

## MAUI'S GENEALOGY, THE ISLAND WEB

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As in a seminar given in March 2006 at ANU, translated into French and published by *BSEO* the same year (Dunis 2006:197-267) and now expanded into a book which I have just completed in English (in press), I propose to trace the Austronesian mythological beginnings in China's Liangzhu culture through an analysis of its jade culture that allows me to link with the first oceanic forays out of Taiwan. Our setting is in Peinan where 'the Rites of the Sea' (Puyuma:67-89) are performed at three different locations: on the ocean shores facing Orchid Island and Green Island and along the north shore of the Peinan River opposite Du Lan Mountain. Why? Because the Rites of the Sea originate from three different legends.

1a) Once upon a time, Demalasaw went out to the eastern seas in search of a staple plant. He landed on Orchid Island and fell in love with Tayban whom he married. The couple decided to bring millet seeds to Taiwan. Because it was forbidden to do so, they tried every possible stratagem in vain. Eventually, Demalasaw managed to hide the seeds successfully in his prepuce. That's how millet was introduced into Taiwan. Cauquelin gives a variant (2004:210): The woman stuffed the millet into her vagina, but, when she urinated, the grain was ejected. Then the man unsheathed his penis, and hid the grain under his prepuce. They were searched. They were thoroughly searched, in vain. The grain had been stolen.

2a) Patakiu's favourite trick was to steal rice dough patties. His neighbours were so tired of him that his uncle Kulalui decided to banish him. Kalalui and other villagers invited Patakiu to a hunting party on Green Island, enticingly visible from Peinan. In those days, a huge banyan tree formed a bridge from the small island to Taiwan. Patakiu did as he was told: rush into the forest to flush out animals. The rest of the hunting party quickly retraced its steps and cut off the natural bridge. The marooned trickster wailed so much that he stirred the gods into dispatching a great fish to carry him home. «After three deep dives they arrived at Cat Mountain on the eastern shores of Taiwan (Puyuma:84).» Cauquelin again gives a key variant: The Amis tell the story of the origin of grain among the Puyuma: 'Come', said a whale to a Puyuma. He went and the whale carried him and offered five grains of millet (2004:211).

3a) An ancestor used to wade across the Peinan River to the northern shore to tend to his crops and gather wood until one day he discovered a poisonous hundred-pace-long snake in his food bag. 'The Rites of the Sea' being a few days away, he hastened to make an offering to placate the Mountain Spirit.

These three separate legends indicate a location in the southeast through mention of the river and the two islands off Taiwan. Along with the snake and the whale, they altogether (1b) form yet another triptych with the Rukai story of 'Baleng and the Snake' (Rukai:75-99) and the Amis story of 'Maciwciw's Visit to the Land Without Men' (Amis:63-78). Apart from sounding uncannily Polynesian in both content and style, this triptych of legends corresponds to three actual Polynesian stories we shall look at later!

2b) Baleng was the eldest daughter of a Rukai family. The whole tribe as well as both Paiwan and Bunun admired her beauty. On 'the day bringing satisfaction', climax of the

millet festival, her suitors are numerous but fail to move her. Past midnight, though, the sound of a bamboo flute issues from a crevice in the wall and enchants her. The same entrancing call repeats itself the following evening and then, in a crescendo, turns into a whirlwind. Baleng falls in love with a creature looking like a handsome man to her but like a giant snake to her shocked family: Kamamaniane, king of the Dalupalhing tribe. He comes back again one evening to claim his bride, his fellow tribe-snakes bringing lavish gifts. Crowds of people gather to see her off, some going all the way to Dalupalhing Lake into which the newly-weds disappear, Baleng having promised to prepare food for the hunters. «Baleng missed her family and friends so much that every year at the harvest festival she sent her two children to visit their grandparents and other members of the tribe (Rukai:95).» Until one day a young tribeswoman unwittingly mistreated the two visiting snakes. Realizing she was forgotten, Baleng decided to take the shape of a white egret to soar above her former village.

In a far cry from the matrilocality of a vanishing way of life based on hunting and horticulture, young women are now wrenched from the emerging families' new farming locations. They are also presented as going back to nature as they take over shamanism from the men. Yet another Rukai story (ibid.15-38) emphasizes this brutal transition. Muakaikai, the only child of an aristocrat, was so pretty that every villager took it for granted that Kuleleele, although of a somewhat inferior status, was her fitting match. The verdict of the giant swing on the 'day bringing satisfaction' was thus eagerly awaited: «Each young woman tried to outdo the others by being the most graceful and elegant on the swing, while all the men tried to outdo one another by finding out who could demonstrate the greatest strength and could go the highest and the furthest on the swing (ibid.19)... Muakaikai swung high and far... Her ascent seemed endless (ibid.21).» All the better for a mean-hearted old man who abducted her by whispering a curse which blew the beautiful woman away into his grandson's arms. It took her ages to get used to her new village but she eventually gave in. «Although her husband was very kind and loving, Muakaikai spent days and nights longing for her parents, her loved one and her village (ibid.32).» Time passed and she gave birth to several boys and girls. To honour her kindness, her husband eventually suggested the whole family should pay a visit to Muakaikai's village.

3b) Long ago there was a young Amis man, Maciwciw, who worked hard and long in the fields. It rained so much one day that the flooded river swept him off to sea. Holding on to a piece of wood, Maciwciw bobbed up and down until he made landfall on an unknown island. Weariness caught up with him as he looked in vain for a village. When he woke up, he was surrounded by threatening women wielding knives and spears. «What is this thing? I've never seen anything like it before! But it does look tasty! (Amis:68)» exclaimed their chiefess and soon Maciwciw was tied up and brought to the village. No men were needed on that Island of Women because they could become pregnant by simply opening their arms to the wind. The beautiful chiefess put her prey in a cage to fatten it. The young woman in charge of the feeding was startled when the prisoner asked for help. He could talk! How could she remain insensitive to a human being? She handed him a knife and that evening, Maciwciw ran to the sea. In hot pursuit, many torch-carrying women were about to seize their man again when a great whale loomed out of the dark to rescue him. Maciwciw jumped on the whale's back and they sped away from the chasing canoes illuminating the night. Once home, he realized he had been away for quite a few years. Very few people could recognize him. He felt he had to show his gratitude to the young woman who had allowed his escape and to her friend the whale who had rendered it possible. Hence the annual Amis Sea Festival ritual. Could a story be more explicit in showing us that the shaman's voyage is nothing but a woman's affair now that the offerings consist of rice cakes and millet wine to accompany the

betel nuts? Our cross-roads in the Western Pacific transforms the shaman's voyage into a land-finding expedition. In the very same way Austronesians, having become Lapita, then Polynesians, began to reach for new horizons in the Eastern Pacific.

It now becomes interesting to outline the Polynesian triptych.

1c) In *Terre et Mer*, his PhD dissertation, Henri Lavondès presents 'The Isle of Women motif.' He deems it widespread in Polynesia and probably elsewhere in the Pacific (1975:411). Here is a version he collected in the Marquesas, a version Marika Moisseff analyses in *Sexual Snakes, Winged Maidens and Sky Gods, Myth in the Pacific, An Essay in Cultural Transparency* (Dunis ed. 2008:141-154). When Kae became a widower, he and another chief joined forces in a seafaring venture, in search of a wife. The other chief, an extremely ugly man, was jealous of Kae's beauty and marooned him on a wooden dish in the middle of the ocean. The currents carried Kae to Pandanus Island, inhabited exclusively by women whose husbands were pandanus aerial roots (*urefara* in Tahitian: pandanus's penis. Von den Steinen: once peeled, the youngest roots are smooth, slippery and fragrant. 1998, 2:22). When they were pregnant, a witch doctor would cut their womb open. The mother died and the child lived, but the children were always girls. That is why all of the island's inhabitants were women. There were no men other than the witch doctor. The chief of the island was a woman who did not make love with the pandanus aerial roots. One day, as she went to the beach with her companions, she found Kae there. She took him home with her and greatly appreciated the pleasure of having a human husband.

Kae asked her why there were no men in her country. The chiefess explained why and Kae reacted: "No more cutting open! When their pains come, we will help the women to deliver, we will have them make efforts. Chase the magician away when he comes and bring the women to me, I will do the work." From then on, the child was born without killing the mother. The women were very happy. Kae's wife, the woman chief, became pregnant by her husband. One day, as she was delousing her husband's head, she came upon a white hair. Kae asked her to name their child-to-be 'Kae's white hair,' and thereupon decided to return to his home country, carried by a dolphin provided by the chiefess. After her husband's departure, the chiefess gave birth to a boy, who, when he grew up, persistently pleaded to find out who his father was. He then went off to find him, on the back of another dolphin belonging to his mother. Kae had a pig farm and plantations in his country. The entire property was surrounded by a stone wall that Kae's son caused to collapse as he ran away from the wardens. The latter finally caught the young man, tied him up and threw him into an earth oven, where he was soon about to be cooked. "My mother told me that Kae, my father, lives here," he said, in tears, "That is why my name is 'Kae's white hair.'" Kae was thus able to recognize his son and save him (Lavondès, 1975, I: 412 and II: 227-246).

Could there be any closer cousins for Maciwciw than Kae and his son? The same drift, the same Island of Women, the same male loneliness, the same hair's breadth escape from the cooking oven, the same agricultural destiny and descent, the same ride on a big sea mammal? On Maupiti (Llaona in Dunis ed. 2000:152-161), in the Society Islands, where Sinoto found graves which were identical to those found at Wairau, New Zealand, several variants present Mahutari'i, a warrior who goes down to the beach at night to fish *momote'a* crabs with his torch. Mahutari'i inadvertently treads on a '*upa'i*' crab which sweeps him away to Rarotonga. The early morning newcomer waits all day in vain for a welcome and decides to go inland at sunset. He finds a pool shaded by a pandanus and upon hearing approaching voices, he ascends the tree. Young women are coming to bathe and enjoy their 'husband': a young aerial root. Taken aback, Mahutari'i throws pandanus seeds into the pool and is thereby discovered

and invited to join in the fun, thus becoming the women's husband on this island devoid of men. In another variant, Mahutari'i and nine other warriors set out to the same island on a *pa'apa'a* crab and establish families.

2c) Land-finding reaches its apogee with Maui, the East Polynesian trickster who equates islands with whales (Hiroa 1970:4-5, Dunis 1984:63). Maui played so many mischievous pranks that his brothers were afraid of him. In planning a deep sea fishing expedition, they endeavoured to keep it secret but Maui found out and stowed himself away in the canoe at night. The brothers embarked in the early morning chuckling to themselves at having outwitted him. After the canoe was well out to sea, Maui emerged smiling from his concealment and assumed command, forcing his brothers to continue the course until they evidently sailed out into the unknown waters of the south. They had no provisions or water for such a long voyage. Maui thus decided to fish. His brothers refusing to help, he used his grandmother's lower jawbone as a hook which he smeared with blood he obtained by striking himself sharply on the nose. Maui then hooked a fish and, by means of a magic incantation, hauled it up through the seething waters to the surface. Te Ika a Maui, The Fish of Maui, the North Island of New Zealand, raised the canoe high into the air on the peak of Mount Hikurangi. The trickster left the fish in charge of his brothers while he returned to Hawaiki to get priests to divide his catch with the correct ritual. However, his impatient brothers cut up the fish without priestly assistance. The fish writhed and squirmed with the result that inequalities were produced that became mountains and valleys when rigor mortis set in. Some traditions state that the South Island, Te Waka o Maui, is the Canoe of Maui.

Such mastery of the sea was instrumental in the Polynesians' meeting with the Amerindians for yet another agricultural exploit: the acquisition of the sweet potato. Unique American element within an Austronesian culture which itself had evolved in Southeast Asia, turned Lapita on the Bismarck Archipelago, then Polynesian in Tuvalu-Tokelau-Samoa-Tonga, this precious tuber allowed the Pacific islanders to conquer altitude in Hawai'i and latitude in New Zealand. To account for its uncanny presence in the greatest of all oceans, we juxtaposed Ben Finney's reconstruction of the roads of the westerly winds which the Polynesians used for their eastern forays (2001) with Spate's mapping of the Spanish routes off Central and South America (1979). Spate's slight inexactitude concerning the bearings of the Juan Fernandez Islands made us realize that the two itineraries meet in the vicinity of Easter Island (Dunis 2004-5-6). The New Zealand sweet potato achieved such an economic and cultural status that it went as far as to reshape the very creation myth.

Like their remote Austronesian cousins in Taiwan, the Maori of the 17th variant of the sweet potato myth had to kill a brother to use his skull as a fertility catalyst (Best 1976&1925:197-8, Dunis 1984:144-5&2005:92-4). The 10th variant (Best 1976&1925:105, Dunis 1984:137&2005:92) has it that Rongo-maui ascends to the heavens like the Paiwan man of the ceramic vessel securing millet seeds (Paiwan:63-82). Then Rongo-maui inserts the celestial seed tubers in his *ure*, penis, just as Demalasaaw does with the millet seeds in the Puyuma legend (Puyuma:68-75). Another possible Maori plant of Amerindian origin, the gourd (*Cucurbita lagenaria*), makes its seeds available in the entrails of spermwhales coming from Hawaiki (Taylor 1974&1855:378, Dunis 1984:26,128), echoing the millet seeds delivered by the whale in the Amis' version of the acquisition of grain (Cauquelin 2004:211). Both the Taiwanese Austronesians and the New Zealand Maori thus pass from the vertical axis of myth joining heaven and earth to the horizontal axis of history linking two sea-separated lands.

3c) The third story of our Polynesian triptych, 'The Canoe of Rata', is Tahitian (*Legends of Polynesia*, 1994, Dunis 1999): Enticed by the island he can see from his rock, Rata decided to build a canoe and thus set out along the river in search of a tree. He was looking for a ford when he heard shrieks and saw an egret struggling with a moray-eel at the foot of a pandanus. The bird cried for help but Rata refused to intervene despite its warnings: 'Should I die, your canoe will never be finished!' He went on, singled out a big tree, felled it, started to hollow it out, went home at night. The fight was still going on in the morning when he forded the river. The egret cried again for help but Rata would not pay attention. He was taken aback at the working site, though: his tree was intact! His surprise over, Rata chose an even better tree, cut it and hewed until dusk. When he forded the river on the third morning, the fight was still going and the spent egret stared at him silently. Rata moved on. The second tree was back in place too! Rata suddenly remembered the egret's words and dashed down along the river, hoping it wasn't too late to help the bird. He arrived just in time to chop off the head of the moray-eel with his adze. Rata tended the injured egret and then went up the valley where a splendid tree was waiting for him. He again worked until night. Stepping out of his hut in the morning, he was astounded to see a beautiful canoe floating in the lagoon. Perched atop the mast, the egret was proffering the finished product it had been polishing at night with the other birds (1994:43-50). The homesick Austronesian egret has thus turned into a Polynesian shipbuilder who masters the sea dangers (the moray-eel) to sail for ever eastwards.

The presence of the egret in both Taiwanese and Tahitian myth is yet another indicator to look beyond Australasia and Polynesia in the great reach for the American shores. Is the Pacific reef-egret (*Egretta sacra*) a denizen of Australasia and Polynesia only? Present throughout the Southwest Pacific (Mayr 1978) under the name of reef heron (*Demigretta sacra*), it is conspicuously absent from Hawai'i (Pratt 1987:88, Shallenberger 1981). This almost pan-Pacific denizen can appear either in white or dark garb (Itoh 1991:383: «the distribution of the white morph coincides with the presence of coral reefs, from which white beaches are derived. Only the black morph was seen outside this range»). Our bird belongs to Australasia and Polynesia in Falla (1979:74), Pratt (1987:88), Thibault (1975:52-57), *Manu* (1993:30-31), the very thorough *Reader's Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds* (1998:103), [www.nzbirds.com](http://www.nzbirds.com), [www.birdforum.net](http://www.birdforum.net), Waterbird Population Estimates:3rd Edition, Itoh (1991:383-9). Other sources acknowledge its absence from the Americas: Clements and Shany (2001:15-6), Couve and Vidal (2003:424-9,610), Rosso and Alvarez (2003), *National Geographic Society* (1983). Jaramillo (2003:66) brands it a mere Easter Island vagrant and Schlatter (1988:277) an Easter Island visitor, which in itself substantiates its flying capacities. The Rukai snake's bride turned into a gallant Tahitian shipbuilder does in fact go beyond Easter Island. The reef-egret has made it all the way across the watery third of the globe. It can be seen in Arica too, the very area where Chile and Peru meet on the American coast, yet another justification for our map of the intersecting Polynesian and Amerindian sea routes (Dunis 2004-5-6). Its name there: *garza de los arrecifes*.

In the second of our four collective books on the Pacific (Dunis 1999:127-169), we studied the variants of the extant legends of French Polynesia and found that they formed a closed set whose purpose consisted in maintaining and reinforcing kinship and seafaring ties between the five distant archipelagos of the Society, the Tuamotus, the Marquesas, the Gambiers and the Australs. Ideal safety net from which to rebound when venturing up north (Hawai'i), eastwards (Rapa Nui) and southwest outside the tropical zone (New Zealand). That very same study prompted us to focus on and re-examine the extant legends of the Taiwanese Aborigines. The legend of the Austral islands of Raivavae, Rapa, Tubuai, Rurutu and

Rimatara we had collected in 1984 (ibid.139-40) is remarkable for its characterization of the reef egret in the terms just studied as an eastward pointer.

We have thus come full circle with the reef egret. We have re-established the link between the Asian and American coasts of the Pacific ocean. We have closed the loop, a loop we could wind around the handle of the *patu*, a weapon to be found in Taiwan (Ling 1960 & National Museum of Prehistory), New Zealand ('the fish breaker') and South America (Ramirez 2004). Shaped as a miniature whale, this flat weapon is the very illustration of our giant Pacific ford from one island to another from China to America. In the final analysis, Maui the trickster stands as the very incarnation of Polynesian mobility. Austronesians, Lapita and Polynesians moved east with the rain zone. The latter, «normally situated in the western equatorial Pacific, moves east into the central Pacific during an El Nino (Couper-Johnston 2001:237).» Once the main archipelagos were settled, each new island looming out of the unknown must have indeed been perceived as a royal treat: a whale, for «on some Pacific islands, the disappearance of fish went hand in hand with drought (ibid.238).» The common skipjack (*Katsuwonus pelamis*) itself, plying back and forth with ENSO, pointed the zigzagging direction for all future explorations. Does not «the tuna's tendency to migrate thousands of kilometres in pursuit of its preferred food supply (ibid.239)» force the fish to shadow the huge swarms of plankton which thrive on the edge of the warm pools (ibid.)?

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Magical Maui offers a lifetime's worth of unique experiences, unparalleled scenery, and moments that make it the must-visit Hawaiian island. Conde Nast Traveler's number one choice in their 20 Best Beaches in the World last year was Maui's black volcanic sand Honokalani Beach at Wai'anapanapa State Park, a must-stop option on the Road to Hana. Joe West/Shutterstock. Enjoy three amazing islands. Here's another highlight that makes Maui unique: It's actually comprised of three islands, not one. Romantic Lanai and uncrowded Molokai are also part of Maui, which is officially known as Maui Nui. From Maui island, you can sail to Lanai on a scenic 45-minute Expeditions ferry or hop a 25-minute view-filled flight to Molokai. Maui, volcanic island, Maui county, Hawaii, U.S. It is separated from Molokai (northwest) by the Pailolo Channel, from Hawaii (southeast) by the Alenuihaha Channel, and from the small islands of Lanai and Kahoolawe (both to the west) by the Auau and Alalakeiki channels, respectively. With an area of 1,917 square miles, Maui takes its name from a Polynesian demigod. It was created by two volcanoes, Puu Kukui and Haleakala, which constitute east and west peninsulas connected by a 7-mile- (11-km-) wide valleylike isthmus that has earned Maui the nickname of the "valley isle." The island was first settled by Polynesians c. ad 700. A 14th-century Hawaiian chief, Piilani, built the island's largest stone temple, Piilanihale Heiau (still extant), and an extensive road system.