Manu narratives of Polynesia: a comparative study of birds in 300 traditional Polynesian stories

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Volume I

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Peut-on imaginer un monde sans oiseaux ?

Pour ma petite Kraken de Kōwhai…

Who has inspired me more than she will ever know

Abstract

In all traditional Polynesian societies, birds engaged humans' imagination with their songs, their colours and their power of flight, especially because of the absence of large land mammals in Polynesia. *Manu* ('birds' in most Polynesian languages) were also very powerful symbols. This thesis aims to offer a comparative study of the role of birds in traditional Polynesian narratives and to find commonalities between stories from different Polynesian island groups, in order to provide, through textual analysis, a picture of the spiritual, material and emotional relationship of Polynesian peoples with birds in pre-European times.

A corpus of 300 bird-related Polynesian narratives has been assembled. Those were, for the most part, collected and published in the 19th and 20th centuries by travellers, government officials, ethnographers, missionaries, anthropologists and linguists. The texts have all been summarised, and the recurrent themes and motifs involving the birds have been analysed in depth. Though 'Polynesia' is understood as comprising all the island groups within the Polynesian Triangle as well as the Polynesian Outliers, references have also been made to stories originating from other parts of Oceania.

The analysis of the texts suggests that birds appear in the stories in a variety of roles. Some narratives are purely 'animal stories' without human characters. These account for and give meaning to the physical, vocal and behavioural characteristics of a given species, Polynesian peoples having developed their own bodies of belief to explain a bird's behaviour and appearance. However, birds also play a part in stories about the origin of the world and of humankind, and they appear in many traditions as message-bearers sent by a deity to warn or advise humans, as guardians and protectors, as cherished pets, but also as giant man-eating birds.

These findings demonstrate that birds are far from being restricted to the 'animal story' genre: any type of Polynesian narrative may involve *manu*. Birds engaged Polynesian peoples' imaginations in such a way that all their narratives could lend themselves to featuring feathered creatures as dramatis personae.

Résumé

Dans les sociétés polynésiennes traditionnelles, les oiseaux séduisaient l'imagination. Ils inspiraient l'homme par leurs chants, leurs couleurs et leur vol, notamment du fait de l'absence de grands mammifères en Polynésie. Les *manu* (« oiseaux » dans la plupart des langues polynésiennes) remplissaient aussi une fonction symbolique très forte. Cette thèse propose une étude comparative du rôle des oiseaux dans les récits traditionnels polynésiens, et cherche à établir des similitudes entre des histoires appartenant à des régions différentes de Polynésie. Elle vise à montrer, par l'analyse de ces textes, la richesse du rapport spirituel, matériel et émotionnel entre l'homme et l'oiseau dans les sociétés polynésiennes traditionnelles.

Cette thèse rassemble un corpus de 300 récits polynésiens comportant des oiseaux. Ceux-ci ont été pour la plupart recueillis et publiés aux XIXe et XXe siècles par des voyageurs, des fonctionnaires, des ethnologues, des missionnaires, des anthropologues et des linguistes. Tous ces textes ont été résumés, et sont accompagnés d'une analyse de leurs thèmes et motifs. Le cadre géographique de cette étude est la grande Polynésie, c'est-à-dire l'ensemble des îles du « Triangle polynésien » et les « Exclaves polynésiennes ». Néanmoins, quelques récits provenant d'autres régions d'Océanie ont également été inclus.

Comme le révèle l'analyse des textes, les oiseaux jouent dans les récits polynésiens des rôles très différents. Ainsi, certains récits sont purement et simplement des « fables animalières », sans personnages humains, qui expliquent l'origine des caractéristiques physiques, vocales et comportementales d'une espèce d'oiseau donnée. Mais les oiseaux figurent aussi dans certaines histoires relatives à l'origine du monde et de l'humanité, et ils apparaissent dans une multitude de traditions comme porteurs de messages envoyés par une divinité pour avertir ou conseiller les hommes. Dans de nombreux récits, ils font aussi fonction de gardiens et de protecteurs, ou sont des animaux de compagnie très chers à leurs maîtres, ou bien, au contraire, des monstres géants mangeurs d'homme.

En conclusion, les oiseaux ne sont pas confinés aux fables animalières : ils peuvent figurer dans tout type de récit polynésien. Les *manu* stimulaient l'imagination des Polynésiens d'une telle manière que toutes leurs traditions pouvaient inclure des créatures ailées comme acteurs du récit.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I wish to acknowledge the Polynesian raconteurs who told the collectors these great stories.

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Introduction

Māku e whakarongo ki te manu
E korihi i te tākiritanga o te ata[1]

A flock of black-backed gulls hovers majestically just outside the windows of my 10th-floor office. A pair of ducks laze around on the grass at the Otago Museum Reserve as I make my way home. A diminutive fantail flits about restlessly outside my kitchen window. On my uphill walk to the swimming pool, a plump *kererū* perches quietly on the telephone lines overhead. On my run through the Town Belt, an elegant *tūī* flying above my head makes whirring noises. Everywhere I go, the birds of Dunedin continually remind me of the task that I have set out to do: write a humanities thesis about them.

*

The idea of this thesis stemmed from the felicitous encounter of two of my interests: birds and traditional stories. My interest in feathered creatures comes in particular from watching Jacques Perrin's spellbinding documentary film *Le Peuple migrateur*/*Travelling Birds* (*Winged Migration*), and from reading Margaret Orbell's fascinating study, *Birds of Aotearoa: A Natural and Cultural History*. This book made me realise the cultural importance of many bird species of which I was unaware, even though I had been living in New Zealand for more than ten years. It opened my eyes to a world that I had until then ignored: the avifauna inhabiting the islands where I am privileged to live. My interest in traditional stories derived mostly from reading about Greek and Roman mythology in my childhood years, and, much later, from attending Professor Michael Reilly's lectures on Māori oral traditions, which introduced me to the depth and wealth of meaning of the traditional narratives of the Māori people, particularly their cosmogonic stories, their accounts of the canoe voyages of their ancestors from their homeland (Hawaiki) to New Zealand, and their traditions relating their first settlement on these islands.

I thus set out to combine those two interests of mine in a thesis that will, it is hoped, appeal as much to those who are fond of birds as to those who have a liking for Polynesian

[1] 'Let me now here listen to the birds / Singing their song at the break of day'. These lines are from a *tangi* (lament) for Tonga-awhikau (Ngāti Ruanui, Taranaki) (Ngata & Jones 2004-2007:III,596-597).

stories. My primary intention was to gather in one place narratives from throughout Polynesia that featured birds, or *manu*, as characters, because this task had never been undertaken: most of the published research on Polynesian oral traditions focuses on one island (or island group) only, and when multiple Polynesian islands are considered, birds are only ever alluded to. Another intention was to examine the many themes and motifs that would hopefully emerge from these bird stories, and to try and identify precisely, as much as possible, the bird species appearing in the narratives.

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Among other approaches, this work intends to be an ethno-ornithological study, which aims to shed light on the nature of the relationship between people and birds in traditional Polynesian societies. To achieve this, I have compiled Polynesian narratives that feature birds as dramatis personae, then analysed and compared them, in order to identify the recurrent themes and motifs that run through them. These stories have all been published, or are available in manuscript form: I have not collected any story myself. The first step has been to locate bird-related narratives in Bacil Kirtley's *A Motif-index of Traditional Polynesian Narratives*, published in 1971.[2] However, many Polynesian stories were published after 1971, and Kirtley did not survey all the existing literature.[3] Therefore, although Kirtley's motif-index was a valuable tool in locating many of the stories, numerous other publications had to be surveyed so as to find as many narratives about birds as possible. The corpus of 300 stories contained in this thesis does not claim to be exhaustive; however, it is believed that the addition of other stories would not bring up new themes or new motifs, nor would it alter the conclusions.

In this thesis, 'Polynesian' stories are defined as originating from Polynesian communities living on the thousand islands of East Polynesia, West Polynesia,[4] and the Polynesian

[2] Narratives about birds can be found mostly in Chapter B ('Animals') of the motif-index, but also in A2200-A2599 ('Animals characteristics'), D100-D199 ('Transformation: man to animal') and D300-D399 ('Transformation: animal to person'), among other places. A motif is 'the smallest element in a tale having the power to persist in tradition' (Thompson 1946:415).

[3] Kirtley (1971:VI), 'becoming familiar with the immensity of relevant materials, abandoned his original intention of analyzing all existent collections'.

[4] East Polynesia traditionally includes Aotearoa/New Zealand, Rēkohu/Chatham Islands, the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Hawai'i and Rapa Nui/Easter Island, whereas West Polynesia consists of Sāmoa, Tonga, Niue, Tuvalu, Tokelau, 'Uvea/Wallis Island and Futuna.

Outliers.[5] Fiji and Rotuma, although commonly classified as 'Melanesian', are also included, because their traditions (particularly those from Rotuma and the Lau Islands) have been greatly influenced by Tongan and Samoan stories.[6] Furthermore, because there have always been contacts between the different cultures of the South Pacific, the conventional divide between the three cultural areas of the region (Polynesia in the east, Melanesia in the west, and Micronesia in the northwest) should not be strictly adhered to when studying the oral traditions of its people. It is believed that the inclusion of a few narratives from other parts of Melanesia and from Micronesia, mostly in the footnotes, will show that those share quite similar traits and themes with Polynesian traditions.

*

I compiled a corpus of 300 Polynesian stories about birds and systematically categorised the narrative roles of the birds, because I wanted to find out how Polynesians used birds in their stories. Very little has been written on the topic of birds in Polynesian oral narratives: birds have been looked at without the stories, mostly by ornithologists, and anthropologists have studied Polynesian oral traditions without paying much attention to the birds present in them. The topic of the role of birds in oral traditions has been addressed in different cultures outside Polynesia, but even then most scholars did not focus on the *stories*; rather, they investigated the place of birds in the culture generally.

My approach, in contrast, was comparative (across all Polynesian cultures) and archival. My training as an archivist paleographer, at the École nationale des chartes in Paris, has informed the methodology that I used in this thesis. I have envisaged it from an archivist's point of view, that is, from a cataloguing, categorising perspective. In my view, compiling a corpus is the necessary starting point before the stories can be interpreted. A comprehensive survey and categorisation of the narratives is the essential first step that must be undertaken before any in-depth analysis of the stories can be done. In order to build this corpus,

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[5] For a definition of 'Polynesian Outliers', see I-1. In this thesis, Roman numerals (in smaller font) refer to chapter numbers, and the Arabic numerals that follow the chapter numbers are section numbers (each chapter contains between two and five sections).

[6] Luomala (1949:206) argued that, 'though geographically within Melanesia, Rotuma is a Polynesian outlier', and that Rotuman mythology is a 'mixture in which Polynesian themes and characters predominate, particularly in the form known to Samoans, Tongans, and other western narrators'. The Rotuman language is strongly influenced by Polynesian languages (Tryon 1995:I(1),15; Schmidt 2000; Howard & Rensel 2007:9-10). Kaeppler (2008:4), who included Rotuma in West Polynesia, also wrote that Fiji 'includes a large group of diverse tribal groupings in some ways similar to Melanesia, but with artistic traditions that closely relate to those of West Polynesia'. Kirtley (1971) included both Rotuma and the Lau Islands in his *Motif-index of Traditional Polynesian Narratives*.

that is, to locate the stories, summarise them, and categorise them, I used the library and archival science techniques that I was taught in France, as well as my knowledge of Māori, a Polynesian language that I acquired at the University of Otago in Dunedin.

When my corpus was established, I then set out to examine the themes and motifs that emerged from these bird stories. Identifying themes and motifs in a narrative is a form of analysis; this is how the word 'analysis' is construed in this thesis. My approach also differs from a literary approach because the texts, drawn from a large variety of genres, are too disparate to be susceptible to narratological generalisations. My methodology, rooted in archival science principles, had its limits, however, in that it did not allow me to pursue a more in-depth analysis of the stories. But it is hoped that this thesis will lay the foundations for further work across a number of disciplines.

*

The thesis is composed of two parts and three appendices. Part A, 'He kupu arataki' ('some introductory words' in the Māori language), consists of three introductory chapters that set the scene, as it were, of the stories. They bring together different fields of study, such as social and cultural anthropology, cultural history, ornithology, palaeornithology, biogeography, linguistics (semantics in particular), ethno-ornithology and psychoanalysis, in order to give the reader a better understanding of the narratives of Part B. They also explain why the bird species present in the stories, as well as the stories contained in Part B themselves, are but a very small fraction of what once existed on the thousand islands of Polynesia. My aim in these introductory chapters is to describe and summarise the relevant findings by recognised leading scholars in their respective fields. My intention in reporting this evidence is to provide the reader with the broader research context that backgrounds the more focused discussion of Part B.

In Part A, 'Polynesia' (Chapter I) defines what is commonly referred to as Polynesia, sheds light on the origins of the birds that inhabit the region and on the history of the settlement of the Pacific by Polynesians, and describes the mass extinction of bird species that occurred in Polynesia after first human contact. 'Narratives' (Chapter II) then provides an overview of the nature and distinguishing features of traditional Polynesian stories, their different types, as well as the circumstances in which they were collected and the methods used by their collectors; the chapter also looks at some issues around editorial choices, translation and interpretation. Finally, 'Manu' (Chapter III) defines the word *manu*, investigates the

importance of birds in traditional Polynesian culture and religion, and examines the symbolic associations conjured up by birds; the chapter then provides a brief outline of the research pertaining to the sets of beliefs and values attached to birds by people (ethno-ornithology), and to the significance of birds in written and oral literature.

Part B, 'Ngā kōrero o nehe' ('the stories of old' in Māori), consists of seven chapters in which 300 Polynesian narratives featuring birds are summarised, compared with each other, and analysed.[7] Seven themes, which give their name to the seven chapters, have been identified and, for the purpose of this study, each story has been assigned to a particular chapter based on the main theme that it contains. Many, if not most, stories encompass more than one of those seven themes; however, only a small number of stories are repeated in other chapters, to prevent the latter from becoming too ponderous and cumbersome.

In Part B, 'Genesis' (Chapter IV) deals with stories about the creation of humankind, about birds giving birth to humans and humans giving birth to birds, about birds helping in the creation of the landscape and the acquisition of precious foods and fire, and about the origins of the birds on the islands. 'Aetiology' (Chapter V) explores narratives that account for the behavioural, physical and vocal characteristics of different species of bird, whereas 'Vehicle' (Chapter VI) shows how birds carry or snatch people away and how people turn into birds in Polynesian traditions. In 'Communication' (Chapter VII), the birds' gift of speech in the stories and their role as messengers and informants is examined, and their function as guardians and protectors of places and people, helpers, guides, servants and cherished pets is investigated in 'Custody' (Chapter VIII). 'Eros' (Chapter IX) considers traditions in which birds intervene in human love affairs and those in which birds are married to humans. Finally, 'Thanatos' (Chapter X) delves into Polynesian narratives of birds foretelling, revealing or causing death, of bird attacks, and of birds put to death. At the end of each chapter, a map summarises the distribution in Polynesia of three particular stories (or motifs) drawn from that chapter.

Appendix 1 ('*Manu* corpus') contains the text of all 300 stories and their variants, together with their bibliographical references. Unlike the chapters of Part B, which usually focus on one particular version of a story, this appendix includes all the different versions that I was able to locate. It also contains the summary of the whole story (that is, the section

[7] The Polynesian stories have all been assigned a number, from **1** to **300**. They are numbered sequentially, from Chapter IV through to Chapter X. Story numbers appear in bold throughout the thesis (except in the indices).

of the story in which a bird plays a part), whereas the chapters may only look at an extract of that story. This appendix does not include, however, any analysis of the material or comparisons between the narratives – apart from a few explicative footnotes.

Appendix 2 ('The birds of Polynesia') consists of a list of Polynesian bird species showing their scientific, English and French names, together with their names in the vernacular languages of Polynesia. It also contains 139 images of the different species of bird that appear in the 300 stories of the corpus. Appendix 3 ('Analysing oral traditions and animal stories') explores the question of the functions of traditional narratives, particularly in Polynesia, and of their study and analysis, and then looks at one particular type of tradition, the 'animal story'. Four indices complete the thesis.

This thesis comprises three volumes. The main body of the text (including Parts A and B) can be found in Volume I; Appendix 1 and the indices are located in Volume II; Volume III comprises Appendices 2 and 3. Each volume has its own list of references.

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The aims of this thesis are manifold. Firstly, the thesis aims to compile in one place traditional stories from across Polynesia which are scattered in publications that can be difficult to access (or which are found in unpublished manuscripts); not all of these stories are available in English. It could thus help readers get acquainted with texts that may have otherwise eluded them. Secondly, beyond being merely a compilation of *bird* stories, the narratives selected in this thesis represent a wide corpus of texts that allow for fruitful comparisons across different Polynesian cultures. This corpus could therefore facilitate the study of the connections between those traditional cultures as well as their unique features. Thirdly, it is hoped that these stories will foster an interest in oral traditions among Polynesians and non-Polynesians alike, that is, not only in their study, but also in their collection and preservation. Fourthly, this thesis aims to demonstrate the importance of birds in traditional Polynesian cultures. In so doing the intention is not merely to shed some light on the past, but also to draw attention to the feathered creatures that still live around us today, and the importance of protecting the many species that are sadly facing extinction.

Beyond the compilation and analysis of a corpus, this thesis is foremost meant as a tribute to both the wonderful *manu* of Polynesia and the people who devised and passed on through the generations many great stories about them.

Notes on language and orthography

Throughout this thesis, all words and noun phrases in any one of the 36 Polynesian languages listed at the beginning of Appendix 2 are italicised, except for proper nouns,[1] and for bird species names in Appendix 2. However, when the quote from a text in a Polynesian language is a sentence, it is enclosed within single quotation marks and is not italicised.

In the stories of Part B, I have used, when referring to a bird, the personal pronouns 'he' and 'she' (and therefore the possessive adjectives 'his' and 'her'), as well as the relative pronoun 'who', which may appear to be a departure from traditional English usage. The decision to use gendered pronouns and determiners seemed appropriate given that birds actually exhibit in many of those narratives human-like behaviour, and that some of them, being pets, do have a personal relationship with the human characters in the stories. It was also based, however, on my desire to acknowledge the fact that birds are sentient beings. The words 'it' and 'its' are reserved for non-bird animal species (mostly crabs, rats, lizards, pigs, fish, turtles and insects), in order to enable the reader to distinguish between birds and non-bird animals in the stories. This does not mean to imply, of course, that I consider birds to be above all other animals, but since birds are the focus of this study, I believe that this was the best way to proceed.

In the footnotes, when the English translation of a French quote is not referenced, the author of the translation is myself. In the footnotes of Part B, however, the English translations of each chapter's epigraph in a Polynesian language, although not referenced, are always accompanied by a story number, and the author of the translation is the author of the work from which that story comes.

The spelling of Polynesian words, including Polynesian bird names, follows the orthography used in the dictionaries of Polynesian languages listed in Appendix 2 (pp. 62-64). Words are thus not always spelt in the same way in the thesis as in the original text, particularly with respect to macrons and reversed apostrophes (representing glottal stops). This approach was necessary to ensure consistency, especially with regards to bird names. Macrons are used for long vowels; however, an umlaut is used instead of a macron for some Rotuman, Ulithian and Efatese words (none of those languages being a Polynesian

[1] Polynesian canoe names, however, are italicised.

language), because that is how they appear both in the original text of the stories and in the dictionaries to which I have had access.

Official English names of birds[2] are capitalised, which is the rule followed by Gill and Donsker (2017), while names of other animals are not. Where the particular species cannot be identified (which is often the case for such birds as albatrosses, cormorants, doves, pigeons and waders), the English name of the bird is not capitalised, as it is simply a generic name. Scientific names are always provided, unless the species has already been referred to in the same paragraph. When the official English name of a bird is the same as the Polynesian name (e.g. *tūī, kākāpō*), the capitalised English name is omitted.

Finally, for the sake of consistency I have used the past tense throughout Part A to describe traditional Polynesian societies; however, this does not imply that some of the beliefs or cultural practices reported are no longer current. As for Part B, the stories are retold in the past tense, whereas I have used the present tense in Appendix 1.

[2] It should be noted that, for the stories that take place in a 'mythical' homeland (in a more or less distant, 'pre-migration' past), the identification of the species (by way of assigning a species' scientific name and English name to a Polynesian word) is always based on the avifauna that the people who knew those stories had around them and were familiar with, and not on the avifauna of the islands on which those stories are said to have taken place.

Glossary of Polynesian terms[1]

ʻaito: warrior

aliʻi: chief

Aotearoa: New Zealand[2]

ariʻi, *ariʻi nui*, *ariki*: high chief, paramount chief, prince, princess, king, queen

atua: deity

heiau: shrine

karakia: ritual chant, ritual incantation

kiore: Polynesian rat (*Rattus exulans*)

kūmara: sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*)

kupua: supernatural being, culture hero

Luangiua: Ontong Java

manu: bird

motu: islet

Mugaba: Rennell Island

Mungiki: Bellona Island

Murihiku: Southland (New Zealand's South Island)

Rakiura: Stewart Island

rangatira: chief

Rapa Nui: Easter Island

Rēkohu: Chatham Islands

tapu: sacred, prohibited, restricted, set apart; sacredness, prohibition, restriction

Te Ika-a-Māui: New Zealand's North Island

Te Waipounamu: New Zealand's South Island

tohunga: priestly expert

ʻUvea: Wallis Island

waka: canoe

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[1] Only Polynesian terms that occur more than four times appear in this glossary. They are followed by an English gloss in brackets when first appearing in the thesis.

[2] Unless otherwise specified, Aotearoa refers in this thesis to both the North and the South Islands of New Zealand, although the usage of this term is sometimes restricted to the North Island.

PART A

HE KUPU ARATAKI

Chapter I

Polynesia

> Situé dans l'espace aérien dépourvu de routes, qui ne présente rien d'autre qu'un vide animé par le vent, l'oiseau se meut en parfaite liberté. Il trace lui-même son chemin sans laisser le moindre vestige de son passage.[1]
>
> Davy (1992:11)

> The sea was open to anyone who could navigate his way through.
>
> Hau'ofa (1993:9)

1. What is 'Polynesia'?

'Polynesia' is a Western construct. The term was coined by Charles de Brosses in 1756 to encompass all the islands of the South Pacific Ocean. In 1832, Jules Dumont d'Urville defined Polynesia as consisting of all the islands within a triangle[2] formed by the lines extending between Hawai'i, Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Rapa Nui (Easter Island). In this way, he distinguished it from 'Melanesia' and 'Micronesia'. The three groups of Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia are generally understood to make up 'Oceania' (Kirch 2000:5) (Fig. 1). However, Westerners soon realised that some eighteen or so small islands in Micronesia and Melanesia, scattered through the Western Pacific Ocean, were inhabited by people

[1] 'Finding itself in an aerial space devoid of roads, which presents nothing apart from an emptiness animated by the wind, a bird moves in perfect freedom. It determines its own route, without leaving the slightest trace of its passing.'

[2] As Biggs (1971:466) pointed out, the Polynesian 'Triangle' should actually be a tetragon to encompass Tuvalu.

who were culturally and linguistically Polynesian (Kirch 2012; Scaglion & Feinberg 2012).[3] Western scholars therefore added those so-called 'Outliers' to Triangle Polynesia to form a vast Polynesian culture area stretching more than 10,000 kilometres from west to east (Fig. 2-13).

Polynesia as a culture area

Polynesia is thus a culture area populated by people speaking related languages[4] and sharing a more or less similar culture. It is characterised by its vastness. The westernmost island settled by a Polynesian people, Kapingamarangi, in the Federated States of Micronesia, and the easternmost island, Rapa Nui (Te Pito-Te-Henua), are more than 10,600 kilometres apart. Rakiura (Stewart Island), the southernmost island, and Kaua'i, the northernmost island, are more than 8,300 kilometres apart.[5]

Culturally speaking, unlike Melanesia and Micronesia, Polynesia 'continues to be recognized for its remarkable uniformity despite the vast area that its islands encompass' (Scaglion & Feinberg 2012:1), and 'tends to hold up as a robust group of closely related cultures' (Kirch 2000:9). Polynesia has remained to this day a meaningful entity for culture-historical analysis, whereas Melanesia and Micronesia have not (Kirch 2000:211). Polynesians constitute a 'phylogenetic unit', which was first recognised from their languages, from the time of James Cook (Kirch & Green 2001:53-91). For Kirch (2000:214),

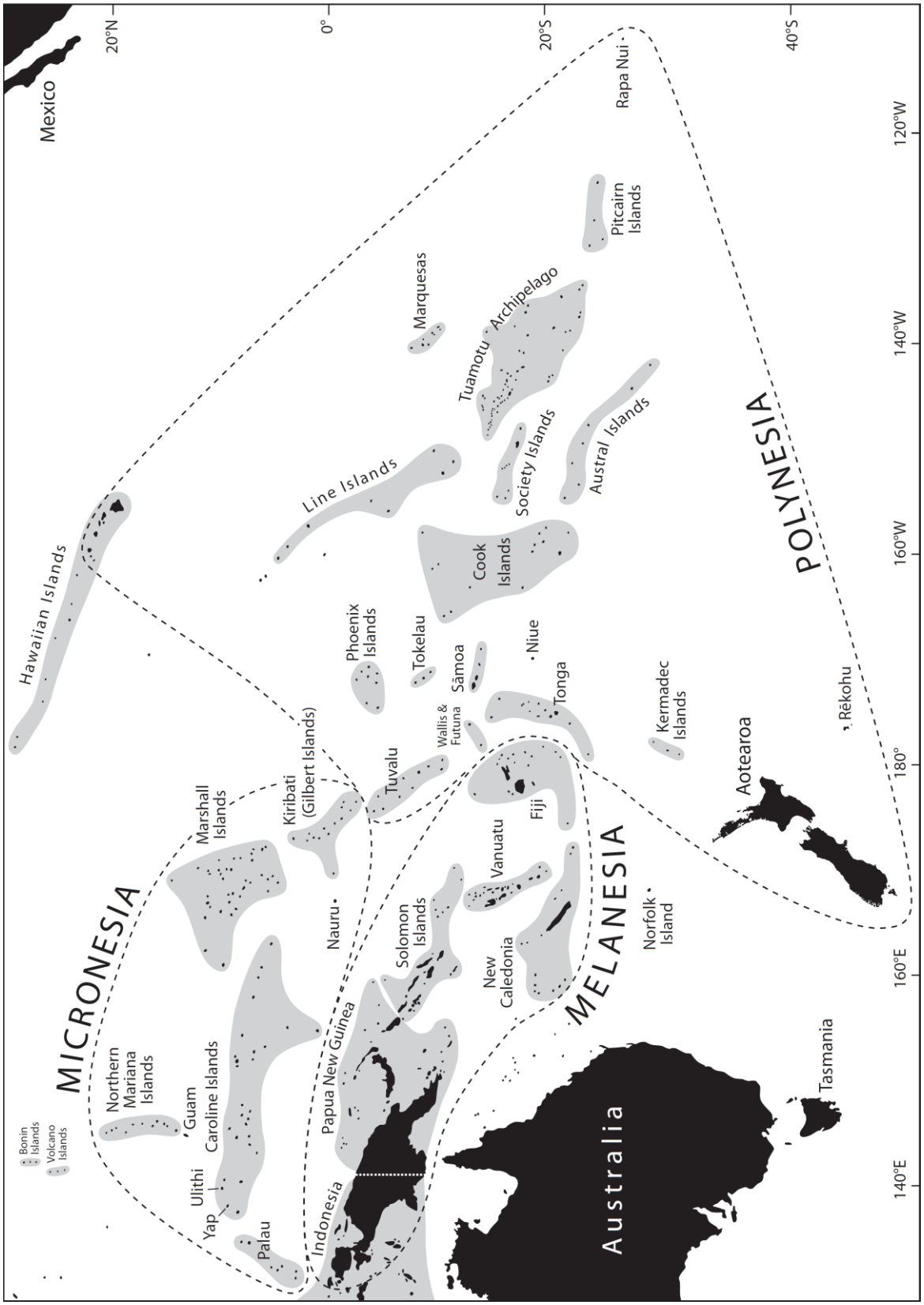
> Arguments adduced from the independent evidence of linguistics, biological anthropology, and comparative ethnography converge on an interpretation of Polynesia as a phyletic unit, in which the region's modern languages, populations, and cultures descended from a common proto-language, parental population, and ancestral culture. Differentiation out of this ancestral group occurred over two and a half millennia, resulting from geographic expansion out of an

[3] An outlier language is indeed 'as much a Polynesian language as any other' (Biggs 1971:467). The Polynesian Outliers are Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi (Federated States of Micronesia); Nuguria, Takū and Nukumanu (Papua New Guinea); Luangiua (Ontong Java), Sikaiana, Mungiki (Bellona Island), Mugaba (Rennell Island), Vaeakau-Taumako (that is, the Duff or Taumako Islands and some of the Reef Islands, including Pileni), Tikopia and Anuta (Solomon Islands); Mele (Imere) and Ifira (Fila), Emae, Aniwa and West Futuna (Vanuatu); and West Uvea (New Caledonia).

[4] In Polynesia, 'only Polynesian languages were ever spoken', with a maximum of a million speakers (Biggs 1971:466).

[5] The following random example of distance gives an idea of the immensity of the Polynesian culture area: Boston, Massachusetts is both closer to Rapa Nui than Kapingamarangi is, and closer to Kaua'i than Rakiura is.

Figure 1. Oceania



> original homeland [i.e., Tonga, Sāmoa and their close neighbours] and from a variety of evolutionary processes and historical contingencies.

However, it must be borne in mind that, although Polynesia is at a basic level quite homogeneous culturally, linguistically and artistically, each area of Polynesia is distinct (Kaeppler 2008:4). Furthermore, Polynesian culture was not a 'circumscribed closed system with internal variations' (Leach 1985:221). Leach (1985:219-220,222), who 'very nearly' argued that Polynesia was a 'subjective figment of the ethnographic imagination' with 'no basis in objective empirical/historical reality', refuted the idea

> . . . that once upon a time there was a precontact, precolonial, era when human societies lying outside the ambit of European explorers, traders, missionaries, colonial administrators or whatever led an uncontaminated indigenous 'traditional' cultural existence which was what professional ethnographers would always like to have observed and recorded but never did.

Polynesian societies ought to be envisaged as dynamic, not static.

Polynesia as a geographical and geological entity

With the addition of the Polynesian Outliers on the western fringe of the Polynesian Triangle, Polynesia does not, geographically speaking, stand as a coherent unit, as there is no geographical continuity between the Triangle and the Outliers.

From a geological point of view, Polynesia does not represent a very meaningful unit either. This is because one of its archipelagoes, namely Aotearoa, did have continental (i.e., Gondwanan) connections, whereas all other Polynesian islands have always been islands (Steadman 2006:40). Furthermore, there are very close links between the geological and biological histories of Norfolk and Macquarie Islands and those of Aotearoa, so much so that those two islands may be included, for instance, in the Aotearoa avifaunal region (Tennyson & Martinson 2006:I), even though they are not classified as 'Polynesian'. In fact, 'Zealandia' is now considered to be a continent, stretching from the Subantarctic Islands all the way up to New Caledonia (Campbell & Mortimer 2014).

An 'avian Polynesia'?

As far as birds are concerned, which were already living in that region when *Homo sapiens* was barely leaving Africa, 'Polynesia' is not a particularly meaningful grouping either, for at least four reasons. Firstly, the avifaunas of Aotearoa and Hawai'i, at two of the corners of the Polynesian Triangle, are highly endemic and have different origins and evolutionary histories from those of the rest of Polynesia (see *infra*).

Secondly, East Polynesia has a quite distinct avifauna from that of West Polynesia. Although Mayr (1976:601) found that Polynesia had a 'fairly homogeneous avifauna', West Polynesian landbirds and East Polynesian landbirds are actually quite distinct from each other. Seventy per cent of West Polynesia's landbird genera do not occur in East Polynesia. Only four species of landbirds are shared by West Polynesia and East Polynesia, today or in the past: the Pacific Reef Heron (*Egretta sacra*), the Pacific Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*),[6] the Spotless Crake (*Porzana tabuensis*) and the Pacific Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula pacifica*). Furthermore, not one extinct species of landbird is shared by those two regions (Steadman 2006:160).[7]

Thirdly, the Polynesian Outliers, being located in Melanesia and Micronesia, have of course avifaunas typical of those two regions, and not typical of Polynesia. The avifauna of 'Melanesian' Fiji, on the other hand, resembles that of Sāmoa and Tonga more than that of the other Melanesian island groups to the west, namely Vanuatu, New Caledonia, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea (Steadman 2006:3). In Tonga, the anthropogenic extinction of many 'Melanesian' taxa has 'artificially sharpened the biogeographic distinction between the avifaunas of Polynesia and Melanesia' (Steadman 1997:54).

Fourthly, more bird species have also kept self-colonising a corner of Polynesia, namely Aotearoa, from outside Polynesia, that is, from Australia, after first human contact. Sixteen bird species are estimated to have settled by themselves in the archipelago since human arrival,[8] even though Aotearoa is situated more than 1,500 kilometres from the east coast of

[6] These two species are Oceania's most widespread landbirds (Steadman 2006:359).

[7] Steadman included Fiji in West Polynesia because of the similarities between the Fijian avifauna and the Tongan and Samoan avifaunas.

[8] Those species include, for instance, the *kōtuku-ngutupapa* (Royal Spoonbill, *Platalea regia*), the *tauhou* (Silvereye, *Zosterops lateralis*) and the *warou* (Welcome Swallow, *Hirundo neoxena*), all arrived in the past 200 years (Tennyson & Martinson 2006:14). And as Holdaway and Worthy (1997:105) stressed, the relatively

Australia and Tasmania. Even small bird species are actually able to cross 'considerable stretches of the open sea to settle in new territories' (Mayr 1976:602). Thus, birds flout the human obsession with geographical limitation and categorisation when they fly out of Australia to settle in the southwestern corner of Triangle Polynesia.

Furthermore, characterising the 'indigeneity' of 'avian Polynesia' in opposition to the bird species introduced by humans in post-European times (mostly from Europe and Asia) is quite complex. The Swamp Harrier (*Circus approximans*), for instance, does not seem to predate Polynesian settlement in Aotearoa (Holdaway, Worthy & Tennyson 2001:131), but colonised this archipelago relatively recently from Australia (Steadman 2006:360). This bird of prey was then purposefully introduced in Tahiti in 1885 to control rats, and spread rapidly to most other Society Islands. Because harriers kill other birds, they have been listed since 1999 by the French Polynesian government as one of the four avian species threatening French Polynesia's biodiversity, and their killing is therefore authorised (Gouni & Zysman 2007:148,225).[9] While for Māori the *kāhu* (Swamp Harrier) represented the *rangatira* (chief) in the language of metaphor (Orbell 2003:38), was 'a symbol for a great chief' (Grey 1857:32), and was associated with victory in battle (Orbell 2003:39), in Tahiti the harrier is now known as the *manu 'amu moa* or *manu 'ai moa* ('chicken-eating bird') (Gouni & Zysman 2007:148) and has become a 'threat to biodiversity'. The difficulty in characterising the 'indigeneity' of 'avian Polynesia' is illustrated by the two strikingly different human perceptions of this bird in those two areas of Polynesia (albeit in different times): this bird is seen in Tahiti as just another invasive introduced species,[10] while for Māori *kāhu* had a very deep symbolical significance.

recent arrival of the *pūkeko* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*) in Aotearoa was not suspected until the end of the 20th century because of the current abundance and widespread distribution of this bird. Actually, the *pūkeko* was probably just a regular visitor unable to establish in the archipelago 'until suitable habitat was produced after human settlement and the other terrestrial rails were extinct'.

[9] 'Arrêté nº 171 du Conseil des Ministres du 9 février 1999', *Journal Officiel de la Polynésie Française*, 18/02/1999; 'Arrêté nº 1301 du Conseil des Ministres du 15 novembre 2006', *Journal Officiel de la Polynésie Française*, 23/11/2006.

[10] Another raptor, the Chimango Caracara (*Milvago chimango*), introduced in Rapa Nui in 1928, may also be responsible for the decline, or even the extinction, of a few species of seabirds on that island (Thibault & Cibois 2016:81-82).

A geographically immutable entity?

Polynesian peoples travelled the full length of the Pacific Ocean and settled on islands that they later abandoned or where they died out long before their 'discovery' by Europeans, such as the Pitcairn Islands or Norfolk Island. In the Western Pacific, Carson (2012:43) also argued that 'a number of Polynesian outlier populations probably have disappeared due to assimilation into pre-established indigenous groups', for instance in New Caledonia. This is because 'a small immigrant population is not expected to survive as a distinct cultural entity after exposure to more numerous, culturally different neighbors'. Therefore, one should be wary in assuming that the current geographical distribution of Polynesian peoples across the Pacific, whether it be within the Triangle or in the Outliers, has been immutable for centuries. Furthermore, not all Polynesian communities settled on previously uninhabited islands. Carson (2012:43), for instance, reported that

> Oral traditions of Rennell and Bellona indicate co-existence with indigenous *hiti* [i.e., native people] communities for some period of time, but eventually the Polynesian immigrants became the dominant or sole occupants. Similar situations may have occurred on Tikopia and Taumako, where the archaeological evidence reveals long-term early habitation by indigenous groups prior to Polynesian arrival.

As far as birds are concerned, since 'modern distributions of most species are subsets of those that existed at human arrival', one ought not to analyse modern distributions of bird species in the Pacific 'as if they were natural' (Steadman 2006:401,510). As Clark (1994: 73) explained, 'the geographical range of bird populations is no more immutable than that of human populations.'

It is important to bear all those geographical and historical limitations in mind when considering the place of birds in the narratives of the peoples of the Polynesian culture area: there is no strict correspondence between 'avian Polynesia' and 'human Polynesia', and the distribution patterns of avian species as well as the occupation patterns of the islands of the Pacific Ocean by Polynesian peoples have changed, sometimes dramatically, over time.

2. *Pleistocene and Early Holocene Polynesia: the realm of the birds*

The Polynesian islands were populated by birds hundreds of thousands of years before humans ventured on their shores. Pre-Pleistocene avifaunas are poorly known (Holdaway, Worthy & Tennyson 2001:158), but as far as Pleistocene avifaunas are concerned, fossil evidence suggests that most of the bird species existing at first human contact in places such as Tonga, Aotearoa or Hawai‘i had been present for more than 100,000 years (Steadman 2006: 448).[11] In the Aotearoa avifaunal region[12] for instance, ‘for at least the past 100 000 years, until 2000 years ago, the fauna appears to have been very stable in composition, despite strong cyclic fluctuations in climate and vegetation’ (Holdaway, Worthy & Tennyson 2001: 120).[13] In Aotearoa, late Quaternary fossil records of birds in particular are characterised by a widespread distribution of deposits and an abundance of fossils that offer a very detailed picture of the distribution of bird species and of the changes in that distribution (Holdaway, Worthy & Tennyson 2001:120-121).[14]

Tropical Polynesia

The avifauna of tropical Polynesia (excluding Hawai‘i) originated mostly from New Guinea, a ‘very important evolutionary center for birds’ (Mayr 1976:612). Even the most distant island groups, such as the Pitcairn Islands, have birds that originally came from New Guinea (Mitchell 1990:124). For Steadman (2006:511), ‘all evidence, modern or prehistoric,[15] points to Old World (Papuan) affinities for the landbirds everywhere in Oceania except the Hawaiian Islands.’ The birds’ ‘colonizing route across the Pacific seems to have taken them from New Guinea to the Bismarck Archipelago, on to the Solomons, Vanuatu and New Caledonia, to Fiji and Samoa, east to the Society Islands, and lastly north to the Tuamotus

[11] Sandpipers, for example, colonised East Polynesia around thirty million years ago, in the Oligocene epoch (Thibault & Cibois 2017:36).

[12] It includes Norfolk Island, the Kermadec and Subantarctic Islands, and Rēkohu (Chatham Islands).

[13] There is no evidence of colonisation by birds from outside Aotearoa from about 10,000 years ago until human arrival (Holdaway, Worthy & Tennyson 2001:120).

[14] ‘Once dead in a cave,’ birds had ‘a very good chance of remaining there undisturbed’ because of the absence of mammalian scavengers to destroy the carcasses (Worthy & Holdaway 2002:xxx).

[15] From the perspective of Pacific archaeologists and palaeontologists, ‘prehistory’ refers to pre-European times.

and Marquesas' (Mitchell 1990:124). Humans would take more or less the same route thousands of years later.

The New World element is nil in Oceania, even though the prevailing winds and currents in the tropical Pacific are from the east (Steadman 2006:40).[16] In the Pacific, Neotropical avifaunas have had no influence on the islands, apart from those lying close to the American mainland. As winds and ocean currents generally have an east-to-west direction in Oceania, 'much colonization by birds . . . has been against the prevailing wind and current', even for weakly flying species (such as rails) (Steadman 2006:511).

Aotearoa, Hawai'i and Rapa Nui

The avifaunas of Aotearoa and Hawai'i, however, have 'largely independent evolutionary histories' (Steadman 2006:95). Aotearoa and Hawai'i are the only Polynesian archipelagoes to have endemic families of birds,[17] which indicates 'their long separation' (Mitchell 1990: 124).

As far as Aotearoa is concerned, the presence of several endemic families, genera and species indicates that its avifauna has been 'isolated for a long time' (Holdaway, Worthy & Tennyson 2001:147). It is highly endemic and of largely independent origin from the avifauna of tropical Polynesia (Steadman 2006:511). Out of the 245 bird species present at first human contact in the archipelago (including Norfolk Island, the Kermadec and Subantarctic Islands, and Rēkohu), 176 were endemic to the archipelago, that is, more than 71 per cent (Holdaway, Worthy & Tennyson 2001:119). The avifauna of Aotearoa seems to be of Australian origin (Mitchell 1990:124) – the Australian influence has been deemed 'very strong' (Holdaway, Worthy & Tennyson 2001:147).

In Polynesia, only Hawai'i has landbirds of American origin (Mitchell 1990:123). Its avifauna is mostly composed of North American elements, as opposed to Polynesian elements (Mayr 1976:656). 'Four of Oceania's most widespread families of landbirds', that is,

[16] 'This reflects how much closer the islands are to New Guinea or Australia than the New World tropics.' Indeed, 'the thousands of kilometers of deep ocean in the tropical eastern Pacific, at most latitudes unbroken by islands, have been an effective isolating agent . . .'

[17] These are the Apterygidae (kiwis), Acanthisittidae (wrens) and Callaeidae (wattlebirds) in Aotearoa, and the Drepanididae (Hawaiian honeycreepers) in Hawai'i (Van Perlo 2011:41).

megapodes, pigeons, parrots and starlings, are absent from the 'independently derived and highly endemic Hawaiian avifauna'. This is probably due to the isolation of the Hawaiian Archipelago (Steadman 2006:320,511). Although they rank third in geographic range and taxonomic diversity in Oceania, no parrots have been found in Hawai'i; their absence is 'natural rather than due to human impact' (Steadman 2006:342).

In tropical Polynesia, no bird species originated from Aotearoa, probably because of climatic differences (Watling 1982:22). Landbirds from Hawai'i did not colonise other islands in the Pacific either. As far as birds were concerned, those two island groups were 'on the way to nowhere' (Steadman 2006:419).

Finally, in the easternmost corner of the Polynesian Triangle, Rapa Nui, no landbird survived to historic times, but fragmentary prehistoric bones have been discovered.[18] Until the island's landbirds have been better documented, it will be impossible to ascertain whether they included a Neotropical element, thereby differing from all the other avifaunal regions of Oceania (Steadman 2006:209).[19]

Transoceanic dispersal

Apart from Aotearoa, all Polynesian islands, having always been islands, required 'dispersal for biotic enrichment' (Steadman 2006:40). Even the ancestors of the birds that are now flightless probably flew to the various islands of Polynesia. As Mitchell (1990:124) explained, 'to fly requires such great effort that once wings are no longer needed to forage for food or to escape predators they are, in evolutionary terms, quickly dispensed with.' Many bird species go through 'periods of active expansion but lose this faculty again at later periods of their evolutionary history' (Mayr 1976:613). In Polynesia, in the absence of predators, formerly volant rails, for instance, evolved into flightless species on a great many islands, regardless of their isolation (Steadman 2006:296). It may have taken as few as tens or hundreds of generations to develop flightlessness on predator-free islands (Steadman 2006:298-299).

[18] Two species of rails, two species of parrots and one species of heron seem to be represented by those bone fragments. All of those species are extinct and undescribed (Steadman 2006:251-252).

[19] There is a Neotropical element in the island's native flora (Steadman 2006:249).

According to Mayr (1976:614-615), dispersal of bird species primarily depends on the age of the island, its size (and the number of habitats available), its distance from the nearest landmass and its climate. Birds that are successful colonisers tend to have the following characteristics, among others: they travel in small flocks; they are seed-eaters rather than insect-eaters; they are freshwater birds (because fresh water has a scattered distribution); they have the ability to fly 'across large stretches of ecologically unsuitable habitat' and to shift habitat preference (Mayr 1976:668-670). For instance, two very successful colonisers among passerines with a great ability to disperse over the ocean are the starling (*Aplonis* sp.), which has been recorded on more Pacific island groups than any other bird, today or prehistorically, and the reed-warbler (*Acrocephalus* sp.), which has also colonised very remote islands in Micronesia and East Polynesia (Steadman 2006:379,383).

In Polynesia, volant rails such as the Spotless Crake (*Porzana tabuensis*), the Buff-banded Rail (*Gallirallus philippensis*) and the Australasian Swamphen (*Porphyrio melanotus*) may actually have colonised some of their modern range after human arrival; the same goes for the Pacific Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula pacifica*). Partial deforestation on the islands colonised by the Polynesians actually 'created suitable habitat for the rails and may not have been especially disadvantageous for *D. pacifica*'. On a few Polynesian islands, palaeontologists have not found bones of this pigeon in the earliest cultural levels but only in later ones (Steadman 2006:340). As for penguins in Aotearoa, *Megadyptes waitaha* (Waitaha Penguin), an endemic species, probably became extinct during the 15th century, not long after human arrival; within just a few decades of the extinction, the southern part of the archipelago was colonised by *Megadyptes antipodes* (Yellow-eyed Penguin), showing that faunal turnover and species replacement can be very rapid (Rawlence *et al.* 2015).

The limits of the expansion

However, the 'general eastward trend through Melanesia, West Polynesia, and East Polynesia is one of reduced floral and faunal diversity at all taxonomic levels' (Steadman 2006: 41), and this is particularly true of birds. For instance, Tahiti has only twelve species of native landbirds, whereas as many as forty could be found on an island of equivalent size in Vanuatu or the Solomon Islands (Mitchell 1990:124).

Many bird species reached a limit in their eastward expansion in the Pacific somewhere around the West Polynesia/East Polynesia divide. For example, except for Aotearoa and Hawai‘i, East Polynesia seems to have always been devoid of any resident species of hawks or eagles, unlike West Polynesia (Steadman 2006:361). Other distribution patterns are more obscure; fantails (*Rhipidura* sp.), for instance, occur in Fiji and Sāmoa today, but are absent from nearby Tonga, where no bones of fantails have been discovered (Steadman 2006:379, 381).[20] However, a ‘failure to colonize’ is, generally speaking, less likely to be the reason for ‘illogical discontinuities’ in the modern ranges of many bird species than ‘anthropogenic extinction’ (Steadman 2006:383).

Polynesian bird species dispersed over the widest expanse of water on the planet and evolved for thousands of years, thriving in the absence of ground-based predators, namely mammals. They colonised very remote islands from New Guinea and Australia (and, as far as the Hawaiian avifauna is concerned, North America), reaching islands up to 10,000 kilometres away from those two regions. However, the arrival of mammals, *Homo sapiens* and his commensals, in the Late Holocene, around 3,000 years ago, was not without consequence for the aboriginal feathered occupants of the Polynesian islands.

3. Late Holocene Polynesia: the coming on the scene of mammals

The *manu* narratives of Part B were collected from people whose ancestors, who came to be known as ‘Polynesians’, are believed to have originated thousands of years ago from Austronesian speakers living in Southeast Asia. They travelled on outrigger and double-hulled canoes via Near Oceania to Polynesia and on to South America, and their odyssey across the largest ocean of all constitutes one of the most remarkable epics in human history.

[20] Being very thin, those bones actually pass through the sieves used by archaeologists (Thibault, pers. comm.).

The origins of the Polynesians are now accepted as being tied to Lapita-derived populations.[21] The 'Lapita Cultural Complex' that originated in the Bismarck Archipelago around 1350 BC is an archaeologically-defined cultural complex characterised by distinctive artefacts and stamped pottery. Within a few hundred years, Lapita sites appeared outside the Bismarck Archipelago, in Remote Oceania, where they represented the first human settlements. The Lapita seaborne expansion reached Fiji and Tonga around 900 BC, and Sāmoa around 700 BC (Matisoo-Smith 2012:395). It must be noted, though, that 'the Polynesians became Polynesian once inside the Polynesian triangle; that is, they did not migrate with a cultural complex recognizable as modern Polynesian' (Kaeppler 2008:4). As Kirch (2000: 211) summed it up,

> In short, the branch of Oceanic-speaking peoples whom we designate as Polynesians had their origins in the Eastern Lapita expansion, to become distinctly Polynesian during the course of the first millennium B.C., within the archipelagoes of Western Polynesia. Here, in Tonga and Samoa and their close neighbors like Futuna, is the immediate Polynesian homeland – what generations of later Polynesian peoples would call, in their myths and traditions, *Havaiki*.

However, the settlement of East Polynesia[22] does not appear to have begun until 1,200 to 1,500 years later, after a 'long pause' (Matisoo-Smith 2012:395), even though this 'pause' has given rise to many chronological debates among scholars (Kirch 2000:232-233). A meta-analysis of radiocarbon dates from East Polynesia has shown that population dispersal did not happen further east than the Society Islands before the 13th century (Wilmshurst *et al.* 2011).

The settlement by Polynesian peoples of the Outliers, which are 'central to the prehistory of the entire southwestern Pacific' (Kirch 2012:25), began around 1000 from the Tuvalu/Tokelau and Futuna/'Uvea (Wallis Island) areas (Carson 2012:41). Those eighteen or so islands were settled from Central Polynesia by retrograde westward migrations (Bayard 1976). As Scaglion and Feinberg (2012:3) explained,

> . . . archaeological and linguistic evidence, as well as oral traditions, demonstrate that, while some islands had earlier residents, the current inhabitants'

[21] However, there is increasing evidence that significant elements derived from post-Lapita population movements were later introduced to Polynesian culture and biology (Addison & Matisoo-Smith 2010).

[22] East Polynesia is generally assumed to have been settled from Central Western Polynesia (Sāmoa in particular); however, for a theory of settlement of East Polynesia from the Central Northern Polynesian Outliers, based on linguistic data (shared lexical bases and grammatical features), see Wilson (2012, 2018).

progenitors arrived from the east as a result of back-migrations out of the Polynesian triangle and into Melanesia or Micronesia. This is sometimes called the 'blow-back' model, and it is the one generally accepted today.

As for the southwestern corner of the Polynesian Triangle, Aotearoa, the archipelago was probably not settled until the first half of the 14th century (Jacomb *et al*. 2014). The 'long prehistory' model, according to which Aotearoa must have been settled by the 8th century (Sutton 1987), has now been discredited. On the contrary, 'the first people arriving in New Zealand from tropical East Polynesia initiated an immediate and rapid biotic transformation that is easily detectable and consistently dated across a range of records' (Wilmshurst *et al*. 2008:7679). Radiocarbon-dating of rat bones and seeds gnawed by rats showed that the commensal *kiore* (Polynesian rat, *Rattus exulans*) was not introduced to Aotearoa until the 14th century (Wilmshurst *et al*. 2008), contrary to previous assumptions.

Furthermore, there is mounting evidence that suggests that 'Polynesian voyaging continued beyond the eastern boundary of the well-known Polynesian Triangle', sporadically, to South America (Matisoo-Smith 2012:403).[23] It has been hypothesised that the Polynesian sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*) was collected by Polynesian voyagers between 1000 and 1100 from the west coast of South America (Storey, Clarke & Matisoo-Smith 2011:126). Linguistic evidence is suggestive of trans-Pacific contacts, the word *cumar* and its variants in several languages spoken in Peru and Ecuador being similar to the word *kūmara* in Polynesian languages (Scaglion & Cordero 2011). In addition, the fact that the mitochondrial DNA sequences obtained from archaeological chicken bones found in the pre-Columbian site of El Arenal in Chile were similar to those from ancient Pacific chicken bones points to a Polynesian origin (Storey, Quiróz & Matisoo-Smith 2011).

Birds as factors in the human colonisation of the Pacific

It has been suggested that the discovery and settlement of almost every inhabitable island in the Pacific Ocean by Lapita-derived populations, and then by distinctly Polynesian peoples, was aided by birds. This may be true for at least three reasons.

[23] This voyaging, however, may never have 'actually involved physical settlements, but merely involved brief contact associated with voyages of exploration or trade or even accidental contact by canoes of fishermen blown off course' (Matisoo-Smith 2011:221).

Firstly, as Lewis (1994:212) put it, the indigenous navigator is 'no castaway, but a highly trained expert making deliberate voyages within the conservative framework of his navigational system', a system in which the observation of birds actually played a very significant role. As Dening (1972:114) observed, 'birds were most frequently taken as a sign of land, and the directions they flew in the evenings and early mornings were always noted':

> Uninhabited islands, especially, provided a sanctuary for birds, so that birds in great numbers became accepted in the Pacific by the explorers as the sign of an uninhabited island. In this we might find an explanation of why almost every uninhabited island in the Pacific gives signs of having been visited by the Polynesians. Lost voyagers would be easily attracted by the sign of birds.

This is because seabirds are often much more plentiful on uninhabited islands than on inhabited ones (Steadman 2006:107). They were extremely numerous in the Pacific at human arrival. In Rapa Nui for example, probably more than thirty resident species of seabirds used to be present before human contact, making it the richest seabird island in the world (Steadman 2006:251). The current number of individual resident seabirds in the tropical Pacific may actually be between one hundredth and one thousandth of what it was 3,000 years ago (Steadman 2006:107).

Seabirds indicate the direction of land; terns and noddies have relatively short daily ranges, while boobies and frigatebirds fly further out. They indicate the direction of land only in the early morning when they fly out to their fishing grounds, and in the evening on their return home (Lewis 1994:206). As for tame tropicbirds and frigatebirds that appear in Polynesian stories as land-finders, Lewis (1994:208) believed those stories of shore-sighting pet birds aboard canoes to be 'vague and nonspecific'; however, he agreed (1994:209) that tame frigatebirds were used to carry messages between islands.

Furthermore, migrating landbirds and shorebirds, such as the Pacific Long-tailed Cuckoo (*Urodynamis taitensis*), the Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*), or the Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*),[24] may have 'provided the early Polynesians with clues to the existence of undiscovered islands'. Even though Lewis (1994:214-216) believed this hypothesis to be 'entirely speculative', because there would have been 'no indication at all as to how far off the birds' destination lay', he nonetheless conceded that 'this drawback would not necessarily prevent curious voyagers from casting about along the star path that the

[24] For Te Paa (1912), it was the Bar-tailed Godwit, or *kuaka* in Māori, that his ancestors followed from their homeland, Hawaiki, to Aotearoa.

flocks had taken.'[25] The annual migration of petrels and shearwaters from the North and Central Pacific to Aotearoa, for instance, may have provided Polynesians with the clue that land lay to the south (McGlone, Anderson & Holdaway 1994:143-144).

Birds also aided human colonisation of the islands of the Pacific by permitting their biotic enrichment, thus allowing people to find sustenance on them. Seabirds, especially frigatebirds,[26] are 'agents of interisland dispersal for plants with sticky fruits or seeds' (Steadman 2006:399). Seabirds also transport nutrients from marine origin to islands, which triggers the growth of terrestrial vegetation (Steadman 2006:402). Furthermore, in the Polynesian islands' forests, nectarivorous and frugivorous birds are responsible for pollination as well as plant propagule dispersion (Steadman 2006:503). Therefore, without the birds, Polynesian people would probably have not found as much nutritional value from plant sources on the islands which they settled.

Thirdly, the very presence of birds on the islands may have been a factor in the Polynesian peoples' seaborne expansion in the Pacific, since they represented a major food source. At first human contact birds must have been remarkably tame, allowing people to 'gather' them more than they would have 'hunted' them, because they must have displayed 'naïveté' towards their new ground-based predators (Steadman 2006:78,127,405). This ease of access to this food source probably played a part in the rapid human expansion into the Pacific:

> The pursuit of unexploited avifaunas, not to mention pristine fishing and shelling grounds, may explain why the Lapita people, and later colonizers of East Polynesia, moved so rapidly across the Pacific. Once beyond Near Oceania, abundant, tame birds and previously unfished reefs awaited on each new island (Steadman 2006:77).

[25] Bachimon (1995:234) put forward the hypothesis that Tahitian cosmogonic myths, for instance, provided for a carefree exploration of the Pacific Ocean, because they suggested that islands were fishes that lay under the surface of the ocean; priests and heroes expert in 'island fishing' aboard the canoes would be able at any moment to make those islands appear from beneath the surface, thus alleviating any fear of wandering endlessly on the ocean.

[26] This is because of the frigatebirds' 'poor site fidelity' and because of the fact that, being unable to land on the ocean, they are less likely than other seabirds to 'have a seed or fruit wash away from their bodies once it adheres to them'.

The effects of the depletion of birds on the human expansion in the Pacific

After first human contact, however, bird populations were depleted on island after island (see *infra*). Therefore, less and less interisland dispersal of plants occurred, hence less food was available for people. A depletion of seabird populations may have also led to a decrease in marine nutrients, which in turn may have resulted in weaker vegetation growth on many Pacific islands (Steadman 2006:402).

Furthermore, pollination and plant propagule dispersion in the forests were probably limited by the loss of nectarivorous and frugivorous birds (Steadman 2006:503).[27] As Mitchell (1990:131) explained, 'evolution has charged [forest birds] with the means to distribute the offspring of trees and so ensure the survival of both tree and bird. To harm one half of such a partnership is often to threaten the survival of the other.' Birds depended on the forest for their survival, but the forests depended on the birds for their survival as well. By depleting the islands of birds, the first settlers of the islands harmed the forests that they too depended on in their daily lives (for food, building materials, the making of canoes, etc.), and by clearing the forests they also harmed the birds.

It may also be surmised that the anthropogenic depletion of seabirds in the Pacific actually deprived the Polynesian navigators of a crucial means to find their way across the ocean. The loss of most seabirds, other than the Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*), the Black Noddy (*Anous minutus*) and the White Tern (*Gygis alba*), must have significantly limited the use of seabirds as navigation aids (Steadman 2006:107). Shearwaters and petrels were indeed depleted on countless islands across Oceania. Furthermore, the Polynesians' ability to find fish may also have decreased with the depletion of seabirds, as those were (and still are in many parts of Polynesia) used to locate schools of fish (Nordhoff 1930:249-250; Kennedy 1931:49; Phillipps 1953:266; Anderson 1981:146; Steadman 1997:69-70; D'Arcy 2006: 39).[28]

[27] Mangaia, for example, lost three species of nectarivorous birds about 600 years ago: the Sinoto's Lorikeet (*Vini sinotoi*), the Kuhl's Lorikeet (*Vini kuhlii*) and the Conquered Lorikeet (*Vini vidivici*) (Steadman 2006: 504). The *jeu de mots* around the name of the latter finds its motive in the idea that, in Polynesia, 'people came to an island, saw the native parrots, and then conquered them, leaving behind only the bones' (Steadman & Zarriello 1987:523).

[28] In Nukuoro for instance, there is a term for the *ngongo* (Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*) closely watched by fishermen because they lead their flocks to schools of fish: *manu de gabadanga* (Carroll & Soulik 1973:287).

In sum, it is important to note that the depletion of both seabirds and landbirds after human arrival on the Pacific islands reduced the range of species that Polynesians could use not only as navigational and fishing aids, as food, as pets, or for their feathers and bones, but also in their 'legends' and 'imagery'.[29] Therefore, it may be argued that 'the importance of birds in Oceanic societies, while substantial at European contact,' was 'even greater before so many of the species were lost' (Steadman 2006:107).

Man's commensals: three mammals and a bird

Homo sapiens did not settle the islands of the Pacific alone. Four commensal animals were associated with the dispersal of the Lapita culture (Matisoo-Smith 2007). Pigs, dogs and chickens (Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*), all of Southeast Asian origin, were all 'part of the contribution of the early Austronesian speakers to the Lapita complex', and 'an important part of the Lapita "transported landscape"' (Kirch 2000:111).

So was the Polynesian rat (*Rattus exulans*), the fourth commensal. Even though scholars did not consider this possibility until relatively recently, rats were not accidentally but deliberately transported by Polynesians in their canoes. This is evidenced by their widespread distribution all across Polynesia, the abundance of rat bones discovered in archaeological middens throughout the region, and the importance of *kiore* in Māori culture. Some Māori narratives about *ngā hekenga waka* (the canoe migrations from tropical Polynesia to Aotearoa) do mention *kiore* intentionally placed in the *waka* (canoes).[30] Rats were considered a valuable food source, and they differ from the other three commensal animals in that they were not domesticated, but 'left to breed naturally in reserves' (Matisoo-Smith 1994:79-80).

Even though the *kiore* may have been known by Māori as a 'vegetarian which lived harmoniously in its environment, having little if any effect on other fauna and flora' (Haami 1994:72), it has actually been shown that in Aotearoa animal and insect remains represent up to 90 per cent of its stomach contents, and there are reports of *kiore* preying on the eggs

[29] For example, a giant flightless bird, *Sylviornis neocaledoniae*, a stem galliform that could weigh up to 34 kilogrammes, became extinct in New Caledonia shortly after human arrival (Worthy *et al*. 2016). Those huge birds must have been a 'thrilling' sight for the first Lapita colonists of New Caledonia (Steadman 2006:293). They appear in some traditions as ferocious animals called *du* (Griscelli 1976:5-6; Poplin & Mourer-Chauviré 1985:94-95).

[30] For instance, Grey (1855:211-212) (*Aotea waka*); Simmons (1976:141) (*Horouta waka*).

and young of lizards and birds (whereas it is mostly vegetarian elsewhere in the Pacific) (Matisoo-Smith 1994:81). Even where the rats did not prey on birds, they were very destructive to the islands' forests. In Hawai'i for instance, it has been argued that the main source of lowland forest destruction which brought about avian extinctions was actually not agricultural clearing and burning by the Polynesian settlers, but the introduced Polynesian rat itself, a 'prime suspect in the demise of the forest' (Athens *et al*. 2002:73).

Rats, dogs and pigs were, with humans, the first non-bat mammal species to live on the Polynesian islands in post-Pleistocene times. Through predation and habitat destruction, they did have an impact on the Polynesian avifauna, which varied from island to island. As for the Red Junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*) introduced by Polynesians, it served as a reservoir for pathogens (Steadman 2006:502).

Commensal birds

Even though most birds flew to the various islands of Polynesia (see *supra*), some of them were carried between islands by the Polynesians. The main reason for this was the value accorded to the birds' feathers, but birds were also taken from island to island because of the food source that they represented, or because they were pets (see III-2).

Kakā (Maroon Shining Parrot, *Prosopeia tabuensis*), for instance, were taken by Tongans from Fiji to Tongatapu and 'Eua because of their highly prized red feathers. The *sega'ula* (Collared Lory, *Phigys solitarius*) was introduced by Samoans to Sāmoa from Fiji for the same reason; unlike *kakā* in Tonga however, *sega'ula* did not establish themselves in the wild in Sāmoa (Watling 1982:24). In East Polynesia, the *vini* (Blue Lorikeet, *Vini peruviana*) was carried as a cage bird between islands (Holyoak 1980:35).[31] The *'ura* (Kuhl's Lorikeet, *Vini kuhlii*) may have been taken by Polynesians to some of the Line Islands, namely Kiritimati, Tabuaeran and Teraina, at the end of the 18th century (Kape 2010: 13,25).

[31] Today, Blue Lorikeets are only present on three atolls in the Leeward Group of the Society Islands, on a few islands in the Tuamotu Archipelago, and in Aitutaki (where they are known as *kurāmo'o*). According to Steadman (2006:218), they must have been introduced to Aitutaki from Tahiti and not from another island in the Cook Islands, because all prehistoric bones of small species of *Vini* found in the Cook Islands are of *Vini kuhlii* (Kuhl's Lorikeet).

In some traditional narratives, the Australasian Swamphen (*Porphyrio melanotus*) is also said to have been transported by the Polynesians. According to Ariki Tafua, the *karae* was indeed introduced by his people to the island of Tikopia in ancient times (Firth 1985: 165-166). In Aotearoa, stories of the voyage of the *Aotea waka*, captained by Turi, say that it carried from Hawaiki 'some pet Pukekos, or large water-hens' (Grey 1854:111; 1855: 212). The *Horouta waka* too transported *pākura* from Hawaiki to Aotearoa, according to Tūrei (1912:158). *Karae* is the Tikopian name, and *pūkeko* and *pākura* are the Māori names, of the Australasian Swamphen.[32] Hotu Matu'a and his people were also said to have carried on their canoes from their homeland to Rapa Nui twelve species of seabirds; twenty of each were brought, according to one tradition, in thirty large calabashes (Barthel 1978:103,149).

The 'great blue highway'

The transportation of those commensal birds from island to island is a testament to the interaction between the islands of Polynesia in pre-European times. The ocean was 'not just a barrier to interaction but a facilitator of migration – it was, in actuality, a great blue highway' (Matisoo-Smith 2012:409). In Polynesia, inter-archipelago contacts continued well after the initial settlement period. For instance, the analysis of basalt adzes collected in the Tuamotu Archipelago showed that those adzes originated from the Marquesas, Pitcairn, Austral and Society Islands, and even from Hawai'i, thus proving that there was post-colonisation interaction in the form of extensive interisland voyaging between East Polynesian archipelagoes (Collerson & Weisler 2007).

As Kirch (2012:25) argued, for example, about the Polynesian Outliers, 'the idea of island isolates is inadequate', because even though 'islands are physically bounded ecosystems', island societies 'had no discrete barriers to the potential for interaction with others beyond their shores'. Therefore, as Hau'ofa (1993:7) put it, the universe of the peoples of Oceania

> comprised not only land surfaces, but the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it, the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above with their hierarchies of powerful gods and

[32] However, no species of *Porphyrio* seems to have lived prehistorically in tropical East Polynesia, where the ancestors of Māori came from, apart from *Porphyrio paepae*, an extinct species of swamphen whose bones were discovered by Steadman in archaeological sites in Hiva Oa and Tahuata in 1986–1987 (Steadman 2006: 105-106).

> named stars and constellations that people could count on to guide their ways across the seas. Their world was anything but tiny. They thought big and recounted their deeds in epic proportions.

The Polynesian world was ‘a large sea full of places to explore, to make their homes in, to breed generations of seafarers like themselves. People raised in this environment were at home with the sea. They played in it as soon as they could walk steadily, they worked in it, they fought on it’ (Hauʻofa 1993:8). Thus, Oceania was once a ‘boundless world’ (Hauʻofa 1993:10),

> a large world in which peoples and cultures moved and mingled unhindered by boundaries of the kind erected much later by imperial powers.[33] From one island to another they sailed to trade and to marry, thereby expanding social networks for greater flow of wealth. They travelled to visit relatives in a wide variety of natural and cultural surroundings, to quench their thirst for adventure, and even to fight and dominate (Hauʻofa 1993:8).

This is evidenced by oral traditions and by blood ties retained to this day, for instance by the high chiefs of Fiji, Sāmoa and Tonga (Hauʻofa 1993:9).

The Māori *whakataukī* (proverb), ‘E kore au e ngaro, he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiātea’ (‘I shall never be lost, for I am a seed scattered from Rangiātea’), may be understood as: ‘a people whose ancestors came from Rangiātea and successfully crossed the wide seas to Aotearoa cannot be defeated’ (Orbell 1995:148). The Polynesians were indeed outstanding navigators[34] who skilfully sailed across an ocean representing a third of the Earth’s surface to discover almost every one of its thousand islands. Their discovery and settlement, however, brought about what may be described as the ‘largest vertebrate extinction event ever detected’ in the history of the Earth (Steadman 2006:408).

[33] It was Europeans and Americans who later ‘drew imaginary lines across the sea, making the colonial boundaries that, for the first time, confined ocean peoples to tiny spaces’ (Hauʻofa 1993:7). For instance, Mangaia is closer to Rimatara than Raʻivavae is; this observation helps to suggest cultural parallels that may be obliterated by the fact that Mangaia and Rimatara belong to two distinct political areas, the Cook Islands and French Polynesia respectively (Vérin 1969:25).

[34] ‘It is all too easy’, as Lewis (1994:354-355) cautioned, to underestimate Polynesian navigational methods, ‘perhaps because the scientifically conditioned Western mind finds difficulty in grasping the concepts involved and in appreciating the degree of precision that is attainable by them’.

4. The other face of Late Holocene Polynesia: 'man as a catastrophe'[35]

The mass extinction of avian species after first human contact in Polynesia has been touched upon earlier in this chapter. An overall description will now be presented of what this major event entailed, because it is essential to bear in mind, when reading Polynesian narratives about *manu*, that the species present in those texts are but a portion of the species that the first Polynesians to settle on the islands found living there. The avifauna, in its richness, diversity and distribution, was anything but perennial during the few centuries of pre-European human occupation of the Polynesian islands.

Palaeontology and the 'shifting of the blame' from Europeans to Polynesians

Most avian extinctions in Polynesia are anthropogenic: they occurred 'during the past 3000 years, well after the major changes in climate and sea-level associated with the Pleistocene-Holocene (glacial-interglacial) transition' (Steadman 2006:89). However, the pre-European extinction of birds in Polynesia has only been studied in the last thirty years or so (Steadman 2006:510). Before the 1970s, it was generally assumed that the anthropogenic loss of avian species and shrinkage of avian distribution ranges were mostly attributable to the Europeans who started to settle on the Polynesian islands at the end of the 18th century, clearing forests and bringing guns and various animals with them. The world in which indigenous people lived was often deemed to be one 'protected not so much by an ethos of philanthropic goodness to other sentient beings as by dependence and self-interest, by simple common sense' (Guss 1985:x). This 'common sense' was supposed to have prevented massive faunal extinctions.

The reality, however, is far different. The analysis of palaeontological records conducted since the 1970s has allowed scientists to discover the magnitude of the pre-European losses. According to Mitchell (1990:194), the first evidence of bird extinction caused by Polynesians was found at Barbers Point in O'ahu in 1976 by Yosihiko H. Sinoto.

Archaeological discoveries led Olson and James (1984:768,778) to argue in 1984 that 'the period of the original peopling of the diverse islands of Oceania, with their highly

[35] This expression is taken from the title of a book chapter by Olson (1989).

endemic biotas, may have been marked by one of the greatest waves of rapid extinction of species of animals and plants in the history of the earth', and that the elimination of the 'greater part' of the avifauna occurred in pre-European times. Olson (1989:50) wrote in 1989 that

> Because until recently there was no paleontological record for most oceanic islands, it was natural to assume that European man was chiefly responsible for the degradation of insular habitats that has resulted in historically documented extinctions. This, in combination with the 'noble savage' fallacy, has led to a gross underestimation of the effects of man on insular biotas. Now, with the paleontological record being expanded to many more islands, we have sufficient data to hint at the true magnitude of the losses.

In Hawai'i for instance, Olson and James (1984:777) argued that, by destroying lowland forests by clearing for agriculture (mainly by fire), 'the Polynesians wrought a greater change in the total biota of the archipelago than has been accomplished by all post-European inroads in the wet montane forests'.[36] Unsurprisingly, Mitchell (1990:194) reported that these findings did not go down well with Hawaiians, as they challenged the idea that Polynesians were the 'guardians of Paradise'. He went on to suggest that Polynesian peoples were 'no better conservationists than modern Westerners'.

Similarly, for Cassels (1984:741), 'dramatic as they are, post-European extinctions do not compare to the scale of the pre-European ones', and pre-European extinctions offer 'one of the best cases for arguing that prehistoric man was capable of causing the extermination of fauna on a catastrophic scale'. It has now been actually established as a fact that the anthropogenic extinction of birdlife in Polynesia, albeit ongoing, was 'mostly prehistoric' (Steadman 2006:510).

However, as Kirch (2000:62) put it, recognising the responsibility of indigenous Pacific peoples in dramatic changes to their environments does not mean to suggest that they are 'environmentally insensitive eco-vandals'. Kirch believed Polynesians to be 'not more or less environmentally conscious than most other human groups', and argued that it was only 'our outdated Rousseauian notions that make it appear so'. The concept of 'noble savage' was born out of these 'Rousseauian notions'. They make it, as Brown (2013:159-160) put it in the case of Aotearoa, 'misleadingly easy to project contemporary environmentalist ideologies onto', for instance, traditional Māori society.

[36] However, the introduced Polynesian rat (*Rattus exulans*) was deemed by Athens *et al*. (2002:73) to be the main agent responsible for the destruction of Hawaiian lowland forests (see *supra*).

Extinctions in tropical Polynesia

It is important to keep in mind that the bird populations currently living on the Pacific islands are only subsets of those that lived on them at human arrival (Steadman 2006:88). The loss of birdlife on most of the islands of Remote Oceania was probably 'blitzkrieg-like' after the arrival of Polynesians, a 'rapidly dispersing people with high population growth[37] who hunted intensively wherever they went, wiped out many species, and then moved on to richer hunting grounds' (Steadman 2006:75).

After the arrival of the Polynesians on a given island, some avian extinctions occurred within a century or less, whereas others took millennia (Steadman 2006:407). Some extinctions seem to have taken a relatively short time; in Mangaia for instance, practically no bird bones appear in late prehistoric archaeological sites (Steadman 2006:225). Similarly, in the Northern Marquesas, the analysis of midden content from seven sites excavated by Yosihiko H. Sinoto and Marimari J. Kellum in 1964–1965 in Ua Huka and Nuku Hiva revealed that in the settlement period (Phase I) seabirds were a 'major food source', but that this food source was virtually decimated by the end of that settlement period (Kirch 1973:37).[38]

The characteristics of the bird species that became extinct before European contact are as follows: large birds, often the largest; many of them flightless and diurnal; of the volant species many were ground-nesting and had small clutches (Cassels 1984:757-759). Because the islands of Remote Oceania had been free of human and other mammalian predators (bats being the only native mammals), at first human contact birds must have been remarkably tame, allowing people to 'gather' them more than they would have 'hunted' them (Steadman 2006:78,405). Most of the extinction and extirpation of bird species occurred 1,000 to 500 years ago; East Polynesia was the worst affected area in Oceania by anthropogenic depletion, and the species that suffered the most were rails, parrots and pigeons (Steadman 2006:512).

Almost all the many hundreds of species of rails became extinct on the islands of Oceania after human arrival. Flightlessness became 'terminally maladaptive' for them

[37] Natural growth was probably 'much higher in prehistoric Polynesia than in Western historical demography due to an epidemic-free environment'. Therefore, it has been argued that, 'starting from small numbers of settlers and limited migration, Polynesians covered island landscapes to the point that new customs, such as infanticide and human sacrifice, were adopted to limit growth' (Rallu 2007:32).

[38] 'Whether the decimation was a result of over-exploitation by the human population, or a result of the introduction of rats is not known. It may be significant that bird remains rapidly diminish at the same time that the first rat bones occur in the midden' (Kirch 1973:37).

(Steadman 2006:296).[39] Most East Polynesian island groups also used to have one or two species of ground doves (*Alopecoenas* sp.); today only two species are left (the Marquesan Ground Dove, *Alopecoenas rubescens*, and the Polynesian Ground Dove, *Alopecoenas erythropterus*), and they only live on a handful of islands in the Marquesas and the Tuamotu Archipelago (Steadman 2006:337-338).

A tropical Polynesian island would have typically lost 50 to 90 per cent of its species of native landbirds, as revealed by bone assemblages (Steadman 2006:127), and most single-island endemics have become extinct (Steadman 2006:416). In Oceania, the anthropogenic decline of landbirds involved the extinction of countless species, whereas that of seabirds mostly affected populations of extant species (Steadman 2006:401). The seabird family that has lost the largest number of populations in Oceania are the Procellariidae (shearwaters and petrels) (Steadman 2006:395). Since human arrival, boobies (*Sula* sp.) may have lost hundreds of populations in Oceania (Steadman 2006:397). Overall seabird populations today may be 'at least one or two orders of magnitude less than they were at human arrival' (Steadman 2006:401).

Palaeontology has revealed since the 1970s the extent of the losses. It has at the same time helped explain the presence in traditional narratives (or songs) of bird species that were absent, at the time those narratives were collected, on the islands where they originated. In Mangaia for instance, no pigeons or doves are to be found, today or in Gill's time. However, Gill collected a story about pigeons (**125C**) and stated (1894:26) that in pre-European times 'two or three varieties of the pigeon' lived on the island. Clerk (1981:273) believed that it was 'highly likely' that there had been pigeons or doves in the past, even though he was unable to find any evidence of their presence in Mangaia 'within living memory'. This evidence was actually found shortly afterwards: in 1984, Steadman (2006:219) discovered bird bones in the Te Rua Rere cave that proved for the first time that pigeons and doves once lived on the island. Indeed, he identified five species: the extirpated Lilac-crowned Fruit Dove (*Ptilinopus rarotongensis*), Polynesian Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula aurorae*), Marquesan Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula galeata*) and Polynesian Ground Dove (*Alopecoenas*

[39] 'Reversibility of evolution is poorly understood', but it can be said that 'if regaining the power of flight is possible in flightless rails once nonnative predators arrive, it does not happen quickly enough to prevent extinction' (Steadman 2006:296).

erythropterus), as well as the extinct Great Ground Dove (*Gallicolumba nui*) (Steadman 2006:212,216-217).

Extinctions in Aotearoa

For Binney (1971:n.p.), 'a lugubrious list of extinct species in this country is our stain of shame.' Since human arrival around 1300, 58 of the 223 original breeding bird species have become extinct. Te Ika-a-Māui (New Zealand's North Island) has lost 51 per cent of its bird species (Tennyson & Martinson 2006:1). The rate of extinction was 'probably much greater in the first century or two' after settlement by Polynesians than from the 16th century onwards (Holdaway, Worthy & Tennyson 2001:163). Seabirds were less affected than land-birds because they had more offshore island refuges. The main reason for the bird extinctions was not climate change or disease, but predation by humans and rats (and, in post-European times, cats) (Tennyson & Martinson 2006:2).

Fifteen out of 43 songbirds living in Aotearoa at the time of human contact are now extinct (Tennyson & Martinson 2006:106). Among them, the wrens are of particular note:

> Six forms of wren are known to have occurred on the New Zealand mainland and its inshore islands, and four of these are extinct. They were the most diverse family of songbirds in New Zealand and considered to be the most ancient of all of the world's songbirds and to be part of New Zealand's original Gondwanan fauna. Three of the New Zealand wren species were also extraordinary in being almost the only known flightless songbirds in the world.

All nine species of *moa* (New Zealand moa, Dinornithiformes) quickly disappeared from the fossil and archaeological records after excessive hunting by the first human settlers (Tennyson & Martinson 2006:19), as they were among the birds that were a source of 'easily exploited fat and protein' (Steadman 2006:78).[40] They became extinct around 1500, only two centuries after first human contact (Perry *et al*. 2014). Holdaway *et al*. (2014:3) showed that it was only a small human population of fewer than 2,000 individuals that, 'with a basic toolkit of stone tools and fire', was able to rapidly hunt this megafauna to extinction.

[40] Armstrong (2013:20-21) argued, however, that 'the emphasis on protein hunger in New Zealand historiography has less to do with nature and more to do with the projection backwards of a very twentieth-century investment (economic, cultural and conceptual) in the farming and consumption of animal products'. He deemed 'exaggerated' the appetite for animal protein projected back into prehistory by most recent historians, who refer to *moa* 'not as animals but as "protein", and to moa extinction as a "protein shortage"'.

The Haast's Eagle (*Hieraaetus moorei*), which used to prey on *moa*, also became extinct a short time after human settlement, as evidenced by the fact that its remains have been discovered in human midden sites (Tennyson & Martinson 2006:62). In Rēkohu, two island-endemic penguin taxa (*Eudyptes warhami* and *Megadyptes antipodes richdalei*) were extirpated shortly after human arrival (Cole *et al.* 2019). As for the rails, eleven species were lost in Aotearoa. Among them was the *moho* (North Island Takahē, *Porphyrio mantelli*), the largest rail in the world (Tennyson & Martinson 2006:84). However, different species of bird have different histories of population decline. The analysis of samples of microsatellites and mitochondrial DNA of *kākāpō* (*Strigops habroptila*), for example, showed that no major population decline occurred after Polynesian settlement, and that a sharp population decline and loss of genetic diversity did not occur until after European colonisation (Bergner *et al*. 2016).

Finally, bird extinctions in Aotearoa have resulted in a 'strong bias towards marine and coastal taxa in the present avifauna, in contrast to the balanced representation of terrestrial and marine species in the Pleistocene and Holocene fauna' (Holdaway, Worthy & Tennyson 2001:120). Therefore, an analyst is now 'struck by the dominance of seabirds and waders and the scarcity of indigenous songbirds, waterfowl, and rails' (Holdaway, Worthy & Tennyson 2001:162). In fact, only the most resilient of the endemics have survived to this day (Holdaway, Worthy & Tennyson 2001:163).

A consequence of extinctions: the issue of 'endemism'

The apparent endemism of some bird species is actually an 'artifact of anthropogenic extinction' (Steadman 2006:340), as illustrated by the following four examples.[41]

For one, the largest extant pigeon in Oceania, the Marquesan Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula galeata*, or *'upe* in Marquesan), now regarded as endemic to Nuku Hiva, used to live on other Marquesan Islands, and bones of that species have been discovered in Huahine, Tahiti, Mangaia, and possibly Henderson Island. Thus, this pigeon, 'now seen as endemic to a single

[41] This situation of 'pseudo-endemism' was deemed by Thibault and Cibois (2017:30), however, to be 'less extreme' in East Polynesia than argued by Steadman.

island, actually had a range that spanned most of East Polynesia . . . before people caused its nearly total demise' (Steadman 2006:248).

Another example is furnished by the megapodes. Fossil evidence indicates that most of the islands of Melanesia and West Polynesia were occupied by *Megapodius* at first human contact (Steadman 2006:288). The Tongan Megapode (*Megapodius pritchardii*, or *malau* in Tongan) for instance, now seen as endemic to Niuafo'ou, used to live on possibly more than a hundred islands in West Polynesia;[42] nowadays it only survives on that single island (Steadman 2006:291).[43] Megapodes, possibly *Megapodius pritchardii*, were even present as far south as Rangitahua (Raoul Island), in the Kermadec Islands (Tennyson & Martinson 2006:66).

As for the parrots, the Kuhl's Lorikeet (*Vini kuhlii*, or *'ura* in the Rimatara dialect), seen as endemic to Rimatara, was actually widespread in the Cook Islands prehistorically (Steadman 2006:344). Lastly, *Cyanoramphus*, a genus of parakeets often thought of as endemic to New Caledonia and the Aotearoa avifaunal region (encompassing Norfolk Island and the Subantarctic Islands), was in fact present in the Society Islands as well, but the *'ā'ā* or *'ā'ā taevao* (Black-fronted Parakeet, *Cyanoramphus zealandicus*, and Ra'iātea Parakeet, *Cyanoramphus ulietanus*) became extinct in the 19th century (Bruner 1972:91-92; Holyoak & Thibault 1984:130).

5. Epilogue

'The dreadful Hubris of Mankind is seen', in Binney's (1971:n.p.) words, 'in his wilful assumption of title to live off the world, rather than live with it.' The respective importance of human predation (attested in archaeological sites), habitat loss through deforestation, disease (introduced pathogens) and predation from the mammals introduced by humans (rats, dogs and pigs) in the demise of so many bird species varied from species to species and from

[42] In tropical East Polynesia, however, megapodes are absent from the fossil record (Steadman 2006:293).

[43] In Tonga for instance, at least four species of megapodes disappeared 'within a century or two of human contact' on five small islands of the Ha'apai Group (Steadman 2006:293).

island to island.[44] However, human presence in Polynesia may 'rightly and without prejudice' be termed an 'environmental catastrophe' (Steadman 2006:107), regardless of the fact that 'some and perhaps most of the losses were indirect and beyond human control' (Steadman 2006:406). As Steadman (2006:89) concluded, 'the extinct birds of Oceania are not some archaic assemblage of species that was destined by nature to go the way of the dinosaurs. If not for people, virtually all of the extinct species and populations of birds known from Oceania would be alive today.'

Furthermore, many species of bird have been introduced by humans in post-European times, whether it be for food, for pleasure, for hunting, or as 'putative predators against rats or insects' (Thibault & Cibois 2017:24). In Aotearoa for instance, an estimated 37 species of bird have been introduced since European contact (Holdaway, Worthy & Tennyson 2001: 139).[45] Introduced birds are now more numerous than native species on a number of islands in French Polynesia (including Tahiti), Hawai'i, Rapa Nui, and perhaps Fiji (Steadman 2006:417,496). The damaged biotas of those islands are now 'beyond hope of recovery' (Steadman 2006:496).

*

Manu and humans thus embarked on parallel migrations in the Pacific Ocean at different times of their history. Millions of years ago, the air became in Polynesia a highway for the birds, while the ocean served a similar function for people, albeit much later. The avifauna of Polynesia has undergone dramatic changes since human contact. The birds that the first humans discovered on the thousand islands of Polynesia were remarkably more varied and numerous than the ones that the first Europeans to navigate these waters saw, and furthermore, the avifauna that the latter were able to observe two hundred years ago was again considerably more diverse and plentiful than the present-day avifauna.[46] One may wonder whether there is 'a bright sky ahead for our remaining feathered friends' (Homan 2008:n.p.).

---

[44] These four agents were called by Wilson (1992:253) 'the mindless horsemen of the environmental apocalypse'.

[45] The factors that have increased the probability of wider dispersal of those introduced species are: strong flight, ease of movement over water masses, and flocking (Holdaway, Worthy & Tennyson 2001:153).

[46] Significant decreases in landbirds could be observed in even a short time. For example, Gill (1885:127) reported that 'the woods of Rarotonga, when I first knew the island some thirty-two years ago, were everywhere vocal with the song of birds'. He blamed guns, cats and cyclones for the disappearance of landbirds; 32 years later, he would ride 'round the island without hearing the cry of any but sea-birds'.

In any case, the birds of Polynesia are not just physically present in body for everyone to admire and for a palaeontologist or archaeologist to examine, they are also present in the human mind, and particularly in one of its most remarkable and elaborate workings: the oral narrative. Feathered creatures will be momentarily set aside in order to explore the realm in which they are so plentiful, the traditional Polynesian narrative.

Figure 2. Polynesian Outliers

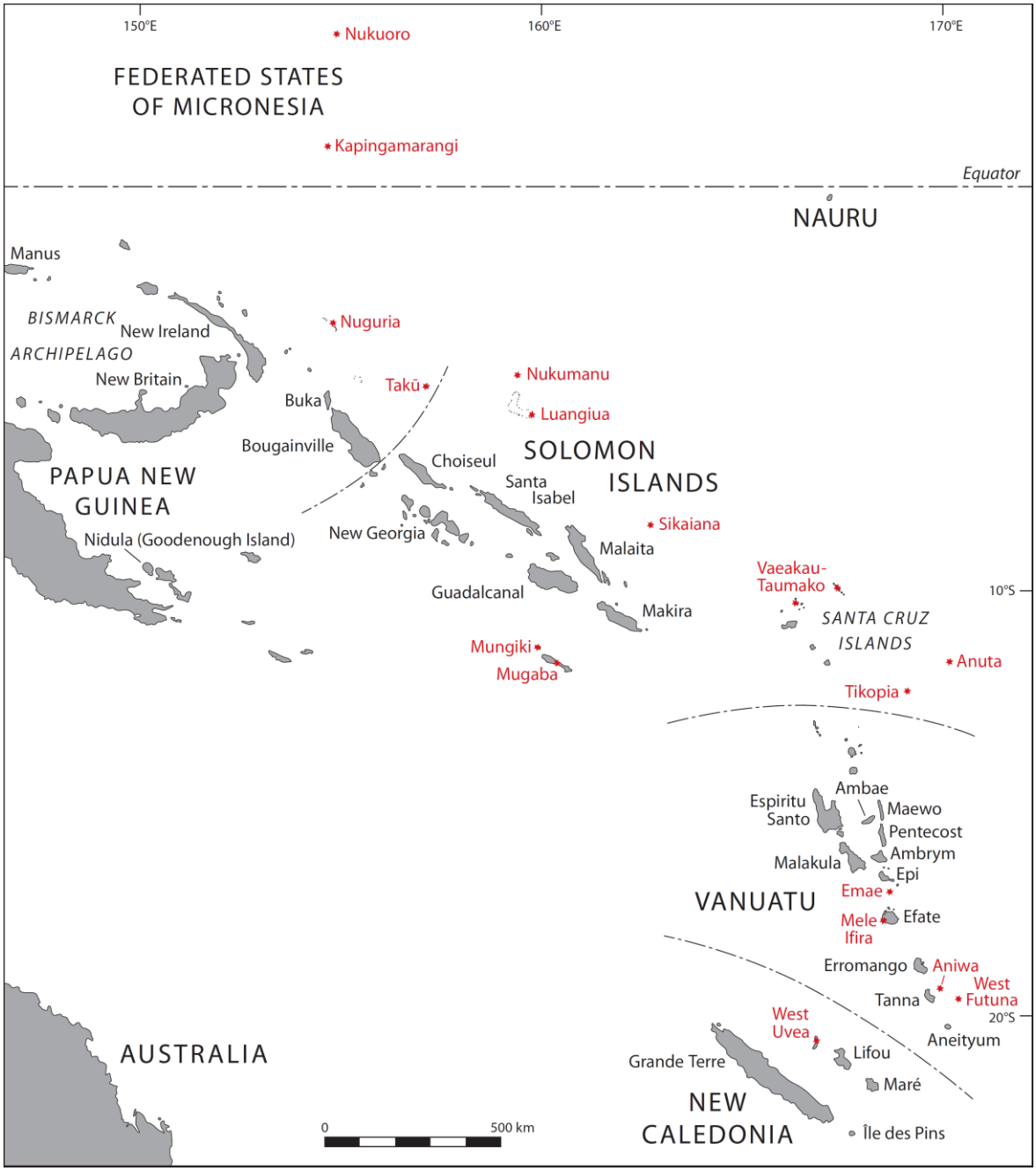


Figure 3. Fiji, Rotuma and the Lau Islands

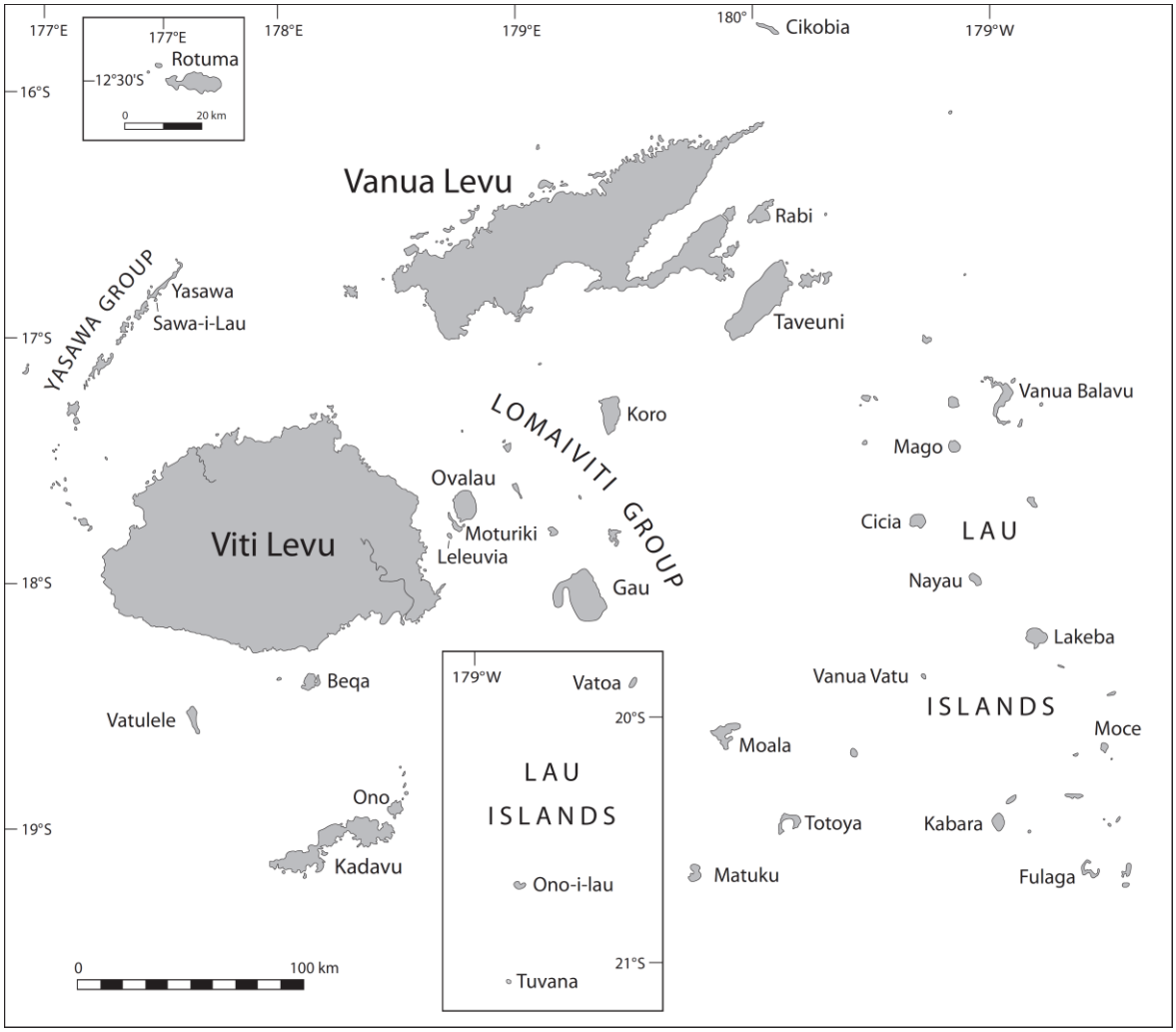


Figure 4. Tuvalu, Wallis & Futuna, Tokelau and Sāmoa

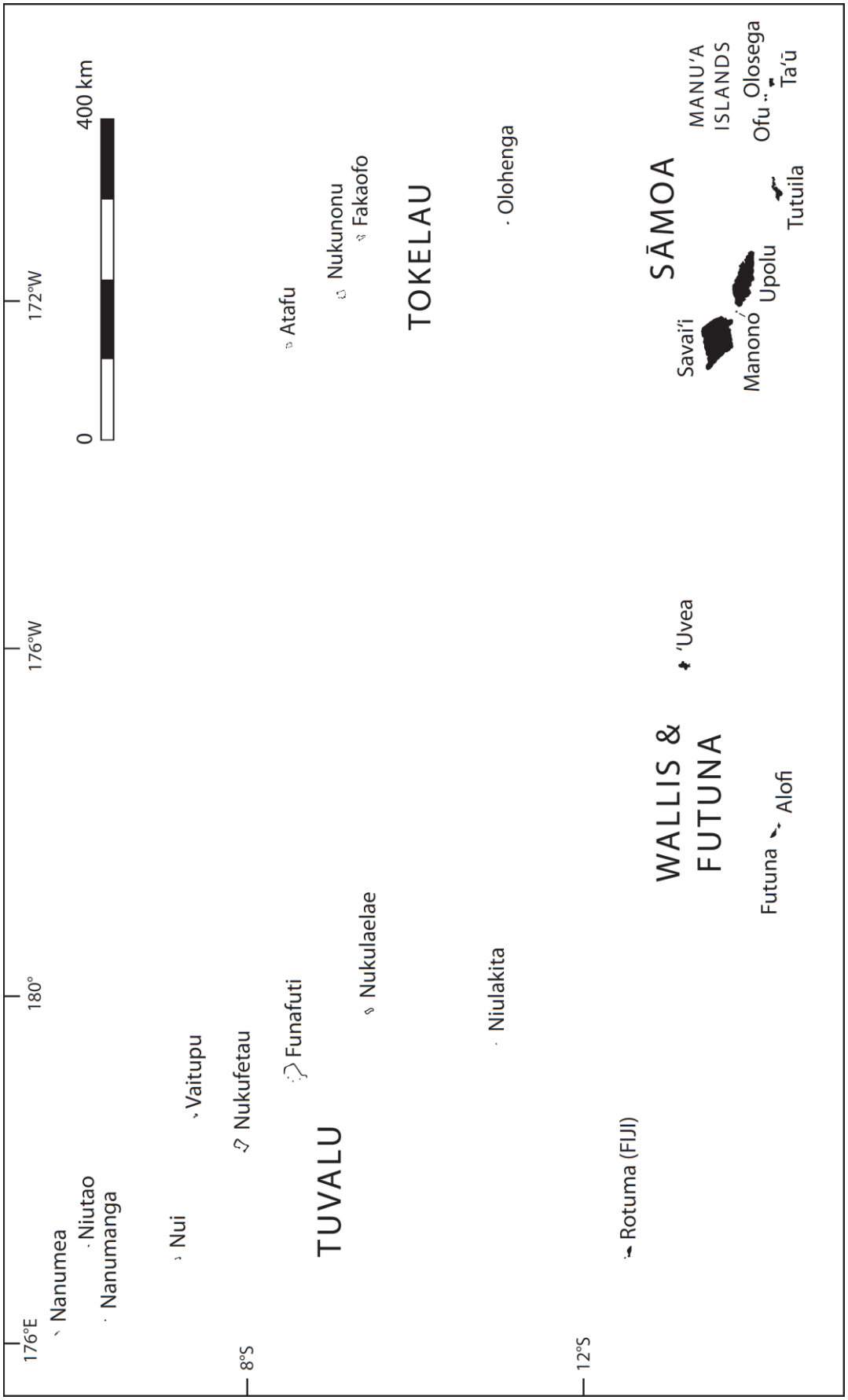


Figure 5. Tonga and Niue

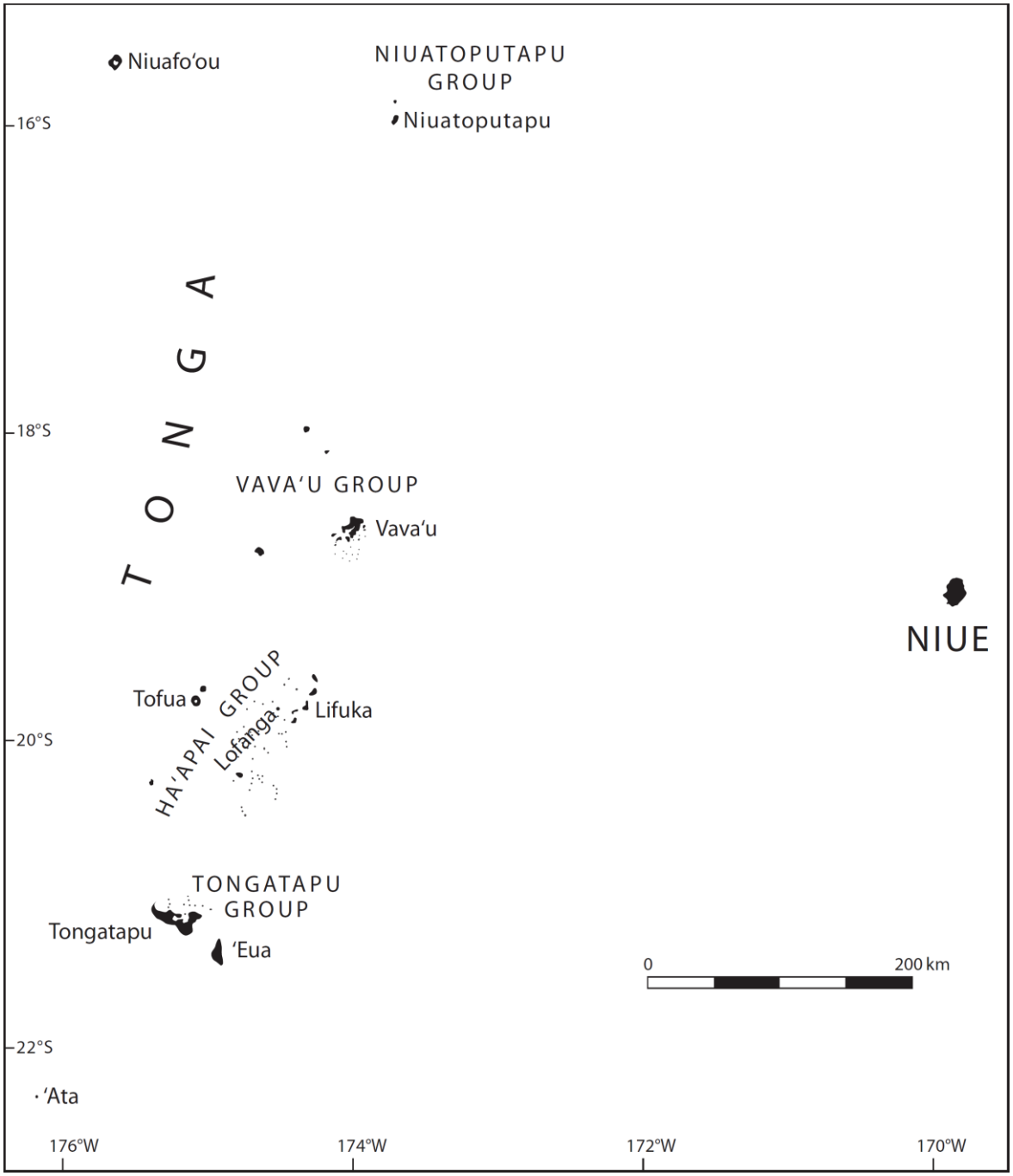


Figure 6. Cook Islands

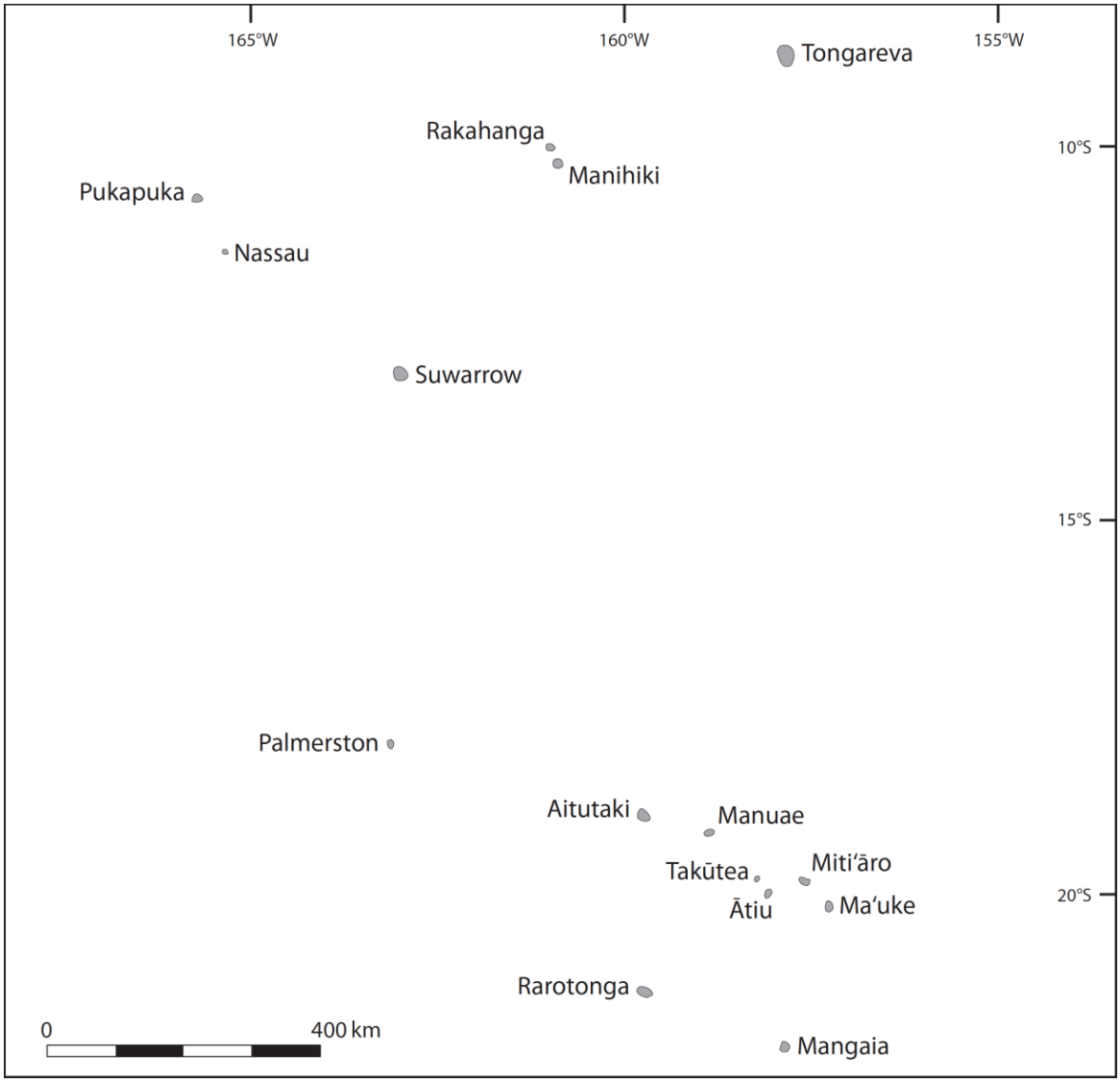


Figure 7. Society Islands

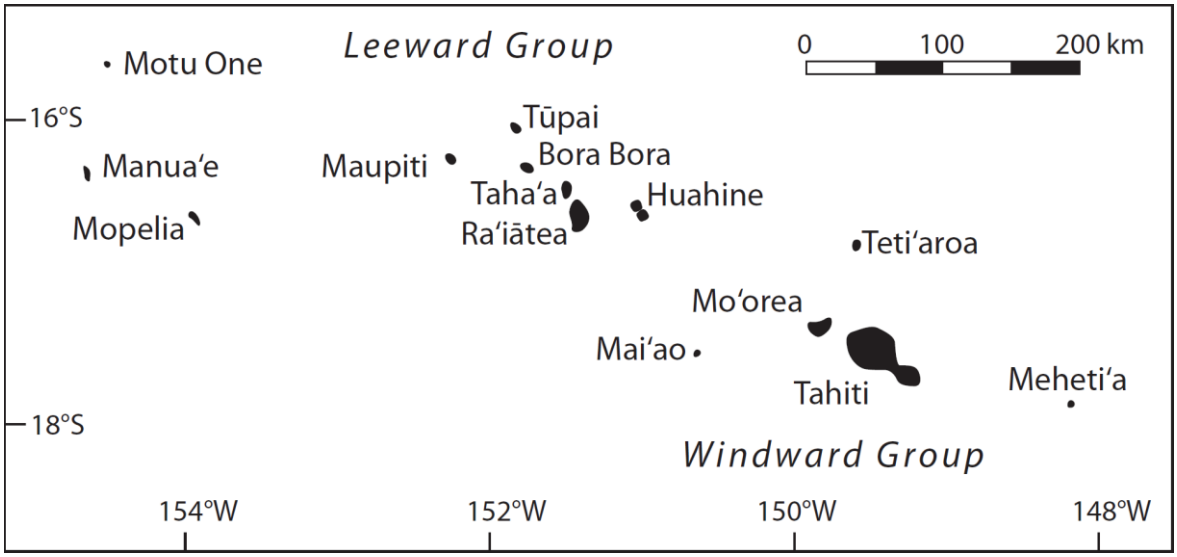


Figure 8. Austral Islands

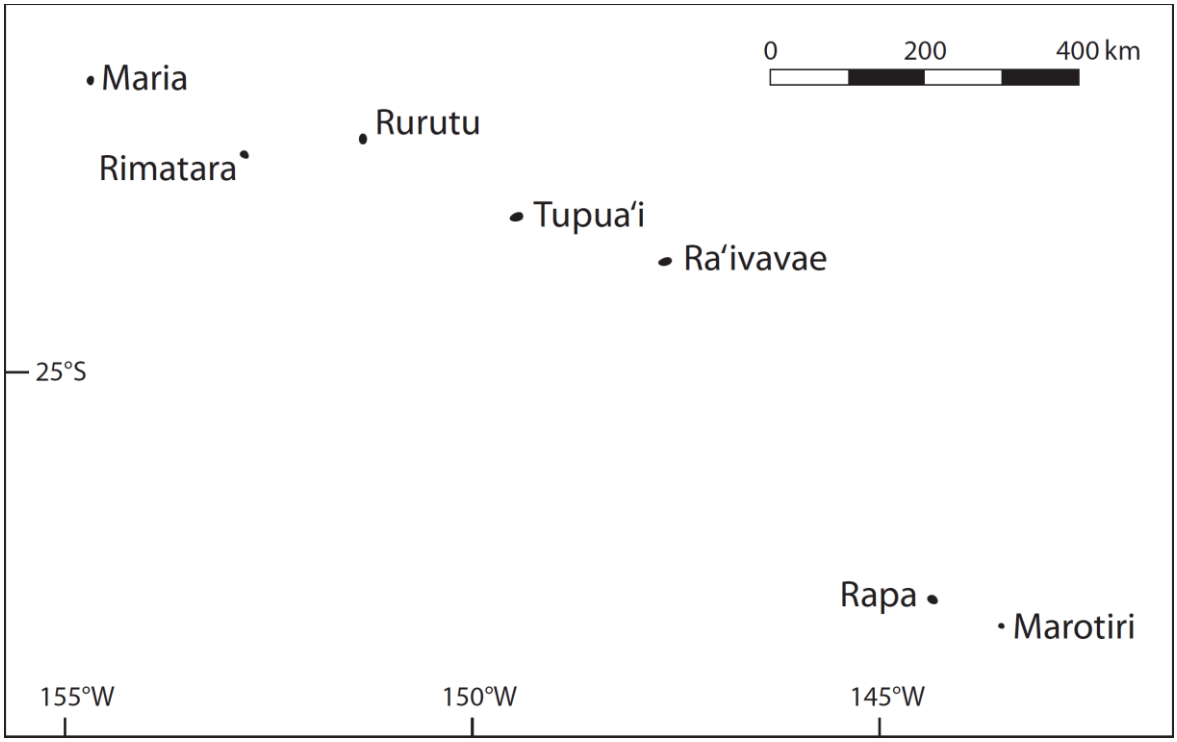


Figure 9. Tuamotu Archipelago and the Gambier Islands

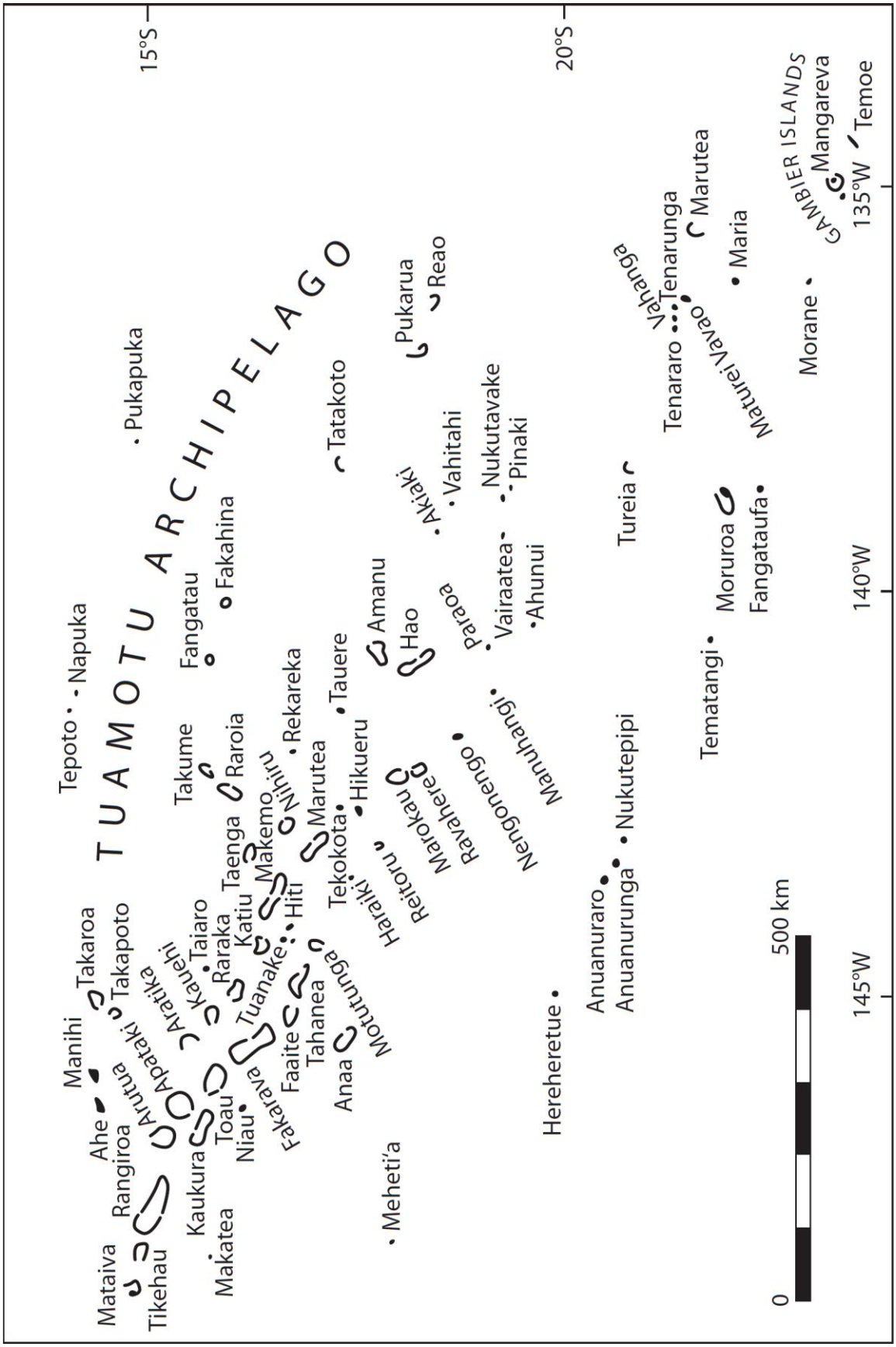


Figure 10. Marquesas

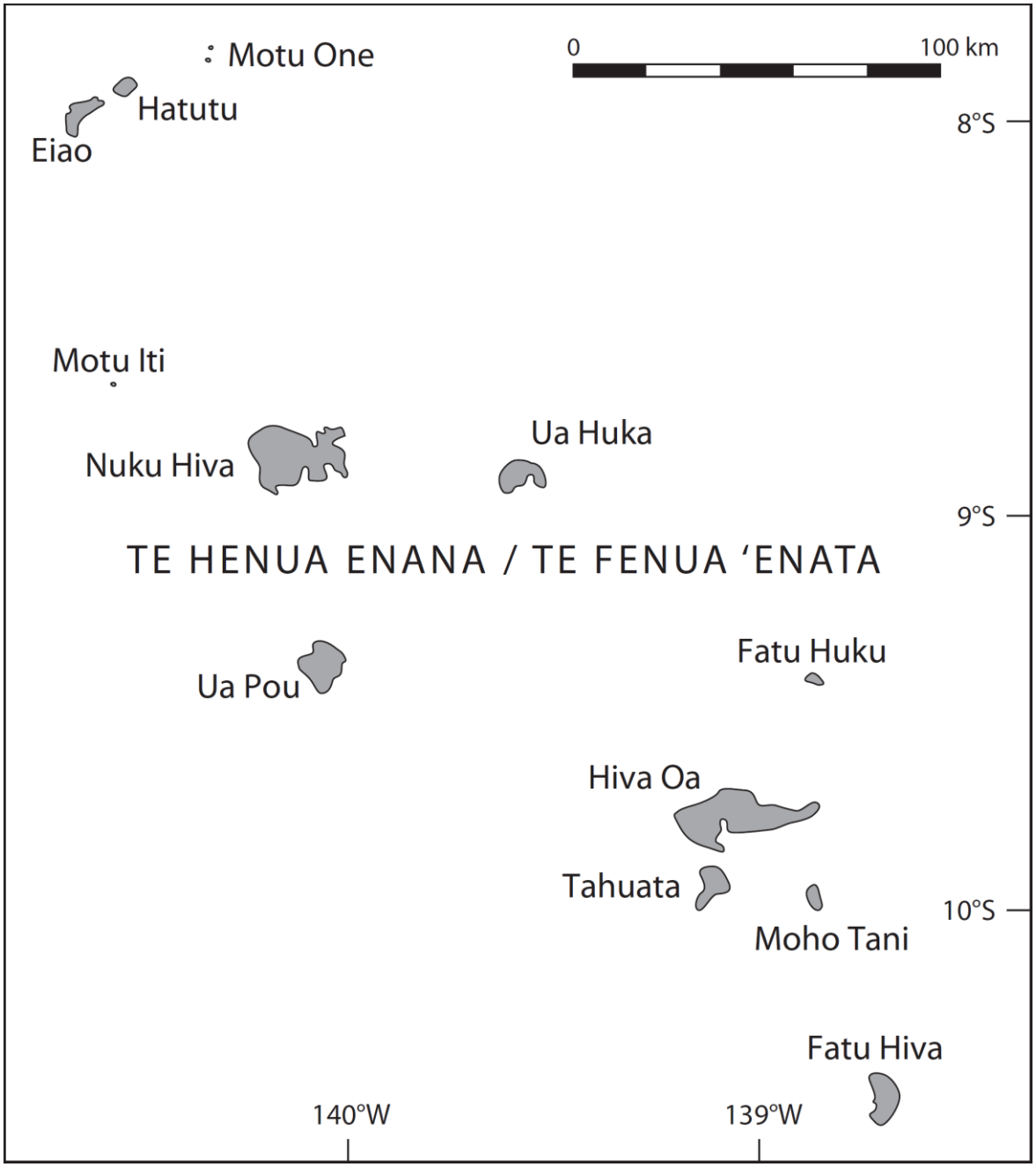


Figure 11. Hawai'i

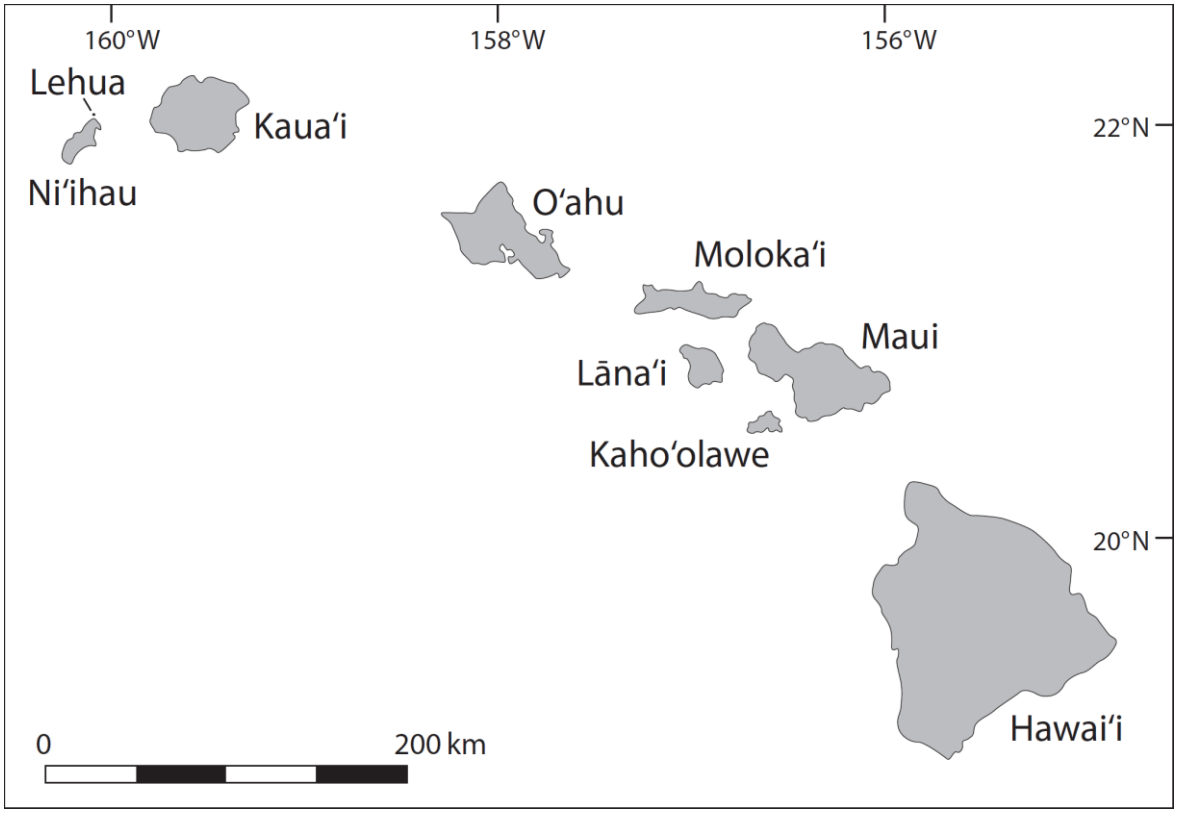


Figure 12. Rapa Nui

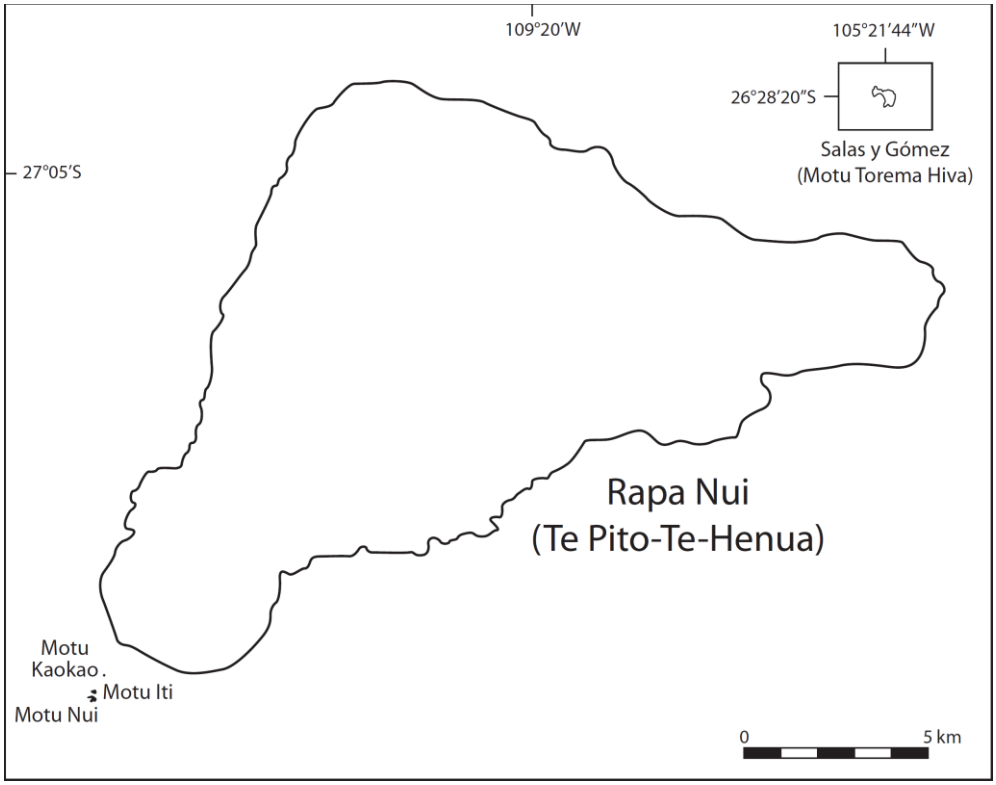
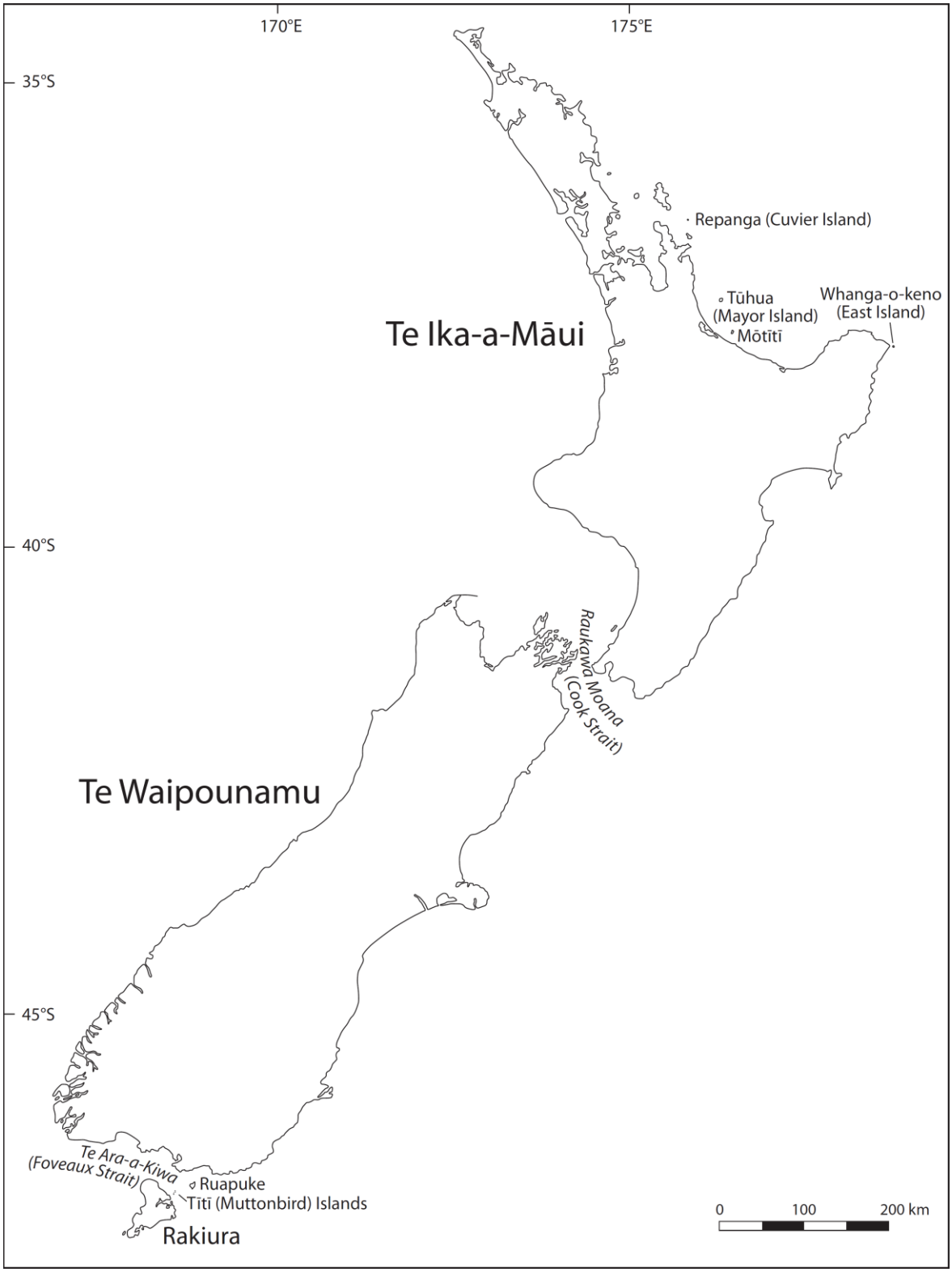


Figure 13. Aotearoa



Chapter II

Narratives

> Folk-tales, legends, and myths must be lifted from their flat existence on paper, and placed in the three-dimensional reality of full life.
>
> Malinowski (1926:125-126)

1. The oral narratives of the Polynesians: an overview

Oral narratives are a particular type of discourse. They have 'distinctive stylistic features, setting them apart from ordinary discourse', and they 'relate some kind of story, setting them apart from sermons, speeches, proverbs, riddles and so forth' (Huntsman 1981:210).[1] For Ricœur (1991:131), narratives are a 'part of a chain of speech by which a cultural community comes to be constituted and through which it interprets itself narratively'.[2] In Polynesia, narratives were handed down orally from generation to generation in those cultural communities, and started to be recorded in writing and published in the 19th century. The nature and the main distinguishing features of those narratives will be presented to offer a general overview of what constitutes the corpus of texts from which the narratives about *manu* have been extracted for the purpose of this study.

[1] The *Cambridge Dictionary* (2019) defines a 'story' as a 'description, either true or imagined, of a connected series of events'; it is synonymous with 'narrative'. By using these two terms I do not imply that the texts are based on true events or that they are works of fiction. I regard all 'myths', 'tales', 'legends', 'anecdotes' and 'fables', which are terms that I will discuss in the second section of the present chapter but not use otherwise, to be types of stories or narratives. *Manu* appear in all those types of text. In this study, 'oral narratives' and 'traditional narratives' will be used interchangeably; so will the terms 'narrative', 'story' and 'tradition'. 'Traditional' stories should be interpreted as stories that were 'handed over, transferred by word of mouth' (as opposed to, for instance, stories contained in novels by Polynesian writers). They were, and in some cases still are, transmitted from generation to generation, but they are not necessarily pre-European, from a very long time ago.

[2] '[Le récit] appartient à une chaîne de paroles, par laquelle se constitue une communauté de culture et par laquelle cette communauté s'interprète elle-même par voie narrative' (Ricœur 1986:167).

The importance of oral literature in Polynesian culture

The love of the Polynesians for their oral literature has long been noted.[3] Polynesians had an 'extraordinary literary talent' (Luomala 1940:372), and were 'gifted litterateurs with deep appreciation of whatever is fine in any literature' (Luomala 1949:13). They listened to oral recitals 'with the greatest of interest and attention' (Te Rangi Hīroa 1932:15).

In Futuna for instance, Burrows (1936:224) explained that storytelling was a 'favorite pastime', and in Aotearoa the same expression was used by Best (1924:I,178) about Māori.[4] In Pileni, telling stories was simply the principal form of entertainment (Hovdhaugen, Næss & Hoëm 2002:5). In the Marquesas, the 'mere physical exercise of talking' was a 'distinct source of pleasure' (Handy 1930:18). Collocott (1928:5) found the Tongan to be 'an incurable conversationalist', 'a fine orator' and 'a critical judge of public speaking'. Skilful raconteurs were thus held in very high esteem. In Mungiki for example, they were admired just as much as expert fishermen and canoe builders (Kuschel 1975:20).

Polynesian narratives related the creation of the world, of humans and animals; they told of gods, heroes and ancestors, whose deeds were meaningful and relevant for the audience. On almost every island,[5] stories were told that featured the same central characters, such as Māui, Hina and Tinirau, Tāwhaki, or Rata.[6] Those central characters were talked about in 'hero-cycles', one of Polynesia's most characteristic genres (Luomala 1940:367). Luomala defined the hero-cycle as 'an oral account of the biography of a hero told in prose interspersed with chants'. Famous examples include the Tāwhaki cycle and the Māui cycle. Tāwhaki is 'a spirited personification of everything a great Polynesian chief should be', while Māui is 'a hero of the Polynesian proletariat and the non-conformists', and 'a defier

[3] The expression 'oral literature' or 'spoken literature' may be an oxymoron to some, but I regard it as valid. As E. Rice (1923:5) argued, Hawaiians, for instance, had a 'spoken literature, much as we have a written one', because they 'received through their ears as we receive through our eyes'. 'The song, the proverb, the fable, or the history inscribed in set form of words upon the tablet of the human memory', wrote Harding (1892:440), 'is as truly literature as if with an iron pen and lead it were graven in the rock for ever.'

[4] For similar accounts by early-19th-century Pākehā authors, see McRae (2017:27).

[5] In the case of Māui, for example, it is 'often through accidents of fate' that no story has been collected about this culture hero on some islands (for instance Rapa Nui), as Luomala (1949:5) observed. This does not mean that these traditions were absent from those islands.

[6] The names of characters who appear in narratives across Polynesia (e.g. Rata/Laka/'Aka/Raka) will be given, for lack of space, only in Māori, when dealing with Polynesia in general, and in the vernacular language when dealing with a particular island or island group.

of precedent, a remodeler of the world and its society' (Luomala 1940:373; 1949:28).[7] Hina and Tinirau were also well-known characters throughout Polynesia and appeared in countless stories, as will be seen in Part B.[8]

Performance

Huntsman (1981:213) argued that in many ways oral narratives are 'more akin to drama than to literature'. In Polynesia, the collectors of stories noted on many occasions the importance of the dramatic performance in the recital of a story.

In Pukapuka for instance, Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1936:1-2) observed the 'intense dramatization of the subject matter by gesture and vocal expression' in storytelling, and explained that the raconteur acted out as if reliving the incidents in the story. For example, when in a story Māui pulls in a fish, this episode 'involved vigorous movement of hand and body until every fathom of fish line was hauled in from the depths of the ocean'. The raconteurs reproduced all noises accurately and emphatically, and direct quotations of a character in a story were pitched higher than the standard speaking tone. Thus, storytelling was noted to be emotionally and physically draining, so much so that at the end of their narration the storytellers needed 'a long breathing spell' before starting another story.

Another example is the reciting of animal stories in Mungiki, in which inflexions and changes in intonation played an important part in their dramatic effect. These changes were particularly apparent in the dialogues between the animals, as the storytellers endeavoured to imitate the animals' voices (Kuschel 1975:58). In the Cook Islands, Siikala and Siikala (2005:134) found that because 'the overall meaning of a narrative is in fact formed in the actual narrative situation on the basis of all the expressive material attached to the performance', the storyteller's 'tone of voice and gestures contribute ultimately to the meaning of the text'.

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[7] Māui is 'the arch mischief maker of Polynesian mythology' (Beckwith 1970:121). His adventures (particularly his journey to the heavens or the underworld to secure fire for humankind) show, as Beckwith argued, that he is also a sorcerer, for 'mischief making is sorcery, euphemistically phrased'.

[8] Although, as Collocott (1928:129,n.1) pointed out in Tonga, 'it is not necessary to assume that every occurrence of the names Hina and Sinilau' concerns the two famous culture heroes. Tongans themselves told Collocott that there was 'a tendency for stories of handsome men and their beautiful wives to attach themselves to the names of Sinilau and Hina'.

To become part of the oral traditions of any community, in Polynesia or elsewhere, a story needed to be accepted by that community, and to go through its 'preventive censorship'; or else it disappeared (Detienne 1981:84). In Polynesia, the listeners of a story, while stimulating the raconteur to 'exert his best pantomime and narrative talent', were also 'a control to prevent unpopular deviation from narrative formulas', and acted 'as a brake on an overexuberant imagination which might get too far ahead of the crowd' (Luomala 1949:65). In Sāmoa for example, each *fāgogo* (story interspersed with songs, or *tagi*) was considered to comprise a number of key episodes essential to the plot, and if the storyteller altered any of them, he would instantly receive criticism from the audience (Moyle 1981:43). In Pileni, Hovdhaugen, Næss and Hoëm (2002:6) observed that children 'could be rather critical even towards experienced and old narrators, criticising them when they made errors or forgot important points in the story'. Similarly, Salmond (1974:232) discovered that in Luangiua the audience corrected all the storyteller's mistakes.

Re-creation

Oral narratives were handed down from generation to generation through countless 're-creations'. Unlike the Polynesian priest who recited an incantation word for word with no room whatsoever for deviation, the Polynesian storyteller did not recite a story by heart, but 're-created' it every time he told it; that is why two texts produced by the same raconteur in two separate performances were never exactly the same (Lavondès 1975:37-38).

As Kuschel (1975:XI) found in Mungiki, 'every time an oral tradition is retold, it is re-created to make it live anew for a younger generation.' He defined a good storyteller as 'a person who in telling what countless story-tellers had told before him would reproduce or re-create the plot in a novel way, in his personal way', while keeping the story 'within the framework of tradition' (1975:20). In Tokelau, Huntsman (1977:VIII) observed that 'elaborations, additions and modifications are allowed, even encouraged, if they heighten the entertainment value' of the *kakai*, or 'tales'.

Songs and chants in narratives

A well-known characteristic of Polynesian prose narratives was the presence of songs and chants in verse in many of them. The narratives were therefore a combination of 'literature, history, and poetry' (Te Rangi Hīroa 1932:15).

In Mangareva for instance, oral narratives were transmitted largely in songs, which were popular because the people loved singing; their 'emotional value' explains why they were still sung when Te Rangi Hīroa visited the island in 1934. While prose narratives did suffer loss and change over time, the songs kept their original form because of the 'social need for this form of emotional expression'. These songs, called *kapa*, formed part of the recital of a story, and their themes originated in the incidents of the prose narratives. The *kapa* ensured the survival of some stories, which would not have been remembered without them (Te Rangi Hīroa 1938:15,304,384,386). Furthermore, dancing and singing went together. For example, the story of Hina-hakapirau and her three bird sentinels (**170**) was recorded in a dance, a *pe'i*, in which the performers stood up to sing and dance (Te Rangi Hīroa 1938:334-335,396).

In the Polynesian hero-cycles, the prose varied 'according to a narrator's taste and knowledge', but the chants in them were more consistent, and were frequently remembered even when the stories that they ornamented were forgotten (Luomala 1949:22). Luomala argued that it was 'their importance as magic spells' that kept some of those chants alive.

In Pukapuka, storytelling was 'largely incidental to the composing and reciting of chants', but the allusions in the chants mostly originated in the stories (Beaglehole & Beaglehole 1936:1). Chants, or *mako* (1936:78), thus became 'practically unintelligible' if the story that they drew on was not remembered. Similarly, in Kapingamarangi, stories were interspersed with *tangi-khai*, or magic chants. Those were 'couched in the old language', whereas the narratives themselves largely conformed to 'present speech'; *tangi-khai* became unintelligible even to the Kapingamarangi themselves (Elbert 1948:62).

In Sāmoa, *fāgogo* were stories interspersed with songs (*tagi*). Whereas the *fāgogo* tended to retain identically worded songs, the wording of the narrative itself was 'at the discretion of the storyteller, and thus varie[d] from individual to individual, and from occasion to occasion' (Moyle 1981:43).

Truthfulness

Collectors and scholars of traditional narratives have often wondered if the people who recited and listened to those narratives believed them to be true, even when they dealt with the supernatural (such as birds carrying people on their backs, or transforming into humans for instance). A small sample of their views will be presented here.

According to Elbert and Monberg (1965:30-31), the people of Mugaba and Mungiki, who held truth in high regard, believed their stories to be an 'expression of truth'. The two anthropologists described the islanders' approach to their stories as very practical and realistic, whether those dealt with the prosaic or the marvellous. Because they related true events, for them all stories were 'history', and their truthfulness was proved 'by the mere fact that they have been handed down through the centuries'. Kuschel (1975:56) discovered that 'when asked if they really believed that [their animal] stories were true, the Bellonese answered that of course they did, because they had heard these stories from the adults for years on end, and had themselves told them to their children in turn.' These stories accounted for a number of phenomena that could not otherwise be adequately explained, and since everyone gave the same explanation of a phenomenon, this explanation simply had to be true. Similarly, Orbell (1992:1) argued that Māori stories, even those dealing with the supernatural, 'were unquestioningly accepted as the truth'.

In Tikopia however, Firth (1961:12-13), writing about the traditional stories, or *kai*, of the island, observed that people did not seem to care whether they were true or not. He gave the example of the various *kai* of Ina (who marries the king of Tonga in most stories), held by some Tikopians to be true, while others were in doubt. Tokelauan narratives, or *kakai*, were also regarded as neither true nor false, and storytellers as well as the audience were not concerned 'whether the incidents recounted did or could actually occur' (Huntsman 1977: VIII).

Intercultural diffusion and external influences

Some Polynesian narratives may appear to be restricted to a particular island or island group, while others seem to be spread across a much wider area. However, it is not easy to determine if a story is unique to an island, because Polynesians often used localisation as a literary

device. In Mangarevan narratives for instance, 'the actual sites where ancient characters lived and the scenes of their activities were included in local story, so that later generations have come to believe that the tales did occur in Mangareva.' The stories were thus made locally significant (Te Rangi Hīroa 1938:303-304).

Similarly, Luomala (1949:137,241) inferred that localisation, a central feature of Polynesian storytelling, personalised stories by linking them to the local geography, and produced much aesthetic satisfaction for the audience. Localisation is 'one of the processes whereby an alien myth roots itself in its new home and develops new branches'. This is how narratives spread across Polynesia, using localisation to become rooted in their new environment as the Polynesians settled the Pacific islands.

Polynesians also encountered non-Polynesian peoples during their exploration of the Pacific, and were influenced by the narratives of these peoples. As Luomala (1949:14) observed, 'during centuries of wandering and pushing onward to a less crowded part of the world, these sophisticated literary eclectics must have listened to the prose and poetry of the peoples whose paths they crossed and who came to them.' This is because, as attested by ethnographic literature, 'les hommes d'une société écoutent souvent les mythes de leurs voisins, [et] les comparent aux leurs pour en créer de nouveaux' (Sperber 1974:88).[9]

One can even detect in some Polynesian narratives, according to Kirtley (1976:235), extra-Oceanic elements that are a testament to influences predating the expansion of the Polynesian peoples across the Pacific Ocean:

> The kinds of exotic influences perceptible in the traditional narratives of Polynesia make it clear that much of the area has participated in an exchange – even if in an attenuated form – of intellectual culture throughout its history. Though few whole complex narratives of Eurasian origin withstood the erosion imposed during their transmission through the cultures lying to the west of Polynesia, certain hardy and viable conceptual elements did survive and take root. This process of transmission and adaptation and its implications require continuing investigation.

Another 'process of transmission and adaptation' of non-Polynesian narratives by Polynesians that has been somewhat investigated by scholars is the one that occurred after European contact. That process slowly began at the end of the 16th century, when European sailors exploring the Pacific Ocean started to discover the islands of Polynesia, but it intensified at

[9] Ethnographic literature attests that 'the men of one society often listen to the myths of their neighbours, and that they compare them to their own in order to create new ones' (Sperber 1991:76).

the end of the 18th century with the meeting of more European and American explorers, scientists, traders, whalers and missionaries with Polynesians.

European stories circulated widely throughout Polynesia at the time Polynesian oral narratives were recorded by ethnographers (Luomala 1949:249). In Tonga for instance, Gifford (1924:5) discovered that many European stories had been published there by the time he collected Tongan narratives, in 1920–1921, and that the former had influenced some Tongan stories, which thus became 'hybrid tales'. For example, Gifford found himself recording the story of Cinderella recounted to him 'under a thin disguise of Polynesian names'.

However, the study of stories which are a synthesis of European and Polynesian elements 'can teach us much about how new material is integrated into the culture' (Luomala 1949:249). It gives one a better understanding of the culture in question because 'external' elements cannot be adopted indiscriminately into the corpus of traditional narratives of a society: 'plots (and other narrative materials) can only be borrowed if they fit or can be molded to fit the culture, more exactly the level of culture which we would call deep structures' (Maranda & Maranda 1971:IX). As Beckwith (1940:32) argued, 'borrowed material [the storyteller] may use, but so incorporated as to appear true within his own traditions.' In Aotearoa for instance, there is a 'cultural logic' in the fact that a particular European story was taken up by Māori, and thus 'transformed in the context of a different world-view' (Schrempp 1985:18).[10]

2. Classification of Polynesian narratives

The texts about *manu* that will be studied have been drawn out of a vast array of narratives belonging to many different types. In this section I will consider how Polynesians themselves distinguished between those different types (every island or island group in Polynesia

[10] Schrempp discussed the case of the Māori story of the ant and the cicada, published in Best's *Maori Religion and Mythology*, and adapted from a European story.

will not be considered here, for lack of space). The way Western collectors and scholars of traditional narratives categorised those narratives will then be briefly presented.

East Polynesia

In Aotearoa, Te Maire Tau (2003:17) classified Māori oral narratives into three categories, *wānanga*, *pūrākau* and *pakiwaitara*. Because they 'deal with the occult' (rituals, or *karakia*), *wānanga* were *tapu* (sacred, restricted). *Pūrākau* were about ancestral deeds, whereas *pakiwaitara* were stories simply told to entertain.

In Hawai'i, *mo'olelo* was a generic term for a story, whereas *ka'ao* was more particularly a fictitious one (Elbert 1956:100). In the Marquesas, *a'akakai* and *tekao atua* were, according to Lavondès (1964:III), sometimes myths, sometimes legends, sometimes tales, sometimes simple stories, and very often composite stories that blended all these genres. (*Tekao*) *a'akakai* were narratives handed down by the tradition, and *tekao toitoi* were supposed to be true stories (Lavondès 1975:27).

In Tupua'i, according to Aitken (1930:5), 'tales of traditional or mythological happenings' were included in the *parau tupuna*, records kept by 'every family of importance' on the island and containing material whose main purpose was to establish a family's rights to land (i.e., genealogies and stories about the deeds of the ancestors, especially their travels, disputes and battles). In Mangareva, according to Te Rangi Hīroa (1938:14), *atoga* was the generic term for stories about famous figures such as Māui, Tāhaki and Apakura, as well as narratives of local origin. In Tahiti, stories were called *'ā'amu* or *'ā'ai* (Ahnne 1933:170).

West Polynesia

In Futuna, according to Burrows (1936:224), two names were used for stories, *fakamatala* and *fananga*. The former applied to historically true accounts and to explanations of natural phenomena, whereas the latter was used to refer to stories told for entertainment, which had, unlike *fakamatala*, a definite form (some had verse sections), and were appreciated as works of art. Songs and sayings were types of *fananga*. *Fakamatala* and *fananga* tended to merge into one another, for 'history may be told with the emphasis on form rather than on fact'.

Mayer and Nau (1982:26) pointed out that the action in *fananga* could not be located historically.

Similarly, in ‘Uvea, a distinction existed between *talanoa* or *talatuku* (‘talk handed down’), which were historical traditions, and the stories told for entertainment, called *fangana* or *fananga*. However, some stories were called indiscriminately *talatuku* or *fananga* (Burrows 1937:161).

In Pukapuka, some of the informants of Beaglehole and Beaglehole distinguished between *tala wenua*, truly Pukapukan stories, and *tala wānongo* (or *tala wānonga*), stories about events that occurred elsewhere. However, the informants disagreed between themselves about the categorisation of some stories, which were *tala wenua* for some, but *tala wānonga* for others (Beaglehole & Beaglehole 1936:2).

According to Collocott (1928:5), *fananga* was in Tonga the general term for a narrative, but *tala tupua* in particular were stories about gods and supernatural events, and creation stories. Rotumans distinguished between ‘myths’ (*fäeag tupu‘a*), reports of events witnessed by the storyteller (*rogo*), and ‘fictitious’ stories (*hanuju*) probably told to entertain (Howard 1985:44-45). Finally, in Tokelau, *kakai* were stories, which had short songs or *tagi* interspersed in them (Thomas, Tuia & Huntsman 1990:60). Their essential quality was their entertainment value (*mālie*). They were not deemed to be ‘sources of secret or esoteric wisdom’, hence they were not ‘valued and guarded property to be transmitted only to specific others’, unlike *gafa* (genealogy) and *tala anamua* (‘[true] stories of the past’). *Kakai* could therefore be told to any audience (Huntsman 1977:VIII).

Polynesian Outliers

In Mugaba and Mungiki, there was only one term for stories, *tagatupu‘a* (or *tautupu‘a*), which covered stories about gods, culture heroes and ancestors, as well as stories about ordinary people or animals. Genealogies and accounts of recent events were also *tagatupu‘a*. *Tagatupu‘a* were clearly distinguished from two other kinds of oral traditions, ritual formulas (*kupu giu ‘atua*) and songs (*kupu me‘a* or *taugua*) (Elbert & Monberg 1965:29).

A distinction was made in Tikopia between *arārafanga*, *tara tupua* and *kai*. *Arārafanga* (from *arāra*, 'to talk') denoted stories about ancestors up to about the third generation and made of secular material, whereas *tara tupua* dealt with the remote past, especially ritual matters, and were often treated as sacred. *Kai* were narratives with a 'strong dramatic interest'; they were 'usually timeless' and 'used to a considerable extent for recreation', as an alternative to 'general conversation'. Some *kai* were of modern invention (Firth 1961:11-12). In Luangiua, stories with historical content, or *kakala*, were distinguished from *'ai*, 'stories similar to those of the European genre "folk tale"' (Keopo 1981:VIII).

In Kapingamarangi, the twenty 'myths and tales' that the Bishop Museum party recorded on the atoll in 1947 were of a kind called *puakai*, that is, stories involving 'the miraculous' (Emory 1949:230). *Hkai*, also known as *fesaoga*, were, in West Futuna, 'traditional tales, myths or allegories' that were told for entertainment in 'standard prose', and were 'subject to infinite variations and expansions'. *Tagihkai* were episodes in those stories, 'fixed forms set to music and sung in the process of story telling typically to depict a character's lament' (Keller & Kuautonga 2007:94). Similarly, in Aniwa, *ta kai* were stories commonly told in the evening by elderly people to children; they contained fragments of song 'often sung without the whole story itself being told' (Gray 1894:162). As for Pileni *lalakhai*, they were 'traditional fairy tale[s]' that could include 'legendary material' and were set in most cases in a particular place in the Pileni-speaking islands (Hovdhaugen, Næss & Hoëm 2002:5).

Finally, in Anuta, *tangikakai* were stories 'viewed as fantasy and told for entertainment value, most often to children as bedtime stories', and were often set in 'mythic' times and locations (in particular, the Heavens, *nga Rangi*). *Taratupua* were 'spirit tales' (generally taken not to be true), whereas *araarapanga* were about 'relatively recent events' and of a 'putatively historical nature' (generally taken to be true). Those three categories of narratives were typically regarded as discrete genres with distinctive features, but there might be some overlap (Feinberg 1998:8).[11]

[11] For instance, 'there is sometimes disagreement as to whether a particular narrative that is primarily about identifiable ancestors but has supernatural elements is an *araarapanga* or *taratupua*'.

Westerners' classification of narratives

The terms 'myth' and 'legend', which 'tend to dismiss', as Kirch (2018:275) argued, the value of oral traditions as 'witnesses of real human affairs', have long been used by collectors and scholars of traditional narratives. For Malinowski for instance, who based his categorisation on his material collected in the Trobriand Islands, narratives (as summarised by Firth [1961:7]) may be divided between stories held to be true and regarded as sacred (myths), stories held to be true but not regarded as sacred (legends), and stories not held to be true (fairy tales). Firth argued, however, that these two criteria of truthfulness and sacredness were too ambiguous, so that any attempt to distinguish between these genres based on these criteria would be arbitrary (Firth 1961:182).

When studying the structure of the texts, a strict distinction between these genres is hardly possible either. Agreeing with Propp (1968:90), who argued that 'fairy tales' were morphologically similar to 'myths',[12] Lévi-Strauss (1983:127-128) asserted that there was 'no serious reason to isolate tales from myths'. He observed that narratives that were tales in one society were myths in another society, and vice versa, and that 'the same tales, the same characters, the same motifs' appeared in the myths and the tales of any given society.

For the sake of clarity, and out of a yearning for categorisation, Western collectors of Polynesian narratives endeavoured to classify the stories that they gathered into separate genres, in particular when publishing them. In Futuna for instance, Burrows (1936:224-230) distinguished place tales, origin tales (e.g. the origin of kava, of bananas), hero tales (e.g. the story of the trickster Ufingaki), legends (e.g. the legend of Sina), and animal tales. Mayer (1970-1971:7-8) categorised Futunan and Uvean narratives as cosmogonic myths, legends about characters, legends about demons, legends about metamorphosis, animal tales, or real stories.

For Te Rangi Hīroa (1938:303), Mangarevan *atoga* (the generic term for oral narratives) could be divided between stories created locally and those that predated the settlement of Mangareva. He also distinguished between myths about the gods, legends about culture heroes (those two categories being shared by other Polynesians), later legends, tales of local

[12] '. . . the fairy tale in its morphological bases represents a *myth*.'

origin about the spirit world, and, finally, tales about voyages and local events (Te Rangi Hīroa 1938:306-384).

In Pukapuka, Beaglehole and Beaglehole found that narratives could be divided into myths, stories about gods, animal stories, folk tales, tales of cannibals (*tangata kai tangata* and *tupua kai tangata*), and stories about historical characters. Myths, which were few in number, accounted for natural phenomena (Beaglehole & Beaglehole 1936:3). There were more stories about gods; those dealt especially with the relations between gods and humans (1936:24). The two anthropologists further divided the stories about historical characters (which constituted 'the background for much of everyday conversational reference') into six classes: stories of love, stories of adultery and its punishment, stories of thieving and its punishment, stories of revenge for insults of homicide, stories of culture hero-like historical personages, and stories of voyaging Pukapukans (1936:49).

For Elbert (1956:100), five types of Hawaiian narratives could be distinguished: hero tales, which focus on the exploits of semidivine or mortal heroes; 'semihistorical anecdotes and tales', which 'mostly concern war and make a minimal use of the supernatural'; romances, which are about love affairs; trickster tales, which 'focus on the cleverness of the heroes and underplay supernatural and romantic elements'; and, finally, moral tales, which usually feature 'unnamed commoners'.

In Aotearoa, Shortland (1856:1-2) divided Māori narratives between traditions about the origin of the world and of humans, traditions about heroes and demigods, and traditions dating from the time of the migration to Aotearoa or thereafter. In his *Maori Religion and Mythology*, Best classified Māori stories into the following categories: 'myths and historical traditions', 'origin myths and tutelary beings', 'nature myths', 'demon lore' (about *taniwha*, *tipua* and 'mythical denizens of forests and mountains'), and 'fables and miscellaneous folk tales'. *Kōrero tara*, *kōrero pūrākau* and *pakiwaitara* were terms for the latter,[13] the 'simplest form of folk tales, fables and similar stories that were known to all' (Best 1982:560).

For Orbell (1968:X-XIII), Māori prose narratives, or *kōrero*, may be divided into myths, legends and folktales, but she admitted that it could be difficult to distinguish between these three categories. Unlike legends and folktales, myths did function 'as a source of archetypal

[13] As well as *kōrero paki* (Best 1924:I,178); among *kōrero tara* or *pakiwaitara* are, for instance, 'little dialogues between animals, plants, rivers and other natural phenomena' (Orbell 1968:XI).

figures and occurrences that provided a pattern and explanation for human events, and were frequently referred to in ritual chants and songs, as well as in proverbs'. As for legends, which were 'sometimes at least partly historical', they were 'about the fortunes of political groups and their leaders', and explained 'the origin and nature of the tribes and sub-tribes, and sometimes of landmarks within their territory'. Finally, many folktales were 'told for their own sake', their function being to entertain; however, the events narrated in them and their dramatis personae were not superficial but the 'product of the deepest levels of the psyche'.

In conclusion, although Polynesian cultures have much in common with one another, there does not exist one word across all Polynesian languages to designate a story or narrative. The words *fananga*, *kakai*, *kōrero* and *tara*, and all their cognates, are widespread but do not occur on every Polynesian island or island group.[14] Polynesians did not adhere to the distinctions often made by Westerners between myth, legend and tale. Those distinctions are not only irrelevant for the owners of the stories themselves,[15] but they are also impractical for the study of those stories. A distinction that did seem to be made by Polynesians, however, was a distinction between stories told merely for their entertainment value and those which were not, although there might be some overlap between the two categories. In any case, it is generally not possible to distinguish in Polynesian narratives between stories that were believed to be true and stories that were deemed by their audience to be purely the products of the imagination of the raconteurs.

3. The collecting of Polynesian narratives

The texts about *manu* that will be studied in Part B are part of narratives that were collected in a variety of different circumstances by collectors from a vast array of occupations using various methodologies. In this section I will provide an overview of the context in which the stories were recorded by ethnographers and other people interested in them, of their

[14] The word *parau* may be added to this list. For an analysis of the concept of *parau* in Maupiti, for instance, see Tuheiava-Richaud (1999).

[15] As Burridge (1969:197-198) argued, myth, legend and tale are irrelevant categories 'derived from the European experience', whereas narrative is an 'inclusive term'.

methods, and of their informants' attitudes with regards to the story collection process. This will give the reader an appreciation of the conditions in which the narratives that form the basis of this study passed from the oral state in which they had been thriving for centuries to the written state, in the collector's notebook, and ultimately in printed form.

Collectors

In the 19th century, some explorers, travellers, traders, missionaries and government officials started to collect stories from Polynesian informants, and some of that material was published. After the First World War, trained anthropologists followed suit.[16]

In some parts of Polynesia, particularly Hawai'i, Aotearoa, Tonga and Sāmoa, many stories were collected, but other islands did not receive as much attention. In the first part of the 20th century, the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu published the findings of scientific expeditions sent to a number of Polynesian islands to gather ethnographic data, including, generally, oral traditions. In the second half of the 20th century, many Polynesian Outliers, which had until then hardly been visited by Westerners, became the focus of anthropologists.

Methods

Some collectors claimed to have collected the stories faithfully in their original language. Wohlers (1874:31), for instance, wrote down the narratives that he collected in Ruapuke 'word by word out of the mouths of several old Maori'. In Rapa Nui, Métraux (1940:363) also stated that he gathered all his material in the Rapa Nui language, and that the texts were checked on the island by Rapa Nui. The stories that St Johnston (1918:25) published were exactly as told to him by the Lau Islanders, and in Pukapuka, the stories were 'collected in text and translated in the field with the help of competent informants' (Beaglehole & Beaglehole 1936:1).

[16] For an overview of the history of the recording of oral traditions in Polynesia from the late 18th century until the present, see Craig (2004:20-25). A list of publications containing traditional Polynesian narratives was furnished by Kirtley (1971:XI-XXVI). Kirtley (1955:28-37) provided the same for traditional Melanesian and Micronesian narratives.

These informants were sometimes named in the works published in the 19th century and the first part of the 20th century. In the second half of the 20th century, the acknowledgment of all informants by name became much more systematic, and a short presentation of their background (personality traits, tribal affiliations, but especially place of residence, age and gender) became a scientific norm by which anthropologists had to abide. Indeed, texts do increase 'in scientific value with . . . all the essential information concerning the narrator and his background' (Lavondès 1967:496). However, it is all too easy to chastise with 'the easy moral rectitude of retrospect', in McRae's (2000:3) words, some early collectors about their editorial practices.

Most collectors were eager to secure the knowledge from those who they thought were the best informants on the island where they were collecting stories. In the Marquesas in 1920–1921, Handy (1930:3) sought the company of the person that he thought was 'probably the most learned man in all the islands at the time', Isaac Puhetete, called Haapuani, from Atuona, in Hiva Oa. Similarly, Gill obtained in Mangaia traditional knowledge from, among other informants, Mamae, a 'man of superior knowledge' and 'one of the cleverest men' that he had ever met; the two became very close friends (Reilly 2009:20-21).

Writing down a story under the dictation of the informant was from the early days the most utilised method, but some collectors also used material written down by Polynesians themselves. Tape recording became much later another means to record narratives. Writing from his experience in Ua Pou in 1963–1966, Lavondès (1967:490-496) thoroughly explained the advantages and drawbacks of these three different methods of collecting oral narratives in the field: tape recording of oral recitations, texts written down by the ethnographer under the dictation of his informants, and texts written down by the informants themselves.

In Kapingamarangi, Elbert wrote down stories in the local language under the dictation of the islanders (Emory 1949:231). However, in Mungiki, Kuschel (1975:18) observed that 'the actual process of [his] writing down their accounts seemed to sap the enthusiasm of the informants', and he found that the raconteurs were reflecting upon 'their choice of words while they were waiting'. Therefore, he decided to record everything on tape, in order to preserve the spontaneity of the local narrative style.

Some collectors also used texts written down by their Polynesian informants, such as Grey (1855) and White (1887-1891) in Aotearoa. In Rotuma, Mesulama Titifanua wrote down stories under the dictation of older Rotumans, and those stories were then published by Churchward (1937-1938:104). In Sāmoa, Krämer (1994:I,4) claimed that he always favoured original texts; he secured texts written down by his informants and copied them (or had the stories directly dictated to him, or to his assistant).

In Tikopia, in his early years on the island, Firth (1961:21) sometimes told his informants Māori creation stories 'as an analogy', in order to 'stimulate comparison', for his attempts at collecting cosmogonic narratives were unsuccessful. White, as a young man in the Hokianga, in Aotearoa, related tales drawn from his reading of European literature (William Shakespeare, Walter Scott) to encourage his Māori friends to tell him their stories (Reilly 1985:106-107; 1990:46).

Furthermore, Howard (1985:44-45) observed that the texts recorded by missionaries and ethnographers in Rotuma were probably answers to particular questions, such as '"Where did the Rotumans come from?" and "Do you know any other interesting stories about the old days?"' The missionaries and ethnographers who recorded texts in Rotuma had specific ideas about what should be recorded. In Polynesia more generally, Howard (1985:39) argued that the body of Polynesian literature about the deeds of the early ancestors was generated by the Europeans' obsession with the question of the origins of the Polynesians, in such a way that 'informants were incessantly asked where their ancestors had migrated from, triggering founding myths, stories of epic voyages, and the like.'

However, later collectors were careful not to prompt the reciting of particular stories but let their informants choose what they wished to tell. In Mugaba and Mungiki for instance, Elbert and Monberg (1965:32-33) took down 'mechanically' what the raconteurs told them. The two anthropologists described how their informants, telling one particular story about a god, a culture hero or an ancestor, would be led to tell many other stories about that god, culture hero or ancestor. Elbert and Monberg did not usually prompt the telling of narratives: their informants told the stories that were important to them.[17] Similarly, Hovdhaugen, Næss and Hoëm recorded narratives in the Reef Islands (Pileni and Nifiloli)

[17] However, the story of the goddess Nguatupu'a and her brother Tepoutu'uingangi (**127**), who turn into two birds, was told to Monberg as an answer to his question 'whether the gods ever embodied themselves in animals or plants' (Elbert & Monberg 1965:78).

in 1997–1998, and all but two of the stories subsequently published were 'chosen by the narrators and told spontaneously' (Hovdhaugen, Næss & Hoëm 2002:5). In Nukuoro, Carroll (1980:VI), wishing to 'record a complete cross-section of the sorts of tales known by anyone on the island', also let her informants tell her the stories of their choice, and barely told them that she was not so interested in stories that were 'foreign imports'.

Did the collectors deem the sample of the traditions that they gathered to be exhaustive? Métraux (1940:363), in Rapa Nui, and Emory (1965:347), in Kapingamarangi, both believed that they had recorded all the stories extant at the time of their visit on the islands. In Tokelau, Huntsman (1977:IX) also wrote that the repertoires of the 'foremost raconteurs' were 'pretty well exhausted'. However, Burrows (1937:161) admitted that stories were hurriedly collected in 'Uvea, and 'probably do not represent all types'.[18]

Finally, it must be noted that Westerners were not the only ones to publish Polynesian narratives. In Aotearoa for instance, Māori also contributed narratives themselves, particularly to the early volumes of the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* and to the Māori-language *niupepa* (newspapers) from the 1840s to the 1930s (McRae 2000:15,n.15; 2017:13). In the Cook Islands, Kauraka (1982, 1988, 1989, 1994), a Rarotongan writer, published stories from Manihiki, Rakahanga and Pukapuka. In Hawai'i, authors such as Malo, Kamakau, 'Ī'ī and Kepelino, among others, published a vast literature of traditional material, particularly in Hawaiian-language journals and newspapers (Leib & Day 1979:5-34; Valeri 1985:XXIII-XXVII).

Unpublished material written down by Polynesians in the 19th century also took the form of *puta tupuna* in the Society and Austral Islands (Babadzan 1979), and *puka papa'anga* in the Cook Islands (Siikala 1991:16-17; Siikala & Siikala 2005:69-73). These documents were family registers containing, among other types of text, genealogies, titles to land, and stories. In the Society Islands, the first *puta tupuna*, also called *puta tumu* or *puta parau pa'ari* (Saura 2000:7), were written down as early as 1846 (Saura 2008:294). They contained much more than narratives. In the Cook Islands, *puka papa'anga* were created to 'preserve the genealogical information and epic tradition in manuscript form' (Siikala & Siikala 2005: 69).

[18] For instance, Burrows did not collect stories about Hina, but he believed that they may have existed on the island (later, Mayer [1970-1971:9] did actually collect a great number of them).

Stories not recorded originally for their own sake

Writing down stories was for many ethnographers a practical means of learning the language of the island on which they were to do their ethnographic work. Kennedy (1945:65) found that 'one of the quickest ways of attaining fluency in colloquial speech is by learning to tell a folklore tale in the words in which it is commonly told.' In Kapingamarangi for instance, Elbert wrote down stories at the dictation of the islanders 'as much for the language material as for the stories themselves'. Thus, through that dictation Elbert's Bishop Museum party quickly 'learned idioms and caught shades of meaning of words because of their natural context'. The stories were in fact not only 'a speedy means of becoming acquainted' with the language, but also with the people themselves, as well as their lore (Emory 1949:231). Similarly, in 1966 Carroll began tape-recording stories in Nukuoro, initially to learn the local language, but she soon became interested in the stories themselves and wished to record more, as she explained in the preface to her *Nukuoro Stories* (1980:v):

> My own interests in the project were essentially literary: while learning the language (for the purpose of ethnographic interviews as well as to facilitate daily interaction) I became increasingly aware of the differences in the Nukuoro narrative styles and structures from the European forms with which I was familiar. Now fluent in the language, I wanted to explore these differences more systematically, and for that I needed an extensive set of recordings, since written texts were unavailable.

Besides gathering stories to learn the local language, some collectors also took them down for the songs that they contained. In Sāmoa for example, when Moyle (1981:7) recorded in 1966–1969 over 200 *fāgogo* (stories interspersed with songs), he did so 'not so much for their narrative content', but for the sake of the songs themselves, as his objective was to offer a 'comprehensive ethnomusicological survey'.

Reluctant or enthusiastic informants?

If, as mentioned earlier, Firth was at first unable to collect Tikopian cosmogonic narratives and therefore sometimes told his Tikopian informants about Māori creation stories to 'stimulate comparison', it was in his opinion (1961:21) because of 'considerable resistance to the idea of imparting religious or quasi-religious material'. He also recounted (1961:15-16) that his Tikopian informants sometimes told him about the *tapu* character of the material that they were transmitting, and about their fears 'lest they or their children be injured by angry

gods as the result of communicating the material' to him. Firth believed that, at the beginning, some material transmitted to him was either concealed or distorted, as a consequence of those fears.

Similarly in Tupua'i, but for possibly different reasons (shame rather than fear), Aitken (1930:102) wrote regretfully of the 'extreme reluctance' of the islanders to tell him about their ancient stories, in particular their creation narratives; his multiple attempts to get those either met with complete failure, or he would be told the Biblical story of the creation. His informants 'denied all knowledge' on such subjects as the old deities and the formation of the earth from the void. Aitken surmised that the older people did remember those stories, but that they were ashamed of them, or afraid to recognise that they knew them, now that they were Christians.

In Pukapuka as well, according to Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1938:308), talking about the old religious practices was 'a sin', after Christianity erased the old beliefs and customs; therefore, stories about the gods may have been much harder to gather from the islanders than secular ones. And in the Lau Islands, St Johnston (1918:18-19) found it very difficult to get the people to talk about the old times not only 'for the simple reason that they [were] fast forgetting them', but also because the old people had been forbidden, at the time of their conversion to Christianity, to talk about their ancient stories. He observed that it had been easier for him to collect interesting stories on islands with no resident missionaries, because on those islands the prohibition against talking about those ancient stories 'was not so strictly enforced'. Elbert and Monberg (1965:30), by contrast, found that in Mugaba and Mungiki 'all bans have been lifted, and everybody talks freely and without caution, even about matters that were immensely sacred before the acceptance of Christianity.'[19]

The Kapingamarangi, as Elbert (1948:60) explained, were not forbidden to talk about their old traditions by their ruler, but they were warned against telling crude stories:

> In a dramatic speech in church soon after our arrival, King David [the ruler of the island, appointed by the people] explained our mission, and stressed that everyone was to talk freely of the old life, that this life was not 'bad', and that we were good people who wanted to talk of Kapingamarangi to their kinsmen in Hawaii, Samoa, and New Zealand. But David admonished the people to tell

[19] As a result, Elbert and Monberg observed that it was difficult to ascertain the 'degree of sanctity' of the traditional stories of the two islands.

> us nothing that was 'bad', particularly singling out the modern love songs as unfit for our ears.[20]

In Rapa Nui, Métraux (1940:3) reported that he knew 'of few places in the Pacific where so little remains of the ancient culture', that the traditions that lingered in the memory of the Rapa Nui were rare, and that those had been recorded 'over and over again by visitors to the island'. Nevertheless, he stated (1940:363) that his informants 'always showed real eagerness' to help him with the recording of their traditions. This was, in his opinion, partly because they saw his transcribing those traditions in their own Rapa Nui language as a 'guarantee that their folklore would be preserved forever'.

That eagerness of the Polynesian storytellers to tell their stories to Westerners was reported by many collectors. In 1934, Pukapukans provided stories 'with enthusiasm and interest' (Beaglehole & Beaglehole 1938:4).[21] Similarly, in the Reef Islands, Chief Basil of the Pileni settlement in Nifololi was 'pleased and proud to co-operate' with Elbert (Elbert & Kirtley 1966:349). Emory (1949:231) also found that the Kapingamarangi 'delighted' in dictating their stories to the Bishop Museum party. No sooner had the elected ruler of the island, King David, finished dictating a story than he wanted Emory to write down another one, apparently because, in Emory's opinion (1949:233), he was worried that others might contribute more stories than himself. Emory (1949:237) reported that one of his informants, Kiati, a 47-year-old widow, was eager to tell all the stories that she knew when she realised that the Bishop Museum party wanted to collect as many stories as possible.[22] Similarly, in Nukuoro, the storytellers were, according to Carroll (1980:v), 'more than willing – often eager – to have their stories recorded' for posterity, even though she never gave anyone an incentive to record them. She stated that no inducement was requested by them either.[23] In

[20] However, the Kapingamarangi sang those 'bad' songs to the Bishop Museum party anyway (Elbert 1948: 145).

[21] Beaglehole and Beaglehole, whose arrival on the island 'created something of a sensation', explained however that the process was slow, because the people had to rethink themselves back into the past and re-apprehend their old customs.

[22] Emory stated that she provided them with many stories not only because she 'liked' them, but also because she liked smoking the cigarettes that they gave her, since 'being one of the few Catholics, it was all right for her to smoke'.

[23] In the Tuamotu, Stimson, who was convinced of the existence of a supreme god, Kiho-tumu, paid his informants, and it has been argued that they may have fabricated stories to please him and receive the money, much to Emory's dismay (Krauss 1988:241-282). In Ra'ivavae as well, Stimson paid his principal informant, Tauira'i, 'a few francs for each piece of work' written in a notebook (Marshall 1962:83). But for Lavondès (1967:496), the drawbacks of remunerating his Marquesan informants for writing down texts appeared 'very small', as this allowed him to salvage 'numerous fragments of legends and less-known narratives from the

Pileni, Hovdhaugen, Næss and Hoëm (2002:6) found that, although people were initially shy, most of them soon showed no embarrassment in telling them stories.

To explain that eagerness in the case of the people of Mugaba and Mungiki, Elbert and Monberg (1965:29) put forward the hypothesis that knowing stories became a 'matter of social prestige', because the people on those two islands had quickly become aware of how much Westerners appreciated their stories.[24] Similarly, outside Polynesia, in Kiribati, Maude pointed out that the prestige and self-esteem of the older people who had retained traditional knowledge were considerably raised by Grimble's eagerness to acquire such knowledge, and that those people had been, until Grimble's arrival in 1926, 'saddened and humiliated by the lack of interest taken by the younger men and women in their expertise' (Grimble 1989:XXIV). However, informants may not be willing to tell stories belonging to other tribal or family groups than their own. In West Futuna for instance, Keller and Kuautonga (2007: 59) observed that their informants 'would feel ill at ease if questioned about a tale or the meaning of a text perceived as belonging to others'.

4. The publishing of Polynesian narratives

When reading Polynesian stories, one cannot but ponder the extent to which the text on the page is the actual 'voice' of the storyteller. Have not the collector, the editor, the translator and the publisher of the narratives (sometimes the same person, sometimes several individuals) altered them in such a way that they have ultimately become a pale, and even distorted, version of what they were in their oral state? When reading narratives about *manu*, one ought to be mindful of the issues surrounding the collectors' and publishers' editorial choices and the translation of those stories into European languages.

repertory of certain storytellers who had started out by declaring that they "had completely exhausted the original legends which they had in their stomach"' ('U pao onaona te tekao a'akakai mei 'oto to'u kopu').

[24] One of Elbert's and Monberg's main informants, Taupongi, told them that as a result some stories originally belonging to particular families were being 'pilfered' (*kaia'a*) by people who did not own them.

Editorial choices

From the mass of texts gathered by a given collector, admittedly only a portion of them were published. How did the collector or publisher decide which ones to include in their published work, and in what order to arrange them?

In Mugaba and Mungiki, Elbert and Monberg (1965:32) set the criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of a text in their published collection of narratives themselves. The ordering of the narratives in a 'time-semantic sequence' was also their own, although they did declare (1965:33) to have attempted not to intrude their 'Euro-American obsessions with time and classification into the stories and their translations'.

In the preface to his *Folktales of the Maori*, Grace (1907:2) explained that he chose to include in his collection the stories that were the most typical and the 'most perfect in form or whimsical in detail'. In Aotearoa again, Clark (1896:VII) chose to publish, from a large body of stories, the ones that were the oldest or the best known among Māori.

In Mangaia, this slant was criticised by Te Rangi Hīroa (1934:7), who argued that Gill had offered 'biased pictures' of Mangaian culture:

> The Rev. Wyatt Gill, a resident missionary who was able, because the old men alive in his time had grown up before the advent of the first missionaries in 1823, to record much of the history of Mangaia and many of her songs, wrote largely to interest the British public in the work of the London Missionary Society. In his eight published books . . . there are more detailed stories about murders, human sacrifices, and cannibalism than about the more constructive institutions of Mangaian culture. Yet Gill has covered Mangaian history from the first native settlements to the advent of Christianity.

The selection of stories to be published was thus influenced by the intention pursued by the collectors and publishers,[25] such as, in Gill's example (in Te Rangi Hīroa's view), the desire of some missionaries to describe thoroughly the 'savagery' and 'viciousness' of Polynesian 'heathens', and to demonstrate how much they had been 'transformed', for the better, through the missionaries' hard work.

Furthermore, in the case of the traditional stories from Aotearoa, Potts (2013:102) argued that Māori narratives, and our interpretations of them, were 'filtered through the lens

[25] As a matter of course, it may also be influenced by their personal interest. If Elbert included a volcano explanatory story in the collection of seven Pileni narratives that he published in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* in 1966 (and elicited that story from his informant in the first place), it was because he was himself fascinated with the 'perfect' conic shape of that particular volcano (Elbert & Kirtley 1966:349,354).

of Pākehā writing and reading'. Our reception of those narratives has been shaped by 'cultural mediation via Pākehā narrative styles', because, as she explained, the genre of the 'just-so' story was very popular in Europe in the 19th century, and European collectors of Māori stories, such as Grey and Best, 'would inevitably have been influenced by these precursors [i.e., the likes of the Brothers Grimm and Rudyard Kipling], and selected and shaped the stories they presented accordingly'. Therefore, many animal stories were never documented (Potts 2013:107). The collectors and publishers were thus interested in some Māori stories because they could draw parallels between them and the European stories which they themselves were familiar with, while discarding other stories that they found too odd.

The oddity of the plot is one thing, the oddity of the narrative style is another. Many a collector or publisher of Polynesian narratives noted the 'dullness' of the stories in their original form, because of the repetitions that they contained.[26] Therefore, they cut some passages, summarised others, fearing that the Western reader might become 'disinterested' from the 'tediousness' of the text. For instance, in his *Ethnology of Easter Island*, Métraux (1940: 363) 'tried to follow exactly the original', but cut the 'unnecessary repetitions that delight native audiences'. Wohlers (1874:31) also found the stories that he collected in Ruapuke 'bulky, incoherent and rambling'; thus he believed that 'few readers would have the patience to wade through them.' That is why he reordered the narration himself, leaving out 'tiresome and useless repetitions'. He claimed, however, to have retained the 'essential passages and expressions', in the dialect of the Māori of Ruapuke.

As 'tedious' for the reader as the narrative style may be, in the opinion of the collector or publisher, Beckwith found it important to leave it as it was in order to give the reader a better appreciation of the 'actual character of the Polynesian mind', as she explained (1919: 295) in the introduction to her *Hawaiian Romance of Laieikawai*:

> The only reason for presenting the romance complete in all its original dullness and unmodified to foreign taste is with the definite object of showing as nearly as possible from the native angle the genuine Polynesian imagination at work upon its own material . . . and by this means to portray the actual character of the Polynesian mind.

[26] It has been argued that the only real difference between oral literature and written literature is the amount of repetition, more frequent in the former (Vansina 1961:52). In Māori oral tradition for instance, repetitions occurred not only in the language itself, but also in the structure and content of the story, as well as in its scenes and settings (McRae 2017:37).

Furthermore, many stories were not translated faithfully, but 're-written', as some collectors and publishers admitted; others did not mention that fact, however, and one should always be mindful of the fact, particularly when reading narratives published in the 19th century and the first part of the 20th century, that the stories published may have been retold by the collector or publisher.

When the retelling was acknowledged, it was often the case that the collector or publisher claimed to have been faithful to the 'spirit' of the stories. In the preface to her *Maori Tales and Legends* for instance, Clark (1896:VII) wrote that she had endeavoured to 'adhere to the true spirit of the tales themselves, and to give them the form, expression, and speech characteristic of the country and clever native race'. Similarly, Grace (1907:2) confessed in the preface to his *Folktales of the Maori* that he had retold them in his own way, 'but without embellishment'. What he strove to achieve was to keep the 'atmosphere and colour' of the original Māori texts.

Fison (1907:V) wrote in the preface to his *Tales from Old Fiji*: 'Each one of [the stories] contains a genuine legend as its skeleton, so to speak. For the flesh with which that skeleton has been covered, the most that can be claimed is that it is of the native pattern.' But as Gifford (1924:13) explained, it is difficult to determine how much of the 'detailed elaboration' of some of the stories in Fison's book was the work of his informants and how much was the work of Fison himself.

Another aspect of the editorial practices of the collectors and publishers of Polynesian narratives that the modern reader ought to be conscious of is the melding of stories from different informants or different islands into one story. For instance, according to Elbert (1956: 99), some editors of collections of Hawaiian traditions translated into English 'welded together' several versions of a story in order to present what they thought was a more interesting story. In Elbert's opinion, Rice's *Hawaiian Legends* (1923) and many works by Westervelt, among others, belong to this category. Luomala (1940a:176) also observed that some collectors of Polynesian narratives 'summarized a native version or several versions from one or more islands and thus produced a new form by condensing [the] information and levelling differences'; thus what they published was a composite version of a particular story.

Finally, one cannot but regret the absence of annotations, comments and explanations in many publications of Polynesian narratives, especially the early ones. As Lavondès (1967: 496) pointed out, 'a text increases in scientific value with the increased wealth of accompanying annotations . . .' In Rotuma, Howard (1985:44) deplored the fact that the texts recorded by missionaries and ethnographers yield 'virtually no information about the teller and the context of performance, let alone the way the stories were learned and transmitted'.

Translating the narratives

Some publications of Polynesian narratives do not offer any translation, but present only the original text in the vernacular language, such as Carroll's *Nukuoro Stories* (1980),[27] Kauraka's *E au tua taito no Pukapuka* (1994), or Saura's *Huahine aux temps anciens* (2005). In the latter case, Saura (2005:8) did not translate into French the narratives that he collected in Tahitian, in accordance with his informants' request.

Other publications do not include any Polynesian language texts at all, but only their translation in English or another European language. Writing about Māori oral traditions published in English from the middle of the 19th century onward, McRae (2000:8) observed that the paucity of Māori texts paradoxically invested the English texts with the appearance of authenticity:

> The language of these books brought the oral tradition to national and international notice but . . . while paying tribute to the indigenous language and culture, translation also strengthens the position of English. Although they have assisted survival of the language, the books in Māori have not been canonical. As less Māori has been spoken, the English versions have claimed the readership and authenticity.

Many more publications contain the original texts in the vernacular language, and a translation into a European language (mostly English, French, or German). In a few of those, only some texts were provided in their original language, because of an alleged lack of space claimed by the editors. Burrows (1937:161) noted that the Bishop Museum held Uvean versions of all the stories that he published in his *Ethnology of Uvea (Wallis Island)*. Métraux (1940:4) stated that all the narratives that he collected in Rapa Nui were recorded in the

[27] Carroll published 325 Nukuoro stories in the local language. 'In subsequent publications we shall present an English translation of each story, line by line, and extended commentaries' (Carroll 1980:v); however, this did not eventuate.

vernacular language, but that, ‘for reasons of economy’, only a few texts in Rapa Nui were included in his *Ethnology of Easter Island*. Like Burrows with his Uvean material, Métraux indicated that the Bishop Museum Library held the original manuscripts in the Rapa Nui language. In their unpublished manuscript, ‘Myths, stories, and chants from Pukapuka’, Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1936:1) only provided the Pukapukan text for two of the stories, in an effort to ‘indicate something of the flavor of the Pukapukan literary style and the characteristic methods of story telling’. Again, all the original texts were filed in the Bishop Museum Library.

For the texts that have been translated, numerous issues faced the translator. One of the most obvious issue was that when, as Kuschel (1975:29) explained, one attempts to translate a Polynesian oral narrative into another language, ‘countless concepts find no common denominator in the two languages and thus must lack also the whole complex of corresponding ideas, experiences, associations, and feelings.’

Furthermore, should the translation be literal, so as not to ‘betray’ the original text, or should it be idiomatic, in order to be more comprehensible for the Western reader? For instance, Emory (1949:232) translated Kapingamarangi stories literally, because he wanted his translations to be faithful to the native style, even though it could potentially make the stories appear ‘more childlike than they are and somewhat monotonous’. Churchward (1937-1938:104), on the other hand, acknowledged that his translations of Rotuman stories were not ‘word for word’, because his aim was to translate the texts into idiomatic English, and because as far as the poetry was concerned, he strove to ‘reproduce the rhythm and assonance of the original’.

Whether literal or not, all translations were not entirely accurate. In his study of the figure of the chief in Hawaiian mythology, for instance, Elbert (1956:99) did not take into account narratives published only in English and for which there was no Hawaiian text available. The reason is that he viewed most translation from Hawaiian into English as ‘unreliable’. He considered the narratives collected by Fornander and his three Hawaiian helpers (Kamakau, Kepelino and Haleole), and later published as the *Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folklore* (1916-1920) by the Bishop Museum, to have been translated into English ‘very inaccurately’.

Another issue that is worth mentioning is the fact that many texts were expurgated when translated, because their collectors or publishers found the material too crude or obscene for their readers. This is because of the recurrence of sexual motifs in many Polynesian narratives. For example, Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1938:413) pointed out that 'for the Pukapukan all activities lead naturally to sex', so that all chants, whatever their purpose, 'come sooner or later to the fact of sex'. Similarly, Handy (1930:5-6) found that throughout the Marquesan stories 'the sex motif is more dominant than any other'. The stories that he published in his *Marquesan Legends* (1930) were 'essentially Marquesan in character – rugged and rough'. Although his translation into English of the Marquesan texts aimed at preserving 'the lore in its unvarnished integrity' despite the numerous references to sexual activities, Handy did leave out of the translation the episodes in the stories that he deemed too crude to be published in English. Those were only presented in Marquesan; interested readers, he claimed, could translate them with the help of a dictionary. A few decades earlier, Gill deliberately excluded mention of sex and excretion in some Mangaian texts (Reilly 2015:148). Similarly, White, who wrote in his journal that 'nearly all [his] best tales' were 'tainted with indecency' (Reilly 1989:162), often gave, in his *Ancient History of the Maori*, a 'circumlocutory or even misleading' translation to references to sexuality, sexual organs and defecation – or those references were not even translated at all (Reilly 2004:29-30).

Motives for publishing narratives

In June 1769, in Tahiti, Cook (1893:83) wrote in his journal: 'Many absurd stories are told of [Maui's] Feats by Tupia'; therefore, he did not write them down. Fortunately, all the Westerners who had the good fortune of listening to Polynesian lore[28] did not find those stories 'absurd'; on the contrary, they decided to record and publish them, pursuing a variety of goals which will be outlined here.

For Lévi-Strauss (1976:510), the ethnographer is the symbol of expiation for the wrongdoings of colonialism. This atonement could take the form of an endeavour to save from oblivion Polynesian narratives before it was too late. As Huntsman (1981:210) explained, for many collectors 'narratives had to be "rescued" before they disappeared under the

[28] For Kuschel (1975:XI), collecting oral traditions in Mungiki was a 'richly rewarding experience', because he could not but 'sense the enormous power' of those traditions when told by skilful raconteurs.

onslaught of Western civilisation and preserved for posterity, as "butterflies" mounted behind glass, as a source for reconstructing or recalling states, relationships, events of the past, whether recent or remote.'

In the 1890s in Sāmoa for instance, Krämer (1994:I,VII) wished to contribute to the 'preservation of the cultural heritage of the slowly dying-out peoples of the Pacific in the evening of their unique culture and philosophy of life'. He found it tragic to witness the Samoan spiritual heritage vanishing before his eyes:

> Every year zoological expeditions are equipped to do research on animals which will be in existence hundreds and thousands of years from now,[29] yet we fail to consider that in the Pacific Ocean peoples dwindle before the mighty onslaught of civilisation. We are about to let spiritual treasures fade away as did the Spanish conquistadores 400 years ago in the West Indies. Will we some day reap the same accusations? Or is man less interesting than a tadpole? (Krämer 1994:I,2).

In the Lau Islands, St Johnston (1918:18) believed that the traditional stories allowed one to uncover the 'secrets of the past', and to 'snatch, before it is too late, the already rapidly slipping cable that links us with the olden time'. Lavondès (1975:III), who collected stories in the 1960s in the Marquesas, and particularly in Ua Pou, wished to 'make the voice of the silent ones heard directly', and saw an urgent need to record oral traditions in the Pacific islands, because of the process of change that their traditional cultures (among which some were 'irrevocably doomed') were going through at the time. He stressed (1967:483) that it was crucial to collect as many texts as possible, since those texts would most likely be the only sources at the disposal of future researchers.

Many books of Polynesian stories were also published with a view to present Polynesians as skilful littérateurs to their Western readers, and to arouse sympathy for them. For Westervelt (1915:VII) for instance, 'in purity of thought, vividness of imagination, and delicacy of coloring the Hawaiian myths are to be given a high place in literature among the stories of nature vivified by the imagination.' Collocott (1928:3), a Methodist missionary, published his *Tales and Poems of Tonga* to 'quicken intelligent sympathy of white people for the brown races of the Pacific, and to stimulate the confidence that these peoples are possessed of intellectual and moral qualities that demand respect, and will enable them to make their fit contribution to the progress of the world'. Similarly, in the preface to his *Folktales of the Maori*, Grace (1907:1) explained how he wished to

[29] For many bird species, however, this was not going to be the case: see 'The other face of Late Holocene Polynesia: "man as a catastrophe"', I-4.

> preserve from forgetfulness tales which, while they illumine for us the mental workings of a primitive people, at the same time prove indubitably that the sturdy Maori, who tattooed his body with grotesque patterns, was possessed of a soul, sensitive beyond belief to romantic and sentimental impressions, and that in his musings his barbaric mind frequently leaped to a mental altitude as high as that attained by the great mythologists of the ancients.

Furthermore, as Huntsman (1981:209) asserted, some individuals collected oral narratives 'for profit': those narratives, 'rewritten as saccharine, inoffensive stories, are encased within glossy covers, and sold as "myths and legends"'. Many books without much, if any, scientific value were thus published.

The motive pursued by some missionaries (although they may have had a genuine interest in the stories for their own sake) was quite different. Their intention was to demonstrate to the Western readers of those Polynesian narratives the necessity of evangelising Polynesian 'heathens'. To this end, they highlighted the old 'savage' and 'cruel' ways of the latter to foreground the success that they themselves had achieved in their missionary work. In Aotearoa for instance, Tiramōrehu (1987) wrote down in 1849 at Moeraki a Ngāi Tahu creation story for Creed, a Wesleyan missionary in Otago. This interest in old Māori lore expressed 'a common missionary desire to show the moral revolution worked upon them through conversion' (Reilly 2008:83).

5. The obscure and lifeless minute remains of what once was?

Countless stories have been lost forever, because they were never recorded and ceased to be transmitted orally through the generations. The ones that have survived are often seen as obscure and even impenetrable, because their meaning is lost. Furthermore, they have been described as lifeless because they have been cut off from their performative context. Those are three important limitations that need to be kept in mind when reading Polynesian *manu* stories and their analysis.

Stories lost

Traditional Polynesian stories and Polynesian *manu* species have in common the fact that the ones that have survived to the present day are but a fraction of what once existed in Polynesia. For the many narratives that one is fortunate to be able to read today, there were countless others that were never recorded. For instance, E. Rice (1923:4) regretfully observed in the preface to W. Rice's *Hawaiian Legends* that some stories have been lost 'on account of ill-timed ridiculing by some chance companion', for storytellers, being 'very sensitive', did not tell their stories to an 'unsympathetic auditor'.[30] Many Hawaiian stories have also been lost, she argued, because they were not widely known, but known only to the people who attended the high chiefs, since storytellers, which formed a 'distinct class', only lived at the residence of the chiefs.

Collectors of oral traditions, especially on larger islands, were aware that stories, being innumerable, could possibly not all be recorded. In Tonga for example, Collocott (1928:6) believed that local stories, which dwelled upon 'the beauties' of the islands, were 'probably countless'. As Luomala (1949:168) pointed out,

> The Maui cycle of Rarotonga is a small part of the corpus of traditional history which accidents of fate like the invention of the printing press and Gill's interest in Te Ariki Tara-are's learning have preserved for us. Even this corpus presents but one man's recollection, a ripple at the end of the ever changing stream of Rarotongan oral literature.

This 'ripple' is all that remains of a multitude of stories that have been lost.

Impenetrability and problems of interpretation

Understanding the language of the stories is the first hurdle. Even at the time they were collected, some of the words in the narratives were not understood by their raconteurs anymore, let alone by their collectors. In Rapa Nui for instance, Métraux (1940:32) noticed that many old words had been forgotten by the Rapa Nui at the time of his visit. In Tonga, Collocott (1928:4) found that 'much of the language and many of the allusions of the poetry of an earlier, even comparatively recent, time are unintelligible to most living Tongans'. In

[30] Similarly, in the Loyalty Islands, Hadfield (1920:IX) reported: 'However absurd some of the stories might appear, I knew that if I ridiculed them in the least I should not only give offence, but sadly restrict the output of further information.'

Kapingamarangi also, some of the *tangi-khai*, or magic chants, present in the narratives and expressed in the old language, were incomprehensible even to the raconteurs themselves (Elbert 1948:62).

Not only is archaic language impenetrable, but a text which seems clear at first sight can also have a double meaning, as Ottino (1965:21) found out in Rangiroa. For instance, when he endeavoured to translate two *fa'atara* (poetical chants), Ottino realised that the words, which made up meaningful sentences, were in fact names of people that were elements of genealogies. He was told by one of his informants that some texts had multiple meanings that were not mutually exclusive. In Oceanian texts, layers of meaning can indeed be superimposed like millefeuilles (Aufray 2001:33). Adding to the complexity of interpretation, the number of homonyms in Polynesian languages is multiplied by the economy of phonemes (Ottino 1966:31).[31] Furthermore, as Keller and Kuautonga (2007:6) observed in West Futuna, 'meaning should never be directly captured by explicit prose.' While the speaker's task is to 'construct intriguing discourses, episodic developments or figurative tropes that reflect unspoken wisdom', the listener's is to make sense of the hidden meanings. This deciphering is arguably even more problematic for people from another culture.

Humour presents another difficulty for outsiders. Kuschel (1975:XI), for instance, lamented that his collection of animal stories from Mungiki had often left him 'with a sense of being far distant from any profound understanding', especially when the audience roared with laughter and he himself did not get the point. That is because humour is 'presumably one of the most impenetrable areas of alien cultures' (Kuschel 1975:47).

Even if modern readers can comprehend the meaning of the words, how can they appreciate Polynesian narratives, which have been described as belonging to 'another world of action, feeling, and ideal, widely at variance with our own' (Beaglehole & Beaglehole 1938: 413)? Are they not excluded from understanding the associations present in the stories? Can they find them intellectually or emotionally interesting (Kuschel 1975:29)? Lavondès (1975:

[31] Proto-Polynesian 'contained only thirteen consonants and few of the daughter languages have as many. Hawaiian and Southern Marquesan are well-attested languages with only eight consonants, and such linguistic information as there is for Rurutuan suggests that it has only seven' (Biggs 1971:469). As a consequence, Polynesian languages have a greater level of homonymy than other languages. For example, the Māori noun *tara* can have the following meanings, among others: point, spike, peak, tooth (of a comb), spine (of a fish), rays (of the sun), penis, papillae, courage; gossip; White-fronted Tern (*Sterna striata*); side wall (of a house); vagina. *Tara* also has different meanings as a verb (Williams 1971:386-387). Another hurdle to interpretation of Polynesian texts is the fact that many (especially early) publications of Polynesian language stories do not represent vowel length (with macrons) or glottal stops, which is necessary to distinguish between words.

IV-VI) wrote indeed about the 'disconcerting opacity' of many of the Marquesan texts, and their 'innumerable details of an off-putting strangeness'. Writing about Māori animal stories, Potts (2013:107) argued that the narratives that have survived contain shades of meaning and references that are no longer accessible to the modern reader. For Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1938:413), all the Pukapukan stories and chants were the product of a cultural patterning utterly foreign to Westerners, who are at pains to appreciate Pukapukan culture 'by an effort of feeling'. All these difficulties led Kuschel (1975:XI) to ponder the following questions after having collected stories in Mungiki in 1971–1973:

> . . . how far is it actually possible to transmit oral stories from one culture to another? . . . Will the reader ever be able to do away with his own cultural pattern, the cognitive filter employed in perceiving and structuring his environment? Will he be able to experience and appreciate the stories as much as the listener? Will the associations and emotions which the stories evoke in the listeners and upon which the narrator will often play, be the same? Can they be communicated at all to someone who did not grow up in the culture in question?

Of course, it is not only the modern reader who is confronted with these obstacles; the ethnographers and anthropologists themselves are too. As Sperber (1974:84) argued, they have to work with 'scraps':

> De sa propre culture et des cultures voisines l'indigène connaît généralement plus de mythes que n'en connaît l'ethnologue, et les connaît mieux : les références lui sont claires et peu d'allusions lui échappent. Pour les comprendre il dispose d'une multitude d'indices car le symbolisme est quotidien. L'ethnologue au contraire doit péniblement tout transcrire, tout traduire, tout vérifier. Il ne dispose, en fin de compte, que de bribes. Il travaille souvent sur les matériaux refroidis, qui parlent mal et ne répondent pas, d'un collègue.[32]

With all our 'efforts of feeling', Polynesian *manu* stories may thus retain much obscurity. However, it must be noted that, for the stories that are still told today, storytellers can help scholars understand the narratives, as Huntsman (1995:157-158) pointed out:

> Scholarly experts can question and ponder in their studies and libraries, but their questions need not simply be subject to their own speculations, plausible and persuasive as many of their proposed answers are. The raconteurs are experts too, who are aware of what they have done and what they are doing. Consulted sensitively and specifically about the narratives they tell, I have found that they give frank, and often expansive, answers.

[32] 'Of his own culture and of neighbouring ones, the native generally knows more myths than does the anthropologist, and knows them better. The references are clear to him and few allusions escape him. To understand them, he has available a multitude of indices, for symbolism is an everyday affair. The anthropologist, on the contrary, must write everything down painfully, translate it all, verify it all. In the final analysis, he has only scraps at his disposal. Often he works on a colleague's cold materials, which speak little and don't answer at all' (Sperber 1991:72-73).

‘. . . We must talk’, she argued (1981:216), ‘about the “tales” we collect with the people we collect them from, with the tellers and their audience.’

‘Residues of living performances’

As Howard (1985:45) argued about Rotuman narratives, ‘stories are constructed out of an extensive array of semiotic codes, which are transmitted in a variety of media’: there are ‘codes embedded in the string of words from which written texts are constructed’, ‘expressive codes embedded in speech and gesture’, ‘spatial and temporal codes’, etc. Even if the words are understood, the expressive codes cannot be read in a book. And because stories were recited in performances, whose importance was highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, those expressive codes played a fundamental role, to which the modern reader of these stories does not have access.

Because the texts are cut off from the performances in which the stories were recited, Huntsman (1981:209) argued that oral narratives, as carefully as they may be recorded, lose their ‘vitality’ when written down. Similarly, for Emory (1949:232), Kapingamarangi stories ‘lose much of their vitality’ when transcribed and translated, because the readers are cut off from the variety of emotions expressed by the raconteurs’ body language. Elbert (1948: 62) too observed that some stories in his Kapingamarangi collection may sound ‘bald’ in English, because their unfortunate reader cannot, unlike him, ‘hear the soft earnest voices, or see the merry eyes, or hear the rhythmic chants’. In Micronesia, Chambers (1972:4), who wrote a comparative study of traditional Marshallese, Gilbertese and Nauruan narratives, also regretted that his summaries of the stories were a ‘very pale and lifeless’ reflection of the vibrant oral lore.

In Rotuma, the texts recorded by missionaries and ethnographers are ‘residues of living performances’, that is, they have been deprived of the ‘elaborations’ that characterised the performance before a Rotuman audience (Howard 1985:44-45). As Howard (1985:46) observed,

> The written texts recorded by visitors to Rotuma . . . are restricted to certain codes and therefore only represent partial semantic structures. Their full meaning has been lost, and it is possible that performative codes significantly altered, perhaps even inverted, some of the meanings in the written texts (as, for example, an ironic tone of voice inverts meaning in English). Corollary to this, the

> full meaning of key symbols, metaphors and metonyms cannot be recovered from such residual texts.[33]

Writing about his publication of Samoan stories interspersed with songs (a genre known as *fāgogo*), Moyle (1981:13) conceded that 'the transcripts are bereft of the aural (and visual) elements which, together with the linguistic content itself, contribute to an overall understanding and appreciation of the *fāgogo* as an art form.' McRae (2000:9) came to the same conclusion in Aotearoa, emphasising that the printed text fails to capture 'the presence, passion and rhythm of spoken words', which are very much part of Māori tribal identity.

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Therefore, when reading Polynesian *manu* stories, one should be mindful of the significant losses inherent in the transformation of the stories from the oral state to the written state. Instead of focusing on the stories themselves, the next chapter will examine the place of birds in traditional Polynesian societies, and in the human imagination more generally.

[33] However, Howard (1985:46-47) conceded that there was 'a considerable degree of redundancy' in the texts, and that it was 'reasonable to assume that the messages of greatest concern were the most redundant, and that they were the least likely to be nullified or drastically altered by unrecorded performative codes'.

Chapter III

Manu

> In all ages man's imagination was fired by the sight of soaring birds and was seized by the ambition to migrate and to sail upon the wind like one of them.
>
> Laufer (1928:8)

> What more natural than that gods called upon to traverse great distances quickly in the discharge of some work on the earthly plane should be believed to assume the form of birds?
>
> (Handy 1927:130)

1. What is a manu*?*

For Westerners, 'birds' are members of the class Aves, distinguished from other vertebrates by having such distinctive attributes as feathers, bills, and bodies structured for flight (Gill 1990:14-15). The Polynesian word *manu*, however, is far from equivalent.

The word manu

The Polynesian languages belong to the Oceanic languages, which in turn are a subgroup within the family of Austronesian languages. The Austronesian languages constitute the largest language family in the world – an estimated 20 per cent of all the languages of the world belong to this family (Tryon 1995:I(1),5-6). The Polynesian subgroup is composed of

sixteen languages spoken in the Polynesian Triangle and fourteen languages spoken in the Polynesian Outliers (Tryon 1995:I(1),15).[1]

The term **manu* can 'unambiguously' be assigned to Proto-Polynesian as a 'bird' label, and that term is traced to Proto-Austronesian **manuk* (Brown 1981:93,106,n.5).[2] In many Austronesian languages from outside the Polynesian subgroup, the word *manu* or a cognate thereof designates a 'bird', for instance in Bangingi Sama (spoken in the Philippines), Bugis and Sundanese (spoken in Indonesia), Motu (spoken in Papua New Guinea), or Raga and Lewo (spoken in Vanuatu) (Tryon 1995:II,313-314).

However, the Proto-Polynesian taxon **manu*, often thought of as meaning 'bird', probably extended in actual fact to 'all non-marine animals' (Clark 1982:141,n.2), and so did the Proto-Oceanic taxon **manuk* (Clark 1994:75; 2011:271; Pawley 2011:443-450). Today, many Polynesian languages (but not Māori) still include most, if not all, terrestrial animals in the acceptation of the word *manu*. In Mangaia for instance, *manu* are all the creatures of land and air, in opposition to *ika* or *mangaika*, the fish (Clerk 1981:78), and *manu rere* ('flying *manu*') are restricted to birds and bats (Clerk 1981:83).[3] In Mungiki, *manu* are animals living in the air and on the ground; *manu ngenge* are flying animals, which include butterflies (*pepe*) and flying foxes (*peka*) (Kuschel 1975:34). In Tahiti, *manu* is 'a general name for all sorts of birds, fowls, or winged insects; also sometimes an animal of any kind' (Davies 1851:131).[4]

Brown (1981:83,86-87) found, by surveying 112 languages, that languages lexically encode 'bird', 'fish' and 'snake', three of the five folk zoological life-form terms, before the

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[1] In Appendix 2, however, 36 languages appear because Austral (AUT), Rapa (RAY), Penrhyn/Tongarevan (PNH) and Rakahanga-Manihiki (RKH) will be considered languages and not dialects, and because two languages will be acknowledged in the Marquesas: South Marquesan (MQM) and North Marquesan (MRQ).

[2] In the context of historical linguistics, an asterisk before a word means that the word is a hypothetical reconstruction.

[3] The term *manu vaevae 'ā* ('four-legged *manu*', that is, mammal) does exist in Mangaian, but Clerk (1981: 256) observed that the *manu vaevae 'ā* category was 'of little importance in the daily life of Mangaians' and was 'seldom referred to'. However, the same expression (*manu va'e ehā*) was used in Rapa Nui to designate sheep when those were first introduced on the island (Englert 1938:78; Barthel 1978:138), and this expression is also attested in Mugaba and Mungiki (*manu ba'e haa*, Elbert 1975:167), in Niue (*manu huifā*, Sperlich 1997: 208) and in Sāmoa (*manuvae-faā*, Ma'ia'i 2010:265) to designate a quadruped.

[4] *Manu* may be translated as 'animal' in, for instance, Tuamotuan (Stimson 1964:283), West Uvean (Hollyman 1987:165), East Uvean (Rensch 2002:152), Tuvaluan (Jackson 2001:156), Niuean (Sperlich 1997:208), Kapingamarangi (Lieber & Dikepa 1974:129), or Nukuoro (Carroll & Soulik 1973:286).

other two, 'wug' (i.e., insect) and 'mammal', probably owing to the 'considerable distinctiveness' of the first three life-forms as 'natural discontinuities *vis-à-vis* the relative lack of distinctiveness' of the last two.[5] He explained (1981:93) that reflexes of the term *manu* 'in contemporary daughter languages either stand on their own as labels for "bird", or as constituents of compound terms for "bird"', such as *manu lele* or *manu rere*, 'flying *manu*'. As Brown (1981:93-94) observed,

> Reflexes of **manu* in some Polynesian languages label broad zoological classes variously encompassing such creatures as land mammals, reptiles and insects, in addition to birds. Such a category is sometimes overtly characterised as constituting a 'nonsea creature' grouping that is in direct contrast with a 'sea creature' grouping . . . In addition, birds often form the semantic focus of these broad classes; in other words, some **manu* reflexes have both the restricted sense of 'bird' and the general sense of 'nonsea creature'.

Brown (1981:94) further argued that there were 'reasons for believing that "bird" constituted the primary, if not the only, zoological referent of the Proto-Polynesian term and that daughter languages, in some cases independent of one another, expanded their reflexes of **manu* to additional creatures'.

However, Tahitian and Tuamotuan have alternative words for 'bird', *'apa'apa* and *kupakupa*, not derived from **manu* reflexes. *'Apa'apa* being a reflex of Proto-Polynesian **kapakapa*, 'to flap wings', birds were thus conceptualised in Tahitian as 'wing-flapping creatures'.[6] As for *kupakupa*, Brown (1981:96) suggested that this Tuamotuan term for 'bird'[7] was related to the Tahitian word *'upa'upa*, an unidentified species of bird, possibly the *'ū'upa* (Grey-green Fruit Dove, *Ptilinopus purpuratus*), and developed as a 'bird' label 'through expansion of reference'.

In this study, *manu* will be understood as 'bird' exclusively. Therefore, narratives about bats, butterflies and other insects and mammals will not be considered, even though those animals may have been thought of as *manu* by their Polynesian storytellers.[8]

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[5] One may refer, however, to Bulmer (1985) for a critical review of Brown's argument.

[6] For Māori, the birds of the forest were *ngā aitanga kapakapa a Tāne*, 'the wing-flapping progeny of Tāne' (Cowan 1930:58).

[7] *Kupakupa* is a generic term for a bird (Stimson 1964:263).

[8] Given the author's location in Aotearoa, it seems appropriate to acknowledge the language of the *tangata whenua* (people of the land) by prioritising their understanding of the word *manu*, which in Māori is not applied to any nonhuman animals other than birds. For this reason, *manu* is understood as 'bird' in this thesis.

Bird categories, sexual differentiation and life-stage differentiation

Westerners often distinguish between landbirds (forest birds and birds of the open country), seabirds and shorebirds. In Polynesia, this differentiation was not necessarily important. For instance, Clerk (1981:257) found that this distinction was not a Mangaian way of thinking about the birds: none of his informants 'presented a set of location-based categories' as a division of the 'bird' category. One systematic division that they did suggest, though, was based on the 'usefulness' of the birds: *manu kainga* were taken for food and *'uru manu* for their feathers, while *manu pu'apinga kore* were of no practical use. This categorisation was quite pragmatic.

As for sexual differentiation, it seems to have seldom been acknowledged in the nomenclature. Birds rarely have two different names for the male and the female.[9] In Mangaia, according to Clerk (1981:261), only chickens (introduced by the missionaries at the beginning of the 19th century) were sexually differentiated in language in a consistent manner. An exception seems to be the Māori language, however, which has specific names to designate the female bird in a number of species.[10]

Different names for different life-stages of a particular species of bird appear in Polynesian languages, but are not common. For instance, in Rapa Nui, four names corresponding to four stages of development were given to the bird that was the object of a cult, the *manutara* (Spectacled Tern, *Onychoprion lunatus*, or Sooty Tern, *Onychoprion fuscatus*) (Barthel 1978:150). In Māori, only the juvenile of the *tūī* (*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*) and that of the Kelp Gull (*Larus dominicanus*) seem to have been assigned a different name from the adult bird (Williams 1906:199,203). Clerk (1985:341) observed that in Mangaian no species of bird had a 'unique life-stage terminology', unlike fish species and various invertebrates. Juveniles were referred to by terms such as *unuunu* or the Rarotongan word *punua* (young) along with the generic name of the bird. He suspected that it was so because those two terms may 'carry some connotation of "offspring in the care of a parent"', and birds, like mammals,

[9] See Appendix 2, however, for some names that apply exclusively to one sex or the other.

[10] For instance, *kōkōtea* and *kouwha* (Tūī, *Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*), *kōrurerure* (Rifleman, *Acanthisitta chloris*), *kōpara*, *tītapu* and *tōtōaireka* (New Zealand Bellbird, *Anthornis melanura*), *mokorā* (North Island Robin, *Petroica longipes*), *tarapō* (Tomtit, *Petroica macrocephala*), and *matakiore* (Stitchbird, *Notiomystis cincta*). On the other hand, *kakarapiti* (New Zealand Falcon, *Falco novaeseelandiae*), *kōpūrehe, tute, kōkōtaua* and *kōkōuri* (Tūī, *Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*) designate the male bird (Williams 1971).

were the ‘creatures showing the most evident parental care’, in contradistinction to fish and invertebrates.

Naming bird species

Clark (1982, 1994) reconstructed the nomenclature for bird species in Proto-Polynesian (PPN) and in Proto-Oceanic (POC). Many names seem to be onomatopoeic, although this is often difficult to assert with certainty. Many bird names reappear as cognates throughout Polynesia (see Appendix 2).

When previously unknown birds encountered by Polynesians on an island were similar to or reminiscent of birds which they were familiar with, the first settlers named them accordingly. In Aotearoa for example, the first settlers discovered ‘an almost totally alien avifauna, but nevertheless retained a surprising number of the original PN [i.e., Polynesian] names, sometimes only in myth and chant, sometimes as multiple options (e.g. *rupe* and *kukupa* for the pigeon), sometimes transferred to quite different birds’ (Clark 1982:140). ‘Semantic shift’ was one strategy to designate new species in Māori (Harlow 2007:34-35).

In that archipelago, the Dinornithiformes ‘looked like larger versions of the domestic fowls’, or *moa*, ‘so they were called after them’.[11] As for the *kiwi* (*Apteryx* sp.), it may have been named after the *kivi*[12] (Bristle-thighed Curlew, *Numenius tahitiensis*) because of the similarity in the shape of their ground-probing beak, which the *kiwi* uses in the forest to dig for worms, and the *kivi*, for marine worms on the beach (Orbell 1985:7). For Clark (1982: 130), however, onomatopoeia ‘probably played at least as important a role’ in the naming of the *kiwi*, the voice of the male bird being a ‘shrill whistle *ki-wi*’ (Falla, Sibson & Turbott 1979:18). There may also be a connection with the Proto-Polynesian **kiwi*, ‘blind or partially sighted; to close the eyes’ (Clark 1991), this bird’s sight being weak (Falla, Sibson & Turbott 1979:17).

[11] According to some, however, *moa* was but a modern name. For instance, Beattie (1918:150) was told that ‘the Waitaha called the bird *pouakai*, and killed them in great numbers. Those ancient people never called the bird moa – that name was given by modern Maoris seeing the bones lying about.’

[12] The word *kivi* is attested in a few Polynesian languages.

Every bird species known to the Polynesians had a vernacular name. In Mungiki for instance, Kuschel (1975:36) observed that everyone knew each animal by its vernacular name and referred to the animal using that vernacular name; 'zoological taxonomy' was 'hardly ever referred to'. Polynesians knew from an early age the names of all the birds, as has often been remarked, for example in Mangareva (Laval 1938:211). In Luangiua, Bayliss-Smith (1972:2) found that the knowledge of birds was 'considerable' and that 'only the rarest and most inconspicuous of the shorebirds lack individual names'. It may be argued that the word *manu* was much less often used in Polynesia in pre-European times than the English word 'bird' is today, because then the particular name of each avian species was known.

Manu *applied to people*

The word *manu* was not restricted to nonhuman animals, though. In the Cook Islands, *manu* was 'often used figuratively for a human being' (Buse 1995:223). In Pukapuka, men may be referred to as *te manu o Mataliki*, 'the birds of Mataliki' (Mataliki was the supreme god), and women may be called *te manu o Taua* (Taua was their special guardian) (Beaglehole & Beaglehole 1938:309). In Anuta, *manu* was 'used metaphorically in reference to an immigrant or visitor from overseas': *te manu o te moana* is a visitor who, just like a bird, 'comes from the sea, spends its day there, and comes ashore only at night to sleep' (Feinberg 1977:I, 94). Similarly, *manu* may be translated in Tikopia as 'wanderer' or 'traveller' (an analogy with birds coming ashore to seek refuge), but also as 'protégé', as in *te manu o te ariki*, a 'protégé of the chief' (Firth 1985:230-231).

In Tahiti, the *ari'i vahine* (women chiefs) were compared to birds (Marau Ta'aroa 1971: 102); just as male *ari'i*, they did not really walk, but 'flew' (Henry 1928:516,n.4; Marau Ta'aroa 1971:177,221). Personal names could even be bird names, for instance in Mungiki (Kuschel 1975:41), unlike fish. In Māori, *manu* also meant 'a person held in high esteem', *manu kura* being a 'chief, leader in council'. *Manu a Tāne* and *manu a Tiki* designated a man (Williams 1971:176).[13] This usage of the word *manu* to designate a human being hints at the importance of birds in traditional Polynesian societies.

[13] The Māori expression *manu taupua*, which was 'applied to a male bird which acts as sentry while the rest are feeding', was also 'used figuratively for *a chief*' (Williams 1971:401).

2. *The importance of* manu *in traditional Polynesian societies*

Observation and imitation

As Clerk (1981:76) observed, Mangaians 'remain very aware of their animal world. It is not something that is merely reflected upon. It is lived with, as it has been throughout their history.' This is particularly true of birds because, in the absence of mammals, 'except for man himself, the bird is the most visually conspicuous animal in Oceania' (Skinner 1966:1), the 'most interesting living thing next to man' (Métraux 1940:331).

This familiarity with birds as the 'most visually conspicuous' animals around them led the Polynesians to develop a deep knowledge of all feathered creatures. Oliver (1974:I,281) concluded, for example, that the 'widespread intellectual interest in their natural environment' shown by Tahitians, 'quite apart from any tangible utilitarian element present in that environment', manifested itself particularly with regards to birds: their acquaintance with the birds and their habits was 'exhaustive and extraordinarily detailed'.

The careful observation of birds by Polynesians may have led to them 'borrowing' or 'imitating' some of their practices. It has been suggested that, in prehistoric times, the art of weaving may have originated from the imitation of bird nests robbed by humans (Armstrong 1958:96), and that singing, which is uncommon among nonhuman mammals, may have been picked up by humans from birds (Lingis 2007:43).[14] In Polynesia, the Māori *haka* may have had its origin in the observation of the restless fantail jumping from side to side (Andersen 1926:28). According to one of Best's (1977:333) informants, *pūkana*, the dilating of the eyes, derived from the glaring Koukou, a *ruru* (Morepork, *Ninox novaeseelandiae*), annoyed with Tīrairaka (New Zealand Fantail, *Rhipidura fuliginosa*). Furthermore, in the Marquesas, the movements of the dance called *hakamanu* were inspired, according to tradition (Kimitete & Banneville 1990), by the observation of the graceful 'dance' of a *mōkohe* (Great Frigatebird, *Fregata minor*). That bird was also imitated in a traditional dance on the atoll of Tatakoto, in the Tuamotu Archipelago (Stimson 1964:254).

[14] 'Only human vocal production is comparable' to the vocal abilities of birds (Gill 1990:16). As a matter of fact, 'birds are much more versatile vocalizers than humans because the syrinx [i.e., the organ in which birds produce vocal sounds] is bipartite and the two sides are capable of acting either together or independently' (Salwiczek & Wickler 2004:165). Birds can thus produce two sounds at once (Gill 1990:194-198).

Furthermore, Māori may have imitated *kākā* (New Zealand Kākā, *Nestor meridionalis*), which were said to carry a piece of bark in their claws to lick whenever they were thirsty on long journeys, by placing a leaf of *māhoe* (whiteywood, *Melicytus ramiflorus*) between their lips to suck when they were thirsty (Andersen 1926:178). Bird calls too could be imitated: when Tahitian *'aito* (warriors) shouted the call of the *tōrea* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*), this was termed *fa'ata'itōrea*, which translates as 'to imitate the cry of the bird *torea*, as a signal for plunder, revenge, or murder' (Davies 1851:74; Rey-Lescure 1945: 84).

Polynesians were careful observers of birds. This is because *manu*, as Clerk (1981:341-342) put it, can act as an 'index', informing activity and 'providing information about states of the world relevant to present and future action'. Birds were thought to be able to predict the weather;[15] some of them, for instance, forecast the rain, such as the ubiquitous Pacific Long-tailed Cuckoo (*Urodynamis taitensis*).[16] The observation of bird behaviour had many other practical uses for Polynesians (birds as navigation aids and 'land-finders' were mentioned in I-3), as the following two examples will illustrate. In Hawai'i, the movements of the *'elepaio* (*Chasiempis* sp.) were observed to determine the suitability of a tree to make a canoe; if the bird stood still on the tree, it was deemed unfit as it was thought to be rotten (Handy 1927:286; Beckwith 1970:91). In Mangaia, the *tōrea* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*) warned the fishermen fishing at night on the reef of the change in the tide's direction, since the incoming tide dislodges the bird from its feeding place on the reef; as it takes off, it emits a cry which the fishermen listened for (Clerk 1981:341).

Disconnection between Polynesians and birds in post-European times

To some extent, Polynesians lost interest in the avifauna of their islands, as has been remarked by Europeans, from the end of the 19th century onwards, as the following examples will show.

[15] Or a natural disaster: it is 'perfectly well attested,' wrote Buller (1888:II,179), 'that shortly before the terrific Tarawera eruption in 1886 the Gannets [i.e., *tākapu*, or Australasian Gannet, *Morus serrator*] suddenly disappeared from White Island and from all their other resorts in the Bay of Plenty.'

[16] 'All over the world the calling of various species of cuckoo is associated with rain . . .' (Armstrong 1958: 200).

In Aotearoa, Williams (1906:197) deplored the fact that 'the Maori of to-day has lost the knowledge of his forefathers' in terms of bird names. For Best (1924:II,502), 'the Maori no longer has to know the habits of the offspring of Tane; the *tapu* of the ancient forest is no more; its *mauri* [life force] is virtueless; the forest itself is disappearing. The old lore of Tane, and Rehua, and Punaweko, is but a memory.' In Rapa Nui, Métraux (1940:32) discovered that 'names for the plants and animals of the island, in which the present-day natives take no interest, are not remembered'. In the 1970s, Clerk (1981:282) found that the interest of Mangaians in birds was 'limited' and that 'photographs of them aroused much less visible interest than those of fish'; Reilly (pers. comm.) too noticed a fair indifference to birds on the island. Similarly, Cook (1984:6) observed that Tongans kept telling him that they never saw any birds on their islands – even though the archipelago has 'many interesting and beautiful species'.

More recently, Salducci (2002) studied the negative impact of the cultural disconnection between French Polynesians and birds on the effort to preserve endangered species, noting (2002:110) for example that the Tahitian name of some endemic species of bird, such as *vini* (Blue Lorikeet, *Vini peruviana*), has been reassigned to introduced species, without most people being aware of that transfer.[17] In Fiji, and West Polynesia in general, Watling (2004: 13) found that most local people were now ignorant of bird names, and 'those with specialised knowledge are becoming increasingly rare.'[18] On many Polynesian islands, native birds are seldom seen today, unlike introduced species. Thus, 'without regular sightings of their native birds and without a use for them in their culture, most islanders have now forgotten their names and few care that they exist' (Mitchell 1990:203). Polynesians did indeed have a 'use' for birds in their traditional culture, which will be succinctly examined.

Feathers and bones

The use of bird feathers by Polynesians has been much studied, whether it be to clothe or adorn themselves or for religious or other practical purposes; a few examples of uses from throughout Polynesia will be provided here.

[17] *Vini* has even come to mean 'cellphone' in Tahitian.

[18] He regretted (2004:7) the fact that there was an 'almost complete lack of Pacific Islanders with ornithological interest and expertise commensurate with the conservation challenges facing the region's birds today'.

The *maro ʻura*, the Tahitian royal symbol, was a girdle made of red feathers, which were the symbol of the gods (Handy 1927:126);[19] the *maro tea*, worn by the high priests, was made of white feathers (Ellis 1831:III,108-109; Henry 1928:189; Marau Taʻaroa 1971: 43; Saura 2011). As Rose (1978:1) explained, ʻof all the items of ancient Tahitian material culture, few exceeded feather girdles in ritual or behavioral significance'; those ʻcould almost be said to symbolize the social order'. The black and white feathers of the *uaʻao* (Red-footed Booby, *Sula sula*) were used to make the *orooro* that decorated the bed of deceased Tahitian *ariʻi*; that bird was thus called the ʻbird of death' (Marau Taʻaroa 1971: 59).

In Hawaiʻi, cloaks and helmets were made from the red and yellow feathers of honeycreepers and honeyeaters, and ʻit was considered a great skill to remove [the feathers] delicately and release the birds to grow a new set' (Mitchell 1990:196). The *ʻahu ʻula* for instance, made of hundreds of thousands of feathers of the *ʻiʻiwi* (*Drepanis coccinea*), the *mamo* (*Drepanis* sp.) or the *ʻōʻō* (*Moho* sp.), was worn by the highest-ranking male *aliʻi* (chiefs) (Conant 2005:279-280). In Aotearoa as well, *kahu huruhuru*, or feather cloaks, were worn (Orbell 2003:11-13). In Mangaia, *tīputa* (cloaks, ponchos) were made from white, green, blue and yellow feathers (Gill 1894:26-27). In Niue also, the feathers of the *hega* (Blue-crowned Lorikeet, *Vini australis*) were plaited to make *kafa*, ʻvery highly valued' girdles ʻonly worn by the chiefs and warriors' (Smith 1902:213).

Bird feathers were also used to make or adorn headdresses. In Tahiti, the *taumi*, ʻthe most showy headdress worn officially by the king and princes and high chiefs', was a helmet made of bird feathers (Henry 1928:286). In Mangaia, the *pare piki* was a conical headdress ornamented with feathers of various colours, including the red tail feathers of the *tavake* (Red-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon rubricauda*) (Gill 1894:27). Those red tail streamers were much valued as decorative feathers (Clerk 1981:260). In Mangareva (Te Rangi Hīroa 1938: 8) and Rapa Nui (Métraux 1940:220-228; Forster 2000:304-305) too, feathers were used for headdresses.

Samoans used the red feathers of the *segaʻula* (Collared Lory, *Phigys solitarius*) that they kept in captivity for edging mats; they conducted a trade in live birds, which they

[19] According to Moerenhout (1837:I,472), the birds whose feathers were used to make the *maro ʻura* were not killed; Tahitians caught them by surprise, plucked them, and released them so they would grow new feathers to be plucked later.

periodically plucked (Armstrong 1932:91; Watling 1982:89).[20] Feathers could also be used as fishing lures, such as the white body feathers of the tropicbirds in Mangaia (Clerk 1981: 260); the pure black or pure white feathers of another five species were used as *māūnu* (bait) (Clerk 1981:260-264). Tahitians (Henry 1928:136), Māori (Yate 1970:70) and Mangaians (Gill 1894:134) decorated their canoes with feathers. In Aotearoa, sculpted figures were adorned with feathers (Orbell 2003:13), and Māori also used them as personal ornaments (Best 1924:II,534). The *pōhoi* was a 'much-favoured ear ornament among both sexes' consisting of a 'bunch of the soft downy feathers of the albatross or gannet' (1924:II,535). Finally, bird feathers often had a very important religious function: Babadzan (1993) studied, for instance, the role of feathers as amulets in Tahiti, and the Hawaiian *akua hulu manu* were feather images of various gods (Conant 2005:281-282).

Sharpened bird bones were used as tools, such as tattooing instruments[21] and sewing needles. For example, in Rapa Nui, two sewing needles made from the radius of Murphy's Petrel (*Pterodroma ultima*) were recovered in 1991 at Ahu Naunau in Anakena (Steadman, Vargas Casanova & Cristino-Ferrando 1994:88). Métraux (1940:213) found that *ivi tia nua*, or sewing needles, were indeed generally made of bird bones on the island. Other artefacts were made from bones, such as whistles, which have been found for instance in 'Eua (Steadman 1997:73). Bird bones also sometimes served to inflict death, such as in Tahiti, where a bone from the leg of the *ua'ao* (Red-footed Booby, *Sula sula*) was used to kill newborns; that bird (whose feathers were used to make *orooro*, see *supra*) was thus called the 'bird of death' (Marau Ta'aroa 1971:59).

Food

One of the most obvious causes of depletion and extinction of avian species in Polynesia was, as stated in I-4, predation by humans. Ethnographers have given a very detailed account of bird hunting methods in most parts of Polynesia; an overview of those methods was

[20] At the beginning of the 20th century, that trade was made illegal, but it continued intermittently (Watling 1982:89).

[21] For instance in Tahiti (Henry 1928:287), Aotearoa (Best 1904:166), Rapa Nui (Métraux 1940:237-238,241), Rarotonga, Aitutaki and Mangaia (Te Rangi Hīroa 1944:128), Luangiua and Nukumanu (Parkinson 1986:19), Sikaiana (Lever 1953:232), Takū (Moyle 2018a:153), or Tikopia and Anuta (Steadman, Pahlavan & Kirch 1990:147).

provided by Steadman (1997:60-66). *Seuga lupe*, the catching of *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) with a net, was for instance a favourite pastime in Sāmoa, and was even considered the 'most distinguished sport' among the population (Pritchard 1866:161-163; Krämer 1995:II,385-388).

Birds, a source of protein, have been found in middens on island after island in the Pacific, as in Tikopia for example, where seabirds (particularly larids) as well as landbirds are well represented in middens (Kirch & Yen 1982:282). Throughout Polynesia, both seabirds and landbirds were eaten, and so were their eggs. In Aotearoa, Māori were dependent on birds 'for much of the food they most enjoyed' (Orbell 1985:180), particularly *kererū* (New Zealand Pigeon, *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*), *kākā* (New Zealand Kākā, *Nestor meridionalis*) and *tītī* (Sooty Shearwater, *Ardenna grisea*).[22] In Mangaia, according to Gill (1894:26,307,n.1), the *tītī* (Black-winged Petrel, *Pterodroma nigripennis*) was 'easily deceived by an imitation of its cry' and then caught by hand.

In post-European times, the importance of birds as a food source may have decreased significantly in a number of places. In Tikopia for instance, Firth (1930:321) reported that 'birds at no time form any important part of the Tikopian food supply', although they were occasionally eaten:[23] the *ngongo* (Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*) 'is not infrequently eaten by the contemporary Tikopia' (Kirch & Yen 1982:282); so were the *katoko* (Brown Booby, *Sula leucogaster*) and the *rupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*). The latter, however, was, according to Firth (1985:413), traditionally not eaten, as it was considered to be the incarnation of Te Atua-i-Taumako (see *infra*). In Mangareva, Te Rangi Hīroa (1938:8) observed that birds were 'unimportant' as a food source. In the Marquesas, according to Lavondès (1975:132), birds were only occasionally eaten. Clerk (1981:256) found that in Mangaia birds had become 'an insignificant item' in people's diet. Today in Takū, although small birds are 'not normally eaten', larger birds such as *kanapu* (Red-footed Booby, *Sula sula*) are caught and eaten 'in large numbers once or twice a year', in a 'large-scale operation authorised by the *ariki* [paramount chief] and Council as cultural practice' (Moyle 2018:234, n.1).

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[22] Māori also reportedly used to lick the excrement of *koekoeā* (Pacific Long-tailed Cuckoo, *Urodynamis taitensis*) and *korimako* (New Zealand Bellbird, *Anthornis melanura*) off the leaves of trees on which it had fallen because it was 'sweet-tasted' (Rutland 1892:132).

[23] 'On two or three occasions in 1977–78, PVK [i.e., Kirch] was served booby and Brown Noddy that had been netted from Tikopia's cliffs and baked in an earth oven' (Steadman, Pahlavan & Kirch 1990:146).

Pets

Traditional narratives abound in which birds appear as pets, and Western explorers, travellers, missionaries, ethnographers and anthropologists repeatedly reported instances of tame and captive birds kept as pets on island after island in the Pacific.[24] The earliest mention of tame birds in Polynesia probably comes from the two Dutch navigators Jacob Le Maire's and Willem Schouten's journal: in 1616, in Futuna, they saw 'pigeons',[25] which Futunans held 'in great esteem, for all those of the king's council had a pigeon sitting near them on a small stick' (Van Spilbergen 1906:208).

One of the most well-known examples of birds kept as pets in Polynesia is the *tūī* (*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*) of Aotearoa (Best 1977:308-317). Māori used to assign a name to all their pet *tūī* (as well as all their other captive birds), and would feed them berries and roasted *kūmara* (sweet potato, *Ipomoea batatas*). Best (1924:II,478) heard captive *tūī* 'discoursing in Maori, and inviting passers-by to stay and be entertained'. *Tūī* 'sometimes became so tame that they would be given their liberty, and the man who could stand forth on the plaza during a reception of visitors with his talking bird perched on his shoulder crying a welcome to those visitors, was envied by all'. Yate (1970:53) observed of the *tūī* that, 'when confined in a cage, it learns with great ease and correctness to speak long sentences.' *Tūī* were a very handy means of finding out a stranger's name: unlike people, they could ask for it without humiliating the visitor.[26] These talking birds were *tapu* for Māori, which is why menstruating women were not to feed them: it was feared that their *tūī* might lose their power of speech (Best 1977:309).[27]

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[24] Pukapuka may be the only Polynesian island where, according to Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1938:73), birds were never kept as pets.

[25] It may have been the *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*), but the description of its colours by the Dutchmen does not exactly fit that species (Thibault, Cibois & Meyer 2014:13).

[26] This is because, as Luomala (1949:54) explained, 'Polynesian etiquette does not permit one to ask a stranger who he is. He may be someone so distinguished and famous that everyone ought to know him. It is embarrasing [sic] to the questioner and offensive to the person questioned if there is some doubt and one does not probe delicately.' In Māori culture in particular, people of rank thought it 'shaming' to have to tell their names to people who did not know them (Orbell 1992:84). Māori felt an 'intense aversion' to telling their name (Johansen 1954:13), because 'there is something insulting to a great man in his name and himself not being known' (Johansen 1954:125).

[27] Hanson (1982:358-359) argued that the reason for this prohibition was either that 'the sort of *atua* [deity] associated with menstruation', being inimical to the *atua* who lent articulation to those birds, would drive them off ('repulsion'), or that the menstruating woman represented a danger for the *tapu* of the birds because 'a

The abundance of observations of birds kept as pets in post-European times must hint at the commonness of the practice in pre-European Polynesian societies. Māori (Tikao & Beattie 1990:134-135) and Moriori (Shand 1911:4) used to keep *karoro* (Kelp Gull, *Larus dominicanus*) and *kākāriki* (parakeets, *Cyanoramphus* sp.) as pets. In the Marquesas, at the time of Lavondès's visit in the 1960s, wild birds[28] were still domesticated or tamed (*haka-va'e*) just for pleasure, not to derive any practical benefit from it (Lavondès 1975:107). In Mangaia, juvenile *ngōio* (Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*) were sometimes reared as pet birds, or *manu 'akaperepere* ('beloved bird'), and fed on fish (Clerk 1981:259). Steadman (1997: 77) also reported noddies and boobies 'kept as tame pets in sheds behind houses' on the island.

In West Polynesia, *manuāali'i* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*) were 'readily domesticated' and followed their master 'like a dog' in Sāmoa (Pritchard 1866:167); Samoans took them on their journeys, and the 'greatly prized' birds were 'petted in their dwellings' (Stair 1897:192). Tame *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) that were used as decoys to catch wild *lupe* were 'highly prized and petted', and were the 'constant companions of the chiefs and orators on their journeys, at their public meetings, and in their daily avocations' (Pritchard 1866:162). *Manutagi* (Crimson-crowned Fruit Dove, *Ptilinopus porphyraceus*) also were kept in captivity; they were taken as fledglings from the nest (Armstrong 1932:58). In Tokelau, Wodzicki and Laird (1970:252,257,262,266) observed pet boobies, noddies, terns and herons (the latter chasing 'poultry out of the houses'), and in 'Eua, Steadman (1997:77) noticed that *kakā* (Maroon Shining Parrot, *Prosopeia tabuensis*) were held in captivity (Tongans introduced them from Fiji in pre-European times, see I-3).

In the Polynesian Outliers, the bird species kept as pets included terns, herons, noddies and frigatebirds in Kapingamarangi (Eilers 1934:13; Niering 1963:151; Emory 1965:10),[29] pigeons and ospreys in Mungiki (Kuschel 1975:40), fruit doves in Mugaba (Bradley & Wolff 1958:97), boobies, frigatebirds, terns, noddies and pigeons in Luangiua (Bayliss-Smith

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woman's capacity to draw *tapu* into herself was heightened during menstruation' ('attraction'). Either way, the *tapu* animating the talking birds would be removed.

[28] Lavondès gave the *pihiti* (Ultramarine Lorikeet, *Vini ultramarina*), boobies and shearwaters as examples.

[29] In Kapingamarangi, young boys fed their pet terns and noddies small fish caught in coconut shell traps (*ulu dahi*). This was for them not just 'a rehearsal of both the technical and the ritual aspects of fishing', but also 'early training for taking responsibility for the care of something other than oneself', and their 'first taste of what would become adult responsibilities' (Lieber 1994:96-97).

1972:4; Bayliss-Smith & Christensen 2008:19), frigatebirds in Takū (Hadden 2004:99), and noddies in Tikopia (Steadman 1997:77).

Frigatebirds served as message carriers in Nauru; because these birds do not land on the ocean (their plumage being permeable to water), the material that they were entrusted with did not get damaged (Petit-Skinner 2012:56-57). This practice may have existed in some parts of Polynesia too, such as Sāmoa (Armstrong 1932:17) and Tuvalu, where Gill (1885: 17) found that the people of Niutao were fond of taming frigatebirds: 'a high perch is built near the sea, and the bird secured to it by a long string.' Similarly, in Tokelau, young frigatebirds were tamed and kept on perches near the houses (Lister 1892:59).

Cockfighting, involving *moa* (Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*), was quite popular in some parts of Polynesia, particularly Hawai'i and Tahiti. In Hawai'i, *hākāmoa* was a 'very fashionable sport with the *alii*' (Malo 1971:230). Tahitian men were very fond of *fa'atitora'a moa* (literally, 'the act of making *moa* peck [one another]') and extremely attached to their roosters: 'ils prenaient de ces oiseaux des soins propres à faire croire qu'ils leur portaient, un attachement rarement manifesté pour aucun être, non pas même pour leur enfans' (Moerenhout 1837:II,147).[30] Roosters were made 'house pets' (Henry 1928:277), and were very well fed:

> Là, non contens de passer des heures entières à les contempler et à les caresser, leurs maîtres se seraient plutôt privés de nourriture que de ne pas donner à manger à leurs oiseaux favoris. Ils les nourrissaient toujours eux-mêmes, de fruit à pain ou d'autres végétaux, qu'ils leur mettaient dans le bec, après leur avoir appris à l'ouvrir, comme on apprend à un enfant à ouvrir la bouche, pour recevoir les alimens (Moerenhout 1837:II,147).[31]

All this evidence suggests that Polynesians were very attached to their pet birds, but acts of cruelty against birds were not unheard of. In Rapa Nui for instance, it was believed that to kill a misbehaved son one would just have to bury a rooster alive, leaving the head showing (Englert 2006:170-171). In Takū, children would smear tree gum on the eyes of a captured *huia* (Atoll Starling, *Aplonis feadensis*) and find 'amusement in its frantic blind blunderings' (Moyle 2011:114). Climbing Mount Hiro in Ra'ivavae, Marshall (1962:50-51)

[30] 'They took such special care of these birds as to make one believe that they bore an attachment for them such as nothing else, not even to their own children' (Moerenhout 1993:357).

[31] 'Not content simply to spend entire hours in looking at them and caressing them, their masters would rather have deprived themselves of food than not to give their favorite birds nourishment. They always fed them themselves, with breadfruit or other vegetables, which they put in their beaks after having taught them to open them, as one teaches a child to open its mouth to receive nourishment' (Moerenhout 1993:358).

described a ‘moment of horror’ when one of the boys accompanying him grabbed a tropic-bird from a nest on a cliff face and showed the quivering bird to him:

> As we discussed the tropic bird and its habits in a rather detached academic fashion, the young chap suddenly beat the bird’s head on a rock, tore a hole in its throat, ripped the skin and members from the still-squawking body, and stuffed the carcass in his hip pocket. When we protested, too late, he only grinned and threw away the unwanted skin and limbs.

And in Aotearoa, Yate (1970:153) reported seeing live birds used as ear ornaments ‘with the head squeezed through the hole made in a person’s ear’: the birds were ‘allowed to hang there, and flap their wings and struggle, till they were dead; the blood streaming down the person’s cheek, from the scratches received from the dying bird’.[32]

Birds thus played an essential role in the material culture of traditional Polynesian societies. This ought not to overshadow, however, their importance in the spiritual and religious culture of those societies.

3. ‘Mystical’ birds: manu *and religion*

Birds did play a very important role in Polynesian religion, whether they were regarded as deities in themselves, or the messengers of a deity, or ‘supernatural’ creatures able to communicate with the living and the dead and foretell the future. This explains why this topic has been of particular interest to ethnographers and anthropologists, whose large body of research contains some telling examples from throughout Polynesia that will be briefly mentioned here.

Man’s kinship with birds

In order to comprehend this religious aspect, one has to bear in mind that for Polynesians birds were not nearly as separated from humans in their conceptions of the origin of life as

[32] Bird heads, wings and beaks were used as ear pendants by Māori (Best 1924:II,537). *Tīrairaka* (New Zealand Fantail, *Rhipidura fuliginosa*) were worn suspended in the ear; so was the head of the *huia* (*Heteralocha acutirostris*) (Angas 1847:pl.XXXIX,fig.13).

they are nowadays for Westerners. For instance, birds were often mentioned as originating before humankind, which suggests that Polynesians held them in very high regard.[33] Furthermore, *manu* were sometimes recognised by Polynesians as their 'distant kin', for instance in Aotearoa (Orbell 1985:180), where people and birds belonged to the 'gigantic "kin"' in which the 'whole cosmos of the Maori unfolds itself' (Johansen 1954:9). As a result, 'inasmuch as man, birds and trees are descended from a common source [i.e., Tāne], it is not surprising that, when the Maori entered a forest, he felt himself to be among his own kin, albeit somewhat distant relatives' (Best 1977:6). For Māori, birds and humans were thus related by genealogy.

Birds were not only man's kin, but they could also be related to other animals such as snakes and lizards. In Aotearoa for instance, there was a belief among Tūhoe that *koekoeā* (Pacific Long-tailed Cuckoo, *Urodynamis taitensis*), absent during the winter,[34] became *kumukumu*, or lizards; that the equally absent *pīpīwharauroa* (Shining Bronze Cuckoo, *Chrysococcyx lucidus*) became *moko kākāriki*, or green geckos (*Naultinus* sp.); and that fragments of eggshell left in the nest of *kākāriki* (parakeet, *Cyanoramphus* sp.) developed into these geckos (Best 1977:321,337).

Tapu *restrictions*

People's kinship with birds is one of the reasons that explain why birds were sometimes not eaten, or not killed, or why some deities had to be propitiated before they were. Throughout Polynesia, there was indeed a vast array of prohibitions affecting the edible status of birds: some species were considered to be people's relatives, an ancestor, and were *tapu* to a particular social group, and other species were considered to be the incarnation of a god. Ethnographers painstakingly recorded on many Polynesian islands which bird species were *tapu*

[33] However, Te Rangi Hīroa (1939:44-45) argued that 'the Polynesian mythologists and storytellers used dramatic effect in their recitals, and it was quite natural that they should enumerate plants and animals in a sequence that led up to the climax, man.'

[34] They winter in Melanesia and tropical Polynesia and return to Aotearoa in October (Moon 1992:187). Similar beliefs were reported in Taupō and Whanganui by Taylor (1855:405) and in the Bay of Plenty by Keys (1922).

to which social group, because prohibitions greatly varied not only from island to island,[35] but from social group (tribe, clan, family) to social group.

In Tikopia for instance, 'the eating of an animal which is thought to serve at any time as the manifestation of an *atua*' was, Firth (1930:317) reported, 'an extremely rare occurrence', and was considered as 'an act of the utmost rashness' by Tikopians.[36] The *rupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*), for example, was *tapu* to the Taumako clan; not only did Taumako never eat *rupe*, but a man whose wife was of Taumako would refrain from eating it too. The reason is that it was believed that the oil from the flesh of the *rupe* helped to form the man's semen, and that 'by the process of sex intercourse this enters the body of the woman, and thus by an indirect route a portion of the prohibited animal is absorbed' (Firth 1930:319-320).

In Aotearoa, where *tapu* birds were thought to have their own ancestor, Raka-maomao (Best 1976:170; 1977:125; 1982:265), the *atua* Tāne had to be propitiated before his children could be killed, that is, before birds could be hunted. Ceremonious offerings had to be made to extinguish the *tapu* of the forest, and then again when the first bird was taken.[37] This arose from the belief that Tāne found *tapu* in Te Wao Nui ('The-Great-Forest') and brought it to humankind, and that everything that belonged to Tāne was *tapu* (Te Maire Tau 2003:79,82). As Johansen (1954:89) observed, 'the *mana* [power] of the forest manifests itself by there being many birds, as the forest and its birds constitute a whole which descends from Tane.' As a result, any inappropriate killing of birds would affect the *mana* and the *tapu* of the forest and its birds, with dire consequences for the transgressors.

It could also be said that Polynesians had a quite similar relationship with fish. Bataille-Benguigui (1988; 1996:419-421) argued that Oceanians actually considered fish as 'social partners'. They relied so much on fish as a food source that, when men were out fishing, they abided by certain social rules regulating their behaviour (silence in the village and sexual abstinence, for instance in Tonga) to avoid scaring the fish away. This is because fish, it

[35] For example, Watling (1982:66) observed that early ornithologists were unable to collect Pacific Reef Herons (*Egretta sacra*) in some parts of Fiji because these birds were revered, but that they were not accorded any special status in Tonga, where they were sometimes eaten.

[36] 'As a rule the animal which is thought to serve as the *ata* [reflection, image] of a deity is not eaten, though it may be killed on occasions. The swamp-hen for instance is never utilized for food' (Firth 1930:318-319).

[37] Best (1897:49-51) described for example the offering by Tūhoe warriors of the first bird caught in the forest.

was believed, abhorred unharmonious situations in the village: fishing would be unsuccessful if those social rules were not strictly obeyed.[38] Fish thus exerted a sort of social control on people. According to Bataille-Benguigui, this widespread idea of the necessity of harmony in interpersonal relations, calm and discretion determined human-fish relations throughout Oceania. In Tikopia for example, where the relationship between people and fish was envisaged as 'one of mutual dependence', some fish were considered 'shy, even prudish, in reaction to any breach of bodily decorum in sex matters on the part of the fisherman' (Firth 1981:220-221).

However, fish could also be envisaged as having, unlike birds, 'the special role of being caught and put to use', for instance in Māori symbolic thought – 'this was the very reason for their existence' (Orbell 1995:41). Men defeated in war were thus often spoken of as fish, and Shirres (1997:66-67) cited a *karakia* (ritual chant) in which a war party was represented by a bird, and their enemy, by a fish. Huntsman (2017:279,n.11) found that in Tokelauan narratives, 'fish are gender-feminine and the birds that prey upon them are gender-masculine.'

Birds as incarnations and messengers of deities and ancestors

Birds held in Oceania a much deeper 'mystical relationship with the gods and ancestral spirits' than anywhere else, Barrow (1967:193) argued, because of the paucity of land mammals in the Pacific and the 'strong influence' of seabirds 'on the imaginations of seafaring peoples'.[39] Scholars have explored in detail this 'mystical relationship' of birds with gods, ancestors and spirits in traditional Polynesian societies; a few examples from throughout Polynesia that illustrate this relationship will be cited here.

Birds could be the embodiment of a deity, or its messenger, as in Hawai'i, where birds were 'potential gods or spirit beings' (Beckwith 1970:90), and deities appeared in bird

[38] An example of this can be found in the Ātiu story of Inutoto (**159**): Tangaroa-i-te-take knows that his wife Inutoto has gone dancing in an *'are karioi* (house of entertainment) because he could not catch a single fish that night.

[39] Polynesia probably sustained at first human contact richer seabird faunas than Melanesia (Steadman 2006: 386). Because of its indigenous rodents, crocodiles, snakes and monitor lizards, Melanesia may have been 'marginal for most seabirds even before human arrival', whereas predator-free Polynesian islands were 'prime breeding grounds for seabirds' (Steadman 2006:392-393). The islands of Remote Oceania may have been 'covered with breeding seabirds' at human arrival (Steadman 2006:401).

bodies (Beckwith 1970:91). In Kapingamarangi, *ti rō*, a 'duck-like',[40] black, green and blue bird, was sent by the god Uta-matua to the island from time to time to check on people and report back to him.[41] Upon his appearance, the high priest would talk to this *tapu* bird for a long time, and people were to look after *ti rō* for as long as he stayed on the island. If the bird died, he was wrapped in banana leaves and buried by the *tapu* stone (Eilers 1934:133-134).

In places such as Tikopia (Firth 1930:321) and Sāmoa (Handy 1927:130), birds were sometimes spoken of as *ata* (reflection, image) of the deities of particular social groups. For instance, in Tikopia, the *sikotara* (Pacific Kingfisher, *Todiramphus sacer*) was thought to be the *ata* of Te Atua-i-te-uruao ('The-God-in-the-Woods'), the principal *atua* of the Porima family (Firth 1930:321; 1985:438). Similarly, in Tahiti, Henry (1928:384-388) spoke of each bird species as the 'shadow' of a particular god, and in Mangaia, the *mo'omo'o* (Spotless Crake, *Porzana tabuensis*) was thought to be the embodiment of one of the principal deities of the island, Mōtoro (Reilly 2009:43).

In Tikopia, each *atua* was related to a particular social group, and all birds were thought to be the '*ata* of various *atua* which appear in this form to mankind' (Firth 1930:305). For instance, the *sivi* (Coconut Lorikeet, *Trichoglossus haematodus*) was thought to be the embodiment of Te Atua-i-Taumako, related to the Taumako clan (Firth 1930:321). Because this bird fed on tree fruits and coconut, to make it go away Tikopians uttered a 'go, ancestor!' ('poi pū e!') formula politely inviting the *sivi* to fly away to the mountains to 'allow the spot which it is raiding to stay vacant in order – so it is assured – that the crops thus left to mature may form an adequate food present for it at some future date' (Firth 1930:311-312).

Another 'poi pū e!' formula, mentioning 'the prospect of large crops in other places', was used to make the *karae* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*), which constantly raided taro and banana cultivations, go away. Tikopians had to speak 'properly' (*fakalaui*) to the bird because it was deemed to be an *atua* in disguise (Firth 1930:312).

[40] The (unidentified) species did not live on the island, according to the Kapingamarangi.

[41] Uta-matua's father was saved by the intervention of a bird, in **137**.

Māori also ordered these birds (*pūkeko*), when they were invading their *kūmara* gardens, to return to their ancestor, Hine-wairua-kōkako (Best 1982:266).[42]

Not all birds of a given species were considered to be an *atua*, though. For Tikopians,

> . . . if a person walking through the woods sees a startled bird fly away from him or a swamp hen run, then it is simply a creature in natural form; if, however, it comes towards him and exhibits none of the fear which is to be expected in the circumstances, or if it hovers near him and keeps up a continuous cry for no apparent reason, then it is held to be inhabited at the moment by a supernatural being (Firth 1930:306).

Thus, if a bird 'behaves strangely in a manner not characteristic of its species then it is an *atua* in animal guise', not 'an ordinary individual' (Firth 1930:305).[43] Clerk (1981:356) discovered that Mangaians recognised 'similar conventions': the *rākoa* (Audubon's Shearwater, *Puffinus lherminieri*), for instance, 'is an ordinary bird until it comes to the village', and 'a cockerel reveals itself as an omen animal by entering the house.'

Anthropologists have long been researching the possible motives for those conventions, and they have also tried to find a rationale behind the variety of responses that different avian species elicit in a given social group: why does a society assign a mystical value to some bird species and not to others? Clerk and Bulmer explored this question in great depth and put forward two explanations. In Mangaia, most spirit birds (and animals in general) were 'of limited utilitarian importance', that is, they were not eaten or caught for their feathers (Clerk 1981:362), whereas in another part of the Oceanian world, the Kalam of the highlands of Papua New Guinea gave 'special mystical values' to 'both unusually tame[44] species and unusually shy species' of birds (Bulmer 1979:68). Bulmer (1979:72) surmised that there were

> general tendencies, present in many, perhaps most human societies, to respond as patrons to those birds that succeed in initiating human-like interaction with man, and to develop special attitudes and values in respect of both conspicuously tame and conspicuously shy, but identifiable, bird species.

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[42] 'Hie! Hie! Haere ki te hūhi, haere ki te repo, haere ki a Hine-wairua-kōkako! Hie! Hie!' ('Be off! Be off! Go to the swamp, go to the marsh, go to Hine-wairua-kōkako! Be off! Be off!').

[43] The same went for fish: 'fish behaving in character were just *ika*, those behaving bizarrely might be *ata*' (Firth 1981:221).

[44] Tameness is the 'toleration by birds of the close presence of human beings, in some instances amounting to a positive tendency to seek such presence' (Thomson 1964:802).

On some Polynesian islands, it was thought that souls assumed temporarily the form of birds (Handy 1927:85). In Mangareva for instance, Janeau (1908:30) recorded that people believed that the souls of the dead came to visit their relatives in the shape of *ngoio* (Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*). As such, birds, whose power of flight suggests a 'communion with higher powers' (Armstrong 1958:22), were seen as intermediaries between the living, dwelling on the earth, and the spirits, dwelling in the heavens. Furthermore, they alight on the roof of houses, which is 'a half-way point between the human world and the world of the supernatural' (Orbell 1992:130). Birds could embody the souls of the dead as well as those of the living.[45] In this regard, Eliade (1951:102), drawing on Asian, North American and South American examples, found that 'les oiseaux sont psychopompes. Devenir soi-même un oiseau ou être accompagné par un oiseau, indique la capacité d'entreprendre, étant encore en vie, le voyage extatique dans le Ciel et l'au-delà.'[46]

Furthermore, humans' ability to speak and understand the language of animals, and of birds in particular, is a very widespread motif in world folklore and mythology.[47] Learning the language of birds allowed one to communicate with the spirits. Writing about the shaman who knows the 'animal language', originating in animal cries, Eliade (1951:101-102) concluded that

> Apprendre le langage des animaux, en premier lieu celui des oiseaux, équivaut partout dans le monde à connaître les secrets de la Nature et partant à être capable de prophétiser. Le langage des oiseaux s'apprend généralement en mangeant du serpent ou d'un autre animal réputé magique. Ces animaux peuvent révéler les secrets de l'avenir parce qu'ils sont conçus comme les réceptacles des âmes

[45] A story recounts how, in the early 19th century, the young queen of Huahine, Ari'i-paea-vahine, after having stopped breathing, was believed to be dead by her people. They put her body in a canoe. A white *'ōtu'u* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*), coming from a nearby *marae* (sacred place of worship), then alighted on the canoe: the young woman's spirit had entered that bird. A goddess told Ari'i-paea-vahine to look at the body; as she fixed her eyes on the face disfigured by gangrene, her spirit left the bird and slipped back into the body. The *'ōtu'u* flew back to the *marae*, and the queen recovered (Henry 1928:220-222).

[46] 'Birds are psychopomps. Becoming a bird oneself or being accompanied by a bird indicates the capacity, while still alive, to undertake the ecstatic journey to the sky and the beyond' (Eliade 1964:98). For a study of the surviving shamanistic story and song cycles from Polynesia, which feature birds such as Lupe, see Gunson (1995).

[47] Siegfried in Norse mythology and Melampus in Greek mythology, for instance, received this power from a serpent or dragon (Thompson 1946:83). There was a worldwide popular belief according to which snakes were blood relations of birds. According to a saying of Democritus handed down by Pliny the Elder (*Naturalis Historia*, X, 137), snakes are generated from the mixed blood of different birds. Frazer (1888:180-181) argued that this belief in the kinship of snakes and birds arose from the observation that the former eat birds and their eggs. The idea that snakes understood the language of birds stemmed from this kinship. Anyone who ate a snake would acquire the language of birds 'on the folk-lore principle that in eating of an animal's flesh one absorbs the animal's mental qualities'. This belief is clearly illustrated in stories containing the motif B217.1.1, 'Animal languages learned from eating serpent' (Thompson 1955-1958:I,401).

> des morts ou les épiphanies des dieux. Apprendre leur langage, imiter leur voix, équivaut à pouvoir communiquer avec l'au-delà et avec les Cieux.[48]

Thus, birds were spiritual intermediaries between the visible and the invisible world, allowing humans access to the invisible one.

It would seem that Rapa Nui was the only Polynesian island where an actual bird cult developed. The principal god of the island, Makemake, was represented with a human body and a bird head. His 'avatar' was the *tangata manu* ('bird-man'), the chief of the finder of the first tern's egg in the annual race organised on a small islet, a seabird colony off the main island (Oliver 2002:214-215). As Métraux (1940:331) observed, 'until the second half of the nineteenth century the annual feast of the bird man (*tangata-manu*), held at Orongo, was extremely important to Easter Islanders.' The importance of birds in Rapa Nui culture 'and the use of birds as the basis for a religious cult are undoubtedly due to the poverty of the island fauna in which birds were the only conspicuous creatures'. This bird cult has been the subject of much ethnographic research (Routledge 1917; 1919:254-266; Métraux 1940:331-341; Englert 1948:172-177; Barrow 1967).

Omens and ornithomancy

Birds also played a very significant role in Polynesian divination.[49] Polynesians interpreted the behaviour of birds in a variety of ways as portents of good as well as evil. The behaviour under scrutiny for divination purposes included birds' flight and movements, their vocalisations (songs, calls and cries), and their appearance in certain places or at certain times. Polynesians assigned that behaviour profound prophetic significance. This is especially true because in Polynesia, where 'every man was his own prophet' (Handy 1927:165), divination played an all-important role in daily life, and even more so when warfare was impending (Oliver 2002:154). In Aotearoa for example, Best (1977:125) observed that 'the Maori

[48] 'All over the world learning the language of animals, especially of birds, is equivalent to knowing the secrets of nature and hence to being able to prophesy. Bird language is usually learned by eating snake or some other reputedly magical animal. These animals can reveal the secrets of the future because they are thought to be receptacles for the souls of the dead or epiphanies of the gods. Learning their language, imitating their voice, is equivalent to ability to communicate with the beyond and the heavens' (Eliade 1964:98). This is attested by the plethora of stories containing the motifs B215, 'Animal languages', B216, 'Knowledge of animal languages', and B217, 'Animal language learned' (Thompson 1955-1958:I,400-401).

[49] In ancient Greek, *ὄρνις* meant 'bird' as well as 'omen' (Liddell & Scott 1940).

seemed to be ever on the look-out for evil omens; good omens we hear little of, but ever he seemed to be looking for trouble.' Māori regarded, in particular, 'all birdsong as meaningful' (Orbell 2003:68).

Polynesian ornithomancy was wide-ranging, covering every aspect of life in traditional Polynesian societies. In particular, birds were thought to be able to announce the seasons (which played a key role in agricultural practices for example),[50] warn of danger (for instance the approach of enemies), announce the coming of visitors, predict death,[51] foretell success or failure in war, etc. Dreams about birds also were meaningful.[52]

As Clerk (1981:346) found in Mangaia, the main function of the bird form of the gods was that of omen. He discovered (1981:357) that

> The information derived from an event is directly related to its unpredictability. An acceptable omen must to some extent parallel in its frequency of occurrence the situation it is taken to predict (or interpretation must be sufficiently wide to accommodate its variable ocurrence [sic]). The behavioural definition of animal omens does serve to regulate their particular frequencies. A major omen . . . involves not only rarely seen creatures but strong behavioural qualifications, increasing the rarity of the event.

In Mangaia, where all omen birds were 'noted for their vocalisations', the 'ability to produce sound is crucial to many spirit-animal contacts' (Clerk 1981:358-359). In Tahiti, the cry of a bird on a *marae* (sacred place of worship) was interpreted as an oracle by the priests (Henry 1928:152). Colours too could be significant: in Aotearoa for example, white and albino birds were sometimes believed to bring bad luck.[53]

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[50] The singing of the *riroriro* (Grey Gerygone, *Gerygone igata*), for instance, reminded Māori that it was time to dig the ground in preparation for planting the crops (Orbell 2003:93-94). Birds could also reveal the nature of the coming season; for instance, about the nest of the *riroriro*, Best (1977:330) reported that, for Māori, 'according to the direction in which the nest faces, the point to which its side-opening is directed, then it is known that the coming season will be dry or wet, also the prevailing wind will be foretold in the same way.'

[51] To give but one Polynesian example, in Takū, the *manu tanirua* (a very rarely seen bird, maybe the Wedge-tailed Shearwater, *Ardenna pacifica*) may fly 'northwards over the village, always at night'. If that bird 'is heard returning southwards later that night, all is well, but if it is not seen or heard, a death in the village is imminent' (Moyle 2018:231-232).

[52] For instance, if a Māori warrior dreamt that he saw a *kākāriki* (parakeet, *Cyanoramphus* sp.) 'in the oven, divided into two parts, it would be a sure sign of his own death the next day' (Taylor 1855:161).

[53] For example, white *tītī* (Sooty Shearwater, *Ardenna grisea*) (Lyver & Moller 2010:254), *tīrairaka* (New Zealand Fantail, *Rhipidura fuliginosa*) (Orbell 2003:91), or *kererū* (New Zealand Pigeon, *Hemiphaga novae-seelandiae*): 'it is but seldom that a white pigeon is seen in these times, and to see one is looked upon as an evil omen, misfortune will assail the person who sees it, or his relatives; such a bird is termed a *manu tute*' (Best 1982:344).

To understand Polynesian narratives about birds, it is critical, when reading the texts, to always be mindful of this mystical and spiritual relationship of Polynesians with the *manu* that surrounded them.

4. Bird symbolism

Birds do not just evoke those mystical and spiritual connections. They also conjure up mental associations with reproduction, birth, death, sexuality, fire (Armstrong 1958:104,179), which will be most apparent in IV, IX and X. The subject of bird symbolism has mostly been studied from a Western point of view (Armstrong 1958; Rowland 1978), yet Western ideas about bird symbolism may shed some light on the Polynesians' mental associations with regards to birds, because in spite of societal differences, the workings of the human mind beholding the natural world are quite comparable cross-culturally. These symbolic associations will be presented here in very general terms, as a prequel to the analysis of *manu* symbolism in Polynesian stories conducted in Part B.

Birds, femininity, reproduction and birth

Birds have always been thought of in connection with reproduction (Armstrong 1958:104). This is because, as Rowland (1978:XIV) put it in her study of bird symbolism, 'as a generative symbol' a bird has 'both male and female attributes': 'as the procreator, it is the male organ', while being also 'the maternal breast, the life-giving milk' (see *infra*, about psychoanalysis).

In Southeast Asia, where the ancestors of the Polynesians came from, birds are connected, in tradition as well as in the iconography, with other animals such as the snake, fish, dragon, bull, or water buffalo (Sellato 2006:22), and there is in particular a 'dualistic metaphorical use of the bird and snake figures', in which the snake (or fish) stands for the netherworld, and the bird, for the upperworld. Furthermore, in most cases, 'birds represent femininity and a subordinate or junior status' and are 'associated to the post-mortem stage',

whereas snakes represent 'virility and seniority' and are 'associated to the pre-natal stage' (Sellato 2006:23).[54]

There is one characteristic of birds in people's imagination that is manifest all over the world: helpful birth animals are often birds, such as the stork in many European cultures, the spoonbill in Mexico, the ibis in India, the crane in Japan, or the dove in the Middle East (Von Reitzenstein 1909:668).[55] Many helpful birth birds will be encountered in the Polynesian stories of Part B, although, for the sake of illustrating this connection between birds and birth/reproduction, three Australian Aboriginal examples from northern Queensland will be looked at here.

For the Kongkandji, an Aboriginal tribe of Cape Grafton, it was a particular species of pigeon (*kope*) that brought fully formed babies (whose *wai-wai*, or breath, was already in them) to mothers in a dream (Roth 1903:18,22). The Aboriginals of Cape Bedford believed that babies were made in the West, the land of the setting sun, and that they were fully grown. When they migrated to the land of their mothers, however, girls took the form of Masked Lapwings (*Vanellus miles*), and boys, the form of snakes; they resumed their human shape once inside the mother's womb. When hearing the lapwing calling out at night, people would say that there must be a baby somewhere around (Roth 1903:23). Finally, the Aboriginals of the Pennefather River area believed that curlews were responsible for women's menstruation, by inserting their beak into their vulva (Roth 1903:24).

Manu *and psychoanalysis: mental associations between birds and sexuality*

Although Vienna and its psychoanalytic school seem to be very remote from Polynesia, briefly mentioning some psychoanalytic theories about birds may be of some interest. The aforementioned Australian Aboriginal belief about menstruation brings to mind the

[54] In East Polynesia, where snakes are absent, it was the eel that was seen as 'sexually aggressive towards women' (Reilly 2009:31). Lohmann (2008:114) argued that 'snakes' phallic shape and ability to shed their skins [in the way men 'shed' their penile foreskins] make them potent signifiers of both sexuality and immortality . . .'

[55] For Rank (2004:61), everywhere 'we find the same symbolic representation of the womb as a well, a kettle, a ditch, a dark cave, or a hollow tree', and the bird is 'the male entity that rescues the child from this primeval prison'.

psychoanalytic theory postulating that birds symbolise the penis,[56] because both bird and phallus 'contradict the force of gravity'. In this regard, Wormhoudt (1950:173) argued that

> Psychoanalysis has, on the basis of clinical evidence, established the fact that the bird may in dreams be a symbol for the breast as well as the penis. A symbolic connection in the case of bird-penis is that both have the ability to contradict the force of gravity – the bird by flying, the penis by erection. The connection between bird-breast is more difficult to see, but since penis and breast are unconsciously identified[57] the bird can be made to stand for both.

The connection between bird as phallus and bird as breast, he continued (1950:174), may derive from the fact that in many traditional societies some birds were thought to herald rain, which was often regarded as the urination of the gods. Thus, if birds symbolise the penis as 'urinary duct', the link between penis and breast may be that both produce a liquid. It may also be because of their 'roundness and softness' that birds are 'selected by the unconscious to serve in the category of symbols for the pregenital emotion associated with the mother's breast' (Schnier 1952:97).

Furthermore, the closeness of the German words *Vogel*, 'bird', and *vögeln*, slang for 'to copulate',[58] made Freud (1932:371) believe that

> the intimate connection between flying and the idea of a bird makes it comprehensible that the dream of flying, in the case of male dreamers, should usually have a coarsely sensual significance; and we should not be surprised to hear that this or that dreamer is always very proud of his ability to fly.

Freud (1932:371) agreed with the theory of the psychoanalyst Paul Federn according to which 'a great many flying dreams are erection dreams, since the remarkable phenomenon of erection, which constantly occupies the human phantasy, cannot fail to be impressive as an apparent suspension of the laws of gravity.' For Jones (1923:326), it is a fact that 'the act

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[56] It may be worthwhile noting from the outset that, perhaps paradoxically, only about 3 per cent of bird species actually have a penis. Lacking an external sexual organ, most male birds eject sperm out of their cloaca. The very few species that do have a penis include ducks, swans, geese, as well as ratites (with the notable exception of the *kiwi*, *Apteryx* sp.).

[57] Schnier (1952:113) summarised the Freudian theory according to which 'in certain situations the penis is actually a symbol of the maternal nipple', because 'the identification of nipple with penis stems not only from the similarity in shape but may also originate in children's observations of nursing processes of certain four legged animals, e.g. the cow.' This identification is reinforced 'when the child observes the udder or teat of a cow, which in function is a breast nipple, but which in shape and position on the abdomen resembles a penis'. Furthermore, Wormhoudt (1949:13) argued that birds 'come and go with inexplicable suddenness and this may symbolize the fact that the child has no control over the comings and goings of the breast'.

[58] As Segal (2001:87) pointed out, 'wing' was a euphemism for the phallus in Ancient Greek, and 'bird' (or 'little bird') is used to refer to the penis in the slang of many modern languages, including *petit oiseau* in French, *uccello* in Italian, and *pajarito* in Spanish. It is also true of languages as diverse as Arabic (*hamama*, حمامة), Chinese (*diǎo,* 鳥), Vietnamese (*con chim*), and Quechua (*pichiku*), among others.

of rising in the air is constantly, though quite unconsciously, associated with the phenomenon of erection.' He argued (1923:327) that the parts of the bird that tend to be 'unconsciously conceived of in terms of phallic symbolism' are the neck,[59] the head and the beak, because those 'inevitably recall a snake'.

'Bird dreams' were for Freud sexual dreams. When he was seven or eight years old, he dreamt that his mother was '*carried into the room and laid on the bed by two (or three) persons with birds' beaks*'. Because of the closeness of the words *Vogel* and *vögeln*, Freud (1932:537) believed that this dream was linked to 'a dark, plainly sexual craving, which had found appropriate expression in the visual content of the dream'. Similarly, the vulture dipping his tail into Leonardo da Vinci's mouth in Leonardo's famous childhood dream was interpreted by Freud (1916) as a breast and penis symbol.

Of special note is the *moa* (Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*), used in cockfighting, a very popular sport in some parts of Polynesia (see *supra*). For Dundes (1993:33), 'the world's foremost psychoanalytically oriented folklorist' (Boyer, Boyer & Sonnenberg 1993:XVI), cockfights are a 'thinly disguised symbolic homoerotic masturbatory phallic duel, with the winner emasculating the loser through castration or feminization'. He argued (1993:35) that it was likely that 'the symbolic equation of cock and human phallus exists regardless of whether or not the term for "rooster" in a given culture refers explicitly to the male organ.'[60] This 'castration' was connected in the Hawaiian case with bodily excretion: according to Malo (1971:231), 'the winners always reviled those who lost with insulting and offensive language, saying "you'll have to eat chicken dung after this", repeating it over and over.' The expression used was: ''Aina iho kūkae o kō moa!' ('Eat your fowl's excrement!') (Malo 1996:115,286).[61]

[59] Māori believed that a pregnant woman who ate a bird's neck (as opposed to the rest of the body) would bear a son (Best 1906:2).

[60] As Cooper (2008:89) explained, the rooster is 'a virility symbol in many cultures, and comparative studies suggest that its "virility" is an archetype that transcends historical and cultural boundaries'. Allan and Burridge (1991:106-107) posited ten explanations to account for the semantic extension of the word 'cock' from 'rooster' to 'penis' (including the coincidence of the rooster's crow at dawn and a man's matutinal erections). In Polynesian languages however, the connection between the word *moa* and the male organ does not seem to exist.

[61] The same insult was hurled at the defeated side in a boxing match (*mokomoko*) (Fornander 1919-1920:VI, 204-205).

As for the other two Australian Aboriginal beliefs cited above, the association of birds with human birth and the aforementioned bird-breast connection were, for Rank (2004:88-89), due to the fact that birds' sexuality (and animals' sexuality more generally) is, unlike human sexuality, not hidden from view but overt:

> Animals are especially appropriate substitutes for the mother or wet nurse because their sexual processes are plainly evident to the child, while the concealment of these processes is presumably the root of the child's revolt against the parents . . . we cannot dismiss the suspicion that animals owe a portion of their totemistic overvaluation to the fact that they reveal their sexual processes so openly, whereas the child's parents strive to hide them.[62]

Similarly, Lutwack (1994:192) argued that birds are 'perceived to be more erotic than other animals', possibly because 'their mating and nesting are often so easily observed by humans'.[63]

Lévi-Strauss and birds

Another typically Western conceptualisation of birds is offered by structuralism (this method of analysis of traditional narratives is presented in Appendix 3). For Lévi-Strauss (1962:274), 'les oiseaux sont des *humains métaphoriques*'.[64] Birds are, as Aristotle (*Historia animalium*, II, 12) famously observed, bipeds like humans.[65] However, they physically differ in most other regards from the latter, as Lévi-Strauss (1962:270-271) argued:

> Les oiseaux sont couverts de plumes, ailés, ovipares, et physiquement aussi, ils sont disjoints de la société humaine par l'élément où ils ont le privilège de se mouvoir. Ils forment, de ce fait, une communauté indépendante de la nôtre, mais qui, en raison de cette indépendance même, nous apparaît comme une société autre, et homologue de celle où nous vivons : l'oiseau est épris de liberté ; il se construit une demeure où il vit en famille et nourrit ses petits ; il entretient souvent des rapports sociaux avec les autres membres de son espèce ; et il

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[62] This may not be universally true, however. James Cook, Johann Reinhold Forster and Louis-Antoine de Bougainville all observed that Tahitians had sexual intercourse 'in spite of the presence of others', and may even have 'preferred an audience for their sexual activities', as cited by Oliver (1974:I,362-363). In Ra'ivavae, copulation was, according to Marshall (1962:245), 'played out within a circle of wide-eyed children who store[d] away this knowledge of life . . .'

[63] Fabre (1986) showed how in literature the search for birds, their nests and their eggs (strictly reserved to boys), a theme which runs through many French biographical novels, represented for boys a way to access their sexual identity.

[64] 'Birds are *metaphorical human beings*' (Lévi-Strauss 1966:207).

[65] 'σκελη δε δυο καθαπερ ανθρωπος μαλιστα των ζωων', '[the bird] is remarkable among animals as having two feet, like man'.

> communique avec eux par des moyens acoustiques qui évoquent le langage articulé.[66]
> Par conséquent, toutes les conditions sont objectivement réunies pour que nous concevions le monde des oiseaux comme une société humaine métaphorique : ne lui est-elle pas, d'ailleurs, littéralement parallèle à un autre niveau ?[67]

Thus, far from being merely a penis and breast symbol, birds may in actual fact symbolise human society at large.[68] It should come as no surprise, then, that birds appear all over the world in stories where they behave as humans. As Boyd (2007:217) put it, 'we have an immemorial urge to tell stories involving characters who behave in human ways but are not human.' Animal paintings in Chauvet, Lascaux, Altamira or Lubang Jeriji Saléh caves are examples of this, and so are the many Polynesian dendroglyphs and petroglyphs depicting animals, and birds in particular.[69]

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[66] Salwiczek and Wickler (2004:166,168) showed that 'the development of song in young songbirds largely parallels that of speech in human infants'. For instance, 'sets of vocalizations' are socially transmitted from adults to young individuals in both humans and songbirds; 'abnormal vocal development' follows social isolation; and the 'ability for vocal learning' is at its peak during an 'early critical period of life' in both humans and songbirds. Vocalisations and song phrases are exchanged 'in duets' by some bird species, and those are 'comparable to human individuals who take turns when talking'.

[67] 'They are feathered, winged, oviparous and they are also physically separated from human society by the element in which it is their privilege to move. As a result of this fact, they form a community which is independent of our own but, precisely because of this independence, appears to us like another society, homologous to that in which we live: birds love freedom; they build themselves homes in which they live a family life and nurture their young; they often engage in social relations with other members of their species; and they communicate with them by acoustic means recalling articulated language.
Consequently everything objective conspires to make us think of the bird world as a metaphorical human society: is it not after all literally parallel to it on another level?' (Lévi-Strauss 1966:204).

[68] In Māori songs for instance, *turiwhatu* (New Zealand Plover, *Charadrius obscurus*) and *tōrea* (Variable Oystercatcher, *Haematopus unicolor*, and South Island Oystercatcher, *Haematopus finschi*) were 'implicitly likened to humans', probably because 'standing on the beach they could be thought to resemble people' (Orbell 2003:158).

[69] For example, in Canterbury and North Otago, prehistoric rock drawings seem to depict eagles, which would have been the Haast's Eagle (*Hieraaetus moorei*) (Tennyson & Martinson 2006:62). In Rēkohu, Moriori carved bird figures on *kōpī* trees (karaka, *Corynocarpus laevigatus*) (Jefferson 1955; Richards 2007). Petroglyphs representing birds or 'bird-men' have been found in Rapa Nui (Métraux 1940:270-272; Lee 1986; Horley & Lee 2012) and Kiritimati (Emory 1934:21-22,fig.10a; Lavondès 1976:789-791; Di Piazza 2005:56-57), among other islands. In Australia, a large painting of an emu-like bird recorded in a rockshelter in western Arnhem Land may represent *Genyornis newtoni*, a giant 'thunder bird' or *mihirung* (Dromornithidae) which probably became extinct 45,000 years ago (Gunn, Douglas & Whear 2011) – although, as Gerritsen (2011:57) pointed out, the difficulty in identifying extinct megafaunal species in rock art lies in the fact that 'it is not always completely certain as to what nominated species actually looked like'.

5. *Ethno-ornithology and bird narratives of the world: an overview of the literature*

Studying birds in culture: ethno-ornithology

This discipline 'explores how peoples of various times and places seek to understand the lives of the birds around them' (Hunn 2010:XI). Birds have 'lives': they are not only 'utilitarian objects' and symbols, they are also sentient beings (Bonta 2010:23).[70] In pre-industrial societies, animals, and birds in particular, 'were with man at the centre of his world' (Berger 1980:1). Ethno-ornithology is the study of this central place of birds, those sentient beings:

> The 19th century, in western Europe and North America, saw the beginning of a process, today being completed by 20th century corporate capitalism, by which every tradition which has previously mediated between man and nature was broken. Before this rupture, animals constituted the first circle of what surrounded man. Perhaps that already suggests too great a distance. They were with man at the centre of his world. Such centrality was of course economic and productive. Whatever the changes in productive means and social organisation, men depended upon animals for food, work, transport, clothing.
> Yet to suppose that animals first entered the human imagination as meat or leather or horn is to project a 19th century attitude backwards across the millenia [sic]. Animals first entered the imagination as messengers and promises (Berger 1980:1-2).

Birds were undoubtedly seen as 'messengers and promises' in Ancient Greece. Pollard's famous *Birds in Greek Life and Myth* offered a 'synoptic view of the attitude of the ancient Greeks to birds in ordinary, everyday life, as well as in the mythology which coloured all their thinking' (1977:9). In Southeast Asia (Le Roux & Sellato 2006), birds were also explored as 'cultural heroes, spiritual mediators, messengers between men and gods, and omens of good and bad fortune', and their place in 'folktales and myths, beliefs and rituals, ornaments and social life, and the iconography' was examined (Sellato 2006:21). In Polynesia, a similar synoptic approach was taken by Riley (2001) and Orbell (2003) in Aotearoa.

However, one of the first foci of ethnozoology, and thus ethno-ornithology, was to understand how pre-industrial societies categorised animals. For instance, writing about Leach's and Lévi-Strauss's works on animal classification, Handoo (1990:37) contended that the primary concern of these works was the 'logic of cultural classifications', and not

[70] For an overview of the emotions felt by chickens, for instance, see Potts (2012:46-51).

the attitudes of people towards animals. Leach and Lévi-Strauss, he argued, were 'interested in animal semantics not in relation to cultural attitudes, but as expressions of what they [saw] as the working of the human mind'. That is not to say, though, that taxonomy was all that interested structuralists as far as animals were concerned. As Leach (1974:66) pointed out, Lévi-Strauss was able to show, in South American mythology, that 'sets of relationships among human beings in terms of relative status, friendship and hostility, sexual availability, mutual dependence may be represented in myth' as relationships between different kinds of birds.

The categorisation of animals was also one of Clerk's areas of interest in his Mangaian study of the animal world, but his thesis was more generally 'an ethnozoological study concerned with the role of animals in the life and worldview' of Mangaians, which described the 'knowledge and beliefs concerning animals' among the people of the island (Clerk 1981: 2). While Clerk's objective was to understand the role and place of animals, and birds in particular, in Mangaian everyday life in the 1970s, Salducci's objective, in his historical study of the birds of French Polynesia (2002), was quite different. Salducci (2002:23) aimed to find a way to raise public awareness of the necessity to safeguard native and endemic birds in the 21st century, through an exposition of the cultural and spiritual significance of birds in pre-European times.[71]

Ethno-ornithology is not limited, however, to the realm of the written word. Because birds are sentient beings that enthuse other sentient beings – humans – with emotions and provoke their imagination, they feature prominently in visual arts.[72] For instance, two exhibitions held in Aotearoa illustrated how birds have inspired works of art. The exhibition *Birds: Arrivals and Departures* (Auckland Art Gallery's New Gallery/Toi o Tāmaki, 2002) looked at 'the way that Māori and Pakeha New Zealanders have imaged birds through material culture, painting, sculpture, video, and installation art . . .' (Mason 2002:14). As for the exhibition *Birds: The Art of New Zealand Birdlife* (Pātaka Museum of Arts and Cultures,

[71] A similar approach was recently taken by Torrente *et al.* (2018), to demonstrate the value of the traditional relationship between sharks and Polynesian people in shark conservation.

[72] For a study of birds in the work of two prominent Aotearoa artists, Don Binney and Bill Hammond, for instance, see Skinner (2003) and Smith (2007).

2006), it was a 'comprehensive survey show featuring the work of nearly 60 contemporary artists' (Brown 2013a:178).[73]

The study of birds in written literature

Other studies have focused on birds as dramatis personae in a particular literary work, or corpus, and the present work naturally falls into this category. A few examples of such studies will be provided here to demonstrate the diversity of texts and corpora that can lend themselves to such an analysis, starting with written literature.

The birds of the Bible have been much studied, in particular by Harbaugh (1854), who aimed to show the 'sacred associations' that birds bring with them (1854:27). Harting (1871) analysed the role of the feathered creatures that feature in the Shakespearean oeuvre (birds of prey, songbirds, domesticated birds, game birds, wild fowls and seabirds), whereas Wormhoudt (1950) offered a psychoanalytical interpretation of the role of birds in some of Shakespeare's plays. Harrison (1956) studied the role of birds in the works of Chaucer, Spenser, Milton and Drayton in an 'intensive survey of allusions to birds' (1956:IX) in the poems of these four authors.

Olivier (2016) analysed the role of birds, particularly the swan and the raven, in 12th- and 13th-century French Arthurian romances, focusing in particular on the relationship between bird symbolism in Celtic mythology (which greatly influenced Arthurian romances) and the birds' narrative functions in this body of literature. Boekhoorn (2008) examined the function of birds (among other animals) in medieval Celtic literature, particularly in the mythological, heroic and hagiographical texts from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany. Le Cornec-Rochelois (2016) studied the place of birds in the 13th-century collection of hagiographies known as Jacobus da Varagine's *Golden Legend*, to determine the nature of the relationship between saints and birds. Level (1975) researched the place of birds in French poetry and showed how poets found in birds 'un sujet de tableau,

[73] The exhibition catalogue 'steadfastly located bird art within a conservation paradigm, while also discussing the close spiritual relationship between native birds and Māori, the destruction of birdlife and ecologies through human arrival, and the bird as a symbol of vulnerability and freedom'.

un ami, un symbole, ou un miroir'[74] (1975:166), while Lutwack (1994) explored the depiction of birds in the prose and poetry of 19th- and 20th-century British and American writers.

Friedrich (1997) demonstrated the large extent to which Homer's *Odyssey* was imbued with avian symbolism. His aim was to reveal 'unique understandings of essential, underlying values in Homeric culture and the cultures of the world generally', as he argued (1997: 306) that the presence of birds in the *Odyssey* offered 'crucial and nuanced, albeit often subliminal or latent, meanings'. As for the *Iliad*, in her analysis of 35 bird scenes Johansson (2012:16) aimed to 'investigate the identities, interactions and functions of the birds in the *Iliad* in order to try to fully understand their inclusion and significance in this epic'. Their symbolic functions and presence as 'transmitters of messages, information, and emotions' were ascertained 'through semiotics and hermeneutics'. Also incorporated in her analyses were 'recent posthumanist discussions of animals as agents' (2012:39). She insisted on the importance of examining the birds of the *Iliad* in a 'more thorough ornithological and zoological way' than previously done (2012:40).

The study of birds in oral literature

In Oceania however, it is mostly in oral literature that the role of birds has been researched, in places such as Australia, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia; a few of those studies will be mentioned here.

Bird stories of Australian Aboriginals were studied by Tidemann and Whiteside (2010). They located 447 stories across at least 106 different language groups, identified in them 116 species of birds, and looked at some stories of ornithological significance. Feld (1990) analysed the symbolism of birds in the oral traditions of the Kaluli of the highlands of Papua New Guinea, and in particular how some of the narratives dealt with male/female oppositions in Kaluli society; the colour of the birds' feathers was especially important in his analysis. Still in Papua New Guinea, Kalam traditions (*sosm*) in which birds figured as actors were published by Majnep and Bulmer (1977). Finally, in his study of Nage stories about

[74] 'A subject to be portrayed, a friend, a symbol, or a mirror.'

the origin of death and the alternation of day and night,[75] in eastern Indonesia, Forth (1992, 2007) offered a 'demonstration of the importance of percepts in eastern Indonesian bird symbolism, and of how empirical features of natural kinds [particularly bird vocalisations] can influence their mythological value to an extent comparable to their formative role in shaping ethnozoological taxonomies' (2007:495). In particular, he showed (2007:504) that in Nage bird symbolism, 'the visual is on the whole subordinated to the auditory sense, and birds generally figure as symbols or signs on the basis of their vocalizations rather than their appearance.'

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In this triptychal introduction, 'Polynesia', 'narratives' and *manu* have been defined, the wide expanse of Polynesia has been embraced in order to review the history of its avian inhabitants and the nature of the oral traditions of its peoples, and the symbolic associations of birds as well as their importance in the material and religious cultures of the Polynesians have been surveyed. In the following part, I will bring together the two fields of study, the traditional story and the bird.

[75] In Nage bird symbolism, there is a mythological opposition between the pigeon, an enemy of humankind associated with darkness, and the friarbird, associated with daylight (Forth 2007:504).

PART B

NGĀ KŌRERO O NEHE

Chapter IV

Genesis

> He pakakina mai te manu ki te hoto mataʻu o Makemake. He veveri Makemake, he ui meʻe ngutu meʻe karā, meʻe huruhuru. He toʻo mai e Makemake, he hakapiri, he hakarere. He noho, he manaʻu Makemake mo anga i te tangata, mo tuʻu pe ia, mo rere mai o te reʻo, mo vanavananga.[1]

1. Creation

What is the role of birds in the creation of humankind? Birds play a prominent part in many stories of origins all over the world as the original beings flying over the primeval sea, as the helpers of deities in the task of creation, as the parents of an egg from which the first human beings hatched, or as the originators of humankind by having pecked at an item (such as a tree) or fashioned humans from clay or wood. Dixon (1916:155-175), for instance, compiled such stories from Indonesia and the Philippines, an area that the ancestors of the Polynesians passed through. In Polynesia, narratives belonging to this category do occur as well, but much more frequently, as will be seen, in West Polynesia than in East Polynesia.

A bird's egg is the origin of humankind

Most Māori narratives about the birth of humankind have Tāne as the creator of the first man. But one Māori story recounts how Aotearoa was settled by people who came out of an egg dropped on the ocean by an enormous bird (**1**). The bird, flying over the ocean, dropped an egg which lay on the surface for many days before bursting its shell. An old man and a

[1] 'Then a bird suddenly perched on Makemake's right shoulder. He was frightened when he saw a being with a beak, wings, and feathers. Makemake took them (the shadow and the bird) and left them together. After a time, Makemake thought of creating a man that would be identical to him, a man that had a voice and could talk' (**9**).

woman appeared, followed by a boy and a girl, each holding a dog and a pig, and they all boarded a canoe which eventually landed in Aotearoa. This narrative was deemed to be 'a burlesque of the cosmic egg' by Campbell (1993:292). It is reminiscent, however, of a Hawaiian story which made the islands of that archipelago originate from an egg dropped on the ocean in the same fashion by a huge bird (**1A**). The bird laid an egg on the ocean which was hatched by the warm winds, and the Hawaiian Islands were born from it.[2]

In Fiji, a story recounts how the islands were peopled by the progeny of a man and a woman born from two eggs incubated by the supreme god Degei (**2**). This serpent god found a nest in which a *kitu* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*) had laid two eggs. Degei hatched them himself. A boy and a girl were born; he took them from the nest and nurtured them. They became man and wife, and the land was peopled by their progeny; hence Fijians did not migrate from another land.[3]

Birds play a part in the creation of humankind

Maggots, as well as bird's eggs, as the origin of humankind constitutes a widespread motif in West Polynesia. As will be seen, Samoan, Tongan, Tokelauan and Fijian narratives tell of a bird pecking at or discovering a maggot developed from a rotting creeping plant or a stranded fish and from which humankind originated. There does not seem to be any cognates of these stories, however, in East Polynesia.

In some Samoan versions of the creation of humankind (**3**), the supreme god Tagaloa sent his daughter Sina down from the heavens to survey the earth, in the shape of a wading

[2] Cf. a Tahitian version of the creation of the world according to which the supreme god Ta'aroa lived in the beginning in a dark egg-like shell revolving in endless space, named Rumia (Henry 1928:336,339).

[3] Whereas the Māori, Hawaiian and Fijian stories do not recount how the bird got impregnated in the first place, in Tanna (Vanuatu), the story that explains how the first men came into being from a bird's egg has Mwatiktiki (akin to the Polynesian Māui, but 'lesser-statured' [Lessa 1961:329]) responsible for the bird's pregnancy. Mwatiktiki cut his hand when planting yams. To clean his wound, he plunged his hand in a spring. His blood mixed with the water. A *kasawat* (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*) came and drank from the spring (according to Ramík [2015], that species is called *kasawar* in the Lenakel/West Tanna/Netwar language). The bird later laid an egg from which two brothers hatched, Kasiken and Kalpapen, the first 'true' men – there were only 'stone-men' and wandering spirits in Tanna before them (Bonnemaison 1997:123). Both the Tannese and the Fijian stories are about a rail, whereas the Māori and Hawaiian stories are about two huge seabirds.

bird,[4] a *tulī*.[5] All was water, but the bird found a resting place, a small rock. Every time that the bird visited the rock, it grew bigger and bigger. Tagaloa gave the bird a creeping plant (*fue*) and some earth to cover the barren rock. By and by the withered leaves of the *fue* turned into worms, which became men and women. Other versions say that man was created from the maggots born from the rotting *fue* by an *aitu* (spirit), Gaio. When Gaio instructed Tulī (Tagaloa-a-lagi's servant) about the names of the different parts of the body that he was making (head, stomach, elbow, knee), Tulī said that his own name should be included in all of them – hence the words *tuliulu*, *tulimanava*, *tulilima* and *tulivae*. In the version collected by Lesson, Tulī, who again is Tagaloa's daughter Sina, was tired of flying all day long without a place to alight, so she asked Tagaloa to give her one. The next day she found an island covered with sand where she could rest. Tulī then told Tagaloa that she would like a mountainous island covered with trees, which she found the following day. But Tulī was still unsatisfied: she wanted a man to rule the island. Tagaloa thus created a man, and called the man's head *ulu*; but Tulī said that the back of the head should be called *tuliulu* so she would not be forgotten (and so on with other parts of the body). Tulī then told Tagaloa to breathe life into the man.

In Tonga, maggots also develop from the rotting *fue*, but the bird, a *kiu*,[6] has a more active role in the creation of humankind than in the Samoan stories: he pecks at the plant (**5**). In the sky, Tama-pouli-alamafoa, Tagaloa-eiki and Tagaloa-tufuga asked Tagaloa-atulogologo, the messenger, to go down to earth and see if there was any land. He travelled on the back of a *kiu*. In the end, in the form of the bird, he broke the root of the *fue* in two; a big worm was formed inside it, and he cut it into two parts with his beak. Two men, Kohai and Koau, developed from the two parts of the worm, and a little fragment hanging from his beak became Momo, a third man. Another version has it that on a sandy island, a *kiu* was scratching about the sand on the beach, searching for food. He found a *fue*; as he scratched

[4] In Samoan, *tulī* may refer to a few different species of wading birds – see Appendix 2.

[5] According to Futunan tradition, a goddess came to earth in the shape of a bird not to create humankind, but to bring their first king to the people of the island. Lupe, the goddess of the *sau* (king), came to Saufekai (in the high plains of Futuna) from Pulotu, the abode of the gods, in the shape of a *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*), and she gave the people their first *sau* and the *kete 'uli* ('black basket'), the symbol of royalty (**4**).

[6] In Tongan, *kiu* designates the Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*), the Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), the Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), as well as the Wandering Tattler (*Tringa incana*).

up the sand among its leaves, those turned into worms, which then transformed into men and women.

Tokelauan stories also mention a bird pecking at maggots that turned into the first men (**5A**). An *uluakata* (giant trevally, *Caranx ignobilis*) was stranded on a beach in Fakaofo, one of the three atolls of Tokelau. The fish rotted, and a 'sacred bird' (*manu hā*) flew forth and pecked at it. A few days later, two maggots started to grow where the bird had pecked. Those two maggots turned into two men, named Kava and Higano. They went away to Sāmoa, where they married some women, before returning to Fakaofo to live. According to Macgregor (1937:17), the bird in question is a *tālaga* (Red-footed Booby, *Sula sula*), but other versions in Macgregor (1937:18) and Huntsman and Hooper (1996:331,n.2) feature a *tuli* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*), as in the Samoan and Tongan stories. Burrows's version too mentions a *tālaga*; the maggot coming out of the carcass of the fish pecked by the bird turned into a man, Teilo, whose sons, Kava and Sigano, became the ancestors of all the people of Fakaofo.

In Fiji, a cognate of this story was told to Fison by the Tongan chief Ma'afu (**5B**). A 'sandpiper', which could well be a Pacific Golden Plover again, was looking for food. The bird scratched the muddy ground, and uncovered slimy and stinking worms. He did not eat them, but scattered them around with his foot. These worms grew into men after being exposed to the sun for several days. The Tongan gods, who had no slaves then, took them as their slaves. Another Fijian story, from Fulaga in the Southern Lau Group, recounts how the people of Fulaga originated from a hen (**6**). That story does not mention maggots, but again links the scratching of the ground by birds with the origination of people. A hen told her hungry chicks to scratch the ground for food, as she had no food for them. In some places the chicks scratched the bottom out of the land, hence the name of that land, Vanua Seu ('scratched land'), and the hen became the ancestor of the people of the island.

An account of the birth of the island of Pukapuka is reminiscent of the above Samoan story in which the *tulī* found the rock bigger and bigger at each visit, but in that narrative the bird does not play a role in the creation of the first man on the island (**7**). Before the creation of land, the god Tamaei lived in Tonga. When Tonga was pulled out of the ocean, Tamaei, together with all the gods living there, flew away, taking the form of a *kākā* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*). He flew over the sea until he saw a white coral head growing at the bottom of the ocean; he flew back to Tonga but then returned to the coral, which was growing and

rising. It stopped growing when he looked at it; he returned to Tonga, but again eventually flew back to that place. The coral was now very close to the surface. A man, Mata Aliki, sprang from the coral and made the island of Pukapuka out of it; he became the progenitor of all the people of Pukapuka. Tamaei went back to Tonga as a *kākā*, but returned to Pukapuka later in the form of a human being.

There are also narratives about birds and cosmogony that are specific to a Polynesian island and have no cognates elsewhere. For instance, in Tonga, a story recounts how a bird, a *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*), was one of the original beings but did not have progeny (**8**). In Pulotu,[7] Limu (seaweed) and Kele (mud) had a child, Touiafutuna, a stone. When the stone cracked, it gave birth to four pairs of twins, one of them being Tukuhali (a sea-snake) and Lupe (who is the female element in this pair). Unlike the other three pairs of twins, Tukuhali and Lupe did not mate. The descendants of the three pairs of twins were the various forms of Tangaloa, who peopled the sky, the multiple forms of Māui, who peopled the earth, and Hikuleo, who dwelled in Pulotu. Tukuhali was told to go and live in the sea, and Lupe to go and live on the earth (*i uta*), to fly, and to rest on the *toi* tree (*Alphitonia zizyphoides*).

In Rapa Nui, a bird was present when the god Makemake, the creator, fashioned man with clay (**9**). Unlike the preceding stories, this narrative does not mention which species that bird belongs to. Makemake was alone; he looked inside a gourd filled with water and saw the shadow of his face on the surface of the water. As he was greeting his shadow, a bird suddenly perched on his right shoulder. He was frightened at first at the sight of this being with feathers (*huruhuru*), wings (*karā*) and a beak (*ngutu*). He took the shadow and the bird and left them together, before creating man by impregnating clayish earth.

[7] Tongans believed Pulotu to be the place of residence of their gods and ancestors. It was ‘a very large island, lying at a considerable distance to the north-westward of their own islands’, a place ‘well stocked with the most beautiful birds of all imaginable kinds’. When a bird was killed in Pulotu (to provide food for the gods), another living bird immediately took its place (Mariner 1817:II,108).

2. Mutability

Humans hatching from a bird's egg is not a motif restricted to stories about the origin of humankind. Birds giving birth to humans as well as humans giving birth to birds are two recurring motifs in Polynesian narratives (although they do not seem to feature in Māori stories).

A woman gives birth to a bird

A Tahitian story of the origin of the first *maro ʻura* (girdle made of red feathers) has it that Tefatu (who may be Taʻaroa?) met Hehea, an *ariʻi*, in the heavens (**10**). He took her to Opoa in Raʻiātea, and Hehea gave birth to two birds. The birds always perched on her shoulders. One day, longing for her affection, they started pecking at her nose, which bled heavily, and the birds hastened to drink the blood, which coloured all their plumage red. When they later drowned in a flood, their mother Hehea attached their red feathers to each extremity of Tefatu's belt, making the belt *tapu*, and named this first *maro ʻura* Te Raʻi-pua-tata.

In the Samoan *tala* (stories) about the *sega* (Blue-crowned Lorikeet, *Vini australis*), the bird was born from a clot of blood (**11**). In one version, it was Sinainofoa who gave birth to that lump of blood while swimming in the sea, and the bird's father was Tagaloa-a-lagi. In another version, the parents of the *sega* were Ō and Lua in the heavens; the lump of blood was thrown away, but Tagaloa-puʻu and Tagaloa-lualua found him and took care of him. In a pool of water named Ai-punalagi the *sega* took shape, transforming from a lump of blood into a bird. In another version, Ō, the son of Tagaloa-puʻu, and Ua, the daughter of Tagaloa-lualua, were the parents of the *sega*, born in a pool in the heavens (*puna-lagi*). They gave him taro, breadfruit and fish to eat, early in the morning and in the evening, placing the food on a tray (*laulau*) on a heap of stones at a stream springing from a cave at the end of the pool. When the *sega* was fully grown, he flew down to earth. For Samoans, the conspicuous red feathers of the *sega* on his throat and abdomen may have found their explanation in the story of his birth as a clot of blood.[8]

Whereas the beautiful *sega* is subsequently coveted by various men in those Samoan *tala* (see VIII-3), and Hehea cherishes her two bird children, in other narratives a bird child

[8] In Manuʻa, those red feathers could, according to Krämer (1994:I,537), only be worn by the king's daughter.

is rejected by his human parents. For instance, a Tahitian story tells of a woman who gave birth to three eggs in the Papenoʻo Valley (**12**). Three red birds, *ʻura*, hatched. The woman's husband, expecting her to give birth to a human child, was very angry, and thus the birds decided to move away. Two of them settled in Punaʻauia, and the third one went to Bora Bora and settled on the mountain Te Ara-i-Paia, where a man, Tautu, adopted and cherished him. Hehea's bird children were red from drinking the blood from her nose, while the *sega* was red from being born from a clot of blood; the three *ʻura* too were red.

A Samoan story about Lupe (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*), the son of Tafitofau and Ogafau, features another example of rejection (**13**). When his mother complained that he did not look like a human being and said that she would like to have a daughter, Lupe flew away in anger to go and live in the bush. The Tongan story of the pigeon-headed girl, ʻUlukihelupe, is a case of more outright rejection by the parents (**14**). When Finemee was pregnant, she had a craving for *veka* (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*). One day, because there was no *veka*, she ate a *lupe*, even though the bird was the god of her family. One night, Finemee gave birth to a child with the head of a *lupe*. Her husband Sivao buried the child and the placenta under a rubbish heap. A couple later found the baby girl, looked after her, and fed her chewed toasted coconut; ʻUlukihelupe then grew into a beautiful maiden. A similar story tells of Vae-lavea-mata, born with the head of a *lupe* and abandoned by her parents on the island of ʻAtā, near Tongatapu. The baby girl was found by the chief of the island, Ahe, who cared for her and adopted her. She eventually shed her beak, her head became human, and she grew very beautiful and married the Tuʻi Tonga Takalaua.

A Nukuoro story also tells of a nonhuman miscarried foetus dumped with the rubbish, or excrement (**15**). A pregnant woman went to the ocean side of the island to defecate. She dug a hole in the ground. She had a miscarriage, and gave birth to an egg, which she buried along with her excrement. A few days later, the egg hatched. The *ngongo* (Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*) grew until he was able to fly to the ocean and catch small fish. He found his parents' home by accident, but he did not want them to see him because he was ashamed of what his mother had done to him.

By contrast, in Hawaiʻi, Lepe-a-moa is not rejected (**16**). The 'chicken girl' was born from an egg, the granddaughter of Keahua, the highest chief of Kauaʻi. The egg was looked after by her grandmother Kapalama in Oʻahu. From the egg hatched a beautiful chicken whose feathers were of all the colours of all types of birds. She was fed sweet potatoes, and

had a bird-woman, Ke-ao-lewa, as an ancestress. She later changed into a beautiful girl of her own will, and her magical powers allowed her to transform into a chicken and back into a girl (she thus had a double nature like the Tongan girls ‘Ulukihelupe and Vae-lavea-mata).[9] In a Huahine story, the eldest son of the chief Teri‘itepine‘ofe was also born as a bird; he later helped his younger brother flee with his beloved (**17**).[10]

A bird gives birth to a baby boy or girl

Birds impregnated by the wind is a widespread motif in traditional narratives; it stems from the belief that wind is a fertilising principle. In Western folklore for instance, the sterile, unfertilised eggs laid by young hens and pigeons (among other birds) were known for centuries as ‘wind-eggs’; Aristotle and Aristophanes wrote about them (Zirkle 1936:111-112). Polynesian stories too tell of such anemophilous birds.

In Tonga, Lupe Pāngongoa was a *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) who, always turning her tail to the wind, eventually became pregnant (**18**). Her child was named Hinaleiha‘amoa (she later married Sinilau). In another version, however, this *lupe*, longing for a child, turned her behind towards the rising sun for many days until she became pregnant. The sun, not the wind, was thus the fertilising agent in this version. In a Samoan variant of that story, the mother of Sina (who eventually married Tigilau) was not a *lupe* but a wading bird, a *tulī* (**168C**). The bird walked on the beach. A wind blowing from inland made her lift one leg in the air; then, a wind blowing from the sea made her lift the other leg. She thus became pregnant, and a daughter, Sina, was born. In Takū, it is a *nnō* (Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*) who gave birth to Asina (**19**). Sitting in a *fetau* tree (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), the bird turned her back to the wind, which blew successively from the north, the south, the southeast and the northwest, and she eventually became pregnant (*haitama*). She gave birth to a girl, Asina. The girl and the bird lived at the top of the tree.

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[9] Another Hawaiian narrative tells of such transformations into *moa* and back into humans. Hina-ai-malama had a brother, Iheihe, who occasionally turned into a rooster, and a sister, Kanikaea, who occasionally turned into a hen. They lived at the bottom of the ocean, and their parents were gods (Fornander 1918:v,266-267).

[10] In a story from Lifou (Loyalty Islands, New Caledonia), a chick is also well looked after by his human mother. An evil octopus, which swallowed a pregnant woman wading about the reef in search of shellfish and later disgorged her on an uninhabited island, cast a spell on her so that she gave birth to a large bird’s egg instead of a human baby. A hawk (probably a Brown Goshawk, *Accipiter fasciatus*, or Swamp Harrier, *Circus approximans*) hatched from the egg; the woman fed and nursed him. The bird grew bigger; he came to understand human speech, and he made signs to be understood by his mother (Hadfield 1920:254-260).

Men too can be responsible for impregnating a female bird. In Rapa Nui, a story tells of a hen sitting on a stone at Anavaero, with whom Tangaroa copulated (**20**). After going fishing with his brother and bathing in the sea, Tangaroa killed the hen at Vaimangaro; he plucked her before putting her in a basin. An old woman then went to the basin, and heard the cry of a baby from inside the stomach of the hen. She took the baby home and looked after him. She named him Tu-ki-haka-he-vari; after a while the child went looking for his father. In another, more detailed version, two men of the Miru tribe, of royal descent, went fishing at Hotu-Iti, near Poike. On the way, they stole a hen from an old woman. Angry at them for this theft, the god of fishermen prevented them from catching any fish that day. At sunset, furious and tired, one of them retired to the nearby cave where they had hidden the hen and slept with her, while his companion lit a fire to try and attract the fish. At dawn he came to the cave and woke up his companion. He had not caught any fish, so they had nothing to eat but the hen. They killed her, threw all the waste in a little hole near the cave called Tuki-haka-he-vari, had a feast, and returned home unhappy. That morning, an old woman, A-Ure, walked by that place and saw with amazement that in the hole full of blood a child was moving in the hen's intestines. She rescued the child and bathed him in the ocean. As she was childless, she decided to raise him with her husband as their son, and named him Auviri. Later, Auviri went looking for his real father to be able to marry the woman that he loved, and the man recognised him as his son. In this story, the boy was not born out of an egg as in the preceding stories of Hina/Sina/Asina, but from the intestines of his dead hen of a mother. This dramatic human birth from a bird parallels the birth from a human miscarriage of birds such as the Tongan 'Ulukihelupe, the Samoan *sega* and the Nukuoro *ngongo*.

Female birds can thus give birth to a baby girl (Tonga, Sāmoa, Takū) or boy (Rapa Nui), but a boy could also well envisage a bird being his father, as illustrated by this Emae story (**21**). Mauitikitiki (akin to the Polynesian Māui), who lived in Emae, went to Efate on the back of a turtle. In the bay of Fila, he urinated on a rock; a woman living inside the rock became pregnant. He told her to name her child Tamakaia if it was a boy, and went back to Emae. Later, Tamakaia played with children who told him that he was a stranger because his father was from Emae. As a *veka*[11] (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*) crossed the courtyard, one of the children said that the bird was Tamakaia's father. Tamakaia ran after the bird, caught him, and asked him if he really was his father. The *veka* was offended, and haughtily replied that he could not be his father since his father was in Emae. Tamakaia

[11] *Bwilake* in the Nakanamanga (Nguna/North Efate) language.

then let him go and asked his mother, who told him that he was indeed in Emae.[12] Tamakaia went away to find him.

3. Landscape

Birds do not only help in the creation of humankind and give birth to humans, they also help in the creation of the landscape, particularly by assisting men in fishing up islands in the Pacific Ocean, leaving their marks on some features of the landscape, and spreading trees.

Birds help fish up an island

Some Polynesian stories tell of birds used as a bait or a hook to fish up islands. A Māori account, a lesser-known one than the fishing up of Te Ika-a-Māui by Māui with his grandmother's jawbone, tells of the part played by a *kūkupa* (New Zealand Pigeon, *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) in the emergence of the islands of Aotearoa from under the sea (**22**). Māui lived on a rock in the middle of the ocean; one day, while he was fishing, his line got stuck into a piece of land that was so heavy that he could not pull it up. After three months, he caught a *kūkupa*, placed his spirit inside him, and tied the line to his beak. He made him fly up, and the islands of Aotearoa were pulled out of the sea.[13] In another version, the bird in question is none other than Māui's elder brother Rupe.[14]

[12] As Luomala (1949:111) observed, asking one's mother the name of one's father is a 'familiar question in Polynesian hero myths that reflects Polynesian concern with genealogies and the difficulty of knowing the identity of one's parents due to the customs of adoption and of abandoning unwanted children, particularly those born to parents of different social classes. It is also popular because of the wishful thinking on the part of narrators and listeners who dream out loud through the myths of the possibility that they too are the children of chiefs and not their humble parents.' This is because 'the fantasy of not being the child of one's humble parents, but of royalty, strongly appeals to a society that values high descent, grants the highly born many privileges and credits them with superior magical authority.'

[13] This Māori account is, as Luomala (1949:156) noticed, reminiscent of a Mangarevan tradition according to which Te Rupe, Māui's grandfather, reproached him for not having come to him beforehand to ask for the correct procedure when fishing up land: when hauling his fish, which was land, to shore, Māui's hook had loosened and the land had sunk beneath the sea (Te Rangi Hīroa 1938:311).

[14] *Rupe* or a cognate thereof is a pigeon in most Polynesian languages. In Māori, the New Zealand Pigeon (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*), endemic to Aotearoa, is called *kererū*, but *rupe* 'became a personification, Rupe. An unusually large kererū might be spoken of admiringly as Rupe, and so might an ordinary one, if a speaker wished for some reason to treat it as representative of kererū in general' (Orbell 2003:75-76).

In a Rotuman story, Moeatiktiki (akin to the Polynesian Māui) also fishes up an island with a bird, but by tying him up to his fish-hook and lowering him down into the sea instead of making him fly up (**23**). When he went fishing for sharks with his brothers, Moeatiktiki hid in his canoe a *kaläe* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*) that guarded banana trees in his father's garden and that he had captured after breaking his wings to secure the bananas. He tied the *kaläe* to his fish-hook, lowered him, until the bird reached Moeatiktiki's grandparents' house down below in the land of Tonga. When the fish-hook approached the house, the bird started to call out, and so the grandparents attached the fish-hook, as they had been instructed beforehand by Moeatiktiki, to a banyan tree in front of their house, before releasing the bird. Moeatiktiki hauled up the land to the surface, until the canoe was aground in front of the house. In another version, there were two *kaläe* watching the father's garden; Moeatiktiki killed one of them as they were sitting on the banana tree. He then took out the bird's *pofo* (gizzard) and put it in his garment (*taktakai*). The next day he went fishing with his two younger brothers, Moeamutua and Moealangone, and, using the *pofo* of the *kaläe* as bait, he fished up the island of Tonga out of the ocean. According to a variant of this story, Moeatiktiki went fishing with his two brothers soon after securing fire from an old man and being told that one day that man would help him through Moeatiktiki's foster mother, a *ve'a* (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*). As he caught something, he heard the *ve'a* calling from the shore. Remembering the old man's promise, he pulled up the island of Tonga from under the sea.

The Rotuman *kaläe* and *ve'a* are both rails. It is another rail, an *'alae* (Common Gallinule, *Gallinula galeata*), that Māui made use of to catch the Hawaiian Islands. A Hawaiian narrative recounts how Māui fished up the islands of the archipelago with his fish-hook and the sacred *'alae* of his mother Hina on it (**24**). Hina took pity on the struggling bait (*maunu*) and tried to rescue him. She caught a wing, but could not pull the bird from the hook, so the wing was torn off, and the fish, a large *ulua* (jack), tore the bird in pieces. It is because the bait broke that the Hawaiian Islands came up as separate islands and not as a continent.

Māui enlists the help of a *punake* (Marquesan Ground Dove, *Alopecoenas rubescens*)[15] to acquire a wife in a story from Fatu Hiva – but he fishes up an island in the process (**25**). Māui, upon hearing about the beauty of Hina-te-au-ihi, devised a plan to capture her. He

[15] This identification was made by Von den Steinen. According to Gouni and Zysman (2007:84), the Marquesan Ground Dove is called *oputu*, *kataupepe*, *otue* or *kotue* in Marquesan. Dordillon's dictionary (1931:344) has *punake* as a 'species of bird'; figuratively, a 'yelling and shrill voice'.

caught a *punake*, because this bird did not exist on Hina's island, Tongareva. He then went fishing with his brothers. When they were on the open ocean, he looked down and saw Hina's island deep down underwater and Hina putting coconut oil on her hair by a banyan tree. Māui took the bird, hooked him by the wings on his fish-hook (Huia-tapatapa), and dropped the hook down. The hook happened to fall just in front of Hina. The girl took the bird and admired him, before fastening the fish-hook to the trunk of the banyan tree – just as Moeatiktiki's grandparents did in the aforementioned Rotuman story of the *kaläe*. Māui and his brothers then pulled the submerged island to the surface. The difference from the previous stories is that Māui, after grabbing Hina, thrust the island away (Māui and his brothers then rowed back to their island with her).

A tradition from Nukumanu has a bird responsible for shaping a whole island, as opposed to fishing one up from the depths of the ocean (**26**). Originally, the Tava Reef, in the middle of Nukumanu's lagoon, was an island, the only land at Nukumanu. The *hihitau* (Island Monarch, *Monarcha cinerascens*) took sand from Tava, where the *kareva* (Pacific Long-tailed Cuckoo, *Urodynamis taitensis*) also lived, and brought it to the reef where the main island of Nukumanu now lies, thus building the island. The bird then fashioned all the other islands of Nukumanu in the same way. The people of Tava did not notice that the *hihi-tau* was taking all the sand, but they realised that Tava was becoming smaller and smaller. They all left Tava eventually to live on the other islands, taking coconuts and taro with them.

In a Rotuman account of the emergence of the island of Rotuma from under the sea, sand is present too, but birds are responsible for the birth of the island in a different manner from the Nukumanu story (**27**). The Samoan chief Raho, whose granddaughter Maheva had been insulted by the king Gofu, was instructed by two girls named Hauliparua to make a basket, fill it with sand, and leave Sāmoa in his canoe with his *hoag* (clan). When two *armea* (Rotuma Myzomela, *Myzomela chermesina*) flying in front of the canoe started singing, Raho was to drop the basket of sand overboard. He did as instructed. They travelled on for many days, and when the birds started singing, the basket was thrown overboard and the island of Rotuma came up from under the ocean with the canoe on top of it. Thus, it is the singing of the *armea* in a particular location on the ocean that gave birth to the island of Rotuma. This story is reminiscent of the role of the *ve'a* in the aforementioned Rotuman narrative about the fishing up of Tonga by Moeatiktiki.

Birds are associated with a landmark

Besides islands, some stories link birds to particular landmarks such as mountains, hills and rocks. A Māori tradition tells of Ngake and Whātaitai, two *taniwha* (water spirit) living in a lake – which is now Wellington Harbour (**28**). Both tried to force their way out; Ngake succeeded, forming what is now the harbour's entrance, while Whātaitai failed at Evans Bay. Whātaitai then assumed the shape of a bird and flew to the top of Tangi-te-keo (Mount Victoria), where his screeches (*keo*) can still be heard. Another bird may still be seen in Bora Bora: Hiro's pet rooster (**29**). The famous *'aito* Hiro and his son Marama were playing a game with stones (*timora'a 'ōfa'i*) on the *motu* (islet) of To'opua in Bora Bora. Marama had tied his *moa oni* (male Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*) to a nearby rock. But when Hiro turned his stones over, the *moa* became restless and broke the piece of string. He flew away to the main island where he crashed on a cliff and turned to stone, leaving a mark on the rock which is still visible on the mountain of Fa'a-nui.

The much bigger man-eating *moa* encountered on the island of 'Eua and subsequently killed by Kijikiji (that is, Māui) and Atalanga in a Tongan story was so huge that his excrement formed a hill on the island (**30**). That *moa* was bigger than a house.[16] In Sāmoa, it is not a hill but a rock that is said to have been made by an extraordinary bird (**31**). A man named Piliopo threw a stick at Lupe-ulu-iva, a nine-headed *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*), and killed him. He cooked him, then threw away the entrails and ate the flesh. The bird's entrails became a rock in Savai'i, which is visible to this day.

Birds are linked with geographical features in a looser way in the following Māori tradition. Pawa (or Pāoa), the captain of the *Horouta* canoe, had a *kāhu* (Swamp Harrier, *Circus approximans*) that he sent out on the ocean near Tūranga (Gisborne) (**32**). The bird's wings became waves skimming along the shore ('e tipi ana i uta'). As Reedy (in Ruatapu 1993:234, n.140) explained, 'this must refer to a feature in the landscape which was understood in this way.' Pawa then encountered Rongo-mata-ihu, a giant *kiwi* (*Apteryx* sp.) that could not be killed by humans, the pet bird of a giant, Rongokako, Pawa's enemy. Pawa set a snare (*tāwhiti*) for the bird, but it is Rongokako who came across it, and he dealt it a blow.[17]

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[16] Another hill is associated with a bird in Tahiti. Manu-i-te-a'a, a giant bird that was the incarnation of the god Ta'aroa, overturned the hill of Ma'atea in Vaira'o, Taiarapu – it has remained upside down ever since (Henry 1928:384).

[17] The trap was set by Pawa on Tāwhiti, a hill at Tokomaru Bay. Mount Arowhana (in the Raukūmara Range, inland from Tokomaru Bay) was said to have been formed from the debris of the trap, whereas the stick flew

Finally, birds can also give their names to a land feature. In two Hawaiian stories for instance, two roosters gave their names to a piece of land and a fishpond. According to McAllister (1933:76,154), Helu-moa ('Scratching-chicken') was the name of the land on which stood a *heiau* (shrine), in the village of Waikiki, and that name came from a rooster that lived up Palolo Valley and came down to that land to scratch for food; and an old fish-pond in O'ahu was named after Kaauhelemoa, a half-man and half-chicken *kupua* (supernatural being)[18] who could change himself into a man or a chicken.

Birds bring trees into being

Two narratives from Aotearoa and Tahiti recount how birds were responsible for the growth of a particular species of tree. In the Māori case, a bird dropped feathers into the ocean that gave birth to trees;[19] in the Tahitian case, a bird brought down to earth from the moon the seeds or the fruits of the banyan tree.

According to Māori tradition, Pou-rangahua fetched a giant bird, Te Manu-nui-a-Rua-kapanga,[20] his ancestor, to take him from Hawaiki back to Tūranga (Gisborne) in Aotearoa, with his belongings, two baskets of *kūmara* and two spades (*kāheru*) (**33**). As the bird shook himself when they arrived near Tūranga, Pou plucked some of his feathers, which fell into

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all the way to Waikato, where it became the ancestor of all the forests there (Fowler 1974:24). 'The snare must have been like those used for catching rats, with a bent-over rod' (Ruatapu 1993:234,n.140). Large footprints found on rocks in several places in that area were said to have been left by Rongokako himself, or by his giant pet *kiwi* (Lambert 1925:231).

[18] Hawaiian *kupua* stories 'tend to follow a regular pattern. The kupua is born in some nonhuman form, but detected and saved by his grandparents, generally on the mother's side, who discern his divine nature. He is precocious, becomes speedily a great eater, predatory and mischievous. He is won over to the side of some chief by a present of his daughter or daughters as wives, and sent to do battle with his rival or with some dangerous adversary who is terrorizing the country' (Beckwith 1970:404). One of the most famous Hawaiian *kupua* was Kamapua'a, a half-man and half-pig mischief-maker with shape-shifting powers, who, for instance, was enticed (*ho'owalewale*) to steal his stepfather Olopana's chickens by a *moa kupua*, a rooster named Kawauhele-moa (Fornander 1919:v,314-315).

[19] Cf. a Tahitian version of the creation of the world in which the supreme god Ta'aroa is said to have shaken off his red and yellow feathers: those became trees and green vegetation (Henry 1928:338-339).

[20] Te Manu-nui appears on a carving in the *wharepuni* (sleeping house) Te Mana-o-Tūranga at Whakatō *marae* (meeting house) in Manutuke (Poverty Bay). An illustration of this carving can be found in Fowler (1974:pl.28-29). Te Manu-nui was often thought of as a *toroa*, or albatross, and the expression *roimata toroa* ('tears of the albatross') may be derived from this tradition. *Roimata toroa* is a '*tukutuku* [ornamental lattice-work] pattern formed with stitches that fall vertically, like albatross tears, representing misfortune and disaster' (Moorfield 2018). The tears of seabirds such as albatrosses, which result in the story from the bird's mistreatment at the hands of Pou, are a 'saline solution secreted from tubular nostrils' that the birds must rid their bodies of, as they absorb large quantities of salt (Orbell 2003:167).

the ocean and produced *kahika* (white pine, *Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*). When a tree branch broke off and was cast ashore, a great forest, called Makauri, sprang from it. In another version, Te Manu-a-Ruakapanga was looking for a suitable place to land at Tūranga, but Pou, getting impatient, pulled out one of his feathers to make him fly down faster. This feather sank in the sea, and took root on Toka-pūhuruhuru (Ariel Reef). It grew into a *kahikatea* (white pine, *Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*)[21] called Makauri. Some generations later, the chief Māhaki-rau asked his tame shark to bring him a branch of that tree. He then planted it on the shore, thus creating a great *kahikatea* forest.

In Tahiti, Cook reported a story according to which a particular species of tree used to grow on the island, but was destroyed in some accident; the seeds, however, were taken by doves to the moon, and the trees flourished there – the spots seen on the moon are groves of that tree (**34**). In two other versions however, a bird brought back to earth the seeds of the tree: he flew to the moon, where he plucked the berries of the *'āoa* (banyan, *Ficus prolixa*) that covered it, before flying back to earth and dropping the seeds on the islands. Henry's version is more detailed: Hina set off in her canoe to go and visit the moon. She stayed there with an *'ū'upa* (Grey-green Fruit Dove, *Ptilinopus purpuratus*) as a companion. The bird dwelt in an *'ōrā* (banyan) and lived upon its figs. He came down to earth with a bunch of figs in his mouth, but on the way he met an *'ōtaha* (Lesser Frigatebird, *Fregata ariel*, or Great Frigatebird, *Fregata minor*) who tried to steal the figs from him in order to claim the credit of bringing them to earth (*'ōtaha* are notorious kleptoparasites). However, directed by Hina, the *'ū'upa* held onto them and escaped from the *'ōtaha*. He scattered the figs on the earth, and the first *'ōrā* sprang from them. In those accounts banyan trees thus originated on the moon and were brought down to Tahiti by a bird.

4. Culture: food and fire

This Tahitian account of doves bringing figs to earth is reminiscent of Polynesian stories of birds responsible for carrying foodstuffs important to humankind owing to their high nutritional value, such as sweet potatoes and yams. Birds play a crucial part in many narratives

[21] For Biggs (1991:69) however, this *kahika* is not a *kahikatea* (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*) but a *pōhutukawa* (*Metrosideros excelsa*).

that explain not only how humans came to possess cultivated foods, but also how they secured fire to cook them.

Birds help humankind secure food

Two Māori stories account for the origin of the cultivation of the precious *kūmara* in Aotearoa.[22] The first one explains how humankind secured this plant from Pani, the mother of the *kūmara*, while the second relates how it reached Aotearoa from the ancestral homeland of the Māori, Hawaiki; a bird figures in both.

A woman, Pani, stored all the *kūmara* in her stomach (**35**). One day, she went to Monariki, a stream of water, sat down in the water and collected the *kūmara* with her hands. A *moho* (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*), Pātātai,[23] hiding on the other side of the stream, watched her. When he made a loud startling noise with his lips,[24] Pani was overcome with shame, and returned to the village, crying; *kūmara* was thus secured for man.[25] To account for the introduction of *kūmara* to Aotearoa from Hawaiki, some narratives relate that Pou-rangahua was told by Tāne in Hawaiki to fetch his ancestor Tawhaitari[26] to carry him back to Tūranga (**33**). However, the bird could not fly up ('kīhai i tārewa'), probably because of the weight of Pou's belongings: two spades and two baskets (named Hou-takere-nuku and Hou-takere-rangi) of *kūmara*, obtained on the summit of Pari-nui-te-rā.[27] Therefore, he fetched another bird, his ancestor Te Manu-nui-a-Ruakapanga, who carried him and

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[22] As Dunis (1984:162) put it, the *kūmara*, one of the only surviving plants from the tropics, was for Māori a 'tangible organic link with their homeland that had become mythical', hence its unique cultural value. Its function consisted in 'shaping culture out of mere agriculture' (Dunis 2009:200).

[23] *Pātātai* is one of the Māori names of the Buff-banded Rail.

[24] *Moho* make a 'high-pitched, penetrating squeak' (Moon 1992:100).

[25] Colenso (1881:39), however, was 'inclined to believe that a man [rather than a bird] was intended, who, probably, obtained that name from his so solitarily acting, concealed, rail-like, among the rank untrodden vegetation on the margin of the stream'. Johansen (1958:128) argued that 'it is extremely characteristic of his whole attitude towards existence that [the Māori] does not . . . conceive the kumara as a gift from the gods, but something he gets hold of either by stratagem or by force. There is not to him the self-expression or value in obtaining passively as in capturing.'

[26] For a discussion of the association between a great bird named Tawhaitari and Tāne in several Māori traditions, see Ruatapu (1993:222,n.4).

[27] Dunis (2016:704) surmised that the 'great cliff of the sun' (Pari-nui-te rā) was a reference to the Andean origin of the sweet potato: the Andes 'block the rising sun' and are the 'domain of a very large bird, the condor'.

his *kūmara* back to Aotearoa. Māori were thus indebted to this giant bird for this very valuable foodstuff.

In Rapa Nui, another very important plant, *uhi* (yam, *Dioscorea* sp.), became the most common food thanks to the intercession of a *makohe* (Great Frigatebird, *Fregata minor*).[28] The people of Hanga Roa jealously guarded their *uhi*, which only grew there (**36**). They did not allow its cultivation anywhere else on the island. Rapu, a hard-working man living at Poike, owned the most beautiful garden on the island, with sweet potatoes, bananas, sugarcane and taro; only yams were missing. The people of Hanga Roa always refused to give him any yams in exchange for his products. Attempts to steal the fruit were all foiled, and threats were met with laughter. One day, a *makohe* flew over Rapu's garden, and hovered there. Rapu eventually told the bird that he would be a good bird if he brought him back an *uhi* root. The *makohe* hurried to Hanga Roa; in Tahai he spotted a man just about to plant *uhi*. He swooped down, snatched the root away from the man, and flew back to Rapu's garden with the root in his beak. There he dug a hole with his beak, dropped the root in it, covered it with soil, and flew off. After a while, Rapu noticed an *uhi* growing in his garden, and he remembered what he had told the *makohe*. Rapu then shared *uhi* roots with everyone, and so *uhi* became the most common food on the island. In another version of that story, the man is named Itua-orunga-kavakava-kioe, the bird (whose species is not mentioned), Haa-rongo,[29] and the *uhi*, Onaku-o-te-takatore; when the *uhi* grew, Itua-orunga-kavakava-kioe noticed on it the spot pecked by Haa-rongo when snatching the *uhi* – thus he understood that the *uhi* had been brought by the bird.[30]

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[28] According to Johannes Wilbert (cited in Lee 1986:47), 'the frigate bird in general may have a special mystique in that it is a magnificent flyer and a symbol of invasion in that it steals food from other birds, and also symbolizes territorial and sexual invasion or reproduction.' For Barthel (1978:151), that bird was the emblem of nobility: 'in the Rongorongo script, the equivalent of frigate bird, "precious bird" (*manu kura*), is frequently used. The word *kura* seems to refer to the red laryngeal sack of the frigate bird.'

[29] Barthel (1978:125) believed that the fact that *uhi* were originally the property of the people of Hanga Roa, in the west of the island, 'may have referred to the antagonism between nobility and commoners. A sociohistoric interpretation seems justified because the additional name of the yam-distributing frigate bird [i.e., Haa-rongo], "listening bird", may have been the name of a scout or spy. Through theft and deceit, the once exclusive right to cultivate yams is usurped.'

[30] A Micronesian tradition, from Ulithi (Caroline Islands), also relates how yams originated from birds. Haluwai, akin to the Polynesian hero Tāwhaki, travelled to the Sky World, where he met a blind old woman counting her twenty taro tubers. After he cured her blindness, she gave him a rooster. When he returned to earth, the rooster started defecating everywhere on the island of Yap, and the excrement turned into yams; those yams were the ancestors of the present-day yams on the island. Someone took the rooster to leave yams all over the ground of his house, but Haluwai recovered his bird and brought him to his house; however, his excrement stopped turning into yams (Lessa 1980:8-11). In another version of this story, the hero, named Giluai, was given not one but two roosters, by the god Yelefath. He tied them to his shoulders so that by flapping their

Finally, in the Mugaba story of the quest for food in *tu'aa gangi*, the invisible heaven, a *mugikaakoni* (Common Sandpiper, *Actitis hypoleucos*) helps the culture hero Mautikitiki (i.e., Māui) secure food for humankind (**37**). Mautikitiki and his party went to the invisible heaven to ask the gods for food. On the way they encountered a leaping and singing *mugikaakoni*, whom Mautikitiki put in the back of his loincloth. The bird begged Mautikitiki not to kill him, because he could help him in the invisible heaven. Then, when they reached the latter, Mautikitiki kept asking the bird (who was watching the sun) about the position of the sun. When the bird finally answered that the sun was setting, Mautikitiki threw red leech into the eyes of the gods and started casting down food such as garden fruits, taro and plantain.

Birds are the guardians of fire, or help Māui make fire

In most Polynesian narratives however, Māui enlists the help of birds to secure fire rather than food. A Māori account relates that, after the death of his *tipuna* (grandfather) Mahuika, the guardian of fire, Māui asked the *tītakataka* (New Zealand Fantail, *Rhipidura fuliginosa*) where Mahuika used to keep his fire hidden (**38**). Upon the bird's refusal to tell him, Māui caught him and squeezed him between his fingers. The *tītakataka* then told him where to find the fire (which had been stored in trees), took two pieces of wood, and instructed Māui how to produce fire by laying one piece flat and rubbing (*hika*) with the other.

In Hawai'i, birds are also punished by Māui for not being cooperative (**39**). The *'alae* (Common Gallinule, *Gallinula galeata*) were the keepers of the fire. Every time that they saw Māui-mua approaching them, they put out the fire and flew away. The four Māui brothers could only see the fire when they were out at sea fishing; by the time they reached the shore it had been put out. Knowing that there were four of them, the birds would only light the fire when they could see four men in the canoe. Māui-mua instructed his brothers to put a tall calabash in his place in the canoe. The birds were thus fooled, and they lit their fire to roast bananas. Māui-mua leapt on one *'alae* and intended to kill him because the birds had been hiding the fire from him, but the *'alae* promised to let him have the fire if he spared his life; otherwise the secret of fire would die with him. He then told Māui-mua that the fire was in the leafstalk of the *'ape* (giant taro, *Alocasia macrorrizhos*), and then in the leafstalk of

wings they would slow down his fall back to earth. Their excrement also turned into Yap's first yams (Lessa 1980:14).

the *kalo* (taro, *Colocasia esculenta*), but when Māui-mua rubbed the leafstalks with a stick no fire came out. Eventually the bird told Māui-mua that he would find the fire in a dry stick.[31] Māui-mua then made a fire, and, angry with the bird for having deceived him, he rubbed the top of the head of the *ʻalae*, which became red with blood.

In three traditions from the Cook Islands too, a bird helps Māui light a fire, in this instance a tern. In Mangaia, Tangaroa-tuʻi-mata, Māui's grandfather, was the guardian of fire (**40**). He gave Māui a lighted stick three times, but Māui extinguished the stick with water three times. Then Tangaroa rubbed two dry sticks together to produce fire, but Māui, who was holding one of the sticks, blew the fire away as it was just igniting. Angry with Māui, Tangaroa summoned his favourite bird, a *kākāia* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*), to take his grandson's place and hold the lower stick, and fire was eventually produced. However, as the bird was still holding the stick with his claws, Māui seized the upper stick from Tangaroa's hand and singed the sides of the bird's eyes with it. The bird flew away, escaping through a hole to the upperworld.

In a Manihiki version, Māui-pōtiki asked his grandfather Tangaroa-tuhi-mata ('Tangaroa-with-the-tattooed-face') to give him fire so he could cook food (**40A**). Tangaroa called two *kakavai* (Black-naped Tern, *Sterna sumatrana*), his pets, to press down the fire-making stick, which he rubbed with another stick. When fire was produced, he gave the stick with the fire to Māui, but Māui put it out and asked for another stick. Tangaroa made fire again with two sticks, but Māui singed the corners of the two birds' eyes with the hot end of the stick, so the birds flew away, never to come back again.

Finally, in a Rakahanga version of that story, Māui secured fire from his grandfather Tangaroa-tuhi-mata in the underworld, Hawaiki-i-raro (**40B**). When the brand was extinguished, Tangaroa told Māui to call the birds to come and hold down the fire stick. Māui called to the birds, and two *kakavai* flew down and stood on the far end of the fire stick to steady it. Māui generated the fire and struck them on the head with the stick to reward them; one flew north and the other one flew south.

[31] 'Thus', wrote Valeri (1985:22-23), 'a human trait (eating cooked food) passed from bird to man, and an animal trait (eating raw food) passed from man to bird.' *ʻAlae* thus 'came to occupy a place midway between humanity and animality'.

In Mugaba and Mungiki, it is a *kangae/kagae* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*) that Māui harms. In Mungiki, Mautikitiki and the *beka*[32] kindled a fire, but then the bird ran away and the fire died (**41**). Mautikitiki told the bird to come back and stand on the hearth, and they kindled a fire again. Again the bird went away and again the fire died. Mautikitiki then put the fire stick in the bird's bill out of anger. Another version has it that the bird urinated on the fire to put it out. In Mugaba, Mautikitiki told the *kagae* to stand on the fire-plow while he was kindling a fire (**41A**). The bird did as he was told, but stepped off when it started burning, so the fire died; this happened twice. An angry Mautikitiki then struck the fire stick on the bird's bill.

All these stories of birds singed by fire or struck by Māui account for the bulging eyes and projecting tail of the *tītakataka*, the red frontal shield of the *'alae*, the black marks around the eyes of the *kākāia* and the *kakavai*, and the red bill of the *kangae/kagae*.[33] Frazer (1930:215-216) thus argued that this type of story was 'primarily intended to account for certain colours or other characteristics of animals, which primitive man attributed to the action of fire', and that those narratives were 'only secondarily meant to explain the origin or discovery of fire. If this view is correct, the myths in question are rather zoological than physical.'

Rather than merely knowing how to make fire, birds actually keep it within themselves in a Marquesan story (**42**). Their fate at the hands of Māui is much more grievous than that of the Māori *tītakataka*, the Hawaiian *'alae*, the Cook Islands *kākāia* and *kakavai*, or the *kangae/kagae* from Mugaba and Mungiki. In that narrative, from Fatu Hiva, Mahuike swallowed Ahi, the fire, before giving some of it to two *toake* (White-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon lepturus*) and some to two women. The birds hid the fire in their beaks. When they rubbed their beaks their saliva burst into flames, and that is how they gave fire to people (whereas the two women hid it in their anuses, and when they rubbed their backside their faeces burst into flames). Māui Ti'i Ti'i went to the underworld, where he was told by his mother where to find the fire. First he went to the *toake*, and received fire from them, but, disgusted by the

[32] The *beka* is the young of the Australasian Swamphen. The young does not have a red bill, unlike the adult (*kangae*/*kagae*).

[33] For an analysis of the interaction between the birds and Māui in those stories as a metaphorical sexual intercourse, see IX-2.

fire produced from saliva, he killed them by cutting off their heads, which he then put into his bag (the two women suffered the same fate).[34]

Countless stories from all over the world also recount how birds brought fire from the sky down to earth for humankind to use.[35] In Polynesia however, only one such narrative, from Mugaba, seems to have been recorded and published (**43**). It tells of the *baghigho* (Cardinal Myzomela, *Myzomela cardinalis*) and the *maghughape* (Rennell Fantail, *Rhipidura rennelliana*). Because they did not have fire, the *maghughape* suggested to his friend that they go to the invisible heaven (*tu'aa gangi*) to get some; his friend nodded. There, while the *maghughape* danced and the people laughed at him, the *baghigho* procured some fire. They went back down and alighted on one tree after the other as they went. This is why wood burns now when the fire-plow is worked.[36]

[34] This Marquesan story of birds producing fire from their saliva is reminiscent of a Nauruan tradition according to which in the beginning there was no land except Sāmoa and Beru (in Kiribati). In Sāmoa grew a huge tree called Dauogira. It was so tall that people could not climb up it, until one day a man named Gireda reached the top of the tree. Gireda broke off all the branches and the treetop, but saw in the tree an egg-like object, which he took away, boiled, and broke apart. A little bird with a big and long beak came out of it. He spewed forth fire from his beak. The deity Auuirieria, who lived in Beru, wanted the bird for himself, but Gerida refused to hand over the bird to him, so Auuirieria went away looking for another bird. Auuirieria then saw all the branches of Dauogira floating in the sea. From the two leaves on one branch he made Banaba (a raised coral island in Kiribati) and Nauru, and from other leaves he made other islands, now in Kiribati (Hambruch 1914: I,385-387).

[35] See Frazer (1930:207-215) for an overview of those stories.

[36] Similar stories from other parts of Oceania are numerous. For example, in Namoluk (Caroline Islands), Olofat, the mischievous eldest son of Luke-lang, the supreme god and owner of fire, sent fire down to earth with the help of a *mwi* (probably the Micronesian Starling, *Aplonis opaca*): the bird took the flame in his beak and flew from tree to tree, placing the seed of fire into those trees – men could thereafter extract fire from them by rubbing sticks together (Girschner 1912:185). A story from Cape Grafton in Australia also tells of a fire-bringing little bird. A *binjir binjir* (the Red-backed Fairywren, *Malurus melanocephalus*, according to Tidemann, pers. comm.) flew up to the sky to procure fire, as there was none on earth. He was successful, but he hid it by sticking it under his tail so that his friends would not have the benefit of it. He told them that his quest had been fruitless. He advised one of his friends, though, to try and kindle a flame by using various pieces of wood, but this did not work. The friend, however, suddenly spotted the fire stuck on the *binjir binjir*'s back, and burst out laughing. The bird had to admit that he had got some fire, and he showed his friend which particular wood to use to make fire (Roth 1903:11).

5. Avian settlement of the islands

According to some traditions, *manu* had been living on the islands from all eternity when humans arrived on their shores, but other stories recount how they were brought there by gods and people.

Gods and men place birds on earth

Māori accounts of the origin of birds often mention Punaweko as the creator of landbirds and Hurumanu as the creator of seabirds (Best 1982:263). These two deities fashioned two clay eggs (*anga*), which they brought to Tāne, who endowed them with life; landbirds and seabirds respectively hatched from those two eggs.[37] Some Māori traditions about *ngā heke-nga waka* (the canoe migrations from tropical Polynesia to Aotearoa) mention birds brought down to the archipelago by people in their canoes,[38] in particular the Australasian Swamphen (*Porphyrio melanotus*) – although, as was noted in I-3, no species of *Porphyrio* seems to have lived prehistorically in tropical East Polynesia.

In the Lau Islands and Rotuma, two stories tell of a man who travelled down to the underworld and brought a bird back to earth. The Lau Islands tradition recounts the adventures of Tui Liku (**44**). Left alone on the island of Tuvana (the southernmost island in the Lau Group) by his countrymen from Ono, Tui Liku was repeatedly mistreated and almost killed by demons, when Ligadua, the son of the king of Burotu (akin to the Samoan and Tongan Pulotu), appeared and scolded the demons for abusing him. Tui Liku then asked

[37] The culture hero Tāwhaki was credited with bringing various bird species from the heavens down to earth (Best 1982:265). Tāne, after defeating Whiro, also took down to earth some feathered prisoners (Thornton 2004:142,149,162,175). When Tāne visited his elder brother Rehua in the heavens, Rehua shook out of his topknot *kōkō* (Tūī, *Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*), before killing and cooking them. Tāne did not eat them (because they had been in contact with the *tapu* head of Rehua, and feeding on lice); however, he asked Rehua how he could procure some, so Rehua taught him how to snare *kōkō* (Wohlers 1874:9,35).

[38] For instance, the *Aotea waka*, captained by Turi, is said to have carried 'some live edible rats in boxes, and some tame green parrots', as well as 'some pet Pukekos, or large water-hens' (Grey 1855:211-212). Only *kiore* and *pūkeko* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*) are mentioned in the Māori version (Grey 1854: 111), not the 'green parrots'. However, in Kawau's (1854:509) manuscript which Grey's *Ko nga mahinga* was based on, 'te kakariki' (parakeet, *Cyanoramphus* sp.) was added between the lines. According to a Ngāti Hau version of the voyage of the *Aotea*, Turi brought in the *waka* not only the *pūkeko* but also the *moho* (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*) and the *kōkōreke* (New Zealand Quail, *Coturnix novaezelandiae*), as well as the *moa-kirua*, 'a small bird, resembling the Weka [*Gallirallus australis*]', 'never now seen of man' (Best 1896:122). As for the *Horouta waka*, 'it is said that at the time the cliff fell at Hawaiki [thus filling the canoe with *kūmara*], and "Horouta" was laden, rats fell into the canoe at the same time, as well as the Pakura bird' – *pākura* being another name for the *pūkeko* (Tūrei 1912:158).

Ligadua to take him with him to Burotu. His spirit reached Burotu, but his body remained on the beach. He visited Burotu, ate with the king, and took back to Tuvana two red nuts unknown to him to plant there. He returned to Tuvana with Ligadua, but visited Burotu on three more occasions and brought back to Tuvana a coconut tree, an almond tree and the *miji* (Sulphur-breasted Myzomela, *Myzomela jugularis*).

The Rotuman narrative tells the story of To Noava. Karagfono, a spirit in the shape of a man, was invited by To Noava to have some kava in his home (**45**). Then, in turn, Karagfono invited To Noava to visit him in Limari, a dry land under the sea. To get there, he jumped into the water with him, and they reached Limari. After a while To Noava wished to go back to earth. Karagfono gave him two *moa* (Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*), a male (*moa fã*) and a female (*moa hani*), as presents to take back to earth. The hen was called Sukivou. He told To Noava to keep the young for himself when the pair was to breed, but to return the two adult birds to him when he was to find Karagfono waiting for him at the place where they dived down to Limari. Sukivou then carried To Noava out of the ocean back to Rotuma. Her ten chicks became the ancestors of all the fowls in Rotuma.

A story from Rapa Nui explains how birds came to live on the islet of Motu Nui (off the southwestern coast of the main island), not from the underworld or the heavens as in the previous traditions, but from a far-off island (**46**). In the past there were no seabirds on the main island, Te Pito-Te-Henua, or even on the islet of Motu Nui. There was a stone in Hanga Nui on which lay a skull guarded by a witch named Hitu. One day, when Hitu was not paying attention, a wave came and took the skull away. She rushed immediately into the sea to recover it and swam for many days, but the skull kept floating ahead of her. She finally reached a small island, all white from the excretion of countless seabirds that nested there. As soon as the skull was washed ashore, it turned into Makemake, the chief of Motu Torema Hiva (Salas y Gómez Island). Makemake was greeted with great joy by Haua, the seabirds' guardian. Hitu too stayed on the island, to help Haua in his work. After a while however, Makemake wanted to take birds to Te Pito-Te-Henua, so he asked Haua to catch a few birds. Makemake released them at Poike, then returned to Motu Torema Hiva. The following year, he went back to Te Pito-Te-Henua to check if the birds had bred, but when he found out that the people had eaten the birds' eggs, he was furious. He thus caught the birds and set them free at Vaihu, but, as the same thing happened there, Makemake relocated the birds to Vai Atare. There the people left one egg be, and from that egg hatched the first *manutara* (Spectacled Tern, *Onychoprion lunatus*, or Sooty Tern, *Onychoprion fuscatus*). That *manutara*,

however, did not satisfy Makemake when he next visited the place. He caught all the birds once again and released them on the islet of Motu Nui, where the birds bred astonishingly well.

Birds live on an island before the arrival of people

In contrast to those stories about *manu* brought to earth or carried to an island by gods or men, the birds in the following stories were present at human arrival. Two Māori traditions mention birds living in Aotearoa before the first settlers reached her shores. The first one is about a white bird named Komakahua,[39] who was the size of a chicken (**47**). Komakahua was the guide of Te Kāhui Tipua, a race of giants who walked across the sea from Te Pātū-nui-o-āio to Te Ika-a-Māui, via Hawaiki, well before humans landed on those shores. In Te Ika-a-Māui the *tipua* (strange being) quarrelled among themselves and started attacking each other. Komakahua decided to take three of the worst *tipua* over to Te Waipounamu (New Zealand's South Island), to prevent the race from becoming extinct. He placed Kōpūwai (a man with a dog's head) in a cave near the Mātau (Clutha) River, Te Pouākai[40] on Tāwera (Mount Torlesse, in Canterbury), and Te Kārara-huarau (a man with the body of a lizard) in a cave near Tākaka. As the latter was the worst of them, he made his own home in a hole near that cave to be able to watch what Te Kārara-huarau was doing. Later on, he went to live in the holes in the cliffs near Cape Foulwind, where he may sometimes be seen flying about.

The second narrative is also about birds that live in Aotearoa prior to human settlement, but this time they can be identified (**48**). After visiting Te Waipounamu, Kupe returned to Aotearoa (North Island). At Kauarapāoa, on the Whanganui River, while looking for *tangata whenua* (people of the land), he heard the voices of a *weka* (*Gallirallus australis*) shouting in the river ('e hō ana mai i roto i te awa'), a *kōkako* (North Island Kōkako, *Callaeas wilsoni*) and a *tīwaiwaka* (New Zealand Fantail, *Rhipidura fuliginosa*), but he returned to the mouth of the river when he found out that those were only birds, not humans. Upon returning to

[39] Komakahua may be a shearwater or a petrel; it may be the same as, or a larger species than, the *kōmako-huariki*, 'a small bird, and *tapu*', 'curiously marked and striped'. Best (1918:106) tells the story of one such bird guarding the cod banks in Raukawa (Cook Strait) and holding stationary for one day a canoe crossing the strait because a man on board had broken the *tapu* of Raukawa.

[40] See the narratives about Te Pouākai in X-3.

Rangiātea, he reported to the people what he had found in Aotearoa and Te Waipounamu, and told them that he had seen no one there, only birds: ‘ko ngā mea i kite ai au ko Kōkako, e kō mai ana i runga i ngā tau-kahiwi, ko Tīwaiwaka e tītakataka ana i mua i taku aroaro’ (‘what I saw were Kōkako, singing on the ridges of the hills, and Tīwaiwaka, flitting about before me’).

In Sāmoa, Rangiroa and Hawai‘i, it is fowls, noddies and owls respectively that were present before human arrival, according to some traditions. A Samoan narrative recounts that when the land was flooded by the sea,[41] only some fowls (*moa*) and pigeons survived (**49**). The latter flew away, but the *moa* stayed and were made *tapu* (not to be killed) by Lu, the daughter (or grandson) of the supreme god Tagaloa, and called thus the *sā moa*, or ‘preserve fowls’; that is the origin of the name Sāmoa. A Rangiroa tradition relates that ‘Oio, son of Marama and Ao-nui, was the first man on the island (**50**). When he arrived, he gave his name to the *‘oio* (Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*) that were living there and that were previously known as *ra‘aiva*.

In Hawai‘i, the *menehune* (small people who lived on the islands before the arrival of Polynesian settlers and were renowned for having built many structures) were at odds with *pueo* (Short-eared Owl, *Asio flammeus*), as two stories recount. In one of them, the *menehune* settled on the plain above the Lumaha‘i River in Kaua‘i (**51**). One of them started to build a *heiau*, but the owl of Kāne, large enough to carry a man, came and sat on the stones. When the workman returned the next day, the owl was there again, flying over the place and croaking. The monster dog Kuilio-loa was also there, running about. The *menehune* therefore gave up his work after seeing those two evil omens. In another story, the *menehune* built a temple and a fort in the Mānoa Valley in O‘ahu (**52**). Pueo and the *menehune* became enemies and waged war against each other. Pueo called upon the other owls from O‘ahu and the owls from Kaua‘i to come and help him in the fight. After a fierce battle the birds captured the temple and the fort, and the *menehune* were thus driven out of the valley.

*

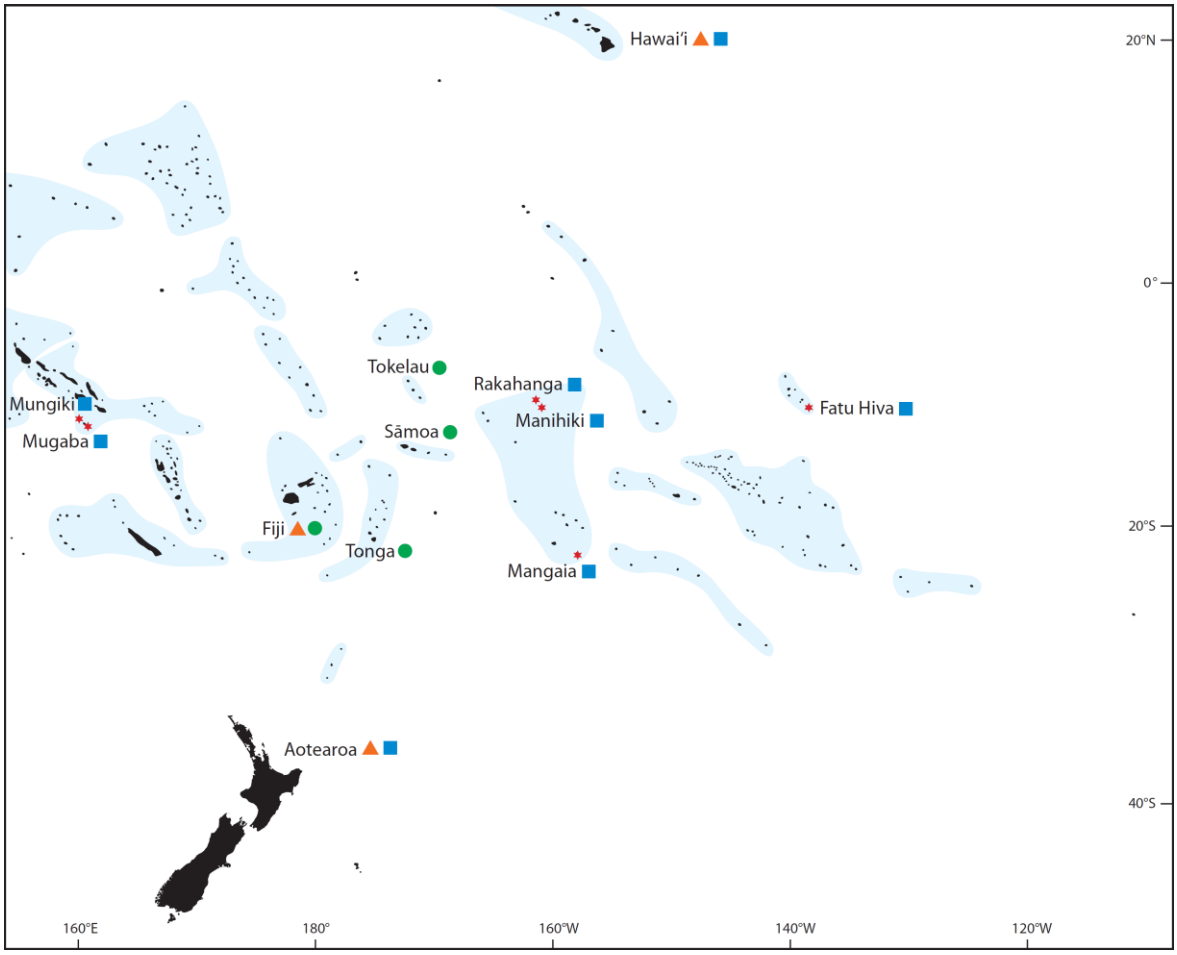
Birds thus play diverse roles, more or less active ones, in some of the Polynesian traditions that relate how humankind came into being, particularly by laying eggs or pecking at

[41] A Rimatara tradition says that the homeland of the *‘ura* (Kuhl’s Lorikeet, *Vini kuhlii*), the island of Tuana‘i, near Rimatara, sank beneath the sea after a violent storm. These birds then settled in Rimatara (Kape 2010:11).

maggots out of which came the first men and women, or by just being present when gods created human beings. Some traditions recognise that birds predated people on some islands, while others recount how men or gods brought some species with them to a particular island. Some Polynesian stories also show that birds could truly be envisaged as the parents of a human and that humans too could give birth to birds.[42] As for the ones that relate the role of birds in the acquisition by humankind of some precious foods and of fire to cook them, they present *manu* as agents of cultural change.

[42] A creation story from Manus (Admiralty Islands, Papua New Guinea) draws together the three motifs of a bird giving birth to a baby boy, a man impregnating a bird, and a bird being the ancestor of humankind: a *pimpal* (pigeon) bore two young; one was a *manuai* (Eastern Osprey, *Pandion cristatus*) and one was a man. The man had intercourse with his mother, and became the ancestor of the human race (Meier 1907:651; Bowern 2011:217). In another one, a parrot created man. Alu and Asa, two parrots, or *kareng*, were sitting in a tree. Asa suggested that they make a man so they would not remain alone. He thus stitched up two leaves together, stitching a hand, a foot, a head and a stomach. As he threw the leaf to the ground, it turned into a man. The man got up, and Asa told him to go and build himself a house, sew a woman for himself, and produce numerous offspring (Meier 1906:480-481).

Figure 14. Genesis stories



▲ A bird's egg is the origin of humankind (**1**, **1A**, **2**)

● A bird pecks at or discovers a maggot developed from a rotting creeping plant or a stranded fish and from which humankind originates (**3**, **5**, **5A**, **5B**)

■ Birds are the guardians of fire or help Māui make fire (**38**, **39**, **40**, **40A**, **40B**, **41**, **41A**, **42**, **43**)

Chapter V

Aetiology

> Tela muna atu ei Naleau ki te Tuli, 'Se tangi ai a koe ki tou ingoa. Kae tangi koe o a ki toku ingoa. Tenei la ka mio tou alelo ne au ke tangi e loa koe ki tou ingoa.'[1]

1. Duality

Many Polynesian narratives feature two birds (or a bird and another animal) in opposition to one another: they argue and compete with each other, or they trick each other. Stories of complementarity, in which two birds (or a bird and another animal) help each other or proceed to an exchange that does not involve deception, are few and far between. Nearly all these traditions are aetiological: they explain the origin of the physical characteristics of bird species, but also of their behavioural traits (particularly their diet) or their habitat, as well as the cause of the enmity between two given species.

Opposition

a. Arguments about the best place to live or the best food

Two Māori 'parting of ways' stories featuring birds present an opposition between land and sea. Two animals argue about the best place to live, and part ways because they cannot agree. These 'survival' stories are about finding the safest place to live in order not to be killed and eaten by people; therefore, although no human appears as dramatis persona in those narratives, they do imply the presence of people.

In the first one, the *koreke* (New Zealand Quail, *Coturnix novaezelandiae*) and the *pakake* (New Zealand fur seal, *Arctocephalus forsteri*) are friends (**53**). The seal wanted its

[1] 'And Naleau said to the *tuli*, "Why do you not cry your own name, and wherefore do you cry my name? So now I shall twist your tongue so that you will indeed cry your own name"' (**95A**).

friend to go to sea with it, but the bird wished to stay on land. The seal insisted; it started to leave, but the *koreke* grabbed his friend. The seal then began to cry (*tangi*) and sang a lament about having to leave to avoid being killed and eaten. The seal eventually went out to sea, and its friend stayed on the shore before heading inland. In the story of the *toroa* (albatross) and the *kākāpō* (*Strigops habroptila*), a seabird plays the part of the fur seal (**54**). In this narrative also, the *toroa* wanted the *kākāpō* to go out to sea with him, but the latter replied that they were better off on land. The *toroa* argued that they would be found and eaten if they stayed on land, but the *kākāpō* believed that this would happen if they went out to sea; so they parted company.

The Māori story of the *kiore* and the *pōwhaitere* (parakeet, *Cyanoramphus* sp.) differs from the previous two narratives in that one of the protagonists, the *kiore*, knows that it will be killed and eaten by people anyway; there is no hope for the poor rat (**55**). The two animals had a conversation. The *pōwhaitere* told the rat that they should climb up the trees to eat the fruits of the *miro* (brown pine, *Prumnopitys ferruginea*) and the *kahikatea* (white pine, *Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*).[2] But the rat replied that their numbers were declining because man was coming, who twisted their necks and snared them.[3] For Taylor, the 'moral' of the story was that there is 'no escape from man's power'. In another version, the rat replied that it belonged to the earth ('nō raro nei au') where man strangled (*ronarona*) it. The opposition is not between land and sea in this narrative, but between the earth and the treetops.[4]

In the Tuamotu, another narrative tells of the argument between a bird and another animal, each one predicting that the other will be killed and eaten by people (**57**). Unlike the previous narratives, they are not friends but siblings.[5] A *moa* (Red Junglefowl, *Gallus*

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[2] Parakeets are usually found high in the forest canopy, but they also often forage on the ground (Moon 1992: 183).

[3] Māori considered *kiore* a valuable food source (see I-3).

[4] From the Tuamotu (Anaa) comes a story in which the opposition is between two nesting habits (**56**). The *ngoio* (Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*) asked the *kīrarahu* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*) how she laid eggs. The *kīrarahu* replied that she did not build a nest but laid eggs in the hollows in tree branches. The *ngoio* said that she made a nest, so that when she laid eggs, the wind would not blow them away. The *ngoio* built her nest and laid her eggs, and the *kīrarahu* just found a hollow in a tree branch and laid her eggs. This is what the two birds have done ever since. Incidentally, this is why some Micronesian names for the White Tern translate to 'lazy bird' (Segal 1987:21).

[5] The fowl and the turtle were born in Havaiki-te-a-raro of the same parents, according to a tradition from Anaa (Emory 1947:62). According to Mo'o, a priest of Bora Bora, the turtles were born first, to Tū-moana-urifa and his wife Rifarifa, then the fowls were born of the same parents (Henry 1928:380-381).

gallus) and a turtle (*tifai*) had an argument: the turtle said that it had more prestige because it was sacred to the gods, whereas the fowl would be eaten by women and children. The fowl scornfully replied that it was the turtle that would be eaten; the bird would dive into the depths of the ocean and escape from humans. However, at that moment, a man picked up the turtle and took it to his king to be eaten. The fowl then tried to dive into the sea, but he was caught by a party of women and children passing by and taken to their home. This is how the fowl became a domestic animal and food for women and children (while the turtle became a delicacy for the aristocracy). While the Māori stories explain why the fur seal and the *toroa* parted company with their respective friends, the *koreke* and the *kākāpō*, this tradition describes how the *moa* became a domestic animal.

Another version of that Tuamotuan narrative is reminiscent of the Māori stories because it also raises the question of whether the sea or the land is the best place to live. According to this second version, a turtle swimming in the ocean told a *moa* standing on the shore to come into the water, but the *moa* replied that the turtle should come ashore. The turtle refused because it did not want to have to eat excrement (*tūtae*), and the *moa* also declined the turtle's offer because he was reluctant to eat nothing but seaweed (*rimu*). The turtle then said to the *moa* that he was disreputable (''aore ōu roʻo'), whereas it was esteemed (ʻe roʻo tōʻu'), being a *tapu* animal. Thus, this story is not just about *roʻo* (renown), but it is also about food: the *moa* thought that the best food could only be found on land, but for the turtle the best food was in the sea.

Another story about a bird being disgusted by the food eaten by another bird comes from Mungiki (**58**). The *taba* (Brown Goshawk, *Accipiter fasciatus*), the *mangibae* (Eastern Osprey, *Pandion cristatus*) and the *ngupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) were brothers.[6] They came from the underworld, Tengaangonga. The *taba* caught his food first, and came back with a string of snakes. However, the *mangibae* was not impressed at all, and he told his younger brother that the forest was full of pigeons, thus convincing the *taba* to eat his own brothers. The *taba* came back with a string of pigeons, which he ate raw; he also ate the snakes. Then, the *mangibae* caught his food, and came back with a string of parrotfish, which he ate raw. Since then relatives have been fighting with each other, and *mangibae* have been eating fish, and *taba*, pigeons and snakes.

[6] The osprey was the oldest; for some informants the pigeon was in the middle and the goshawk was the youngest, but for others the pigeon was the youngest.

In a version collected in Mugaba, the *taba* and the *magibae* are not brothers but friends, and there is no *gupe* (**58A**). The two friends made their nest together. One day, they went separately to get their food: the *taba* went to the bush to catch birds, and the *magibae* went to the sea to catch fish. The *magibae* was first to return to the nest with some fish, and he waited for his friend. But when the *taba* came back with his catch of snakes and rats, the *magibae* found them so disgusting that he stamped on their nest and his fish and flew away.[7] The two friends separated forever. In this version the motif of the *taba* eating his own brother is absent; this version focuses instead on the disgust triggered by the food brought back by the *taba*, which explains the separation.

A Mungiki narrative about the *taghoa* (Australian White Ibis, *Threskiornis molucca*) explains this time the feeding habits of this bird: *taghoa* leave their perching tree in the morning, and only come back in the evening (**59**). A female *taghoa* waited all day long in her tree for the male to return home; when she angrily reproached him for coming back so late, he retorted that he had been to the far end of the island. Since then *taghoa* have been going out early in the morning, flying off a long way in search of food, and only returning in the evening.

b. Races and games of hide-and-seek

A variant of the story of the *kākāpō* and the *toroa* introduces a game of hide-and-seek: the two birds have a contest to decide who will be the master of the land (**54**). This notion of competition is absent from the aforementioned version. The birds agreed to take turns at hiding on a piece of open land with very little cover. The *toroa* hid first, but the *kākāpō* soon found him because his white plumage was very conspicuous. He hid a second time, but again, before long, the *kākāpō* found him. The *kākāpō* then hid; he covered his head with a *piupiu* fern and lay down on a bare patch of land. The *toroa* looked everywhere but could not find the *kākāpō*, until the latter laughed out loud, thus revealing his hiding place. The *kākāpō* hid a second time; he used the *piupiu* again so as not to be found. The *toroa* flew backwards and forwards over the land but failed to discover him. Because of this shortcoming, he was banished to the ocean by the other birds, who considered him unfit to dwell

[7] The collectors wrote that the people of Mugaba had ‘a horror of rats and snakes’.

on the land. In this version, the *toroa* is clearly defeated, whereas in the aforementioned version he goes to sea of his own accord.

The game of hide-and-seek played in another version of that story is not a contest to decide who will be the master of the land, but a way to ascertain whose plumage provides the better camouflage (it is again about being safe from people). The *kākāpō* and the mollymawk[8] became friends at a gathering of all the birds. The mollymawk suggested that the new friends exchange places of residence, but the *kākāpō*, who did not like the idea very much, replied that the white and grey plumage of his friend would make him too conspicuous on the land: unlike the *kākāpō* with his green plumage easily camouflaged in the foliage, the mollymawk would not be able to hide from his enemies. The mollymawk then suggested that they put it to the test by taking turns at hiding. The mollymawk tried to hide, but the *kākāpō* could still see him. When the *kākāpō* hid, however, his friend looked for him for a long time, but in vain. He then went out to sea, while the *kākāpō* remained on the land.

In ʻUvea, Niue and Mugaba, it is not two birds who play a game of hide-and-seek, but a plover and a hermit crab. They also race with each other. In ʻUvea, one version of the story explains why there are many hermit crabs on the islet of Nukuhifala (off the east coast of the island), while another version explains why the islet of Nukutapu (off the northeastern coast) belongs to the people of Alele (**60**). The first version has it that the *kiu* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*, or Ruddy Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*) accused the hermit crab (*ʻuga*) of being slow of foot, so the two fought. When the *ʻuga* pinched his leg, the *kiu* cried in agony, and the *ʻuga* declared itself the winner. The *kiu* then raced with the *polili* (Wandering Tattler, *Tringa incana*). The *ʻuga* wanted to race with the *kiu*, but it told him that they should sleep first. While the bird was sleeping, the *ʻuga* crawled out of its shell, and when the bird awakened, he saw the shell and, not suspecting that the *ʻuga* was gone, went back to sleep. The *ʻuga* thus won the race, and told the assembly of *kiu* that they could not live at Nukuhifala, because it was the ruler there now, so the *kiu* flew away to Nukuhione and Nukuteatea. To this day there are many *ʻuga* at Nukuhifala.

According to the second version, it was the islet of Nukutapu that was contested between the people of Vaitupu and those of Alele. To settle the matter, they decided to organise a race; the former chose the *kiu*, and the latter, the *ʻuga*; Vaitupu was to be the starting

[8] In Aotearoa, ʻmollymawkʼ is the usual term for some smaller species of albatross.

point, and Nukutapu the arrival point. The two animals agreed to start the race at sunrise, but during the night the *'uga* crawled out of its shell and ran away. In the middle of the night the bird awakened, but he assumed that the *'uga* was still sleeping. At sunrise, the bird started racing, but it was too late: as he was about to reach the islet, the *'uga*, which was already there, told the bird to go away because Nukutapu now belonged to the people of Alele; ashamed, the *kiu* flew away to Nukuteatea. For Mayer (1976:159), this story reflects the opposition between the villages of Vaitupu and Alele. It also explains why some *motu* have more *kiu* and why others have more hermit crabs.

In the Niuean version of that narrative, the hermit crab (*ugamea*) plays exactly the same trick on the poor *kiu*,[9] but the object of the race is different: they do not race to a *motu* to claim its ownership (Niue has no *motu*), but to the ocean to ascertain who is going to own the water (**60A**). Because the *ugamea* wins the race, the sea becomes its home, and the defeated *kiu* has to rest on rocks. This version is thus reminiscent of the Māori 'parting of ways' stories of the *koreke*/fur seal and the *kākāpō*/*toroa* in their opposition between land and sea, which does not appear in the Uvean versions. The difference, though, between the Niuean tradition and the Māori ones is that only the latter are about finding safety from humans.

In Mugaba, just as in the first Uvean version mentioned above, the race between the plover and the hermit crab is triggered by the bird's remark that the crab walks like a weakling (*sehu lologi*), whereas he can fly strongly and to distant places (**60B**). The *sibiu* (Greater Sand Plover, *Charadrius leschenaultii*) challenged the hermit crab (*'unga*) to a race; the latter agreed but asked him to wait for it to get ready. The *'unga* went and asked all its congeners to help it. When it returned, they started the race. The bird flew away and the *'unga* stayed behind. He asked the *'unga* where it was, and it replied, 'Here I am'. He flew away again, and then asked the same question, and heard the same reply, and so on until he exhausted himself, fell down, and died. The *'unga* then said, 'You have died, you who challenged, but only I am living', before eating the bird's stomach (*tina'e*). As Kirtley and Elbert explained, the *'unga* (which is a scavenger and 'may be seen piled up in heaps on Rennellese beaches') won the race 'against a swift opponent by stationing its relatives, indistinguishable from itself in appearance, along the course to be run'. The outcome of the race is the death

[9] Whereas in 'Uvea *kiu* can designate both the Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) and the Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), in Niue *kiu* only designates the former; Ruddy Turnstones are named *fulimaka* in Niuean.

of the bird, again tricked by the *'unga* but in a different fashion than in the Uvean and Niuean stories. This narrative is also less aetiological than the others as it does not explain why hermit crabs live in a particular place and why plovers do not.

Another tradition, from Niue, features again a *kiu* and a crab playing a game of hide-and-seek; but in this instance, it is the bird that is the victor (**61**). The *uga* (which is not the hermit crab but the coconut crab) hid first; the *kiu* spotted its claws before long and went to peck at it. Then the bird hid; the *uga* could hear his voice coming from above, but could not find him. The reason why people cannot find the nest of these birds[10] is that the *uga* failed to find the *kiu* then; this story is thus clearly aetiological.

Two Māori stories deal with a race between two species of bird. The first tradition accounts for the presence of one species and not the other on a particular group of islands, and the second story explains how a bird flew to the heavens, never to return to earth again. In Rakiura, the *kōkako* (South Island Kōkako, *Callaeas cinereus*) and the *tīeke* (South Island Saddleback, *Philesturnus carunculatus*) agreed to have a race to find out which bird flew faster (**62**). The *kōkako* thought that he was leading, but the whistle of his rival sounded away ahead in the bush. Every time that the *tīeke* heard the *kōkako* coming behind him, he flew ahead and whistled. He won the race and was recognised as the better flyer; thus, he flew to the Tītī (Muttonbird) Islands, where he is still to be found, whereas the *kōkako* remained in Rakiura. Unlike the *kiu* of 'Uvea, Niue and Mugaba, the *kōkako* is not tricked by his opponent; he is defeated because he is the slower flyer.

The second story is about the race of the *hōkioi,* or *hakuwai*,[11] and the *kāhu* (Swamp Harrier, *Circus approximans*) (**63**). The *hōkioi* was described as a huge red, white and black hawk-like bird, or as a bird resting on the mountain tops with black feathers tinged with yellow and green and some red ones on the top of his head. The *hōkioi* and the *kāhu* both claimed to be able to reach the heavens. As they were flying towards the heavens, they were

[10] Pacific Golden Plovers are migratory birds that breed in the Arctic tundra. A Fijian proverb says that something may be as hard to find as the egg of that bird (Watling 1982:150); cf. the Māori proverbs, or *whakataukī*, about unobtainable things, which mention another bird that breeds in the tundra, the *kuaka* (Bar-tailed Godwit, *Limosa lapponica*): 'kua kite te kōhanga kuaka?' ('who has seen the nest of the *kuaka*?') and 'ko wai ka kite i te hua o te kuaka?' ('who has seen the egg of the *kuaka*?').

[11] Tennyson and Martinson (2006:92) reported that the *tutukiwi* (South Island Snipe, *Coenocorypha iredalei*) became extinct in 1964. 'The species flew rarely in daytime, though would do so if sufficiently alarmed. A capable flier, its eerie, nocturnal, aerial display is thought to have been the basis of the mythical celestial bird Hakawai . . . Some of the South Island snipe's surviving relatives fly high into the air, give a brief whistling call, then descend at speed, making their tail feathers vibrate which produces a roaring noise like a jet.'

assailed by the winds and the clouds, so much so that the *kāhu* could not fly any higher, so he called out 'kei!' and flew back down. However, the *hōkioi* continued his ascent, disappearing into the heavens.[12] These two Māori stories seem to be the only published Polynesian traditions about two birds racing with one another.

Trickery

Elements of deception (on the part of the hermit crab) are apparent in some of the preceding stories. Trickery, however, is the central motif of many more Polynesian traditions about birds.

a. Theft

Red was throughout Polynesia a sacred colour.[13] According to a Māori tradition, the *kākā* (New Zealand Kākā, *Nestor meridionalis*) was the only bird with red feathers (**64**). The *kākāriki* (parakeet, *Cyanoramphus* sp.), longing for his *kura* (red feathers), offered to pick his lice (*kutu*). The *kākā* agreed, but after a time, when he was not looking, the *kākāriki* plucked all the red feathers on his head and flew away. The *kākā* called out, 'Whakahokia mai ōku raukura!' ('Give me back my red feathers!'), and pursued the little thief, but he could not catch him. This is why the *kākāriki* has some red feathers on his head, and why the only red feathers that the *kākā* can still boast are under his wings.[14]

In Rimatara, the thief is another psittacine, the *'ura* (Kuhl's Lorikeet, *Vini kuhlii*). He steals not just the red feathers of the poor *moho* (Spotless Crake, *Porzana tabuensis*), but all his colourful feathers (**65**). The *moho* was the most beautiful bird on the island with his

[12] In another version, the *kāhu* claimed that Hōkioi could not fly higher than the fernbird. Incensed, Hōkioi challenged the *kāhu* to a race to find out who could fly higher. When the *kāhu* saw a fern plain on fire, he flew down to prey on the animals escaping from the fire, but Hōkioi continued to fly to the heavens, and never returned to earth again.

[13] The word *kura* ('red') and its cognates (*kula, 'ura, 'ula, ku'a*) had on many Polynesian islands 'meanings connoting excellency and sacredness' (Handy 1927:131). In Hawaiian narratives, for instance, the colour red is 'constantly associated with the accouterments of chiefs' (Beckwith 1919:322).

[14] In another version, however, the thief is the *kākā* and the victim is the *kākāriki*. The *kākā* stole from the *kākāriki* his bright red plumage, procured in Motu-tapu, the sacred island of Tinirau, when he saw how much admiration those red feathers caused. The *kākā* jeered at him to make him confused, then plucked the feathers. He gave his own feathers to the *kākāriki*, and fled. Another story says that both birds got some of their feathers stained red by Tāwhaki's blood when the culture hero was slain (Best 1982:432).

multicoloured plumage. The *'ura*, however, was grey and dull, and he became jealous of the *moho*, who was admired by all. He waited for the *moho* to take a nap, then stealthily moved towards the sleeping bird. He started by stealing the green feathers on his wings, then the yellow feathers on his back, then the red feathers on his chest, then the blue feathers on his head. However, as he was in the middle of taking the orange colour of his legs and about to take the red colour of his eyes, the *moho* felt the beak of the *'ura* on his eyelid and woke up suddenly. Ashamed of having lost all his colours, the *moho* ran off to the marsh to hide. To this day the *'ura* flies around showing off his beauty, whereas the *moho* only comes out at night. Thus, the story not only accounts for the colours of each bird, but also explains why the *moho* is such a secretive crepuscular bird,[15] very much unlike the *'ura*.

In a Māori narrative, the thievish behaviour of a bird backfires on him to the point that he, and not the victim of the theft, goes into hiding (**66**). The *kōkako* (North Island Kōkako, *Callaeas wilsoni*) wished he were as beautiful as the much-admired *huia* (*Heteralocha acuti-rostris*). Thus, he borrowed the bill and the plumage of a dead *huia*; but instead of admiring him, the other birds all laughed and jeered at him, saying that although he tried to look like a *huia*, he was still a *kōkako*. This story may explain why the *kōkako* is 'skulking in habit' (Moon 1992:242).

A tradition from Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro accounts for a bird's entirely black plumage; its colour does not result from theft but from the refusal of his friend to paint him with other colours. In the Kapingamarangi version, the *moeho* (Micronesian Starling, *Aplonis opaca*) suggested to the *dala* (Spectacled Tern, *Onychoprion lunatus*) that they beautify themselves (**67**). The *moeho* painted his friend's feathers white using a mixture made of softened coral stones, then he painted the head black using charcoal mixed with water. The *dala* was now pretty (*hūmarie*). Subsequently, the *moeho* asked the *dala* to paint him, so the *dala* painted him all black with the charcoal mixture. The *dala* then went away, refusing to add some white spots on his friend's feathers despite his insistence; he said that it was enough and that it would do. The *moeho*, however, found that he was ugly (*huaaitu*), and complained that his children would be black just like him.[16] In the Nukuoro version, the

[15] In Tahitian, as a noun *meho* is the Spotless Crake, and as a verb it means 'to be hiding, or seeking a refuge among the bushes, as fugitives in war time' (Davies 1851:142).

[16] For Elbert, this story shows the 'dislike of being black'. In Nidula (Goodenough Island, Papua New Guinea), the bird painted black is not a starling but a crow. After the *bwaiobwaio* (probably the Torresian Crow, *Corvus orru*) had given the *ulo* (probably the Channel-billed Cuckoo, *Scythrops novaehollandiae*) beautiful coloured

same bird (called *moso*) closed his eyes (**67A**). His friend (whose species is not mentioned) picked up the container of black paint and poured it on the entire body of the *moso* before flying away. When the *moso* opened his eyes and looked all over his body, he was not happy at all. He said that if his friend landed on the ground he would beat him up; the friend replied that if the *moso* flew up in the air he would beat him up. This story explains why the *moeho*/ *moso* is black,[17] but it may also account for the fact that this bird eats seabird eggs: the antagonism between the two species may come for the Kapingamarangi and the Nukuoro from that episode.[18]

In all the above narratives, a bird is tricked by another bird. From Mungiki comes a tradition in which the thief is an insect (**68**). The *tuu* (Bronze Ground Dove, *Alopecoenas beccarii*) prised off bark every day, which he would beat to make a loincloth. The noise greatly annoyed the bagworm moth (*tukutuku*), which decided one day to find the source of this racket. When it arrived at the abode of the *tuu*, it saw the loincloth, put it on itself and stole it. The *tuu* then chased the moth to get his loincloth back, up and down a tree, but the moth was faster because of its spinning thread, and the exhausted bird just gave up. Since then,

stripes on his tail, the *ulo* painted the *bwaiobwaio* a dull and uniform black; the latter has been angrily chasing the former ever since (Young 1991:382).

[17] In Epi (Vanuatu), a narrative also deals with a bird painting his friend black, but its outcome is more an opposition based on habitat than one based on colours; neither does enmity spring up between the two birds. This narrative is more akin to a 'parting of way' story that explains why some fowls are domestic and live in the village, while others are wild and live in the bush. The *pukeke* (probably the Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*) adorned the fowl (probably the Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*) with red paint; the fowl then adorned the *pukeke* with some burnt charcoal and placed the red fruit of a tree on his forehead. They went to look at themselves. The *pukeke* told the fowl to stay in the village because he had been dressed up well; as for the *pukeke*, because he had been blackened, he would stay in the bush. The people of the village would give him food to eat there, yams, taro and bananas (Riddle 1915:167).

[18] According to Reichel and Glass (1990), Micronesian Starlings do eat seabird eggs; whether the Kapingamarangi and the Nukuoro had observed this or not is unknown, but if that was the case, the story may explain the behaviour of the starling eating seabird eggs in retaliation for the trickery of the tern.

the *tuu* has been mourning the loss of his loincloth, weeping every day.[19] This narrative thus accounts for the plaintive call of this bird.[20]

Finally, a bird tricks a fish in a tradition from Mugaba (**69**). The *baapenupenu* (Moustached Treeswift, *Hemiprocne mystacea*) asked the trevally (*hu'aaika*) to give him its tail, in exchange for some of his feathers. The fish obliged him, but the bird took it and flew away, and the fish went out to sea. The story explains why the *baapenupenu* has a forked tail like that of the trevally. But in Pukapuka, it is the fish that steals the tail of a bird (**290A**). The *tavake mokomoko* (White-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon lepturus*) perched on a coral rock in the lagoon. All the fish in the lagoon tried one after the other to pull out the bird's long tail feathers, even changing their colours to blend in with the colour of the sea, but each time the wary bird saw the fish approaching and flew off. The *wūmoemoe* (stareye parrotfish, *Calotomus carolinus*), changing its colour three times to the various colours of coral formations in its background, sneaked up to the bird unnoticed, and managed to close its teeth around his tail feathers. The *tavake mokomoko* wriggled out of its jaws, and flew off without his tail feathers. This is why to this day the *tavake mokomoko* has a short tail compared with the *tavake toto* (Red-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon rubricauda*). The other fish grabbed the feathers from the *wūmoemoe*, and inserted them in their fins and tails: this is why some species of fish have long fins or long tails today.

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[19] The call of the *tuu* is a 'long monotonous series of deep flat *hoop-hoop-* notes' (Dutson 2011:311). A story from Lifou accounts for the melancholy call of another species of dove, which is either the Red-bellied Fruit Dove (*Ptilinopus greyi*) or the Pacific Emerald Dove (*Chalcophaps longirostris*). Two friends, the dove and the pigeon (probably the Metallic Pigeon, *Columba vitiensis*), whose ancestors were humans, took a long journey together with their respective (human) grandmothers and a rat, the pigeon's friend. After a while they became very hungry and looked for food everywhere, but could not find anything to eat. The situation became desperate, so the pigeon came up with a plan that he said would save both his and his friend the dove's lives. However, he first made the dove promise that he would carry out his instructions. The pigeon told him that he would do whatever his friend told him to do. The pigeon then said that each bird would peck out his grandmother's eyes and eat them. The dove was shocked and very sad, but he had to abide by his promise because he never went back on his word. His grandmother agreed to have her eyes gouged out with a small wood stick. The pigeon, however, pecked out the rat's eyes. The happy pigeon and the sad dove both ate their food; then, they flew back to their grandmothers. They called them by name as they approached the place where they had left them, but only one answered; the dove's grandmother lay dead. He mourned her loss, and his sad lamentations can still be heard today – the Pacific Emerald Dove's call is mournful and monotonous (Dutson 2011: 307). As for the pigeon, he laughs all day (Hadfield 1920:251-253). A variant of this story can be found in Laville and Berkowitz (1944:29-32).

[20] From Kavatch, near Hienghène (New Caledonia), comes a tradition that accounts for the plaintive call of the *mwen* (Eastern Barn Owl, *Tyto javanica*). The *mwen* and the *hŵawŵak* (New Caledonian Crow, *Corvus moneduloides*) wanted to go swimming. They took off their heads and left them on the shore so they would not get wet, and went to bathe. After a while the *hŵawŵak* got out of the water because he was cold, but the *mwen* said that he wanted to stay in. The *hŵawŵak* then stole the head of the *mwen*: he put it on, left his own head there, and went away. When the *mwen* found out that his head had been stolen, he cried bitterly. This is why the hooting of the *mwen* at night sounds so sad (Ozanne-Rivierre 1979:58-61).

All these stories, which account for the colours of a bird's plumage, his distinctive call or the shape of his tail, only result in anger, shame or sadness. Other narratives about trickery have more dramatic endings.

b. Harm and death

One of the most widespread Polynesian narratives about *manu*, whose versions have been collected in a few Polynesian Outliers and most areas of West Polynesia (but not in East Polynesia),[21] is that of the Buff-banded Rail (*Gallirallus philippensis*) and the Australasian Swamphen (*Porphyrio melanotus*). The storyline differs slightly in each version, but some elements appear in most of them: one of the birds (usually the Buff-banded Rail) is tricked by the other into eating excrement; he takes revenge by convincing the other bird to put his leg in a tridacna, which closes on him, trapping him;[22] when the tide comes in, the poor bird is either saved just in time, or drowns.

A Futunan version, for instance, says that the *veka* (Buff-banded Rail) and the *kalae* (Australasian Swamphen) went fishing on the reef (**70**). The *kalae* stepped further away to defecate, and caught a *moa* (Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*), whose feathers he used to 'adorn' his own excrement to give it the look of a *moa*. He then told the *veka* to stop fishing and to go and catch a *moa*. The *veka* ran and found what he thought was a *moa*, but in his struggle with it he got his eyes and his body all covered with excrement. Wild with anger, he went and washed himself in the shoal. The *kalae* then told him to stop crying and to forgive him, but when they went back to fish, the *veka* noticed a big clam shell (*vasua*). He persuaded the *kalae* to put his finger in it so they could take it away. The bird's leg got stuck as the clam shell closed. The *veka* ran back to the shore and urged the tide to come because he had been humiliated by the *kalae*. The *kalae* implored the *veka* to throw down stones to protect him from the incoming tide, and told him, crying, that he would surrender many of his own possessions to him. But the *veka* refused and urged the tide again to come. When the water level reached his beak, the *kalae* begged the *veka* again, but to no avail. The tide came in, and the *kalae* drowned. The same bird (called *manuāali'i*) also dies in a Samoan version

[21] This may be because, as was noted before, no species of *Porphyrio* seems to have lived prehistorically in tropical East Polynesia.

[22] In West Futuna, however, it is a squid (*feke*) which seizes the bird's leg and holds it firmly (**70G**).

of the story which does not include the excrement-eating episode (**70B**). If the *ve'a* does not help his friend, it is not out of revenge, but simply because he accuses him of being a savage (*fe'ai*) taro plantation (*maumaga*) raider.

In Niuean versions, the scatological element is present in a different form: the *kulē* (Australasian Swamphen) decided one day that only he should eat sugarcane, bananas and taro, and that the *veka* should only eat excrement (**70C**). Very angry with the *kulē*, the *veka* used a charm so that the legs of the *kulē* would get stuck in the clam shell. It eventually opened again, but by then the legs of the *kulē* had become red and quite elongated from all his efforts to free himself, which explains the red and long legs of the *kulē* to this day. The *kulē* then chased and caught the *veka*, whom he repeatedly struck on the head with a tree branch, so that his head was split in several places; the marks are still visible today.[23]

A version collected in West Uvea is again about excrement, but does not feature the revenge episode with the tridacna (**70D**). The *veka* and the *kalae* lived together, roasting and eating tubers every day. One day, the *veka* left his friend for a moment, but when he came back he found that the *kalae* had eaten all the tubers; there was no food left for the poor *veka*. Thus he had to go to the bush where the *kalae* had defecated after eating all the tubers, and he ate the excrements. Since then, the *kalae* has been eating tubers, as well as sugarcane and bananas, which he steals from people's fields, whereas the *veka* goes to find his food where people defecate.

In Mungiki, the trickster is not a swamphen, but another long-legged bird, the *kangau* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*).[24] The victim of the 'scatological joke' is the swamphen – Buff-banded Rails are indeed absent from the island.[25] The *beka* (young Australasian Swamphen) and the *kangau* were friends, and would eat their food together (**70E**). One day, when the *beka* was not looking, the *kangau* broke open his friend's yam (*'uhi*) that was being roasted, took out the mash, and defecated inside. Then he put the two parts of the yam back together, and ate the mash. When the *beka* returned, he noticed that the yam was broken, but

[23] The Buff-banded Rail's 'crown, nape and eye stripe are chestnut-brown contrasting strongly with the greyish white eyebrow' (Watling 1982:75).

[24] A variant from Mugaba has a much smaller bird, a *maghighape* (Rennell Fantail, *Rhipidura rennelliana*), playing the part of the *kangau* (**70F**).

[25] In West Futuna, the trickster is also a Pacific Reef Heron (*matuku*), but his victim is a *veka*, as in the Futunan, Niuean and West Uvean versions (**70G**).

the *kangau* told him that it probably broke because it was overcooked. The *beka* then ate his yam, and complained about the rotten and putrid taste; but the *kangau* said that his own yam tasted the same. When the *beka* had eaten the whole yam, the *kangau* told him that he had just tricked him into eating his faeces. Thus the *beka* chased the *kangau*, but could not catch him.[26] The *beka* was very angry with the *kangau* and looked for a way to take revenge on him. After becoming friends again, they went to the sea together. The *beka* dived down, found a tridacna (*haasua*), and removed its entrails with his prodding stick (*nao*). The *kangau* wanted one for himself and begged the *beka* to teach him how to do it, so the *beka* told him that he just needed to push his leg into the clam, twist his leg, and pull up the entrails. When the *kangau* dived down and found a tridacna, he put his leg inside, but the clam closed up. He begged the *beka* for help, but the *beka* reminded him of his past trickery and flew away. Fish came along and swam around the clam, but it did not open. Eventually a turtle came and hit the clam, whose shell broke into pieces; the leg of the *kangau* was freed.[27]

Some versions of this very widespread narrative are more aetiological than others: some account for each bird's eating habits – Buff-banded Rails being omnivorous scavengers, and Australasian Swamphens being infamous all over West Polynesia and the Polynesian Outliers for raiding plantations[28] – as well as physical characteristics such as the marks on the head of the former or the long and red legs of the latter. One may wonder whether the story

[26] This is why to this day the *kangau* flies to the shore when he is frightened by people at sea, and flies to the ocean when he is frightened by people on the shore, and why the *beka* has been eating faeces ever since.

[27] A version from the Loyalty Islands differs from all the previous stories in that it does not feature rails (but a dove and a gull) or any scatological motifs; however, the argument is again about food. Two friends, the dove (probably the Red-bellied Fruit Dove, *Ptilinopus greyi*, or the Pacific Emerald Dove, *Chalcophaps longirostris*) and the seagull (probably the Silver Gull, *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*), were flying together, looking for food. The dove, having sharper eyes than the seagull, always spotted food before his friend, but the seagull always claimed to have seen it first, and thus ate all the food. The dove became very hungry. When the dove spotted a large clam shell in the shallow water, the seagull agreed to give him all the food that they had found if he left the clam to him. The seagull swooped down and inserted his beak in the clam, but the clam closed, catching the bird's head and neck. The seagull died, and the dove has enjoyed an abundance of food ever since (Hadfield 1920:230-232).

[28] Some ethnographers, anthropologists and ornithologists noted the dislike of swamphens on the part of Polynesians because these birds fed on bananas, yam and taro, and could wreak havoc on their plantations, for instance Davenport (1968:143) in Taumako, Elbert and Monberg (1965:134) in Mugaba, or Cibois and Thibault (2019:12) in Rotuma. In Tonga however, the *kalae* was held sacred by some people, who 'were in the habit of tying together a bunch of these birds, and taking it about with them'; such a bunch was tattooed on the throat of the priest connected with the bird's worship (Collocott 1921:161). In Niue, Loeb (1926:190) reported the belief that when a swamphen (*kulē*) heard the people abusing him, 'He has long legs, a long head, and long excrement', he got very angry with them, flew to their plantations, and ate everything up – this is why people stopped abusing the *kulē*.

sprang from people having actually observed birds with their legs stuck in a tridacna. Some versions are more humorous than others: the scatological element (eating faeces unintentionally) made the story very funny to its audience.[29] There does not appear to be any similar narratives in East Polynesia.

In Hawai‘i for example, the only trickster story featuring birds that has been published is that of the rat, the trickster, and the *pueo* (Short-eared Owl, *Asio flammeus*), the victim which gets revenge (**71**). The *kupua* ‘Iole (Polynesian rat, *Rattus exulans*) and Pueo lived in Kohala. Pueo was a farmer who worked hard at night; ‘Iole was lazy and kept stealing Pueo’s sweet potatoes (*‘uala*). ‘Iole dug a tunnel to reach Pueo’s garden without being seen. When Pueo realised that most of his *‘uala* were gone, he was very angry with ‘Iole, so he pecked a hole in the gourd that the human keeper had filled with water for ‘Iole. However, the man struck him with a stick of wood and broke one of his legs. Pueo then called to ‘Io (Hawaiian Hawk, *Buteo solitarius*), and told him what had happened. ‘Io blamed Pueo for pecking the *hue wai*, but Pueo cried and said that he was hungry because his *‘uala* had all been stolen. ‘Io looked at the man and could not help Pueo because the man was stronger than him. When Pueo’s leg was well again, he sought out an expert in rat shooting, and heard about the *kupua* Pikoi-a-ka-‘alala from O‘ahu. He went to O‘ahu, befriended Pikoi, and told him about ‘Iole’s misdeeds. They sailed to Hilo, where, from the top of a hill, Pikoi shot an arrow that instantly killed a sleeping ‘Iole in Kohala. This story may explain why owls hunt for rats.

Finally, the following narrative from Aniwa may account for the antagonism between fowls (the trickster in the story) and crocodiles; it primarily explains why the latter are not found in Aniwa (**72**). It appears to be the only Polynesian tradition featuring both species.[30] In Aniwa, a little red hen was bored and wished to go to Tanna. She tricked all the crocodiles into forming a line between one island and the other, under the pretence of wanting to count how many crocodiles there were in Aniwa. She jumped on their backs all the way to Tanna, counting the crocodiles. As she got there, she started laughing and told them that they had been duped as her only intention had ever been to go to Tanna. However, she spoke too soon: the last crocodile on whose back she was still standing opened its mouth and pulled out all her tail feathers. Ashamed and looking ridiculous, the little hen ran to hide in the

[29] In Mungiki for instance, Kuschel (1975:48) observed that ‘the audience is often eagerly waiting to hear famous, funny incidents like the reef heron tricking the young swamp hen into eating its feces.’

[30] In the Polynesian culture area, only some Outliers are inhabited by saltwater crocodiles (*Crocodylus porosus*).

bush, crying; as for the crocodiles, angry at having been deceived, they all left the island to go and live further north.

Complementarity

Not all the stories featuring two birds (or a bird and another animal) are about opposition (argument and separation, or contest), or about tricksters and their victims getting revenge. A very small number are about rescue or exchange.

In Futuna, the life of a *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) was saved twice by an ant (**73**). Lo‘ata (ant) and Lupe were close friends. The bird would fly from tree to tree, and the ant would always follow him, crawling on the ground and keeping an eye on him at all times. One day, an eagle (*akuila*)[31] spotted the *lupe* and wanted to prey on him, but the ant noticed the eagle flying above them. When the eagle alighted on a tree, the ant climbed up and stung him in the eye; the eagle fell down to the ground and died. A man then found the dead eagle, cut his wings, put him in a bag, and returned home. The following day, the same man went hunting; as the ant was telling the *lupe* how it had saved his life the previous day and how much it loved him, it spotted the hunter and climbed down the tree in which the two were conversing. Just as the man was about to shoot the *lupe*, the ant stung him on his knee, and the shot missed the bird. The ant and the *lupe* then fled together to the forest.[32]

In Pileni, it is the life of a *kovā* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*) that is saved by a turtle; the bird later reciprocates by saving the turtle’s life (**74**). A *kovā* was fishing on the reef, when a clam (*paua*) bit his leg. When the rising tide reached his neck, he asked a fish coming towards him to break open the clam; but the fish told him to wait for someone else to come and help him. Another fish came along, and that fish made a similar answer. A turtle then swam by, and the *kovā* promised the turtle that he would help it in return some day. So,

[31] From Latin, *aquila*. There is no eagle in Futuna, but the Swamp Harrier (*Circus approximans*) is an accidental visitor (Thibault, Cibois & Meyer 2014:31).

[32] In Ambae (Vanuatu), a hen’s chicks are saved by a kite in what is primarily an aetiological story about yams. A hen and her ten chicks came across a wild yam (*gigimbo*). The yam got up and ate one of the chicks. The chicks then called out to a kite, who told the hen to put them under him. When the yam asked the kite where the chicks were, he replied that he did not know. As the yam rebuked the kite, the bird seized the yam, flew high up in the air and dropped it. Another kite then took it up and dropped it to the ground again. The yam was thus broken into two parts, whence some yams are good and some are bad (Codrington 1891:364).

the turtle slammed into the clam with its bottom and broke it to pieces; the *kovā* thanked the turtle, vowing to help it one day, before flying away (this part of the story is similar to the aforementioned narrative of the swamphen or heron whose leg gets stuck in a tridacna, but without the involvement of the *veka*/*ve'a*). Later on, the villagers caught some turtles to have a feast (including the one which had saved the *kovā*), and those were all put inside a fence. The *kovā* came and pulled the fence up, so that all the turtles ran away. The following morning, the villagers tried to shoot the *kovā*, but he defecated into a man's eyes.[33]

These two 'rescue' stories do not seem to be aetiological, unlike the following 'non-rescue' story, again from Pileni (**75**). The chief (*aliki*) of the *kio* (Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*) would take them to the reef at low tide to find food. But one day he stepped on a clam (*paua*), which bit his leg. He asked for help, but all the *kio* ran back to shore. The tide started rising; he cried as loud as he could, but he eventually drowned. This is why *kio* are now afraid to go down to the sea.

Stories of exchange too are distinctly aetiological; birds can exchange places of residence,[34] or feathers. A variant of the Māori story of the *toroa* and the *kākāpō* (**54**, see *supra*) recounts that the *toroa* lived on land, but his white plumage made him very conspicuous, and he was easily seen and killed. The *kākāpō* lived at sea, but his green plumage was not deemed suitable there. Therefore, the two birds simply exchanged places.[35] In Mungiki, the *kangae* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*) and the *taghoa* (Australian White Ibis, *Threskiornis molucca*) exchanged their feathers (**77**). The *kangae* wanted the white

[33] In a cognate from the Nggela Islands (Solomon Islands), the heron (*soo*) caught his foot in the coral, and the tide came in. He asked a shark, a crocodile and all the fish to come and save him, but none of them did. When a turtle came, the *soo* gave it a sea urchin to eat, so the turtle smashed the stone to free him. The *soo* then promised that he would save the turtle's life if ever it was in danger. Later, the turtle was caught by some fishermen. The *soo* came, danced in front of the boys who were watching the turtle (before it was supposed to be killed) to distract their attention, and released the turtle, which went back to sea before the people found out that it was gone (Codrington 1891:357-359).

[34] In a Tuamotuan story (from Anaa), two birds do not exchange places of residence, but come to an agreement on where each will live (**76**). The *kuriri* (Wandering Tattler, *Tringa incana*) and the *tōrea* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*) lived on the beach. The *kuriri* asked his friend who should call out when flying along the beach. The *tōrea* replied that the call of his friend was louder; he could not do it because his call was too weak, but what he wanted for himself was a startling cry. The *kuriri* agreed, and said that he would live right next to the water, and his friend, a bit more inland.

[35] A turtle and a bird also exchange places of residence in a narrative from Malekula (Vanuatu) to be safer from people (Deacon 1934:727). The turtle (*nambwa*) dwelled in a tree and the *netew malau* (Vanuatu Megapode, *Megapodius layardi*) dwelled in the sea. One day, the bird jumped onto the shore and saw the turtle in its tree. He told the turtle that people would see it there and kill it because it was not strong, but that he should dwell on land because he could run away if people came. So the two animals exchanged places.

feathers of the *taghoa*, who coveted the dark feathers of the *kangae*. But while the *taghoa* put the dark feathers on top of his own tail feathers (on the outside of his rump) to make them visible, the *kangae* put the white feathers under his own tail feathers. The two birds boasted about their new feathers, but the *kangae* had to flutter to show off his. This is a characteristic of the *kangae* to this very day: he flutters and wiggles his tail feathers as he walks to expose the white feathers on his rump.

2. Plurality

Unlike the narratives in the preceding section, aetiological stories featuring a large number of birds and other animals seem to be absent from East Polynesia, with the notable exception of the Māori war between the landbirds and the seabirds (for possible explanations, see Appendix 3).

Landbirds and seabirds, or birds and fish, are at war

In Polynesian narratives, two wars featuring armies of birds were fought: the Māori war between the landbirds and the seabirds, and the Samoan war between the birds and the fish.[36]

The freshwater cormorant was given a fish caught in the ocean by the saltwater cormorant, but his throat was wounded by its spines (**78**). He told his friend that in the river eels were much better because they were smooth and slippery. The saltwater cormorant was then given an eel caught in the river by the freshwater cormorant, and he liked it so much that he asked his friend to give him part of his domain, and he would give him part of his in return.

[36] From Niue comes a story about the war between the birds (*manu lele*) and the crawling animals (*manu totolo*), but it is first and foremost a story about the *peka* (Pacific flying fox, *Pteropus tonganus*). The birds won some days, and the crawling animals won the other days. The *peka* pretended to be a bird when the birds won (by unfolding its wings), and when the crawling animals won, it claimed to be one of them too (by showing its teeth). However, the *manu* were not deceived by its treachery, and they drove it away one day; this is why the *peka* must fly alone at night (Loeb 1926:194-195). The *peka* comes out as the winner, though, in another Niuean story. The *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) and the *peka* had a dispute over who carried his head best: the *lupe* argued that he carried his head up in the air beautifully, but the *peka* replied that it carried its offspring with it when flying, while the *lupe* left his offspring in his nest. The *peka* then gave a demonstration, and the *lupe* was thus defeated (Loeb 1926:203).

But the freshwater cormorant objected. The saltwater cormorant then went to raise an army to attack all the landbirds and seize their domain. The freshwater cormorant also raised a fighting force to resist the attack.

At dawn, the *pītoitoi* (North Island Robin, *Petroica longipes*) cried to awaken all the birds. The freshwater cormorant, the *kawau*, asked who would go as a scout to locate the enemy; the *koekoeā* (Pacific Long-tailed Cuckoo, *Urodynamis taitensis*) volunteered.[37] The *karoro* (Kelp Gull, *Larus dominicanus*) led the advancing army of the seabirds; he shrieked when he heard the *koekoeā*. The *kawau* then asked who would advance and challenge the enemy; the *pīrakaraka* (New Zealand Fantail, *Rhipidura fuliginosa*) volunteered. He grimaced, glared and danced with his *taiaha* (long wooden weapon) before the enemy, and cried his challenge to them.[38] The *kawau* then asked who would conduct the *karakia* of war over them; the *tūī* (*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*) came forward.[39] He told the *hōngē* (North Island Kōkako, *Callaeas wilsoni*) to start the air of the chant, the *tīraueke* (North Island Saddleback, *Philesturnus rufusater*) to recite the words, Tāne-te-waiora (Tomtit, *Petroica macrocephala*)[40] to do the invocation, the *pīpīwharauroa* (Shining Bronze Cuckoo, *Chrysococcyx lucidus*) to conclude the *karakia*, and the *kūkū* (New Zealand Pigeon, *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) to make the final response; all obliged him. Then, the *kawau* asked who would begin the battle, and the *ruru* (Morepork, *Ninox novaeseelandiae*) volunteered. He rose, lifted his *pouwhenua* (long weapon), and his eyes glared at the advancing army of the seabirds. The *kākā* (New Zealand Kākā, *Nestor meridionalis*) then rose, advanced with his weapon, the *ō kākā* stone,[41] and glared at the enemy. Both birds jeered at and challenged the seabird army. Then the battle broke out, and the seabirds were defeated, so they fled

[37] According to another version, it is the *miromiro* (Tomtit, *Petroica macrocephala*) who was appointed by the landbirds as their scout (*torotoro*) to watch the movements of the enemy, because of his keen vision (the Māori idiom *kanohi hōmiromiro*, meaning 'sharp-eyed', comes from the observation that the *miromiro*/*hōmiromiro* has keen eyesight), his ability to move rapidly, and his knowledge of the marks left on fallen leaves and on the ground (Keys 1923).

[38] As was noted in III-2, the Māori *haka* may have had its origin in the observation of the restless fantail jumping from side to side (Andersen 1926:28).

[39] Māori had pet *tūī* that could recite *karakia* (Orbell 2003:67). See the story of Tāne-miti-rangi (**133**) in VII-1.

[40] According to Williams (1906:198).

[41] *Ō kākā* were small stones believed by Māori to be carried by *kākā* to serve either as hones to sharpen their beak or as a means to assuage their thirst on long flights (Best 1977:196).

back to the sea, while the *pārera* (Pacific Black Duck, *Anas superciliosa*) laughed. Never did the seabirds come back to the domain of the landbirds.[42]

As Orbell (1995:182) explained, the 'main sympathies' of the Māori 'were naturally with the land, so in myths the land generally wins over the sea'. Food is the origin of the conflict between the two parties, as in many narratives of the previous section. The difference between this tradition and the previous stories, though, is that the conflict between the two cormorants leads to a large-scale war – not only did the saltwater cormorant covet the delicious eels, he and his army of seabirds attempted to seize the entire domain of the landbirds to gain possession of all its food supplies. The saltwater cormorant suggested that they exchange a part of their respective domains. The exchange did not eventuate, though, unlike in the preceding stories of the *toroa*/*kākāpō* and the *kangae*/*taghoa*, because the freshwater cormorant simply did not want to eat fish with spines that hurt his throat. In the story, each species of landbird has a particular role to play, depending on his vocal, physical or behavioural characteristics. In the end, the narrative explains how the land came to be the domain of the landbirds, and why shearwaters and petrels rear their young on land.

In Sāmoa, the war waged by the birds against the fish is, again, about food (**79**); because the birds prevailed, they can now catch fish in the sea or the river as they please, just like the landbirds of Aotearoa which are now the masters of the land and all its food supplies. At least five different versions of this story were collected and published; despite their variations, all are aetiological. According to one version, the birds were defeated by the fish, and the frigatebird[43] and the pigeon were captured, but the birds meditated on their loss, whereas the fish boasted stupidly. The birds then attacked the fish in revenge; the *gogo* (Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*), the *matu'u* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*) and the *tulī* (wading bird) were the pursuers of the rearguard, and the fish were vanquished. This is why birds have the right to go to sea to catch fish. The *inaga* (whitebait), however, blamed the large fish of the sea for the debacle, because they had attacked the birds without waiting for the

[42] Another version specifies that the first rank of the mighty seabird army was composed of the albatross, the Australasian Gannet (*Morus serrator*) and the Kelp Gull (*Larus dominicanus*), with other seabirds following closely. The Swamp Harrier (*Circus approximans*) pursued and killed the fleeing seabirds, and the New Zealand Falcon (*Falco novaeseelandiae*) darted in and out among them. In this battle, the *tītī* (Sooty Shearwater, *Ardenna grisea*, or Cook's Petrel, *Pterodroma cookii*) and the *tāiko* (Black Petrel, *Procellaria parkinsoni*, or Westland Petrel, *Procellaria westlandica*) were made prisoners. This is why those two seabirds lay their eggs and rear their young on land, to this day.

[43] *Atafa* is the Samoan name for both the Great Frigatebird (*Fregata minor*) and the Lesser Frigatebird (*Fregata ariel*).

inaga to arrive and take part in the battle. The *inaga* then fought another battle with the birds, clinging and sticking to their eyes and bodies, and the birds were defeated. This is why the *inaga* can swim up the river to the mountains, the domain of the birds.

In Lesson's version of this story, one of the birds, when diving to attack the fish, caught a pregnant moray eel, which he carried to the mountain. Forced to live in a foreign environment, the eel changed into a snake; there have been snakes in Sāmoa ever since.[44] In Pritchard's version, the fish took two prisoners, the *gata* (snake), which was transformed into the *pusi* (moray eel), and the *gogo*, captured by a fish (the *tuga*)[45] in whose skull the bird is now to be seen. Thus, it is a bird that is responsible for the presence of a snake in Sāmoa in Lesson's version, whereas in the other version the snake predated the war between the birds and the fish, and the transformation of the animal is in the opposite direction.

Birds and other animals go on a trip in a canoe

The most widespread Polynesian narrative featuring *manu* is the story of the trip in a canoe taken by various animals. It has been collected on most islands and island groups in West Polynesia and the Polynesian Outliers (as well as in many parts of Melanesia and Micronesia).[46] The plot can be divided into two parts. In the first part, birds and other animals, including a rat (and often a hermit crab), take a trip on the ocean in a canoe, which they have often built themselves; when the canoe sinks, for various reasons, on the open sea, the birds fly away, the hermit crab sinks down to the bottom of the ocean, while the rat has to swim back to shore. The second part deals with the rat and an octopus (sometimes a turtle), which saves the life of the poor exhausted rat by carrying it back to shore on its head; but the rat plays a trick on the octopus, either defecating on its head or eating up all the hair on its head, or its brain; when the rat is back on land and the octopus realises what has happened, the latter tries to kill the rat, sometimes unsuccessfully. Only the first part of the story will be

[44] The Pacific boa (*Candoia bibroni*) is the only species of snake (*gata*) present in Sāmoa. According to Gill (1993:86-87), it may have been introduced by Polynesians 'either accidentally or deliberately'.

[45] This *tuga* may be the *tuganini* (large-toothed cardinalfish, *Cheilodipterus macrodon*) (Jordan & Seale 1906: 252).

[46] Lessa (1961:245-264) discovered more than 130 Oceanic versions of that story and found (1961:263) that 'all the Polynesian stories occur in the western part of the culture area'.

analysed here, since in most cases the second part does not feature any birds.[47] It is the second part, however, that contains the most salient aetiological elements – the smooth head of the octopus and the enmity between rats and octopuses.[48]

In Sāmoa, the rat (*'isumu*) and the hermit crab (*uga*) made a ship out of dry breadfruit tree wood and hibiscus twigs (**80**). The *tulī* (wading bird) then came, wishing to ride with them; they allowed him on their ship. When they encountered a great storm, the ship sank, and the *tulī* flew away. In Niue, the story features the same characters: the rat (*kumā*), the coconut crab (*uga*) and the *kiu* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*), who built the canoe together (**80A**). A Tuvaluan version says that it was the *tuli* (Pacific Golden Plover) who was about to sail his canoe, when the *uga* and the *kimoa* (rat) came along (**80B**). The *tuli* asked them what they would do were the canoe to sink. Because the *uga* said that it would stick onto a rock and the *kimoa* said that it would swim ashore, both were allowed to go.

Other versions (from Pukapuka, Kapingamarangi, Tonga, Tokelau) say that many birds were on the canoe, not just a plover. In Tokelau for instance, the *uga* (hermit crab) was the captain of the canoe (**80F**). It went bonito-fishing with its crew, the *tuli* (Pacific Golden Plover) at the bow, the *vahavaha* (Ruddy Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*) next to the bow, the *kimoa* in the middle, and the *akiaki* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*) at the bailing place (the *uga* sat at the stern). In 'Uvea, the rat (*kuma*) and the hermit crab (*foi uga*) were accompanied by two birds: the *tala*[49] and the *veka* (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*); they all made a canoe from the leaf of a banana tree (**80G**). The rat and the hermit crab were accompanied by a *kataha* (Lesser Frigatebird, *Fregata ariel*) and a dog (*kungi*) in Mungiki (**80H**), and by an *ube* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*), a pig and a dog in Pileni (**80J**). In West Futuna, the ship was built by the animals under the leadership of the crab: a dove, then a pigeon, then a flying fox, then a rat all heard the noise and came to enquire; the crab told them all to come and help (**80K**).

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[47] Except for three Samoan versions in which the octopus asks a *lulu* (Eastern Barn Owl, *Tyto javanica*) to kill the rat, which is devoured by the bird – the same fate befalls the rat in a version from Mota (Vanuatu) (Codrington 1891:361-364). In Nukuoro, the rat, which all the animals want to kill because of its trickery, is discovered under a coconut shell on the beach by a *dilidili-dogi* (Grey-tailed Tattler, *Tringa brevipes*), but it manages to run away (**80M**).

[48] In Polynesia, octopus lures were often shaped like rats (Spennemann 1993:42).

[49] In East Uvean, the *tala* is the White Tern (*Gygis alba*); however, for Mayer the bird referred to in this story told by a woman from Futuna could also be the Pacific Kingfisher (*Todiramphus sacer*), *tikotala* in East Futunan.

A Tongan version explains why the canoe sank: it was not a storm that capsized it, but a *sikotā* (Pacific Kingfisher, *Todiramphus sacer*) who pecked a hole in the bottom (**80E**). Similarly, in the Uvean version it is the *tala* who repeatedly pecked the banana tree leaf. In West Futuna, the kingfisher was also responsible for the sinking: just before the launch of the ship, a kingfisher came and asked the animals to take him with them, but they spurned him, asking him where he was when they were building the ship. Angry, the bird flew to the top of a mountain and watched the ship as it reached the open sea; he flew after the ship and crippled it. A Mugaba version also has a *ligho* (Pacific Kingfisher) hitting and smashing the canoe (**80I**). In a version from Ifira, the culprit is an unspecified bird which may again be a kingfisher, judging from his 'large beak' (**80L**). Many birds and a rat went from Efate to Ifira on a large banana tree leaf. One of the birds warned his friends not to leave any food scraps or crumbs in the canoe when they all had their lunch, in the middle of the passage to Ifira. However, a bird dropped some yam crumbs, and when he tried to peck at them with his large beak, he made a hole in the canoe, which sank as a result.

In Nukuoro, the rat (*gimoo*) and the rooster (*gaago*) share the responsibility of the sinking (**80M**). When the animals were out at sea, the rat became hungry, so it started tearing open the basket of excrement that the *gaago* had packed for his lunch, and ate it. It spilled into the canoe; the animals asked the *gaago* to bail it out, but he refused to do it, arguing that it was the rat that had torn the basket open. The rat said that it would not bail it out either because that food belonged to the *gaago*. They kept arguing until the canoe began to sink.[50]

In Pileni, the culprit is not a bird but a pig: while the animals were fishing, the *ube* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) suggested that they all sing a song; the others told the bird to sing first. The *ube* sang, and his voice sounded very good ('na leo e lavoi

[50] In Nauru, the culprit is the rat alone, which gnawed at the canoe. In one version, the rat did not take part in the building of the ship, but ate almonds; when the birds asked the rat for some, the rat claimed that there were no almonds left and only threw them empty shells. In another version, the birds tried to find water while they were building the ship because they were thirsty; but each time a bird went to the well to fetch some water with a coconut shell, the owner of the well drove him away and emptied his coconut shell; eventually, the hermit crab succeeded in bringing back some water after biting and killing the owner of the well (Petit-Skinner 1978:65-66). In a Nemi version (New Caledonia), the rat, whose only companion on the trip was a *kniik* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*), chewed the sugarcane that the canoe was made of, because it was very hungry; eventually, the whole boat was eaten up (Ozanne-Rivierre 1979a:220-229) (see other versions, collected in the north of Grande Terre in the Haeke language and the Nyelâyu language in Coyaud [1979:206-208], and collected in Houaïlou by Jacqueline de La Fontinelle in Petit-Skinner [1978:63-64]). In Maré (Loyalty Islands, New Caledonia), the rat had no role in the sinking, although it did eat sugarcane. The birds and the rat went to Toka (Tiga) in their canoe to steal someone's possessions; there they ate sugarcane. On the way back to Maré, the owl (*meni*) was the pilot and the buzzard (*wadongo*) was at the helm. When the full moon rose, the owl was blinded and could not see the way. The canoe ran aground on Tiga's reef, the birds flew away and the canoe sank (Poirier & Dubois 1948:25-26).

karoa'). Then the rat sang, then the dog sang, and their voices sounded good too. But when the pig sang, the others laughed at its voice; angry, it stamped on the canoe (made of a giant taro leaf), which sank. Finally, in Mungiki, it is the hermit crab that provokes the sinking of the ship, by farting and making holes in it.

In most of the versions of this story collected in Polynesia, the birds have a similar role: they build the canoe, and fly away when it sinks, leaving the poor rat alone. In some of them, a bird, usually a kingfisher, pecks holes in the canoe, provoking its loss. No cognate of this story seems to have ever been collected in East Polynesia.

Other stories

Two other traditions, from Tuvalu and Nuguria, feature various birds. Both are aetiological, in that the first one explains why *tala* (Greater Crested Tern, *Thalasseus bergii*) are treated well by all the birds, and the second one accounts for the fact that *hiko* (Beach Kingfisher, *Todiramphus saurophagus*) eat hermit crabs.

In Vaitupu (Tuvalu), the birds prepared a feast and a stone oven (*umu*), and the *gogo* (Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*) volunteered to guard it while the birds went to bathe (**81**). But a monster (*tupua*) came, threatened to eat the *gogo* if he did not open the oven, and took the food away. When the birds returned, they chased the *gogo* away and prepared another feast. The *upaitoi* (young of the Lesser Frigatebird, *Fregata ariel*, or of the Great Frigatebird, *Fregata minor*)[51] then volunteered to guard the oven, but the same thing happened with the monster. The third time around, it was the small *tala* who came forward, so despite his size the birds left him in charge of guarding the oven. When the monster came, it was killed by the *tala*, whom all the birds have since then treated with respect.

In Nuguria, the leader of the *hiko* called all the *hiko* to a meeting on an island away from their homes (**82**). The meeting started, and after a while all the birds became hungry, so their leader asked other birds if they would go and find some food for them so they could continue their meeting, but all declined his request. He then sent some young *hiko* to gather nuts. When they reached the island where the nut trees grew, they played and swam until sunset instead of gathering nuts. Because the other *hiko* got hungrier and hungrier, they sent some

[51] According to Child (1960:16).

parrots (possibly the *heena*, Coconut Lorikeet, *Trichoglossus haematodus*) to find the young *hiko*. When they found them and told them that all the *hiko* were waiting for their food, the young *hiko* grabbed some hermit crabs because looking for nuts would take too much time and they would get punished for being so late. Thus, they flew back to the island where the meeting was held, carrying hermit crabs instead of nuts. All the *hiko* then realised that no nuts had been brought, only hermit crabs, which they refused to eat; so their angry leader told the young *hiko* to eat all the hermit crabs themselves; that is why *hiko* still eat hermit crabs today.[52]

Like the stories of the Māori war between the landbirds and the seabirds and the Samoan war between the birds and the fish, and some versions of the destruction of the canoe pecked at or eaten up by hungry animals, the Tuvaluan and Nuguria narratives are about food: protecting a feast in an *umu*, and procuring hermit crabs instead of nuts for the hungry *hiko*.

3. Human and bird

The Polynesian narratives in this section deal with the physical (or sometimes vocal) characteristics of birds which are attributed not to the action of other birds or animals, but to that of men and women, most of them being culture heroes.

Explanation for red or black marks and colours

Because red was considered a sacred colour throughout Polynesia, many stories explain why some species of birds have a red plumage or a red bill. The red colour of the beak and frontal shield of the *pūkeko* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*), for instance, was accounted for by Māori in various narratives which all revolve around blood.[53] Three traditions mention the culture hero Tāwhaki, and one, Māui.

[52] Beach Kingfishers are strictly coastal, and their chicks are fed on crabs (Webb 1997:39; Hadden 2004a:172).

[53] Blood stained the bill of another bird: the *parea* (Chatham Pigeon, *Hemiphaga chathamensis*). A tradition from Rēkohu has it that when Hine was in labour, Tinirau confined her in a house (**181B**). The fog settled and with it came *parea*, who helped Hine deliver her child and thus got stained by her blood, hence their red bill.

One version has it that Tāwhaki, on his long journey up to the heavens, met the *pūkeko* coming down (**83**). The bird brushed against him with his wings in a very rude fashion. Outraged, Tāwhaki seized him by the beak (of a dull, nondescript colour), which he pinched so hard that it has been a brilliant red colour ever since. According to another version, the *pākura*[54] and the *matuku* (Australasian Bittern, *Botaurus poiciloptilus*) met Tāwhaki on their way down to earth. They were looking for a cooler place to live as the heavens were dried up by the sun. Tāwhaki, who was ascending to the heavens, noticed that the forehead of the *pākura* was stained with blood, so the *matuku* explained that the bird had been struck by Tama-i-waho for pilfering and eating his food (shellfish). Another story features Tāwhaki, but in a different context. Punga was the father of the *pūkeko*, but Tāwhaki asked to be his foster-parent (**84**). After cutting his hand with an adze while building the house Rangi-ura, he smeared some blood on the bird's forehead to mark the fact that the bird was now his foster-child.

The tradition that involves Māui uses blood to account for both the red bill of the *pūkeko* and the red spots on the head of the *kākāriki* (parakeet, *Cyanoramphus* sp.) (**85**). While she was bathing in the sea, Māui's wife was sexually assaulted by Tuna-rua, a giant eel. She told Māui, who decided to kill it. She went back to the spot where she was assaulted, and lured the creature to the shore while Māui hid nearby. As soon as it was out of the water, he rushed out upon it and attacked it with his *toki* (axe), Mātoitoi. He cut off its tail and threw it into the forest; he cut off its head and threw it into the sea; he rolled its huge trunk into a stream. A *pūkeko*, frightened at the noise of the fight, ran away, but in passing, his beak and legs got splashed by the monster's blood. The blood also splashed onto a *kākāriki* sitting in a tree nearby. Some of it settled on his head, which has remained red to this day.[55]

In a story that explains how the birds of Taumako acquired their distinctive markings, it is not the blood of an eel but that of a pig that is smeared on birds (**86**). Taumako was home to Vailape, a man-eating pig, and a *pakola* (ogress), who ate so many people that the survivors decided to leave the island altogether. One woman, Kahiva, was left behind, however. She dug a hole to be safe from Vailape and the *pakola*, gave birth to twin boys, Lauvaia

[54] *Pākura* is another Māori name for the *pūkeko*.

[55] Māui is also responsible for inflicting red or black marks on various birds when he was trying to make fire (see IV-4). In Hawai'i, he rubbed the top of the head of the *'alae* with a fire stick. In Mugaba and Mungiki, he struck the fire stick on the bill of the *kangae/kagae*. In the Cook Islands, he singed the corners of the eyes of the *kākāia* and the *kakavai* with it.

and Hemaholuaki, and raised them in the hole. The two boys eventually ventured out of the hole, and they killed the *pakola*, and then the pig. They butchered the pig and carried its meat back home for their mother to cook. Then they called all the birds of Taumako. They wanted one of them to fly to Pileni and tell the people of Taumako who lived there that Vailape and the *pakola* were now dead. First, they chose the bat (*peka*), put bristles of the pig on its back so that it would be recognised, and asked it to fly right inside the men's house and answer the people's questions by fluttering its wings if the answer was yes, and by staying still if the answer was no. However, before being out of sight of land, the bat got tired and returned to Taumako. Then, the two boys chose the *miki* (probably the *mihi*, Cardinal Myzomela, *Myzomela cardinalis*), whom they smeared with the pig's blood; they gave him the same instructions. He went further than the bat, but tired and returned. Next, they selected the *lenga* (probably the Palm Lorikeet, *Charmosyna palmarum*), whose legs they painted black with the pig's cooked blood. The *lenga* went further than the *miki*, but he also tired and returned. The same happened with all the different species of birds of Taumako. Finally, Lauvaia and Hemaholuaki asked the *vili* (probably the Coconut Lorikeet, *Trichoglossus haematodus*), and smeared his beak with dark blood. He flew straight to the men's house belonging to the Taumako people in Pileni. They understood that both Vailape and the *pakola* were dead and that Kahiva wanted them to return to Taumako; thus, they all went back to their island.

According to a West Futunan tradition, the head of the Cardinal Myzomela was tainted red not by pig blood smeared on him, but by the blood of an ogre's anus (**87**). An ogre (*ta pasiesi*) ate all the people on the island but for a few children that he saved for later meals. Led by the culture hero Majihjiki, the children eventually escaped and were pursued by the ogre. As he was trying to climb up a tree to reach his victims high in the branches, the ogre fell to his death. The children, however, were too scared to climb down, so they sent various animals to check if the ogre was really dead: a black ant bit him on the legs, arms and eyes, but the ogre did not make a move; a fly buzzed in his ears, but again the ogre stayed motionless. Still unconvinced, the children sent all the other animals, until only one animal was left, the *manumea* (probably the Cardinal Myzomela). The black bird told the children that he would find out for sure whether the ogre was dead or still alive, and he flew into his mouth, then emerged from his anus. The ogre's red bottom coloured the head of the bird when he got out, hence the red colour of his head today, whereas the rest of his body is still

black (the children now truly believed that the ogre was dead, climbed down the tree, and resettled their original villages).[56]

Finally, in Sāmoa, two birds received their red or black colour for being unruly (**88**). They were singed not by a fire stick, but by burning yams. Le-fanoga, the son of Tangaloa-a-ui, was very unruly. He prepared an oven for his father, and put some yams on the hot stones. He went surfing with his brother Laʻa-mao-mao. They enjoyed themselves so much that they did not come back in time to open the oven, despite their father's repeated injunctions. The yams were all spoilt and burnt. Tangaloa was so angry with his sons that he took a burning yam and threw it at Le-fanoga, whose body was burnt in several places; he turned into a *lulu* (Eastern Barn Owl, *Tyto javanica*), hence the reddish spots on that bird. Tangaloa threw a blackened yam at Laʻa-mao-mao, who turned into a black *matuʻu* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*). Le-fanoga flew away to Upolu, and Laʻa-mao-mao, to Manono.

All these Polynesian narratives attribute the red or black colours of the bird to fire (or a burning item) or blood.[57]

[56] This story is also found in neighbouring Tanna (Ray 1901:149-150; Humphreys 1926:95-97; Bonnemaison 1997:101-106; Gardissat 2004:246-250). In Guiart's version (1956:12-13), the twins, called Kasesaw and Kanyapnin, first sent a *bwelëng-bwelëng* (Pacific Robin, *Petroica pusilla*), who pecked the arm of the dead ogre, Semsem; the ogre did not move. The second bird, a *sül* (Coconut Lorikeet, *Trichoglossus haematodus*), perched on his body; again, Semsem did not move. Then the *kawiya metameta* (Cardinal Myzomela, *Myzomela cardinalis*) entered his mouth and came out of the anus; he brought back to the twins some clotted blood.

[57] The plumage of the bird children of Hehea in the Tahitian account of the origin of the first *maro ʻura* was also coloured all red when the two birds drank the blood coming from their mother's nose (**10**, see IV-2). In the Keraki (Trans-Fly, New Guinea) story of the origin of the bullroarer, Tiv'r, the Originator, was married to Engu, who had a sexual malformation preventing her from having proper sexual intercourse with her husband. She was, however, pregnant with the bullroarer. Intrigued by its characteristic whining sound coming from inside Engu's abdomen, Tiv'r ordered the birds to steal it. Several birds tried one after the other, by swooping down on her when she was bending her back to sweep the village; but each time she sat down just in time to foil the birds' attempts. *Karara*, the parrot, however, was almost successful; he drew blood from Engu, hence his red plumage. Eventually, a little bird, the *serekute*, managed to snatch the protruding bullroarer from her vagina – causing her first menstrual blood to flow – and took it to his master (Williams 1969:307-308). As Dundes (1980:182) argued, this story shows 'the semantic connection between bullroarer and female procreativity'; for an analysis of the cult of the bullroarer in Australia and New Guinea as a phallic cult, see Van Baal (1963). In Polynesia, only Māori seem to have had bullroarers, called *pūrerehua*, but Best (1925:162-164) did not mention any accounts of their origin.

Explanation for the shape of a bird's beak and a bird's running habit

Various traditions account for the peculiar shape of the beak of some bird species, inflicted on the bird by a man or a woman, often as a punishment. In Polynesia, the beak of four species was of particular note and thus features in aetiological narratives: the long and decurved bill of the female *huia*, the short bill of the *lulu*, the bill of the *lupe* with its characteristic black cere, and the sharp bill of the *ligho*.

A Māori story tells of a *rangatira* who caught in his snare a beautiful female *huia* (*Heteralocha acutirostris*) (**89**). He plucked two of her tail feathers, which he placed in his hair. He cast a spell on the bird, commanding her to come to him whenever he desired, then he let her go. However, one day, the bird was nesting when she was summoned, so she came with her tail feathers all ruffled, which made the *rangatira* very angry.[58] He asked her why the feathers were in such a bad state, and she replied that it was because she had been sitting on her nest. He then told her that he would remedy the situation, took hold of her, and bent her beak into a circular shape. Thus, when sitting on the nest, she would be able in future to pick up her tail feathers with her beak and lift them clear of her nest.

The beak of the *lulu* (Eastern Barn Owl, *Tyto javanica*) is cut as a punishment for snatching a child away in a Niuean tradition (**90**). A father left his three children to go to the bush, after telling them that if a bird came, they should not jeer (*amuamu*) at him. While he was away, however, a *lulu* came, and the children taunted him, so the bird snatched one of them away. When the father returned home and discovered what had happened, he covered his house to conceal it from view and told his two children to mock the *lulu*, while he himself was hiding. The children did as they were told: when the bird came, they called him *lulu mata popoko* ('hollow-eyed owl'). When the *lulu* rushed towards them (after having asked whom they were with), the father seized him and cut his beak so that it is short up to this day.

In Sāmoa, Sina's husband Tulau'ena was murdered by his older brother Tulifauiave while they were out at sea to catch bonito, because Tulifauiave wanted to make Sina his wife (**91**). Fearing that her husband might be dead, Sina asked the *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) if he had seen him, but the bird answered that the 'pig' had just left after

[58] For Māori, as Johansen (1954:202) put it, 'life is and must be perfect and whole', and 'perfection is a matter of course'.

talking to him. Angry at the *lupe*, Sina put a rock on his nose, which is how the bird got the cere on his bill.[59] Finally, in Mungiki, Mautikitiki observed the birds and noticed the strong beak of the *ligho* (Pacific Kingfisher, *Todiramphus sacer*) (**92**). Thus he decided to make that bird his servant. He used him to get firewood. The *ligho* pecked it with his beak, which became very hard; it is like this to this day.

A narrative from ʻUvea also explains why *veka* (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*) run on the ground instead of flying up in the air (**93**). Pokume was married to a *veka*. He told her to go with him and work on the plantation. She first said that she could not work, but her husband insisted; so she went to the chief of the *veka* and begged him to summon all the *veka* to help her, because she could not possibly do all that work alone and she feared that she might be beaten up by her husband. The chief of the *veka* accepted, provided she prepared an oven of food for him. The tribe of *veka* worked on the plantation, but in the afternoon a violent storm arose. Pokume told his wife to help him set up a house, but she refused, arguing that her wings would shelter her from the rain. However, heavy rain started falling and she got very cold. She then begged Pokume to let her into the house that he had just put up, and where he had lit a fire. Once inside the house, wrapped up in bark cloth blankets, she fell asleep, but Pokume took her over to the fire, and she woke up because of the heat and cried. Pokume then hit her and broke the ends of her wings; she escaped and disappeared into the bush.[60]

If *kiwi* (*Apteryx* sp.) too run on the ground instead of flying, it is because, according to a Māori tradition, one was punished by the *patupaiarehe* (fairy folk) for refusing to deliver a message (**94**). *Kiwi* used to have strong wings and a beautiful plumage. They were the friends and servants of the *patupaiarehe*, who helped the birds in their search for food; the birds in return acted as messengers between the various clans of *patupaiarehe*. One day, the chief of the *patupaiarehe* asked his personal *kiwi* messenger to deliver invitations for a great gathering of the fairy clans. But the *kiwi* refused to go, arguing that he was tired. As he went to sleep, the chief waved his *taiaha* (long wooden weapon) over the *kiwi* and the *patupaiarehe* recited a powerful *karakia*: the wings and tail feathers of the bird dropped off, and his

[59] Another version says that Sina stuck on his beak the food that she had been masticating, so he could be identified among all the other birds by that lump on his beak.

[60] ʻThough they can fly, [Buff-banded Rails] usually seek safety by running away quickly and hiding among the tall grass and bushes. If flushed they rise abruptly and fly somewhat ponderously, with legs dangling, but not far; after several wingbeats they glide and soon drop back to the ground' (Bregulla 1992:140).

feathers became dull. When he woke up, he cried. The chief then decided to give him strong legs so he could continue to be the messenger of the *patupaiarehe* – but he would have to run instead of fly.

Explanation for a bird's voice or call

Stories accounting for the plaintive or melancholy call of doves and owls, from Mungiki, Lifou and New Caledonia, were presented in the first section of this chapter, as they involved trickery by another bird or an insect. But in other narratives, the interaction with culture heroes explains the bird's voice or call.

According to a Māori tradition, the *piopio* (South Island Piopio, *Turnagra capensis*, or North Island Piopio, *Turnagra tanagra*) accompanied Māui when the latter, wanting to overcome death, journeyed with other feathered companions[61] to the land of Hine-nui-te-pō (**269**). When they all got to the home of Hine-nui-te-pō, the *piopio* started to sing to keep up Māui's courage, but he stopped half-way, and his song has remained half-sung ever after.[62]

Two stories from Luangiua and Tuvalu explain how the *'ivi*/*tuli* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*) got his particular call, when the trickster and culture hero Naleau twisted his tongue for having denounced him as a thief. The Luangiua version says that Naleau went to the island of Keloma where Hakuvave dwelled (**95**). Naleau stole Hakuvave's food, but his bird, the *'ivi*, witnessed the theft. Naleau asked Hakuvave what kind of bird he fed, and Hakuvave replied that he fed a black *heli* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*). Hakuvave told Naleau to let their birds fly, and Naleau replied that Hakuvave should let his bird fly first. The *heli* took to the air and called, 'kau, kau, kau!' In turn, the *'ivi* flew away, crying out, 'Naleau steals, Naleau steals!' Angry with his bird, Naleau transformed himself into a sandworm to lure the *'ivi* into pecking at it. When the bird got close enough, Naleau grabbed

[61] Māui's other bird companions were the *tīwaiwaka* (New Zealand Fantail, *Rhipidura fuliginosa*), the *riroriro* (Grey Gerygone, *Gerygone igata*), the *miromiro* (Tomtit, *Petroica macrocephala*), the *toutouwai* (North Island Robin, *Petroica longipes*, or South Island Robin, *Petroica australis*) and other birds of the forest. For an analysis of the episode of the death of Māui crushed between the thighs of Hine-nui-te-pō and of the role of birds in his demise, see X-1.

[62] Buller (1888:I,27) reported that the song of the *piopio* consisted 'of five distinct bars, each of which is repeated six or seven times in succession; but he often stops abruptly in his overture to introduce a variety of other notes, one of which is a peculiar rattling sound, accompanied by a spreading of the tail, and apparently expressive of ecstacy'.

him, held him firmly, and turned his tongue. The *'ivi* then flew away, calling, 'kivi, kivi, kivi, kivi!' This is still his call today.

In the Tuvaluan version, Naleau (born as a lizard from a boil on his father's head) and his friend wanted to make a feast of soft coconut mash (*pōi*), but Naleau had to steal from other people because he had no land (**95A**). As he was climbing up a coconut tree, a *tuli* cried out, 'Tuli, tuli, Naleau ko kaisoa ki te niu o tino' ('Tuli, tuli, Naleau is stealing people's nuts'). Naleau then caught the bird, and twisted his tongue so that from now on he would cry out his own name instead of Naleau's. Naleau climbed up the coconut tree again to take some nuts.

The same bird (*dilio*) features in the Lau Islands tradition that recounts the adventures of Tui Liku (**44**, see IV-5). Tui Liku was taken from Tuvana to Burotu by Ligadua, the son of the king of Burotu. His spirit reached Burotu but his body remained on the beach; he visited Burotu four times. However, on his fourth return to Tuvana he noticed that a *dilio* had been pecking at his body and that one of his eyes had been pecked out. Since that day the *dilio* of Tuvana have been calling out all day long, 'Tui Liku, Tui Liku!'[63]

Explanation for a bird's colours

Many stories account for the colours of a bird's plumage. In Aotearoa, Māui asked the birds, one after the other, to fetch him water (**96**). The *tīeke* (North Island Saddleback, *Philesturnus rufusater*) refused, so Māui threw him into the water. The *hihi* (Stitchbird, *Notiomystis cincta*) would not obey either; Māui threw him into the fire, and his feathers were burnt.[64] The *tōtōara* (North Island Robin, *Petroica longipes*), however, fetched him some water: Māui rewarded him by giving him white feathers on his forehead.[65]

In a Hawaiian tradition, Māui is actually responsible for all the colours of all the birds: originally, only he could see birds; ordinary people could only hear them (**97**). They would

[63] Angry, Tui Liku did not want to get back into his damaged body, but Ligadua told him that he had no other choice, so Tui Liku returned reluctantly into his body, went back home and was thereafter known as Matadua, the one-eyed one.

[64] Male *hihi* have a yellow neck and shoulder band.

[65] For an analysis of this story, see McRae (2017:129-130).

hear the flutter of their wings, and the beautiful and mysterious music of their voices. Māui himself had painted the bodies of the birds, but those were invisible to the people: he kept the delight of the birds' colours to himself. One day, however, he decided to make these colours visible to the people. They have been able to see and admire the birds ever since.

In Mugaba and Mungiki, as well as in Sāmoa, it is not Māui but Sina who is responsible for the colours of some bird species. In the first case, the birds come to her wanting to be coloured, whereas in the Samoan story it is Sina who goes to them, asks them if they have seen her missing husband, and rewards them by giving them colours.

In Mugaba, Sina, a *kakai* (culture heroine), was rubbing her turmeric (*ango*)[66] when the birds came to her, wanting to get some colours (**98**). The *suusuubagu* (Rennell White-eye, *Zosterops rennellianus*) was the first one, but Sina did not give him any colours. He just stood there and some turmeric spilled on him, so his skin turned yellow. Then came the *baghigho* (Cardinal Myzomela, *Myzomela cardinalis*); Sina took him in her hand, so he became red. She took hold of the legs of the *gupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*), and they became red as well. She grabbed the abdomen of the *higi* (Silver-capped Fruit Dove, *Ptilinopus richardsii*), and it turned red. After grating her turmeric, Sina rubbed a *tapa* with the cord of the turmeric. The *sibigi* (Yellow-bibbed Lory, *Lorius chlorocercus*) came and had his body rubbed with it by Sina. She removed her morinda flower necklace and put it on the bird's neck. Then, she mixed water with resin and tattooed the *ligobai* (Barred Cuckooshrike, *Coracina lineata*) with it. She also tattooed the *manutangionge* (Shining Bronze Cuckoo, *Chrysococcyx lucidus*), the *kaageba* (possibly the Pacific Long-tailed Cuckoo, *Urodynamys taitensis*) and the *taba* (Brown Goshawk, *Accipiter fasciatus*). Finally, the *ghaapilu* (Rennell Starling, *Aplonis insularis*, or Singing Starling, *Aplonis cantoroides*) came, but Sina did not tattoo him, putting instead some black on him; so, he turned black. Each bird flew away after being coloured by Sina.[67]

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[66] For a study of the aesthetic, cosmetic and ritual uses of the pigment produced from the roots of this ancient cultivar in the Polynesian Outliers, and of the connection between turmeric and sexuality, see Bayliss-Smith (2012:116-124).

[67] Fish, too, were coloured by Sina according to some traditions from West Polynesia and the Polynesian Outliers. In Pukapuka for example, all the fish were pure white in Yina's time. Standing on the seaward side of the reef one day, Yina, who was menstruating, called the fish to her, making them believe that she was going to feed them. When the fish came to her, she grabbed them, scratched them with her fingernails, leaving marks and stripes of various colours on many different species of fish. She stained red two species with their own blood after having inserted her hand into their cloaca; another fish was stained bright red from swimming near where her menstrual blood had dripped; another one, trying to swallow her coconut husk menstrual pad, got

The aforementioned Samoan story of Sina looking for her husband Tulau‘ena (murdered by his older brother Tulifauiave while they are out at sea because Tulifauiave covets Sina) offers an example of birds receiving colours as a reward for being helpful, like the Māori *tōtōara* who fetched Māui some water (**91**). After asking the *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) if he had seen her husband (see preceding section), Sina asked the *manuāali‘i* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*) the same question. When the bird replied that Tulau‘ena had just left, Sina put her mat’s feathers on his nose as a reward. Then she encountered the *manumaā* (Many-coloured Fruit Dove, *Ptilinopus perousii*), who said the same; Sina gave him her white mat for his breast. Then she came across the *manutagi* (Crimson-crowned Fruit Dove, *Ptilinopus porphyraceus*): she gave him her red feather tuft and her red mat for his nose, and her white short-haired mat for his breast. Finally, the *sega* (Blue-crowned Lorikeet, *Vini australis*) told her to strike a woman named Matamolali in the face with her coconut frond. Sina gave the *sega* her red feather tuft for his chest, a whale tooth necklace for his beak, and her brown mat for his tail feathers.

Finally, in a Futunan narrative, the Blue-crowned Lorikeet (*hega*) is also rewarded for providing information (**99**). A man asked several birds where the sun rose. The *misi* (Polynesian Starling, *Aplonis tabuensis*) and the *motuku* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*) replied that they did not know, so the man made the legs of the *misi* much thinner, and the beak and the legs of the *motuku* much longer. The *hega* replied that it was the *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) who knew where the sun rose; the man gave him some green and white feathers. The *lupe* replied that it was the eagle[68] who knew; the man made his legs red and his face pale (the eagle then took the man on his back and flew to the sun, where the man found a cure for his sick father).

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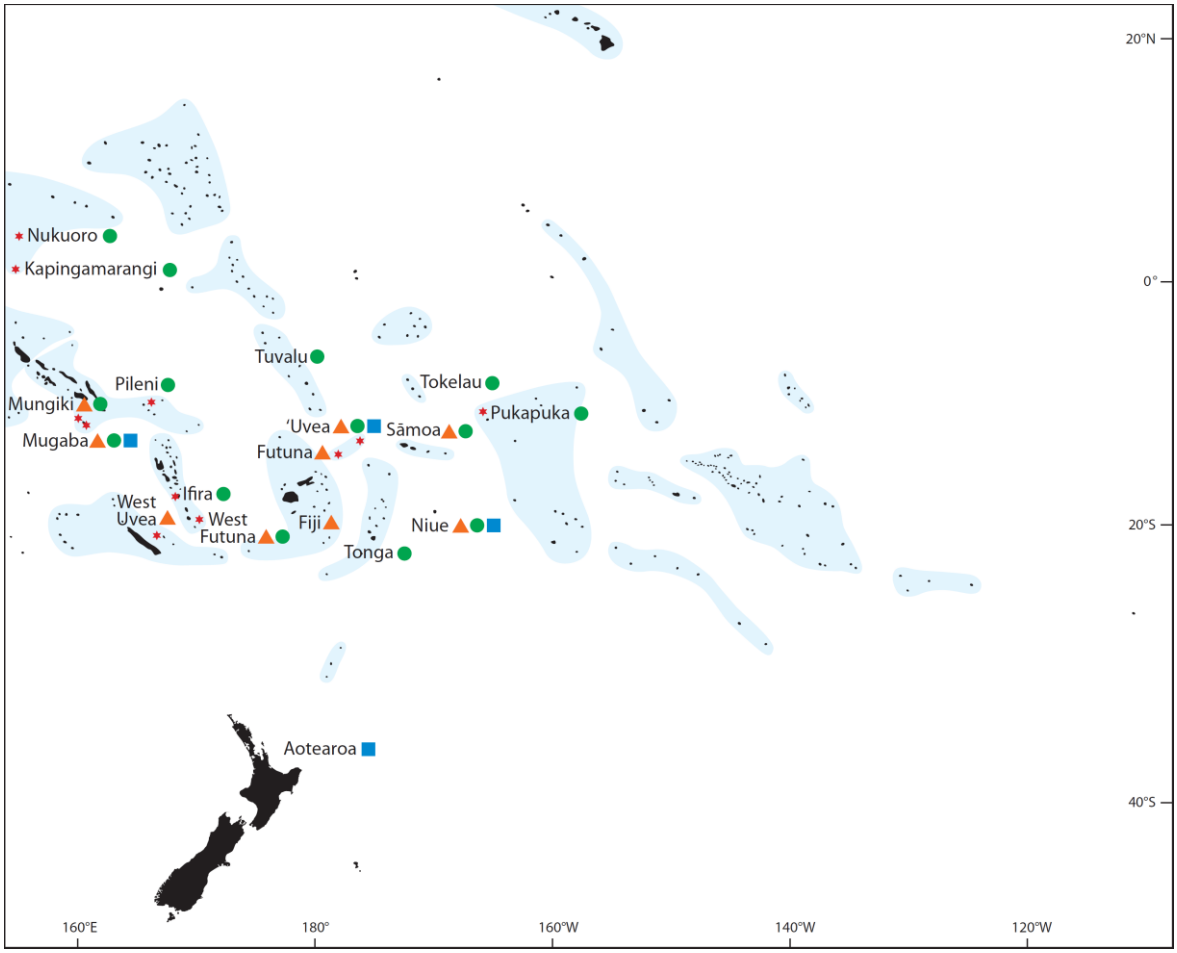
Among Polynesian ‘animal stories’, stories involving two characters thus deal much more frequently with opposition (separation, contest or deception) than with complementarity (rescue or exchange), whether they feature two birds or one bird and another animal (rat, crab, fish). Narratives about a plurality of species are mostly limited to the Māori war

the pad stuck in its throat, where it has remained to this day. She also tore the tail of a whale in two (Beaglehole & Beaglehole 1936:13-14). Less ‘brutal’ versions can be found in Tokelau (Burrows 1923:155) and Niue (Smith 1903:98), as well as in Tonga (**203D**) and Luangiua (**203C**).

[68] There is no eagle in Futuna, but the Swamp Harrier (*Circus approximans*) is an accidental visitor (Thibault, Cibois & Meyer 2014:31).

between the landbirds and the seabirds, the Samoan war between the birds and the fish, and the animals' trip in the canoe. These 'animal stories', as well as all the traditions in which the origin of the characteristics of each species of bird is attributed to the action of men and women (especially culture heroes), reveal that birds have not always looked, sounded or behaved the way they do now: a particular event, described in all those aetiological narratives, has triggered a change in their appearance, voice or behaviour that has become permanent.

Figure 15. Aetiology stories



▲ A bird tricks another bird into eating excrement and/or convinces him to put his leg in a tridacna (**70** to **70H**)

● Birds and other animals go on a trip in a canoe (**80** to **80M**)

■ Two birds (or a bird and another animal) race with each other or play a game of hide-and-seek (**54**, **60**, **60A**, **60B**, **61**, **62**, **63**)

Chapter VI

Vehicle

Ko te matuku nae i ei tona mulihaku loloa. Hau hau lava te matuku kae tūtaoho atu lava ia tamaiti. Kua mimigi iē tahi tamaiti i te ua, iē tahi tamaiti i nā lalo pakahau, iē tahi tamaiti i te tua, kako te kimuli, e ā ia te manu, na mau ki te mulihaku o te matuku. Lele ai lā te matuku. Ko te matuku i luga, ko te Hāuai i lalo.[1]

1. Carriers

Birds can be envisaged as a *vehicle* in Polynesian narratives in that they can carry away a person, often on their backs, either of their own accord or unawares, taking the person home or snatching the person to a faraway place, usually over the ocean. They may also steal objects. Birds are thus a 'means of transport', either benevolent or malevolent.[2] This is a recurrent motif in traditional narratives all over the world. In *The Arabian Nights: Tales of One Thousand and One Nights* (2008:II,465-466), for instance, Sinbad the Sailor attaches himself in his Second Voyage to the roc, or *rukh*, a giant bird of prey in the mythology of the Middle East. It is also a widespread motif in popular culture, for instance in the adventures of Nils Holgersson, the boy who travels all around Sweden on the back of a wild goose (Lagerlöf 1910).

[1] 'The *matuku*, there was his long tail feather. The *matuku* comes comes directly and the children leap right out. One child clutches onto the neck, one each clutches onto the underwings, another child on the back, as for the youngest, whose bird he is, he held onto the tail feather of the *matuku*. The *matuku* flies away then. The *matuku* above, the Ogre below' (**106B**).

[2] Most traditions about malevolent birds that carry away people to kill and eat them are, however, analysed in X-3.

A bird carries a man or a woman on his back

Te Manu-nui-a-Ruakapanga is the most famous benevolent bird carrying a man on his back in Māori tradition (**33**). In Hawaiki, Pou-rangahua fetched this giant bird, his ancestor, to take him back to Aotearoa with his belongings, two baskets of *kūmara* and two spades. As the bird shook himself when they arrived near Tūranga, Pou plucked some of his feathers, to make him fly down faster because he was getting impatient (see IV-3&4). But another Māori tradition, from Murihiku (Southland), also tells of another giant bird carrying back home a man who, like Pou-rangahua, plucks the poor bird's feathers just before arriving at his destination (**100**). A chief set out to find Manu-nui-a-Tana (for Tāne?), a giant bird, to obtain some of his beautiful feathers, because the women of his tribe wanted to hang the white downy feathers (*awe*) of the *kōtuku* (Great Egret, *Ardea alba*) in their ears, but no *kōtuku* was available. The owner of Manu-nui-a-Tana, however, declined his request for feathers, but he let him take one of his birds to carry him home on his back. The chief noticed on the bird's back some *kura-awe* (red feathers), so he pulled them out just before getting to his destination. The bird cried and reproached him for doing this, but the chief replied that he was just trying to smooth down his feathers. When he got home, he gave his wife and daughters the precious plumes.

It is possible to find in other parts of Polynesia instances of birds taking a man back home from a faraway island, but also back to earth from the heavens. A narrative from Lakeba, in the Southern Lau Islands, tells of the Tongan chief Longa-poa, who, fleeing his ferocious and cruel wife Fekai, the king's daughter, sailed away with his men (**101**). His canoe, together with Fekai's canoe who had been chasing him, was swallowed by a whirl-pool, but Longa-poa alone survived and made it to a strange island. There, a god, taking the appearance of a little old man with a big head and big eyes, lent him his giant bird to take him back to Tonga (the trees looked breast-high against that bird). The god told Longa-poa not to be afraid, and to tie himself to the bird above the bird's knee. In the middle of the night the bird spread his wings and flew away. Longa-poa travelled safely and comfortably because the bird had drawn up his legs, so Longa-poa was held tightly to the bird's breast. At daybreak, the bird alighted on Tongatapu, and Longa-poa untied himself. As in the Māori stories of Pou-rangahua and the Murihiku chief, the giant bird is lent to the protagonist by some kind of deity, but in the Lakeba tradition the protagonist does not mistreat the bird by pulling out his feathers.

In the Marquesas, a story from Hiva Oa recounts how another bird carried a man back to earth, at the request of the bird's wife, a woman (**102**). Again, the story features not only a man and his feathered carrier, but also a third party who 'lends' the latter to the former for the trip. Hina took her grandson Fai to live with her in the heavens. When Matuku (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*), Hina's husband, brought Hina fish to eat, he could smell the presence of a human (Fai), but Hina denied it – probably for fear of having Matuku eat her grandson. However, Hina later asked Matuku to take Fai back to his land because he was missing his daughter. She placed a wooden board on Matuku's back and attached it with bark ropes to his wings. Fai climbed on the bird's back with his five bags (containing saffron, *hiapo*, or banyan tree figs, pigs, cane sugar and kava). Matuku flew in the wind and the rain. He alighted on a mountain in Hiva Oa. Fai got down, unfastened his bags, cut off the bark ropes, and thanked Matuku, who then flew away. Fai later bred the pigs and planted the saffron, the *hiapo*, the cane sugar and the kava that all came from the heavens. This Marquesan tradition thus explains the origin of these precious foodstuffs, and is reminiscent of the Tahitian story about doves bringing banyan tree figs to earth (**34**, see IV-3).

Conversely, in the Tuvaluan story of Sinafakalua and Sinafofolangi, birds carry a young woman back to the heavens (**103**). Sinafakalua and Sinafofolangi, the daughter of the Sky and the Sun, who lived in the heavens, were good friends. Sinafofolangi would come down to earth to play in the taro gardens with her friend, but one day she was eaten by Alona, Sinafakalua's father, a cannibal god. As Sinafakalua was filled with grief, after a while Alona vomited the half-healthy, half-rotten body of the girl. The reunited friends played again in the taro gardens, picking flowers and singing, until a flock of frigatebirds[3] arrived, hovering over them. The birds seized Sinafofolangi, and took her back to her parents in the heavens.

In Hawaiian stories too, the back of birds is quite a common means of transport. In the romance of Ke-ao-melemele (the 'maid of the golden cloud'), for example, another frigatebird, again the property of deities, carries two girls and a baby on his back (**104**). When Hina gave birth to Paliula, Ke-ao-melemele's sister, the gods Kāne and Kanaloa sent two girls to Hina to fetch the baby girl. The two girls were carried on the back of the great bird 'Iwa (Great Frigatebird, *Fregata minor*). 'Iwa took them to the door of Paliula's parents' house.

[3] *Katafa* is the Tuvaluan name for both the Great Frigatebird (*Fregata minor*) and the Lesser Frigatebird (*Fregata ariel*).

The baby was given to the two girls, who took her on ‘Iwa’s back to Kāne and Kanaloa, who in turn sent her on ‘Iwa’s back to Hawai‘i, where she was to be raised by the great priestess Waka. Waka then instructed her pet birds to build a house for the girl. She also sent ‘Iwa to a far-off land to fetch two magical trees (one that attracted fish and one that produced food). When the bird had completed this task, he flew back to Kāne and Kanaloa and told them all about his journey.

A Samoan story tells of not one, but hundreds of birds that carry a boy on their backs to a faraway place to allow him to revenge his mother, who has been mistreated by her sisters (**105**). Vi and Vo had ten albino daughters, all named Tetea, and another daughter, Sina. After the parents’ death, eight of the albino sisters started to treat Sina very badly, and one day they pushed her into a swamp to kill her. Sina survived, married Tuialemu, and they had a son, Matilaalefau. The child spent his time flying on the back of hundreds of birds. Seeing one day a black thing lying in the West, he wanted to go and find out what it was, so he sat on the back of the birds and went to the land of the albinos. He asked the birds what those white things were; they replied that those were albinos. He expressed the wish to take them back to his homeland, so the birds caught them and carried them back to the child’s home. There he treated them very badly, cutting their arms and legs.

Another helpful bird appears in a Futunan story, which tells of an eagle[4] that took a man on his back and flew to the sun, where the man found a cure for his sick father (**99**, see V-3). But it is in a tradition from Tuvalu, Pukapuka and Tokelau that the feathered carrier actually saves the protagonist’s life: a boy uses a *matuku*/*matiku* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*) to escape from an ogre. The details of the plot vary in the three versions, but they all feature this particular bird as the boy’s saviour. In the Tuvaluan version, the ogre (*tupua*) Lupelupetoa captured Tasi, the youngest of ten brothers, and fastened his leg so that the boy could not run away (**106**). One day, Tasi said to the ogre that he needed to go and defecate. He then untied his leg and attached it to a tree. When a *matuku* flew by, Tasi told him to come so he could jump on his back. They flew away, and when the ogre pulled the cord to drag the boy back to his home, he found that it was tied to a tree. He swallowed the tree and died. The order of the names of the ten brothers was then inverted so that Tasi (which means one in Tuvaluan) became first.

[4] There is no eagle in Futuna, but the Swamp Harrier (*Circus approximans*) is an accidental visitor (Thibault, Cibois & Meyer 2014:31).

In the Pukapukan and Tokelauan versions of this story, the boy tries to get away on the bird's back but falls down; in the former, he then kills the ogre himself, but in the latter, the bird comes back later to take him away and the ogre dies from having swallowed the tree, as in the Tuvaluan version. In Pukapuka, Vaetuaniu and other children were carried away by a cannibal spirit to the land of the spirits where children were eaten (**106A**). Vaetuaniu asked the spirit to be allowed to go to the beach to defecate, because the spirit was going to eat him up, and surely, the boy argued, the spirit would not want to have to eat his faeces. On the beach Vaetuaniu instructed a coconut shell to answer the spirit if the latter should call. He hurried away, and called on the seabirds to carry him to the land of Tinilau, but only the *matiku* agreed. The spirit then called three times, and the coconut shell answered three times, telling the spirit to wait until the child had finished defecating.[5] The impatient cannibal spirit, however, came looking for Vaetuaniu. When he saw the *matiku* flying away with the child on his back, he made the bird shake him off. Vaetuaniu fell down to the ground, but as the spirit tried to seize him, the child kicked the spirit, severed his head, and then smashed his body and head to pieces with a stick.[6] After that no more children were eaten by cannibal spirits on the island.

The Tokelauan version mentions the names of the birds that are unable to carry away the boy and his brothers before the *matuku* comes. The ogre (*hāuai*) Nautoa captured five brothers and imprisoned them in his house (**106B**). Hape, the youngest, had a clubfoot (*hape*). They managed to get out of the house one night, climbed up a huge tree, and sat at the top of the tree until the following morning. Nautoa thought that he could smell humans in that tree, so he started chopping it down. The tame birds (*nā manu fāgai*) of the five brothers then came one by one. The bird of the eldest was a *tālaga* (young Red-footed Booby, *Sula sula*); the other birds were a *fuakō* (Brown Booby, *Sula leucogaster*), a *katafa* (Great Frigatebird, *Fregata minor*) and a *takupu* (mature Red-footed Booby, *Sula sula*). The bird of the youngest was a *matuku*. Each bird wanted to take one of the brothers, but Nautoa told

[5] Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1936:3) discovered that 'the motif of "threes" appears in all stories whether mythical or historical', and inferred that it 'serves as a technical device to heighten suspense, increase the dramatic qualities of a narrative and produce an exciting climax'.

[6] In Pukapukan stories of *tangata kai tangata* (man-eating people) and *tupua kai tangata* (man-eating demons), the punishment of the ogre, 'which is often as ferocious and brutal as the original crime, is related by the narrator with great emphasis and graphic detail'; in these traditions, 'the death of the man-eater is invariably accompanied by much apparently sadistic cruelty in which the cannibal is pounded apart piecemeal' (Beaglehole & Beaglehole 1936:39). See also **300**, another Pukapukan tradition, in which people pound a man-eating bird to pieces before grinding the pieces to dust.

them all to leave, so the frightened birds all flew away one after the other. However, the *matuku*, Hape's bird, did not go away, but called out 'kaō!' and fetched all the children at the top of the tree: one of them clung to his neck, two of them to his underwings, one to his back, and Hape clung to his tail feather. The *matuku* flew off, but his tail feather came off and Hape fell to the ground. Nautoa snatched him and took him back to his house. He fattened the child up because he wanted to eat him. When Hape saw his *matuku* wandering on the edge of the reef, he told Nautoa that he wanted to defecate and suggested that the ogre tie a line around his leg to allow him to go to the beach to relieve himself. Nautoa agreed, but on the shore Hape tied the line to the branch of a *tauhunu* tree (*Heliotropium foertherianum*), and his bird took him back home. Nautoa waited a long time, and then, out of anger, ended up swallowing the *tauhunu*, which killed him; now the bark of the *tauhunu* is the skin of Nautoa.

A cognate from Mugaba also tells of a frigatebird and a booby being unable to carry on their backs children trying to flee from an ogre (**106C**). The saviour in that version is not, however, a heron but a much smaller bird: a *gopiti* (Black-naped Tern, *Sterna sumatrana*). Three orphaned brothers were running away from an ogre. They climbed up a big *pingipingi* (lantern tree, *Hernandia nymphaeifolia*) to hide in the branches. When they saw a *kataha* (Lesser Frigatebird, *Fregata ariel*), they sang to him, asking him to help them get away. The bird tried to carry the brothers on his wings, but they were too heavy, so he flew away. The same happened with a *kanapu* (Brown Booby, *Sula leucogaster*, or Red-footed Booby, *Sula sula*). Finally, the *gopiti* carried one child on his wing, another on his other wing, and the third child jumped on his back as he flew off. Although he was small, he carried the three brothers home.

In two narratives from Aotearoa and Rapa Nui, various birds are also asked to help and carry a man and a woman on their backs, but in both stories they refuse, and it is eventually a marine creature (a whale and a turtle, respectively) that obliges them. In the Māori story of Wai-huka, Tū-te-amoamo coveted Hine-i-te-kakara, the beautiful wife of his younger brother Wai-huka, so he decided to kill him while fishing at sea, near Marokopa (**107**). As they were about to return to land after catching *hāpuku* (groper), Tū-te-amoamo told his brother to dive down to get the anchor. He then cut the rope and sailed away, leaving Wai-huka floating about in the water. Wai-huka asked the *toroa* (albatross) to carry him to land, but the bird ignored him, as did the *karoro* (Kelp Gull, *Larus dominicanus*), the *kawau*

(cormorant), and all the other birds (*ngā manu katoa*). The fish did not listen to him either. Eventually, a *tohorā* (whale) took him back to the shore. Believing that her husband was dead, Hine-i-te-kakara went along the shore looking for his body. She asked the *toroa* if he had seen a pile of decaying things heaped up, but he replied that he had not. The *kawau*, the *karoro*, all the other birds and all the fish also replied that they had seen nothing,[7] but the whale told her where to find him, and husband and wife were reunited. Wai-huka killed his elder brother in the end.

In this Māori narrative, birds just plainly ignore Wai-huka's plea, but in the story of Uho, from Rapa Nui, birds actually reply to the young woman that they are unfortunately unable to carry her (**108**). Uho was the most beautiful young woman on the island. She lived on a hill near Anakena with her father. One day, her belt was stolen by a turtle. She swam after the turtle and begged it to return her belt, but the turtle kept on deceiving her, and Uho eventually reached an island. The chief of that island, Mahuna-te-raa, married Uho, and they had a son. But Uho was sad because she missed her island. One day, a *kiakia* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*) flew over her head, so she asked the bird to take her back to Te Pito-Te-Henua. But the *kiakia* replied that she was too heavy for him.[8] After a while, another bird flew by, a *makohe* (Great Frigatebird, *Fregata minor*). Uho made the same request, but the *makohe* replied that her island was too far for him. So, Uho asked every seabird flying nearby, but she always received similar negative responses. Eventually, a turtle came by, and agreed to take Uho back to her island if she let it touch her.[9] In another version, at sunset, Uho first asked a *taiko* (Herald Petrel, *Pterodroma heraldica*) to take her back to her island, but the *taiko* said that she was too heavy, so she sat down again and cried. Then she asked a *kiakia*, a *makohe*, and the next day a *kena* (Masked Booby, *Sula dactylatra*), a *ruru* (Southern Giant

[7] In the Samoan story of Sina looking for her husband Tulau'ena (murdered by his older brother Tulifauiave while they are out at sea because Tulifauiave covets Sina, as in the Māori story), Sina also asks birds if they have seen her husband (**91**, see V-3).

[8] Conversely, in a Bukawa narrative (Huon Gulf, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea), it is the bird that proves to a young woman that he is strong enough to carry her back home. A young woman was deceived and abducted by a tapa-beater, who abandoned her on an island of driftwood. Looking for food, she found a sea eagle's egg (probably the White-bellied Sea Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucogaster*). She held it in her hand; it broke, and a young bird hatched. She cared for the bird until he grew very big. The bird flew off, caught fish for her, and brought her a fire brand to cook it. She wished to return home, so the bird offered to carry her on his back. As she doubted that he was strong enough to do so, he found a great log of wood and lifted it to show her that he was, so she finally trusted him. He carried her back to her island, where she was reunited with her parents. She petted him and fed him taro, but the bird was not content, so he flew away and she cried (Lehner 1911:480-481).

[9] Métraux's version, which only features one unobliging bird and does not mention the bird's species, says that Uho offered to pay the 'little turtle with the red penis' with her vulva.

Petrel, *Macronectes giganteus*, or Northern Giant Petrel, *Macronectes halli*) and a *tuvi* (Grey Noddy, *Procelsterna albivitta*), but they all declined her request. On the third day, she offered her vagina to a turtle so it would carry her to her island.

A giant bird lifts a canoe with men on board or carries a person unawares

The narratives in the previous section all feature birds that are asked, often by their master, to carry a person on their back and then kindly oblige them (or refuse to help, in the last two traditions mentioned). Others, however, tell of a giant bird with apparently more sinister intentions who lifts up a canoe or unwillingly carries over the ocean a person who has tied themselves to him (as with the roc, in the popular mythology of the Middle East, to which Sinbad the Sailor famously attached himself).

A Tuvaluan story (from Vaitupu), for instance, tells of the brothers Talingapopo and Popo who went fishing (**109**). The *kailopa* bird (*te manu kailopa*) came, lifted their canoe into the air, and carried it away to the top of a high tree. The two men tied their canoe to the tree and to the bird at night. The following morning, when the bird tried to fly away, the tree and the canoe swayed, and the bird shed a tail feather. That feather carried the two men to Paolaola, an island inhabited by women, whom the two brothers taught how to give birth.[10]

Another bird that lifts the canoe of a man who has gone fishing is the *tongounuunu*, in a narrative from Mungiki (**110**). A man from Nikiua (an unknown island) went fishing. The *tongounuunu*, a large eagle-like bird, came and lifted up his canoe, which he carried away with the man in it. The bird placed the man in his nest, but the man jumped out of the nest and slept under it. When dawn came, the man grabbed the bird's leg as he was about to fly away. The bird flew on and on, until he reached Nikiua. Then, the man pulled out one of his tail feathers (*hungumungi*), let go of the bird's leg, fell into the ocean, and swam ashore. He then cut the feather into seven pieces, which he used as sleeping plank beds. As Kuschel (1975:54) explained, 'it is left to the imagination of the individual to picture what [creatures such as the *tongounuunu*] looked like and where they came from. Nobody knows how they

[10] The story of the 'island of women', very widespread in Oceania, was studied in detail by Dunis (2016). In one tradition from the Gazelle Peninsula (New Britain, Papua New Guinea), incidentally, it is a bird that leads the man to the island of women. A man set some snares in a tree to catch *balu* (Island Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pistrinaria*, according to Lanyon-Orgill [1960:111]). One of the birds caught in a snare tore it loose and flew away over the ocean. The man, who wanted to secure the bird, followed him in his canoe; after paddling all day and all night, he landed on an island where the bird perched on a tree: the island of women (Meier 1909:85; Parkinson 1999:297).

are supposed to have come to the island in the first place.' As in the Tuvaluan story of the *kailopa*, the giant bird shed a tail feather that was valuable to the protagonist who made use of it.

A story from the Lau Islands tells of a bird that carries away a young woman who is at sea not to fish but to get away from her angry parents (**111**). The king of Lakeba asked his daughter Langi (or Sina-te-langi) to keep an eye on his great piece of cloth left outside on the grass to bleach, while he went to bathe. As there was not a cloud in the sky, she went to sleep. But the rain came, and when she woke up, it was too late. Her father was very angry with her, so he hit her repeatedly before driving her away.[11] She went to the beach and made a raft out of old coconuts. The wind carried her on the ocean. After two days, she spotted a huge bird in the sky flying towards her, so she hid among the coconuts. The bird, however, landed on the raft, and Langi, fearing for her life, tied herself to one of the bird's breast feathers. When the bird soared into the sky, she was carried away. The bird flew all night, and just before dawn he reached Kaba, an empty land, and alighted there. Langi then untied herself, and the bird flew away.

In a narrative from Tonga and Sāmoa, the giant bird that carries a man over the ocean when the latter clings to his leg or breast does not snatch the man on the ocean, as in the previous stories: it is the man who comes to the island inhabited by the creature (**112** & **112A**). As in the narrative about the *tongounuunu*, the bird in question is a raptor. Kae got stranded on an island where the gigantic, man-eating bird Kanivatu (Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus*)[12] lived. When Kanivatu fluttered his wings to fly away, Kae clung to his breast without the bird noticing. Kanivatu carried him away from the island and flew over the ocean. When Kae saw the islands of Sāmoa, he let go of the bird and landed there.[13]

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[11] For a similar episode involving mats left in the rain and scolding parents, see **18**, **123B**, **203**, **203B**, **203C** and **203D**.

[12] *Gānivatu* is the Peregrine Falcon in Fijian. The bird breeds only in Fiji but has been recorded in Sāmoa (Watling 1982:71).

[13] A Micronesian tradition, from Ulithi, also relates how a man used a giant bird to reach a faraway island by clinging to his breast. Haluwai, akin to the Polynesian culture hero Tāwhaki, on his way to the Sky World, found the nest of a giant *rakhui* (this bird was known to Lessa [1966:50,n.10] only by its native name, but it is probably a bird of prey, as in the Mungiki and Samoan/Tongan stories). He hid in the nest and waited for the bird to come. He climbed on the bird, lifted a feather and got underneath. The bird flew over all the islands of the Sky World. Haluwai dropped a stone or a piece of coconut over each island in order to make the bird swoop down to catch it: he thus could have a closer look at the islands. When he spotted an island inhabited by people, he threw down another stone and jumped out from under the feather. The bird flew away. Haluwai then met an old blind woman on that island, who gave him a rooster whose excrement turned into yams when Haluwai

A bird snatches a person away or steals an object

Children can be snatched away by birds, as is the child taken by a *lulu* in the Niuean story that explains the short beak of that bird (**90**, see V-3).[14] In a Tuamotuan tradition, it is the son of Kui, Vahi-vero, who is abducted by two wild ducks (**113**). The ducks[15] took him on their backs to the land of Hiva-ro-tahi. Later, when Kui caught sight of the birds circling overhead, he climbed to the top of a tree and managed to seize them. Fearing for their lives, they confessed to taking the boy away to their mistresses, the witches Nua and Mere-hau, and they told Kui that the only way for him to see his son again was to release them. Kui let them go, believing that they would return his son to him. The ducks promised to do so, but never came back. After a year, Kui decided to go in search of Vahi-vero. He went to Hiva-ro-tahi, captured the two witches, and found his son. When he rubbed his nose against Vahi-vero's face, the boy, his eyes stuck together because of his constant crying, believed that the ducks were pecking him, so he started whimpering. Kui washed the boy in a pool of water, as he was covered with bird droppings, having been used as a privy by the ducks. On their way back to Vavau-nui, Kui spotted the birds, and devised a stratagem to kill them. Kui and Vahi-vero swam energetically to create a disturbance on the surface of the sea that the birds believed to be a school of mullet. But Kui's friend, the bill-fish (*totoviri*), was hiding beneath the waves: when the two ducks dived into the water, the bill of the fish pierced them both, killing them. Kui then took their bodies back to Vavau-nui as food for his son.

A Tahitian version of the Rata cycle recounts how Vahie-roa and his wife were seized by the great black bird Matutu-ta'ota'o while they were fishing by torchlight on the reef, on the night of their son Rata's birth (**114**). The bird gave the woman to Puna's wife, Te Vahine-hua-rei, who placed her downwards with her head in the ground and her feet up, to serve as a stand from which to hang food baskets. Matutu-ta'ota'o swallowed Vahie-roa's head, and

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returned to the island of Yap (Lessa 1980:8-11,14; see also n. 30 in IV-4). A similar version (in which the hero is named Galuai) can be found in a song from nearby Ifalik (Burrows 1963:48-50).

[14] In Nidula, a tradition tells of an orphan carried away by a *manubutu* (White-bellied Sea Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucogaster*) to his nest high in a tree. There, the bird looks after and nurtures the boy – in contradistinction to the other stories (Young 1991:383-384). A narrative from Lifou also recounts how two seagulls (probably the Silver Gull, *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*) pounced down upon a baby boy crawling about the house and left alone. They carried him to a distant island, and left him by a large fallen tree. A witch raised him. When he finally went home, she gave him a coconut: this is how the coconut was introduced to Lifou (Hadfield 1920: 228-230).

[15] *Mokorā* is the Tuamotuan name for the Pacific Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*).

the man's body was devoured by the great Tridacna.[16] It is also on the reef that Gānivatu (Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus*), in a Fijian narrative, abducts a young woman (**115**). In the land of the gods, the god Rokoua gave his sister Tutuwathiwathi in marriage to the god Okova, but as she accompanied her husband to the reef, she was seized and carried away by a huge bird, Gānivatu (or Ngutulei).[17] Okova and Rokoua set off in their canoe to find her, and when they reached the Yasawa Islands they were directed to a cave in Sawa-i-Lau. They eventually killed Gānivatu in his cave (see X-3).

Manu do not only snatch people away, they may also steal objects or even attempt to steal part of a landscape. The Kapingamarangi story of Aparē and his brother Aparī features a stealing *moua* (Great Frigatebird, *Fregata minor*). Aparē cut down some poles with an adze (**116**). When he encountered a *moua* carrying a bonito in his beak, he threw stones at him, but the bird did not fall. He then threw the adze at the bird, who let go of the fish and caught the adze. The *moua* then flew away with the adze in his beak. Aparē gave the fish to his older brother Aparī, but Aparī scolded his younger brother, refused to eat the fish, and ordered him to go and find the adze as it was his. Aparē then went away to recover it, and met an old woman who gave him some tasks to perform. He obeyed, and the old woman gave him two pretty girls and the adze, which he brought back to his brother.

In Huahine, the robbers are two ducks,[18] as in the Tuamotuan story of Vahi-vero (**117**). The birds, a male and a female, came from Mount 'Orohena (in Tahiti) to 'Uturoa, in Ra'i-ātea, to steal a precious object belonging to Hiro's daughter. Hiro pursued the two ducks, and on his way to Tahiti, hit Huahine with his double canoe, cutting the island in two. In Tahiti, he went to the Nahoata River, where the ducks were resting on two rocks to dry between two dives. Hiro caught them there, and forced the male bird to return his daughter's treasure to him. In another narrative from Huahine, two ducks, who again came from

[16] Matutu-ta'ota'o/Mātuku-tangotango, who kills Rata's father in many versions of the Rata cycle all throughout Polynesia, may be a shark (in the Tuamotu, a 'demon-shark', according to Stimson [1964:296]), or a human, or a large black bird – *matuku* and its cognates being the name of the Pacific Reef Heron (*Egretta sacra*) in many Polynesian languages. In the Māori story of Matuku-tangotango, for example, Orbell (1995:114) deduced that, although Matuku-tangotango appears to be a man in one account because he washes his hair in a pool, 'his name and Rata's use of a noose must generally have been sufficient to give him something of the character of a bittern [in Māori the *matuku-hūrepo* is the Australasian Bittern, *Botaurus poiciloptilus*]. This bird was regarded as unattractive, unsociable and melancholy, so a giant bittern could perhaps be readily envisaged as an enemy.' See X-3 for two accounts of the death of this monster at the hands of Rata, in two versions from Tahiti and the Tuamotu in which he is clearly identified with a bird.

[17] *Ngutulei*, or *gutulei*, is a booby (*Sula* sp.) in Tongan, East Futunan and East Uvean.

[18] *Mo'orā* is the Tahitian name for the Pacific Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*).

‘Orohena, also tried to steal Mou‘a-tapu, a mountain near Maeva, in Huahine, by towing it at night (**118**). However, their plan fell through when the sun rose.

Finally, a tradition from Tupua‘i recounts how a bird, irritated by the people’s warlike behaviour, stole the *pito* (navel) of Tupua‘i to punish them (**119**). He placed it in the ocean far away from Tupua‘i, in the form of a rounded mountain or a rock: Mai‘ao, 700 kilometres away. Because of this theft, the people of Tupua‘i have lacked energy ever since.

2. Humans and gods entering or turning into a bird

Birds can also be envisaged as a *vehicle* in Polynesian narratives in that humans or gods are capable of transforming themselves into them, or even physically enter them, commonly to fly away and escape (or hide) from an antagonist, to go and look for a missing relative, or to manifest themselves to the living after their death in the form of a *manu*.[19]

Flying away to escape or to look for a relative

In traditional narratives, turning into a bird and flying away is obviously an effective way to flee from an enemy. The Māori story of Monoa illustrates such a means of escape (**120**). In Hawaiki, Monoa, son of Whiro, was requested to go to the *whare kura* (house of learning) to act as a *tohunga* (priestly expert), but the men of the *whare kura* secretly wanted to kill him. When he arrived at the *whare kura*, he followed his father’s advice and did not enter the house, but climbed upon the roof and looked through the *pihanga* (window). He saw the lungs of his two brothers, who had been summoned to the *whare kura* before him and killed. He uttered a *karakia* allowing him to escape as a bird and fled. He ran into the middle of a flock of *kawau* (cormorants), then a flock of ducks, then a flock of *kuaka* (Bar-tailed Godwit, *Limosa lapponica*), then a flock of *tōrea* (South Island Oystercatcher, *Haematopus finschi*, or Variable Oystercatcher, *Haematopus unicolor*), then a flock of *karoro* (Kelp Gull, *Larus dominicanus*). However, none of them could conceal him: he could not hide himself among

[19] In traditional Polynesian religion, birds may be envisaged as incarnations of deities and ancestors: see III-3.

any of those flocks. Finally, he ran into a flock of *tara* (terns), which completely covered him, so that his pursuers could not see him.

A Mangarevan story tells of a man who turns into a bird to escape drowning (**121**). Teiti-a-toakau, born from a clot of blood in the shape of a lizard and brought up in the underworld, became a famous warrior in the upperworld. A spirit named Teiti-a-pie, taking the appearance of a *totara* (spot-fin porcupinefish, *Diodon hystrix*), wanted to challenge him, so he submerged Mangareva, the sea being in his power. To escape drowning, Teiti-a-toakau then turned into a *kotake* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*).

From Rotuma comes another narrative about the transformation of the protagonist into a bird to escape from death (**122**). Lalatäväke and her younger sister Lilitäväke were orphans. One morning, Lilitäväke woke up and found that her sister had changed into a *kura* (Red-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon rubricauda*)[20] and had just flown out of the window. The bird flew to the abode of the king's son, Tinrau, to lure him to the girls' place. Tinrau chased after the beautiful bird, came to Lilitäväke's house, and, forgetting all about the bird, asked the younger sister to marry him. They got married at Tinrau's place, but soon thereafter, the king decided to have her put to death to eat her. Lalatäväke, as a *kura*, then came to her sister's rescue: after shaking out her feathers in her sister's house she put them into a basket, covered her sister up with a mat in her bedroom, and hung up the basket above her. When Tinrau came home, Lalatäväke pretended to be his wife. The following morning, as the oven to cook Lilitäväke was ready and Tinrau's men were coming to the house to seize her, Lalatäväke pulled the basket of feathers and sprinkled them over her body, thus turning into a bird again. She then pecked at the mat covering her younger sister, who instantly turned into a *täväke* (White-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon lepturus*). The two birds flew away from Tinrau and his men.

Turning into a bird is also a recurrent motif in the narratives that feature a protagonist looking for or following a relative, commonly one's sister or mother. The famous story of Rupe/Lupe and his sister Hina/Sina will be analysed in VIII-1&2, but three versions of this very widespread tradition are worth mentioning here because in all of these, Rupe/Lupe is not originally a bird, but a man who turns into or enters a bird to go and find his sister

[20] *Phaethon rubricauda* was never actually recorded in Rotuma (Cibois & Thibault 2019:10). The species, however, may have nested in the past on the islets west of Rotuma (Thibault, pers. comm.).

Hina/Sina, whom he misses very much.[21] In Māori tradition, Māui-mua (the elder brother of the culture hero and trickster Māui-pōtiki),[22] after being told by Rehua in the heavens that his long-lost sister Hinauri was at Motu-tapu, the island of Tinirau, changed himself into a *rupe* (New Zealand Pigeon, *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) (**123**). He alighted on the window sill of Tinirau's house. Hinauri gave birth the same day and recognised her brother. The people of Motu-tapu tried unsuccessfully to snare Rupe. The bird then flew away with Hinauri and her child.

A Mangaian tradition also recounts how Ina fled from her parents after they mistreated her for having let the thief Ngana steal all their treasures (**123A**). She reached Motu-tapu and married Tinirau. Her younger brother Rupe, longing for her, asked a *kāra'ura'u* (Blue Noddy, *Procelsterna cerulea*) to take him to Motu-tapu. The bird agreed, so Rupe entered the bird and flew away. Ina saw the bird on a bush near her house one morning. She gazed at him, and the bird turned into Rupe. Rupe flew back to his parents to tell them that Ina was alive and well. Ina's mother wished to go and see her, so she and Rupe entered two birds[23] and flew to Motu-tapu.

Finally, from Kapingamarangi comes another version of this tradition, in which the brother does not turn into a bird as in the Māori story, or enters one as in the Mangaian story, but hews one out of a tree (**123B**). Hina, a one-legged girl, and her brother Ruapongōngō put their possessions outside to dry in the sun while their parents were away, and they went to sleep. A heavy downpour came, and when Hina woke up some of the mats (*kahara*) were missing. She was scolded by her parents, so she went away. A turtle carried her to the island of Tinirau, where she was mistreated. But Ruapongōngō missed his sister, so he hewed out a bird of a *bingibingi* tree (*Hernandia sonora*), and painted his body with charcoal and coconut oil so it became black and shiny. Then he entered the bird, flew away, and looked for his sister. Eventually he reached the island of Tinirau. The people there found him very pretty and gave him food; he did not, however, eat their food. They asked him if he liked bonito (*atu*), and when he answered that he did, all the people decided to go fishing for bonito. Only Hina stayed in the village. Ruapongōngō came out of the bird, and told his

[21] The numerous Polynesian versions of this tradition will not be assigned a unique story number in this work, owing to their considerable variations in plot. See also **203**.

[22] As Luomala (1949:153-154) noticed, although the story of Rupe's search of her sister is told throughout Polynesia, only Māori traditions link this story to the Māui cycle.

[23] Gill called them 'linnets'. They may be *kereārako* (Cook Reed Warbler, *Acrocephalus kerearako*).

sister to pack her favourite belongings. Hina then entered the bird with her belongings, and they flew away. The people in their canoes threw a bonito at the bird as he flew over them. The bird caught it, so they threw another one, and the bird caught it too. But he did not catch the third one because he was full. Ruapongōngō told Hina to let her leg down for the people down below to see. They thought that the bird was bringing Hina's leg, so they all went back to shore. The bird then came back and fetched the priest. Ruapongōngō and Hina took him home and treated him as badly as he had treated Hina.

In Rapa Nui, another girl, Uho, is carried by a turtle to a faraway island where she also bears a son to the chief of the island, but, missing her family, she longs to return home (**108**, see previous section). The transformation from human to bird in this tradition, however, does not apply to the girl's brother looking for her as in the stories about Rupe/Lupe and his sister Hina/Sina, but to her son, who turns into a bird to join his mother after she has gone back on her own to her island. Before leaving the island, Uho told her son that he would grow feathers and become a bird. She returned to Anakena on the back of a turtle, and was happily reunited with her father and her people. A big feast was held. When a huge bird came by, Uho called to him with gentle words. A man threw a stone at him as he was about to alight on the ground, but the bird rose again and dodged the stone. He eventually alighted and embraced Uho. Everyone present was astonished when he shed all his feathers and transformed himself into a handsome boy. Uho then told her people all about her adventures.

Māui turns into a bird

Māui too transforms into a bird in various Polynesian narratives to escape from his antagonist – in particular, his ancestor (or ancestress) from whom he has stolen fire – or to look for his relatives. Several Polynesian traditions tell of the curious and mischievous culture hero turning into a bird (generally a pigeon) to follow his parents down to the underworld incognito, where he often alights on a tree and drops berries on his parents' heads,[24] before being thrown stones at and resuming his human shape. One tradition also recounts how he transforms himself into a bird to follow his brothers. All these narratives join the long list of stories about Māui and the birds (in which Māui uses a bird to fish up an island, Māui is helped

[24] 'The business of tossing berries or fruit at one's host as if it were a jokester's notion of a calling card', wrote Luomala (1949:54), 'is frequent in myths.'

by a bird to secure food or fire for humankind, Māui is accompanied by birds on his fateful trip to enter Hine-nui-te-pō, etc.).[25]

In Māori tradition, Māui transforms into a bird (*whakamanu*) to escape from his grandmother (or grandfather) Mahuika, the owner of fire (Grey 1855:48-49). But he also turns into a *manu* to flee from other antagonists. In a Mangaian tradition, for example, Ru, from Avaiki, raised the sky with some stakes to allow the people on the earth to stand up straight (**124**). One day, when surveying his work, he was interrupted by his son Māui who disrespectfully asked him what he was doing. Angry with Māui, Ru threatened to kill him, so Māui challenged him to try. Ru then seized the small Māui and threw him up in the air, but when falling down Māui turned himself into a bird and lightly touched the ground uninjured. He resumed his human form but became a giant, and he threw Ru high in the sky, thus raising the sky to its present-day height, and Ru was killed.

Throughout Polynesia,[26] Māui follows his parents in the shape of a bird. According to Māori tradition, Māui turned himself into all kinds of birds to fly down to the underworld in search of his parents, but not one of those transformations pleased his brothers, until he took the shape of a *kererū* (New Zealand Pigeon, *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*): only then did he look very beautiful to them (**125**). His white breast was the belt of his mother Taranga, and his black throat was the fastening of the belt. He flew down to the underworld and perched on a tree. He dropped a berry on his father's head, then some more on both his parents' heads. People then pelted the bird with stones. He was hit by the stone thrown by his father, fell down to the ground, and turned back into a human. Another version says that Māui descended to the underworld, then transformed into a *miromiro* (Tomtit, *Petroica*

[25] The close relationship between the most famous of Polynesian culture heroes and *manu* even manifests itself in terms of filiation in two stories from Emae and Hawai'i. In the first one, a woman found a bird's egg, cooked it and ate it. She bore a son after ten days: Mauitikitiki (Capell 1960:34). In the *Kumulipo*, the Hawaiian sacred creation chant, Akalana and Hina-a-ke-ahi ('Hina-of-the-fire') had four sons; much to Hina's dismay, her youngest son, Māui-a-ka-malo ('Māui-of-the-loincloth'), was born as an egg; from the egg a fowl (*moa*) hatched, who crowed ''alalā!' before taking human shape (Beckwith 1951:135,237). Beckwith (1951:129) argued that, because in other parts of Polynesia Māui turns into a pigeon, 'obviously the Hawaiian *moa* should be a pigeon, but, since the pigeon was not known to Hawaiians, the composer [of the *Kumulipo*] uses the fighting cock as feathered symbol of the part the newborn infant is to play in the world.' (The Hawaiian Islands were never colonised by columbids, because their isolation from other islands exceeds 1,000 kilometres and 'no island in Oceania known to be inhabited by columbids is more than 600 km from another columbid-bearing island' [Steadman 2006:320].)

[26] As well as in other parts of Oceania; in the Caroline Islands for instance, Motiketik turns into a starling to follow his mother (or father) Lorop under the sea; he perches on a morinda tree and eats its fruit, before being recognised by Lorop and taking again his human form (Luomala 1949:223-224).

macrocephala). He alighted on the upper part of a *kō* (digging stick),[27] and sang a *tewha*, the first *kūmara* planting ritual song, which people have been singing ever since when planting crops. People started throwing stones at him when he finished his song, so he transformed into a *kererū*, flew to a *karaka* tree (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*), and dropped a berry on Taranga's head. He was then hit by a stone, fell to the ground, and returned to his human form.

In an Anutan version of the story, Metikitiki (that is, Māui) also climbed to the top of a tree, a *nonu* (*Morinda citrifolia*) (**125A**). He bit into a fruit the way a rat would do, then threw it down at his father. The second time around, his father looked up and saw a *rupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) eating, whom he cursed. A Tuamotuan tradition explains why Māui resumed his human shape: he was not pelted by stones but lost all his feathers because of indigestion (**125B**). Māui, in the form of his own pet bird, flew down to the underworld to find his parents. There, the bird was taken up by his father Tangaroa, who fed him so much that he had indigestion, which made him lose all his feathers: he thus turned into a man again.

Another Tuamotuan narrative (from Fangatau) tells of Māui not exactly transforming into a bird, but rather entering one. Māui-tikitiki-a-Ataraga followed his father Ataraga down to Havaiki, where the latter used to gather food. After passing the gate, he saw a *tūtururū* (Polynesian Ground Dove, *Alopecoenas erythropterus*) and entered that bird. When Ataraga and his wife Hava saw the bird, she asked her husband to strike him on the wing so that their children could play with him. But when Ataraga approached him, Māui came out of the bird.

Māui also enters a bird rather than turning into one in a Mangaian version (**125C**). Māui wanted to follow his mother Buataranga to Avaiki, so he went to see the god Tāne, who owned beautiful pigeons.[28] But the pigeon that he was first given did not please him, so he returned him to Tāne, and the same happened with the second pigeon and all the others until Tāne agreed to lend him his specially prized red pigeon, Akaotu. Māui had to promise to Tāne to return Akaotu to him uninjured. Akaotu was a tame pigeon who knew his name and

[27] In a version from Murihiku, Māui alighted on the handle of his father's *kō* in the form of a *pīpīwharauroa* (Shining Bronze Cuckoo, *Chrysococcyx lucidus*) (Beattie 1919:48-49).

[28] As was noted in I-4, there were no pigeons left in Mangaia when this story was collected by Gill at the end of the 19th century. But when bird bones were discovered in a cave on the island in the 1980s, five species of doves and pigeons were identified: the extirpated Lilac-crowned Fruit Dove (*Ptilinopus rarotongensis*), Polynesian Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula aurorae*), Marquesan Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula galeata*) and Polynesian Ground Dove (*Alopecoenas erythropterus*), as well as the extinct Great Ground Dove (*Gallicolumba nui*).

could fly back to his master Tāne from anywhere. Māui entered the pigeon and descended into the netherworld. But two demons at the passage down to Avaiki caught Akaotu by the tail: he thus lost his beautiful tail. Akaotu then alighted near where Buataranga was beating her cloth. She knew that the bird had come from the upperworld because there were no red pigeons in Avaiki. She asked him if he was her son Māui, and the bird nodded and flew to a breadfruit tree. Māui then resumed his human form. After fighting with the fire god Mauike, he secured from him the secret to make fire, then hurried to the breadfruit tree where Akaotu was waiting for him. He restored his tail to avoid Tāne's anger, re-entered the pigeon, and flew back to the upperworld. He alighted in a secluded valley, henceforth named Rupe-tau. He resumed his human form and returned Akaotu to Tāne.

Finally, Māui turns into a bird to follow his brothers in a Māori tradition (**126**). The brothers went fishing in their canoe, but they would not allow Māui on board because of his mischievous conduct. He thus took the form of a *tīrairaka* (New Zealand Fantail, *Rhipidura fuliginosa*) – or, in another version, that of another small bird, the *riroriro* (Grey Gerygone, *Gerygone igata*) – flew to the canoe, and perched on its prow. Because of his constant twirling, however, his brothers recognised him immediately, so he resumed his human form by shedding his feathers one by one, before fishing up Te Ika-a-Māui.

Transformation: gods, humans, and after death

In Polynesian traditions, looking for a relative and fleeing from an enemy are two common motifs associated with the transformation of a human or culture hero into a bird, but there are in those narratives many more instances of this type of transformation, featuring gods, men, and the spirits of the deceased.

Gods too can turn into birds. From Mungiki comes the story of two sky gods, Tepou-tu'uingangi and his sister Nguatupu'a (**127**). The deities admired the *tiangetaha* flower (*Gardenia leucaena*?) armlets of the goddess Patikonge. When Patikonge told them that she found those flowers on the shore, they went there. They found the flowers, but their reflection was coming from the underworld. Patikonge told them to dive down and take some. They thus assumed the form of two light (*tea*) *lingobai* (Barred Cuckooshrike, *Coracina lineata*) and dived down, but Patikonge pulled up a large net that was lying in the ocean and caught the two birds. She roasted them, but when the birds pretended to be cooked, she went away to get some leaves, and the birds flew away. They perched on a tree and sang. The god

Tehainga‘atua, embodied in a dark (*‘ungi*) *lingobai*, heard their call, and searched for them. When he found them, they all flew away together, Tehainga‘atua in front and Nguatupu‘a and Tepoutu‘uingangi behind him – *lingobai* fly this way to this day.[29]

In Aotearoa and Rotuma, it is a man who transforms himself into a bird, in the first case to borrow the bird’s beauty, and in the second case to play a trick on his guests. A Māori tradition tells the story of Tama-nui-a-raki, an ugly man whose wife Rukutia went away with the handsome Tū-te-koro-punga because of Tama’s ugliness (**128**). Tama then travelled down to the underworld to ask his ancestors to make him look handsome. When he met a beautiful *kōtuku* (Great Egret, *Ardea alba*) there, he decided to transform himself into that bird. He thus flew away and alighted on the shore of a lake in Te Rēinga (place of departed spirits). He caught a fish by stretching his long neck, and ate the fish. But he was caught by his ancestors who suspected that the bird might be Tama on account of the eight bends in his neck, and Tama then turned back into a man.

In the Rotuman story of Moeatiktiki and his brothers, who fished up Tonga with a *kaläe*, the man that they meet on the island turns into a bird to hide and play a trick on them (**23**). The boys’ grandparents attached the fish-hook to a banyan tree in front of their house, and Moeatiktiki hauled up the land to the surface, until his canoe was aground in front of the house (see IV-3). However, Moeatiktiki could not find his grandparents there because they were carried away by the current when the land emerged from the surface of the sea. The three brothers could only find one man on the island, Tupua’rosi. Tupua’rosi invited them to his house to eat, but he asked a flock of *juli* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*, or Wandering Tattler, *Tringa incana*) to call out the three brothers’ names as soon as they caught sight of the boys. When the brothers approached Tupua’rosi’s house, the *juli* flew up and called out their names, and Tupua’rosi ran off to hide, and changed himself into a *moa* (Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*).[30] Eventually, the brothers understood that they were being tricked, and when Tupua’rosi invited them again, the *juli* called out their own names instead of the brothers’ when they saw the three boys on the beach. Tupua’rosi then had no time to hide, and he thus had to offer them food.

[29] Barred Cuckooshrikes usually fly in small groups (Dutson 2011:367).

[30] Moeatiktiki, in this part of the story, ‘has tricks played on him rather than playing tricks on other people’: he and his brothers ‘are hard put to match wits with the marplot, who has a malicious sense of humor’ (Luomala 1949:216,218).

Finally, a few stories deal with the spirit of a deceased person entering a bird.[31] The Māori story of Kōrako-iti tells of a child who took upon his death the form of a white *tūī* (*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*) to save his father (**129**). Kōrako-iti ('Little-albino') was the son of a chief of the island of Mōtītī. The child became sick, and died. His father went fishing, but a storm arose. He swam ashore, and landed on a strange beach, barely alive. Meanwhile, some boys of the village found a white *tūī* in a tree and threw stones at him to kill him, but the bird called out, 'How dare you try to kill Kōrako-iti? Go home to your mothers and tell them to whip you.' The children were very afraid, so they ran away. The people of the village then heard a voice from the spirit world, telling them that it would guide them in the form of a white *tūī* to where the missing man had been cast ashore. Indeed, the bird led the people to him the following day.

In a narrative from Manihiki, Fonoia and his wife Matuanui had a daughter, Kahumarama, whom Matuanui did not care for (**130**). It was Fonoia who looked after her. One day, while Matuanui was at the beach collecting clam shells, Fonoia packed all his belongings and left home with his daughter. They settled on an islet far away. Matuanui was devastated when she found out that they were gone, so she dug a deep hole in their house and laid herself in the hole, crying and preparing to die. After she died, her spirit (*mauri*) entered a *tōrea* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*). The bird flew to Kahumarama's islet. When the girl saw the bird on the beach, she asked the *tōrea* twice if her mother was still alive, but the bird did not reply. When asked for a third time, however, the latter shook his head. Fonoia then let Kahumarama go back to their former abode, where she found her mother dead in the deep hole.

From Hiva Oa comes a tradition in which it is not the spirit of a man that turns into a bird after his death, but his genitals (**131**). Mapuni's nine brothers were seduced on the beach one by one by a sea ogress whose vagina hid moray eels. Those eels ate the brothers' genitals, and they all died before being devoured by the woman. Mapuni then had sexual intercourse with her, but it was so intense that he managed to get her to fall asleep. He lured the moray eels out of her vagina with some fish, then he caught them with a noose. However, the ogress woke up and killed him when she discovered that her moray eels were gone. She ate him whole but for his genitals, which turned into two *outa'e* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*). The two birds later played a few tricks on her in order to starve her, causing the fish that she

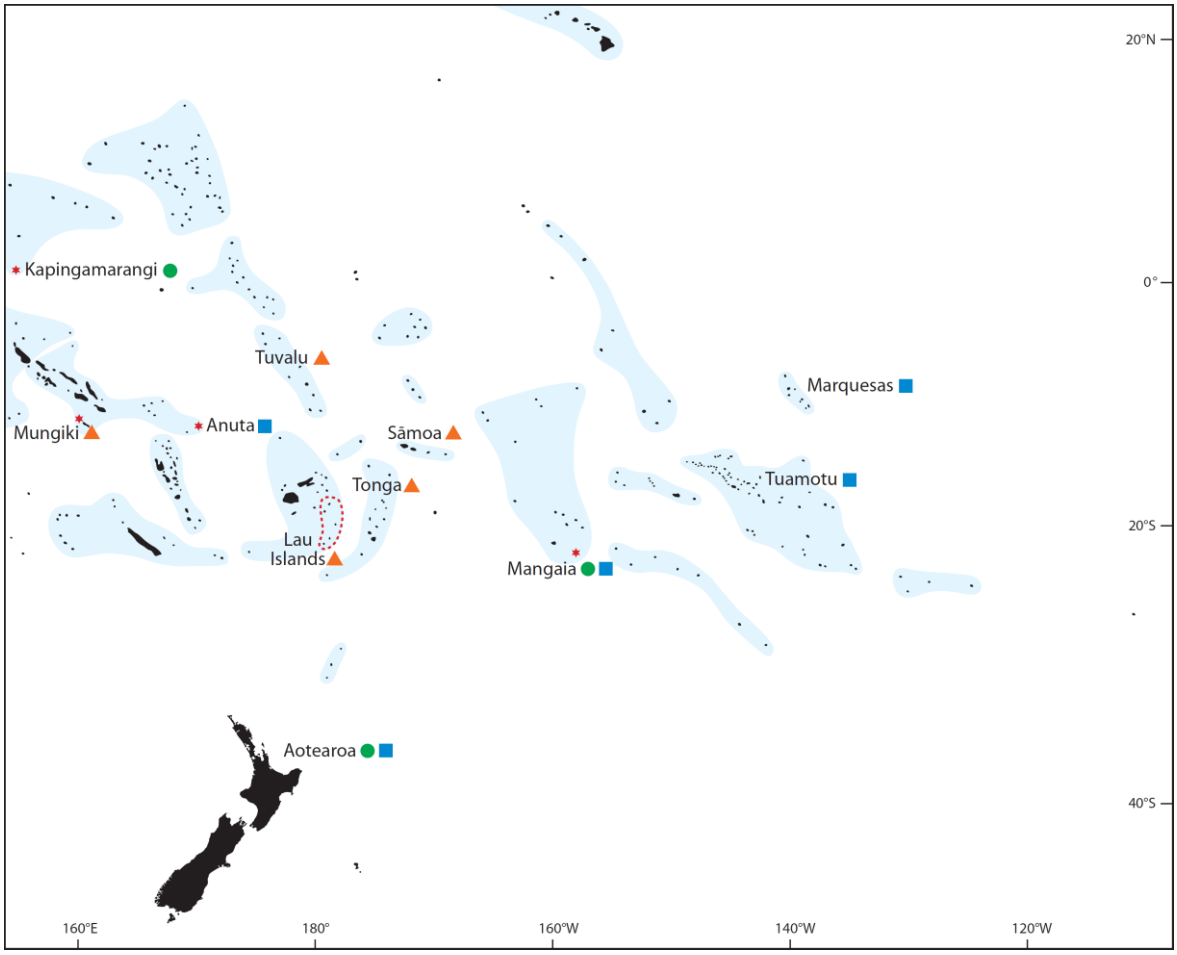
[31] Stories about spirits turning into birds and killing an antagonist are dealt with in X-2.

had caught to escape, attaching her fishing net onto a coral outcrop, as well as stealing and eating her pig.

*

Manu thus appear as vehicles in many Polynesian narratives. They carry or snatch people away, often taking them over the ocean to far-off islands. For the canoe-less protagonists, the homesick ones in particular, they are the only way to go back home. They may serve as a medium to travel between this world and the heavens, or the ancestral homeland of Hawaiki. When humans turn into birds, stones are often thrown at them by people when they try to alight, but then they assume their human form again. In those narratives, people do not use birds as vehicles for entertainment – birds as vehicles always serve a purpose. Whether the protagonist actually travels on the bird's back, or physically enters a bird, or literally transforms into one, the motifs in those traditions are the same – in particular, going home, escaping from danger, and searching for a relative.

Figure 16. Vehicle stories



▲ A giant bird lifts up a canoe or unwillingly carries over the ocean a person who has tied themselves to him (**109**, **110**, **111**, **112**, **112A**)

● Rupe turns into or enters a bird to go and find his sister Hina (**123**, **123A**, **123B**)

■ Māui turns into a bird to follow his parents down to the underworld (**125** to **125D**)

Chapter VII

Communication

> Ti kau arā ka khumi reperā a mē, pērē tāriki. Ti akiaki ka māngi mai e herekhai ki ti kau arā tāriki thāne, porō: 'Hu tē heia. Rahia ki ūta, penepeneina, e thoko kinae kōtou.' Ti kau arā ka penepene a mē.[1]

1. Power of speech and song

Birds can sing and call, and they can be taught to talk. This singing, calling and delivering of taught phrases all feature as important elements in the plot of many Polynesian narratives. But in the stories birds may also appear as having the gift of speech, thus being able to give people advice and instructions and to warn them of danger.[2]

Birds call like humans or recite incantations

Māori tradition has it that Turi, the captain of the *Aotea waka*, placed a *matuku* (Australasian Bittern, *Botaurus poiciloptilus*) in his *pā* (fortified village) near Pātea, because the cry of the bird ('hu, hu, hu!')[3] would make any enemy approaching the *pā* believe that Turi was inside (**132**). The enemy would then turn back and flee. Thus, every time that Turi left the *pā*, all his people were able to go with him. He also uttered a *karakia* to strengthen the bird in his defence of the *pā*. This tradition is reminiscent of the story of Kupe, the famous Polynesian navigator, who told the same Turi (about to sail from Hawaiki to Aotearoa) that at the mouth of the Pātea River Turi would encounter the *kōkako* (North Island Kōkako, *Callaeas*

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[1] 'The people grabbed [the man] with intent to beat him. An *akiaki* white tern flew by and spoke to the beaters of the man, saying: "Don't do it. Take him ashore and care for him and he will be your leader." So the people took good care of the man' (**137**).

[2] Narratives about birds that announce a person's death will be dealt with in X-1.

[3] Male *matuku* utter low booming calls during the breeding season (Moon 1992:70).

wilsoni), who called out just like a human being, and that he should not be deceived by his human-like call (**48**).

In another Māori story, Tāne-miti-rangi, the pet *tūī* (*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*) of Iwi-katea (a chief from Te Wairoa), could not only recite *karakia* when *kūmara* were planted,[4] but he could also kill people by *whaiwhaiā*, or witchcraft (**133**). Another Māori tradition, from Ngāti Kahungunu, tells the story of Tau-tini-awhitia (**134**). When his mother was pregnant, she had a longing for birds.[5] Her husband came back with a *huia* (*Heteralocha acutirostris*) and a *kōtuku* (Great Egret, *Ardea alba*), but the woman kept them as pets and did not eat them.[6] The man then went away to live elsewhere, and she had her baby. The boy eventually wanted to know his father, so he went away and caught two birds in the forest, a *huia* and a *kōtuku*. He taught each one a particular phrase. One night, he sneaked into his father's house. When the two birds spoke their phrase, the man recognised his son.

In the first narrative, it is the peculiar human-like call of the *matuku* that Turi uses to deceive his enemy. In the story of Tāne-miti-rangi, the *tūī* is taught to recite ritual chants by his master. And in the story of Tau-tini-awhitia, the two birds are taught a particular phrase by the protagonist.[7] However, in other Polynesian stories about talking birds, the birds' power of speech is envisaged not as a skill taught to them by humans but as a natural talent.

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[4] For Hanson (2005:7309), the story of Tāne-miti-rangi and the 'emphasis on perfection of delivery of incantations and performance of ceremonies' are evidence of the fact that 'Polynesians believed their gods to be concerned with the outer form of worship', and that 'inner feelings and convictions were not relevant issues in Polynesian religion'.

[5] According to Best (1906:2), 'when a woman is pregnant, she often expresses a wish for some of the more delicate foods, such as birds, and such will be procured and prepared for her. If it is seen that she eats of the wings, neck, etc., only, it is known that the child she bears is a male. But if she eats the body of the bird, then, it is said, the child is a female.'

[6] As Orbell (1995:192) observed, 'since the white heron sometimes symbolised the male and the huia the female, the woman's pets together represented the child of unknown sex whom she was to have.' In Māori belief, 'if a newly married man dreamt that he saw skulls decorated with feathers lying on the ground it was a sign that his wife had conceived. If the feathers seen in the dream were those of the white crane (*kotuku*) the child would be a boy; if the feathers were those of the *huia*, it would be a girl' (Tregear 1904:40).

[7] Conversely, *manu* can also teach humans a new language. A tradition from Nuku Hiva has it that the *uhi tua*, a method of talking in which a word's syllables are transposed, was taught to two women by a *kōmako* (Northern Marquesan Reed Warbler, *Acrocephalus percernis*); this trick language, used for amusement, was spoken by men, women and children, and only understood by the inhabitants of the Haa Paa Valley (Handy 1930:19).

Birds give advice and instructions

In the Hawaiian story of Kahuoi, for example, his choice of a particular location to plant banana trees is endorsed by a passing talking bird (**135**). Kahuoi was planting bananas, when an *ʻelepaio* (*Chasiempis* sp.) came and told him that he had chosen a good place to plant them, and that his field would be famous. Conversely, another Hawaiian tradition tells of birds showing men which tree not to fell to build a canoe.[8] In the story of the chief Keawe-nui-a-ʻUmi, two birds, Kani-ka-wi and Kani-ka-wa, delayed the building of the double canoe destined for this chief (who was pursuing his personal attendant Pakaʻa who had run away) by calling out from the top of the trees being felled by the chief's men that the logs were rotten (**136**). The two birds kept causing the logs to decay, so Keawe-nui-a-ʻUmi eventually hired Maʻi-lele to shoot them. But it was Pikoi-a-ka-ʻalala who was successful. His arrow went through the neck of one bird into that of his friend. The two enemies of Keawe-nui-a-ʻUmi did not die, however: they flew up to the sky. Another version says that after shooting both birds, Pikoi could not find their bodies.

Birds can also instruct humans to do a particular action. The Kapingamarangi story of Uta-matua, the 'founder of the settlement and the principal god until the adoption of Christianity in 1919', was, according to Elbert (1948:118), the 'island's most important tradition'. It recounts how the people of Tamāna found a stranger lying in the fish weir that they had built (**137**). They killed him, but when they came back to the weir the next day the man was still alive. They intended to beat him up again, but an *agiagi* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*) intervened and told them to spare the life of the man: 'Take him ashore,' the bird said, 'and care for him – he will be your leader.' They followed the instructions of the *agiagi*. The man later took a wife, and they had a son, Uta-matua.

In Hawaiʻi, a bird instructs a man to build a shrine (**138**). Kapoʻi found some eggs and intended to roast them when the *pueo* (Short-eared Owl, *Asio flammeus*), perched on the fence by his house, begged him three times to give him back his seven eggs. Kapoʻi first replied that he would eat them, but eventually he told the bird that he could come and take them. Then the *pueo* instructed Kapoʻi to build a *heiau* to be called Manua. Kapoʻi did as instructed, and then he set *kapu* (consecrated) days for the dedication of the *heiau*.

[8] As was noted in III-2, Hawaiians observed the movements of the *ʻelepaio* to determine the suitability of a tree to make a canoe: if the bird stood still on the tree, it was deemed unfit as it was thought to be rotten. In the following story, the birds in question may be *ʻelepaio*.

Birds give instructions to save Māui's life in a Tuamotuan tradition (**139**). Māui fell ill. His mother Huahega summoned flocks of every type of bird to come and tell her how to cure her son. The first flock of birds told her that Māui would never recover because they could not cure his sickness. The same thing happened with the second flock of birds, and so on until a flock of *takatakahiara* (petrel) arrived. Those birds told Huahega that Māui should obtain the first shell (*kiri mua*) of a *tupa* (land crab), and dwell within it to recover. They explained to her how Māui was to proceed, before flying away. Māui did as per their instructions, and recovered from his illness.

In the Samoan story of Sina, she looked everywhere for her husband, who had been murdered in his boat while fishing (**91**, see V-3). According to one version, Sina came across a *sega* (Blue-crowned Lorikeet, *Vini australis*) sitting in a tree. She sang a song twice to the bird, and the *sega* replied, in a song, that he had seen a man with a starfish-tipped spear in his back and a string of beads, and that it might have been her husband. As a reward Sina gave him her crimson kilt for his back. The *sega* then told Sina to go and slap her parents' aunts' faces and to ask them to go and search for her husband, whom they would be able to recognise by the spear in his back and the string of beads. Sina did as instructed, and her husband was eventually brought back from the dead.[9]

Birds warn of danger

Birds can also warn people of the approach of a war party,[10] or tell them that their village has been attacked by one. A Futunan story illustrates the first case (**140**). At Keu, in Alofi, a bird came at night and, sitting on a branch, cried and woke up a woman. The bird called out that a war party from Tonga was on the way. The woman woke up her husband and told

[9] In a Tongan narrative, a pigeon begs the women mourning his master to make way for his widow, so she can come close to his body and mourn (**230**, see also IX-1). Lolomatokelau got killed by some men at a game of dart throwing (*tolo*). His wife Lolongovavau wept herself to sleep. The spirit (*laumālie*) of her dead husband visited her, and, fearing that Mahuamata, his *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*), might be captured, asked her to keep an eye on him. The spirit then returned to Pulotu. Lolongovavau went to see his body, but had to weep at a distance from it because the place was packed with the wives of the men who had killed Lolomatokelau. However, Mahuamata beseeched the women to make way for her, so she eventually came near the body and mourned.

[10] In Aotearoa, in 1823, Ngā Puhi warriors from the north launched a surprise attack on the island of Mokoia, in the middle of Lake Rotorua, on a misty morning. The local Te Arawa people were warned by a flock of *tarāpunga* (Black-billed Gull, *Chroicocephalus bulleri*, or Silver Gull, *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*) of the attack when the birds suddenly flew up in alarm and shrieked upon seeing the enemy's *waka*. After the battle, Te Arawa *tohunga* performed rituals to make these birds *tapu* so nobody would harm them, because they had tried to save the people of Te Arawa (Pōmare & Cowan 1930:I,245-246; Orbell 2003:150-151).

him to listen to the bird crying. The husband then went down to the beach, and he saw the Tongan canoes on the water approaching the island (Tongan invasions are a recurring motif in Futunan narratives).[11] In a story from the Lau Islands, it is not the call of the bird but his behaviour that reveals what has happened (**141**). On a hillcrest on the island of Cicia, the two villages of Na Vuwai and Watika were in conflict with each other. One day, the villagers of Na Vuwai made their way by stealth to Watika, where they killed everyone but for a tribe who was out fishing on the reef. A *lātui* (Fiji Goshawk, *Accipiter rufitorques*) then let the tribesmen on the reef know of the attack (*lātui* were the ancestral gods of that particular tribe): he flew in circles above the burning houses, swooped down to the people, and cried out to draw their attention to the smoke rising from the village on the hill.

In many stories, a bird tells the protagonist of the murderous intentions of an evil spirit, an enemy, or an ogre.[12] In most of them, as will be seen, they are listened to, thus the protagonist escapes unscathed. In two stories from Rarotonga and Mangaia, however, a woman and a man do not pay heed to the birds' warning, and in a Nukuoro narrative, birds try to wake up a woman who is being held by a ghost, but it is too late.

The Rarotongan story of Ngaroariki, the wife of Ngata, the king of Rarotonga, recounts how the god Tangaroa came to the beautiful woman's rescue twice when she was attacked by men and by demons (**142**). On a third occasion, when she went to bathe in a spot not far from the abode of the sorceress Moto, who was jealous of her charms, Tangaroa tried to warn her of the danger by sending out his messenger, the *kuriri* (Wandering Tattler, *Tringa incana*). The bird called to her two or three times, 'Teuteuae, ruerueae, e tū ra, e oro ra, 'aere ra!' ('Haste, haste, arise, flee for your life!'), but she did not pay attention to the *kuriri*. Moto then assaulted and disfigured her.

In Mangaia, on the way to a meeting on the top of the hill Maungarua with a relative of his (who had decided to put him to death), Itieve came across another wader, a *kau'a*

[11] In one version of the Māori story of Korotangi (**217**, see VIII-3), this duck also warns the people of the arrival of enemies.

[12] A story from Ulithi tells of two girls who disobeyed their parents and went to an island inhabited by an ogre. Their pet bird, a *hängau* (a black bird whose species is unidentified), flew to the island, where he spotted the ogre preparing an oven to cook them. He tried to awaken them by singing a song, standing on their foreheads. They woke up and were told to flee, or they would be eaten by the ogre. They eventually killed him and found their parents (Lessa 1961:63-65).

(Bristle-thighed Curlew, *Numenius tahitiensis*),[13] darting suddenly out of the bush (**143**). The bird called out 'kau'a!' over his head. Itieve then said to the bird, 'Āo, Tāne koe e karanga nei?' ('Tāne, is it you who are calling?'). But he kept going. He started climbing the hill, but the *kau'a* came back, called out again, and Itieve repeated the same question, but kept going. Half-way up the hill, he met the *kau'a* for the third and last time, but then again ignored the warning. When he finally reached the top of the hill and met his relative Kekeia, he was slain in an ambush by the warriors of an enemy tribe.

A woman named Moso joined a group of women working in a taro patch, in a Nukuoro tradition (**144**). It was very hot and she became very tired, so she went to Guduma, a little island right in the middle of the taro patch, and fell asleep while the other women were working. When evening came, the women started heading back home, not knowing that Moso was being left behind. A group of *moso* (Micronesian Starling, *Aplonis opaca*) flew over her and started singing. They told her to wake up and hurry back to the village. When she tried to open her eyes, she could not move them. The birds flew over her again and sang the same song. She finally woke up. It was getting dark. Because a ghost had been holding her for a long time while she was sleeping, she was very weak and sick when she returned to the village, and so she eventually died.

More numerous are the stories in which the protagonist pays heed to the bird's warning. In Kapingamarangi, Timutoko came back after his death as a ghost (**145**). He climbed onto the roof of his house, and intended to eat his two wives. The two women, however, were warned by two *agiagi* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*) of his deadly intentions. The birds advised them to wrap their mat around a stick and to run away to their own land. The women followed their instructions. The *agiagi* then took the women's place and started singing. The ghost came down from the roof and opened his mouth wide to swallow them, but the birds flew above him, shouting 'aki aki aki aki!' The ghost then looked down at the mat, and he swallowed it. The stick pierced his mouth, and Timutoko died.

In a story from 'Uvea, a young man was going to Atuvalu to court a woman (**146**). On the way he met a *kiu* (Ruddy Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*, or Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*) who kept on crying. The bird followed the young man and did not want to go away. The young man ignored the persistent *kiu* at first, but he eventually asked him what

[13] This *kau'a* may, however, be a Pacific Long-tailed Cuckoo (*Urodynamis taitensis*); see Clerk (1981:266-268).

he wanted. The bird told him that a woman was about to spring up from under the ground, but that she was from another world, and that he should run away from her. The young man thus ran away as fast as he could. When the woman sprang up from the base of a tree and saw the *kiu* there, she wondered why the young man was not there. The bird told her to wait for him: he was probably late. After a while, however, the woman started pursuing the young man. The latter threw two coconuts at her, which hit her head. Because of her injury she was not able to catch up with the young man, who arrived safely at his destination, after having discarded on the way the food basket that he was carrying. The *kiu* found the basket and was thus rewarded.

In two traditions from ‘Uvea and Futuna, birds do not only tell the protagonist of a female evil being’s murderous intentions – they also reply to the latter in the protagonist’s place, pretending to be them so they can run away. In the Uvean story of Ulukena, the son of the chief of Vailala, Ulukena visited the daughter of the chief of Lausikula (**147**). Upon leaving, he promised her to come back in three days. When he broke his promise, the girl died of heartbreak. One day, Ulukena came back to Lausikula, not knowing that she was dead. The girl was in her bed, she told him to wait until nightfall, and she would give him a nice meal. She instructed him to go and bathe in the sea and gave him buckets of fresh water to wash the salt off afterwards. However, Ulukena noticed that this was not fresh water, but blood. The girl invited him to stay with her, and asked him several times if the sun had set yet. He would just have to wait for a while until sunset, and then she would give him the meal. However, a little bird urged Ulukena to flee: the girl was dead and the spirit would kill him at sunset. Ulukena thus ran away. Believing that he was still at her side, the girl asked again about the sunset, but the little bird replied in his place. He then flew up to the top of the roof of the house to see if Ulukena and his servants were gone, but they had not reached the reef yet, so he started whistling to let them know that they must hurry. After Ulukena had arrived at Nukuloa, the girl climbed on the roof, but she could not see Ulukena’s canoe on the shore at Utuleve, and the house collapsed with her on it.

In the Futunan story, the helpful bird is a *veka* (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*) (**148**). Hina, from Tavila (in Sigave, Futuna), and Mele, from Alofi, were friends. The two young girls promised each other that they would never marry, or misfortune would befall them. Hina, however, broke the promise: she got married, but then she died and became a man-eating demon. Unaware of her passing, Mele decided to go and visit her friend in Tavila with her family. Hina, hiding under a mosquito net and waiting until sunset

to eat the visitors, talked to them from her mosquito net and invited them to stay and have a meal. But after the meal, a *veka* urged Mele to run away at once, or Hina would eat them at sunset. He also offered to take her place in the conversation with Hina. Mele and her family fled, and the *veka* came and sat down to converse with Hina. Just as the sun was setting, Mele's canoe arrived back at Alofi. Hina rushed out from behind the mosquito net, and the *veka* went away with a laugh. Hina then ate up all the leftovers and the waste.

Birds also reply on the protagonist's behalf in a Tongan tradition (**149**). Sinilau and Hina-kili-toto got married, but on their wedding night Hina was kidnapped by a spirit, Talingamaivalu. Sinilau visited a few islands to find her. On one of them, he slept with a woman, who became pregnant. She gave him her two *sikotā* (Pacific Kingfisher, *Todiramphus sacer*) to protect him on his journey. He reached Talingamaivalu's island and found Hina. Hina told him to go and hide to avoid being seen, killed and eaten by the spirit. Talingamaivalu came and told Hina that he could smell a live human, so she introduced Sinilau to him as her brother, who had come looking for her. After the spirit had gone away to prepare a welcome feast for Sinilau, Hina placed a bunch of plantains on her bed. She covered it up to make the spirit believe that it was her. She then ordered the two *sikotā*, hidden in her bed's mosquito net, to reply to Talingamaivalu if he were to call her. Sinilau and Hina fled in his boat. When Talingamaivalu called Hina, the *sikotā* replied, 'here I am'. He told Hina to come out of the house with Sinilau and eat the feast; the birds replied, 'thank you'. As no one came out, he called Hina again and asked her to come out twice, and twice the birds replied in the same fashion. Tired of waiting, he entered the house and pulled back the covers. Realising that Hina was gone, he tore down the walls of the house to use them as wings and go after Hina and eat her. But as he flew off, the two *sikotā* flew up to his face and each pecked out one of his eyes; Talingamaivalu fell dead. Meanwhile, Sinilau and Hina reached the birds' woman's island; she had given birth to a boy, but she told Sinilau to go and live with Hina.

Birds and the coming of daylight

In Polynesian traditions, birds help the protagonist not only by giving them instructions and warning them of danger, but also by triggering with their singing the early coming of daylight, and by making people believe with their song that dawn has come when it actually still is night, as will be shown in three narratives from the Marquesas and Mo'orea. As Orbell

(2003:15) wrote about Māori, the dawn chorus of the birds was seen by Polynesians as ‘an affirmation of the approach of day, an eloquent celebration of life’, in contradistinction to the dangers lurking in the darkness.[14]

In a Marquesan story, from Tahuata, Kena, after the death of his wife Tefio, set off to the land of Mauhepo (**150**). The chief of Mauhepo, where daylight and darkness both lasted seven days,[15] was Tē‘ikiotepō, the lord of the night. On the way, a woman instructed Kena to equip himself with two roosters, two fleas and two *kōma‘o* (Southern Marquesan Reed Warbler, *Acrocephalus mendanae*). When he got there, it was night. The fleas stung Tē‘ikiotepō and his daughter Kape‘u, the song of the *kōma‘o* awakened the people of the land, and the roosters sang three times, thus triggering the early coming of light. Tē‘ikiotepō then came out of his house and gave Kena his daughter in marriage. On the way back, Kape‘u complained about the stony path, so Kena ordered his roosters to carry them on their backs.

Another Marquesan narrative, from Hiva Oa, tells of the same birds whose singing provokes the early coming of light, but it features different protagonists (**151**). Vehie-Oa (Rata’s father) went down to Havaiki to find his wife, Tahi‘i-Tokoau, who had fled there after seeing him kiss another woman. He equipped himself with various insects, a *kōma‘o* and a rooster, which he put in a bag. Thanks to their singing the night gave way to daylight in Havaiki, and Vehie-Oa returned home with his wife.

A tradition from Mo‘orea features birds that do not trigger the coming of light as such, but simply make thieves believe by their singing that dawn has come, thus foiling their plans (**152**). Te Remu ‘Ura was the queen of Mount Rotui. One night, three warriors came in a canoe to steal the mountain with a noose. The queen saw them approaching the island, so she asked her *noha* (Tahiti Petrel, *Pseudobulweria rostrata*), named Noha ‘Ura, to wake up all the birds. When the three warriors started to steal the mountain, the queen asked Noha ‘Ura to tell all the birds to make a great noise. All the nocturnal birds, like the petrels, made a terrible racket, so much so that the three warriors, believing that it was dawn already, stopped pulling the mountain.

[14] In Māori watch songs for instance, in which watchmen would warn any enemy approaching at nightime that they were on the alert, the singing of the birds was ‘inseparably linked to the coming of the light’.

[15] Mauhepo is akin to Havai‘i, according to Lavondès.

2. Messengers

Manu may also carry messages in Polynesian traditions, from a person to another person, often between islands, either by talking or by other means such as nodding.[16]

Birds deliver their message by talking

Three Hawaiian narratives deal with birds delivering messages concerning marriage. The first one features a bird-carried message about a marriage proposal, from a chief to a woman; the second one tells of a bird-carried message about a woman's unsuitability for marriage, from a daughter to her father; and the third one deals with a bird-carried message about the necessity to return a married woman to her husband, from a priest to the king who had her abducted.

In the romance of Lāʻiekawai,[17] Aiwohi-kupua, a young chief of Kauaʻi, wanted to abduct the beautiful princess Lāʻiekawai, who lived at Pali-uli,[18] to marry her (**154**). He had bird messengers: the swiftest were ʻŪlili (Wandering Tattler, *Tringa incana*) and Akikee-hiale (Ruddy Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*).[19] They told him of the terrible battle between two *kupua*, his man-eating dog and the great lizard, guardian of Pali-uli, who defeated the dog. Aiwohi-kupua then decided to forget about Lāʻiekawai, and to marry Poli-ahu, a high chiefess living on Mauna Kea. Thus he sent ʻŪlili and Akikeehiale to tell Poli-ahu that she had three months to prepare for their marriage. However, the two bird messengers flew by mistake to Hina-i-ka-malama, a chiefess of Maui whom Aiwohi-kupua had met before

[16] A tradition from Mugaba explains why a particular bird was chosen as messenger by the gods (**153**). The *ʻatua* (gods) held a party (*hakatahinga*) at their home in Nukuahea (the legendary island settlement of the gods lying to the east of Mugaba). The birds gathered there and were presented with the *papa*, the sounding board (the gods' 'only musical instrument', a 'plank beaten with wooden clubs for chants and dances'). They discussed who was going to beat the *papa*, and after deliberation they appointed the *ghou* (Black Bittern, *Dupetor flavicollis*). The bird came up and beat the opening chant (*ʻugu*). All the birds waved their arms and danced, watched by the gods. The *ʻatua* liked the dance of the *kataha* (Lesser Frigatebird, *Fregata ariel*), and thus decided to make him their medium (*eketanga*).

[17] This *kaʻao*, or 'narrative rehearsed in prose interspersed with song', was put into writing by Haleʻole in the 1860s. It was the only 'piece of Hawaiian imaginative writing to reach book form' (Beckwith 1919:293-294).

[18] Pali-uli is 'a mythical earthly paradise, sometimes identified with one of the twelve islands of Kane, but in Hawaiian romance placed on the island of Hawaii, in the wooded uplands of Ola-a between Puna and Hilo districts' (Green & Pukui 1936:159,n.1).

[19] The common Hawaiian name of this bird is *ʻakekeke*.

meeting Poli-ahu, and who had fallen in love with him. They delivered their message to her. When an angry Aiwohi-kupua realised that the two birds had found Hina instead of Poli-ahu, they ceased to be their master's favourites. The quick Koaʻe (White-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon lepturus*) was then dispatched to Poli-ahu with the same message as before. When he reported back that the demand had been accepted, Aiwohi-kupua was pleased. Three months later, just before the marriage, Koaʻe was sent again to Poli-ahu to get the bride to come and meet Aiwohi-kupua. The bird came back to his master with a message from the chiefess telling him where and when the marriage was to take place. But, out of revenge, the dismissed ʻŪlili and Akikeehiale then flew back to Hina-i-ka-malama to tell her of Aiwohi-kupua's impending marriage with Poli-ahu.

Ka-pua-o-ka-ohelo-ai, banished by her parents (two chiefs of high rank) from Hilo with her attendant for having slept with her brother, sailed to Kuai-he-lani,[20] in another Hawaiian story (**155**). There, the king wanted to marry her. However, he wished to know his daughter's opinion about the young woman, so he sent some bird messengers to his daughter (as she was living away from her father) to come and meet Ka-pua. When the two women went to a sacred bathing place, Ka-pua slipped, which was a sign that she had lost her virginity. Angry with her, the king's daughter then sent some birds to her father to tell him what had happened and that she should be put to death. Eventually, a priest nonetheless found that Ka-pua was of the highest rank, so she was not killed.

The third Hawaiian narrative about bird messengers tells of Haka-lani-leo, the wife of Haka, king of Hilo, and mother of Niheu and Kana, who was abducted by Keoloewa, the king of Molokaʻi (**156**). Mo-i, Keoloewa's *kahuna* (priest), knew that Niheu's and Kana's party was on its way to come and rescue Haka-lani-leo, so he sent his messenger, Kōlea (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*), to warn Keoloewa that, should he not return her to Haka, a disaster would befall him. The bird flew to the palace and delivered the message, but the king dismissed the prophecy of the *kahuna*. Soon after, while Mo-i was dreaming, Kōlea saw his lips move, so he woke him up and asked him why he was mumbling in his sleep. Mo-i then sent Kōlea to the king again to warn him of the impending danger if he did not set the woman free. Angry with Mo-i, Keoloewa sent his messenger to advise the *kahuna*

[20] Kuai-he-lani is 'the name of the cloudland adjoining earth and is the land most commonly named in visits to the heavens or to lands distant from Hawaii'. It lies to the west of Hawaiʻi (Beckwith 1970:78-79).

to stop dreaming, or he would be punished (Niheu eventually rescued his mother, see VIII-3).

Marriage (searching for, proposing to, or abducting a woman) is a recurring theme in Polynesian stories; so is war. In the preceding section, two narratives (the Futunan story about the war party coming from Tonga and the Lau Islands story of the *lātui* that lets his tribesmen know of the attack on their village by his unusual flying patterns) told of birds warning people of the approach of a war party, or telling them that their village has been attacked by one. A Tuamotuan tradition also tells of two birds telling of an attack, but in this narrative the birds do not initiate the communication themselves: they are just messengers used by a young man to let his uncle know of what has happened in his absence. The great navigator and warrior Moeava lived on the island of Takaroa (**157**). While he was in Napuka with his wife Huarei and their son Kehauri, Moeava's enemies from the western and central islands of the Tuamotu Archipelago entered into a league and attacked Moeava's island, Takaroa. They murdered three of Moeava's nephews, whom he had adopted after his elder brother's death. However, Reipu, the youngest of his nephews, escaped the massacre together with his sister Tu-tapu-hoa-atua. They hid in a tree covered by a creeping plant, where they stayed for many days. Then Reipu caught two *taketake* or *kīrarahu* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*), and he sent them off to Napuka to inform Moeava of the attack on Takaroa and his brothers' murder. When dispatching them he sang them a *pehe* (song). Upon receiving the message, Moeava returned at once to Takaroa.

Finally, a Samoan story recounts how a bird was used to deliver a message to Tigilau's people to all come to him (**158**). Le-malu-o-sāmoa fought with Tigilau and broke Tigilau's arm with his club. Tigilau begged for his life, and Le-malu showed him mercy. He then took him to his house, and Tigilau offered Le-malu to bring all his people under Le-malu's authority in exchange for his life. Le-malu accepted. Tigilau's *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*), named Nonu, thus flew into the house of Le-malu. Tigilau told his *lupe* to go and instruct all his people to come because he had been defeated by Le-malu, and to bring his sister Sina-leʻuʻuni as well. The bird flew to Savavau, Tigilau's land, and did as he was told.

Birds deliver their message by non-talking means

Birds do not necessarily need to talk to deliver a message: they can also nod, flutter their wings, or carry on their neck a knotted cord with a message.[21]

A narrative from Ātiu tells of a kingfisher[22] that carries a message between a woman and her estranged husband (**159**). At a dance, Inutoto attracted the attention of a man who coveted her. When Paroro, her husband, learned that they had slept together, he beat her up badly. She then ran away to a cave in the *makatea* (raised formation of dead coral), Te Ana-taketake. Paroro searched everywhere for her, in vain. A few months passed by. Inutoto subsisted on roots and wild fruits. She composed a lament for Paroro asking the gods to bring him to her. Hearing her lament, her god, Tu-te-rangi-marama, ordered a kingfisher to carry the message to Paroro. The bird flew in front of him, attracting the man's attention with his peculiar cry. Paroro asked the bird if he had come for him, and the bird nodded three times. He then asked if he should follow him, and the bird nodded again. The bird led Paroro and his friends to the cave, where husband and wife were happily reunited.

Nodding is also the means of delivering a message in a traditional narrative from the Tamatoa family of Raʻiātea (**160**). In Tahiti, the *ariʻi* Vēhi-atua-i-te-mataʻi-hāʻiriʻiri attacked the village of a rival *ariʻi*, Moe-te-rā-uri, while the latter was away in Mataʻirea, and enslaved all of his people. Tū-tua, a *tahuʻa hiʻohiʻo* (seer) and *ʻaito* of Moe-te-rā-uri, then sent a *tōrea* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*) and a *puhi* (eel) away to inform Moe-te-rā-uri of what had befallen his people. In Mataʻirea, the *tōrea* alighted on his

[21] They can also make themselves understood by making signs, as in the Lifou story of the woman who gave birth to a hawk on an uninhabited island after an evil octopus had cast a spell on her (see n. 10 in IV-2). The bird (probably a Brown Goshawk, *Accipiter fasciatus*, or Swamp Harrier, *Circus approximans*) caught a fish in the ocean one day and brought it back to his human mother. Having no fire, she could not cook the fish, so she asked the bird to fly to Lifou, find her mother, and fetch a few items for her: a skirt, a live fire stick, a piece of rope, some stones and a calabash full of fresh water. The bird flew away and landed on the old woman's lap. He then perched on the items that his mother had requested, and the old woman understood that those were the things that he wanted. Thus, she placed on his back a basket, secured by a rope, with the skirt and stones in it, tied the live fire stick under one wing, and suspended from his beak a gourd filled with fresh water. The bird flew back to his mother. She cooked the fish, and they both ate it. Meanwhile, the evil octopus took the disguise of a woman and tried to seduce her husband. She asked the bird to fly to Lifou to her husband, and to tell him to kill that evil spirit. The bird found the husband; he managed to make himself understood and to get the husband to carry all his instructions. The man boarded a canoe with the evil woman and paddled to the open sea. There, instructed by the bird, he attached a large stone to the woman before throwing her overboard. He then went back to shore. The bird perched on the prow of the canoe, showing the man that he was to go on a second voyage. Acting as a pilot, the bird flew ahead of the canoe; the man and his friends found the little island, and husband and wife were reunited (Hadfield 1920:254-260).

[22] It is the *ngōtare* (Chattering Kingfisher, *Todiramphus tutus*).

shoulder. The *ari'i* asked the bird if he was bringing news from his land ('e parau 'āpī teie i te fenua'). The bird nodded his head. The *puhi* turned into a vessel which brought Moe-te-rā-uri home. When he got there at dusk, the *tōrea* sang twice, waking Vēhi-atua. Tū-tua told him not to worry: the bird was simply coming to eat the *īna'a* (whitebait) in the river mouth, because the tide was coming in. But Moe-te-rā-uri eventually broke the head of Vēhi-atua with his *'ōmore* (spear).[23]

In the Taumako story that explains how the birds acquired their distinctive markings (**86**, see V-3), a bird does not nod, but flutters his wings to answer a question in the positive; to answer in the negative, he does not move. Lauvaia and Hemaholuaki, after killing the *pakola* (ogress) and Vailape, her man-eating pig, instructed the bat, then the *miki*, then the *lenga*, then all the other birds, and finally the *vili* to fly right inside the men's house belonging to the Taumako people in Pileni and to answer the people's questions by fluttering their wings if the answer was yes, and by staying still if the answer was no. Only the *vili*, whose beak the two boys had smeared with dark blood, made it to Pileni. The Taumako people in Pileni knew that the *vili* had come from Taumako, for only on that island were there birds of the pale yellow-green variety, and that he had come for a special reason, on account of his black beak. They asked him if the boys' mother, Kahiva, had been eaten by the *pakola*; the bird did not move. They asked if she was still alive; he fluttered his wings. They asked if she had given birth; again he fluttered his wings. They asked if the *pakola* was still alive; he did not move. They asked if Vailape was still alive; he did not move. They realised that both the *pakola* and the pig were dead and that Kahiva wanted them to return to Taumako. Thus they all went back to their island.

A Māori story also tells of a bird carrying a message about the safety of a group of people between two islands, but in this case the bird is carrying on his neck a *tauponapona*, a knotted cord for conveying information (**161**). In Hawaiki, Whātonga and his nephew Tūrāhui took part in a regatta, but their canoe was blown away to the open sea. They eventually reached Rangiātea, where they settled, Tūrāhui marrying the daughter of the local *ariki*. Meanwhile, Toi-te-huatahi, the grandfather of Whātonga, went in search of them, and visited Aotearoa. In Hawaiki, Tūrāhui's mother, longing for her son, asked a *tohunga* to send Te Kawa, her son's pet *wharauroa* (Shining Bronze Cuckoo, *Chrysococcyx lucidus*), to his

[23] Two other stories feature birds that deliver information by nodding their heads: Tāne's bird Take-aitu (**224** & **224A**) and Roymata's two pigeons (**206**).

master. To his neck was fastened a *tauponapona* with a message asking its recipients if they were safe and well and on which island they were. Te Kawa was brought to the *tūāhu* (sacred place for ritual practices) and then sent on his way. The bird flew all the way to Rangiātea, and alighted on the gable of the house of the *ariki*. Upon hearing his master's voice, the bird asked him if he was Tūrāhui. The man recognised his pet's voice and called to him; the bird flew down from the gable to alight on his shoulder. Tūrāhui then took him in his hands and started crying. His people gathered around him wondering why he was crying. Whātonga recognised Te Kawa, the bird who had come from their own island. The people started crying; when the weeping was over, they untied the cord from the bird's neck and understood the message. They then made the following reply with the *tauponapona*: they were all well and they were in Rangiātea. Te Kawa was sent on his way. When he headed towards the east (*whakarāwhiti-marangai*), Whātonga knew that this was the direction that his people needed to take to return to Hawaiki. He told the *ariki* that the arrival of Te Kawa had ignited their desire to return to their island; the *ariki* agreed to their departure, and they left Rangiātea in six canoes. After a while, in the middle of the ocean, Te Kawa returned, with a message asking if Whātonga's people were coming back. They all returned safely to Hawaiki.[24]

[24] Most of these Polynesian stories feature birds delivering a message between islands. But a narrative from Ambae tells of a bird carrying a message from a spirit living on the earth to celestial creatures living in the sun. A girl, Banihi Mamata, came down to earth from the sun with her son. Takaro, a spirit living in Ambae before the creation of humankind, hid the wings of the girl, and he made the pair work in his yam garden. But when they later found their wings in a hole in the ground, they hurried back to the sun. Takaro cried when he realised that they were gone. He called a *hiko* (probably the Pacific Kingfisher, *Todiramphus sacer*), and asked him to go and fetch them in the sun because he himself did not have wings. The *hiko* flew up to the sun, and alighted on an almond tree in the land of Banihi Mamata. The women were dyeing their mats. He took an almond and with his beak drew four figures on it: Takaro, Banihi Mamata, her child and himself. He threw it down, the child picked it up and showed it to his mother. They recognised the four figures, looked up to the bird, and told him to get down (this episode is reminiscent of the Polynesian traditions that tell of the transformation of the culture hero Māui into a bird, generally a pigeon: he follows his parents down to the underworld incognito, where he often alights on a tree and drops berries on his parents' heads; see VI-2). They asked him why he had come, and he replied that he had been sent by Takaro to take them back down to earth to live with him. They told him that they were not going down until Takaro had climbed up there; then they would go down with him. The bird reported to Takaro, who used as a ladder the root of a banyan tree in which he had thrown a hundred arrows. He climbed up, preceded by the *hiko*. He found Banihi Mamata and her son, who told him and his bird to go back down first, and they would follow. However, they cut the root with an axe. Takaro and the bird fell down to earth, and Takaro could not climb up ever again (Suas 1912:54-57).

3. Informants

Birds may also communicate information to their master by serving as scouts sent away to gather information about what is happening in a distant location, by revealing what other people (in particular thieves and tricksters) have done and denouncing them, and by performing the duties of a sentinel to protect their master or inform them of the arrival of a stranger.

Scouts

A few Hawaiian narratives feature birds as scouts. The *ali‘i* Aukele-nui-a-iku and his brothers went searching for land to conquer (**162**). The queen Na-maka-o-kaha‘i had four bird brothers, Kane-moe, Kane-apua, Leapua and Kahaumana. They flew to Aukele-nui-a-iku's canoe when he and his brothers approached the queen's island, to ask them what their intentions were. The four birds reported back to their sister that the canoe was a ship to make war (*moku kaua*). The queen then destroyed the ship, but Aukele managed to swim to the shore and fell asleep under a tree. The queen's dog, smelling his blood, began to bark, so the queen asked her bird brothers to go in search of the person that the dog was barking at, suspecting that one of the men on the canoe had actually survived. However, the birds told her to send her two maid servants. The two women, instead of killing Aukele, befriended him, and they reported to the queen that they had seen no one. The dog barked again, so the queen sent her four bird brothers. The birds were greeted by their names by Aukele, and they found it so wonderful that he should know their names that they decided that he should marry their sister. When Aukele arrived at the queen's house, she commanded them to kill him; however, out of shame they all turned into rocks or logs of wood to hide from him. Later, they assumed their human forms, and eventually Aukele married Na-maka-o-kaha‘i.

The story of the brothers Niheu and Kana not only features birds sent as messengers (see preceding section), but also birds sent as scouts (**156**). Keoloewa, the abducting king of Moloka‘i, sent his body guard of *kōlea* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*) to find out if a war party was coming to take the woman back to her husband. The birds flew everywhere, but they could not see any warriors on the move. Angry with the birds, the king had a fire built to put them all to death. However, one *kōlea* eventually came back with some news: ‘I flew to Hilo,’ he said, ‘I ran along the beach, drank from a stream because I was

thirsty from running, and I flew back to the beach. But there I saw on the sand the footprints of a giant [i.e., Kana].'[25] Keoloewa then put out the fire and spared all the birds.[26]

In a Fijian narrative, from Lakeba in the Southern Lau Archipelago, a bird is sent by the sky-king, not to find out about the approach of an enemy as in the Hawaiian stories, but to track down his missing turtle; the bird reports back to his master that the animal has been killed (**163**). Lekabai, a Samoan man, was washed up on a rock after a big storm. The sky-king gave him a turtle to carry him back to Sāmoa, but he made the man promise to give the turtle a coconut and a coconut-leaf mat when they reached the island. However, upon his return home, Lekabai, reunited with his friends and family (who had believed him dead), forgot all about the turtle. Tired of waiting, the turtle started to swim along the reef, looking for food. People saw the turtle; they speared and killed it. Lekabai eventually remembered his promise to the sky-king, but he could not find the turtle on the beach. Then he saw the people preparing an oven to cook the turtle, so he grieved for it. He told them to put out the fire and dig a deep grave for the turtle. They dug it for five days, and on the sixth day they buried the turtle along with a mat and a coconut. The sky-king sent a sandpiper[27] to look for his turtle. The bird arrived just as the turtle was being buried. He swept down among the crowd, brushed the head of a boy named Lavai-pani with his wings, and reported back to the sky-king. Henceforth Lavai-pani remained a child: after three generations had passed he was still a boy.[28]

Finally, a bird is sent by a man to find out the origin of a noise in a tradition from Tau-mako (**164**). When Lata (the culture hero) heard men working on a canoe in the interior of the island, he sent a wild pigeon (probably an *ube*, Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) to fly over them to find out what they were doing. The bird reported back to him, and Lata

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[25] Kana, the stretching *kupua*, is 'the hero of a number of local legends explaining gashes in the contour of an island, or markings like a footprint in the rocks, or displacement of rock ledges as in some convulsion of nature' (Beckwith 1970:464).

[26] In another version of this story (in which the abductor is named Kapepeʻekauila), the messengers Kōlea and ʻŪlili (Wandering Tattler, *Tringa incana*) were sent by Kapepeʻekauila to find the two brothers after their mother's abduction. The two birds flew over Kana and called out to him. Kana reached up into the sky with his gigantic hands, causing a wind that almost killed them. They returned to Kapepeʻekauila and told him what had happened.

[27] This 'sandpiper' could be, among other possibilities, the Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*).

[28] Later, when the Tongans came to Sāmoa to get the shell of the turtle for their king (who had heard that story), only Lavai-pani could remember where the turtle was buried. The Tongan party gave their king twelve pieces of the shell, keeping one for themselves. After the king angrily demanded the thirteenth piece, they migrated to the island of Kadavu, where their descendants live to this day.

asked him to find him a good tree in the forest suitable for a large *puke* (sailing canoe). The bird led him to a tree in the higher part of the island belonging to Sinota, a supernatural being. Lata felled the tree, but Sinota later made it stand again. The two argued violently over who owned the tree, and they finally decided to build two canoes, one for each.[29]

Tattletales[30]

Two Māori stories tell of a tattletale bird. Te Ngārara was a man-eating winged reptile that lived between the Te Arawa and Waikato tribes (**165**). The Waikato chief Kahu-ki-te-rangi gave Te Ngārara a human wife so he and his people could safely travel between the two tribes' territories, because Kahu was in love with the daughter of a Te Arawa *tohunga*. The *tohunga* then agreed to give his daughter to Kahu. However, a *weka* (*Gallirallus australis*) told Te Ngārara about Kahu's wedding, and when Te Ngārara, curious to see whom Kahu was marrying, saw the beautiful bride, he resented Kahu so much for giving him an ugly wife that he snatched the bride. But Kahu eventually managed to kill Te Ngārara and rescued the young woman.[31]

A Te Arawa story tells of Kura-ngaituku, a giant ogress feathered like a bird and armed with talons, who lived in a cave near Rotorua with her tame birds and lizards (**166**). One day, she captured a young man, Hatupatu. While she was out bird-hunting, Hatupatu slew all her pet birds and lizards, stole her beautiful cloaks, and fled from the cave. But a *riroriro* (Grey Gerygone, *Gerygone igata*), one of Kura-ngaituku's pet birds, managed to escape,

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[29] Davenport (1968:177) reported that 'the Lata saga goes on, episode after episode, in this fashion. There seems to be an episode for every settled area on every island of the Santa Cruz Group, but no one knows them all. Not long ago the swapping of Lata yarns with strangers was a pastime and evening entertainment in the men's houses whenever canoes arrived from other islands. Lata is always credited with being a culture hero of sorts, even though his antics – not all of which are believed literally – are roguish and often antisocial.' In Tau-mako, Lata was known to have been the first man to build and sail a *puke*. These Taumako voyaging canoes have two identical ends, 'both of which feature carved shapes of Lata's face and the bird that locals say helped Lata to make his first canoe' (Feinberg & George 2012:78).

[30] Narratives about birds that reveal an affair or sexual misconduct will be analysed in IX-1.

[31] In the north of Grande Terre (New Caledonia), a story (told in the pwaamèi language) tells of another denouncing bird. The *kaulul* (a 'species of bird' for Coyaud, but according to Moyse-Faurie [pers. comm.] it may not be a bird but simply a trickster), walking up a hill, met seven people, whom he tricked one after the other. Eventually, the fantail (either the Grey Fantail, *Rhipidura albiscapa*, or the Streaked Fantail, *Rhipidura verreauxi*) revealed to the last victim that they had been cheated by the *kaulul* and told them to kill him. The *kaulul* ran downhill, but on his way down he met all his other victims one after the other, and because they had in the meantime realised that he had tricked them, they all wanted to kill him. They all ran after him, and the *kaulul* eventually died (Coyaud 1979:205-206).

and he flew off in search of his mistress. He told her that Hatupatu had escaped by calling continuously, 'kua riro ā tāua taonga, riro katoa, riro riro rawa' ('our possessions are gone, all gone, quite gone') – hence the bird's current name. Kura-ngaituku then pursued the young man, who managed to hide inside a rock, and she was eventually burnt to death in a hot spring. In one version of the story, Hatupatu stopped up all the holes in Kura-ngaituku's house with *muka* (flax fibre) so the birds could not leave, crept out of the house and closed the door after him, but he had overlooked one little hole, through which the *riroriro* escaped.[32]

A cognate of the story of Kura-ngaituku, from the Te Ara-a-Kiwa (Foveaux Strait) area in Murihiku, tells of an ogress, Te Hine-o-te-morere, who lived in Waitaha (Canterbury) (**167**). She had pet birds whose red feathers (*kura*) were much sought after by men. But when men came to her house to procure *kura*, she would kill them in their sleep at night. One day, Tāwhaki, a *tohunga*, tricked her by putting *pūpū* (cat's eyes) on his eyes so as to appear awake all night. In the morning, she went away to get some water, and Tāwhaki killed all her birds to obtain their feathers. However, the *riroriro* escaped and kept singing, 'ko riro riro riro riro katoa', until he found his mistress. Te Hine-o-te-morere pursued Tāwhaki through Te Tiritiri-o-te-moana (Southern Alps), but he eventually hid in a rock, thus escaping her fury.

As was seen in V-3, two stories from Luangiua and Tuvalu explain how the *'ivi*/*tuli* got his particular call (**95** & **95A**). They feature a bird whose tongue is twisted by the trickster and culture hero Naleau for having denounced him as a thief, as does the *riroriro* (without suffering the consequences) in the previous narratives.

Another informing bird is the *moa* (Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*), in a story from Futuna, Tonga and Sāmoa, who reports to Sina/Hina that because the wooing expeditions of the Tu'i Fiti and the Tu'i Tonga have tried to kill him or her, Sina/Hina should send them away and refuse to marry them. The Futunan version has it that, when the wooing expedition of the Tu'i Fiti came to Sina's beach, the men saw her pet *moa* scratching the ground (**168**). They tried to spear him with a wood stick, but the *moa* flew inland and sang a song to Sina about what had just happened. Sina then refused to receive them, so they went away. When the wooing expedition of Tinilau came, Tinilau ordered his men to spread out a mat, on

[32] The carved sliding panel of the doorway in the meeting house Nuku-te-apiapi in Whakarewarewa represents Kura-ngaituku with her pet bird above her head (Phillipps 1970:78).

which the *moa* ate crumbs of yam. The *moa* flew inland and sang about Tinilau's arrival. Sina received the wooing expedition, and Tinilau went away with her.

In a Tongan version, the *moa* is not the girl's pet, but her mother (**168B**). The Tuʻi Tonga, having heard of Hina's beauty, came to her island with his men. When the *moa* spotted his canoe approaching the island, she flew to the beach and scratched the sand. The Tuʻi Tonga ordered his men to go ashore and catch the *moa* so he could present the bird to Hina as a gift. But before they could stone her, she flew back to her home and told Hina what had happened. They both fled to the far end of the island. The *moa* perched on the top of a tree to watch the arrival of the boat, while Hina was hiding. The Tuʻi Tonga and his men looked everywhere for Hina, but could not find her, so they went away. The Tuʻi Fisi then came to the island, and again his men tried to kill the *moa*, but she flew away to warn Hina of their arrival. Sinilau and his men then came from Sāmoa. Sinilau told his men to place some scraped coconut on a coconut leaf and some bonito in a folded banana leaf for the *moa* to eat, and to wait for her to finish eating before going ashore. The *moa* ate all the food, then flew back to her house to tell Hina that she had been fed by Sinilau's men and to get ready to sail away with him. She gave her some instructions to prepare for travel, and Hina left with Sinilau for Sāmoa, where the wedding took place.

One Samoan version of this story also has it that the bird is Sina's mother, but it is a *tulī* (wading bird), not a *moa* (**168C**). When the *aumoega* (proposal party)[33] of the Tuʻi Fiti arrived, the Tuʻi Fiti spotted the *tulī* walking on the beach, so he ordered his men to stone the bird so they could have a feast with Sina. The *tulī* flew away to her house and told Sina what had happened: she urged her not to marry the Tuʻi Fiti. When they arrived at the house, Sina told them to go back home: she was not going to marry him. So they went away. Later, when Tigilau and his party arrived, Tigilau ordered his men to bring a pig for the *tulī*. The bird sat down and ate the pig, before flying to her house and singing to Sina that she had just feasted on a fat pig and that Sina was to marry Tigilau at once. The bird shook her feathers, and fine mats and tapa cloths flew out. Sina then went to live with Tigilau.

[33] For an explanation of this custom, see Vaʻa (2008:162).

Sentinels

Birds also appear in Polynesian stories as sentinels who tell their master of the approach of a stranger. A Hawaiian tradition tells of Imaikalani, a blind chief from the Kaʻū district on the island of Hawaiʻi (**169**). Imaikalani, despite his blindness, was a formidable warrior thanks to his birds, two *koloa* (Hawaiian Duck, *Anas wyvilliana*). The *koloa* would hover above him and tell him when a man was approaching, from whichever side he was coming. The two birds, however, were eventually killed by Piʻimaiwaʻa (Umi's adopted son),[34] who then killed Imaikalani.

From Mangareva comes the story of three birds that serve as sentinels to protect a woman suffering from another type of disease (**170**). Hina-hakapirau had three *torea* (Wandering Tattler, *Tringa incana*) watching the three paths leading to her house, where she was hiding during the day because of her suppurative disease that made her look ugly. She had magic powers to get rid of the disease at night. The role of the bird sentinels was to warn Hina of the approach of a stranger: Hina would then wake up from her daytime sleep and hide. One day, Ra-turagi, who had only seen her in the night time in all her beauty, married her, and Hina made him promise never to visit her between daybreak and sunset. However, told of his wife's disease by his friends, Ra-turagi decided one day to go to her house during the day. A warrior caught one of the three birds in a hand net (*manogi*), and Ra-turagi was then advised to go down that path. He found the ugly Hina sleeping and fled.

Several Māori stories tell of a sentinel bird, in particular a *tūī* (*Prosthemadera novae-seelandiae*), that not only announces the arrival of a visitor, but, more importantly, reveals their identity. For instance, Takaha was a talking *tūī*, the pet of the people of Maungatautari, in the Waikato (**171**). When Apanui, a chief from the Bay of Plenty, visited the area, the people of the place were unaware of his identity. Fortunately for them,[35] Takaha heard them

[34] The story of Umi is 'one of the most popular of all Hawaiian prose sagas of heroes' (Beckwith 1970:391).

[35] Fortunately, because, as was noted in III-2, in Māori society people of rank thought it 'shaming' to have to tell their names to people who did not know them (Orbell 1992:84). Māori felt an 'intense aversion' to telling their name (Johansen 1954:13), because 'there is something insulting to a great man in his name and himself not being known' (Johansen 1954:125). Apanui would have been insulted, had it not been for Takaha's intervention.

asking each other who the stranger was, and, in his sagacity, revealed to them his name. They then made Apanui a present of the bird.[36]

Finally, as was seen in VI-2, in the Rotuman story of Moeatiktiki and his brothers, who fished up Tonga with a *kaläe*, the man that the three brothers met on the island, Tupua'rosi, invited the three brothers to his house to eat, but he asked a flock of *juli* to call out the three brothers' names as soon as they caught sight of the boys (**23**). When the brothers approached Tupua'rosi's house, the *juli* flew up and called out their names,[37] thus giving Tupua'rosi time to run off to hide and to change himself into a *moa*. Seeing no one, the brothers went back home. The following day, the same thing happened.

*

Communication from birds to humans can thus be achieved through different means in Polynesian narratives. *Manu* are not silent animals. In these stories, their cries, calls and songs appear as meaningful utterances in the plot. Birds also deliver information through their peculiar behaviour (in particular, nodding), thus appearing as intelligent animals able to understand their masters' instructions, even if they cannot talk. But they also have in many narratives the gift of speech, which allows them to deliver a wide range of information, including advice and instructions, and even to reply on a person's behalf. Birds are not only go-betweens, messengers (often between islands), but they are also informants. As such, they can warn the protagonist of an impending danger (which their power of flight allows them to anticipate), report back to their master what they have witnessed, or reveal a visitor's identity, theft, and trickery.

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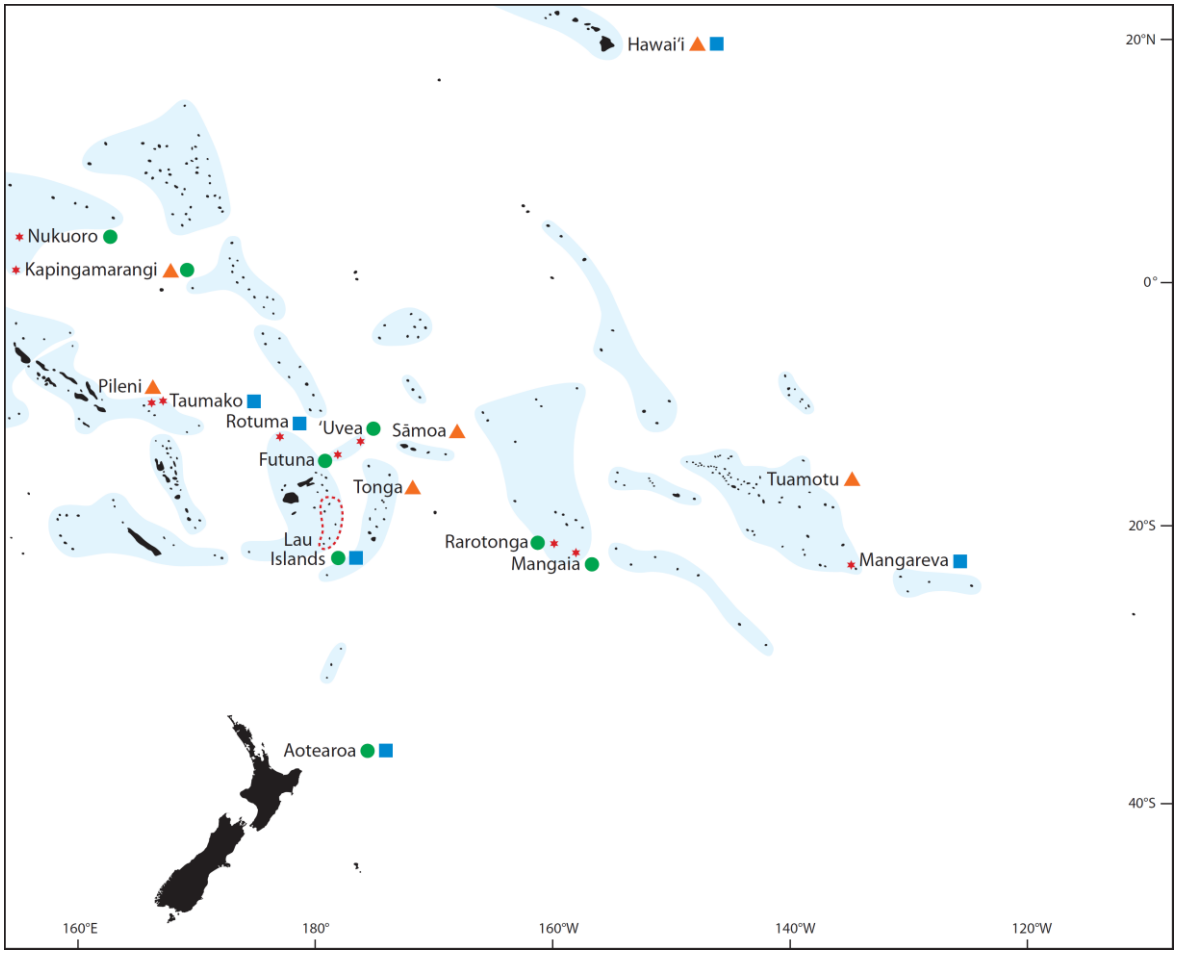
[36] In a Nauruan tradition, a bird, created from dirt by a primordial being, also reveals to his master the names of people. In the beginning existed only the air, the sea, and a being named Areop-Enap ('Old-Spider'). One day, Areop-Enap found a big tridacna, and forced his way into it. It was dark inside, and he had to crawl around because he could not stand upright. He found two sea snails and a huge caterpillar, which he asked to push the ceiling of the shell to get some space and brightness. He made one of the sea snails the moon, and the other one, the sun. The upper half of the shell of the tridacna became the vault of heaven, and the lower half, the earth. Areop-Enap went for a walk on the earth, and came upon some big stones. He made people from these stones. He then walked on to another land, where some men and women were sitting under trees on the shore. He could not see their faces well and he wanted to know their names. So, he sat down and scratched the dirt from under his fingernails to shape a being, to which he attached wings. He then asked that bird to fly to those people and to come back to him with their names. The bird flew away and perched on one of the people's nose. Someone then addressed that person by their name, telling them to kill the bird. The bird flew off and landed on someone else's nose, and the same happened until the bird had heard the names of all the people there. He then flew back to Areop-Enap and told him all the names. Areop-Enap addressed the people (who actually were gods) by their names, thus showing that they must obey him (Hambruch 1914:I,381-384; Dixon 1916: 249-250,252).

[37] The Pacific Golden Plover's whistle is given 'either at rest or on rising' (Watling 1982:149).

Figure 17. Communication stories



▲ Birds give advice and instructions (**91**, **135**, **136**, **137**, **138**, **139**, **164A**, **230**)

● Birds warn of danger (**140**, **141**, **142**, **143**, **144**, **145**, **146**, **147**, **148**, **217**)

■ Birds are used as scouts or sentinels (**23**, **156**, **162**, **163**, **164**, **169**, **170**, **171**)

Chapter VIII

Custody

> No Paliuli ʻo Keamalu, no kēlā ʻāina kamahaʻo i noho ʻia e Lāʻiekawai . . . Na nā manu i kiaʻi iā ia, a i hānai iā ia i nā hua lama, piʻoi, māmaki a me ka wai o ka lehua.[1]

1. Guardians of places and people

Custody can be defined as the 'protective care or guardianship of someone or something', which is akin to the Māori concept of *kaitiakitanga*. In Polynesian traditions, birds exercise this care or guardianship in many different ways. They may protect a particular place, having often been left in charge by humans, or take care of a parturient and/or of a newborn, or save a person's life.

Birds guard an island, a pool of water, food, or an object

In the previous chapters, some guarding birds have already been encountered. In Aotearoa, Turi placed in his *pā* a *matuku* whose cry made approaching enemies flee (**132**). In Mugaba and Mungiki, the culture hero Mautikitiki encountered the *mugikaakoni*/*mungikaakoni*, who was the guardian of *tuʻaa gangi*, the invisible heaven (**37** & **37A**). As was seen in the Rotuman story of Moeatiktiki, two large *kaläe* guarded his father's banana plantation (**23**). And each of the three paths leading to the house of Hina-hakapirau in Mangareva was guarded by a *torea* (**170**). Other narratives tell of such guarding birds.

According to Māori tradition, Wheketoro, the captain of the *Mangarara* canoe (which was coming from Hawaiki), before landing on the east coast of Aotearoa, left some birds, as well as many reptiles, on the island of Whanga-o-keno (East Island, off East Cape) (**172**). These birds were Wehiwehi and Hine-ki-tōrea, a male and a female *tōrea* (Variable

[1] 'Keamalu, or Clear Shade, lived in Paliuli, that wonderful land where Lāʻieikawai dwelt . . . Birds guarded her and fed her with *lama*, *piʻoi*, and *māmaki* berries, and with the honey of *lehua* blossoms' (**209**).

Oystercatcher, *Haematopus unicolor*), as well as Tūhaka (Tūwhaka) and Tongawhiti, a male and a female *whāioio* (New Zealand Pipit, *Anthus novaeseelandiae*). The four *manu* were left there to guard (*tiaki*) the island.[2] Much later, Kaiawa set about removing the *tapu* placed on the island by Wheketoro. He thus lit sacred fires, and then smothered them to create a great smoke, which caused Tūhaka and Tongawhiti to sneeze (*tihe*), making them tame (*rarata*). As for the two *tōrea*, they flew away to the rocks offshore and thus remained untamed ('kīhai rāua i poaina e ia').[3]

Similarly, two other birds, Mumuhou (Mumuhau) and Takereto, were left on Repanga (Cuvier Island) by Ngātoro-i-rangi, the *tohunga* on the *Te Arawa* canoe (**174**). The role of these two *tīeke* (North Island Saddleback, *Philesturnus rufusater*)[4] was as follows: 'te mahi a ērā manu, he tohu hau, he tohu marangai, he tohu i te paki, i te hau e paki ai te moana' ('the occupation of these birds is to foretell the winds, the north-east wind, the signs of fine weather, the wind when the sea will be calm'). Best (1898:241) reported that Māori believed it to be a sign that the weather was changing when the two birds sang.[5]

In the Tuamotu, a story from Anaa tells of birds guarding not the island itself, but its surroundings, preventing people from setting foot on it (**175**). While Māui was fishing up the Society Islands, a spirit, Te Kura-i-te-atua,[6] used a waterspout to fashion the islands of the Tuamotu Archipelago. The whirlwind stirred up the waves so much that the sand at the bottom of the sea drifted about and piled up to form some islands with inner lakes. Te Kura-i-te-atua decided to reside on Anaa, and made that island inaccessible to humans by commanding some seabirds to flap their wings on the surface of the sea to create constant storms

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[2] Whereas *tōrea* inhabit rocky shores and sandy beaches, *whāioio* inhabit grasslands and rocky terrain (Moon 1992:114,201).

[3] When they reached the bottom (*hiku*) of Te Waipounamu in their exploration voyage, Kupe was believed to have said to Hine-waihua, his companion Ngake's wife, to leave there her pet *kekeno* (New Zealand fur seal, *Arctocephalus forsteri*) and *kororā* (Little Penguin, *Eudyptula minor*), to guard that end of the island ('hei tiaki mai i tērā pito o te motu'), because there were no people there ('kāore he tangata tahi') (**173**).

[4] *Tīeke* belong to a family of birds, the Callaeidae (wattlebirds), endemic to Aotearoa, whose ancestors must have arrived there via transoceanic dispersal after the islands separated from Gondwana (Shepherd & Lambert 2007). No bones from that family have been found on tropical Pacific islands.

[5] Even as late as 1864 these two *tīeke* were still believed to exist and to perform that role, the note of one being 'an unfailing sign of fine weather', whereas the 'shrill cry of the other' was a 'no less certain warning of storm' (Meade 1870:7).

[6] According to Emory (in Luomala 1940a:192), Te Kura-i-te-atua may be translated as 'the sacred crimson bird with the gods'. Rather than a god in the strict sense, this name probably refers to the essence of the power of a very spiritual entity (Saura, pers. comm.).

that sank any ship approaching the island. Those birds were *atua* in the disguise of birds. When those were eventually subdued by the *'aito* Mapu, from Takume, the storms stopped.

Birds can also guard pools. The Māori story of Hine-te-iwa-iwa recounts how she jumped into Tinirau's pools of water (*wai whakaata*), which Tinirau used to admire the reflection of his face, and made them muddy in order to attract Tinirau's attention (**176**). Those pools were guarded by Ruru-atamai ('Intelligent-*ruru*', *ruru* being the Morepork, *Ninox novaeseelandiae*), perched on a tree near the pools. When he saw Hine in the pool, he called out at once to his master. According to another version of the story, Tinirau's pools were guarded by not one but two *ruru*, Ruru-wareware ('Forgetful-*ruru*') and Ruru-mahara ('Thoughtful-*ruru*'). When Hine-te-iwa-iwa broke down the doors and the fences of three of the four pools, Ruru-mahara told Tinirau about Hine's actions, but Ruru-wareware denied that anything had happened. Tinirau thus went to the pools to see for himself, and there he met Hine.

The two *ruru*, the intelligent one and the forgetful one, also appear in a Māori narrative featuring Uenuku, Rata's granddaughter's husband (**177**). Uenuku dispatched his two pet owls, Ruru-atamai and Ruru-wareware, to guard his children's *kūmara*, because the precious food was being stolen by the children of Whena. When two thieves came at night to the elevated storage place (*whata*), the two *ruru* flew from the back wall of the *whata* and killed them. A war ensued between Whena and Uenuku.

This story is reminiscent of a Samoan tradition in which a bird is also sent to stop thieves from stealing food, but in that story the bird in question fails (**178**). The supreme god Tagaloa-a-lagi had two sons, Lelei ('The Good One') and Lēaga ('The Bad One'). Lēaga's children kept stealing Lelei's and his children's food, so Lelei complained to his father. Tagaloa-a-lagi told him not to be angry with Lēaga's children. He gave him a little bird, Tulī-leoleo-talo ('Taro-guarding-*tulī*', the *tulī* being a wading bird), to guard his food. When Lēaga and his children came at night to Lelei's taro plantation, Tulī-leoleo-talo ran around the plantation, but the thieves were not afraid of the little bird, and they stole Lelei's taro. Lelei went back to his father, complaining that the bird was useless as he just screamed and ran around. In the end Tagaloa-a-lagi sent down a spirit (*aitu*), Taia, to the garden one night, and Lēaga and his children were killed.

Finally, a Hawaiian tradition tells of a bird that guards a pearl fish-hook (**179**). Kuula and Hina lived in Niolopa, in the Nu'uanu Valley in O'ahu. They owned Kahuoi, a pearl

fish-hook that attracted *aku* (skipjack tunas). When the fish saw the hook, they would jump into Kuula's canoe.[7] Kahuoi was kept by a bird named Ka-manu-wai, who lived on *aku*. However, one day, the hook was stolen by Kipapalaulu, the king of Honolulu. Ka-manu-wai, thus going without any food, flew to his roosting place. There he closed his eyes from hunger (hence that place was named Kau-maka-pili, 'roosting with closed eyes') and went to sleep. Later, Hina had a child, Aiai. The baby was thrown at birth by his parents into a stream and was carried by the water to the palace of the king of Honolulu. Aiai grew up there. He later married the daughter of the king, Kauaelemimo. One day, Kauaelemimo was longing for *aku*, so Aiai told her to ask her father to give him a pearl fish-hook and a canoe. Eventually the king agreed, and Aiai took Kahuoi and Ka-manu-wai along on his fishing trip. The canoe was soon filled with *aku*, some of which were eaten by Ka-manu-wai, and the bird was restored to his former self. When Aiai returned home, he gave his wife the *aku*, and Kahuoi was taken by its guardian Ka-manu-wai.

Birds help deliver a baby, lead a person to a baby, or find and raise a baby

As was noted in III-4, helpful birth animals in traditional narratives all over the world are very often birds. Thus it is not surprising that *manu* should assist parturients and look after newborns in many Polynesian traditions.

From West Uvea comes a story in which a bird finds an egg and looks after it, and a human baby hatches from that egg (**180**).[8] A lizard, wandering about in the grass, cut its tail on a leaf. Its blood dripped on a taro leaf. The lizard went away. A swamphen[9] (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*), looking for food, scratched the blood that had dried on the leaf and resembled an egg. She sat on it and waited. When an old woman of the Yanu clan came, the bird flew away. But the bird came back every day to sit on the blood. One day, the old woman came and heard a baby crying. She took the child and raised him. This

[7] In Aotearoa, *tīeke* (North Island Saddleback, *Philesturnus rufusater*) were believed to be the custodians of Te Whatukura-a-Tangaroa, an heirloom of Te Whānau-a-Apanui brought from Hawaiki on the *Tauira* canoe. This *whatukura* was a red stone carved in phallic shape which, like Kahuoi, attracted large quantities of fish. The *tīeke* would disclose its hiding place 'to the person lawfully entitled' to its custody (Gudgeon 1906:34-35).

[8] Cf. the stories of birds laying eggs from which humans hatch in IV-1.

[9] *Kalae* in West Uvean (Fagauvea). They could only be hunted after a priest from the Rshua clan had conducted rites dedicated to their death (Guiart 1992:398).

was the beginning of the Rshua and Yanu clans of the village of Banut. Guiart (1992:398) argued that the tail of the lizard is a male symbol, the taro leaf symbolises the womb, and blood replaces sperm as originator of life. According to him (1968:65), the name of the swamphen was used in the Loyalty Islands as a symbol of the woman who regularly engages in illegitimate relationships,[10] and the taro leaf plays a mediating role in the story between the wandering lizard and the swamphen of loose morals, whereas the presence of the blood as opposed to semen keeps the episode on a symbolic level.

Birds may also help deliver babies. This is most apparent in the Polynesian story of Hina/Sina. This young woman left her island to go and marry Tinirau/Sinilau; however, she was mistreated by her husband and/or his other wives, became pregnant, and had to give birth all alone, faraway from her family. But in some versions of this story, a bird, the young woman's brother (a pigeon),[11] or mother (a hen), then flies to her island to be with her and help her deliver the baby.

According to a version of this tradition from Tupuaʻi, Rupe (Polynesian Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula aurorae*) and Hina were brother and sister (**181**). Tinirau married Hina, took her to his country, and left her there while he went away to another place, telling his people to look after his pregnant wife. But they placed her in a house that they covered with a net, so that she could not leave the house and no one could get in. Hina was by herself, and when she went into labour, nobody came to help her in spite of her moaning. She then thought of her brother Rupe back home, so she called him to come and help her. Rupe came straight-away, made a hole in the net, grasped Hina's back with his wing, and then her abdomen, because that is where Hina told him she was feeling the pain. She gave birth to a boy.

A Tuamotuan version, from Amanu, does not take place on Tinirau's island, but on the 'island of women' (**181A**). It does not feature Tinirau as Hina's husband, but it contains the

[10] Interestingly, in Ancient Greece and Rome, this bird was on the contrary a symbol of marital fidelity. The Greek rhetorician Athenaeus (*Deipnosophistae*, IX, 388c) wrote: 'Polemon in Book V of his *Response to Antigonus and Adaeus* claims that when the purple gallinule [i.e., the Western Swamphen, *Porphyrio porphyrio*] is domesticated, it keeps a close eye on the married women in the house, and feels so strongly about the situation, if one of them is seduced, that when it suspects that this is going on, it informs its master by hanging itself.' For Aelian (*De natura animalium*, III, 42), that bird 'is violent in its jealousy and keeps a close watch on the mated female birds, and if it discovers the mistress of its house to be adulterous, it strangles itself'.

[11] For Māori, according to Yate (1970:91), 'for a dove to coo, at the moment when a man-child is born, is a prognostication that by him some great things are to be brought about'; that bird, as Orbell (2003:77) argued, 'must have been thought to be Rupe himself, again making his appearance at the auspicious moment when a boy is born'.

motif of the women who mistreat Hina. Tangaroa, who lived in Amanu, was swallowed by a shark, but he managed to cut his way out of its abdomen after two or three days. He was cast ashore on an island inhabited by women. His daughter Hina went searching for him, but when she arrived on the island, the women wanted to put her to death, so they prepared a big fire. Hina then called her brother Te Rupe. The rain started falling, which announced Te Rupe's arrival. Hina gave birth to a boy. Te Rupe placed the baby between his legs and Hina on his back, and they flew away. Hina asked him to fly very high in the sky. When they reached a certain altitude, however, there was no wind, so Te Rupe could not move forward anymore even though he was still flapping his wings. Hina then told him to fly down just above the surface of the sea, but at that moment the moon rose, so Hina suggested that they go to the moon. On arrival there she prepared food for Te Rupe and her baby.

A version from Rēkohu has it that when Hine was in labour, Tinirau confined her in a house, as in the version from Tupuaʻi. The fog settled and with it came *parea* (Chatham Pigeon, *Hemiphaga chathamensis*), who helped Hine deliver her child (and thus got stained by her blood, hence their red bill). In this version the *parea* may be envisaged as the companions of Hine's brother Rupe (**181B**).

In Tonga, it is not her pigeon brother but her mother, a hen (*moa*), that helps Hina give birth, not once, but three times. As was noted in VII-3, Sinilau, when approaching the island of Hina, whom he had come to court, told his men to give the *moa* some food (**168B**). The *moa* ate all the food, then flew back to her house to tell Hina that she had been fed by Sinilau's men and to get ready to sail away with him. Hina left with Sinilau for Sāmoa, where the wedding was held. She became pregnant, and when labour started the *moa* knew what was happening, so she flew to Sāmoa to be with her daughter. She hid in the house, and when the baby was born, she brought a small dog and flew off with the baby boy to her island, leaving the puppy in the baby's place. Sinilau was then told that a dog had been born, which he raised as his son. When Hina delivered her second child, the same thing happened, but this time the *moa* brought a kitten.[12] The third time Hina gave birth, it was a *veka* (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*) that she left in the baby girl's place. Again Sinilau accepted the *veka* as his child. The *moa* brought up the two boys and the girl on her island.

[12] Cats were introduced to Tonga at the end of the 18th century, either by James Cook's crew in 1777 (Beaglehole 1974:541) or by the first missionaries (Wilson 1799:266). The 'kitten' in the story may have taken the place of another animal in older versions.

When they were grown up, she decided to take them to Sāmoa so they could meet their real parents. There they were reunited with Sinilau and Hina, and the *moa* flew back to her island.

Birds can also lead a person to a baby. The Hawaiian story of Lau-ka-ieie recounts how a woman followed birds and found a beautiful baby girl (**182**). Hina-ulu-ohia was a *kupua* who appeared to a woman, Pokahi, in the form of an *ʻōhiʻa* tree (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) rising up from the water of a river, with *ʻiʻiwi* (*Drepanis coccinea*) picking its red flowers and singing. Then the tree slowly sank down and disappeared. The *ʻiʻiwi* flew away to the West, and Pokahi followed them. There Hina-ulu-ohia had left a baby girl wrapped in a moss for Pokahi and her husband to raise: Lau-ka-ieie. They brought her up, and birds became the girl's servants and companions.

Finally, in Aotearoa and Rotuma, as well as in Sāmoa and Tokelau, birds not only find but nurse and raise a baby, the culture hero Māui/Moeatiktiki in the first two instances, and Tagaloa-a-Ui/Tae-a-tagaloa in the last two.[13]

A Māori story, from Ruapuke in Te Ara-a-Kiwa (Foveaux Strait), tells of Māui raised by two birds (**183**). After being thrown in the bushes (*tātaraheke*) by his mother Hina upon his birth,[14] Māui was found by Mū and Weka (*Gallirallus australis*), who raised him. *Mū* is 'a wingless bird' (Williams 1971:213), and Tremewan (2002:89) surmised that it may be a variant of *moho*, another rail (either the Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*, or the South Island Takahē, *Porphyrio hochstetteri*). Interestingly, in the Rotuman story of the birth of Moea-tikitiki (or Moeatiktiki), it is also a rail that raises the culture hero (**23**). Moeatiktiki was born as an aborted foetus and was discarded by his parents, Lu and Mafi. Lu's father, Tangaroa, seeing this from the heavens, sent heavy rain to revive and wash the foetus. A *veʻa* (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*) came and took him to her nest. The bird cared for Moea-tikitiki, who grew into a healthy boy. She eventually told him about

[13] From Ulithi comes a narrative in which birds raise a baby, not after finding him, but after being given him to look after by his parents. Two siblings, Malupucha and Murölharara, had sexual intercourse, and the girl gave birth to a baby boy. Wishing to kill themselves over their incestuous act, they gave the baby to a *harhar*, a 'large white bird with black specks' (unidentified species; it was known to Lessa [1966:50,n.10] only by its native name). Other birds helped the *harhar* look after the baby. They would spread out their wings during the day to shelter him from the sun, and go out and catch fish to feed him. Eventually, the birds took him to his grandparents when he reached the crawling age. In the end, the two siblings got married and were reunited with their parents and their son (Lessa 1961:23-24).

[14] As Rank (2004:83) argued, 'exposure as a dampened form of killing was certainly real at a certain stage of cultural development and had the meaning of an oracle: if the child manages to survive, then it has the right to live, and is a hero.'

his parents, and instructed the boy to go to their home and make himself known to his mother Mafi, which he did.

In the Samoan story of the birth of Tagaloa-a-Ui, it is not one but three birds that are sent down by Tagaloa to look after a newborn – but none of them is a rail (**184**). The people of Atafu offered human victims to the sun every day. Ui addressed the sun and begged him to accept a substitute. The sun fell in love with her and promised her that he would no longer ask for human sacrifices. However, fearing that the sun might demand human victims again, Ui's family left for some other land. Ui and her sister Ala saw on a beach a *panea* (trumpet shell) and a bird (*lai*, probably the same as the *laīa*, Blue Noddy, *Procelsterna cerulea*),[15] belonging to a man named Liʻi (or in another version to two men named Nimoaʻi and Laveaʻi), enjoying himself in the rollers. Ui stole the *panea* and the bird and hid them in her bag. Then she jumped into the sea and swam to the island of Taʻū, in Manuʻa. There she gave birth to a baby boy on the reef, cast him onto the shore, and died. Tagaloa, seeing the baby from the heavens, took pity on him. Thus he sent his representatives Tulī (wading bird)[16] and Fuia (Samoan Starling, *Aplonis atrifusca*) to look after him. He also sent a hermit crab (*uga*) to divide the baby's umbilical cord, and a *miti* (Polynesian Triller, *Lalage maculosa*), who sucked the mucus from the baby's nose and mouth.[17] The boy was named Tagaloa-a-Ui.

A Tokelauan cognate of that story features only the *tuli* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*). Luafatu and his pregnant wife Kui encountered a great storm on their way to Fiji from Fakaofo (**184A**). Their canoe sank, and Luafatu drowned. Kui made it to the reef of an island, on which she gave birth. She then walked to the beach and died. Tagaloa sent Tuli from the heavens down to that reef. The bird called the baby Tae-a-Tagaloa, and named the parts of the baby's body after himself: *tulivae* (knee), *tulilima* (elbow), *tuliulu* (neck).[18] He gave the boy a small adze (*atupa*) and a long-handled axe (*ualoa*), with which Tae-a-Tagaloa later built a canoe.

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[15] In another version (collected by Krämer), that bird is a *manuāaliʻi* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*), 'the bird of Liʻi', who, upon coming ashore with Ui, slips away from her and runs into the wood, before Ui gives birth.

[16] As in the Samoan story of the creation of humankind (**3**).

[17] *Miti* means 'to suck' in Samoan.

[18] This episode also appears in some Samoan versions of the creation of humankind (**3**).

Birds save a person's life or bring a person back to life

In these Māori and Rotuman, Samoan and Tokelauan stories, a bird saves a newborn's life. *Manu* may also save the life of men and women, as will be seen in the following traditions, of which many come from Hawai'i.

A Māori narrative about the culture hero Tāwhaki and a Tokelauan narrative about the chiefly maiden Faufau both feature a bird whose call or song revives the protagonist. Tāwhaki was attacked at the pool (*wai whakaata*) of Rangituhi and left for dead by his cousins (the children of Punga and Karihi), who were jealous of his success with women (**185**). Tāwhaki managed to cure himself with *karakia*, and a *kāeaea* (New Zealand Falcon, *Falco novaeseelandiae*), his *tupuna* (ancestor), came near him. The bird startled him to awaken him (*whakaoho*) from this stupor, with his cry 'ke, ke, ke!' In Tokelau, Alo-mouanaki's canoe landed near where Faufau lived (**186**). Alo was spotted by Faufau's servants at a pool where they came to collect water. After they told their mistress of Alo's great beauty, Faufau fainted. The *lulu* (Eastern Barn Owl, *Tyto javanica*) then sang that she was lovesick. Her arm started moving, so the people asked the bird to sing again. The *lulu* thus sang again, and Faufau was revived. She then extolled Alo's beauty in a song that she sang out to the *lulu*.

Birds can also save a person from drowning – their master in a Hawaiian narrative, and their brother in a Samoan one. In Hawai'i, Kauakahi-ali'i was a young man who, upon seeing a water nymph braiding her hair on a rock, fell in love with her (**187**). He made love to her, then brought her to his house filled with his beautiful pet birds. Later, the nymph, who belonged to the ocean, tried to take him back to her home in the sea by seizing him and jumping into a river. His bird friends, however, saved him: they got a half-drowned Kauakahi-ali'i out of the water and carried him back to his home in the mountains. In Sāmoa, Loa and Sina had three sons, Pili, Fuia (Samoan Starling, *Aplonis atrifusca*) and Ma'oma'o (Mao, *Gymnomyza samoensis*), and a daughter, Sina (**188**). When Sina married the king of Fiji, Pili turned into a lizard[19] to accompany his sister to Fiji because he loved her. On the way to Fiji, Sina let him out of her bag, and he fell into the sea. Loa then sent Fuia and Ma'oma'o to rescue him. The two birds found Pili swimming in the ocean, and they took him to Fiji.

[19] *Pili* means 'lizard' in Samoan.

An owl also saves the life of his brother in a Hawaiian narrative, and two other stories from Hawaiʻi feature life-saving owls. While Māui was away snaring the sun, his mother Hina had another son, a *pueo* (Short-eared Owl, *Asio flammeus*) (**189**). Later, Māui was taken prisoner and placed on the altar to be sacrificed, but Hina had a vision of what was happening to her son, so she and the *pueo* went looking for him. The bird set Māui free by untying his bonds when the guards were all asleep, owing to the prolongation of the night by an invocation of Māui to the moon. The *pueo* then led him to their mother Hina.

A *pueo* also saves one of her relatives in the story of Lau-kia-manu-i-kahiki (**190**). Makiʻioeoe, a chief from Kuai-he-lani,[20] visited Kauaʻi, where he left a woman with child. He returned to Kuai-he-lani before the baby girl was born. Lau-kia-manu-i-kahiki grew up, and decided to go in search of her father. She reached Kuai-he-lani, where she bathed in a sacred pool. Because she was not recognised as Makiʻioeoe's daughter, she was then seized by her father's guards and held prisoner in a pig house. A *pueo* perched on the house called out to Lau-kia-manu-i-kahiki at midnight, and revealed her and her parents' names. That *pueo* was Lau-kia-manu-i-kahiki's mother's aunt, who had come to save her. The bird flew down and placed on the girl the three tokens that Makiʻioeoe had left with the girl's mother before her birth: a whale's teeth necklace, a bracelet and a feather cloak. The guards heard the bird's call, and reported to Makiʻioeoe what they had heard. Makiʻioeoe, believing that she was indeed his daughter, came to the house, and heard the call of the *pueo*. He then broke into the house and wept over his daughter.[21]

In the story of Kapoʻi, the *pueo* who instructed Kapoʻi to build a *heiau* to be called Manua (see VII-1) later comes to his rescue (**138**). Kapoʻi, by setting *kapu* days for the dedication of the *heiau*, broke the laws of the king of Oʻahu. He was thus seized by the king's men, and the king, Kakuihewa, intended to have him put to death. However, that *pueo* gathered all the *pueo* from Lānaʻi, Maui, Molokaʻi and Hawaiʻi, and at daybreak all the birds, covering the sky, flew away to Honolulu. There they pecked the king's men with their

[20] Kuai-he-lani is 'the name of the cloudland adjoining earth and is the land most commonly named in visits to the heavens or to lands distant from Hawaii'. It lies to the west of Hawaiʻi (Beckwith 1970:78-79).

[21] Birds that play a role in the recognition of his child by a chief also appear in the Māori story of Tau-tini-awhitia (**134**, see VII-1).

beaks and scratched them with their claws. The *pueo* were victorious, and the king recognised the power of the *akua* (god) of Kapoʻi, who was released.[22]

Manu not only come to a person's rescue, they may also bring a dead person back to life, as illustrated by three stories from Hawaiʻi, Rapa Nui and Mangaia. Birds being sometimes seen in traditional Polynesian societies as intermediaries between the living, dwelling on the earth, and the spirits, dwelling in the heavens (as was noted in III-3), it is natural to see them performing that role in some traditions.

The first story again features a *pueo*, who resuscitates a human relative, the maiden Kahala-o-puna, no fewer than four times (**191**). Even though he had not met her yet, the Waikiki chief Kauhi was determined to kill Kahala-o-puna, his betrothed, after hearing two disfigured men boasting of having conquered her. He went to her house, and she followed him into the bush. There he killed her, and buried her under a rock. However, a *pueo*, who was a relative of Kahala, had been following them. The bird dug out the body. With his wings he brushed the dirt off it, and he restored the girl to life by breathing into her nostrils. The bruise on her temple, where Kauhi had hit her with *hala* (pandanus) nuts, was healed at once when the *pueo* rubbed his face against it. Kahala then sang a lament. But Kauhi heard it, so he returned and killed her again. The *pueo* revived Kahala again. She was killed and buried twice more by Kauhi, and brought back to life twice more by the bird. But the fifth time around, Kauhi buried her under a large *koa* tree (*Acacia koa*) whose roots proved too much for the *pueo*. His claws became entangled in the roots, so he had to give up, and he flew away. In the end, a young man who was passing by revived Kahala, and she married him, before being eaten up by a shark, into which the spirit of Kauhi had transformed itself after he was put to death.

A story from Rapa Nui tells of a bird that restores a soul to a body (**192**). A spirit took a warrior's soul to an *ahu* (funerary cairn) to kill him, but another spirit summoned three other spirits to save the warrior: Paepae-a-tari-vera (the spirit of a house), Mata-varavara-ahu-rahai (a drop of rain), and Ahiva-kararere (a bird). The latter went to the *ahu* and dug

[22] As Beckwith (1970:124) found, 'many stories are told of escapes from imminent danger due to an owl. A warrior under Kamehameha in the thick of the battle was about to plunge over a precipice when an owl flew up in his face and he was able to thrust his spear into the earth and save himself from the leap. Napaepae of Lahaina, capsized in the Pailolo channel, swam all night and would have gone under had not an owl flapped its wings in his face and attracted his attention to land. A man escaping from the enemy in battle was saved from pursuit by an owl alighting at his hiding place. All these natural occurrences were interpreted as direct interventions of the owl as protector in danger.'

the warrior's soul out of its grave. The soul sat on Ahiva-kararere, and the bird flew up. The soul was then restored to the body by the spirits.

Finally, a Mangaian tradition recounts how two birds took a man back to the upperworld, at his grandfather's request, thus bringing him back to life (**193**). Two *karakerake* (unidentified species)[23] sent by Moko flew down to his grandson Ngaru in the netherworld. They landed on an *'uru* (breadfruit tree). Ngaru's chanting (*tarotaro*) asked the birds to release the rope. From each bird one rope dropped down. The *karakerake* then hauled Ngaru up and carried him to Moko. As Reilly (2015:163) argued, 'the ropes that brought Ngaru back from 'Avaiki alluded to the ropes used to let a body down into burial caves.'

2. Helpers and guides

Custodians of places, parturients, newborns, and people whose lives they save, *manu* also come to the aid of the protagonists of the stories in a few other ways.

Birds as guides

Firstly, birds act as guides, either in the underworld or over the ocean, in some Polynesian traditions.

In a Māori story, *manu* from the underworld guide a couple back to the upperworld (**194**). Because her jealous husband Mataora had struck her, Niwareka fled to the underworld, Rarohenga, the land of her parents. Mataora went down looking for her, and he eventually found her. She agreed to go with him. On their way back to the upperworld, Mataora and Niwareka were stopped by Tīwaiwaka (New Zealand Fantail, *Rhipidura fuliginosa*), who was guarding the base of the ascent to the upperworld. He sent his children, Peka (the bat) and Popoia (i.e., *ruru*, the Morepork, *Ninox novaeseelandiae*), to guide the couple.

[23] *Karakerake* 'does not correspond with any bird currently found in Mangaia or elsewhere in the Cook Islands' (Reilly 2015:183,n.28).

Pātātai (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*) sent his child too and told Mataora to place them in dark places, to avoid being killed. This is why they are all nocturnal animals.[24]

Another bird acts as a guide in the underworld, to reunite two lovers, in a Mangarevan tradition (**195**). Hina-te-kakara was rescued from a shark that had swallowed her by Taihuka. But Taihuka was later killed. Hina went down to the underworld to find her rescuer's spirit and restore it to its body. There she asked a bird if he had seen the spirit. The bird led her to the right place. Taihuka eventually came back to life.[25]

In other traditions, birds act as guides over the ocean. In a Tuamotuan version of the Rata cycle, for instance, Rata, on a mission to avenge his father Vahi-vero slain by Mātuku-tangotango at Puna's request, was sailing on the high seas when a *taketake* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*) came flying above his canoe, swooping down and ascending suddenly (**114A**). Rata asked the bird who he was. Though the bird did not reply, Rata knew that he was none other than his grandfather Kui, who had come to protect him from Puna's retinue. He instructed the bird to fly to the land of Puna, to find all of Puna's sea monsters, and to learn the fate of his parents. The *taketake* flew away and Rata sang a chant about the bird. On his way to the land of Puna, Rata was shown by the bird the dwelling places of all the sea monsters.

The Fijian story of Matandua features a little bird that guides the hero to the island of his father (**196**). Talingo and her newborn were cast ashore on the island of Ono (an outlier to Kadavu Island). Talingo died, and the baby boy was cared for by a childless couple, who named him Matandua ('One-eyed'). Matandua grew up to be a fine, strong man. The local people tried to kill him several times, but he was always protected by Talingo's spirit – she watched over him and appeared to him in his dreams. She told him to flee Ono with his foster parents and to sail to Tonga to find his father, so he left in a canoe. When a white line of surf was in sight, a little green bird with a white breast alighted on Matandua's head as he was steering the canoe. The bird flew away to an island barely seen in the distance, then came back and forth many times, until Matandua decided to follow the bird and had the prow of the canoe point to that island. At that moment the bird stayed on his head and went

[24] Buff-banded Rails are 'semi-nocturnal': they are 'secretive rather than actually shy' and 'spend much of the day concealed in thick vegetation' (Bregulla 1992:139-140).

[25] See also **274**, a tradition from Ua Pou in which a *kena* (Masked Booby, *Sula dactylatra*) guides supernatural beings from Havaiki, called *tētuapeke'oumei* (who may be the souls of the dead), over the ocean from Havaiki to the land of light, and back.

to sleep. When the reef was visible, the bird woke up and flew forward to indicate to Matandua where the passage was. Thus he landed with his foster parents on the island of Tongatapu. The bird led them to the village of the king, but the people had been attacked by a man-eating giant, the village had been deserted, and all the houses were in ruins. The bird then led them to the survivors: he darted away, and Matandua followed him into a forest, over a hill and down into a valley. The bird again perched on Matandua's head, and Matandua found his father.[26]

Two seabirds also provide guidance over the ocean during the colonising voyage of *Hakautu*, the founding canoe of Takū (**197**). *Hakautu* may have been the first canoe to arrive on the island (Moyle 2007:279,n.10). Whenever this canoe went on a voyage, a *raupiti* (Black-naped Tern, *Sterna sumatrana*) flew in front of it and showed the right direction. Whenever the canoe came to the deep sea, a *tavake* (White-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon lepturus*) appeared and cried, also showing the right direction. He flew away every time that the canoe approached an island, and the *raupiti* then took over.[27]

In addition, some narratives tell of people who follow birds over the ocean to find land (as was noted in I-3, the observation of seabirds played a very significant role in the traditional navigational system of the Polynesians). But in those stories the birds are not guardians or helpers: they are just followed.[28]

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[26] In a Tongan cognate of this story, in which the hero is named Muni, a bird also guides him to his father, but not over the ocean (**196A**). When Muni learned that the couple who had raised him in Lofanga (in the Ha'apai Group) were not his real parents, they told him that his father was in Tongatapu and that a *veka* (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*) would meet him there and lead him to his father. When Muni reached Tongatapu, a *veka*, as predicted, ran before him, so he followed him and found his father, Motuku-ve'e-valu.

[27] According to the *ariki* Avo Sini, who told Moyle this story, it was also the *raupiti* and the *tavake* that 'acted as guides in the pre-contact voyaging to Nukumanu Island'. Because of their relationship with these two birds, 'members of Avo's patriline are unable to catch, cook or eat either bird' (Moyle 2018:229).

[28] For instance, a Rotuman tradition says that Rotuma was ruled by some ruthless Tongan chiefs (**198**). Fa'afe, a man of chiefly rank, wanted to fight against the Tongans but could not find anyone to help him, so he decided to leave in his canoe. He took with him two *armea* (Rotuma Myzomela, *Myzomela chermesina*), and after a while let them fly towards the land. The two birds returned to the canoe before very long, so Fa'afe knew that he had to go further. The same thing happened at two other places. Finally, when he let the birds go and they did not return, thus showing that there was fresh water there, he told his crew that they would land there. And a Tongan narrative tells of Hama, a clairvoyant living in 'Eua, who noticed a tropicbird (*tavake* in Tongan, a White-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon lepturus*, or Red-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon rubricauda*) flying away before sunrise to get food (**199**). He told the crew of a canoe to start very early in the morning and to follow the bird, for they would find the island of 'Ata, where no canoe had ever been. He also told them about the headlands and the rock that they would see there. The men obeyed his instructions, and this is how the island of 'Ata was discovered. Upon their return they reported that Hama's descriptions were correct. Another Tongan tradition tells of two brothers, Gaseata and Gaseana, from Nofoali'i, in Upolu, who decided one day to follow

Birds hollow out a canoe or pull the ropes to haul it

Numerous Polynesian traditions, particularly from Aotearoa, Sāmoa and the Cook Islands, about the building of a particular canoe feature birds: a bird fighting with another animal (a snake or an eel)[29] is saved by a man, usually Rata, for whom a canoe is then made by birds (sometimes after those same birds prevent him from making one by re-erecting the tree, because he has not followed the protocol), and sometimes carried by them through the air. Here is a version of this story from Aitutaki (**201**).

In Kupolu, a huge spotted sea-snake got out of the water to follow a white heron, found him sleeping on a pandanus tree, and climbed up the tree. They fought the whole night. The following morning, Rata, on his way to chop a tree to build a canoe, found them fighting. When the heron saw Rata, he implored him to help him, but the sea-snake told Rata not to intervene. The bird begged Rata again, but again the sea-snake told him to go away, which Rata did because he wanted to go and fell a tree. But the heron then said reproachfully to Rata that his canoe would not be built without his help. Rata felled a tree, but the following morning the tree was up again. On the third morning, he noticed that the exhausted heron and the sea-snake were still fighting. He understood now the words of the heron, so he struck the sea-snake with his axe and cut it into pieces. Later, Rata again felled a tree, watched all day long by the heron perched on the branch of a nearby tree. When Rata left at night, the grateful heron summoned all the birds of Kupolu. They obeyed their master's order and hollowed out the huge tree trunk with their beaks to fashion a canoe. The seabirds drilled holes and the landbirds fastened the parts together. The following morning, the work was complete. The birds then carried the canoe to the beach by Rata's house.[30] Rata woke up, and named the canoe *Tarai-pō*, 'fashioned in the night'.

In some versions, the bird rescued by the man is not a heron but an owl. The word *ruru*, which appears in some versions, may actually refer to either, or even to an albatross or petrel.

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in their canoe their restless tame tropicbird; the bird led them to Vava'u, then to Fakanoaloto (a fishing ground), and eventually to Ha'apai, where they settled and founded the Tuita clan (**200**).

[29] As was noted in III-4, there is in Southeast Asia a dualistic metaphorical use of the figures of the bird and the snake, in which the snake represents virility and the netherworld, and the bird, femininity and the upperworld. In East Polynesia, where snakes are absent (Steadman 2006:65), eels were seen as sexual aggressors of women; Kirtley (1971:137) listed a plethora of Polynesian narratives containing the 'eel paramour' motif.

[30] A Māori tradition, from Ngāti Porou, is reminiscent of this episode: different species of bird gathered to haul the hull of the *Tākitimu* canoe carved by Ruawhārō in Hawaiki (**202**). Each species held a drag rope of its own. When Ruawhārō and Tūpai cut the drag ropes, each species flew away with its own rope. This is why those bird species still fly in flocks to this day.

According to Buse (1995:407), in Rarotongan *rūrū* is an owl; but there are no owls in the Cook Islands. In Sāmoa, *lulu* is the Eastern Barn Owl (*Tyto javanica*), and *ruru* is the More-pork (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) in Māori. But *ruru* is a type of petrel (*Macronectes* sp.) in Rapa Nui, and 'ruru' is part of the name of an albatross (*toroa ruru*) and of a petrel (*ruru-tāiko*) in Māori. Gill (1876:149) reported that in Aitutaki and Rarotonga some people believed the *ruru* to be the albatross, while others said that it was the white heron.

A bird helps his human sister

Another very widespread Polynesian tradition is that of Hina/Sina and her brother Rupe/ Lupe. It was noted earlier that some versions of that story, in which the young woman leaves her island, marries Tinirau/Sinilau (who mistreats her), becomes pregnant, and must give birth all alone, say that her brother, a pigeon, comes to help her deliver the baby. Other versions do not specifically mention that episode, but they do emphasise how much Rupe/Lupe has been longing for her sister, and how he helps her to get away (with or without her baby)[31] from the people who mistreated her. Some also feature an episode preceding and explaining the young woman's flight from her island: mats left in the sun to dry are ruined by the rain because of her negligence, in spite of her bird brother's intervention (pecking her eyes to wake her up), she gets scolded by her parents, and thus flees her home out of anger, or shame.

In a Tokelauan version of this story, for example, Sina and her brother Te Lupe (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) lived in Fakaofo (**203**). One day, their parents put all their mats out in the sun and went away, leaving their children in charge. Wanting to spoil all the mats, Asolelei ('Fine-day') caused a strong wind to blow the mats out to sea while the unsuspecting Sina was asleep. Te Lupe, who was awake, recovered some mats, but the majority were lost. He pricked his sister's eyes with his bill to wake her up, but to no avail. When the parents returned, they found their mats gone and Sina still asleep. They were very angry with her, so she ran away to the beach, jumped on a turtle's back, and was carried all the way to Vavaʻu, where Tinilau lived. Sina married Tinilau and gave birth to a baby girl. Meanwhile, Te Lupe was looking everywhere for his sister. When he finally landed in Vavaʻu, he told her to sit on his shoulder and to put the baby in his bill. They flew over

[31] This episode illustrates 'the brother's claim to his sister's child' in traditional Polynesian societies (Orbell 1978:111); see Goldman (1970:449-459) for a study of the uncle/nephew relationship in those societies.

Tinilau's canoe, who was out fishing, and Tinilau followed them. They thus returned to Fakaofo.

Three versions from Nukumanu (**203B**, in which the girl is named Namukataha), Luangiua (**203C**, in which she is named Asinga) and Tonga (**203D**, in which she is named Tangifetaua) do not specify that the *lupe* is the girl's brother, but in all of them the bird tries to help her in the same fashion when the mats get all wet. In the Tongan version the bird is said to be her pet, and a Tokelauan variant has it that Te Lupe was caught in the bush by Hina's parents and tamed for her. The bird can be envisaged in these versions as a pet, if not as an adoptive brother; in any case there is a very strong bond between the *lupe* and the girl.[32]

A Nukuoro tradition also tells of a bird helping his human sister and of the special bond between them (**15**). In it the bird does not save her mats from the rain or carry her back to her island, but he helps her catch many fish. As was noted in IV-2, a pregnant woman went to the ocean side of the island to defecate. She dug a hole in the ground. She had a miscarriage, and gave birth to an egg, which she buried along with her excrement. A few days later, the egg hatched. The *ngongo* (Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*) grew until he was able to fly to the ocean and catch small fish. He found his parents' home by accident, but he did not want them to see him because he was ashamed of what his mother had done to him. However, he secretly saw his sister. When they met, they cried. She wanted him to meet their parents, but he refused. One day, he told her to come out to the reef at a certain time to catch fish. He flew out to the ocean side of the reef to lure the fish towards the reef. She then caught many fish. When she returned home, her parents saw all the fish, so they asked her where she got those ocean fish. She remained silent so that they would not find out about her brother. Every day she came home with ocean fish, and her parents asked her the same question. Finally, one day she could not hold it anymore, so she told them the story of her brother. The parents cried a lot, then sent her to ask the bird to come home. The *ngongo* refused. They decided to cook some food and go out to the reef, hoping that he would come. But the bird never came.

[32] See also the three versions of this tradition analysed in VI-2 (**123**, **123A** & **123B**); in those Rupe/Lupe is not originally a bird, but a man who turns into or enters a bird to go and find his sister Hina/Sina, whom he misses very much. See also **13**, from Sāmoa.

Birds find a missing relative for their master

The birds' power of flight allows them to go and look for a missing person on behalf of their master. In the Māori story (from Te Arawa) of Te Aotapairu, a bird finds his keepers' mother who has gone away (**204**). Te Aotapairu, unhappy and ashamed, left her husband and fled to settle among the Ngā Puhi, at Whangaruru, where she remarried. But her son, Te Rongorere, and her daughter, Hineteao, longed for their mother, so they went in search of her. They set out in a canoe from Maketū, taking with them a pet *miromiro* (Tomtit, *Petroica macrocephala*) named Matairangi.[33] They sailed past Hauraki, Waitematā, then Whāngārei, and let the bird fly ashore at each of those places, but the bird always returned to the canoe with nothing in his beak. At Whangaruru however, the bird alighted on the window of the house where Te Aotapairu was weaving a mat. His flitting about made her understand the reason of his coming. He alighted on her head and pulled some reddish hair, which he brought back to her children in their canoe. They immediately recognised their mother's hair. Matairangi piloted the canoe to shore, and then led the children to their mother's house. Te Aotapairu returned to Maketū with Te Rongorere, Hineteao and her youngest child, also named Matairangi, and she settled in Tūhua (Mayor Island) with a new husband.

In a Māori version of the story of Hine and Tinirau, Tinirau uses his pet seabirds to find Hine, sending them ashore as he is sailing along the coast in the same fashion as in the previous narrative (**205**). After Rupe had snatched Hine-te-iwaiwa and her baby away from him (see **123**), Tinirau went searching for them, travelling on the back of his pet whale, Tūtūnui, and accompanied by his pet seabirds. When the birds cried over a *kāinga* (village), Tinirau knew that Hine was not there. But when they eventually made a prolonged cry ('ka tūmau te tangi a ngā manu') and hovered over a *kāinga*, Tinirau made a landing and found his wife.

Birds, two pigeons, are also sent away to reunite their master and his wife in an Emae tradition (**206**). The canoe of Roymata, a chief from Efate, was blown off course by the wind. Roymata landed at Vaitini, on the island of Emae. There he hid his chiefly identity by removing his bracelets, so Ti Vaitini made him his slave. In Efate, his wife dispatched his two *nawipë*[34] (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*), Sererei Yatonga and Ropmangè-ngè, to find him. The people of Emae threw arrows at the birds, but missed them. They landed on Roymata, one on each shoulder, prompting Ti Vaitini to realise who Roymata

[33] In Māori, *matairangi* is an 'observation post, as a hilltop used as a lookout' (Williams 1971:187).

[34] *Nawipë* is the name of this bird in some of the languages of Efate; in Emae it is *rupe*.

was. They plucked hairs from his beard and flew back to Efate to show to his wife (in the above Māori story of Te Aotapairu the bird Matairangi pulled her hair and showed it to her children). She asked them where Roymata was, and named each island in turn. The birds nodded negatively until she named Emae. The people of Emae apologised to Roymata for having treated him badly, and they took him back to Efate.

In a Tahitian tradition, a bird not only finds the king's wife, but also rescues her (**207**). Paihe-ʻōtuʻu was a little *ʻōtuʻu* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*). A giant heron named ʻŌtuʻu-nunamu, who lived in a cave in Raʻiātea, had stolen the wife of the king (god?) Tuoropaa, so the king sent messengers around Raʻiātea and Tahaʻa to summon all the herons to go and fight ʻŌtuʻu-nunamu. However, they were all afraid of the giant bird, and only the brave little Paihe-ʻōtuʻu went. He alighted on ʻŌtuʻu-nunamu's beak, who swallowed him. He then descended all the way down to the bird's intestines, which he started to eat. ʻŌtuʻu-nunamu cried in agony and spat out the little bird, who landed on Tahaʻa. Paihe-ʻōtuʻu then bathed in a river, before going back to the cave. He was swallowed and spat out again a few times, until ʻŌtuʻu-nunamu's intestines were completely eaten, causing the giant bird's death. He set Tuoropaa's wife free, and she was taken back to her husband. All the *ʻōtuʻu* then gathered and proclaimed Paihe-ʻōtuʻu as their king.

Finally, a narrative from Raʻivavae collected in 1984 tells of another *ʻōtuʻu*, who does not find the relatives alive, unlike all the other stories (**208**). Hao and Maria had five children: Rapa, Raʻivavae and Tupuaʻi (three sons), and Rurutu and Rimatara (two daughters). Hao went deep-sea fishing, but failed to return home. Maria asked the *ʻōtuʻu*, a family friend, to go and look for him. The bird agreed, but the five children wanted to go in search of their father themselves, much to the chagrin of their mother, who worried that she might lose them too. After four days, Rimatara was exhausted and abandoned the search, then died. After five days, it was Rurutu's turn. After six days, Tupuaʻi gave up too, and died. Rapa and Raʻivavae continued the search, unaware of their siblings' demise. They died soon after. Maria asked the bird to go in search of her children. He found them dead, one after the other. He cut a lock of the hair of Rimatara and Rurutu, took a piece of the tapa loincloth of Tupuaʻi, the pearl necklace of Raʻivavae, and a piece of Rapa's loincloth together with a pearl kept in one of its tapa folds. The bird cried, and brought Maria the bad news. She died of grief soon after.

3. Companions

Other stories feature birds who are very close to their master: they are his or her attendants, or cherished pets, whose mistreatment at the hand of an antagonist inevitably triggers retaliation.

Servants

Feathered servants and companions can carry a person on their wings, or serve them food, particularly in Hawaiian narratives.

Lau-ka-ieie, brought up by Pokahi and her husband, had birds as servants and companions (**182**, see preceding section). One day, the young woman had a dream about a young chief of Kaua‘i, Kawelona, so she sent her brother Makani-kau, the god of the wind, to him. Makani-kau found Kawelona carried by his bird guardians, a flock of *‘i‘iwi* (*Drepanis coccinea*), on their wings. Those birds, who were flying from Kaua‘i towards Lehua, were directed by a bird *kupua*, Kukala-a-ka-manu. The *‘i‘iwi* welcomed Makani-kau, and Kawelona agreed to go to Hawai‘i to wed Lau-ka-ieie because he too had dreamt about her. Among the *kupua* people of the Hawaiian Islands who gathered to celebrate their wedding were *ka-poe-kino-manu*, people with bird bodies.

In the romance of Lā‘iekawai, the maiden Lā‘iekawai often rested on the wings of birds (for instance, Beckwith 1919:370), with two scarlet *‘i‘iwi* perched on her shoulders and shaking the dew from red *lehua* (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) flowers on her head (1919:434). Lā‘iekawai and her guardians at Pali-uli had their food brought to them by birds, and the birds cleared away the leftovers (1919:442). McAllister (1933:117) also mentions the story of a woman who lived on the summit of Kawiwi, in O‘ahu, at a place called Pali-o-Keawaawa. She never left that mountain peak, and summoned birds to bring her food whenever she was hungry. Another Hawaiian example of birds serving food to their master can be found in the story of Kea-malu (**209**). Kea-malu was a beautiful maiden who lived at Pali-uli. Birds were her guardians, and they fed her with berries and with the honey of *lehua* flowers. She only ate the food of birds. One day, a young man saw her by a spring and

desired her, but she did not want to marry. When the man insisted, the birds took Kea-malu away on their wings.[35]

A narrative from Hiva Oa also features birds taking food (as well as songs) back to their mistress (**210**). Because a singing festival was to be held in honour of the chiefess of Hanaiapa, the *kotaʻe* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*) and the *kopeʻa* (Marquesan Swiftlet, *Aerodramus ocistus*) flew up the valley to find songs to sing in her honour and to gather sweet things for her.[36] Finally, from Fatu Hiva comes the story of two birds that bring fish and water to their master (**211**). In Ua Pou, Akaui was treated badly by his host Toaetini: he was served a pig skull that had already been eaten. He took revenge by making Toaetini's servants disappear when summoned: a bird that brought fish, a rat that brought kava, and a *koao* (Spotless Crake, *Porzana tabuensis*) that brought water. Toaetini sent a man to look for his *koao*, the man went to the water but found the bird dead. So was the rat.

Bird servants may also attempt to recover for their master a person who has been taken away, as illustrated by two narratives from Hawaiʻi and Mangaia. In the already mentioned Hawaiian story of the brothers Niheu and Kana, sons of the king of Hilo, their mother Haka-lani-leo was abducted by Keoloewa, the king of Molokaʻi, who lived in a fortress on the hill named Haupu (**156**). Wanting to deliver their mother, Niheu, Kana and their war party landed on Molokaʻi. Niheu climbed up the steep cliff, entered the fortress, struck the soldiers with his spear, and rescued his mother. But Mo-i, Keoloewa's *kahuna* (priest), told the *kōlea* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*), Keoloewa's bodyguards, that to destroy Niheu's strength they just had to pull some hairs from his head. As Niheu was going down the cliff with Haka-lani-leo on his back, one brave *kōlea* flew down and pulled five hairs from his head. Niheu then stopped to count his hairs, found that five were missing, and in his anger dropped his mother, who was taken back to the king's fortress by the soldiers. Niheu then sent his spear to find the culprit, and the spear soon came back at his feet with the bird pinioned on it. Niheu eventually rescued his mother with his brother Kana's help, and the people of Haupu all died, except for Mo-i and his sister.

[35] A tradition from Mungiki also tells of a woman carried on the back of her bird servants. Whenever Kinou, a culture heroine, wished to move about, she would just clap her hands, and *ngupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) would come to her. Then she would sit on their backs (Kuschel 1975:119-120).

[36] In Hawaiʻi, Beckwith (1970:543) deduced that 'a dominating theme which runs through all Hawaiian romantic fiction and is used to motivate much of its action is the power of music to attract and of chanted song to awaken love.' In this Hiva Oa story, the two birds learned two songs from a handsome young man, Tona-hei-eee; after they had sung them to the chiefess, which delighted her, the man revealed himself and slept with her.

In Mangaia, human sacrifices were offered to Rongo (**212**). One day, one of Rongo's victims was stolen from his altar by Matarau, a lizard god with two hundred eyes, eight tails and eight heads, and kept in the shade of Matarau's *marae* (temple). The lizard watched the victim from a dark recess. Rongo sent his birds to recover the victim, but they could only look from a distance, perched on the branches of the sacred trees of the *marae*, because they were terrified by Matarau. They went back to Rongo, who scolded them and sent them back to the *marae*. But when they approached Matarau's cave, they were all devoured by the lizard. Eventually, two little yellow butterflies sent by Rongo hid on the yellow leaves of a banyan tree and managed to steal the victim from Matarau, aided by an army of butterflies and moths.[37]

Pets[38]

In some Polynesian narratives, culture heroes have pet birds. For instance, according to a Māori tradition, a *piopio* (South Island Piopio, *Turnagra capensis*)[39] named Piopio-tahi was Māui's pet (**213**). He travelled with Māui on his canoe *Mahunui* from Hawaiki. The bird talked only to Māui, and only Māui could understand his talk. Milford Sound was named Piopio-tahi after him.[40] Another culture hero (*kakai*), from Mungiki, Tobaka, travelled in his canoe with his pet bird (**214**). Tobaka drifted carelessly on the open ocean until he ran out of food. His *kangae ngangi* (Nicobar Pigeon, *Caloenas nicobarica*) was hungry, but there was nothing left to feed him, so Tobaka cut off one of his fingers, and fed it to the bird. Then he found his whetstone (*simata*) in a basket, and made his bird swallow it. When the *kangae ngangi* defecated, Tobaka grabbed the whetstone and washed it off in the ocean to get rid of the bird's intestines clinging to it. He then made him swallow the whetstone again. Eventually his rotten canoe split into two pieces; a turtle came, and Tobaka climbed on its back.

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[37] Gill believed this tradition to be an 'allegorical account of the loss and recovery of Vaioeve', the first human sacrifice offered to the god Rongo in Mangaia.

[38] See III-2 for an account of the importance of birds as pets in traditional Polynesian societies.

[39] According to Beattie (1945:143), however, South Island Māori did not call that bird *piopio*. The name of the 'native thrush' (as Orbell [2003:78] pointed out, 'nostalgic British colonists called the piopio the New Zealand thrush, though the resemblances are superficial') was 'certainly not *piopio*', but Beattie's Murihiku informant told him that *piopio* was the name of the Morepork (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) (Beattie 1920:XVII,7,9).

[40] For the explanation of the half-sung song of the *piopio* (in connection with Māui's fatal encounter with Hine-nui-te-pō), see **269**.

Gods too have pet birds in some traditions, as illustrated by two examples from Mugaba and Pukapuka. Tehu'aigabenga lived in Nukuahea[41] with his bird Tengigongigo (**215**). Tengigongigo was a very wise bird that accompanied Tehu'aigabenga wherever he walked. This bird gave the life principle to humans. People could hear him crying, on the sea and in the houses, but nobody could see him. In a Pukapukan tradition, Ngaliieieu, the god of the sea, had two pet birds (**216**). When he wrestled on the shore in Sāmoa with another god, Te Akuaku, the two birds came and helped Ngaliieieu by holding his leg firmly to the reef so that Te Akuaku could not throw him beyond the sea. The contest was a draw; the two gods became friends and set out for Pukapuka, where they settled.

There are also stories in which people have tame birds and are very attached to them, and the attachment is reciprocal.[42] This is most apparent in the Māori story of a *pārera* (Pacific Black Duck, *Anas superciliosa*) named Korotangi (**217**). A man (named Te Haupa in one version) caught a bird at Kāwhia, but instead of killing him, he kept him as a pet because of his beautiful plumage. He built a hut for Korotangi, and fed him the best of foods, even *huahua* (birds preserved in their own fat). His wife, however, disliked the bird because so much good food was wasted. Whenever her husband went fishing or hunting, she would mistreat the bird and eat his food, and only give him *pōhata* (wild turnip) leaves to eat. Thus Korotangi ran away. When the man returned and asked his wife where his beloved bird was, she replied that he had swum away out to sea. The man looked everywhere for the bird, in vain. He only found some feathers that Korotangi had shed on the ocean. He brought the feathers home, wept over them, composed a *waiata* (song) for the bird, and carved a little box to hold the precious feathers. When his wife's people told him how she had let the bird

[41] For the people of Mugaba, Tehu'aigabenga was 'one of the most important district gods', the 'guardian of man's activities and properties', and Nukuahea was the 'legendary island settlement of the gods' (Elbert 1975: 198,302). For the people of Mungiki, Nukuahea was 'the home where all things desirable to humans were stored, and from where Tehu'aigabenga, the great donor of things, took them and gave them to people' (Elbert & Monberg 1965:85,n.6).

[42] Two narratives from Niue and Aniwa tell of people who capture a wild bird but the bird escapes. In Niue, a man came upon a *tuaki* (White-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon lepturus*) trapped in a hole and flapping his wings to get out of it. Very happy with his find, he took him to his house by the sea. There, after closing the screens of coconut leaves, he released him, but the bird did not fly. Believing that the *tuaki* could not fly, the man tied his beak with a string (to prevent him from biting) and threw him towards a rooster in the hope that the two birds would fight. But the *tuaki* flew up and escaped towards the sea. The man looked everywhere but could not find him (Loeb 1926:110-111). In Aniwa, a white *jiji* (probably the *titi*, a petrel or shearwater) was dwelling on a rocky point on the island. Every night she would go fishing, and upon returning she would call her chick to come out and eat the fish. People heard the birds, so one day, they took the chick from his burrow, passed him from one person to another (as the nest was difficult of access), and took him to their village. All the people admired the white chick. When the mother came back, her chick did not answer her call, so she went to the village. There, the people shouted and hit her, but she managed to snatch her chick from them, and the two birds flew away (Gray 1894).

escape and how she used to eat his food, he left his wife and returned to Manukau, where he came from. There, he would open the box, weep, and sing his *waiata*. When he died, he was buried with the carved box.

The attachment of the bird for his human companion is more obvious in another version of this story, according to which Korotangi's companion is not a man but a young woman. Parewhaita, from Maukutea (on the southern side of Aotea Harbour), found on the beach a very young, lonely *pārera*. She took him home and nursed him. They became inseparable companions and conversed with each other. After a while, however, she married and moved to Te Maika, taking Korotangi with her. Once she started having children, the bird became more and more neglected as her domestic duties increased. So the bird eventually left. He tried to make friends with the other birds, but they just pecked at him. When he returned to Aotea Harbour, the ageing bird felt very lonely. He gazed at his own reflection on the surface of a pool of water, and, sensing his decline and decrepitude, he thought once again of Parewhaita, sang a lament, and plunged into the pool, turning immediately to stone.[43]

From Mangareva comes a story in which the birds' loyalty to their human companion goes beyond the latter's death (**218**). Turia killed his brother-in-law Honu-a-karoiti, a chief from Aukena (one of the Gambier Islands), by throwing him down a cliff. He loaded the body of the dead man onto his canoe and returned to Mangareva, but on the way two pet kingfishers[44] of Honu came fluttering above the canoe. They would not go away. Only when one was killed did the other one fly away.

The first settler of Rapa Nui, Hotu Matu'a, also had pet birds which he always carried on his shoulders, two *tara* (Sooty Tern, *Onychoprion fuscatus*, or Spectacled Tern, *Onychoprion lunatus*), whom he had raised and taught to speak (**219**). One day, Hotu Matu'a visited his daughter Teatea and her husband Ruko, and he stayed with them a few days. Ruko told him that he had seen Oroi, the brother of Hotu Matu'a, who wanted to be king in

[43] Korotangi is the name of a serpentine carving representing a bird that was found at Kāwhia in 1878: see an illustration of it in The Editors (1929:55) and an account of its finding in Wilson (1889:500).

[44] The Mangareva Kingfisher (*Todiramphus gambieri*) became extinct in Mangareva prior to 1922 (Holyoak & Thibault 1984:145). This bird may have been known in Mangarevan as *iikotara* ('the name of a bird' for Tregear [1899:24]) as cognates of this word designate kingfishers in other parts of Polynesia, or as *nganga* (the name of 'the alcyon bird' according to Janeau [1908:28]). However, the birds in this story are not kingfishers but *kotuku* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*) in Janeau (n.d.:85-86), the manuscript about the history of Mangareva that Janeau copied (in Mangarevan with a French translation) for the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts in Braine-le-Comte and that Laval supposedly closely followed in his *Mangareva, l'histoire ancienne d'un peuple polynésien*.

the latter's place. Hotu Matuʻa then told Teatea and Ruko that he would go and find his brother, and to watch his birds from the top of the hill: if the birds flew away, Hotu Matuʻa was dead, but if they could not see the birds, either Hotu Matuʻa had not found Oroi, or he had defeated him. Oroi saw his brother coming and placed a noose on the path. When he believed Hotu Matuʻa to be trapped, he pulled the noose. Hotu Matuʻa stumbled but did not fall. Alarmed, the two birds on his shoulders flew up, but immediately returned to him. When Oroi came out of his hiding place, Hotu Matuʻa was still standing, and he cursed his brother. Oroi then fell to the ground, and Hotu Matuʻa defeated him easily.

A Tongan chief, the Tuʻi Haʻatakalaua, residing at Fonua-motu,[45] was very attached to a tropicbird,[46] his pet (**220**). This bird, who had a red ribbon of dyed bark tied around his leg so that people would recognise him and not harm him, would fly off in the morning to seek food, and return to his master in the evening. But one evening, the bird did not return. Grieving for his pet, the Tuʻi Haʻatakalaua then had the clairvoyant Hama (the same Hama whose observation of a tropicbird flying out to sea in the early morning led to the discovery of the island of ʻAta, **199**) brought to him. Hama told him that the bird was alive and well, that he was looking for food in a distant place, in Sāmoa, and that he would come back. The chief wanted to know the precise day of his beloved bird's return, but Hama just told him the successive stages of the bird's return. The chief kept enquiring about his return, and became suspicious of the truthfulness of the clairvoyant's words, but Hama kept naming place after place, drawing nearer and nearer. Eventually, he told the Tuʻi Haʻatakalaua to go and hide in the rolled mat-screen in his house because his bird was about to arrive, and to let the bird look for his master. The Tuʻi Haʻatakalaua did as he was told, and saw a tropicbird approaching. However, the bird's red ribbon having turned white, he questioned Hama, who replied that it had become white because of the bird's fishing on the reefs in Sāmoa. The bird then flew into the house, and looked everywhere for his master. When he found him, they greeted and caressed each other, and the Tuʻi Haʻatakalaua kissed and stroked the bird.

In the Samoan story of the *sega* (Blue-crowned Lorikeet, *Vini australis*), a bird born from a clot of blood (see IV-2 for an account of his birth), men keep wanting to get this extraordinary *manu* at all costs: one steals him, one gives a canoe in exchange for him and

[45] Fonua-motu, the residence of the Tuʻi Haʻatakalaua, is an island connected to Tongatapu by a causeway (Māhina 1999:85,n.36).

[46] Either a *tavake* (White-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon lepturus*) or a *tavake toto* (Red-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon rubricauda*).

wants the *sega* to be buried with him upon his death, and one intends to put all his priests to death when they fail to secure the bird for him (**11**). In one version of this story, the Tu‘i Fiti saw the *sega*, and wanted to secure him, so Olo and Faua stole the bird for him in the heavens. When Taeotagaloa saw the bird, he asked the Tu‘i Fiti to give him the *sega*, and he took him to Manu‘a. Then Lagafua took him from Taeotagaloa. Lagafua coveted Ngatā-lau-tolo’s canoe, and he gave him the *sega*. The man died soon after, and the bird was buried with him, but the bird was still alive, feeding on Ngatā-lau-tolo’s body. Then he flew up and moved from place to place, from Upolu to Savai‘i. Malietoa wanted the bird. All his priests (*taula aitu*) were about to be put to death when they failed to secure him (the bird would not come down). When Tagaloa-Tui-Manu‘a stretched his hand, however, the *sega* perched on it. He asked Malietoa to spare the priests’ lives.

Theft, mistreatment or murder of a pet bird triggers retaliation

The attachment of people to their birds, apparent in the previous stories, makes it natural that, should misfortune befall their cherished pets, retaliation will follow, as illustrated by a few traditions.

In the Māori story of Tāne-miti-rangi, the pet *tūī* of Iwi-katea, a neighbouring chief, Ngarengare, coveted the bird (**133**, see VII-1). He had him stolen in Iwi-katea’s absence. When Iwi-katea realised that his precious *tūī* was gone, a war ensued, and Ngarengare and his people had to go and live in another area.[47] Another treasured *tūī* appears in the story of Rua (**221**). Tangaroa and his people, the *ponaturi*,[48] who lived in the ocean, stole the talking *tūī* of that *tohunga*. The bird was taken to the ocean home of the *ponaturi*. Rua looked everywhere for his bird, in vain. After a while, however, he could hear on calm nights the sound of his pet’s voice as if coming from the sea. When he called out to his *tūī*, he could hear the bird speaking across the waves. The sound was coming from a rocky islet far out at sea, so Rua decided to swim to that islet, following the bird’s cry. The *ponaturi* returned to

[47] Similarly, in Ōpōtiki, Apanui slew Tuteao to take possession of the latter’s talking *tūī*, Hine-te-iwaiwa (Best 1977:310). Another story (Best 1977:316) tells of the chief Kahukino, also from Ōpōtiki, who refused to give his pet *tūī* to a visitor from Waiaua – the latter then led a surprise attack on Kahukino’s *pā* (fortified settlement).

[48] ‘These supernatural beings resemble people. They live in the sea and sometimes come ashore, especially at night; their footprints would sometimes be seen on the beach in the morning. They are generally hostile to humans’ (Orbell 1995:139).

that islet every evening to pass the night in their sleeping house. There, Rua recovered his bird with the help of the house's janitor, Tatau.[49]

The theft of a pet *moa* (New Zealand moa, Dinornithiformes) also leads to a tribe having to flee their lands and settle in another area in a tradition from Ngāti Apa (**223**). Apa-hāpai-taketake, the eponymous ancestor of this tribe, was the son of Ruatea, who had come to Aotearoa on the *Kurahaupō* canoe. He coveted a pet (*mōkai*) *moa* belonging to Ngāti Tūwharetoa. He thus stole the bird and went off with him, but he fell over a cliff and received a permanent injury, which caused him to be thereafter named Apa-koki ('Limping-Apa'). Ngāti Tūwharetoa sought *utu* (retaliation) for this theft, and thus abducted Apa's wife. Apa then stole their *kūmara*, after which they drove Ngāti Apa away from their home at Pūtauaki (Mount Edgecumbe) – Apa's people fled south, and settled in the Rangitīkei area.[50]

Mistreatment of a pet bird also triggers retaliation. The Tahitian and Rarotongan story of the great navigator Hiro/Iro features an episode in which the crew of his canoe mistreats the cherished pet bird of the god Tāne while he himself is asleep, and a storm is their punishment. The Rarotongan version says that the bird of Tāne, Take-aitu, alighted on the altar of Tāne on Iro's canoe bound for Upolu, when Iro was asleep (**224**). The men killed him and proceeded to cook him, however the bird would not cook. Iro then awoke, recognised the bird of Tāne, and to avoid Tāne's wrath took the dead bird, arranged his feathers, and put a stone inside him (as the men had thrown the heart overboard). Take-aitu recovered, but not entirely. Iro told him to shake his feathers and try flying on the outrigger, so the bird flew on the outrigger and back to the canoe. Iro then told him to fly up above, so the bird flew back to Tāne. But when the god noticed that his bird had been mistreated, he asked the bird if the culprit was the offspring of Pou-ariki. The bird nodded his head. The *atua* then sang a

[49] A Māori story, from Te Tai Tokerau (Northland), offers an example of an attempted theft that was unsuccessful (**222**). In the Ōhaeawai district, a large, beautiful white bird (possibly a *kūkupa*, New Zealand Pigeon, *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) appeared in the sky. He circled round and round, and alighted on a great barren rock, a volcanic outcrop on which there were many pools of water. The bird sipped water from one of those basins. The people realised that he was no ordinary bird, and wondered if he was a messenger from the gods. Their chief, Kaitara, told them that he had come from Hawaiki and had been brought to them by the winds of Tangaroa. He named him Taiāmai, declared him *tapu*, and told his people not to approach him: he would bring them *mana* (power, prestige). The bird alighted on the rock every afternoon to sip water from the basins. He enhanced the *mana* of Kaitara and his people in the eyes of the neighbouring tribes. However, one evening, a neighbouring chief attempted to seize the bird, because he was jealous of the *mana* that he brought to Kaitara. The bird then melted into the rock and vanished. He was never to be seen again. The chief fled, fearing that a curse might be put on him.

[50] For another version of this story, in which the *moa* is not a coveted pet but a deadly bird, see X-2.

lament (maybe because the bird had died), and Tāne caused a strong wind to blow, which capsized Iro's canoe. He then came down, and cut off Iro's brothers' heads.

The Tahitian version, in which the bird is named Tāne-manu, includes a subsequent episode in which Hiro tries to take revenge on the bird (**224A**). Hiro, sailing on the ocean, wished to take a nap, so he told his brothers that, should they encounter a flock of large white birds accompanied by a beautiful red bird, they must not kill them, because this bird would be Tāne-manu. But the brothers, as they were preparing breakfast, killed some of the birds, and struck and stunned Tāne-manu. They cooked and ate the birds while Hiro was sleeping. When Hiro woke up, he scolded his brothers for their careless actions, accusing them of bringing destruction upon them all. Thus he took Tāne-manu, invoked Tāne to give him life, and the bird was revived. Tāne-manu flew away, but his head was drooping in sorrow, because of the cruel treatment that he had received. Tāne then asked his cherished bird who was responsible for his sorrow, and the bird nodded when he pronounced the names of Hiro's brothers. So, whenever Hiro fell asleep, a big storm would threaten to sink the canoe, but it would end when he awoke. Finally, a storm swamped the canoe, and Hiro sank down to the bottom of the ocean, slept there, then made it back to land. He planned revenge on Tāne-manu. He found the bird's home, dug himself a hole beneath it while the bird was still at sea, and waited for him in the hole. When the bird returned, Hiro seized him, but the bird was so strong that he managed to escape. He flew to the first, second and third skies, followed by Hiro. They then flew down to Rurutu, and swam from there to Ra'iātea. There, Hiro found the bird sitting in a *nono* tree (*Morinda citrifolia*), exhausted and unable to go any further. The bird begged Hiro to let him live, but, accusing him of being the cause of all his troubles, Hiro banished him to the tenth sky, where he was to remain by Tāne forever after.[51]

Six other narratives feature birds whose murder does not go unpunished. From Sāmoa comes a story in which the murderers are eventually forgiven, after a chase through the heavens, but in all the other traditions the murder of the bird results in a war, with the murderer being sometimes killed.

One of the stories that account for the origin of the name 'Sāmoa' says that Lu, son of Gaogao-o-le-tai, caught two *moa* (Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*) and went in his canoe to

[51] Tāne also had a pet *pīra'e* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*) named Tae-fei-aitu, who nestled against his neck, on his shoulder (Henry 1928:369,411).

Upolu (**49**). There he lived with his *sā moa* ('sacred fowls'). One day, two of the supreme god Tagaloa-lagi's people came down from the heavens to earth to fish, but when the *moa* started pecking at the fish that they had caught and put into two baskets, they seized and killed them, before returning to the heavens. In the morning, Lu went off in search of his *moa*, because he was missing them. Suspecting the fishing party from the heavens to be responsible for their disappearance, he went up to the first heaven, where he smelled roast fowl. The two men were in the middle of eating the *moa*. Lu chased them through the nine heavens. Upon reaching the tenth heaven, they encountered Tagaloa. Lu then told him what had happened, but they all made peace when Tagaloa gave Lu his daughter in marriage. Tagaloa told Lu to name the earth 'Sāmoa' in remembrance of his *moa*.

There is no forgiving in the Rarotongan story of Aro-a-uta and Aro-a-tai (**225**). Those two birds were the pets of Tu-tarangi. He reluctantly consented to lend Aro-a-uta to his younger brother Tāne-auaka. But, because the bird did not want to go when sent away to catch fish for him, Tāne-auaka killed him. He then begged his brother to lend him Aro-a-tai. The bird went away to catch fish as instructed, and brought back fish for Tāne-auaka's people to eat.[52] However, they did not set aside any fish for the bird, who thus starved. Therefore, the next morning, when ordered to fly away and fish, Aro-a-tai stayed put, because he was hungry. Angry with the bird, Tāne-auaka then killed him. The birds' death triggered a war between Tu-tarangi and his younger brother.

In a Marquesan tradition, a man does not go to war over his pet bird with his brother, but with his brother-in-law (**226**). Tonofiti had a rooster, Niuha'a-i-te-po, and a hen. His sister Fanau stole the hen and the chicks, and went away to stay with Kakuma, her husband. Tonofiti went looking for his hen with his rooster. When he got close to the place where Fanau was living, the rooster crowed, the hen pressed to the ground, and she laid useless and stinking eggs. When the rooster crowed again, the hen cackled, and they eventually found each other. However, Fanau caught them both, and Kakuma plucked the feathers of the rooster's neck, before killing him. Tonofiti knew that his rooster was dead because blood shot into his chest at that moment. When he found his sister, she denied being Fanau.

[52] Could this story be an indication that Polynesians used trained birds for fishing, as was practised with cormorants (which are absent from the Cook Islands) in China and Japan since the 3rd century and in Europe since the mid-16th century (Jackson 1997; Beike 2012)? Smith (in Te Ariki-tara-are 1919:135) surmised that Aro-a-tai and Aro-a-uta were 'trained sea-gulls'.

However, the rooster started crowing from her mouth, then through her armpit.[53] Tonofiti then beat her up with his club, and war was declared the next day. Kakuma's 140 men were defeated by Tonofiti's 140 men.

The murder of the beloved bird does not only lead to a war in a Fijian tradition, but also to a great deluge, which, as in the above Māori stories of Tāne-miti-rangi and Apa's *moa*, forces people to move (**227**). According to one version of this tradition, the supreme god Degei, the Great Serpent,[54] worshipped by the people on the hill of Kauvadra, had taught one tribe the art of canoe-building. His beautiful black *soqe* (Barking Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula latrans*), Turukawa, who slept on a banyan tree at the entrance of Degei's cave, used to wake him every morning. When Degei opened his eyes in the morning, he would make the darkness go away.[55] But Degei would then call across the valley and tell the people to rise and go to work, so the canoe-builders, having grown idle and proud, by and by hated the bird: they were sick of having to work forever. Thus, one day, Rokola, the chief of that tribe, crept towards the banyan tree, and shot Turukawa while he was asleep (in other versions, the *soqe* is killed by Degei's grandsons, or grandnephews). The arrow pierced the bird's breast, and he fell dead to the ground. When Degei woke up and saw his cherished bird lying dead on the ground, he grieved for Turukawa. He waged war on Rokola's tribe, and provoked a deluge of rain which drowned Rokola and many of his people. The survivors were scattered everywhere, and became the servants of people for whom they made canoes.[56]

The murderer of the bird is also killed in the following two traditions. According to some versions of the already mentioned Māori story of Tāne's bird, Te Manu-nui-a-Rua-kapanga, this great bird, who had carried Pou-rangahua and his two baskets of *kūmara* to Aotearoa, was caught on his way back to Hawaiki by Tama-i-waho (**33**). This great *tipua*

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[53] Similarly, in a Māori tradition (Te Arawa), Pōtaka-tawhiti, Houmai-tawhiti's dog, was killed and eaten by Uenuku and his son Toi-te-huatahi, in Hawaiki. When Houmai-tawhiti's sons Tama-te-kapua and Whakatūria came to Toi's village, looking everywhere for their dog, they kept calling it, until the dog howled its reply from inside Toi's stomach. Toi held his mouth shut but the dog kept on howling – a war then ensued (Grey 1855:123-124).

[54] For the story that recounts how the Fijian Islands were peopled by the progeny of a man and a woman born from two *kitu* eggs hatched by Degei, see **2** in IV-1.

[55] This is reminiscent of the stories in which birds trigger with their singing the early coming of daylight (see VII-1).

[56] Thompson (1892:143) argued that 'there is little doubt that the god Ndengei was once a man – deified because he was the embodiment of the ancestral spirit – and that his favourite pigeon was really shot, and his people divided in consequence.'

(strange being), who lived on Mount Hikurangi, ate him. Tāne-nui-a-rangi avenged the death of his bird by sending Taukata to find Tama-i-waho, recognisable by his uneven teeth (*niho tapiri*). When the assembly in Tama-i-waho's house on Mount Hikurangi all laughed, they showed their teeth, so Taukata recognised the murderer of Te Manu-nui. He took him to Hawaiki, where he was killed and eaten.[57]

Finally, a Samoan tradition tells of the nine-headed *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) that belonged to the chief Leutele, from the Atua district (**31**). One day, she flew from Upolu to Savaiʻi. She alighted on a tree. The chief Piliopo, from the village of Aopo, threw a piece of wood at her because she was hiding the sun, which killed her. Piliopo then gutted her. A chief from Upolu, Late, then came searching for the *lupe*. Upon seeing Piliopo's bloody hand, he understood what had happened, and so he killed Piliopo in retaliation. Piliopo then turned into a stone.[58]

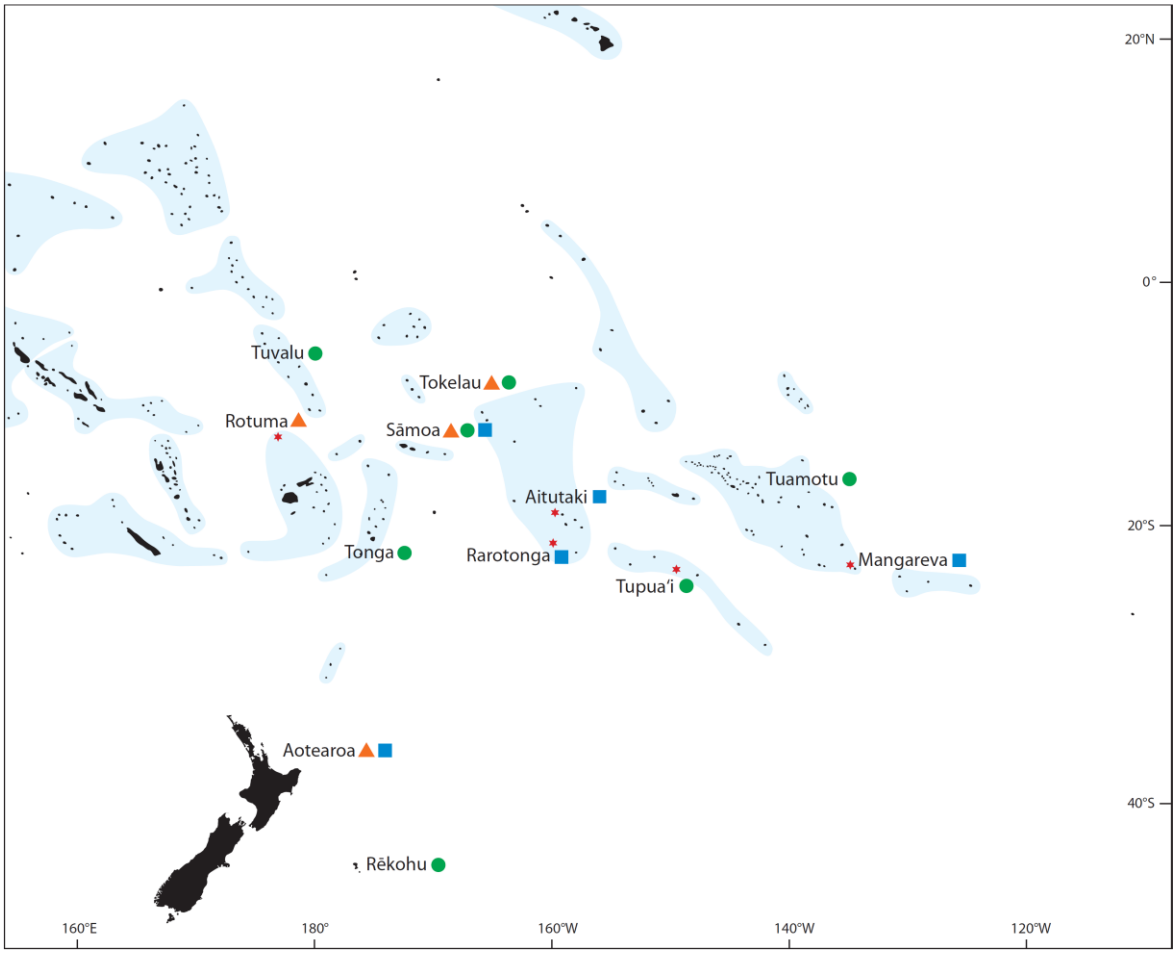
*

Birds thus protect people and guard places in many Polynesian narratives. They help the protagonists of the stories in many different ways, and can even save a person's life. *Manu* serve as guides, attend their human masters by bringing them food, and are cherished pets whose theft or mistreatment does not go unpunished. These narratives demonstrate the importance that Polynesians attached to the birds around them.

[57] As Best (1897a:40) observed, this episode actually 'appears to be a local adaptation of the Polynesian tradition of Tinirau and his pet whale Tutu-nui, which was slain by Kae'.

[58] See IV-3 for another version of this story.

Figure 18. Custody stories



▲ Birds find, nurse and raise a baby (**23**, **183**, **184**, **184A**)

● Rupe/Lupe helps Hina/Sina deliver her baby and/or get away (with or without her baby) from the people who mistreated her (**13**, **181**, **181A**, **181B**, **203**, **203A**, **203D**)

■ A bird fighting with another animal is saved by a man, for whom a canoe is then made and/or carried in the air by birds (**201** to **201D**)

Chapter IX

Eros

No fanatu Asina rā nei te sikisikitau rā e tū i te tūrana te vai. E tū i te tūrana te vai rā nei, rā ku vasiri ake ki Asina, *Asina nā ni tafā ai e au ai koe no utuhia?* Ā ma ni tafā ana mātua. *Ā koe ku fano no kave nā tafa ō mātua nā, koe ku au ki avana tāua.*[1]

1. Human love affairs

Given the symbolic association between birds and sexuality (see III-4), it should come as no surprise that *manu* are present in numerous Polynesian narratives dealing with finding a wife, seducing a woman, recovering an abducted wife, or reporting illicit sexual connections. In these traditions, birds do intervene in human love affairs.[2]

Birds find a wife for their master

A chief who wants to marry only the most beautiful woman may send his bird messengers to other islands to locate her. In the already mentioned Hawaiian story of the brothers Niheu and Kana (**156**), Keoloewa, king of Moloka‘i, had three messengers: Kōlea (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*), ‘Ūlili (Wandering Tattler, *Tringa incana*) and ‘Akekeke (Ruddy Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*).[3] Keoloewa sent them one day to find a wife for him. They looked everywhere for the most beautiful woman on earth, but could not find her until they flew to Hilo, where they saw Haka-lani-leo, Niheu’s and Kana’s mother, bathing in the sea

[1] ‘When Asina arrived, a finch was there on the fence around the pool. It stood there on the fence and asked, *Asina, whose containers are those you’re going to fill?* She replied that the containers belonged to her parents. *Go then, take the containers to your parents and then you and I will get married*’ (**252**).

[2] For a study of images relating to birds in Māori love poetry, see Orbell (1977:226-240).

[3] As Beckwith (1970:90) discovered, the birds that serve as messengers for the high chiefs are, ‘in the machinery of romance’, usually ‘migratory birds or those which nest in high cliffs’.

at night. They then flew back to Moloka‘i to tell the king that they had found a woman whose skin was like the *‘ō‘ō* (*Moho* sp.). A double canoe was prepared for the journey to fetch her, and the birds flew ahead of the canoe to show the way to the queen’s abode. She was abducted.

From Tahiti comes a story in which another chief sends his bird messengers to find a wife, but this time for his son (**228**). Tetunae, *ari‘i nui* of Farepua, in Tahiti, sent his two feathered *ve‘a* (messengers), ‘Īta‘e-uri and ‘Īta‘e-tea (‘Dark-*‘īta‘e*’ and ‘White-*‘īta‘e*’, *‘īta‘e* being the White Tern, *Gygis alba*), known as the birds of Vaiari, to find a wife for his son Aumoana. However, they could not find a suitable young woman. On their way back to Tahiti, they were pursued by Tāne-manu, the gigantic bird of Tāne. He followed them to the mountain of Mou‘a-roa, in Mo‘orea, where they almost died from exhaustion. The following morning, they flew down to the valley, where the people of the land told them about the daughter of their *ari‘i*, Te ‘Ura-i-te-ra‘i. The birds told their master about the young woman, who eventually married Aumoana.

An *‘elepaio* (*Chasiempis* sp.) brings a young woman to his master in a different way in a Hawaiian narrative (**229**). Hoa-make-i-ke-kula was a very beautiful young woman, born in the form of a taro and brought up by her grandparents. One day, she was picking *lehua* (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) flowers in the forest, when a bird called out to her. It was ‘Ele-paio, the messenger of Ka-lama-ula, king of Keawewai. Then the bird changed into a handsome young man, before summoning the fog to come down. The fog enveloped Hoa-make-i-ke-kula until she arrived at Keawewai.

Birds are the judges of a beauty contest which will decide which young woman a man will marry in another Hawaiian story (**209**, see also VIII-3). Kea-malu, a beautiful maiden who lived at Pali-uli and had birds as her guardians, was seen and desired by a young man one day at a spring. But she did not want to marry. When the man insisted, the birds took Kea-malu away on their wings. She remained hidden for a while, then returned to the spring when she thought that the young man had forgotten about her. However, the man returned and was about to take her away when an *‘io* (Hawaiian Hawk, *Buteo solitarius*) came and pecked the man’s face and arms, and the girl was again carried away by the birds. A test of beauty was then organised between Kea-malu and Ka-lehua-‘ula, the young man’s *ipo aloha* (sweetheart). The two girls each placed their flowers in a gourd (*‘umeke*), and the winner of the contest would be the owner of the gourd over which the most birds fluttered. *‘I‘iwi*

(*Drepanis coccinea*) hovered over Kea-malu's gourd, but only a few birds hovered over the other girl's. The two girls then appeared in front of everyone to be seen and compared, and Kea-malu won the beauty contest and married the young man.

Finally, in a Tongan tradition, a bird cooes to inform his master of the presence in his compound of a young woman, whom he then marries (**230**). Lolongovavau, Hina's and Sinilau's daughter, was taken to Pulotu as a child by Hikuleo. Her maternal uncle, 'Ofamaikiatama, accompanied her. When she became a very beautiful maiden, 'Ofamaikiatama went to the upperworld to find a handsome man to be her husband. He found Lolomatokelau at Ha'atafu in Tongatapu, went back to Pulotu, told Lolongovavau to come with him, and left her in the man's compound before returning to Pulotu. Lolomatokelau's *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*), named Mahuamata, cooed to inform him of the presence of the young woman in the compound, so he woke up and called his younger brother to go and see what all the cooing was about. Lulutalihala went and found her, then told Lolomatokelau, who eventually married her and had a son with her.

Birds are used to seduce a woman, or lure a man to a young woman

Birds may also be used by the protagonist of a story to seduce a woman. One way of accomplishing this is to perform a love charm on a bird. A narrative from Tainui illustrates how Māori used birds for the purpose of *ātahu* (love charms).[4] In the Waikato, Reitū and Reipae were twin sisters famous for their beauty (**231**). Their fame reached a Ngā Puhi *rangatira*, Ue-oneone, who decided to take Reitū as his wife. He performed an *ātahu* on his pet *kāiaia* (New Zealand Falcon, *Falco novaeseelandiae*), then the bird flew all the way to the girl's abode. Reitū was sitting on the porch (*mahau*) of her house. The *kāiaia* perched on the beam (*paepae*). When she stood up, he flew away, but she followed him, and Reipae followed her. The sisters covered a great distance. When they reached Kaipara, Reipae met a *rangatira*

[4] 'By means of the *atahu* rite an errant wife or husband was caused to return. It was also resorted to by a man who wished to influence a woman in his own favour; it was even said to be effective in overcoming dislike on the part of a woman . . . The most interesting form of *atahu* was that in which a living bird was employed as a medium. This bird was despatched as an influencing medium; and we are told that it was always a *miromiro* (North Island tit) [i.e., Tomtit, *Petroica macrocephala*] that was so employed. A charm was repeated over the bird and it was despatched on its errand. It would fly straight to its objective, be that person ever so distant, and alight on his or her head. That person would at once be impelled to rise and proceed straight to the sender of the mediumistic bird' (Best 1976:367).

whom she married, but Reitū kept on following the bird. When she finally encountered Ue-oneone, they got married.

Another way to seduce a woman is to trick her into undressing in front of a man, with the help of a feathered 'accomplice', which results in the woman having to submit to his advances,[5] as illustrated by two stories from Aotearoa and Pukapuka. A narrative from Pātea tells of Uwhenga, who coveted Taneroa, the wife of Rau and daughter of Turi, the captain of the *Aotea* canoe (**232**). He tricked Rau into going away. In the forest, Uwhenga made a *kākā* perch (*pae-kākā*) and climbed up a tree. When Taneroa saw Uwhenga up in the tree, she asked him to let down a *kākā* (New Zealand Kākā, *Nestor meridionalis*) for her. He caught a bird, plucked his feathers (*hou*) so that he would not fly away, and lightly fastened the tips of the wings. He then let the bird down, but when the *kākā* touched the ground the fastening of the wings came loose and the bird ran off. Taneroa then rushed to catch him, but while pursuing him, her only garment (*mai*) unfastened itself and eventually fell off her. She caught the running bird and recovered her garment, but saw Uwhenga up in the tree laughing at her as she stood naked. She told him that as he had seen her naked she was now his, and thus Taneroa became Uwhenga's wife.

In a woman-seducing contest between two Pukapukan culture heroes, Ngaliyeyeu and Te Awuawu, the latter won thanks to his *tikitiki*, a 'spiritual being with godlike powers' in the form of a small bird (**233**). He then lent his bird to Ngaliyeyeu. While the beautiful Mulitauyakana was bathing, the bird pecked at her kilt, causing it to fall off. The woman then rushed out of the water to drive him away. However, Ngaliyeyeu was there, saw the naked woman, and could thus seduce her.

Birds may also be used as bait to capture a woman, as will be shown in two Marquesan stories. In the first one, from Hiva Oa, Pohu's brothers and sisters chose a wife for him (**234**). A net (*ueue*) was let down to catch the woman, named Hua-nai-vaa. She lived in a land

[5] Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1936:25,n.5) found that, 'for the Pukapukan women, as for the women of some other Polynesian groups, resistance to desired or undesired, to expected or unexpected, male aggression vanishes at once if the aggressor sees her exposed genitals. Shame felt at this nakedness seems to produce a feeling that all is lost and that nothing can be done further to ward off the aggressive male. Under other circumstances a woman's forced exposure of the genitals may produce such shame that suicide is the only way of preserving self-respect.' This would explain Taneroa's and Mulitauyakana's 'surrender' to the two male tricksters in these two stories. The Māori story of Te Aka-tāwhia offers another example: this young woman had to marry Māhanga after she was seen, and thus shamed (*whakamā*), at her private latrine (*turuma*) by the latter, who was lurking behind her. She then composed a *waiata* (song) in which she chastised his actions and mentioned a *tīeke* (North Island Saddleback, *Philesturnus rufusater*) scratching around the latrine (Jones & Biggs 1995: 126-129).

below the sea, Oovau. She was drawn into the net by a *kūkū* (White-capped Fruit Dove, *Ptilinopus dupetithouarsii*). The net was pulled up, and she was brought to Pohu. However, two months later she was found by her former husband, who took her back home. The net, in which Pohu's brothers and sisters had put a fish this time, was let down again, and the fish nibbled at Hua-nai-vaa's foot until she came into the net. The fish and the *kūkū* then brought the net up, and she stayed with Pohu.

The second one, from Fatu Hiva, which was retold in IV-3, also features a dove as the bait (**25**). Māui, upon hearing about the beauty of Hina-te-au-ihi, caught a *punake* (Marquesan Ground Dove, *Alopecoenas rubescens*),[6] went fishing with his brothers, hooked the bird by the wings on his fish-hook, and dropped the hook down. Hina took the bird and admired him, before fastening the fish-hook to the trunk of a banyan tree. Māui and his brothers then pulled her island to the surface. Māui grabbed Hina, and he and his brothers rowed back to their island with her.

Finally, female birds can lure a man to a young woman. As was noted in VI-2, the Rotuman story of the two orphaned sisters Lalatäväke and Lilitäväke recounts how one morning Lilitäväke woke up and found that her elder sister had changed into a *kura* (Red-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon rubricauda*) and had just flown out of the window (**122**). The bird flew to the abode of the king's son, Tinrau, to lure him to the girls' place. Tinrau chased after the beautiful bird, came to Lilitäväke's house, and, forgetting all about the bird, asked the younger sister to marry him. They got married at Tinrau's place.

A Tuamotuan tradition about Moeava[7] tells of another beautiful bird that leads a man to a young woman, whom he marries (**235**). This famous chief was in his canoe, *Murihenua*, in the channel between Napuka and Tepoto, when he heard a bird crying. The bird was a *rupe* (Polynesian Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula aurorae*),[8] who told him, with the beautiful voice of a maiden, that she was the *rupe* that bathed in the waters of Te Fanomaruia, at Te

[6] This identification was made by Von den Steinen. According to Gouni and Zysman (2007:84), the Marquesan Ground Dove is called *oputu, kataupepe, otue* or *kotue* in Marquesan. Dordillon's dictionary (1931:344) has *punake* as a 'species of bird'; figuratively, a 'yelling and shrill voice'.

[7] See also the subsequent story of the *taketake* that informed Moeava of the murder of his nephews in VII-2 (**157**).

[8] Today *Ducula aurorae* is only found on the Tuamotuan island of Makatea. In Tahiti, none have been reported since the 1990s (Gouni & Zysman 2007:62). The collector of this story was informed that this bird was 'at one time found at Te Poto' (Audran 1919:38,n.3). This species seems to have been once widespread in East Polynesia, fossils having been found for instance in Mangaia and Ātiu (Steadman 1989:193,201).

Pukamaruia (in Napuka). Thus Moeava asked the *rupe* if she was Huarei,[9] the beautiful maiden from Te Pukamaruia to whom he had been betrothed as a child, but who was also coveted by Moeava's antagonist, Patira (Patira had shown his love for her earlier by stroking her cheek, and would later abduct her). The bird uttered her plaintive cry again, before flying away quickly to Te Pukamaruia, which was visible on the horizon. Moeava thus decided to sail to Te Pukamaruia. Before landing, he composed a *pehe* (song) about the *rupe* and Huarei, and then went to meet Huarei, his beloved betrothed, whom he married.

A man turns into a bird to recover a woman

In the Polynesian Outliers and West Polynesia, the story of Sina and Tinilau (some of whose episodes have already been discussed in VI-2, VIII-1&2) often features a section in which Tinilau turns into a *lupe*/*rupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*) in bad shape, and is caught by or given to Sina, before being placed on a stick in her husband's house. Sina's husband is warned repeatedly of the true nature of the bird by his mother or sister, but dismisses them because he wants to sleep. The *lupe* then slowly turns back into a man after shaking his feathers a few times, and Tinilau kills the husband with the stick on which he has been perching, before running away with Sina and marrying her. In East Polynesia, as will be seen, the same sequence of events is found, but with different protagonists, Māui and his abducted wife, and the bird in question is not necessarily a pigeon.[10]

A version of this tradition collected in Nukumanu says that Tinilau told Namukataha (i.e., Sina) to marry Ahivo, his elder brother, when she arrived on his island (**203B**). One day, Ahivo asked Namukataha if she wanted to get a *rupe*. She replied that she wanted one, so she took a *rupe* and placed him on a stick, but the bird fell down. She then placed him on Ahivo's wooden stick. She said to the *rupe* that he was not a bird, but Tinilau himself, then

[9] He asked the bird if she was his *huraro tuiragapua* (which may be a rare species of fish), that is Huarei, figuratively.

[10] Stories of men turning into or entering a bird to recover an abducted woman are also found in other parts of Oceania, for instance in Nauru. The wife of Gamodugodug was abducted and carried to the skies by Eteningawarawaru. Gamodugodug untied his frigatebird (*itsi*), entered the bird's body, and flew to the skies. Eteningawarawaru and the woman were bathing in a pool. When they saw the bird, they threw fish at him in order to catch him. They placed the bird on a perch near their house. When Eteningawarawaru was asleep, the bird gave the woman a wink. She recognised her husband and warned Eteningawarawaru, but he did not believe her. The bird then gave her another wink, stuck out his tongue, and opened his beak. Gamodugodug came out of the bird and slit Eteningawarawaru's throat. He and his wife then entered the bird again, and flew back home (Petit-Skinner 1982:404-405; 2012:52-53).

she asked him to shake his plumage ('lulu to hulu!'). His legs then came out. Namukataha repeated the same thing, and his arms came out. The third time around his body and his head came out. Tinilau got up, grabbed the stick, and cut off Ahivo's head. He then married Namukataha.

In Luangiua, the narrative mentions all the birds that come when summoned by Asiho, the husband of the young woman (named Asinga) – all are dismissed by Asinga until the *lupe* appears (**203C**). Upon arriving on his island, Asinga went to Kingilau's house, where she made a mess.[11] They slept together, but Kingilau gave her to Asiho as his wife. Asiho and Asinga went to the beach, and he asked her if she wanted to eat a bird. She replied that she would like to, so Asiho called out to all the birds and asked them to come to him: the *ngo'o* (Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*), the *leia* (Black Noddy, *Anous minutus*), the *kava'e* (White-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon lepturus*), the *akaha* (Lesser Frigatebird, *Fregata ariel*, or Great Frigatebird, *Fregata minor*), and the *popi'i* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*). They all came, and Asiho asked Asinga to choose one. The girl replied that she did not want any of those, so they all flew away. She then asked Asiho to call out to the birds again. Kingilau came in the shape of a *lupe* with the last group of birds. Asinga told Asiho that she only liked the last bird, before grabbing the nearly-dead-looking bird, much to Asiho's surprise. She asked Asiho to put the *lupe* on his fighting stick. While she looked for lice in his hair, Asiho fell asleep. Two sisters then came along and warned him that this was no bird on the stick, this was Kingilau, but Asinga sent them away. When Asinga asked the *lupe* to shake his body, a hand appeared. The two sisters then came back, warned Asiho again, but were driven away by Asinga. When she again asked the *lupe* to shake his body, he resumed his human form. Kingilau then picked up the stick, stabbed Asiho, and ran away with the girl.

In a Takū version, Tinilau does not give away the girl to another man, but the latter marries her while Tinilau is gone (**236**). Tinilau and Asina lived together until Tinilau went to the sky to check on his other houses. While she waited for her husband to return, a man named Asifo came to her house, and told her that Tinilau had abandoned her to go and live with his other ten wives in the sky; Asifo then took Asina away to marry her. By the time Tinilau eventually came down from the sky, Asifo had grown tired of Asina. Asifo climbed up a tree with his net (*seu*) and told Asina, who was waiting below, to choose which *rupe*

[11] This 'mess' is reminiscent of the way, in a Māori version of this tradition, Hine-te-iwa-iwa jumped into Tinirau's pools of water, which Tinirau used to admire the reflection of his face, and made them muddy in order to attract his attention when she arrived on his island (**176**).

she wanted him to catch. Tinilau then said to Asina to choose the one bird that would come flying towards Asifo lower than all the other birds, a bird with ruffled feathers, and he changed himself into that bird. When Asina spotted the *rupe*, she called out to Asifo that that was the bird she wanted, so he caught the *rupe* in his net, but the bird was so heavy that he almost lost his balance. The bird refused to stay on his hand, so Asifo placed him on Asina's hand, and they went to Asifo's mother's home. Weaving her mat, the mother stared at the *rupe* while Asifo was resting, and she realised that the eyes of Tinilau were staring back at her. She cried out that the bird was not a real bird but Tinilau himself, and asked him to shake his feathers. The *rupe* then shook his feathers, and two legs appeared. Asifo rebuked his mother for interrupting his sleep, and told her to be quiet and weave her mat. But she cried out again in the same manner, and when the bird shook his feathers again, he transformed himself into Tinilau. Tinilau grabbed Asifo's weapon, on which he was sitting, hit Asifo on the head with it, and ran away with Asina.

Sina's husband does not get killed in the end but only sneered at by his sister in a Samoan version (**236A**). Sina was in love with Tingilau, but her parents forced her to marry Tupu-o-le-fanua. The couple sailed to the latter's home. His household was comprised of birds: birds of the land, of the sea, of the east, of the west, of the sky, of the deep. When Tupu-o-le-fanua's sister, Mata-iva ('Nine-eyes'), called them, flocks of different kinds of birds filled the house. Tupu-o-le-fanua told Sina to choose one bird and dismiss the others, because the noise upset him. Sina chose a young pigeon: Tingilau had transformed himself into that particular bird. The pigeon was placed in the couple's bedroom, his leg attached with a string to a perch. When the bird started cooing at night, Sina told her husband to ask Mata-iva to shut some of her eyes. Angry, she closed all nine eyes. When the bird cooed again, Mata-iva sang to her brother, warning him that the bird was none other than Tingilau. Sina then told her husband to ask his sister to go to sleep, which she did. The bird cooed again, and Tingilau recovered his human form. Tingilau and Sina fled together to his home. When Tupu-o-le-fanua woke up in the morning, he was mocked by Mata-iva for having ignored her warning. But in a Tuvaluan version, Taliga-maivalu, Sina's husband, does get killed by Tinilau (**236B**).

Finally, a Tongan version of this story has it that Hina's parents refused, as in the Samoan version, to let her go with Sinilau (**236C**). But before leaving, Sinilau told Hina to ask her future husband Telinga-mai-valu (a god with eight ears), two days after her marriage, to assemble all his *lupe*, and to pick for herself the *lupe* that was almost dead, that is, Sinilau

himself. When the day came, Hina did as she had been instructed by Sinilau. She was given the bird, and fed him cooked food every day. The bird ate pork and drank coconut water, just like humans. But Telinga-mai-valu's sister, Mata-valu ('Eight-eyes'), became suspicious of the bird, and came to infer that he was actually a man, because every time that she crept towards Hina at night, with the intention of killing her, the bird cooed and woke up Hina. Afraid of Mata-valu, Hina begged her husband to tell his sister to sleep. When warning her brother in a song about the bird being a man, Mata-valu wondered what kind of *lupe* would eat human food and make the *lei-mangamanga* his perch. For Collocott (1928: 130,n.1), the *lei-mangamanga* (literally, 'branching ivory'), although being 'unknown to present-day Tongans', probably indicated the vagina.

The motifs in some Māui traditions from East Polynesia are very similar.[12] In a Nuku Hiva story for instance, Māui's wife[13] was abducted by Tai-ana-e-vau (**237**). Māui killed his *'upe* (Marquesan Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula galeata*), took out his stomach, then entered him. He flew to the house of Tai-ana-e-vau, where he was recognised by his wife, who fed him. She put him on a beam of the house, but he fell off, so she placed him on another beam, but he fell again, and so on until she put him on a large piece of rope. When the night came, Tai-ana-e-vau was warned by his mother of the impending danger, but he just wanted to sleep. At midnight Māui awoke, grabbed his enemy's club, and called him. Tai-ana-e-vau was killed, and Māui returned home with his wife.

A version from Ua Pou says that it is Māui-tikitiki's mother who instructs him to enter an *'upe* (**237A**). While Māui-tikitiki was obtaining fire from Mahuike, his wife was abducted by his cousin Tainaivao. His mother told him to enter the body of his *'upe*, a bird from Havaiki caught by Māui and tamed by his wife. Māui's mother then ordered the bird to fly up. The *'upe* alighted on the roof of Tainaivao's house, then entered the house. He landed on a short wooden club, and the woman recognised her bird. She asked Tainaivao to place him on the long wooden club. Pekapeka, Tainaivao's mother, warned her son that Māui

[12] For the narratives in which Māui transforms into a bird for other reasons, i.e., to follow his parents down to the underworld or to escape from his antagonist (in particular his ancestor or ancestress from whom he has stolen fire), see VI-2.

[13] 'Judging from versions throughout Oceania,' wrote Luomala (1949:189), 'the only purpose of introducing a wife into the [Māui] cycle is to have her stolen by dangerous creatures whom Maui can slay to exhibit his superior magical skill. Most narrators ignore the wife even to the extent of not bothering to name her. They hurry on to the details of Maui's revenge on the person who has stolen her.'

might be in the bird's body. The bird then vomited Māui, and Māui and Tainaivao fought. Māui got his wife back, and returned to his parents.

The name of Māui's antagonist's mother, Peka, also appears in two versions of this story from the Tuamotu and Hawai'i. Neither of them says that the bird is a pigeon. In the Tuamotuan version, collected in Fangatau, Hina, Māui's wife, was abducted by the Peka clan (**237B**). Māui entered the body of a *tōrea* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*), flew to their land, alighted at night on the house of Peka-tuakana's mother, and cried (*heva*). The mother realised that the bird was Māui, so she warned her son, but Peka-tuakana just wanted to sleep with Hina, so he rebuked his mother. When the night got very dark, Māui came out of the *tōrea* and killed Peka, before returning with his wife to his land. The Hawaiian version says that the chief Pe'ape'a-maka-walu ('Pe'ape'a-with-eight-eyes', as in the above Tongan story) carried Māui's wife away (**237C**). Māui's grandfather, Ku-olo-kele, then fashioned a bird out of *ki* (*Cordyline terminalis*) leaves, *'ie'ie* (*Freycinetia arborea*), and bird feathers. Māui entered the *moku-manu* ('bird-ship'), pulled the strings attached to the wings, and flew away to his wife. He waited for Pe'ape'a to close his eight eyes, then emerged from the bird and killed him. He took his wife, re-entered the bird, and returned to O'ahu.

One difference between the stories about Tinilau from the Polynesian Outliers and West Polynesia and those about Māui from East Polynesia is that in the former, the man transforms himself into a bird, and shakes his feathers to resume his human form, whereas in the latter, Māui enters a living or dead bird,[14] and then just comes out of it.[15]

Finally, the following three Mangarevan narratives tell of a man who turns into a bird to go and find his mistress sent away by his wife, of a man who is transformed into a rooster

[14] As Lessa (1961:329) pointed out, in these traditions 'it is hard to separate bird and rider from one another'.

[15] A Nauruan tradition tells of a man entering a bird to get his wife back, but the ending does not follow the same pattern as all the previous stories of Tinirau/Sinilau, Māui, and Gamodugodug. In the past there were no birds in Nauru except for one, the *itsirir* (Nauru Reed Warbler, *Acrocephalus rehsei*) (according to Hambruch, the *itsirir* was a *tapu* bird that was not to be eaten). Auuitimaio, who lived in the heavens, cast a bait and a net down to earth. When a woman named Eakeno approached the net, he lifted it up with the woman in it, and he made her his wife. Her husband Amuirin was very sad. He found a crab on the beach and told it what had happened. They made a slingshot, crept onto some wilted leaves on which two *itsirir* were sitting, killed the two birds, and crawled into their entrails. They flew up to the heavens, found Eakeno, alighted on a tree and on the fence of the house, and told Eakeno to come to them. Angry with the birds for addressing her by her name, she chased them with a stick, so they flew to a post near the house. As she approached them, they seized her and took her back to earth. Later, Auuitimaio let his net down to earth again, but Amuirin tore it apart (Hambruch 1914:I,447-448).

so he can become the master of numerous hens, and of a man who is turned into a bird to be able to flee with his beloved, a young woman who can transform into a bird at will.

Te Ma-tuteagi, the lord of the underworld, fell in love with a woman from a house of entertainment (*'are popi*), and spent the night with her (**238**). When his wife found out, she banished the woman to Te Avamotu, an islet on the outer reef of Mangareva. In the evening, Te Ma-tuteagi returned to the *'are popi*, but found no one, so he went to the upperworld and transformed himself into a bird. He flew along the coast looking for the woman. He flew over two *'are popi* whose keepers called out to him, but he flew on. Eventually he alighted and returned to his human form. In the end, he found his beloved, but because she had lost her beauty through exposure to the sun, he left her, and she died.

Another narrative recounts that Moa and Miru were the first men to settle in Mangareva (**239**). Whenever they went fishing on the reef, they saw beautiful maidens frolicking on the beach, but every time that they went back to the beach, the women had disappeared. One day, Miru decided to fashion a dummy, and he placed it next to Moa,[16] before hiding behind the rocks on the beach. He told Moa that he would catch one woman for himself and another one for his friend. Twelve women appeared from under the ground. When they saw Miru, they hurried back to the spring which they had emerged from, but one of them, the queen Mokorea, was caught in Miru's net. Moa then hurried to the beach, but he cried bitterly when he realised that there was no maiden for him. On seeing him cry, Mokorea made him turn into a rooster, and told him to fly to Tahiti so he could be the master of numerous females there. In Tahiti the hens welcomed Moa warmly, as they had been looking for him for a very long time. Moa realised that when he was a man he was able to swim, but now he decided to live on the land, and since that time fowls (*moa* in Mangarevan) have been living upon land.

The third Mangarevan tradition tells the story of Manu, who was looking for a beautiful young woman, Pitorita, whom he had seen in a dream (**240**). An old woman told him that she had given Pitorita the power of transformation to escape from her evil parents, a wizard and a witch, and that he would find her if he hid near a spring. Ten green birds would alight, and the eleventh bird would be blue. They would all turn into young women and play in the water, and Manu would recognise Pitorita by the stone ring that she wore. Manu went to the

[16] Māui-mua fooled the *'alae* in the same fashion in **39**.

spring, and indeed found Pitorita. But when he asked her to marry him, she turned back into a bird and flew away. He then ran to her house. Exhausted, he called out to her. The bird flew down to him, gave him two seeds, transformed him into a chick, placed him on her back, and flew off. Manu escaped from her parents thanks to the magical seeds, and Manu and Pitorita eventually got married.

Birds reveal an affair, or sexual misconduct

Stories of tattletale birds were presented in VII-3. One particular secret that *manu* may reveal to their master, either with words or through a peculiar behaviour, has to do with the infidelity of their spouse.

According to a Māori tradition (Ngāti Kahungunu), Ruawhārō and Tūpai had sexual intercourse (*ai*) in Hawaiki with Hine-hehei-rangi, the wife of their elder brother Timu-whakairihia (**241**). The latter's two pet (*mōkaikai*) *miromiro* (Tomtit, *Petroica macrocephala*), Hine-pipiwai and Hine-papawai, witnessed the scene. They flitted about (*tītaka-taka*), whirling up and down and around the woman. They then flew home to inform their master. When Ruawhārō and Tūpai visited him, Timu-whakairihia made his two younger brothers eat purgative fish, which caused them to defecate on the mats, and their shame was his revenge.[17] In another version, in which Ruawhārō is Timu-whakairia's grandson and has sex with his wife Hine-kukuti-rangi, the two *hōmiromiro*, Hine-pipiwai and Hine-papawai, told their master not because they had witnessed the scene, but because they instinctively knew what had happened ('ka tae te tohu ki ngā mōkaikai a Timu'). In another version (in which the woman is named Kapua), Timu-whakairihia saw two birds flitting about (*tītaka-taka*) in the window of his house, before alighting and copulating in front of him: he thus understood that someone had defiled (*takahi*) him.[18]

Conversely, in another Māori tradition, as well as in a Hawaiian one, a bird tells a woman (or two women) of the infidelity of the husband. As was noted in VIII-1, Tinirau's pools were guarded by two *ruru* (Morepork, *Ninox novaeseelandiae*), Ruru-wareware

[17] In traditional Māori society, 'revenge', wrote Johansen (1954:65), 'is a necessity of life, because life is a whole and can only exist as a whole. Revenge is the fight for perfection and thus for life itself; it is the sign of the health of life.'

[18] The two birds appear on a carving in the *wharepuni* (sleeping house) Te Mana-o-Tūranga at Whakatō *marae* (meeting house) in Manutuke (Poverty Bay). An illustration of this carving can be found in Fowler (1974:pl. 18).

(‘Forgetful-*ruru*’) and Ruru-mahara (‘Thoughtful-*ruru*’) (**176**). When Hine-te-iwa-iwa broke down the doors and the fences of Tinirau’s pools, Ruru-mahara told Tinirau about Hine’s actions, but Ruru-wareware denied that anything had happened. Tinirau thus went to the pools to see for himself, and there he met Hine. Tinirau’s two wives then sent the two *ruru* to find Tinirau. The birds found him sleeping with Hine. Ruru-mahara reported back that he had seen two heads and four feet, but Ruru-wareware said that it was a lie.

There is no second bird denying the allegation of the first bird in the Hawaiian story of Papa and Wakea (**242**). A *kōlea* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*) named Laukaula told Papa, from whom some of the Hawaiian Islands were born, that her husband Wakea had slept with other women, Kaula and Hina, while Papa was in Tahiti. Papa was so angry that she left and found another husband.

Another wading bird tells a woman not of her husband’s infidelity precisely, but that he is leaving her, in a narrative from Ra‘iātea (**243**). Tehaotoa and her beloved, Pofatu, lived in Ra‘iātea. After a while, Pofatu did not love her anymore. One day, he asked her to go and fetch some fresh water for him. As she was just about to reach the spring, her god came to her in the form of an *‘uriri* (Wandering Tattler, *Tringa incana*), and told her that her beloved would be gone when she returned. Upon her return the house was indeed empty. She was determined to find Pofatu, so she set off towards Opiti. On the way the *‘uriri* asked her where she was going. The following morning, she heard the bird singing, which reinvigorated the tearful girl. She thus started singing. After a while the bird sang again, and her weariness went away. In the end, she and two other women abandoned by their husbands were turned into small turtles.

In two narratives from Tonga and Sāmoa, a bird awakens two lovers who sleep together. The first one tells the story of the god Tangaloa ‘Eitumātupu‘a (**244**). A *toa* (ironwood tree, *Casuarina* sp.) grew on the island of To‘onangakava, in the lagoon of Tongatapu, between the islands of Talakite and Mata‘aho, and the tree was so tall that it reached the sky. Tangaloa ‘Eitumātupu‘a came from the sky down the tree, met a woman, ‘Ilaheva Va‘epopua, who was fishing, and slept with her. The god returned to the heavens, but came back down to ‘Ilaheva and slept with her again. The couple overslept, and when dawn broke, a *tala* (tern) flew by. Upon seeing them, the bird cried, which awoke Tangaloa. The god then woke up

his lover. This is why the islands were called Talakite ('Tern-saw') and Mataʻaho ('Eye-of-day').[19]

In the second one, from Savaiʻi, it is because the bird wakes up the lovers *before* dawn that they can sneak away unscathed (**245**). Liavaʻa and his pregnant wife Sagaiaalemalama went fishing in their canoe, but a storm arose and the boat was destroyed. They drifted for four days and four nights, and when the man's strength finally failed him, his body became that of a fish. He asked his wife to sit on his dorsal fin and let him take her to the place where Tala lived. Tala had no family, and birds were his only company. Sagaiaalemalama was washed ashore on Tala's land, and she fell asleep on the beach, where she was discovered by Tala and his birds. She delivered a boy, named Falaoletoafa, and the three of them lived together as a family. When the boy was grown up, he asked Tala if there was a place where he could meet people, so Tala told him about the beautiful maiden Sina, the daughter of Tigilau. They rowed together to the place where Sina lived, with *ʻīao* (Polynesian Wattled Honeyeater, *Foulehaio carunculatus*) flying ahead of them. The birds told Sina that Falaoletoafa was coming. When she caught sight of him, she asked to sleep with him. Falaoletoafa then instructed Tala to let all the *ʻīao* sleep outside except for one, who would sleep in Sina's house with him. He told that bird to wake him with his singing early in the morning, before daybreak, or he and Tala would be killed. The *ʻīao* did as instructed, thus allowing Falaoletoafa and Tala to sneak away and return home. In the end, Sina's parents wanted to put Falaoletoafa to death, but his life was spared thanks to his mother's intercession, and he eventually married Sina.

Finally, in the following two narratives a bird reveals or punishes sexual misconduct, incest in the first case (Tokelau), and out of doors sexual intercourse in the second (Aotearoa).

Tilihauiave and his elder sister Hina were abducted by Tinilau's men and taken to Vavaʻu, in Tonga, where Hina became one of Tinilau's wives (**246**). Tinilau became jealous of Tilihauiave, for the youth was very handsome, so he devised a plot to have him killed. Tilihauiave died when a tree felled to make a canoe fell on him, and his body was tossed into a river. The body drifted down the river, but Hina caught it and cried over it, after which Tilihauiave came back to life. He then set fire to all the houses in the village, and with an

[19] Tangaloa then returned to the sky, but came back once again to ʻIlaheva. They had a child, ʻAhoʻeitu, who became the first divine Tuʻi Tonga, displacing the Tuʻi Tonga descended from the offspring of the maggots (see **5**).

adze destroyed all the canoes but one, before escaping with his sister in the remaining canoe. They went home, and he found his house. There, the youngest child (*kimuli*) was the village maiden (*taupou*). He slept with her. The following morning, he went and slept under a tree. He then cried out to a bird up on that tree, 'kata ifo te manu i luga nei' ('the bird above laughs down now'). The bird replied by saying Tilihauiave's parents' names, that he and Hina-e-matua (his elder sister) went away, and that he and Hina-le-tauaga (his younger sister) made a mistake (*femaomaoaki*). Tilihauiave did not understand the bird's cry, so he called out to him again, and the bird repeated the same cry. The *taupou* was Hina-le-tauaga, his younger sister. In one version, Tilihauiave and Hina-e-matua then found their parents, but in another version, Tilihauiave went off to kill himself after that revelation.

In a Māori tradition, Tāwhaki lost his wife after transgressing against the prohibition of having sexual intercourse outside (**247**). This is because, as Reedy (in Ruatapu 1993:227, n.56) explained, 'it was regarded as improper to sleep with a woman in the forest', in traditional Māori society – especially with a high-ranking woman. Te Manu-i-te-rā ('The-bird-in-the-sun') told Tāwhaki not to make love to his wife Hapai outside their house, or they would be struck by the rays (*hihi*) of the sun. But Tāwhaki disobeyed. After having sexual intercourse (*mahimahi*) with her outside, he went somewhere else. When he returned, Te Manu-i-te-rā had abducted Hapai. Tāwhaki then went looking for her on the sea. It is unclear, however, whether Māori actually conceived of Te Manu-i-te-rā as a bird. Smith noted that this episode was 'a very strange fragment', and 'doubtless the remains of some more complete story, the greater part of which is lost'. Best (1899:98) also observed that 'in very old myths we note that the sun is often termed Te Manu-i-te-ra (The Bird in the Sun), a curious name, of which the true meaning or origin appears to be unknown to this generation.'[20]

[20] Luomala (1949:120) remarked that the sun was sometimes regarded as a 'big bird' by Māori. Because the sun (whose rays were actually wings, according to Best's informants [1977a:798-799]) was stalked and snared by Māui, Māori drew upon this feat of his for help in trapping birds, in the hope that his snaring technique would be of use to them. Upon sacrificing the first bird of the hunting season to Tāne, they would chant an invocation about how Te Manu-i-te-rā was snared by Māui.

2. Birds and their human lovers

Manu do not only have a supporting role to play in love affairs between a man and a woman – they may also be themselves involved in a love affair with a human. Given that tame and captive birds were kept as pets on virtually every Polynesian island, as Western explorers, travellers, missionaries, ethnographers and anthropologists repeatedly reported (see III-2), it is unsurprising to find that so many Polynesian traditions feature birds married to humans. This is particularly so because, as Lorenz (1971:133) famously observed,

> Birds reared in isolation from their kind do not generally know which species they belong to; that is to say, not only their social reactions but also their sexual desires are directed towards those beings with whom they have spent certain impressionable phases of their early youth. Consequently, birds raised singly by hand tend to regard human beings, and human beings only, as potential partners in all reproductive activities.[21]

Birds steal a woman

It was noted in VIII-2 that in a Tahitian tradition, a giant heron named ʻŌtuʻu-nunamu, who lived in a cave in Raʻiātea, stole the wife of the king Tuoropaa (**207**). The following three traditions from Te Waipounamu, the Marquesas and Tokelau also feature birds that steal a young woman.[22]

Hine-o-te-morari, a witch, had a daughter, Whano, whose beauty attracted many suitors, but the mother held them captive if they attempted to take Whano away from her (**249**). Two friends, Kukuruwhatu and Pīoioi, fell in love with Whano, and decided to try their luck. Kukuruwhatu went first. Hine-o-te-morari took hold of him, branded him across the chest, and took him prisoner. Pīoioi then went to the witch's house, and as she was about to catch him, he started singing a song. He managed to come very close to Whano while singing, without her mother noticing, and he eventually snatched Whano, turned into a bird, a *pīoioi*

[21] Furthermore, in birds 'there is no law of attraction of opposites by which female animals are drawn towards men and males towards women' (Lorenz 1971:135). In Aotearoa, Sirocco, the famous hand-reared *kākāpō* (*Strigops habroptila*), is a case in point (Chambers & Main 2014:68).

[22] A woman turns into a bird to steal another woman's husband, though, in a Māori tradition from Murihiku (**248**). Hine-wairua desired a married man, Kamure, so he fled with his wife and his daughter in a canoe. Hine-wairua transformed herself into a *kōau* (Great Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*), dived under their canoe out on the ocean, and held it still. When Kamure's wife dived down to see what was happening, Hine-wairua came up the other side of the canoe, got on board, and urged the canoe onwards, leaving Kamure's wife in the water. She survived and gave birth to twin boys; when the boys eventually found their long-lost father and sister, Hine-wairua was burnt in her house.

(New Zealand Pipit, *Anthus novaeseelandiae*), and flew away with her. Kukuruwhatu (New Zealand Plover, *Charadrius obscurus*) remained with the brown mark on his chest.[23]

In a Marquesan tradition, Māui's wife is stolen by some animals, including birds.[24] According to one version of this tradition, she is actually repeatedly swallowed by her abductors, but not killed – she is retrieved by her husband each time when he cuts the animal open, and then she lives with him again. Thus it is a story about a bird stealing a wife to live with her, not to kill her. Furthermore, there is a semantical connection in many languages between the act of eating and sexual intercourse (Lévi-Strauss 1962:139-140; 1966:105-106; Paulme 1976:312; for Polynesian examples: Beaglehole & Beaglehole 1936:39; Dunis 1984:167).

A version collected in Hiva Oa has it that Hina-te-auihi, Māui's wife, was swallowed one day by an eel when bathing in a creek, but Māui found the eel with the help of his mother, Maiutu-a-te-mau (**250**). He slit it open, then pulled Hina alive from it. Later, she was swallowed by a pig, but Māui again found the pig, slit it open, and rescued his wife. But as she was sitting one morning at the entrance door of their house, she was swallowed by a heron (*matu'u*, Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*), who then flew away, singing 'kao!' Maiutu told Māui that the bird had taken Hina, but that he would not find her again because she was a ghost. However, he replied that it did not matter, because he longed for her. So, Maiutu instructed him to get some glue from trees and bring it to her.[25] She saw the heron's droppings on some stones, so she smeared the birdlime on them. When the bird stepped on the stones, his feet became stuck. He then beat his wings, but they got stuck as well. Maiutu brought the powerless bird to her son, who slit the heron open. Māui lived with his wife again for some time. But one day, when Māui was out fishing, a tern (possibly the *ta'a*/*tara*, Sooty Tern, *Onychoprion fuscatus*) came to their house, swallowed Hina, and carried her to the *fau* tree (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*) where he lived. Maiutu then told Māui to get the lime again, to smear it on a bamboo stick, to go and poke the bird in his tree with the stick, and to bring

[23] The breast of New Zealand Plovers (in breeding plumage) is russet-coloured (Moon 1992:120). For another theft made possible by the distraction caused by a dancing bird, see **43**, and n. 33 in V-1.

[24] Cf. the East Polynesian stories of Māui turning into or entering a bird to recover his wife abducted by another man in the previous section.

[25] In traditional Polynesian societies, the use of birdlime was an effective way to catch perching birds (Steadman 1997:65).

the bird back to her. Māui did as he was told. He slit the tern open, and found his wife, whom he lived with again. Māui and Hina then had a girl, Hina-hea.

Another version, collected in Fatu Hiva, also features an eel, but a rooster takes the place of the heron and the tern (**250A**). Māui's wife Hina was first abducted during his absence by a rooster (*moa*) with a tail of eight feathers.[26] His mother told him what to do to recover his wife. Māui pursued the bird and killed him. Then Hina was abducted by an eel, and finally by a pearl-oyster. Māui was eventually killed by the pearl-oyster,[27] because his parents had decided to withdraw their advice owing to their son's mischievous nature.

Finally, Matuku (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*) steals and marries Sina in a Tokelauan narrative (**251**). She is rescued not by her husband, as in the Marquesan stories, but by her brothers. Sina's father, Kakau, instructed his sons, Filo and Mea, to go and kill Matuku, who lived in the bush. They went to the bird's house, where they found their long-lost sister. When they heard the bird coming home, they devised with Sina a plan to kill him. The two brothers hid, and when Matuku entered the house with two dead men whom he had caught for food, Sina gave him a drink in a coconut shell that was only half-full. When Matuku threw his head back to drink, Filo struck him from above and Mea struck him from below, which killed him.[28]

Birds propose to a woman

In other stories, birds do not go as far as abducting a woman. They desire her nonetheless, but they simply propose to her. In the following four stories from Takū, Tokelau, Tonga and Nukuoro, birds propose to a young woman, but her parents refuse to let her marry the birds

[26] For Māori, the number eight expressed 'the extraordinary, the powerful, the potent, the miraculous', but across Polynesia it was also associated with 'totality, the lot' (Biggs 1990:33-34). It was for instance the 'basis of the political division of all the [Society] islands' (Handy 1927:129). For more examples of the special significance of the number eight in Polynesia, see Beckwith (1970:209-210).

[27] Lavondès (1975:245) observed that the opening of the vagina is likened to that of a shellfish in Polynesian languages. Cf. the Māori account of the death of Māui in the vagina of the goddess of the night, Hine-nui-te-pō (**269**).

[28] Filo then carried the bird home, while Mea carried Sina. However, when crossing a dangerous spot on the reef, Filo was dragged down by the weight of the dead bird and drowned, and Mea drowned as well when he tried to rescue him. Matuku, Filo and Mea became three stars which can be seen in the sky in the direction of Sāmoa.

in question because they deem the habitat or diet of each species to be quite unfit for their daughter.

Tahitotoa and Tahitotavau sent their daughter Asina to fetch water in a Takū tradition (**252**). Asina came upon a *sikisikitau* (Island Monarch, *Monarcha cinerascens*) sitting on the fence by the pool. The bird asked her whom the containers that she was holding belonged to. Asina replied that those were her parents'. The bird then told her to return them to her parents, and that he would marry her. So, Asina went back home crying, and told her parents that the *sikisikitau* wanted to marry her. But they forbade her to marry him, because he ate different kinds of food from them, such as insects and butterflies. The next day, she went to fetch water again, and came upon a *moa* (Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*) combing his feathers. Again the bird told her to return the containers to her parents and come back so he could marry her. But again her parents advised her not to marry the *moa*, because he ate earthworms and beetles. The next day, Asina went to Tinilau's pool to fetch water. Tinilau asked her to marry him, and this time her parents told her to go and marry Tinilau.[29]

In three cognates of this story, Hina ends up marrying not Tinilau, but one of her feathered suitors. From her house, Hina used to look at the seabirds flying off from the top of the coconut and *puka* trees (*Hernandia* sp.) to go fishing at dawn, and returning to their nests in the evening, in the Tokelauan version (**252A**). But the birds too saw Hina. One day, they came to her one after the other wanting to marry her. The first to propose was the *katafa* (Great Frigatebird, *Fregata minor*), and it was the *lakia* (Black Noddy, *Anous minutus*) that proposed on his behalf. Hina informed her parents about the proposal of the *katafa*, so they told her to ask where they would sleep. The *lakia* replied that they would sleep in the crown of the *puka* tree. The parents were of the opinion that it would be difficult for Hina to climb up the tree and to spread her mat at the top, and that she would not be protected from either the sun or the rain, and might fall. Thus they asked her to tell the *lakia* to go away. As the *lakia* flew off, the *gogo* (Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*) came, carrying the proposal of the *takupu* (Red-footed Booby, *Sula sula*). Again, Hina and the *takupu* would sleep in the crown of the *puka* tree, so the parents rejected the proposal. Then, the *tuli* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*) came, conveying the proposal of the *tiāfē* (Bristle-thighed Curlew, *Numenius tahitiensis*). He told Hina that they would sleep in a hole in the reef. Her parents said that she would not be able to get in there and to spread her mat, and that when the high tide came

[29] Moyle (2003:137) reported that this seems to be the only story about Tinilau in Takū.

her mat would get all wet. Therefore, the proposal of the *tiāfē* was rejected. Now it was the turn of the *akiaki* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*), who proposed to Hina on behalf of the *tavake* (White-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon lepturus*, or Red-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon rubricauda*). Hina and the *tavake* would sleep in a hole in a *puka* tree. Her parents were finally satisfied: her mat would be sheltered in the hole. The *akiaki* cried, and all the *akiaki* gathered round. They lifted up Hina, and carried her gently to the abode of the *tavake*, together with her plaited mat (*lālaga*), her plaiting board (*papa*), and her cockleshell scraper (*pipi*). Hina stayed in the hole with the *tavake*. The storyteller, Manuele Palehau, explained to Huntsman (1980:112) that 'the proposing and messenger birds were suitably paired' because 'each pair is of like colour and each messenger is smaller than the proposer it speaks for' (black and white, grey and white, brown, white).[30]

Hina's two feathered suitors also have a messenger who proposes to her on their behalf in a Tongan version of this tradition (**252B**). Hina lived in the forest with her parents. She befriended animals and birds. Lulu (Eastern Barn Owl, *Tyto javanica*) asked Moko (lizard) to go and ask for Hina's hand in marriage on his behalf. He instructed his friend to claim that he lived in a mansion thatched with red feathers, and ate yams and pork. But Moko, sitting outside Hina's house, cried out that Lulu lived in the hole of a *puko* tree (*Hernandia* sp.) and ate maggot-infested sweet potatoes and stale rats – which was the truth. Hina's parents then refused to give her to Lulu in marriage. Lulu was furious with Moko when he learned that Moko had delivered the wrong message, and he sent him again to Hina. But Moko repeated the same message as before, and Lulu's proposal was rejected once more. Kalae (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*) then asked his friend Veka (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*) to go and ask for Hina's hand in marriage.[31] Veka went to Hina's house and cried out that Kalae lived in a mansion thatched with red feathers, and ate yams and pork – which was the truth. Hina's parents then told Veka to take her to marry Kalae, and the two got married.

In Nukuoro, the bird that ends up getting the parents' agreement to marry their daughter turns out to be a very bad husband, but fortunately for the girl she is saved by another bird, who marries her (**252C**). First came the *gadaha* (Great Frigatebird, *Fregata minor*). He said

[30] Later, the *tavake* might have gotten Hina pregnant, because she had a craving for fish: 'pregnant women in Tokelau characteristically crave fish' (Huntsman 1980:112).

[31] For another story in which these two birds are friends (before one plays a trick on the other, who then wreaks revenge on him), see **70** in V-1.

to the parents that he was going to marry their daughter, but they replied that, as he was the one that beat up the other birds and took their food,[32] he would not marry her. The *gadaha* left, and a bird of the sky[33] came. He was told, however, that all he did was fly in the sky, so he could not marry her either. Then came the *gaalau* (Brown Booby, *Sula leucogaster*), but the parents said that he went to the ocean and lived out there, so he would not have their daughter. But when the *gava* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*) came, they told the girl to marry him, because he had a breadfruit tree (*gulu*) that would provide food for her. On the way to his home, the girl and the *gava* went past a sleeping place, so she asked him whose sleeping place it was: it was that of the *gadaha*. She wished she could sleep there because it was very breezy. Then they went past another sleeping place, which the *gava* said was that of the *gaalau*. She wished she could sleep there too because it was high and breezy. Then they came to the sleeping place of the bird that always flew in the sky, and again she wished she could sleep there because it was high. They finally arrived at the place of the *gava* in the breadfruit tree. The girl noticed that it was very smelly, there were lots of mosquitoes, and the bird's droppings were all over the place. The *gava* picked up the girl and flew out to the ocean. He threw her into the sea, but the *agiagi* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*) saved her and took her back to her parents. They told the *agiagi* that he could take her as his wife.

Birds are married to a woman

A few avian-human marriages have been encountered in the preceding chapters. In a narrative from 'Uvea (**93**, see V-3), a man named Pokume was married to a *veka*. He made her work in his plantation, and punished her for not helping him set up a house by breaking the ends of her wings. In the Marquesas, a story from Hiva Oa (**102,** see VI-1) recounts that Matuku was married to Hina, and brought her fish to eat (Hina asked Matuku to take her grandson Fai back to his land).

Not one but two *matuku* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*) are also the husbands of a woman in another tradition from Hiva Oa (**253**). Kena, from the Ta'aoa Valley, went to

[32] Frigatebirds are notorious kleptoparasites.

[33] The *manu daha de langi* was unknown to the Nukuoro translator of the story. In nearby Kapingamarangi, *daha* is 'to soar, to glide, to remain stationary in the air' (Lieber & Dikepa 1974:23). The *manu daha de langi* may be a petrel or a shearwater. The Audubon's Shearwater (*Puffinus lherminieri*) has been listed as occurring in Kapingamarangi (Buden 1998:150).

Havai‘i to find the spirit of his beloved, Tefioatinaku, killed by two evil spirits.[34] The spirit of Tefio dwelled in the fourth Havai‘i. Upon reaching the third Havai‘i, a very mountainous place, Kena met a beautiful woman, Taha-kua-i-te-ata, who warned him that he would be killed if her husbands, Matuku-uta (‘Upland-heron’) and Matuku-tai (‘Sea-heron’), found him. Bearing land fruits on his wings, Matuku-uta came, but Kena killed him, then threw his body over a cliff. Bearing fish on his wings, Matuku-tai came, and met with the same fate. But when Kena abandoned the woman, she threw herself from a cliff. He eventually found the spirit of Tefio in the fourth Havai‘i, and returned to Ta‘aoa with her.[35]

Another tradition from Hiva Oa mentions that two birds, Matakika (‘Eyelid-turned-outwards’) and Vaefati (‘Broken-leg’), albeit not married to her, had ‘rights’ to Mahaitivi’s wife because they were his ‘name-friends’, or *ikoa* (Von den Steinen explained that a ‘name-friend’ was ‘one with whom one has exchanged names, so that each one has claim to all property of the other, including the wife’). In Hiva Oa, ‘Aka visited Mahaitivi because he intended to travel to a faraway island, ‘A‘otona (Rarotonga?), to fetch *kula*[36] feathers, the flower garlands used as ornaments for the girls wilting too quickly (**254**). Mahaitivi had already been to ‘A‘otona, so he told ‘Aka that he would find there two birds, Matakika and Vaefati, his *ikoa* – which parallels the Māori story of Kupe who told Turi that he would encounter Tīwaiwaka and Kōkako (**48**). ‘Aka then mounted an expedition to get there.[37]

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[34] Earlier in the story, Kena was shown where to fish by a bird named Tutae-kena (‘Excrement-*kena*’, *kena* being the Masked Booby, *Sula dactylatra*), and thus brought back a great catch of fish three times, much to the amazement of all the people.

[35] Handy (1930:120,n.19) argued that, since *kena* is the name of the bird that ‘plunges into the sea from the air for fish’, and since ‘the spirits of the dead were thought to plunge into the sea from the western point of Hivaoa on their way to Havaii’, it was probable that ‘the idea of Kena’s journey originated in observation of the activities of the bird *kena*’.

[36] The identification of this *kula*, a bird with red feathers, is uncertain. The *Vini kuhlii*, the *Vini australis*, the *Phigys solitarius* and the *Phaethon rubricauda* have been suggested by Von den Steinen (1988:20-24) and Lavondès (1975:306-307). Henry (1928:384,435) mentioned a ‘red-feathered duck’ (*mo‘orā ‘ura*) that lived in a lake on the summit of Mount ‘Orohena in Tahiti, but no traces of that bird or of that lake have ever been found (Salducci 2002:21).

[37] Out of the 140 men in his expedition, 100 died from hunger. When they finally arrived at ‘A‘otona, the men built a house, roasted coconuts to lure the *kula* into the house, then hid in it. A flock of *kula* came, but they were suspicious. They sent to the house scouts who were meant to make the men laugh to give them away. The first scout was Matakika, who had ulcers on his face. The second one was Vaekoki (‘Lame-leg’), who limped into the house on his legs. The third scouts were a pair of *kula* that mated in the house. However, the men did not laugh. Believing that the house was truly empty, all the birds then flew into it, but ‘Aka shut the door. The birds were plucked, and the feathers filled 140 baskets. The men then let the *kula* fly away, and sailed back to Hiva Oa. Lavondès (1975:308) inferred that in the Marquesas the prohibition of laughter accompanied every *tapu* ceremony (cf. the death of Māui in Māori tradition, **269**); thus the whole episode of the men having to suppress their laughter before the antics of the *kula* may point to a *tapu* ritual. Laughter, however,

Finally, a woman has a bird lover, who gets killed by her vicious relatives, in another narrative from Hiva Oa (**255**). Hoani Poʻotu was secretly in love with a bird, Huʻutemanu. She lived with her cannibalistic mother and grandaunt, Kona and Pumei. They made food, which Hoani would take away with her. When she was alone, she would look out towards the ocean and sing a chant. Huʻutemanu would then come, and the two lovers would go to a little coconut leaf house and eat the food there. One day, Pumei saw them. She was very angry, because the bird was eating the food that she had painstakingly prepared. Later, taking advantage of Hoani's absence, the two old women called Huʻutemanu by imitating Hoani's chant. When he came, expecting food and love, they shot an arrow at him. He fell dead to the ground, and they ate him raw. Blood then dropped upon the breast of Hoani (as in the story of Niuhaʻa-i-te-po, Tonofiti's cherished rooster, **226**), who thus knew that her husband was dead.[38]

Avian-human copulation

The texts of all the preceding narratives about avian-human marriages do not specifically mention sexual intercourse, but those of the following stories do.

It was noted in IV-4 that Māui enlists the help of birds to secure fire by means of a fire-drill in a few Polynesian traditions. The interaction between the birds and the culture hero when they try to produce fire may actually be conceived of as a metaphorical sexual intercourse,[39] especially when it is specified that the bird is holding the lower stick. This is because, as Frazer (1930:220) argued, an analogy was drawn between the working of the fire-drill and sexual intercourse in many traditional cultures around the world. 'In all such cases', he wrote,

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also seems to serve as a sign of male response in a sexually charged situation such as observing a naked woman (for instance, Uwhenga laughs at the naked Taneroa, in **232**), presumably indicating arousal or excitement – hence the expectation of laughter in the situation of watching the copulating *kula* (Reilly, pers. comm.).

[38] Later, Kona and Pumei claimed that they did not know anything about the fate of the bird, so Hoani went to Havaiʻi in search of his soul. She found Huʻutemanu, who appeared in human form and was bathing in a pool to wash off saltwater, as he had been bathing in the sea. Hoani threw a sack over his head and hurried back with him to the land of the living. But when he told her that he needed to defecate, Hoani opened the sack. The youth slipped out and went back to Havaiʻi. She never saw him again.

[39] As Luomala (1949:124) discovered, 'the making of fire is often compared to sexual activity' even in Melanesian and Micronesian traditions that do not feature Māui 'as the fire-stealing hero'. For a study of the symbolic equivalence in Polynesian languages between sexual intercourse and fire-making, see Koskinen & Hatfull (1959).

> the horizontal stick, which the drill perforates, is regarded as female, while the upright stick or drill proper is considered as male; so that on this analogy fire elicited by the fire-drill may be said to be produced from the body of a woman, and particularly from her genital organ, which in the fire-drill is represented by the hollow in which the drill revolves.

In Napuka (Tuamotu), to give but one Polynesian example, Conte and Kape (1983: 1277-1278) pointed out that *kaurima*, the sharp stick that was used to rub the other piece of wood, may be translated as 'penis in the hand',[40] whereas the word used to describe the action of rubbing the two pieces of wood, *hika*, also designates the female sexual organ. In Māori, *hika* is, as a verb, 'rub violently' and 'kindle fire by friction' as well as 'copulate', and, as a noun, the female sexual organ too (Williams 1971:49).[41] Thus, the little birds in the Māui stories of the acquisition of fire who hold the lower stick (particularly the terns in the Cook Islands narratives, **40**, **40A** & **40B**) may be envisaged as Māui's female sexual partners of some kind.

Some narratives, however, make the sexual intercourse between a human and a bird much more explicit than this analogy between fire-drill and sex. A story in which a man copulates with a female bird was encountered in IV-2 (**20**). According to that tradition from Rapa Nui, two men of the Miru tribe went fishing at Hotu-Iti. On the way, they stole a hen from an old woman. Angry at them for this theft, the god of fishermen prevented them from catching any fish that day. At sunset, furious and tired, one of them retired to the nearby cave where they had hidden the hen and slept with her. The two men later killed her, and threw all the waste in a little hole. An old woman then found in the hole full of blood a child, who was moving in the hen's intestines (she rescued the child and decided to raise him with her husband).

Three stories from Aotearoa, Ātiu and Nuku Hiva also feature avian-human copulation, but only the first two result in a pregnancy, as in the preceding story of a boy born from the intestines of a dead hen. The Māori story, from Te Arawa, of Pūhaorangi says that this *atua* living in the sky descended to Hawaiki in the form of a *rupe* (New Zealand Pigeon, *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) to be with the beautiful Kura-i-monoa (**256**). The young woman

[40] *Kaurima*, or a cognate thereof, is the fire-plough in most languages of East Polynesia (Greenhill & Clark 2011). In Māori, another word for it is *ureure*, derived from *ure* (penis) (Best 1924a:88-89). Moreover, the Māori verb *tahu* means 'set on fire', 'burn', 'cook', but as a noun *tahu* means 'husband, spouse, lover, darling' (Williams 1971:360).

[41] *Hika*, or a cognate thereof, is to 'make fire by friction' in most Polynesian languages, and the female sexual organ in at least five of them in addition to Tuamotuan and Māori (Greenhill & Clark 2011).

fondled the bird, and thus became pregnant. Her child, Oho-mai-rangi, became the ancestor of the people who came to Aotearoa on the *Te Arawa* canoe.

The protagonist of the Ātiu narrative is also a pigeon (**257**). The pet of the god Tangaroa, a pigeon[42] from the spirit world, came to Ātiu. He rested in a cave (which is still known as the 'Pigeon's Fountain'). There, he refreshed himself by sipping the drops of water that were falling from the roof of the cave. He noticed the shadow of a beautiful woman in the fountain, so he embraced the woman, before returning to the spirit world. From this union a child was born, Ātiu, 'the first-born', who gave the island its name. For Siikala (1991:86), this tradition is about the 'capability to fly to other lands to seek a wife' because of the scarcity of land; 'after finding the land, it is also necessary to find a wife for the society to be able to reproduce itself.'

Finally, a story from Nuku Hiva is more about lust than reproduction (**258**). A bird lived on the top of the house of Haha-poa and his wife. When Haha-poa went away, the bird would come down and sleep with his wife. One day, she told her husband to go away because she was having her period. Haha-poa then pretended to go away, but he stayed to spy on her. Because the bird saw him, he did not come down. Therefore, when Haha-poa peeped into the house, the woman was by herself. However, he went into the bush and returned after a while to peep in again, and then he saw the bird with his wife. Infuriated, he was about to kill her when his brother sneeringly told him that he could go and sleep with his pig. Enraged, he thrust a stick into her side and took out her liver.

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There are significantly more male birds married to (or proposing to) women than men married to female birds in Polynesian traditions. Of the fourteen stories in the second part of this chapter, twelve deal with the first instance (the Māui stories of the acquisition of fire excluded). It is noteworthy that a Pacific Reef Heron is the husband of a woman in no fewer than six of them.[43] One might expect that a heron should be thought of as a husband, for his

[42] The Pacific Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula pacifica*, *rupe* in Rarotongan) and the Lilac-crowned Fruit Dove (*Ptilinopus rarotongensis*, *kūkupa* in Rarotongan) are still to be found in Ātiu, but remains of the Polynesian Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula aurorae*) and the Polynesian Ground Dove (*Alopecoenas erythropterus*) have also been found on the island (Steadman 2006:212).

[43] To this list one may add the Mugaba story of an evil being who tries to seduce a man's wife before turning into a Pacific Reef Heron (**259**). When Tamoa's wife went down to the beach, Vavenga, an evil being, took the appearance of her husband, and pretended to be Tamoa. When Tamoa arrived, Vavenga was gone, and the woman told him what had happened. Tamoa knew that Vavenga would come back. When Vavenga returned,

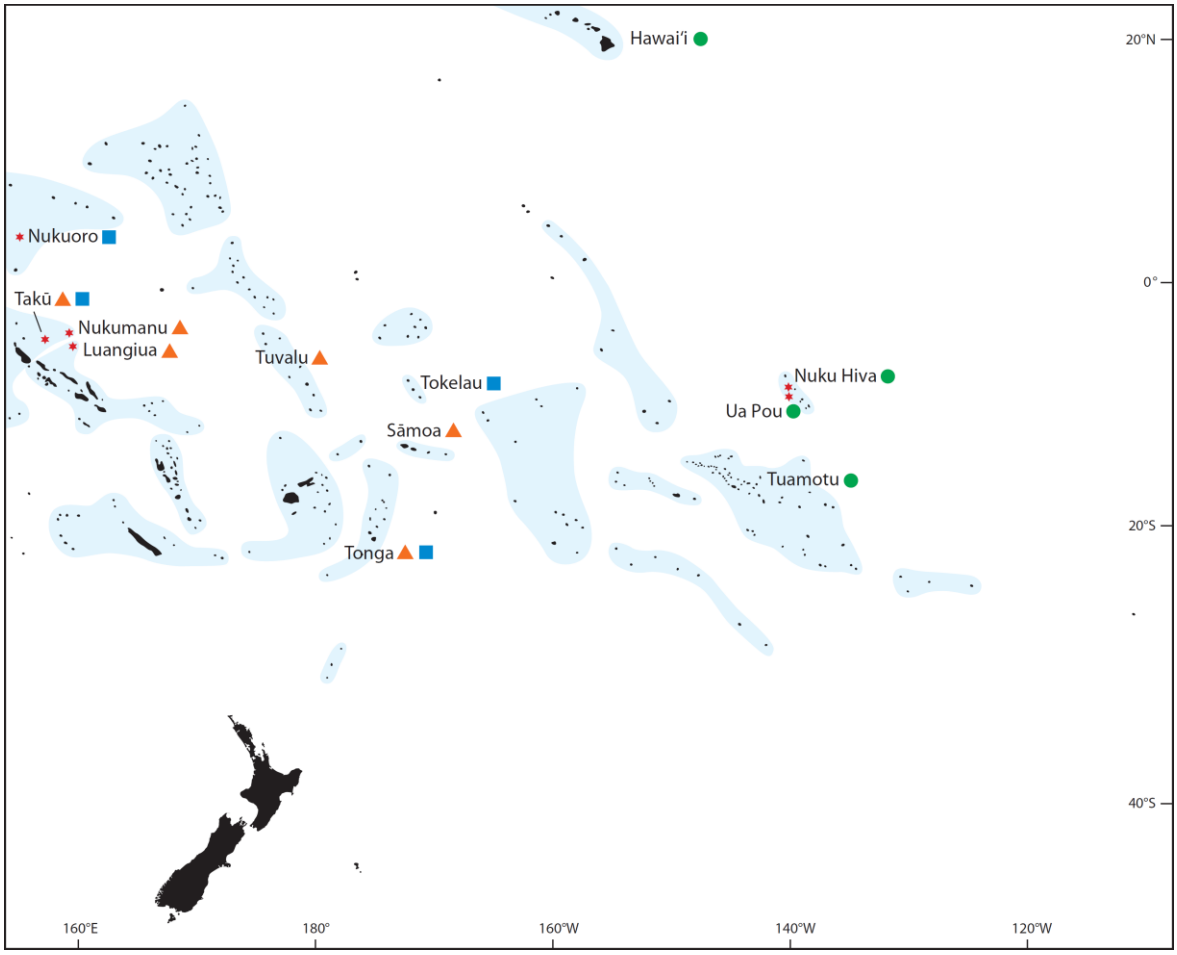
neck and beak are particularly long, and a bird's neck and beak tend to be, as was noted in III-4, 'unconsciously conceived of in terms of phallic symbolism'.[44] Only two traditions deal with the second instance, a man married to a female bird. Interestingly, those two narratives (**93** and **20**) are about two men who exert physical violence on their feathered wife or sexual partner. Significantly, those two hapless *manu* happen to be a reluctant flyer and a flightless bird: a rail and a fowl.[45] When they are not married to birds, humans turn into them to recover their wife, or use them to find love and/or a sexual partner: wading birds and seabirds are sent out to other islands to find a wife for their master, pigeons and doves lure a beautiful woman into a net, etc. *Manu* also reveal the infidelity of a spouse. All these Polynesian traditions strongly connect birds with a longing for love, with lust, and with sexuality.

he asked the woman to cook food for him, but Tamoa came up behind him and struck him on the head. Vavenga fell to the ground, Tamoa kept hitting him, but Vavenga turned into a *kagau*, got up, and flew away.

[44] According to Stimson (1964:296), in Tuamotuan *mātuku-rere-hau*, the 'swiftly-flying white heron', is the poetic name of the phallus.

[45] Huntsman and Hooper (1975:420) found that 'by the evidence of Tokelau folktales, it is clearly women who are in league with or who are victims of the creatures of the animal and spirit worlds, while men oppose, prey upon and outwit animals and spirits.' The same argument could be made in the particular case of birds in traditional narratives from around Polynesia.

Figure 19. Eros stories



▲ Tinilau turns into a pigeon, is placed on a stick in Sina's husband's house, turns back into a man and runs away with Sina (**203B**, **203C**, **236**, **236A**, **236B**, **236C**)

● Māui enters a bird, flies to his wife's abductor's house, turns back into a man and runs away with his wife (**237**, **237A**, **237B**, **237C**)

■ Birds propose to a young woman, but her parents refuse to let her marry them (**252**, **252A**, **252B**, **252C**)

Chapter X

Thanatos

> Hoki tonu iho ngā ngutu, e hemo ana anō te tao, tū ana te manu rā i te taha o Pito. Ka makaia atu ngā ngutu o te manu rā, ka tū ki te rae o Pito, ka hinga a Pito ki raro; akiaki atu hoki, ka mate i konei a Pito . . .[1]

1. Harbingers of death

It was noted in III-3 that in traditional Polynesian societies birds were thought to be able to predict someone's death. A few stories illustrate this particular branch of ornithomancy. In some narratives, birds also lead a person to their death or to a dead body, or divulge a person's death with their cries, calls, or behaviour. In others, *manu* not only predict or reveal a person's death, but are even responsible for the mortality of the human race as a whole. All these traditions demonstrate that birds conjure up mental associations with death, as was noted in III-4.

A bird's appearance presages death

From Ra'iātea comes the story of the *ari'i* Tautu-ari'i-i-Ōpoa (**260**). He was celebrating with his son Tama-toa and his people the pregnancy of Tama-toa's wife, when an *'ūpoa* (Gould's Petrel, *Pterodroma leucoptera*) alighted near his head. Tama-toa asked his father what the bird was coming here for. Tautu-ari'i replied that the *'ūpoa* belonged to Hiro, the first *ari'i* of Ra'iātea, that his presence announced the death of an *ari'i*,[2] that he was the guardian of

[1] '. . . the bird bent down its beak and the weapon missed its mark. Then the bird was upon him. With a great blow of its beak it stabbed him on the forehead, and he fell to the ground. Still the bird attacked him, and he died there' (**284**).

[2] When the cry of the *'ūpoa* is heard, wrote Henry (1928:388), 'in the stillness of the night over the dwelling place of royalty, especially on islands unfrequented by the bird, it is regarded as a sure sign that some member of the family will soon die. This coincidence took place in 1873, shortly before the death of Queen Pomare's grandchild, Pomare-ono, and of the Prince Consort Ari'ifa'aite.'

the cemetery of the *ari'i*, and that he had come to take him. The bird then flew away, but came back towards the head of Tautu-ari'i. The *ari'i* kissed his son's forehead, then died.[3]

The story of the death of Hotu Matu'a, the first settler and *ariki* of Rapa Nui,[4] also features a bird (**261**). On his deathbed, Hotu Matu'a asked two *akuaku* (guardian spirits)[5] of Hiva, his homeland, to make the *moa* (Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*) of Ariange[6] sing. The *moa* sang, his voice being carried from Hiva to Te Pito-Te-Henua, and the *ariki* died. Another version says that the song of the *moa* was so loud that it reached the homeland of Hotu Matu'a, and from there the echo reverberated all the way back to Te Pito-Te-Henua, thus announcing to everyone the death of the *ariki*. Thus, as Barthel (1978:146) inferred, 'the most important animal of the old island culture[7] is involved in every aspect of life right up to the hour of death and even then provided an (acoustic) bridge to the land of origin in the West.'

The *'ūpoa* and the *moa* announce the king's death, but three stories from Taumako, Rotuma and Niue tell of birds that play a role *after* a man's passing. In the first one, a family of ten brothers, who were all married, lived on the islet of Tahua, off Taumako (**262**). One of them slept with one of his brothers' daughter, and she became pregnant. She told her father, who then convinced the man's brothers to kill him. They hurt him badly, but he escaped from Tahua in a canoe, taking refuge on the islet of Kalua, off the northwestern tip of Taumako. There, the people nursed him, but the man knew that he was going to die. On the fourth day, he told them that he would die the following day, and that they should keep a watch for a bird during the night following his burial. That bird would circle the village, the men's house and the *fale atua* (ritual house) before flying off, and the people would

[3] In Māori tradition, Hine-ruarangi, originally a daughter of the ancestor Toi, transformed into a *kawau* (cormorant). Misfortune or death befell anyone to whom she appeared (Gudgeon 1906:46). Kai-a-te-hihi was a two-headed parrot (probably a *kākā*, New Zealand Kākā, *Nestor meridionalis*), whose appearance was a sign of war, death and disaster. He was the guardian spirit of Wharo, a chief of Ngāti Maniapoto and Whanganui. This bird only flew when urged by the spirits of men who were about to die (Gudgeon 1906:45).

[4] See also **219**, the story of Hotu Matu'a and his pet *tara*.

[5] *Akuaku* were 'lesser gods', 'supernatural beings who belonged to a certain district or family', and who were 'supposed to haunt a particular spot on the island and maintain connections with the people living near by' (Métraux 1940:316).

[6] For Englert, Ariange (or Ariane, Ariana) was either a place name or the name of an *ariki*.

[7] *Moa* 'achieved a position of supreme importance' in traditional Rapa Nui society; wealth 'was conceivable only in terms of the number of chickens owned' (Barthel 1978:143,145). They received 'more attention and honor' than anywhere else in Polynesia (Te Rangi Hīroa 1938a:229).

receive some important news from the direction in which he had flown. As predicted, a *tuli* (probably a wader)[8] came to Kalua during the night following the man's burial. The bird flew off to Tahua, and went straight into the *fale atua* and then into one of the men's houses, before leaving. The next day, all of the man's brothers started to have incestuous relationships with their sisters and sisters' daughters, and with their mothers and daughters. Quarrels and fights ensued, and eventually they all killed each other. Incest regulations were from then on set forth and strictly adhered to, and a *tuli* always appeared and flew about when someone from that place on the islet of Tahua died.

The second narrative features again Raho's two *armea* (Rotuma Myzomela, *Myzomela chermesina*) – those birds had flown in the front of this Samoan chief's canoe and sung to give him the signal to throw overboard a basket of sand, and the island of Rotuma had then come up from under the ocean with the canoe on top of it (**27**, see IV-3). When the king of Rotuma Tu'iterotuma died, the two birds, Manteifi and Manteafa (or Monteifi and Monteafa), were sent by Raho. They flew in front of the bearers to show them where to bury the king. When they acted as if about to alight, but flew on, the people knew, as per Raho's instructions, that there was the place to dig the grave. Another version has it that they flew over hill after hill before stopping at Seselo, where the king was then buried.

As for the Niuean story, it deals with two birds that lead an unsuspecting man to the bodies of his two murdered sons (**263**). Mohelagi, a chief of Liku, went to the bush to shoot *hega* (Blue-crowned Lorikeet, *Vini australis*).[9] He took his aim at two birds, but they flew away and went to peck at some fruit. Mohelagi followed them, and was about to shoot them when they flew off again. Mohelagi became angry and pursued the two birds. They eventually led him to a *tuali* tree (*Syzygium clusiifolium*), on which they perched. At the bottom of the tree, under some ferns, Mohelagi found the decomposed bodies of his two sons, who had been murdered.

[8] For Davenport, this bird is a 'wagtail', but according to Hovdhaugen (2006:130) the *tuli* is 'a small bird with long beak living on the beach and flying in groups'. It is probably the Wandering Tattler (*Tringa incana*) or the Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*).

[9] As was noted in III-2, in Niue the feathers of this bird were plaited to make *kafa*, 'very highly valued' girdles 'only worn by the chiefs and warriors'.

Finally, a Māori story features a bird that leads two boys to their death at the hands of a *maero*,[10] or ogre (**264**). Inuwai was very fond of *kererū* (New Zealand Pigeon, *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) preserved in their own fat (*huahua*). She had 53 *papa huahua* (gourds holding preserved birds) stored in a *whata* (elevated storage place). Hungry and greedy, her husband's twin boys, Te Iro and Te Haruru, pilfered the birds at night, one *papa huahua* after another, until Inuwai discovered that 22 of her *papa huahua* were empty. Inuwai was very angry, so she complained to her husband, Matangi. The latter admonished his people, vowing that the culprits would be crushed, and went home to recite *karakia*. Inuwai hid her remaining *papa huahua* in the forest to prevent further theft, but one day Te Iro and Te Haruru found the hiding place, a hollow *rātā* tree (*Metrosideros robusta/umbellata*), after following Inuwai. The two boys had a meal of birds. Remembering their father's *karakia*, they worried about being caught by a *maero*, so they started running to hide from the *maero*. A *kākā* (New Zealand Kākā, *Nestor meridionalis*) then appeared. They tried repeatedly to catch him, but he eluded them a hundred times when they thought that he was within their grasp; thus the bird led them deeper and deeper into the forest. Eventually, as the *kākā* screeched and flew in smaller and smaller circles, the *maero* suddenly appeared, and caught the two boys in his claws.

A bird reveals murder and death

A Māori tradition recounts how the culture hero Tāwhaki was attacked at the pool (*wai whakaata*) of Rangituhi and left for dead by his cousins (the children of Punga and Karihi), who were jealous of his success with women (**185**). His aunt Muri-whaka-roto went looking for him. She called out his name. A *pūkeko* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*) answered her with his call, 'ke!' ('ka ō mai he pūkeko "ke!"'). She went in the direction of that voice, and called out Tāwhaki's name again. A *moho* (North Island Takahē, *Porphyrio mantelli*) replied (*ō*), 'hu!' She then returned home and accused Tāwhaki's cousins of having murdered him.

[10] *Maero* were 'savage, hairy people' with 'long bony fingers', who 'speared their prey with their jagged nails' and 'ate their food raw' (Orbell 1995:94).

Another bird cries, thus letting a man know that his son has been murdered, in a tradition from Rēkohu (**265**). In Hawaiki, Rākei stole a *pūtē-a-kura*[11] from Tamahiwa's home in his absence. Tamahiwa's sons, Pauhu and Pahore, found Rākei up on a *mānuka* tree (*Leptospermum scoparium*) spearing birds. They killed him with his own spears and cut him up, but his penis, his heart and his head were swallowed by his god Maru before they could chop them off. Rākei's father, Tama-te-hokopa, was at home waiting for his son to return. A *tōrea* (Chatham Oystercatcher, *Haematopus chathamensis*) came and cried 'tore!' When Tama-te-hokopa asked the bird if his son had been slain, the *tōrea* repeated 'tore!' He then wept for his murdered son. The following day, he set out with the birds and searched for the body of his son. The *tōrea* went by the sea, and the *hopiritu*[12] went by the bush. The *tōrea* arrived there first. Tama-te-hokopa placed his son in a garment. The *tōrea* then carried loads of stones to his house to make an oven, travelling by the beach, whereas the *hopiritu* carried loads of *paretao* (a species of fern), travelling inland. An oven was dug, in which Rākei was placed. After five days, he returned to life.[13]

In another tradition from Rēkohu, it is the birds' behaviour that confirms the murder of a brother and father (**266**). In Hawaiki, Horopapa's daughter was murdered by Tu-moana's son. A war ensued, in which Tira, Horopapa's younger brother, was killed by Tu-moana's war party. After dreaming that Tira had been killed, Horopapa told Tira's twins, Api and Akahu-rangi, to go to a ridge and look if the *kārewarewa* (New Zealand Falcon, *Falco novaeseelandiae*) was feeding with his wings outstretched, and if the *kāhu* (Swamp Harrier, *Circus approximans*) was soaring. The two children went to the ridge, then reported back to Horopapa what they had seen: a *kārewarewa* feeding with his wings outstretched and a *kāhu* soaring. This is how Horopapa knew that Tira was dead. His people later took revenge on Tu-moana's tribe.[14]

In a Mangarevan story birds make movements when asked if a son is dead, thus confirming that he is, whereas in two stories from Aotearoa and Hawai'i (see paragraphs below)

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[11] A *pūtē-a-kura* was 'a finely-woven small basket or pouch, in which choice ornaments only were held, such as *heis*, *kuras* and the like used in decorating their persons' (Shand 1896:91,n.22).

[12] According to Shand, the *hopiritu* was 'an extinct rail of the Chatham Islands'. *Hopiritu* may be another name for the extinct *mehonui* (Hawkins's Rail, *Diaphorapteryx hawkinsi*), *mehoriki* (Dieffenbach's Rail, *Gallirallus dieffenbachii*), or *mātirakahu* (Chatham Rail, *Gallirallus modestus*).

[13] When he recovered, a war party of Tama-te-hokopa fought against Tamahiwa and his people. Shand believed this war to be one of the causes of the migration from Hawaiki to Rēkohu.

[14] This story was for Shand another cause of the migration from Hawaiki to Rēkohu.

birds report the death using words. In the first story, Toa-apakura's son, Tunui-te-maku, was killed in Tahiti (**267**). Back in Mangareva Toa-apakura saw *moko'e* (Great Frigatebird, *Fregata minor*) flying overhead. She knew that they were coming from Tahiti, so she asked them if her son was alive. The birds did not make any sign. She then asked them if he was dead: they flapped their wings, lowered their feet, and bent down their heads. Thus she understood that Tunui-te-maku was dead, and commanded her brothers to avenge his death.[15]

According to the story from Aotearoa, Kupe came with his children and two *mōkai* (pets), Rupe (New Zealand Pigeon, *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) and Te Kawau-a-Toru, a cormorant, to Aotearoa (**268**). At Manukau and many other places, Kupe sent forth Te Kawau-a-Toru to see if the currents were strong,[16] whereas Rupe's task was to discover seeds in the forest – but he found none. When they reached Raukawa (Cook Strait), the birds of Te Waipounamu came over; Rupe asked them what kind of food there was on their island, to which the birds replied that the food was plentiful – he should come and see for himself. Te Kawau-a-Toru then asked them if they knew where to find strong sea currents; again the birds told him to come over, because across the strait the currents were strong. Rupe and Te Kawau-a-Toru reported to Kupe what they had heard, and Kupe agreed to let his two *mōkai* go. On the other side of Raukawa, in Te Hoiere (Pelorus Sound), Rupe saw some birds feeding on the fruit of a tree, and then going to the water to drink, and then going back to the tree; Rupe imitated those birds, and did not return to Kupe. As for Te Kawau-a-Toru, he drowned in a channel, Te Aumiti (French Pass), after breaking his wing in the current because it was too strong. A flock of *tara* (White-fronted Tern, *Sterna striata*) then flew straight to Kupe's home at Te Rimurapa (Sinclair Head) to tell him of his birds' demise. When his daughter Mohuia heard them call, 'kua mate!' ('they are dead!'), she grieved for her *mōkai*, rushed into the ocean, and drowned. Mourning his birds and his daughter, Kupe cut his flesh, and decided to return to Hawaiki.

The Hawaiian story of Kahala-o-puna also features a bird that reports a death (**191**). This maiden was murdered four times by her betrothed, the Waikiki chief Kauhi, and revived as many times by a *pueo* (see VIII-1). One version of that tradition has it that the fifth time

[15] No bird brings the bad news to Apakura in a Māori cognate of this story (White 1887:II,147E,143M).

[16] This is because cormorants are 'often found fishing in the strong currents' (editors' note). Cormorants are referred to in Māori ritual chants 'to ensure the safe passage of a vessel overtaken by stormy weather' (Orbell 2003:145).

around, Kauhi buried her under a large *koa* tree (*Acacia koa*) whose roots proved too much for the *pueo*. His claws became entangled in the roots, so he had to give up, and he flew away. An *'elepaio* (*Chasiempis* sp.), Kahala's cousin, who had witnessed the murder, then flew straight to the girl's parents to inform them of what had happened. Meanwhile, a young man who was passing by found the girl's spirit and dug up the body, and Kahala was eventually restored to life.

Finally, a bird can confirm an ogre's death by entering his body, and then coming out of it. A West Futunan narrative tells of such a brave myzomela (**87**, see V-3).[17]

Birds and human mortality

The culture hero Māui, in Māori tradition, died when trying to conquer death by entering the goddess of the night, Hine-nui-te-pō, because a bird burst out laughing at the sight of him crawling into her vagina. He was betrayed by his feathered friend, and thus humankind was deprived of immortality (**269**). This story, Beckwith (1970:121) argued, is 'founded upon the common belief in a sorcerer's power to journey in the spirit to the land of the dead to pluck souls back into life'. One version has it that Māui found companions (*hoa*) for himself: the *miromiro* (Tomtit, *Petroica macrocephala*), the *pītoitoi* (North Island Robin, *Petroica longipes*), the *tātāeko* (Whitehead, *Mohoua albicilla*), the *kōriroriro* (Grey Gerygone, *Gerygone igata*), and the *tīrairaka* (New Zealand Fantail, *Rhipidura fuliginosa*). They went to the house of Hine-nui-te-pō (in another version, the birds urged Māui not to go, or he would be killed by the goddess, but he insisted on going). He told his feathered *hoa* not to laugh, took off his clothes, and entered Hine-nui-te-pō. When his head was out of sight, the birds' cheeks started to grin ('e memene noa ana ngā pāpāringa o te tini manu rā'). When his chest disappeared, the *tīrairaka* burst into laughter, waking the *ruahine* (woman). Māui was cut

[17] In a cognate of this tradition from Nidula, an eagle plays the part of the ogre, and a dog, that of the myzomela. Manubutu (White-bellied Sea Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucogaster*) was a giant bird that lived in a tree-house on a hill and ate people. The survivors fled to another island, leaving behind an old woman and a pregnant girl. The latter delivered twin boys in a cave. The old woman gave them magical spears. They killed the bird, but sent their dog to fetch the bird's heart and make sure that he was dead. The dog entered the mouth, came out of the rectum, then went back down through the body, picking up the heart and coming out of the mouth. All the people then returned to the island, and the two sons met their father. According to its collector, this story was the 'most popular and best known story in the local folklore' (Young 1991:384-385).

in half between her thighs, and died. In two other versions, this bird is also responsible:[18] in one, the *tīwaiwaka* fluttered over the face of Hine-nui-te-pō and tickled her nose with his tail; in the other, he started dancing about (*tuone*), thus awaking her.[19]

Tylor (1873:335-337) believed this story to be akin to the 'episode of the Sun's or the Day's death in sunset'. He argued that he was 'able to use an unexceptionable means of testing whether the legend is or is not a real sun-myth':

> If it is so, then the *tiwakawaka* (also called the *piwakawaka*) ought to be a bird that sings at sunset. I have had inquiry made in New Zealand to ascertain whether this is the case, and have thus obtained a perfect confirmation of my interpretation of the legend of the death of Maui, as being a nature-myth of the setting sun; the reply is that the name 'describes the cry of the bird, which is only heard at sunset'.

Similarly, Andersen (1995:235) contended that

> There is little doubt that the last great adventure of Maui' is a story of the attempt of the sun, or sunlight, to overcome darkness. The very choosing of his companions by Maui' is an indication, for the small birds[20] always accompany the setting sun with song, as they hail his rising with song. The laughing note of the fantail, too, is one of the last among the notes of the more familiar birds to be heard as the shades of evening close in.

In a version from Tūhoe, however, it is not the *tīwaiwaka* but the Buff-banded Rail (*Gallirallus philippensis*) that is responsible for Māui's demise: the *moho tupererū* laughs

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[18] As Dunis (1984:172) put it, among birds the fantail is 'the most incapable of accepting immobility'. Māui's death is, in Luomala's (1949:35) words, 'bitterly tragic' because 'he died through the weakness of . . . creatures with whom he had allied himself in preference to the gods'.

[19] In a Nauruan tradition, two birds also accompany a man to the land of the dead, but they go back to the land of the living one after the other. Areop-Enap, the first being, created people from stones (see n. 36 in VII-3 for the beginning of the story). But they all quarrelled because they all wanted to be the first. Areop-Enap told them to stop fighting, and took them to Tarawa (the end of the world), where they had to live and support the vault of heaven. He then made two baskets, a small one and a large one, which he told the people to take good care of and never to open, after which he walked away. When Naga (for Hambruch, the personification of Death) got white hair, he said to the others that it was time for him to go away and move to another land. He took with him the small basket and two birds, the *kiwoiy* (Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus*) and the *itsirir* (Nauru Reed Warbler, *Acrocephalus rehsei*) – Hambruch spells the *kiwoiy*, *ikiuoi*, and the *itsirir*, *ikirir*, and the second bird may actually be the *iwyiyi* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*), because Hambruch noted that the two birds were two species of plovers, whose call forebodes death. When a foreign land was in view, the *itsirir* flew back to Tarawa, and the people thus knew that Naga had reached another land, the land of the souls. The *kiwoiy* and Naga entered that land, the bird flying just in front of Naga, from whom he was only separated by his own shadow. But eventually the *kiwoiy* flew back to Tarawa and whistled to the people, 'He is gone, he is gone!' The people then opened the large basket, but only found evil and bad things in it, such as sorrow, worry, hunger and sickness, which settled in the world, while all the good things were lost to humankind (Hambruch 1914:I,381-384; Dixon 1916:249-250,252).

[20] As Orbell (2003:86,91) noticed, the association of Māui with little birds is 'all the more appropriate because Māui-pōtiki himself, as the youngest son, was (we are sometimes told) very small'. Like the *tīwaiwaka*, Māui too 'was daring and restless, and although very clever he was sometimes regarded as small and insignificant'.

at the wrong moment. In Māori, *pererū* means 'making a whirring, fluttering noise', and *whakapererū*, 'frighten, startle' (Williams 1971:278). Furthermore, two of the bird's other Māori names are *katatai* (*kata* is 'laugh') and *pūohotata* (*pūoho* is 'start, take alarm'). Thus, as Dunis (1984:260) pointed out, the very name of the bird evokes the tragic death of Māui.

This association of the *tīrairaka* and the *moho pererū* with death in Māori tradition parallels their association with the latrine (*turuma*, or *heketua*) and its beam (*pae tautara*, or *paepae tautara*). Two stories illustrate this connection: Kupe said to Turi that in Aotearoa he had only seen the *pīwaiwaka*, hopping about on the *pae tautara* (**48**), and Pātātai (i.e., the Buff-banded Rail) told Mataora, on his way back to the upperworld, to leave his youngster at the altar (*tūāhu*) of the *turuma* (**194**). As Orbell (2003:185) observed, 'it seems that in reality [*tīrairaka*] often flew above the heketua, chasing flies', and in a widespread West Polynesian story Buff-banded Rails eat excrement (**70**). The beam of the latrine was in traditional Māori society 'a barrier between the worlds of Day and Night'; there was represented 'the kingdom of the dead' (Johansen 1958:98,109). The Māori association of these two birds with death and the latrine is also evidenced in a *tangi* (lament): 'E hara i te taru te mate / Kua mate mai i mua i a Māui / Nā Te Pātātai i kata, ka motu ki roto rā / Ka puta te rehurehu, ka rere te tīwakawaka / Ki runga ki te tihi o te hamuti / Mōu rā te hē' (Grey 1853:251).[21]

Interestingly, in two narratives from other parts of Oceania, it is also because of the Buff-banded Rail that humans became mortal. In the first one, from Efate (Vanuatu), it was not decided in the beginning whether humans and other creatures should die or be immortal, like the snake casting its skin. The creatures deliberated; some wished to die, others wished to be immortal. The *man tangisi nerei* (maybe the Pacific Robin, *Petroica pusilla*)[22] was expressing his views in favour of eternal life, when the *pilake* (Buff-banded Rail)[23] barged

[21] 'Death is no light matter / [Even] before Maui people died / It was the rail that laughed, then [Maui] was crushed in there / The moth got out, the fantail flew / Up on top of the *heketua* / Then ill-luck [*he*] befell you.' As Johansen (1958:98-99) pointed out, in this *tangi* 'the kingdom of the dead in mythology and the ritual scene at the *heketua* have been merged in a very suggestive way'.

[22] A 'bird something like robin red-breast, venturing near the dwellings of men', with 'beautiful bright red marks under its eyes' (McDonald 1898:764). This bird appears as benevolent to humans in another Efatese story: in the beginning, man was not superior to other creatures. When man was tied up as if he were a pig, the pig roamed freely all day, eating and caring only about itself. The pig did not care about the hungry man. The *man tangisi nerei* took pity on man and cut the cords that tied him up. Because the pig was selfish, the bird deemed it to be unfit to have authority over other creatures, and ruled that man would have ascendancy over them, pigs included (McDonald 1898:763-764).

[23] According to Hans Schmidt, pers. comm. (Nguna/North Efate language). The *pilake* is a 'dingy-looking bird, afraid of man, and keeping at a distance from him'; the word also means 'to be in mortal terror' (McDonald 1898:764).

in in the middle of the deliberation, declaring that he had just buried his parents and that offspring would have to be begotten to replace them. The *man tangisi nerei* wept at that moment, which left bright red marks under his eyes that are visible to this day. Birth and death were thus established (McDonald 1898:764).

In the second narrative, from Palau (Caroline Islands), Obagat wanted humans to be immortal. He intended to place a stone inside their breast, so that they would become as strong and lasting as the stone and not require food. But the *tariit* (Buff-banded Rail)[24] disagreed: he wanted only breath to be placed in humans, so that they would be subject to disease and death. Obagat, however, ignoring the bird's objection, sent his son to fetch the water of life to give humankind immortality. The precious water was brought in a taro leaf. But the *tariit* caused the branch of a *karamal* tree (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*) to strike and tear the leaf, and so the water was spilled on the tree. That tree thus acquired immortality, whereas humans remained mortal. In retaliation, Obagat hit the *tariit* on the head with a piece of wood – hence the red strip still visible today on that bird's head (Kubary 1873:46-47).

It is another species of bird, a heron, that caused humankind to lose immortality in a Tahitian tradition (**270**). Ti'i, the first man, created by Ta'aroa, was a malicious being. He had a white (*'uo*) *'ao* (Striated Heron, *Butorides striata*). He used his *'ao* to slay humans, by making the bird enter the body of whomever he wished to kill. Humankind thus lost eternal life because of Ti'i and his *'ao*.

Finally, a Hawaiian tradition, reminiscent of the Book of Genesis,[25] does not hold a bird responsible for the mortality of humankind as in the preceding stories. But it does assign to a bird the task of taking the first man and the first woman, Kumuhonua and Lalohonua, away from the land of Kāne (**271**). This tradition has it that Kumuhonua and Lalohonua were

[24] According to Josephs (1990:325) (*terríid*).

[25] This story comes from the Kepelino manuscript, which contains an account by Kepelino Keauokalani, born about 1830 in Kailua, of Hawaiian traditions. Beckwith (1932:6) argued that, even though some stories, in particular the ones about the creation, the flood and the origin of death, were 'certainly interpreted after the pattern of Christian teaching', the substance of those stories must have existed 'in native form'. This is because, as she put it, 'it is not possible to suppose that all this material could so swiftly have taken form in the minds of a people who for the first time came in contact with the ideas.' One of Beckwith's main arguments in favour of the 'sincerity' of the Hawaiian material somewhat 'reinterpreted in the light of Biblical dogma' was that no New Testament concepts (such as the stories of the birth of Jesus and his teachings) seem to have influenced the traditional narratives. She contended (1970:46) that it was 'much more likely that familiarity with the biblical stories has lent a coloring and an emphasis to traditions which were genuinely native than that the Hawaiians have invented these stories in direct imitation of Bible accounts'. On the other hand, for Te Rangi Hīroa (1938a:246), the story of 'Ā'aia-nui-nukeu-a-kū-lawai'a was a 'neo-myth' that found 'no confirmation in the other Polynesian areas'.

created by Kāne, Kū and Lono after these gods had created the animals, and that they lived in the hidden land of Kāne (*ka ʻāina huna a Kāne*). There, they met ʻĀʻaia-nui-nukeu-a-kū-lawaiʻa (ʻGreat-white-beaked-albatross-which-stands-fishing') (or ʻĀʻaia-nūkea-nui-a-Kāne).[26] Lalohonua was deceived by the bird, and ate *ka ʻōhiʻa kapu a Kāne*, the sacred apple of Kāne. She went crazy (*pupule*), and from fright (*makaʻu*) turned into an *ʻāʻaia* – *ʻaʻaia* means 'demented' (Pukui & Elbert 2003). Kumuhonua also ate the *ʻōhiʻa*. The bird then carried them away into the forest.

2. Birds attack

Manu may take care of newborns, save people's lives and come to the protagonists' aid in many Polynesian stories – but they can also attack. Along with the traditions discussed in the preceding chapters in which a bird pecks at a person to injure or kill them,[27] a few other narratives feature eye- and face-pecking *manu* (particularly plovers, or other waders). Some traditions mention other instances of birds injuring or killing people in a variety of ways: pulling a man's hair, attacking a canoe, tearing out a man's liver, casting people down into the ocean, kicking a man with their mighty legs, or eating up an entire family. Humans, evil beings and the spirits of dead people also transform themselves into birds to attack other people.

Pecking

In West Polynesia, several traditions tell of a man named Matandua, Muni or Ufigaki, who is pecked at as a newborn by a wader that tears out one of his eyes, before being rescued and raised by a childless couple and growing to become an extraordinarily strong man. A Fijian

[26] For Beckwith (1970:92), the *ʻāʻaia* is the Laysan Albatross (*Phoebastria immutabilis*), which 'used to be seen commonly along the island coasts and was called "Kane's bird"'. According to Pukui and Elbert (2003), however, the *ʻāʻaia* is a 'legendary bird believed to have taken the shape of the *ʻā*, booby bird' (*Sula* sp.). In a chant cited by Fornander (1880:II,16-17) and Malo (1971:249,n.2), the same bird is also said to have carried away Hema, the father of Kahai; the *ʻāʻaia* gouged out Hema's eyes in Kahiki (Thrum 1922:106; 1923:71-72).

[27] A plover in **44**, two ducks in **113**, an army of owls in **138**, two kingfishers in **149**, **149B** and **149C**, and a hawk in **209**.

version of this story has it that a Tongan king sailed on the ocean in his large double canoe full of people when a fierce storm arose, which tore the sail (**196**). Stuck on the ocean in a canoe that did not move, the people became hungry, so the king ordered a young man to kill one of the women. However, the young girl, Talingo, jumped into the sea with her baby just before the man could strike her with his club. She clung to the steering oar unnoticed, and drifted thus for four days, while suckling her baby (who lay on the oar's blade) and trying to keep the birds away from them. But one of the birds tore out the baby's eye with his beak. On the fifth day, mother and child were cast ashore on the island of Ono (an outlier to Kadavu Island). Talingo died, and the baby boy was cared for by a childless couple, who named him Matandua ('One-eyed').[28]

The man is named Muni in a Tongan version of this tradition, in which the pecking attack occurs after the newborn is cast ashore (**196A**). At sea, Muni's mother was cut open while pregnant because the occupants of her canoe believed her to be responsible for their misfortune (they were experiencing bad weather). The foetus was thrown into the sea, and was cast ashore at Lofanga (in the Ha'apai Group). The infant lay on a rock, where his eye was pecked by a snipe, which disfigured his face. But his cries attracted a man and his wife, who adopted the little boy. The Futunan versions of this story (in which the man is named Ufigaki) only mention that waders pecked at him, but not that they tore out his eye (**196B**). According to one of them, Moekiala saw a *tuli* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*, or Wandering Tattler, *Tringa incana*) hopping on the beach and pecking at something. As she got closer, she found a baby still wrapped in a placenta. She and her husband then adopted the baby.

Two Hawaiian narratives tell of not one, but hundreds of plovers tearing up a man's face.[29] In the first one, a man is attacked and killed by *kōlea* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*) because he has been eating them in great numbers (**272**). Kumuhana would catch a large number of *'akekeke* (Ruddy Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*) and *kōlea* at night, broil them, and relish their delicious flesh. One day, Kumuhana and his neighbour heard a plaintive voice coming from the sky, 'Pi-i-i-o!' His neighbour warned him that it was the spirit of Kumukahi, the bird god watching over the *kōlea*. Kumuhana, however, took no heed, and

[28] See also **44** (in IV-5 and V-3), a narrative from the Lau Islands in which Tui Liku becomes known as Matadua after being pecked by a *dilio* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*).

[29] Before leaving the Hawaiian Islands for Siberia and Alaska, the migratory *kōlea* 'collect in very large flocks' (Munro 1960:55).

caught many birds that evening, which he laid in heaps. But the birds disappeared during the night. Suspecting that his neighbour had stolen them, Kumuhana paid him a visit. The neighbour told him that he should ask for Kumukahi's forgiveness and that his house was now filled with birds. Kumuhana returned home and found hundreds of birds in his house. He prepared an earth oven, then tried to catch the birds, but they all passed through his fingers. As he heard a voice outside crying 'Pi-i-i-o!' the birds all arose and pecked at him, so he ran outside, but there were even more birds waiting for him there. Blinded and badly hurt, he fell into the oven that he had just prepared, and died.

In the second narrative, the same birds attack a man in the same fashion, but he survives (**273**). Maka-'ūlili, the ruler of the *kōlea*, was sent by Mo-i, the *kupua* ruler of Moloka'i, to Vavau to bring him back a variety of *kōlea*. He came back with a *lau* (400) of *kōlea 'ūlili* (the *'ūlili* is the Wandering Tattler, *Tringa incana*), a *lau* of good *kōlea*, and a *lau* of bad *kōlea* (*kōlea 'ino*). The birds lived on Haupu, a hill near the Pelekunu Valley. When Mo-i noticed that the hill periodically sank beneath the sea, and then rose up again, he asked the birds to find the cause of this phenomenon.[30] They told him that a giant turtle that lived at the base of the hill was responsible for this, and that it ought to be killed. But Mo-i refused to do so. In retaliation, the *kōlea 'ino* sneaked up on him while he was asleep, and tore up his face with their claws. Mo-i then banished all the *kōlea 'ino* to the barren hill of Maa-ku-newa.

In a tradition from Ua Pou, a *kena* (Masked Booby, *Sula dactylatra*) pecks the eyes of the goddess Hānau, who feeds in Havaiki on human souls, thus killing her (**274**). Tama-pekeheu was a *tau'a* (priest) from Hakama'i'i. One day, he stole the fish-hook that the *tētua-peke'oumei* (supernatural beings from Havaiki) were using to catch human souls before bringing them to their mistress Hānau, who ate them. Because the *tētuapeke'oumei* came back to her empty-handed that day, one of them had to be sacrificed and have his eyes fed to the hungry Hānau. Tama-pekeheu heard from his home what was happening in Havaiki, and decided to send there one of his souls, his bird soul, in the form of a *kena*.[31] The bird presented himself to the *tētuapeke'oumei* in order to be caught by them. He was brought alive to Hānau so that she could relish the freshness of his eyes. But, as Hānau was about to tear his eyes out, the *kena* tore her eyes out with a single peck and swallowed them, before

[30] This supernatural hill also appears in **156**.

[31] As Lavondès (1975:295) observed, Kena is also a man's name, and Tama-pekeheu literally means 'child of the wing'. Thus, in this story the bird bears a man's name whereas his human master bears a bird's name.

returning to the land of the living and Tama-pekeheu. He later became the chief of the *tētua-peke'oumei*, and took them to visit the land of light.

The pecking of a bird forebodes the death of a child in a Mangarevan story (**275**). Tuatai, a chief from Taravai (one of the Gambier Islands), mistreated Puku-tunu. Ahari, Puku-tunu's brother, came from Mangareva to Taravai with an army to avenge his brother. After most of Tuatai's men had been killed, Tuatai, his son, Kai-raruga, and a few of his warriors were surrounded. On the top of a mountain, knowing that they were doomed, they sang a chant about the imminent death of Tuatai, and about the kingfisher[32] that was going to strike Kai-raruga on the chest. Once the song was finished, they were indeed all killed, and the kingfisher pecked the child's chest; Kai-raruga died.

Plovers, kingfishers[33] and birds of prey are the most frequent eye- and face-pecking *manu* in Polynesian traditions.[34] In a Tongan narrative, it is a rail that engages in this behaviour – in this instance, after a man's death (**276**). When the Tu'i Tonga Havea was murdered, his body was cut in two. His head and chest floated on the shore, in Tongatapu. A *kalae* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*) came and pecked the face. The name of the

[32] The Mangareva Kingfisher (*Todiramphus gambieri*) became extinct in Mangareva prior to 1922 (Holyoak & Thibault 1984:145). This bird may have been known in Mangarevan as *iikotara* ('the name of a bird' for Tregear [1899:24]) as cognates of this word designate kingfishers in other parts of Polynesia, or as *nganga* (the name of 'the alcyon bird' according to Janeau [1908:28]). The bird, however, is not a kingfisher but a *kotuku* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*) in Janeau (n.d.:55), the manuscript about the history of Mangareva that Janeau copied (in Mangarevan with a French translation) for the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts in Braine-le-Comte and that Laval supposedly closely followed in his *Mangareva, l'histoire ancienne d'un peuple polynésien*.

[33] In a Samoan tradition (from Savai'i), a *ti'otala* (Flat-billed Kingfisher, *Todiramphus recurvirostris*), hidden at first in an empty coconut shell, is also used by a boy, Lemaluosāmoa, the son of Tigilau, to peck the eyes of the roosters of a crowd of children in a cockfighting contest (Moyle 1981:208-219).

[34] In Māori tradition, Whaitiri's blindness was caused by an 'immense flock of very little birds' that filled her house every night and scratched her eyes with their claws, in the tenth heaven; they were all killed (but for one, Tongo-hiti) by her grandson Tāwhaki, who then restored her sight (Taylor 1855:39). It is a man's penis and testicles that birds (chicks, in this case) go for, however, in a narrative from the Asabano of Papua New Guinea. Iblukanawe cooked sago, and wanted to mix an egg with sago flour. So, he picked an egg of the Northern Cassowary (*Casuarius unappendiculatus*) and broke it, but inside a chick jumped out and pecked the man's penis and testicles, before running away. He chased after the bird, but the bird escaped. The same thing happened with a chick jumping out of an egg of the Dwarf Cassowary (*Casuarius bennetti*), and again, with an egg of the Collared Brushturkey (*Talegalla jobiensis*) and of the Red-billed Brushturkey (*Talegalla cuvieri*). An angry Iblukanawe prophesied where (the lowlands or the mountains) each of these four birds would live, and who (men and/or women) would eat them. In the end, as he had no eggs left, he used his own phlegm to mix with his sago (Lohmann 2000:96-97).

beach, Houma-kalae, which means ‘point of land of the *kalae*’ (Gifford 1923:105), comes from this incident.[35]

Other attacks

Birds can desecrate a man’s head by brushing against it or pulling his hair, as in the Hawaiian story of Niheu and the *kōlea* (**156**, see VIII-3). In another Hawaiian tradition, a giant bird attacks a canoe by vomiting over it to sink it – but without success (**277**). After an argument with his brother Lono-pele over the death of their sons, the high priest Paao decided to emigrate from Sāmoa to some other island with a party of 38 people. As their canoes left the island, Lono-pele sent a violent storm to destroy them, but they were protected by two supernatural fish. He then sent Kiha-haka-iwa-i-na-pali, a giant bird, to sink the canoes by vomiting over them. However, the people covered the canoes with mats just in time, and were thus saved. They eventually landed in Puna, on the island of Hawai‘i.

Another giant bird attacks a canoe in a Tahitian tradition (**114**). An *‘ōtu‘u* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*) named ‘Ōtu‘u-ha‘a-mana-a-Ta‘aroa lived on the island of Hiti-Tautau-Mai (Moruroa). When the *ari‘i* Tū-i-hiti approached the atoll, the bird flew to his canoe and started pecking furiously at the bow. But when Tū-i-hiti revealed his name and ordered the bird to let him pass, the *‘ōtu‘u* flew back to his lagoon in search of fish. Later, the same thing happened when other canoes, including that of Rata, passed by.

A bird tears out a man’s liver in a Hawaiian narrative (**278**). Lono, a chief of Hawai‘i, was an expert in healing remedies who had been given his powers and knowledge by the god Kamaka. The god Kalae kept trying to kill a man named Milu, a chief of Waipi‘o, by making him sick. Lono healed him from his sickness caused by the god, and told him to build a house and stay inside for a while, or he would be in great danger. If he left his house after hearing people making noise outside, he would die. After a while, a great bird appeared in the sky. The people shouted when he passed over their heads. Milu, becoming tired of that great noise, pushed aside the *ti* (*Cordyline fruticosa*) leaves of his house to look outside. At that moment, the great bird swooped down to the house, plunged his claw under Milu’s arm, and tore out the man’s liver. Lono then ran after the bird, who flew away swiftly and dashed into a pit, where the man’s blood was left on some stones. When Lono came upon

[35] The Samoan *sega* (Blue-crowned Lorikeet, *Vini australis*) also fed on the body of his dead master, whom he had been buried alive with (**11**, see VIII-3).

the stones, he rubbed the blood on a piece of tapa cloth, then went back to Milu, who was almost dead. With that blood-covered cloth and some medicine poured into the wound, Lono healed Milu. Since then the place where the bird hid Milu's liver has been called Ke-ake-o-Milu ('The-liver-of-Milu').

Lethal bird attacks also occur in a few stories.[36] In two versions of the story of Hina and her brother Rupe (Polynesian Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula aurorae*), from Tupuaʻi and the Tuamotu, the bird, after helping her give birth, avenges his sister (because she has been mistreated, see VIII-1) by casting all the people of the island where the abuse occurred into the ocean. In the first version, Hina asked Rupe to carry Tinirau's people and then herself to their home country (**181**). Rupe obliged her; however, he shook down Tinirau's people travelling on his back and wings into the ocean, and all were killed. When Rupe returned to Hina, he told his sister that the people had arrived safely, but again he took people on his back and wings only to cast them down into the ocean. He did this three times until no one from Tinirau's people was left alive. Finally, Rupe carried Hina on his back, and when she saw all the bodies floating on the surface of the sea, she asked him why he had done such a thing. Rupe replied that those people had wronged her by shutting her away in a house and not coming to her help when she was in labour: he was angry with them, therefore he killed them all. In the Tuamotuan version, it is Hina who begs Te Rupe to go to the island of women and drown all the women there because they mistreated her (**181A**). When Te Rupe got there, he offered the women to take them to a country with an abundance of food, so the women agreed to go. Some of them got on his back and wings, but Te Rupe cast them down into the ocean. He did this several times until no one from that island was left alive.

A Māori tradition tells of a kicking *moa* (New Zealand moa, Dinornithiformes) (**223**).[37] A man named Apa came upon a *moa* on the western side of Pūtauaki (Mount Edgecumbe). *Moa* were creatures that lived on air; they were always standing on one leg and holding the other one up (*pēpeke*),[38] with their mouth open (*hāmama*), feeding on the wind. Apa struck the leg that the *moa* was standing on, but was kicked by the bird's drawn up leg, fell down

[36] Traditions about giant man-eating birds that eventually get killed will be dealt with in the last section of this chapter.

[37] For another version of this story, in which the *moa* is not a deadly bird but a coveted pet, see VIII-3.

[38] Taylor (1872:97) was told in 1839 by the people of Waiapu that a very large bird (which he believed to be a *moa*) lived in a cave at the top of Mount Hikurangi, 'guarded by a large lizard', and that he was 'always standing on one leg'.

the cliff, and died. The cliff was thus named Te Takanga-o-Apa ('The-falling-of-Apa'). In another version, Apa survived, but was injured and thus known thereafter as Apa-koki ('Limping-Apa').

Finally, from Sāmoa comes a story in which a female bird eats a woman and her two sons at the request of her nephew – the husband and father of the victims – before eating him too (**279**). Saētānē caught an octopus, cooked it, wrapped it in taro leaves, and hid it in a covered oven in a taro plantation. His wife Saēfafinē found it, and ate it all with her two boys, Pipitū and Pipitala. When Saētānē discovered that the octopus was gone, he sang out to his aunt, an ogress (*sau'ai*) in the shape of a *ve'a* (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*), begging her to come and eat Saēfafinē. Saēfafinē heard the bird screaming as she came. The *ve'a* asked her nephew if she should eat just a leg, or everything; he told her to eat the head first. The bird ate the woman's head, then an arm. Pipitū sang out to his father, begging him to spare his life, but Saētānē asked the *ve'a* to eat him too – so she did. Pipitala then offered to go and catch an octopus for his father, but Saētānē replied that it was impossible: he would be eaten too. But when his wife and children had all been devoured, Saētānē cried, and asked the *ve'a* to restore Saēfafinē to life. However, she ate him instead.

A human, evil being or spirit turns into a deadly bird

Women may turn into birds to kill men. A Māori tradition tells of a cannibal woman who transforms into a bird to follow her fleeing husband on the ocean, but dies after ingesting a hot stone (**280**). Uta feared that his wife Houmea might swallow him and their two children alive, so one day he sailed away with them. When Houmea returned to the village after fetching some water, she spotted the canoe far off on the horizon. She walked to the tidal bank and entered a cormorant (for Colenso, *Graculus varius*, which is the Australian Pied Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax varius*, or *kāruhiruhi*). Before the bird reached the canoe, the two children hid Uta under its platform. Houmea opened her mouth wide, and the children gave her some roasted fish, but she was still hungry and asked for more food. They then used a pair of wooden tongs to fling a big hot stone into her mouth.[39] She swallowed it and died, but cormorants are her offspring.

[39] For Colenso, this story shows that Māori 'deep-sea fishing canoes also carried a fire-place, and had fires and heated stones used for roasting fish'. Death by feeding hot stones is a widespread motif in Polynesia, particularly in stories of escape from cannibal women (Beckwith 1970:195). *Moa* (New Zealand moa,

Haumea and her husband Tagaroa-mea, one of the three creator gods, had eight sons in a Mangarevan cognate of this story (**280A**). Tagaroa gave his wife some kava when she was pregnant with their son Tu, to appease her and distract her from her craving for human flesh. Tagaroa took another wife, the young Toa-tāne (Tāne's daughter), and Haumea took another husband, Pia, with whom she had another eight children. One day, Haumea got angry with Pia, and decided to kill him. To save their father, the eight children devised a plan to go sailing to another island and hide their father in the canoe, wrapped up in a sail. They told their mother that it was just the trunk of a banana tree. When the canoe sailed away, Haumea returned home to murder Pia, but she could not find her husband, so she suspected that the tree trunk might have been him. To catch up with the canoe, Haumea then transformed herself into a bird. She reached the back of the canoe, but her children gave her some kava that they had been grinding. She became intoxicated, fell into the sea, and drowned.[40]

A goddess assumes the form of a bird in a Mungiki tradition – in this case, she manages to kill a man (**281**). The sky goddess Nguatupu'a[41] incarnated herself as a *katongua* (MacKinlay's Cuckoo-Dove, *Macropygia mackinlayi*). When Hu'aitebaka'eha went to the forest to snare flying foxes and climbed up a rope to catch one, the bird cut the rope, and the poor man fell down into a hole. The *katongua* called out, 'He has fallen! He has fallen!' The man cursed Nguatupu'a, then died.[42] Two Mugaba stories also tell of a female trickster who turns into a bird (**282**). In the first one, Taheta'u and his brothers were priest assistants at a temple. One day, they all dreamt that Baabenga (a female trickster) came and sang a song. But when they woke up, only the *ligho* (Pacific Kingfisher, *Todiramphus sacer*) was singing:

Dinornithiformes) were also thought to swallow hot stones thrown at them by people in order to kill them (Best 1977:189).

[40] From the heavens, Tagaroa then saw the dismembered body floating on the water, and took pity on his first wife, so he gathered her sexual organs, which turned into another woman, who bore him a son. Another god took the chest, and Tagaroa took the remainder of the body. Again, two women were formed, who bore two sons. In another Mangarevan version, Pia was concealed by his sons in a bundle of brushwood. Haumea turned into a *kena* (Red-footed Booby, *Sula sula*), and alighted on the stern of the canoe. The sons gave her poisonous kava, which killed her; she fell into the sea, and they returned to the shore.

[41] According to Kuschel, this goddess was regarded as 'extremely dangerous'.

[42] In a story from Hiva Oa, another killer god (regarded with 'esteem and reverence' by the Marquesans) takes the shape of a bird. Tohe-tika, born at two months in Atuona from his mother's ear (or from under her armpit), made his way up the valley to live with the gods in a sacred place, Pō-au. After three months, he appeared to his mother in her sleep, asking her to bring him a fish and a ripe breadfruit. The next morning, she thus sent her two brothers with the fish and the breadfruit to the sacred place where Tohe-tika lived. The two men noticed a large bird flying near them in the valley, and threw stones at him. They then rested on a stump and ate up the food. The bird (i.e., Tohe-tika) transformed himself into a man and cut off their heads. Two brothers were sent on the same journey three days later, but they met with the same fate (Handy 1930:107-108).

Baabenga had taken the form of that bird. Later that day, they ate fish that had been poisoned by Baabenga, and they all died but for Taheta‘u. In the second story, Huei tried to kill Baabenga one night with a piece of torch, striking her on the neck, the body and the head. Baabenga was not afraid; she asked him why he was beating her. She then assumed the form of a *kagau* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*), cried, and flew away.

Another Mugaba narrative features a *kagau* as the deadly embodiment of a woman (**283**). A man and his wife cooked pandanus keys. The woman scooped out the keys for her husband, but he would not let her have any of it, even the outer surface (which is hard and unsavoury). She thus told him that she would not see the dawn. When he found her dead in the morning, he mourned, and cut down their coconut trees.[43] He then went to the shore, got into the water, and walked out to the reef. Looking back, he saw a white *kagau* on the cliff trail, who followed him to the reef. When the bird got close, he recognised his wife. The *kagau* then grabbed him, and they both fell into the sea, and died.

Finally, in two narratives from Aotearoa and Tahiti, it is a man, not a woman, who turns into a bird to kill another man. According to a Ngāti Kahungunu tradition, Pito murdered his brother-in-law Tītapu because the latter had performed the *kawa* (opening ceremony) over his newly-built house without waiting for Pito’s house to be completed (**284**). In her sleep, Tītapu’s wife, Torotorokura, saw the spirit (*wairua*) of her husband in the form of a *kōtuku* (Great Egret, *Ardea alba*) fighting with her brother Pito. She told Pito about her dream, but he dismissed her, saying that spirits did not come back to fight. The next morning, a *kōtuku* was standing on the bargeboard (*ihi*) of the house. Pito seized his spear (*tao*), and the bird flew down to the courtyard (*marae*). Pito threw his spear but missed the bird, who then stabbed him on the forehead with his beak, causing his death.

The Tahitian story of Hura and Pena also features a stabbing heron (**285**). These two friends went to Tūpai in their canoe, but ran out of food. Hura went to Bora Bora to gather provisions, promising to come back after five days. But Hura came back on the seventh day; meanwhile, Pena had died, and his spirit had buried the body. Hura then shared with the spirit the food that he had brought back. During the meal, however, Hura realised that it was only Pena’s spirit. He thus asked Pena to go and fetch some fresh water, and he escaped in his canoe. But when Pena came back, he saw that his friend had left him, so, wild with anger,

[43] In Mugaba, this action was, according to Elbert, ‘an expression of grief’.

he turned into an *ʻōtuʻu* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*), flew to Hura, and stabbed him to death.

3. Birds die

Humans may be killed by birds, but birds too are put to death by people in many Polynesian traditions, mainly for having eaten their food or for having preyed on them, in the case of giant man-eating *manu*.

Birds are punished by death for their actions

A Tongan narrative tells of a bird killed for having eaten plantains from a tree planted by two brothers, Wise Malala and Foolish Malala (**286**). Nineteen days after planting the tree, Foolish Malala discovered that its fruit had all been eaten. The angry brothers then called a meeting of all the birds, but the birds all declared that they were not guilty and that they did not know who the culprit was. However, it appeared that the *misi* (Polynesian Starling, *Aplonis tabuensis*) was absent, because he was sick. He was thus carried to the meeting by the other birds and questioned. He too denied having eaten the fruit of the plantain. But when he was made to defecate, his faeces were full of ripe plantain: the *misi* was thus killed.[44]

In Mungiki, doves kill each other in a fight over food (**287**). That is, according to Kuschel, because on the island 'fruit doves are noted for their jealousy'. The *hingi* (Silver-capped Fruit Dove, *Ptilinopus richardsii*) all gathered to eat their *songo* pudding (made of coconut and grated taro). Another creature came and hid in the house. After the leader of the *hingi* had made sure that all the males, all the females and all the young had been well served, the creature jumped down on the leader, killed him, and ate his pudding. Then all the *hingi* asked who the greedy one was, and they fought with each other, until there was only one

[44] In a Samoan cognate of this story, the birds are non-speaking characters (**286A**). Tuivalea (the 'ignorant' one) and Tui-atamai (the 'clever' one) were brothers. Tuivalea regularly checked on the growth of the banana tree. One day, he found that the bananas had been eaten. He told his brother that he had seen a bird there. Tui-atamai asked him to go back and get that bird, a *fuia* (Samoan Starling, *Aplonis atrifusca*), but not eat it. Tui-valea went back to the banana tree and caught the bird. Tuiatamai ate the *fuia*. Some time later, Tuivalea again found that the bananas had been eaten by a bird. Again, his brother told him to go and get that bird, a *lupe* (Pacific Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula pacifica*), but not eat it. Tuiatamai ate the *lupe*. On another visit, Tuivalea discovered that an ogre had been eating the bananas; the two brothers eventually killed the ogre.

bird left alive. That bird ate his pudding, but the creature jumped on him and killed him. Only the creature remained alive.

A West Uvean story is also about food (**288**). A couple left their two little girls alone at home with an abundant supply of food, and went to their plantations. A hawk (probably a Brown Goshawk, *Accipiter fasciatus*, or Swamp Harrier, *Circus approximans*) called at the house, and, learning that the parents would not be back until evening, took advantage of the situation. He suggested that they all sit together and eat, but he devoured all the food, leaving nothing for the girls. He even scratched their arms and bodies with his claws when they tried to pick up a piece of food. When he heard the parents coming back, he flew off. The parents were very angry when they found out what had happened, but they believed that the hawk would not dare come back the next day. So, they left again. However, the hawk did come back, and behaved like the previous day. Upon their return home, the parents decided to take revenge on the bird, and so they shaved their daughters' heads. On his third visit, after eating all the food, the bird was struck by the girls' appearance, and admired their bald and shiny heads. He thus asked them to improve his own appearance in the same way, so the girls plucked out almost all of his feathers. When he heard the parents coming back, he tried to fly away, but he failed to get off the ground, so he started running; but he was caught and killed by the parents. Since that time it has been safe to leave children alone at home.

A heron is killed by two children in a Pileni narrative not for being greedy, but for having insulted their grandmother twice after being denied food twice (**289**). An old woman lived with her two grandchildren. The children went fishing. They put their catch in a dry place on the coral rocks. A *kovā* (Pacific Reef Heron, *Egretta sacra*) came, looked at their fish, and asked the children to give him a *lape* (wrasse, *Thalassoma* sp.). But they told him to go and catch fish himself. The *kovā* then insulted their grandmother by saying that her buttocks were muddy ('te noko o pualaua e pelapela'). The children retorted that they were going to tell her; the *kovā* flew away. They returned home, and their grandmother instructed them to go and extract some sap from a variety of trees the next day, to put the mixture on the rock where the *kovā* stood, and then to go fishing. The children did as they were told. The *kovā* came and alighted where the sap had been placed. Again he asked the children to give him a *lape*, but again they told him to go and catch fish himself. When the *kovā* reiterated the previous day's insults, the children ran towards him with a stick. He tried to fly

away, but was stuck to the rock.[45] As they grabbed him, he promised to help them some day and to bring them something good if they let him go. But they replied that they would beat him to death because he had been insulting their grandmother. They took him home, and the grandmother said that they should kill him, so they beat the *kovā* until he died, before cooking him in an oven.

In a Tokelauan tradition, the killers are not humans, or other birds, but fish. Either the fish want to kill the bird to obtain his beautiful feathers, or to take revenge on him for feeding on them (Huntsman 1980:112). After the *tavake* (White-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon lepturus*, or Red-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon rubricauda*) married Hina (**252A**, see IX-2 for the beginning of this story), Hina had a craving for fresh fish, so the *tavake* went away to catch some fish for them (**290**). He alighted on the top of a rock in a pass and looked for fish. A meeting of the fish was then called, in which the fish decided to kill the *tavake*. The shark was the first fish to volunteer, and explained how it planned to hide in a breaker and suddenly jump up to catch the bird; but the other fish thought that the shark would be spotted. Then the trevally volunteered, but the fish again believed that the bird would see the trevally in the breaker. Finally, the *gagale* (spinytooth parrotfish, *Calotomus spinidens*), an unlikely candidate, offered to kill the bird by floating down like a leaf to the side of the rock where the tail of the bird was turned, before leaping up and grabbing it. The elders agreed to its plan. So the *gagale* floated down to the rock, and grabbed the tail of the *tavake*. The bird then stabbed the fish with his beak, but the *gagale* did not let go and held on tight. Two fish managed to reach the rock to help the *gagale*: the *taotao* (red cornetfish, *Fistularia petimba*) plucked one long tail feather (*velo*), while the butterflyfish (*tifitifi*) plucked the other, killing the *tavake*.[46] The rock where it all happened was named Te Fatu-o-te-tavake. Hina thus lost her husband.[47]

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[45] In the same manner as the heron in the Hiva Oa story of the abduction of Māui's wife (**250**).

[46] *Taotao* and *tifitifi* are 'smaller fish' that 'obtain the prize parts of the Tavake because the tide is out and the larger fish cannot swim through the reef shallows'. The former's acquisition 'accounts for its tail', and the latter's, 'for its backfin' (Huntsman 1980:112).

[47] The *gagale* then plucked the dead bird and distributed the feathers to the skipjack, the kingfish, the trevally, the black jack and the soldierfish; those are the fish that today can be lured with *tavake* feathers. The flesh of the bird was eaten by the blue parrotfish and the yellow parrotfish; those are the fish that today come to bait. But when the moray eel (*puhi*) came, there was no flesh left to eat, so the *gagale* told the *puhi* to eat the bones, and that is why *puhi* are bony. In a Pukapukan cognate of this story, the *tavake* manages to wriggle out of the jaws of the parrotfish and to fly off – but without his tail feathers (**290A**, see V-1).

Birds punish others by committing suicide

Birds can also take their own lives, as in this story from Tendo (Hienghène area), in New Caledonia, in which an owl kills all her offspring before killing herself to punish her husband. The *kniik* (Australasian Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus*) planted a taro on a foothill. Because his wife, the *mwen* (Eastern Barn Owl, *Tyto javanica*), and their six children had nothing to eat, the *mwen* went looking for food. She found the taro, took a bud, boiled it, and gave it to her children. But they were still hungry, so she went back to take more. After a few days, she pulled out the stem. When the *kniik*, who had gone for a walk, returned home, she rebuked him for not providing food for his family. He thus went looking for his taro, but could not find it. The *mwen* said that she did not know that he had planted it. They had an argument, and the *mwen* left with all her children. The *kniik* followed her to a waterfall. She reproached him again, and uttered an incantation. One child leapt and died at the bottom of the waterfall. She uttered it again, and all her children leapt and died one after the other, despite the protests of the *kniik*. He apologised for his actions, but she leapt too and died (Ozanne-Rivierre 1979:108-123).

This story is reminiscent of a Rapan tradition in which a woman behaves in the same way to punish her husband, but for being unfaithful to her rather than for not being a good provider for her family (**291**). Mā‘ata and her husband Ngoroiteatua had four children, including a baby. Suspecting him of having a mistress, Mā‘ata decided to kill herself and her children. She took them to a big rock at the top of a very high cliff in the north of the island. She played with their hair to put them to sleep, before throwing three of them in the ocean. Ngoroiteatua, who was fishing in his canoe, noticed that she was throwing something from the top of the cliff, so he shouted and asked her what she was doing. She replied that she was throwing *ngoio* (Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*).[48] He then came closer to the cliff, and, promising her that he would stop seeing his mistress, begged Mā‘ata not to throw herself off the cliff. But she did, with her baby. Birds are not characters in the story; however, they are associated with the dying children.[49]

[48] Other versions mention an *‘oi‘oi*, or petrel.

[49] A tradition from Nidula tells of a bird that kills himself to punish the boy that he looked after but who ran away from him. An orphan was carried by a *manubutu* (White-bellied Sea Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucogaster*) to his nest high in a tree. There, the bird nurtured the boy, fetching him fresh fish. As the boy requested more and more things for his comfort, the bird started stealing them from a nearby village, indulging his every whim. Eventually, because he wanted to go and play with the children of the village, the boy asked for a rope to get down from the nest. Whenever the *manubutu* went away to fetch him food, the boy prepared his departure.

A giant man-eating bird is killed by a man or a group of men

Narratives from Tuvalu, Mungiki, the Lau Islands, Tonga and Sāmoa featuring roc-like giant birds were presented in VI-1; those birds lifted up canoes with men in them, or carried a person without their knowledge. Other traditions, from throughout Polynesia, make it clear that these extraordinary *manu* eat humans; but they are all slain in the end.[50]

Te Pouākai is in Māori tradition (Te Waipounamu) a giant bird living on a mountaintop that caught and ate people (**292**). It has been surmised that this bird was the Haast's Eagle (*Hieraaetus moorei*).[51] In some versions of the story, the setting is Te Waipounamu, but in others it is a strange island close to Hawaiki. The names of the man or men who kill him differ from version to version, but the methods that they use to do so are quite similar.

One version has it that Te Hau-o-Tāwera and fifty armed men covered a pool with young *mānuka* trees (*Leptospermum scoparium*), before hiding underneath. Te Hau-o-Tāwera went to lure Te Pouākai from his nest. The bird pursued him to the pool, and his legs became entangled in the *mānuka*. The fifty men then struck him with their spears, and the bird died. Another one says that the *pouākai* seized young children and ate them in his nest. It was decided that a red-haired man (*kōrakorako*) should act as a decoy, while other men lay hidden nearby. The bird attacked the man, but when his claws became entangled in the man's *pōkeka* (rough cape made of undressed flax leaves), the men rushed out and beat the bird to

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One day, the bird returned to an empty nest. He searched for the boy everywhere, and found him after many days. He told the boy to gather firewood to light a large fire so that he could warm himself. However, when it was lit, the bird plunged into the flames, telling the boy reproachfully that he had deceived him by running away from him. The *manubutu* died, and the boy cried bitterly (Young 1991:383-384). For Young, the sea eagle is 'a bird of strong nurturing instincts but with a strong susceptibility to slight and umbrage', and in this story he punishes his son 'with guilty remorse'. Korotangi too commits suicide after being separated from his human companion in Māori tradition (**217**, see VIII-3).

[50] An Ulithian tradition about a man-eating bird features quite different motifs from the Polynesian narratives in this section. A man-eating *kuling* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*) lived in Ponape. He devoured all the people on the island, then moved on to Truk, then to Namonuito, and he ate everyone there too. When he arrived in Pulap, the daughter of the god Pälülop was waiting for him. She gave him some food, which she constantly renewed by magic as he ate it. The grateful bird then taught her the art of navigation: this is how the people of Pulap became expert navigators. The girl hung some food baskets on his neck, but on his way back to Truk he got exhausted, fell into the ocean, and drowned (Lessa 1980:39-41). That the *kuling* should reveal to humankind the secrets of navigation may be, as Lewis (1994:209) pointed out, 'indicative of the importance of birds in Carolinian navigation': 'for the Carolinian navigator the observation of seabirds overshadows all other techniques for homing on islands that are out of sight.'

[51] This extinct bird, the largest eagle known to have existed, 'possibly survived for hundreds of years in the presence of humans but the evidence is inconclusive. There are prehistoric rock drawings in Canterbury and North Ōtago that seem to depict eagles . . . What is certain is that Haast's eagle became extinct after human colonisation because its remains have been found in human midden sites. Some of these bones were used as tools or ornaments' (Tennyson & Martinson 2006:62).

death. Children bones were then found in the nest. In a version from Te Tai Poutini (South Island's West Coast), the bird is named Pou-a-Hawaiki. After a hunting party failed to come home, people saw a giant bird snatch a man and carry him off to a hilltop. Pukerehu broke one wing of Pou-a-Hawaiki with his spear, and then killed him as he swooped down to him in a lagoon's waters. The mate of the bird then flew down, but was killed in the same manner. Pukerehu climbed up to the bird's nest on a hilltop, where he found human bones. He also found two chicks in the nest, which he slaughtered.

In two versions that do not take place in Te Waipounamu, the *pouākai* is killed after two men build a house in which the bird gets stuck. One of them has it that Pungarehu and Koko-muka-hau-nei from Hawaiki went out fishing and landed on the island of the Aitanga-a-nuku-mai-tore, a people that only ate raw food. The *pouākai* was a man-eating bird (*he manu kai tangata*) on the island, who caught people when they went to fetch water. The two men built a house with one window, at which they sat. The bird flew towards them, Pungarehu struck his beak with an axe before breaking one wing, then the other, and the bird died. The two men then explored the cave that the bird inhabited, which was littered with human bones. Feeling homesick, they returned to their island.

The other version says that Te Oripāroa, his brother Manini-pounamu and their companions were stranded on an island where an old woman (*ruahine*) lived. She only ate raw food, and all her people had been eaten by Pouākai. Each wing of the bird measured one *kumi*, or ten fathoms (18 metres). The bird lived at the 'tenth row of hills in Hawaiki' (*ngā pae tuangahuru o Hawaiki*). The *ruahine* told them that when he saw a human, he would stretch one wing to catch him. Te Oripāroa and his companions built a house whose sides were made of trees growing in the ground. Manini-pounamu, the fastest runner among them, set off, and when he reached the fourth ridge of hills, he saw the bird catch fish, and he shouted. The bird rushed towards him, but Manini ran back towards the house with the bird close behind him. Manini rushed into the house; Pouākai stretched his wings and thrust them into the house to knock it down. But the house did not collapse, and the men cut off his wings, then his head. When they cut his stomach, they found greenstone (*pounamu*) and the bones of dead people (*te iwi tūpāpaku*) in it.[52]

[52] Moriori also had a tradition about a man-eating bird of prey. The twins of Tamatea were devoured by a *kāhu* (Swamp Harrier, *Circus approximans*). Tamatea hit the bird with an axe, and cut him into two pieces (Shand 1896a:203,206). As for the Moriori traditions about the *poua*, an enormous bird that lived in Rēkohu, Tregear (1889:78), who believed the name *poua* to be related to the Māori *pouākai*, argued that the *poua* was probably

Most of the *pouākai* traditions have in common the cutting of one wing of the bird, then of the other, as modus operandi, and the discovery of human bones at the end. They share the former motif with the Hawaiian traditions about Halulu,[53] another *manu ʻai kanaka*, or man-eating bird (**293**). Halulu was a cousin of the queen Na-maka-o-kahaʻi. One day, his wings obscured the sun, and he took a man named Aukele-nui-a-iku by the head. He carried him up to a cliff. He lived in a cave in the side of that cliff. There were already four people there, ready to be eaten by Halulu. They told Aukele that Halulu was going to kill him and eat him up. Halulu would catch two men with his right wing and devour them, then catch another two men with his left wing and eat them. But Aukele showed the men where to position themselves in the cave. When Halulu came and snatched the first two men, Aukele cut his right wing with an axe. When his left wing reached into the cave, Aukele cut it off, and it was thrown into a fire. Then Halulu's beak reached into the cave, and was cut off. Halulu was killed, and Aukele plucked some feathers from his forehead before throwing them into the air. They happened to fall before Na-maka-o-kahaʻi, who recognised them: she thus understood that her cousin had been killed. Halulu was cut up and roasted, and eaten up by the five men. Then the bird Kiwaha, Halulu's mate, who was also in the cave, gave Aukele a rainbow to get down to the bottom of the cliff.[54]

Halulu's species is not specified, and the identification of the *pouākai* with the Haast's Eagle is only speculative,[55] but the other man-eating *manu* appearing in Polynesian narratives belong to identified species. A Tongan story tells of a giant man-eating *moa* (Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*) bigger than a house (**30**). Mauiatalaga and his son Mauikisikisi encountered him in ʻEua. Mauikisikisi threw a stone at the *moa* but missed him, and the *moa* flew away towards Tongatapu. He threw another stone, which this time hit the bird's leg and wing. The *moa* fell into the sea, swam away with the wing and the leg that were not injured,

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a very large ratite rather than a giant flying bird, because according to tradition Moriori had driven the last surviving birds into Te Whanga Lagoon, where they drowned.

[53] Beckwith (1970:496) reported that Halulu is 'the name of an ancient heiau situated on the coast of Kaunolu district on the island of Lanai and the man-devouring nature of the bird Halulu may refer to the human sacrifices demanded by the deity of the heiau'.

[54] In another version, Halulu's victims are not in a cave in the side of a cliff but in a hole-like valley. Halulu would perch on a tree on the edge of the precipice and let down his wing to brush against the floor of the valley and catch the victims who lay on the ground. But the men were taught by a man named Kukali to make knives and hatchets. They cut off the bird's wings, then his legs, and killed Halulu. They all escaped, then set fire to the body of the bird. However, two of Halulu's breast feathers flew off to his sister.

[55] In Mangareva, the *gahoa* was 'a bird resembling an eagle, which is said to carry off human beings' (Tregear 1899:15), but no narrative about the *gahoa* seems to have been collected.

but later died on a beach in Tongatapu (another version says that the *moa* started to scratch the ground and pushed his head forward to devour the two men before they threw stones at him).

In a Tokelauan narrative, the man-eating *manu* is a *veka* (Buff-banded Rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*) (**294**). As Huntsman (1980:113) observed, there is no bird called *veka* living in Tokelau, and 'Tokelauans seem not to know what it means – except it is obviously a bird'; however, Buff-banded Rails (*ve'a*) are found in nearby Sāmoa. Tāgulu ('Rumbling Thunder'), Fāititili ('Cracking Thunder') and Uila ('Lightning') were brothers. They lived with their mother Nea. The *veka* had the appearance of an ogre (*hāuai*). While the boys were fishing, the *veka* came to their house and asked Nea where they were. He said that he would eat Nea and her children upon their return at sunset. Tāgulu came home and saw his mother crying; she told him what had happened. Fāititili, and then Uila, came back home. The brothers discussed how they would go about killing the *veka*. Tāgulu went to the outer reef and stood there, shouting out to the *veka*. He raised his stick to strike a blow, but was killed when the *veka* swung down his wing. The same happened to Fāititili.[56] When the *veka* approached Uila, Uila waited for the bird to be close enough, and then suddenly flashed the lightning. The eyes of the *veka* blinked, and Uila struck his wing with a stick, breaking it: the *veka* was dead.[57]

Gānivatu (Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus*) is the man-eating bird in a Fijian narrative (**115**). In the land of the gods, the god Rokoua gave his sister Tutuwathiwathi in marriage to the god Okova, but as she accompanied her husband to the reef she was seized and carried away by a huge bird, Gānivatu (or Ngutulei).[58] Okova and Rokoua set off in their canoe to find her, and when they reached the Yasawa Islands they were directed to a cave in Sawa-i-Lau. The bird was not in his cave, but they found Tutuwathiwathi's little finger there, which was proof that she had been devoured by the bird. After a while the bird returned to the cave, his shadow covering the face of the sun. He was carrying five turtles in his beak and ten porpoises in his talons. As the bird began to eat the creatures in his cave, Okova

[56] 'According to other tellers, the older boys are not killed; they faint from fear or are only injured' (Huntsman 1980:114).

[57] Two other storytellers' narratives continue beyond the death of the bird. Uila plucked and cooked the *veka*, and was therefore made the eldest by Nea. Hence the observation that 'first the lightning flashes, then the thunder cracks sharply, finally the thunder gently rumbles away' (Huntsman 1980:114).

[58] *Ngutulei*, or *gutulei*, is a booby (*Sula* sp.) in Tongan, East Futunan and East Uvean.

prayed to the gods to cause the wind to blow. The wind spread out the tail of the bird, and Rokoua speared and killed him. Okova and Rokoua then took out a feather, which they used as a sail for their canoe, and they sailed back home after throwing the dead bird into the sea (which caused a flood).

A Pacific Reef Heron (*Egretta sacra*) appears as a man-eating bird in three narratives from Tokelau, Takū and the Tuamotu. The first one was presented in IX-2: two brothers, Filo and Mea, killed the *matuku* that had abducted their sister Sina by striking him at the same time from above and from below as he was drinking from a coconut shell (**251**). The second one, from Takū, also tells of a deadly heron (*heri*) (**295**). Temusē, the son of the *ariki*, and his men were swallowed by a shark (*manō*), but Temusē kindled a fire inside the shark's stomach, and the men extracted themselves from its stomach. On another occasion they were swallowed by a giant clam (*nakohu*), but again Temusē saved himself and his men by cutting its hinge muscle with a knife to make it open. Later, two canoes failed to return after a fishing expedition on the reef, so Temusē and his men left in a third canoe to find them. They came upon a *heri* lying in wait at a passage. The bird would kill people there, put their heads on top of his house, and eat their bodies. The *heri* shouted out to the men that it was their time to die, but Temusē replied that he had been eaten by a shark and by a clam before, and could not be killed. Temusē and the bird cried out to each other, then the bird came down to catch Temusē, but he struck the *heri* dead with his paddle. He and his men then went to the bird's island, where they saw all the heads of the bird's victims, and upon returning home, they told everyone to go and fetch their dead sons' heads.[59]

In a Tuamotuan version of the Rata cycle, Rata's parents, Vahie-roa and Tahiti-toʻerau, from Papenoʻo (in Tahiti), were attacked while fishing by torchlight on the reef by a bird,

[59] Another Takū tradition is reminiscent of both the Tuvaluan story of the *kailopa* bird (**109**, see VI-1) and the story of the *heri*. Every morning, men went fishing on the reef in their canoes, but they would never return in the afternoon, until one day only two men were left alive, Te Laki and his younger brother Te Anake (**296**). They set out in their canoe to find out what had happened to all those people. A big bird, the *parara*, blotting out the whole sun, came down; they hid in the canoe, and the bird lifted it up and took it to his house in the sky made of clouds. He looked for the two men in the canoe, but could not find them, so he went to sleep. That night, Te Laki and Te Anake tied their canoe to a feather under the bird's wing. In the morning, when the *parara* took flight, that feather was pulled out, and he went down. When the two men woke up, they looked around, and saw the canoes whose crew had been killed by the bird – his nest was made up of all the canoes. He had eaten the people and left the bones there (all the heads had been discarded and had gone as far as the clouds on the horizon). The two brothers climbed on top of the feather, rode it as it came down, and arrived down below. Later, they parted ways and disappeared, Te Laki to the northwest, and Te Anake to the southeast, thus giving their names to the northwest and southeast trade winds, respectively. The *parara*, or *pallaa*, is a 'large, black, non-indigenous bird of prey: sea eagle' (Moyle 2011:236); it may be the Stanford's Sea Eagle (*Haliaeetus sanfordi*) (Hadden, pers. comm.).

Mātuʻu-taʻotaʻo (ʻVery-dark-*mātuʻu*ʼ),[60] one of the *ʻaito* of Puna, *ariʻi* of Makatea (**114A**). The bird swallowed Vahie-roa, and carried his wife off to Makatea, where she was hung upside down on the *fata mihamiha* (altar for offerings) of Puna's daughter. Rata was raised by his grandfather ʻUi. He later made a canoe to go and find his parents. On their way to Makatea, Rata and his men vanquished all of Puna's *ʻaito* (which were monsters of the sea), before encountering Mātuʻu-taʻotaʻo. Rata struck the bird with his spear, and cut off one wing; the bird could still fly and attacked him again, but Rata struck the other wing, killing him. The bird was taken into the canoe, and from his mouth the bones of Vahie-roa's head fell out. The bird was then eaten up, and his feathers were used to adorn (*faʻaʻunaʻuna*) the canoe (in the end Rata killed Puna, rescued his mother, took Puna's daughter as his wife, and returned home). In a Tahitian version of this story, when Rata ran into Matutu-taʻotaʻo, he hid in the water, and threw his spear out of the ocean to break the bird's right wing (**114**). The bird tried to kill Rata, but spun around on his axis and fell; Rata then broke his other wing with his spear. Matutu-taʻotaʻo vomited Vahie-roa's head, then Rata slew him. Both of his wings were set up as great sails for the canoe, and his immense shining black feathers were plucked to be fastened on its masts, sails and ropes[61] (when Rata reached Hiti-marama, Puna's island, he killed Puna, rescued his mother, and the island sank forever).

In a Hawaiian story, the giant man-eating bird is a *pueo* (Short-eared Owl, *Asio flammeus*) by the name of Pueo-aliʻi, who regularly killed children and animals in Oʻahu (**297**). Because he was believed by the people to be a *pueo* sacred to the gods, they dared not molest him. However, Kaululaau, an *aliʻi* from Maui, slew the bird with his javelin, then cut off his head and one of his feet, and pulled out four very long feathers from his wings. He demonstrated to the people of Oʻahu and their king that the bird, although resembling a *pueo* from a distance, was no *pueo*, but the spirit of Hilo-a-Lakapu, a chief of Hawaiʻi of *akua* (godly) blood, who had become embodied in a bird when his head was placed on a pole for the birds to feed on after he was slain in battle. After Kaululaau had revealed the truth, the malignant spirit of Hilo left the head of the dead bird.

Finally, Pacific Black Ducks (*Anas superciliosa*) too appear as man-eating *manu* in two stories from Tonga and Pukapuka. Maafu Toka and Maafu Lele were raised by their mother,

[60] According to Stimson (1964:296), in Tuamotuan *mātuku* is an obsolete and poetic synonym of *kōtuku*, the Pacific Reef Heron.

[61] For other uses of a giant bird's feathers, see **109**, **110**, **115** & **296**.

a huge lizard (**298**). After they found their father, Maafu, a great chief of Tongatapu, the two brothers were so mischievous that Maafu decided to get rid of them. He told them to fetch him some water from a particular water hole at midday, but did not mention the huge man-eating *toloa* that lived there. One of them was attacked by the bird as he was standing in the middle of the pond with his coconut shells, but he hit the bird with his fist so violently that he broke his wing. The boys then went back to their father with the dead bird and the water.[62] This Tongan tradition is reminiscent of the Rotuman story of Moea-tikitiki, who was sent by his father on three errands (because his father was sick of his mischievous behaviour and wanted him to die), including the task of cutting bananas in a plantation guarded by two huge *kaläe*, eventually killed by Moea-tikitiki (**23**).[63]

According to a Pukapukan tradition, the culture hero Te Palo heard about a man-eating *koloa*[64] that lived in Witi (Fiji) (**300**). The bird ate all the fish on returning fishing canoes, but when there was no fish, he would eat the fishermen instead. Te Palo decided to kill him. On the first day, he went fishing, and when he returned, the *koloa* came and ate all the fish in his canoe. On the second day, Te Palo made a wooden cover for the bow of his canoe, and put some of the fish that he had caught in the bow. The *koloa* came, and started eating the fish in the stern. But when he reached the bow, Te Palo grabbed the wooden cover and fitted it tightly over the bow to enclose the bird. The enraged *koloa* furiously tried to get out, but eventually exhausted himself. Te Palo then called all the people; they came with sticks and stones and pounded the bird to pieces, before grinding the pieces to dust.

[62] A similar incident then took place with a huge parrotfish (*humu*). Maafu lost patience and asked his sons to go away because of their mischievous conduct. Maafu Toka and Maafu Lele said that they would go up to the sky to live there, taking with them the *toloa* and the *humu*. If their father wished to see them, he would just have to look up on a dark night. Maafu Toka and Maafu Lele thus became the stars of the same names, and Toloa and Humu became two clusters of stars (the Magellanic Clouds, which served as a guide to voyagers).

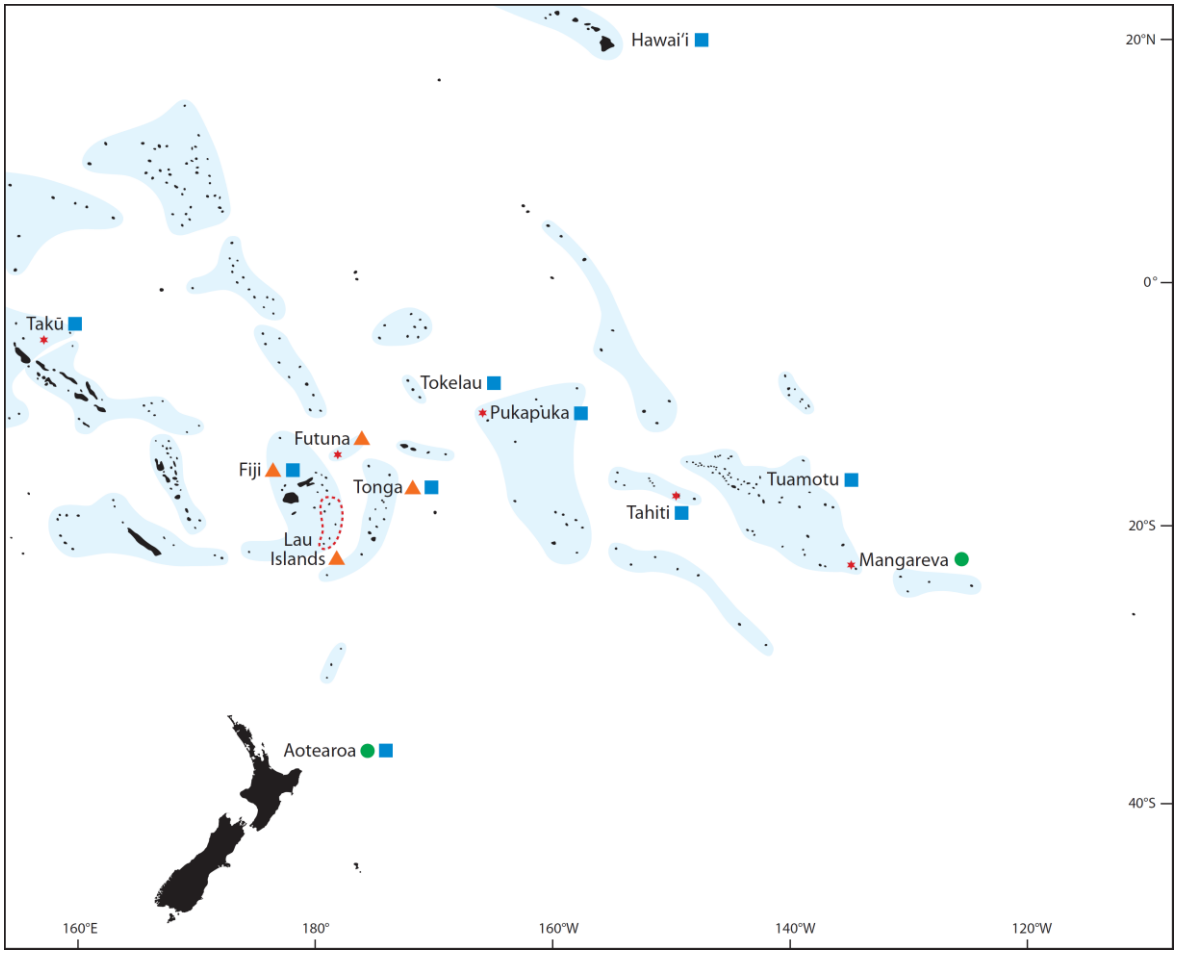
[63] A *kalae* may also be the bird featuring in a Futunan story about a banana- and man-eating *manu* (**299**). A woman told her son to go and check their banana plantation. When he got there, he noticed a bird with a sharp beak and red legs pecking a bunch of ripe bananas. He threw stones at the bird, but the bird did not move. When he got home, he told his mother what had happened. She ordered him to go back and throw stones at the bird again to make him fly away. But when he did, the bird told the boy that he was finished with the bananas and was now going to eat him and his mother. The boy went back home, and mother and son ran away with their belongings. They climbed to the sky on a magic rock; when the bird tried to climb up a ladder to catch them, they cut the ladder, and the bird fell to his death.

[64] *Toloa* is the Pacific Black Duck in Pukapukan, therefore this identification is only speculative.

*

In conclusion, *manu* foretell, reveal and provoke death in many Polynesian narratives. Their attacks, often by pecking, can be deadly, but humans too can turn into killer birds. Stories about giant man-eating *manu*, blotting out the sun and often killed by men by cutting one of their wings, then the other, are found all around Polynesia. In Polynesian traditions, birds not only play a prominent part in the creation of humankind, give birth to humans, or look after newborns – but they also feature conspicuously in those traditions as dramatis personae at the time of Death.

Figure 20. Thanatos stories



▲ A wader pecks at a man's or a baby's face and/or tears out one of his eyes (**44**, **196**, **196A**, **196B**)

● A cannibal woman turns into a bird to follow her fleeing husband on the ocean (**280**, **280A**)

■ A giant man-eating bird is killed by a man or a group of men (**30**, **114**, **114A**, **115**, **251**, **292**, **293**, **294**, **295**, **297**, **298**, **300**)

Conclusion

In traditional Polynesian societies, people developed a deep knowledge of all feathered creatures, and devised a great many stories about them. Polynesian bird stories reveal that *manu* elicited much interest in people, that their habits and behaviour were intimately familiar to Polynesians, and that they were perceived as much more than a food source. The beautiful colours of *manu* had to be accounted for: their origin was explained in a story. The same went for a peculiar behavioural or physical characteristic, a call or cry, a feeding or nesting habit. Their power of flight also made them natural messengers, spies and scouts, as well as carriers of men and women; and owing to their vocalisations, they assumed in the stories responsibility for communicating information to people. Their breeding habits too gave rise to many stories about humans hatching from a bird's egg, human babies cared for by a bird, or birds married to humans. Finally, the strong bill, the very large size, or the aggressive or protective behaviour of some species inspired a great many narratives in which birds attack people.

*

The 300 stories of this thesis, with all their variants, comprise 381 texts. As is shown in Fig. 21, narratives from East Polynesia make up around 54 per cent of those 381 texts, while narratives from West Polynesia represent 27 per cent of the total, and narratives from the Polynesian Outliers, 19 per cent. The figures in Fig. 21 do not necessarily prove that birds featured more prominently in the traditions from some islands than in those from other islands, but rather confirm that historically, more narratives were collected in Aotearoa, Hawai'i and Sāmoa than in any other Polynesian island group, as Kirtley (1971:VI) pointed out. In Australia, 'the number of stories collected for a language group is a reflection of time spent learning about them rather than the number that may exist or have existed' (Tidemann & Whiteside 2010:155) – the same can be said for Polynesia.

Figure 21. Origin of the 381 texts: islands/island groups from which texts were drawn

East Polynesia		**West Polynesia**		**Polynesian Outliers**	
Aotearoa & Rēkohu	72	Sāmoa	23	Mugaba	16
Hawai‘i	34	Tonga	21	Mungiki	15
Cook Islands[1]	24	Fiji & Lau Islands	12	Kapingamarangi	6
Marquesas	21	Tokelau	12	Takū	6
Society Islands	17	Futuna	9	Nukuoro	5
Tuamotu	13	Tuvalu	8	Pileni	5
Mangareva	11	‘Uvea	8	Taumako	3
Rapa Nui	8	Niue	6	West Futuna	3
Austral Islands	5	Rotuma	5	West Uvea	3
				Others[2]	10
TOTAL	**205**	TOTAL	**104**	TOTAL	**72**

In many stories, there is no indication of the species that the bird character belongs to. The storyteller may not have mentioned the species, but it is also likely that the collector of the story (or later, its translator or publisher) did not know what particular bird was referred to, for lack of knowledge of either ornithology or the local language; the information was thus regrettably lost. There are also a very few cases in which the Polynesian word for a particular bird in a story cannot be assigned with certainty to a known species. But in most stories, the birds that appear as dramatis personae can be identified to species level. Of the 358 bird species that live or used to live in Polynesia and have or had a Polynesian name (all are listed in Appendix 2), 147 actually appear in the 381 texts contained in the corpus compiled in this thesis.[3]

Among those 147 species, some feature only once or twice, but a few of them appear much more frequently, as is shown in Fig. 22. The Pacific Reef Heron (*Egretta sacra*) and the Pacific Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*) are Oceania’s most widespread landbirds, but

[1] 14 stories from the Southern Cook Islands (7 from Mangaia, 4 from Rarotonga, 2 from Ātiu, 1 from Aitutaki), and 10 stories from the Northern Cook Islands (7 from Pukapuka, 2 from Manihiki, 1 from Rakahanga).

[2] Fewer than 3 stories for each island (Aniwa, Anuta, Emae, Ifira, Luangiua, Nuguria, Nukumanu).

[3] Those two figures (358 and 147) actually include one order (Dinornithiformes) and four genera (*Apteryx*, *Chasiempis*, *Cyanoramphus* and *Moho*). This grouping had to be made because the particular bird belonging to this order or these genera and appearing in the stories cannot be identified to species level.

whereas the first one is the most common bird species in the narratives (31 texts), the second one only appears in 7 texts. The Pacific Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula pacifica*) is the second most common species in the narratives (30 texts),[4] and appears much more frequently than any other pigeon, ground dove or fruit dove. The Pacific Reef Heron and the Pacific Imperial Pigeon, a shorebird and a forest bird, are thus the two species that most engaged the imagination of the Polynesians.

The third most frequent bird species (28 texts) is the only bird among the four commensal animals associated with the dispersal of the Lapita culture (see I-3): the Red Junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*). The most common migratory bird in the stories is the Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) (24 texts); it is much more prevalent in the narratives than tattlers, sandpipers, turnstones, godwits, curlews, or sanderlings.

Two rails are very common in the stories: the Australasian Swamphen (*Porphyrio melanotus*) (24 texts) and the Buff-banded Rail (*Gallirallus philippensis*) (20 texts). Both birds are absent from tropical East Polynesia, unlike the Spotless Crake (*Porzana tabuensis*), which is one of only four species of landbirds shared by West Polynesia and East Polynesia. But, as was noted in V-1, the Spotless Crake, which only plays a part in 3 texts, is a secretive crepuscular bird, which may explain why, despite having a much wider range in Polynesia than the other two rails, this species features so rarely in the narratives.

Two seabirds feature among the ten birds that recur most frequently: the White Tern (*Gygis alba*) and the frigatebird (*Fregata* sp.). The White Tern (17 texts) appears more often than noddies (14) and all the other tern species, maybe because of its conspicuous all-white plumage, whereas frigatebirds (17) are more common than tropicbirds (12) and boobies (10), possibly because of such striking features as their very large size, kleptoparasitic behaviour, and red gular pouch.

Owls, that is, the Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*), the Morepork (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) and the Eastern Barn Owl (*Tyto javanica*), are by far the most frequent birds of prey (20 texts); other raptors present in the stories include harriers (7), falcons (7) and goshawks (5). Kingfishers (16 texts) complete the list of the ten birds that recur most frequently in the narratives; in 9 of those texts, they use their strong beak to peck at someone or something (sometimes with deadly consequences).

[4] Three other species of *Ducula* appear in another 6 texts.

Figure 22. The ten birds that recur most frequently in the narratives

SPECIES OR GROUP OF SPECIES	NUMBER OF TEXTS
Pacific Reef Heron (*Egretta sacra*)	31
Pacific Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula pacifica*)	30
Red Junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*)	28
Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*)	24
Australasian Swamphen (*Porphyrio melanotus*)	24
Buff-banded Rail (*Gallirallus philippensis*)	20
Owls (*Asio flammeus, Ninox novaeseelandiae* & *Tyto javanica*)	20
White Tern (*Gygis alba*)	17
Lesser Frigatebird (*Fregata ariel*) & Great Frigatebird (*Fregata minor*)	17
Kingfishers (*Todiramphus* sp.)	16

In the traditions from tropical East Polynesia (excluding Hawai‘i), the most frequent birds are the Pacific Reef Heron, the Red Junglefowl and the White Tern. In Hawaiian narratives, the most common bird by far is the *pueo* (Short-eared Owl, *Asio flammeus*), followed by the *kōlea* (Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*) and the *‘elepaio* (*Chasiempis* sp.). The absence of the smaller forest birds of Hawai‘i, such as honeyeaters and honeycreepers, in Hawaiian narratives, is particularly striking: only the *‘elepaio* and the *‘i‘iwi* (*Drepanis coccinea*) make an appearance. So is the absence of the *nēnē* (*Branta sandvicensis*), which is the official bird of the state of Hawai‘i, but does not seem to appear in any published Hawaiian story.

Wading birds (*tulī*)[5] and the Pacific Imperial Pigeon (*lupe*) are the most frequent birds in Samoan stories, and the latter is also the most common *manu* in Tongan ones. As for the Polynesian Outliers, whose avifaunas are typical of Melanesia and Micronesia, and not of Polynesia (as was noted in I-1), and whose list of bird species mentioned in the narratives far exceeds those of West Polynesia and tropical East Polynesia (but not that of Aotearoa), the birds that recur most frequently in the narratives are, again, the Pacific Imperial Pigeon and

[5] In Samoan, the Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), the Sanderling (*Calidris alba*), the Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), the Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) and the Wandering Tattler (*Tringa incana*) are all named *tulī*.

the Pacific Reef Heron. Red Junglefowls and Pacific Golden Plovers, however, are only few and far between in the stories from that area, unlike those from the rest of tropical Polynesia.

The avifauna of Aotearoa is quite distinct from that of the rest of Polynesia, as was noted in I-1&2. In Māori stories, it is the *kererū* (New Zealand Pigeon, *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) that predominates, followed by the *tīrairaka* (New Zealand Fantail, *Rhipidura fuliginosa*), the *miromiro* (Tomtit, *Petroica macrocephala*), and cormorants – the first three species being endemic to Aotearoa.

*

Harrison (1956:132-133) argued that 'in the last analysis any study of birds in literature bears more directly upon man than upon birds'. That is because

> Through the centuries, through millions of years, the life of birds has continued unchanged. Allowing for the processes of evolution, the appearance of birds, their habits, and their songs have varied less than the contours of a landscape. Perennially a part of nature's cycle, bird life is still the same – except in the eyes of humankind. This incidental relationship has constantly varied its complexion as men of different ages have sought to fit all nature into their pattern of beliefs.

Johansson (2012:15) also emphasised this timelessness of bird species, as opposed to the vicissitudes of human societies. Stories arise from the interaction between people and birds and from the emotions that the latter elicit in them. As the 300 traditions gathered in this thesis illustrate, Polynesians used *manu* creatively not merely to entertain audiences, but more importantly to express their concerns about life and death, turning them into characters in their rich oral tradition. Birds became 'storytelling material', from which Polynesians created stories about their own concerns with human existence. Birds were thus invested with significance in traditional Polynesian cultures.

Lévi-Strauss (1966:53-54) emphasised that accurately identifying birds (among other living organisms) in oral traditions is not sufficient; one has to 'know the role which each culture gives them within its own system of significances', because those systems do differ from one society to another. Lavondès (1975:421-422), taking a Marquesan example, agreed:

> Il ne suffit pas par exemple de traduire *koao* par « l'oiseau *koao* » ni même par le « *koao* (*Porzana tabuensis*) » . . . Il faut encore apprendre à voir ces espèces animales avec les yeux des Marquisiens eux-mêmes, tenter de les replacer dans

> tout l'univers des représentations et des associations d'idées auquel, pour eux, elles renvoient.[6]

This is because a particular bird species was not randomly selected to become a dramatis persona in a story; bird species are not interchangeable in the traditions. The 300 narratives compiled in this thesis show that the inclusion of a defined species often had to do with the physical or behavioural characteristics of that species, as observed by the Polynesians, which can be linked to important cultural values. In some cases, ornithologists help reveal what those characteristics are; in others, it is the collectors of the stories who, through their patient ethnozoological research in the field, shed light on the significance of a particular species in them.

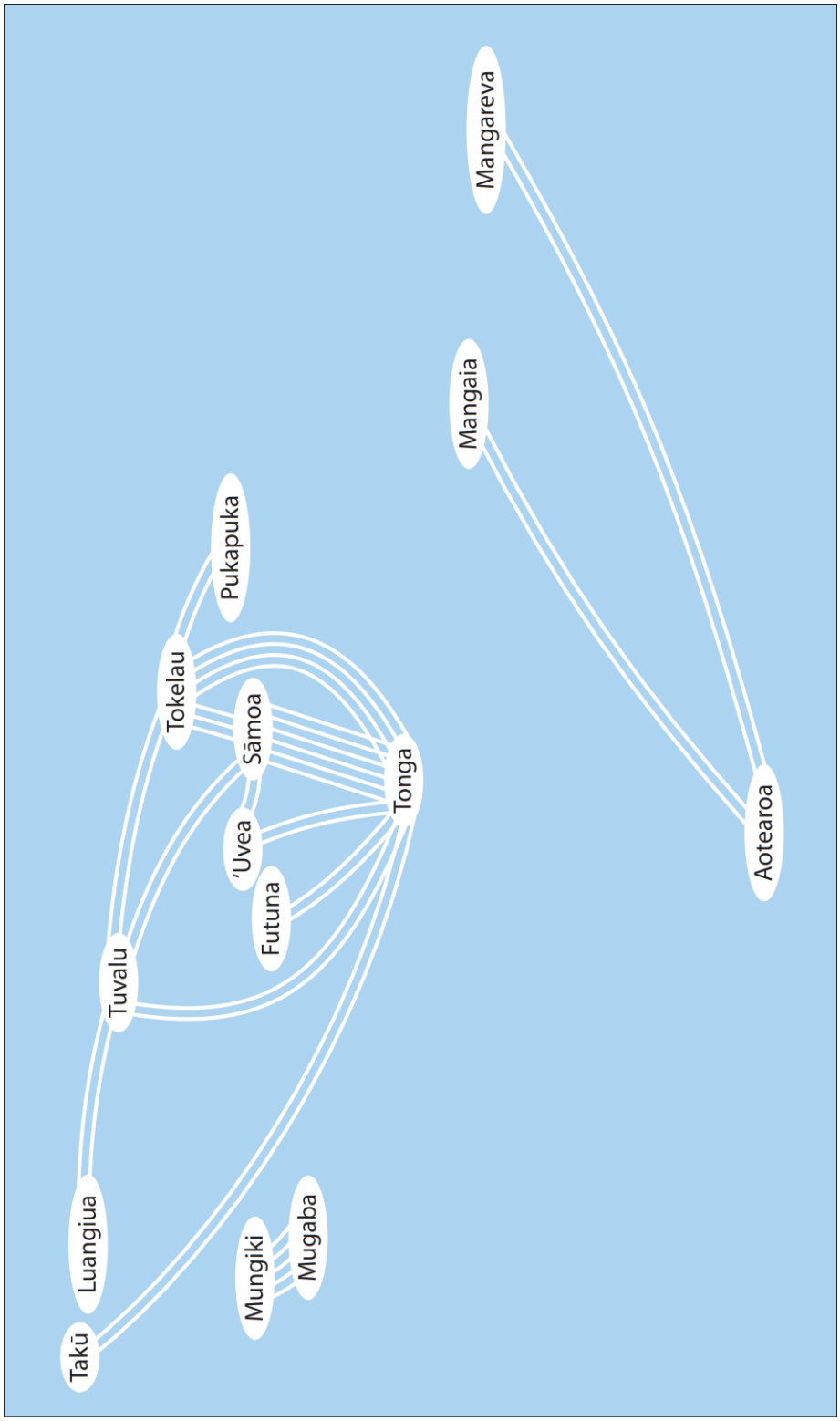
*

The avifauna and the traditional narratives of Polynesia share a few similarities. The most striking one is that the birds and the stories that survive to this day are but a fraction of what used to exist on the Polynesian islands. As a consequence, there are discontinuities in their geographical distribution. The corpus compiled in this thesis shows for example that more or less similar versions of the same bird story can be found on different Polynesian islands, particularly in West Polynesia (Fig. 23), suggesting that the story may have also existed on other nearby islands but was simply never recorded there, or never published. By the same token, the current absence on a given Polynesian island of a species of bird present on nearby islands is probably due to anthropogenic extinction rather than to a failure on the part of that species to colonise that island. Another similarity between birds and narratives lies in the fact that ethnographers and anthropologists have long been trying to salvage Polynesian narratives in the face of the onslaught of Westernisation by recording and publishing them, while ornithologists have been striving to save critically endangered species of birds.

This thesis does not lay any claim to have gathered all available Polynesian stories about *manu*, but does contain most of the published ones. More could be gathered. The Bishop Museum Library and Archives in Honolulu in particular holds manuscripts containing traditions collected by ethnographers on many different Polynesian islands in the 20th

[6] 'It is not sufficient to translate "*koao*" by "the *koao* bird" or even by "*koao* (*Porzana tabuensis*)". One still has to learn how to see these animal species with the eyes of the Marquesans themselves, and to try and put them back in the whole universe of representations and associations of ideas to which they refer for the Marquesans.'

Figure 23. Bird stories shared between Polynesian islands



(A line extending between two islands or island groups represents one story in the corpus which is found on both islands. To ensure readability, this figure does not show when two particular islands only share one story, and excludes the two most widespread bird stories, **70** and **80** – see Fig. 15.)

century; a great many bird stories can probably be found in them. Another potential research area would consist in using techniques such as structural analysis (which is briefly presented in Appendix 3) to analyse some of the 300 stories of the corpus in greater depth, so as to reveal their hidden meanings. Furthermore, if bird stories from other culture areas than Polynesia are compiled, it will be valuable to compare them with Polynesian traditions, and in particular to find out if those stories can be arranged into a framework similar to the one used in this thesis. Feathered creatures have always inspired human imagination – thus the place of the bird in the human mind is, in Polynesia as elsewhere, an almost inexhaustible subject of study.

He manu koa nge au, e taea te rere atu
E taea te hokahoka he parirau mōku?[7]

[7] 'If I were a bird, I could fly away / But how can I fasten wings to myself?' These lines are from a *tangi* (lament) composed by Haruru for her husband Te Kuru-kanga (Whanganui) (Orbell 1977:228; Ngata & Jones 2004-2007: I,344-345).

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[1] Information about editions, or collections and series such as memoir or bulletin numbers (e.g. Bishop Museum Bulletins or Polynesian Society Memoirs), is generally not included in this list of references. Macrons in authors' names do not necessarily appear in the original works but have been added here to conform to current conventions. The use of spacing and capitalisation for non-English titles follows the stylistic usages of the language. It should be noted that the works published by the University of Auckland's Department of Anthropology and included in this list of references are 'working papers'.

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