meaningful' than the second. Why? The answer is given by Tonori Kiririyei and Siyakwakwa Teitei in the *Aesthetic Conversations*: the 'beautiful', or rather the 'more beautiful', depends on the tradition of a School, on the style of a group of carvers, and therefore on a specific 'taste'.<sup>4</sup> But it is implicit in the notions of 'School', 'Tradition', 'Taste', etc., that one solution is adjudged more beautiful than another, because the person judging bases his judgement on a 'model' of specific reference. Beauty, then, is encapsulated in a model of historic reference, but it is also true that the elaboration of a model (for example, of a *lagimu*) that is different from other models depends (as Siyakwakwa and Tonori say in the *Aesthetic Conversations*), on the desire to 'be different' which is characteristic of a true carver. Indeed, Siyakwakwa stresses the way in which wanting to be different from another carver is a stimulus that sparks off the 'invention' of a new graphic sign, a new visual strategy.

Thus 'Beautiful' can, according to the woodcarvers of Kitawa, be synonym of Harmony, and hence of respect for the principle of noncontradiction, and also of taste, traditional mode, etc. Or, to put it another way, harmony, tradition, taste, and traditional model are all concepts which come into play when we wish to define why one solution is 'more beautiful' than another.

But from the 'visual' point of view, apart from the justifications provided *a posteriori* for the solution adjudged 'most beautiful', we have already seen that there is a kind of problem (which I shall for the moment call technical/aesthetic) — such as the problem of harmonization between the form of the *lagimu* and the graphic signs carved on it — which, because it is both technical and visual and not simply ethical, or mythical, requires not only a formulation in purely conceptual terms but also a 'practical' solution, by means of rules. In short, in the case of the multicoloured prowboards we have a problem, a solution, and an ethical judgement on the solution, but we have not, or so it seems, rendered explicit the Rule which made possible the solution of the problem. At least we have not done so in the form of a mathematical or geometrical formula.<sup>5</sup>

The woodcarvers of Kitawa say that a graphic sign is carved only when it is adjudged 'beautiful' or 'correct', but 'how' it is carried out technically on the wood is not (and perhaps cannot be at the level of verbal definition) made explicit in a rule. Or rather, this rule is given by the very act of reproducing the traditional way of engraving: thus a graphic sign is 'beautiful' when it is carved as the masters of the past carved it.<sup>6</sup> Therefore the technical rule which realizes an aesthetic concept (for example, a particular concept of beauty) would consist in the reproduction of the 'way' of carving of the master who has handed it on to his pupil.

However, we still do not have an explicit formulation of the rule, only its transmission and application, consisting in the imitation, the reproduction, of the same 'way' of carving. In reproducing one of his master's graphic signs, the pupil only shows that he still believes in the validity of the rule: he carves a graphic sign on the right, for example, because the master's model would have it so. Non-imitation, non-reproduction, would in this case mean the nonapplication of the rule, and therefore non-knowledge, either theoretical or practical, of the technique of carving.

Apparently, therefore, the pupil does not set himself the problem of elaborating the rule in order to carve a particular graphic sign: the mere reproduction of this graphic sign is in itself a quasi-elaboration of the rule. I say 'apparently', because I do not rule out the possibility that the reproduction of a graphic sign and the 'way' of carving it, since it is achieved as a result of continual experience, looking over and over again (a real act of visual 'spying') at the master's and the other elder carvers' way of carving the graphic sign, may be tantamount to an intuitive learning of the rule. For example, if the master executes, with hand and chisel, a particular curve which leaves on the wood a graphic sign adjudged 'beautiful' and 'harmonious' both in itself and in correlation with the other graphic signs, the pupil, if he imitates the graphic sign and the 'way', will obtain the same 'correct' and 'beautiful' effect. And the obligation placed by the master on his pupil of repeating the graphic signs of his model might also be interpreted as a stratagem to make the pupil learn the rule, the way of carving is thereby viewed as the realization of an aesthetic concept.<sup>7</sup>

However, though we may be able to identify a rule for achieving a particular graphic sign adjudged 'beautiful' or 'correct' by reproducing the graphic sign which encapsulates it, such as 'the curvature of the graphic sign A must be executed as the master carved it on his model X; otherwise the result will be a disharmonious effect not only on the graphic sign itself but also on the entire texture in which it is inserted', the fact that such a rule is

learnt does not tell us how the rule was elaborated in the first place.

When Tonori Kiririyei says in the *Aesthetic Conversations* that he respects the rules for the composition of graphic signs as he learned them from his master Kurina, and that his respect for these rules permits him to achieve a positive formal result, he still does not disclose how these rules were elaborated. He only explains the value of 'reproduction' or reiteration, that is to say the reinforcement of the rule, but not how the rule was arrived at and why it was chosen to realize an ensemble of graphic signs adjudged harmonious. For the aesthetic judgement on the harmoniousness, or non-harmoniousness, of a texture of graphic signs on a *lagimu*, for example, can be accepted by virtue of the simple fact of its having been formulated.<sup>8</sup> The reasons for the judgement may not in fact be 'recounted' or 'revealed', but they must be known at least by the person who first constructed the texture of graphic signs, as well as by the person who has to articulate, and therefore justify at a critical level, his judgement: for the harmony of a texture of graphic signs cannot be purely a matter of chance; is only achieved by applying a rule which has been elaborated on the basis of precise aesthetic concepts.

The technical rules are always the result of theoretical reflection. To say that a carver carves according to the 'tradition' as he learnt it from his master is only to underline the fact that the elaboration of a particular rule has already occurred and that it has been accepted. For example, to hide behind the proposition "It is beautiful because I carved it as my master Kurina did" may mean either that the rule, and hence the technique, is kept secret, or that the same rule is applied by 'imitation', by repeating the same way of carving but without being capable of realizing it in a real geometrical formula of the type " $r = a^o$ ".<sup>9</sup>

In the first case the carver knows both the aesthetic principles and the rules by which they are applied at the factual level in execution, in a given material (such as wood, in the case of the *lagimu* and *tabuya*), but the elaboration of these principles, and their realization by using technical rules, is kept a tight secret from the time of initiation into the art of carving, and disguised in metaphors.<sup>10</sup> A visual metaphor, for example, is what the carver makes visible (such as a graphic sign carved and covered with colour), but the secret of the metaphor, in this case 'how' it was constructed, is not unveiled. Only a person belonging to the restricted group of carvers should know this way of construction and would be able to reveal it.

But the construction and revealing (and hence also the 'transmission' of the esoteric knowledge) occur only within the

group of carvers (the knowledge passes from master to pupil). Outside the group there are some who only perceive harmonious graphic signs but do not know the manner in which this harmony is realized, or the formulation of the rule for realizing a graphic sign is also attributable in part to the need to safeguard this 'knowledge' from infiltrations by elements considered to be non-orthodox.

The technical rule therefore exists but is secret, is not rendered explicit (hence the ban, in force among the carvers of Kitawa, on drawing a graphic sign on the wood's surface before carving it, a ban which is imposed on an initiate during his apprenticeship),<sup>11</sup> and is probably transmitted (apart from the 'visual' transmission through initiation and reproduction of the master's model) under the guise of poetic formulas, visual metaphors, etc., whose meaning is known only to the true initiate. If this hypothesis is correct, the situation on Kitawa is rather similar to that which obtained in the Orphic Mysteries and the School of Pythagoras. The hypothesis is supported by a series of factors, such as the following:

The esoteric initiation into the profession of carver of multicoloured prowboards, which already prefigured a clear distinction between the man who will engrave *lagimu* and *tabuya* (the 'face of the sun' and the 'face of the moon'), and who is credited with the ability to create images, and the man who will only carve the hull of a canoe — on which the prowboards will be placed — who is credited only with normal skill, similar in concept to the *téchne* of the Greeks. It is during the initiation that the initiate hears his master-initiator chant the poetic formulas with which the hero is invoked — the mythical serpent Monikiniki, who 'possesses' the young man and imbues him with the ability to create images. And it is in the formulas that the aesthetic principles, which have a greater conceptual than a technical value, and which will guide the carver's way of working, are concealed in the form of metaphor.

(b) The period of apprenticeship, which may last as long as 20 years, and during which the initiate must respect a set of dietary prohibitions as well as certain norms of behaviour, or, as we might say, of professional ethics. It is in this period that an initiate learns the technique, the way of realizing on the wood a mental image which thus becomes a graphic sign and visible. It is the period in which the initiate must keep the secret of the technique he has learned and must not reveal to anyone outside his group (which constitutes a genuine school) 'how' the carving is done. For example, the technique could be revealed with a drawing: for by drawing one reveals a 'process' (from the general to the particular, from the abstract to the concrete, from the intuition to its realization by making it visible, etc.) which, precisely because it is a 'process', is

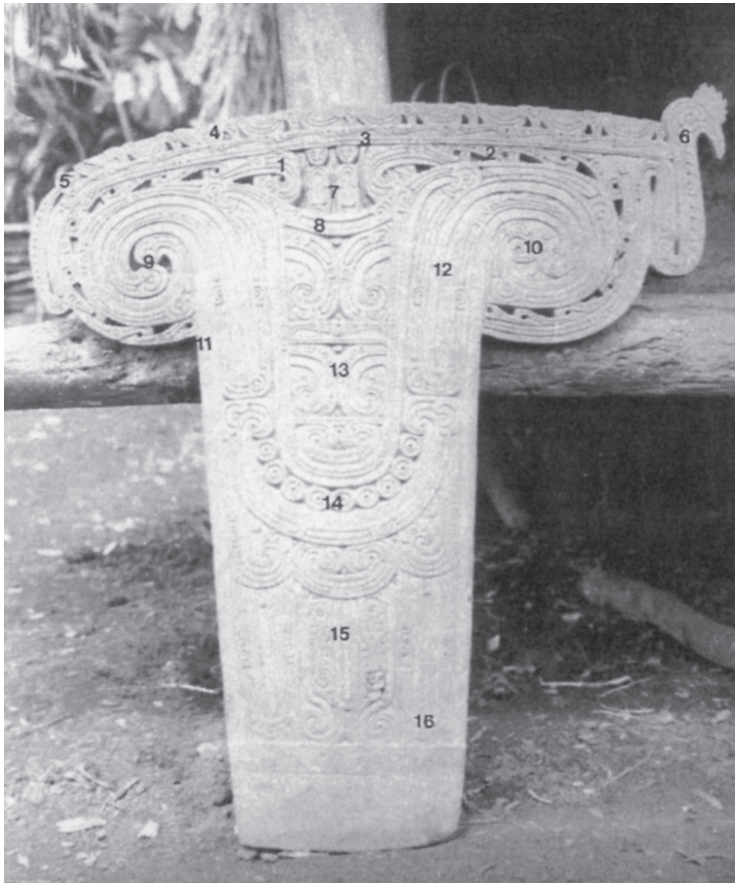


Figure 1. *Lagimu*, by Towitara Buyoyu, Kitawa 1974.

- |                           |                    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. doka                   | 9. weku            |
| 2. gigiwani               | 10. kwaisaruvi     |
| 3. kabilabala             | 11. kara kaimalaka |
| 4. susawila               | 12. kara kaivau    |
| 5. monikiniki             | 13. karawa         |
| 6. rekoreko or siyakwakwa | 14. duduwa         |
| 7. tokwalu                | 15. kaikikila      |
| 8. vakaboda               | 16. matara ina     |





Figure 2. *Tabuya*, by Kurina of Lalela, Kitawa.

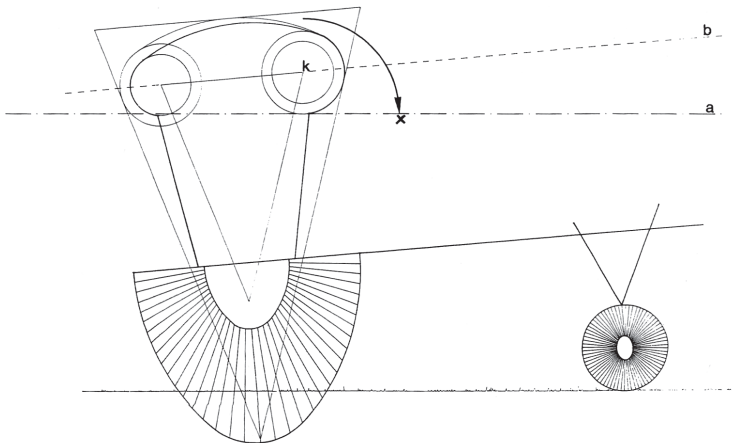
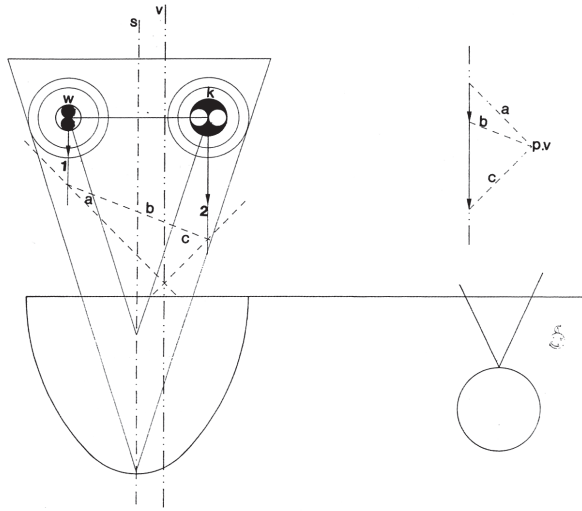


Figure 3. Schema of the 'visual unbalance' of the kula canoe, drawn by Alveraldo G. Scoditti.





**Figure 4.** Schema of the 'visual balance' of the kula canoe, drawn by Alveraldo G. Scoditti

- $\underline{s}$  = axis of symmetry of the *lagimu*
- $\underline{v}$  = quasi-axis (apparent) due to the difference of mass of the *weku* and *kwaisaruwi*
- $o_1$  = quasi-mass vector (*weku*)
- $o_2$  = quasi-mass vector (*kwaisaruwi*)
- $\underline{P.V.}$  = quasi-pole of the quasi-funicular polygon
- $\underline{a-b-c}$  = sides of the quasi-funicular polygon.

The intensity of the quasi-mass vector is proportional to the surface of g.ss., that is to their quasi-mass. The displacement of the symmetry axis  $\underline{s}$  from axis  $\underline{v}$  is due to the different intensity of quasi-masses proportional to the g.ss., and it is determined through the composition of quasi-mass vectors  $o_1$  and  $o_2$  by using the method of the funicular polygon (graphic method to place the resultant inside the space of nonconvergent forces).

Polygonal construction of the 'schema-lagimu' forces:

- (1) The quasi-mass vectors are parallel to each other and summed up in a vector sense (figures on the right of the *lagimu*);
- (2) The points  $o_1, 1, 2$ , shall be connected to the quasi-pole  $\underline{P.V.}$ , arbitrarily chosen, so fixing the sides of the funicular polygon ( $\underline{a}, \underline{b}, \underline{c}$ );
- (3) By considering the polygon and drawing parallels to its sides ( $\underline{a-c}$  or  $\underline{c-a}$ ), we will find the crossing point  $\underline{V}$  on the quasi-axis  $\underline{v}$ .

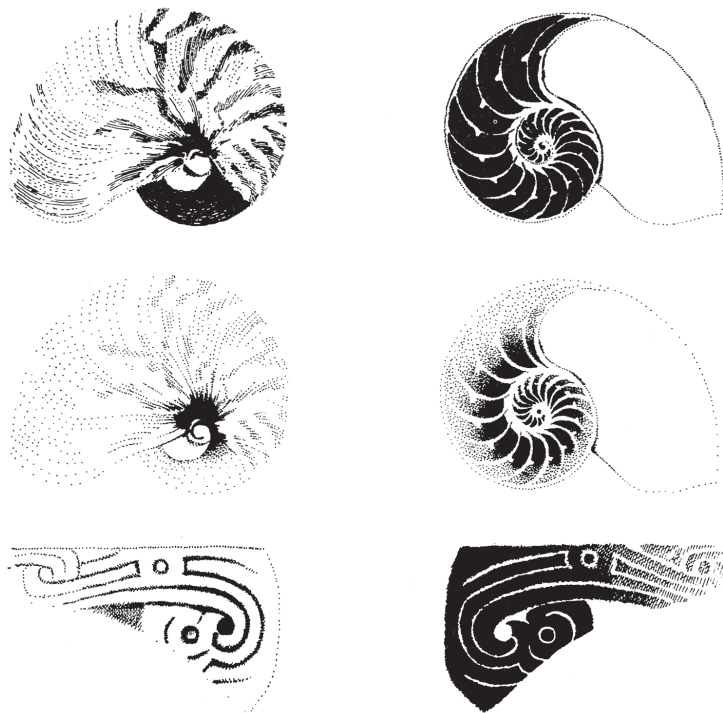
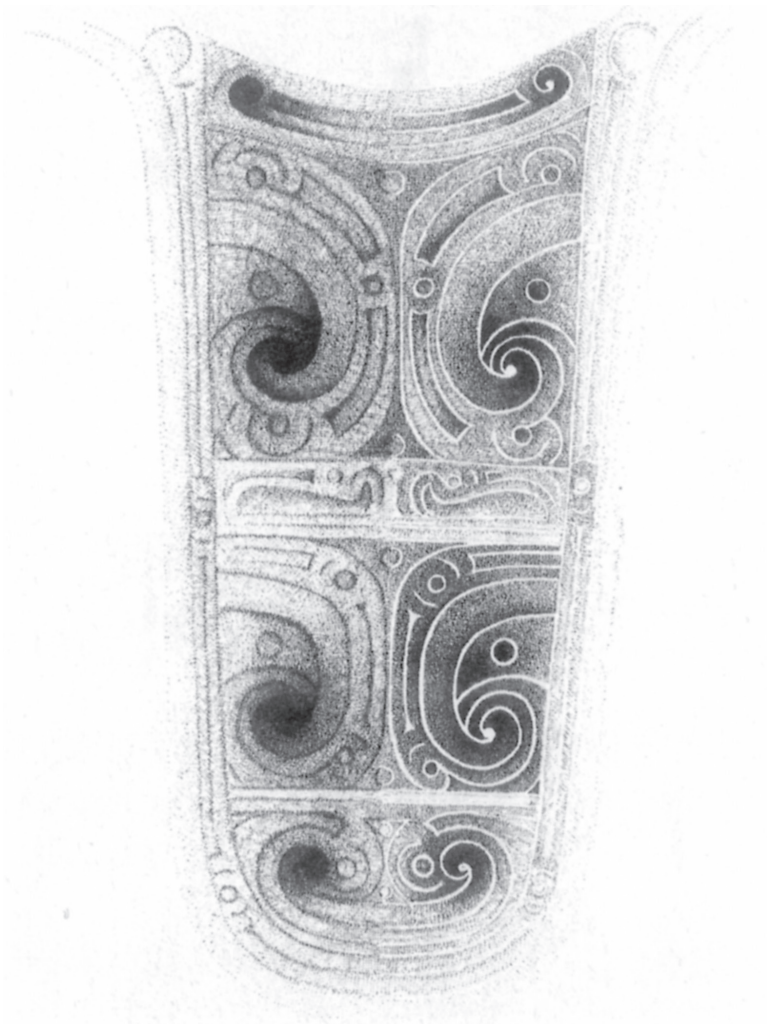


Figure 5. *Doka*, drawn by Giulia Napoleone (China ink).



Figure 6. *Nautilus pompilius*, drawn by Giulia Napoleone (China ink).



**Figure 7.** *Karawa*, drawn by Giulia Napoleone (China ink).

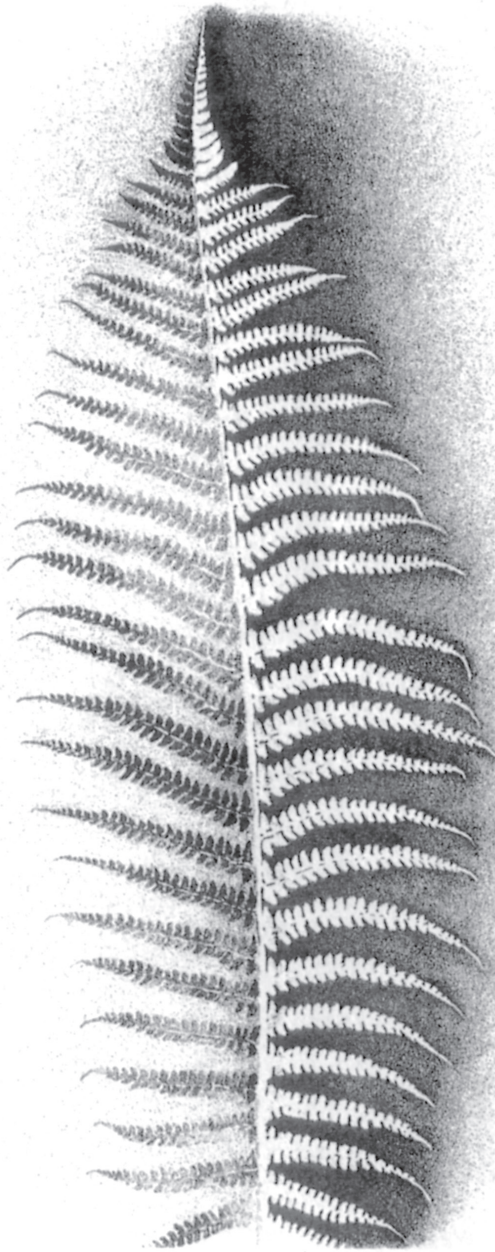


Figure 8. Fern, drawn by Giulia Napoleone (China ink).



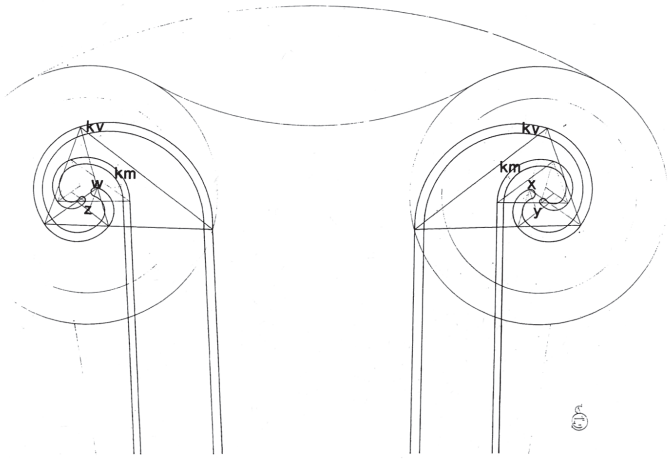


Figure 11. Schema of both the *weku* and *kwaisaruwi*, drawn by Alveraldo G. Scoditti.

kv = kara kaivau

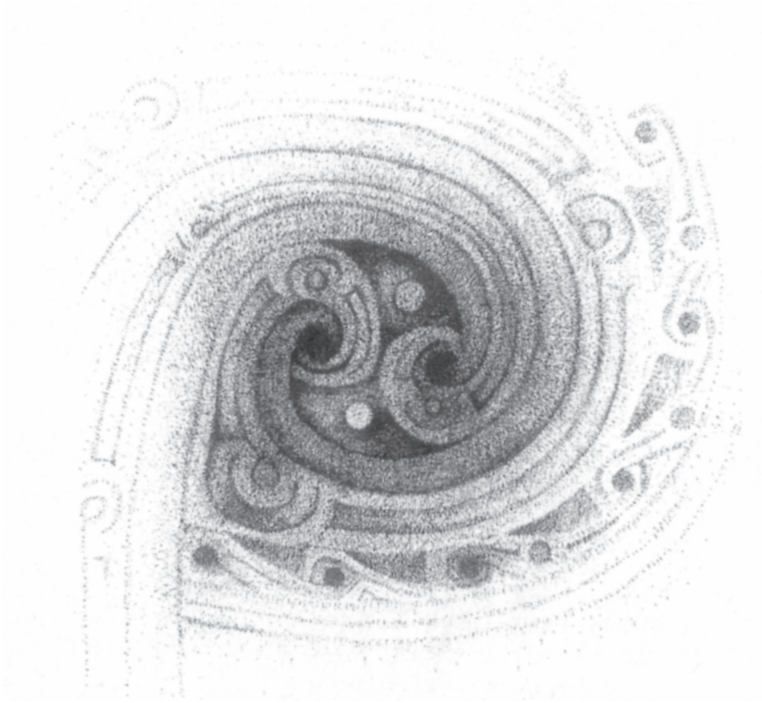
km = kora kaimalaka

y = starting-point of the spiral km (right)

x = starting-point of the spiral kv (right)

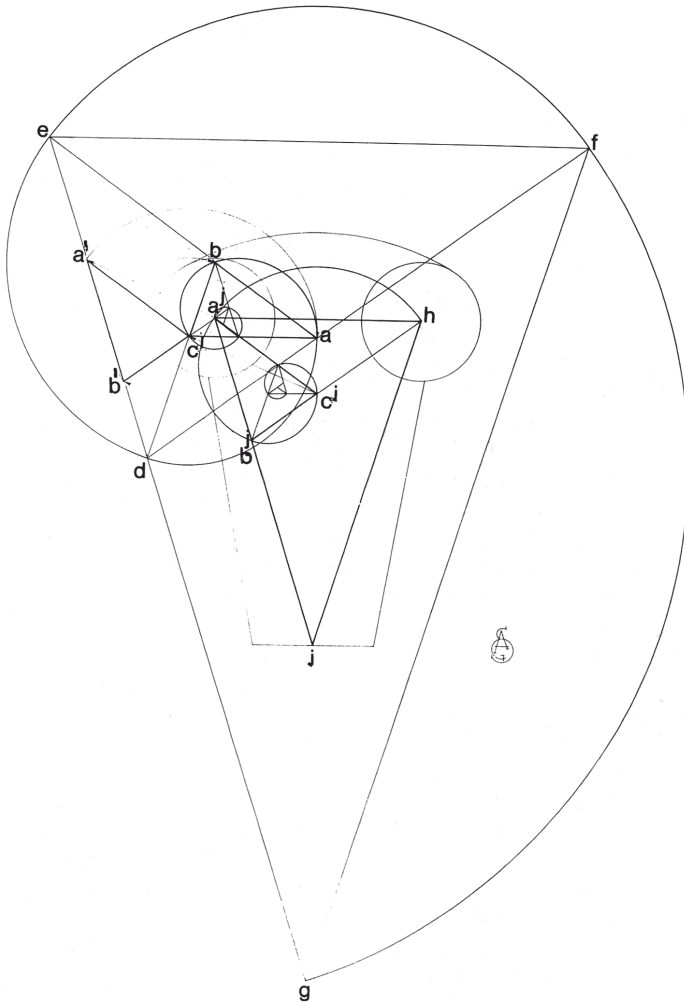
z = starting-point of the spiral km (left)

w = starting-point of the spiral kv (left)



**Figure 12.** *Kwaisaruwi*, drawn by Giulia Napoleone (China ink).





**Figure 13.** Schema of the *lagimu* as *gnomon* of the *weku*, drawn by Alveraldo G. Scoditti.

The triangle EFG, that inscribes the schema of the *lagimu*, is the last of a ‘gnomic’ series of triangles including the g.ss.

So, we have that the triangle A'B'C' (that includes the *weku* or *kwaisaruwi*), is the *gnomon* of the triangle A'H,J; the ‘translation’ triangle A'B'C, is the *gnomon* of the triangle DEA; the triangle D,E,A is the *gnomon* of the triangle EFG.



subject to error, with the consequent necessity of correcting this error — for example, erasing the sign that was executed and replanning it — which thus reveals the ‘change of mind’. But above all, drawing, and hence rendering visible an intuition, in full view of everyone, implies a recognition of the possibility of error: for example, the intuition (which at the conceptual level is equivalent to a hypothesis) could be denied by the experience which in this case might compel the carver to modify the sign in which the intuition has been encapsulated. Of course the world of experience can ‘only’ be represented by the expressive medium, by a language, by a way of expressing oneself. But the carver, during the constructive process of a graphic sign, observes that the mental image itself, indeed the intuition of a mental image, needs to clash/meet with the world of experience in order to reach a ‘formed state’, in order to become a graphic sign. However, the carver also knows that this recognition of the world of experience, viewed as one of the terms of artistic expression (verbal and non-verbal), must not be revealed, and he disguises it under the concept of creativity, viewed as an almost exclusive attribute of the engraver. In short, “the way it is done” must be hidden in the mind: hence the ban on drawing, on revealing. The image must pass from the mind directly on to the wood without the mediation of drawing as a ‘visual trial’, and hence without revision. The meaning (also in the wider sense of verbal, as well as mythical-symbolic meaning) of the engraved graphic sign, which conceals the passage from the initial intuition, which through conceptual reflection becomes a ‘project’, to the execution of this project, must remain secret. Secrecy continues through the practice, which I would describe as quasi-esoteric, of respect for prohibitions: by respecting them, and therefore abstaining from eating certain foods, the initiate learns forms of self-control and purifies both his body and his mind. Non-respect for prohibitions nullifies the value of the initiation and implies being driven out of the group and, above all, away from the master. The act of initiation is nullified.<sup>12</sup>

(c) The final step, when the initiate is recognized as an ‘artist’ (*tokabitamu*) or ‘artisan’ (*tokataraki*), that is a builder of hulls for ceremonial canoes. When, in short, he has reached the last step on the ladder of initiatory values. It is the moment when he is acknowledged as having the ability to ‘invent images’.

We have, then, a series of progressive tests, which make one suspect that on Kitawa, as on other islands in Milne Bay where the exchange of the ceremonial Kula Ring is practised, there is a group of carvers which broadly resembles, both in its internal organization and in its way of behaving, the typical structure of the

Orphic and Pythagorean Mysteries. It is within this group that we must look for the rule which must represent and realize an aesthetic concept, taking for granted, in view of the observations already made, the fact that knowledge of it may be 'explicit' (in other words formalized) for the person applying it, even though it is encapsulated in some 'magic' metaphor or word.

But I should make it clear that the stimulus to identify the rule on the basis of which the whole texture of the graphic signs on *lagimu* and *tabuya* is constructed is founded on the hypothesis, of a 'formalist' nature, that the rule itself is 'also' enclosed in the 'form' in which a graphic sign, and hence the whole graphic surface of the two multicoloured prowboards, presents itself to the eye. If the attraction which an artefact exercises over the eye and the mind of the perceiver is determined partly by the 'way', initially only intuitively perceived, in which it has been planned and constructed, then this way must be encapsulated in the object itself. It may be sublimated (for example, a triangular form is sublimated by a span of colour which hides the 'absoluteness', 'rigidity' and 'abstractness' of the schema 'triangularity') but nevertheless present, underlying.

This brings us the relationship between the Rule (in the sense of an architectural quasi-project) and the 'form' which 'veils' the Rule. The presence of the Rule, its essentiality, therefore constitutes the intrinsic beauty of the form of an artefact, one might say 'secret essence', known only to the person who constructs it but intuitively perceptible to the person who perceives it: it is the correlation between Rule and Form that renders a visual artefact 'self-sufficient' at the expressive level.

## The rule of the Golden Section

The task of identifying the Rule which, in my opinion, forms the basis for the planning and construction of *lagimu* and *tabuya* was achieved with the help of the master of the art (*tokabitamu bougwa*) Towitara Buyoyu, of the 'Nukulabuta' clan and the sub-clan 'mwauli'. Towitara, who died in 1975, was considered an inventor of images, in other words, a person who had elaborated and proposed a new model of multicoloured prowboards, and therefore a man who was in the best position to suggest how a *lagimu* or a *tabuya* is planned and carved.<sup>13</sup> His prowboards are regarded all over Kitawa as the most correct interpretation of the schema of canoe *tadobu*<sup>14</sup>, as well as of the concept of 'harmony'.

The crucial factor that suggested Towitara's 'way' of carving, and hence the nature of the Rule which governs the graphic composition of the multicoloured prowboards, and in particular of the four graphic signs (*doka*, *gigiwani*, *weku* and *kwaisaruvi*) which are termed 'basic', or 'fundamental', and which realize the schema of the *lagimu*, (cf. Scoditti 1982a), is the *doka* (Fig. 5). This graphic sign is classed by the carvers themselves as the most 'meaningful', the one most laden with aesthetic and symbolic values, a sort of technical and aesthetic *summa*. A perfect graphic realization of it determines the artistic skill of a carver. It is considered to be the symbol of imagination (an essential prerequisite for anyone wishing to be considered a genuine carver, a *tokabitamu*) and ratiocination.

For example, Towitara himself explicitly stated that from the way in which a *doka* is carved one can tell the 'quality', the conceptual density, of its author. Such great emphasis on the way of carving the *doka* cannot be considered a matter of chance; there must be precise reasons, even if it is impossible to render all of them explicit: it is in the *doka* that we must search for the secret Rule for carving, a harmonious graphic sign, for realizing the Harmony (the equivalent of the Golden Section of the Pythagoreans) of the entire graphic texture of a *lagimu* and *tabuya*.

If we look, now, at a *lagimu* carved in 1973 by Towitara Buyoyu (cf. Fig. 1), we observe the *doka* symmetrically arranged around an axis passing through the centre of the *lagimu* (cf. Figs. 1 and 5). This whole area is considered the most meaningful both from the technical-aesthetic and from the symbolic point of view. From the technical-aesthetic point of view it is the area which, according to the carvers of Kitawa, presents the greatest difficulty in execution: indeed three of the four graphic signs classed as 'basic', or 'fundamental' (*weku*, *gigiwani* and *doka*) are carved on it.

From the symbolic point of view the area is significant because the *doka*, which, as I have mentioned, is a metaphor for the imagination and the power of reasoning, is carved there. For the *doka* is the formed idea, the expressed concept. The *gigiwani* (cf. Fig. 1), on the other hand, symbolizes an idea, a concept, in the process of formation: it is a foretaste of something that will be, but is not yet, perfect (cf. Scoditti 1982a). It is as if the carver had wanted to represent through the *gigiwani* his creative effort, his attempt to achieve perfection: it is no coincidence that a long string of *gigiwani* culminates in the *doka*.

Through the presence of the *weku* (cf. Fig. 1) this area symbolizes the primal scream of the mythical hero Monikiniki, before it becomes a definite, formed word. It also expresses the polysemic

magma of the word itself before it is classified by a single concept. Through the presence of the *kwaisaruvi* (cf. Fig. 1) the area symbolizes the beauty of the mythical hero metaphorized by the eye, but it is a feminine beauty, as if it wished to express the attribute of generative force, of the mythical hero, symbolized by the whole *lagimu/tabuya*.

In short these four graphic signs viewed as an 'ensemble' symbolize at the visual level the concept of 'schema', which from time to time is interpreted in a specific model of *lagimu* and *tabuya*. Schema here means a 'harmonious' construction (first mental, and conceptual, and later concrete), and includes within itself, as in a synthesis, a series of universal principles which can be traced on all multicoloured prowboards, at least at the level of planning, as for example in the right-left counterpoise between two elements with respect to a centre (the *weku* — which is empty and light in colour — is counterbalanced by the *kwaisaruvi* — which is plane and dark). The correlation between these two graphic signs can itself be read, again at the level of universal principles, as a correlation and opposition between 'speaking' (*weku*) and 'seeing' (*kwaisaruvi*), as visual extensions in their turn of the intellect and imagination (*doka*).

The *doka*, then, appears as the supreme synthesis of an ensemble of technical-aesthetic and symbolic values, as the emblematic metaphor that must be unveiled if one is to grasp the secret not only of the construction of a *lagimu* or a *tabuya* but also of the aesthetic principles which underline this construction. It is in the *doka* that the Golden Number of the carvers of Kitawa, the key to carving and executing a 'beautiful' *lagimu*, must be hidden. Now the *doka*, according to Towitara Buyoyu (whose account was later confirmed by Tonori Kiririyei and Siyakwakwa Teitei), is inspired by the *Nautilus pompilius* (Fig. 6), in Nowau (the language spoken on Kitawa) *goragora*.<sup>15</sup> And two shells placed side by side led to the original idea of representing the two *doka* on the *lagimu* (cf. Fig. 5).

At this point two interconnected problems present themselves:

(1) The first concerns the 'reason' why the carver decided on the *Nautilus pompilius* and not on another shell or another element of Nature, in order to construct the graphic sign *doka*;

(2) The second concerns the 'way' in which the passage was made from the *goragora* shell to the graphic sign *doka*; in short the mechanism, the calculation, which transformed an element of nature (which in this case may coincide with experience) into an element of the mind of man — an element of culture — as if it were, particularly for the person looking at it, one of man's own products. This problem also raises the question whether a calculation of a

mathematical or geometrical kind (even if it was kept merely at the intuitive level, and hence not rendered explicit in a formula of the type  $\frac{\sqrt{5}+1}{2}$  forms part of this mental mechanism, in order to plan the *doka*.<sup>16</sup>

I said earlier that the two problems are interrelated: and indeed the eye of the carver (which may be a metaphor for the mind's ability to think) perceives the *goragora* (which may be a metaphor for nature, experience) and from this perception originates the *doka*, seen as a 'process' (a meeting-point between the reflecting judgement and the object of reflection) that has been realized, as a result of the constructive ability of the man-carver who has reflected on the first element/*goragora*. This is a reflecting judgement which develops within the set of aesthetic problems concerning the planning of the *lagimu* and the *tabuya*, and which therefore originates as typically 'formal' but then, in turn, is a way of manifesting itself characteristic of the reflecting judgement in general, that is to say, of man's planning ability.

The carver mind, then, looks at the *goragora* because it is seeking an 'excuse' (which I would describe as being of a formal nature) to represent one of his mental projects, which may be, as in this particular case, both aesthetic (related to the sphere of the carving of the two multicoloured prowboards) and ethical (and hence related to a mode of behaving and of representing the history of the social group in which the carver lives). I would say, in fact, that the *goragora/doka* represents, *par excellence*, the cardinal principle within the Culture of Kitawa: it symbolizes man's — the carver's — ability to reflect on the Forms on Nature, on their way of 'presenting themselves'. These forms are felt to be harmonious on the basis of the reflecting judgement, on the basis of that sensation of calm which they produce in those who perceive them, as if they were indeed forms constructed by the mind of man. It is as if, by reflecting on a form of Nature perceived by the mind, man discovered the Form of one of his mental images, of Harmony. Harmony, which might be defined as an ensemble of elements (one would have to specify in each particular case whether the elements are aesthetic, ethical or mythical, but it seems to me that the distinction is chiefly a methodological one) which balance one another out in such a way as to realize a situation of stasis, of arrest (even though this may be only momentary), is therefore a product of the activity of the reflecting judgement which in Nature tries to identify situations of 'stasis', of 'arrest'.

This type of 'identification' lies at the root not only of the art objects produced on Kitawa (in addition to the *lagimu* and *tabuya*, other objects such as spatulas for the betel nuts, ebony mortars,

mats of woven coloured fibres, decorations for the face and the body for the dances of Milamala, etc.) but also of the social structure itself (for example, the fundamental binary nature of the brother-sister relationship which finds a mirror-image in exogamic marriages; the balancing of power among the four clans who design the power structure; the ceremonial Kula exchange itself, interpreted as a form of harmonious relationship between two partners).

The principle of harmony that characterizes the 'way', the constructive ability, of a carver of *lagimu* and *tabuya*, must have been elaborated in his mind as an ideal of perfection which the carver then attempts to realize in concrete form: it presents itself as a mental project which must in some way be the result of reflection on harmonious forms already realized in Nature. But it is equally obvious that the principle of harmony can be verified with reference to one's own body: for example, in the rhythmical beating of the heart.

These reflections are the basis of the intuition of the principle of harmony which one tries to represent externally in a form that may itself also be suggested by nature. But the suggestion must be one that pertinently expresses this principle. One's gaze, cast upon Nature (no longer perceived as an ensemble of data opposed to man and foreign to him, but as a homologous way of expressing the harmony and rhythmicality of the Forms) falls therefore on a series of elements that the eye itself (the mirror of the mind) judges to be harmonious and similar (but not equal) to the mental project of harmony. The harmony of a leaf, the fern, for example, reveals itself as such to the eye insofar as the leaf is chosen to mean, and hence to symbolize, a 'mental' project of harmony: it is probable that the leaf has 'in itself', so to speak, a schema of harmony, otherwise it would not be possible to explain why it is looked at by the carver, but it is equally true that it is the gaze (a particular gaze cast at a particular moment, but the fruit of a continual attention to the problem of representation) which attributes harmonious value to the leaf. Thus it is as if the leaf lent form, a particular form (which will subsequently be adjudged harmonious) to the mental project of harmony.

But at the moment when the project of harmony (already elaborated but, perhaps, not adequately expressed by an internal image) meets the 'form' of the leaf (and the meeting is planned, in the sense that there may be pure chance in the contingent moment, but it is a chance that has been sought for), this form is not accepted as the eye 'sees' it, and hence as a figurative element to be taken just as it is and inserted into a formal context, but is interpreted — that is

to say, taken over by the mind and made its own.

The form of the leaf functions, then, as a 'point' of departure, as an image which is sounded out by the mind to see if it will adapt itself, once it has been modified, to representing a particular project of harmony. The image of the leaf is seen in transparency, manipulated, the mechanism of its formation is grasped, its essence is sucked out, and, once it has been reduced to its 'skeleton', and therefore freed from figurative elements, it is associated by the mind with the project of harmony which already has 'a life of its own', and so to speak, a conceptuality of its own which, to use a metaphor, 'borrows' the form of the leaf, elaborating it in the process (Figs. 7, 8 and cf. Fig. 1).

Of the original form of the leaf only a faint recollection remains. There remains a 'metaphorical form', that is to say an allusion, a recollection, a memory. The whole mental process, or mechanism (perhaps the mathematical/geometrical calculation itself) which has resulted in the graphic sign inspired by the leaf remains hidden within the form of this sign. It may be reconstructed provided one has been initiated into the mechanism.

This interpretative hypothesis is also valid for the construction of the *doka* inspired by the *goragora* or *Nautilus pompilius*, whose form must have attracted the eye of the carver constantly seeking Expressive Forms to represent 'visually' his project of harmony. But the eye that has looked at the shell must have activated the mind of the carver, whose gaze has penetrated deep into the inside of the Nautilus, and has seen the harmonious succession of the whorls of a spiral theoretically growing in size *ad infinitum*. In the same way a harmonious experience in the past of a creator of images may theoretically continue *ad infinitum*.

Now within our so-called 'classical' tradition the Nautilus expresses in Nature the rule known as the Golden Section, the Golden Number of the Pythagoreans, supposed in theory to be a 'logarithmic or equiangular spiral', and described by James Bernoulli as the *Spira Mirabilis*.<sup>17</sup> The subject of this spiral has also been taken up by D'Arcy W. Thompson, who has demonstrated how the whorls of the equiangular spiral continually grow in size with respect to the whorls of Archimedes' spiral — or uniform spiral, in which  $r = a\theta$  — according to a fixed relationship, which means that "Each whorl which the radius vector intersects will be broader than its predecessor in a definite ratio; the radius vector will increase in length in geometrical progression, as it sweeps through successive equal angles, and the equation to the spiral will be  $r = a^{\theta}$ ".<sup>18</sup> The characteristics of the equiangular or logarithmic spiral are:



- (a) The curve of the spiral is a figure that grows continually without changing its form, just as in the shell *Nautilus pompilius*;
- (b) The vector angles around the pole are proportional to the logarithms of the successive radii, and therefore we will have the formula  $\alpha = k \log r$ ;
- (c) The similarity continues;
- (d) Nevertheless the increase in size is asymmetrical and is characteristic of the equiangular spiral.

If we connect these characteristics with the *doka* (derived, by a process of schematization and abstraction, from the *goragora*), we arrive at the conclusion that this graphic sign has been constructed on the basis of a calculation, probably intuitive in nature, and that it is characteristic of the Rule by which the logarithmic or equiangular spiral develops (Fig. 9). This seems to be the origin from which is derived the harmony of the *doka* and the harmony of the entire *lagimu/tabuya*, seen as a *gnomon* of the *doka* and the other three fundamental graphic signs.

The *doka*, then, contains 'in itself' the Rule, the reason for its construction and the justification for its harmony. In short, through the *doka* the woodcarvers of Kitawa demonstrate that the principle of harmony corresponds to extremely precise canons, to rules which are probably only felt intuitively, but which must be followed in order to produce a harmonious object or artefact. Towitara Buyoyu's insistence that it is in the *doka* that a carver's constructive ability is affirmed or denied must therefore be interpreted as a way of saying that in order to carve a correct, 'beautiful' *doka* it is necessary to apply the rule of the Golden Section just as it is realized in the *goragora* or *Nautilus pompilius*. And a correct curvature of the *doka* towards the *tokwalu* (cf. Fig. 1), the quasi-human figure carved on the vertical axis of the surface of the *lagimu* (which in order to be harmonious must respect a particular proportion, fixed probably 'by eye'<sup>19</sup> partly on the basis of the whole hull) is a demonstration that the carver has intuitively carried out a calculation which makes it possible to consider the final whorl of the spiral-*doka* as the result of a series of internal whorls which increase in size in a geometrical progression according to a fixed relationship (perhaps established roughly on the basis of the size of the whole surface of wood) starting from a pole, which in this case coincides with the *ubwoli* (cf. Fig. 1), a hole which is made in the wood and from which the graphic sign begins. Of course the perceiver only sees the external form of the *doka*, while the skeleton that governs and determines this form remains completely hidden.



In short, the geometrical, abstract calculation — which constitutes the progressive succession of the whorls and their size — remains ‘secret’ because it is located in the mind (*o nopoura nano ra*): the expression (literally “it is inside his mind”) is in fact used on Kitawa to suggest that the structure, the skeleton, of the *lagimu/tabuya*, and therefore the carver’s constructive ability, resides in the mind. Which could also be interpreted as a metaphor signifying that a carver knows the intuitive, quasi-geometrical calculation relating to the way of constructing a graphic sign but that he conceals it like a secret “inside his mind”. The only aspect of this calculation that he reveals is the final product, that is a ‘beautiful’, ‘correct’ form, which appears so only as a result of his imagination and his constructive ability. But the same occurs in the *Nautilus pompilius*, or *goragora*: we do not actually see the geometrical progression of the whorls unless the shell is sliced open in section.

It is obvious that carving the *doka* on the basis of the supposed geometrical progression of its whorls does not mean carving according to the formula of the Golden Section  $\frac{\sqrt{5}+1}{2}$  (which is an *a posteriori* realization of a way of constructing which in the beginning, probably, is followed more or less by experience, by “trial, error and correction”), but it rather means ‘recognizing’ the existence of this Formula as it is manifested in Nature.

Nature ‘is not thinking’ about the formula when it ‘constructs’ its elements: the Nautilus ‘is not thinking’ in terms of  $\frac{\sqrt{5}+1}{2}$ , but it constructs it according to a logic, a mechanism, that man later ‘thinks out’, and schematizes or symbolizes, in this formula! The formula of the Golden Section is, then, a form of ‘synthetic memorization’ of a process of growth judged to be harmonious. Even ‘animism’ is therefore simply a recognition of this constructive logic or ability in Nature: it makes no difference whether we say that the Nautilus has ‘a soul’ or that the Nautilus grows according to the formula  $\frac{\sqrt{5}+1}{2}$ . Both modes of expression are the result of the reflecting judgement: the mind-eye sees that the Nautilus, seen in cross-section, presents a series of whorls that have moved away according to a certain progression from the initial point of departure (which is fixed arbitrarily) and that this way of growing could continue *ad infinitum*. Then it reflects on this way of growing and deduces from it that it is different from other ways of growing (for example, that of a tree). It defines the way of growing of the Nautilus as a ‘way of growing in a geometrical progression’, and schematizes and memorizes it in the formula  $\frac{\sqrt{5}+1}{2}$ . But it is not necessary to elaborate a formula in order to say that we are conscious of this ‘way’ of growing: it is enough to demonstrate it by the effective construction of a graphic sign, such as the *doka*, or an

artefact, such as a *lagimu* or *tabuya*. This same 'way' is externally perceived simply as harmonious.

It seems obvious to me, at this point, that the harmony (which is better defined as a principle expressed through a rule defined by the carver) of the *doka* synthesizes and symbolizes the harmony of the entire *lagimu*, and that it does so on the basis of the distribution over its surface of the graphic signs, especially the fundamental ones, engraved by applying intuitively the rule of the Golden Section, just as it is manifested in the logarithmic spiral of the *Nautilus pompilus/doka*. For example, each of the *gigiwani* (cf. Fig. 1), which form the long string that culminates both on the right and on the left in the two *doka* (which are to be considered as *gnomons* of the former) is also constructed on the basis of the Golden Section.

But the similarity between *doka* and *gigiwani* seems to be only structural, geometrical, because the relevant source of inspiration in nature is different. In fact, if Siyakwakwa Teitei's account is correct, the *gigiwani* was constructed as a result of the inspiration provided by a chain of chrysalides linked together (in this case, too, a curvilinear element of nature is involved) which form a series of logarithmic spirals which have their origin in a focal point and move away from it in a geometrical progression.

It is for this reason that I have defined the *doka* as *gnomon*<sup>20</sup> of the *gigiwani*: their structure is the same, except that the *doka* is greater in size. The *weku* (Figs. 10, 11) too, was constructed on the basis of the Golden Section (or Golden Triangle): each of the two *ubwouli* holes represents the point of departure from which there develops in geometrical progression one of the two spirals which inscribe a golden triangle on which this graphic sign is based.<sup>21</sup>

Even the *kwaisaruvi* itself (Fig. 12 and cf. Fig. 11), which could be described as the photographic positive of the *weku* (a plane, dark graphic sign is counterbalanced by an empty, light-coloured one) is constructed by applying the rule on the Golden Section: the two whorls, coloured respectively red and black, inscribe a golden triangle and are comparable, at the geometrical level, to two equiangular spirals which have a point of origin corresponding with the points of origin of the *weku* (points which in the *kwaisaruvi* are less perceptible because they are hidden by the plane engraving and the dark colour).

Therefore both the *kwaisaruvi* and the *weku* synthesize on the geometrical level a growing series of golden triangles in which, starting from a particular triangle (the innermost one with respect to the whorls), every other triangle is a *gnomon* of the preceding one.

Moreover, for the principle of translation, and taking as a point of reference the *weku*, for example, the triangular schema itself (isosceles triangle) of the entire surface of the *lagimu/tabuya* is constructed on the Golden Section, and is inscribed in an equiangular or logarithmic spiral (Fig. 13). The same principle applies if we take as a point of departure for the development of the spiral the *kwaisaruvi*. Therefore the entire surface of the *lagimu* can be considered a *gnomon* of the golden triangle (which coincides with the graphic sign *karawa* — cf. Figs. 1 and 7) which lies at the innermost point on the whole surface. Thus the *lagimu/tabuya*, as a geometrical and abstract schema, is equivalent to an equiangular spiral inscribing a golden or isosceles triangle. It is no coincidence that in the past Kitawans used to build ceremonial canoes called, significantly, *goragora*, and characterized by a *lagimu* in the form of a large, stylized, Nautilus shell.

## Notes

1. Kitawa Island, Marshall Bennetts (Melanesia).
2. Both the Nowau and the English texts, together with an interlinear translation and a list of the vocabulary used in the Conversations, form part of Vol.II of my dissertation for a Ph.D. in Oceanic Languages, examined in October 1982 at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Also enclosed with the same volume were the three cassettes containing the recordings of the Conversations in Nowau conducted between Siyakwakwa Teitei, Tonori Kiririyeyi and myself.

The Conversations recorded were first transcribed with the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet and then rendered in an orthographical form. The texts thus defined were checked in 1980 with Kaigabu Kamunamiya, at the Linguistics Department, Port Moresby University, and finally computerized at the Literary and Linguistic Computing Centre, University of Cambridge.

I am particularly grateful to Professor George B. Milner (S.O.A.S., University of London), not only for his supervision of the Ph.D. thesis but also for having assisted me during the definition, both phonetic and phonemic, of the Nowau texts. I would also like to thank the phonetician Dr. Francis Nolan (Department of Linguistics, Cambridge University) for helping me establish examples of phonetic transcription of Nowau.

3. In this case 'triangular' refers to the basic structure of the *lagimu* (and also of the *tabuya*, seen as 'half' of the *lagimu*; cf. Scoditti 1982). For, if we schematize the various *lagimu* carved on Kitawa, from a particular period of time onwards, we obtain a 'figure' very similar to an isosceles

triangle or golden triangle. This structure may in turn be interpreted as a materialization of the general and abstract schema, 'triangularity', understood as a 'logical notion' and perhaps also a mythical one. Therefore the triangular structure of the *lagimu* is only an interpretation (linked both with a specific period of time and with a school of art on Kitawa) of the schema 'triangularity', and with respect to this schema it represents a concrete, visual, 'model of reference'. It is significant that during the early phases of apprenticeship a young carver learns to carve from a pandanus leaf a triangular shape, the size of the palm of the hand, as if to master visually the concept of 'schema' through a physical, objective interpretation of it.

4. On Kitawa every carver of *lagimu* and *tabuya* forms part of a 'school' or 'workshop', whose organization is similar to that of the medieval Guilds or the Renaissance artists' workshops. A school is led by an old carver who is recognized as the repository of the model of *lagimu* and *tabuya* followed by the members of the same school. Often the *caposcuola* is also the man who constructed a new 'model', that is to say a new interpretation of the schema multicoloured prowboard: in this case he is called *tokabitamu bougwa*. Every school, or workshop, is distinguished by a series of graphic signs peculiar to it alone, or by the graphic-visual solution of an aesthetic problem. Both on the graphic signs and on the aesthetic solution there is a strict copyright (Scoditti 1982).
5. A rule may be only 'intuited', and may never even be rendered explicit in a mathematical formula; or it may be followed for decades in an empirical manner, testing, looking and correcting, and then be rationalized in a formula - indeed, be 'formalized'. In general Rule is here understood as 'empirical', Formula as 'theoretical'. They are not, however, taken as opposed to one another but simply as correlated. For example, the greater part of Western architecture, at least until the early Renaissance, is, if we exclude Vitruvius, based on the Rule and not on the Formula.
6. The appeal to 'tradition' has often been seen as an imitation or reproduction of a 'codified' means of expression, as a lack of invention. In my opinion, however, it is more correct to interpret this appeal to tradition as a way of emphasizing the validity of a given 'model of reference' which is still considered valid not because it is 'absolute' but because it is 'difficult' to violate in a society in which the absence of writing or drawing (as 'proof' in order to correct an error, or a proof to test the validity of a new hypothesis) make its 'modification' more problematical.
7. Hence the imitation of the master's model by one of his pupils is to be interpreted as a visual metaphor, a 'visual correlation' between an aesthetic concept and its practical realization in the multicoloured prowboard of a ceremonial canoe. The aesthetic concept of harmony, for example, is metaphorized on the *lagimu* by carving symmetrical graphic signs (the *weku* on the left and the *kwaisaruwi* on the right) around a central axis (*vilakora* or *karawa*), so that by compelling a pupil

to respect this symmetry the master teaches him, in addition to the bilateral symmetry, the aesthetic concept of 'harmony' realized by representing the former. The rule "carve the *weku* on the left and the *kwaisaruvi* on the right" thus renders explicit the aesthetic concept of Harmony in its essence and the same continual repetition of the rule is nothing less than a restatement of the validity of this concept and of the ways of realizing it.

8. Cf. L. Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*.
9. This is the formula of the equiangular spiral, whose values, unlike those of the Archimedean or uniform spiral (where we have  $r = a^{\theta}$  increase in size according to a definite ratio given, indeed, in the formula  $r = a^{\theta}$ . Cf. D'Arcy W. Thompson, 1977.
10. Metaphor is used in this case as a stratagem for 'correlating' an aesthetic value and the relevant rule that realizes it visually. For a Nowau carver, then, metaphor operates both as a means of masking and as an expressive stratagem, in order to represent: the visual metaphor expresses by 'veiling', and only a person who knows how a metaphor is constructed can intuit its true value, the hidden secret.
11. Drawing, inasmuch as it is a graphic trace, even though barely perceptible to the eye, is to be interpreted in this case not so much in a technical sense as in a 'symbolic', I would even go so far as to say 'conceptual', sense. For its prohibition implies, of course, the possibility that it can be executed: therefore there is no question of 'drawing', as a graphic trace, not being known by the Nowau carver; it is rather the function of drawing that is denied and prohibited. A Drawing, understood as a sketch, a trace, 'memorizes', fixes, a logical passage, or the shadow of a concept. It blocks an intuition, and therefore develops an operation of 'memorization' which is at the same time one of 'unveiling'. In drawing, or tracing, the silhouette, the shape, of a graphic sign before carving it the carver reveals the mechanism that has led to the construction of the graphic sign itself. It is as if he unveiled the whole village the mystery of the construction. Moreover, by this tracing, or drawing, he also reveals the error, the change of mind — both of which must remain internal, closed in the mind of the carver. The village must not 'see' the material proof (the drawing and its erasure) of the error and the change of mind: a graphic sign must appear on the outside as if it were constructed from nothing, the work of a thinking mind, the material concretization of lightning intuition which knows no elaboration, changes of mind, attempts.
12. The game is very subtle: a master, even if he has initiated a young man (who may belong either to the same lineage as the initiator — thus violating the rules of matrilinear descent — or to a different lineage) could reject him during the apprenticeship. Or he might realize that the initiate is not up to the task, is not 'made of the right stuff'. In these cases it is said that the initiate has not respected the canonical prohibitions, with the consequence that he annuls his capacity, attributed to him at the moment of initiation, for 'constructing images':

the initiate is, in fact, denied the possibility of carving multicoloured prowboards for a ceremonial canoe. The opposite may also occur: a young initiate may decide to withdraw from the 'career of carver' and therefore eat the forbidden foods.

13. Towitara knew how to carve, for example, harmonious *lagimu* and *tabuya* because in addition to possessing a precise concept of harmony (probably the fruit of a collective, historical effort, even though limited to a restricted group of carvers) in his mind, he was able to realize it in a specific 'form' which, in turn, requires the excogitation of a rule, of a 'way', that renders it visual, material. Therefore the Rule, if it exists, is at the same time both a 'form rendered explicit' and a 'concept' (the mechanism of construction) veiled by this 'form'.

Thus we have an aesthetic judgement on an artefact formulated by the group within which this artefact was produced, and the judgement is based on the recognition that one is seeing realized materially, an ensemble of aesthetic principles that must, therefore, also be encapsulated in the object itself. One must of course remember that a judgement is always conditioned by tradition, by the ancestral 'way' of seeing (and the 'way' may be interpreted as a metaphor for 'model of reference'), but the tradition is made up of principles and rules that are interpreted at different times, and if an interpretation evokes a positive judgement, this means that it has 'grasped' the spirit, or the soul, of the traditional norm, which thus presents itself no longer as a relative, limited value but as a 'classical' value.

What is underlined in the traditional or classical norm, through this interpretation, is its value as a general, abstract schema rather than its rigidity; otherwise there would not even be the possibility of an interpretation. Moreover, the appeal to tradition, to the ancestral way of seeing and judging, is made with regard to a specific artefact and not in the abstract: the judgement is given at the moment when an artefact evokes it with its texture of graphic signs.

Therefore this texture must contain the reason, the rule, the way, of its construction. The very harmony or disharmony, of the texture is, so to speak, immanent in the texture itself even though it is correlated to the concepts of harmony or disharmony.

14. The *tadobu* schema of the ceremonial canoe is followed in the band of islands of the Kula Ring to the west of Kitawa as far as Iwa, to the east of Kitawa, while the *nagega* schema (whose variant *goragora* was constructed on Kitawa) is still followed in the islands of Gawa, Kwaiwata and Muyuwa. It is very likely that the name *tadobu* derives from the island Dobu, belonging to the Kula Ring, which is situated to the west of the Trobriands. This schema must have spread from this island to the Trobriands and from there to Kitawa via Vakuta, to the south of Kiriwina. According to Towitara Buyoyu, whose clan and subclan originated in Vakuta, the *tadobu* schema was imported to Kumwageiya (the territory of Kitawa controlled by clan groups originating in Vakuta) and gradually imposed itself on the two other territories of Lalela and Okabulula. The *tadobu* canoe is considered

swifter, more agile, than the *nagega* canoe, whose structure is more massive (cf. Munn, 1977).

15. It seems to me of interest to record an observation made by Towitara Buyoyu when we were discussing the relationship between the two terms *doka* and *goragora*. In reply to my question as to why the *Nautilus pompilius* shell is called *goragora* in Nowau, whereas the symbol derived from it, through a process of schematization and abstraction, is defined by the term *doka*. Towitara said that the question of the terms that connote a graphic sign is entirely arbitrary: *doka* and *goragora*, he said, are only 'names'. By this I think that Towitara was emphasizing that:

(a) The relationship between an element of Nature, such as the Nautilus, and a graphic sign inspired by this element is an 'indirect' relationship, in the sense that the element may function as an 'excuse', as a point of departure, therefore having a formal or formalizing value, for the construction of a graphic sign. The graphic sign *doka*, for example, which is inspired by the Nautilus, takes from its 'form', understood as an element that represents to the eyes, visualizes, the whole mechanism of the formation of the graphic sign itself. It is the visual — indeed, formal — synthesis of this mechanism. It is, of course, an interpreted 'form', and therefore produced by the intellect.

(b) The relationship between the word *doka* and the graphic sign that it connotes is arbitrary in the sense that the same graphic sign could be called by a different name. But it may be that by connoting the graphic sign with *doka*, which in Nowau vocabulary also means 'to think', 'to imagine', 'to produce concepts, ideas' (cf. Scoditti 1982a), the carver wished on the contrary to allude to the symbolic-iconographic content associated with this sign. If, according to the iconographical interpretation of the *lagimu* and the *tabuya*, the *doka* represents the intelligence and the imagination of the mythical artist-hero (and hence an idea of perfection, harmony), it is quite likely that the term *doka* was chosen to indicate these concepts which, in order to be represented graphically, needed to seek a 'formal excuse' in Nature, in a natural element that could realize this ensemble of concepts graphically. This element was identified in the *goragora*, or *Nautilus pompilius*, because 'formally' it represents a figure, the logarithmic or equiangular spiral, which realizes in nature the concepts of perfection and of harmonious progression (from a 'given' point a series of increasingly large whorls develop in a geometrical progression).

16. This is the formula of the golden section or golden number: "Cette équation traduite en mots donne l'énoncé suivant 'Le rapport entre la somme des deux grandeurs considérées et l'une d'entre elles (la plus grande) est égal au rapport entre elle-ci et l'autre (la plus petite)'. Appliquée à des longueurs en divisant un segment AC en deux segments AB et BC par la choix d'un B tel que  $AC : AB = CB : BC$ , elle correspond à ce qu'Euclide appelle déjà: Partage d'un longueur en moyenne et extrême raison. C'est aussi bien géométriquement qu'algébriquement le partage asymétrique le plus 'logique' et le plus important à cause des ses propriétés mathématiques, esthétiques, etc."

- (Ghyka 1959: 27). In note 1 on the same page Ghyka writes “La valeur numérique du rapport au nombre-mesure = 1.618 ... est l’expression arithmétique de la section dorée ou nombre d’or: suivant la suggestion de Sir Th.Cook et Mark Barr (dans *The Curves of the Life*, Constable édit.), je l’ai désigné par le symbole  $\phi$ ”.
17. James Bernoulli 1961 in *Acta Eruditorum*, quoted by D’Arcy W. Thompson in *On Growth and Form*, 1977: 178, note 7.
  18. D’Arcy W. Thompson, 1977: 176.
  19. ‘Measuring by eye’ is determined by the long apprenticeship and by experience: every rule, before becoming a mathematician and/or geometrical formula, is indeed determined by experience, by man’s continual application to a problem. The Kitawan carver does not possess an explicit ‘table’ of the proportions that he must respect when he carves a *lagimu* or *tabuya*, or when he carves an outrigger for the ceremonial canoe. The measuring is done intuitively, and is based on the ‘gaze that calculates’, literally ‘by eye’: the eye, for example, calculates the distance between one extremity of the trunk and the other, and establishes the relationships, for example, relative to the thickness of the wood, which must be respected in order to obtain a harmonious outrigger. And in the carver’s mind, activated and made expert by experience, a subtle calculation is made, which causes him later to carve the multicoloured prowboards to ‘a certain size’. He uses his eye, his mind and his hands (how many times have I seen the length of an outrigger being calculated by stretching out the arms ‘in the form of a cross’, starting, for example, from the point x and then gradually moving them till they reached point y!): by experience he knows that the length must be ‘half an arm high and one arm wide’ if he also wishes to obtain a particular visual harmony. And by repeating this relationship for decades he ‘founds’ the Rule which may later be rationalized in a mathematical and/or geometrical Formula.
  20. “There are certain things, says Aristotle, which suffer no alteration (save of magnitude) when they grow. Thus if we add to a square an L-shaped portion, shaped like a carpenter’s square, the resulting figure is still a square; and the portion which we have so added, with this singular result, is called in Greek *gnomon*”. D’Arcy W. Thompson, 1977: 181.
  21. At the symbolic level the *weku* represents the primal scream, the howl, of the mythical hero Monikiniki which, later, is transformed into a ‘word’. The transformation from ‘scream’ to ‘word’ is like the development of the whorl of a logarithmic spiral which grows in a geometrical progression and moves in an asymmetrical manner away from the original point-shout, but does not negate it.



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# DECIPHERMENT OF THE EASTER ISLAND SCRIPT

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What is *kohau rongorongo* — a mnemonic means, as some scientists think,<sup>1</sup> or a phonetic script, as others are sure?<sup>2</sup>

Bishop T. Jaussen, who recorded on Tahiti Island some data on *kohau rongorongo* the Rapanuian Metoro pretended to know, the missionary S. Englert, who lived on Easter Island for many years, and some ethnographers who made field investigations on Easter Island (C. Routledge, A. Metraux, T. Barthel) agree unanimously that 1) every glyph tells a whole word and 2) this word is connected with some other words which are not represented on the tablet by glyphs and should be read by heart. The text is written not only on the tablet, as T. Barthel notes, but in the memory as well — a condensed text on the tablet and a full one in the mind.<sup>3</sup> The word represented on the tablet by the glyph is, according to C. Routledge, only a *peg*, according to T. Barthel — only a *Stichwort*,<sup>4</sup> The natives Metoro, Tomenika, Kapiera and Teaa stated this. Tomenika added that the word represented by the glyph was usually connected with 3–10 words,<sup>5</sup> and Kapiera even adduced two texts to compare — a written one and an oral one. In the written text there were 10–15 glyphs, in the oral one — about 50 words.<sup>6</sup> The most difficult thing was, as Metoro said, not reading but keeping in mind. When experts in script (*tangata rongorongo*) gathered in Anakena during their annual meetings, they used to check not the tablets (it was even possible not to bring them) but the correct reading.

In our attempts to read the texts on the tablets we thus start from

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two premises: 1) every glyph tells a whole word and 2) this word is connected with some words not marked on the tablet that the *tangata rongorongo* used to recite by heart.

Is it possible to read the texts on the tablets now, i.e. to read the information not only written but kept in the memory by the experts as well? S. Englert, C. Routledge, A. Metraux consider it impossible.<sup>7</sup> H. Neumann supports the opinion.<sup>8</sup> T. Barthel is inclined to believe the same, and moreover that the texts are written in ancient language as it was 500 years ago. That is why it is possible only to interpret them.<sup>9</sup>

The work of deciphering Easter Island script has been going on for more than 100 years, and some real results have been obtained. In 1871 the Bishop of Tahiti, Tepano Jaussen, invited one of the Rapanuians working on Tahiti to read the texts on 4 tablets (Jaussen obtained 5 tablets, but one of them was given as a present to N. N. Mikloucho-Maclay not long before, when the traveller visited Tahiti in July 1871 on his way to New Guinea). This person, called Metoro (*Tau a Ure*), seemed to know the *kohau rongorongo* and fulfilled the Bishop's request. Jaussen thoroughly recorded his "readings", but they appeared to be not real readings (the text became incoherent). It was not even a story about how to read one or another glyph, but an interpretation of what the glyph might represent ("this is the earth", "this is the sky", "this is a chief", etc.) and what is more, sometimes in the Tahitian language. Jaussen did not publish the "Metoro readings". However, he compiled from them a catalogue of glyphs.

The Leningrad schoolboy Borya Koudryavtsev, while studying two tablets brought home by N. N. Mikoucho-Maclay and kept in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in Leningrad (one of them is now on display in Helsinki)\*, made an important discovery: he found out that these two tablets have one and the same text. Later, looking through the published photos, he found this text or a part of it on two more tablets. B. Koudryavtsev had no time to publish his article (he died during the Siege of Leningrad). Only after the war was his article published.<sup>10</sup>

One important condition for deciphering the *kohau rongorongo* is, of course, a knowledge of the Rapanui language and culture. Among the published works are T. Barthel's "*Grundlagen zur Entzifferung der Osterinselschrift*" and A. Metraux's "*Ethnology of Easter Island*". A. Metraux gives a detailed description of precontact Rapanui culture, quotes a number of myths, traditions, legends, and makes some valuable observations about *kohau rongorongo*. T. Barthel was the first to publish in full the "Metoro readings" recorded by T. Jaussen (discovered in archives in Rome)

\* During the symposium in 1987, when this paper was originally given, artefacts from the Leningrad Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography were displayed in an exhibition in Helsinki. (Eds.)

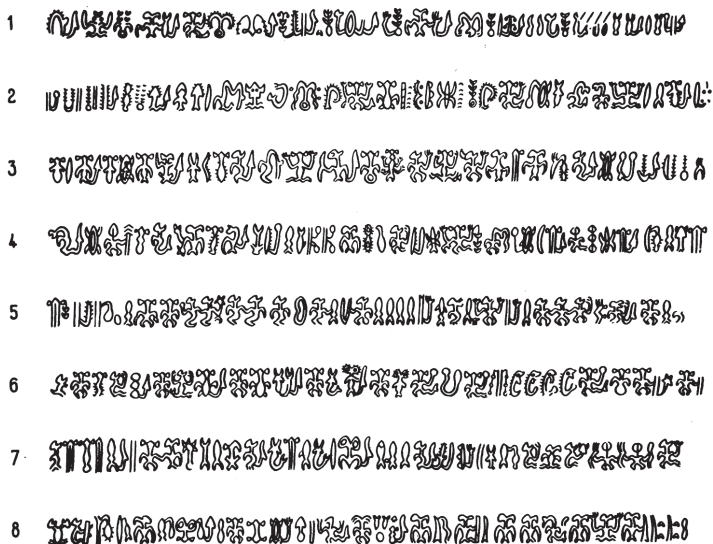


Figure 1. Chilean small tablet.

and compiled a detailed catalogue of the glyphs.

Myths, traditions and legends were recorded by numerous people and published in different magazines sometimes hard to find. The Leningrad ethnographer and linguist I. K. Fyedorova managed to collect all (or almost all) the folklore texts and combined them (in Russian and in Rapanuian when it was possible to get such a version) in her monograph “*Myths, Traditions and Legends of Easter Island*”.<sup>11</sup> As we are concerned with the approaches to reading *kohau rongorongo*, we shall mention the article by Yu. V. Knorozov and the author of this paper “*Preliminary report on Easter Island script*”<sup>12</sup>, where the text on the Chilean small tablet is interpreted (Fig. 1).

The glyph “a man” (*tangata*) is repeated there six times: in one case the glyph “a man” is followed by one glyph, in three cases by two, in two cases by three. Personal names are usually preceded by the particle *-nga* (for example, *Nga Tavake*); the concept of “a person” is sometimes shown by the word *nga* (*tetahi nga*, “one man”). Then the Rapanuian places after the personal name the name of his father (e.g. *Tuu-ko-Ihu*), and in this case he needs two glyphs to tell the name on the tablet (Ego + father). Sometimes the personal name is followed by the names of the father and grandfather (e.g. *Makoi-Ringiringi-a-Huatava*), so to render such a



Figure 2. The genealogy (Chilean small tablet).

triple name three glyphs are required: Ego + father + grandfather.

Let us divide this small text into six groups, each starting with the glyph “a man”, and let us place them one under the other (Fig. 2). We shall start “reading” from the first group: “a man” *nga*, “an octopus” *heke*. We have got the name: Nga Heke. In the second group: “a man” *nga*, “a shark” *mango*, “an octopus” *heke*, a glyph that separates the name from the following one. We have got the name: Nga Mango Heke. The reading of the names is conditional (it is quite possible that they are read in a different way), but the formal point here is important: in the first group the glyph “an octopus” (*heke*) is present, in the second group the glyph “an octopus” is also present but not in the first place but in the second (Mango Heke). We may conclude that Nga Heke is the father, Nga Mango Heke is his son. In the third group: “a man” *nga*, “a turtle” *honu*, “a shark” *mango*. We have got the name: Nga Honu Mango. This reading is also conditional, but what is noteworthy is the fact

that in the second group the glyph “a shark” is situated in the first place, in the third group the glyph “a shark” is also present, not in the first, but in the second place. We may draw the conclusion that Nga Mango Heke is the father and Nga Honu Mango is his son. In the fourth group: “a man” *nga*, unidentified glyph (let us suppose “a rat”, *kiore*), “a turtle” *honu*. So we have got the name: Nga Kiore Honu. Again the same picture: in the third group the glyph “a turtle” is situated in the first place, in the fourth group — in the second place. We may conclude that Nga Honu Mango is the father and Nga Kiore Honu is his son.

A. Metraux rejected the possibility of finding any genealogies on the tablets. But having got acquainted with our analysis of the text on the Chilean Small tablet, he changed his opinion. On the tablet preserved in Santyago, he writes, is a series of glyphs which probably corresponds to a short genealogy.<sup>13</sup>

Not everything is clear in the text in which A. Metraux admitted the existence of a genealogy. First of all, the names have not yet been read. Nga Heke, Nga Mango Heke, Nga Honu Mango, Nga Kiore Honu cannot be considered true readings; Metoro named the glyphs in such a manner (“this is heke”, “this is mango”, “this is honu”) and we do not know how they should be read. Secondly, not everything is clear in the fifth and in the sixth groups. In the fifth group it is unclear where the third glyph came from; if it is a glyph of the grandfather’s name, why is it not the glyph “a turtle”? In the sixth group the glyph telling the name of the grandfather is unquestionable (in the fifth group this glyph tells the name of the father), but nobody knows where the second glyph (father) appeared from.

By the way, our analysis of this text is not a reading proper but a step for further reading and gives certain standpoints for further studies. Firstly, the glyph “a man” can be read as *nga*. Secondly, the information of the aborigines is corroborated — every glyph tells a whole word.

In the article mentioned we analysed the text on the Tahua tablet consisting of 19 glyphs (Fig. 3). This text, as we then said, begins with the glyph “a boat” (*vaka*) followed twice by the pair of glyphs “a walking man” and “the sky”, which may be read as *rangi* (“to send, to visit”), and four times by an unidentified glyph (it may be a numeral), and twice by the glyph of a man with his hand raised (according to Metoro, elder brother glyphs for plants... then a glyph for foot (*oho* “to go, to send”) and the glyph for father (*matua*)”:<sup>14</sup>

At that time (1956) we could not avail ourselves of the “Metoro readings” and of the full collection of folklore texts. Only the



Figure 3. Text on the Tahua tablet.

catalogue of glyphs compiled by T. Jaussen was used while analysing the text on the Tahua tablet. Our analysis nevertheless appeared to be correct, though now we may make it more precisely. We did not then pay due attention to the myth in which two of the six men sent to Easter Island dissuade Hotu-Matua from landing there (“this land is bad”). I. K. Fyedorova had paid attention to the episode and supposed that “these scouts were sent by different chiefs, so it will explain why Ira and Raparenga attempted to persuade Hotu-Matua that the land of the island was bad”.<sup>15</sup> The text on the Tahua tablet affirms this supposition: two chiefs (glyphs 3, 5) sent (glyphs 4, 6) six men (glyphs 7–12), but four of them (glyphs 7–10) were sent by Hotu-Matua and two (Ira and Raparenga, glyphs 11–12) were sent by some other chief (Hau-Maka, maybe). The names of the scouts are not represented in the script and the *tangata rongorongo* had to mention them by heart.

The text for analysis on the Tahua tablet was read by Metro in such a way: 1) *tangata ui* 2) *ki tona marama* 3) *tangata noho ana* 4) *i te rangi* 5) *te tangata* 6) *hakamaroa ana i te rangi* 7) *moe* 8) *e noho ana ki te moa* 9) *e moe te erueru* 10) *e mosa te kapakapa* 11) *e moa te terehua* 12) *ka hora ka tetea* 13) *ihe kuukuu* 14) *ma te maro* 15) *henua* 16) *kua tuu* 17) *marai* 18) *i tona ohoga* 19) *ariki*.<sup>16</sup> In this text, recorded not very strictly by T. Jaussen, *tangata* means “a man”, *ui* “to look”, *marama* “a

moon”, *noho* “to go”, *rangi* “the sky”, “to send”, *moa* “a hen” (*moe* is a mistake in recording), *ihe* “a needle-fish”, *maro* “a garland of flowers”, *henua* “an earth”, *marai* “a sacred place”, *ariki* “a chief”.

Metoro, here as always, named the meaning of glyphs but at the same time (not willing to repeat, as it seems) he interpreted the same glyph with a slight difference (e.g. “a hen”, 7–10). One more detail is curious. Glyph 13, rather frequent in different tablets, was interpreted by him as *ihe* “a needle-fish”, *avanga* “a tomb, a vault in *ahu*”, *hokohuki* “a digging stick”, *hokovero* “a spear”, *tau* “a rock”, *kona* “a place”, *henua* “an earth”. Only once while “reading” the analysed text did he pronounce the word *kuukuu*, i.e. he named one of the scouts that had perished and had been buried in the cave. Maybe here he rightly defined that this glyph means *avanga* “a tomb, a vault in *ahu*” and added according to his knowledge that the perished scout *Kuukuu* was mentioned.

Here we have a rare true reading: *Kuukuu*, though the glyph telling his name is lacking. The only glyph present (13) tells the pivotal word “a grave”, so everything connected with it should be read by heart.

Thus the information told by the natives is confirmed; only pivotal words are represented on the tablet and the wisdom of the *tangata rongorongo* mainly consists of his memory of the oral texts, and only then of his knowledge of glyphs. Without the context the glyph *avanga* does not mean much.

The conclusion that not all the words are present on the tablet, but only pivotal ones, that some words (names of scouts, for example) are represented by pictograms but not by phonetic glyphs now determines our approach to the decipherment of *kohau rongorongo*. We believe it is too early to attempt to read some new words not found in dictionaries or some new texts unknown from other sources (as T. Barthel does, for instance). But we should not restrict ourselves to pure structural analysis, not even attempting to read the text (as the Australian researcher D. Guy does).

Let us try to identify some familiar text (a myth, tradition, legend, etc.) on the tablets. The structure of the written text should to some extent coincide with the structure of the oral text (we have seen this on the *Tahua* tablet).

We possess several versions of the myth about the coming of the first migrants to Easter Island from the ancient land of origin, *Hiva*. The first to arrive was the chief *Hau-Maka* (in the myth his spirit). According to another version *Hau-Maka* visited Easter Island in dreams. *Hau-Maka* was searching for a sandy beach. So he proceeded along the islands *Motu Nui*, *Motu Iti* and *Motu Kao* to the east along the southern coast, doubled round the *Poike*



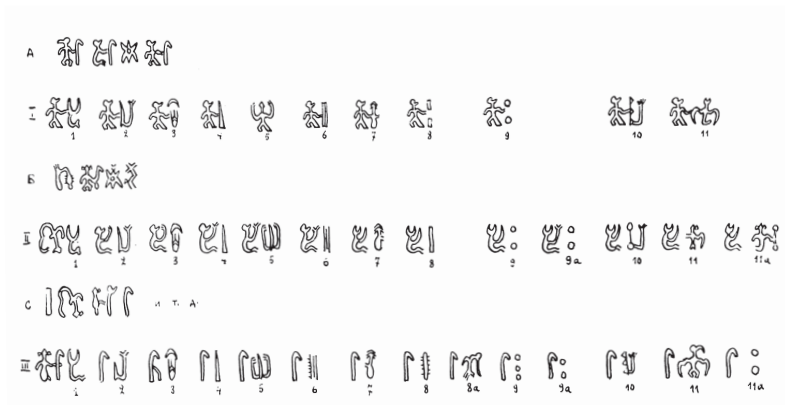


Figure 4. Text on the Aruku Kurenga tablet (myth about the three expeditions).

peninsula, turned to the west and there found the sandy Anakena Bay. Some other places visited by him in passing are also mentioned. After him six scouts came to the island. They were also searching for a sandy bc'ach and, following the same route, stopped at Anakena Bay. Some 50 place names visited by them in passing are given. And at last Hotu-Matua set off for the island, following the same route as far as Anakena Bay.<sup>17</sup>

The structure of the myth is as follows: the first expedition is described, some geographical names are listed, terminating in sandy Anakena Bay; this is repeated for the second expedition and the third.

On the Aruku Kurenga tablet (Fig. 4) we find a text with a structure coinciding with that of the myth about the three expeditions: three series of glyphs each consisting of 11–14 groups. The first series should be indicated by A(x), the second by B(x) and the third by C(x). A is a constant glyph of the first series, B — of the second, C — of the third, and x are variable glyphs: in one group from the first series it may appear as one, in the other group — as another, etc. The variable glyphs in these three series are the same: A(1), B(1), C(1); A(2), B(2), C(2), etc. with some insignificant additions in the second series: B(9a), B(11a) and in the third series: C(8a), C(9a), C(11a). The sequence of variable glyphs is one and the same. We may suppose that glyph A is read as “Hau-Maka”, B as “scouts” (though it is a single glyph) (Fig. 3, 7–12) and C as “Hotu-Matua” (Fig. 3, 19), x-glyphs represent the place names (since the route of the three expeditions is the same, the place names should also be the same).

In the myth about the scouts some 50 geographical places are named from Orongo via Poike peninsula to Anakena Bay. The termini should be hypothetically read as follows: glyph 9 means “a sand” (according to Metoro). It may be sandy lands Taharoa or Hanga-o-Honu. Glyph 8 may be read as Taharoa (*taha* “a bird”, a frigate-bird) or as Hanga Tavake (*tavake* “a phaeton-bird”). Glyph 11 may in this case denote a bird (*Anakena* is literally “a cave of birds”). Glyph 7 (according to Metoro, *poki* “a son, a grandson, a nephew, a descendant”) should here possibly be read as *mahaki* to designate the place Vai-Mahaki on Poike peninsula. A. Metraux writes that “in legends the term *mahaki* is often used to replace the absent person — a parent, brother, sister, daughter, son, etc.”<sup>18</sup>

So here is a hypothetic reading of some points placed on the route from Poike peninsula, and the place names Vai-Mahaki, Hanga-o-Honu, Anakena, Taharoa are known in the myth of three expeditions. As regards the place names before Poike (glyphs 1–6), it still seems impossible to read them. The attempt to identify the whole myth about the three expeditions on the Aruku Kurenga tablet cannot be considered fully successful. The cause of the failure lies in the fact that the text contains numerous geographical names and the man contains even more, so the researcher may choose the ones that suit him and the method gives an unreliable result.

It would be desirable to choose for analysis and reading a text from the tablet that is not only known to us from other sources but is unambiguous in meaning. For instance, here we have 10 groups of glyphs on the tablet and 10 names known from other sources; metaphorically these 10 glyphs are 10 different kinds of locks and the 10 names are 10 different keys. The task is to “open” the 10 *concrete* locks with the 10 *concrete* keys (provided that one key “opens” only one lock).

The text we are looking for contains 4 tablets: Tahua, the Leningrad Big, Leningrad Small and Chilean Big one (Fig. 5). It may be denoted with the formula: 10 A(x) B, or 10 A(x) C B, where A is a constant glyph (according to Metoro, *raa* “a sun” or *hetu* “a star”), x are ten variable glyphs, B one final glyph (according to Metoro, *uhi* “a yam”) on the Tahua tablet. C B are two final glyphs on the three remaining tablets.

We may use this concrete text to demonstrate the peculiarities of our method of deciphering and its distinguishing features from other methods used by other researchers — the method of formal analysis (Australian scientist D. Guy), the method of interpretation (T. Barthel), the method of reading (I. K. Fyedorova). D. Guy makes, as he writes, a “purely structural analysis of the text”. He does not attempt to identify the meaning of the glyphs in the text, nor the

information about the glyphs and script obtained from Metoro and Rapanuians by inquiry; nor does he use the data about Rapanuian culture, myths, legends, traditions from the works of A. Metraux, T. Barthel, etc. All these materials he considers to be not very reliable and he uses them “as an argument is only to weaken the conclusions” obtained with the help of pure structural analysis.<sup>19</sup>

This is one extreme — pure structural analysis of the text. The other extremity is the attempt to read (in the same text) some separate words not fixed in the Rapanui language and even to read a story unknown from other sources.

T. Barthel supposes that group 1 (Fig. 6) tells about the dawn, groups 2–5 tell about the phases in an eclipse of the sun, group 7 — about the sunlight.<sup>20</sup> I. K. Fyedorova reads this text as follows; group 8 “came and took the yams”, group 9 “came and ate the yams”.<sup>21</sup> I prefer the version of I. K. Fyedorova. It seems more probable, but, unfortunately, it finds no analogy in other sources and remains a hypothesis only.

We tried to find from other sources a text analogous in structure with the text on the tablet. In 1956 we suggested that the text contains a list of yam varieties, because each group ends with the glyph *uhi* “yams” (according to Metoro). So here we have a myth in which one of the heroes enumerates the sorts of yams growing in his garden. Only two of them are mentioned in the myth — *hatuke* and *tarakura*. A. Metraux gives the names of about 40 species of yams.

So the attempt to “unlock” these 10 locks (10 variable glyphs) with the help of even 40 keys (yam varieties known to us) does not help.

Later we returned to this text. The initial glyph is here *hetu* “a star”, *raa* “a sun”. The Rapanuians know the Matariki stars (Pleiades), literally “small eyes” (*mata* “an eye”, *riki* “small”) or “chiefs’ eyes” (if the word Matariki was derived from *mata ariki*, as on the Island of Mangaia, the word *ngariki* was derived from *nga ariki*). The word *mata* has one more meaning: “a tribe”. So we get a chain of related meanings: *Matariki* stars, *mata* “eyes”, *mata* “a tribe”. We may consider that the initial glyph *mata* is read here as “a tribe” and a list of them follows. In the text we find 10 groups of glyphs (Fig. 7) and 10 tribes inhabiting Easter Island: Hiti-Uira, Hiru, Raa, Hamea, Marama, Haumoana, Ngatimo, Ngaure, Tupahotu, Koro-o-Rongo (Fig. 8). The task is to open 10 locks (10 variable glyphs x) with the well-known 10 keys (10 tribe names).

According to Metoro, the glyph *hiti* means “a plant” in the second group (Tahua tablet) or *ui* “to look” (Leningrad Big tablet). The glyph in the third group is *marama* “a moon”, *vaka* “a boat”. The

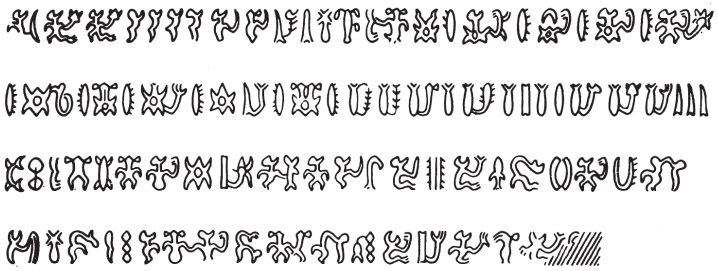


Figure 5. Text on Tahua tablet.

Т А Х У А		Ленинградская (б)		Ленинградская (м)		С - Я (б)	
Племена	Границы территории	Границы территории	Племена	Границы территории	Племена	Границы территории	Племена
МЫРУ							
ХИТИ-УРА					пропущено		пропущено
МАРАМА							
ТУПАКОТУ							
НТАУРЕ							
НТАГИМО					испорчено		
ХАУМАНА					испорчено		
РАА					испорчено		
ХАМЕА					испорчено		
КОРО-О-ПУНИ					испорчено		испорчено

Figure 6. Text on 4 tablets: Tahua, Leningrad big one, Leningrad small one, chilean big one.

ЗНАКИ (ТАХУА)	ТОЛКОВАНИЕ МЕТОРО	ЗНАК, ВЫРАЖАЮЩИЙ НАЗВАНИЕ ПЛЕМЕНИ	ЧТЕНИЕ ЗНАКА (ПО МЕТОРО)	ЧТЕНИЕ ЗНАКА В СПИСКЕ ПЛЕМЕН	НАЗВАНИЕ ПЛЕМЕНИ
	ka eoa ka tapamea		 ka tuu i te tonga	—	МИРУ (ИГАПАУ-КРИВОНОГИ)
	ma te tagata e hetu noho i te heze i uhi tapamea		 maitaxi hiti (АПАЦ)	hiti РАСТЕНИЕ	ХИТИ - УИРА
	e hetuu mau i te cima kia noho te ma tama e uhi tapamea		 marama	МАТАМА ЛУНА	МАРАМА
	e hetu mata e hokohuki ko te nua hine	—	—	—	ТУПАХОТУ
	i mama i te ahi e uhi tapamea		tangata человек, люди	nga человек, люди	НГАУРЕ
	ko te ahi haxatara xi te henua		 tangata kai - moa (ТАХУА)	moa КУРЦА	НГАТШМО
	ka puhi hoxi ki te ahi ma te hoxohuki		hau	hau ХИБИСКУС	ХАУМОАНА
	ki te ahi e uhi tapamea		ra'a	ra'a СОЛНЦЕ	РАА
	ka puhi hoxi ki te ahi ma te toga tuu te tapamea		tonga СТОЛБ В ХИЖИНЕ	ha НАГЕ - ХИЖИНА	ХАМЕА
	e tagata hakaga- nagana e uhi tapamea		—	Rongoro	КОРО-О-РОНГО

Figure 7. Text on the Tahua tablet (tribes).

glyph in the fourth group (except the Tahua tablet) is *amo* “a stretcher”, “to carry”. We have already ascertained the glyph in the fifth group in the case of genealogies: it is *nga* “a man”. The glyph in the sixth group was determined on the Tahua tablet (the four scouts) as *moa* “a hen”. The glyph in the seventh group, according to Metoro, is *hau* “a hibiscus”

In the third group the Marama tribe is mentioned. In other groups the tribe names are given on the tablets only partly, not in full. The glyph *hiti* in the second group (Tahua tablet) tells the tribe name Hiti-Uira. On the Leningrad Big tablet another variable glyph, *ui*, in the second group tells the same tribe name Hiti-Uira. In the fifth group the glyph *nga* should be read as Ngaure. In the seventh group the glyph *hau* is from Haumoana.

So we have already “unlocked” four of the “locks” with four of the “keys” — we have read the tribe names Hiti-Uira, Marama, Ngaure and Haumoana, not interpreting them at will but according to the “Metoro readings” and analysis of genealogies (*nga* “a man”). These tribe names do not leave room for doubt in their reality or



Figure 8. Easter Island (tribes).

readings. Some six “locks” are left (groups 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10) and six “keys” (Miru, Tupahotu, Ngatimo, Hamea, Raa, Koro-o-Rongo).

The name of Ngatimo tribe consists of two parts: *ngati* “descendants” and *mo* (maybe the name of some ancestor). The name Mo was not fixed in any sources. But the myth recorded how a chief, Moa, from the Tupahotu tribe married the daughter of a chief from Miru tribe, migrated from the Tupahotu territory to some other place and there founded a new tribe.<sup>22</sup> It seems possible to get the tribe name Ngatimo as an abridgement of Ngati-Moa (“descendants of Moa”). And the glyph from the sixth group (*moa* “a hen”, according to Metoro) then tells the name of Ngati-Moa or Ngatimo tribe.

The glyph for a bird (maybe *tavake* “a phaeton bird”) appears in the fourth group on the Tahua tablet. Hotu-Matua had another name, Nga Tavake. It comes from the myth: “The land was left where Teavaka landed. Ariki Hotu-Matua landed and settled there.”<sup>23</sup> It also comes from the names of the four scouts posing as sons of Hotu-Matua and including his second name, Tavake, in their personal names: Kuukuu-a-Huatava, Ringiringi-a-Huatava, Nonoma-a-Huatava, Ure-a-Huatava,<sup>24</sup> *hua* being “a son” and Tava a shortened Tavake. The glyph in the fourth group on the Tahua tablet is apparently read as Hotu and tells the tribe name of Tupahotu.

Metoro interpreted the glyph in the fourth group on the three remaining tablets as *amo* (in Rapanuian and Tahitian it means “to carry”). There is another Rapanuian word with the same meaning — *tupa* (in Tahitian the word *tupa* does not mean “to carry”). The difference between *amo* and *tupa* is that *amo* means “to carry on the ends of a pole” and *tupa* is “to carry on a stretcher with the load placed in the middle”. The glyph in the fourth group testifies to the load placed in the middle. Thus we should consider this glyph as *tupa* and read the text here as Tupahotu.

It would be logical to suppose that the list of tribes on the tablets would start with the name of the most powerful tribe — this was the Miru tribe. The glyph “legs” in the first group probably indicates that the members of this tribe were imputed to have weak legs (they were even nick-named *ngapau* “bow-legged”).

Now three “unlocked” puzzles (groups 8, 9 and 10) and three keys (Raa, Hamea, Koro-o-Rongo) remain untouched.

So far in analysing texts from the four tablets, we have not crossed the limits of Easter Island. But in order to understand the meaning of the two-headed figure (group 10), we have to take a broader look. The meaning of *moai-aringa* figures on Easter Island is not yet ascertained. On Tahiti and Hawai’i similar images portrayed a deity. The chief deity there was Rongo, and so we shall interpret the variable glyph in the tenth group as Rongo, enlisting as an exception the materials from other Polynesian Islands. This glyph would then give the tribe name Koro-o-Rongo.

The name of the Raa tribe is apparently told by the eighth group. The variable glyph in the ninth group was interpreted by Metoro as *tonga* “a central post in the dwelling”. We could not see any connections between the glyph (*tonga*) and the tribe name (Hamea). One of the ten “locks” remains locked and the last “key” (Hamea) does not open it.

There are some vague gaps in the analysed text from the four tablets. We did not find the meaning of the glyph of the raised hand (groups 3, 4, 5, 7). It may tell about the temporary tribal union including Tupahotu, Marama, Ngaure, Raa tribes. But other evidences name the Hotu-Iti union of tribes Tupahotu, Hiti-Uira, Ngaure, Koro-o-Rongo. As R. Williamson notes, quite rightly, the structure of these two unions could hardly be constant.<sup>25</sup> Tradition tells how the Harama tribe used to make war against the Miru tribe; part of the Hiti-Uira tribe had been included in the Tuu union of tribes and fought against Hotu-Iti.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the text on the four tablets will confirm the supposition of R. Williamson about the inconstant structure of the unions of the tribes Tuu and Hotu-Iti.

In conclusion we would like to note that the old question of



whether *kohau rongorongo* is a mnemonic means or a phonetic script was put in the wrong way: not “either”, but both are possible at the same time. Even phonetic (syllabic) glyphs may prove to be mnemonic means. Indeed, what is the glyph *nga* telling the tribe name Ngaure? In one aspect it is a syllabic glyph *-nga*, in the other it is a mnemonic means reminiscent of the word Ngaure. The same applies to glyphs *hiti* (reminiscent of the word Hiti-Uira), *ui* (the same word), *hau* (the word Hau-Moana), *tupa* (the word Tupahotu), etc.

Unfortunately only few of the tablets have been preserved (not more than 20). The folklore records are comparatively few and sometimes of poor quality (the Rapanuian version was not recorded in many cases), or the translation was wrong. The Rapanuian language has so far received insufficient study. All this makes the decipherment of *kohau rongorongo* much more difficult.

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**C**ulture and History in the Pacific is a collection of essays originally published in 1990. The texts explore from different perspectives the question of culture as a repository of historical information. They also address broader questions of anthropological writing at the time, such as the relationship between anthropologists' representations and local conceptions.

This republication aims to make the book accessible to a wider audience, and in the region it discusses, Oceania. A new introductory essay has been included to contextualize the volume in relation to its historical setting, the end of the Cold War era, and to the present study of the Pacific and indigenous scholarship.

The authors of *Culture and History in the Pacific* include prominent anthropologists of the Pacific, some of whom – Roger Keesing and Marilyn Strathern, to name but two – have also been influential in the anthropology of the late 20th and early 21st century in general.

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