THE LION AND THE FRIGATE BIRD
VISUAL ENCOUNTERS IN KIRIBATI

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I Certify that

a) except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of myself alone;
b) the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award;
c) the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program;
d) any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged;
e) ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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Brian Eric Gilkes
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SUMMARY
This project-based research asks ‘how might present visual perceptions in Kiribati be engaged with through negotiation with the past?’

The outcome of this exploration is an artist’s book that describes the research process. Its structure is a metaphor for an Oceanic voyage. Its content is a poetic of works and images inspired by the Gibertese *kuna*, a classic form of creative performative oratory.

Drawing on sights from the past and present, and the authors perceptions of cross-cultural visual communications; ethno-archaeological research by immersive fieldwork, conversations and in the archives, implies that from the late eighteenth century the English and I-Kiribati saw each other through the cosmological filters of respective myth-historical pasts. The English are informed directly or indirectly by literature. The I-Kiribati are informed by a cosmology of non-iconic visual signs known by orality and performance. The research suggests that the visual sign system differs from that of written language by increased degree of negotiability, multivocality and multivalency. The turtle-like cosmogonic structure, *Te Bo ma te Maki* (The Darkness and the Cleaving Together) is omnipresent in the maneaba (Sacred House of the People), imagined over a canoe, and that this can be seen as an equivalent to Juri Lotman’s Semiosphere. In placing visual communication within this sphere, dynamic force is attained by the ongoing interchange of differences.

The study has implications for art practice, visual ethnography, visual theory, experiential geography, visual historiography and the psychology of perception.
PROLOGUE

The Story of Mai
‘Going to an outer island?’ queried David Lambourne, People’s Advocate for the Republic of Kiribati. ‘You should take some tobacco to place at the village shrine’.

I asked the taxi driver in one of the three cars on the atoll of Abaiang if I could buy some tobacco and explained my purpose. ‘We don’t do that any more. That’s from the old time’, interrupted an old man, who, with a young woman, accompanied me from the coral strip airport to the village in which I was to stay. I bought the tobacco anyway, from a thatched roadside stall. The old man smiled. ‘The ghosts like to smoke’, the young woman commented.

I asked Daemon, the custodian of the village guest hut, about the shrine. He said he would get ‘the woman’. He didn’t succeed for another day.

I expected she might be one of the village women I had seen, having walked around most of the village, with its retiring inhabitants and furiously snarling dogs.

I had never seen her before, fiftyish, she wore a circular black tattoo on one cheek. This was the only face tattoo I had seen in Kiribati.

She spoke no English. Daemon acted as interpreter. He said her name was Mai. She was the ‘Ibonga’, the keeper of the spirits. The missionaries translated the word as ‘sorcerer’.

We walked to a deserted beach past the north end of the village, past the white washed church, the huts of the sick and the rubbish dump.

Standing on the sand with a dog that usually trotted just behind her, she stood in the waters edge talking quickly toward the sea for several minutes. The only word I understood was ‘Australia’. She threw one of the three pieces of tobacco in to the sea. ‘She has asked the sea spirits to welcome you,’ Daemon said. ‘If they accept you, you are welcome. If you mean harm to the village then you have had it. You must follow her again.’
We followed her back through the village.

When we past the church, the grounds were empty. Beyond the church, the village, the guesthouse, the track became narrow, leading into an old copra grove. No footprints here, no dogs, except for the ibonga’s. The air was stiflingly hot and very still. Fifty metres from the ocean we turned right. The ibonga spoke again. ‘This is the place of the village spirits’. In front of us was a rectangle bordered by stones, about seven metres across. Small boulders enclosed a mound of white stones. The ibonga stood by a large black stone that looked curiously volcanic, which appeared as if it was bursting out of the ground. To her left there were two smaller stones sitting amongst decomposing cut flowers. On the top of the large black stone was a red stone about the size of a goose egg.

Mai indicated we should step inside the rectangle. I felt quite glad Daemon was smoking. I didn’t quite know why.

‘This is the stone of the men’, Mai said. ‘The place of the spirit Naboika’. I was to hear of Nauboika again. Another time, Biribi Bwaate, councillor of Buairiki village on North Tarawa, told me that Nauboika was a man who swam the straight to Abaiang many generations ago, and that the strait was named after him.

Mai then walked to the far side where the red stone rested on the black. ‘This is the stone of the village women, the spirit stone of Nikuao’. She spoke quickly for a minute or so near the stone of the women, and then stood silent for a few seconds. She turned and spoke to me. ‘You may walk through all of the village’ Daemon translated. ‘Nothing will harm you. You may also wish what will come true. You may wish to catch fishes and you will catch them.’ I am letting the whole thing go somewhat over my head; other parts of the translation seem meaningless. Then I thought this was the first and probably the last time I would be granted a wish. Saying nothing, I wished. But not for fish.

‘Do you want to come the rest of the way to hear the spirit story’, said Daemon. ‘You do not have to’.
Between the rectangle of the spirits and the ocean were two deserted huts, just shells of buildings, upright yet with no roofing, nothing else, no belongings.

‘The man who lived there died four months ago’, explained Daemon.

On the beach we took sand and placed it so it stuck to both cheeks. We had been asked to do this before on the lagoon beach. I had seen dancers place sand on their cheeks before they performed.

Mai continued, ‘The woman Nikuao came from this village, she was bathing on that rock and the man Nauboika, he came from North Tarawa and saw her and he swam over. They had three children, two boys and one girl’. On the way back to the village a woman called out from in front of a house and Mai threw the third stick of tobacco to her.

She left us when we returned to the village and we never saw her again.

During the remainder of our stay no dog barked, even if accidentally trodden on.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
There is a story I first heard in the Solomon Islands and later had it repeated from sources as far away as India. It goes something like this.

A western anthropologist was questioning an old lady. ‘What supports the Earth?’ he asked. ‘A turtle’, she replied. ‘And what is under the turtle?’ ‘Another turtle’ she said. ‘And what is under that?’ The old lady was losing patience with the ignorance of the pale questioner. ‘Young man’ she said, ‘it’s turtles all the way down’.

In my attempt to explain the experiences of a day spent with an *ibonga*, I commenced trying to find an explanation for why the dogs no longer barked. Mai, the *ibonga*, had spoken to ancient spirits of the village. If there was to be an explanation, the key was to be found in the past. This might explain how the I-Kiribati seem to have kept much of their traditional knowledge and culture, some of which I had experienced in the sacred *bangota* (shrine) in the forest, despite intrusions of I-Matang (white people from the west). I developed a research question asking how might the past inform my perceptions of the present. As I searched in some of the most remote islands on the planet, and researched the past in the archives, I found the secret was far deeper, and had an origin much more remote, in Deep Time, when the struggle was not between the minds of the people of the Lion and those of the Frigate Bird, but between a turtle the I-Kiribati call Tabakea, that supports the world,\(^1\) and a dancing shark, called Bakoa. This project tells that story.

The I-Matang literature I had read about Kiribati, suggested the old days had long gone, that the I-Kiribati were all devout Christians, and, wherever possible, would join the modern world. I wanted to find the story that, my observations suggested, was not being told.

When I stood in the *bangota* at Tebontebike all I could see were paradoxes. How, in a small village dominated physically by an immaculately kept white church, did all these seemingly traditional rituals exist? When nuns were running a health service in

\(^1\) Although Tabakea has a symbolic significance throughout Kiribati as a supporter of the island world he is mainly significant in the stories of Banaba, a raised coral island, part of Kiribati but to the west of the Gilberts.
the village, why did the women still go to the boua (sacred or highly significant monument) in the shrine in the forest? Why did the dogs no longer bark?

To find the answers, I first needed an overarching question that would focus my research. Before I came to this I needed to move back from my experiences and consider a more general case, by considering other experiences as well as my own.

I started by looking at I-Matang – I-Kiribati encounters since the first days of contact. How had Islanders and Outlanders seen each other? What informed that seeing? What understandings did that seeing give? How did each change the other? Could all this explain what I was experiencing? Much of the research presented in my Artist’s Book and unravelled in this exegesis, is about answering these questions.

In the Artist’s Book I have emphasised the awareness of place, the notions of non-linearity of time and the negotiability of oral performance. In the utilisation of techniques of perception I can directly engage with aspects of visuality.

The project also allows elements of the unexpected to appear. It was only after the visual narrative was assembled that I noticed the recurring dogs in my photographs (quite unintended) and in some historic images. It is instructive to observe under what conditions they did, or did not, bark.²

Difficulties in Ethnographic Research
I was aware of potential difficulties of research in a culture different to my own, both in the present and in the past. The I-Kiribati of the early European encounter period saw the world and their ‘other’ quite differently from today’s I-Kiribati. I view the world through filters of culture, time and, as I would discover, my own myth-history.

It is always difficult to understand how others construct the world. Any knowledge gained will always be partial. The past is even harder. Cultural differences are not only between myself and the Pacific Islanders that I met in this research. The gap is

² Kelly,W 2003 p. 157. Barry Schwartz notes this aspect of surprise: ‘the painter or printmaker discovers, grows and finds things he or she did not know were there.’
also between now and the past. It takes imagination to attempt to understand a nineteenth century colonial official or missionary. In Chapter 2, ‘Methodology’, I explain my approach to this. As an I-Matang from Australia, with no Islander background I came as a Stranger, an Outlander. Such a situation always makes problematic both objectivity and the issue of observation of situations that my presence might affect.

Verbal communication between researcher and researched is problematic, but in my case, was not difficult. The I-Kiribati may believe in spirits, may practice magic and may have secret knowledge, but most speak English and have high school education. Some I spoke to had studied at Oxford or USP or ANU. Some had degrees in anthropology, history or cultural studies. Some had PhDs. Many of my informants were quite aware of the problems of cross-cultural communication and were very willing to help. I was well aware that my informants would withhold some knowledge. Compartmentalisation of knowledge meant that, however willing, the information supplied would always be limited.

Visual ethnographers have expressed concern that behaviour is modified by the presence of the outsider. This is my interest, rather than my concern. I am not an anthropologist attempting to study another culture as if I was not there, but am researching how different cultures see each other, what informs the interpretation of that seeing and what consequences that has. In the bangota at Tebontebike the performance was constructed specifically for me, and this was quite transparent.

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3 Pink,S 2006, pp 1-17.
4 As Malinowski did in his pioneering of extensive immersive ethnography in the Trobiands with some success or Mead did in a much shorter study in Samoa, with highly problematic results. Malinowski’s ‘Argonauts of the Western Pacific’ became a classic work despite Malinowski’s prejudices against the Trobianders. The positive contribution of Malinowski’s work can be read in Firth, R 1957. Firth’s own work in Tikopea is perhaps a stronger work for the author’s greater affinity with his subjects. See Firth, R 1965. Mead became famous for her writings on the sexuality of young girls in Samoa and influenced American anthropology, but Freeman (Freeman, D 2001) suggests Mead’s conclusions are incorrect as she was deliberately provided with false information. I was informed by a friend, Wanjuk Marika of the Rirratjini of Yirrkala (East Arnhem Land), in 1969, that his people often amused themselves by making up stories to tell eager anthropologists.
Most discussion of subjectivity is directed at so called ‘western’ cultures. I believed there must be an awareness of indigenous agency. The effect of the intruder on the intruded is seldom mentioned, which seems to me to be incredibly arrogant and demonstrably false.  

In the exegesis to follow I am aware that my degree of subjectivity must always influence conclusions. In approaching I-Kiribati seeing in the present, I could talk extensively with the people themselves. To see how their ancestors saw the Strangers of the past, when there is little, even in the oral records, is extremely difficult. Here the gaps are biggest and the task hardest. Here I look for the clues of indigenous agency in images from the Strangers and in their writings.

It is not only my view of the I-Kiribati that is filtered by my cosmology, but that of the Strangers that came in the past. In many ways their interpretations of their seeing is also alien to mine. I have tried to read the descriptions of, for instance, young nineteenth Century French nuns, as best I can, to see through their eyes. I believe, after reading hundreds of pages of diaries and reports, that I can glimpse something of how they interpreted the sights that confronted them in a strange land. I see the task as little different from attempting to see how any other human might see.

**Ethics of Ethnology**

Dan Sperber notes that there are ethical dilemmas to be considered. ‘Anthropologists have neither the authority nor the competence to act as spokesmen for the people who have tolerated their presence.’ Sperber continues - ‘and even less to give the world professional guidance in moral or professional matters’. I trust I have not even been tempted to do so. The warning is still instructive, for I have been aware that the observations of the archive and the outcomes of encounters are often motivated by the desire to change others according to the outsider’s prescriptions. How much am I being ethnocentric in considering contact with ‘the other’? What prescriptions of

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5 Ethnographic film-maker, David MacDougall believes the presence of the camera does modify the situation, and that that modification is positive in that the observed can participate and is not just to be presented as the viewer/cameraperson/intruder intends, that is awareness of the outsider promotes agency.


morality, ethics and law were imposed, in the past, by I-Kiribati people and by I-Matang on the other? Is it not the imposition of the European on the non-European, which seems to be the predominant reflexive concern of Euro-centric authors? The encounter is a two-way situation.

**Different Paths of Communication**

It became apparent that many I-Kiribati did not consider the I-Matang very important at all. They believed they would leave, as other visitors had, but while they were around, one would be sensible to extract the maximum benefit available.

In the 19th century, Western Europeans that manipulated power relationships could write. This was how most of their stories; traditional knowledge, laws and religion were communicated. The I-Kiribati utilise orality and the performance of dance, ritual and magic. I would experience all of these. In doing so I became interested in the way performance communicates knowledge, and how knowledge is informed by non-iconic visual metaphors of place and space. By non-iconic I use the Peircian definitions where signs may be totally symbolic, with no physical resemblance or connection with their meaning. As soon as my interest moved into tropes of visuality, the world of the I-Matang faded quickly as I went back to the first voyages, the ancestral spirits and to the beginning of the world.

How islanders and outlanders saw each other is important, as they might provide the information about the connections between past and present. The deeper understanding of how knowledge systems affect the experience of encounter and its outcomes may point to better understanding of different cultures leading to mutual understanding and respect.

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7 Uriam, K 1995, p. 65. An alternative view, that the coming of I-Matang finished the old traditions has been expressed by some unimane (old men).

8 Macdonald, B 1971, p.78. In England, education and thus literacy was essentially restricted to the upper classes until compulsory education was legislated for in 1891 (Scotland 1872). It was feared education would make the workers restless, an argument used by Grimble in the 1920’s in the GEIC to restrict schooling to the islanders to the very basic.

How I-Matang and I-Kiribati interpret visual metaphors in their perceptions of events, performances, places and spaces, and how these interpretations are communicated in written words, or by orality and performance, determines beliefs. Beliefs construct identity, and thus the position from which the observations of the world are interpreted. In looking at other peoples, across the interfaces of culture, these interpretations contribute towards the outcomes of the encounter situation.

The Artist’s Book is the outcome of my research. It makes use of my findings about I-Kiribati cosmology to address the enigmas and paradoxes of encounter. It investigates the relationships between culture, knowledge, visuality and performance. My images from the present and the written text indicate the persistence and adaptation of I-Kiribati culture in the face of persistent pressures by traders, missionaries, colonial bureaucrats and other outsiders for the I-Kiribati to conform to the cultural norms and beliefs of the intruders.

The narrative content in my Book reflects on my research voyage. Its structure uses what I know of I-Kiribati cognitive and communication structures, its epistemology and its historiography.\textsuperscript{10}

My research methodology follows ethnographic fieldwork practice and the study of archival and historical documents.\textsuperscript{11} The reader in images and in stories of encounter can share the process of research. This is a process I, as a visual artist, find much more appropriate than to attempt to make pictures out of words alone.

Inga Clendinnen notes the dangers and the possibilities of history and anthropology. ‘Historians’ main occupational hazard is being culture insensitive, anthropologists’ is insensitivity to temporal change. Both can be insensitive to the reciprocating dynamic between action and context. Together however they are formidable, and in my view offer the best chance of explaining what we humans do in any particular circumstance, and why we do it.’\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} Perhaps more correctly, the ways in which its past is communicated.
\textsuperscript{11} See Chapter 2 Methodology.
\textsuperscript{12} Clendinnen, I. 2003, p .3
Without knowledge of cultural webs that inform how one culture observes another, the encounter situation is impossible to decipher. The particular backdrop and specific actors in encounters, not only shift with time but also are informed by different pasts and with different methods. I have tried to be sensitive to both culture and cultural changes over time and this approach was used during the creation of my Artist’s Book.

**Foundation Work**

I have been involved with images for a long time. I took my first photographs when I was nine. A major in biochemistry as an undergraduate student initiated an interest in the chemistry of sight. Further studies in psychobiology followed in the 1970’s when I read the works of Sperry, Levy and Gazzaniga\(^{13}\) who were experimenting with a dichotomous brain that was visual or word centred, inductive or deductive, linear or holistic, and metaphoric or iconic. The ways in which the visual and creative part of the brain could be developed by particular practices followed from this work. Richard Zakia’s ‘Perception and Photography’\(^{14}\), set me on a path of exploration of phenomena, sight and mind that I still walk.

In my work with students I experimented with meditation, visualisation and the use of symbols and metaphors, as they might exist in rituals, stories, performances and everyday life. I studied some Zen Buddhist, Sufic and Yogic methods for increasing awareness and creativity. I became interested in ideas of visual language and visual literacy in order to ‘read’ visual experiences. In this I was influenced first by notions of underlying similarity of geometric and iconic visual symbols as explored by Carl Jung in ‘Man and His Symbols’\(^{15}\), and later in the theory of Charles Sanders Peirce who in the mid 19\(^{th}\) Century suggested that signs could be usefully divided into the

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\(^{14}\) Zakia, R 1974

\(^{15}\) Jung, C 1978
iconic (representational), indexical (causal), or symbolic (habit of interpretation)\textsuperscript{16}. Peirce stressed the importance of the interpretant, the person who interprets. This study examines the contribution of the interpretant / observers identity within their cosmology i.e. their ‘point of view’ in interpreting both the concrete and the abstract. I take the symbolic to be a pure form of sign that is non-iconic, having meaning only to a person who has been taught the meaning of the symbol. \textsuperscript{17}

Barbara Maria Stafford’s\textsuperscript{18} works introduced me to the 18\textsuperscript{th} century polymath and painter, Humbert de Superville. Humbert was motivated, to find commonality in sign systems used in different cultures – a sort of God given common basket of perceptual gifts, distributed equally to all\textsuperscript{19}. What I found useful in this is how visual signifiers may be seen and interpreted across cultural boundaries. My psychobiological investigations have continued parallel to those on visual language, and this has informed much of the process of my art practice including the Artist’s Book presented with, and discussed in this exegesis.

**How The Lion and the Frigate Bird started.**

On a photographic assignment to record aid projects for Australian Volunteers Abroad\textsuperscript{20} I visited South Tarawa and North Tarawa atolls in the Republic of Kiribati. South Tarawa is dirty and overpopulated. North Tarawa and the outer islands I was to


\textsuperscript{17} The basic triad is Object/Sign/Interpretant and the third triadic division is Quasilsign (Particular), Sinisign (individual thing that may include several qualisigns), and Legisign (universal category that may include many sinisigns). The Sky Dome can be considered as a Legisign. Blunden, A, 2005/6, “Charles Sanders Peirce: The Subject as Semiosis”, at \texttt{http://home.mira.net/~andy/works/the-subject.htm} accessed 4/7/2009. I find this useful when investigating sign systems. The approach helps the awareness that signs may have multiple meanings and groups of meanings that may differ with the interpretant. The concept also makes one aware that visual signs may only be operative in conjunction. Much modern semiotic analysis does not do this. Determining singularity is a European aim.

\textsuperscript{18} Stafford, B 1997, p.5.

\textsuperscript{19} Humbert is not usually listed as an Enlightenment thinker, but this approach places him squarely in this domain.

\textsuperscript{20} Now Australian Volunteers International.
visit later, almost pristine, with small villages of traditional houses and very little
evidence of strong influences of the outside world. There is no television, very few
cars and no supermarkets. The country was independent and seemingly happily so.
On investigation I found very little research had been centred on Kiribati.

My initial few weeks in Kiribati suggested to me that the I-Kiribati knowledge system
differed from that of Europeans. It seemed less analytical, more performative, and
more visual. The notion of dominant cerebral hemisphere discourse is useful when
considering how seeing is made sense of, that is, are perceptions analysed by
induction or deduction and using what premises? How are these premises arrived at?
These questions assist my negotiation of the past as informing perceptions across
cultural interfaces.

The Research Question and Objectives

Question
My central research question is ‘How might present perceptions in Kiribati be
engaged with through negotiation with the past?’ Developing this question was
difficult, as I had many questions, the answers to which might explain the day with
Mai, and many more as I delved into visual communication across and within cultural
boundaries. It was not only my experiences I wanted to explain, but that of other I-
Matang and that of the I-Kiribati in their encounters with I-Matang. It became
apparent that it was in the past that the clues existed to explain what is seen in the
present and this question would serve as my guide.

Objective
My first objective was to make a film telling a story of interaction between I-Matang
and I-Kiribati that could somehow explain the enigmas experienced in Kiribati. I
took 40 hours of video and gathered much historical photography before realising that
I could never afford to do it properly.

I considered an exhibition of prints and rejected it, as I wanted to include written
narrative that could be expressed orally. An audiovisual would solve this problem but
would not have the longevity I thought the project deserved. I decided my objective
would be a fine art book. The Artist’s Book is a recently evolving genre of art performance, so the production of such a book was an opportunity to experiment with a research presentation method that has been only recently utilised.\(^1\)

A book can be easily observed interactively. It can be opened at any point and reread. It is portable and requires no special apparatus for viewing. It can be physically crafted so the sensation of reading, is tactile as well as visual, though it lacks sound and can only suggest movement. On reflection the only sound I would like is the sound that is inescapable on coral atolls – the sound of waves crashing on the reef.

**The Artist’s Book as a Meta Narrative**

My Book consists of a series of short narratives, selected from my personal research experience, in fieldwork, in the archives, in conversation and in reflection.

The justification of the use of narratives of experience is an apriori position that true knowledge derives from experience. Being told something alerts to possibilities and if the teller is respected the knowledge may be accepted. It may not be truly believed until it is experienced. Experience can be direct and indirect. Instant experience can come from performative art – be it a story told, sung or danced. Films and plays can also transmit experience when one becomes absorbed into the story. Encyclopaedias and textbooks seldom offer experience, but a novel or an Artist’s Book might. Greg Dening spoke of how emotions may be transmitted from the archive, in hand written manuscripts where it can be seen when the hand started to shake, or, where there are the marks of wine or tears on a page.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) A pioneer in the use of the artist book for postgraduate research was my first supervisor John Storey who produced artist books as part of his DCA at Wollongong University. More recently I have worked with Tommaso Durante to produce three books including one for his Masters at RMIT, with Gali Weiss in documenting her artists books for her PhD research at Monash University and Mary Rosengren in preparing prints for her artists books for her PhD, also at Wollongong University.

\(^2\) For this reason he regretted typewriters, much less computers. Dening’s notion of immersive anthropology he calls ‘ethnogging’ Dening 2004, p. 227.
Stories can be a type of experience that acts metaphorically connecting remote experience to ones own – thus making ‘sense’, that is, transferring the experience – knowing duality from one spatiotemporal position to another.

An example also helps explain in part how Samoan pastors in Kiribati were more successful evangelists than their European colleagues from the London Missionary Society. The missionary W Wyatt Gill reports the methodology. Gill observes how the islander pastors communicated their interpretations of the Bible by telling stories with local content – of fishing, family life and the like and then explaining the story as metaphor of the knowledge they sought to impart.

The Artist’s Book is a meta-narrative, a narrative about narrative. It is a performance of experiences (mine) that indicate cultural continuity by stories (the myth-histories of I-Kiribati and I-Matang).

Like the turtles that support the world, the Artist’s Book consists of multivalent and multivocal layers of the perceived events, spaces and places that are overlaid in time. Marsha Berry suggested to me the palimpsest as metaphor – a parchment scraped back and overwritten. I like that. Many of the manuscripts I have examined are overwritten, commented on, and edited by readers coming after – sometimes following, sometimes superseding, always changing. Images as well are selected, cropped, represented, retitled.

Leopold von Ranke, in speaking of history, wanted to get back to the original documents to discover ‘Wie es eigentlich gewesen ‘– how it essentially was. The difficulties inherent in this are the subject of much deconstruction of the historical method. We can only approach truth, never define it. This accepted, a priori, then this is origin, the truth of which I am not concerned with, although deferring to its importance for others. It does not matter to the Maori if Hawaiki was in Melanesia,

23 Gill, WW 1885, pp. 73-75.
24 Often quoted, example Evans RJ, 1997 p.17.
25 For example, Jenkins K 1995 pp.44, 69; McCullagh CB, 1984, pp. 4 , 38.
26 Their Homeland of Deep Time.
Indonesia or was a route maybe from Hawaii. The I-Kiribati are not concerned if their ancient home, Matang, was far to the west or close to Samoa.

I am concerned with the passage from then to now, in the interventions and interpretations between the experienced now, the experienced then (where myth and history have slippery and permeable interfaces) and what is seen now is the voyage – the ideas between that partly explain how visual communication operates now. It is not only the explanation of the observed but also its multivalency, how the seen operates with other aspects of the experienced, of the other senses – hearing, feeling, smelling – the invention of the whole body and what informs its interpretations. I will now discuss this in some more detail and in the following chapters will apply this to particular observations that I record in my Artist’s Book.

Reflections on Visual Communication and the Imaging of Oceania

Paradoxes of Visuality
Narrative structures are always placed in a particular context. They are told to an audience who must interpret them from the structure that they themselves have constructed in order that the world might make sense to them. Not only will different members of an audience (and that audience might be spread across the world and be interpreting the story at different times) read the story differently, but also individuals may see several possible meanings. Stories are thus negotiable, mutable and uncertain. The use of narratives for these projections in the social sciences was initiated and used primarily by Clifford Geertz, with classic examples such as ‘The Balinese Cock Fight’, ‘The Rabbi and the Sheep’ and ‘The Funeral’. Greg Dening, who worked with Geertz, uses the technique in history in his ‘The Death of

27 Geertz was an anthropologist. History is the other area where narrative has become used as a basis for negotiation. Both are called Social Sciences and Humanities. The first implies that their problems can be resolved scientifically. This was the case in the nineteenth century when definite reasons for observations were expected giving rise to phenology, concepts of social evolution and other sub disciplines and ideas now regarded as erroneous and hypothetically deductively, false.

29 ibid, p.107.
30 ibid, p.153.
William Gooch, ‘Mr Bligh’s Bad Language’ and in ‘Beach Crossings’, as Donna Merwick did in ‘Death of a Notary’ and ‘The Shame and the Sorrow’.

Geertz takes men’s cultures to be ‘the webs of significance that he himself has spun’ and that the webs are multivalent, that is, that can be connected to several meanings and, more importantly, in several ways. Not only as an idea of perception connected to others, but that it may do so by various pathways. In its simplest form for example, an observation may be interpreted analytically and emotionally, so that explication becomes ‘thick description’.

A group of Melbourne based academics applied Geertz’s methodologies and developed it further in fields inside and outside anthropology, including application to history and cultural studies. In doing so, Greg Dening, Inga Clendinnen, Rhys Isaacs and Donna Merwick were called by Geertz, ‘The Melbourne Group’.

The Melbourne Group emphasised multivocality and multivalency and the giving of the past its present, that is its immediacy, in narrative. Multivocality, that is allowing possibilities of many voices, many points of view. It is important here to distinguish between the listening to various voices and the implications for those voices on usage and interpretation. The term indicates not only wider source material but the use of different thinking strategies in different contexts, that is, not just considering voices from those often ignored, (powerless, colonised or marginalised) but the way these people think in their places and times.

Dening, with whom I was fortunate enough to have many extended conversations, considered events of the past for their multivocality. Indeed it was those voices he wanted to give life to, to give voice to the dead so they could speak in the present

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31 Dening, G 1997.
33 Merwick, D 1999.
34 Merwick, D 2006.
35 Geertz, C 1973, p.5.
36 ibid, p.9.
38 Thomas, N 1997, p.34, connects Geertz’s anthropological approach to history to Dening’s relativistic epistemologies.
across the chasm of time. Geertz, Dening, Clendinnen, Merwick and others inspired by them, have used descriptive narrative to initiate the search for meaning. I find this approach useful and informing to my work, but where Geertz and the Melbourne Group restrict their strategies to writing, I extend the approach with image narratives. My Artist’s Book utilises multivocality to reveal paradoxes in visual communication and the multivalencies that might assist their resolution.

Using and Differentiating Visual and Verbal Communication

In my Artist’s Book I have made use of direct visual communication with the use of photographs and manual art works. These are intended to engage the reader both in my physical journey and in the more distant world of others in images from the archives. Within the context of I Matang – I Kiribati encounter, I also wish to distinguish visual communication from that of orality and literacy.

Visual communication is a field of recent origin. It thus does not fit well within the established disciplines of art history, history, psychology, anthropology, philosophy or the natural sciences, yet it is connected to all of them. It does not have, like Western philosophy or history a genealogy of developing and evolving ideas. Rather it is multivalent from its conception and increasing in complexity in a system described as rhizomic, a concept that uses the underground spread of rhizome plants as a metaphor of structure, as contrasted with an arboreal structure connecting out with branches from a central trunk.

This complexity has been conveniently codified into twelve areas, each with its own theoretic base and development. These are aesthetics, perception, representation, visual rhetoric, cognition, semiotics, reception theory (including phenomenology and historical research), narrative, media (including examination of documentary photography), ethics, visual literacy and cultural studies. I am not going to attempt a survey of the ideas contained in this. Sandra Moriarty lists over a thousand basic

39 Smith, K et al, 2005.
references in the area up to the 1990’s many of which are extensive monographs\textsuperscript{40}. I will use some of these areas where appropriate in the specificity of decoding my book and placing it in relation to ideas in the field.

The legitimacy of the visual has been a long term philosophical concern at least as far back as Plato, most famously in the story of the Cave\textsuperscript{41}, where underground slaves see only flickering shadows and believe them to be reality; to the extent that a returned escapee to the outside sunlit world is not be believed when he suggests the truth is other than the experiences of the cave, which are illusions.

The notions of the superiority of the cerebral and ultimately language over the sensory, particularly sight, is both long and convoluted and was revised with some enthusiasm in 20\textsuperscript{th} century France, initially with Bergson then Barthes, and then in the 1970’s with Derrida, Foucault, Debord, Lyotard and Baudrillard.\textsuperscript{42}

Susanne Langer suggested in 1942 that images operated differently to words and should be considered differently,\textsuperscript{43} a position supported and extended by Barbara Maria Stafford, who say’s ‘iconophiles should be cheered by the neurological fact that we share our image–based concept of the world with other human beings who made comparable images and so permit us to imagine ourselves into their lives.’\textsuperscript{44}

My position on this is that words and images both have the potential to deceive, both have ambiguous meanings, both have metaphoric meaning and explanations of both often tell more of the interpreter than the subject. This does not mean either or both

\textsuperscript{41} Plato, The Republic, Ch.7 See Jacques J H 1971 p.105. The moral imperative to reveal the truth (of the Good) ibid. p.109.
\textsuperscript{42} Jay, M 1994, arguments against visuality summarised on p.588 The arguments of the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century became increasingly theoretical and obscure and I believe have little relevance to research except in a few university areas such as English which has a vested interest in the hegemony of words over direct perceptions.
\textsuperscript{43} Langer, S 1953, p.116. Langer maintains that we envisage stories, but words tell-make a statement ibid p.118. That statement also is a story, which evokes a mental image, so Langer’s differentiation is useful but not universal.
\textsuperscript{44} Stafford, BM, 1997, p.203.
cannot indicate truth; it means caution is advised and there may be levels of truth or multiple truths.

Words written and spoken operate differently. The written word is more didactic, the spoken word more negotiable. Performance itself is largely seen as phenomena, though it is interspersed with the sounds of gunfire, the smell of smoke and the vibration of drums. As I will show, for the I-Kiribati, it is not only objects and words that have meaning but positions and directions.

Barbara Maria Stafford notes ‘the totemization of language as a godlike agency in western culture has guaranteed the identification in writing with intellectual potency. Ferdinand de Saussure, the early twentieth century founder of structuralism, strengthened the biblical coupling of meaning with naming by formulating the opposition of signifier/signified. These verbalising binaries turned noumenal and phenomenal experience into the product of language. Not only temporal but spatial effects supposedly obeyed an invisible system, the controlling structure of an inborn ruling ecriture.’

If the legitimacy of both language and sensation in the form of visuality is accepted, and if language spoken is differentiated from written language, with the spoken having more the negotiability of the visual compared with the didacticism of the written, then a clear difference of epistemology between the performative I-Kiribati and the book centred I-Matang is established. My research explores some of the implications of these differences in I-Kiribati and I-Matang ways of knowing.

**Visuality of Encounters in the Pacific**

In the last section I sought to establish some general properties of the visual and compared it to spoken and written language as a method of communication. In this section I move from the background to the focal, to consider how the Pacific was communicated to Europeans, that is how the Pacific represented a theatre of visuality that has changed significantly over the last two centuries as the motives for Europeans

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45 The connections between Christianity, and words and naming with divine right of possession are expanded in ‘Cosmology’.

46 Stafford, 1997 p.5.
in Oceania changed. Pacific Islanders frequently are constructed as ‘other’. I turn to Edward Said’s ‘Orientalism’ to explore some implication of this construct; in particular the limitation of Said’s analysis methodologically (through literature) and specifically (the Christian-Muslim encounter). Said influenced ideas of how Europeans see non-Europeans. Said’s primary interest was the ‘Orient’, predominately the Muslim world. It suggests uniformity of peoples outside Europe and a uniformity of European attitudes towards them. The approach itself is problematic as European empires operated differently in different places and at different times. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Pacific.

The Pacific only became known to Europeans in the 18th century. China, India, Africa had been trading with Europe for centuries, if not millennia. Each had established, if not fixed ideas about the other. The Pacific brought about a new set of relationships initially interpreted in terms of European myths. So Tahiti became a new Cythera – Birthplace of Venus, or an Eden before the Fall, and most island people were regarded, if not as noble savages, then as some sort of equivalent to what Europeans had developed from. The major encounter period of the second half of the 18th century connected with the Enlightenment ideas of rationality, and progress made possible by science. The artists that accompanied Cook, Bougainville, d’Entrecasteaux and D’Urville produced illustrations to support scientific description. Art Historian Bernard Smith saw them as reflecting the cultures of their producers. Smith’s work firmly established visuality and visual communication as a key to attitudes across the beaches of the Pacific. He recognised in the late 18th century descriptions of islanders, their sense of identity and openness to the newness of European comings, seen in the myriad canoes that always came out to the tall ships and whose occupants crowded onto the decks.

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47 Said, E, 1978. Said was a Palestinian. His views expressed in Orientalism (1978) expanded in Culture and Imperialism (1994) but concentrating in the representations of colonial experiences in literature. Interestingly ‘After the Last Sky’ included a story photographic essay on the Palestinians by Jean Mohr (ed). It is my contention that Palestinian agency is clearest in Mohr’s visual approach.

48 Maude, 1968, pp.35-83. The existence of the Pacific had been known for a lot longer. The Spanish had sailed across it (Magellan 1521, Mendana, 1568, Quiros, 1606). Luckily for the islanders, the Spanish, who did not have a reputation for amicable foreign relations, ‘discovered’ few islands and did not stay.

49 Smiths work, on how Europeans saw and represented Pacific Islanders, in 1960 precedes Edward Said’s influential ‘Orientalism’ by twenty years.
As the encounters increased and the ideals of the Enlightenment were replaced with missionary zeal, mercantile greed and imperial expansions, artists were no longer required. Smith’s evaluation of the visual in his analysis of Pacific encounters stopped. His work was accessible to, and popular with, the public, which may have reduced the influence on further academic exploration until it was rediscovered, initiating research not only into the drawings of the 19th century, but also into the photography that became popular in the 1880’s.

Before photography, drawings and paintings formed an established part of official, if not unofficial, European intrusions into Oceania. That these so called objective representations of the islands and their people largely reflected pre-existing European ideas was a central thesis of Bernard Smith’s work, mainly from the 1960’s to the present. Smith’s concentration was on the manual arts and the period before photography. Many researchers have followed up on Smith’s work, particularly Nicholas Thomas, Bronwen Douglas, Margaret Jolly and Max Quanchi. All these examine European representations of islanders. Of these only Quanchi concentrates on photography.

One of the difficulties with analysis of intercultural relations is the lack of data from the other side of the beach. This has been partly addressed by post Smith researchers who have examined Pacific Art and its meaning within and across cultures, with particular emphasis on art from Papua New Guinea and Aotearoa-New Zealand.

The visuality from the other side of the beach was seldom considered, although indigenous agency was a concern of ANU historian Jim Davidson from the 1950’s. There were no significant visits to the Gilbert Islands until the mid 19th century, well after the contact period discussed by Smith and other scholars, examining the looking

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50 Thomas, N & Losche, D (eds), 1999, pp.1-16.
54 For art works as two way seeing from contact to current times see Thomas, N & Losche, D (eds) 1999. For Twentieth Century Pacific art see Craig, B, Kernot, B, Anderson, C 1999.
in the encounter situation. The images used in my book commence in time with etchings deriving from the 1841 US Exploring Expedition and continue with photography into the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, including my own to 2001. The images I look at in my book move from the drawing to the photograph in the 1880’s. The drawings are \textit{en plein air}, of sights, not memories or fantasies. They have this in common with photographs of ‘the moment’ that provides a conduit to actual events.

In the Pacific many photographs were staged, or set up\textsuperscript{55}. These are what I term theatrical.\textsuperscript{56} Many were not. Most had some purpose. It is my contention that this does not discount value. The staged photographs of the first hundred years of photography were ubiquitously naïve and relatively easy to deconstruct. The purpose of such images was to expand missionary influence, trade and power. That they often did this by attempting to prove indigenous peoples fitted the author’s theories of racial superiority is not difficult to determine and is helpful in determining the thinking of the outsiders. It is useful to find out who took the photographs and to consider what their motives might have been.

Unfortunately photography does not feature in Pacific art until very recently, which restricts a two-way view\textsuperscript{57}. Despite these difficulties I have found the analysis of photographs, both current and historic, in conjunction with other data such as stories, reprints, diaries and previous research to be useful in not just contributing other evidence but is capable of furnishing unique information.\textsuperscript{58} I will be giving examples of this when I consider specific images that I have used in my Artist’s Book.


\textsuperscript{56} As distinguished from photographs of theatre – of which I include many in the book and discuss in the following chapters.

\textsuperscript{57} Epeli Hau’ofa, then Director, Centre of Oceanic Art and Culture told me he believed photography and in particular film, would and should be a dominant methodology for islanders to tell their stories.

\textsuperscript{58} I have expanded on this in a number of papers, including Gilkes, B 1998, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2006.
The Form and Contents of the Exegesis

Following the Methodology the chapters and their contents are:

Chapter 3 - Place & Time
This chapter suggests place is understood by how its perception is informed by narratives of the past. One’s own place and that of others is seen not so much for what it is, whatever that might be, but for how it is imagined. That imagined place informs one’s identity, who one is and who one is not. Place itself is informed in its imagining by time present, past or future. Whether time is regarded as linear and connected to ideas of progress, or circular and connected to nature, whether one looks at time as something one should allow to direct one’s actions or whether it is independent, differentiates the way in which the present is experienced and the way in which the past informs the present.

Chapter 4 - Space
The communication of ideas for most Europeans from the mid nineteenth century has been via the written word and by symbols that are portable and not associated with positions or orientations. Despite now being largely literate, the I-Kiribati of the past and for a large proportion in the present, transmit knowledge by orality and performance. This is aided by symbols that have defined spatial positions, or positions relative to some space domain. This chapter deconstructs relevant pages of the Artist’s Book to explore how visualised space informs I-Kiribati knowledge systems.

Chapter 5 - Cosmology
Place, Time and Space contribute to knowledge systems but a complete culture requires threads to hold the whole structure together. These threads constitute beliefs in metaphysics, destiny and survival requirements, which the myth-historical past clarifies. This adds up to what the I-Kiribati call maka, which can be translated as ‘standing’ as in ‘his standing in the community’, or ‘he stands tall’. The English sense of their place in the world, which determined how they saw it, was very similar. It was more didactic than Islander knowledge because it was largely fixed by the written
Chapter 6 - Encountering
If different peoples have different pathways to power, then the observations of each other in the encounter situation can have results ranging from coincident visions to misreading to conflict. This chapter considers how I-Matang and I-Kiribati saw each other’s world and what were the consequences.

The encounter is evaluated as performance, in the acts of exchange and in the efforts of people to change others when those on either side of the beach essentially believed themselves to be at the centre of the universe. The course of events is shown to depend on interpretation of seeing. Europeans also sought to influence people in their home countries by re-presenting the encounter in images and words, in order to gain support for their agendas.

Chapter 7 - Dancing
This is my conclusion. It considers the outcomes of encounters, and how I-Matang and I-Kiribati both changed. It suggests that the way in which the I-Kiribati are informed by the past, enables absorption and adaptation of the ways of Strangers. The society thus changes but the essential culture and identity expressed as Te Katai te Kiribati remains and is experienced through a number of cultural expressions, primarily the Dance. The Dance is used as a metaphor for the outcome of the interaction of Lion and Frigate Bird as the I-Kiribati use it as the expression of identity and as a means of communicating it.

The Sky-Dome structure of the Artist’s book is justified by its equivalence to Juri Lotman’s semiosphere, where the sphere of signs of communication can be considered as experiential, where that experience is largely visual, and thus the Artist’s Book adds knowledge to epistemology of the encounter.

This chapter also points to some limitations to the argument presented in the exegesis, that the past informs the seeing of the present and that the I-Kiribati utilise abstract signs that facilitate cultural survival. The argument is limited by other factors that
restrict external domination. These include lack of resources or strategic importance on the atolls that discouraged settlement, and a social structure that resisted diseases. The chapter suggests avenues for further research and points out that the research undertaken to explain how I-Kiribati culture appears to have survived onslaught from Outsiders is threatened by something else, something the I-Kiribati have symbolised, in their visual environment as a threat, from the beginning of time itself. Ultimately it is the forces of the rising Ocean, symbolised by Bakoa, the Shark that threatens the Turtles that support the world.

The next chapter, ‘Methodology’ details the research process used to inform the Artist’s Book, and the approach I use to negotiate a past written in or about images.
CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY
The following methodology description first covers the research process as fieldwork, archive research and conversations. Secondly I describe my artefact, the Artist’s Book. This is considered from the point of its poetics. Poetics include its performance criteria, performance style, aesthetics, word image interaction and epistemological basis.

Fieldwork

It was important to determine the limits of practical field research. I had to decide whether to stay in one village or on one island, or to gather information from the wider archipelago.

The general field of inter and intra cultural communication would be where I would hope my research would be useful, but this actual project considers a limited case study which is interesting in its own right, at least in its identification of some mechanisms instrumental in cultural survival. The I-Kiribati people use the same language\(^{59}\) and move quite freely between the islands. They have allegiances generally with utu (family)\(>\)boti (clan)\(>\)village\(>\)island\(>\)nation\(>\)rest of the world. This is in the stated order of importance with the biggest gap being the last one. That is, anything that is I-Kiribati is much more important than anything that is not. The historic influence of Samoa is greater in the south and it is thought that the southerners have a reputation for a somewhat greater morbid introspection and tendency to violence than northerners\(^{60}\). Despite this the degree of homogeneity is sufficient to consider I-Kiribati as I-Kiribati. I decided to research in the Gilbert Group as a whole, visiting where I could and gathering data from other islands by conversations and research of the archives.

My main location areas were South Tarawa – Betio, Bairiki, Teoraereke, Taborio and Bikenibeu; North Tarawa - Buariki, and Taratai; Abaiang – Tebontebike, Tabwiroa, and Morikao, and Butaritari – Butaritari Village and Ukiangang. I

\(^{59}\)The northern most two islands of Butaritari and Makin have a slightly variant dialect.

\(^{60}\)I have no direct evidence of this, but both I-Matang and I-Kiribati report it. David Lambourne (Then People’s Advocate, Republic of Kiribati) informed me that suicides and murders are more prevalent in the south, but are greatest on over-crowded South Tarawa. Conversation, June 2001, Bairiki Islet.
conducted fieldwork in Kiribati every year for four years. Total fieldwork time was four months. As well as observation, conversations and extensive note taking in field journals, I took about 40 hours of video and some thousand photographs.

The Archive
My fieldwork had suggested that the I-Kiribati concept of the past is communicated in particular by symbols incorporated into artefacts, spaces and performance. This directed me to archives where I could study the events of the past, the evaluation of those events and the previous knowledge of the I-Kiribati and I-Matang cultures from the time of contact to the present.

Finding the documents was a bit like a detective game, one source leading to another. A line in a book or a comment dropped in conversation at a conference would lead to another repository of documents. The main sources are mentioned in my acknowledgements section. The two biggest collections are in the National Archives of Kiribati in Bairiki, South Tarawa and the Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide. I spent many days in both. The Barr Smith special collections hold the Maude collection, which consists of Harry and Honour Maude’s personal collections plus the Grimble and Pateman papers. Another important source was the Mitchell and Dixson Library, Sydney which, as well as missionary and trader diaries, has extensive photographic collections. The Maude collection led to me contacting Professor Maude’s son Alaric Maude who gave me a copy of ‘The Gilbert Islands Observed’ compiled by his father61. This self-published book contains transcripts of a large number of manuscripts. The originals of many of these are in private collections or have been destroyed since their transcription. The most exhilarating moments were when I came across previously unstudied material. In Adelaide I found a large box of photographic negatives in the Maude collection. The curator, Susan Woodburn, remarked that the box had not been opened before as no one had asked. After I had been in the archives of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart mission in South Tarawa for 3 days, Sister Margaret suddenly appeared with a bundle of old documents and letters

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61 Maude, HE, 2005, Not commercially available. Authors copy courtesy of Alaric Maude, University of Adelaide.
tied with string. ‘See what is in here,’ she said. ‘We never showed these to the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau.’

Sometimes it was a two-way process as I passed on information to the librarians. I identified some information on some Robert Louis Stevenson photographs for the Writer’s Museum in Edinburgh and was able to identify locations for a number of photographs in the Mitchell Library.

**Conversations**

I term my interactions with my informant’s conversations rather than interviews. Although the two words are somewhat interchangeable, the interview tends to imply short questions and long answers where the ideas of the interviewer are subordinate to those of the interviewee. The conversation implies a balanced interchange of ideas and perhaps arguments which I believe is in more depth than an interview and more capable of the generation of new ideas. Of particular interest and influence on my work on perception has been Bela Julesz’, ‘Dialogues on Perception’ where Julesz has long and in-depth Socratic conversations with himself. The challenging of ideas for me is the most important part of research. The conversation is open ended and organic where one is never sure where the path will lead. The interview tends to be more didactic as the interviewer probes in a predetermined direction, often with a fixed hypothesis. To evaluate connections and disparities in epistemological and cultural cosmologies, the extended dialogic conversation affords unique insights.

**Poetics of the Artists Book**

‘Poetics are not poetry, but the suggestion that they might be is left with the breath of the word.’

This quote from Greg Dening inspired a way of thinking about the Artist’s Book, that it should be an integrated lyric form, not a diary, but a crafted performance. The book is structured using some of what I have learned of I-Kiribati performance and cosmological constructions.

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63 Dening, G 1996, p.35.
Dening is talking about history when he says that poetics are concerned with ‘experience, rather than credentials of the observer’, and that for him, poetics ‘is the most generous way to describe a reflective discourse on all the hermeneutic dimensions of histories as cultural artefacts’, and are ‘the relationships we have with the texts that suffuse our lives’. I take Dening’s approach as a way of thinking when approaching the data that informs me – the archival writings and images, the conversations, and the experiences of my fieldwork and ultimately the ways in which I present them in the groupings of ideas, and the ebb and flow of visuals and written text. The I Kiribati lyric form, the Kuna, inspires the form of the Artist’s Book, by the stories of the epic Voyages, and by the sphere of cosmological significance, which is the Sky Dome.

**The Artist’s Book as Performance**

The Artist’s Book is a story of the progress of the research written as a voyage. In Kiribati the canon of traditionally oral literature can be divided into *karaki* (stories), which are generally formulaic and the *kuna*, which is a creative piece developed by the performer, usually with the aid of magic.

‘It is in the *kuna*, whether song or poetry, that the Gilbertese have been able to exercise their literary genius to the fill – untrammelled by the limitations of the *karaki* in its various forms he has been able to give full rein to his marvellous facility for choosing the right phrase or metaphor to captivate our imaginations and send us soaring through the heavens with the very gods themselves’.

I use the idea of the *kuna* to construct ‘The Lion and the Frigate Bird’. The Navigators of Kiribati utilised a complex system of way-finding that consisted of *betia* (sea signs) such as the movement of certain fish, turtles and birds and the interface patterns of waves, signs in the sky such as columns of light reflected from lagoons and aggregates and tones of clouds and the seeing of the night sky as a Sky Dome, covered with moving patterns of stars. Star groups could be recognised as familiar objects – fish hooks, canoes etc. as I-Matang recognise Scorpio, the Southern

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65 Uriam, K 1995, p.35.
Cross, The Big Dipper and so on. Islands positions could be recognised by certain zenith stars\textsuperscript{67} and directions could be recognised by the canoe’s movement relevant to certain star groups. Routes to different destinations are known as Star Paths and remembered by stories, which are chanted or sung\textsuperscript{68}, each station on the Star Path featuring in the story. A single Star Path is one of many describing voyages. Stars and their constellations form the whole night sky, the Sky Dome described in VI p.17 of the Artist’s Book. My story uses collections of ideas as stations on my Star Path through the Sky Dome of my Voyage to answer my research question.

The Sky Dome is an important metaphor for the epistemological context of this research. As a Kiribati conceptual construct, it is central to my discussions of space in Chapter 4 and forms a framework for my concluding thoughts in Chapter 7 of this exegesis.

**Performance Style**

I Kiribati performance incorporates eloquence of oratory, emotive gestures and movements and strong personal involvement. Performance, whether as oration or as dance, transmits images into the imagination of the audience, so they share a version of what the performer sees in their imagination. This experience is re-created by the performance. This is my intention with the Artist’s Book as stated in V1 pp.17 & 19. The style is formed by the aesthetics of image and word construction and the way words and images interact.

**Aesthetics**

The Artist’s Book is primarily a visual narrative but its visuality is in part a literary description of the research experience. This book may not meet the viewer’s correlation of what they see with pre-established ideas of what art should look like, though I must be informed by it at some level. The images I use are not to show what was seen, but what that seeing implies. That is, what can be deduced from the seeing, what informs it and how it might conform to theoretical structures. The Book is

\textsuperscript{67} Stars at Zenith over particular islands were known, as were directions form the North Star and the rotation of the Southern Cross and Pointers. See Lewis, D 1994, pp.113-15, 159-60.

\textsuperscript{68} Grimble, 1931 a, JPS, pp.197-224.
constructed as visual performance, which contains clues and messages. In that its aesthetics are philosophical.

**Alternative Performances**
In the same way that a play is written, the written narrative is intended as oral performance. That is, it is intended to be spoken and listened to, rather than read. In an alternate type of presentation, the images could be sequenced on screen. I prefer the interactivity of a book, which gives more control to the reader.

**Word Image Interaction**
I imagine the interaction as a double helix where images and words form separate narratives. These narratives complement each other in meaning and periodically appear to ‘cross’ each other, intensifying a moment. The Book’s words and images form a Gestalt, to be comprehended in synthesis. The images are not illustrations of the written text. They form their own narrative of impressions independently from the narrative of descriptions. Both may have emotive content but are expressed in different ways.

For the old lady the world was to be known, like the tier of turtles, as a series of levels that have no ultimate solution. My narratives suggest such levels of meaning. They are not linear in time or in geographic positioning. Making connections, ‘webs of significance’, between different parts of the narrative, produces meanings.

**The Artist’s Book as Epistemology**
Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and my Book is a study of what can be known in the seeing across cultural boundaries, so it could be thought of as an exploration of differential epistemologies. In the strict sense it does not follow the usual pattern of defining features, conditions, limitations and justification, although features, conditions and limitations of what is understood in visual communication are concerns of my exegesis. The Book is more concerned with how different knowledge systems make sense of seeing, seeing being in this instance a primary tool that accesses epistemology. I maintain that the conventional Western approach to

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69 Like a harmonic.
understanding knowledge, that is the establishment of belief, truth and justification conditions, do not fully account for the way people ‘know’ what they see. What does influence belief is a cultural system connected in different ways to the past. This cultural system, where it relates to believed knowledge systems (not social relationships, rituals or technologies ie applied knowledge), I understand as epistemes with paradigmatic limits. The Artist’s Book presents some of the paradoxes and ironies of visual communication in Kiribati as seeing with epistemic differences. In order to facilitate some degree of understanding of how the I-Kiribati transmit their knowledge I use in my Book a structural form based on a voyage using traditional way-finding. This is a constant reminder that what is seen in the present can only be understood by negotiation with the past.

Creativity as a Facilitator for Humanist Outcomes in Ethnography.
History and anthropology usually claim some degree of objectivity, as if this fits them better as social sciences where events and peoples can be analysed and deconstructed as in a laboratory or a dissection room. These disciplines may also be considered as a humanity, which gives them a different flavour indeed, where reductionism is not a technique and ultimate cause not a destination. Dening sees history as a humanity – ‘That is what gives it its graces’ he says. I do not see my work as being historiographic or anthropological, but it is ethnographic and in the artistic exposition of ethnography in the present or in the past is the possibility of humanism. Herbert Marcuse wrote – ‘All reification is a process of forgetting. Art fights reification by making the petrified world speak, sing, perhaps dance.’

Creative Strategies
My Artist’s Book is a collection of my experiences on the research voyage. The images have multiple explanations and content that, like the dogs that no longer barked, may be inexplicable. The associated text in the Book often indicates my reaction to the visual as or shortly after it impinged. The images represent a narrative of experience, the text one of reflection and reaction. These parallel narratives are not

71 Reification is the process of converting living (eg humans) into the inanimate (eg written specifications). See Edgar, A & Sedgwick, P (eds) 1999, p332.
always connected. This reflects how one may be distracted by one’s thoughts and may miss the implications of what one sees. The exegesis reflects from a greater distance from where the multivalency and the multivocality may be observed when the vision becomes wider, on stepping back.

A researcher experiments with the jigsaw, completes the picture as much as possible and then uses leaps of imagination to fill the spaces between. This process is creativity. Creative research will always have issue with those of Cartesian and of a hypothetical deductive bent, but each contributes to the other. At the edges of the known are always the leaps of faith, hope or promise. In the mind of the navigators leading the first Great Voyages from Near to Far Oceania, there must have been such leaps of faith. Even then as stated in V I p.15, sailing in Near Oceania would have supplied confidence and skills to attempt moving into the unknown.

In this ‘stepping back’ the connections – the ‘webs of significance’ – are not obvious by some direct correlation. An element may not be seen again, may not appear to be in an obvious relationship with another. The method involves the recognition of tropes, mental bridges to other places, events or ideas, that when discovered, may have multiple meanings which only clarify when more of the web is observed. There will always be gaps.

**Using Visual Hermeneutics to Fill Gaps**

The attempt to fill gaps, to understand multiplicity, involves a research strategy of visual/perceptual hermeneutics. The hermeneutics of perception require a strategy that gives a result with more substance, more probability of truth than that offered by a ‘leap of faith’. The difficulty of hermeneutics is its circularity. It is difficult to know the part of something without knowing the whole. The overall has to be considered before the parts on which it depends. The difficulty of extracting the meaning of the observation of a cultural object or event without a comprehension of the complete episteme that surrounds and produces it. This is where the ‘leap of faith’, or the wild guess is replaced with the creative, which

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might start, ‘what if’ or ‘suppose’. It is the creative act that finds the threads of significance. It is the sword that breaks the Gordian knot.\textsuperscript{74}

Hermeneutics is concerned with interpretation of texts as one might find in the archives and of the visual, traditionally works of art, but also visual representations such as diagrams, signs and photographic snapshots. The idea can be extended to performances such as dances or rituals of identity, magic and power. It can also be extended to Artist’s Books.

My research seeks to seek meaning in the present rather than the past. In order to achieve this I consider how metaphors used in communication enable the past to inform the present. To know what webs one is connected to, is to establish identity. Identity is the position one believes one occupies within the web. The significance of the webs is known as cosmology. The identified place in the cosmological web of beliefs is the seat of observation. Identity is also a place from which to act as well as a place of reception. That acting is the performance that will be viewed from the positions of other identities. Inherent in the bangota of Tebontebike was a cosmology passed from Naboika and Nie Nikuao and other anti (spirits), shared by the villagers and passed in part to me through Mai. All views are from one cosmology to another. The more awareness there is of the webs of cosmologies, the more effective the communication.

My task is to interpret seeing and presence, a hermeneutic of visual communication. The film maker, David MacDougall partly accepts Roland Barthes statement, that a photograph is a message without a code\textsuperscript{75} but states that ‘photographic images can never the less be fashioned into codes that are at once vividly concrete and yet ambiguous, engaging the intellect and imagination in both controlled and uncontrollable ways’.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{74} The Gordian knot was a ball shaped knot of vast complexity. Legend had it that whoever could undo the knot would possess all of Asia. When presented with the knot and its story, Alexander of Macedonia, later to be known as Alexander the Great, drew his sword and sliced the knot open and proceeded to conquer most of the world known to Europe.

\textsuperscript{75} Barthes, R 2000, p.197. Barthes was referring specifically to press photographs.

\textsuperscript{76} MacDougall 1998, p.64.
This gives a useful approach to the photographs taken by others, for example the historical images in my Book. My readers, with a mixture of directness and ambiguity, will interpret the images I have made. It is not only photographs that can be understood as having these properties. The visual as described in journals or letters, and the ones evoked by narrative, share this dialectic of certainty and intangibility.

**Difficulties of Negotiating a Visual Past**

The extant images and written text describing past encounters are almost all authored by I-Matang. They are largely reflexive, describing I-Matang attitudes, thoughts, motivations, prejudices and performances. I-Kiribati thinking of the past is difficult for an outsider to access. I have maintained, at least since 1998 when I suggested at the PHA conference in Honiara that with a sufficient body of evidence, that is enough photographs, drawings and descriptions then the view of the depicted “other” could be accessed. 77 Bronwyn Douglas (ANU) has formalised a methodology since 1999 78, to be included in her forthcoming book ‘Indigenous Presence and the Science of Race; Representing ‘Savages’ in Oceania, 1600-1850’, that is discussed and used in a number of her papers, especially ‘In the Event: Indigenous Countersigns and the Ethnohistory of Voyaging’. 79 She says: ‘I not only problematise the assumed centrality of European actors in actual cross-cultural encounters but argue for an ongoing, mobile dialectic of discourse and expériences – that the presence and agency of indigenous people infiltrated the writings and pictures produced by sailors, naturalists and artists in the course of scientific voyages and left ambiguous countersigns in the very language, tone and content of their representations’.

My own approach is applied in the exegetical analysis, which follows, specific to the images used in my Artist’s Book and the primary written texts I refer to in the exegesis.

Analyzing the Texted Past

In this exegesis I reflect on the research experience encapsulated in the Artists Book, The Lion and the Frigate Bird. My voyage is one of seeing. The reflections are on seeing, on what is communicated by vision and how that seeing is known. My seeing is re-presented as photographs and written text. Often I see through the eyes of others. To approach ones own seeing is difficult enough, to analyse sights that can only be imagined is perhaps harder. One must travel through space and time, seeing past lives as seen by people that have never been met. Not quite. When the seeing of the past leaves many images – photographs or sketches or paintings, and much writing that describes that seeing, and there is evidence from others present at the time, then the past can be accessed in part. By careful analysis what it is possible to know, what is not known and what may be unknowable, becomes clearer. I am interested in how gaps in knowledge can be approached, how the visual jigsaw can have a solution when pieces are missing. It is the communication given by sights as recorded by images or of descriptions of observations that is re-presented in my Artist’s Book.

As an example of this approach I take Fanny Stevenson’s photograph ‘The Bar Room of the San Souci’, June 1889, which appears in the Artist’s Book in V I p. 6-7. Presented here is a more complete analysis than space permits for all the images in the Artist’s Book.

Bar Room at the Sans Souci, Butaritari, 1889

The scene is the bar room of the ‘Sans Souci’, situated in the grounds of Wightman Bros, traders of San Francisco on the Pacific coral atoll of Butaritari. The photograph gives clues to that which was outside the frame. The presence of missionaries and traders are suggested, as are clues to social relationships.

It is a July evening in 1889. It is warm, between 30 and 33 degrees Celsius. Most of the occupants are regulars. Behind the bar is Tom the Norwegian barman. The man with the hat and pipe is Adolf Rick, Prussian born but American citizen, with the post
of American Commercial Agent and manager of Wightman Bros. The other standing man is most likely a trader or perhaps a ships captain. The women are probably the traders’ wives, as there are no I Kiribati men. The woman with the hat may be Mrs. Rick, the only European woman on the island. She was often in this bar. Her skin appears dark, and European women usually stayed out of the sun. She does not wear the ‘Mother Hubbard’ of the other women, those shapeless garments indicative of missionary influence. Traders’ wives were often women of significance, often of royal lineage, owning large tracts of land. By their marriage they gained access to the symbols of European power, as well as that of the islands. Often they ran their husbands business, and did so with great efficiency. Their husbands gained power too. We are uncertain if we are seeing the face of Mrs Rick, or that of a successful Butaritari merchant. In this instance, my bet would be on Mrs Rick.

There are three visitors in the room. We are certain of their identity. Seated at the table with a wreath of small flowers on his head is the writer, Robert Louis Stevenson. Behind the camera and unseen is, Fanny, his wife. Her son, Lloyd Osborne, sits in the foreground wearing a striped blazer.80

Bar rooms, especially in outposts of European influence, are where cultures and ideas encounter each other in conversation. More than council chambers, throne rooms and houses of parliament, they are at the core of the politics of power. More than churches, they speak of religion and more than the boardroom and counter they are places of trade.

At the time this photograph was taken a complex power play was taking place in Oceania. Germany, recently industrialised and driven by Kaiser Wilhelm81 was establishing plantations and traders in New Guinea, Samoa and the Carolines, and just to the north of Butaritari, in the Marshall Islands82. German traders had petitioned the German Government to annex the Gilberts less than a year before Stevenson’s

80 The handwriting on this and other photographs in the collection is possibly Lloyd’s. Elaine Greig of the Writers Museum, Edinburgh believes this to be the case but has concerns about some signature characteristics (correspondence Greig to author, 2005).
81 Scarr, D 1990, p.216.
82 Primarily the Hamburg firm of JC Godeffroy und Sohn (Macdonald 1982, p.27) who around this time passed their interests to Jaluit Gesellshchaft (ibid., p.67).
visit, because of the establishment of the Californian firms of Wightman Bros. and
Crawford & Co. both of whom were established on Butaritari with Rick as
Wightman’s manager. Rick had requested visits from American warships.83
Unknown to any of the Europeans, the Hawaiian missionaries in the Gilberts,
including Maka and Kanoa on Butaritari, had petitioned King Kelakaua of Hawaii to
annex the island group.

It was to Washington that Stevenson wrote requesting restriction of liquor to the
islanders84, but it was the British, fearing both American and German influence, and
always wary of the French, who were discussing annexation in Suva and Whitehall,
and who would announce the Protectorate in 1892. None of this power struggle can be
deduced from the photograph, but if we know this, we may have a clue as to why
Rick is so earnest.

The atmosphere is casual but perhaps a little tense. The camera was unfamiliar. The
shutter speeds slow, often necessitating some posing. It is likely the island women
were unaware of how to act or react, resulting in a temporary awkwardness rather
than any social ineptitude or reticence. In the photograph we see five European men
and six women. There are no I-Kiribati men in the Sans Souci. From first appearance
it would seem this is a situation of European men consorting with island women to the
exclusion of island men. There were traders with local wives that banned men from
their households, but the situation in the Sans Souci in July 1889 was much more
complex.

The photograph suggests that island men were not permitted to drink at the bar. The
missionaries forbade liquor, but missionary influence was not strong on Butaritari in
1889.85 The king however, no doubt to preserve his authority, was more influential.86
The whites profited from liquor sales and would encourage rather than ban it. A ban
on liquor had been lifted for July 4th celebrations of American Independence and a

83 Letter Rick to Secretary of State, Consular Matters August 1888 – 30th September
1892, National Archives Records Service Washington.
84 Stevenson, RL 1926, pp.250-51.
85 There were two Hawaiian pastors of the ABCFM, Maka and Kanoa. Both were of
advancing years and not particularly effective.
86 Teburimoa, the Uea, was a despot, known, according to Stevenson as Mr. Corpse.
wave of drunkenness had followed. The Sans Souci had restricted sale of liquor to beer, but the rival bar ‘The Land we Live In’ run by an African American Mr. Williams, had not followed suit.

The situation on this occasion was dangerous – the whole population including the king and army were drunk and armed.87 ‘Tom was putting up the shutters on the bar. Custom might go else where, Mr. Williams might profit as he pleases, but Tom had had enough of bar keeping for that day.’ 88

Most of the posters are advertisements, but not for liquor. They suggest an interest in trade. The lamp is easily recognisable as of Dutch design, of a type common in the Dutch controlled East Indies, particularly Java.89

On coral atolls very little wood is available that is suitable for planking. The timber that the bar and rafters appear to be made from would be almost impossible to find locally and would have to be obtained from high islands, the nearest being some thousands of kilometres distant. All this is evidence of extensive trading connections. We require more data to recognise the ‘mother hubbard’ as the clothes of the missions, to know not all I-Kiribati women dressed this way and that not only were the missions present, but they were having limited success. From letters and books we know more about the missions, from other photographs more about what they did and did not influence.

The image of the bar room at the Sans Souci is perhaps most interesting for its statement, this is what it was like, how it appeared, these were, the faces of the people who were real people that did exist – at this time, in this place. We see faces, we know how people looked, we see how they dressed, and we see the bar, where the drinks were kept, the sort of glasses and bottles.

87 Stevenson suggests Butaritari villagers were armed ‘from the highest to the lowest with revolvers and repeating rifles’. (RLS 1988, p.233 (1900). ‘---over a thousand stand of excellent new arms’ (ibid, p.255).
88 ibid, p.238.
89 Until recently I was in possession of a number of these lamps of both hanging and wall-mounted varieties.
When we see the bar room at the Sans Souci we are privileged to share a little of the world of the late 19th century, in particular the world of the Stevensons. We share their intimacy with the Europeans and islanders of Butaritari atoll. We share their surroundings, see ‘it was small, but neatly fitted, and at night (when the lamp was lit) sparkled with glass and glowed with colourful pictures like a theatre at Christmas. The pictures were advertisements, the glass coarse enough, the carpentry amateur; but the effect, in that incongruous isle, was of unbridled luxury and inestimable expense. Here songs were sung, tales told, tricks performed, games played.’ 90 In that moment of synthesis, monochrome becomes colour, two dimensions, three. Like Stevenson we can walk into that room across space and time, reflect on multivalencies, share the immediacy of the experience of life. This is a special form of knowledge.

The Sans Souci represents the type of world I-Matang create for themselves, a recreation of home. It is a crafted place where outsiders create scenes that are similar to sights at home. The new place is transformed into the old and all is comfortable. This is the creation of a simulacrum, where I Matang in unfamiliar surroundings create a stage on which they can act, thus bridging home with there. A real crossing, of the ‘beach’ between the worlds of the I-Matang and that of the I-Kiribati takes a lot more. The crossing between our world and that of the Sans Souci is similarly partial. We cannot live in that ‘Foreign Country’, 91 but can visit and explore for a while.

A much fuller picture, like our own reality, is never complete and emerges with examination of large collections of images, text, reminiscences, archaeology, or in representation in the extended narrative. The single photograph provides little complete data without other knowledge. Even then we have clues, not surety.

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90 Stevenson, RL 1986, pp.224-25. RLS’s original notes were made in 1889. They were posthumously published in a number of editions.
CHAPTER 3

PLACE & TIME
In Place and Time I consider how the island world of Kiribati is seen, and has been seen in the past, by the I-Kiribati and I-Matang. I suggest that places are seen and understood by myth-histories of that specific place or of others, that one is familiar with, from real or myth-historical narratives. I will discuss several examples from my Artist’s Book to show how these inter-relationships may be observed.

For Europeans in the Pacific, over time, various degrees of accommodation were achieved and new myths created. Those that had the greatest exposure and therefore influence, were the narratives from adventurers and missionaries that in the nineteenth century replaced those from explorers. Whether the myth-histories were recent traveller’s tales or stories originating in the distant past, by the mid nineteenth century the stories were being received from the written word.

The myth-histories of place for islanders is continuous, as the islander’s myth-history usually connects to, or complements, myth-histories of personal and cultural identity. Islander stories are passed on orally, and by performance, particularly dance and ritual.

Place can then be understood in association with some written or performed version of the past. The past itself may be understood differently by Europeans and Islanders. Europeans usually understand time as linear, the present preceding the future, the past preceding the present. Islanders see time as organic and circular; the future is known from the past and the present is that, omnipresent. Islanders understand a sequential attribute in time, as in genealogies, but not teleological or evolutionary. These differences help to explain how seeing for I-Matang and I-Kiribati may be understood in terms of different myth-histories and different understandings of time.

Notions of time are not usually part of a discourse on visual communication, which is normally approached as positioned at the point in time of perception, at the time of

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92 Myth-history is the notion of the past that may be true but unprovable or partly true, partly myth or entirely myth. In myth-histories the boundaries between these possibilities is diffuse.
the actual seeing, or on the reflection of that seeing, that gives meaning and contributes, negates or reinforces knowledge, or at least, beliefs.

The connections between time and visuality are something that is central to this study. From my research question I wanted to investigate the past to explain what I had experienced on the day Mai introduced me to the anti of Tebontebike. It occurred to me that on that day that I was seeing part of the past in that it was informing my perceptions in the story of Naboika and Nei Nikuao, in the use of the artefacts of the bangota (shrine) and the boua (the symbolic stones) and in communication with the anti from the sea. In many other experiences in Kiribati, some described in this project, the past was often the key to the way the present was seen, the way the seeing was known. There were to be two important aspects to this.

Firstly what is seen is interpreted partly from a framework in which one places oneself. If I can call this identity, then identity is largely informed by notions of a construction of the past termed by Cornford93, ‘mythistoricus’, a notion used extensively as ‘myth-histoire’ by La Touche in his work in the southern islands of Kiribati.94 Secondly, with the concept of myth-history the seeing of place is inextricably linked with the knowing of time. As with much knowledge, especially that of other ways of knowing, there are always paradoxes. The Artist’s Book shows how these findings and paradoxes were revealed.

As the Voyage of ‘The Lion and the Frigate Bird’ commences, I ask, how do I see this island world? How do islanders see it? What informs how that seeing? Does seeing change with familiarity?
In V I, pp.10 -11 is my sighting of the atoll of Marakei from the air. I note on p.26 that my impression of Marakei was of an ‘Oceanic Avalon’. Marakei suspended, earth between water and air, a magical land. The only connections I had were the Arthurian legends where lands existed in myths that appeared and disappeared. I was making sense of my seeing by reference to stories I had read. Those with knowledge of Irish legends might see such islands as somewhere like Tir Na Nog, the island where time is suspended. I also perceived the space in which this strange land was

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suspended to be a dome, as the margin between sea and air was diffuse. The idea of the Sky Dome permeates my entire narrative.

Atolls like Marakei have stimulated the imagination of other I-Matang. In 1895, CM Woodford wrote, ‘As an example of the coral atolls, the island of Marakei in this group is perhaps the most perfect known. Dr Dana compares it, when seen from the masthead, to a garland thrown upon the water.’ I-Matang have been aware of the use of garlands in the marginal spaces of arriving and leaving since Bougainville’s visit to Tahiti in 1766. Perhaps garlands were made sense of in stories of the garlanding of Greek athletes. In the sight of garlands one could imagine oneself as an arriving hero, a verification of an Enlightenment dream where white strangers were acclaimed as emancipators.

Such metaphorical associations are thoroughly romantic, as exemplified by the Pacific authority and one time Colonial Officer and District Commissioner to the Gilbert and Ellice Island Colony, Harry Maude, who wrote – ‘If one draws a circle around the island world of the Pacific, at its centre will be found the perfect models of the South Sea Islands of romance: a necklace of sixteen low coral atolls straddling the equator and almost touching the 180\(^{th}\) meridian.’

When Maude had left the island world and was back in Australia, his assistant in promoting health programs in the islands was Nancy Phelan, who mixed work with a holiday to the Gilbert Islands. Maude was concerned Phelan would not appreciate the beauty of the austere atolls, but Phelan had an even more romantic view – ‘After acquaintance with the blue volcanic peaks of the high islands, stepping ashore on a coral island is like seeing the Parthenon for the first time after a lifetime of Renaissance painting. All is brilliant, clear, simple, uncluttered, perfect, yet in no way chilling, uncomforting or bleak. To land on such an island is to regain a lost world, to be transported back to the imagination of childhood. We find that almost everything is different when we grow up, bigger or smaller or better or worse than we imagined, but these little islands remain unchanged, so innocent, clean and beautiful that they could only be imagined by children. They are the islands where the treasure

\(^{95}\) Woodford CM, 1895, p.351.  
\(^{96}\) Maude in Sabatier, E 1977, p.v.
was buried, where the parrot screeched, where the ribs of the hulk rotted in the sandy cove. There is nothing quite like them in our adult lives.’

Phelan’s vision typified a knowing of the Pacific that was informed by adventure books that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries replaced the notions of the Pacific as classical paradise that was informed by early contact tales, especially those of Bougainville at Tahiti. Paradise was lost with the deaths of La Perouse, Cook, and the missionary John Williams.

I-Matang coming to the Pacific from 1850 to 1950 were largely influenced by stories. These were often partly based on true encounters and events or events that might have been true. They are myth-histories and they were relatively recent ones. The first Europeans to enter the Pacific were influenced, as Bernard Smith has pointed out, by stories passed down from classical times. Tahitians were compared to Roman soldiers. Polynesian buildings and clothing and sexual mores were akin to those of ancient Greece. The dreams of a paradisaical Pacific were replaced by adventure and cannibal stories in the nineteenth century, to be replaced once more by sensuous dreamings in advertising of products and tourism from the mid twentieth century.

By the mid nineteenth Century, sensuality was mixed with danger. The Enlightenment hope of spreading knowledge was fast being replaced by the possibilities of commercial exploitation and the spread of the Christian Gospel to heathen lands. Daniel Defoe’s publication in 1718 of ‘The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe’ itself a myth-history, initiated these literary informants. Roughly based on the self-marooned Alexander Selkirk’s sojourn on Mas a Tierra in the Juan Fernandez group off Chile, Crusoe’s island was tough going but abounded in game, grew vegetables and had abundant fresh water in a balmy climate. The natives (one in this case) were easily tamed and made wonderful servants. Crusoe’s island was ripe for British pluck and genius and inspired many. Herman Melville’s ‘Mardi’ originated in the coral lagoons of The Kingsmills, as

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97 Phelan, N, 1958 p.16.
99 The US Exploring Expedition of 1839-1842 was perhaps the last of the Enlightenment voyages in the Pacific. In any case one of its aims was to facilitate American power so trade could be conducted to US benefit.
Kiribati was known in the mid nineteenth Century. If Melville espoused romance and philosophic reflection in ‘Mardi’ (1849)\textsuperscript{100}, his previous Typee (1846) and Oomoo (1849) spoke of treachery, violence and warned of damage done by Outsiders to indigenous Pacific peoples. Charles Warren Stoddard’s ‘Cruising the South Seas’ added another element – that of the homoerotic appeal of islander men, in particular Polynesians.\textsuperscript{101} R.M. Ballantyne wrote ‘The Coral Island’ in 1858, a rollicking boy’s yarn that Robert Louis Stevenson enjoyed.\textsuperscript{102} ‘The Coral Island’ was still selling well a century later.

Robert Louis Stevenson was already a famous author before his two Pacific voyages reported in ‘In the South Seas’, which influenced twentieth century European writers like Maude and Grimble. Based on voyages taken by Stevenson and his family in 1888 and 1889, it was published posthumously in 1909.

Louis Becke published 35 stories of the Pacific from 1894 until 1913,\textsuperscript{103} most based on stories gained in island bars, or that were part autobiographical, that told of the violent interface of European and island worlds. Becke sailed extensively in the Pacific and at one stage was charged with piracy after three months as supercargo for the notorious Bully Hayes\textsuperscript{104}. His trading days in the Gilbert and Ellice group gave rise to stories of the extreme violence in Kiribati in the mid nineteenth century.

Maude was impressed sufficiently by Becke to publish ‘Louis Becke, 1845-1913, The Writer who Lived his own Pacific Romances’\textsuperscript{105}.

\textsuperscript{100} Melville’s work reached a peak after ‘Mardi’ in both adventure and reflection with his most popular book ‘Moby Dick’ in 1851. ‘Mardi and a Voyage Thither’ was published in 1849.
\textsuperscript{101} Geiger J, 2007, p. 208.
\textsuperscript{102} The Coral Island valorised the missionary endeavours in the Pacific. The book was used as a Sunday School prize at least into the 1950s. RLS appreciated efforts of individual missionaries e.g. Fr Damien in Molokai and Maka in Butaritari, but seemed to think the missions did little good overall.
\textsuperscript{103} http://marshall.csu.edu.au/people/LoisBecke/Biblio.html Accessed 23/6/09
\textsuperscript{104} Bully Hayes was a labour recruiter and rogue with a penchant for violence. See Lubbock, B 1931.
The early twentieth century saw the books of another adventurer turned writer, Jack London. Like Becke, London was prolific. A number of his stories were based in the Pacific. Like Becke’s they were adventure stories with lots of shady characters and mayhem.

From Defoe to London, literary myth-histories formed a combined picture of Pacific places, an image of warmth, palm trees, adventure, sensuality, with an edge of danger and paganism. All this had a great deal of appeal to restless young men, missionaries attracted to cannibals and idols, outcasts looking for places to hide and men looking for places to increase their power and wealth. 106

In Oceania, when one sees place it is known by stories to be connected with the events of the past. Place acts as a metaphor to time. 107 This is particularly so in Kiribati, where the land area is small and every square metre accounted for. The I-Kiribati (V I pp.20-1) see their land quite differently. Whereas I-Matang see water, land, vegetation, people and animals as something of the present to be evaluated 108 according to memories bought from elsewhere, the I-Kiribati see the same phenomena, but see them as connecting them to a past that has personal meaning, so that place and time are intimately connected.

As the I-Matang bring differing cargos of the mind, different books and different expectations, they interpret their experiences differently. The I-Kiribati see the past differently. The I-Kiribati past varies from family to family and boti (clan) to boti as their genealogies and karaki are different. Even cosmogony varies, with some stories of origin being more dominant in different boti or different islands.

There is nothing like these islands (V1 pp. 10-11) in Europe, these traces of land in a vast ocean. The fragility of the atolls is something words have difficulty with. When

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106 The power game in the Pacific was for the I-Matang a male activity. There were women with both island and European ancestry who gained considerable power and often wealth. These included some trader’s wives as mentioned in the Bar Room at the Sans Souci analysis in Methodology. Better known would be the tragic Princess Kalualani of Hawaii and the legendary Aggie Grey of Samoa.

107 And time to place. See Yi-Fu Tuan, 2008 p. 129.

108 And exploited, if possible, for their own benefit.
seen, like this, from the air, it seems a miracle they survive at all. The I-Kiribati make sense of place in their myths of cosmogony and the stories of how they came to be the way they are and where each individual came from. Natural places and things - islets, rock pools, trees, tides, fish, birds and winds, as seen and experienced, are given meaning by stories that inform the individual of their identity.

**Connecting Place to Deep Time**

In the *Te Bo ma te Maki* \(^{109}\) (V 1 pp. 24-26), are a number of levels of meaning. The story gives meaning to phenomena now seen. After Riiki (The Great Eel) prised open *Te Bo ma te Maki* he was thrown into the sky to become the Milky Way, \(^{110}\) a sort of Oceanic Rainbow Serpent \(^{111}\). Na Areau threw the eyes of his father Na Atibu in to the sky to create the Sun and Moon. Na Atibu’s right arm became the strong west wind and his left arm, the gentle trade winds from the east.

These are the sort of cosmogonic stories one might find anywhere, but there is part of the story that is much more specific to I-Kiribati identity.

When *Te Bo ma te Maki* was opened the ancestral spirits of all the I-Kiribati people were released. These were known as Rang and Baba, \(^{112}\) the Fools and Deaf Mutes. In Polynesian cosmogony the sky is Rangi, the Earth Mother Papa. In Gilbertese ‘p’ and ‘b’ are interchangeable eg the island of Beru can be called Peru. The belittling of these spirits at the time of Creation indicates that Na Areau and company replaced the gods of Polynesia. There are further connections between the present and the creation. When *Te Bo ma te Maki* was opened. Na Areau’s father Na Atibu had a wife, Nei Taekea, whom Grimble associates with the eastern Polynesian sun goddess Vatea or Wakea. Vata is associated with the stingray as is the Gilbertese light

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\(^{109}\) As mentioned in the Artist’s Book, *Te Bo ma te Maki*, is the object from which the universe was created. The name translates as ‘The Darkness and the Cleaving Together’. The two main streams of the karaki (stories) name Na Areau as the Creator, or in older karaki, Tabakea, ‘The First of All’.

\(^{110}\) Tiroba, T (translator) 1901, p.13.

\(^{111}\) In some stories Riiki fell to earth in pieces creating the islands (REF) In others Nakeau created the islands.

\(^{112}\) Grimble in Maude (ed) 1989, p. 262.
skinned goddess Nie Tituabine, the most powerful female in the old Gilbertese pantheon.\textsuperscript{113}

At the same time as Riiki there also appears Tabakea, the Turtle\textsuperscript{114}, who is also a crocodile, which connects Tabakea not to Samoa, which is the setting of many of the myth stories, but to the islands near Papua New Guinea.

By a study of Oceanic mythology a probable history can be built up. It would seem from this argument that the first arrivals in the Gilber
ts were dark people associated with Na Areau and Tabakea. Light skinned people from Indonesia later dominated them.\textsuperscript{115} The full argument is far too complex to be presented here, and not central to my story. What is important is that in seeing the places, as the pastor in my Book showed me, then the direct connections for the I-Kiribati to their beginnings and their ancestry. To see the places is to have identity.\textsuperscript{116}

The connections between now and then in what is seen in Kiribati is not restricted to I-Kiribati seeing. My feeling that the dance movements and rituals I saw in Kiribati were similar to previous experiences in South East Asia, (V I p.55) was my own connection to a past. If there was indeed a connection between the dances then I may have been experiencing some connection far back in time, when the ancestors of the present day I-Kiribati came from South East Asia.

**Place and Historical Time**

The gentleman on p.28 VI, placed near the story of King Kewe is not of course Kewe, who according to the genealogies, lived some time after the return from Samoa around 650 years ago. The photo is of Tem Binoka, *Uea* (High Chief or King) of Abamama (Land of Moonlight) and the nearby atolls of Kuria and Aranuka.\textsuperscript{117} *Uea*

\textsuperscript{113} ibid, p.263.
\textsuperscript{114} See footnote on Te Bo ma te Maki and Tabakea on the previous page. It is also of interest that Buariki; the village I stayed in on North Tarawa, has the same name as a brother of Tabakea in some of the *karaki*. It was from near this village that I was shown the place of Te Bo ma te Maki.
\textsuperscript{115} Uriam, 1995, p.56.
\textsuperscript{116} For more of the connections between history and myth in Kiribati see Grimble ibid, pp. 255-267.
\textsuperscript{117} In the the 1880’s, Binoka became good friends with the Stevenson entourage.
were established by heredity and/war. From Abamama north they constantly fought to gain or retain control of all or areas of atolls. Tales of these exploits were often told in karaki in connection with the places of their activities.\textsuperscript{118}

The I-Kiribati in their seeing of places and artefacts trace their own genealogies, which often dictate their social functions. Places contain stories can be known on different levels. This is exemplified in the story of King Kewe.\textsuperscript{119}

Binoka, of whom we have a considerable body of reports and photographs\textsuperscript{120} died in 1892, just before the protectorate was declared. Much of his reputation is entering the realm of myth. Kewe, of whom we also have evidence, is, due to the distance of time, much more prone to distortions of fact. Facts are not as important to I-Kiribati as they are to I-Matang. Seeing the places confers authenticity not of facts, but of the story of the place. The blood of Nie Aramaeano is under our feet and she was the daughter of Bakoa the Shark. The seeing of the places makes the stories real and connects now to Deep Time, thus consolidating I-Kiribati identity.

The way I-Kiribati regard time was (and is) a constant source of frustration to the I-Matang. Being on time is a quality beloved of merchants of goods, faiths and empires. Merchants, missions and imperialists worked together to attempt to infuse islanders with their concept of time. One of the first tasks of the mission schools was to teach local children how to tell the time\textsuperscript{121}. Marching was more about control and being in synchronicity with time, than physical exercise, as seen in the mission school photograph in V I pp. 58- 9.

\textsuperscript{118} Binoka had a fearsome reputation amongst his own people. On Sunday’s he enjoyed firing his repeating Winchester into the village – ‘make em more bright’ – he was reputed to say. He killed anyone who caught sight of his wives in his harem. (Maude in Davidson JW & Scarr D, 1976, Baiteke and Binoka of Abemama, p.201 – 224). Binoka’s ancestry could be traced to the formidable warrior Mangia of Butaritari who had prevented the seemingly unstoppable navies of Uakeia (The Diviner) and Kaitu of Beru from attacking Butaritari and Makin around 400 years ago. Such an ancestry justified his position as uaea together his armoury and bodyguards.

\textsuperscript{119} Tiroba, T 1990, p.12-14.

\textsuperscript{120} Photographs by R L Stevenson held in Writers Museum, Edinburgh

\textsuperscript{121} Conversation with Greg Dening, 2006.
As I-Kiribati look to the past in order to inform the future, the I-Matang version of time has quite a different vision. The postcard reproduced in V I pp. 68-9 is an imagining of the future of phosphate mines on Banaba in the early twentieth century. The vision of belching factories and bulging banks never eventuated. Long before 1999 Banaba was mined to ruin, the lush growth turned to arid limestone pillars and the Banabans were removed to Rabi in Fiji.

**Anxieties of Displacement**

The I-Matang (V I, p.32) perform for the camera, between the worlds of identity. One pours a drink; the other pretends to threaten him. The photograph was taken in the early 20\(^{th}\) century. There was no threat to the I-Matang that was being reflected here. The performance expresses old anxieties played out in a strange land.

To the I-Kiribati all the land is seen as part of ones identity. In pre-Protectorate times only slaves owned no land and to be a slave was to have no identity\(^{122}\). Slaves were generally those defeated in war, so even now people argue before the Lands Commission for return of lost land that will return identity. Intermarriage and complex distribution systems on death mean most people own at least several small pieces of land. Identity is fused with land, which is usually marked, often as Bokaati told me ‘by stones placed by our Grandfathers, deep in the ground with magic.’ (V I p.34). The missions had their own visual rhetoric. The fences around the land that they negotiated for were visual signs of the sacred (V I pp. 58-9). They spoke of this in visual metaphors. Outside the fence was darkness, inside was light.

Magic, land, people and their signs become fused, yet the I-Kiribati culture is living and changing, so land has been given to churches and government for purposes deemed important enough to break some of the old connections (V I p. 33-4). Even then, people know to what land they belong, even if they do not have the use of it.

**Fusing of Land and Identity**

The movement of the fence (V I p.35) has a significance that the immoveable church fences do not. Some I-Kiribati boundaries are inflexible, due to their sacred

\(^{122}\) Uriam, 1995, pp. 6, 176.
connotations. The marae boundaries separate sacred space from profane space. In the past fences marked certain women’s and men’s areas, the interior being tapu for example, males were not permitted to enter a female compound.

The boundaries between private land plots do not work like this. That people are always arguing about them does not mean that boundary disputes are all about land ownership. It is also about the symbolism of boundaries, which concerns relationships between the owners on either side of the boundary. The Samoan scholar Malama Meleisea said in a lecture, November 21st 1997 – ‘Everybody exists because they know what their relationship is to that person and this person to that person. And when you place right in the middle of the village, a fence, all those relationships are questioned.’ Meleisea was talking about the introduction of an immovable fence. If the boundary markers are being moved then the relationships between the people on either side of the boundary are always in mind, to be considered as the circumstances change. This is a further example of the integration of land/people that has always been difficult for I-Matang to understand as they see land as property.

For the I-Kiribati land is not only made sacred with magic, it is infused with anti. (V I, pp. 36-7). It is the anti that make some places cold. Curiously I-Matang feel the cold there too. The anti do not retreat from the mission land either. There is a place in the grounds of a Catholic mission where sleepers, I-Matang and I-Kiribati wake, feeling they are being smothered. Anti are believed responsible. The meaning of places is made more significant and more multi layered as time goes by. The Second World War added anti and meaning. (V I p. 37).

The Beach as Place of Interface
The story of Sister Baptiste is about crossing the beach. Beaches are places of interface. Beaches separate ocean from land, past from the present, Strangers from Natives and Outlanders from Islanders.

124 Moving the symbolic border constitutes a semiotic fluidity which strengthens relationships. This is further described in Chapter 7, Dancing.
In 1895, ten young nuns, mainly from France\textsuperscript{1} came to Kiribati to complement the male Roman Catholic Mission of the Mission Sacre Couer. They had come to stay. Sister Alaima Talu writes: “Sister Mary Berchmans returned to Australia after a few years. The rest never saw their countries again. They gave their all and in death allowed themselves to mingle with the soil of Kiribati. The sacrifice was complete.”\textsuperscript{125}

Of all the Sisters of the Sacred Heart that devoted their lives to their God and to the Kiribati people, Sister Mary Baptiste Kelhetter’s story is metaphorical for the entire endeavour of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart (V I, p. 35-39). She exemplified the essential differences between the early Protestants who were inflexible and mostly transient, with their Polynesian teachers who were often corrupt, exploitative and self-seeking and the French Catholic Missions who generally displayed none of these tendencies, and gained hearts and perhaps souls, by more effectively crossing the boundary between the two worlds. Born in Alsace in 1870, she arrived in Kiribati in 1895 and died there in 1941. I photographed her grave on Abaiang. In the Catholic Archives on South Tarawa, I found the letters that described her contagion with leprosy in 1914 and her refusal to be removed to an asylum either in Fiji or Australia. There are few records I could find about her from that time until her death in 1941\textsuperscript{126}. I was told that she became sick and had to be looked after at Tabwiroa. Sister Alaima Talu mentions she was there, very sick, in her separate house in 1939. I have been unable to find out her movements or activities from the time of her diagnosis and appointment to be in charge of the leper colony on Tarawa, until 1939. Of the time she managed the Tarawa Leprosy Asylum I could find nothing. I can extrapolate some of her experiences from other documents and by interpolation.

The total commitment of those in the Catholic Missions is evidenced by their graves. The priests and nuns thought their commitment was to the people, but by living out their lives in the land they became part of it and part of the people. The land and the people are one word, \textit{te aba}.

\textsuperscript{125} Talu, Sr. A, 1995, p.8.
\textsuperscript{126} She died a few days before the Japanese invaded.
Paradoxes of Time

The image (V I pp. 44-5) is a reminder of the paradoxical visual perceptions of metaphors of time. In a quiet village on an outer island, time would seem not to be something to be watched. Time would seem to be to play with children, chat or sleep. Watches are not something one would expect; yet the old man in the photograph wears a watch. He would be of an age where it seems to be even less important than for younger people to wear a watch. This is a visual paradox, which warns one to be careful. Things are not always as they seem and it is very easy to come to incorrect conclusions.

The way in which present experiences are interpreted is also dependant on notions of time. I-Matang and I-Kiribati both have concepts of myth–history, differing in the pasts they believe they are connected to. The notions of time are visually represented in different ways.

For most I-Matang time is linear, with past, present and future occurring in that order according to a teleology connected with Divine Purpose or Progress or both. Divine Purpose was a central belief of missionaries. Traders, naval leaders and colonial officials tended to support Progress. Teaching the ‘natives’ about money, discipline, work ethic, and how to tell the time, moved things in the right and inevitable direction.

I-Kiribati understand time as organic, circular and sometimes synchronous. Circular time may be conceived as in return of seasons, harvesting cycles and the repeated positions of heavenly bodies. Circular, or organic time is visually known. The position of stars, phases of the moon, flowering of plants, the coming of certain fish, all indicate positions in circular time. These may be indicators for action, such as celebrating, exchanging, ritualising, fishing or voyaging. Time can also be seen as having a presence, so future is seen as past, both lying in interchangeable positions relevant to the present.

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127 Hau’ofa, E, in Borofsky 2000, p.461.
It cannot be said that time in Oceania is universally considered as circular and that
time in the western world is linear. In Kiribati, as in much of the Pacific, an
important part of the establishment of identity is by the knowledge of genealogies that
connect one step-wise directly back in time, ultimately to the creation stories. In this
way one’s known history, father, mother and grandparents connect to the known past,
to myth–history and into Deep Time. In I-Matang lands, say England, France or
Australia, a farmer knows circular time as well.

Places can be seen that connect the viewer by story directly to the creation, as in the
islet pointed out to me by the pastor as the place of Te Bo ma te Maki (V I, pp. 24 –
29) where Now leads to Deep Time. It is not just the creation myths that do this, but
the metaphors within most karaki indicate events in the distant past, that have
meaning in the present.

The places associated with stories like that of Kewe belong to a past not quite so
distant and likely refer to real people. The story of the capture of Kewe mixes real
people, who leave physical traces, such as the kitchen foundations on V I. p. 29, with
mythical beings such as the residents of Mone, beneath the sea. In the story there are
more levels of meaning. If Nei Arameo is a daughter of Bakoa, the Shark, then her
death and Kewe’s escape from Mone is another story of triumph over the sea, told by
reference to the places where the event is reputed to have occurred. On the path of
Kewe’s walk I was shown certain rocks that have further significance. I was only
shown evidence of the story when I indicated I knew something about it. I have
heard, from other sources, of other stories connected with physical objects near
Buariki on North Tarawa that were not mentioned by Tateti Tauma or Biribe Bwaate.

**Images of Paradise, Realities of Desert Islands**

As stated earlier, the I-Matang came with preconceptions as to what sort of place
Pacific Islands are. The desert islands such as Kiribati, have a special place in I-
Matang literature, from the wild adventures of Ballantyne’s ‘Coral Island’

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deadly searches for fabulous pearls to cartoons depicting castaways or cannibal cooking pots.\textsuperscript{129}

A mental image of palm trees overhanging white beaches is certainly what outsiders see. Up until the Protectorate was established in 1892, the Gilberts could indeed be places of adventure and danger. For most I-Matang the reality was the hardships of lack of communication, varied food and comforts of home, in a strange environment.

The sense of alienation from the land was expressed by the art teacher, Cait Wait when she told me that the (Kiribati) land was not her land and she could not share it with the indigenous women as she could with the aboriginal women she had worked with in Australia.

The unfamiliar could be interpreted as a new positive reality. In 1875 the missionary, Mrs Andrew D Colchord wrote in her diary –

‘Thurs 23\textsuperscript{rd} July - Took a walk a little way under the coconut trees and enjoyed the beauty of the sea. Never had noticed such beauty before in the high arching trees. A wise Creator has given this climate tall trees with a few large leaves like a windmill to shade, and plenty of room for air to circulate. The soft twilight shade that came down through the trees was delightful.’\textsuperscript{130}

In this example the sequence: imagining paradise - finding discomfort, is reversed. The missionaries were told the Pacific was no paradise but full of ugliness and sin. For a small moment, at least Colchord’s prejudices were overcome. I have no doubt the Pacific weaves strange spells.

I spoke to a Catholic volunteer teacher on Abaiang. She came from Australia. Her husband had died a little over a year before. She said she was at a loss for several months. She then decided to volunteer in Kiribati. ‘Since then’ she said, ‘I have watched every sunrise’. There was some of this sense of the beauty of Kiribati to an

\textsuperscript{129} The cooking pots I remember from mid 20\textsuperscript{th} century cartoons have a strong resemblance to the iron pots used to render whale blubber from the whaling fleets that operated along The Line to the 1860’s.

\textsuperscript{130} Colchord, D, 1875 Journal of Mrs Andrew Colchord aboard The Morning Star. Manuscript.
outsider in the experience of another missionary, the Mormon on the ferry, (V I pp. 52-3). I’m not exactly sure what emotions went through Mrs Colchord’s mind over 130 years ago, as she watched the sun set in the coconut grove but the young Mormon was transformed. Earlier I had seen him as quite morose and totally out of place in his formal attire. With the fish, the spray, the baby, the sunset, the cheering, everything operated simultaneously. I’m sure at this moment he was experiencing a moment of Te Katei ni Kiribati, The Essence of Kiribati that I write more about in the concluding chapter, Dancing.

**Home as Paradise**

The I-Kiribati themselves are not jaded to the beauty of their islands. On walls in small cafes, on school buildings and (as seen in V I pp. 54-5) small shops, are painted palm trees, the night sky, shells and other icons of their world. Unlike the places that may be significant from the past, these are very much re-presentations of the experiences of the present. The traditional culture, as will be discussed further in the following chapter, Space, did not contain such re-presentations and the skills to paint are recent, taught by I-Matang, such as Cait Wait.

Such sights of place are not intended for I-Matang, they are not tourist posters. They exist largely for the enjoyment of the I-Kiribati, an appropriation of an I-Matang art form for their own benefit. The Star Twinkle is in a village seldom visited by I-Matang and is a shop primarily for local needs.

**The Tree as Conduit to the Past**

The genealogies that connect present identity with the past are symbolised, by both I-Matang and I-Kiribati, as trees. The tree in Kiribati has further and deeper meaning. On the cover of Maude’s book on Gilbertese oral tradition is a visual representation of a tree (V I pp.70-1) and its relationship to the atua of I-Kiribati cosmogony, whose karaki infuse the meaning of I-Kiribati places.

Trees have great importance to the I-Kiribati. I was taking a video of a very large tree on Butaritari as a young man bicycled past. He slowed and watched me intently.

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About 15 minutes later a *unimane* appeared and sat some distance away watching me. Perhaps 20 minutes later he left without saying anything. I’m sure he was intent on seeing that I was not doing anything that might interfere with the tree.

A tree can mean many things. There are many trees in the *karaki*. On Banaba there are trees of Life and Death. This story is contained in V II pp. 44-5. Somewhere near Buaraki where I was shown the place of Te Bo ma te Maki and Kewe’s adventures, is the Tree of Tarawa (*Te Uekea*).\(^{132}\) This is where culture and peoples were ‘planted’ and ‘grew’ following the fall of the most famous tree of all (*Te Kai n Tikuaba*), - ‘The Resting Place of the Frigate Bird’, or ‘The Resting Place of Lands’.\(^{133}\) The fall of The Tree of Samoa (*Uruakín kai n Tikuaba*) is a metaphor for the expulsion from Samoa about the year 1350 of the ancestors of the clans now dominant in the Gilberts.

The tree may be real. It may be seen only in visions, but it is a non-iconic metaphor; representing something different to the way it appears.

In the next chapter I consider how knowledge is transmitted by non-iconic metaphors.

\(^{132}\) ibid. p.33.

\(^{133}\) Uriam, K 1995, p.134.
CHAPTER 4

SPACE
In the last chapter, I discussed the inter relationship of time and place in the construction of identity and how myth-histories inform and consolidate that identity. This identity provides a framework, determining how sights of familiar and unfamiliar places are seen.

In ‘Space’ I consider how the I-Kiribati construct meaning out of the view of defined spaces and orientations, which are reinforced by repetition in different contexts. This results in a visual world, both constructed and natural, that consolidates identity through an experiential epistemology that differs fundamentally from I-Matang knowledge structures.

Before I look at cosmologies of I-Kiribati and I-Matang in the next chapter, I want to put a case that the visual signifiers of elements within the maneaba, te bata (dwelling house), te waa (canoe) and the Sky Dome, provide a structure, interpreted by karaki, that connects the past, present and future in a manner that is inescapable for the I-Kiribati.

The I-Kiribati expand this significance in structure with metaphors seen in phenomena and rituals. These include mat patterns, decorations, tattoos and string figures, that form a Gestalt of enduring webs of significance that have a flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, whilst identifying with an I-Kiribati universe.

This is not a knowledge system exclusive to Kiribati. Other islanders have complex symbolic structures as do people worldwide. I-Matang utilise non-iconic metaphors too. Pulpits, Bibles, cups of wine, pieces of bread, flags mean something that they are not. The difference between I-Kiribati and I-Matang visual metaphors is a matter of scale and emphasis. I-Matang visual tropes are received and interpreted on occasions, remnants from a past before print took over and survival and acceptance required the necessity to read signs. They surround the Kiribati. Their world depends on visual language. The I-Kiribati may stand out against other societies, including those from other islands, in their almost exclusive use of abstract symbols that reference knowledge. These abstract signs have multiple levels of meaning made in association with other signs.
Social Significance of Metaphors of Space

The observation of spatial metaphors is also central to interpersonal relationships in domestic and public spaces. The human head is regarded as a repository of maka (sacred strength), and therefore tapu (in this instance meaning sacred and therefore forbidden) to touch. Patting children on the head is not regarded as polite. The feet are of the earth, farthest from the head. It is not good manners to point the soles of the feet at someone.\(^{134}\) The space between people is important. If people are talking, even from one side of a road to another, a passerby should move behind one of the talkers or duck their head below the line of speech. Metaphors of space are omnipresent.

The Maneaba as Tapu (sacred)

The traditional village maneaba had many functions. Many of them still exist. The maneaba is now and always was, sacred. To harm the maneaba is to offend it (matauninga) and to be thus accursed (maraia).\(^{135}\) To strike the maneaba is to strike at the heart of I Kiribati culture.

In the 1990’s a drunken man enraged at a village rebuke for his ill behaviour, set fire to the roof of a maneaba. The uniname (old men) sat and decided his fate. He was chased by a group of young men out onto the reef and killed. In the ensuing court case not one of the many people on the beach at the time saw anything. Two men were found guilty of assault and given a short prison sentence. The other suspects were found not guilty and released.\(^{136}\)

It was recognised by the earliest I-Matang visitors that the maneaba was something special. Its size dictated it as the first building sighted on approaching an island, the last to disappear on embarkation. Protruding above the fringe of palms and pandanus the great maneabas are immense. They can soar over 15m high, be over 40m long.

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\(^{134}\) This may occur when sitting on mats or on the beach. The I-Kiribati squat, sit cross legged or sit on their feet. The transgressions are usually with I-Matang not aware of the protocols and not comfortable sitting this way. The land is sacred, transferring power to the skin that touches it, which is a good reason not to wear shoes.


\(^{136}\) Discussion with David Lambourne who was Defence Attorney at the time. Conversation 27\(^{\text{th}}\) September, 2001.
and 20m wide. Traditionally each village had one large maneaba. In recent years most churches have built their own maneabas. In the administrative centre there are government maneabas. These may look to outsiders like smaller versions of the great maneabas but they do not contain the same meanings in their construction and spatial relationships.  

I have described how the maneaba can be seen as a Sky Dome of signs that act as conduits to the past (V I, pp 80-1). Its size also gives it another meaning. In a flat land where a small mound is called a hill, a maneaba is a mountain. Let me trace back the most important maneaba in modern Kirabati to the myth-history of Deep Time.

The House of Parliament of Kiribati is called Te Maneaba ni Maungatabu.

Maungatabu is one of the three designs of maneaba brought from Samoa after The Breaking of the Tree of Samoa (Te Kai-n-tikuaba). The Tree had Auriaria at the top, the kings of Mone (the Underworld) at the bottom and various ancestral antí in the branches. The Tree grew on the side of Maungatabu, The Sacred Mountain that smoked from its summit and occasionally emitted flames. Seeing the House of Parliament is to see The Sacred Mountain that supported the ancestors of the people who came from Samoa, but also before that to te Bo-ma-te-maki as the trunk of the Tree is said to be the spine of Na Areau’s father Na Tiubu. Na Areau created the world by opening te Bo-ma-te-Maki, and the sun and moon by casting Na Tiubu’s eyes into the sky.

Reports from the United States Exploring Expedition (1838-1842) placed great emphasis on the maneaba of Utiroa. The drawing of the interior (V I, pp. 66-7) shows how imposing it appeared and how it provided a theatre for oratory. The drawing also suggests a space that would engender awe, as a cathedral or a palace might. The central floor space is empty. Its special sanctity reserves it for special occasions, significant moments or sacred objects. I-Matang became aware of this and placed their lawmakers and judges there.

A low fence or rectangle of stones surrounds the maneaba, extending a few meters from it. This area, like the floor of the maneaba is usually covered with coarse gravel.

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137 This does not mean they were not respected. The churches especially Roman Catholic churches contain other metaphors that indicate other spiritual values and another version of Deep Time.
The maneaba, the space it encloses and this surrounding area constitutes the *marae*. The entire *marae* is sacred space. The space on and around the maneaba within the *marae*, was in Samoa both a place of refuge and sacrifice. Although the coconuts ritualistically buried during the building of a maneaba most likely stand in for human heads used during the years in Samoa, the *marae* as a place of sacrifice is not recorded in Gilbertese oral history.\(^{138}\) Throughout oral and recorded history it remains a place of refuge where warriors fleeing war\(^{139}\) could safely visit and beaten wives wait for their husband’s anger to subside. When on Abaiang in 2001, I watched a large group of school children loaded with bundles of firewood, heading off in a leaky boat for Tarawa, where they would stay safely in the maneaba of Bairiki, during the Independence celebrations.

The feeling of the sanctity of the enormous space is still there, as John Thurston informed me (V I p. 77) and as I felt myself (V II, pp. 70-1).

It may be that the significance and meaning of the maneaba can be found ‘only by a combination of linguistic analysis, information carefully gathered through participant observation, and the sifting of oral and written historical sources’;\(^{140}\) but the significance of the visual as a direct conduit to knowledge is largely ignored.

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**The Maneaba as a Sky Dome of Identity and Social Structure.**

The Artist’s Book introduces ‘Space’ with the most important and most metaphoric of structures, the maneaba. In the first image in ‘Space’, (V I, pp.74-5), an elderly man drags a floating log. The log is destined for a new maneaba at Buariki on North Tarawa. The space of the sky envelops and makes central that which will signify the volume of the Sky Dome.


\(^{139}\) Maude, H 1991, p.11.

\(^{140}\) Lundsgaarde H, 1978 p.68. Lundsgaarde argues the social function in and about the Maneaba such as protocol, *boti* identification and ceremony can only be understood by the knowledge of circumstance and different times, necessitating the study of the present as well as the past. However field -work alone will valorise function excessively. (Lundsgaarde 1978 p.79). I discussed this with Lundsgaarde not long before his death.
The maneaba in today’s world appears to function as a community recreational facility. Old men chat and play cards. Women weave mats or plait garlands for the dances. Children play noisily. On formal occasions where law is discussed, feasts or dances are participated in or honoured guests received. Quite often the great vault reverberates with the roar of a crowd watching traditional dance or disco or silently broods over solemn meetings.

The Boti

Each group of villagers that can trace a common ancestor are members of a clan group – the boti. Gilbertese society is divided into family groups known as utu and, formerly extended groups who live on common land, (kainga). These clan groups can, by genealogies, trace their origins to a common ancestor. In the maneaba each clan has a defined sitting place, used now mainly on ceremonial occasions. These sitting areas are called boti and their positions are defined by relationships to the boua (support pillars) and the roof structure. For instance a specified boti may sit near or between particular boua to a width of so many rafters or inaki, (thatch pieces). These positions have been defined at least since the Return from Samoa (around 1280) with adjustments in area due to population changes. Traditionally the clans were then arranged according to a hierarchy of a three or four tiered class system of High Chiefs, Nobles, Commoners and Slaves.

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141 Hockings, J 1989, p. 81. The boti originally numbered three on Beru, increasing in the twentieth century from 13 to 30 depending on the island. Extensive ritual and social relationships (marriage, adoption, power and protocol) are defined by the boti system.

142 The colonial government’s re-arranging of village structure as shown in VII pp.86-7, (Photo by Maude 1931), disturbed the physical arrangement of the kainga.

143 Urium, K 1995 pp.166-7 & 171. This date is determined by Uriam’s interpretation of genealogies estimating a generation as 30 years, as marriage was not permitted until a man had proved himself as a warrior and undergone the necessary education and rituals.

144 The southern islands did without High Chiefs, Tabiteuea – a large southern island meaning ‘Kings are Forbidden’. Government here was by the maneaba, usually a council of unimane. In the now independent Kiribati, national laws are reviewed in the maneaba by both unimane and uaine.
Different boti had specialised knowledge and function, specified property ownership, and rights to fishing grounds and flotsam (floating logs, stranded porpoises or laying turtles). Individual boti had a type of copyright system for canoe crests, kite and mat patterns and house types. Further extensive protocol systems operated, for instance boti spoke or were served food in the maneaba in a specified order.

The term boti is both a clan name and a sitting place. The sitting place is also named inaki, which is the thatch of the roof over a particular boti. This defined space between floor and ceiling within the marae signifies social structure. It is important to see this space as part of the marae and not just that inside the maneaba. The term marae, is one of space, not of building. It includes the volume in the maneaba and the space surrounding it, all of which is sacred. When I rode a bicycle or motorbike past a maneaba, I took care (on advice and by observing others) to dismount until I had passed the marae.

On the floor of the maneaba the clans, (boti) have positions under the rafters (oka) and thatch (inaki) and surrounded by the pillars (boua). Each boua represents an anti of Deep Time, discussed in ‘Cosmology’. Each boti has an area of entry into the maneaba. In the Gilberts (except Butaritari and Makin) the prominent boti is Karongoa-n-Uea, the clan descended from the high kings of Upolo on Samoa, through the warrior Tematawarebwe, his family and followers who survived Uruakin Kain Tiku - aba (The Breaking of the Tree of the Resting Place of Land of the Frigate Bird) around 1400 and arrived on Beru. Their clan spread subsequent to the

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146 Hockings, J 1989, p.40  Hockings notes, ‘The building is a physical expression of the social system.’  
147 Maude, H 1991, p.10.  
148 ibid. p.7.
successful campaigns waged by Kaitu and Uakeia around 1650,\textsuperscript{149} as far north as Marakei.\textsuperscript{150}

There are numerous reports that the knowledge of traditional significances of the maneaba may have been lost. In the 1920’s Colonial Administrator Arthur Grimble wrote that the significance of the \textit{boti} system within the maneaba had been entirely forgotten. Maude stated that the \textit{boti} system had been largely destroyed by Samoan teachers by 1892, when the Protectorate was declared and the power structure shifted to Court House and Magistrates Office. John Hockings stated to me in a telephone conversation that none of the rituals or significances of space have been forgotten.\textsuperscript{151} (V I p. 80). It would seem from David Lambourne’s remarks (V I, p. 77) that with independence, power has returned to the people in the maneaba. How the \textit{boti} hierarchy contributes to maneaba power I have not been able to ascertain.

\textbf{The Enclosure of the Sun}

The \textit{boti} system then came from Samoa, where it has been associated with a sun cult. The Karongoa structure is thought to be much larger than previous meetinghouses. On several islands the \textit{unimane} say ‘\textit{te Taai nanon te maneaba},’ ‘There is sun in the maneaba’, or ‘The Sun is in the maneaba’.\textsuperscript{152} The completion of the ridge capping takes place when the sun is at its zenith (High Noon),\textsuperscript{153} which is also the time for the placement of the first thatch.\textsuperscript{154} The instructions for the building of the maneabas were obtained from Te Taai – The Sun by Bue his son by Nei Matamona.\textsuperscript{155} 156

\textsuperscript{149} Uriam takes this date as 13 generations before 1900 (Uriam 1995 p.169). Maude favoured around 1650. Maude and Grimble used the Polynesian estimate of 25 years per male generation whereas Uriam argues for 30 years, as I Tungaru men would not marry until they had proved themselves as warriors (ibid. p.167).
\textsuperscript{150} A delegation of allegedly gigantic warriors from Butaritari convinced them not to proceed further north to Butaritari and Makin.
\textsuperscript{151} 2005.
\textsuperscript{152} Grimble, A 1989, in H.Maude (ed) pp.115, 127 & 200
\textsuperscript{153} Maude, H 1980, p.31.
\textsuperscript{154} ibid, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{155} Maude, HC & HE, 1994, p.72, Grimble in Maude HE 1989, p.128.
\textsuperscript{156} Yi-Fu J, 2008, p.96 notes that Christianity also has connections to the sun at Ephesians 5:14 and Malachi 4:2. He states ‘The Christian week begins with Sunday and in the early years of the Church, Christians worshipped the resurrected Christ of the Dawn.’
The story of Bue has further implications for how the interior space is seen, so I will give a brief version. Te Taai caused Nei Matamona to become pregnant with the energy of a beam of light, so Bue was born of a virgin, his father being a Supreme God. At this point in history the sun moved very fast, so there was insufficient time in the day for Nei Matamona to complete her weaving. Bue decided to convince Te Taai to slow down, voyaged east to Te Taai and followed him, finally snaring him with a noose. In order to free himself, Te Taai promised to slow down, resulting in the length of day we have now, which presumably gave Nei Matamona enough time to get through her days program of weaving mats and rolling sennit on her thigh.

Te Taai also gave Bue the instructions for building the maneaba which was passed on to his descendants, the clans of Ababou and Maerua, who currently retain the knowledge as used in V I p. 15. Te Taai has six ‘stations’ to pass, three in the sky and three below the earth. The three in the sky correspond to three positions in the arc of the maneaba ‘Sky Dome’ from east to west. In the traditional ceremony on the erection of the eastern central boua called Te Taai, the incantation indicates these as the ‘the rock of his vigour’, ‘the rock of his separation from the horizon’, and ‘the rock of his blazing.’

Grimble believed the maneaba was originally a temple to the Sun God, which is not recognised as a deity in Te Karaki but is claimed by Grimble, as an ancestor by Karangoa secret lore.

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157 They also are in charge of solar eclipses and weather modification. Their boti is on the western side of the maneaba by the boua of the moon, Namakaina.
158 There are many published versions of the Bue story, including a brief one in Maude, HE, 1980 p.4, an extended version in Grimble R, (ed) 1972, pp.132-6. The Bue story seems outside the main stream of I-Kiribati mythology and may be a local version of the Maui story from Polynesia. There are many similarities, including the trapping of the sun.
160 Grimble, R (ed), 1972, pp.132-136. The Karongoa from Samoa and the two groups residing on their arrival Te Bakoa (the Shark people, whose atua is Tabuariki – the Thunderer) and Te Nguingui (Maude 1991, p.13).
Cultural Endurance and Supremacy in the Maneaba

The entire construction of the maneaba in its three main forms (Tebonetebike, Tabiang and Maungatabu\textsuperscript{161}) has symbolic function, seen by all who enter it. The ridge itself is the zenith of the Sky Dome in Gilbertese navigation.\textsuperscript{162} In the Kuna, ‘The Song of Moiua’, as recited by Ten Arebaio of Beru\textsuperscript{163}, the saga commences:

\begin{quote}
\textit{E bo te taubuki ni Karawa}
\textit{E nea-buni-tarai-o}
\textit{Nakon ika ni mauawa, Nei-o-o}
\textit{Te ika Tabuimai ke te ika Aurawai}
\end{quote}

A mighty whirlwind gathered force and shook
From end to end the ridge pole from the sky
Wakened the deep-sea fish and offspring of
The gods Taburimai and Arawa

This verse refers to the invasion of Abemama by the Porpoise, Whale and Tropic Bird people (whose gods were Taburimai, Auriaria and Nei Tituabine), who defeated the autochthonous Bonito people who traced them to Nareau and the Black Gods.\textsuperscript{164} The destruction of the ridgepole symbolises the loss of the old cosmology.\textsuperscript{165}

Within the maneaba there is the opposing symbolism of Tabakea and Bakoa. (The Sea and The Land). The eastern half of the space represents Tabakea, the western, Bakoa. East looks to the future, west to the past and places of origin.

Tabakea is the triumph over water, represented by Bakoa, but also triumph of the Samoan invaders of the thirteenth century over the autochthonous Tungaru people.

\textsuperscript{161} The three types are thought to have been originally introduced by different groups from Samoa, differ in width to length ratio and roof pitch. Maude, HE, 1980, pp.10-12.
\textsuperscript{162} Cowell, R, in Maude, HE & HC, 1994.
\textsuperscript{163} ibid.
\textsuperscript{164} ibid. p.253.
\textsuperscript{165} Dated to some 700 years ago this maneaba would have predated that bought from Beru after the Uakia and Kaiku wars.
who included the *boti* of Bakoa. The magic of the Bakoan people was feared and a number of procedural and structural steps were undertaken to suppress Bakoa.\(^\text{166}\)

The visual rhetoric of *tautauna* (burying) Bakoa, include the shortening of the western *tatanga* (the main bearer), resting on the *boua* (support post), the *kainta* (purlins) were lashed slightly higher on the east than the west, *te inaki*, (thatch) is one less on the west side and *te inai* (floor mats) are laid so the mats on the eastern side overlap those on the western.\(^\text{167}\)

The *boti* of Bakoa is on the eastern side, presumably so it can be kept under control of the stronger side of the maneaba under the thatch of the dominant clans usually on the north side. The *karaki* inform that the original Tabontebike maneaba on Beru was set up this way by Tematawarewbe the leader of the Karongoa from Samoa. Mention has been made in the Methodology of the Sky Dome. Its symbolic representation in the roof of buildings is an omnipresent visual metaphor of the Kiribati universe.

**The Ceiling of the Maneaba as the Sky Dome**

The Gilbertese consider the night sky as a dome against which the stars, constellations and nebulae move according to the time and the seasons.\(^\text{168}\) Knowledge of the Sky Dome enables navigation by the Star Paths. The knowledge of the Star Paths is transmitted by *karaki* where the stories describe strings of events involving characters that are symbolically connected with stars, nebulae or constellations – the Sky Signs.

The positions of the directional Sky Signs are taught with reference to the roof of the maneaba. The knowledge of the structure, the building techniques and all-important incantations of *tabunea* (magical rites) were traditionally of the *boti* Maerua.\(^\text{169}\) These were not the master Navigators, but *tiaborau*,\(^\text{170}\) so the navigational visual analysis of the roof structure of the maneaba constituted a separate set of secret lore, which maintained a separate repository of prestige and power.

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\(^{168}\) Farrall, L 1979, p.41.  
\(^{169}\) Maude, H 1980, p.2.  
The navigators referred to the night sky not as *karawa* – the heavens, but *uma ni borau* – The Roof of Voyaging.\(^{171}\) It is this concept, the transfer of the visual to abstract, via metaphor that converts the sky into the Sky Dome, seen as a great roof and that roof is the ceiling of the maneaba, whose structure is miniaturised in the *bata*, the dwelling houses. The observation of the roof of ones house, reminds one of that of the maneaba and then that of the Sky Dome.

**Te oka and Te Kain Ta – The Rafters and the Purlins**

If the foundations of the maneaba and its supports are the gods and spirits of Deep Time, the ridgepole is the direction to the future, the rafters and purlins a complex map that connects them. How much of this knowledge remains since long distance voyaging ceased is not known.\(^{172}\) In the 1920’s it was estimated there were only about 20 people who knew the connection in detail\(^{173}\) and Maude felt there were less in the 1930’s\(^{174}\), but the lore of the Master Navigators was always tightly held. During the Diaspora to Samoa it was kept intact for around 400 years (about 850-1280CE).\(^ {175}\)

Teaching the arts of navigation is carried out in the maneaba, where *te tatanga ni mainiku* – the eastern roof plate becomes the eastern horizon, *te tatanga ni maeao*, the western roof plate is the western horizon, and the ridge pole, *te taubukei*, the meridian.\(^ {176}\)

The rafters, *oka*, and their intersections with the ridge, trace star movements, for example in the middle pair of rafters (the eastern and western) apex where Rigel (beta

\(^{171}\) ibid. p.197.
\(^{172}\) Inter island group voyaging was severely restricted by the first missionaries (Maude papers, Laws of Nikunau et al MSS 0003 A/8) followed by colonial authorities (Macdonald, B 1982, Chapters 5 & 8). There has been a gradual revival since the 1930’s and considerable current interest since Lewis’ voyages (Lewis, 1972) and the formation of the Polynesian Voyaging Society (Hawaii).
\(^{173}\) Grimble, A 1931 JPS 40, p.91.
\(^{174}\) Maude, H 1980, p3.
\(^{175}\) 1250 – 1275 according to Hockings, J 1989, p.28.
\(^{176}\) ibid. p.198.
Orionis) crosses the meridian. Similarly, the northern rafters trace the Pleiades and the southern pair, Antares (alpha Scorpionis). The purlins (kainta) indicate altitude above the horizon,\textsuperscript{177} normally three between plinth and ridge that is increments of 22.5 degrees. The nautical almanac relates to the rising of the Pleiades, season of Nei Auti, the woman who manufactures flies, and then blows them to earth on the west wind,\textsuperscript{178} and the star Antares (Rimwimata), just after sunset, which on the equator is constantly at 6pm. When the star reaches a purlin at this time, a seasonal sub division is indicated. The method is accurate to about a day.

There were old stories, though no longer used for teaching, but of the same type as the Star Path stories. These only make sense when the stars are seen as they were in the distant past. When the great voyages from near to remote Oceania, that is, from the Melanesian islands of the Solomons and Vanuatu to Micronesia, probably made possible by the technological advance of the rafts and simple canoes to outriggers, around 5000 years BP, Polaris was not the pole star (then around 72 degrees) with Kochab closer at 84 degrees but more significantly Archermar (Eritani) was three times brighter than Polaris and close to the South Celestial Pole.\textsuperscript{179} Thus stories of journeys of \textit{anti} may be understood as actual voyages or teaching stories when the star paths were different. Whether this is known now has not been determined.

The Master Navigator, Biria, was not permitted during his training, ‘to identify a single body in the sky itself, he had to name word perfectly no fewer than 178 stars, constellations and nebulae, to indicate their relative positions in the roof and say what height above the eaves (i.e. horizon) any one of them might be seen at sunrise and sunset at all different seasons of the year’.\textsuperscript{180}

When observing the actual sky, the maneaba roof is remembered and superimposed in the Sky Dome, the stars themselves being in the thatch. The stars are observed relative to the spars and rigging of the voyaging canoe (baurua) but sometimes by lying on ones back. Sabatier describes the famous woman navigator, Paintapu, who

\textsuperscript{177} Grimble, R 1972, pp.218-222.
\textsuperscript{178} Grimble, A 1931, JPS 40 pp.200.
\textsuperscript{179} Grimble, R 1972, pp.219-220.
\textsuperscript{180} ibid. p218.
led a flotilla from Tarawa to Abemama around 1780, giving orders as when to tack while lying on her back observing the night sky. Navigation by the stars then becomes a nexus of the observed relationship between the actual stars and their metaphorical significance in the maneaba structure and the stories of knowledge (*karaki aika rabakau*). 

Every step in the construction is at a precise time determined by the position or phase of the sun and/or moon and each important step accompanied by *tabunea*. The Tebontebike maneaba should be built in the season of Nei Auti (Pleiades – December to June) and the Muangatabu, during Rimwimata (Antares – June to December).

The symbolism of the roof takes a significant step from that of the supporting columns and poles. Each roof relates to a bird, the lower smaller birds such as noddys or terns, and the higher the great birds, the frigate bird or the tropic bird. These are the signs of the sky, the signposts of the mariner, the indicators of the Sky Dome.

In the intersection and elevation of the rafters are the positions of stars in the rigging of the *baurua*. The signs relate directly to the Sky Dome, which is supported by the *Atua*. The People of the Maneaba are in the present, supported by the *Atua, Anti, Anti-aomata* – the past and above them are the directions of the future, the voyage. Within the presence of the visual signifiers the orators in the maneaba transmit meaning. By its signs are maneabas made meaningful, in its *tabunea* are the dances given *mauri* (blessings, in this usage).

There are no doors or windows, the maneaba is always open but from the outside all one can see is the *boua* and perhaps the half hidden row or two of people inside. One must duck down under the low eaves, pass between the *boua* to enter the vast space. The crouching made necessary by the eave height forces the entrant to pause before entering the dim space. (V II p. 36)

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182 The two other types of stories a defined by Uriam are *Karaki aika iango* (fiction) and *Karaki aika rongorongo* (history). Uriam, 1995, p.35.
183 Maude, H 1980, p.47.
In the maneabas, (V I, p. 93) the central east boua is Te Taai and the central west, Namakaina (the Moon); the northeast corner is Tabakea, the southeast, Bakoa. The south west is Nie Tituabine, the north-west, Ngkoangkoa who is the first spirit Nareau released from Te Bo ma Te Maki, known as the First of All. The other boua reference ancestral anti from the nearby boti.

The ridge is aligned North South and the first pole placed is that of the ancestral atua Nei Tituabine where female nurturing and protective functions may well have been fused with those of the Roman Catholic Virgin Mary.

The second pillar on the northeast is named after Tabakea the anti whose presence is a turtle (also the crocodile and the ladybird)\(^{184}\) symbolising the Beginning, the Darkness and the Cleaving Together (Te Bo ma Te Maki – is shaped like a turtle) and the triumph of the land over the ocean. The central column on the eastern side is Te Taai (The Sun) the usual place of the boti Karongoa, and to the west Namakaina (The Moon).\(^ {185}\) The north and south central columns also have totemic importance. The signs of the gods support the roof and the building of each significant stage was traditionally accompanied by tabunea. Opposite Nie Tituabine is the boua of Bakoa, the shark.\(^ {186}\)

The cosmological metaphors of the maneaba are significant in two ways. Firstly the extant connections are fluid. The earliest reference to the connections between the physical structure and the Tungaru cosmology are in the Song of Moia. It might have been after the successful invasion of the light skinned gods that foundational boua was dedicated to Nie Tituabine. If this invasion was from the south (probably Samoa) then the Tabakea support came from another invasion as Tabakea most likely originates through Banaba where Tabakea features in the creation stories as the brother of the black god Nakaa, but also as the First of All, born of the rubbing of Heaven and Earth. Nareau takes this position in the rest of the Gilberts.

\(^{184}\) Hockings, J 1989, p.227.
\(^{186}\) The clan existing on Beru when the people of Samoa returned and whose magic is feared, it is placed deeper as a precaution to ‘tautauna Bakoa’ – keep Bakoa buried (Maude 1980, p.20) to ensure safety of the maneaba. The ridgepole must overhang Bakoa.
Secondly the *boua* are the supports, representing the past that is incorporated in the present. Nei Tituabine offers fertility, refuge, and good. Tabakea is a representative of the oldest gods not now exerting power, present but not forgotten. Te Taai is even more ancient – a recognition of forgotten powers devolving into the all-conquering Auriaria – Au rising over the horizon, facing the east, and in the west by the moon. Other *boua* have other connections and each relates to the positions of the *boti.*

The *boua* support the Sky Dome of both maneaba and *bata,* thus symbolically underpinning the entire I Kiribati knowledge system. All are conduits to Deep Time. Some may have more presence than others. For a particular *boti* ancestral *anti* in a nearby *boua* would be more important than for a *boti* with a different *anti.*

The missionaries had primed themselves to look for idols and the relationship between islanders and the *boua* afforded some gratification. Rev. W Gill was a highly intelligent man, his books exhibiting a high degree of perception, yet he still maintained that the ‘native (was) worshipping a post’ (V I pp. 104-5). It seemed not to occur to him that a *boua* had some sort of equivalence in function to a cross or altar.

Te Taai and Namakaina are more difficult. They may be reduced in significance as the meanings for the days of the I-Matang week have (V I p. 94). All the same other references like the headdress Te Taai (V I p. 94) certainly remain, and Cait Wait placed much emphasis on this in the painting (V I p. 95) and it remains in common speech, (V I p. 97).

In the experienced grandeur and some of the sacred buildings the I-Matang and I-Kiribati used the same visual metaphors – compare the interior of the Utiroa maneaba (V I pp. 66-7) with the church interior (V I pp. 98-9). Both used the experience as a metaphor not only of the sacred, but also of power, as Henry Schulz commented (V I

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187 Jung, C, 1978, p.258. Carl Jung points out that the uncarved stone as mediator between humans and gods is mentioned in the Bible when Jacob took the stone that he used for a pillow when God offered him the land of Israel, set it up and poured oil over it.

188 Gill, W, 1885, p.15.
There is a further visual reference to power in an especially *tapu* space – in the maneaba the central position, and in the church the raised area for the pulpit and the preacher/s. This is very apparent in V I p. 98-9 where the teachers, probably Samoans, look down from on high in a form of surveillance.

**Te Bata – The House as a miniature Maneaba/Sky Dome**

The orientation is the same as the maneaba if possible. The main *boua* have the same significance, i.e. the corner and centre side posts. Similar protocols and structural procedures are taken to suppress the evil of Bakoa. Quite often the corner *boua* are necessary, with Bakoa on the southwest and Tabakea on the northeast corner. As in the maneaba the easterly *tatanga* is Tabakea, the westerly Bakoa. The *tatanga* of Tabakea is shorter by a hand span to ensure supremacy. The ceiling can also be viewed as the Sky Dome.\(^\text{189}\)

**Significant Relationship between the Maneaba and Te Wa - The Canoe**

The traditional I-Kiribati canoe has in its building and construction analogous protocols to the maneaba and the *bata*. Perhaps more than in any other situation in the sailing of a canoe it is important to keep at bay the forces of Bakoa. In the tropics the best winds for sailing are the gentle and constant easterlies. The winds of danger come from the west. So once again safety comes from Tabakea and danger from Bakoa.

The I-Kiribati canoe is symmetrical from front to back but asymmetric from one side of the hull to the other. The side facing the outrigger has a greater curvature than the side away from the outrigger. With the trade winds blowing the float would be on the westerly side, the side of Bakoa.

In the maneaba a *karaki* or dance of a voyage would refer to the western side as Bakoa, the side of the float. Then the structure of the maneaba below the eave

\(^{189}\) Hockings, J, 1989, p.163.
become *Te Wa*, the canoe, sailing under the Sky Dome. This completes the visual sphere of significance.

**Non-Iconic Visual Rhetoric and the Iconic Structures**

The Book text (V I pp. 76-7) suggests connections between the observed structure of the roof of the maneaba and the night sky as seen from a voyaging canoe. The thatching pieces (*inaki*), are indicators of the clan (*boti*) seating positions beneath, and indicate relationships between the maneaba and authority levels.

I use the examples of the maneaba/house/canoe in order to illustrate how an epistemology based on non-iconic visual metaphors might work. If Peirce’s triadic system of signs is used, and if such signs are rated from representational to abstract, then a system of non-iconic metaphors is the most abstract of all i.e. totally symbolic and interpretant dependant, compared with indexical signs (eg smoke indicates fire) or iconic i.e. representational, recognisable in a physical sense. In I-Matang thinking, such signs are used in limited cognitive frame-works eg. red, amber and green traffic signals are non-iconic symbols, as are more extensive networks of iconic symbols eg simplified picture glyphs of mountains, human figure and face for focus adjustments on simple cameras. The most accepted sign system in western culture is not visual, but in printed language.¹⁹⁰ No doubt before extensive use of printing, knowledge was contained in memory and passed on orally. This may have been aided by a visual system, which has since been dropped from practice.

**Reflections on Visualising Space**

It is my contention that the I-Kiribati knowledge system that defines identity, social relationships and certain skills such as navigation is contained within related symbols. These can be three-dimensional as is the space enclosed by the maneaba, two dimensional, as in a particular beam that is a line in space or as a position that is a

¹⁹⁰ This may be changing as the industrialised and electronic world ubiquitously watches advertisements, videos and uses mobile phones to record images.
point in space. The significance is often embedded in the orientation of volumes or lines and in the position of points relative to other points, lines or volumes.

Orientation may have fixed relevancies, particularly towards, east (future, land, life, the rising sun, Tabakea) and west (past, sea, death, the setting sun, Bakoa) and up (more powerful, victory) and down (less powerful, defeat). Variable references include towards or away from the sea or lagoon. Space may be associated with place, eg a maneaba may be built at an auspicious place, which then becomes a marae and thus mauri, (blessed). The maneaba enclosed by the rectangular marae is appropriately oriented to make its internal symbols active. If this is not followed it is logical that the maneaba will not ‘work’ and the situation described in V I p. 80 could occur, when people died when a maneaba was built not following the protocols, and stopped dying when the correct procedures were followed.

The linguist, Giovanni Bennardo, describes three-dimensional space as a knowledge domain. He restricts much of his ‘Representing Space in Oceania’ to language as the second part of his title, ‘Culture in Language and Mind’ indicates. He is careful to state that the ‘book is not about space as metaphor’. He says further ‘A metaphor implies two knowledge domains and some of the content of the first knowledge domain is occasionally used to clarify and/or make it easier to talk about the second knowledge domain. This implies that the first domain must be well known. Consequently, regarding the use of space as a metaphor, the more we know about the specific domain of space, the better we will be able to use it in metaphoric terms.’

Bennardo’s book is about greater Oceania, where visual metaphors are used extensively in many places as they are in the case of Kiribati, the specific symbols and their meanings often being quite different. The problem with Bennardo’s linguistic approach is that it attempts to use I-Matang epistemology to describe essentially experiential epistemologies. This does not mean the exercise is futile, in fact such discourse is useful in discussions of orientation, but it is difficult to discuss social or knowledge mechanisms based on symbolic domains, which in the I-Kiribati situation often require myth-historical knowledge. By this approach there are three

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192 Ibid.
domains. One is the non-iconic symbol, eg. an *inaki* or *boti* position, second is the myth-historic knowledge transmitted by *karaki* that define the *boti* and one’s relationship to it, and third, the implied social behaviour patterns.

Space as metaphor seems to be appropriated by linguists in much discourse, but such discussion is interpretive and depends on the experience of the original spatial metaphor, at least in I-Kiribati epistemology. We can say, ‘I’ll put you above me’. This is not a visual metaphor. One would not normally suppose the speaker is about to lift the listener into the air. If however the mats on the eastern (Tabakea) side of the maneaba overlap the western (Bakoa) side, then it is a visual experience that suggests the evil magic of Bakoa and the forces of the ocean are being suppressed. If the symbols in the maneaba (and other physical constructs of the I-Kiribati world) form a language, it is a visual language and the overall argument is by visual rhetoric.

The traditional I-Kiribati knowledge system uses the visual sign with metaphors of speech and performance in the art of oration. In this system cognition follows the simultaneous interpretation of the experiences of sight and sound, often combined with gesture.

**Reflecting on Metaphors**

When the use of metaphor is described as language discourse, it is the use usually restricted to verbal metaphors but it refers to their use in a rhetoric derived from Greco-Latin origins, that is, their usage follows structures originating largely from Aristotle via Cicero. John Locke proposed that metaphors could be visual. Locke’s recognition that information came from perceptions and was not innate was, in Bertrand Russell’s view, revolutionary.\(^{193}\) Humbert & Peirce further developed the idea. With Saussare, semiotic theory moved from images back to words, where it has essentially remained until the late 20\(^{th}\) century. This is well documented\(^{194}\) with the discussion of semiotics usually emanating from English departments. The development of theory of the meaning of visual signs has come largely from art criticism and art history.

\(^{194}\) Stafford, BM 1997, p.5, p.65.
What I argue is that the western art analysis of visual metaphor does not achieve resolution when attempting to decode visual knowledge metaphors in non-print cultures. Further visual metaphors form a different type of epistemic paradigm than the western knowledge construct and that that paradigm is only complete when the visual is combined with oral and/or kinaesthetic performance.

The holistic interconnecting web of visual signs, orality and performance itself constitutes an art form which differs fundamentally from what is usually called art in western print based cultures. Essentially art in western societies is a process separated from the necessary activities of growing food, earning a living and social intercourse (including politics, policing, education, medicine and law). Art becomes an occupation of a minority, largely considered non-essential or a hobby. It is generally a social function and of monetary value, but is a luxury to be indulged in or reflected on after essential needs and functions have been attended to.

Oral (non-print) cultures usually utilise art as a much more socially pervasive activity. For example, indigenous Australian art uses arrangements of known symbols painted on two-dimensional surfaces – cave walls, bark and lately canvas and paper, to preserve and communicate stories of mythical, historic or myth-historic events that have meaning and significance. Such activity usually emanates from a group or a spokesperson for a group rather than being the product of an individual as in western art.

I am suggesting the I-Kiribati take this a step further. Their two dimensional art forms, such as mat, tattoo and decoration patterns, repeat geometric designs, for example zigzags and squares that do not in themselves produce continuous narratives, as may traditional Australian paintings or to take a European example, the paintings of Brughel the Elder.\(^{195}\) The I-Kiribati patterns may be specific to certain villages or to certain stories, the meaning only being revealed by remembered or creative oration.

In Oceanic patterns, the ubiquitous zigzags often represent the interface of land and sea. In the I-Kiribati context it follows that again the opposing forces of Bakoa and

\(^{195}\) Dvorak, M 1984, pp.74-76.
Tabakea are symbolised, and this standard symbolism acts as a basis for stories of voyages, invasions, good versus evil and many other common themes involving opposing forces.

Maneaba and bata floors are covered with mats so patterned; as are body decorations used during dancing, in fencing around bangota, graves and the more temporary hangings in maneabas during special events and celebrations. As noted in VI p. 82 and shown on VI pp. 86-7, the weaving of mats was considered a harmless occupation of women and was not interfered with by the missionaries.

In these instances two dimensional art pieces are given contextual social meaning by their placement within the space. The walls of the Muangatabu maneaba, the Parliament building on South Tarawa, have significant mats of each of the islands hanging on all the walls, thus enclosing the parliamentarians in symbolic art.

The use of position, line, direction within space and space itself, which often has very specific significance i.e. sign meaning, extends visual rhetoric into three dimensions which transforms the entire I-Kiribati environment – house, mwenga (family compound), maneaba, church, bangota, village, babai pits, fish traps, canoes, forests, beaches, weather, sun, moon, stars and sky into one continuous work of art.

In Kiribati the network of non-iconic symbols is so multivalent that it permeates the whole culture and defines the entire I Kiribati cosmos. In the next chapter, Cosmology, I look at differences and similarities between I Matang and I Kiribati cosmologies.
CHAPTER 5

COSMOLOGY
In the last chapter, Space, I looked at the mechanisms, particularly visual metaphor, by which the past informs I-Kiribati consciousness. I argued that non-iconic metaphors in constructions, the natural environment and in performance produce an entire visually symbolic world that renders the I-Kiribati past - real, mythical or by some fusion - omnipresent. In Cosmology I further reflect on my Artist’s Book on how I-Kiribati cosmologies contrast with those of the I-Matang.

Reflections on Cosmology
The study of cosmology, Suzanne Rickard considers, is to see the universe as an ordered whole. I take cosmology to be an over arching understanding of the exterior universe and how it relates to the inner self. Ideas about place, past and self and the metaphors that connect them make them a mental fabric of significance. At its essence, cosmology is the dominant belief system of individuals or groups that provides a viewpoint, a structure by which what is perceived is evaluated. This chapter could have been called ‘Episteme’ if we accept W. J. T. Mitchell’s definition of episteme as ‘an entire system of knowledge/power relations’. That is, indeed, what it is concerned with, but ‘Cosmology’ has connotations of something that stretches infinitely into time and space, thus seeming more appropriate to an investigation into the contribution of the past in the seeing of the present.

I have discussed the importance of place, the metaphors of space, position and orientation and how these are given meaning through stories of the past. In order to make the fabric of I-Kiribati everyday life work, that is to form ‘webs of significance’, there are forces that provide cohesion. The supernatural is believed to have the power to affect events such as health, luck in love, fishing success, or can be used to cause illness or death. In Kiribati the spiritual entities may be old gods, ancestral spirits, Christian entities or some combination or syntheses. The supernatural powers may be unlocked or repressed by spells, prayers and rituals,

197 Geertz, C 1993, p.9, webs of significance that constitute culture
which may combine pagan and Christian elements. There are familial and clan
associations and relationships. Such ties are emotional but also subject to the edicts
of Church, custom, legal constraints and the maneaba. As David Lambourne stated to
me, ‘there is no appeal against the maneaba’.199

Both I-Kiribati and I-Matang may be considered as products of their myth-histories.
Whereas the I-Kiribati had their myth-histories passed on to them orally and by
performance and ritual, aided by the metaphors embedded in places and objects, the
I-Matang largely had their myth-histories embedded in books. Sermons were
essentially exegeses of the Bible, as the preacher considered it relevant to human
behaviour of the present.200 English law was the evaluation of the laws, detailed in
books that often dated back centuries, being decided by judges and governments
according to the circumstances of the present. Scientific ideas, accelerating from the
seventeenth century, had origins in Euclid’s geometry and Aristotle’s physics,201
which were further developed by Galileo, Copernicus and Kepler. The greatest
initiator of modern scientific thought, that inspired the Enlightenment’s scientific
endeavours, was Isaac Newton who, in his famous statement ‘I stand on the shoulders
of giants,’ recognised his debt to the past.202 Paradoxically, it was the burgeoning of
science and the simultaneous waning of fundamental Christianity203 that characterised
the Enlightenment, leading to secular theories of racial variation and even of human
specism. 204

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199 Private conversation, July 2001, South Tarawa.
200 There are good examples in Gill, W 1885 & 1872.
201 Which were mainly wrong, Russell, B 1994, p.216.
202 He also was an alchemist.
203 With the exception of the nineteenth century missions and strangely a resurgence
of fundamentalism in our own time.
204 The Enlightenment notion that knowledge based on human values and rational
science should be used to benefit all humankind gave way to social Darwinism (after
his ‘The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection’, 1859). This included
pseudo-scientific techniques like social anthropometry. In the first half of the
nineteenth century phrenology was popular. Both led to classification by physical
characteristics of the head resulting in much headhunting by Europeans, often
German, but many heads ended up in British museums.
In the previous chapter I discussed how an environment of visual metaphors linked to a myth-historical past provides a cosmological structure for the I-Kiribati. In the following section I consider an English cosmology informed by literature.

**English Notions of Race and Hierarchy**

In this section I outline a notion of race as it developed in nineteenth century England. I wish to argue that the way in which English saw Gilbertese was derived from English myth-history and was largely communicated by books.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, most Europeans had never met a non-European. Many had never seen one. There were, however ideas about non-Europeans that were largely the opposite of what they considered themselves to be. Notions of race and of superiority of Europeans and, for the English, superiority of Englishmen, on the basis of skin colour was not a significant consideration until the nineteenth century. England had long distinguished humans on the basis of origin, military success, religion and class. For example, following the victories of Cromwell in 1650 and 1651 and the Jacobite uprising of 1745, Irish and Scots were sent as slaves to the West Indies. With Imperial expansion it became necessary to justify dispossession, theft, forced labour and underpayment required to carry out the enterprise. If the peoples to be colonised or otherwise controlled by Europeans could be represented as inferior, and either had a natural slave-like disposition, or were supplied by God for the service of Europeans, or who required servitude for their own betterment, then the exercise was not only justified but was a requirement of European imperialism. In order to do this it was necessary to be able to recognise those who were inferior. Applied globally, during the British Empire, the class system was believed to work best with Englishmen at the top. This was expressed well by Grimble. The Empire was to be ‘Kindly administered, naturally - nobody but the most frightful bounder could possibly question our sincerity about that - but firmly too, my boy firmly too, lest the school children of Empire forget who were the

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205 White slavery, primarily from England, had occurred since at least 1662. Of 25,000 slaves sold in the Barbados in 1701, 21,700 were white. Source http://electricscotland.com/history/other/white_slavery.htm sighted 8/7/2009. Beyond the scope of this work, the enslavement of the Scots and Irish by the English deserves much greater research and exposure.
prefects and who were the fags’. Appearance was the first clue to this type of class hierarchy. Skin colour was the easiest way to do this. This gave strength to the idea that the darker your skin the more you differed from northern Europeans.

The only way of appealing to evidence for this attitude was offered by concepts of evolution that appeared in the mid nineteenth century, particularly with Darwin’s ‘The Origin of the Species’ in 1859, which gave the proponents of race hierarchy a teleology to lean on. Darwin had not proposed this at all, but the idea of evolution of the physical, as Darwin had concentrated on, was extended to the social. The next step then was to allay the idea of skin colour to the early evolutionary period. Darker skinned people could then be either remnants or ancient precursors of advanced whites, or even a separate species evolving from some ape like ancestor. Although the idea of one group of humans being superior to another was accepted to some degree for the slave trade, it was the second half of the nineteenth century that used (or misused) science to infuse the concepts of racism throughout the general population. The connection with literacy is noted by Peter Fryer: ‘in time (racism) acquires a pseudo- scientific veneer that glosses over its irrationalities and enables it to claim intellectual respectability and it is transmitted largely through the printed word.’

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207 Racial hierarchy based on skin colour was promoted in the nineteenth century to the academic circles of the new discipline of anthropology. Foremost in the promotion of ideas of Aryan supremacy and the inferiority of people with darker skins was James Hunt, a founder and first President of the Anthropological Society of London. Refer to his paper ‘On the Negro’s Place in London’; read in 1863, reproduced in Montague, A (ed) 1974 pp.203-351. For analysis of Hunt’s racism and its influence see Ellingson, 2001. p.248, and Young, R 1994, p.135. The English also classed the Irish and southern Europeans as illogical, slow, stupid, insensitive etc. partly on the base that their skins could be perceived as darker than upper class English but also according to a supposition that Anglo Saxons were superior to Celts. Similarly most English workers were considered inferior, justifying the class system. Before the expansion of the British Empire and Dutch and Germans had been doing much the same and before that the Spanish and Portuguese. The Spanish in particular had a reputation for harsh treatment of any opposition. Much effort was made to present Cook as the humanitarian opposite of Cortez, the imperial effort as benevolent, compared to the barbarity of the Spaniards.
Myth-histories of Supremacy and Destiny

The opposite of non-English inferiority was English superiority. This too was based on an idea of the past. It was believed the freedom enjoyed by the English had been handed down and developed since Anglo Saxon times.\(^{209}\) This idea developed without any attempt at scientific support, depending entirely on an argument based on a mythic history. In essence this argument claims that the English were descendants of Teutonic Anglo Saxons, whose laws and freedoms originated in the forests of northern Germany. All other peoples, including Celts, were inferior. Further, the English believed they had a God given mission to colonise and rule. Although colonisation in the tropics was not considered a good idea as it sapped English strength; settlement in temperate climates might reinvigorate the Anglo-Saxon scene of the English village. The British Empire sought to recreate this scene wherever possible.\(^{210}\)

The scientific justification of racism was usually argued by emotive speeches and papers rather than by any evidence. Extreme racists such as John Crawfurd and James Hunt exerted control over nascent anthropology in London.\(^{211}\)

To accusations that dark skinned people were unintelligent, uninventive and insensitive, were added childishness (and child like, thus fostering paternalism), uncleanliness and unseemly attitudes to women. Women themselves were allegedly bad mothers (the Native Mother theory).\(^{212}\) To varying degrees all these descriptions were applied by I-Matang to I-Kiribati.

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\(^{210}\) Mission tracts often contained illustrations of the before and after genre. The before image being of a chaotic ‘native’ village scene complete with fights, pigs and nakedness, witchdoctors, cannibals etc and the after scene showing the village rearranged as an idealised English village with clothed churchgoers, neatly trimmed foliage, penned animals etc.

\(^{211}\) John Crawfurd was a colonial official that on retirement promoted such extreme racist views as hunting black people likes animals and eliminating ungrateful Maori that refused to relinquish their land. He supported Hunt to influence the Ethnological Society of London. When this was unsuccessful and the Society further incensed Hunt by voting to admit women, Hunt formed the Anthropological Society of London. See Ellingson, 2001 p. 286. For Hunt’s views see *On the Negro’s Place in Nature*, Montagu, 1974, pp.202-253.

Englishness, Literature and Imperialism.

a. An English Culture

In ‘Place and Time’ I discussed how popular literature from ‘Robinson Crusoe’ to tourist brochures of the Twentieth Century directed Outsider’s anticipations and interpretations of the Pacific as place. Often these books solidified notions of destiny and duty. Robinson Crusoe valorised Crusoe’s industry and inventiveness, ‘The Coral Island’ demonstrated the wonderful transformations that missionaries could achieve as well as how young British lads could overcome seemingly vastly superior forces, especially of ‘natives’ and rescue damsels in distress at the same time.\(^{213}\)

The British Colonial enterprise was supported by a number of authors popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries. Propaganda for English racial supremacy and/or the glories of the British Empire included books, short stories and poems by Rudyard Kipling, H Rider Haggard and Conan Doyle.\(^{214}\)

It is my contention that this valorisation of an imperial present was informed by much older myth-histories of heroism, courage, justice and wisdom dating back to the Beowulf, and Arthurian legends.\(^{215}\) The English had come to think of themselves as an amalgamation of the Teutonic, Germanic Anglo-Saxon warrior Beowulf, (who could, like the similarly mythical St. George, slay monsters, leading to a belief in

\(^{213}\) It should be noted that not all popular literature of this period supported European interference in Island affairs. Louis Becke, Jack London and Robert Louis Stevenson all spoke of the negative aspects of European greed, power-seeking and missionary zeal.

\(^{214}\) Publishing of this type of material reached a zenith about the time of the First World War. See ‘Princess Mary’s Gift Book’, 1914.

invincibility) and the wise, mystical, chivalrous, Christian and British, Arthur. The concept of the heroic king leading a unified England centred on Alfred the Great.\textsuperscript{216}

The English largely saw themselves with images of these heroes in mind (V I, p. 96). The middle and upper class English created images of themselves to be viewed by others in their dress and ritualistic performance as I discuss in ‘Encountering’. Their stories informed the English that they represented the highest form of human development. I am convinced that this is what they believed. They probably still do.\textsuperscript{217}

\section*{b. English Manifest Destiny}

For those that directed the expansion of the empire in Whitehall and their preferred vanguard the missionaries, notions of capitalism and enterprise as set down in books were critical. Although Pacific islands were peripheral to imperial ambitions in India, Southern Africa, New Zealand and Australia, the motivations for hegemony were the same. The overarching belief was in the need for markets, labour and raw materials. This required the protection of traders and plantation ‘owners’ and official support for the missions, whose aims they saw as pacification, smoothing the way as it were, for trade, agriculture and mining.

Notions mainly originating in the late eighteenth century drove the belief in the need for empire. Adam Smith\textsuperscript{218} consolidated notions of how the market worked, providing a persuasive argument that economic wealth was based not on piracy or slippery deals, but on scientific principals of supply and demand. Thomas Malthus predicted mass death and starvation, as the population would grow geometrically,

\footnotesize{\cite{Ingram1993}: This version of The Saxon Chronicle was published in this form in 1823. References to Alfred from the year 853 to his death in 901 on pp94 - 124.
\cite{TheGermans1906}: The Germans, French and many others, including the I Kiribati, had the same belief. The expression of such beliefs comes with the possession of power.
whilst the food supply increased arithmetically.\textsuperscript{219} Population explosion would, according to Malthus, provide need in excess of capacity for local supply, necessitating overseas market for goods and supply of raw materials and food.\textsuperscript{220} Empire then, was driven by economic and mercantile imperatives, need for imported food at home and new lands to absorb expansion. The alternative, the upper classes feared, would be revolution that would threaten the class system. The class system itself implied hierarchy, the necessity for those at the top to believe they were superior, and were required to display and act out that superiority at home and abroad.

David Hume was the embodiment of the Scottish Enlightenment, producing his popular ‘History of England’ (1754 -62) which promoted progressive increase of Britain’s power, promoting and establishing\textsuperscript{221} the consolidation of English belief in their destiny, in both the increase of power internationally and the spreading of their ideas of freedom, work, duty and so on, to the unfortunate benighted souls outside England. Hume was not an imperialist but his views reinforced English ideas that their past indicated the nation had a destiny to fulfil.\textsuperscript{222}

Fiction had a wider appeal to the general population than the work of Adam Smith, Malthus or the Enlightenment writers. Daniel Defoe’s ‘Robinson Crusoe’ 1719\textsuperscript{223}, is described by KR Howe as ‘one of western capitalism’s more influential manuals for individual self effort and economic progress and domination.’ It is also about ‘personal salvation, imperial energy and racial master-servant relationships’.\textsuperscript{224} Howe also notes that Crusoe’s island is no paradise and that he triumphs by effort and ingenuity.\textsuperscript{225} Crusoe teaches English to the cannibal islander Friday, and reads to him

\begin{footnotes}
\item[219] Malthus, TR, 1798, For comment see Davies, N p. 646.
\item[220] It was doubtful if altruism played a significant part in imperialism but Enlightenment humanism and Christian ethics provoked some sympathy for the poor at home and colonised people overseas in the British Parliament. I am not convinced this extended to the Catholic Irish.
\item[221] Davies, N p.695.
\item[222] ibid., p.698 Also see Marwick, 2001, p59.
\item[223] Set in the Caribbean, but based on Alexander Selkirk’s experiences as a castaway on the far Eastern Pacific island of Juan Fernandez in 1709.
\item[225] ibid, p. 89.
\end{footnotes}
‘things to make him useful, handy and helpful’. Such attitudes assisted British expansion when views of Paradise faded. In other words British pluck, perseverance and innate intelligence could overcome any unforeseen difficulties and problems. Thus difference could be seen as a challenge, to prove superiority.

The Protestant missions believed both in imperial ambitions and in notions of how heathenism was visually identified. The former is repeated in numerous letters, tracts and reports.

In the nineteenth century islanders were generally regarded as primitive and less developed than Europeans. In the twentieth they were regarded more as people who differed not in essence, but in culture. The nineteenth century idea that there are stages of human development characterised by the progression: childlike behaviour>savagery>barbarism>civilisation was challenged by Haddon’s anthropological expedition to the Torres Strait islands in 1898, which concluded there was no difference between islanders and Europeans except for the circumstances of place and social environments. This followed in the 1920’s and 1930’s with domination of the Fatal Impact Theory, that had evidenced population reduction in the Pacific due mainly to introduced disease, as the inevitable evolutionary trend of the superior to eliminate the inferior. Once inferiority was disproved, evolutionary determinism evaporated.

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226 Pennycook, A 1998, p.11. Pennycock also points out despite Crusoe’s revulsion and disgust at evidence of cannibalism he sees nothing amiss in his shooting of some islanders one afternoon. Ibid, p, 698.

227 A good example is in the Maori wars where the British belief in their own superiority, racial technical and strategic led to defeats and extraordinary losses. Eventual British success was due to their troops outnumbering the Maori by very high factors and the Maoris effort being weakened by the previous Musket Wars. See Belich, James, “The New Zealand Wars and the Myth of Conquest” in Borofsky, 2000 p.255.

228 Howe, K p.47.

229 This suggested that the superior Europeans could replace the inferior races and was supported by observation of rapidly declining islander populations, which were mainly due to venereal diseases, measles and smallpox. By 1850’s most populations were increasing, yet the fatal impact theory survived at least until the mid twentieth century. See Moorhead, 1966. The impact may not have been fatal to all but was devastating on some islands like Nuku Hiva (see Dening G 2004) and Rapanui (see Diamond J, 2005). Others were severely affected by loss of sovereignty, disruption of custom and foreign settlement.
Missionaries and Duty
The London Missionary Society missionaries, as with their ‘Boston Mission’ counterparts, the ABCFM, were mainly city based lay evangelists from a middle class, often trade, background. They were pious, enthusiastic biblical fundamentalists, seldom educated formally in theology and with little or no knowledge of the people they were to preach to. Generally they believed in English superiority and that it was a gift to the godly. The English village was the way God intended people to live; clothes made man and cleanliness was next to godliness. One wife was quite enough. Dancing led to promiscuity, which was also bad. Hard regular work, except on Sundays, was a good thing. The British Empire and supply of goods to it was also what God wanted. Jesus did not like smoking. They considered themselves not superstitious but Islander beliefs were. Any practice outside that of church going, hardworking, law abiding, bible reading, neat, hymn singing, nuclear families as practiced in an idealised England was the work of the Devil. This included Roman Catholicism and marriage between Europeans and islanders.

Visual Communication within Culture
Artists who had been employed on the eighteenth century’s exploration voyages were not replaced in the nineteenth, with the exception of Alfred Agate on the US Exploration Expedition from 1838 to 1842. Illustrations in English publications were largely invented in England and not sourced on location. The notable exception was the missionary photographs used to show the success of the mission effort with churches filled with white clad, bible toting parishioners, often compared with pictures of the benighted heathen, naked, besmeared with paint and looking miserable or engaged in killing each other. The battle scenes were invariably set up. The applied particularly to Melanesia, from Fiji to PNG, which had a reputation for violence. I have seen no evidence to suggest there was any more violence in, say The Solomons than in Tahiti or Kiribati. It is true that more missionaries were eaten in Melanesia than elsewhere and Christianisation took a lot longer. This undoubtedly filtered the view.
In contrast, the I-Kiribati identity was communicated within the community by performance, to be observed by onlookers.

**I-Kiribati Cosmology as Performance**

On p.92, V I is a photograph taken by Harry Maude in the 1930’s. A girl stands, ready to dance. There have been over seventy years of intense mission activity and this girl proudly displays the signifiers of ‘the things of darkness’ as the missionaries would say. On her head she wears the coconut leaf head band which is called Te Taai, V I, p.94, leaving no doubt of its reference to the sun. The necklaces are of shells and human teeth. The teeth may have come from ancestor’s skulls, perhaps from enemies slain in ancient battles. The major conflicts ceased in the Protectorate in 1892, so that would make war trophies at least forty years old. The shells are things of the sea, of the realm of Te Bakoa. All these symbols are indicative of power that is accessed from supernatural sources. Before she dances she will be rubbed with oil infused with spells to increase the power of her symbols with the strength of the ancestral anti, V II p. 58. On her face she may wear the sands of Bakoa as today’s dancers do in V II p. 38-9. Her identity can be seen to connect directly to the powers of Deep Time.

The costumes of dancers and the rituals associated with them, whether they are of spells to the anti or the ritual of the Mass, are both conduits to power and the making visible of those connections. By costumed performance the past is made visible in the present and the power bestowed by the connection is the past made manifest.

This is common to both I-Matang and I-Kiribati as shown in the montage, V I pp. 94-5. The cosmologies have elements of structural similarity but are otherwise mutually exclusive. In the background, Nei Reiba, the ibonga of Buariki contacts the anti in a designated area that I am forbidden to enter on pain of death. In the top left uniformed marines wave flags and fire guns. The image depicts locals rounded up

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231 Grimble A 1989, p82.
232 Note the dancers in VII, pp. 38-9 wear necklaces of short leaves that still represent, but are not actual, teeth. The belts are human hair, and have within them access to the female maka.
and dressed for the occasion. The English demonstrate that by the performance of ritual, they are in charge. (See also V II pp. 24-5). Along the lower side, wearing a large Te Taai, a man performs to an assembled crowd of I-Kiribati, surrounded by anti of darkness (left) and light (right). Beneath the force of the marines are the spirits of Christianity as Gabriel speaks to Mary. Under the blue spirit in the foreground, beneath the I-Kiribati watching the British military are the woven symbols of the waves and the power of Bakoa. They appear over the head of the anti. Only the spirit and the ibonga and the rays of Te Taai are within the bangota. The rays link the bangota to the ceremonies of the maneaba. This montage depicts opposing visual demonstrations of power.

Cosmological Generalisations

Europeans in the Pacific can be divided into groups with similar attitudes. For instance, beachcombers, missionaries, traders, colonial officials, settlers, adventurers and tourists represent discreet groups who displayed themselves, and categorised others according to shared beliefs. Within groups, individuals stand out for their conservatism to the presumed culture of the group or for their radicalism. Such an approach is much more difficult when looking at islanders. Geography and the fall of the historical dice have given rise to Europeans creating the arbitrary division of Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia. The islanders in general become the opposite of what Europeans believed themselves to be. Thus, if Europeans are individualistic, inventive, active and materialistic, then the islanders are communal, conservative, languid and spiritual. Melanesians became more primitive, violent and treacherous than Polynesians, with Micronesians in between.

233 This repeats the metaphors of direction discussed in the preceding chapter. The cosmos is dialectic of opposing forces. Left is West, dark, past, water, sunset, less human, and Bakoa. Right is East, light, future, land, sunrise, truly human, and Tabakea.
235 These themes are ubiquitously reported in Howe, p.70.
The English looked for hierarchy. Those who were in control as Lowe says, ‘came from the same social classes and all had been bought up by nannies’. Together with class systems, they looked for evidence of individual ownership of land and the exploitation of land (cultivation, ordered planting) for personal profit. They looked for order. Missionaries wanted to see nuclear families, monogamy, hygiene and clothes. For them heathenism went with idols, cannibalism and non-respect of women.

For practical purposes the American missionaries had very similar attitudes to the English. The French Roman Catholic missionaries were much more visual in their practice. Their myth-history is outside the gamut of this study but the comparison between how the I-Kiribati saw them compared with the view of the Protestants, which is considered in ‘Encountering’, is important as it demonstrates how the cosmologies of French and English/American missionaries differed. The Catholics’ sacramentalism, wider pantheon of the supernatural and use of performance and ritual, indicated a cosmology much closer to that of the I-Kiribati than that of the Protestants.

**Relationships with the Natural World**

I’m not sure if it is due to the bookishness of European hegemony and the orality of Islanders, but Europeans have constantly striven against the forces of nature while Islanders have developed strategies to survive with the natural forces. I-Kiribati traditional buildings and canoes have no nails or screws. They are held together with sennit lashings. They move with the wind and the waves. Canoes don’t crash through the waves; they work with them to extract some of their energy. The signs of fair weather and favourable winds determine departure times and when to go fishing; Europeans work according to the clock. Islanders sleep when the sun is at its hottest. Perhaps it’s the Bible that demands dominion over the natural world that has motivated the belief that humans can ignore the natural forces. Despite the efforts of Christian missionaries, particularly Protestants, most Islanders sleep at midday and tell stories of the anthropomorphic character of waves, winds and fishes. Few Islanders believed in the Christian God. Lowe reflects a view of the natural environment that is in reaction to the Christian belief in dominion over the natural world.

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237 - and their current day, mainly Anglophone inheritors.
Islanders wear shoes, even in banks, garages or in the police force (V II, pp. 26 - 7). The soles of the feet contact the sacred land.

The weather is constantly watched (V II, pp. 106-7). The compromises with the outside world controlled by international politics and commerce are mainly symbolic. At important meetings men often wear that most useless piece of European clothing, the tie. Not shoes. Not a suit. Plastic baskets appear along side woven ones. Toddy is gathered in bottles as well as coconut shells. Bicycles are popular (V II, p.12). The drum in V II pp. 32-3 has its underside covered in beer cans to improve the sound. Ridi (skirts) for dancing have been made with videotape rather than pounded leaves. The latter have not really caught on. I was told they don’t have the magic, and that magic is needed to perfect the dance.

Many of the ways of the Outsiders have been tried. Some are accepted. Many are rejected. There is a flexibility in the cosmology, that knows how to reset the sails when the wind changes, when to change the fishing tackle, but also when to pull the lines back into the boat and go back to a spot where it is known the fish will be. The story of encounters between different cosmologies and how this is seen is the subject of the next chapter, “Encountering” where I explore looking across the beach, from one set of cosmologies to another.
CHAPTER 6

ENCOUNTERING
In the last two chapters, I proposed that I-Matang and I-Kiribati each had their own understanding of the world, a multivalent cosmology established by beliefs informed by a myth-historical past, communicated mainly by literature (I-Matang) or orality and performance (I-Kiribati). Each saw the world through the filters of their own cosmology.

In this chapter I describe visual aspects of the encounter, that is, how the I-Matang and I-Kiribati viewed each other. The images in the Artist’s Book are my own or from I-Matang sources. The I-Kiribati view has been sourced from interviews and, perhaps more importantly, from an analysis of indigenous agency evident in the visual and written records by the method established in previous chapters. A further example of this method is the analysis of ‘The Beach at Utiroa’, described below.

I suggest that by recognising the different cosmological views of Outlanders and Islanders, observations of, or during, encounters might be interpreted. That interpretation suggests that the initial encounter is a performance of identity. Subsequent interaction modifies cosmologies, identities, interpretations and outcomes. The Artist’s Book provides narratives of the encounter that describe these modifications.

**Performances on the Beach**

Often the first step in the encounter is performance. When the Outlander arrives on the beach and perceives the other, the first act is a display. ‘This is who we are’ they are saying: ‘this is how you should know us’.

Initially the encounter is a display of power relationships. Then each looks at the other for what is desired. Sailors looked for women, traders for commodities, Marines for opposition, castaways and escaped convicts for refuge. Islanders first desired iron, then tobacco. Soon it was the I Matang power they coveted, initially by the acquisition of guns, ultimately by appropriation of the gods of the whites.

When contact is established there is exchange, exchange of looks, exchange of fire, exchange of discourse, exchange of commodities and exchange of performances.

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Performing
The interaction between islanders and outsiders can be considered mainly as performative. By performance I mean events set apart in time and place, with a beginning and an end, with performers and audience, the performer/s acting a planned or spontaneous set of actions for the purpose of being observed. This would include not only a dance or oration, but also a wedding, a police parade, firing of warning shots, flirting and playing poker. A performance can also be personal and include prayer and ritual. In this situation the observer is an actor who may act as if the self could be another. This requires an awareness of body actions as if choreographed for an invisible audience. The actor is self-conscious, aware that others may be observing. The actor sees the observers as an audience. Not all actions are performances. Routine domestic tasks, mending nets, untangling a fishing line, getting dressed, are not necessarily performance, but they might be.

Observing Performance
Displays of identity and intent were incorporated in the acts of possession, which were very much visual affairs. In V II pp. 24-5 uniformed marines fired guns into the air as their flag was raised. Local people were rounded up for the occasion and dressed to show their acquiescence to European sensibilities. The occasion was photographed so its representation would be seen back home. The seated crowd would appear to be suitably approving, displaying the expected respect. This display was much later, appropriated by the descendants of the former audience, who were now in their own uniforms, with their own flag raised. (V II pp. 26-7). The roles were reversed in my photograph. The visual symbolism was the same.

In my photograph the I-Matang visual displays of possession were reinvented for the changed power relationship. The uniformed British soldier can be compared with the I-Kiribati warrior on V II p. 29. The uneasy I-Kiribati soldier here is the subject of an I-Matang representation as if to show a pacified other, dressed up for visual display,
as a warrior of the past, that British authority rendered impotent.\textsuperscript{239} Not so the symbolism of defiance in the tee shirt at Bonriki airport on V11, p.39 where the woman takes pride in her warrior ancestors on the clothing she wears from the I-Matang world. I-Matang imagery, appropriated by I-Kiribati agency, is displayed as visual information to inform an observer’s knowledge.

\textbf{Establishment of New Equilibria}

Looking across interfaces of culture can be considered as an audience action. In this view, performance is the ‘set apartness’ of its activity from the interface. It functions as ‘in-betweeness’; as a marginal, liminal, and negotiated activity undertaken at borders,\textsuperscript{240} or as I term them here, ‘beaches’\textsuperscript{241}. I propose that the action and the interface after the encounter is always a two way one, with a new equilibrium being established after the encounter, which is often unexpected and unplanned. This is a consequence of the interpretation of the performance of the other i.e. how what is seen is interpreted and acted upon.

For both I-Kiribati and I-Matang at any point in time and for any individuals the prevailing episteme is cosmological. Yet in the encounter the observation of difference may sow seeds of discontent and negotiation that in time challenges knowledge and power relations which may change in order to establish, or attempt to establish, a new equilibrium. The desire of the observer will be toward the osmotic – the attempt to bring the other into one’s own cosmological sphere by a one-way diffusion. This is informed by a belief in one’s own superiority and the superiority of

\textsuperscript{239} It is most likely that several photographs would have been made of this subject. One or more may have shown defiance. The image selected is this one where the eyes of the soldier look away as if in deference. The image is interesting for its portrayal of material culture, but also for its selection for home audiences, probably in England. There is no threat to British hegemony here. The photograph was taken well into the period of British control when independent military actions were illegal.

\textsuperscript{240} Carlson, M 1996, p.20.

\textsuperscript{241} The Beach has been used as a metaphor for the interface of Outlanders and Islanders by a number of scholars including Greg Dening. See Dening 2004, pp. 13, 16, 19, 31, 74, 186 and 348. A justification of my approach is in Dening’s comment, ‘Beaches of the mind, like beaches of the body, being in-between, are more places of defining than definition. They are better experienced in story than in thesis.’ Dening ibid, p74.
one’s beliefs. In practice there are leaks both ways; a sort of two-way diffusion occurs before a new and dynamic equilibrium is established.

**Encounters – Benevolent or Aggressive Intentions.**
The early encounters teetered between accord and violence.242 There are no visuals of the encounters between I-Matang and I-Kiribati, no drawings before the 1840’s, no photographs before the 1880’s. I can’t show what was seen in my Book, but knowing the past again gives clues to what was to come.

A Spanish ship sailed past Nonouti in 1537. They called it ‘Isla de los Pescadores’ after what they saw, ‘The Island of Fishermen’. 243 Captain Byron stopped at Nikunau July 2nd, 1765. His log reports being approached by sixty canoes, with many Islanders coming on board removing anything that they could. 244 The stage was set for discord but no shots were fired until 1788.

Captains Gilbert and Marshall sailed through the group after dropping of convicts to Port Jackson. Gilbert had his ship painted red. 245 He had heard the Islanders liked red. I don’t know if they did. Some Islanders liked red feathers. Many canoes came out. In one large canoe an old man sang a long song. “Chaunted” Gilbert wrote. I read his diary. Gilbert thought the islanders wanted him to come ashore but he considered it too risky and sailed on. Marshall in the other ship became nervous when he saw the canoes. He fired the ships guns. I don’t know if anyone was hurt. Gilbert was not pleased with Marshall. There were many like Gilbert and Marshall over the next century. The whalers came next but not for another thirty years. They wanted water and women. They paid for both with hoop iron and tobacco, and sometimes with knives and muskets. Sometimes they took what they wanted at gunpoint. Sometimes women were thrown overboard when the sailors were required back on the rigging or filling the oil barrels. Such acts soured relationships. The sight of the tall ships was

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242 Excerpts from transcribed MS describing first hand violent encounters in Maude 2006, pp 5,10, 11, 13, 19, 21, 37, 41, 47, 56, 57, & 58.
244 Ibid p91.
interpreted differently in the light of memory. Ships were ambushed and plundered. Some sailors jumped ship and some were thrown off. The survivors became beachcombers.

There are many images of encounters in the Pacific, where Europeans have represented what they saw. Bernard Smith talks about the most famous of these, ‘The death of James Cook at Kealakekua Bay’, ‘The War Boats of Otaheiti’, and the early scenes of settlement in New South Wales. Most analyses of contact encounter between Europeans and Pacific Islanders concentrated on the eighteenth century. The encounters of the nineteenth century have had scant coverage. The image of the members of The United States Exploring Expedition at Utiroa Village, Tabiteuea (V II, p. 74, 75) is as instructive as any discussed by Smith.

The USS Peacock was part of what was the most extensive voyage of exploration in the history of the United States, The US Exploring Expedition of 1838 to 1842. In 1841 the Peacock anchored off Utiroa Village on Tabiteuea atoll.

The written reports describe USS Peacock arriving at Utiroa. The population looked dead, being asleep for the midday ‘siesta’. This indicates islanders were not concerned about the arrivals. They would have been quite aware of their presence. Descriptions and Arthur Agate’s drawing of the inside of the maneaba (V I p.66-7), suggest the Americans were able to walk freely through the village and inside the maneaba, observing it’s functioning. The islanders were reported as pilfering some belongings from the sailors. At this stage relations seemed quite amicable. On returning to the ship a marine named Anderson was missing. He was still missing by the next morning. The ships officers asked, then demanded that the islanders find and return Anderson. Anderson did not appear. Both sides resorted to weapons. Captain Charles Wilkes’ described what followed the idealised encounter shown in the etching. ‘There were about five hundred natives, well armed, on the beach, and others were constantly coming from all sides, they shouted and shook their weapons

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246 Details and references at Maude 1968, p256.
248 By Alfred Thomas Agate (1812-1845) The accomplished official expedition artist.
with threatening gestures’\textsuperscript{249}. Islanders donned suits of armour and gathered on the beach, waving weapons; uniformed US marines on board ships fired guns into the air. The crew of the Peacock assumed Anderson had succumbed to treachery and had been murdered. They fired at the leaders of the islanders and fired a rocket into the crowd. The beach cleared, whereupon two contingents of marines landed and set fire to the entire village. Three hundred buildings were destroyed, including the maneaba.

The drawing in my Book (V II pp.74-5) , made by Arthur Agate who witnessed the events, adds quite a bit of information. The drawing obviously depicts the village before it was fired. There are few signs of aggression by either side. The marine on the far left, whom I will return to shortly, holds the only weapon visible. Women and children are present. Except for the marine, the clothing of the visitors appears casual. They watch the entire scene, chat casually to Islanders or to each other. Two stand inside the marae. In the left mid-ground a visitor appears to be watching a demonstration boxing match. No one else seems particularly interested in these occurrences. A little to the right, and closer to the maneaba, stand a group of Islanders with a visitor, who may be holding a roll of paper or an instrument. It may be Horatio Hale the philologist, or perhaps Captain Wilkes himself. In the left foreground we see some pilfering, as unseen by its owner, what looks like a picnic basket, is being interfered with. This appears to be a benign view of encounters across the beach, but all is not well. The marine on the left, unobserved by his companions, has moved into the forest. He stands looking into a compound in which there are a number of women. An Islander, leaning against the corner of the compound, is observing him. Further away he too is being watched. Let me read this image.

The marine is Anderson. He is about to enter a women’s compound. It is forbidden for any man, I-Kiribati or otherwise, to do this. The punishment for this offence is death. The man watching Anderson is a guard. When Anderson transgresses he will signal the men back in the village. What follows is summarised in the texts. Agate knew exactly why Anderson was killed. So would have every man on the ship.\textsuperscript{250} The

\textsuperscript{249} Wilkes, 1841, p.59.  
\textsuperscript{250} Word travelled about this event by sailors. There is a description of Anderson’s death as a result of Anderson attempting the seduction of an island girl in Pierson,
village was fired, and villagers fired upon to impress them that American interests were not to be interfered with. This had nothing to do with justice, either American or that of the I-Kiribati. The expedition was meant to be scientific, a continuation of the eighteenth century Enlightenment voyages, but protection of US economic interests, in this case, those of American whalers, was a key purpose of the expedition.

In this encounter, official performance was the last act. No one had to display their difference until Anderson broke the rules. Costuming came first. The marines lined up with their uniforms and guns, the islander men appeared with armour, spears and shark’s-tooth swords. The first act was the sabre rattling, the second the shooting of some island leaders and the firing of a rocket. The Islanders dragged off their dead and wounded and the marines fired the village as a main act. All this intended to be seen and remembered, to become history to inform future actions. There were two sides to the story. The one that dominated was that of the winners. Curiously it was a careful reading of one of the winner’s stories, and a visual one at that, that gave access to the other side of the beach.\footnote{251}

When the USS Peacock visited, there were six beachcombers in the Gilberts. Two of them, Kirby and Grey left with the Peacock. Horatio Hale, the expedition’s philologist, interviewed them in depth. We learn much about those early encounters from Hale’s diaries.\footnote{252} Grey had lived on Butaritari. Grey said there were no gods on Butaritari, just lots of ancestral \textit{anti}. If there were no \textit{atua} then they could not have thought Grey was one when he landed. Maybe they did not tell Grey about the gods. They picked him up and didn’t let him touch ground for a week. Maybe you don’t pick up gods. There are events and actions that have many possible explanations. We

\footnote{George 1855 \textit{Journal of Voyage from Sandwich Islands through Kingsmill and Mulgrave Islands to Strong’s Island in the Caroline Group}, MS, University of Adelaide, Maude Collection. Also see Maude 2006, pp. 36-7 and 63. Well after this missionaries reported the event as unprovoked murder. See Bingham to Clark, November 1868 on board ‘Morning Star’, transcribed in Maude 2006, p. 93. \footnote{251} The drawing was reproduced in a history of Kiribati mainly written by I-Kiribati people. The most important section, the left hand side, was cropped off, probably for design reasons. \footnote{252} Hale H, 1842,1843 ‘Notebooks, as informed by two sailors, who had been left on the islands,. Held in the Mitchell Library, Sydney.}
are not sure why Grey was carried for a week. Being carried around is usually a sign of status. Triumphant football captains are held aloft. During the Roman Empire a new emperor was raised on shields. In the Gilbert Islands in, 1889, the Stevenson’s photographed the tyrannical king of Abemama, Kuria and Aranuka, Tem Binoka, being carried on a litter. Binoka was definitely no god. That’s him V II p. 68-9. He looks like a white man, pith helmet and all. Sometimes he wore military uniform (see V I p. 28). Sometimes he wore an oversize dress (see V II p. 82 -3). No one laughed. He was a crack shot with his repeating Winchester. The photograph shows how Islanders could appropriate the appearances of European power for their own purposes.

The other murderous despot in the island group at the time of the Stevenson’s visit was Teburimoa of Butaritari. He gained and maintained his position by methods that earned him the name ‘Mr Corpse’. In the Stevenson’s photograph on V II, pp 60-1 he displays visual symbols of power as displayed by Europeans including military uniform, uniformed and armed army and a cannon.

**Missions, the Light and the Dark**

Missionaries had a multi-pronged agenda. On the surface they were there to convert the heathen, to convert a cosmology based on island myth-histories to one originating from the Middle East on the other side of the planet. They also assisted the commercial and political agendas of their home country.

The sub- text of spreading Christianity was commerce, in which both Protestant and Roman Catholics were complicit. In V II, pp.10-11 of the Artists Book, the photograph taken at St Louis School on Banaba in 1920, shows the ordered pupils with an over-clad nun and a Man Friday-like assistant, displaying prowess in the addition of two incomprehensibly high sums of money. The students look terrified, or bored. Such constructed visuals were used to solicit funds. Ironically, unknown to the nun or her assistant, the sum on the blackboard is being added up incorrectly.

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253 Macdonald B, 1982 p. 29. His malevolent magic was feared more than his rifle.
Early beachcombers, traders and Colonial officials supported the missionary effort, sometimes because of personal belief and usually because mission success facilitated their own power base. The Christianising of Islanders pacified them, so the theory went, making them more amenable to other agendas. The effort of their own lives was a sacrifice of easier life styles for the greater good of Church, metropolitan power or capitalism. All these solidified and increased personal gain in goods or prestige to varying extents.

The missionaries saw aspects of I-Kiribati lives – nakedness, dancing and rituals of mourning the dead, as obstructions to their objectives. They described the sights in fundamentalist visual terminology. They described the island world as a place of darkness. Their desire was to change this perceived darkness to the light of their world.  

‘My heart almost sank within me, as I looked at these poor sinful creatures. Such listless faces as some had. As I looked at our boys and girls, I saw what the saving grace of God can do. Such a contrast between them. Our scholars eyes sparkled and their faces lit up, as it seemed with a heavenly light when put alongside these, their brothers and sisters.’

After missionaries finally gave up their decades long attempt to stop dancing, they moved to absorb it into their own cosmology, admitting modified dances into their own rituals. They generally succeeded in modifying the costume to cover breasts, which had no significance to the I-Kiribati. I have a feeling the covering of breasts

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255 A source of such inspiration was John iii. Verses 19,20. See Gill, 1885 p21.
256 Wilson, LE 1894-5 Journal (unofficial manuscript).
257 For summary of the mission’s position on dancing and an erudite response by Grimble, who supported all dances except the most immoderate see ‘Discourse on Gilbertese Dancing in Maude (ed), 1989 pp 314-33. Maude notes, ‘it was soon obvious that should any further attempt be made to prohibit dancing to church adherents it would be the number of Christians rather than the number of dancers that would decline’. ibid p333.
258 The Roman Catholic Mass on Kiribati integrated dancing into the ceremony.
may now be a habit\textsuperscript{259}, but was mainly introduced to be polite and no doubt to lessen
the perpetual nagging.

In the dances adapted to Church activities the hair is decorated with flowers. The
churches do not mention Tabakea, but his flowers present less threat than do the
forces of Bakoa. Outside the churches there is no shortage of Te Taai headdresses,
V I, p. 83. I haven’t seen the rows of teeth but would not be surprised if they existed.
Perhaps buried under a rock in the forest, or lying in the hidden upper side of a \textit{bata}
beam, called \textit{kai-n-Tabanou} (the beam of skulls).\textsuperscript{260} The short white pandanus leaves
now worn around the neck could well stand in for teeth. I have a feeling this current
practice would not have the same degree of \textit{maka}.

Much to the frustration of missionaries the I-Kiribati have no carved objects. There
were stones of significance and other objects such as large shells and missionaries
reported whalebones. As far as shells and bones go there is little evidence to
substantiate the missionaries’ beliefs, but such objects may have had totemic
importance to certain clans. Missionaries smashed some stones but also incorporated
them in their churches. This seems to have been an attempt to de-mystify them, but
may have been seen by I-Kiribati as a fusing of the two spiritual systems.

The Samoan and Hawaiian teachers incorporated anything that was associated with
pagan beliefs such as \textit{boua}, shells for reception of offerings or items of totemic
significance (eg whale bones, shark’s teeth), into their houses to be used for mundane
or domestic purposes. They believed that when the old gods did not strike them down,
then the people would accept the new gods (Jehovah and Jesus Christ according to
many of the Polynesian teachers) as being more powerful.\textsuperscript{261}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[259] The habit took a long time to establish. Photographs taken after WW2 show bare
breasted women. See McQuarrie, P 2000, pp. 151,156. By this time the missionaries
had been active for nearly a century.
\item[261] The majority of literature on the Pacific takes this view as instrumental in the
conversion process (eg Macdonald 1982, p41). My belief is that this is overrated and
the \textit{maka} associated with the items appropriated by the preachers could be transferred.
For instance \textit{boua} may only be that in particular positions relative to other items – say
within a \textit{bangota}. When outside the sacred space they are just rocks or shells. This
requires further study.
\end{footnotes}
By the time the Protectorate was proclaimed, the majority of the southern islands had succumbed to the LMS and scenes like V I pp. 98–9, were the norm on a Sunday morning. A clue to the reason why is in the foreground of this photograph. The preachers of the LMS are not the dour London trades people\(^{262}\) who sailed to Oceania from England, but islanders. They were the Samoan teachers dropped off by mission ships. It was they who did nearly all of the early converting work. The photograph, as seen from the black border, is a slide. Such slides were shown in church halls and Sunday Schools to provide evidence of success in “the work”, in order to raise funds.

The missions reported a shift from a time of darkness to a time of light, in other words a complete paradigm shift. More likely, I think what happened was a cosmological adjustment as power relationships differed.

The strategy of the use of island pastors was a good one for the missions, partly because islanders respected islanders more than I-Matang, but because in Kiribati as in a number of other islands the depletions of slavers and labour recruiters had severely shaken the integrity of the southern islands.\(^{263}\) The missions helped keep the recruiters out. They were one conduit to I-Matang power. Islanders quickly learned that guns were superior to shark tooth swords and javelins and they attempted to arm themselves as fully as possible. This included the acquisition of cannon, see V II, pp.60-61. The central and northern islands seemed more successful here than the southern. The southerners took the alternative approach, which was to absorb the I-Matang gods. This was facilitated by the LMS teachers from Samoa, the I-Kiribati especially in the south having an affinity for Samoa, as many traced their ancestry to the return of the diaspora from Samoa some six hundred years before.\(^{264}\) They have a saying – ‘All true men come from Samoa.’

\(^{262}\) Kent, 1972, p.27.
\(^{263}\) Labour, recruited legitimately, coerced or kidnapped from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands often went to sugar plantations in Fiji. Captain George Palmer of HMS Rosario reported they were both unhappy in Fiji and unsuited to the work. Palmer G 1973, pp. 85-6. (First published 1871). Some Gilbertese were recruited for Australia by Benjamin Boyd – George Lancaster, Master of the Portenia 1847 in Maude (ed) 2996, p.42.
\(^{264}\) Samoans used island metaphors in their allegorical teaching, most of which was visual imagery. See ‘Bible Truths Illustrated’ in Gill, 1885, pp 76-122.
The American mission spear-headed by Hiram Bingham and with Hawaiian teachers fared poorly, the north being mainly pagan in Grimble’s time in the 1920’s, by which time the ABCFM had left.\textsuperscript{265}

The Roman Catholic Church shared some approaches with traditional Gilbertese spiritual observances. The position of the Virgin Mary was not unlike Nie Tituabine, both were caring, nurturing, female and close relatives to the major male figures of power. Catholic priests carried crosses, waved incense and sprinkled holy water, as the \textit{ibonga}’s carved spirit boxes conducted \textit{tabunea} and sprinkled magic oil and sand.

The Roman Catholics have many practices such as dressing up in colourful costumes, rituals, lots of supernatural beings, a prominent supernatural female, interest in good and bad spirits, and belief in possession that resemble traditional I-Kiribati religious/spiritual practices and beliefs.

Rituals, prayers and responses were similar conduits to the spirits in both cosmologies. As the I-Matang were so powerful and rich, it seemed reasonable to add their gods to the current ones.

Not being able to translate God into local language, \textit{atua} meaning any number of powerful \textit{anti}, the missions called their God, Jehovah, after an Old Testament deity. This gave rise to the Tioba cult (Tioba being the Gilbertese pronunciation of Jehovah) where processions were held holding crosses bedecked with sacred red feathers.\textsuperscript{266}

\textsuperscript{265} The Hawaiian teachers had mixed influence. As a group and as individuals they sought much personal power, often trading themselves at the expense of the I Kiribati. Just prior to the Protectorate Hawaiian pastors from at least three islands and probably more, attempted to have the Hawaiian King Kealakekua take over the Gilbert Group. Manuscripts supporting this reside in the Maude Collection in Adelaide of which I have copies. These include manuscripts from teachers on Butaritari, Marakei and Tabiteuea. The latter was signed by Kapu and Namilu, who led the infamous religious massacre of 1880. MS held in University of Adelaide, Maude Collection.

\textsuperscript{266} On Tabiteuea in 1880, the Hawaiian pastors Kapu and Namilu, representatives of the ABCFM decided to attack the Tioba followers in the southern villages. The resultant war led by the pastors singing ‘Jesus is your Friend’ killed up to 1000 Tioba people, many of whom were burned alive. Maude Papers, J-3. Item 5. Reid Cowall’s translation of Pateman, May 1942 \textit{Aia Karaki nikawai I-Tungaru}: 89, Beru, Gilbert Islands ( Kiribati), London Mission Press. Also Maude, HC and HE 1981, Tioba and the Tabiteuea Religious Wars, JPS, Vol 90, No 3, pp307-336.
The image in VI, pp. 90-1 is intriguing. It is an etching of Hiram Bingham’s church on Abaiang in 1859.\footnote{267} It is Sunday and the conch shell is being blown\footnote{268} to summon the congregation to the church service. It is early morning or evenings, as the toddy gatherers are climbing the coconut trees. Many missionaries attempted to stop Sunday toddy gathering as it was against their ideas of Sabbath observance. A group of islanders sit on a log operating a coconut oil press, thus flouting the Sunday work ban. They have little apparent interest in attending church. A group of missionaries stand on the right, probably Bingham, his wife and visiting missionaries from the Boston Mission. It appears the only attendant is the gentleman in a dress and a hat, carrying a parasol. From Bingham’s letters we know that this is most likely the Uea, Kaieia, who Bingham regarded to be a church member while he was there and a back-slider in his absence. I note that the dog is barking at the missionaries. The artist was obviously aware the mission had limited success because after twenty years effort there appears to be no converts left. I would suggest even the Uea whom Bingham claimed as a convert was only there to find out what was going on and to protect his people.

Even mission reports, usually full of stories of success to encourage greater weight in the collection plates, concentrated on Bingham’s (undoubted) skills of translation in his efforts to produce a written language for the I-Kiribati people, rather than his converts.

More than any other group of intruders to Oceania, the missions exploited visual metaphors to support their efforts.

\footnote{267} According to Talu, A et. Al. p.131. The image is credited to Bingham in 1910, Te Tiaukurebe, ABCFM, Boston.\footnote{268} Maude believes the conch blower is the Hawaiian teacher Kanoa. Maude 1968 p203.
Theft, Exchange or Payment?

All over the Pacific the first European visitors reported Islanders coming out to the tall ships and stealing anything accessible. Commodore John Byron was the first in the Gilbert group to record this experience in 1765.\textsuperscript{269} The practice was still active in 1841, as we saw in the beach scene at Utiroa. Missionaries and traders reported continual removal of possessions well into the period of British control.

Money was not a prime concern of the I-Kiribati, as the story of the Mad Woman and of \textit{bubuti} on V II p.13 indicate. The I-Kiribati operate an exchange system analogous to Malinowski’s Kula Ring\textsuperscript{270}, which operates on reciprocity. Value to the I Kiribati is family, human relationships, not material goods, which like the money that procure them is useful but has lower order of priority. In the first encounters the Europeans watched the I Kiribati to prevent pilfering. They reported seeing a lot of it. They accused the I-Kiribati of being thieves, yet Teiwaki (V II p.14) reminded me, theft was an anathema to the I-Kiribati now and in the past. The word for thief and rat is the same, \textit{kimoa}. What was it then that the I-Matang’s observations did not convey?

Islanders shared objectives of gain, but because of their more precarious circumstances dictated by environment - isolation, arid soil, limited technology and food supplies- saw sacrifice of others to be more important than any on their own part. Any personal sacrifice was that of individual identity to that of the group. Only with the group’s success, could the individual survive. Early missions had little effect on this, but the British Protectorate, and later the Colony, stopped warfare and reduced the power of the dominant chiefs.

The pilfering of visiting ships and resident traders by Islanders\textsuperscript{271} was an enforced sacrifice of visitor’s goods for the benefit of the hosts. If the new arrival stayed they would be provided for until they could contribute to the society. If they left they would be provisioned. This procedure would have been practiced on visitors long

\textsuperscript{269} Maude, 1968, p91.
\textsuperscript{271} The journals of virtually all of the early visiting ships and of nineteenth Century traders reported what they considered to be theft or attempted theft. See Maude HE (ed) 2006, pp.5,8,10,13.
before the Europeans came. To arrive and not share goods in the period prior to British rule was dangerous. Trader St. John Curtis-Keyes was killed on Abaiang, reputedly for not handing over a bottle of hair oil.\textsuperscript{272}

With the exception of rapacious \textit{Uea},\textsuperscript{273} the I-Kiribati operated communally, the I-Matang for individual power and glory. The significance of possessions was seen differently.

\section*{After Raising the Flag}

I have previously discussed the act of assuming imperial hegemony as visual performance and how such performances may be appropriated by the colonised.

In Kiribati, the Protectorate and later the Colony attempted to impose ideas of Englishness as described in Chapter 5.

With its phosphate Banaba suffered from the effects of Malthusian prophesy as mining destroyed the island in order that (primarily) Australia and New Zealand soils could be improved to provide food for the settlers in these countries and Britain. The British dream is expressed in V I pp. 68-9.

Order and surveillance was facilitated by reorganising \textit{kainga} hamlets into regulation houses ordered into rows along the road. (V II pp. 86-7). Similar control was exercised on coconut plantations, which were grown on land from which indigenous species including many species of pandanus and plants used in traditional medicine had been cleared. (V II pp. 88-9). In the foreground of the last photograph is a \textit{babai} pit. \textit{Babai} pits provide important food, especially for feasts. Many were removed to allow expansion of plantations. The appearance of order and control was important

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{272} Colchord, Mrs Andrew, (missionary) 1875, Thurs, July 15\textsuperscript{th}, Diary, Manuscript. It is most likely the Englishman was also unpopular for other reasons as well as the hair oil incident.
\item \textsuperscript{273} The best-known example on Kiribati being Tem Binoka who allowed no foreign traders to operate in his realm on their own behalf. He employed a Scot, George Murdoch, with a shady background, but who later was to serve in the British Administration, as a supercargo, but conducted his own trade personally on anchored ships.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
for the officials, who distributed postcards of their efforts to demonstrate their success. Colonial expansion resulted in an attempt to protect indigenous populations by interference, often dictated in the twentieth century by current anthropological theories.  

The strongest influence on early twentieth century Gilbert Islands was the British civil servant Arthur Grimble who was an amateur anthropologist influenced by the ideas of WHR Rivers. Rivers had been on Haddon’s Torres Strait expedition where he had developed his anthropological theories. Rivers supported the idea that Pacific cultures had been largely static and only changed when outside ideas came in, that is by diffusion. A general belief by Europeans, promoted by Rivers, was that such outside ideas had negative influences and contributed to degradation, anxiety and pathological depression, leading to population loss.

Arthur Grimble as Resident Commissioner attempted to prevent such diffusion by restricting contact from outside and restricting western style education. The culture was interfered with as he saw fit, and law and order were taken to extremes, with rules as to where and when to sleep, eat, build houses, dance and so on. That is, Grimble attempted to change almost every aspect of I-Kiribati life in order that it might not be changed.

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274 Darwin’s evolutionary theories (1859) were misinterpreted to suggest indigenous peoples of Australia and the Pacific would die out. Europeans considered themselves to be the superior ‘race’, evolved to succeed peoples they considered inferior. Population decrease in the nineteenth Century, mainly due to imported disease supported the “fatal impact” theory. The idea continued into the twentieth Century as anthropologist WHR Rivers proposed decline was accelerated by the “giving up” syndrome, which occurred when missions destroyed faith in traditional gods and practices (Rivers, WHR, in Montague (ed) p. 391-409).


276 Grimble was Resident Commissioner r Acting Resident Commissioner for most of the period from 1922 – 1932. Macdonald, 1971 p. 266. He was a supporter of Rivers ideas on diffusion.

277 He did record a considerable amount of traditional lore, much of which has been useful for this project as well as for many scholars after Grimble including Maude, Lundsgaarde, La Touche, Urium and K. Teaiwa.
A Command Performance

The image on V II pp. 34-5 requires some explanation. As a representation, a photograph, it operates on a number of levels. The photograph was taken on Banaba, known to the I-Kiribati as Ocean Island, where the British Phosphate Commissions removed most of the vegetation and soil to obtain phosphate primarily for Australia and New Zealand farmers.278 A current day observer might notice the costuming is unusual if compared for consistency to older or more recent images. As an image used for the basis of visual communication it requires a more complex analysis than most of the others in this research. This is a command performance. It is taken in the grounds of Government House on Banaba. We know that from the ordered path the dancers stand on and the manicured trees in the background. The performers are dissimilar to all the other dancers I photographed who are represented in the archives. They do not wear Te Taai headdresses. Their belts are of shells, the things of the sea, they are not human hair as worn by the I-Kiribati male dancers. This is a rare photograph of the Aka people. Maps of Banaba show the position of three villages. There was a fourth. This was that of the Aka people. The Aka were darker than their neighbours and like the boti Te O in the Gilbert Group, they were feared for their magic. The myth-histories of the I-Kiribati include dark Melanesian people who were the first to populate the islands and to be later subjugated by lighter skinned people, we suspect, from Indonesia.

The village Te Aka was deserted by the time of the coming of the I-Matang phosphate miners, probably due to the devastating drought of the 1880’s, the people being absorbed, probably with some reluctance, by the other villages. The Te Aka were still feared and their remnant village was tapu. When the BPC decided to mine the Aka village site they were warned not to. They proceeded and the leader of the mining group suddenly died. The village was left untouched. The colonial written records make no mention of the Te Aka, but their photographs present the enigma of their presence. I include this image as an example of the importance of the visual record as a key to knowledge.279

279 General information on Te Aka corresponded to me 2009, by Stacey King, whose husband, Raobein Ken Sigrah is a descendant of Te Aka.
Encountering Deep Song
The sights of encounter cannot be considered alone. In the above example the seeing of the past was enhanced by the synthesis of the visual and the verbal.
I now emphasise the synergy between sight and other sensory perceptions in accessing the past. I take the sample of the Toddy men and their songs (V II, pp. 54,55,56) because they connect to a far distant past that no one, at least as far as I can ascertain, I-Kiribati or I-Matang can fully access. Most of the songs seem incomplete. So is the vision of the singers, in the quarter light before dawn, with the singers high in the fronds of coconut palms. Visitors to the Gilberots have often noted the sight and strange sounds of the singers. The song I mention on V II, p.56 sounded like a traditional English folk song, like something out of the Child Ballads. Other songs were harsh and guttural. Some I could not get translations for. The language was too old, and I could find no one who knew the meaning. The men sing to each other. There is comradeship here, yet what connects them is the Deep Song, the meaning of which is unimportant. It is the knowing that people have sung these songs for generations before. By the ritual of toddy gathering in the dim predawn, is the dim pre-history, the deep past is experienced. Every I-Matang I have spoken to about experiencing the toddy singers; everything I have read about others seeing and hearing them suggests an experience of contact with something distant.  

A Century of Encountering
Actors on either side of the beach sought to influence the other by their own performances of their cosmologies. Neither influenced the other as much as they would have preferred. As they always have, the I-Kiribati moved with the changing climate, extracting what they could that was useful. If the power was too great to resist, such as the British Empire, the I-Kiribati waited until it went away, as it did. Church, Empire, traders all changed. The Church eventually relaxed on dancing, smoking and the use of playing cards. The Empire left. When it did, as a last act, it gave to the I Kiribati hundreds of books, mainly about England. They bestowed the essence of their cosmology. Traders remained, but in competition with co-operative
stores. The result of how the past informed the current seeing of Kiribati, what this means and why it is important, is the content of the next and final chapter, “Dancing”.
CHAPTER 7

DANCING
Outcomes

Summary - The Voyage so far

In the beginning an aside in a conversation with an Australian expatriate in a cosmopolitan island bar led to a stone rectangle in a forest in a remote northern atoll and an encounter with ancient spirits. What was seen and experienced that day challenged my own ways of making sense of observations. This was not an everyday situation of work or domesticity, but an entertainment. It was an entertainment, not in the sense of amusement, but of entertaining thoughts and doing so from a position of in-between-ness, where one pauses from the normal position of observing the world to see from a distance. To be entertained is to be aware, to allow thoughts to enter. It is a mechanism to approach paradoxes. It is a way of trying to see things from other points of view and I have endeavoured to reveal this in my Artist’s Book.

I allowed others to speak to me, of their ways of seeing, reproduced in images and words, of views across the interfaces of cosmologies in the atoll world. I was not the first Stranger to arrive in the Gilbert Islands. My seeing might be explained in the seeing of some of those that had come before me. This was the start of a negotiating with the past to engage present perceptions. The past goes back a long way and Outsiders and Islanders have met, evaluated their perceptions of each other, acted and changed each other, for thousands of years. This was the performance that I was to be entertained by.

What I saw was the interaction of different cosmologies. I might call them “spheres of influence”. Each sphere was formed from spheres further back. Each sphere was known by signs. The meaning of the signs was transmitted by stories. I concentrated my story on the English (The Lion) and the I-Kiribati (The Frigate Bird), with a few minor players including French missionaries, Samoan and Hawaiian teachers and a few Scots.

All had different beliefs about their own identities. All had different stories and different signs. The I-Kiribati created a world of signs, pointing them out from the stages of their speaking. The Outlanders referred to them in their books and letters.
By the time I had spent enough time being entertained I told my story in an Artist’s Book. It is not a book like the familiar books of the I-Matang. It is the lyrics of a song, a script of a performance. It is a new myth-history.

The Informing of Identity.

It would seem from this research that the I-Kiribati and I-Matang saw each other as being very different from themselves. They were much more similar than they thought. Their identities were both informed by a myth-historical past that resulted in a self-image of cultural superiority. The English spoke disparagingly of the Celts, particularly the Irish. Of their ancient history, they thought the Picts and Britons inferior to the Romans, Anglo-Saxon and Norman. As Protestants and old time enemies of the French, they reviled the Gallic Roman Catholic missionaries perhaps more than the Pagan Islanders. The Gilbertese sought to suppress the descendants of defeated autochthonous people of the dark gods of the west, notably Na Areau and Bakoa, but even more the recently defeated in their civil wars. The myth-historical stories of the British and I-Kiribati both spoke of island communities that had been subjected to successive invasions and internal conflict. The dominant groups in both communities were the winners of the conflicts. The stories of the winners were the stories that had prevailed.

281 In the late nineteenth and early twentieth Century there was English support for ideas of supremacy. The Scots had more sympathy for their old allies the French and those from the Highlands were unlikely to have been as anti Catholic as those from southern areas. The Scot Murdoch was trader, labour recruiter, employee of the ʻuea Binoka and then a colonial administrator. He was astute, intelligent and got on well with the I-Kiribati. That he was a Scot and not as paternalistic as the English probably prevented his promotion to District Commissioner. See Macdonald, 1982, p86 for brief biography of Murdoch.

Britons were, not surprisingly, very much part of British myth-history, but were like the small dark ancestors of the Gilbertese, inferior to their conquerors whose language became dominant. Like the “old words” of Kiribati, the languages of the ancient Britons, Welsh and Cornish (and Breton in France) were surviving relics of defeated peoples. Stories of heroic Britons - Boudica and Caratacus, centred on conflicts with the Romans. The ‘Celtic wonderland’ of Arthur, (Campbell, J 1991, p. 296) may have been entirely myth. Characters like Sceafa originated in Scandinavia. Interestingly like many of the old Tungaru heroes some genealogies trace such heroes to gods, Sceafa being traced to Woden but also to a son of Noah. Ingrams Rev J (trans), 1993 p.94.
The English looked for differences to confirm their ideas of themselves. When they did not find cannibals, sirenic whores, or lack of a class system, the missions reported nakedness, dirt, lascivious dances and childishness. The colonial officials and traders saw lack of order, discipline and industriousness. Marines saw treachery. A lot of this was imagined. Islanders saw foreigners backed by superior force that suggested pragmatism. They also saw opportunity to access goods like steel, tobacco, guns, playing cards and a wider food base.282

**Differing Modes of Visual Communication.**

The previous section suggests that the seeing across the Kiribati beach was similar, but the outcomes varied due to imbalance of power. My Artist’s Book tells a more complex story. Although peoples of the Lion and the Frigate Bird were both informed by somewhat similar myth-histories of conquest, heroism and power; the methods of transmission of those myth-histories were fundamentally different. The I-Kirabati used abstract signs that they recognised in their constructions and environment that were interpreted according to contingency. Some of their stories such as their genealogies were inflexible. These fixed the relationship of the self to particular clans that implied certain behaviour patterns and repositories of knowledge. Others were negotiable within individual *utu* or the maneaba. With the exception of the subaltern beachcombers, the I-Matang did not have this degree of flexibility, being informed and largely controlled by the written word. In general the English in many encounter situations saw what they believed they should see, interpreted and acted on the cognition of those sights accordingly.283 They only deviated when the

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282 They recognised potential advantages of the English language, education and new technologies. The practices they wanted to keep, that the intruders disapproved of, could be hidden. They disliked the meanness of the English, who to be fair, had no money. When paid well by American soldiers who had driven out the Japanese during WW11, and when they had seen black Americans in positions of authority that they could not attain under the British, they appealed for the Americans to replace the British. They were unsuccessful.

283 The evidence is prolific. To cite a few examples The New Zealand Wars see Belich, J, “The New Zealand Wars and the Myth of Conquest” in Borofsky (Ed) p. 262, The Mau Rebellion in Samoa see Firth, S, ‘The Agencies of Colonialism’, in
outcomes were overwhelmingly indicative of error. Often they made situations worse by trying to strengthen their own position, as when Grimble reduced payments for land to the Banabans when the BPC was willing to pay more. 284 I maintain that this was a consequence of interpreting situations “by the book”. The extreme example was the LMS and ABCFM missionaries, who were, up until George Eastman in the 1920s totally fundamentalist, interpreting all they saw in terms of their exegesis of the Bible.

A Theoretical Reflection on Escaping Paradoxes

In the beginning of this project I thought my subjectivism might be somewhat subverted by seeing this project as a Star Path beneath a Sky Dome. Early in the research, in reading some of the Maude papers and David Lewis’s ‘We the Navigators’, I realised the maneaba formed a Sky Dome which was not only a form from which members of certain families could learn navigation, but also contained signifiers that touched the depth of Deep Time and the very heart of the I-Kiribati identity. Later I learned that the significance of the Sky Dome was repeated in houses, canoes and infused the entire environment to form a complete model of knowledge, by which the whole world was interpreted and given meaning.

It would seem that because I-Matang do not have, or have lost, a knowledge system based on the experienced environment, much less the night sky (if we can dismiss astrology), then it would seem there is an incompatibility of cosmologies or that different cosmologies cannot be understood by the same mechanisms. This would seem to be supported by differential methodologies of transmission, i.e. I-Matang by writing, I-Kiribati by performance reinforced by visualisation of constructed sign, signifying natural phenomena and orientations.

I would suggest this is not so and all knowledge systems can be seen as a sort of Sky Dome. By this mechanism compatibility or not can be envisaged as the intersection of knowledge domes or spheres, like intersecting three-dimensional Venn diagrams. Early in this exegesis I was dismissive of semiotics as presented by Saussure as a

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system more suited to literary criticism than the analysis of the visual, while accepting some of Peirce’s and Humbert de Superville’s approaches as useful, as supported by Barbara Maria Stafford.\textsuperscript{285} In this last chapter, while I celebrate the survival of a unique and confident I-Kiribati cultural identity, and note the current applicability of the ancient myth–historical conflict between the forces of Ocean and Land, I also want to examine where we might go from here. How might we understand the visual metaphors that define identities and cultural systems? How does this research fit into or modify theoretical frameworks?

I return to the Sky Dome to find a solution in the semiosphere proposed by Juri Lotman, first mentioned, according to Kalevi Kull, in a letter from Lotman to Boris Uspensky, March 19\textsuperscript{th} 1982.\textsuperscript{286} In it Lotman was influenced by Vladimir Vernadsky’s idea, that life must be preceded by life. Lotman equates this to his notion that culture must be preceded by another culture and text by another text. Again I am reminded that there are turtles under turtles and so on \textit{ad infinitum}. Behind signs are there are other signs, as I have noted in the analysis of the fools and deaf mutes (Rang and Baba reinterpreting Rangi and Papa)\textsuperscript{287} in Kiribati cosmogony, where the beginning of Kiribati culture marked the end of an earlier association with Polynesia.

Like the Sky Dome the semiosphere is, according to Emmeche, ‘the totality of interconnected signs, a sphere that covers the earth.’ This sounds very much like a Sky Dome. Before explaining how the semiosphere might be applied to visual communication within or across cultural boundaries I would like to go back a little to an old problem described as Meno’s Paradox. Juri Lotman applied Meno’s Paradox,\textsuperscript{288} which states ‘one cannot search for what one does not know (how can you know what you are looking for if you don’t know what it is) and does not need to search for what one already knows. If this is so, then learning is impossible.’ Lotman applies this to communication ‘If two individuals are absolutely different from each other,\

\textsuperscript{285} Stafford, B.M, 1994.
\textsuperscript{287} Grimble, A, 1989, p261-262.
\textsuperscript{288} Discussed by Socrates as recorded by Plato.
then they cannot communicate, if they are identical they have nothing to learn from each other." The situation Levi-Strauss found was extreme. His world and the world of the South Americans had no common ground. Usually contact is not the first encounter. Even here plausible attempts have been made to understand the sign system of the other as Sahlins has in his Cook as Lono theory in Cook’s death in Hawaii, or Dening’s analysis of the Dolphin’s visit to Tahiti in 1767.

In both these encounters the weight of academic as well as popular opinion is that the intruders were believed to be gods, and the subsequent violence would have been accepted as the fulfilment of expected roles of sacrifice and exchange of power relationships.

My problem with traditional semiotics, at least that coming from Saussure and to a lesser extent Peirce, is that the analysis of signs is generally received within the western dialectical model of dualities that does not satisfactorily address the organic, multivalent nature of experience, unlike the Sky Dome with its multiple pathways and ‘webs of significance’. Saussure’s system, does not address ecological relationships as James Lovelock envisaged in his Gaia theory, which emphasises the difficulties inherent in reductivism which has dominated western thinking and is now being challenged by the complexity of the human genome and metabolic pathways to explain human, and indeed all life systems.

The semiosphere, as is the Sky Dome, is not a cosmos of signs as theorised by Saussure and Pierce, but a cosmos of communication. I deduce this from Kull’s interpretation of Lotman. I wish to extend this, or rather apply it more specifically to visual communication. The Sky Dome may be understood as a semiosphere that is read by seeing it in the maneaba, other constructions and in the interpretation of the

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292 Dening, G in Borofsky (ed) 2000, p. 112.
293 ibid, p.115.
294 At least as it was understood by the students upon whose notes the late 20th century analysis depends.
natural world to which the myth-histories of time impart significance. When there is communication there is a semiosphere. As I see it, when two semiospheres representing two cultural constructs intersect, a third semiosphere is formed where communication between cultures exists. This is a semiosphere of inter rather than intra cultural communication. This is not an ideal, as the condition of stagnation would be reached that Socrates was aware of in Meno’s Paradox. Learning and hence growth is then finished, evolution stops and we have stagnation and, according to Jarred Diamond, cultural collapse.²⁹⁵ What is necessary is an understanding of how others read signs. The two semiospheres intersect but co-exist in the unstable condition of change. Visual signs are multivalent within the intersecting space. This is organic diversity, which promotes not domination, assimilation or annihilation, but symbiosis. This new semiosphere fits Kull’s twelfth definition ‘the semiosphere is a world of multiple truths, of multiple worlds²⁹⁶.

Kull compared two of John Locke’s divisions of human knowledge,²⁹⁷ physics and semiotics, but does not discuss the third, ethics. This is difficult to include in a semiosphere, but is not outside it as Kull claims physics is.

I have already looked at attitudes to theft in the analysis of Exchange and the morality of dancing, the sanctity of women in the encounter at Utiroa, the mission’s attitude to nakedness and other problems that might be said to be ethical. Their resolution is inside the semiosphere in the understanding of the others meanings of signs if not agreement. It is this understanding that leads not to common signs but to fluid equilibria, a sociological equivalent to Markownikoff’s chemical equilibria, where the addition of one component to a group of associating and disassociating molecules shifts the equilibria but retains all the components, albeit in different proportions, that is, the integrity of each component is retained. In this instance as Outsider influence wanes the I-Kiribati essence, te Katai ni Kiribati, strengthens. This is what ‘Dancing’, VII p.92, in the Artist’s Book is saying. A negotiation with the past indicates the levels of meanings that underpin the interpretation of visual signs.

²⁹⁷ Kull ibid., p. 182.
Visual communication involves multiple simultaneous interpretations that strengthen the semiosphere.

This becomes obvious in examination of the I-Kiribati Sky Dome, which justifies the construction of a visual narrative using the Sky Dome as a model.

**Dialogues with the Past. A.**

In this exegesis the past has been negotiated with in a number of ways. I started from my own present to explain visual paradoxes in Kiribati. The key seemed to be in the past of Kiribati, which was part of the present. Ultimately my answer to this might be useful to other visitors, not only to Kiribati, but also in other cross-cultural situations. The research led to how encounters of the past were themselves informed by stories of still more distant pasts. All moments are informed by other moments. Turtle upon turtle upon turtle. This is a sort of linearity. In the encounter two or more spheres of historically informed cosmology intersect. These intersections occur at simultaneous time-space conjunctures. These connections are lateral. Thus my interrogation with time occurs in three dimensions, forward, backward and sideways.

The critical difference between I-Kiribati and I-Matang cosmologies is that for the I-Kirabati the three dimensions can be considered as existing as simultaneous-position without volume. This is a self/utu/boti point that then occupies the cosmos. In the I-Matang cosmos all the points occupy different positions. The self then is a point between past self, future self and others. This point/self/ego only maintains its position, that is stability, by the maintenance of lines of tension between other points, represented by self or others at other points in time. The I-Matang I met in the present and in the past were mostly struggling to ease those tensions. The I-Kirabati, especially on the outer islands, were easier. If I let it, my days just rolled by too. Yesterday today and tomorrow were one. Many I-Kirabati who went to South Tarawa seeking jobs, became like the I-Matang, dissatisfied. The I-Kirabati saw the power of the I-Matang. Some desired it. Some desired part of it. Others rejected it, staying closer to *Te Katei ni Kiribati* and the power of the ancestors in the maneaba and the sacred places that they saw all around them.

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Is this a visual thing? Is it a concern of those involved in visual communication? I think so. The visual is our prime method of intersecting with the world. I have attempted to show this in my Artist’s Book, my Voyage into intersections.

**Dialogues with the Past- B**

My second chapter is Methodology, in which I outline the procedures and approaches used in the research.

One area deserves further comment in this last chapter. My research question asks how might present perceptions in Kiribati be engaged with through negotiation with the past? To this end I engaged with the past by examining images, consulting the archive and having conversations. The ways in which images may be used in researching the past, applied approaches pioneered by Bernard Smith and developed by Bronwyn Douglas and Nicholas Thomas combined with ethno-historiographic approaches of Clifford Geertz, Greg Dening and Inga Clendinnen. The application of these techniques was particularly instructive because a far greater number of images were used over a longer period in a smaller area than any similar research that I have found.

Smith’s approach is radical in Pacific Studies. His perspective is that of an Art Historian. His concerns with the visual and the past coincide with my own, although the theatre of performance we view is different. Smith is thoroughly reflexive, extracting from the artist his world, the re-presentation of his imagery. Through this he finds the filters that operate in the viewing. Geertz is a cultural anthropologist. He unravels his own observations, observing the multiple ‘threads of significance’ he calls culture. Geertz moves from the culture of the observer to that of the observed. In The Lion and the Frigate Bird I am concerned with both the observers and the observed and the liminal space that divides them. Douglas’s work looks for clues in the images of Europeans for evidence of what islanders saw. The limitation of – or perhaps the strength of Douglas’s work, is her concentration on a very few images to extract whole ways of thinking. Her concentration on the pre-photographic period,

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298 Geertz, C 1993.
that is, prior to 1850 and mostly on the late eighteenth century. Her difficulty is that very few images are extant, that is she doesn’t have much to go on.

I will now summarise what this project has resolved about the differences in I-Matang and I-Kiribati thought, that suggest how the performances of the other is seen.

**I-Matang/I-Kiribati concepts that influence the cognition of the observed.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I-Matang</th>
<th>I-Kiribati</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Container view of space</td>
<td>Point of view of space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore or will to overcome nature</td>
<td>Aware of and work with nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate and superior to nature</td>
<td>Part of nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear time</td>
<td>Organic, circular time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literate</td>
<td>Oral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporadically performative</td>
<td>Continuously performative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual signifiers when necessary</td>
<td>Cosmology of visual signifiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valorise the individual</td>
<td>Valorise the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Co-operative within group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above are general and not prescriptive. Individuals can be seen with varying degrees of adherence to the general patterns. These patterns are useful in the analysis of particular situations as frames of reference. I have placed some emphasis in the previous chapters on the experiential cosmology of the I-Kiribati and the informing by literature of the I-Matang. I feel some further comments need to be made on the implications of literate and non-literate cultures. It should be mentioned that the I Kiribati of today are largely literate but still rely strongly on the oral and performative inherited from a non literate past.

**Literacy, Orality and the Visual**

Discourses on differences between outer cognition of the visual and the inner reflective processes dates at least to Plato, most famously in the allegory of the cave
in Chapter 7 of The Republic. Walter J Ong’s work in the 1990’s, puts the position succinctly at that time, and points out some variances implied by my work.

Ong suggests that the literate cultures think differently from oral cultures\(^{299}\). Print he suggests, does not require the oral techniques of memory, such as repetition, and leads to much more rapid technological change. He suggests literacy promotes dissection.\(^{300}\) I disagree here. The intensive discussions in the maneaba aim to determine the accuracy and/or relevance of the oral performance and the associated visual performance in, for instance, the dance. Knowledge that must be remembered exactly is subject to extensive criticism and correction. Often knowledge is evaluated in how it might usefully apply to current situations.

Ong’s work, although concentrating on written and oral knowledge transmission, usefully connects the oral to the visual (as well as sound). I have suggested that understanding comes with experience, not being told. Ong states ‘you can understand primary oral culture better than those who live in it – if not feel it as intimately. All knowledge of anything demands proximity and distance: advantages of writing (more distancing than orality, which feeds on proximity)’.\(^{301}\) In my Introduction I stated there was veracity in seeing from afar, but the only real knowing is the experiencing of the study. This is the validation for immersive ethnology as followed by Rivers, Haddon, Malinowski, Boaz and those coming after.

I have mentioned the closed nature of the I-Matang interpretation of the visual. The prescriptive implied by the written, the ‘feeling of finality’ as Ong suggests.\(^{302}\) Although Ong does not valorise oral or print cultures to the detriment of the other, his concentration is on how the written word operates.

This is also the problem with continental criticism (Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva and others) that I mentioned briefly in my Introduction. They write, lecture and think from the perspective of European print culture. Such critics largely see the function

\(^{299}\) Ong, W.J 1988.
\(^{300}\) Bingham, Art, Review of *Orality and Literacy* accessed 24/7/09 at http://www.engl/wac/ong_rvw.html.
\(^{301}\) Ong, WJ 1995.
\(^{302}\) Bingham ibid p.4.
of the visual, which has greater affinity with non-literate traditions, as a precursor of the literate, which of course is true, but the possibility of parallel knowledge systems i.e. synchronic (co-existing) and diachronic (evolutionary) is largely ignored.

This is Ong’s advantage as he considers both, but the way in which the visual operates in either culture is not his focus.

It is my contention that the language of the visual depends on the interpretation of visual signs. The signs the literate view, are not always read correctly. Literate cultures seldom teach people how to see. The I-Kiribati, so long and so recently an oral culture live in a world of visual signs as I discussed in ‘Space’ and are taught to interpret it, apply it, make performances of it, and as they get older, debate it. In this the I-Kiribati negotiate with the past as I have done in this work, in order to evaluate the experiences of the present. The cosmology of the I-Kiribati and the narratives that transmit it, are thick descriptions of multivalent signs. The Artist’s Book of ‘The Lion and the Frigate Bird’, describes my voyage to discover some of that world and how it, and other visual worlds, might be understood and re-presented.

I have arrived at a destination. Not the destination. Starting with an idea that the secret to the future was in the past, I had directions that helped me through the storms and doldrums. I caught enough fish and rain to sustain me. The dogs along the way were unexpected. Turtles and Sharks were not, but there was a lot more to them than I thought at first. I arrived in a new land where Estonian philosophers discussed their own Sky Domes.

303 Of the many questions this research project has raised, the one that most people seem to want answered is ‘why didn’t the dogs bark?’ When first pondering on this most perplexing question I thought the answer was indeterminacy. This is, that there is no answer. Then I thought maybe it’s like the turtles. The end at infinity is unimportant; it’s the consideration of the turtles along the way that is important. This was far too Taoist. Finally it was the dogs, or rather the images of them that kept appearing, that indicated to me that they too were signs. They are the signs on the beaches of encounter. They always work on the edge. They fill the liminal spaces with barks and sniffs. They indicate if we are on the right track or barking up the wrong tree. They tell us when to be careful. They let us know when we are accepted. They appear when we least expect them and should not be ignored.
The next voyage is now informed by a different past. New Strangers have appeared with their own stories, speaking a new language, reading new signs. A new voyage begins.
Appendix 1

Glossary
Aba – Word synonymous for The Land and The People who inhabit it.

Anti – Pronounced ‘untss’ – spirits or ghosts, usually of ancestors.

Antimaomata- Part human, part spirit. A period in history where the genealogies are unsure of the human state of an ancestor, who may have been a spirit.

Aomata- A true human

Babai- Giant Swamp Taro, Cytosperma chamissonis, slow growing tuber eaten at celebrations. Grown with compost in pits of brackish water. The babai pits have private titles

Bakoa – A small dark powerful sorcerer whose totemic presence is the shark. Also an autochthonous clan that precedes the Coming from Samoa. Also sand when placed on the face for ceremonies and dancing.

Bangota - Shrine. Usually rectangular, open air space, sometimes fenced, containing one or more boua. They are usually on the ocean side of the village.

Bata – House. In form and significance it can be a miniature of the maneaba.

Baurua- The great voyaging canoes.

Betia - Sea signs, used for positioning when fishing or voyaging. Signs may be wave patterns, fish swarms, seaweed patches etc.

Boua – A monolith, symbolic of the power of atua or important ancestral anti. Missionaries destroyed most freestanding boua. The boua that are supports for the maneaba and various other buildings remain. Usually carved from solid coral rock, but may also be wooden and sometimes concrete.

Boti – A sitting place in the maneaba, defined by a number of covering inaki. Also the clan whose place is in that boti.

Bubuti - A request for goods or services that is repaid by reciprocity.

Ibonga – Shaman or Sorcerer. A person who has special access to anti. Position often hereditary. Ibonga have special knowledge of spells and rituals for healing, illness, death, fishing, love and other purposes. Ibonga may be male or female. Most villages seem to have one.

I- Kiribati – A person of Kiribati. Sometimes refers to the language.

I- Matang – Literally person from Matang. Matang is a place of origin in the sagas and may refer to a place near Samoa, or, as in this case, to a place of Deep Time in the west. The term refers now to white people, particularly Europeans or their descendants. Talu et.al 1979 p. 129. A book of histories written by I-Kiribati people defines I-Matang as ‘white skinned spirits’.
Inaki – Refers both to a section of lashed together thatch, about 1 x 2 metres, and to the place under it in the maneaba.

Kainga or Kainga – A hamlet of people with common ancestors, refers to both the group of people and the land they occupy. A system disrupted by missions and particularly colonial administrators.

Karaki – Orally transmitted stories. Subdivisions Karaki aika iango (Fictional), Karaki aika rabakau (fixed sacred texts of knowledge or wisdom), Karaki aika rongorongo (History – either genealogies or historical narratives). Karaki are to be differentiated from Kuna, which are free form performative sagas.

Kaunga - Landless slave, usually captured in war or found guilty of crime. Such a person was considered to have no history.

Kimoa – Rat or thief.

Kuna – An oral narrative or song, presented creatively. To be distinguished from karaki.

Maka- A sacred potency. Similar to the Polynesian ‘mana’.

Marae – A sacred space, common throughout Polynesia as a marked space usually including temples or meeting houses. In Kiribati the marae includes a marked space around the maneaba and the entire interior volume of the maneaba itself.

Marea - Accursed.

Matang - One of the places of origin in Deep Time. Sometimes thought to be near Samoa, sometimes far to the West. Home of fair or red skinned ancestors.

Maunga-tabu – Literally ’sacred mountain’. In the legends the tree Kai-n-tikuaba was grown on the south side of this mountain. The mountain smoked and sometime emitted fire. The name passed to a type of maneaba brought to Kiribati from Samoa.

Mauri - A word of well-being. As greeting means ‘be blest’ or ‘good health’. Buildings, dances etc. can be ‘mauri’.

Mone – An undersea home of the powerful and cannibalistic spirits and creatures some of whom are human, some who can transform themselves so they appear as trees, fish or other forms.

Mwenga - A house for living in and also the land on which it stands.

Na Areau or Nareau – Refers to two atua present at The Creation. Na Areau the Younger, also called Na Areau the Wise, was The Creator. He is a small, black ugly

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305 Maude HC & HE 1994 p.250.
god with big ears and frizzy hair. He is a trickster and usually malevolent. Luckily, he no longer takes an interest in human affairs.

*Nikiranroro* - Older woman unmarried or divorced, often a prostitute or free sexual agent.

*Nei* - Prefix to a woman’s name. Could be translated as She or The Woman or Lady.

*Oka* – Rafters.

*Ridi or Riri* – A skirt made traditionally from stripped and partly fermented leaves but sometimes black plastic. Ubiquitously worn as a very short skirt by women prior to the coming of the missionaries. Now used in dances and can be multi layered and quite long. *Ridi* can be made of videotape.

*Tabu* - see tapu.

*Tabunea* – Spells often used with, but distinct from, rituals.

*Tabouriki or Tabu-ariki* – Ancient *atua* ancestor, heard as thunder, prevalent in stories in most islands but particularly in the South.

*Tatanga* – the main bearer in constructions.

*Te Taai* – The Sun and the headdress that is its symbol. *Te Taai* occurs in some *karaki* as a powerful male force that may have been a god in former times. Also a clan of the same name.

*Tapu* - Sacred. Sometimes forbidden. Taboo a rough translation that is seldom understood.

*Te Bo ma te Maki* – The Darkness and the Cleaving Together. In I Kiribati cosmogony a huge metaphysical object that contained spirits which did not allow them movement or speech. Na Areau the creator commanded the Giant Ray to prise it apart and Riki, The Great Eel to separate its over and under sides.

*Toddy* - Coconut spathe milk. Nutritious when fresh, with high vitamins including B group. Ferments quickly to a potent alcoholic drink

*Uea* - High Chief or King. Position usually gained by war, but has also been hereditary.

*Uma ni barau* - The night sky, literally “The Roof of Voyaging”.

*Unaine* – Female elder. May be quite young, if wife of a *unimane*.

*Unimane* – Old Man. Male elder, usually over 50 years of age who is given respect and who may reveal ancestral knowledge and special powers as well as decide matters of importance.
Un-waka or Uniwaka – A game from Butaritari and Makin where a young man wards off missiles hurled at them by a series of attackers. Once deadly with the use of fire hardened pandanus spears, now replaced by babai stalks.\footnote{See Grimble, Undated “Games, Butaritari, Men, Te Uniwaka” in Grimble Papers V (Games) Field Notes, Maude MSS 0003 series 2/4 No. 1 of 4. University of Adelaide, Special Collections.}

Utu – Kin, relatives, family.

Wa or waa – Canoe.

Wawi - The Death Magic. Particularly prevalent in the northern islands. Usually practiced by ibonga, but others have the knowledge too. Aided by possession of belongings of the accursed, especially hair and nail clippings.
Appendix 2

Abbreviations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABCMF</td>
<td>American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (also called the Boston Mission)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANU</td>
<td>Australian National University</td>
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<tr>
<td>BP</td>
<td>Before Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPC</td>
<td>British Phosphate Commissioners</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOLSH</td>
<td>Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart</td>
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<tr>
<td>dpi</td>
<td>dots per inch</td>
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<tr>
<td>edn</td>
<td>edition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEIC</td>
<td>Gilbert &amp; Ellice Islands Colony</td>
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<tr>
<td>gsm</td>
<td>grams per square metre</td>
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<tr>
<td>HDR</td>
<td>High Dynamic Range</td>
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<tr>
<td>JPH</td>
<td>Journal of Pacific History</td>
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<td>JPS</td>
<td>Journal of the Polynesian Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>LMS</td>
<td>London Missionary Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSC</td>
<td>Mission Sacre Couer (Sacred Heart Mission)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHA</td>
<td>Pacific History Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>PMB</td>
<td>Pacific Manuscripts Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>SICHE</td>
<td>Solomon Islands College of Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIDT</td>
<td>Solomon Islands Development Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL&amp;TFB</td>
<td>The Lion &amp; the Frigate Bird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>USP</td>
<td>University of the South Pacific</td>
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Appendix 3

Making an Artist’s Book
The period covered in the research, production and reflections in the project constructed with the greatest revolution in photographic and printing technology since the nineteenth century. The shift from analogue to digital necessitated new workflows, equipment and media. Parallel with the ethnographic, historical and conceptual research extensive research was undertaken in how to apply the new paradigm to the processing of images and in fine printing. What follows is a summary of this research and its conceptual underpinnings.

At the time of printing ‘The Lion and the Frigate Bird’ represents the most advanced fine printing techniques in the world. Despite this the book is handmade. Each file is independently prepared, manually imposed, each sheet is hand fed into the printer and registered by eye. Each sheet is individually hand cut. The book is bound using traditional methods. These procedures result in slight variations; which are a signature of the handmade.

**Media**

The highest print quality now available is by the use of advanced inkjet printers, capable of stochastic dot patterns. Resolution with dot sizes down to 3.5 picolitre at 2880 dpi was chosen, using an Epson 9900 printer. The inks are highly pigmented affording excellent archival properties resisting both fading due to ultra violet light and exposure to atmospheric pollutants. Acid free pure cotton papers enhance longevity.

Most papers to accept pigmented inks for fine art printing are too thick to fold and bind (approximately 280 to 450 gsm). This meant further testing for suitable papers was necessary.

Uncoated paper (Schutt Dutch Etching and Somerset Book White) was experimented with. The sharpness of the text could be retained but the colour gamut and maximum density would not give the intensity I needed to give a perception of light and colour under clear equatorial skies.
I thought tipping in photos might offer a solution. I printed 75 images on Museo Silver Rag before I determined the book could not be properly bound using this approach. The exercise was not wasted; as it was in these prints I furthered my perceptual edits of depth, volume and acuity that came from my professional practice as a fine art printer.

A further bonus was that many of my final images had been selected from the thousands I had and they had been scanned, cleaned and edited.

In the latter half of 2007 and the first half of 2008 I made three books for a client using Somerset Book White, Zerkall and Awagami Inbe. Problems with registration and binding all had to be overcome. In October 2008 a new series of papers using new coating technology came out of France. One was Canson Rag Photographique Duo 220gsm. This produces the widest colour gamut and highest maximum density ever for a fine art matte paper. I had my paper.

The process of making fine art prints is slow and expensive. A square metre takes 45 minutes to print. Registration is very difficult. As far as I know there is no commercial service to make books this way, so I was on my own.

During this time taken for the technology to mature and for me to master it, I refined a new structure for the Artist’s Book’s narrative based on my findings.

**Crafting the Artists Book**

**Imaging and Seeing**

In the making of the images for the book, strategies have been devised to narrow the gap between the observed and the represented.

To negotiate the seen past is to consider its mechanisms as well as its attention and the interpretation of that attention.
The book contains both my photographs – part of my engagement with the present – and images from the past, which I also engage with in the written and oral texts. The vintage photographs as well as my own have been subjected to electronic editing to more closely appropriate the way they were originally seen.

Photographs are not reality or the way reality is actually seen. They are selective, restricted in tonal and colour gamut and physically two-dimensional. They see a window of phenomena simultaneously; they do not scan like the eye. Still photographs are frozen slices to time, they do not move.

All the same, like a frame taken out of a movie, they can approximate the way a seeing was in a moment of significance both to the original observer and those who view the image later.

To ascertain how this correlation operates there is the assumption that how one sees one's own older images and reflects on that seeing, making links between memories of original observations and the way things are currently seen, is similar to the way others have seen in the past. This is a problematic. As there is no empirical evidence to the contrary, I proceed on that assumption. Taught that we see in three dimensions because we have two eyes, I was intrigued that I could see quite well in three dimensions with one eye closed. Undergraduate studies in Photographic Science informed me about perspective, transparency, colour presence (red advances, blue recedes) and coverage (that which is closer may hide all or part of things further away). This was the limit of my perceptual theory until advent of computer software that could change tonal relationships in photographs in ways not previously possible. Extensive investigation led to volume and depth edits using various combinations of several luminosity edits. It was aspects of contrast that led to development of my current techniques of changes in local contrast, light edits and acuity edits by wavefront reconstruction in order to create dimensionality, depth and volume in constructed or recorded images. The theoretical inspiration for development of an art practice that presented in a way similar to the natural world came from the work of Bela Julesz in his ‘Fundamentals of Cyclopean Perception’ and ‘Dialogues on
Perception’. Julesz researched the mind’s response to abstract patterns of varying contrast of luminance and chroma to investigate how the mind discerns depth and the figure-ground relationship. I wish to extend this to the re-imaging of the natural world.

In practice the vintage photographs as well as my images from the present (or more accurately the now recent past as the moment after a photograph is recorded it becomes a record of the past) have been edited to appear more ‘real’, more three dimensional, containing more volume and depth.

**Techniques of Visual Dimension**

The principal of editing images to simulate seeing that I follow are:

- **Adjust dynamic range.** Usually this requires obtaining maximum paper density (DMax) and aligning that with deepest shadow pixels on the image file and the lightest pixel to paper white.

- **Adjusting of luminosity steps for separation along the tonal range similar to that in the visual system.** This does not occur in the colour spaces commonly used (sRGB or Adobe RGB 1998) that distort tonal steps, particularly by shadow compression. This does not happen in LAB colour space, thus a duplicate image can be converted from RGB to LAB and the luminosity channel transferred to the top of the RGB layer stack of the original image where it is blended on Luminosity.

- **Using colour spaces that do not ‘clip’ printable colours, enclosing printable colours closely, to maximise sensitivity to adjustments, that is having as many of the available steps within the useful space as possible.** For this I have largely used the crafted spaces created by Joseph Holmes primarily Ektaspace PS5 and Ektaspace 100.

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307 Juesz, B 1995 and 2002
308 This is a wider range than used for offset printing as inkjet prints have less dot bleed (ink spread). In 8 bit this means the print dynamic range can go from 0 to 255 compared with offset where 15 to 240 is more normal.
• Extension of colourfulness beyond the usual limits of colour space by the use of the Joseph Holmes variant spaces including his Adobe RGB 1998 variant spaces.

• Separating chromaticity from luminosity by use of Lobster software adjusting each independently. One of the problems with commonly used photo editing Adobe Photoshop is that it is impossible to adjust colour without altering the tonal relationships and vice versa. This problem is reduced but not eliminated by the use of blending modes i.e. adjusting a colour layer eg. Curves while blending on colour mode still alters luminance values.

• The use of local contrast edits. This is a very powerful technique. The ability of the human visual system to scan means small local differences in luminosity and colour can be amplified in order to distinguish phenomena more clearly. Some camera lenses are better at separation than others but the effect is constant and global.

The basic technique to achieve local contrast utilises low percentage (10-25%) contrast filters with high radius (40-70 pixels) and zero threshold. The most used filter here are unsharp mask, smart sharpen and high pass. The high pass filter is blended with overlay or soft light blending modes. The application of these filters utilises layer styles to prevent an expanded tonal range from forcing tones into the clipped area. The filter may be used iteratively in combination, at varying opacities and be locally applied by utilising painted masks of varying opacities.

• The application of locally applied contrast edits together with differential sharpening mimics the attention capability of the brain, that is the ability of the eye to focus attention on specific objects or on networks of objects, can be facilitated.

• The application of local and global sharpening using both traditional edge contrast techniques and advanced iterative deconvolution wavefront reconstruction algorithms. Edge sharpening controls can artificially increase contrast at high gradient luminance shifts. This is a common practice and like large radius contrast increase, mimics the brain’s acuitive functions. Deconvolution takes a completely different approach. All visual images are dependant on the resolution of the visual system. A camera image reproduces the theoretical dot as a circle, known as a circle of confusion. Images formed
with less than optimum focus produce from the same ‘dots’, larger circles. Since the larger circles are a product of the smaller circle, there is logically a pathway to reproduce the smaller original circle from the larger one. In practice there are a number of approaches based on probability of size and position of the wavefronts whose distorted products constitute images. In this project the software application Astra Image, derived from NASA space programs has been used with the following algorithms - Wavelet reconstruction, Van Cittert and Richardson- Lucy deconvolution in up to 40 iterations. This approach is most effective in initial sharpening of scanned images with differential unsharp mask or high pass sharpening applied at the editing stage and a further sharpening using a combination of unsharp mask and Richardson- Lucy deconvolution (two iterations) after final sizing and as the last preprint edit.

- On occasions, global and individual colours may be adjusted wholly or partly according to remembered colour. This represents the difference between colours as seen and colours remembered.

- The above may be applied in print or whole in appropriate sequences. In order to minimize pixel damage the strategy used uses the minimum number of moves to obtain the desired result. This ‘elegant solution’ has been found to produce the most harmonious and reality like results.

- The use of highly luminous profiles. Specific profiles map the interpretation of colour numbers in the digital file within the colour space of the printer/paper/ink combination. The building of profiles is both art and science and is a highly specialised craft. In this I have relied on the custom profiles of Les Walkling. Beautiful profiles not only enable accurate colour but also enable colour and luminosity differences to be clearly perceived. The above techniques enable printed images that have a high degree of realism. This is of high importance in this project in which the past is seen as present, that is, various distances of past and the present are continuing and interchangeable.
Binding Specifications
Half cloth with paper sidings (Khadi, Indian Handmade paper).
Section sewn around three tapes with wrap around endpapers and hand made head and tail bands.
Dimensions
Head to tail 285mm
Spine to foredge 205mm
Depth 30mm

Book Details
Two Volumes, each of 120 pages, in 15 eight-page sections.
Paper- Canson Rag Photographique Duo 220gsm
Inks-Epson Ultrachrome HDR pigmented – 10 colour
Resolution 2880 dpi
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