

Chapter 1. Introduction

James J. Fox

This is the third in a series of volumes produced in the Department of Anthropology from the work of the Comparative Austronesian Project.¹ The first of these volumes examined the comparative design of Austronesian houses and related these spatial forms to the social and ritual practices of their resident groups. The second volume provided a general survey of the Austronesians focusing on their common origins and historical transformations. This third volume explores indigenous Austronesian ideas of origin, ancestry and alliance and considers the comparative significance of these ideas in social practice. As a collection, these papers offer a variety of perspectives across a range of societies of the Austronesian-speaking world from insular Southeast Asia to the islands of the Pacific.

The Comparative Austronesian Project

The Comparative Austronesian Project was originally prompted by a recognition that on virtually every area of the Austronesian-speaking world, there had been a considerable increase in significant research. As a consequence of the development of this research, there had also occurred a “localization” of interests and a proliferation of different modes of analysis to deal with what, from a comparative perspective, could reasonably be considered as similar questions.

Many regional specialists seemed no longer aware of important work being done by other Austronesian specialists. Thus researchers in Indonesia, in the Philippines, in Melanesia, in Micronesia and the Pacific islands had each developed their own research concerns. Many of these research concerns reflected the interests of previous research that had been based on established traditions of inquiry within each area. Moreover, for a large area such as Indonesia, there was even greater “localization” of interests with specialization tending to foster a focus on specific islands or subregions, with a deep bifurcation between the eastern and western halves of the archipelago.

Yet, at the same time, a great deal of comparative linguistic research had clarified internal relationships within the Austronesian language family and archaeologists had begun to trace the Austronesian expansion along lines indicated by the linguistic evidence. The possibilities for comparative research within an Austronesian framework had never been better.

It was the intention, therefore, of the Comparative Austronesian Project to bring together researchers from different parts of the Austronesian-speaking world to initiate discussions on comparative issues. The Project was conceived

of as broadly interdisciplinary. It endeavoured to involve archaeologists, linguists, anthropologists and historians in this common discussion of related comparative concerns. For a period from 1989 to 1991, the Comparative Austronesian Project was given formal project status within the then Research School of Pacific Studies. Since this period and as a result of the Project, comparative Austronesian studies have been recognized as a continuing focus of research within the renamed Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies.

Origins, Ancestry and Alliance

The papers in this volume were originally presented in a marathon six-day conference (25–30 January 1990) on issues of “Hierarchy, Ancestry and Alliance” held in Canberra and the University’s property at Kioloa on the south coast of Australia, offering participants a fine view of the Pacific Ocean for the concluding sessions of the conference. The conference produced a total of twenty-nine papers. From these papers, one set dealing specifically with ideas of hierarchy was selected to form the volume, *Transformations of Hierarchy*, edited by Margaret Jolly and Mark S. Mosko (1994). A second set of papers also concerned with hierarchy and precedence but equally concerned with ideas of origins, ancestry and alliance was selected to form this present volume. A majority of the papers in this volume are based on presentations at the conference but they have been revised, rewritten and, in several cases, substantially expanded as this volume has proceeded toward publication.

A feature of this second set of papers is its coverage of a diverse range of Austronesian societies ranging from Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines to Micronesia and central Polynesia. Although each paper presents a specific case or cases, the volume, as a whole, has been framed to highlight possibilities of comparison among societies that might otherwise be considered within separate different regional settings. Discussion of issues of hierarchy — rank, stratification and status — as well as issues of equality figure prominently in all of the papers. A principal concern is to examine how hierarchy and equality are created, imagined and maintained by reference to ideas of origin and ancestry as a “founding” ideology in Austronesian societies.

To explore these ideas also requires attention to history. Indeed an historical perspective is essential to the comparative effort. The expression of fundamental conceptions that constitute the basis by which these societies are defined as Austronesian is made evident in their history.

The Austronesian Language Context

Comparisons among the Austronesian-speaking peoples have a long history (see Jolly and Mosko 1994:1–18; Bellwood, Fox and Tryon 1995:1–16). By definition, all such “Austronesian” comparisons must, either implicitly or explicitly, be carried out in reference to some understanding of the Austronesian language

family. Linguistic relations among Austronesian languages point to relations of historical derivation, often of a time depth that provides a perspective for comparison. It is, for example, of comparative significance to recognize that although Palau (or *Belau*) is located in Micronesia, the language of its population is classified as a Western Malayo-Polynesian language. Many of the fundamental features of *Belau* culture may thus bear a closer resemblance to cultures far to the west than to those of many of their own nearer neighbours (see Fox 1992, 1995a:42-45).

There are by present reckoning roughly 1200 Austronesian languages, of which all but about 14 form part of the Malayo-Polynesian subgroup (see Ross 1995; Tryon 1995). In recent years, as historical linguistic research has developed, our understanding of linguistic relationships within this large family has been vastly enhanced. In the process, earlier suppositions about higher order relationships among these languages have been re-examined and, in some cases, called into question. As a result, there are many issues of linguistic classification that are currently the subject of considerable debate (see Ross 1995 for an extensive examination of a variety of current issues in Austronesian linguistics).

Present uncertainties have much to do with the nature of the Austronesian expansion and the consequences of constructing the Austronesian family tree to represent this expansion (Ross 1995:45-55). The schematic representation of the diversification of Austronesian languages has generally relied upon a “rightsided” branching to denote a group of speakers that has separated itself and migrated from another settled population. While this migration may constitute a clear separation from a parent language, it gives no indication of the status of the language or dialects of the “stay-at-home” population. If the separating language were part of a dialect chain, then the historical break produced by the migrating group may be easier to identify as a distinctive linguistic occurrence than the differentiation that may occur among localized communities whose dialects slowly diverge, in diverse ways, over a long period of time.

Thus, for example, in terms of the primary separation that occurred within the Austronesian family, it is reasonable to inquire whether the various Austronesian languages of Taiwan — such as Atayal, Rukai and Paiwan — were part of one or more Formosan dialect linkages (Ross 1995:45-49). Similarly but for even more complex reasons, as both Blust (1985) and Ross (1995:72) have noted, the languages assigned to Western Malayo-Polynesian may not all form a single subgroup. And if this is true of the Western Malayo-Polynesian languages, the unity of so-called Central Malayo-Polynesian subgroups is even more questionable.

In a situation where so much historical linguistic research is underway, it is useful to continue to draw provisional schematic representations of the

Austronesian language family as Tryon has done for the *Comparative Austronesian Dictionary* (1995:22-28) and at the same time to draw up lists of Austronesian language groupings within provisional subgroups for further consideration as Ross has done in his sequel commentary on Tryon's classification (1995). These different perspectives provide both a specific and a general structure that can (and will) be subjected to modification as research progresses.

The papers in this volume may be taken to present a broad cross-section of Austronesian societies whose separation can be interpreted to represent a dispersal over a period of some 3000 to 4000 years. The arrangement of papers in the volume is explicitly intended to achieve a rough balance in coverage across the Austronesian- (or more accurately, the Malayo-Polynesian-) speaking world and at the same time to highlight similarities (and differences) among larger linguistic subgroups.

In terms of the present provisional classification of Austronesian languages, the societies discussed in this volume belong to three large subgroupings: Western, Central and Eastern Malayo-Polynesian, which also represent a broad regional distribution of these languages. The Iban, the Mandaya, the Makassarese and both the Tausug and the Sama-Bajau are groups whose languages would be classified as Western Malayo-Polynesian. Similarly the various related languages of the Timor area, the languages of Sikka and Tana 'Ai, that of Palu'é, Buru and that of the Mayawo of Damer would all be classified within Central Malayo-Polynesian, even though the differences among these languages is considerable. Finally Rarotongan in the Cook Islands, the language of Satawal in the Caroline Islands and Tongan all belong to Eastern Malayo-Polynesian. In terms of Ross's classification (1995:74-94), this range of languages includes at least four distinct language groups in both the Western and Central Malayo-Polynesian subgroups and at least two in Eastern-Malayo-Polynesian. The extent to which similarities are discernible across this range of societies may be indicative of the sharing of fundamental cultural conceptions that constitute some of the epistemic ideas of the Austronesians.

The Discourse on Origins Among the Austronesians

One of the perennial preoccupations in Austronesian studies has been with tracing the origins of the Austronesians. Archaeologists, linguists and historians have all been concerned with this task. A less prominent concern has been to examine indigenous ideas of origin and how they function within Austronesian societies.

Ideas of origin are themselves a matter of concern in most Austronesian societies and hence a suitable subject for investigation. However, such indigenous ideas of origin involve a complex array of notions. Conceptions of ancestry are invariably important but rarely is ancestry alone a sufficient and exclusive

criterion for defining origins. Recourse to notions of place is also critical in identifying persons and groups, and thus in tracing origins. Similarly, alliance, defined in the broad sense of relations of persons and groups to one another, is also an important element in defining origins. Together all of these notions imply an attitude to the past: that it is knowable and that such knowledge is of value, that what happened in the past has set a pattern for the present, and that it is essential to have access to the past in attempts to order the present. Origins may be conceived of as multiple and access to them may be provided by diverse means. Dreaming, contact with spirits, the recitation of formulaic wisdom, the witness of the elders, or the presentation of sacred objects as evidence of links to the past may each provide forms of access to the past.

Considered comparatively, ideas of origin may vary significantly among Austronesian populations but these ideas generally rely upon a combination of elements often phrased in terms of common metaphors based on recognizable cognate expressions. It is this discourse on origins that is distinctively Austronesian.

It is possible, in linguistic terms, to trace the use of cognate terms among different groups but much more is involved in this discourse. Frequently similar metaphors of origin persist even where the terms used in these metaphors are unrelated. Fictitious etymologies are also frequently devised and elaborated to support narrative claims about origin within this discourse. It is therefore not just a general concern with origins that is significant but a rich and complex discourse by which “origin structures” are created and disputed that is of primary interest. It is this discourse on origins and its relationship to social practice that is a focus of this volume.

Idioms in the Discourse on Origins

Austronesian discourse on origins is based both on a semantics of recognizable cognate terms and on a variety of similar metaphoric idioms. The combination of similar idioms and common metaphors, often bolstered by recourse to folk etymologies, is discernible in various papers in this volume.

Sather provides an excellent example of this usage in his discussion of the Iban understanding of the concept of *pun*. *Pun* means “source, basis, origin, or cause”. Quoting Freeman, he notes that its root meaning “is that of stem, as of a tree, from which development of any activity springs”. *Pun* may thus describe a person who initiates an action, such as a *pun bejelai*, who organizes and leads an expedition, but it may also apply to the founder of a family, *pun bilik*, the originator of a house, *pun rumah*, or the main line of a genealogy, *pun tusut*. These usages all imply a focus of reference, a point of initiation and a locus of continuity. As such they evoke an entire epistemology of origins. It is within

these terms that Sather is able to differentiate between equality and hierarchy in Iban social practice.

The term, *pun*, derives from proto-Malayo-Polynesian (PMP) **puqun*: “tree, trunk, base, source” and is one of a number of terms in Austronesian discourse on origins. The metaphoric linkage of “origin” and “cause” with the “base”, “trunk” or “(tap)-root” of a tree and the implied sense of growth that derives from this botanic idiom may also be applied to life in general and to social life in particular. Fox examines reflexes of **puqun* (*fun, pun, hun, un*) in six societies of the Timor area, taking this term for origin as a “marker” to distinguish “progenitor lines” in each society and to point to the social transformations these lines have undergone from one society to another. As an essay in regional comparison, the paper considers alternative possibilities for viewing groups in relation to their “origin structures”.

The occurrence of reflexes of **puqun* as a botanic origin category is common and wide-spread in both Western and Central Malayo-Polynesian languages (see Adelaar 1992:48; Fox 1980:14; Sugishima 1994:156) but it is by no means the only term that links origins to a base, trunk or root. Thus, in Madagascar, among different Malagasy-speaking populations, *fotora* (“trunk”) or *fototra* (“origin root”) as in the expression, *fotoran’razan’ay* (“root of our ancestors”) figures prominently in the identification of origins (see Feeley-Harnik 1991:132-137; Thomas 1994:9). The equivalent terms among the Karo Batak would be *benakayu*; among the Minangkabau, *pangkalan*; among the Javanese and Balinese, *wit* (*kawitan*); among the Tontemboan of Minahasa, *tu’ur* (see Graafland 1898,I:215; Schwarz 1908:553); or as in the case of Bislama, the pidgin of Vanuatu, where the term *stamba*, “root-place” (from English, stump) is used, this botanic term may derive from an outside source (Bonnemaison 1985:41).

It is possible also to identify reflexes of other origin categories that can be traced back to and reconstructed as proto-Malayo-Polynesian. Besides **puqun*, reflexes of **t-u(m)pu* (or **epu*), “ancestor, master, second generation relative”, and **tu(m)buq*, “growth”, figure prominently in metaphoric statements about origins (Fox 1995a:36). Together these reflexes interrelate the notions of origin as “trunk”, as “ancestor” and as “growth”. Such reflexes may be used in various combinations. The Kedang of Lembata, for example, combine a reflex of **epu* with a term for trunk, *puén*, to designate the affinal position of the mother’s brother (*epu puén*) (Barnes 1980:79). The neighbouring Lamaholot utilize a different combination to a similar end by combining the term *belaké*, “wife-giver”, with *pukén*, to identify the “stem or source wife-giver” (*belaké pukén*) while relying on *opu* as a reciprocal of *belaké* to designate wife-taking affines (Graham 1994:346-352). In the Pacific, reflexes of **tu(m)buq* and **t-u(m)pu* combine, in various forms, to create a semantics of origins. Writing on ideas about ancestors (*tipuna, tupuna*) among Maori, Ann Salmond has examined the

semantic use of such terms as *tupu*, “generative force with an individual growth, bud, shoot” and the related term, *puu*, which, in Maori, has come to mean “origin, cause, source, root of a tree or plant, heart, centre, main stock of a kin group” to argue that “plant growth and the growth of human beings are often held parallel in the semantic patterns of the Maori lexicon” (1991:344).

Lewis takes up this discussion of origin structures and examines the differences between progenitor and progenitrix lines in Sikka and Tana 'Ai. In these societies, the term for source or trunk is *pu'an/puang*. Similarly, Grimes considers the way in which people of the island of Buru “express ideas of origin and cause using metaphors based on the imagery of a living plant or tree”. The word for trunk and root in Buru is *lahin* and among the population of the island, all things grow, develop and are traced from root (*lahir*) to tips (*luken*).

Biersack examines the concept of origin in Tonga focusing in particular on the Tu'i Tonga as the *tefito*, or original “root” of society. Cognates of the word, *tefito*, also figure prominently in other Pacific island societies and are referred to in some of the classic ethnographies of the region. In his *Tikopia-English Dictionary* (1985:466–467), Firth reports that *tafito* means “base, basis, origin, reason, cause”. *Tafito* is the principal term used to identify social or ancestral origin and can also refer to a person who is a principal figure in any formal proceeding or a major participant in an exchange transaction. According to Firth, the notion of *tafito* that applies to ritual officiants takes its reference from the gods:

Each god was regarded as having his basis (*tafito*) in a special ritual officiant, who himself might have several titles (*rau*) by which he addresses the god in different contexts: by his temple in Uta; in his canoe yard; for curing illness. Like the botanical principle of postulating the origin of a species near where most of its varieties are found, the “owner” of a god often has more titles than other men do ... (Firth 1970:144).

Thus, in Tikopia as in Tonga, the notion of origin has direct relevance to a system of titles. It is also relevant to a sacred geography that identifies places where rituals are performed. From the term *tafito* are derived the word *tafitoanga* (“place of origin”) and *tafito-ranga* (“beginning”) (see Fox 1995a:45–47 for a further discussion of these and other terms in the epistemology of Tikopian ideas of origins).

Another critically important term for designating origins in many Polynesian societies is *tumu* (Hawaiian: *kumu*), which carries a similar configuration of botanic meanings. In Rarotongan, for example, *tumu* signifies “foundation, root, cause, origin, source, that which introduces, the reason or cause of anything; the trunk or the main part of anything from which something springs or is made, created or fashioned”. *Tumu* thus forms the base for a variety of other crucial

terms: *tumu-enua* (“chief” or “leader”), *tumu-karakia* (“principal priest”) or *tumu-emu* (“leading part of a recitative”) (Savage 1962:413).

Siikala, in his paper, refers to the tracing of origins among the Cook Islanders through path and genealogy as “expressions of the same process, the extension of the ancestral *tumu* in space and time”. In his monographic exposition of indigenous ideas of origin, ‘Akatokamanāva, Siikala (1991) has provided a much more extended examination of these notions of *tumu* and in particular of the Cook Islanders’ genealogical conceptions of the “origin of all things” from Atea and Papa-i-te-’itinga through their child, Te Tumu.

All these various distinctive botanic metaphors that combine notions of growth and succession, of derivation, division and differentiation are relied upon for heuristic purposes: to trace and distinguish features of social and religious life. Reliance on such botanical analogies is in no way unique to the Austronesians. In *Biological Metaphor and Cladistic Classification* (1987), Hoenigswald and Wiener have assembled a remarkable collection of essays that chart the use of botanical metaphors in the history of western sciences from the ancient Greeks to modern taxonomists who are concerned with the rigorous methodologies of what is referred to as “phylogenetic systematics” or “cladistics”. In this respect, it is evident that ancient Greek thinkers were as much concerned with the processes of change and the origin of things as are many Austronesians and that they relied on similar organismic analogies and on their own forms of folk etymologizing — Plato’s primordial words: *prōta onomata* — to intuit and articulate relationships (see Percival 1987). Austronesian concerns with origins and all the varied discourse on such origins may thus be viewed as particular articulation of a near universal orientation to the world.

A common effect of the variety of Austronesian botanic metaphors is to give physical representation to temporal processes. As is reiterated by contributors to this volume, these metaphors conflate temporal and spatial modes of comprehension. This relates to the analytical notion of precedence that is developed throughout this volume. As is implied by the term, precedence connotes a priority in time but also a priority of position, rank or status. This double aspect is crucial to an understanding of this notion.

During the course of the Comparative Austronesian Project, precedence was the subject of much discussion. There was a “working paper” on precedence (Fox 1990) which was eventually published in a somewhat revised form (Fox 1994), but more importantly there were a number of detailed ethnographies that developed ideas of precedence in specific Austronesian societies. The publication of Lewis’s *People of the Source* (1988) provided the first extended use of precedence in a study of an eastern Indonesian society. This was followed by a succession of other equally important theses that utilized ideas of precedence: McWilliam on the mountain Timorese (1989); Graham on Lewotala in east Flores

(1991); Vischer on the population of Palu'é of Flores (1992), Grimes on Buru (1990, 1993) and Reuter on Sumatra (1993).²

All of this work was as much directed to the practice of precedence as to the language of precedence. One concern was to distinguish precedence from hierarchy. Whereas it is theoretically possible to conceive of precedence as either coincident with or supportive of hierarchy, the focus of most of these initial studies of precedence was on the continuous positioning among groups and individuals, using a variety of mixed criteria, to argue for their place within society. The concern was more with competition and contention; the creation of orders of precedence that were subject to dispute and revision; and with the possibilities of a variety of outcomes locally in different groups within similar cultural contexts. It is these ideas of precedence as discourse and practice that are also considered in various papers in this volume.

Precedence as Discourse and Practice

Bellwood initiates the discussion of origins in relation to practice by pointing to the critical importance of what he calls a “founder-focused ideology”. This ideology includes reverence for ancestral founders, the naming of groups after them, and the ranking of positions in relation to such founders by which rights to land, labour and ritual prerogatives are derived. The general ascription of genealogically based rank in turn contributes to what Bellwood terms “founder rank enhancement” by which junior members of society are propelled to move out to establish their own senior founding position elsewhere, thus providing a strong motivation for exploration and expansion. This model, which Bellwood sketches, is concerned not just with single founders but “with successive and multiple founders” whose existence admits of a great variety of possibilities for tracing origins. History and its representation are crucial factors for this model and the complexity of cases to which it may apply.

Recognition of this complexity is Siikala’s starting point in his examination of chiefly relations among the island polities of ‘Atiu, Ma’uke and Mitiaro in the Southern Cook Islands. Although the origin narratives of the Cook Islanders recount relations among the islands based on an opposition between elder and younger, which also distinguishes between gods and humans, a whole set of other oppositions involving gender and marriage are brought into play to support internal claims to succession among the chiefly lines on the different islands. Because islands have separate gender identities, a claim to succession on one island is based on the reverse criterion of a claim to succession on another.

In his succinct analysis of the complexity of relations among founders, Siikala also presents another epistemic theme among Austronesians: the tracing of relations by means of the notion of “path”. In such a notion, genealogy and journey merge — as do place and person in many Austronesian societies — to

create both a spatial and a temporal narrative of social relationships. In this narrative, as Siikala notes, “precedence is determined in a recursive way, creating an overall hierarchy”.

In his paper, Sudo continues the consideration of origins in an examination of claims of origin among the matrilineal clans of Satawal in the Caroline Islands of Micronesia. The paper examines relationships among successive and multiple founders. Of Satawal’s eight clans, three are regarded as first settlers and are thereby accorded chiefly status; four clans are considered to be later arrivals and are thus accorded commoner status. One clan, although distinguished as the earliest of all the founder clans, is said to have surrendered its rights to the first of the chiefly clan. These relations encapsulate an order of precedence that acknowledges the transference of superiority from an autochthonous group to groups of incoming settlers. This same theme, in innumerable variants, is a recurrent founding myth for many Austronesian status groups (Sahlins 1985; Fox 1995b).

Sudo examines the complexities involved in these founder relations including claims to migrations from different directions, local and more distant tribute relations, an allocation of rights to the produce of land and sea. In Sudo’s discussion, as in Siikala’s, the idea of alternative modes of arguing rights, which are those of precedence, are indicated as a vital factor in determining local rank and status.

The papers by Sather and Yengoyan form a valuable pair in that both are concerned with societies that are characterized as egalitarian. As Sather shows, the value placed on autonomy and equality among the Iban do not preclude the pursuit of prestige and renown by enterprising individuals. As Freeman has phrased it: “... an individual had to be the source (*pun*) of his own achievement (1981:38). Nor do these values preclude the concrete representation of “an idealized world of precedence” in the alignment of visitors and hosts at ritual performances in a longhouse.

Yengoyan makes similar observations in regard to the Mandaya of Mindanao among whom precedence derives from a remembered past, while egalitarian values dominate domestic life. Formerly organized into territorial groups around a war leader known as *bagani*, the Mandaya required that each *bagani* who succeeded to authority had yet to prove himself by personal valour and daring achievements. The selection of all *bagani* was subject to popular scrutiny and physical confirmation. In contemporary communities where differences are minimized, the places associated with the origins and heroic actions of this *bagani* complex still provide “the emotional sustenance to what the Mandaya consider as their past”.

The subsequent four papers in the volume form a closely related set of essays that reflect shared understandings of notions of origin and their relation to the

practice of precedence in a number of different societies in eastern Indonesia. The papers by Fox and Lewis are broadly comparative and concerned with a reexamination of ideas of alliance. Instead of focusing on exchange *per se*, Fox considers the “giving of life” implied by the kinship categories and botanic metaphors of origin that identify groups that exchange either women or men in various societies of the Timor area and on Flores. Instead of the categories of wife-giver/wife-taker, he adopts the terms progenitor/progeny (or progenitrix/progeny in the case of maternal groups that exchange males) to approximate, at an analytic level, an understanding of local native categories. He then examines the differences among progenitor or progenitrix lines in the various different societies as possible transformations within recognizable bounds. Lewis takes up Fox’s final case, that of the Ata Tana ’Ai, and considers in detail the internal precedence of its progenitrix lines. From this vantage point, he then compares the two closely related societies of the Ata Tana ’Ai and of Sikka, particularly in relation to the delegation of authority. In his analysis, he emphasizes the dynamism and fluidity of relationships and their representations as ordered by precedence.

Following on from Lewis’s paper, Vischer examines contestation in the order of precedence for the performance of ceremonies that both link and differentiate domains on the island of Palu’é, located off the northern coast of Flores. From among 14 small domains, Vischer focuses on a group of three domains whose relationship to one another is likened to the “three hearth stones” that support a single pot. Each of these domains has its own perception of its relationship to the other two based on categorical oppositions to one another. Successful performance of the major water buffalo sacrifice in one has the potential to alter this perceived relationship. With this as background, Vischer examines the specific performance of the all-important water buffalo sacrifice by one domain, Ko’a, and assesses its outcome internally as well as between the domains. The paper is a model of an event-oriented analysis of shifting precedence.

Finally, in this set of four papers, Grimes examines the remarkable configuration of origin structures on the island of Buru. Among the indigenous population of Buru, different houses or house circles (*hum lolin*) are comprised of several generations of related agnatic kin. Houses, in turn, make up a *noru*, which are the basic constituent units of Buru society. Unlike the cases discussed by Fox and Lewis, where precedence is applied both internally within house groups and also between allied “life-giving” groups, on Buru relations between the houses of a *noru* are structured on precedence based on temporal establishment. Relations between individuals within houses are structured on precedence based on relative age, but no precedence is recognized based upon marriage alliance, despite a discourse that conceives of the giving of women as the giving of life. Thus, what Grimes shows clearly is that similar forms of

discourse on origins do not necessarily translate into similar practices of precedence.

Origin Narratives and Historical Formations

Pannell's paper, which is also focused on a society in eastern Indonesia — the population of the village of Amaya on the island of Damer — examines the politics of precedence within the village structures of a modernizing bureaucratic administration. The focus in this paper, as Pannell phrases it, is on "the conjunction of local origin narratives with the logic and practices of the Indonesian state". Features discussed in other papers — the multiple origins of groups, their social categorization as indigenous versus immigrant groups, and the contestation of precedence — are also discussed in this paper but they are given new significance in the efforts of local officials to appropriate these traditions to support their authority. The paper is a salient reminder that such appropriations have been a continuing process among the Austronesians.

The three concluding papers in the volume take up these historical themes directly. Biersack's essay is an extended examination of the Tongan origin structure that has as its "root" the Tu'i Tonga, covering succession within this title system over a period of more than 150 years. Biersack distinguishes between two ranking schemes and carefully analyses the way in which rivals strove to gain precedence resulting in the eventual ascendancy of juniors over seniors. As another appropriate historical case, Bulbeck presents a meticulous analysis of the politics of marriage in the Makassar kingdom of Gowa during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and of the political manoeuvring based on marriage that ultimately determined succession to positions within the interrelated title systems of Gowa and Tallok. The two cases can be usefully compared since sociologically they both involve processes of apical demotion combined with competition for succession by agnatic legitimation that remains open to alternative forms of succession through cognatic relationships.

Where historical records are available, it is evident that Austronesian origin structures are by no means timeless nor are they as transparent as their justifying narratives purport to claim. The final paper in the volume makes this abundantly clear in its analysis of another area of status complexity within the Austronesian world, that of the Sulu Archipelago. Frake compares the perceptions and pretensions of the Tausug of Jolo Island and of the Subanum of the mountains of Zamboanga with those of various Samalan-speakers, some of whom have distinguished themselves, generally by their reputations for banditry or piracy or by being land-based cultivators, as not part of the general boat-dwelling Sama population. In this complex mix of differently identified ethnic groups, the Tausug claim pre-eminence as the original inhabitants of Jolo Island who have attracted the Sama population as immigrants. Yet linguistically, Tausug appears to be the intrusive group whose language is most closely related to the languages

of the central Philippines whereas the Samalan language would appear to have greater antiquity within the Sulu Archipelago. The case makes a valuable conclusion by pointing, once again, to the need to differentiate between the study of indigenous ideas of origin and how they are used in the structuring of Austronesian societies and the study of Austronesian origins that are gradually being pieced together through historical and linguistic research. Both have a part to play in our understanding of the Austronesians.

Bibliography

Adelaar, K. Alexander

1992 *Proto-Malayic: the reconstruction of its phonology and parts of its lexicon and morphology*. Pacific Linguistics Series C-119. Canberra: Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University.

Barnes, Robert H.

1980 Concordance, structure, and variation: Considerations of alliance in Ke-dang. In J.J. Fox (ed.) *The flow of life: essays on Eastern Indonesia*, pp.68-97. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bellwood, Peter, James J. Fox and Darrell T. Tryon (eds)

1995 *The Austronesians: historical and comparative perspectives*. Canberra: Department of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies.

Blust, Robert A.

1985 The Austronesian homeland: a linguistic perspective. *Asian Perspectives* 26:45-67.

Bonnemaison, Joël

1985 The tree and the canoe: roots and mobility in Vanuatu society. In *Mobility and Identity in the Island Pacific, Special Issue of Pacific Viewpoint* 26(1):30-62.

Feeley-Harnik, Gillian

1991 Finding memories in Madagascar. In S. Küchler and W. Melion (eds) *Images of memory: on remembering and representation*, pp.121-140. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Firth, Raymond

1970 Spirit patterns and the social structure. In R. Firth, *Rank and religion in Tikopia*, pp.128-166. London: George Allen and Unwin.

1985 *Tikopia-English dictionary*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.

Fox, James J.

- 1980 Models and metaphors: comparative research in Eastern Indonesia. In J.J. Fox (ed.) *The flow of life: essays on Eastern Indonesia*, pp.327-333. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 1990 Hierarchy and precedence. Working Paper No. 3. Comparative Austronesian Project, Department of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific Studies, Canberra.
- 1992 Origin and order in a Micronesian society: a comparative assessment of two books on Palau. *Canberra Anthropology* 15(1):75-86.
- 1994 Reflections on "Hierarchy" and "Precedence". In M. Jolly and M. Mosko (eds) *Special Issue of History and Anthropology. Transformations of hierarchy: structure, history and horizon in the Austronesian world*, 7(1-4):87-108. Chur and Reading: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- 1995a Origin structures and systems of precedence in the comparative study of Austronesian societies. In P. J. K. Li, Cheng-hwa Tsang, Ying-kuei Huang, Dah-an Ho and Chiu-yu Tseng (eds) *Austronesian studies relating to Taiwan*, pp.27-57. Symposium Series of the Institute of History & Philology: Academia Sinica 3. Taipei.
- 1995b Installing the "outsider" inside: an exploration of an Austronesian culture theme and its social significance. Unpublished paper. First Conference for the European Association for South-East Asian Studies. Leiden 29 June - 1 July, 1995.

Freeman, Derek

- 1981 *Some reflections on the nature of Iban society*. An Occasional Paper, Department of Anthropology. Canberra: Research School of Pacific Studies.

Graafland, N.

- 1898 *De Minahassa: Haar verleden en haar tegenwoordige toestand*. Haarlem: Bohn.

Graham, Penelope

- 1991 To follow the blood: the path of life in a domain of eastern Flores, Indonesia. Unpublished PhD thesis. Canberra: The Australian National University.
- 1994 Alliance against hierarchy: affinal distinctions and sovereign rights in eastern Flores, Indonesia. In M. Jolly and M.S. Mosko (eds) *Transformations of hierarchy: structure, history and horizon in the Austronesian world, Special Issue of History and Anthropology* 7(1-4):339-362. Chur and Reading: Harwood Academic Publishers.

Grimes, Barbara

- 1990 The return of the bride: affiliation and alliance on Buru. Unpublished MA thesis. Canberra: The Australian National University.
- 1993 The pursuit of prosperity and blessing: social life and symbolic action on Buru Island, Eastern Indonesia. Unpublished PhD thesis. Canberra: The Australian National University.
- Hoenigswald, Henry M. and Linda F. Wiener
- 1987 *Biological metaphor and cladistic classification: an interdisciplinary perspective*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Jolly, Margaret and Mark S. Mosko (eds)
- 1994 *Transformations of hierarchy: structure, history and horizon in the Austronesian world. History and Anthropology*. Vol. 7. Chur and Reading: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Lewis, E. Douglas
- 1988 People of the source: the social and ceremonial order of Tana Wai Brama on Flores. *Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 135. Dordrecht: Floris.
- McWilliam, Andrew
- 1989 Narrating the gate and the path: place and precedence in southwest Timor. Unpublished PhD thesis. Canberra: The Australian National University.
- Percival, W. Keith
- 1987 Biological analogy in the study of language before the advent of comparative grammar. In H.M. Hoenigswald and L.F. Wiener (eds) *Biological metaphor and cladistic classification: an interdisciplinary perspective*, pp.3-37. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Reuter, Thomas
- 1993 Precedence in Sumatra: an analysis of the construction of status in affinal relations and origin groups. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 148:489-520.
- 1996 Custodians of the sacred mountains: the ritual domains of highland Bali. Unpublished PhD thesis. Canberra: The Australian National University.
- Ross, Malcolm D.
- 1995 Some current issues in Austronesian linguistics. In D. Tryon (ed.) *Comparative Austronesian dictionary: an introduction to Austronesian studies*, pp.45-120. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Sahlins, Marshall

1985 The stranger-king; or, Dumézil among the Fijians. In *Islands of history*, pp.73-103. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Salmond, Ann

1991 Tipuna-ancestors: aspects of Maori cognatic descent. In Andrew Pawley (ed.) *Man and a half: essays in Pacific anthropology and ethnobotany in honour of Ralph Bulmer*, pp.343-356. Auckland: The Polynesian Society.

Savage, Stephen

1962 *A dictionary of the Maori language of Rarotonga*. Wellington: The Department of Island Territories.

Schwarz, J.A.T.

1908 *Tontemboansch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek*. Leiden: Brill.

Siikala, Jukka

1991 *'Akatokamanāva: myth, history and society in the Southern Cook Islands*. Auckland: The Polynesian Society in association with The Finnish Anthropological Society.

Sugishima, Takashi

1994 Double descent, alliance, and botanical metaphors among the Lionese of central Flores. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Lande- en Volkenkunde* 150:146-170.

Thomas, Philip

1994 The water that blesses, the river that flows: origins, roots, and attachment to place among the Temanambondro of southeast Madagascar. Unpublished MS.

Tryon, Darrell T.

1995 The Austronesian languages. In D. Tryon (ed) *Comparative Austronesian dictionary: an introduction to Austronesian studies*, pp.5-44. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Vischer, Michael

1992 Children of the black patola stone: origin structures in a domain on Palu'é Island, Eastern Indonesia. Unpublished PhD thesis. Canberra: The Australian National University.

Notes

¹ This trilogy of volumes represents only part of a larger collection of studies produced by the Comparative Austronesian Project. These include:

Spriggs, Matthew (ed.)

Lapita design, form and composition. Proceedings of the Lapita Design Workshop. Canberra: Department of Prehistory, Research School of Pacific Studies (1990).

Pawley, Andrew and Malcolm Ross (eds)

Austronesian terminologies: continuity and change. Pacific Linguistics Series C No. 127. Canberra: Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University (1994).

Tryon, Darrell (ed.)

Comparative Austronesian dictionary. 4 vols. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter (1994).

Jolly, Margaret and Mark S. Mosko (eds)

Transformations of hierarchy: structure, history and horizon in the Austronesian world. Special Issue of History and Anthropology. Chur and Reading: Harwood Academic Publishers (1994).

² Reuter was a vacation scholar in the Department of Anthropology while preparing his Honours thesis under Dr E.D. Lewis's direction at Melbourne. His thesis is summarized in his 1993 paper. He later joined the Department and wrote an ethnography of the Bali Aga (1996) which also examines origins and precedence among this mountain population.