

SPATIAL MEMORY AND NARRATION: ORAL HISTORY AND TRACES OF THE PAST IN A POLYNESIAN LANDSCAPE¹

When Inepo, a 27-year-old fisherman on Mauke wanted to tell the legend of Akaina, a character important in the history of the island, he said: ‘Let’s go to the place where Akaina’s body was dried. It is on our land, near the orange grove.’ The day was hot and we hesitated, why not just tell the story right here in the village green. Inepo, however, insisted on showing us the place and told the legend which ended: ‘This place, I know it, I still remember it from my childhood (...) they (Akaina and his party) used to stay in Tane’s *marae* (cult place). That is also on our land.’²

Inepo’s vivid narrative did not focus on the time perspective or historical context. Dramatic events were brought from the past to the present by the place where it all happened, even though to an occasional outsider the place may have seemed to be just another spot of field and bushes. The narrative gave meaning to the place and the place testified that the events really happened on the island. The fact that local history is rooted in material objects, places and landscape, has been widely observed (Basso 1984; Connerton 1989; Glassie 1982; Halbwachs 1992 [1941; 1950], Lowenthal 1990; Tonkin 1995). Henry Glassie describes in his work *Passing the time in Ballymenone* the relationship of the younger generation to the oral history of an Irish village in the following way: ‘The few young men who were interested in history, who sat with the old people and listened with care, learned the complete stories of their place, and when they tell them, nothing is more

obvious than that they set them primarily in space, only secondarily in time.’ (Glassie 1982: 662–663).

Inepo can be compared to the young Irish men to whom the historical narratives are meaningful accounts of places. In fact, the oral historic narratives of most commoners on Mauke resemble the historical folklore of an Irish or another European village in their lack of a precise time perspective.

Inepo’s teacher in the art of historical narratives, called *tua taito* ‘old speech’, does, however, represent a different kind of oral historian. He was Papa Aiturau, a *tumu korero*, ‘a source of history’, who initiated children into the past of their own kin group. Inepo’s reference to the cult place (*marae*) and to the land of the kin group reveals the context and goal of transmitting the historical tradition.

GENEALOGIC KNOWLEDGE AND NARRATIVES

The cosmology of Mauke collected in 1882 by William Wyatt Gill and published in 1911 under the title ‘Growth of the Land of Mau’ke’ ends ‘There are six from the *po* here; and 25 generations of men from ‘Uke down to Pare-pora.’ (Gill 1911: 134–135). In Gill’s cosmology, which describes the origin and the growth of the land and the appearance of gods and people, there are 26 generations before the ancestors of the Maukeans, Uke and his wife Te Puai’angauta, who form the turning point in

the cosmic development (Siikala 1991: 42–62). Life buds out from the dark night, *po*, and the genealogical line of layers of earth and gods is transformed into a line of human beings: Uke ‘came to this land and day and became a man.’ in giving the names of the descendants of Uke’s daughter Taramatie-toro and her husband Tura, the Atiuian ancestor chief, the text specifies six generations from the *po*; altogether there are ‘25 generations of men from Uke down to Pare-pora’. A mythical genealogy turns into a historical one reaching from the divine ancestors to the living people. Interestingly, the exact number of generations is mentioned. When discussing the length of historical time, Maukeans counted that the intermediate time between the *po* and the present day consists of 25–30 generations. That is a common length of the family genealogies which do not contain the cosmological events but begin from the first ancestor after *po*.

The masters of genealogical knowledge are the *tumu koreros*, specialists in oral history. The *tumu korero* of Atiu, George Mateariki, for example, presented the whole series of narratives connected to the cosmic genealogy of Atiu following the order of happenings from the beginning of the world. As a script for his performance he had his *puka papa’anga*, a hand written book which contained lines of names. Picking out name after name, he entered into the narrative world connected to each of the heroes, creating during the narration a long saga of adventures. The key to the narrative tradition is the genealogy and the key words are the names of heroes. The best *tumu koreros* master the historical continuum of the narrated events and can produce a shorter or a longer version of a narrative. The main events in the lives of ancestors can also be told in a summarizing, saga type narrative.

The *korero*, the oral history of the kin group, is transmitted to new generations as (a) genealogies and (b) myths and legends telling of the deeds of ancestors who form the genealogy. Researchers of Polynesian folklore have noted the close connection of genealogies and narratives dealing with mythic history (Chadwick and Chadwick 1986 [1940]: 242–243; Charlot 1987: 11). Gregory Schrempp formulates the quality of the connection in the New Zealand Maori tradition in the following way: ‘(...) the genealogical and prose cosmogonies bear the following complementary relation: they recount the same process, the former from the standpoint of demonstrating continuity, the latter from the perspective of recognising and emphasising discontinuity’ (Schrempp 1985: 23). Schrempp stresses the notion that in the genealogical ordering, discontinuity is subordinated to continuity. The prose form specially marks the phases of separation (*wehe*) in the genealogy. (Schrempp 1985: 21)

Because the same main heroes of mythical history are the dramatis personae of traditions on many different islands, they are also connected to different sets of genealogies. As a consequence of the connectedness of the narratives through genealogy and geography, the corpus of narratives cannot be defined in the usual folkloristic way: seeing them as separate narratives, even the individual narratives are named by referring to the main hero.

The *tua tai’to* corpus of the Southern Cook islands forms a network of narrated episodes. The horizontal dimension of this network is made up of episodes connected to different *ngatis* (lineages) and islands; the vertical dimension in turn creates genealogies. (Martha Beckwith has suggested that genealogies in the Hawaiian Kumulipo could be read not only vertically but also horizontally; on genealogy and related

information; Beckwith 1981; see also Shortland 1974: 94–95; Shore 1982: 81) In performing a narrative, the *tumu korero* can follow the vertical line connecting the lives and deeds of different heroes to form a sequence in time, or he may follow the deeds of a hero on different islands, weaving the episodes into a large narrative entity. Genealogies act as redactional outlines—to use the term of John Charlot—which are needed in producing large tradition complexes orally. Charlot studied the Hawaiian Kamapua'a literature and stated that 'the outline provided the framework of a complex, referring to its individual stories, complexes, or sections in their proper places. This outline could be memorized, and the complex could then be told by expanding some or all the sections as one reached them.' (Charlot 1987: 67.) He found several forms of 'redactional outlines', a typical form being a list.

A genealogy forms an unbreakable chain which links everybody to the origin, to the divine world of the gods and ancestors. Both the individual and the whole ethnic group have a history which define all the important factors constituting the identity. Because genealogies reveal land ownership, the right to chiefly titles etc., they are constantly discussed, reinterpreted and recreated in everyday life. A proper knowledge of the genealogies and connected narratives can be used as a valuable weapon in disputes over land rights and titles. Everybody should learn his own genealogy and the events which established the prevailing order. But, Inepo's narrative shows that this specialized knowledge is not the only or most important outline for an everyday performance of mythic historic narratives.

THE PERFORMANCE OF TUMU KORERO

Comparative and genealogy-oriented studies of Polynesian narratives have disregarded the horizontal dimension of the network of narrative tradition. Not only do the narratives describe events in the landscape, they are also performed—if possible—in it. Children, for example, learn the history of the family group in its *marae*, the ritual place. When recording the Mauke *korero* in 1977, *tumu koreros* Papa Aituru, Tararo Ariki and Tengaru Tobia followed the custom in performing and discussing the narratives in the places of events, *maraes*, pools, landing places of canoes etc. Papa Aituru began his performance at a pool connected to the passage of Oneunga in a typical way (Mauke *korero*, cass. 3, side A):

The passage called Oneunga. There are lots of things that have happened on this passage on Taratoa, its road and the close down of its bathing pool called Vaiou. On this road on Oneunga is a pool, up to this day, which is called Rua Moraro. We will now talk about this man called Rua Moraro. This man had seven wives. We were told that this man came from the tapere called Anua because this tapere, Anua, was full of people from Atiu. The people of Atiu were looking for the people from the tribe of Ngati-Kau who ran into the cave called Motuanga. This man was one of them. Rua Moraro, with his seven wives, ran to this pool at Oneunga. That is why this pool is called Rua Moraro. This was where he came with his seven wives (...)

The setting places the narrator in the middle of the landscape which centres around the famous passage of Oneunga. The name of the warrior

whose life colours the legend about Oneunga is mentioned. Papa Aiturau is, however, not concentrating on events in Taratoa's life but on those that took place at nearby pools.

The performance consists of several narrative episodes divided by comments on and explanations of the customs of bygone days. The first narrative presents an event belonging to the narrative cycle of war between the islands of Atiu and Mauke; it explains at the same time the name of the pool near the road. 'This is a true story from our island' concludes Papa Aiturau, and gives additional information on the former land rights of the passage area. The phrases 'up to this day' connect the past with the moment of narration:

Also in this passage called Oneunga are two rocks. These rocks are called 'Te-Kopu-o-Ngati Tia' (the Ngati Tia Family). This was one tribe who stayed in this tapere, on this side, Ikurua. From this house in Ikurua to those in Punetia is where this tribe stayed, the Ngati Tia. When they go out to sea they would come to these rocks and fish. They caught many types of fish from these rocks, so they always went to these rocks to fish. That is why they called the rocks the 'Kopu-o-Ngati Tia' because their family used these rocks to catch fish. These rocks are still in the passage called Oneunga up *to this day*. They became good fortune for the fishermen from the Ngati Tia tribe who were the best fishermen in those days. This man has descendants on Akatokamanava up *to this day*.

After an interval during which Papa Aiturau explains the former fishing customs he continues at another pool called Moti. The pool evokes a memory of the island's early history. Papa Aiturau performs a well known and

detailed narrative of Kaitini, a woman who hid herself in a pool to avoid a marriage. Kaitini was discovered by a kingfisher and her sons were among the first arikis of Mauke. The legend ends by giving factual information concerning paths and their names, the present use of pools and on the condition of Kaitini's footprints on a rock.

Turning his attention to another important path 'There is also a road from this pool to another pool which is called Motuanga', Papa Aiturau introduces a new narrative connected to the wars between Mauke and the neighbouring island of Atiu:

Just in the Makatea, at this pool called Moti, is a Tamanu tree where a man called Mataiapo (...) Aitu saw him lying on this tree and threw stones at him to make him get down. But he did not climb down. He ran along the branch he had been lying on, on a Ano tree and then jumped down.

He called to Aitu:

Ko au ko Mataiapo Tupu

Toto i Aariga

E tai ngaru

E varti tukunga, me oro an

There is no Tamanu tree there now. it must have been cut to make a canoe or it was burnt. Who knows? The heels are the only part left from the mark of Kaitini's feet, the toes were broken off.

The narrative continues with a description of Kaitini's marriage and the fate of her son Moenau and grandson Tamaiva. To show that he has told only part of the saga, Papa Aiturau finishes his narrative with the words 'There are other stories about this warrior'.

Unlike the performances based on genealogies, Papa Aiturau's monologue followed the logic of the landscape. The perception of

scenery and spatial memory guide the selection of the events narrated. The genealogical connections of the narrative form the plot only when they belong to the central core of the island history. But they are subordinated to the reading of the interconnected features of the landscape, the passage, pools and paths. It seems that in creating the plot which weaves the narrative episodes into one whole, the *tumu koreros* have two kinds of logic: one following the vertical outline of genealogies used when the genealogical line should be specially mentioned, for example in installation ceremonies, and another following the horizontal dimension of the landscape. Together these possibilities of formulating the plot create a timespace of narrative tradition.

SPATIAL MEMORY

The landscape acts as a charter or device for the memory, even though the memory is free to follow its own path in time if that appears to be fruitful in the narrating situation. The spatial memory of the Southern Cook Islands is coded on lists of landmarks; the most important of them are the lists of *maraes*, ritual places of kin groups, and passages—landings—kept by *tumu korero* as well as the genealogies. *Tumu korero* Tengaru Tobia gave a list of 54 passages of Mauke beginning with the most important one, the landing of Taunganui connected to the first ancestor Uke and following clockwise the shoreline of the island. He told which hero is connected to each of the passages, explained the names of the passages and gave knowledge of the fish species favouring these areas.

Now I will tell you about the passages on Mauke. I will start with Taunganui, which we understand is the passage that is being used in Mauke today. This was called after

the arrival of Uke, who used this passage. We will move north. The next passage, closer to Taunganui is called Tiringa. In the olden days when the people go fishing, they would use drinking coconuts as baits. They would chew the flesh of the nut with something else. What this fisherman, Tiringa, used was *taro* that was cooked the same day. He would chew the taro with the coconut flesh and use this as his bait. That was why this place was called Tiringa. (...)

Ngaputaiu—When you go ashore, you will find two holes in a cave which look like the holes of somebody's nose. Its real name is Ngaputaiti-Anareia (Anareia's nose). This cave was where Reia stayed.

Akapa—Place for the Koperu (flying fish).

Angataura—the passage that Marouna and Ue used on their arrival in Mauke. The place where Marouna hid Ue can still be seen.

Raumii—This is where Mariri cried for his wife.

Kakari—At the end is a cave called 'Ana-o-Pera' (Pera's cave). This is another place for the Koperti.

Oneunga—Where Taratoa came to fight. (Mauke korero, cass. 6, Tengarti Tobia)

Tengaru mentions a narrative hero or the first person to use the landing in connection with 25 passages. The great sea-going warriors of the time when the island was inhabited have left their marks and names on passages:

Teoneroa—How it took Iro a long time to get here. He came through here, to Takoto and then to Utu. These are his places, Takoto and Teoneroa. This is where he

went ashore onto Mauke. (Mauke korero, cass. 6, Tengarū Tobia).

Some of the passages are remembered as places belonging to the hero or god and they are named after or by the first occupant: 'Ana-o-Rongo—Rongo's cave, where he stayed'.

The spatial memory has been created through the intentional activities of many generations. In speaking of the spatiality of one's own body M. Merleau-Ponty points out that human operations in space require an 'ability to mark out boundaries and directions in the given world, to establish lines of force, to keep perspectives in view, in a word, to organize the given world in accordance with the projects of the present moment, to build into the geographical setting a behavioural one, a system of meanings outwardly expressive of the subject's internal activity' (Merleau-Ponty 1995: 112). Spatial memory guiding narration is created through recurrent narration events, when the narrators—like Papa Aitūrau in 1977—standing in the centre of their momentary world organize and reorganize the space around, i.e. transform space into meaningful places. James E. Weiner (1991) and Keith Basso (1996) have noted the central role of naming in this transformation. The former writes: 'The manner in which human action and purposive appropriation inscribes itself upon the earth is an iconography of human intentions. Its mirror image is speech itself, which in the act of naming, memorializes these intentions, makes of them a history-in-dialogue.' (Weiner 1991: 50.)

Names form chains of genealogical history and mark the important points of the landscape. The place names bear the memory of historically important persons and events. The quality and organizing of names reveal the boundaries between land areas of different kin groups and

land right relations. The meaning of names has, however, to be known. Edward Tregear mentions that among the New Zealand Maoris the legends about the naming of places gave this kind of crucial knowledge. (Tregear 1904: 445–446). Naming done by ancestors symbolizes the occupation of land, it tells to whom and to whose descendants the land belongs.

The importance of naming is shown e.g. in the basic myth of the Mauke which tells how the ancestral chief Uke sailed from Avaiki, the mythical homeland in the search for land. According to Papa Aitūrau, the first act of name giving and the basic division of land was done by him.

Uke. It was he alone who named that pool. He divided Mauke into two sections. This side we are sitting on is Itaki and that side is Vaerota. He gave this side, Itaki, to one of his grandchildren by the name of Moenau, and gave the other side, Vaerota, to another of his grandchildren, Kaitakoto. These were Kaitini's children. Kaitakoto is the younger of the two.

That is how the island stood from Uke's time to today. This island was divided in the middle. From Anaputa, in the west, around to Tanerau, in the east, is Itaki. The other side is Vaerota. That side at Areora is Vaerota and this side at Ngatiarua is Itaki.

He called the passage where he landed Taunganui-o-Uke Ariki (the great landing of Uke Ariki), which is shortened to Tauanga today. He came through, watching the waves carefully, until he arrived on the shore. So he gave it this name, for the way he watched the waves carefully or waited for the small waves to enable him to land safely.

He came along and found this pool and called

it Vai Roa (his long journey across the ocean). He bathed in this pool and stayed on this island. He called this island 'Ak-atok-a taku manava' which means Heart in love or Heart in Peace because he fell in love with this island on his arrival.

'Niva-o-te-Ra' was his wife from Avaiki. When they arrived here his wife gave birth to a daughter, Kaitini. After Kaitini was another daughter, Teramatietoro, then Moetuma, Ptiatara, Tamauvaro and Tukiakau. *He then changed his wife's name and called her 'Te-Pua-Angauta' which means the arrival of the Gods through his wife, who were his children. Look at the way this man gives names. No wonder the women fall in love with him.*

Let us look at this woman. Where she came from. Her name came from an island called Vaerota. When Uke's people saw this land on their Voyage, they called out to him: 'Uke, there is an island.'

'Let us go onto this island and stay a while as the wind is too strong,' he replied. 'This is not the island I am seeking. The island I seek is to the East.'

This island had already been told to Uke by Tangaroa, his father. He (Tangaroa) had said, 'When you grow up, go and look for this island in the East. *This is your sign to see that you have found it. There is a rock in the passage. When it is high tide the rock cannot be seen. When it is low tide you will see it from the land. It is right at the mouth of the passage.*' (...)

He called this rock 'Toka rukuruku, Toka

Eaea' (Diving Rock, Rising Rock) right at the mouth of the passage. But now there is no rock at this passage. It was blown up at the time when the passage was worked on to deepen it.

He called the passage, Tauanganui-o-Uk-e. He then came here and decided to stay here. He built a Marae and called it Rangi Manuka. He thought about his Marae in Avaiki which was called Manuka. This was the Marae where he and his party prepared themselves before their trip. On his way he then turned to the island of Vaerota.

Papa Aiturus long narrative of Uke's trip lacks the usual plot of migratory legends built on the time sequence. Instead, Aituru is guided by his spatial memory and observation of the results of Uke's struggle: a warrior turns out to be a peace-making ariki who creates the island's landscape by name giving. By giving names, Uke occupies the land and other constituent elements of his arikiship): wife, landing, *marae* and bathing pool.

Naming transforms certain places into landmarks in time and space. The effect of this transformation can be heightened by *naming a special sign characteristic of the place*. According to Papa Aituru's narrative, Uke named the rocks at the mouth of his passage Taunaganui, *Toka rukuruku, Toka eaea* (Diving Rock, Rising Rock). He has to add to his statement: 'But now there is no rock at this passage. It was blown up at the time when the passage was worked to deepen it.' Mentioning the sign of its origin and the comment on its present condition are crucial elements of the orthodox way of narrating.

She (Kaitini) ran from their home in Manuka along the road to this pool called Moti. When she arrived at the pool, she jumped into it *leaving a mark on the rock she*

jumped off, which was the shape of her feet. She jumped off this rock which was very high into the pool, dived down and was gone. (...)

The sad thing about this pool is the mark of Kaitini's feet. The front part of the feet (the toes) have been broken off and only the heels are left on the rock. Some people say that the children did this but others say that it was the foreigners. All I know is that the rock has been broken. The toes are missing and the heels are still there. Maybe one day some people will come and break the whole rock and there will be no more mark.

Signs can be natural stones or even trees; Papa Aituru, for example, mentions a *tamanu* tree when weaving a new narrative motif, the flight of a man called Mataiapo, into his performance:

There is no Tamanu tree there now. It must have been cut to make a canoe or it was burnt. Who knows? The heels are the only part left from the mark of Kaitini's feet, the toes were broken off. The last time we went there was on the 28th and it was like that, only the heels were there.

Signs bear the truth value of the narrative. Teariki Maeva mentioned that he does not believe that Uke was the first person on the island because I have no sign about Uke' (Teariki Maeva, cass. 4, p. 11). The signs or marks of the Southern Cook Island landscape could be called 'traces' in Ricoeurian terms 'in which the very characterizations as historical (...) is based upon the persistence of a thing that is given and ready to hand, that is, of a physical 'mark' capable of guiding a return toward the past' (Ricoeur 1990: 78). The idea of tangible

marks is in their stability; they stay on the spot 'up to this day' as concrete testimonies of past events. They are 'visible here and now' and at the same time they exist because earlier 'something did something', as Paul Ricoeur formulates the double significance of traces or tracks. (Ricoeur 1990: 119.) Traces or marks represent both historical time and the present moment at the same time. The mark of Kaitini's feet (feet of a heroine belonging to the mythic history of island) was introduced to us by an islander. The reason was not, however, to validate the history of island but to produce an experience of meeting the past directly, to evoke a feeling of historical immediacy as David Lowenthal formulates the idea (Lowenthal 1990: 247).

The historical signs of the Southern Cook Islands are seldom artifacts; rather, they are natural objects selected and named to be marks of historical persons. Nevertheless, they have much in common with the historical relics of European landscapes. The concreteness, stability and accessibility of tangible remains provide unmediated impressions of the past. 'To be certain that there was a past, we must see at least some of its traces', writes Lowenthal (1990: 247). Tangible objects validate historical events, they testify and carry meanings belonging to the past. But the stones are mute, they need interpretation to place them in their right place in time. Signs are meaningful only in a 'dynamic tension between what you see and what you know to have existed once and still to exist in some fragmented or symbolic form', suggests Gillian Tindall (see Lowenthal 1990: 243).

As concrete testimonies of the island history, the tangible marks are susceptible to disputes caused by different interpretations. We can ask, as islanders, who founds, names, allocates and marks the borders of the land? Whose history do we find in the landscape?

FINDING THE CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSE

According to the puka papa'anga (hand written family book) of Tutere Moetaua the island of Mauke was found by the god Tangaroa-nui (Siikala 1991: 18–40):

In those days, many canoes travelled on the Moana-nui-o-Kiva (Great Blue Ocean) and they returned telling about many islands over the Blue Ocean, where there were no people. Tangaroa-nui was one of those who travelled in those days. *Among all the islands he had visited he had chosen one and that was Mau'ke. He inspected the land first to know where the womb of the land (kopu-o-teenua) was.*

He sailed his canoe to the sunrise side of Mau'ke and looked from the sea and he saw it was not the womb of the land. He decided to sail around to the side of the sunset and he looked to the land and he saw the womb of the land because the land was open towards the sea. Then he went ashore.

On his way ashore he stepped first on the reef and there were *two rocks standing at the mouth of the passage*. This was it, the waves broke, *these rocks were covered and when the waves receded the rocks surfaced again. So he gave these rocks the names Toka-rukuruku and Toka-eaea.*

He arrived on shore.

He looked at the goodness of the land. He stayed on the island for a short time. After a while he returned to Avaiki.

He told his son, 'When you grow up, look for one island. The island is the best among the islands I have seen, it is in the direction of the sunrise. It is a smooth and wide island, all kinds of plants grow there and it will be you alone who will conquer that island. *Look for the womb of the land. it is on the side of sunset, this is your first sign, look inland and you will see the land is open towards the sea. There are two rocks at the mouth of the passage, this is the sign that you are near the womb of the land*'.

Tangaroa-nui now finished talking.

Now comes Uke's history (...)

The long and detailed narrative continues by describing how the grown up Uke sails from Avaiki, which is 'red with blood' and where 'tribes are at war', to look for an island to live on with his taunga, captain and people. After adventures at sea and on an island called Vaerota, where Uke fights with the chief and gets his wife, the canoe leaves for its last trip, sailing to Avaiki in front' and 'leaving 'Avaiki behind'. The voyage is difficult and the captain Mataki-'enua is ready to turn back to Avaiki. Uke answers:

To stay in Avaiki means death. To go on sailing on the Moana-nui-o-Kiva means death. Therefore we will continue, even if we all die in looking for this *land for me and you to live on.*

At the moment of extreme exhaustion Uke prays to Tangaroa for a favourable wind; he feels that there is land in front of them and calls for his captain Mataki-enua:

Uke: 'Get off, or the offending nights will be upon us, the sacred nights will be upon us. Wake up, there is land in front of us.' The people become strong again and they were paddling the canoe and singing. They arrived on the side of the rising sun, but Uke insisted that the womb of the land lay on the side of the sunset. So they paddled to the side of the sunset looking for the womb of the land and searching for the signs that had been given for him to recognise the land from the sea, the rocks at the opening of the harbour. These were Toka-rukuruku and Toka-aeae. Now they have arrived at the main passage.

Mataki-erma: Uke Ariki, is the canoe going ashore?' Uke Ariki: 'Look landward so that you can see the womb of the land.'

After landing and inspecting the island, Uke built a *marae* (Rangi Manuka) and named his pool (Vai Roa) and the side he wanted to stay on (Itaki); the explanations for names are also given. The narrative ends in the naming of the island:

When he looked how round the island was and the lack of trouble, he decided that he would rest on this island in peace until his death. *He called this island with the name Akatokamanava.*

The narrative of Uke is an origin myth which builds up a genealogical relationship with the divine world (Siikala 1991: 18–62). The connection is described—as in typical migratory legends—in geographical terms: the border between the other world and the world of humans, darkness and light, is crossed by travelling, sailing along the Great Blue Ocean. The trip represents historical time: 'the place is a

goal in future' (Tuan 1989: 130). The aim of the trip is to find land to live on, not any land but an *island with the womb of the land* (*kopu-o-teenua*) where 'all kinds of plants grow'.

Mauke was chosen by the god, Tangaroa, who 'established the source (*tumu*) of land'; it was inspected by him, found to be fertile, equipped with signs and promised to Uke, the son, who found the island by following instructions concerning the signs. The meaning of the signs of the island, *Toka-rukuruku* and *Toka-aeae*, at the main passage Taunganui can be understood only in the light of knowledge of the geography of Mauke. The island is surrounded by an unbroken reef which forms a dangerous obstacle to canoes or boats trying to land. When the main passage was enlarged, the signs were destroyed; the place of the signs, however, is still there 'up to this day'—as *tumu koreros* would say.

The noun *kopu*, womb or belly, refers not only to body parts but also to the social structure of the island. A large family group is called *kopu te tangata*, womb of people; *kopu* refers to essential categories of Mauke culture: food, fertility and human reproduction. Finding the *kopu* of the land means finding the means of reproduction but, at the same time, it refers to both the cosmic place, the centre of the universe, and the topographic features of the island. There is easy access from Taunganui landing to the fertile inland plain with volcanic soil. In the middle of fields, the womb of land, is *pito-o-teenua*, the navel of land or earth, the centre of the island and—at the same time—the cosmos. Finding the small navel hole would be difficult if there were no sign. A big iron tree (*te toa koa*) marks the place and shows the boundary between the two halves of the island, Itaki and Vaerota.

EXPLORING AND CHANGING BORDERS

In the Polynesian narrative world, the role of the great sailors is not only to conquer new lands and establish the social organisation but to explore the borders of the Great Blue Ocean, to survey the distant islands which nobody has visited before. By exploring the extreme regions, wandering warriors seek 'special knowledge in advance of the main body of society', as Daniel J. Gelo has noted in his study concerning Comanche narratives (Gelo 1994: 301).

In addition to Uke and Paikea, who ended up in New Zealand, the heroes of the Mauke tradition connected to the golden era of the great sailors are two pairs of warriors: Tangiia and Karika, Ironui and Tura, the ancestor of the neighbouring island of Atiu. Tararo Ariki gave an overall picture of their actions in the following way (Mauke korero, cass. 4):

Tura, through many years have been sailing through the ocean with Ironui. *They had been sailing together for many years. They were both warriors.*

One day they had a race. They raced to the island called Rangimake and other islands. *They wanted to be the first people to see all the islands in this region.*

We will go back to their race to Rangimake. *The island of Rangimake was also known as Avaiki. It is now called New Zealand or Aotearoa. It took them several years at sea.*

At one time they went back to Akatokamanava (Mauke). This man, Tura, an Ariki and a warrior, stayed with his wife, Taramatietoro, Uke's daughter, and they had some children. It was at this

time that Uke's descendants started in Atiu, which was by Tura and his wife. It was said that this was *one of the strongest warriors who had travelled over the ocean*. At the time when he stayed with his wife and children he stopped travelling. He and Ironui parted. Ironui went back to Iva where he grew up with Tangiia. They were from the same family. Ironui's descendants branched out and so did Tangiia's. It was through Tangiia that Terei and Mororo came. (Mauke korero, cass. 4.)

According to the legends, the voyages of Tura and Ironui reached out from the Marquesas Islands and the Southern Cook Islands to New Zealand, Aotearoa, which was also called by the name of the divine homeland Avaiki. The centre of their voyages from the Maukean point of view is Akatokamanava, a place renowned for its beautiful women. Tangiia and Karika, the other pair of the famous seafaring heroes, also left their signs on Mauke: two rocks named after their canoes, Takitumu and Teau-o-tonga, at the place of the 'Rua of Mania' (the hole of Mania). The passage of Uriata where Karika landed and Aartga where Tangiia landed, the *marae* called Maketu and a pool where Tangiia was seduced by Uke's daughters, also bear testimony of their visit. (Papa Aiturau, Mauke korero, cass. 2, side A.) The famous Tangiia is, indeed, remembered on Mauke because he married two of Uke's daughters, Moetuma and Puatara, and started a lineage in Rarotonga.

In addition to sailing and confrontations with the other heroes, encounters with seducing women are constant elements of the life stories of the great warriors. Through their children, descendants of heroes, women connect men to land, to islands, and mediate through marriages the power relationships between islands. The Polynesian heroes do not

only explore the extremes of the world but establish the relationships between islands and chiefdomships and kin groups as is evident from the information on Iro given by Tararo Ariki (Mauke korero, cass. 6):

Now I will tell you about Iro. This will also include what Tengarū (Tengarū Tobia) had already said about the place where Iro came ashore.

During Iro's voyages over the ocean *he had a Mataiapo Ariki with him*. This man was called Tura. This man, Tura, lived on the island of Atiu, with his wife, Tamatietoro, Uke's daughter *Tura's canoe was called Taputurangi*.

After the time that Tangiia stayed on Rarotonga, two girls arrived there. Their names were Tautu-teEparangi and Tautu-Tapuāe-Mokora. *They became Mataiapos for Mоторo, Tinomana Ariki and built their Marae on Tekou.*

I will not go further into Iro's story. I will just tell you something to prove that Iro and Tangiia Nui came at the same time.

Iro had a son in Tahiti who was called Taite Ariki. Tangiia was also there. It was Tangiia who led Iro to Tahiti, when they met Keus daughter, Rapa Iava Iraka. At the time that Iro left Tahiti and went to Iva, *Tangiia asked for Iro's son to be given for him to be the Ariki on his lands which are Teatu Takatakapoto, Tekopa Tetavake Moerangi, Tetavake Oraurau, Terteke and Atatapu, Tatavirinapapa, Avakake, Takairira and Manaune. This boy then became Tangiia's feeding son and he gave him a new name, Teariki Upokotini. He was chosen as the*

Ariki of Bora Bora. Tutapu came as a witness. This was his pee:

Ariki iki ia ki Bora Bora (Ariki chosen for Bora Bora)

Tuaru nakina ia e (was chased away)

This was to tell that Tutapu was against Taite Ariki as the Ariki of Bora Bora. So Tangiia did not complete his *work which was to make Taite Ariki as the Ariki of Bora Bora until he arrived at Rarotonga. When Tangiia ran away, he came to an island called Nuku and made himself the Ariki of that island. He chose four Mataiapos and six Taungas who were Potikitaua, Moremakanakura, Tangara, Taramaitetonga, Manuaitu and another man. When he arrived on Rarotonga he finished his work which was to make Taire Ariki as the Ariki for Pataa and Araitetonga. He also chose this boy as the Ariki for Takitumu-Tenuaroa-i-Iti (which is Takitumus's real name). From that time these men's descendants are still holding this title as Ariki and their first Ariki was Pao, Upokotini Ariki. This generation line came from Taite-Ariki up to Terito Ariki of today. Kia orana.*

(Mauke korero, cass. 6.)

By conquering new areas the sailing warriors turn into chiefs who establish and legitimate the political order between the islands. They create the political hierarchy by giving the titles of *mataiapo* and *taunga*. The importance of historical legends and additional information and interpretations lies in the knowledge of the allocation of the land in establishing the titles and lineages. It is interesting to see that Tura, the ancestor chief of Atiu who was

related to Mauke through his wife, was said to be a *mataiapo* under Ironui, the chief of Iva (in the Marquesas-Islands). Tangiia and Ironui negotiated over the ownership of the big islands in Tahiti, Marquesas and the Cook Islands; through alliances and marriages they had relationships with smaller outer islands like Atiu and Mauke and, accordingly, Mitiaro. The political hierarchy between the islands and island groups is described in a complicated, dispute-arousing network of traditions. The value of conquests is contested by elder-younger relationships created by marriages which establish lineages. For example, Mauke can boast of being genealogically older than Rarotonga through Tangiia's marriage with Uke's daughters.

The relationships of the islands Atiu, Mauke and Mitiaro called by the common name Ngaputoru are dealt with in a great number of historical legends concerning wars and conquests (see Siikala 1991). Together with narratives telling about the arrival of the Gospel and internal wars between the two halves of the island, they furnish the landscape of Mauke with signs and memories of historical events. The narrative of the chief Akaina and of the war between ngati Kao and ngati Tona, two groups of islanders, refers to the times of Aduans conquering the island. The struggle between Areora and Ngatiarua, in turn, tells about an internal war. The actors of these narratives are chiefs or kinship groups trying to expand their power over the neighbouring lands. The role of women in these wars is to seduce and to help, they are objects of rapacious suitors or they are loyal wives trying to help their husbands and families.

MENTAL MAPS OF THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN

Christianity changed both island life and landscape: seven churches have been built on the small island. Narratives about the arrival of the Gospel and the building of the first church refer to both the altering of the village scenery and the signs and marks invisible to the unexperienced eye. The efforts to strengthen the new faith caused changes in the organisation of settlement. The people were gathered around the first church in the middle of the island; the traditional halves of the island lived on as parts of a village. Later a chief separated, turned Catholic and built a new village, Kimiangatau, near the landing of Taunganui.

The events of the past decades belong to the island history even though they are not part of *korero*, historical knowledge. As Paul Connerton (1989: 13–14) has stated, we should distinguish between social memory and historical reconstruction. The local narratives describing recent events concern groups as well as individuals, and they may be open to multiple interpretations. They do not, however, have any part in the constitution of the social or moral order, even though they provide an opportunity to discuss and negotiate these orders.

The differentiation of shared memories of random events from historical reconstruction of constitutive actions helps to understand the historical consciousness of people, the mode and motivation of the invention of local history, but it is not an easy task in the study of the oral community. Accounts like the following one given by *tumu korero* Tararo Ariki show that the coming of the Gospel was a constitutive event in the island's history:

The Gospel was also received on this Marae, as Aiturau had told us. It was Tararo Kai Vari, as he was known, *who received* the Gospel on Mauke. *The idols were also burnt on this Marae*, and a big feast was held because it was then that the heathens realised that what they were doing was wrong, which were killing, feelings of jealousy and worshipping the idols. *They understood that these were not true gods and that the true God is what John Williams told them and that is Jehova. From that day to the present, the people believed in this true God*, even though they have their different ways of worshipping this one God, which was through their different Religions, like Catholic, S.D.A. and others. (Mauke korero, cass. 1).

But what about the narratives about daily life of the first ministers or, for example, the narrative revealing the greedy character of a simple man named Vaa? In order to understand the logic of creating and fixing values or reproducing the constitutive acts in narration, we should know the island modes of thought. Tumu koreros classify the events of Vaa's life to tua taito narratives, even though Vaa's dealings with the European court system reveal that his life did not represent the constitutive past.

The explanation seems to lie in the spatial memory guiding the performance. In the narration organised by the logic of landscape these dimensions of history are connected in many ways. Papa Aiturau, for example, tells the whole history of the significant place from primeval time up to this day including the visits of high ranking persons and *tere partys* (groups of travellers). It seems that the spatial memory which locates Vaa's action in a historically meaningful place and the moral code which condemns his behaviour work together to

transform a man whose only fault was to ask for food at an improper time and place into a hero of a history reaching from the origin of time to this day.

Maurice Halbwachs stresses that it is through their membership in a social group that people are able to acquire, to locate and to recall their memories. He asks how recollections are to be located, and answers: 'with the help of landmarks that we always carry within ourselves, for it suffices to look around ourselves, to think about others, and to locate ourselves within the social framework in order to retrieve them.' (Halbwachs 1992: 175). Memories are localised by a kind of mapping (Connerton 1989: 37). The landscape of memory is not, however, one dimensional. The social diversity of memories produces multi-layered mental maps which can be altered and interpreted according to the perspective of the group in question. On Mauke the knowledge of the traditional division of the land forms one of these mental maps. In the minds of the people, it melts together many other maps, for example, with the new village order and—at the same time—with the unseen social world formed by tupapaku, spirits. Narratives, namely, not only furnish the landscape with history but with notions of the other world, too. Maraes are related to the fate of lineage members; they are also connected to each by the road of spirits:

When we hear a sound from this Marae at any time the people of Mauke know that *somebody from this tribe will die*. It is never wrong. The sound could be heard coming from here, and from here it goes to Onepueu, from there to the Marae called Nurtukau. It goes on from there to the Marae Orongo and then *flies to the ocean*. Who knows how they work *because they are ghosts*. (Papa Aiturau, cass. 2.)

Maraes are places with *mana* even today. It is impossible to enter a *marae* without permission; even family members can feel uneasy in the holy areas as the following discussion with a 44-year-old man (Tara, cass. 1–2) revealed:

Some *marae* over here I've never seen looked after there's only one that is the *marae* over there which is looked after. My own *marae* I don't look after.

- You don't?
- I don't look after it.
- Why not?
- The people staying over there should go and clean it up. I'm not staying on it; I don't go on that *marae*, I feel funny when I go on that *marae*.
- Some people do not like to go to *marae*.
- Yes, some.
- Why?
- They are afraid of it.
- Why?
- They say there is still you know (...) *mana* on there. But myself I am getting afraid a bit (...)

The narratives of meeting *tupapaku*, frightening ghosts, or benevolent dead are not considered to be 'tradition'; they belong to everyday discourse, even though such experiences can be described in the historical legends. Spirits are part of the social world of the island; they are present, even though their existence is not revealed to outsiders. If necessary, every islander could draw a map of the spirit roads and ancestral sites populated by spirits or supranormal powers.

TIME SPACE OF NARRATIVES AND LANDSCAPE

Different social worlds and their internal connections and hierarchies are rooted in the landscape. Along with unmarked places empty of historical or supernatural tradition and dedicated for reproduction of everyday life, there are places which are frightening, memorable because of a moral misbehaviour, brave deeds or love affairs, places which are filled with dignity or holiness. The quality of the atmosphere of these places and the idea of the borders between them is transmitted through the narratives connected to them. The meeting of the historically marked phases of time with the historically marked places produces hotspots of tradition which could be compared to the chronotopes (literally 'time space') of Mikhail Bakhtin. He refers to the 'intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature' (Bakhtin 1987: 84; cf. Basso 1984: 44–45). The chronotopes of the Western literature interpreted by Bakhtin, such as road or threshold, could be replaced by the passage, pool or *marae* of Polynesian oral literature. These stages of events form intersectional points of spatial and chronological fusion in which the flow of actions crystallises the hierarchy generating principles of Polynesian culture.

These hotspots of island culture are hierarchically related to each other, too. The 'time space' of narratives is socially constructed: the chiefs, men and women, spirits and the dead act in the places which belong to their own territory. The ranking of places follows the ranking of the actors in narratives: The deeds of gods and early heroes mark the boundaries of the world and give the characteristic signs to the landscape of the island. Ancestral chiefs and warriors occupy the land and show the extremes

of the world and the division of land used by kin groups. Borders of land, as well as cult sites, passages and pools inherit their special significance from the first lineage-building chiefs. Cult sites are a meeting ground of human and superhuman powers, pools in turn places of female seduction and the sexual desires of men and gods. Seafaring heroes measure the wide ocean, those going to war seek shelter in caves. Chiefs as well ordinary men and women inscribe the moral problems and the right way to live in their surroundings.

Narratives reveal that past lives on the island, on the roads and village greens, in caves, pools and on the Great Blue Ocean. Legends are both performed and remembered at places which attain importance through their connection with past events. These places are a mnemonic device of oral tradition and a monument to island history. As place names and tangible objects, narratives bear the memory of the past constituting at the same time the history—even constantly discussed history—of oral culture. Concrete and stable signs testify to past events ‘up to this day’; they connect historical events to the present life of the people. Tangible objects can evoke a feeling of historical immediacy, but only when they are interpreted in narrating performances. In giving meaning to tangible objects, in transforming them into signs of crucial actions in the past, narratives create a landscape in which time and space melt together into mental maps of the universe and the social world. These mental maps guide and nourish feelings of identity. The island becomes a real *kopu-o-e-enua*, womb of land, and home of the people.

NOTES

- 1 An earlier version of this article, ‘Oral History and Landscape. Narratives in the Southern Cook Islands’, was read at the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society, Austin, Texas 1997. The article was originally published in 1998 in *Suomen antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 23 (2): 4–19.
- 2 This article is based on field work done with Jukka Siikala in the Cook Islands 1983–1984, 1988 and 1995.

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