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Contributors to This Issue

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Roger Green (1932-2009) was a prolific scholar of Oceanic Archaeology for a half century, conducting research in New Zealand, Samoa, the Society Islands, Mangareva, Hawai’i, the Southeast Solomons Islands and Papua New Guinea. For an account of his life and work, see the December 2009 issue of the JPS.

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New Frontiers of Pacific Research

The Friends of Te Papa, in association with The Polynesian Society and Va’aomanū Pasifika: Programmes in Pacific Studies and Samoan Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, hosted “New Frontiers of Pacific Research” on Thursday 8 September 2011 at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, in Wellington. This event
featured three researchers speaking about their current research on topics related to Pacific archaeology, art history and Māori cultural history. Dr Peter Brunt from the Art History department at Victoria University presented a talk that outlined a Marsden-funded research and book project titled “Art in Oceania: A History”. Professor Lisa Matisoo-Smith of the Department of Anatomy and Structural Biology, University of Otago, presented a talk titled “Redrawing the Polynesian Triangle: Genetic Evidence of Polynesian Contact with South America”. She discussed how the study of genetics in the Pacific was providing researchers with new insights into the settlement of the Pacific Islands. Arapata Hakiwai, who is the Scholar Matauranga Māori at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, discussed his research and database project titled “Reconnecting Māori with Taonga in Overseas Museums”.

As well as highlighting current research and scholarship, the evening celebrated the Polynesian Society and its Journal, and brought them back (briefly) to the institution where the Society began over 100 years ago. According to Elizabeth Ridder of the Te Papa Friends, over 200 people attended this event. One common and interesting feature of each of the talks was that each presenter mentioned how the Journal of the Polynesian Society had played a role in their development as scholars. Many thanks to the members of the Society’s Council for their support and especially to President Richard Benton who graciously agreed to preside over the event at the last minute.

Pacific History Association Conference 2012

The 20th Pacific History Association Conference will be held at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, on 6-8 December 2012. The PHA serves the interests of specialists in Pacific history, Pacific studies, political studies, anthropology, and archaeology. The biennial conference is an international event drawing together researchers from the Pacific Islands, NZ, Australia, Asia, Europe and the Americas.

The Conference theme is “Generations: History in the Pacific, Histories with a Future” and proposed topics include:

- *Tangata Whenua, Tangata Moana*: Māori in Pacific History
- New Zealand and the Pacific: Historical Intersections
- *Tangata o le Moana*: The Histories of Pacific People in New Zealand
- Pacific Histories in Indigenous Languages
- Island Histories/Historiographies
- Law and History in the Pacific
- The Arts and History in the Pacific
- Aid and Development in Historical Perspective
- The Secular and the Sacred in Pacific Historiography
- Sports and Gender in Pacific History
- Biography in the Pacific
- Natural Histories of the Pacific
- Methodology and Ethics of Research Practice
- Samoa, 1962-2012. Fifty Years of Independence

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**Gunson Essay Prize in Pacific History**

An inaugural prize of AUD$1,000 will be awarded at the Pacific History Association Conference, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand, 6–8 December 2012, for the winning entry in the Gunson Essay Prize Competition. Postgraduate students from any country are invited to submit an essay:

- in English
- between 5,000 and 8,000 words
- on any topic
- to jph@anu.edu.au by 1 November 2012.

The winning entry will be chosen by a judging committee including a special speaker at the Pacific History Association Conference and representatives of the Pacific History Association and *The Journal of Pacific History*.

The Gunson Prize aims to promote the work of scholars at the early stages of their research. It pays tribute to Dr Niel Gunson’s generous mentoring of so many students and fellow-scholars over a lifetime of dedication to Pacific history. It will be awarded every two years.

For any further details, please contact *The Journal of Pacific History*: jph@anu.edu.au

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**Polynesian Society Memoirs as E-books**

Three of the Society’s out-of-print Memoirs have been digitised as e-books by the Auckland University Library. They are listed below with their e-book addresses.


They can also be accessed from the JPS online site (www.jps.auckland.ac.nz/) at the end of the Browse list.
PETER RANBY (1926-2012)

Peter Ranby was a larger-than-life figure who served as Secretary of the Polynesian Society for 18 years, and a further two years as a Council member. He succeeded Bernie Kernot as Secretary in 1973, when the Society’s offices were still in Wellington, and remained Secretary after the office’s relocation to Auckland in 1980, serving until 1991.

Peter was a foundation student at Ardmore Teachers College, and went on to a career as an outstanding teacher at schools in the Waikato and Auckland. In the 1950s he worked through his BA part-time, and went on to complete a Masters degree in Anthropology in the 1960s. It was during this time that he became part of the team organised by Professor Bruce Biggs to work on his Polynesian lexicographical database (POLLEX). Peter was one of the researchers who contributed to the first published version of POLLEX (Walsh and Biggs 1966). He did fieldwork on the Nanumea dialect of the Tūvalu language, working with seamen and other people from Nanumea who were resident in Auckland and Mālua, Western Samoa. His description of Nanumea syntax constituted his MA thesis (1973), and his lexicographical work was incorporated in his Nanumea Lexicon (1980) in which he provided an etymology for every new word, thus also providing material for many new reconstructions.

Peter spent several years as a Research Officer with the Te Wāhanga Kaupapa Māori (Māori Research Unit) of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, and played an important role in organising and supervising the fieldwork for the Survey of Language Use in Māori Households and Communities (1973-79), which provided the background data for many subsequent initiatives, including the establishment of Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori. I had the privilege, as Head of the Māori Research Unit, of working with Peter at this time, and our families spent many weeks together helping with the fieldwork throughout the North Island.
Peter’s warm and outgoing personality and breadth of interests attracted a wide circle of friends. In Wellington Peter was at the centre of a group which met at the Abel Tasman Hotel after work on a Friday; they included his NZCER colleague the poet Alistair Campbell, poets Peter Bland and Lauris Edmond, novelist and NZ Listener editor Ian Cross, along with several Tuvaluans, whom Peter knew from his thesis days and who were resident in Wellington to study for their First Mate and Master’s seagoing qualifications. Peter blended the two groups, along with visitors to the office whom he persuaded to join them, everyone conversing together.

In the 1980s he returned to Auckland and for some years was a part-time lecturer at the University of Auckland, teaching the course in Comparative Polynesian Linguistics. He was an active member of a group including Professor Bruce Biggs and his colleagues Andrew Pawley and Ross Clark who worked enthusiastically on enlarging and improving the POLLEX database. The 61 reconstructions marked (Rby) in the current on-line version of POLLEX are evidence of his substantial contribution to this work. It was during this period too that an exchange of papers between Peter and Bruce highlighting the complex phonological history of the Anuta language was published in *Te Reo* (Biggs 1980, Ranby 1982). In Auckland Peter also maintained his extensive social links; Andrew Pawley (pers. comm.) recalls “an evening party in the Anthropology Department common room when Peter brought a bunch of Tuvaluan and Samoan mates along and there was singing and conviviality”, and several speakers at his funeral noted Peter’s love of conversation and his wide range of friends—farmers, artists, writers, factory workers, academics, sailors and school teachers—whom he effortlessly brought together.

Following the death of his wife, Sharon, about a year ago, Peter lived in retirement in Howick. He is survived by his children, Michael, John and Frances, and by his granddaughter Claire, to whom, on behalf of the Council and Officers of the Society, I extend sympathy on their loss.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indebted to Andrew Pawley, Ross Clark and John Wilcox for supplying me with information and personal reminiscences incorporated in this obituary.

Richard Benton

REFERENCES


In 1990, Susana Lodu Qoele died on Simbo, Western Solomon Islands. She was the last surviving witness to the Methodist Mission’s arrival in 1903. In the months surrounding her death she became a focus of widespread concerns about Simbo Christianity (Lotu) and kastom. Many expressed the view that kastom was lost, others debated the veracity of claims that particular practices were kastom. Such concerns overlapped disagreements about proper Christianity, with various people claiming that morality had paradoxically declined during Christianity, others that Simbo Christianity remained threatened by persistent darkness. In this context of long-standing struggle, Lodu came to symbolise the proper marriage of Christianity and kastom, a moral society and an idealised movement from darkness to light.

A particular convergence of factors brought Lodu to such prominence. All old people were well known, but she was the oldest person on Simbo. The understanding that she was probably approaching her centenary (she did not know precisely when she was born) made her remarkable. It became increasingly obvious that she would soon die: although she was not ill, she no longer left the house and she began to speak of dying. At around the same time, the local branch of the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands (UC), the then-successor church to the Methodist Mission, began discussions about their 2003 centenary celebrations. In this context, Lodu’s memories became highly valued as potential centrepieces of a commemorative publication. Finally, my research for an ethnographic history of Simbo religion was significant because people were very interested in its potential utility in establishing particular truths about the past. There was no consensus about what a truthful ethnography should be however. Indeed Lodu’s death highlighted the contentiousness of the past.

These three matters: (i) the approaching death of Lodu, a remnant of a radically different time and a centenarian or near centenarian; (ii) the reflection prompted by the approaching centenary in a society defining itself in terms of movement from heathen darkness to Christian light, and (iii) the questions and reflections, possibilities and uncertainty raised by my research, all influenced Lodu’s status as a key symbol. During this period, different groups used the symbolic Lodu to conjure their visions of Simbo sociality and dispute others’ interpretations. Yet her prominence was short lived and within a few months she faded from the on-going contestation.
In this article I consider Lodu as a transient key symbol, to highlight the significance of temporality to “key symbols”. Anthropology is replete with rich accounts of persistent important symbols, even as their content and significance may be shifting. However, as Moore (1994) notes, most analyses assume the relative stability of symbols. Against this, I am interested in their life cycle, focusing on a short-lived but arguably key symbol. Certainly, although she encapsulated and embodied them, Lodu as symbol cannot be seen as fundamentally important to Simbo cultural understandings. However, for a time, she was a key symbolic expression of and model for addressing prevailing social concerns and uncertainties. A means of expressing cultural models of social life, she was also a pivot for the articulation of concerns about social decay and cultural loss. My account of Simbo suggests social uncertainty, an experiential sense of constant change and decline. In such contexts, a key symbol might be key without being intrinsic to social and cultural being. Indeed, in situations in which people seek means to articulate their visions of society, it is perhaps unsurprising that key symbols may arise without occupying the stable place implied by an understanding of key symbols as systematically interwoven into the wider symbolic system.

After a brief background description, I first summarise Sherry Ortner’s 1973 account of “key symbols”. I then outline Lodu’s life, death and symbolic significance in the weeks and months surrounding her death. This is followed by an analysis of Lodu as a key symbol. Finally, I address her declining symbolic potency as her death receded in time and she came to be remembered as a good old kinswoman, rather than taken to symbolise impossible ideals. In contrast to prevailing assumptions about the longevity and structural fixity of key symbols, I highlight the historical moment of symbolic prominence and suggest the contingency of some key symbols’ existence.

A KEY SYMBOL IN PLACE

Simbo is a small island in the New Georgia Group of the Western Solomon Islands. Tinoni Simbo (Person/s of Simbo) speak an Austronesian language, also known as Simbo, and in the 1990s, when my fieldwork was undertaken, most were fluent in Solomon Islands Pijin. Some 2000 people identified themselves as Tinoni Simbo, although many of them lived in the national or provincial capitals, Honiara and Gizo, with kin or affines elsewhere, or in wage-labour areas. Most people were subsistence horticulturalists and commodity traders of surplus produce (kumara, watermelon, bonito, megapode eggs, etc.), manufactured items like pandanus mats and, occasionally, livestock such as pigs. Increasingly, young people left to seek waged work. Many remained in town for various periods, but others returned, homesick or disappointed at the costs of living elsewhere. Some came home
after saving enough to establish a small enterprise, opening a small store in their homes or buying a canoe and engine for bonito fishing or passenger services, for example.

The island has an unusually high population density in a region characterised by small populations in rich land and marine environments. This provoked acute awareness of Simbo’s relatively limited resources and perhaps contributed to the intensity of a widespread sense that society was increasingly selfish and unequal, and thus ‘not straight’ (sake tozomo, evoking wrongness, moral decline, waywardness, immorality). These concerns, expressed mainly by those living on the island—often in response to their urban-resident kin’s seeming indifference to their needs—coalesced around matters of money, sharing and willingness to help others. A seemingly decadent present was juxtaposed to an idealised pre-Christian time of social encompassment, generosity and mutuality. Such sentiments articulated key cultural-moral ideas of compassionate love (taru: love, compassion, pity) and generosity and projected it into a past of heathen ancestors, described to me by some as “good sinners of the time before”.

Everyone on the island was Christian, although there were marked differences of intensity to Christian belief, practice and discourse. Conversion, conceptualised as a movement from darkness to light, occurred in the early 20th century, with rapid acceptance of Methodism. Subsequently, small congregations of the Seventh Day Adventist Mission (SDA), Christian Fellowship Church (CFC) and South Seas Evangelical Church were established on the island. Urban dwellers also subscribed to a number of other denominations. Denominational differences were points of considerable tension, as most prominently reflected in rhetorical histories of breakaways and the domestic violence in many of those mixed-denominational marriages in which women declined to adopt their husbands’ denominations. Despite this variety the United Church, which is my focus in this article, was the church of a large majority.

SUMMARISING KEY SYMBOLS

Despite enormous changes in anthropologists’ approaches to culture since the publication of Sherry Ortner’s “On Key Symbols” in 1973 (e.g., Faubion 2001, Keesing 1987, Ortner 1999), the concept remains widely cited in anthropological and other analyses of symbolic phenomena. This diverse usage suggests something of its enduring value, her distinction between summarising and elaborating symbols highlighting their place in ideological, emotional and practice domains. There has been little development of the concept since Ortner formulated it and it often serves definitional rather than analytical purposes. The paper is cited largely uncritically, the same passages
on summarising and elaborating symbols cited, paraphrased and quoted, and their significance for the particular analysis often briefly noted before authors proceed with their argument. It is unnecessary to rehearse Ortner’s account in great detail. The article is extremely well known directly or indirectly through its many scholarly applications. Here, I briefly outline the main elements of her concept, elaborating them as necessary later.

As Ortner (1973: 1338) observes, the “primary question… is what do we mean by ‘key’?”, since there seems no limit to what can be treated as a symbol or even an important symbol. Writing at a time when cultural and social systems were perceived as more coherent and systematic than we now understand them to be, Ortner eventually answers herself by reference to “the internal organization of the system of cultural meaning as that system functions for actors leading their lives in the culture”: key symbols are key because they are “‘key’ to the system” (1973: 1343). The key metaphor comes across strongly here. The implication is of the analyst unlocking or revealing a deep cultural logic that links apparently disparate elements. Likewise, the concern with system suggests a degree of symbolic stability despite historical changes (see also Ortner 1990).

Ortner divides key symbols into summarising and elaborating symbols, the latter also divided into root metaphors and key scenarios. Summarising and elaborating symbols are heuristically, rather than absolutely, distinguished. The central distinction between the two is essentially one of emotion and intellect. Summarising symbols encapsulate or stimulate sentiments. They stand for things held to be sacred. Ortner uses the example of the flag. By contrast, elaborating symbols provide means for people to work through issues, serving as instruments of reflection on their society or situation and means towards formulating responses to the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Elaborating symbols are themselves divided into root metaphors and key scenarios. Root metaphors are very basic cultural metaphors, which suffuse worldview and cultural life. As such, they structure people’s thinking by providing basic means of conceiving the nature of the world and their place in it. Key scenarios are cultural scripts for behaviour in mundane or extraordinary circumstances. I interpret Ortner as meaning that these may be unreflectively followed but also available for explicit reflection. A given key scenario does not apply to a single situation, but is a model transferable to diverse social circumstances. The Horatio Alger “rags to riches” myth, for example, provides a template for social reflection and action in a wide array of situations in the capitalist USA.

Ortner develops and modifies her approach in later work (for example, 1990), where she particularly develops her model of key schemas (which she
comes to prefer over scenarios). My over-riding concern, though, is with the particular issue of historical contingency. Further, scholars overwhelmingly continue to draw upon her original formulation. For these reasons, I focus on her original published piece throughout this article. I largely employ Ortner’s framework as laid out here. In particular, I describe Lodu as both summarising and elaborating symbol in different contexts. My argument, then, is not with the concept of key symbol so much as suggesting that time may be a significant element of key symbols themselves.

LODU

I had been on Simbo only a few weeks when I first heard about Lodu Qoele. My Pijin was fluent, my vernacular speech still poor, when I was introduced to Moni, a church “big man”. He told me about her and insisted that I take my tape-recorder down to her home in Nusa Simbo in order to record her account of the “descent of Lotu” as the foundation for my true Simbo history. When I visited Nusa Simbo shortly thereafter for this purpose, Moni told me more of what he expected of my Simbo ethnography—no “lying stories” (i.e., myths, celebrations of pre-Christian society, accounts of ancestral prowess), an account of Simbo Christianity (UC, not SDA or CFC), a history of those Tinoni Simbo who had been missionaries, and confirmation of the strength of Simbo Christianity. Against this, I had visions of the anthropological possibility implied by one who had lived in a world unsullied by missionaries. So, differently motivated, we set off to see her.

Lodu was born in Tapurai village at the NW end of the island, where the missionaries first landed. She lived there for years before moving to Nusa Simbo. Her life took a particular trajectory when, as a young married woman, she decided, against her husband’s wishes, to “make Jesus true”, i.e., to believe in Him. According to our discussion after she told her story, she had developed breasts but was not yet married when the missionaries arrived, placing her in her late 90s or early century when she died. By the 1990s, then, Lodu was one of the very few remaining Tinoni Simbo who had once practised ancestor veneration. She was both unique as a witness to that encounter and important as one who could describe it, precisely at a point at which it was taking on particular social salience.

Moni and I entered the house where she lived with her son Zoni and his wife Taru. Lodu was sitting inside wearing a light cotton dress, toothless and blind; her voice quavered. Unusually, neither of us addressed each other, Moni translating back and forth. I recorded her brief account (reproduced in Dureau 2001) and asked a few clarifying questions which she answered briefly and, to my mind, disappointingly. Lodu was vague, her short-term memory was poor and she clearly wished we would go away and let her rest. We did so.
Naïvely assuming that I could return when my language and understanding of Christian affairs were better developed, I focused on other matters.

There was no further news of Lodu for several months until the UC Quarterly Meeting requested a copy of her account. They were also disappointed at its content, so I mentioned my intentions to speak to her again but suggested that, for their purposes, it might be better if a Simbo person conducted the interview. The Chairman told me, “You can’t do that. Lodu is lying down, waiting for death.”

Indeed, the Narovo branch of the United Church Women’s Fellowship (UCWF) soon called all members to go and visit Lodu. UCWF members always visited dying people and post partum women and I participated in a number of those visits, none with delegations as large as that to Lodu. Some 30 of us trooped to Nusa Simbo, each carrying a small gift to the family—a bar or two of laundry soap, a kilo of rice, half a dozen large kumara or something of similar value and utility. These were left discretely on the front verandah, the visits being marks of respect and compassion rather than of ostentatious giving. As many as possible of us then moved inside, others clustering on the verandah. I was made to enter, although it meant that someone else had to remain outside.

Lodu lay semi-conscious or drowsing on a mattress in the corner. The other women sang a mournful hymn that I did not know. Then the President addressed her and Taru, speaking of Tamasa’s love, Lodu’s lengthy life and our knowledge that she was at peace. There were more prayers, before Taru thanked us, saying that Tamasa would bless us for our visit. Lodu, she said, had asked her to care for her because they had lived together for many years and Lodu loved her as her ‘true child’ (tuqu sosoto). Recently, Lodu had told her that her life is now finished: “I lie down and wait for my death. Tamasa keeps us all, do not be concerned.” She had subsequently declined all nourishment other than occasional sips of juice or water because she did not want Taru to be burdened with cleaning a soiled body and bed.

Several days after our UCWF visit, my friend Lidia asked me to accompany her to see Lodu because she had been unable to join us. She and Lodu were close kin through Lidia’s mother and had a longstanding affectionate relationship. Carrying rice and oranges we set out on Sunday afternoon. Arriving and shaking hands with Taru and Lodu’s sons, we entered. I remained quietly in the corner, as Lidia approached the bed.

Lidia: Qoele, [it’s] me, Lidia.
Lodu: [faintly] Lidia, you were almost late, my daughter. I thank Tamasa you come a last time. Now I can be peaceful, my child. Evaŋana zola. [Evaŋana means good, OK, correct, there-there, alright. Evaŋana zola very good, excellent, thank you, greetings, goodbye, so be it.]
Lidia [crying]: I praise Tamasa for keeping you strong for so long. I bring the immense love of my family. Ḣavān̂a zola, Qoele. On the Last Day we will see each other. Ḣavān̂a zola. Be at peace, my mother. Ḣavān̂a zola.

Lodu: Tamasa keeps us all, my daughter. Don’t be concerned. Lodu relapsed into silence and Lidia sat beside her for some time, weeping silently, before standing and motioning that we would leave. We shook hands with everyone again and sat for a few minutes before returning to our own villages.

To everyone’s amazement, Lodu lived for some time. As she lingered, she became something more than the woman who remembered seeing the missionaries come, a literal embodiment of a more impressive time. Her prolonged dying was said to be due to rituals performed in her childhood to bless her with longevity and health, an idea that replicated a widespread theme of physical decline paralleling the island’s marginalisation since pacification and conversion. Several people told me or I heard them say, “She’s truly strong, that gœele. Truly a person of the time before”. Other UCWF groups and men’s fellowships visited. Her surviving sons and daughters living elsewhere returned home, as did those grandchildren, great- and great-great-grandchildren able to do so. Meanwhile, Lodu lay quietly, answering minimally when spoken to, Taru or other kinswomen nearby.

During this time, I had to visit another island to attend a wedding intended to shore up a Simbo’s family’s legal claims to land holdings there. When we returned, we learned that Lodu had died and we had missed both her funeral and subsequent events. What follows, then, is a composite of various accounts and comments.

Lodu continued to lie on her mattress, growing no weaker or stronger. She wanted to die, her spirit [tomate] was anxious to leave her body, but she was too strong because she was a person of the Time One Day. The Minister prayed and her family prayed, begging Tamasa to release her, all to no avail because “it was not a thing of Lotu”. “She was already baptised long ago. Her soul was a Lotu soul, but the people of One Day worked charms on her to make her strong. Before Lotu descended, they did that—they made her body strong so she couldn’t die.” Finally, her relatives told her that they were going to call in a man who knew kastom medicine to release her. “Ḥavān̂a zola”, she replied. “Then a man who knew the words from the Time One Day came and pronounced the words to release her”, telling her breath to go to the places traditionally traversed by the soul on their way to the pre-Christian home of the dead, Sondo (Shortland Islands). “Finally, he said, ‘Leave this gœele so she can be [at] peace. You go!’ Hearing these words, Lodu stopped breathing; she died.”
Her funeral was very large, with people coming from across the island and various parts of the Solomons. The Minister preached a “good” sermon celebrating her as the archetypal heathen who saw the Light, converted and thereafter lived an ideal Christian life. On the day of her funeral, more areca nut \( A. \text{catechu} \) and food, including a pig, was distributed than at any other funeral people could remember. On her \textit{vamade}, another pig was distributed, along with chicken and fresh and tinned fish and ample rice and kumara.

A number of themes and references in this summary need explication. First, \textit{vamade} (lit. ‘make four’), the second occasion on which food was distributed is, in traditional cosmology, the day on which a person’s shade, mournfully lingering near those it loved, must begin its journey to Sondo. On that day, the family of the dead person ate a meal in their remembrance. Traditionally, this was a conceptualised as eaten in communion with the dead person, the smoke of cooking fires nourishing their spirit. \textit{Vamade} usually involved substantially fewer people than the funeral.\footnote{Killing a pig for Lodu’s \textit{vamade} was thus an even more notable undertaking than doing so for her funeral.}

Linking Lodu to the “Time One Day” is also significant. Simbo used two key phrases to refer to the pre-Christian past. \textit{Totuso rodomo} was the archetypal ‘time of darkness’, sin and violence. \textit{Totuso kame rane} ‘time one day’ or just \textit{kame rane} ‘one day’ is more complex, signifying mythical time, antiquity, or the positive or neutral aspects of pre-Christian times. Using the term in the way it is used of Lodu evokes \textit{kastom}, those aspects of the past seen as both compatible with Christianity and defining features of Simbo being. It also implies the pervasive local sense of diminution, a loss of potency that sits ambiguously against discourses of Christianity as good.

In the 1990s, there were widely held ideas that people of the past were bigger and stronger than those of the present and that they controlled forces now beyond the domain of Tinoni Simbo. This was a radical contrast to the actual situation during Lodu’s childhood. In fact, at that time, the Western Solomons was subjected to decimating epidemics, endemic diseases like yaws and malaria kept life expectancy low, and reproduction rates were such that Tinoni Simbo were expected to become extinct (Bayliss-Smith 2006, Rivers 1922). Arguments about physical prowess and longevity in the past are nostalgic evocations of a lost time that serve as critical commentaries on the present (Dureau 2005). Lodu here serves as a rare empirical example to support such claims, paradoxically right at the point of losing her and thus reinforcing the sense of an impoverished present and lost utopia.

The kind and amount of food distributed at her funeral and widely repeated comments about it, spoke to both the present and to that imagined past. Simbo once practiced prolonged feasting cycles, and mortuary ceremonies were among the most significant occasions for this (Hocart 1922). By the
1990s funerals were much more modest affairs in which close kin, sometimes only immediate kin, often struggled to provide sufficient food and areca for those who attended. Typically, arriving mourners were offered a small bunch of areca from which they took one or two nuts. At some point, the hosts provided a meal of rice mixed with tinned fish, the concentration of which varied according to ability to pay, and departing mourners were given a small parcel of food to carry home. These small quantities sit in poignant contrast to the great periodic feasts that marked mortuary rites in the past (e.g., Hocart 1922).

Pork was highly valued and rarely consumed. The wild pigs that people once hunted have disappeared. Many people raised one or two domestic pigs, usually to sell for weddings or to butchers in Gizo. Pork was not distributed at any other funerals during my fieldwork there. The killing of pigs, then, suggests a willingness to conspicuously expend resources, given that the amount spent would have purchased remarkably more mundane food.

Given how many people mentioned it to me, the food distributions at Lodu’s funeral and vamade had considerable effect. Some people simply described this without judgement. Others described them as appropriate markers of her moral worth and historical significance. Still others found them objectionable. Much of the food was provided by a pair of natal brothers descended from one of Lodu’s sisters. Their critics interpreted them as playing the politics of generosity by openly sponsoring her obsequies and thereby upstaging her other descendants. For such critics, this supply of food was intended to mark the donors’ generosity and relative affluence.

Funerals were not characterised by competition. Providing adequate food was often a somewhat onerous obligation that was rendered even more difficult if it arose unexpectedly. Ordinarily, this was the responsibility of the nuclear family of the deceased—parents, siblings, natal or adopted children—who may be discreetly helped by other members of their kindred (tavitina). Given Lodu’s significance, her funeral could be expected to be very big, and her family to struggle to meet their obligations to provide for mourners and visitors. Under these circumstances, most people would expect members of their kindred to help as they were able. What was resented was the public manner in which the two brothers did so. Significantly, the brothers both had good incomes derived from urban careers and thought to have political ambitions and claimed to be “straightening kastom”.

This situation suggests a hall of temporal and moral mirrors. Lodu represented the ideal union of past and present in a context in which the past throws up, or is made to contain, numerous negative, positive and ambiguous models of and for the present. It is denigrated as the time of heathen darkness and violence, avowed to be the proper site for judging ‘true kastom’ (kastom
sosoto) and nostalgically lamented for all that is lost. This last contextualises a key trope of contemporary moral decay as marked by selfishness: living in a time of Light, granted salvation by Jesus—the ultimate embodiment of compassionate love and generosity—moral critics saw people as selfish and ignoring both Christian and ancestral models of love (Dureau 2005). Yet here were brothers obviously helping their kin who could not comfortably have met their obligations. Claiming to be respecting the past from which Lodu had come and of which she had sustained the best elements, they sought to facilitate a prominent funeral feast for her.

Their language of helping and marking the end of a prominent life, though, was disparaged by some, on the grounds that they had turned the funeral and vamade into a stage for their own wealth, humiliating others who could not provide equivalently. It was because they had parliamentary aspirations, said the cynics. It was not kastom to grandstand at funerals.

As Tomasi, one of their most vehement critics, told me:

OK, it’s like this. Suppose you want to help your [natal or classificatory] sibling—they need school fees, their mother-in-law has died, like that—you go to them. “Here’s some money”. Like that. You don’t make it big, you stay quiet. You don’t shame your sibling, yes Christina? They will remember who helped. It’s fine.

Suppose you want to make yourself big, you don’t give money to your sibling. You send a message to someone who has a lot of bonito or a pig. You buy it from them, you yourself. Then people are eating a pig and everyone knows you bought a pig for your sibling. … You are making yourself big in a hurry. You don’t wait for your sibling to say, “Oh, my brother, he’s a good man. He helped.” It’s like that. That’s not our way.

And yet, the brothers’ generosity could, in fact, be interpreted as a revival of historic forms of feasting. Close relationships between political power and conspicuous largess, particularly in mortuary contexts, pertained in the past (Hocart 1922). In pre-Christian times, the most powerful bayara ‘semi-hereditary leaders’ (in Pijin cif) fed large numbers over sustained series of mortuary rituals for significant social actors. In addition to the ritual meals I describe for the 1990s, in the past, other feasts were held at set intervals on the spirit’s journey, their size, prominence and prolongation varying with the dead person’s prominence. These serial feasts rendered participants clients of their hosts, whose generosity created obligation and loyalty. That is, in pre-Christian times, death was the site of political generosity not entirely unlike that for which the brothers were criticised for not following kastom.
The point I want to make about this is that the heightened emotion surrounding the issue of who paid, effectively creating a contest over the deployment of Lodu as symbol, reflects her key symbol status. The dispute reinforced her symbolic significance because she was worth engaging in this display. It simultaneously threatened to subvert it by exposing the past for which she stood as chimerical since both accounts of disinterested giving drew on only some aspects of that past while claiming to represent it truly.

The past as politico-cultural resource has been a central issue in cultural, political and scholarly debates about *kastom*, tradition and ethnicity (e.g., Akin 2004, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Jolly 1992, Keesing and Tonkinson 1982, Lindstrom 2008, Wallace 1956, White 1991). Lodu’s death condenses many of the issues in these debates as they are lived out in local communities, including Simbo. Concerns about who may make authoritative statements about the past or claim traditional justification for their attitudes and position, about how to sort desirable and undesirable past practices for retention, of what a particular practice actually consisted or of what a given story actually said were prevalent. These concerns played out in many areas, as when a man blocked a female member of his lineage from nominating in a national election in which he intended to stand, when women and men argued opposed views of conjugal authority, or when disgruntled descendants of a *baŋara* surreptitiously disputed the means by which his successor had been appointed.

Lodu’s death can be seen as a disputed key symbol within the local politics of *kastom*. In turn, like the politics of tradition more generally, she illustrates wider issues in symbolic and interpretive anthropology. In a later work, Ortner (1990: 61) observes that her original piece is “stamped with the preoccupations of [its] intellectual era”. In the interim, scholars have repeatedly observed that cultures are only ever partially collective phenomena (e.g., Faubion 2001, Keesing 1987, Ortner 1990, 1999). Crucial questions follow (for example, Cohen 1993: 32, Danforth 1993: 4, Harrison 1995, Ventura 2011). For whom is a key symbol key? How are a culture’s most important symbols entwined in ideological struggles and hegemonic relationships? Who may use key symbols or define their meanings? In what ways might a particular symbol be a site of struggle?

The contention over Lodu reflects such issues. I have no idea whether or not the brothers actually intended the self-aggrandisement of which they were accused. Whatever their purpose, though, their gifts of food intensified Lodu’s symbolic prominence that had been building up in the previous few months. To many she had come to represent particular stances on Christianity, morality and *kastom*. At the same time, she held different symbolic meanings to different groups. And she became part of an ideological struggle between
more or less powerful groups and between political contenders. Some wanted to use Lodu to fix sanctioned accounts of Christianity. The institutional UC, as represented in the Quarterly Meeting, aspired to establish an origin story of the rightful church. Moni, largely in accord with them, also sought a legitimating historical moment in which Simbo was incorporated in the Methodist world. My account was to reinforce his and some conservatives’ view of the nature of true Christianity in context of ongoing widespread disagreement about diverse issues, such as Biblical literalism and church authority, collective and private prayer, interdenominational relationships, Christian and kastom gender relations and the proper economic relationships within particular degrees of kinship.

Against these efforts of official bodies and powerful individuals to construct her as primarily authenticating a particular foundation myth, Lodu as symbol was taken up by numerous critics of contemporary society. If hegemonic accounts presented Simbo as having moved into the Light, albeit stained with persisting dark behaviours that needed to be abandoned, others stressed the ironic loss of what was most akin to Christian morality in the past—compassionate love. For them, Lodu was mnemonic of a time when love permeated social relationships, her death bitterly marked that loss and Lodu herself symbolised the Christian society that might have been, but had eroded as the more affluent became more selfish.

LODU AS KEY SYMBOL

Lodu’s death was just one occasion in which such issues arose. People constantly made adamant statements like, “It’s not kastom” or “It’s our way from long ago to the present”. Likewise, they discussed proper Christian relations between spouses, opposite-sex siblings, the generations and other social groups at length. And they made innumerable passing and sustained references to how things ought to be and had been. Lodu as symbol thus fitted readily into a system of symbols (Ortner 1973, Turner 1967), many of which emerged as dominant symbols over the previous century. Headhunting, chieftainship, Lotu and kastom itself, for example, were all used in attempts to define Simbo identity or work out social norms. Simultaneously, former key symbols, such as ancestral shrines, had been relegated to narrower significance in particular situations such as land cases.

So, what is it that makes Lodu a key symbol? She was employed repeatedly in the prevailing system of Christian and kastom key symbols and my account of Lodu reveals much of wider social and cultural understanding. Still, it would probably unduly stretch the concept to describe her as “key” to the system” of Simbo cultural symbols, given Ortner’s characterisation of key symbols as deeply embedded in a symbolic system.
Yet Lodu seems archetypal according to Ortner’s (1973: 1339) outline of how to recognise key symbols: (i) people noting their importance, (ii) being symbolically provocative, (iii) their multi-contextual ubiquity, (iv) elaboration of their nature, and (v) cultural constraint in regard to them.

Significant persons and institutions did highlight Lodu’s significance. Others used her to articulate their concerns about the state of society. As the talk about her mortuary meals suggests, she provoked intense reactions. She arose in numerous contexts, from centenary planning to political aspirations to moral critiques to the display of church norms in the many UCWF visits. There was prominent cultural elaboration of her—her nature, her witnessing the missionaries’ arrival, for example. And she was a point of restrictions: it was impossible to speak negatively about her and it became difficult to hear anything outside the increasingly formulaic accounts of her life.

Drawing on symbolic analyses of election symbols, Guy (2008: 77) notes the heightened significance of key symbols in liminal situations. Lodu’s dying and death, a period of heightened liminality for her and her family, also suggested a problematic sustained social liminality. People’s critical talk about social and moral decline, kastom and Christianity implies prolonged liminality, a sense of society distressingly stuck betwixt and between an irretrievable ancestral past and a still inadequately Christian present despite the pervasive metaphor of having moved into the Light. Lodu’s death thus accentuated and focused the nagging questions about what it is to be a Christian society.

If key symbols are of different kinds, what kind of key symbol was Lodu? Like other key or dominant symbols she spoke to a variety of constituencies, potentially uniting them despite their profound differences (Abufarha 2008, Turner 1967), but also provoking awareness of those differences (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990). In the emotionally intense criticism of the brothers, she might be seen as a summarising symbol, “summing up, expressing, representing …in an emotionally powerful and relatively undifferentiated way, what the system means to” particular social groups (Ortner 1973: 1339). As Moore (1994: 87) notes, in contexts of felt marginalisation and loss and growing tensions between unequally situated groups, a temporary key symbol can provide “an emotionally powerful way to fight back”.

While the symbolic Lodu served as a summarising symbol, in most instances she acted like an elaborating symbol—“[a vehicle] for sorting out complex and undifferentiated feelings and ideas, making them comprehensible to oneself, communicable to others” (Ortner 1973: 1340). Certainly, talk about Lodu was sometimes emotional, but this was more a matter of provoking the feeling use of other summarising symbols. Thus, for example, when people characterised her as a person of love like the people of the past and
spoke about the loss of loving community relationships in the present, Lodu as symbol was provocative, stimulating awareness and reiteration of the key summarising symbolic value of love. If the intense feeling reflected in criticisms of those who sought to affiliate with her and the Time One Day evokes the emotionality of summarising symbols, her utility to people’s explanations, their prolonged dissections of what was wrong with the brothers’ putative efforts to buy status and the many discursive accounts of her life and death suggest the analytical and ordering aspects of elaborating symbols (Ortner 1973: 1340). For a time, she stood as personified elaborating symbol for what Simbo society should be and how kastom and Christianity should be compatible. In particular, the repeated accounts of her life constituted a key scenario with its “clear-cut modes of action appropriate to correct… living in the culture” (Ortner 1973: 1341).

What Lodu witnessed when the first missionaries arrived was the precursor of a radical transformation of Simbo practices, relationships and, to some extent, worldviews. At the very end of her life, she came to incarnate the changes she had seen and lived, becoming a key symbol of a century anchored in a distant past, the embodied transcendence of the great spiritual and temporal division of times of light and dark, One Day and the present. To many Tinoni Simbo she was iconic of the better of two ages and represented a type of person who never would be again. This was not just because of her dual historical placement and experience, but because of the quality of her character, a doubling of the nostalgia for lost times of good people in times of sin. At the same time, she was a kind of person who should be the norm. Lodu, the only prominent person against whom I heard no slander, reconciled ancestral and Christian powers and spoke to a past that was simultaneously unattainable and buried deep in the common being of Tinoni Simbo. Her inability to die a Christian death until released by kastom invocations marked her grounding in that time, variously suggesting the threat of resurgent darkness, the compatibility of the Christian present and ancestral past, the lingering potential of ancestral power or a final performance of it. Her talk of Tamasa and Christian memorial placed her in the Light. Lodu evoked the old in the new: her reputed character, her extreme longevity, her very connexion to pre-Christian sociality rendered her the last of the metaphorical ancestral “giants”, one who literally transcended eras.

She symbolised above all, Simbo’s movement from darkness to light, she herself marking the present as a Christian time that need not violate those things of the past that ought to be retained or restored. Within this dark to light transformation, she represented a number of important mythic themes. She alone of those living had watched the birth of a new UC key symbol of Simbo as a Christian society based in Methodism when the charismatic, authoritative
chair of the Methodist Mission, the Rev. John F. Goldie, disembarked to pray on the beach and entrust his Polynesian missionaries to the care of a banara. She had been one of those who converted when ancestor veneration provided a non-Christian alternative. She truly understood the nature of ancestor veneration at the ancestral shrines that were now relegated to more limited sacred status. She had lived on the edge of Simbo greatness and been there as it faded in face of British arms and Methodist proselytisation. She was born in the ambiguous time of darkness—of violent domination, military triumph or compassionate generosity from different perspectives. She both rejected and sustained that time as a woman of numerous valued kin connections, known kindness and moral rectitude, living the apparently impossible reconciliation of kastom and Christianity. (See also Mortimer’s 2002: 28 account of Léopold Senghor, Senegal’s poet-president in the 1970s, as the “living symbol” of the “possible synthesis of what appears irreconcilable”, European and African cultures).

It is not uncommon for a particular person to assume key symbol status. Martin Luther King, for example, is a key symbol of the civil rights movement (Sharman 1999). In becoming a symbol, the person is reconstituted in memory. Describing the case of Emil Grunzweig, a slain Israeli peace activist, Michael Feige (1999) raises the question of what happens to the memory of the person reconstituted as political symbol. As he notes, “[m]ythic stories depersonalize the individual, reducing the richness of his or her life story to a schematic sketch” (1999: 145). Indeed this happened with Lodu as she and her life were transformed into a schematic, stripped of all but the relevant details. An individual who acquired symbolic significance very late in a long life, she was simultaneously a person who lived with all of life’s complications, contradictions and imperfections, and a person-symbol shaped as an array of overlapping, but not necessarily consistent, ideals and ideas. For example, her conversion in face of her husband’s opposition provides a key scenario. It evokes the courage to favour God (Tamasa) over family relationships and suggests the efficacy of the Word, since, obedient wife, she nonetheless rejected her husband’s religion and led him to Lotu. By contrast, what it might have cost a young woman to do so, how she experienced the call to Light, whether in fact she was convinced of the superior truth of Christianity become irrelevant, inadmissible elements of her biography as subordinated to the template of movement from darkness to light.10

As such, she was what Gaines and Farmer (1986: 298) describe as a “social cynosure”, a “figure that members of the culture...[have] selected as a focus of attention” and that reveals cultural values and themes. As “central, key or core symbols [sic]...they may be seen as symbols of and for social actions, as vehicles of central conceptions, as vessels of meaning...and as exemplary
figures”. Gaines and Farmer focus on “visible saints” in the Mediterranean, individuals who, as paragons of suffering, serve as embodied key scenarios. A paragon of love and the unification of opposites, as I have noted, Lodu’s character represented the perfect mediation of old and new. Not just a model of how to live, her life history echoes Protestant scenarios, articulated as the movement from darkness to light, sin to salvation and rebirth through Christ, as a model for the whole society, a means of reflecting on the present and articulating claims for a different future.

**DEATH OF A KEY SYMBOL**

Given the robustness of Ortner’s key symbol concept, there is little reason to add one more example to the catalogue of case studies. Nor is another instance needed in the historical study of symbolic life. Since Wolf’s (1958) germinal historicisation of the Virgin of Guadalupe, there have been innumerable such accounts. So, why provide another account of a key symbol in historical context? My purpose in describing Lodu as key symbol is to highlight the element of symbolic temporality. My point is that key symbols can emerge and fade, perhaps rapidly. Yet, almost by definition, key symbols have been taken to be long-lasting, in keeping with Ortner’s stress on their centrality in a system of meaning. This is in keeping with most anthropological treatments of significant symbols (see also Moore 1994). For example, Turner’s (1967) assumption—and the assumption of readers of his Ndembu ethnography—is that dominant symbols like mudyi and whiteness are entrenched. To a significant extent this remains the case, even in historical anthropology. In a later argument, for example, Ortner (1990) addresses the intersections between agency and symbolic structure in an historical account of Sherpa key schemas. Her emphasis, though, is on the historical persistence of schemas and their structuring effects on actors’ agency. Indeed, Moore’s account of a temporary key symbol is a rarity in the innumerable uses of Ortner that I have found.

I agree with such longue durée arguments about persistent cultural logics and themes. My point is simply that our awareness of such continuities can obscure the fact that key symbols have historical origins and that they may arise and fade in rapid sequence. Lodu tells us something of how key symbols may emerge, and suggests their possible contingency. An ordinary person all her life until the fact of her longevity at a particular historical moment made her special; she assumed symbolic potency that far surpassed her significance as a social actor.

Not only did Lodu emerge as a key symbol, it is likely that she was only temporarily so. Talk about her declined rapidly after her death, although the themes that clustered so densely around her name persisted. Plans for the centenary celebration proceeded with little or no mention of
her—the intention, rather, was to re-enact the descent of *Lotu*, replicating the widespread Melanesian drama of painted men brandishing weapons at other men wearing collared white shirts and ties as they waded ashore carrying Bibles (Errington and Gewertz 1995). Lodu seemed to disappear.

There was to be one more encounter with her, though. Over a year after her death, working with my research assistant on transcribing and translating tapes, we started work on Lodu’s account. Lupa, about 24 and the granddaughter of a venerable old man who remembered making ancestral sacrifices, began to reminisce about Lodu:

Lupa: Lodu was the last of the people of One Day. She was born in the darkness.

Dureau: Tell me more: what do you think about Lodu Qoele?
Lupa: A strong person, a good person. All the *qoele* and *barogoso* [old men] say that the people One Day were good people, people who helped each other, people of love. They were big people and they lived a long time, the people One Day. She had a good life and a good death, the *qoele*, Lodu. Now we’re small and weak and we die young. People today aren’t good people like the people One Day. They’re greedy, they don’t help. We came into the Light, we came into the love of Tamasa, but our ways are rotten. It’s like that.

We returned to work, Lupa turning the tape on and off as she transcribed. Two girls—of about 14 years or so—wandered in and watched us until one interrupted: “Whose is the voice of that *qoele*?”

Lupa: Lodu Qoele
Girl: I’m frightened! Is it her spirit? Aren’t you afraid Lupa?
Lupa: I’m not afraid. Lodu was a real *qoele*. Her life was finished, so what should I be afraid of?
Girl: No, I’m afraid.
Lupa: Nothing! [dismissive] Lodu is peacefully dead. She is at peace. Your fear is aimless.
Dureau: Well, what about Lodu’s spirit, Lupa? Is she a ghost or an ancestor now, or what?
Lupa: No, nothing. She’s not a spirit. She’s not an ancestor. She’s dead. Finish. Nothing further.

We finished our work for the day and Lupa went home. When she returned the next week, neither of us mentioned Lodu. As Lupa’s calm reminiscence and the girls’ reactions to hearing Lodu’s voice suggest, she remained a point of awareness several months after her death, and Lupa was still using her as an elaborating symbol to explain her widely shared sense of the problematic
relationship between past and present. But this was the first reference to Lodu that I had heard in some time and Lupa’s comments in response to the recording reflected her very close relationship to her grandfather, and her personal interest in his accounts and in my work.

This is not to say that Lodu disappeared from people’s consciousness or that she was henceforth irrelevant to the past-present contrasts that remained so prominent a part of island concerns. It is, however, to suggest that it was the particular historical and circumstantial contexts of her death that rendered her so intensely and widely a key symbol of and for Simbo. Lodu’s transitoriness is prominent: a symbolic apex reached, she quickly declined to occasionally raised symbolic status. Yet despite the brevity of her symbolic status, she was, indeed, key for a time. She may remain a muted key symbol, re-arising in the longer term (see also Abufarha 2008) by virtue of my writing, the commemoration of the centenary and the remarkable fit between her schematic life and Simbo images of the ideal Christian transformation. She may become consolidated as a more entrenched key symbol of how a society came to be Christian.

Or perhaps not. Perhaps, as Lupa said that last time, “She’s dead. Finish. Nothing further.”

NOTES

1. Qoele (old or elderly woman): an honorific and respectful term of address. In Lodu’s case, it evoked not only her age but the universal sense of her historical significance and great moral worth. While one would address her as “Qoele”, she was spoken about as either Lodu or Lodu Qoele or, occasionally, na qoele pa Simbo (the old woman at [Nusa] Simbo), implicitly referencing her as the pre-eminent old person of the place. I never heard her addressed or referred to as “Susana”, the name she adopted as a young Christian convert. My usual practice in writing about Simbo is to disguise informants—as is the case with all others in this paper—but Lodu Qoele is a prominent historical figure who could not be disguised. My few encounters with her did not involve seeing or hearing anything that was not widely known to others.


3. A substantiating list of references would be of little value. The concept’s wide usage suggests both its utility and that the term itself has become a key symbol of engagement with the literature on symbolism. By way of indication of its abiding appeal, a GoogleScholar search (6 June 2011) for “+Ortner +‘key symbols’” generated 697 results and listed 465 citations of the original version of the article. Given that it has been reprinted a number of times and that some of the key phrases have been cited or quoted in numerous places not covered by GoogleScholar, this
must be a significant under-representation of its ubiquity. The same search on 6 February 2012 generated 37 results for 2011 alone, demonstrating its continuing significance.

A search for “+‘key symbols’ -Ortner” (6 June 2011) generated 3910 results. Granted, this is ambiguous, since the phrase turns up in multiple laboratory and science publications which are unlikely to have been influenced by anthropological studies of symbolism. Further, at least a proportion of social science and humanities’ uses of the expression are likely serendipitous matches. Still, I also take it as an indication that the concept has escaped Ortner’s typology and entered the scholarly vocabulary as a careless phrase evoking, generically, important symbols.

4. This is reminiscent of Turner’s (1967) distinction between the emotional and abstract poles of a dominant symbol. Ortner references Turner’s work in an early inclusive statement in her 1973 article, but does not elaborate (although see Ortner 1990: 61). In contrast to Turner’s argument that dominant symbols have poles of meaning, for Ortner, a given symbol may or may not have both summarising and elaborating qualities. The other major difference between the two is that Turner is largely concerned with ritual symbols, whereas Ortner places key symbols in wider cultural-symbolic systems.

5. Son’s wife/husband’s mother relationships on Simbo are marked by respect formalities focused particularly on corporeal integrity and performed ignorance: neither should be aware of the others’ intimate functions. The SW is held responsible and liable to pay compensation if these restrictions are violated. As in this case, such relationships may become affectionate and loving and the formal expectations be ameliorated or abandoned, a reflection of persistent cultural notions that persons and relationships are ultimately made, rather than fixed or given.

6. Tuqu “my offspring”. Used of one’s own biological or adopted offspring, close kin in the descending generations and occasionally, metaphorically, of those who are much younger than one and of whom one is very fond. I use “child”, “son” or “daughter” to avoid the awkwardness of the transliteration.

7. Typically, the only other such meals were smaller events, usually involving only some close kin. These were held on the tenth day following death, the first anniversary (when the chief mourners were able to cut their hair and shave), and when the grave was cemented (if this was not been done on the anniversary and if it was done at all).

8. People usually called upon these foods for symbolic and practical reasons. In many ways rice was more valued than garden food and rice and tinned fish a virtual staple. At funerals, they were more readily provided in haste by families too grief-stricken or busy with other mortuary obligations to go gardening or fishing. The tinned fish also eliminated the uncertainties of fishing at a time when the family must provide food for others.

9. My fieldnotes suggest that this was the dominant response, but I suspect that this is more a reflection of how strongly and negatively some people felt than of a consensual critique.
10. For those who did not know her, symbolic elements prevailed in their discussions of Simbo as a moral society. Individuals who had a personal relationship with her moved between the two modes of personal relationship and symbolic elaboration and summation, their ties perhaps lending added emotional and moral intensity to their accounts of her as a good person, good Christian and social model.

REFERENCES


**ABSTRACT**

Sherry Ortner’s concept of key symbols has been a mainstay in symbolic studies since its publication in 1973, but it has been little developed since then. This paper proffers temporality as a significant, but largely overlooked element of some key symbols. A
case study of an old-woman’s death on Simbo, Western Solomon Islands, demonstrates how key symbols may emerge and decline rapidly in contexts of uncertainty and political negotiation.

*Keywords:* key symbols, Sherry Ortner, symbolism—time, Simbo, Western Solomon Islands
EVALUATING NEW RADIOCARBON DATES FROM MIDDEN DEPOSITS NEAR MORIORI TREE CARVINGS, RĒKOHU (CHATHAM ISLAND)

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The Polynesian Moriori of the offshore New Zealand Chatham Islands are associated with a novel carving expression that is unlike any artistic tradition recorded for the indigenous peoples of Oceania. Moriori people indented living karaka (Māori) or kōpī (Moriori) trees (Corynocarpus laevigatus) with human and animal forms before the arrival of New Zealand Māori colonists in 1835 (Barber and Maxwell 2011, Jefferson 1956, King 1989, Richards 2007, Simmons 1980). These carved trees occur in lowland kōpī forests of Rēkohu (Chatham Island) primarily, the large northern island of the group (Fig. 1).

On current evidence the Chatham Islands were first colonised by 15th century A.D., if not earlier (McFadgen 1994, Wilmshurst et al. 2011). A number of researchers now believe that early Polynesian voyagers transferred New Zealand karaka as a fruiting food source to the cool Chatham Islands where tropical domestic plants would not grow (Barber and Maxwell 2011, Costall et al. 2006, Leach and Stowe 2005). There has been much conjecture over the antiquity and precise historical meaning(s) of carved kōpī trees and the motivation(s) of the carvers (e.g., Jefferson 1956, Kjellgren 2001, Richards 2007, Skinner 1923: 69-71). At the least, it seems reasonable to assume a developing cultural relationship between the practice of tree carvings and economically valuable kōpī stands.

Carved kōpī trees are designated rākau momori (lit. ‘memorial tree’) and valued highly by Moriori descendants today (Maui Solomon, pers. comm. January 2012). For contemporary Moriori, rākau momori trees and places provide a unique link or portal to the ancestral world (Solomon and Forbes 2010: 228 n5). Regrettably, the number of living rākau momori has reduced dramatically as a result of historical land clearance. The removal of buffering vegetation in particular has exposed diminishing kōpī stands to devastating winds, leading to the collapse of kōpī canopy and the death of mature trees. From a possible pre-1835 total of over a thousand carved trees, it appears that less than 200 rākau momori survive today. The future of the remaining carved trees is uncertain (Barber and Maxwell 2011, Maxwell 2010).
Figure 1. Rēkohu (Chatham Island) showing kōpī stands discussed in text.
A research project has begun in full partnership with Moriori authority Hokotehi Moriori Trust to assess the prospects for rākau momori conservation. The project is also framed so as to investigate the chronology, historical landscapes and meaning(s) of the carved tree tradition in the Chatham Islands (Barber and Maxwell 2011). This work is intended to contribute to, and support, the development of the Hokotehi cultural database managed by Moriori (Solomon and Forbes 2010). Assessment and recording work has been carried out over three field seasons to meet these ends.

From this work new paired radiocarbon results are available from the archaeological excavation of two small, isolated midden deposits found near or abutting discrete rākau momori associations. Of particular note, one of these dates is a terrestrial age on a carbonised kōpī seed. We report these dates as the first indications of an archaeological chronology of Moriori engagements with rākau momori stands and landscapes. We also consider whether these ages in site context might represent a terminus ante quem for the rākau momori carving tradition.

BACKGROUND: RĀKAU MOMORI ASSOCIATIONS AND DATING ISSUES ON RĒKOHU

The absolute chronology of rākau momori trees and stands is poorly resolved. In 1928 Skinner reported uncertainty over the age of the carvings, but opined nevertheless: “I do not think that any of the tree trunk figures seen are much older than a century” (Skinner and Baucke 1928: 346). Simmons (1980: 61) reported two radiocarbon dates “less than 200 years old” on unidentified materials from ovens excavated “between two [carving] groves” at Taia. We have also sampled a dead rākau momori trunk core at the J.M. Barker (Hapupu) National Historic Reserve for radiocarbon dating. From the wide calibrated range of this trunk date, we report “an almost 60% probability that the tree had grown as much as 200mm at some point between AD 1650 and 1810” (Barber and Maxwell 2011: 70). However, since this tree “is one of the smaller rakau momori at this locality” (Barber and Maxwell 2011: 71), the antiquity of the national reserve rākau momori tradition is still unclear.

Chronological resolution is complicated further because kōpī stems are characterised by “copious parenchymatous rays” and appear to lack consistent seasonal growth rings (Costall et al. 2006: 11). This proscribes dendrochronology as a reliable dating tool for kōpī trees. As well, it is not clear when kōpī were first introduced to the Chatham Islands, and therefore, how old any particular kōpī stand might be. Consequently, to investigate the absolute chronology of carved kōpī trees and forest, one is left with the option of resolving datable archaeological site associations and space.
Site association

The association of substantial marine shell midden deposits and carved kōpī stands was first recognised and quantified broadly by Jefferson (1956: 52-57, Appendix B) over the course of several field visits between 1947 and 1953. Jefferson’s mid-20th century observations are important as the carved kōpī “arbours” she recorded then were far more numerous and covered a greater area than today (Barber and Maxwell 2011, Maxwell 2010). In brief summary, Jefferson (1956: 52) recorded 204 “single middens or groups of middens”, with “each group or single midden denoting an arbour”. Jefferson (1956: 52) also identified 119 existing “arbours” with “carvings near them”. This last total almost certainly underestimates the number of “arbours” once associated with carvings and middens (see Skinner and Baucke 1928: 345).

At the least, radiocarbon ages from middens associated with kōpī stands can provide a chronology of Polynesian engagements with the larger kōpī resource. Dates from shell midden deposits abutting or near carved trees may be indicative of actual carving ages as well, although this interpretation requires careful spatial recording and evaluation to be plausible. Given the historical loss of carved trees noted above, one must consider that rākau momori clusters identified today may be relics of a more widespread distribution, rather than a primary, discrete relationship. There is also the problem that buried midden sites may not be recognised in many kōpī stands. Thus for 132 “arbour” sites, Jefferson (1956: 52-53) acknowledged that “grass or weed is growing over the middens and it is not possible now to see how many shell-heaps there were”.

These problems have been considered in our Rēkohu research. The relative health of all remaining kōpī stands incorporating tree carvings has been assessed in 2010-12 monitoring work with further reference to historical data on canopy health and loss, tree condition and carving resolution. We have also measured kōpī tree size and mapped rākau momori positions in the course of our work, again with reference to earlier data sets where available (Barber and Maxwell 2011, Maxwell 2010). As a result we conclude that discrete rākau momori groups may be interpreted with some confidence as relic cultural patterns where the parent kōpī stands are relatively healthy and intact (see discussion of Kaingaroa Station Covenant distribution below). Midden distribution within kōpī stands is at one level a more difficult pattern to resolve. However, within the two most healthy kōpī stands identified in our survey work (Kaingaroa Station Covenant and Taia Bush Historic Reserve), the ground surface is also relatively clear of vegetation, consistent with a pattern identified by Jefferson (1956: 8) for middens in some “arbours”. At Kaingaroa in particular, these clear areas have been disturbed extensively.
by animals that have exposed and spread topsoil middens in places. In both of these stands, midden distribution has been tested further by probing. This does not address the possible presence of deep buried middens in these stands. However, at Kaingaroa and Taia at least, our survey records have allowed us to test midden and carved tree associations as discrete social space in a cultural landscape (see Kooyman 2006). Here we have been especially mindful of Jefferson’s (1956: 54) observation that “in the larger arbours a smaller shell heap is sometimes to be seen a small distance away from the main group…. In one such case the carvings show a different and less elaborate character… and the off-shoot seems a separate entity”.

Radiocarbon dating
A recent assessment of Polynesian colonisation dates highlights serious inadequacies in the existing archaeological radiocarbon database from the Chatham Islands (Wilmshurst et al. 2011). The identification of appropriate radiocarbon dating materials in stratigraphic context is an important fieldwork priority towards achieving a secure archaeological chronology for Rēkohu. Short-lived carbonised plant materials such as seeds and twigs are preferred dating materials among standard midden components if they are recovered from secure archaeological contexts. Increasingly New Zealand archaeologists are also dating abundant shellfish from middens where the taxa concerned were sourced from dynamic coastal environments, such as open beaches or shallow inlets in medium to coarse sand with strong tidal flushing. Suspension feeding shellfish from these environments are less likely to have been in contact with older, depleted carbon food sources. The size and abundance of shellfish valves in middens also provides considerable choice and discretion in sample collection (Higham and Jones 2004: 220, Schmidt 2000).

Although marine shell may seem to be “the logical alternative” to charcoal for radiocarbon dating purposes in New Zealand (Petchey et al. 2008: 245), considerable local marine radiocarbon variability (delta R) is reported in a small number of Rēkohu mollusc valves of known age from mid-western and south-eastern locations (see Petchey et al. 2008). If this variance characterises marine waters throughout the Chatham Islands, then shellfish ages from Rēkohu cannot be calibrated with confidence at present. However, our research suggests that the current New Zealand-wide delta R average advised by University of Waikato Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory (−7±45, F. Petchey, pers. comm. 14 December 2011) is relatively accurate for calibrating radiocarbon dates on suspension feeding tuatua (Paphies subtriangulata) from northeastern Rēkohu archaeological sites as discussed below (see also Barber and Maxwell 2012).
KAINGAROA STATION COVENANT

The private, fenced kōpi stand at Kaingaroa Station is 247 hectares in area. It lies immediately behind Hanson Bay and is managed and protected under a covenant agreement. Here 22 rākau momori incorporating 24 carvings are distributed over about 2 km (see Fig. 2). Dead and dying kōpi trees are recorded along the inland margins of the stand. Some trees near the increasingly exposed inland edge are also displaying signs of stress. Within the relatively narrow stand itself, however, mature kōpi trees are generally healthy and the canopy is continuous, although the future health of the stand is clearly under threat.

Figure 2. Kōpi stand, Kaingaroa Station Covenant, showing carved tree clusters.
At Kaingaroa, distances of between 80m to 250m separate discrete groups of 2-5 intervisible rākau momori (Figure 2). While additional carvings were recorded in 2010-2011, these tree numbers and groups are generally consistent with 1990s survey data (Barber and Maxwell 2011). Most of these rākau momori clusters are recorded in a southwest to northeast alignment. Two adjacent trees occur 600m north of this alignment. Given the relatively good health of this narrow, remnant kōpi stand with a range of tree sizes, we interpret the linear arrangement and separation of discrete rākau momori groups here as a cultural pattern.
The ground surface over much of the Kaingaroa kōpī stand has been disturbed by animals, and is otherwise fairly free of obscuring vegetation other than regenerating kōpī. Consequently, we have mapped midden sites with some assurance here. In this work, shell midden deposits covering hundreds of square metres are often found around or within tens of metres of rākau momori in Areas 1, 2 and 4 (Fig. 2). These deposits may be over 50cm deep (Barber and Maxwell 2011). The wide distribution of midden deposits in these areas is such that it is challenging to resolve midden and rākau momori associations there.

Area 3 is unusual in that a single, small, discrete surface midden deposit lies within or about 10m distance of three out of four carved trees in this locality (Fig. 3). Less than 30m east of this midden, a further midden deposit of comparable size is recorded. No other midden deposits have been located within 150m of the Area 3 carving group. Two of these carved trees are anthropomorphic and face each other (N0511, N0513). N0511 presents a rare, large, symmetrical oval mouth (Fig. 4), while N0513 is relatively faint, with a diamond shape mouth.

N0512 is a long-necked bird in profile. N0510 as an outlier carving in this cluster presents a series of small leaf-like shapes on the trunk and an anthropomorphic figure. Trunk sizes in this group range between N0513 at 29.3cm DBH (diameter at breast height) and N0511 at 58.2cm DBH. The latter is the largest carved tree recorded in Kaingaroa Station Covenant (Fig. 4).

The western Area 3 midden is exposed within a relatively open area that extends to the south beyond N0512 and to the east below tall kōpī canopy. The extent of the midden was confirmed by probing. The deposit is uniformly shallow, with a maximum thickness of about 25cm. Animals have disturbed and spread much of the upper midden at least, accounting we believe for the eastern extension of the deposit (see Fig. 3). A small, one square metre excavation was opened near two matipo (Myrsine chathamica) trees where it was assumed that the extensive rooting system would have held material in place and discouraged animal disturbance.

The integrity of the dense shell deposit became clear in excavation as numerous nested or articulated bivalves of tuatua in broadly horizontal alignment were recovered below the more broken, disturbed turf sediment (5cm deep). The midden matrix is black (10YR 2/1) medium grain loamy sand, 22cm deep, on very dark gray (7.5YR 3/1) sand. An intact horizon of about 8–16cm depth below surface of largely whole and occasionally nested pāua (Haliotis sp.) valves was also identified across the square extending into the sides (Fig. 4). Finfish elements were extremely sparse, and no bird or mammal bone was recovered.

The mix and arrangement of shellfish species at least is notable. Tuatua are soft shore, open beach bivalves while pāua are rocky shore univalves (Powell
The dominance of *tuatua* in the square is consistent both with the proximity of soft shore Hanson Bay, and the components of other midden deposits excavated at Kaingaroa Station Covenant (Barber and Maxwell 2011, 2012). However, while occasional *pāua* clusters are reported from admittedly limited testing in other larger midden deposits at Kaingaroa Station, nothing like a discrete *pāua* horizon with numerous whole shells has been identified. The nearest hard shore is several kilometres distant along the northern Rēkohu coastline.³ It is reasonable to assume that the *pāua* were either discarded by a visiting group, or sourced especially from some distance. Some *pāua* fragments or valves appear to have been cut as well in this midden, suggesting that these shells were sourced with more than subsistence needs in mind.

Figure 4. Carved human figure on tree N0511, Kaingaroa Station Covenant, eastern side view. Height from ground level to base of head is 1490mm. Features in view include a large right eye (width 160mm), a symmetrical oval mouth (width 370mm), a raised right arm and a curved right leg in characteristic crouching position (see Jefferson 1956: 25, Richards 2007: 47-48). N0511 is 9m west of the dated midden site (Figure 3). Photograph by Justin Maxwell, February 2011.
Dates from Midden Deposits near Moriori Tree Carvings

Table 1. Conventional radiocarbon ages before present (CRA BP) and calibrated age ranges AD (CAL AD) at 1-sigma \((p = .68)\) and 2-sigma \((p = .95)\) for radiocarbon dates from Kaingaroa Station Covenant and Taia Bush Historic Reserve sites discussed in text. The marine calibration for Wk- dates is from Reimer et al. 2009 with delta R set at \(-7\pm45\). Southern Hemisphere atmospheric data for the NZA terrestrial calibration are from McCormac et al. 2004.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITE/LAB#</th>
<th>SAMPLE</th>
<th>CRA BP</th>
<th>%\delta^{13}C</th>
<th>CAL AD 1\sigma</th>
<th>CAL AD 2\sigma</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wk-30903</td>
<td>tuatua valves</td>
<td>592±34</td>
<td>1.8±0.2</td>
<td>1657-1806</td>
<td>1560-1885</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wk-30904</td>
<td>pāua valve</td>
<td>697±31</td>
<td>2.4±0.2</td>
<td>1542-1656</td>
<td>1488-1692</td>
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<td><strong>Taia</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wk-30906</td>
<td>tuatua valves</td>
<td>637±35</td>
<td>1.4±0.2</td>
<td>1564-1709</td>
<td>1524-1815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZA37128</td>
<td>kōpū seed</td>
<td>236±15</td>
<td>-21.7</td>
<td>1661-1673 (15%)</td>
<td>1652-1675 (24%)</td>
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<td>1744-1758 (17%)</td>
<td>1738-1798 (71%)</td>
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<td>1762-1771 (10%)</td>
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<td>1780-1797 (26%)</td>
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Figure 5. Midden excavation unit associated with Area 3 (cf. Figs 2 and 3), Kaingaroa Station Covenant, showing horizon of pāua and nested tuatua below matipo root.
Two radiocarbon dates from this site were processed on nested, *in situ* *tuatua* valves (Wk-30903) and a single intact *pāua* specimen (Wk-30904), both recovered from the *pāua* horizon (see Fig. 5). At 1-sigma, these calibrated dates do not overlap (Wk-30904 *pāua*, AD 1542-1656 and Wk-30903 *tuatua*, AD 1657-1806), although both indicate a likely, pre-19th century site context. At the 2-sigma distribution, the dates overlap around the later 16th century to 17th century, within the calibrated ranges of 1488-1692 (*pāua*) and AD 1560-1885 (*tuatua*) (Table 1). For the *tuatua* date, the 1835-1885 distribution at least can be discounted given the site context. Until further dates are processed, our inclination is to follow the mid-17th century to 18th century age range for the locally sourced, open beach *tuatua*, insofar as the two dates diverge at 1-sigma.

**TAIA BUSH HISTORIC RESERVE**

The historic reserve at the south end of Lake Taia incorporates a wedge of *kōpī* “bush” that once extended north to south at least a kilometre and was up to 300m wide (Simmons 1980: 52). Today this *kōpī* reserve covers 1199 hectares. A pine tree (*Pinus radiata*) stand on the western margin has protected the remnant *kōpī* forest from westerly winds for over three decades (Park 1976: 5). Even so, significant carving associations have been lost, presumably before the pine trees provided protection. In the early 1960s Simmons (1980: 52) recorded 140 carvings from three “intact groves” at Taia (Simmons 1965). A single intact association of multiple carved trees (“Taia A” in Simmons 1965) survives today near the southeastern edge of the bush. This association includes 19 carved trees. In the main these carvings are anthropomorphic images. Some include heads alone.

The canopy above the remaining southeastern cluster is currently healthy, while the trees immediately around and including the *rākau momori* are generally in good condition. Within the cluster there is diversity in tree girth with N0403 at 28.5cm DBH and N0402 at 49cm DBH. Healthy trees without carvings extend for tens of metres to the north of this association.

Over an area identified as “Taia South Bush Edge”, Jefferson (1956: 66, Appendix B) recorded eight areas of “shell heaps” separated by distances in the range of 90-340 paces. Simmons (1965) mapped two surface “shell scatters” within “Taia A”. We have located and mapped the probed area of a single, ground level midden deposit within the remaining “Taia A” *rākau momori* cluster (Fig. 6). A carved tree is identified on the eastern side of this midden area (N0401, recorded as no. 314 in Simmons 1965: fig. and Plate III). The crouching human figure of N0401 is carved with a prominent headdress, probably a feather *kura* or *awanga* that may denote status (Fig. 7, see also Jefferson 1956: 31-32, figs 1-131; Richards 2007 and Simmons 1965: Plates II, III for headdress representations on selected carvings at Taia and
elsewhere). No other middens or carved trees were identified for well over 100m in any direction around this Taia carving association.

The rākau momori associated midden deposit itself shows evidence of deflation and surface disturbance. In general the tuatua valves exposed on the surface are broken. The shell midden is most concentrated and intact where the deposit has been secured around tree roots. Towards the southern margins

Figure 6. Carved tree association around excavation units and midden, Taia Bush Historic Reserve.
of the midden area an un-carved kōpī tree with two primary trunks has an extensive root system that is elevated 40-60cm vertically above the current surface. Clearly soil if not midden sediments originally covered these roots.

Two excavation units were opened at the southeastern Taia midden. In a 1m x 1m unit the midden deposit (TE1) was relatively shallow (10-15cms) and confined to the near surface aspect of the black (10YR 2/1) loamy sand topsoil. Tuatua valves were largely broken, other than in the southern corner of the square. Several whale and bird bone fragments were recovered from the midden matrix. The midden sediment in this square appears to have been dispersed, and it is not clear that it is a primary deposit. A further, smaller test unit (TE2: 0.5m x 0.5m) was also opened at the base of the un-carved tree. Again, the primary tuatua shell component was broken and disturbed near the surface of this unit. However, dense, bedded, intact tuatua specimens,
including articulated valves, were identified 8-10cm below ground surface. In one corner of TE2 the depth of the midden below surface was 21cm. The basal part of the midden in the unit was characterised by undisturbed, intact sediment. This suggests that the midden was deposited before the rooting system had spread to the excavation area.

Two radiocarbon dates were processed on articulated *tuatua* valves (Wk-30906) and a single carbonised *köpī* seed (NZA37128) respectively, both recovered from the lower, intact midden sediment of TE2. The calibrated marine age is AD 1564-1709 at 1-sigma, and 1524-1815 at 2-sigma (Table 1). If this single date is an accurate chronological result, then the age of the midden is most likely pre-19th century. It could be as early as the late 16th century to 17th century at 1-sigma. The *köpī* seed sample has the advantage of no inbuilt age, and an association, obviously, with the local *köpī* resource. At 2-sigma, the calibrated range of the *köpī* date is intercepted between AD 1652-1675 (24%) and 1738-1798 (71%). These intercepts conform closely to the *tuatua* indications (at 2-sigma) of a 17th century or 18th century chronology at least for this midden.

**DISCUSSION**

At present, radiocarbon dates from midden deposits provide the only archaeological means to investigate the chronology of Moriori engagements with *rākau momori* stands. In reporting four such dates only we acknowledge that more radiocarbon ages on a wider range of marine and (especially) terrestrial materials are needed from these and other sites to fully compare and evaluate radiocarbon results on Rēkohu samples. From the comparison of these dates, however, we note tentatively that *tuatua* from eastern to northern Hanson Bay may be a relatively reliable marine shellfish for local radiocarbon dating purposes. Elsewhere we report a strong convergence around the mid-16th century through 18th century for calibrated *tuatua* dates from other midden deposits at Kaingaroa Station Covenant (Barber and Maxwell 2012).

At the very least we observe that these first radiocarbon ages point towards 18th century and possibly earlier Moriori engagements with *köpī* stands in eastern to northern Rēkohu. The presence of a dated carbonised seed at Taia is a further indication that *köpī* was of local subsistence value when this pre-19th century midden was deposited.

At Kaingaroa and Taia, the archaeological landscape indications are that the discrete association of midden deposits and carved trees for the two sites reported here represent non-random, social space. This could mean that Moriori chose to carve mature *köpi* trees that had grown up around isolated
midden deposits. Alternatively, both middens may have been deposited in relation to kōpī trees that were being, or had been, carved. The site context suggests to us that the latter explanation is more likely. If social space is marked by the association of midden and carved trees here, it seems more plausible that highly visible rākau momori had primacy as identifiers of spatial significance over small, non-distinctive, ground level midden deposits. There are reasonable grounds, in short, to consider that the midden dates represent a *terminus ante quem* for the carving tradition at both places.

It is possible that other lost, carved trees in these two places pre-date the rākau momori that are now recorded there. Carvings and midden materials may have been added to each existing association over time as well. At Taia in particular, the relatively wide distribution of carvings that face in different directions could be the result of new rākau momori carvings indented on both bare and previously carved trunks at the location of an existing association (see Fig. 6). And at Kaingaroa, it may be that the single outlier N0510 was added to an existing group, or even marked a general place of (harvest?) importance at which other trees were later carved.

* * *

These preliminary interpretations will be tested and no doubt refined in further survey, excavation and dating work. At the least, however, the ages reported here begin to define the outlines of a testable, absolute chronology of Moriori engagements with managed rākau momori kōpī forest (see Solomon and Forbes 2010: 223). These results also flag an archaeological challenge to Skinner’s earlier 20th century suggestion that none of the carved kōpī figures “were much older than a century” (Skinner and Baucke 1928: 346). In that regard, our research aligns with Moriori views of rākau momori as venerable cultural historical expressions of the unique Polynesian society that emerged on Rēkohu (Jefferson 1956: 11-13, Maxwell 2010, Richards 2007, Solomon and Forbes 2010).

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Hokotehi Moriori Trust as the legal representative of Moriori people is a full partner in the research project reported here. We acknowledge and respect the *mana* of Hokotehi Moriori Trust over rākau momori sites, knowledge and images. We acknowledge further the support and encouragement of Hokotehi Moriori Trust chair Shirley King, General Manager Maui Solomon, Project Manager Susan Thorpe (formerly Forbes) and Moriori elder Tom Lanauze. We thank the Department of Conservation, especially Richard Nester, for funding radiocarbon dates and processing the required Taia reserve
sampling permit. Rick McGovern-Wilson, NZ Historic Places Trust, ensured the timely processing of the *Historic Places Act* archaeological authority (no. 2011/263) required for all of the excavation work. A University of Otago Research Grants funded the 2011 and 2012 fieldwork seasons. Les O’Neill, Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Otago, prepared Figure 1. Susan Thorpe, two anonymous referees and the *JPS* editor offered helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

**NOTES**

1. Khaw (2000) has attempted to age Moriori tree carvings by measuring the fractional, differential growth rate of selected carving edges in relation to a generic *kōpi* growth model. We accept that this approach has promise, but believe that some of Khaw’s data are too imprecise to allow the method to be applied with any confidence at present.

2. Here it is interesting to compare Jefferson’s (1956: 11) observation that only two to six carved trees were found “at any arbour having a midden of only one heap of shells”.

3. At Taia, Simmons (1980: 61) also observes that a “local” shell heap section had “paua from the north coast at the base”.

**REFERENCES**


ABSTRACT

Images indented into living kōpī (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*) trees by Polynesian Moriori of the Chatham Islands are a novel, indigenous Oceanic carving expression. Currently the absolute chronology of the kōpī tree carving (*rākau momori*) tradition is poorly resolved. In a recent Rēkohu (Chatham Island) investigation, two isolated shell midden sites were recorded and excavated in the vicinity of *rākau momori* clusters. A cultural landscape assessment provides reasonable cause to identify each carved tree cluster and midden association as discrete social space. Radiocarbon dates on paired marine shellfish samples of different taxa from the Kaingaroa Station Covenant midden and on paired marine and terrestrial kōpī seed samples from the Taia Bush Historic Reserve midden are reported. At the least these dates identify probable, pre-19th century Moriori use of kōpī forest. On site context grounds we suggest that these dates may represent a *terminus ante quem* for the tree carving tradition as well.

*Keywords*: Moriori tree carvings, middens, social space, radiocarbon dates
Ever since the pioneering work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord on the role of orality in the composition of classical Greek and 20th century Serbo-Croatian oral narratives (Lord 1960, Parry 1930, 1932), it has been widely acknowledged that many of the features characterising such narratives can be linked to the constraints imposed by oral methods of composition. As a result, much of the scholarship on oral narrative style—especially that published up until the late 1980s—has tended to focus on the formal structure of the narrative itself—on rhyme and rhythm, on idiosyncrasies of syntax and grammar, on repeated idiomatic “formulae”—in order to show how these aid both performer and listener during any oral performance. Apart from examination of “themes”—lesser segments of the overall storyline that in their familiarity are also seen to assist composition during performance—the general plot and the contextualised meaning(s) of any narrative have tended to be seen as of lesser importance in shaping narrative style. In addition, the contribution of more informal elements of the performance—elements other than those involved in the formal structure or semantic content of the narrative itself—have also tended to be overlooked.

Yet, Parry’s and Lord’s work—and that of the “orality theorists” (as they are often called) in general—has been heavily criticised on a number of grounds. A key target has been their apparent assumption that oral performance is more about the seemingly mechanical transmission of pre-determined, learned idiom than it is about the creative artistry of poetry-making (see for example Calhoun 1935; Edwards 1986, 1988; Foley 1988, 1991). In particular, the inability of much orality theory to come to terms with nuance and complexity of meaning—a result of its view that words and phrases are chosen primarily because of their metrical convenience to the performer rather than because of the particular meanings that they might convey—has been heavily criticised. As Foley (1991: 7) put it,

Traditional [oral] elements reach out of the entire tradition, defined synchronically and diachronically, and they bear meanings as wide and deep as the tradition they encode. The ‘how’ of the traditional idiom… includes an extratextual dimension uniquely the domain of oral traditional art. This idiom is liberating rather than imprisoning, centrifugal rather than centripetal, explosively connotative rather than claustrophobically clichéd.
Pierre Bourdieu (among many others) pointed to the folly of viewing any social practice as involving a simple regurgitation (or “execution”, as he puts it) of any given text (Bourdieu 1977: 24). In a similar vein, much anthropological work has demonstrated that the meaning conveyed in any oral performance is rarely pre-determined or given in the way that many oral theorists suppose; oral performances are not “texts” to be read purely in terms of their semantic content. Instead, we should view them as what Schieffelin (writing on the Kaluli séance, which makes extensive use of oral poetry and song) has termed “an emergent social construction”. He further insisted that “the work of a performance, what it does, and how it does it, can never be discovered only by examining the text, or the script, or the symbolic meanings embodied in the ritual alone” (1985: 721-22). Schieffelin stressed the additional role of the dialogic interaction between performer and audience in this regard, while Kapferer (1983) has focused more on the power inherent in the phenomenological or aesthetic elements of the performance itself: The critical role played by these and other informal performance elements in any oral performance is clear in much writing on the topic. Such elements are not only frequently central to the work of the performance—including to the production of the meanings that it attempts to convey—but also help to create its distinctive aesthetic or style.

In this article I take up these points in exploring oral narrative performance in a Borneo Dayak community. In her introduction to a key collection on oral traditions found in the South Pacific, Ruth Finnegan points out that “we cannot just assume in advance that because one form has been labelled ‘oral’ or even ‘traditional oral’ that we already know all about its likely characteristics” (1995: 22; see also Finnegan 1977, 1988). Indeed, my article focuses on two distinct forms of epic that I recorded in this community in 1986, and asks how we might account for the variations between them. As we will see, while there are many similarities between these two narrative forms in terms of formal structure, there are also some differences. But, in addition, there are a number of critical differences between the informal performance elements of each, resulting in two highly contrastive performance styles. This contrast in style cannot be explained within a conventional Parry-Lord framework, not only because of the formal similarities between the two forms, but also because both kinds of performance must meet roughly the same performance demands.

Recent work on oral performance has shown that the style of any performance is linked as much to the development of particular meanings as it is to the demands of orality. For example, Steven Feld’s work on the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea has shown in marvellous detail how forms of song, including wailing, are intimately connected to their meaning and emotional content (Feld 1990, 1995), while Alan Rumsey’s work on the
metrical oral poetry found in the Ku Waru region of Papua New Guinea shows that metricality (as opposed to non-metricality) is linked to the value accorded in this culture to certain modes of personal interaction (Rumsey 2001). While there is no doubt that the orality theorists are correct to argue that the style of an oral performance is influenced by the constraints imposed by oral methods of composition, I suggest in what follows that many of the differences in style between the two Dayak epic forms are also linked to the different types of context in which they are performed and so to the different set of meanings that each is attempting to convey. In particular, they are linked to the promotion of two different—and competing—styles of masculinity in the community, and to the related differential evaluation as “true” or “fictional” of the two kinds of narrative themselves. However, crucially, the rather different meanings attached to the two kinds of performance cannot be read off automatically from the semantic content of the narrative alone (although this is clearly important), but themselves emerge, and are created, in the act of performance itself.

TWO TYPES OF NARRATIVE PERFORMANCE: SENSANGAN AND THE CERITO NOSI

Gerai is a Dayak community of around 700 inhabitants located in the northern part of the Ketapang district (kabupaten) in the Indonesian province of West Borneo (Kalimantan Barat). Like other Borneo Dayak groups, Gerai people speak an Austronesian language, and they thus share certain linguistic and some cultural traits with peoples found throughout the Pacific, including in Melanesia and Polynesia (see Bellwood, Fox and Tryon 1995). In terms of the conventional distinction made between egalitarian and stratified Dayak societies, Gerai would be classified among the former because they have no formalised authority structure within the community; here there are no chiefs and no system of ranks. Like most other Borneo Dayak peoples, Gerai people were traditionally animist in their religious beliefs and in the mid-1980s, when I first spent time in the community, these animist beliefs still largely prevailed. However, since under Indonesia’s constitution animism is not considered a legitimate religion, Gerai people have been forced, since the 1950s, to convert (at least in name) to one of the world religions. As a consequence, most now describe themselves as Catholic, although the degree to which individuals adhere to Catholic doctrine varies markedly.

Gerai people are largely subsistence rice cultivators, although some raise a little cash through such activities as producing rubber or working at the nearby timber camps. As for most Borneo Dayak peoples, kinship is cognatic in Gerai, and is not strongly emphasised as an organising principle. Here are found no descent groups such as clans and lineages, and not even any clear
conception of a kindred. The most important social unit is what I term the “rice group”: a small grouping (average 6.5 persons), ideally consisting of a stem family and usually (although not always) co-residing. Members produce rice on behalf of the group, share rights in the product and take responsibility for the wellbeing of one another. As I have described at length elsewhere (Helliwell 1995, 2001), the two chief activities around which the rice group coalesces are the production of rice and of children. These two activities are viewed by Gerai people as inseparable: the group produces rice in order to raise healthy children who will, in turn, produce the rice that will perpetuate the group once their parents are old and frail.

Gerai culture is rich in oral traditions and many different oral art forms are still practiced within the community, although the performance of some is now so rare that they are in danger of dying out. Gerai oral traditions display the two characteristics of Pacific oral traditions in general, as outlined by Finnegan (1995: 16-19). Firstly, there are a wide variety of modes of composition and performance found in the community. Thus during my periods of fieldwork I have recorded chants, spells and songs to enlist the assistance of friendly spirits and to repel harmful ones; a variety of tales both humorous and serious, narrated in prose for entertainment (although often with a clear moral attached); ritual hearth genealogies (also told in prose); songs of love, loss or the depiction of other profound human experience; and lengthy accounts of the exploits of culture-heroes, usually delivered in song. Secondly, in Gerai (as elsewhere in the Pacific), verbal texts seldom stand alone, but are invariably part of a wider communicative context involving song, dramatic acting out (especially during ritual), or other forms of bodily presentation and representation. In Gerai, bodily modes of delivery are a crucial part of most performances, and are used to convey much of the intended meaning.

Of all the oral performance forms found in Gerai, the one regarded as pre-eminent by Gerai people, because of both its beauty and its difficulty of performance, is the sensangan: the narration of a tale in slow poetic song with the performer accompanying himself on a small drum. In my experience, sensangan is invariably performed by a man, although Gerai people say that there is no reason why a woman could not perform it if she wished. A sensangan performance takes many hours to complete, moving through a number of episodes to arrive at the eventual happy ending that seems to be a requirement of Gerai story-telling. Since Parry and Lord’s focus on epic poetry, there have been many definitions of epic and sensangan accords with most of them. Thus sensangan constitute a corpus built around the exploits of a single hero (Honko 1998: 9), they are poems in “high style” (Lord 1960: 6), they are “heroic” (Lord 1960: 6) and, perhaps most importantly, they have the quality of “greatness” (Honko 1998: 9). As Honko put it: “Epics usually
rank very high among both literary and oral poetry genres. They are great narratives or superstories which excel in length, power of expression and significance of content over other narratives” (1998: 10).

This description fits Gerai sensangan perfectly. As we will see, sensangan also accord with Bakhtin’s (1981) view of epic as focused on an absolute past, as emanating from community (although not national community, as Bakhtin would have it) tradition as opposed to personal experience and as describing a world that stands “on an utterly different and inaccessible time-and-value plane” (Bakhtin 1981: 14) from the world of the performer and audience. The only definitions of epic that sensangan do not fit are those that emphasise metricality (see, for example, Tedlock 1983: 25).

Like most oral performers, the Gerai singer of sensangan relies heavily on formulaic phrases and recurring themes to keep the tale flowing. However, the metrical requirements of sensangan appear to be far less rigid than those of much oral poetry—for instance, the Greek Homeric and the Serbo-Croatian epics studied by both Parry and Lord (Parry 1930, 1932; Lord 1960) or the Ku Waru poems studied by Rumsey (2001, 2007). Thus a Gerai sensangan performer will frequently lengthen or shorten a word to make it fit more easily with the melody and vice-versa. In the absence of such a rigid metrical structure, Gerai sensangan performers make extensive use of grammar, syntax and vocabulary to maintain a sense of balance within the song; parataxis, and in particular parallelisms, occur constantly, while alliteration and assonance are also freely employed. This can clearly be seen in the following sensangan extract.

*Sedang des ari Koling turun,*
*Turun tangga ke temilayan.*
*Bercayo samo bulan,*
*Bercayo samo mata ’ari,*
*Ya-pun berkilau-kilau samo bintang.*
*Di tangkin podang panyang,*
*Luah-te dayung perawu,*
*Tajam-te buluh lana.*
*Di kepalo-nya bulu burong burai,*
*Di jari itam, di pungong mirah.*
*Inei’ Bintang Tigo di langi’,*
*Do sato tajaw kacow.*
*Awas mantau Koling di beroh,*
*Awas mantau Koling di tanah,*
*Koling yeng panci.*
*Nak bejodoh ken Koling.*

Christine Helliwell
When the day was at the right point Koling descended (from the longhouse),
He descended the entry ladder to the open space.
Shining like the moon,
Shining like the sun,
Like that glistening like the stars.
At his side hung his long sword,
Wide like the paddle of a boat,
Sharp like the quills of a porcupine.
On his head were burai7 feathers,
Black was on his hands,8 red was at his waist.9
Grandmother Three Stars in the sky,10
Had a tajaw kacow.11
She saw Koling below,12
She saw Koling on the earth,
Koling who was splendid.
She wanted to consort with Koling.

Sensangan are always accounts of the Gerai culture-hero Koling. They
are very similar in content to the Iban Keling corpus (Donald 1991; see also
Munan 2005), and also resemble the well-known Bidayuh (Land Dayak) story
of Kichapi (Geddes 1957). In terms of their themes and overall storylines,
sensangan also resemble the stories of the hero Maui found throughout
the South Pacific, and like Maui, Koling is both hero and trickster.13 The
stories tell of Koling’s battles with spirits and ogres as well as with heroes
from the sky and other places, of his winning and/or rescuing young women
(particularly the beautiful Imobonang, who becomes his wife at the end of
many tales), and of the assistance given to him by his spirit helpers and
friends. Great emphasis is placed in the tales on Koling’s courage and daring
as well as on his martial prowess. Tales from this corpus are used to provide
general and spontaneous community entertainment: they might be performed
when large groups of people are gathered for ceremonial occasions, or to
create a pleasant community diversion in the flickering lights of the longhouse
night at the end of a hard day’s work.

Sensangan are included within the broad Gerai category of cerito ‘stories’,
but they are described as cerito rayo ‘great stories’. As far as I can tell,
within the variety of forms that are classified as ‘stories’, the epithet ‘great’
is reserved exclusively for the sensangan corpus, with one exception. The
cerito Nosi ‘Nosi story’ is also described as ‘great’.14 However, in contrast
to sensangan the cerito Nosi accords with only some of the conventional
definitions of epic: thus it focuses on a single hero, it is a poem in “high style”,
it is “heroic” and it has the quality of “greatness”. But it does not constitute
a corpus, comprising instead a single tale with a lengthy (two- to three-hour) storyline. Nor, as we will see, does it focus on an absolute past or describe a world that is understood as inhabiting a different temporal and value plane from our own. Indeed, I will argue here that it is precisely from its description of a world understood as temporally connected to our own that the cerito Nosi gains much of its power. To designate it as not an epic on this basis seems to me to fall into spurious distinctions between backwards-focused tradition and forwards-focused modernity. Certainly, for Gerai people this is a great narrative, as great as any of those in the sensangan corpus.

The cerito Nosi uses very similar themes and formulae to those found in sensangan to communicate the various episodes and overall storyline to the audience. But unlike sensangan, which are sung very slowly to a drum accompaniment, the cerito Nosi is chanted very rapidly in a flat monotone, without accompaniment. One of its most distinctive features is the use of the nonsense word konok—sometimes with the emphasis participle -neh added to the end of it—to separate phrases and words, many of these formulaic. A sense of how this word is used can be gained from the following few lines taken from the tale:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Jedi mangka ya konok,} \\
&Dah mulah sensadai atap konok, \\
&Berangkut boneh konok, \\
&Berangkut joluw pakai: lau’ rompah konok, \\
&Dah nya konok sedang des nugal, nugal, \\
&Dah nugal konok ya konok-neh padi konok, \\
&Ya betapa konok di lem gua, \\
&Betara konok di lem tanah, \\
&Tiga ari tiga malam pengempat belantang.
\end{align*}
\]

So thus konok.
After they had built a farm hut konok,
They carried out rice seed konok.
They carried out many things: meat vegetables konok.
When already konok the time was right for planting (rice), they planted (rice).
After they had planted (rice) konok like that konok-neh the rice,
They made prestations (to the spirits) konok in the cave.
They planted (rice seed) konok in the ground,
Three days three nights on the fourth it began to sprout.

There is little attempt to fit the words to a metrical pattern. Instead each line is spoken at a rapid steady pace with a brief pause occurring at its end; since the lines are of different lengths, there is no regularity about the pauses.
As in the *sensangan* tales, also lacking a rigid metrical pattern, parallelism is extensively used to maintain balance, as are assonance and alliteration. It would seem that in the context of a rapid-fire delivery unbroken by deviation in tone or pitch, the use of the word *konok* helps to distinguish agents and activities from one another, so serving to maintain a clear narrative track and thereby aiding both delivery and receipt of the story-line. In the much slower *sensangan* corpus, the singer has more time to feel his way along the track of the story-line, and to pause or otherwise clearly mark significant points; the audience also has more time to take in the performance and to ponder at moments of confusion. Significantly, as we will see below, individual performances of the *cerito Nosi* appear to vary much less from one another than do individual performances of the same *sensangan*.

As with *sensangan*, I have only ever seen the *cerito Nosi* performed by a man. But in contrast to *sensangan*, Gerai people say that the *cerito Nosi* must be performed by a man. They say that it ‘wouldn’t feel right’ (*teraso nowe nyaman*) for it to be performed by a woman, a point to which I will return. In addition, while the performer of *sensangan* sits erect, interacting actively with his audience—meeting their eyes and moving his head to dramatise and emphasise particular points, even occasionally (where the storyline calls for it) getting up, drum in hand, to dance—the performer of the *cerito Nosi* goes to considerable lengths to efface himself: crouching in his place, eyes fixed on the floor several metres in front of him, body absent from the performance. He is, according to Akei’ Budi, whose version of the story I recorded in September 1986, ‘just a voice’ (*suaro ja’*). Audience behaviour parallels these differences between the two performance styles. The *sensangan* audience is actively involved in constructing the narrative—expressing astonishment at Koling’s exploits, providing explanation and elaboration to one another regarding details of the plot, murmuring encouragement and appreciation to the performer, and sometimes even voicing disagreement with aspects of his telling. In contrast, the audience of the *cerito Nosi* sits quietly, with a respectful demeanour, focused to a much greater degree on the performer than on one another.

There are close similarities between the subject matter and story-line of *sensangan*, and those of the *cerito Nosi*, but also significant divergences. I have discussed these in relation to broader Indonesian conceptions of masculinity and processes of nation-building in an unpublished manuscript (Helliwell n.d.), but they are also pertinent to my concerns here. While *sensangan* detail the extraordinary exploits of a culture-hero, the *cerito Nosi* recounts the mundane activities of a much more prosaic Gerai man/hero named Layang Beu ‘Sloping Shoulders’ (an allusion to the [impressive] width of his shoulders). In the story Layang Beu makes a sword and scabbard, gets married, goes hunting, clears a rice field and grows rice. All of these activities
are outlined in extraordinary detail, emphasising the care and pride that Layang Beu invests in them. In this, his style contrasts markedly with that of his older brother Aning Kesuwi. Aning Kesuwi is hot-blooded and impatient. His sword and scabbard lack the beauty and functionality of Layang Beu’s, and his neglect of his rice fields means that his crop is choked by weeds and eaten by mice. Most significantly, his warlike and aggressive attitude is depicted as being at the heart of his general incompetence; when he goes hunting, for instance, his constant talk of killing and of taking heads frightens his dogs to such a degree that one by one they leave him and he eventually returns home empty-handed. In fact, the cerito Nosi not only glorifies ordinary, everyday masculine activities, but also quite explicitly denigrates the headhunting and warlike exploits celebrated within the sensangan tales; the story is replete with sly allusions to famous, easily-recognisable events in those tales. Indeed, in many respects the cerito Nosi can be read as a subversive commentary on the entire sensangan corpus.

DIFERENT CONTEXTS, DIFFERENT ROLES

The question, then, has to do with the styles of these two types of performance: how do we explain the differences between them? Both convey plots of similar complexity, make use of almost identical formulae and are roughly the same length; with some minor variation, both use the same vocabulary, grammar and syntax. Both are also delivered in the same kind of venue (usually a longhouse apartment or freestanding village dwelling) to roughly the same sized audience (usually around 10 to 25 people) and thus must meet approximately the same performance demands. In formal terms, then, they are very similar. The most significant formal difference between them is that of the rapid-fire delivery—incorporating the use of the word konok—of the cerito Nosi and the much slower delivery of sensangan. Essentially, they work to different rhythms. Yet, in spite of these formal similarities, their performance styles are very different. Since their performances must meet similar performance demands, it is difficult to explain this difference in style in terms of the Parry-Lord hypothesis, that is, in terms of the demands of orality (although orality is undoubtedly a crucial influence on the style of each).

When I asked Gerai people why the two styles were so different, they explained that the two genres fulfilled different functions. The greatness of the cerito Nosi, they said, lies in the lessons that it conveys: it is a text that ‘teaches’ (ngajar). It thus contrasts profoundly with the sensangan narratives, whose greatness lies in their intrinsic beauty, but which are ‘just for play’ (usi ja’).

A distinction between what have been called true or historical accounts, on the one hand, and more fictionalised accounts, on the other, is found throughout the Pacific region: for example, the distinction between tutui teteek
and *bini* in Roti (Fox 1979), between *tala* and *kakai* in Tokelau (Huntsman 1995), and between *temani* and *kange* in the Ku Waru region of Papua New Guinea (Rumsey 2001). We can see the Gerai distinction between the *cerito Nosi* and *sensangan* as mirroring this. While Gerai people say that both the *cerito Nosi* and *sensangan* are ‘true’ (*bonar*) accounts, in that both are said to refer to actual events from the past, they identify the events of the former with the very recent past—an era that is seen as being, in some sense, continuous with the here-and-now—and those of the latter with a more remote, speculative history ‘when we were not yet as we are now’ (*diret bolum tokoh tuam*) (see Rumsey 2001: 200). Although (as with Ku Waru *temani* and *kange*) the difference here does not directly equate with the Western distinction between fact and fiction (Rumsey 2001: 200), it nevertheless reflects, in very general terms, the broader regional distinction between true and more fictionalised accounts. Differences in the two performance styles are closely linked to this distinction.

In order to understand these differences, we need to be aware of the different contexts in which the two narratives are performed. Unlike the Koling *sensangan* corpus, the *cerito Nosi* is not a tale that may be told at any time. Rather, its telling is restricted to the final night of a *sabat* or major wedding ceremony. One of the key elements of the *sabat* ceremony is the handing-over by the husband to the wife of the *buis*—a very substantial body of goods including gold, antique jars, pigs and brass gongs. Gerai people say that in the past the husband presented his wife with a freshly-taken human head as part of the ceremony and the *buis* has come to substitute for this since the banning of headhunting by the Dutch. In either case, in handing over the appropriate prestation, the husband marks himself as a *laki nar* ‘true man’, as a man of higher standing within the community whose voice is listened to and respected on any public occasion. The *cerito Nosi* is told during the *sabat* ceremony, immediately after the *buis* has been counted out and handed over. It is told in the longhouse apartment or house of the new wife’s natal household, and so it is members of this group who form the core around which many others gather to listen. Since the presentation of the *buis* highlights the men’s work that the husband has performed and continues to perform for his wife and their rice group during their marriage—it is not surprising that the *cerito Nosi* is most essentially one about masculinity and men’s roles in contemporary Gerai.

Significantly, the hero of the *sensangan* corpus and the ‘true man’ idealised in the *cerito Nosi* are very different characters. While Koling spends much of his time engaged in martial activities and adventures of one kind or another, Layang Beu spends most of his performing the mundane Gerai masculine
activities of rice-farming and hunting for food. While Koling is aggressive and passionate, Layang Beu is steady and reasonable. We see at play here two competing versions of manhood, reflecting the complexity of images of masculinity found not simply in Gerai or Borneo more generally, but throughout the broader Pacific region.¹⁹ I have argued elsewhere (Helliwell 1994) that in spite of the tendency among anthropologists of Borneo to emphasise the heroic model of masculinity found in Dayak societies at the expense of the more domestic model that invariably exists alongside it, in many of those societies masculinity has always been predicated at least as much—and often more—on a man’s proficiency at rice-farming as on his abilities at headhunting and warfare. In recent times, Christianisation and (in Indonesian Borneo) exposure to the Indonesian state gender ideology of Bapakism²⁰ have led to an increase in the legitimacy accorded to the domestic model and a corresponding decline in the importance of the heroic one. As a consequence, the model of masculinity celebrated in the cerito Nosi is today seen by Gerai people as more ‘appropriate’ or ‘correct’ (sedang) for the contemporary Gerai man than that celebrated in the sensangan corpus.

The identification of the cerito Nosi with the very recent past—one continuous with the present—while sensangan are identified with a more remote past, then, reflects the contemporary Gerai view that, of the two, the cerito Nosi presents the truth of what Gerai men are and have been in living memory, while sensangan present a more fictionalised version. This is indexed in Gerai people’s frequent iteration that Layang Beu is ‘just like us’ (tokoh diret), in contrast to Koling, who is ‘different from us’ (lain dari direkt). With this in mind, we can begin to make sense of many of the stylistic differences between the two genres.

THE ROLE OF INFORMAL PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS

Most of the differences between sensangan and the cerito Nosi outlined earlier are what we might call informal ones—that is, differences in elements other than those involved in the formal structure or semantic content of the narrative itself. As already noted, these kinds of differences tend to have been overlooked by orality theorists, but they are central to both the emergence of the different meanings attached to performances of sensangan and the cerito Nosi, and to the creation of their different styles.

In particular, in a performance of sensangan, the creative role of the performer—as demonstrated through the particular intonations used at different places, the lengthening of certain syllables and shortening of others, the raising and lowering of pitch and volume, movements of the head and body, use of the eyes and facial expressions, all of which serve to convey specific emotions and moral stances—is apparent to everyone, and is indeed
regarded as a vital part of the performance. In a performance of the *cerito Nosi*, on the other hand, the role of the performer is far less obvious: although he recreates and transforms the tale, he does not obviously dramatise it and in so doing explicitly impose his own interpretation between the bare storyline and the audience. In addition, the high degree of interaction between performer and audience that occurs in a *sensangan* performance increases the potential for creative license, while the lack of audience participation in a performance of the *cerito Nosi* has the reverse effect.

As a consequence, *sensangan* performances are subject to considerable variation, while performances of the *cerito Nosi* tend to be very similar to one another. This applies not only to the individual style of the performance itself, and the inclusion of non-narrative elements such as songs, dances or ritual chants, but also to the plot. The latter can vary significantly from one telling to another of the same *sensangan* story. By contrast, the three versions of the *cerito Nosi* that I have recorded (by two different performers) are extraordinarily similar in their plot detail. The Gerai storytellers to whom I spoke confirmed this point. One (who performed both *sensangan* and the *cerito Nosi*) explained that both performer and audience always ‘already knew’ (*dah tau*) the *cerito Nosi* plot, while the plot of any *sensangan* was more ‘open’ (*dikoba*). Following Bauman and Briggs (1990) we might describe *sensangan* as always contextualised, in contrast to the partially “entextualised” character of the *cerito Nosi*. That is, the *cerito Nosi* has, in certain respects, taken on the form of a text—an entity independent of the social contexts in which it is produced and performed—that is replicated relatively unchanged from one performance to another.

Kuipers (1990) and Keane (1995) have both demonstrated that entextualisation may enhance the authority of certain narratives, and add to their apparent “truthfulness”. This appears to be the case with the *cerito Nosi*. Thus it is significant that Gerai people describe the *cerito Nosi* as one that ‘teaches’, in contrast to *sensangan* which are ‘just for play’ since, in the Gerai context, the term ‘teach’ (*ngajar*) suggests both the truth of what is being taught, and the authority of the teacher. ‘Teaching’ traditionally refers to the imparting of wisdom, advice and even direction from members of a senior generation to those of a junior one, and its overtones of authority and credibility have been reinforced by the introduction of state-sponsored schooling in Gerai and surrounding villages in recent years. To describe the *cerito Nosi* as one that ‘teaches’ is thus to mark it as both authoritative and true. This is underscored by the respectful behaviour of both performer and audience during its performance. A performance of *sensangan*, on the other hand, does not carry the same weight: its aim is simply to entertain.
A related informal contrast between the two types of performance further underlines this difference in the credibility and authority of each. Unlike many peoples found around them (for example, Rotinese, Javanese, Balinese) and elsewhere in the Pacific (for example, Tongans, Māori), Gerai people do not locate their true stories within a genealogical history. Indeed, they are very little interested in personal genealogies, a fact that is almost certainly linked to the egalitarian characteristics of their culture (Helliwell 2012). In this respect, their stories resemble those of some other, more egalitarian, Pacific peoples (for example, Tokelauans [see Huntsman 1995]). However, many of their stories are firmly located in place, most notably their cerito keturunan dapur (hearth descent stories), stories that trace the genealogies of particular ritual hearths.\textsuperscript{21} Fox (1979) and Huntsman (1995) have shown how the veracity of true, as opposed to more fictionalised, oral accounts on Roti and Tokelau respectively is established through the fixing of the storyline in place. Something very similar occurs in Gerai. Thus, while sensangan are set in some general sense in and around Gerai—we know that Koling is a Gerai man, and there are occasional references in the stories to his visiting or passing nearby landmarks—the place of Gerai is almost entirely absent from the stories: they are set much more in a remote, fictionalised Gerai-like world, than they are in the landscape of Gerai itself. The cerito Nosi, on the other hand, is firmly grounded in the place of Gerai and the surrounding countryside: we know exactly where Layang Beu lived, where he had his bellows, where he made his rice field, where he went hunting, and so on. This contrast is clear in the following two extracts.

Sensangan extract

\textit{Di sedang des ari Koling turun,}
\textit{Turun tangga ke temilayan.}
\textit{Nak bejalan ke tanah jewo,}
\textit{Nak bejalan ke ruing jolang,}
\textit{Nyuwe Koling turun beburu.}
\textit{Kulu ke Sungai Batu,}
\textit{Utan beluka sagam.}
\textit{Kiliye ke Sungai Munteh,}
\textit{Munteh modoa timuw.}
\textit{Ke kanan ke Sungai Danan,}
\textit{Pohon durien bosai-pun.}
\textit{Kiba ke Sungai Pusat,}
\textit{Beyo tuo ninggal.}
So when the day was at the right point Koling descended (from the longhouse),
He descended the entry ladder to the open space.
He wanted to travel to a place far away,
He wanted to travel to deep forest,
That’s how it was Koling descended to go pig hunting.
Upstream to Stone River,
Where the forest is wild and dark.
Downstream to Bamboo River,
Where the young bamboos sprout.
To the right to Rattan River,
Where is the massive durian tree.
To the left to Pusat River,
Where the old crocodile lives.

The storyline continues from here to describe how Koling encounters a large and dangerous spirit and enters into battle with it. This is followed by various other exploits. Further on we get the sense of him returning to his longhouse (implicitly one of the longhouses of Gerai), although this is never spelled out.

cerito Nosi extract

Dah tampa’ konok turun konok,
Turun konok-neh ke temelayan konok.
Dah detang ke temelayan konok-neh ke jurong konok,
Dah ke jurong konok lalu ke tepiyan konok.
Nyemorong tepiyan.
Kulu konok ke Balut konok,
Dah detang ke Balut konok-neh ke Tumilong,
Dah detang ke Tumilong konok ke Gunong Timor konok.
Dekat Gunong Timor,
Dah rima konok ruing jolang konok.
Ke utan lulai jewo konok,
Riaw asu nyala’ konok.
Bunuh buru konok-neh.
‘Kita pulang-am. Tu-am konok digoga kita’ konok-neh.
Jedi pulang ke Gerai konok,
Detang ke tepiyan konok.
Dironam konok dah nya konok-neh.

When it was dawn konok they descended (from the longhouse) konok,
They descended konok-neh to the open space konok.
They passed through the open space konok-neh, to the rice storage hut konok,
They passed by the rice storage hut *konok* to the home stream *konok*. They waded across the home stream.

They went upriver *konok* to Balut\(^{23}\) *konok*,
Past Balut *konok-neh* to Tumilong,\(^{24}\) Past Tumilong *konok* to East Mountain\(^{22}\) *konok*.

Close to East Mountain,
When they had reached primary forest *konok* deep forest *konok*.
In the jungle far away *konok*.
There came the sound of their dogs barking *konok*.
They killed the pig *konok-neh*.
‘Now we’ll go home. This is what we were looking for’ *konok-neh*.
So they went home to Gerai *konok*,
They came to the home stream *konok*.
They immersed (the pig) *konok* there *konok-neh*.

None of the places named in the *sensangan* extract—Stony River (*Sungai Batu*), Bamboo River (*Sungai Munteh*) and so on—exist in the actual countryside around Gerai, but all are well-known locations in myth. This is true also of the various figures mentioned in the extract: the massive durian tree, the old crocodile and so on. In calling up these places and figures the storyteller is explicitly referencing the semi-fictionalised mythical world that existed ‘when we were not yet as we are now’. By contrast, the *cerito Nosi* extract is profoundly grounded in the contemporary place of Gerai. It starts very explicitly in the village of Gerai itself, describing in detail Layang Beu’s movements in leaving the village. From there we follow him (and his uncle) along a well-known path, and one that is frequently trodden by contemporary Gerai men in search of game and other produce: from Gerai to Balut to Tumilong to the area around East Mountain. The pig is killed and immediately brought back to Gerai to be submerged in the home stream (before being gutted and cut up). In consequence, *cerito Nosi*’s storyline is pervaded with a sense of immediacy, of the here-and-now; its protagonists appear as people ‘just like us’ (*tokoh diret*) in the words of an audience member. *Sensangan* storylines, on the other hand, seem to relate to a world far removed from that in which the contemporary man of Gerai must make his way.

A further contrast between the two types of performance that is relevant here concerns the role of music. *Sensangan* are sung, in contrast to the *cerito Nosi*, which contains little obvious musicality. A number of thinkers have pointed out that music has the capacity to draw us into itself; as Kapferer puts it “music demands the living of the reality it creates” (1983: 187, see also Schieffelin 1985: 713-15). Certainly, during a *sensangan* performance the music transports the audience into Koling’s world in a way that simple
narration cannot do; this becomes especially clear when one compares sensangan performances with the more prosaic telling of tales about Koling that often takes place in the evening, and that lacks any musical component. The absence of song, drum or other performance elements that marks a performance of the cerito Nosi has almost the reverse effect; there is little attempt here to rouse the imagination of the audience or to transport it into a different world. Instead, the monotonal chant used by the performer directs attention almost exclusively onto the storyline itself, and underlines its import. The behaviour/demeanour of the audience reinforces this sense of the gravity of the storyline, a sense that does not inhere to a sensangan performance (where I have known a performer to change storyline midstream).

Because of the authority invested in the Nosi “text”, only community members with sufficient standing are seen as able to perform it. This is undoubtedly the reason why people say that it ‘wouldn’t feel right’ for a woman to perform the story; as I have noted elsewhere, in Gerai women have lower status and less authority than men (Helliwell 2000b: 798-99). Of those men with the appropriate standing to perform the story, very few possess the requisite performance skills; consequently, in the mid-1980s there were only two men in Gerai able to perform it. By comparison, there are no restrictions placed on who should and should not perform sensangan, and during my times in the community I have recorded five different sensangan performers (although one of these was from a different, though neighbouring, village). Similarly, there are no restrictions placed on when and where sensangan may be performed, while the cerito Nosi is limited to a specific ritual moment and place. This all feeds into the greater sense of seriousness and import that surrounds a performance of the cerito Nosi in comparison with one of sensangan.

Much of the difference described here between the two performance styles is encapsulated in Akei’ Budi’s comment, noted earlier, that the teller of the cerito Nosi is ‘just a voice’. In order to understand this comment we need to note that in Gerai sound is identified with sociality and relatedness; to speak of someone as being ‘clever/good at hearing’ (panai ningo) can be read as much as a comment on the strength of his or her connection with others as one on the keenness of his or her auditory sense. Partly for this reason, in the Gerai sensorium hearing is accorded a higher value—and is more strongly associated with what is true or real—than other senses such as sight or smell. Sight, in particular, is understood as potentially misleading or deceptive, in a way that hearing is not. To describe the performer of the cerito Nosi, then, as ‘just a voice’, is to highlight his role as a teller of what is true or real; what he says is uncluttered by potentially deceptive additional performance elements. His withdrawn posture and bodily effacement, as
well as the quiet, respectful demeanour of his audience, all underscore this perception of the narrative during the act of performance.

The key point here is that a *sensangan* performance actively works to engage its audience in the evocation of a semi-fictionalised world and, in the process, to excite, titillate and transport it. As a result, *sensangan* performances are most usually noisy and even rambunctious affairs. Both audience and performer are aware that what they are producing is semi–fantasy or, at the very least, a description of events that happened so long ago that they have little bearing on life in contemporary Gerai. A performance of the *cerito Nosi*, by contrast, positively discourages audience engagement; all performance elements underscore the status of the narrative itself as authoritative and true. Both audience and performer treat the performance as almost a recitation of a true historical sequence of events that have great import for contemporary Gerai life. In this way the *cerito Nosi* is able to operate as a wry meta-narrative on the *sensangan* corpus, reinforcing the appropriateness or correctness of a very different image of masculinity for contemporary Gerai men from that which dominates the *sensangan* tales.

* * *

Parry and Lord—and the orality theorists more generally—were undoubtedly correct to argue that the style of any narrative performance is influenced by the constraints imposed by oral methods of composition. However, it is a mistake to go beyond this and attempt to explain the style of any oral performance exclusively—or even primarily—in terms of the simple fact of its orality. As the contrast between the Gerai *sensangan* corpus and the *cerito Nosi* makes clear, the factors shaping any narrative performance are many and varied and, indeed, the meanings attached to any particular oral performance can themselves play a crucial role in shaping its style. This becomes particularly clear when we move beyond the orality theorists’ fixation on the formal components of any performance, and consider also more informal ones.

While in certain respects the content of the *sensangan* corpus and the *cerito Nosi* are very similar—both focus on the exploits of a hero who lives in the same Borneo jungles, both involve lengthy descriptions of masculine activities, both make use of almost identical formulae and themes—the role of each and the meanings that Gerai people read into their respective performances, are very different. The differences in style of each type of performance are linked to these differences in role and in the meanings that each is intended to convey. *Sensangan* narratives set out to transport the audience to a marvellous world, far removed from the everyday one. Koling is, in every sense, a heroic figure, admired for his superhuman acts of bravery,
aggression and cunning, and therefore in no sense one of us. The cerito Nosi, on the other hand, is firmly fixed in the place and activities of Gerai. In explicit contrast to Koling, Layang Beu is a man of the here-and-now. While the performer of sensangan, then, seeks to entertain his audience—to excite and even titillate them—the performer of the cerito Nosi seeks to do almost the opposite: to downplay any suggestion of fantasy and to convey instead a sense of bald truth. And the truth that he wishes to impart is that Layang Beu, not Koling—the steady family man, rather than the hero—exemplifies what the contemporary Gerai man should be.

NOTES

2. See, for example, Finnegan 1995: 17-19 on the crucial role of these informal elements in story-telling throughout the Pacific.
3. But see Helliwell 1995 on the hierarchy that nevertheless exists in Gerai, and the consequent inappropriateness of the stratified/egalitarian divide for describing Dayak societies.
4. Catholic missionaries—originally Dutch, later from other parts of the Indonesian archipelago—have been active in this region since the 1920s, and since the 1960s a significant number of Gerai teenagers have attended Catholic secondary school in Ketapang (several days travel from Gerai on the coast), staying in dormitories run by Catholic nuns and brothers while doing so. Protestant missionaries—from the fundamentalist New Tribes Missions—have also been active in this area since the late 1970s, and a small minority of Gerai inhabitants have converted to Protestantism (see Helliwell 2001: 29-31). However, even in the 21st century, Gerai people continue to hold to many of their animist traditions.
5. A number of Borneo ethnographers have pointed out that Freeman’s (1961) account of the importance of kindred in Iban society does not hold true for many other Borneo Dayak peoples. See for example, King 1976, 1991; Rousseau 1990: 100.
6. A rice group can (and occasionally does) spread over more than one household. However, members of any one household always belong to the same rice group.
7. The burai is a mythical bird; it features frequently in tales about Koling.
8. In other words, he had black tattoos on the backs of his hands, indicating particular warrior status.
9. In other words, he was wearing a red loincloth, a mark of going to battle.
10. ‘Grandmother Three Stars’ is the spirit believed to live in the star constellation of Orion’s belt.
11. A tajaw kacow is a very tall Chinese ceramic jar.
12. In other words, she looked down through the tajaw kacow and saw Koling below.
13. Knappert (1992: 185) describes Maui as ‘the great Polynesian Ulysses’, and this describes Koling equally well. Westervelt (1910: 185) notes that Maui legends are found right throughout Polynesia and also in Melanesia (see Luomalu 1949). For Māori examples (where he is called ‘Maui tikitiki a Taranga’), see Alpers 1964: 28-70.

14. The word ‘Nosi’ appears to have no meaning in contemporary Gerai other than as the name of this story. The word does not appear in the story and, in spite of repeated questioning, no-one has been able to explain to me why the story has this name. I can only presume that at some point in the past ‘Nosi’ had a meaning that is now defunct.

15. In certain respects the story resembles the humorous Apa’ Alui tales found in Gerai as well as among the Iban (see Sather 1981, 1984 for Saribas Iban versions), since Apa’ Alui’s false bravado is often depicted, at least in Gerai, as the source of his problems. However, it is important to note that Gerai people do not regard the cerito Nosi as humorous: it is an epic in every sense of the word.

16. In both cases the vocabulary, grammar and syntax were close enough to those of the everyday Gerai language for me, as a reasonably proficient (although by no means perfect) speaker of that language, to understand and be able to translate—with a little help—the narrative “text” I had recorded.

17. See Helliwell 1994, 2000a for descriptions of the sabat ceremony. After a couple sabat, they may not divorce and must be buried in a common grave.

18. See Helliwell 2000a for a discussion of why the terms “payment”, “bridewealth” and “dowry” are all misleading as descriptors of the buis.


20. Bapakism ‘fatherism’ promotes a view of the ideal man as a married father, head of his family and steady breadwinner for that family (see for example van Wichelen 2009 and Nilan 2009).

21. As I have noted elsewhere (Helliwell 2012), while Gerai people downplay the importance of personal genealogies, ritual hearth genealogies are crucial to social order in the community.

22. A specific variety of bamboo, used for fine weaving.

23. Balut is a small community around 2 km upriver from Gerai.

24. Tumilong is an area where a small community once existed, around 5 km upriver from Gerai.

25. East Mountain is a tallish peak around 6-7 km upriver from Gerai.

26. See Helliwell 1996 on the crucial role of sound in the creation of sociality and community across different apartments within the Gerai longhouse.

27. Gerai is not alone in this respect. Other cultures that appear to value hearing above other senses include Kaluli (Feld 1990, 1996), Inca (Classen 1993) and Kalapalo (Basso 1985).
REFERENCES


ABSTRACT

As a result of the work of Parry and Lord, oral narrative style has often been explained in terms of the constraints imposed by oral methods of composition, with both the meanings of the narrative and the informal elements of performance tending to be overlooked. This paper explores oral narrative performance in the Borneo Dayak community of Gerai to argue that meaning and informal performance elements can be key to narrative style. Two types of ‘great’ narrative are found in Gerai, and they have highly contrastive performance styles. The differences in style are linked to the promotion of two different—and competing—styles of masculinity in the community, a point that becomes clear only when we consider informal performance elements.

Keywords: oral narrative, oral performance, Borneo Dayak, masculinity
SHORTER COMMUNICATION

REASSESSING THE RADIOCARBON CHRONOLOGY OF THE MAIORO SITE (R13/1): NORTHERN WAIKATO, NEW ZEALAND

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The late Aileen Fox, while at the Auckland War Memorial Museum, wrote up excavations carried out in 1965-66 by Roger Green and members of the Auckland University Archaeological Society at the Maioro site (R13/1) (Fox and Green 1982). The site is located at the southern end of the 100-200 metre high undulating sandstone ridge that extends south from the South Manukau Heads to the Waikato River mouth. The site is about 4 km north of the Waikato River on a high knoll about a kilometre from the coast. It is a small, terraced settlement with pit features that lacked the obvious earthwork defences of a pā. It was chosen as part of Green’s ongoing study of open settlements presumed to relate to the mid and late period of New Zealand prehistory.

Based partially on stratigraphy and partially on $^{14}$C determinations, three phases of occupation were identified (Green 1983). In Phase 1 the site consisted of a series of subterranean storage pits which extended along the top of a ridge and knoll. In Phase 2, occupation focused on the knoll alone with the much more confined terraced space now enclosed by scarps topped by a well-defined perimeter palisade, indicating it was now a fortified pā. In Phase 3 these defences were rebuilt and strengthened.

The initial radiocarbon determinations reported by Green (1983) implied occupation of the site may have begun as early as the late 12th AD and continued until the 17th century. The occurrence of a specialised agricultural settlement as early as the 12th century was unexpected and Green (1983: 109) expressed some reservations as to the validity of the earlier dates. He was well aware that there could be sources of analytical bias (e.g., potential for inbuilt age in the charcoal). Over the last two decades it has become increasingly obvious that the dating of this site needed re-examination. The reasons are several but mainly centre on the reliability of the $^{14}$C determinations.

First, when the initial radiocarbon samples were run, the calibration of $^{14}$C determinations to yield secular ages was still in its infancy. Neither the atmospheric corrections, now routinely applied to terrestrial samples, nor local or regional offsets, now used in calculating secular ages for marine shellfish whose diet incorporates older carbon from the Ocean Marine Reservoir,
were developed. Second, the dates on wood charcoal were processed without the species involved having been identified. The extent to which such 14C determinations might relate to the age of the trees rather than the cultural events concerned was not fully appreciated at the time. Finally, when Maioro was dated, Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) technology, which allows for dating of tiny samples, had yet to be fully implemented in New Zealand. This method is now routinely available and allows re-dating of sites using very small charcoal samples.

Fortunately, at the time the original dates were run the larger charcoal samples were divided with one part being retained as a backup and archived at the Rafter Radiocarbon Laboratory. Three backup samples were available, two from Phase 2 and one from Phase 3. Garry Law requested their return and passed these to Green, who retained them for more than two decades. His intention was to have the charcoal identified to assess their potential for inbuilt age in order to attempt to resolve what he saw as a questionable dating outcome.

RESULTS

Wood charcoal identifications
In 2005 Wallace made a preliminary inspection of these charcoal samples which revealed they were dominated by Pūriri (Vitex lucens), a large, long lived tree whose charcoal is not normally recommended for dating as it has the potential for a high inbuilt age. On reviewing these results in early 2006, Green asked Wallace to extract short-lived species from one of the samples with a view to their dating by AMS. The objective here was to obtain new age estimates for the Phase 2 occupation and resolve outstanding questions about the accuracy of the original determinations. Wallace reported the following results.

Pūriri (Vitex lucens) – 100%
No small diameter material was present and all charcoal pieces appear to have come from the same, possibly large, piece of burnt wood. As dating material this charcoal is unsatisfactory as it has the potential for considerable inbuilt age.

NZ 6274 – Phase 2 - Maioro [1] AU Cat#2002 – Run No. R09572/1
Pūriri – 100%
Charcoal pieces had brown, charred ends indicating they originated as the burnt off end of a post or other large piece of timber, the unburned part of which had decayed away. As dating material it was unsatisfactory, as it has the potential for significant inbuilt age.

Pūriri – 95%
Tōtara (Podocarpus totara) – 3%
Coprosma sp. – 1%
Hebe sp. – 1%

Ninety-five percent of the charcoal was from Pūriri, a large, long lived, tree that has the potential for significant inbuilt age. It is significant that Tōtara, a species that can live to great age, was also present in this sample. A 0.17 gram sub-sample of short lived Coprosma and Hebe charcoal was separated out as an accelerator dating sample. This was subsequently forwarded to the University of Waikato and processed under their AMS protocols as WK19214.

THE ORIGINAL MAIORO CHRONOLOGY

Rather than simply rejecting the original dates as deriving from unidentified charcoal that may have come from tree species with significant inbuilt age, we assess each sample’s stratigraphic position in a way which allows some useful information to be extracted.

Phase 1
Phase 1 consisted of a series of subterranean storage pits along the top of a ridge and knoll. Davidson et al. (2007: 18-91), in their review of storage pit types in New Zealand sites, concluded that they probably functioned as community stores for sweet potato. The sandy loam soils found in the dune swales around the Maioro site, when planted in kūmara, would have been productive for at least for a year or two. During Phase 1 the stored crop apparently did not require defensive constructions to protect either it or the occupants of the site from unwanted predation by others in the region.

NZ6278 (see Figure 1 below) was recovered from a Phase 2 occupation context. On the basis of the sample’s early date, Green (1983: 108-9) suggested it may have been Phase 1 charcoal eroded from a steep embankment and re-deposited on the Phase 2 terrace below (see Green 1983: Fig. 1). However, Green (1983: 108) also stated that the unexpectedly early date for the Phase 2 charcoal may have been owing to it having inbuilt age.

NZ6275, in contrast, has an unambiguous Phase 1 context. It came from a very deep posthole over 180mm across in its greatest dimension with a roughly square post mold indicating it had held a dressed wooden timber. It was interpreted that this post had supported a storage hut (pataka or whata) and that a slanting posthole a short distance away had held a ladder that provided access to it (Fox and Green 1982: 65, Green 1983: 108). The charcoal was clearly from a large timber cut from a substantial tree trunk, which implies a potential for significant inbuilt age for this dating sample.
Phase 2
During Phase 2 occupation focused on the knoll alone with the much more confined space now defended by earthwork scarps and a well-defined perimeter palisade. There are now four dates for Phase 2, three of which have been published previously (Green 1983), and a new AMS date (WK19214) that is reported here [CRA382 ± 32BP, δ¹³C –26.7 ± 0.2].

Sample NZ6279 was composed of pipi (Paphies australis) shells recovered from a Phase 1 pit on the ridge east of the knoll that the occupants of Phase 2 had used as a convenient place to dump their rubbish. It was calibrated using a ΔR value of 37 ± 39, as suggested for shells of this species deriving from the west coast of the North Island of New Zealand (Petchey et al. 2008: 248).

Sample NZ6277 was from a patch of charcoal associated with burned posts on edge of the knoll just inside the Phase 3 palisade line. The field notes (Fox and Green 1982: 64, Green 1983: 110) state that “from the stratigraphic sequence and the amount of wood, much of it partially charred and totara from its look, the post butts were burned off level to the ground and then the area renewed by a buildup of clay”. This overlying clay layer was associated with construction of the Phase 3 palisades and thus sample NZ6277 is clearly from a Phase 2 context (making its attribution to Phase 3 in the New Zealand Radiocarbon Database [http://www.waikato.ac.nz/nzcd/] an error). Identification of the retained charcoal from this sample revealed it was a mixture of Pūriri, Tōtara, Coprosma and Hebe, clearly demonstrating it was mixed occupation material rather than the single burnt Tōtara post butt suggested in Green’s field notes.

WK19214 was derived solely from tiny pieces of Coprosma and Hebe charcoal extracted from the retained portion of NZ6277.

The final dated sample from Phase 2 (NZ6274) was from a single small diameter posthole in the Square F9 baulk that was stratigraphically coincident with the burned off post butts that provided the other Phase 2 charcoal samples.

Phase 3
Sample NZ6276 was only tentatively attributed to Phase 3. It came from the fill of one of three postholes near to the palisade fence in the southwest corner of square F5, two of which belong to Phase 3 and one to Phase 2. On the basis of the sample’s slightly younger date Green (1983: 110-11) concluded that it came from the Phase 3 posthole nearest to the southwest corner of this square. It was suggested this substantial timber upright supported a raised open platform, on top of which dried fern root or other foods could be stored away from predation by rats as illustrated in early to mid-19th century literature on Māori settlements. All the charcoal was Pūriri, most with brown ends.
indicating they originated as the burned off end of a single piece of timber, the unburned part of which had since decayed away.

It should be noted here that in two cases Green (1983) drew on the outcome of $^{14}$C dating to assign samples to occupation phases.

**REVISION OF THE MAIORO SEQUENCE**

*The Phase 2 and 3 dates*

As can be seen on Figure 1, the Phase 2 and 3 samples form a consistent series that overlap at one standard deviation ($1\sigma$). This suggests less than 50 years had elapsed between these two occupations and an age centred on the 16th century is well-supported by these results. This conforms well to the wider New Zealand pattern whereby fortified sites or pā only occur from the 15th century onwards (Schmidt 1996: 446).

Although three of the above samples were run on charcoal from the large and long lived *Pūriri* tree, they show no evidence of more than 50 years of inbuilt age. Because the issue of inbuilt age will arise again when we discuss the Phase 1 dates, it is important to try and understand why this should be so. To do this we need to examine both the natural history of the *Pūriri* tree and the uses to which its timber was put at Maioro. *Pūriri* is a large, long-lived tree of northern North Island strongly associated with the fertile soils sought out by both Māori and early European settlers (Dijkgraaf 1994, Dykgraaf 1992). Though lowland forests where it originally grew were progressively cleared, *Pūriri* has, unlike most other large trees, a remarkable ability to survive forest clearance and to re-grow from fallen trunks and roots (Dijkgraaf 1994: 111-13). At European arrival *Pūriri* was common in coastal areas even where bracken fern and scrub dominated the vegetation and, despite over a century of modern farming, it remains a common feature of present day landscapes. Wallace has identified *Pūriri* charcoal from about one hundred assemblages from Māori archaeological sites in the northern North Island, where it is both abundant and is often the only large tree in samples otherwise dominated by short lived woody species.

*Pūriri* appears to have supplied much of the timber for posts and palisades during Phases 2 and 3 at Maioro. As dry *Pūriri* heartwood has been known to chip even modern steel axe blades, it seems likely that these posts were normally cut from green wood. The secondary trunks of *Pūriri* grow to the size required for posts in at least 50 years, therefore yielding a mean potential inbuilt age of less than 50 years. Despite not meeting the current practice of selecting only short lived species for dating purposes (McFadgen 1982) this is almost certainly why the Maioro *Pūriri* charcoal appears to have supplied reliable dates.
Figure 1. Calibrated Radiocarbon Dates from Maioro.
The Phase 1 dates

At face value the Phase 1 dates (NZ6278 and NZ6275) suggest a gap of up to 300 years between the initial occupation of the site and the construction of the later defences. An Archaic or Moa Hunter era date for a pit and terrace site that had subsequently been modified to become a pā was unexpected since a general review of the evidence suggests this site type dates from the 15th century onwards (Schmidt 1996). Furthermore, no evidence was recovered during excavation that pointed to any significant time gap between Phases 1 and 2 (Fox and Green 1982: 76). For these reasons Green (1983: 108) at the time proposed the alternative explanation, specifically that the Phase 1 dating sample came from wood that had grown several centuries before it was burned. We now know that both Phase 1 samples were remains of posts made from substantial tree trunks and, in retrospect, Green acknowledged it was naïve to date charred fragments of such large timbers of unknown species.

The unexpectedly early 14C determinations of Phase 1 could contain several hundred years of inbuilt age only if the samples derived from large, slow growing forest trees such as Tōtara, Matai or Kauri. These species can contain wood with hundreds of years of inbuilt age and, moreover, it has long been demonstrated that logs of such species have durable timber which can persist for generations in many New Zealand landscapes (Molloy et al. 1963: 69). If the first inhabitants of Maioro cleared primary forest to plant their crops such timber would have been readily available. Wallace has identified many charcoal assemblages where the use of such sub-fossil wood by pre-European Māori is strongly suggested. These are dominated by scrub and shrub species yet contain charcoal of a few large forest trees, such as Tōtara, Matai and Kauri, but contain none of the other tree species that would have accompanied them in a living forest community. These results seem to indicate most pre-European Māori settlements in the northern North Island were set in fern and scrub vegetation; old stumps and logs continued to supply timber and firewood long after the forests had been cleared.

In sum, the overall evidence suggests the two 12-13th century dates obtained from unidentified charcoal samples may well have been biased by inbuilt age and, consequently, their 14C dates are cannot be regarded as reliable.

Other dating evidence

Other evidence from the Phase 1 occupation is also relevant here. Fox and Green (1982: 72-73) reported that two adzes associated with this occupation were made from metasomatised argillite from the Ohana quarries on D’Urville Island. This is usually viewed as “early period” adze material and had previously been suggested as an additional line of evidence for the antiquity of the Phase 1 settlement (Green 1983: 112). These adzes have now
been re-examined by Kath Prickett of Auckland Museum and her preliminary results largely invalidate this interpretation. While the adze illustrated in Fox and Green’s (1982: 73) Figure 16 is confirmed as Nelson argillite, it is clearly a remnant of a much larger implement that has been reworked into the small 2B form typical of later periods. Such small argillite adzes are common well after AD 1500 and their presence has no particular chronological implications (Turner 2005: 61). Additionally, the adze illustrated in Figure 17 of Fox and Green (1982) is not argillite at all but a fossiliferous chert. This material is present in several local adze collections and Prickett believes is from a local Waikato source. Similarly, the chisel illustrated in Fox and Green’s (1982) Figure 18 is made from a greywacke/meta-sandstone and also of likely local origin. Thus the artefacts which were once thought, on the basis of their raw material, to support an early date are, upon re-examination, found to either to be from local sources or, in the case of the sole argillite piece, to be a reworked from an older item. The assemblage as a whole does not indicate an early date for the site but is more typical of collections dated to later periods.

**DISCUSSION**

Open settlements without obvious defensive features, known in Māori as *kainga*, varied greatly in their size, spacing and distribution across the landscape, and only late in the post-contact period could some of them have been legitimately termed villages (Green 1990). A great many are described in field survey reports as composed of terraces with surface indications of subterranean pits which, whenever they are excavated, are found to cover a huge range of sizes and shapes. Occasionally, some such sites have dwellings, earth ovens and extensive shellfish middens. Except in periods of serious conflict, these open settlements served as the everyday habitation sites for a local community. They may often have housed no more than an extended family unit and been occupied only seasonally for periods of as little as five years in light of shifting agriculture practices of Māori.

In the Maioro site sequence Phase 1 begins with just such a small hamlet consisting of a series of subterranean storage pits along the top of a ridge and knoll. On the knoll portion of this ridgeline few structural features from Phase 1 remain, most having been obliterated by subsequent occupations. No reliable dates for this phase were obtained though no evidence was recovered by the excavators that pointed to a significant time gap between this and the succeeding phases (Fox and Green 1982: 76). We propose here that the first occupants of Maioro carved their initial settlement out of old growth forest dominated by trees with high inbuilt age. Wood from these trees would have been used as construction material at this time and we suggest charcoal from this source is likely to have supplied two of the dating
samples. It is argued here that a more acceptable date for Phase 1 would be no earlier than the late 15th century AD.

During the 16th century AD a second phase of occupation occurred with the knoll being converted to a small pā or defended food store. The principal form of defence was a steep scarp and a palisade of posts around the perimeter of the knoll, inside of which multiple small, often intercutting subterranean storage pits were constructed with roofs supported by a single row of small diameter uprights. These pits were tightly packed into the limited available space around two houses and a working floor ((Fox and Green 1882: Fig. 6). The whole arrangement seems to have been to protect the food crop and the hamlet’s inhabitants during intermittent periods of conflict. The same pattern of occupancy seems to have been followed in Phase 3, tentatively dated to the late 16th to early 17th century AD.

* * *

We argue that 12-13th century dates previously reported for Phase 1 at Maioro are probably biased by charcoal deriving from species such as Tōtara that can contain wood with high inbuilt age. The evidence assembled here suggests that the combined old and new determinations for Phases 2 and 3 centres on the 16th century AD and that, in the absence of reliable dated samples from Phase 1, this occupation probably dates to no earlier than the 15th century AD. Overall, we suggest Maioro was occupied by people practicing shifting agriculture for three fairly brief spells from the late 15th to early 17th century AD. If this chronological scheme is adopted, the Maioro sequence will fit comfortably within the broader patterns of North Island settlement and subsistence revealed by archaeological research, where intensive agricultural activities, inland settlement and fortified sites date from the 15th century AD onwards.

The Maioro reanalysis also shows the utility of considering the growth habitats and ecology of wood charcoal species in chronological interpretations. Though Pūriri can grow to be a large and very long lived tree, its rather bushy form when growing outside closed canopy forests means it typically supplies posts with little significant inbuilt age. The practice of “chronometric hygiene” is problematic in assuming that all radiocarbon determinations on long-lived species are necessarily affected by in-built age, something which is clearly not the case with the Phase 2 and 3 samples from this site.

Lastly, the sequence outlined here of initial settlement in old growth forest dominated by trees with high inbuilt age, followed by later occupations in culturally modified landscapes dominated by secondary vegetation where the potential for inbuilt age in timber is substantially lessened, is likely
common to many Polynesian islands. The implication is that the practice of “chronometric hygiene”, where unidentified materials and/or long lived species are automatically eliminated from chronometric assessments, may have a more dramatic effect on dates from early period sites compared to those of later times, leading to biases in estimations of colonisation and other related processes.

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NOTE

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REFERENCES


ABSTRACT

As the two previously reported 12-13th century dates for the founding of the Maioro site have been controversial, residual charcoal from three previously dated samples was obtained and identified. Short lived material from one supplied a new AMS date so that there are now a total of five dates for Phases 2 and 3 whose overlapping ranges centre on the 16th century AD. We suggest the two unexpectedly early dates attributed to Phase 1 are unreliable as they were run on unidentified charcoal that may have incorporated significant inbuilt ages. We argue occupations at this site may have begun no earlier than the late 15th century AD and ended by the early 17th century AD. This analysis illustrates how the growth habitats and ecology of wood species used for dating can contribute to chronological interpretations and has implications for the practice of “chronometric hygiene”.

Keywords: Maioro, C^{14} dating, charcoal, inbuilt age, chronometric hygiene
Mōteatea (sung laments) are at the heart of mātauranga Māori. They are the central strand of Māori poetry and song, a source of knowledge about tribal history and whakapapa, and a living art form. This book introduces Sir Apirana Ngata’s classic four-volume collection of mōteatea, discussing the power and meaning of these traditional Māori songs. With dual text in English and Māori, and illustrated throughout, Ngā Mōteatea: An Introduction He Kupu Arataki provides an accessible entry point into a great Māori art form.

SEAN MALLON
*Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa*

Tattooing was once a strong practice in the Cook Islands but by the early 20th century it was disappearing from the cultural and social life of the region. By the 1990s and in the first decade of the 21st century a revival began partially inspired by the Festival of Pacific Arts held on Rarotonga in 1992. *Patterns of the Past* documents what is recorded about Cook Islands tattooing, the history of the current revival, and the stories of tattooists and tattooed people who have been involved in this process.

*Patterns of the Past* has been a long time in the making and it is published when the interest and production of tattooing in Cook Islands communities is growing. I recall meeting one of the authors, Therese Mangos, in the mid 1990s when she visited Te Papa to view an old vaka ‘canoe’ called A’ua‘u from Mangaia in the collections. She was researching Cook Islands tattooing and the vaka made around 1906 was said to be decorated with motifs based on tattoos worn by Taniera Tangitoru, who was one of the carvers. Over the years, I heard little bits of news about this project and to finally see it in print is a welcome surprise. Mangos and co-author John Utanga have produced the only book on Cook Islands tattooing after two decades of research, commitment and passion for the subject.

The book is beautifully illustrated with around 250 images and the content is fascinating. The text is written in a clear, interesting and flowing style, and will be accessible to a broad readership. The book is organised in three major sections with appendices. It is prefaced with the legend of ‘Ina, an origin myth about tatatau that reminds us of the ancient origins of the art form. The first section is a brief overview of Cook Islands society and culture in the period of initial European contacts. It covers the forms of leadership, religion, ceremonial life and other cultural connections between the different communities across the Cook Islands archipelago. The second section, titled “Tatatau”, introduces readers to the tools and practice of Cook Islands tattooing. It reviews the historical processes that have shaped the development and contributed to the demise of the art form. This section ends with a discussion of the current renaissance and a series of pen portraits of five key tattoo artists involved in the revival. The third section is titled “Patterns”, and explores the wider meaning of tatatau—‘to dress, adorn, decorate’. The authors put tattooing in a larger context of cultural production and examine the interconnectedness of patterning practices across the social and material world of the Cook Islands. They do this through a wonderful
collection of images and artefacts and a careful reading of the archival and published sources. For example, the authors’ analysis of the sources related to Tangitoru and the markings on the vaka A‘ua‘u (mentioned above) throw up some interesting questions and anomalies in the published records. The review of patterning in the material cultures of the communities of Aitutaki, Mangaia, Ngā-Pū-toru and Rarotonga is a revealing and most valuable overview. The final section is the appendices. This is a feature I always look for in survey books of this kind. Here the authors have provided a glossary, endnotes, picture references, bibliography and an index. The inclusion of this material makes Patterns of the Past more than just a beautifully illustrated coffee table book. It is evidence of the scholarship in the authors’ work and forms a solid paper trail for future researchers and scholars to follow and revisit.

The book is elegantly designed by Cypress Vivieaere. Her restrained use of a Pacific colour palette fills the pages with a feel and character that avoids cliché. So often with books on Pacific arts graphic designers cannot resist the urge to over-embellish the pages with cultural motifs and colour in an effort to make the book somehow more Pacific, when the art forms and people (as in this book) do the job more than adequately. Of course it is the photography by Kirsty Griffin that helps brings the words and personal narratives of artists and tattooed people to life. Vivieaere has used Griffin’s photography well and it is obvious she had a rich selection of portraits and close ups of tattoos to choose from. These photographs are complemented by a large number of reproductions of archival images, historical prints and drawings from museum collections around the world. The careful placement of carvings, textiles and other cultural treasures from museums illustrates how patterning and decoration has been deeply embedded across Cooks Islands culture through time.

The book complements other recent significant studies of tattooing in the Pacific: Nicholas Thomas (et al.), Tattoo; Bodies, Art and Exchange in the Pacific and the West (2005), Makiko Kuwahara, Tattoo: An Anthropology (2005) and Ngahuia Te Awekotuku (et al.), Mau Moko: The World of Maori Tattoo (2007). It brings history, material culture, tattooing and tattoo artists’ stories together in a most successful way. An interesting addition for a future edition might be an exploration of the personal stories of tattooed individuals. What meanings do tattooed Cook Islanders give to their tattoos? How do they make these images work for them in their lives?

In Patterns of the Past, the authors have uncovered some of the little known past, but also created a fresh detailed record of the present. It is a collaborative effort that will be a key reference point for generations to come. However, in creating this book the authors too have become an important part of the revival they have documented. Their contribution, through this timely publication will ensure that the lines of Cook Islands tattooing remain dark and strong. Meitaki Ma‘ata!
This recently published edited volume addresses a number of social and economic phenomena characteristic of a globalised, modern economy in terms of how they are actualised and made local on the level of individual nation-states, islands or communities throughout the Pacific. The authors use ethnographic examples from Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, Fiji and the Cook Islands. All concern issues of money and economic re-evaluations, ideas about personhood and sociality and individualism. Their essays examine a variety of "the ways in which knowledges, ideas and desires are dialectically produced and interpreted locally in the Pacific context" (p. 23), specifically by looking at local understandings of wealth, success, speculation and "development" in contexts where notions of individuality, social and moral obligations, and kin and community relations are constantly renegotiated.

In the introductory chapter, Patterson and Macintyre address the usefulness and limitations of employing the concept of "multiple modernities," urging an "unsettling of the imaginary of modernity" as sometimes uncritically employed by anthropologists. They point to the influence in the contemporary Pacific of postcolonial, neoliberal approaches to good governance and the speculative, short term paper economy referred to as "casino capitalism" (p. 5). Since the 1970s, they argue, "Pacific countries have been beguiled by the prospect of economic development that would enable them to participate in a world market economic system" (p. 9), but the anticipated prosperity has not been realised. This does not mean, however, that they have not prompted re-evaluations of ideas about self, community and morality. They point to the myriad contradictions inherent in terms like globalisation and development, which the following chapters all address in one way or another, ultimately contributing to the argument of the book that local and regional experiences reflect both variable and varied reactions to economic processes taking place elsewhere. In response, "Melanesians are aware of their relative powerlessness but they can be both innovative and imitative in their responses... to the forces of global capitalism" (p. 13).

The first essay, contributed by Richard Sutcliffe, does not (unlike the rest of the chapters) deal specifically with the Pacific. Instead, it examines "the imagination of magic" in a general context of global capitalism as against the historical emergence of modernity. Sutcliffe makes the important point that it is necessary to critically assess the concept of multiple modernities from an anthropological perspective, and to distinguish the notion of modernity from simply the present day situation (p. 35). As a general examination of modernity and ideas of enchantment, it seems somewhat divorced of context as the first chapter in a collection of essays about the Pacific. Perhaps it would have worked more effectively as a final chapter, with reference to the other papers in this volume, as the current structure of the book does not provide
a cohesiver summary chapter, leaving the reader without a clear sense of the shared visions of the contributing authors on the issues raised.

All the other eight chapters focus on particular places in the Pacific, and this grounding in ethnography anchors the theoretical discussions that emerge. Mary Patterson picks up Sutcliffe's theme of enchantment as it articulates with local and global economic ideals. She uses the example of Nagriamel, an indigenous land rights movement formed in the 1960s in Vanuatu, and the tensions that obtain between kastom and capitalist notions about land, ownership and profit. Deborah MacDougall also takes up issues regarding land rights in her analysis of how collective actors respond differentially to exogenous institutions, specifically in this case the church and logging operations. She argues convincingly that while the latter encourages boundedness and produces conflict, the former is inclusive of the community as a whole (rather than focusing on individual landowners) and is thus more co-operative. Issues of individualism, agency and subjectivity in Christianity in Fiji are addressed by Tomlinson.

The remaining essays all centre on some aspect of the monetary economy, often as a challenge to existing ideas about personhood, kinship obligations and social cohesion. At play here are various strategies for localising and investing meaning in global flows of money and ideas. Macintyre looks at urban women wage-earners, Cox explores the proliferation of fast money schemes, and Bainton investigates ideas about personal responsibility and morality in the context of the mining boom—all addressing research in Papua New Guinea. Alexeyeff, drawing on Cook Island ethnography, considers peoples’ ideas about gambling and about risk, power and distribution of wealth as a response to, and echo of, government economic strategies, based on liberalisation of regulatory policy and speculative endeavours. Casino capitalism in the 1980s, she argues, gambled with Cook Islanders’ collective prosperity, and the local economy is now deeply dependent on remittances; locally, gambling is one of few avenues to potentially acquire money, and winnings are incorporated into meeting existing social obligations. And finally, Rawlins looks at family trusts and offshore tax havens in Vanuatu as representative of a sort of “fictive kinship” wherein symbolic pathways connect various entities in spatially organised networks.

The figures, maps and diagrams included are minimal, and there is no index of them, but where provided they are helpful in visualising the concepts discussed, as is the case with the “kinship diagram” for financial flows in Rawlins’ chapter. The absence of photographs does not detract from the impact of the book. The volume uses an unusual footnote style and lacks a full alphabetised bibliography, which would have been a useful addition. As noted above, it would have perhaps been beneficial to include a summary chapter at the end of the volume to neatly tie up the interesting threads running through each of the essays in their multifarious approaches to modernity across five Pacific nations.

This volume contributes to wider discussions of a variety of economic processes and their implications, in some cases addressing rather unlikely topics (such as tax havens) in anthropological terms, while others deal with more familiar territory (land ownership, for example). It is most likely to be of use to those with particular interest in political and economic anthropology in the Pacific region, and may also
be relevant to those looking at similar issues in other geographical regions as a point of comparison. Rich in ethnographic detail, the often creative avenues through which the common concerns of individuality, morality and responsibility are addressed make for engaging reading.


M aria AMOAMO

University of Otago

William Bligh is perhaps the most misunderstood of the early Pacific explorers and colonisers. In her new book, Bligh: William Bligh in the South Seas, Anne Salmond brings a fresh perspective to a well documented topic. The book’s 23 chapters trace Bligh’s three voyages to the Pacific Islands: the first on board Resolution with Cook in 1776-80, then Bounty in 1787-90 and the third aboard Providence in 1791-93. Salmond said the book “tumbled out” of the end of The Trial of the Cannibal Dog (Radio New Zealand, 10 September 2011) which frames the story in terms of cultural awareness. Bligh however, seeks to “illuminate the island world, its key players and their relationships with Bligh so often peripheral to existing texts” (p. 21). Why? Because “[t]he Pacific protagonists were as real as their British counterparts, helping to share and shape what happened in both places” (p. 21). This line of argument informs the entire book.

The opening chapters remind the reader that these voyages, inspired by patrons like Joseph Banks, fostered both ecological imperialism and commercial enterprise. From 1765 to 1793 fifteen British naval vessels came into the central Pacific for purposes of discovery and appropriation, or, like the Bounty and Providence, for purposes of exploitation. By the time of Bligh’s first visit in 1777 Tahiti “was no untouched Utopia…. the Islanders had acquired not only guns, muskets, iron tools and strange clothing but also venereal and epidemic diseases” (p. 69). Salmond reflects these cross-cultural impacts in early chapter titles, Chapters 1: The paradise of the World and 3: Island of the Blest, then cynically in Chapters 19: This Modern Cyprus and 21: Paradise Lost. By his third voyage Bligh laments, “they are so generally altered, that I believe no European in future will ever know what their ancient Customs of Receiving Strangers were” (p. 358).

Like Cook, Bligh was initiated into the royal circles of Tahitian society and took a deep interest in local customs and beliefs. He was not only a practical seaman and hydrographer, but a pioneering ethnographer who made major contributions to our knowledge of life in Polynesia during the early contact period (p. 14). Three chapters, 8: Bligh/Parai, 10: These Happy Islanders and 20: Belle of the Isle, provide vivid details of the island world including topics like child-bearing, theology and food preparation methods. Calendrical events, such as the “season of plenty”, Pleiades (matari ‘i), and the many ‘entertainments’ (heiva), sacred ‘arioi performances, fertility
rituals and sacrifices are described, as is the Tahitian practice of taking ‘bond friends’ (*taio*). In this relationship each party was obliged to share knowledge and Salmond notes, “as Bligh’s understanding of the language became more fluent and subtle, his reports grew more accurate and insightful” (p. 169). Similarly, the Tahitians were exposed to and intensely curious about the European world. Following a long-established pattern in Pacific Studies of combining history and anthropology, Salmond is careful to bring historical depth to these accounts.

Bligh’s log, journal and charts from Cook’s third voyage are all missing, gone with the *Bounty*. This missing documentation requires Salmond take a “forensic approach, reconstructing his activities from fragmentary traces” (p. 48). What emerges is a generous, genial patron, a mentor with a care and concern for his crew not often displayed by other commanders. But Bligh could also turn into an overbearing, vitriolic bully, especially to those who failed to live up to his exacting standards. Bligh lacked the charisma and stature of Cook, but ironically upon the arrival of the *Bounty* in Tahiti he claimed to be Cook’s son. Salmond describes Bligh as an insecure man, prone to elaborate feats of self-justification. Paradoxical traits continually plagued his career and his reputation as a tyrant and bully is often blamed for causing the *Bounty* mutiny.

Bligh could readily become “warm and engaging” and was “ardent and faithful” (p. 442) to his wife Betsy. The text offers up rich contrasts of tender domestic life, revealed in the unguarded letters between husband and wife. Salmond describes their marriage as “a love match that would survive the triumphs and disasters of Bligh’s turbulent career” (p. 101). Yet a sense of betrayal permeates Bligh’s character. Unjustly treated after Cook’s death, he received neither recognition nor reward for his work on *Resolution*. He felt betrayed by his protégé, mutineer Fletcher Christian, and upon his return to England following the *Providence* voyage he found public opinion had rallied against him, fuelled by a discrediting “war of the pamphlets” instigated by influential families of mutineers Christian and Heywood. Bligh’s career was plagued with battles both on land and sea.

Over the span of more than a dozen years, Tahiti remains the sensual and exotic backdrop to the book’s narrative. Perhaps Bligh never forgave Tahiti for the mutiny; he was quick to blame the island’s seductive women for leading his men astray. The mutiny is one of the most documented events in naval history and retains a mythical quality, (re)presented in hundreds of books and even three major Hollywood movies. The *Bounty* voyage features prominently from Chapters 5 through 17. Chapter 11: Huzza for Otaheiti! revisits the mutiny while Chapter 12: I have Been Run Down by My Own Dogs charts Bligh’s 3618 mile voyage to the east Indies after the mutiny. Drawing on the works of Owen Rutter, Salmond uses Bligh’s journal to describe this incredible journey by open boat. Amidst deprivation, cold and misery, Bligh not only charts, records and reflects; he instils faith and a sense of hope in the men under his care. Having exonerated himself from all blame, Bligh felt “an inward happiness which prevented any depression of my spirits…. I found my mind wonderfully supported” (p. 216). Chapters 17: The Mutineer’s Babies and 22: The Awful Day of Trial introduce new perspectives of events post mutiny. The Epilogue gives an account of the early Pitcairn settlement by nine mutineers and their Tahitian *taio*. However, some details of this account differ with established literature regarding the sequence of deaths of all but one mutineer, John Adams.
Reviews

Extensively researched, using a broad selection of primary sources and richly illustrated with 25 colour plates and scores of black and white illustrations, Bligh successfully combines historical and anthropological perspectives. Accessible and easy to read, the book is written with a sensitive style and nuanced (at times speculative) perspective about how to represent the past. Salmond remains true to her intention to illuminate the island world with comprehensive descriptions of Polynesian words, customs, beliefs and practice that may prove too detailed for some readers. Bligh is a book that will have wide appeal and a worthy addition to Salmond’s award-winning repertoire.


KIRSTY GILLESPIE
The University of Queensland

Gunter Senft is an Austronesian language specialist well known for his many years of working and living with the people of the Trobriand Islands, Papua New Guinea, learning and researching the language of Kilivila. He first visited Tauwema, a village on Kaile’una Island, in 1982, and has maintained a relationship with the people there since. Thus a book by Senft devoted to a particular performance practice of Trobriand Islanders is something to anticipate, as it promises rich ethnography and a depth of detail and understanding.

In this slim and handsomely-presented book (volume 5 in a series published by Benjamins entitled Culture and Language Use: Studies in Anthropological Linguistics), Senft shines his light on death in the Trobriand Islands. His focus is on Islanders’ traditional belief system regarding the spirit world and how this belief system is expressed through performance, particularly song language.

The book is arranged into four chapters, preceded by some very useful maps and a brief introduction. His skill at ethnographic writing, displayed at the outset, will be particularly valuable for readers who have little knowledge of ritual life in Papua New Guinea (since the book lacks photographs that might otherwise illustrate these scenes). Chapter 1, which is a short (13 page) introduction to mortuary ritual and belief in the Trobriand Islands, introduces the reader to the concept of the baloma, the spirit of the deceased. From this first chapter the reader new to the subject matter will realise that Senft’s writing draws heavily on research that has gone before, most notably that of Malinowski, perhaps the most famous researcher to work in the Trobriand Islands. Senft’s reading and re-reading of Malinowski’s work is a cornerstone of this book.

Chapter 2 is a longer chapter describing in more detail the journey of the baloma after death, the underworld into which the baloma enters, and the interaction of baloma with their former real-world lives, with some comparative notes on similar
eschatological concepts in other parts of the region. It is here that Senft begins to describe the sexual lives of the baloma that the title of the book evokes. Lengthy passages from Malinowski are reproduced here that compare and sometimes contrast with information gathered by Senft during his research. While the presence of Malinowski is significant to the book, and is expected owing to Malinowski’s own preoccupation with “the sexual life of savages”, his shadow can be at times oppressive. Conflicting opinions surrounding Malinowski’s work come to a head early on as Senft declares Malinowski’s assertion of a Trobriand Islanders’ notion of “virgin birth” either a mistake or a tool to promote Malinowski’s career (p. 33). Senft then goes on to explain his disbelief of Malinowski’s claim, including what Senft himself labels a “nasty imputation” (p. 35), and then cites email correspondence with Michael Young and Eric Venbrux that vigorously disagrees with Senft’s assertions. Such interpersonal verbal jousting comes as a surprise in this academic context, but certainly makes for interesting reading.

Chapter 3, the longest chapter at almost 60 pages, is where the reader is finally presented with the songs that are the focus of the book, songs associated with death, the afterlife and the spirit world that crystallise aspects of Trobriand eschatology (and Trobriand culture more broadly). Song by song, stanza by stanza, the songs are systematically described. This formulaic approach to analysis is useful to compare across songs, but the structure becomes somewhat repetitive after several song analyses, and lacks the poetic flow evident elsewhere in the monograph. Towards the end of the chapter Senft presents songs that encode colonial and war histories in the Trobriands, and these are a welcome addition to the book, showing how ancestral song genres can embrace change.

In the Introduction, Senft mentions that the multimedia data upon which this research draws (sound recordings and some film footage) are available through Senft’s website at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics (http://www.mpi.nl/people/senft-gunter/research). It is in Chapter 3 that the reader is directed to these, with the analyses of each song beginning with a reference to the website and to the file name under which the example can be found. The instructions are clear enough, and the files are presented in more than one format to assist in downloading, however the site itself could be more navigation-friendly. Despite this, it is highly commendable that this data has been made available online. Multimedia publication using online resources is relatively new for academic publication so it is natural that ways to do this will improve over time.

Chapter 4 is a short conclusion where in ten pages Senft draws particular attention to the moribund condition of aspects of the song language used, the culture change experienced by Trobriand Islanders more generally, and the nature of languages as dynamic. Following this is an appendix of quotes from James Frazer’s 1913 publication The Belief in Immortality and the Worship of the Dead, which Senft appears to have provided for comparative purposes. A second appendix appears listing the metadata that accompanies the multimedia examples (also available online).

While the focus of this book is the songs of the Trobriand Islanders, it is notable that the volume does not include any musical analysis (though it does include some general musical description as part of the ethnography). Senft is fully aware of this missing element; rather than apologising, he expresses the wish that publishing this
work and making the multimedia examples freely accessible online will inspire a “music ethnologist” to become engaged with this material (p. xvii). The resources provided are indeed rich and abundant, and it would be wonderful to see this wish come to fruition.


**SIOBHÁN M. MATTISON**

*University of Auckland*

Andrew Strathern and Pamela Stewart are social anthropologists at the University of Pittsburgh. Prolific writers, these authors have wide-ranging interests and field experience, covering topics from symbolism and ritual to medical anthropology, and geographic areas from the United Kingdom to Asia and Oceania. The breadth of the authors’ scholarship is reflected in their twofold goals in *Kinship in Action*: to interpret kinship through a processual lens and to explore the interplay between individuals and the kinship systems in which they participate. Strathern and Stewart should be lauded for promoting a pluralistic perspective in the study of kinship and for moving beyond entrenched debates that have for decades plagued synthetic research efforts. The greatest strength of this book also engenders its greatest weakness, however: breadth of coverage is sacrificed for depth of included case studies. This leaves two potential, but undefined, audiences for the book: undergraduate students of kinship who might use this to supplement more traditional texts; and kinship experts desiring exposure to important, but often overlooked, case studies.

*Kinship in Action* may be structured for use as a supplementary text for an introductory kinship course: the first chapter presents a partial overview of the anthropology of kinship as well as its foundational areas of inquiry; subsequent chapters address the life cycle of the family, cultural variation in concepts of reproduction, and the variable structures and functions of kinship; final chapters challenge traditional notions of kinship through exploration of Schneider’s Euro-American “folk model” of kinship as well as new reproductive technologies; and each chapter concludes with “Questions to Consider”. The examples discussed in the book range from contemporary legal cases grappling with the rights of biological versus contractual (“social”) parents, to fictional accounts of kinship in films and novels, to the commoditisation of marriage in the context of market integration among the Telefomin of Papua New Guinea. While students are likely to benefit from the breadth and novelty of these examples, a more streamlined structure, focusing more closely on each case’s original contributions to existing literature, would assist students in unpacking the relevant points.

An instructor who is already very familiar with the anthropology of kinship might profitably make use of the case studies provided in *Kinship in Action*. The geographic emphasis on Oceania provides refreshing examples of populations with which kinship scholars may be relatively unfamiliar, including the Hagen, Duna, Pangia, Melpa,
and smaller-scale groups such as the Huaulu and Telefomin. The facts concerning these groups are numerous, reflecting the authors’ extensive familiarity with and expertise in Oceania. They are, however, presented disjointedly, making it difficult to assimilate the information in the context of the stated goals of the book. For example, the chapter “Concepts in Reproduction” discusses some of the variation in beliefs and rituals surrounding conception and childbirth, including the well-known Trobriand case, as well as lesser-known cases such as the Siuai and other populations of Papua New Guinea. Their relevance to discussions of “Legal Contexts” (p. 41), “New Reproductive Technology” (p. 43), and “Adoption” (p. 46), with which they appear, could be more clearly delineated to assist the reader in attempts to merge seemingly disparate topics into a more synthetic overarching framework. In particular, the case studies could be analysed more explicitly in terms of “action” and the “self and group”, themes implied by the book’s title. This would do much to improve the reader’s ability to grasp the authors’ novel and interesting insights, which at present are often buried within truisms and facts.

The authors’ discussion of the Na (aka the Mos(u)o), with whom I work, is illustrative. While discussed in some detail, the section on the Na (p. 103-7) begins abruptly, without explicit rationale for its inclusion. The section relates important features of Na society, including class structure, marital practices, and rituals. The reader gleans from this material that the Na are matrilineal and that the institution of marriage governs reproduction only among elite members of society, two aspects emphasised in the last paragraph where the authors finally reveal why they find the Na interesting. The broad overview of the Na is summarised based on one ethnographer’s account (Cai Hua 2001, *A Society without Father’s or Husbands: The Na of China*). While the authors speculate that “the relatively unusual features of the [Cai’s] materials make it likely that variant versions exist or will emerge” (p. 107), they do not relate what those variant versions might be. Researchers of the Mosuo (including myself, Eileen Walsh, C.K. Shih, Elizabeth Hsu, Tami Blumenfield and others) have made significant efforts to move beyond explanations of the Na as a case of “extreme matriliny” (p. 107). In addressing temporal and attitudinal changes and the apparent tensions between self and group, these researchers have engaged at various points both of the objectives of Strathern and Stewart’s book. Indeed, the most recent and arguably most authoritative account of the Mosuo, C.K. Shih’s *Quest for Harmony* (2010), discusses marriage (or lack thereof) as an outcome of endeavours to maintain group harmony and would have made a valuable contribution to *Kinship in Action*.

If somewhat fragmented, *Kinship in Action* succeeds nonetheless at various points in bringing together disparate perspectives under one rubric. As a biocultural anthropologist focused on the evolutionary underpinnings of human social behaviour, I appreciate the authors’ holistic approach in general and their attempts to marry biological and cultural theories of human kinship in particular. While their discussion of evolutionary theories of kinship is lacking, the authors’ critiques of David Schneider’s anti-kinship scholarship are salient (especially pp. 132-33), as are attempts to bring into focus both belief and behaviour. I agree with Strathern and Stewart’s emphasis on the “interplay of [kinship] process[es] and structure[s] in local contexts and their emergence as historical trajectories of change” (p. 152) and welcome efforts to incorporate these ideas into the anthropology of kinship.

CHARLOTTE JOY

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*The Tourist State* is an exploration of how the New Zealand State has performed its identity through the creation of its tourist industry. Two specific times at which this has been visible have been the so-called liberal era (1890-1914) and the period from 1998 to the present. In the first instance, New Zealand touted itself as the social laboratory of the World, and “Maoriland” paired progressive liberalism with Māori culture, becoming a brand by which the State sold itself both internally and globally. During the second moment, Aotearoa New Zealand has once again very successfully marketed itself as one of the most popular global tourist destinations through its “100% Pure” advertising campaign.

The thesis of the book is that national identity and internal identity politics in Aotearoa New Zealand are not merely reflected in tourism. Instead, the State constitutes itself and negotiates its difficult identity politics through tourism, more specifically through the performance of tourism. The author thus extends performance methodologies to the study of the State. She does so through shifting the focus from representation of nation to performance: the materialisation and expression of the State. Werry contends that tourism is a mechanism of liberal statehood, an incessantly contested process that is the cumulative effect of a myriad of performances.

Werry uses a number of case studies to successfully put forward the case for a performance approach to tourism studies. Chapter 1 is an account of the creation of a tourist destination at the thermal springs in Rotorua at the turn of the 19th century. The thermal activity in the region had to be domesticated through the reassurance of elaborate architectural schemes such as the grand Government Gardens. The surrounding Māori villages were to a large extent “sanitised” and brought in line with a tourist vision of “Maoriland”. Werry states that in Rotorua “liberalism’s establishment of whiteness as tacit racial norm required the imposition of a local and specific rule of difference that established governmentality’s targets: white hygiene and self-management, and Māori discipline, surveillance, and containment” (p. 41).

In Chapter Two, Werry uses the biography of a single guide in Rotorua, Makereti (known as Guide Maggie). Makereti conformed to an idealised state model of indigeneity. She was of mixed European and Māori descent and managed to successfully negotiate the tourist encounter with subtlety and discernment through an appeal to the universalism of class. Werry uses the example Makereti, whom tourists found to be the perfect blend of cosmopolitan refinement and exotic otherness, as key to exploring the centrality of “conduct” in understanding how bodies are performed and regulated in line with a State’s vision of itself.

Chapter Three explores the relationship between tourism and statehood within the broader frame of global geopolitics through a discussion of the trans-Pacific tour of the United States’s “Great White Fleet” and its welcome by the New Zealand State in 1908. The spectacle of the welcome pageantry is described as a microcosm of the
identity politics at play at the time. Despite attempts at containment by the State, it was an occasion that was used by Māori leaders to put forward their claim to equal global citizenship. The appropriation of Māori pageantry by the State is described as lending the majority non-Māori state the mantle of romantic autochthony. In Werry’s terms, through this appropriation it acted as a “ventriloquist state”. On the other side, the United States used extensive press coverage of its tour to further its claim for an “American Pacific”.

Chapter 4 documents the use of the concept of Māori culture and lifeways (Māoritanga) to help sell tourism in Aotearoa New Zealand. This proposition was first explicitly put forward in the form of promotional film, The Tourism Edge, in 2005, interpreted as either rapacious neo-colonialism or a welcome re-calibration of ontological priorities.

At the heart of current government tourism policy is the concept of the “Free Independent Traveller”, an ideal, high-yield, tourist who engages with Aotearoa New Zealand in its entirety, thus maximising revenue. The “100% Pure New Zealand” campaign has as its central concept “freedom” and relies on a dominant trope from the past, that of pristine nature or terra nullius, that risked alienating Māori stakeholders. However, through the branding of Māori experiences, blending old-fashioned concert party performances with mass-appeal new theatrical techniques, Māori businesses have successfully imposed themselves in the tourist economy. Non-Māori businesses however have the more demanding task of navigating the tensions “between making Māori culture ‘deliverable’ and honoring tribal demands for privacy, autonomy and control over cultural property” (p. 184).

The final chapter deals with “the mutually constitutive processes of film-making and state making, mediated by touristic imperatives” (p. 191). The success of Whale Rider and The Lord of the Rings trilogy marks the “nullification of race” and a form of “postraciality” embraced by the New Zealand State. The economic impact of the Lord of the Rings in New Zealand was substantial; Werry argues, however, that the film’s deeply problematic racial semiology should be kept in mind. The film “mythologises whiteness” (p. 200) to an almost absurd extent. The newly re-invigorated New Zealand film’s industry subsequent support for Whale Rider is described by Werry as a tactical move “forwarding and fashioning the indigenous subject as the engine of collective futurity and prosperity” (p. 212), as opposed to the portrait of Māori modernity as tragedy portrayed in Once Were Warriors. Despite the international success of Māori actors and films, Werry warns that “to claim postracial mobility is to participate in a global economy of fantasy still structured by race and to reinscribe the racial distribution of opportunity and value on which that economy still rests” (p. 227).

Throughout the book, Werry paints a complex and nuanced picture of a new nation negotiating its internal identity and politics through the creation and successful dissemination of its tourist industry. By extensive references to theories of nationalism, spectacle, tourism and performance, Werry weaves a careful path, showing the multiple agencies at play in a nation “performing itself” for both and internal and external market.
January 2012 – March 2012


Mangos, Therese and John Utanga: *Patterns of the Past; Tattoo Revival in the Cook Islands*. Auckland: Punarua Productions, 2011. 220 pp., appendices, bib., colour plates, glossary, index, map. Price: NZ $49.95 (paper).

Patterson, Mary and Martha Macintyre (eds): *Managing Modernity in the Western Pacific*. St Lucia, QLD: Queensland University Press, 2011. 326 pp., figs, maps. Price: AU$34.95 (paper).


* The inclusion of a publication in this list neither assumes nor precludes its subsequent review.
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MĀORI TEXTS


MEMOIR SERIES


52. REILLY, Michael P.J., War and Succession in Mangaia—from Mamae’s Texts. 112pp., genealogies and maps. 2003. Price $16.00.


55. TE HURINUI, Pei, King Pötatau: An Account of the Life of Pötatau Te Wherowhero the First Māori King. 303 + xiv pp., figs, genealogies, indexes, maps. 2010. (Available to members of the Society only at $40.00.)

56. McRAE, Jane, Ngā Mōteatea: An Introduction / He Kupu Arataki. Māori translation by Hēni Jacobs. 158 pp., biblio., figs, notes, song texts. 2011. (Available to members of the Society only at $28.00.)

MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS

TOKELAU DICTIONARY. lii + 503 pp. Price: $35.00.


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