

**WHY INDIGENOUS WISDOM MATTERS:
FINDING TURTLE ISLAND - A NARRATIVE**

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Indigenous wisdom enhances knowing and understanding of the earth and it is prudent to be guided by Indigenous wisdom in a time of ecological crisis. Through storytelling Indigenous wisdom offers messages of hope to the world in this struggle for harmony. There is an Ojibwa prophecy that states, "... look for a turtle-shaped island that is linked to the purification of the earth" (Benton-Banai, 1979). Easter Island (*Rapa Nui*), remotely located in the South Pacific, is a turtle-shaped island. This mysterious island's stone monuments and wooden tablets are a seal about to be opened by a meek child. This project is a fictional narrative of one child's journey of self-discovery. In *Finding Turtle Island*, this child, *Hotu-iti*, struggles to belong to a foreign island in 18th century Polynesia. The islanders are also struggling amidst a war to keep their ancient ways and protect their land. It takes the wisdom of a child hidden in a cave to lead the islanders to restoration. The story is filled with mysteries unraveled and epic adventures. This contextual narrative reflects transferable Indigenous values to help guide the renewal of the earth.

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And thanks to www.350.org for giving me hope. This narrative work began about a year ago, when the atmosphere contained 388 parts per million of carbon dioxide. Now that this work is completed in November of 2011, there are 390.31 ppm of CO₂ in the atmosphere (co2now.org). For the ecosystems on our planet to thrive a level of 350 ppm must be maintained. This project is dedicated to those who strive to return sustainability to our planet.

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Prologue

Does Indigenous wisdom truly matter? Yes. There is untold value in a human community that thrives with their natural environment by weaving each and every person's identity to the earth. This identity weaving happens as Indigenous elders lead the next generation of elders through sacred ceremonies filled with sacred stories and artifacts related to the local ecosystem. One such ceremony was called the *Tangata-manu*, Birdman contest, which once a year captivated everyone on Easter Island (*Rapa Nui*) in the South Pacific. The winning contestant held, not a prize of money or material wealth, but the first egg laid by the sooty tern. The egg was treasured as a representation of the life contained on the island for the entire year. Over the next year, the winning *Tangata-manu* lived in a sacred house overlooking the graves of the ancestors. There he would fast and pray, while everyone on the island would take a turn in feeding the Birdman in gratitude for his victory. The *Tangata-manu* ceremony impressed upon every islander a living metaphor of one, who by imitating a fledgling bird, was enlightened with a spiritual perception of life with an intimate sensitivity to the earth.

This Indigenous wisdom has the power to enable humanity to belong to this planet instead of destroying it. For example, in considering the ecological crisis, Indigenous wisdom presents messages of hope and strategy to escape a world falling apart and return to a land of harmony and sustainability. This wisdom is intended to inspire all humanity, since we are all Indigenous to Mother Earth. It is a natural and gentle voice constantly echoing through living witnesses and ancestral prophets who have sustained harmony with the land over many generations.

Overconsumption of natural resources is evident in today's world. Wangari Maathai of Kenya's Green Belt Movement writes: "And all the signs indicate that we

cannot provide this level of wealth and comfort *using our current means of production* without threatening the life systems upon which all wealth and civilization and other species depend” (Maathai, 2010, p. 113). Human habits of taking, without giving enough in return, drain ecosystems and threaten life on the entire planet.¹ It is remarkable that the Sioux prophesied this day would arrive and even offered a sign of hope for the listening ear:

There will come a time when the earth is sick and the animals and plants begin to die. Then the Indigenous Peoples will regain their spirit and gather people of all nations, colors and beliefs to join together in the fight to save the Earth. They will call this circle the Rainbow Warriors.

Adapted from a prophesy of the Native American Sioux
(Manataka American Indian Council, 2011)

The earth is sick. This is true. Animals and plants are dying and species are becoming extinct. However, hope is found in the resurgence of the Indigenous spirit, a spirit which draws together a circle of learners who are eager to apply Indigenous wisdom in this time of ecological crisis. One question remains, ‘Who are the Warriors?’

In *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore described how human beings have the technological means to restore the earth but lack the motivation (Gore, 2006). The Rainbow Warriors are a motivating force led by Indigenous elders. These warriors are inspired by the visions and dreams of these elders and familiar with their prophecies. For instance, the Ojibwa Seven-Fire prophecy states: “You are to look for a turtle-shaped island that is linked to the purification of the earth” (Benton-Banai, 1979).

¹ In *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore cites 928 peer reviews related to climate change from 1996 to 2006. All 928 articles agreed that global warming is occurring and it is caused by human activity (Gore, 2006).

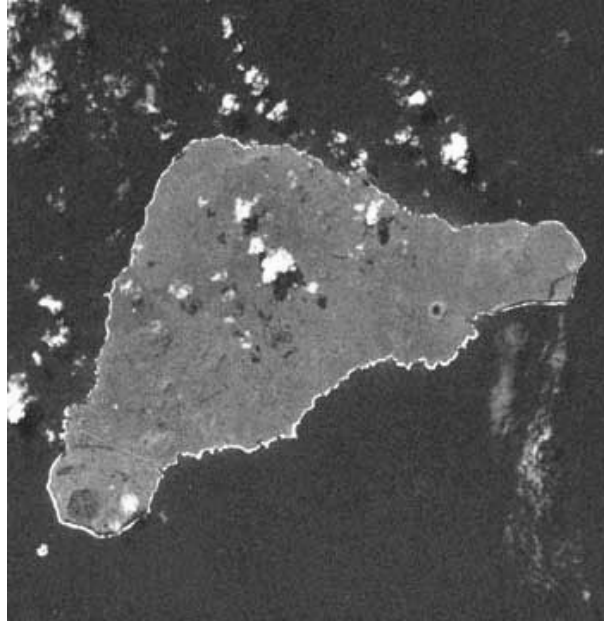


Figure 1: Easter Island (*Rapa Nui*). (NASA).

Rapa Nui, shaped like a turtle, is considered the most remote inhabited location on earth. It is positioned in the South Pacific, over 2000 km from its nearest Polynesian neighbor to the west and over 3500 km from Chile to the east. Currently, there are just over 5000 inhabitants residing on the island that is little more than 24 km across (McLaughlin, 2007). During the colonial slave raids and small-pox epidemic of the late 19th Century the original population was reduced to a mere 111 survivors. Remarkable mysteries are associated with this island, including over 800 giant statues (*moai*), a mysterious egg-hunt ritual (*Tangata-manu*), and a small number of tablets containing a lost Indigenous writing system (*Rongorongo*) (Chauvet, 1935; Métraux, 1940; van Tilburg, 1994).

If *Rapa Nui* is the turtle-shaped island the Ojibwa prophesied about, how is it instrumental in restoring the earth?

Rapa Nui has a history of intimate and painful merging of the stories of the Indigenous world-view and the Western world-view, since the time of first contact in

1722 (Robboveen, 1903; Routledge, 1917). The *Rapa Nui* tablets have intrigued scholars who believe the interpretation of the writing system contains wisdom messages for today's world. This project invites readers to consider one interpretation. Captured in a fictional narrative set in the 18th century, *Finding Turtle Island* is the story of a child, named *Hotu-iti*, who journeys in search of his own identity after being marooned on *Rapa Nui*. He finds his identity through the discovery of the sacred mysteries of *Rapa Nui* tablets. In the decipherment of the chants and stories found on the tablets of *Rapa Nui*, *Hotu-iti* finds his way toward self-actualization² and, in turn, he offers a pathway for others.

Why is *Hotu-iti's* story to decipher these tablets important? His journey teaches humanity to listen to Indigenous voices. These voices guide people through times of crisis, even when it is a child leading the way. And children learn by stories. Stories teach how to hope, to wonder and to dream again of the mysteries of life. Indigenous stories, embedded with transferrable analogy and recognizable symbolism, communicate direction that enables people to pass through chaos and relearn values needed to live in harmony with Mother Earth.

Indigenous storytellers effectively use narrative to invite the learner into an active role in the community's circle rooted in the land, which ultimately connects the whole world together. It is the *Rapa Nui* tablets that provide the cover of their *harekura*³

² Abraham Maslow's investigation of the Blackfoot in 1938 led him to develop Maslow's theory on the hierarchy of human needs, from food and shelter to self-actualization. Remarkably, Maslow perceived that "about eighty to ninety percent" of the Blackfoot population were self-actualized, compared to "five to ten percent" of people in Maslow's own society of metropolitan America (Hoffman, 1999, p. 123). This narrative is an attempt to present the values associated with self-actualization from an Indigenous perspective to readers from any cultural background. These values particularly involve the weaving of identity into the land.

³ *Harekura (wharekura)*: wisdom schools of the Pacific where *tohunga* wisdom keepers teach the sacred rites of their clans. There are sacred initiation and graduation rites for students of the *harekuras*. In order

wisdom school (Tregear, 1891). All wisdom schools have a sacred *tapu* or restriction that determines who is able to enter the *harekura* and hear the stories of the wisdom keepers. These sacred Indigenous tablets are *tapu*, or a mystery to everyone in the world. Therefore, the raising of the sacred restriction on these tablets draws all people under the same Indigenous story for all to become students of the wisdom keepers.

With the meekness and innocence of a child, *Hotu-iti* will ask the reader:

*Come and sit with me at the house of prayer on the hillside of our sacred volcano, Rano Raraku. Come and see the majestic view down through the gravesite of my ancestors, across the sands of Tonga-riki and over an ocean of endless whitecaps. Feel the same breeze I feel running across my face, cool when it gusts, but when it blows gently it warms the skin. It is here I will share with you a story of the ancestors from this land. They are my grandparents and yours, since we are all Indigenous to Mother Earth. Therefore, you are my brother, my sister, and I have no view to impose, only an invitation into the story of finding Turtle Island.*⁴

to participate in each rite, a sacred *tapu* or covering must be lifted in order for the student to enter under the learning and stories of the wisdom school. Presented in the document is the possibility that the decipherment of the Easter Island tablets raises a *tapu* that covers all of humanity, since the tablet translations are currently unknown to all people. This decipherment is the way of the *wananga* (*ancestral tohunga*) to draw humanity under a unified Indigenous wisdom school, together with rites that weave human identity into the land.

⁴ Italicized emphasis added here and throughout the document where chants are sung.

Glossary of Terms

Characters

Hotu-iti: Main Character of this fictional narrative, *Finding Turtle Island*. He lives on an island at war. His clan leaves the island for refuge elsewhere. They are attacked by a European slave galleon. *Hotu-iti* is the only one left on the double-hull canoe pillaged and left to drift. *Hotu-iti* drifts to Easter Island. This is another island at war, over a lineage quarrel. He lives in a cave for several years to avoid being killed due to the islanders' fear of a foreigner's 'contaminated' lineage. *Hotu-iti* ventures out of the cave in the secret of darkness where he listens to clan chants and discovers common elements of all the island lineages. How will *Hotu-iti* provide this crucial knowledge that could end the war?

Rangi-nui: *Hotu-iti*'s birth father and a great fisherman.

Kore: *Hotu-iti*'s birth mother.

Rapa: Beloved uncle of *Hotu-iti*.

Matakerepo: Biological grandmother.

Tawhaki: Chief of *Hotu-iti*'s birth clan.

Turi: A clan Elder.

Kui: Elder woman and wayfinder of *Hotu-iti*'s birth clan.

Hotu-nui: Chief of the *Miru* clan of the *Tuu* tribe of the island of *Te Pito te Henua*, *Rapa Nui* or Easter Island. Foster father of *Maui* who is pursuing his life to protect and keep pure his own lineage.

Maui: Son of *Hotu-nui*. *Maui* endears *Hotu-iti*. *Hotu-iti* takes to him right away due to the twin-like resemblance of *Maui* to *Rapa*. The twin motif is very strong in ancient lore, possibly from the use of Venus in its dual roles as Morning Star and Evening Star to represent the battle of the soul to gain enlightenment.

Hina-nui: Wife of *Hotu-nui* who dies in a war induced house burning, but saves a sacred tablet of *Rongorongo*.

Hina-iti: Princess and daughter of *Hotu-nui* and *Hina-nui*.

Iwi: Grandmother of *Hina-iti* and *Maui* and keeper of the sacred feminine version of chants the grandmothers secretly kept to protect the ancient oral traditions.

Hanga and *Honga*: Twins of the *Miru* clan who are near giants in stature.

Rupe: *Hotu-nui*'s brother who died in cave during a rite of passage to manhood.

Tangaroa-ika: The *tohunga* priest of the *Miru* tribe with chief *Hotu-nui*.

Mata-nui: Chief of the *Koro-orongo* clan of the *Hotu-iti* tribe and archenemy of *Hotu-nui*.

Turi: Eldest son of *Mata-nui* and secret love of *Hina-iti*, eldest child of *Hotu-nui*.

Tura and *Poia*: Youngest children (son and daughter) of *Mata-nui* who led the hunt for *Hotu-iti* in the cave at *Miru*.

Rega-varevare: Actually *tohunga* who prophesied the European's arrival.

Punga-varevare: Plausible Polynesian sorcerer, fallen from the true ways of a *tohunga*.

Deities

Makemake: Supreme Creator.

Tane/Tavake/Tawhaki: *Tane* is bird deity represented by the sun. *Tavake* is the sooty tern of the island's egg hunt with the loudest call of all *Rapa Nui* bird species. Major deity of Easter Island, perhaps akin to *Makemake* and/or *Tane*. The *Rapa Nui* word *tavake* has syllables parallel to the broader Polynesian, *Tawhaki*. *Tawhaki* is the deity who climbed the cord to *Rehua*, the tenth level of *Rangi*. *Rangi* means the sky or heaven.

Tuu/Maru: Deity of war.

Rongo/Orongo: Deity of wisdom, the voice of *Tane*. The two deities have been placed together as twins in Polynesian prayers calling for the assistance of *Rongo ma Tane* (*Rongo* and *Tane*). Perhaps these twin deities are represented in the *Orongo* pictoglyph of twin birds joined at the wing. Given *Orongo* is the setting of the start of the *Tangata-manu* birdman ritual, the loud cry of the *tavake* bird might represent the *Orongo* cry of *Tane*.

Tuhinapo-Rapa: Deity of ocean migration with power oar.

Maui: The ultimate trickster deity who nooses the sun, steals the fire from the underworld and fishes up the islands.

Tiki: The first man. *Tikitawhito* literally the pillar of the little man or the dwarf pillar of the earth. Perhaps *Maui-potiki*, born into the top-knot on the head of his mother *Taranga*. That is, *tiki* is a Polynesian term for top-knot and the deified heroes may be one and the same legendary person.

Hina: Moon deity, who raises a lament for her children on Turtle Island.

Tangaroa: Deity of the ocean. He is sometimes the antagonist, sometimes the first-man deity.

Rata: Deified ancestor who hews down the sacred tree that restores itself every night.

The bird people restore the tree, but then concede in making a canoe for *Rata* to retrieve his father's bones from a distant island.

Nuku or *Uenuku*: The Polynesian Noah type character who survives the great flood, has a mystic home hidden under the Rainbow and also lives in the ground with his wife *Kui* in *Maori* lore.

Kui: Burrowed in the ground in *Maori* lore to survive a dominant migration to her territory.

Wheke: The giant octopus, also considered a deity of wisdom. *Wheke* may be akin to *Maui* in that they are underworld deities associated with the number 8. The eight legs of *Wheke* can 'feel' (*naunau/whawha*) all eight directions or every corner of the underworld – a sign of her great wisdom and understanding for those who sojourn there. *Maui* is called, *Maui* the eight-eyed, perhaps because he can see all of those sojourners in the 8 directions of the underworld, a sign of kinship to the dead. *Maui*'s legendary story of enlightenment occurs by stealing the underworld fire and noosing the sun.

Rangi and *Papa/henua*: Father Sky and Mother Earth, the parents of many of the deities.

Ikaroa: the Great Fish (lit. the long fish), which represents the Milky Way where the ancestors reside in *Rangi*.

Maui-mua or *Rupe*: The first ancestor, perhaps akin to *Hotu Matua*.

Hine-nui-te-po: Underworld deity and plausibly corresponds with *Hina*.

Locations

Orongo: Situated on the southwestern tip of Easter Island, high on the rim of the *Rano Kao* crater. *Orongo* is the site of the beginning and end of the *Tangata-manu* Birdman Egg Hunt.

Motu-nui: Island where the *tavake* birds lay their eggs in September spring when the *Tangata-manu* contestants retrieve the first egg.

Rano Raraku: Situated on the east central portion of Easter Island. *Rano Raraku* is the volcanic crater quarry where the *moai* stone statues were hewn and dragged all over the island.

Tuu: The tribal territory of the western half of Easter Island, with *Hotu-nui* as primary chief. The clans include: *Miru*: (literally meaning boat) *Hotu-nui*'s clan of ancient ariki or kings descended from the first ariki, *Hotu Matua*. Located on the far western and northwestern shores; *Haumoana*: *Tuu* clan on the southwest corner of the island, below *Orongo* village; *Ngatimo*: (literally meaning the breath of the priests/shamans/wisdom keepers) the clan located just east of *Hau-moana* on the other side of the volcano *Rano Kao*; *Marama*: (literally meaning light or moon) *Tuu* clan north of *Ngatimo* in central stone garden region; *Marama-ngaure*: (literally meaning light of lineage) *Tuu* clan east of *Marama* higher up the coast from *Ngatimo*.

Hotu-iti: The tribal territory of the eastern half of Easter Island. The clans of the *Hotu-iti* tribe include: *Tupahotu*: (literally meaning carrying first man) clan of *Hotu-iti* tribe, situated just east of *Tuu*'s *Marama-ngaure* clan and guardians of the *Rano Raraku* crater quarry and the graveyard beach to the south; *Hiti-uiru*: (literally meaning constant shafts of lightning) clan to the north of *Rano-Raraku*; *Koro-orongo*: (literally meaning void calling) clan to the far east on the *Poike* peninsula of Easter Island; *Poike*: far eastern peninsula of Easter Island.

Rehua: The tenth heaven of *Rangi*.

Key Terms

Turtle Island: Shape of Easter Island and related to the early name of *Te Pito te Henua*; *henua* is the Polynesian word for earth and is plausibly related to *honu*, the Polynesian word for tortoise or turtle.

Mana: Power.

Haka: Strength, as a line.

Rongorongo: Writing of the Easter Island tablets in the early language of *Rapa Nui*.

Tohunga: A wisdom keeper or priest who knows all the stories and incantations necessary to continue the sacred ceremonies and traditions of his clan or tribe.

Wananga: A spirit medium and deified ancestor who was a *tohunga* who knew all the chants.

Harekura: A plausible name for the school of *Rongorongo* students akin to the *Maori wharekura* or sacred school, (literally meaning house of red or house of the original flame of wisdom and enlightenment). Red was the required color of the earth in producing the first human beings.

Tapu: A sacred restriction lifted only for those who belong to the land and are prepared by sacred ceremony to pass under the temporarily lifted covering of the *tapu*.

Pure: A ceremony raising and lowering of *tapu* by using the appropriate rites and incantations.

Umu: An offering or payment for sacred incantations from the underworld to the people of the land.

Moai: The stone statues of Easter Island.

Ahu: Platform temples for the statues to line up on. Some are unfinished; others are used as grave sites.

Chapter 1 - Vision of a Birdman Prince

There was a woman named Shanawdithit who died in 1829. Her death marked the complete genocide of the Beothuk nation on present day New Foundland (Great Big Sea, 1999; Inglis, 1828). Her memory must be carved upon our hearts, lest we forget an entire nation's sacrifice. The original inhabitants of Easter Island nearly experienced the same fate (Métraux, 1957; Routledge, 1917). Their ancient Indigenous writing system deciphered for the first time in the novel 'Finding Turtle Island' (Dansereau, 2011), inspired this fictional narrative of a boy named Hotu-iti.¹

I am *Hotu-iti*, an orphan adopted among the princes of Easter Island, a land remote and far from my first home. Many nights I dream of flying off this island. I rise high enough to see many lands across the earth.² From the wisdom of the elders, I recall that life's journey may take us down a path that appears unreal. It is then that our dreams become our reality and help bring back harmony to our lives. I travel out to the moon and back to earth. I descend back down upon my tiny refuge and turtle-shaped island called, *Te Pito te Henua*, the Naval of the Earth.³ Toward this paradise isle, the stars of my ancestors fly with me and are swept like a broom by the rays of dawn. We float together

¹ Consider the narrative as a metaphor for our current ecological crisis. Using the italics at the beginning of each chapter is an attempt to assist in understanding this relationship between Indigenous history, mythology and our current relationship with the land. "We are part of nature. Ultimately nature will always be more powerful than us, despite all our knowledge, technology, and super-weapons. If the Earth's average temperature increases by two or three degrees centigrade more than the pre-industrial level, we will trigger a hostile climate breakdown" Dalai Lama (Stanley, Loy & Dorje, 2009).

² Dreams are highly regarded in Indigenous world-view (Soup, 2011). When life's journey takes us down a path that appears unreal, our dreams become our reality and they help bring back harmony to our lives.

³ *Te Pito te Henua*: The Naval of the Earth is the original name of Easter Island (*Rapa Nui*). *Henua*, meaning earth, is a play on the word, *Honu*, meaning turtle. Therefore, The Naval of the Turtle is a plausible mythic name used by the early ancestors who regarded their island as the source of life, Turtle Island (Churchill, 1912; Du Feu, 1996; Tregear, 1891). All Polynesian dialectic definitions are taken from Tregear unless the notes below state otherwise.

over the head of my motherland and sweep past the graves upon the sands of *Hanga-tuu-hata*⁴ where stand the greatest stone *moai* statues of the temple *Ahu Tonga-riki*.

We fly across from the shore to the volcano quarry, *Rano Raraku*. Here my people have hewn gravestone monuments for these ancestors to be honoured. These statue *moai* stand 15 to 30 feet tall to catch the rays of dawn. In many of our stories, the *moai* giants come to life and are the brothers of our trickster hero, named *Mau*⁵. The *moai* statues were born to life when carved in the volcano

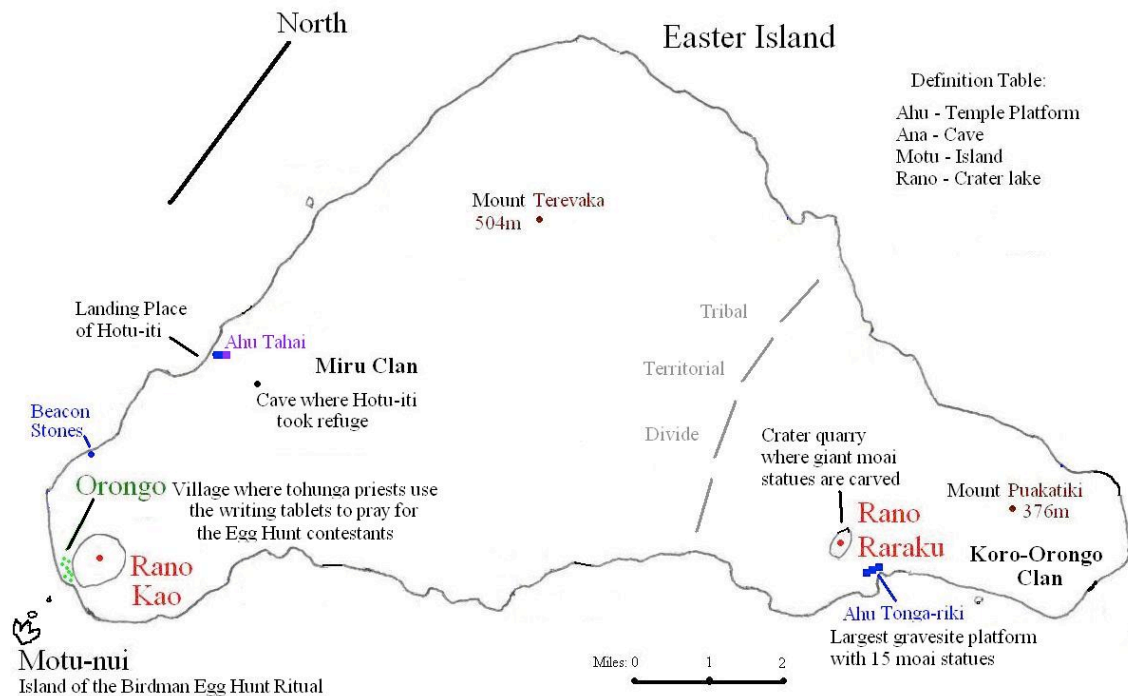


Figure 2: Map of Easter Island⁶ (Illustrated by Dansereau, 2011).

quarry. They travelled out of the volcano to complete their journey by being raised up in rows upon the *ahu* temple platforms.

⁴ In Polynesian funerary rites, the sands of the shore are placed over the torso of the deceased. *Tane Manawa*, the Heart of *Tane* is so big, it is the ocean itself and all the sands of the sea are his gizzard stones that wash us clean when we die (Monberg, 1966; Taylor, 1855; Tregear, 1891).

⁵ *Mau*: this Polynesian trickster deity's name literally means 'life' (Tregear, 1891).

⁶ All pictures are illustrated by Dansereau, 2011 excluding the *Rongorongo* script, which is from Wikipedia and belongs to the public trust. The Map includes locations of important sacred sites and clans in the narrative (Barthel, 1978; Chauvet, 1935; Pinart, 1877).

There is a story⁷ told of our trickster hero, named *Maui*. There was a family of giants who lived among the stars. A certain star father and star mother had a child named *Maui*. They were part of the three-finger clan of star giants. One day, the mother noticed a grey hair on the head of the father. She cried at the thought that her husband was aging, so the father asked his son *Maui* to go down to earth and find the magical egg containing the secret to life ever after.

His mother bid him well, “I can only offer you one thing for your journey. It is a clue about a great horn that will point the way to this magical egg.”⁸

His father had this to say, “You may find some of your brothers down on the earth. If you see any while searching for the egg, bring them back with you to the stars of heaven. But only the brothers who have completed their journey to the sacred platforms can come to the stars. If you bring the others before they are ready, it will cost you your very life!”

So *Maui* went down to the earth, which was covered in water. He swam a vast ocean for many days and nights. Finally, *Maui* came to a place upon the waters. This place he called the End of the Earth, *Te Pito o te Henua*.

Maui looked around the island for the magical egg. He noticed there were many statues raised up on platforms around the edge of the island, but he had no idea where to

⁷ Storytelling: a primary means of passing on knowledge and values from Indigenous wisdom-keepers to their children and grandchildren (Black Water, 2009). Indigenous story-telling weaves the natural environment into the identity of the clan’s youth. Deified tricksters offer Indigenous stories a voice of wisdom intended to protect creation and maintain harmony among all things (Black Water, Weasel Fat & Wolf Child, 2010). This particular story of the Polynesian trickster hero, *Maui*, is designed and placed here by the author to tie together an understanding of the tablets, the statues and the Egg Hunt ritual from an Indigenous point of view (Dansereau, 2011; Routledge, 1917).

⁸ *Motu-kaokao* (Literally: The Island Needle) is the island shaped like a horn protruding out of the water and situated between Easter Island and the islet of the Birdman Egg Hunt (Métraux, 1940). Broader Polynesian mythology has *Maui-tikitiki* raised in the top-knot of his mother, *Taranga*, who threw him in the sea with her topknot, plausibly the horn shaped island (Tregear, 1891).

find this egg until he heard some birds calling. Following the calls, he reached a certain hill that he climbed. At the top was a great circular crater of the volcano, *Rano Kao*. After nearly falling in, *Maui* regained his balance and quickly staggered around the sharp edge of the volcano. To the south, he could see a great horn rising out of the sea.

“That must be the great horn my mother said would point the way to the magical egg containing the secret of life ever after,” thought *Maui*.

He dove down into the sea and swam around the horn. Seeing the magical egg on the other side, *Maui* reached out with his giant hand of three fingers to pick up the egg of everlasting life.⁹

When he brought the egg back to the island of the statues, he noticed that all the statues on the island came to life. So he called all the *moai* statues into a circle to gaze upon the magical egg.

Immediately, all 288 *moai* that were raised up on the sacred *ahu* platforms ran to the circle of *Maui*. They marvelled at the magical egg, but also at *Maui*, who was a giant of 70 feet tall.

Maui said, “You are here in my circle because you completed your journey. Well done brothers of *Maui* raised up.”

⁹ *Motu-nui* is the island where the *Tavake* birds lay their eggs for the Egg Hunt Ceremony. This island is shaped like a hand with three fingers, as if belonging to a giant birdman. The next little island is called *Motu-iti* and resembles an egg. *Motu-nui*, the hand, appears to be reaching out to *Motu-iti*, the egg and drawing it back to Easter Island (Métraux, 1940; Routledge, 1917). This sort of association of land forms into Polynesian story is very common and serves the purpose of weaving the identity of the islanders into the land itself (Beckwith, 1970). In a Hindu creation story, the Brahma or the enlightened one is fashioned from an egg, where the Creator “first created the waters (narah)... and then a seed; he flung the seed into the waters, and it became a golden egg which had the splendor of the sun. From the egg came forth Brahma, Father of All. Because Brahma came from the ‘waters’, and they were his first home or path (ayana), he is called Narayana” (Mackenzie, 1985, p. 101).

“What about the seven?” The *moai* of the platforms pointed to the seven *moai* in front of the ancient village, “They were delayed by the construction of the village for all of us to live.”

Maui kindly replied, “Go get the brothers of *Maui* in front of the village! There is still room in the circle.”

Once in the circle, the seven *moai* from in front of the village said, “What about the *moai* beside the pathways, who were delayed while giving us directions?”

Maui answered with a friendly smile, “Go get the brothers of *Maui* beside the pathways! There is still room in the circle.”

Once the circle was settled, the *moai* from beside the pathways said, “What about the 136 *moai* outside the volcano, who were busy helping us down to the pathway?”

Maui generously insisted, “Go get the brothers of *Maui* outside the volcano! There is still room in the circle.”

Once the 136 *moai* outside the volcano were in the circle, these *moai* spoke up in their turn, “Please, do not leave our 104 brothers who are not yet fully carved on the outside of the volcano. They were busy pointing out the pathways, which only they could see from their vantage point high upon the volcano.”

Maui responded with great concern: “Unfinished!?! We must work hard to complete their work against the outside of the volcano, so they too can rise with the egg of life.”

So the 288 *moai* raised up on the platforms, the 202 *moai* beside the pathways, and the 136 *moai* outside the volcano began to work diligently at completing the *moai* statues fixed to the outside of the volcano quarry. It was the seven *moai* in front of the

village that instructed the others in carving out the 104. As the carving intensified, so did a quaking increase from the volcano. At first it was slight, but as the statues began to detach from the volcano greater rumblings occurred. The scene developed into a frightful commotion of carvers anxiously trying to free their brothers before the volcano erupted. Even *Maui* was furiously assisting those who were released down the slope of the volcano.

Just when the last *moai* statue was carved from outside the volcano, the largest earthquake opened a crack clear across the volcano crater. To the shock of these valiant brothers another 157 *moai* inside¹⁰ the volcano crater could be seen now reflecting the fearsome light of the molten rocks rolling and bubbling below.

Even *Maui* wept at the sight of 46 *moai* inside the crater refusing to leave their 111 unfinished brothers. Would they chip them away before the impending eruption?

Maui frantically looked around at his many brothers inside and outside the crater, knowing they were all certain to perish. He turned to the *moai* outside the crater and commanded them to leave with the egg of life to his star father in the sky. Against their nature, they were all swept up into the sky. Then the seventy foot tall *Maui* entered the volcano and reached across the gaping crevasse, holding it secure even as his back opened with the wounds of the fiery blows. The 46 *moai* inside the crater made good use of their precious moment of time and freed all 111 *moai* statues even as the volcano began a most violent eruption. Over the edge fled the 157. They ran along the paths to the outlying coast of this turtle-shaped island on the waters. Upon the platforms they

¹⁰ Broader Polynesian mythology identifies the locations of the *moai* statues of Easter Island when they describe *Maui* and his brothers, *Maui-roto*, *Maui-waho*, *Maui-taha*, *Maui-mua* and *Maui-pae*; literally *Maui*-inside, *Maui*-outside, *Maui*-beside, *Maui*-in-front-of and *Maui*-raised-up-on-platform. *Moai*, the name of the statue, then, is just an alternate form of *Maui* (Coleman, 2007; Tregear, 1891; van Tilburg, 1994). The statues represented standing up rods or *tiki* mediums of the deified ancestors (Tregear, 1904).

turned their backs to the sea to gaze upon the volcano where the brother who saved their life was now glowing red as the setting sun. With the quaking down came the rocks on the height of the volcano's east rim, filling in the void and fixing *Maui*, our hidden friend, in the tomb-like crater. The final sound of the earth closing over the volcano was like the call of a great *Tavake* bird.

Such was the life of our ancestors in their journey to enlightenment. These are the models we follow all over this Turtle Island, until it is our turn to reach up to the stars.

To honor these *moai* ancestors, we have a very sacred ceremony called the Birdman Egg Hunt or *Tangata-manu*. It begins at the first signs of spring¹¹ with the most colourful and festive procession up to the great island volcano, *Rano Kao*. On the peak of this volcano our *tohunga* priests enter the sacred stone houses of the ceremonial *Orongo* village.¹² Atop the houses, the princesses and princes of each clan dance and sing the most sacred chants offered for a successful egg hunt. In the stone houses, the *tohunga* priests recite the chants from the Easter Island tablets, called *Kohau Rongorongo*. It is only the priests who know how to read the hieroglyphs from these sacred boards.

Then the race begins at the 46 stone houses of *Orongo*, where the contestants are painted white with the dye of the sacred *pua* root. Then they descend down the 1000 foot

¹¹ Spring is in August-September, since Easter Island is located in the Southern Hemisphere (Eyraud, 1864-66).

¹² Inside the volcano, *Rano Raraku*, are 46 finished stone *moai* statues. The number corresponds with the 46 contestants chosen each year to enter the *Tangata-manu* Birdman Egg Hunt; Just as there are 46 stone houses upon *Orongo* village atop the volcano, *Rano Kao*, where the *tohunga* recite the prayers carved on the *Rongorongo* boards of the Easter Island tablets. There are 111 unfinished stone *moai* inside the volcano, *Rano Raraku*, corresponding with the 111 birdman carvings on stone atop *Rano Kao* (Routledge, 1917; van Tilburg, 2007). That is, the 46 *tohunga* priests can recite the tablets in prayer for the 111 birdmen contestants, since the *tohunga* are 'finished' have completed their instruction in the rites of the sacred tablets and the *harekura* school of the wisdom keepers. Remarkably, on Easter Island after colonial slave raids and Small Pox took their toll, there were 111 survivors who enabled *Rapa Nui* to continue as an island people (Fischer, 1997; Routledge, 1917).

cliff into the ocean with a floating bundle of reeds in order to make the two mile swim to *Motu-nui*, the island of the *Tavake* bird's spring nesting. If the current is strong and the seas are high, some of the contestants will drift out to sea and be lost, or they may attract the sharks, if they cut themselves on the rocky descent. Those that make it to the island will sleep in the narrow cave, until the first egg appears in the nest.

The one who finds this egg has the honor of crowning his own clan leader as king of Turtle Island for one year. This winner is shaved bald and given the house of honour, called *Orohie*, at the quarry where the statues were fashioned.¹³ Being bald, he remains a young cooing chick, fed by a clan *tohunga* for the entire year, as an ancient chant declares:

A land with a strange language is Kahiki....

One kind of men is in Kahiki – the Haole (white men);

He is like a god,

I am like a man....

By morsels was the food;

Picking the food with a noise like a bird,

Listen, bird of victory!

Hush! With whom the victory?

*With Ku indeed.*¹⁴

¹³ The race begins at *Orongo*, the Listening Place, atop *Rano Kao*, and the race is completed at *Orohie*, the bird cooing or Calling Place, at the base of *Rano Raraku*. The winning birdman is shaved bald just like the *moai* statues inside the quarry, *Rano Raraku*. The egg is consumed by the new king. It contains the mystical life-force of the entire island for that year (Routledge, 1917).

¹⁴ Fornander, 1969, p. 388. This Hawaiian chant of *Kuaiti* includes a description of *Kahiki* or Eastern Land. Since Hawaiian and *Rapa Nui* dialects are similar and *Rapa Nui* was settled before Hawaii, it is plausible that this Hawaiian chant contains a memory of the Birdman Egg Hunt of *Rapa Nui*, together with its location to the east (*Kahiki*), its strange written language, the men painted white with *pua* root dye, and the victory birdman fed morsels while immersed in chanting prayers at *Orohie*.

Turtle Island's ceremony starts with the tablet chants, continues with the finding of the first egg, and ends with the birdman mimicking the formation of the island statues at the volcano quarry.¹⁵

This ceremony allows our people to follow the journey of enlightenment made by our ancestors, who are represented in the statues on the platforms decorated with shining white eyes. It is these statues that our ancestors use as stepping stones to the stars. So these platforms are the most sacred locations on the island, where offerings are carried to heaven and bountiful gifts are showered down in abundance from our Creator.¹⁶

Our statues are lined in rows to represent harmony as the tying together of all things across our island and among our people: the ancestors of the starry sky are tied to the stones of the earth; the stones to our feet; our feet to our dance; our dance to our chants; our chants to our stories that nourish us with our feasts from birthing to the grave.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Rano Raraku*, the volcano quarry where the statues were carved, can be likened to a nest of chicks or turtle hatchlings. A spiritual parallel is drawn by the young person in need of the food of enlightenment in order to complete the journey from the volcano quarry (111 unfinished and 46 finished *moai*), along the several mile pathway (*moai* appear a milestones along each pathway) and standing up on the platforms of enlightenment (288 *moai*). There are a total of 887 statues (van Tilburg, 1994). Enlightenment to the sacred knowledge of the tablets comes after fasting for 15 days from the tattooing ceremony at the rising of the star Vega (Edwards, 2010) to the finding of the first egg. The egg is returned to one of the 24 *tohunga* singers of the chants in the stone *harekura* temples of *Orongo* village (Kirby, 2008) where the *moai* statue, *Hoa-hakanana'ia*, can be found (van Tilburg, 1994). The *Tangata-manu* then lives at *Orohie*, *Rano Raraku*, to begin the chronicle of his life's journey toward the 288 *moai* ancestors already standing on the temple platforms (Métraux, 1957; Routledge, 1917).

¹⁶ Statues, stones and canoes are used across Polynesia as grave markers of great chiefs or faithful *tohunga* priests. These monuments are considered Standing-up Rods, where the spirit of the deceased ancestor uses the grave marker as a medium to transfer prayers to heaven and heavenly gifts back to earth (Taylor, 1855). The *tohunga* priest who learns all the prayers and transmits them is called a *wananga* medium after he dies (Tregear, 1891). These *wananga* were called upon to protect the islanders from harm. This Standing-Up Rod was the connect between *Avatea* (Sky) and *Whatahotu* (Earth) in Polynesia; in ancient India the one who descends from the sky is called the *Avatar* (Coleman, 2007). The first *Avatar* is the fish, *Matsya* who carries *Manu*, the Hindu Noah (Mackenzie, 1985). *Hotu Matua* is the first *Avatea* of ancient Easter Island. Is then *Hotu Matua* the first *Tangata-manu*, or Birdman?

¹⁷ The *Tangata-manu* ceremony has more feasting, dancing, chanting and dress than any other time of year (Métraux, 1957; Routledge, 1917). Such Indigenous ceremony is meant to tie together the meaning of our existence from before birth to eternity; to weave our identity into the land; from the land to the afterlife in

But even in the grave there is hope, since *Maui*, our Lord of Life, stands with us on the birdman perch of *Orongo*. He is the statue of our hidden friend, *Hoa-hakanana'ia*, buried halfway inside one of the stone houses.¹⁸ He is our most powerful spirit medium. For while all the other statues must wait on the platforms, *Hoa-maui*, is one day going to fly to the otherworld from this perch. It is then that the message of *Orongo* will be truly heard and all the stones will cry out that which has been muted over the ages.

The most sacred carving of *Rongorongo* writing is found on the back of this *Maui-hoa-hakanana'ia* statue. Perhaps one day you will be permitted to glance at this mystery carving, but for now it is *tapu*.¹⁹ One day a child will come and raise this restriction in order to teach us that only the Creator can rightly judge the human heart, which as a bird soars only with freedom.²⁰

In knowing the value my people hold in finding the first egg, I cannot express my joy and wonder at the climbing to the top of the volcano, *Rano Kao*, to *Orongo* village with the victory egg of the *Tangata-manu*. My *tohunga* elder came to me and placed a tablet carved with the sacred chants within my hands. I trembled at the weight of responsibility and wonder of such a gift. The *tohunga* translated the line on the tablet in which he prayed for me. It was the first prayer of three that I must understand in order to

the Underworld represented by the ocean in Polynesian mythology (Beckwith, 1970). In this underworld the deceased spirit is washed or purified in order to transport their spirit forever to the ancestral home of the stars of the Milky Way, called *Ikaroa* (the Great Fish) in Polynesia (Tregear, 1891). The Blackfoot call this ancestral home of the Milky Way, the Wolf's Trail or the Buffalo Trail, (Black Water, Weasel Fat & Wolf Child, 2010).

¹⁸ To give power to the birdmen as they swim, the *tohunga* priests recite the chants inside the *Orongo* village ceremonial houses. The leading *tohunga* recites the tablets in the *Orongo* house where the statue, *Hoa-hakanana'ia*, with the carvings on its back is half buried (British Museum.org; Routledge, 1917; van Tilburg, 2007).

¹⁹ *Tapu*: a sacred restriction (Tregear, 1891).

²⁰ The *tangata-manu* birdman is chosen from the dreams of the *tohunga*. This birdman's race to capture the first egg is a rite of passage to carve out his identity and character. The entire island shares in that rite by uniting their everyday activities to the egg itself, which contains all the life-force of the island for that year (Métraux, 1957; Routledge, 1917).

be enlightened by the ways of our ancestors. These ways teach us how to be productive members of the island.



Figure 3: *The Life Cycle of the Soul into Harmony*²¹ (Wikipedia; Rongorongo.org)

In this first prayer, we make a passage away from the land of our own demise. This passageway of the birdmen is to journey into the underworld of the dead. In this void, we find our hidden friend who went before us to give us the power of the original migration canoe. This power is used to break through the formidable waves that surround our island of death. The return of the first egg is a sign of this victory over death by the overwhelming *harekura* wisdom and *mana* power that is great enough to unite us with the spirits of the ancestors beyond this life.²²

The *tohunga* explained how these sacred carvings are the same as those written on the back of the *moai* statue, *Hoa hakanana'ia*, our friend hidden in the *Orongo* stone house where the priest prays the tablets for a successful egg hunt.

²¹ Notice the character with the circular left foot. This resembles the Aztec sun god, Smoking Mirror – *Tezcatlipoca*, who lost his left foot in the underworld gate, which was replaced by a mirror. The mirror is the instrument used by ancient Central American priests to reflect the burning light of the Creator back to the sky, thus, the burning or smoking mirror (Coleman, 2007). The name of this figure on the Easter Island tablets is '*tupo*', meaning 'grave or tomb' (Dansereau, 2011). In the Blackfoot Sweat-lodge of the Solar Sky Father, Scarface becomes the mirror reflection of Morning Star, child of the Sun and Moon (Reichard, 1921; Black Water, Weasel Fat & Wolf Child, 2010). Smoking Mirror of the Aztec loses his foot when he steps on the lower jaw of the underworld alligator tearing it off. The Norse god, *Vidar*, the Silent One, does the same to the jaw of the underworld wolf. The upper jaw symbol on the Easter Island tablets represents the rising sun which swallowed the Great Flood of the Birdman, *Tangata-manu* (*Manu* also being the Hindu Noah); the lower jaw appears as a flaming moon translated as *Rei*, to tread upon (Coleman, 2007; Cotterell, 1999; Hamilton, 1988).

²² An Indigenous understanding of death from a Mi'kmaq woman: '...our people... are very accepting of death and as far as I can see they view it as part of the natural process. Life and death are one, they're inseparable. I think this comes from our closeness with nature. We understand nature because we observe it' (Robinson, 2005, p. 102). Malidoma Somé of the Dagara in West Africa writes, 'In the ritual, one has to have participants that are invisible and can actually produce results that are unexpected. And because we take the risk or the initiative of putting a request to the spirits to intervene in our affairs, their coming turns our activity (ceremony) into a ritual. It still means that we as individuals play a central role in making rituals happen (Somé, 1993, p. 33).'



Figure 4: Sacred Stone Prayer House of Orongo Village²³ (Illustrated by Dansereau, 2010).

I paused with a tablet of my own to enjoy this amazing egg-hunt victory: the sounds of festive *Rongorongo* chants; the colors of the warriors, their tattoos and power oars; the beauty of the princesses with the *reimiro* tablets of royalty; and the journey past the six miles of stone-walled gardens scented with fresh soil and seeds sprouting into the tender hues of green leading finally to the *Rano Raraku Orohie* fasting house. Here I was in the 10th heaven or *Rangi-rehua*, just turning twenty, in the year-long fasting house of

²³ Figure 4: Sacred stone *harekura* of Orongo. The perspective of a *tohunga* priest reciting a *Rongorongo* tablet in the sacred ceremonial *harekura* of the *Hoa-hakanana'ia* statue at sunset. The tablet is to the lower left. A rock carving of the mythical *Tangata-manu* with egg is in the lower right. The mirror image of the deified spirits of *Rongo ma Tane* is painted onto the ceiling of the *Orongo* stone house. This mirror image is the model for developing the identity of the true human being, whose broken soul can mirror the image of the Creator within. It represents one who is authentic to the highest ideals envisioned in the bird. Attaining this twin-bird image is akin to enlightenment and is called by the *Maori*, *hau paa-hau* (Routledge, 1917; Tregear, 1891; van Tilburg, 2007).

the winning birdman. It is the sacred place where all of the senses become accustomed to silence, so that my sixth sense could perceive the enlightened ways of the ancestors.²⁴

It was during this time of stillness that I reflected on my childhood. I was taken back as far as I can recall. It was before I was orphaned on this island, to when my original clan fled from our island at war. Under Chief *Tawhaki*, with our double-hull canoe, we were the clan of the trading wayfinders, the experts on the sea. So it was not unusual for us to embark out to sea. But it was on this occasion that I sensed, even though I was a four-year-old child that leaving the island in our canoe under the secrecy of dawn meant sure death if discovered by the other clans.

²⁴ Indigenous fasting ceremony: experiencing fasting rites are expected of every Indigenous youth, males in particular. Such rites include the sweat lodge or the vision quest, which are intended to cover or 'kill' the senses in order to awaken the sixth sense of perception. This perception might manifest itself in visions, dreams or an inner light that makes it possible to see the spiritual realities and values at work in the spiritual realm. On these occasions animal totems may be assigned to the individual (Black Water, Weasel Fat & Wolf Child, 2010). The Creator uses this animal totem to express a value expressed in the nature of the animal (eg. The eagle's value is perseverance in soaring above obstacles) and serves as a model and guide for the person in his or her own quest to live out that value in his or her daily 'belonging' activities (hunting, fishing, net-making, gardening, etc).

Chapter 2 – Vision of a Wayfinder

Like Hou-i-ti, all humanity belongs to this paradise of Turtle Island, which is a sustainable earth. The Lakota Chief Crazy Horse said that in the seventh generation his people would return (Ahba Haven, 2011). Now is that seventh generation, and the voice of Indigenous peoples are crying out to a world suffering from lack of harmony with the environment. A Hopi prophesy states, "When the earth is dying there shall arise a new tribe of all colours and all creeds. This tribe shall be called The Warriors of the Rainbow and it will put its faith in actions not words." (Manataka American Indian Council). Who can be a Rainbow Warrior? Anyone indigenous to Mother Earth.

I remember that morning before dawn, being carried by my father through the palms. The starry sky was brighter than the earth.²⁵ When we reached the shore, the sand was a soft dusky white, and the whitecaps were all I could see and hear from the water.

My mother held me as a fire was struck and my father fetched a fish with a net from the sea. Our priest struck the double-hull canoe with a branch which was then lit in the fire of our first-fish offering. The burning branch was waved at the stars of the ancestors in order to sweep them toward the dawn. In this way, our ancestors are honoured with enlightened rays of the sun and in return will offer us a safe journey at sea.

We pushed off the shore as the surrounding clans came out of the palm trees with their spears. We did not use our own spears against our kin who were sending burning javelins our way. Our traditions taught us to do no harm to the islands left behind in the wake of our canoe.

My mother, *Kore*, held me tight to calm my nerves. We were safe at sea and Chief *Tawhaki* raised his staff of authority against the island we were leaving and turned,

²⁵ The stars would give the boy comfort, since they believed the night sky was the abode of the ancestors. See note 15.

while pointing toward a new homeland. He soon pointed the staff to the left and right with the cries of the Canoe of *Rata* rowers timing chant.²⁶

<i>Gnau gnau gnau gnau-waho</i>	Lead, lead, lead, lead forth.
<i>E ara rakau e!</i>	A pathway for the canoe!
<i>E ara rakau e!</i>	A pathway for the canoe!
<i>E ara inano e.</i>	A path of sweet scented flowers.

When we reached the breaking waves of the surf, everyone held onto the canoe and my mother tucked under with me snuggled tightly in her grasp. We rose on the first breaker with a solid thud and collapsed onto a higher surf. I was jolted like the stick that hit our canoe. The warriors rowed with sharp quick digs into the sea until we were assaulted by the next breaker.

“Down!” cried the chief.

The canoe rose with a thud and a collapse onto a higher surf. Again we dug in our oars to make distance on the reef. There are moments when you know you are in danger, even when you are too young to know all things. And this next breaker, the largest we would meet, presented me with one of those moments. The jolt knocked me out of my mother’s arms. Her scream struck me with twice the fear of the falling into the surf. I remember all things at that moment of tumble: the red sky of dawn; the dim crowd on the shore; the still waters of the lagoon; the giant wave we were atop; the colors of the coral below and its darting fish; the canoe and all its riggings; the entire clan huddled in

²⁶ The Canoe of *Rata* is a popular Polynesian mythical story of the deified ancestor *Rata* who retrieves his father’s bones with a spirit canoe, (Beckwith, 1970; Tregear, 1891). This author/illustrator believes that canoe timing chant that contains the Canoe of *Rata* story is found on the four *Rongorongo* tablets of Text A, P, H & Q (Dansereau, 2011; Jaussen, 1893; Olderogge, 1947; Rongorongo.org).

safety with terror on their faces toward me. And my mother and father reaching out to me, but I was in the water.

Yet, my father, *Rangi-nui*, was a great man in all things, especially fishing. He was halfway under the water with me. Then I was back in the safety of my mother's arms. The next breaker was lighter than the last, as was the next and after defeating one more wave we were high on the sea. Even the chief expressed a waning sigh of relief acknowledging my father's greatest catch.

The chief exclaimed, "Like *Maui*, the shapeshifter, your son is both a boy and a fish." There was laughter throughout the canoe and then off again we went on the pathway for the canoe.

Gnau, gnau, gnau, gnau-waho

Gnau, gnau, gnau, gnau-waho...

Though the sea was vast and high as the sky itself, my wayfinding clan settled with a calm we only felt at sea. During our first meal at sea there was joy, trickery and a sense of safety amongst everyone. When the sea was calm, the youth entertained the children in the central house of our double-hull canoe. We were taught string games and chants that would become part of important passage rites into adulthood. The string games included stories about the houses in the night sky and the ancestor stars who occupied each house.²⁷ Each string game was associated with a star house and a tattoo design. Every family was given a few of these houses to tattoo on their bodies. Our stories associated these houses in the sky with mythical heroes, such as *Hina*, the Moon Maiden and her son, our Lord *Maui* who noosed the sun to give the earth light and life.

²⁷ Polynesian wayfinders used star houses (constellations) to guide them across the sea (Davis, 2009).

To serve our island groups, an occupation was chosen for our clan. We were fortunate to be given the wayfinding trade for transporting goods from island to island across the sea. I was old enough to swim and young enough to wonder at all things. I marvelled at the wisdom of my parents. My mother, *Kore*, knew not only these string games and their chants, but also all the stories of *Maui*, *Rata*, *Hina*, *Tawhaki*, *Nuku* and *Kui*.²⁸ These stories of our legendary heroes and gods captivated me and drew me to understand the workings of the waves, the clouds and the stars. My father, *Rangi-nui*, knew all the chants of the flame tossing dances and how to feed and protect us on land and at sea. Chief *Tawhaki* was strong, but not as composed as our elder, *Turi*. Yet none were as wise and mysterious as our wayfinder, *Kui*, atop the perch of the canoe. She was graced with years expressed regally in the greyness of her hair. She spoke very little, and with an endearing whistle, due to her missing teeth. As our guiding wayfinder, *Kui* faithfully spent all her time watching waves and sky, but she always had a great smile for me. So much did I love her that I felt we were the same, and she was as young as I, though her hair was grey. This devotion compelled me to learn all the words she said, especially the chants. When she chanted the ancient songs, I could sometimes see the ancestors dancing around her in the sky. There were fewer of these visions now as I grew from an infant into a child. The adults were not always ready to believe what a child perceives, and so my family thought I was just being a trickster like my uncle, *Rapa*. But *Kui* understood all of my dreams and visions.

²⁸ *Maui* noosed the sun; *Rata* felled a tree that kept restoring itself; *Hina* fled to the moon; *Tawhaki* climbed a rope to heaven; *Nuku* and *Kui* dug tunnels after the great deluge in order to live in the ground (Beckwith, 1970; Tregear, 1891). Each deity of Polynesia had a mythical story that enabled storytellers to pass on values useful to sustaining harmony with the land and between clans. Common elements existed from island to island, with each tribe offering their own unique portion of the story (Armstrong, 2005; Beckwith, 1970; Reichard, 1921). All these story portions together form an epic story that can be gathered from across Polynesia (Dansereau, 2011).

How did *Kui* know so much of sky and sea both day and night? I believed she was from above, since she knew all things about our ancestors the stars. For weeks there was no land, but our wayfinder, *Kui*, knew at all times where we were on the earth. She knew where we came from and where we were heading. She could see in her mind under the horizon where all the islands were every day of the year. She understood the rising and falling of the sun, the moon, and the 32 star houses. If there were clouds, she could count up to eight wave swells on the sea at any time. On her perch she slept no more than two hours per day, and only in short naps so we would not lose our way. Even when she was very ill and slept for too long one night, the men carried her down to place her legs in the water. Within minutes she knew where we were by the way the great ocean current spoke to her. She tapped her stick and winked with her right eye to touch the course just a little to the right and the left eye for a little left. If we were more off course than usual, she would call, "*Maui!*" meaning 'left'. I was given to understand that *Maui* tricked us, so that we would be off course more than a wink. But when she spoke his name all would laugh and race to set us straight to course again. Her knowledge and confidence on the sea convinced me that we were safe, even safer than on the land. From my infancy I came to understand what she knew a little more each day, as my parents would leave me with her to teach me to wade in the tidal pools. It was in these tidal pools that I learned how the sea could speak to me. This was the life of a wayfinder, since my father was from a wayfinder's clan, and that was my identity as well.

There was no sense of time during my life on the sea. Day was about the sun pleasing my skin and the salt seawater soothing my feet. My legs swayed in the ocean current where many sea creatures swam. I could see a very long way down in the water

where the largest fish appeared small enough to catch them between finger and thumb. I could not imagine counting the many fish below. They swam in their schools with various colors and sizes, some as giant as the canoe. A company of dolphins remained with us for many days. The day was never long, for it was full of knot tying, Cat's Cradle, and other games that our joy filled clan would play. Laughter from a loving mother was common. Tricks came from my uncle *Rapa*, and my father taught me the story of the tying of our sacred clan knot.

Night was full of mysteries I cannot put into words, but I will try. The night sky was bright with our ancestors. It was so bright that only the broom of *Tane*, the sun's rays, could sweep them away.²⁹ We also knew the ancestors were in the sea, since at night the swell was also full of strange glowing lights, many lights. Some were the glowing eyes of the sea creatures, but others lights flashed upon their bodies in all the colors of the rainbow. I was only to fear the great green eyes of the underworld guardian, *Wheke*, the eight legged. *Wheke* knew all things of the deep and so was as wise as *Maui* the eight eyed³⁰, who could see all things. *Wheke* could feel, even to the very corners of the Underworld. *Maui* was able to steal the fire from the underworld, since this is what he saw. It was the same fire seen in many creatures beneath the double-hull canoe at night.³¹ These creatures would all speak to me in their own way, little by little, to guide

²⁹ *Tane* was the great bird deity of the sun. *Tane* used the sun's rays to sweep the ancestral stars into the sun along its red path on the sea. This 'Sweeping of the Stars' is a ritual of the *tohunga* when they sweep a burning branch at the stars of dawn (Taylor, 1855; Tregear, 1891). The effect is to offer enlightenment to the ancestors in paradise above. Ask for anything at this time. The ancestors are eternally grateful.

³⁰ *Maui* is a trickster with many names. Indigenous world-view gave infinite ability to their trickster heroes in order to share the Creator's values in storytelling. *Maui* the eight eyed is an example of the all-seeing nature of the Creator since the number 8 corresponds to the eight directions (Tregear, 1891).

³¹ The creatures in the ocean glow at night with various luminous tones upon their skin. For example, the whale shark has spots on its back that glow in the dark; numerous jelly fish species have glowing qualities; as do many deep sea creatures that come closer to the surface at night (Heyerdahl, 1960).

me slowly and gently into the wisdom of *Wheke*, which was too much for me to handle all at once.

Great fear struck the clan when such a large eight-legged appeared with great green eyes larger than a couple of breadfruit³². That is why our wayfinder, *Kui*, groaned upon her perch, which made the hair stand on the back of my neck. The warriors quickly protected us with spears, fire, and powerful chants against this great green-eyed *Wheke*.³³ My father, *Rangi-nui*, approached the face of *Wheke* with a torch he quickly lit from our eternal flame. My uncle *Rapa* came to protect my mother and I as the great arms of *Wheke* reached around the entire double-hull canoe. The *Wheke* was tilting the canoe back over itself to turn us all into the sea. All the wayfinders instinctively jumped to the far canoe in order to return balance to the canoe. At the commotion, all turned to the *Wheke* as if to expect a reply. There was a pause at this tug-of-war with two giant green disks looking across at 88 pairs of tiny, wide eyes.

I grasped this moment to take it all in. Here this giant *taniwha* octopus was causing a paralyzing spell to fall upon us all. I broke the silence when poked by a two-inch claw coming out of *Wheke*'s foot-wide suction tentacle.

To the bleeding scratch, I trembled out a whispering, "*Awhina! Awhina!*"³⁴

At that *Rapa*, my uncle, jumped high up from the prow and fell down upon the tentacle with the spear. The creature's arm was pierced clear through and it dove into the sea like lightning. *Rapa*'s desire to keep his spear caused him to fly through the air into the sea out of the reach of our longest oars. This distraction compelled my father to lunge at the face of *Wheke*, piercing its eye with a flaming torch. *Wheke* released us and

³² Breadfruit: a large fruit used as a dietary staple on many islands of Polynesia. (Métraux, 1957).

³³ *Mana* means power. *Wheke* means octopus (Tregear, 1891).

³⁴ *Awhina!* Help! (Tregear, 1891).

tumbled into the deep dark sea. The canoe bounced with persons and provisions piling all around. All attention was now on *Rapa* swimming with speed and skill to join us on the canoe. The only problem is that the current prevented his advance.

My father cried, “*Wheke* will take him.”

With a dolphin’s speed, my father jumped across to our canoe. In a single motion, he slashed the throat of one of our provisional pigs, tossed it overboard, tied a rope to his waist and dove in after *Rapa*. By the time my father reached my uncle, *Wheke* had accepted the pig offering. Together they swam toward us as other men pulled them into the canoe.

That night I could see its bright green eyes in the distance. One eye was flashing off and on with a wounded wink from my father’s flaming torch. I cannot describe the immensity of pride I felt for my father, whose story would be told for generations to come of the day he caused the eye of *Wheke* to flash in the night as a warning to all other *Taniwha* sea monsters to stay well away from our wayfinding canoe. And I truly believed this was the least my elder kin could do who possessed the *mana* and *haka*³⁵ of the gods greater than *Wheke* herself.

Wheke, with all her wisdom, followed us until *Tane* appeared with the sun to turn *Wheke* back into the deep to wink at the Table of *Rata*³⁶ on the bottom of the sea.

A day came when I again heard the fateful groan of *Kui* as the floating island³⁷ approached our double-hull canoe. It appeared on the horizon as clouds and rushed toward us stirring up a nervous fervour in my clan and tying a knot in my stomach.

³⁵ *Haka*: means strength (Tregear, 1891).

³⁶ The Table of *Rata* (*Laka*) is the bottom of the sea where all underworld deceased are held as spirit-fish. When *Maui* fished up the islands, he caught the Table of *Rata* with his hook and broke it open, releasing all the deceased from the underworld (Tregear, 1891).

My father cried, “It is *Wheke* returned.”

All the clan responded with a sigh of agreement. But as it drew nearer we could see there were strange men upon it. *Kui* recited a prayer I had never heard. As the floating island approached, a distressing silence fell upon my clan. My mother held me tight.

Closer and closer the floating island came. In my heart I wished they would go farther and farther away. My eyes were wide open and my ears were on the alert. The men were close enough to hear, with the voice of a strange tongue. Suddenly one with their staffs cast lightning upon us, striking one of our clan who was wielding a spear. It was my uncle *Rapa*, the trickster of the family. All the clan loved him for his gift of joy. My father rushed to his side. *Rapa*’s breathing grew heavy and short as his chest swelled with blood. *Rapa* sighed, “They are *Tiki*’s clan of the gods.” My father looked over *Rapa*’s waning body and with much sorrow cried, “No... not gods, but demons.” With *Rapa*’s last breath he turned to me and smiled, “Our ancestors, I see them just like my *Hotu-iti*.”

Then, my father looked up and groaned out in sorrow just in time to receive the butt end of a lightning rod and he was out.

“*Matua! Matua!*”³⁸ I called in agony. My father, *Rangi-nui* and my uncle *Rapa* were my heart and my life, but they were now dead before my eyes. My mother rushed me into the *hare* house between the canoes and began throwing coconuts out of the hold. My clan was screaming, thunder was sounding, confusion took hold of me and I felt the

³⁷ The Floating Island: a name used to describe the colonial ships when first seen by Polynesians, due to their immense size. *Hawaiian* myth also places the floating island as an inhabitation of the gods and the mythical land between the sky and the earth (Beckwith, 1970).

³⁸ *Matua*: father (Tregear, 1891).

pains of the underworld within making me weep and tremble. My mother placed me quickly in the hold and began piling coconuts upon me. I began removing the coconuts my mother was covering me with and tried to reason with her as much as was able for a four-year-old child.

I pleaded in vain, “No, coconuts, no more coconuts, no more floating island, no more thunder-sticks, no more blood, no more coconuts, *Papa*.³⁹ Bring *Matua* and *Rapa* back to me!”

Mother continued, and I resisted with other words, now pleading with the gods the chant of *Maui*’s ball game for *mana* to save us from this hell.⁴⁰

With eyes full of tears, mother crouched quickly and held me tight, “*Maui* is coming to save you, my dearest little one. Your *papa* and *matua* are walking the pathway to the stars. There we will watch over you to protect and guide you.” Through a veil of tears, she added, “You must believe me my precious son!”

“No pathway” I said, “No coconuts, until we feast again...”

Then the lightning stick reached out to *Kui* and she fell from her perch above the chief’s canoe. The double-hull canoe was almost completely overtaken and those of my clan captured were already being chained upon the ship to become slaves.

I wept and said, “Take me with you to the stars.”

Mother’s tears fell into my eyes and I closed them tight with the sting. “*Atua-Maui*⁴¹ will come and take you to us by way of another road. And *Hina-ngaru*⁴² will

³⁹ *Papa*: mother (Tregear, 1891).

⁴⁰ The Ball Game of *Maui*: a tattoo soothing chant found on the Easter Island tablets. It might have been used as a string game chant for children to become accustomed to the story. The ball game refers to *Maui-potiki* being weaned in the topknot of his mother’s hair in order to gain wisdom and perhaps also noosing the ball-shaped sun to offer life (warmth, growth, enlightenment) to the world (Kaulins, 1981; Rongorongo.org; Tregear, 1891).

⁴¹ *Atua-Maui*: Lord *Maui*, the Polynesian deity who noosed the sun (Tregear, 1891).

watch over you for the many turnings of your life.” Then I was out with a coconut my mother used to put me to sleep and save my life.

When I woke, the double-canoe was empty of staples, the ornaments were broken off and the sail was torn. All the sea was calm from horizon to horizon, without wind or wave. However, my head was throbbing like a spear twisting in my skull. But it was a gift to distract me from the greater pain in my heart, since I was alone with the sea, the heart of *Tane*. The sea was calmer than I had ever seen. I cried, “*Tane Manawa*⁴³, still my heart, also!” over and over again. I kept still inside the hold of this double-hull canoe for days.

As the canoe drifted, I came upon a patch of drifting seaweed teeming with tiny creatures. Among them were crabs, shrimp, jellyfish and a school of tiny fish darting about in unison like a group of dancers. Some of the tiny crabs came to live on the deck. I named them after their varying colors and was grateful for their company that soothed my broken heart. They would become my new family, while I drifted on the sea.

Farther on, my canoe rose and fell with each swell and I watched the sun, the moon and the stars, like a true wayfinder. I wept to think that my parents were among these stars, too far away to hold.

Then one night I dreamt of *Kui*. She was dressed as a great queen and looked so young with all her teeth. She still had her beautiful grey hair.⁴⁴ She spoke to me many

⁴² *Hina-ngaru*: Loving *Hina*, goddess of the moon (Tregear, 1891).

⁴³ *Tane-manawa*: Heart of *Tane*. The Heart of *Tane* is believed in early Polynesian lore to be so large that it consists of the entire ocean (Tregear, 1891).

⁴⁴ Beautiful grey hair: Indigenous elders are regarded with a high level of respect and their grey hair is a sign of the essential wisdom they pass to the next generation. The hair of the goddess *Hina* was the only rope *Maui* could use to snare the sun. All other ropes burned in the heat (Tregear, 1891). It makes sense to consider *Maui* noosing the sun as analogous to enlightenment, which would rely on *Hina*'s hair as the symbol of wisdom. In the late 19th Century, a cord of hair was wrapped around a *Rongorongo* tablet as a gift of high honor from *Rapa Nui* (Routledge, 1917).

words. Some words I could not understand. But she told me to look for my mother and father shooting across the sky, sometimes alone, sometimes together. She said that in the sea at night the rainbow clan of *Nuku* would also give me comfort.⁴⁵ She also instructed me to eat the flying fish that offer themselves on the deck at dawn. She told me that coconuts crack open when they fight. One night I even woke to the sound of *Kui*. I was certain she was on the perch. I struggled to get out of the hold, only to find myself alone. I returned to my shelter despairing as any four-year-old would and wept myself to sleep. I dreamt of *Kui* consoling me, over and over again. Without her guidance out at sea, I surely would have died. Other family members comforted me and so I felt safest in my dreams. In one dream, my mother let me fly up high above the canoe where I could see land to the east. Just before I awoke, she said to me, “I have found a new family for you. Tomorrow you will meet them.”

At sunrise, I shared morsels of flying fish with my pet crabs, and shared with them my incredible dream.⁴⁶ The reality was that this double-hull canoe was leaning and half swamped. But dreams are meant to alter reality, since up ahead there was an island rising above the morning mist.

Upon the island of *Rapa Nui*, where the canoe wreck had drifted, men of the *Miru* clan were watching for turtles from a stone house on the coast. After some exciting instructions, a runner was sent to the *harekura* sacred house of the island king, *Hotu-nui*.

⁴⁵ *Nuku* or *Uenuku*: a Polynesian deity of the rainbow associated with the oceanic deluge story and found in a chant on the Easter Island tablets (Tregear, 1891).

⁴⁶ Dreams: Indigenous wisdom regards dreams as guidance opportunities (Soup, 2011). Whether by animal totems or deceased kin, the Creator has sent them to instruct us during certain crossroads in life. Small dreams are common and can be ignored, but occasional ‘big dreams’ are to be shared with others (van Gennep, 1960; Black Water, Weasel Fat & Wolf Child, 2010).

In moments the entire clan rushed toward the sea. Prince *Maui-mua*⁴⁷ reached out upon the wreck to this blonde haired spirit-boy, as they called me.

I gazed in wonder at *Maui-mua*, for he resembled my uncle who had perished weeks earlier.

“*Rapa! Rapa! Rapa!*” I called out my uncle’s name and jumped into *Maui*’s arms. *Maui* looked to the boy and back to his clan in bewildered wonder. Everyone laughed. I reached back only for the woven line my mother taught me string-games on. It was on this familiar twine that I learned to tie our clan’s sacred knot using the hints and story my Uncle *Rapa* gave me.⁴⁸

Maui-mua responded to my call, “I’ll be your *Rapa*, if you’ll be my *Tiki-tawhito*⁴⁹, a Pillar of a Little Man to survive such an ordeal alone at sea.”

As *Maui* carried me, there was much discussion among the crowd. I tried to make out their words as they spoke in wonder of the unknown weapon. This dialect was new to me, even in all the wayfinding and trading among the islands. Yet here and there the words were the same. Soon I would discover the similar sounds and speak freely once again. But my heart was broken and it was *Maui* who would hold it together, though as a stand-in for my uncle *Rapa*.

⁴⁷ Prince *Maui-Mua*: *Maui*-the-first, or eldest son, named after the Polynesian deity, *Maui-potiki* (Tregear, 1891).

⁴⁸ The sacred knot is placed here to mimic the use of the bow of Odysseus and provides a bridge to the west with this epic adventure by Homer. You will find Homer’s writing loaded with Indigenous wisdom, providing the Odyssey is taken beyond its mere entertainment value as a passage-rite intended to transform the life of the young listener of Homer (Albion-Meek, 1957). See footnotes 51, 57 and 58 below.

⁴⁹ *Tiki-tawhito*: lit. Pillar of a Little Man or Top-knot Dwarf. A deity of Polynesia regarded as the first deity in human form or the first man. *Tiki* and *Maui-tikitiki* are perhaps one and the same trickster deity (Tregear, 1891).



Figure 5: Fifteen-Foot-Tall Giant Moai Statue at Ahu Tahai (Illustrated by Dansereau, 2011)

On the walk up the small cliff from the water, there was a giant statue on a sacred platform called *Ahu*⁵⁰ *Tahai*⁵¹. The *moai* statue was a giant of 15 feet. He wore a red hat telling of his status as a great chief and victor in battle. His mouth was carved with a tight-lipped warning in facing death to heed the courageous message of this ancestral

⁵⁰ *Ahu*: temple platforms where rows of *moai* statues are raised-up. These were funerary monuments and so represented spirit mediums of the deceased ancestors buried there (Métraux, 1940). The eyes were inlaid with mother-of-pearl to represent enlightenment in paradise and the lips were tight to remind the living of the seriousness of moment when the Creator calls us through death to live with the ancestors in the stars.

⁵¹ The *moai* statue shown here is a drawing of the one facing *Tahai ahu* on the western shore of Easter Island. It has a hat or head-dress. The *moai* average 15 feet in height. The ones on the platforms have flat bases for a solid stance. The *moai* statues partway buried in the ground on the volcano hillside of *Rano Raraku*, have bottoms that are wedge or boat shaped to serve to anchor them on the hillside. The area behind these statues is rendered sacred, since these mediums carry the gifts from above behind their backs. Most of the statues on the the platforms have their back to the sea, rendering the ocean sacred (Barthel, 1978; Métraux, 1940).

spirit. His most striking feature was his eyes inlaid with mother-of-pearl that shone with the brilliance of the dawn. They were the eyes of an enlightened wisdom keeper. As we approached the giant *moai*, I was struck with awe and fear enough to make the hair stand up on the back of my neck.

We moved past the statue *moai* and along a path to a small village. I was taken to the chief, where there was much discussion.

The matriarch, *Hina-nui*⁵², wanted to adopt me into her family, but the chief, *Hotu-nui*⁵³, felt that such an act might cause the surrounding clans to question the legitimacy of the heirs of his rule. All believed, even his silenced enemies, that *Hotu-nui* would be counted among the great chiefs and when he died, given a place under the sacred lineage of the gods. But his wife, *Hina-nui*, had a strong heart and no small voice before the chief. And so, against his concerns, I was adopted under the care of his clan. Because of this, he treated me harshly, so I learned to fear him greatly. The difficult tasks *Hotu-nui* gave me, though I was a mere child, would have eventually been the end of me had it not been for the intervention of his eldest daughter, Princess *Hina-iti*.

She was intelligent like her mother, *Hina-nui*, and they resembled each other in regal confidence. They knew all the customs, chants, and dances required to teach a clan of high regard. And all the families and the children of the clan followed their lead. The men, however, were preoccupied by the drills of battle and wrestling. This is how it was before my wayfinding clan fled from our island. *Maui* was skilled in every move of

⁵² *Hina-nui*. lit. *Hina* the Great. Matriarch of the island and wife of *Hotu-nui*. In this fictional narrative, the mother, *Hina-nui* and her daughter, *Hina-iti*, are named after *Hina*, the goddess of the moon.

⁵³ *Hotu-nui*. lit. *Hotu* the Great. In the novel, *Hotu-nui* is the chief of Easter Island and the head of the *Miru* clan. He is named after *Hotu Matua*, the first ancestor who migrated to Easter Island. The narrator is named *Hotu-iti*, meaning Little *Hotu*. The two were actual chiefs of the island during the generation of first contact with Europeans (Métraux, 1957). Their purpose in this story is not intended to be factual, but rather to give context to the Indigenous wisdom found on the Easter Island tablets.

battle and use of weapons. He was the most cunning fighter and found ways to pin those who appeared stronger.

Along with *Maui's* resemblance to my Uncle *Rapa*, it was my clan knot that gave me consolation. I kept tying it over and over again, too fast for any member of the clan to reproduce. The knot was tied in ten stages during a string game while recalling the ascent of *Tawhaki* to the tenth heaven. Though my new clan members could unravel it, none of them could reproduce the knot without understanding its relationship to the legendary ancestral hero, *Tawhaki*. And I would not reveal the secret, since it was a sacred *tapu* of my clan.⁵⁴

The string game became a wonder to the clans and they began to fear it like a hidden gift from the gods. *Maui* was too cunning for superstitions and was forever trying to reproduce the knot. He would often hand me the string to watch the game again and again. Then he would try and miss the mark after the first or second stage. His smile against his own frustration taught me to trust him. *Maui's* kindness was rivalled by his fierce abilities in battle.

On one occasion two *Miru* clansmen who were giants in stature approached *Maui* and a challenge was underway. They were twin brothers named, *Hanga* and *Honga*. No one in the clan could come near to pinning them.

Maui jumped up slapping *Honga's* knee in laughter, saying, "Well, let's go, then!"

The two circled one another while all watched with wide eyes. Even *Hotu-nui*, *Hina-nui* and her blind grandmother, *Iwi*, came out to listen to the bout. Word quickly

⁵⁴ The knot of *Hotu-iti* is placed here much like the bow of Odysseus is used in Homer's *Odyssey*, to offer a sacred place for knowledge to be kept and unlocked only by those given that rite of knowledge. It also draws a parallel with Homer's work, which serves as a bridge to early Western philosophy.

spread and the entire clan was stirring. On the surrounding hills members of other clans stood to watch. This was no ordinary fight. It was a giant against a prince.

Just as they were about to lunge, *Maui* stopped and said, “Wait!...”

All looked in wonder as it would be uncharacteristic of *Maui* to bow out of a fight.

Maui continued, “I want to fight the strongest giant! Which of the two of you is stronger?”

Each of them replied, “ME!”

Maui said, “I think it is *Hanga*!”

“No! *Honga*!” *Hina-iti* added.

That is when *Honga* and *Hanga* began to fight each other.⁵⁵ This only stirred up more people to gather on the hills until over half of the island was watching the giants fight. Neither of the two believed that the other was stronger. When they collided and tumbled, I could hear the earth shake. People had to move back quickly, as their circle required more room for their tumbles. *Hotu-nui* motioned men to shove them away from his *harekura*, which was a sacred house and the greatest sign of a chief’s prestige.

The giants fell into a mound of boulders used for the hot stone ovens. The mound crumbled around them. This struck me with awe and fear, given that I could hardly move one of these boulders at play. As if she sensed my nervousness, *Hina-iti* drew me back into the doorway of the chief’s house.

When the giants made another loud tumble on some stone-covered thatch, grandmother *Iwi* shouted, “*Owo!*”

⁵⁵ *Maui* tricks the two giants into fighting each other. Essentially, this is the work of *Maui* in Polynesian lore, to defeat the underworld mythical giants by way of stratagem (Tregear, 1891).

There was an excited buzz rising among the onlookers. The only thing missing for the show was a tasty piece of smoked tuna.

Maui just stood very upright, awaiting the results with his arms folded.

Honga and *Hanga* would not relent, though their panting was becoming louder and their foreheads were dripping with much sweat.

Another crash, bang, and boom to the ground made the entire crowd shout in support of this activity. From that moment shouts were heard at every blow from an appreciative crowd. This only gave *Honga* and *Hanga* a second, third, and fourth wind. Their fighting was not revealing a winner.

Suddenly, they fell into a crowd of men who were struck down like sticks by the massive giants.

After some time at this battle, the two finally appeared to be wearing out. That is when they fell to the ground in a lock to pin the others shoulders. Their sweat had gathered dirt on their faces mixed with blood and bruises. I looked on in fear. At first I thought, "Who could win?" Now the possibility of "Who would win?" made me worry for *Maui*. His was the only face that I knew, since he resembled my uncle *Rapa*, and I preferred if that face remained recognizable.

Just as my thoughts returned to the struggle, from over my head flew a great bird, no; a giant kite, no; it was an incredible man. It was *Maui*. He went up and over the chief's house, through the air, some 10 feet high and 20 feet across, and onto the shoulders of giants!

The crowds roared as *Maui* pinned them both.

Maui ran with arms in the air around the circle of spectators and the cheering did not cease for some time. Not even did it cease when it was replaced by a mob chattering in disbelief from the *Miru* clan and beyond. All consciousness began to wane when *Honga* and *Hanga* stood before *Maui* with red faces firm in rage. Without flinching, *Maui* looked back at the giants and stepped toward them with a stern smile and both arms out in invitation. Chief *Hotu-nui* supported his son, *Maui*, with an abrupt victory cry that caught the attention of the giant cousins.

The giants' eyebrows simultaneously relaxed and the crowd began to laugh as the two took the hand of *Maui*. Then even *Honga* and *Hanga* began to laugh louder and more prolonged than the entire crowd, until all was silent but the giants. When even they suddenly stopped, all was laughter again and everyone gradually dispersed.

Maui's cunning and courage were among his many qualities I admired. I would forever be seeking his presence for protection from his father, *Hotu-nui*, who feared my adoption into his clan would contaminate his chiefly lineage. A lineage was a very sacred thing and must be perfect and kept pure lest in battle there were those who were left out just to talk and chatter like cowards.

When the king did harass me, all the others would laugh. If *Maui* was not around I would endlessly call, "*Rapa! Rapa haere haereeeee?*"⁵⁶ Princess *Hina* was my only other hope to stop the madness and come to my defence. She scolded even her own father and rebuked her taunting brothers and sisters.

One day the chief was in a particularly foul mood, due to the taunting of another clan in the distance. I thought for sure I would be beaten. When he started at me, I began

⁵⁶ *Haere*: to go (Tregear, 1891). The boy is calling for *Maui* who looks like his late uncle *Rapa*.

aimlessly looking around for *Maui* and *Hina-iti*, “*Maui, haere?... Hina, haereeee?*” Then the king stopped to listen to another taunting at my expense:

“You’re too old to have children, *Hotu?*” the *Ngatimo* clan inquired with a yell.

Maui, who had approached from the house at my call, returned a yell, “Well your face is shaped like a turtles behind!”

The king laughed out in authority and turned away from me back to his mat by the *maori* earth oven.

The giant twin brothers began to chase those who jeered at us from the *Ngatimo* clan.

Then there were words in the distance from another clan, *Hiti-uiru*: “We want a king, not a hen gathering chicks that are not his own!”

Maui stood up and yelled, “That sounds so dumb I am going to have to punch you in the face!” He ran with a small group to disperse them.

Again a third clan began from another hill. This time the clan was *Koro-orongo* of the *Hotu-iti* tribe,⁵⁷ and *Mata-nui*, the archenemy of the chief, was present.

Mata-nui approached and growled in a hoarse powerful voice, “You named him after my tribe?! Do you wish to nullify my lineage also?”

Hotu-nui shoved me toward his brothers’ homes in order to gather our warriors from *Marama*’s nearby sister clan, *Marama Ngaure*, while he ran back to stand at the door of our own house to protect his family and lodge.

I ran towards *Ngaure* desperate to gather support, knowing that if it did not come I would be killed.

⁵⁷ *Hotu-iti* is the name of the tribe containing the three clans on the east coast of early Easter Island. The name is the same as the name for the child narrator of the story, *Hotu-iti*, to play on the element that one’s enemy is so much an image of the self as to forever beckon the option of peace.

The marauders were those concerned with my presence in the clan. They did not want the lineage of the tribe to be tainted by foreign blood. I was meant to be a slave or dead. When his brothers arrived to support the chief, he had already been surrounded. Many of the men were yelling and lurching toward *Hotu-nui* in turn. But it said something for his fierce presence that there was no bloodshed, even while he stood alone among them. It also revealed something of *Hotu-nui's* character to stand in my defence so as not to cause a division within his own clan who had decided for my adoption. Then the brothers arrived and other clan members joined in the shouting to equal the odds.

But if the marauders would not shed blood, they could at least harm *Hotu-nui* in another way. *Hotu-nui's* house was set on fire. Amid the circle no one saw who it was and the bitter clan cried, "It was a falling star!" and began to run back to their border. *Mata-nui* just walked with a defiant grin.

The women and children began to rush out of the house one at a time, due to the small door and narrow length. But the wind was catching the length of the lodge and smoke began to billow out of the door. *Hina-nui*, the favoured wife of the chief, was not coming out. Another said she had stood in the smoke to reach for the sacred hanging tablet. She was found face down embracing and protecting the tablet on the ground. Not a word was burned on the tablet. It was then that I saw *Hotu-nui* embracing her lifeless body, while lamenting with great cries to heaven.

Chapter 3 - Vision of a Mermaid Princess

Black Elk, the holyman of the Oglala Souix once said, "Grown men can learn from very little children for the hearts of the little children are pure. Therefore, the Great Spirit may show to them many things that older people miss" (Legends of America, 2003). Global warming has not taken the Creator by surprise. Humanity can forge ahead toward global sustainability with the meekness of children who exchange unproductive worry for creative wonder. The earth can even be called mother, since she nourishes and sustains all creatures. Today the earth is the mother with child, since a new relationship is being born out of the critical need for harmony between humanity and the environment. There is no reason to fear this travail toward that return to harmony and the birth of a new paradise.

Chief *Hotu-nui* buried his wife with the tablet she had embraced, and the entire island mourned for many days, since she was loved by all. *Hotu-nui* fell into a severe despair. He no longer carried himself with the same rigor and vitality the island had come to respect.

One day, *Maui* and *Hina-iti* tried to reason with their father for the sake of the clan, "Father!?! The entire island has mourned for my beloved mother and now I fear they are becoming concerned for you."

Hotu-nui, hopeless in his thoughts, stared right through his son.

Hina-iti added, "Mother is surely risen to the stars. Father, it is time to celebrate her life and her courage."

There was nothing more to say, only to wait and see if the curse of death would loosen its hold on the spirit of *Hotu-nui*. However, each day of despair doubled the courage of his enemies and soon *Koro-orongo* was taunting Chief *Hotu-nui* from the surrounding hills.

The chief's mind, full of turmoil, rolled around in his head more ideas of how to make someone pay for his sorrows. Each glance he gave my way made me feel less at ease. It did not help that the tauntings were all about me contaminating the noble lineage of the island. His eldest daughter, *Hina*, my only support, defended me.

“You never treated people this way before mother died!” she reminded him.

Hotu-nui looked at her with fire in his eyes that could heat an earth oven all year, “You speak of her that way again and I will banish you to the lowest tribe!”

I was soon to pay for her support of me against the chief.

Since the embarrassing confrontation with his daughter, Chief *Hotu-nui* was in a particularly foul mood. I was keeping myself busy helping prepare the food for the evening *umu* earth oven feast. I tried my best to avoid the glare of Chief *Hotu-nui*. His pacing carved no shallow path upon the earth around us. It was then I was gladly sent to fetch water from the spring leading down to the ocean. I brought the water up, which always contained a little salt even after a heavy rain. Then the chief came up to me to test the water I retrieved in a *tuna* stomach. He grabbed it abruptly and pushed me aside.

I looked around for Princess *Hina* and called, “*Hina, haere?*”

The chief howled, “Your mother is across the island gathering the royals for the feast.” He lifted a handful of water out of the bag into his mouth. “This is not fresh water,” he whined, “you pulled it straight from the sea!”

Refraining from direct violence to a child, *Hotu-nui* commanded me to fetch the water from *Rano Kao*. The trip down *Rano Kao*, the biggest volcano lake on *Rapa Nui*, was dangerous for adults, much less a child. It was very steep and full of snags and thorns. At the bottom there was no safe footing. To add to my fear, legends told it was

the pit of the goddess of death. Therefore, I would never dream of going down to the infamous crater lake. Yet, there I was being pushed with my tuna bag towards the edge of the decline.

As a child almost six-years old, I knew enough of passage rites to pray at the edge of my descent.

“*Tagaroa*,” I sighed, “save me from the bowels of Grandmother *Kao*, the maiden of death.”⁵⁸

The climb down was nearly impossible for me to do without injury. The best I could manage was to direct my falls. Grassy slides felt less sore than brambles, which were not much less painful than the rocks. It seemed to take me forever to reach the lake at the bottom. To keep from sliding into the water, I could only wedge between the edge and a thorn bush, cutting open more of my bruises.

Being so young, it had not occurred to me what a perilous situation I was in. However, the fear of my dire situation had turned into panic, and I was sobbing. I closed my eyes and began to sing one of the comfort songs Princess *Hina* often sang to me.

Then I prayed, “*Tavake*, in your immeasurable kindness, provide for me the rope of *Ohiro* to climb out of this pit of death!”⁵⁹

I waited for a moment of fool’s hope.

⁵⁸ *Tagaroa*: the Polynesian deity of the sea, elsewhere pronounced *Tangaroa*. He was involved in the battle of the gods to separate their mother, *Papa*, the earth, from their father, *Rangi*, the sky. This is one of the most popular ancient Polynesian myths from which the other myths often follow (Beckwith, 1970; Tregear, 1891).

⁵⁹ *Tavake*: the name of the bird that lays the egg for Birdman Egg Hunt. Also, the name of a primary bird deity of Easter Island. The syllables of this name, *Tavake*, are transferable with the major Polynesian deity, called *Tawhaki*, who climbed the rope to heaven lowered by his Grandmother *Whaitiri* whose sight *Tawhaki* restored. In Easter Island lore, *Tavake*’s characteristics combine the Polynesian sun bird deity, *Tane* and, the rope climber, *Tawhaki*. The Hindu *Tavatimsa* is that level of heaven the Enlightened One carries up his teachings to his Mother (Coleman, 2007; Tregear, 1891).

In the sky, the gods were stirring at the sad sight below.⁶⁰ Tavake, the Sun, in command of Chaos and Order, was rocking and rolling with flames shooting out millions of miles into space like bolts of lightning. There was a trembling of the waters around Easter Island as Tagaroa fled into the depths. The moon hid its light as Hina lamented about the boy and all his troubles at sea.

Hina puzzled at Tavake, “How can Tagaroa scatter the stars of Hotu-iti’s family in the sea, just to swallow the boy up in the lake?”

Tavake was silent, so the gods offered relief.

Rata and Miru offered, “We have a canoe made for the boy! Double-hull!”

“But have you tightened the clan knots to rise above the breakers?”⁶¹ Maui taunted.

Tane and Marama claimed, “The boy needs our enlightenment to survive!”

Maui laughed, “He is as cunning as you both!”

Tuu and Ngatimo chanted, “We have the mana, or power, to make him stand!”

“I cannot stand you screeching like Tavake birds!” Maui protested.

Tavake finally called out to Hina, “Woman, what have you to do with me? I have no worries about human beings or the gods.”

Hina peered down the New Moon window to a world lit by the sun and a boy too small to have a face so weary and a heart so alone. She cried:

You who created all things so marvellous

⁶⁰ Homer’s *Odyssey* works in a dialogue among the gods who have a stake in what happens among humans. A similar dialogue is used here with Polynesian deities to draw a bridge to Western literature. Indigenous wisdom offers divine values essential to participate in creation and such values are understood in relation to the stories of divine heroes (Albion-Meek, 1957).

⁶¹ The wayfinding clans are experts in knot tying in order for the double-hull canoes to stay together against the impact of the waves on long journeys.

From earth, to stars, to moon and sun,

Inspire the awe of human beings and the gods.

Yet, you can stand by as they all crumble away

At the hands of human beings and the gods?

With you as my witness can you be so witless

With one eye open the other waxing and waning to sleep?

The only child of my precious wayfinding clan,

So skilled in their trade,

Able to read the story you wrote on the stars;

Faithfully visiting the sacred ancestors in their star houses;

Taming wind and wave with courage unrivalled;

Puzzling bird and fish by honing their trades;

And loving the sight of Earth like a long lost mother;

Embracing her palms like the rays of the Sun.

And Tavake dreams as a taniwha-whale-beast after a cowering

shrimp!

*Never has there been, nor will be again, such a challenge to the Supreme Being
and such a lament from the Princess of the Moon.*

Suddenly, thunder was heard from a cloudless sky!

*“ENOUGH!” Tavake roused a piercing cry, “It is finished...this lament of
yours!”*

All of heaven shook as the wings of Tavake fanned the dust of Rangi-rehua's highest heaven,⁶² clear toward the Earth.

Seeing the half of heaven falling, Hina dove through the New Moon to the Earth below.

Hotu-iti puzzled at the shooting stars flashing from the north across the day-lit sky. Then a fireball flew overhead high above, trailing with smoke all the way to the south. The star crashed into the sea not too far beyond *Motu-nui*.⁶³ But even as no small wave scattered the *Tavake* birds at this *Tangata-manu* island where the egg hunt takes place, *Hina* had returned above and was inquiring of my whereabouts.

The sign was enough to rouse the *tohunga* priests to inquire among themselves with an eight-day ceremonial fast.⁶⁴ *Hotu-nui* was ordering his runners to fetch the wisdom keepers of all the clans for a meeting to determine the meaning of this sign.

Wedged between this near cliff and thorn bush, I was beginning to cramp up. I searched within the depths of me to find something ... anything I could turn to. I recalled watching the unfolding of the *Tangata-Manu*, Birdman ritual. *Hina-iti* described to me this rite of passage that determined who our next king might be. She said that each swimmer must find within the strength to do what has not been done before. The winner would be regarded as a tree of life for the entire island people. Thinking of *Hina's* voice gave me a new strength. Courage began to bud on this seed of hope within me. It even occurred to me that *Hotu-nui* had done me a favour by sending me down here. Perhaps

⁶² *Rehua*: the tenth and highest heaven in the Polynesian paradise of *Rangi*, the Sky (Tregear, 1891).

⁶³ *Motu-nui*: meaning large island; the largest of three islets to the south of Easter Island. This is the island of the Birdman Egg Hunt. Just to its north is *Motu-iti*, meaning Small Island. *Motu-kaokao*, meaning Needle Island, is between *Motu-iti* and Easter Island (Routledge, 1917; Map, Ch. 1, P. 2).

⁶⁴ Fasting ceremonies are common Indigenous activities to increase the occurrence of dreams and visions to acquire spiritual guidance from the Creator, who often assigns animal totems and ancestral spirits for this guiding purpose (Black Water, Weasel Fat & Wolf Child, 2010).

this journey to the abode of the goddess of death was also a rite of passage for me. There are no negatives in life, only greater challenges to overcome.

It was then that I noticed for the first time here at the bottom the islands of moss, several feet thick from centuries of growth. I looked at the water black from the sheer depth and, closing my eyes, I leapt for my life. I landed upon a wobbly small island almost too small for me. As I was pulling the tuna stomach bag through the water to fill it, I realized that the small floating island was not big enough for both the bag full of water and a boy. My balance gave way to a head-over- heels summersault into the deep water under the mosses.

All the bruises on my skin awoke in sharp pains by this chilly water. As the pain decreased, my mind relaxed under the surface. I was at home in water, since this is where a wayfinder is raised. I watched as bubbles rose to the surface. The sun made a ring of rainbow rays around the turtle-like island of moss floating above me. I was content to stay here, were it not for the air that I craved. I swam to the shore and struggled to secure myself, but the angle was too steep and I kept sliding back into the water. So my only hope was to prop myself up on the moss.

I felt like a log rolling over and over with my little moss island, which became the trickster⁶⁵ in this fateful ball game. I wanted to play, but the moss preferred to keep me

⁶⁵ The trickster: Indigenous storytellers use tricksters to offer a playful energy to youthful listeners. The youth need this energy source and the values acquired from the story to face their passage-rite into adulthood. For example, the value of courage and the energy to complete a difficult task is obtained when the trickster, who often represents the Creator, makes a game of even the most impossible circumstances involving life. Of the African Yoruba, the trickster is Anansi, the Creator turned into a spider (Coleman, 2007). Anansi gathered the sun, moon and darkness in a bag and blinded people by exposing them to the sun. Of the Cherokee, Grandmother Spider gathers the sun across a sky web into a clay urn (Erdoes & Ortiz, 1984). In Africa, Anansi (Anase) captures the sun and protects creatures in the weavings of his web. Ford confirms that Anase's web is a "metaphor for the World Axis that connects humanity to divinity" (Ford, 1999, p. 96). Anansi bought all the stories of the Sky Beings with his animals. The Native Americans are told the stories of the animals in their dreams. It makes sense then to consider the stories of

under. I was running out of energy, so I took a deep breath and let go. I had been taught to be comfortable in the water, but knew that perhaps only my spirit would rise out of this swim. Deeper I sank and I saw in the water the certain divide between light and darkness, life and death.

Suddenly, there was a great surge of force into the water beside me. The initial impact was like a hard strike of lightning with the rising bubbles like a soft rolling thunder. Whatever it was dove below me at an alarming speed. I backed away to gaze at what it might be. There I saw a beautiful woman swimming toward me under the water as if the goddess *Hina* herself had fallen from the moon.

It was Princess *Hina-iti*. She swam with me to a ledge for drawing water on the shore of this lake in *Rano Kao* crater. There she let me rest to recover my breath and sat with her feet in the water singing me a comfort song.

She took me back by an easier path to the clan's sacred house. We approached the feast hidden by the house. There was much laughter, song and a big celebration on the other side. She decided to hide me in a nearby cave behind the *harekura* sacred house. The priests once used this cave for passage rites, where the boy would travel under the earth to find the bed of bones deep in the cave and return as a new born man. The priests could only enter the cave had they fasted severely in order to pass through its narrow confines. Great visions and dreams came to the ancestors who entered. The cave

the animals as carrying the wisdom of the Creator. Anansi's collection of stories is called, Anasesem. When the Hindu Shiva appears as 'Lord of Knowledge', his name is Anantesa (Coleman, 2007). In Anantesa's throat is the poison of Ananta, the world snake. Anantesa's throat became blue and he died while pulling the snake to Churn the Ocean and produce Turtle Island. *Maui*, the Polynesian trickster, is caught in the throat of the deity of death, in order to save humanity. *Maui's* noosing of the sun of enlightenment occurs at the End of the Earth, *Te Pito te Henua*, the earliest known name of Easter Island (Coleman, 2007). Weave these ancient stories together unifies ancient Indigenous voice into a melody all people can understand. One story may apply to one group of people. However, the common elements of many stories can be applied to all people.

was not in use since *Hotu-nui*'s youngest brother died attempting his passage rite within. So it became *tapu* or a sacred forbidden passage.

There, I dwelt in the cave behind the *harekura*, while the chief was led to believe my body was lost in the waters of *Rano Kao* volcano. *Hina-iti* rescued me not only from this volcano's belly, but also from the fears of island royalty. *Hina* planned it perfectly and provided morsels for me to eat. She wrapped them in her prayer *tapa* cloth and lowered them on a line. She gave me another line for finding my way from where I would rest, back through the narrowest hall to the small opening above. I would leave the cave at night and wander the island. I became acquainted with trail, cave and quarter of the clan's territory and even ventured beyond.

Listening from the cave entrance, the chief was planning an all out war of reckoning for the loss of *Hina-nui*. This made me sad to think I would lose *Maui*, who was like my Uncle *Rapa* returned from the sky world above. And I feared for *Hina-iti* whose kind heart resembled that of my mother, *Kore*.

Nothing can prepare a boy for the terrors of death in a cave of haunting spirits, cold and alone. All the boys have to face the same fears. It is important to overcome this fear of the passage rite by offering the child a great feast of affirmation. But for me, *Hotu-iti*, there was no feasting in the cave where I might spot a ghost in the darkness. Yet, my worst fear was that, in wandering inside such a pit, I might be swallowed up as a boy and, if fortunate, vomited up as a man.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ The cave was regarded as the insides of Mother Earth, the goddess of life and death. To enter the earth by way of a cave was a passage into the underworld where the deceased are sent after they die (Beckwith, 1970). Therefore, returning from the cave is a contradiction of fate, as if one were vomited out before being fully digested to an eternal resting place. The boy who entered the cave, however, has been transformed within by the powers of the underworld and so returns with values of courage and maturity to live no longer as a child, but as a man (van Gennep, 1960).

There I was, against the warnings of *Hina-iti*, venturing into the cave, following a dim light that beckoned me down a certain shaft. As I dared myself along the narrow shaft, nothing was visible, except something of a slight haze ahead in the darkness. My childhood pleaded with my soul not to go, to stay back and rest by the safety of the thread *Hina* provided. It was more than being too restless from the strains of lying on the cold stone floor of the cave. It was more than the piercing pains of hunger. Something deep within drove me and spoke to me clearer than even the sense of touch, taste, smell, sight or sound. Though I had little of these five senses at work in the cave, I perceived something even more real that was drawing me on.

As the light was getting clearer I turned to gaze at the solid darkness from where I had come. It dawned upon me that I had no understanding of how to find my way back. I looked ahead at the uncertain light and crawled toward it as my only hope. My heart felt the parallel between light and life, much as I had experienced in the crater lake. Then, around a corner there was an opening from above too small and too high to be reached. Around me the glow of this tiny bit of daylight exposed the inner walls of the cave. Its shaft was of a tubular shape and where the light shone there was a crossroads of three passageways.⁶⁷

I turned back from where I had come and was uncertain which of two openings I should chose for my return. I needed *Hina-iti*, since I was too young to find my way. Though I was old enough to remember that at every crossroads was a passage-rite territorial marker. But there were no marking to guide me.

⁶⁷ Details are used to enable the reader to experience the passage rite of the child in the cave, much like Homer uses details to captivate his students listening to the story of the Odyssey (Albion-Meek, 1957; van Gennep, 1960; Black Water, Weasel Fat & Wolf Child, 2010).

Through tears of fear, I mustered up the courage to call into the darkness for those I had loved, yet were all gone. My call had always been answered in the circle of the clan, but now there was no reply. There was no family, no friend, not even foe. With the fear came doubts that this was not a true passage-rite. There was no elder to cover my forehead with red ochre that I might mark the outline of my hand deep within the cave.

I sat where there was light to console myself, though it was too far above to offer me salvation. Just as my spirit began to wane from loneliness, out of the darkness appeared a tiny flame in the distance. Perhaps I was imagining the heavenly trickster, *Maui*, stealing the fire of the underworld.⁶⁸ But as the flame drew near I was enlightened to something new.

Never before had a woman entered this cave. *Hina-iti* fit like a thin man well fasted for the rite, and she came down with compassion to my underworld of despair filling this box-like cave with hope.⁶⁹ With her was a torch of tied dry reeds soaked in fish oil, and some flint. She sat with me under the skylight and put out her flame letting the red tipped reed raise a smoke offering⁷⁰ to the day above.⁷¹

Hina sat with me and spoke as if I were a man. She told me her fears about the clan war about to unfold. She wanted to reassure me of the goodness of her father, *Hotu-nui*, even though he had been harsh.

⁶⁸ *Maui* is the Polynesian trickster stealing the underworld fire or noosing the sun and is a common theme across Indigenous creation stories (Reichard, 1921; Tregear, 1891).

⁶⁹ Pandora's Box released all the ills known to humanity into the world. But the box also contains hope (Coleman, 2007).

⁷⁰ The use of offering fish and vegetables by the *tohunga* was an important part of early Easter Island ceremony. Grass was even offered atop the volcano *Rano Kao* in the village of *Orongo*, since grass was the only organic substance near the windy stone houses (Métraux, 1957; Routledge, 1917). Here, *Hina's* smoke offering is akin to American Native smudging or incense of eastern religions. The point of the smoke is to find a bridge to world-views beyond an Easter Island context in order to encourage others to wrestle with the wisdom its mysteries have to offer.

⁷¹ The Blackfoot use sweet-grass and sage to provide a smoke offering with their prayers, not unlike the Tibetan monks who offer incense to the four directions or the Orthodox priests who use incense (A View on Buddhism, 2011).

Then she said, “Let me tell you the story of this cave and why it is *tapu*⁷² for all to enter now.

“When *Hotu-nui* was a child, his elder brother died in this cave during his passage rite. The next year, *Hotu-nui* took his turn to recover a chicken bone from the belly of this cave. For the bone an elder would give him a chicken as a sign to prepare to support a family.

As *Hina-iti* spoke within the cave of *Hotu-nui*’s rite of passage as a child through this cave, I could imagine as if I were truly there, for indeed I was.

“The apprentice tied his line to a rock and buried it before a cave. His mother tied a bundle of coconut fibre and sticks around his left wrist and a bracelet she had made for each of her seven apprentice sons. To the bracelet she attached a prayer for power, or *mana*. She asked her apprentice son to learn if her lost son had become a man. Her request puzzled him. The leading men lifted the boulder at the cave front and the smoke from the fish offering suddenly drifted into its yawning mouth as if Mother Earth were breathing. This is our second mother, who would swallow our boys into the heart of her cave to soon vomit out men. The apprentice was the youngest of seven and each brother painted their hand marks in the depths of this cave to confirm the rite of passage to manhood. All but one uncle made it out. His name was *Rupe*. *Hotu-nui* entered the cave in the usual manner, feet first. The cave was so narrow that one must keep the arms above the head. The hands of the apprentice were forced together as he held the long line and released it in time with his descent into the cave. After a time, the feet of the apprentice came to a hard surface and he had to fight the trapped feeling in his body. Bending his knees, the apprentice shuffled his feet to the sides of the cave. To his relief, one of the

⁷² *Tapu*: a sacred restriction upon a certain item or place (Tregear, 1891).

four sides was open. Using the instructions of his brothers, the apprentice kept pushing with his back and shoulders, so that his chest would more easily expand. This enabled him to rise to his knees and from his knees to hunch and drag horizontally as the cave beckoned. After a few more body lengths, the apprentice shuffled to another 90 degree turn and again was taken down. The process continued even as he ran out of thread. The apprentice was given the instruction to find an open shaft with the bones of rats, birds, fish and perhaps even humans. The apprentice was instructed to light the fire that represented the enlightening of his soul to manhood and paint his hand print from the ochre and sweat on his brow. He was told to prepare for any obstacle. Without the thread, he was lost. The apprentice decided to move on without it and, coming to a fork, he left some coconut fibre behind as a sign for his return. The process occurred again, twice, when the apprentice finally reached an opening in the cave. There were no bones. So he shuffled ahead feeling his way singing the songs our people had always sung to Mother Earth to remind him that he was safe. Then, as the apprentice was moving ahead, he hit a hanging wall with a dizzying blow. He could taste the salty warm blood running down his face. The apprentice rolled over and fell into a small room full of bones. A gust of fresh air was coming in from a small hole. This comforted him. The apprentice took his time to light a small fire with the coconut fibre remaining. It gave him enough light to see the prints of his six brothers. The apprentice pressed his hand from forehead to wall, staining it with ochre and sweat and blood. Returning the way he came felt much more difficult. He was exhausted, bruised, and beaten. The man came to a fork in the cave and felt the fibre that was left behind. He continued along until the last clump of fibre, but upon holding it up was too weary to recall from which way he picked it up. So the man prayed

and took a guess. To be at such a crossroads meant life or death. The man went down a fateful tunnel. After a distance he came to a 90 degree turn and felt he was close to home. A few more lengths ahead though, the crawl spaces seemed smaller, and the man did not remember the mud. He pushed his way forward in an increasing frenzy that led to panic. The air became thicker, the rock was heavy on his back and chest. The man could not find any fibres. He was stuck. Like a child, the man began to cry. Even then, he had to stop the sobs cold at his throat, lest they enter a heaving chest and produce a certain suffocation. The man had to relax. What did he have left? ... He was a man. What would a man do? He started to breathe and to pray again. The prayer his deceased brother used to sing came to mind. The man reached ahead, breathing in, moving an inch, breathing in... another inch. He could go on another 10 feet and then he would be out of breath. There had to be an opening. Then the man felt ahead of him the bones of his brother who could go no further. The man understood the language of the bones that guided him back to the fork and a thread and a light and a mother holding him tight like our Mother Earth.”

And my grandmother asked him about the bones, “But whose?”

The man replied, “They were one of the seven whose hand print was made on the wall with red ochre and sweat, and he was the spirit guide who took my place in the grave below.”

Hina-iti concluded, “My grandmother wept knowing that all of her seven sons had become men.”

Then *Hina-iti* said, “I tell you this so that you know *Hina-nui* and in knowing him become a part of him some day, even though he has chosen wrongly to be your enemy for a time.”

With the sky light above, *Hina-iti* was able to light the torch, and suddenly I was enlightened to my underworld.

Chapter 4 - Three Years in the Underworld

The Cherokee have a saying, "When you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced. Live your life so that when you die, the world cries and you rejoice" (InspirationalSpark.com). Harmony is rejoicing in the inheritance of our children. The greatest inheritance for the next generation is a sustainable planet. This inheritance will benefit a circle of children eager to act upon this harmony with a renewed paradise they will call Mother Earth.

Hina boldly took me along through the cave, but was just as amazed at all that we saw. Once through the narrow tunnel, there was a wide opening into a tunnel made smooth and round by the mysterious forces of the underworld.⁷³ The tunnel forked off at times. Sometimes the tunnel narrowed into a small smooth end and other times the narrowing went on into the dark large enough for only a hand. Then we found an opening hewn out by the ancients large enough for a small clan to dwell. There was a pool resting deeper in the wall with a stonewall crescent holding the water back. Just above was a shelf made to enable a family to access the water. There we drank. In all my life there has been no sweeter water to quench my thirst. I looked up at the drip, wondering what source provided such a benevolent fountain. *Hina* only hummed with delight in the discovery of such a resource, for our island had no springs clear of sea salt apart from rainwater gathered in shallow hollows found here and there upon the island.

Hina-iti said, "If there is ever an urgent need during war, all the women and children of our clan could take refuge here. The tunnels are long and many with the feeling of air from several sources. This water has no salt and tastes like it came from the heavens."⁷⁴

⁷³ The cave is a smooth oval passage made by escaping gas from molten stone during the formation of the island (Heyerdahl, 1958).

⁷⁴ Thor Heyerdahl visited this cave and fresh-water fountain in the late 1950s. The tunnels in the cave created by escaping gas from ancient volcanos are plausibly the source of the broader Polynesian mythic

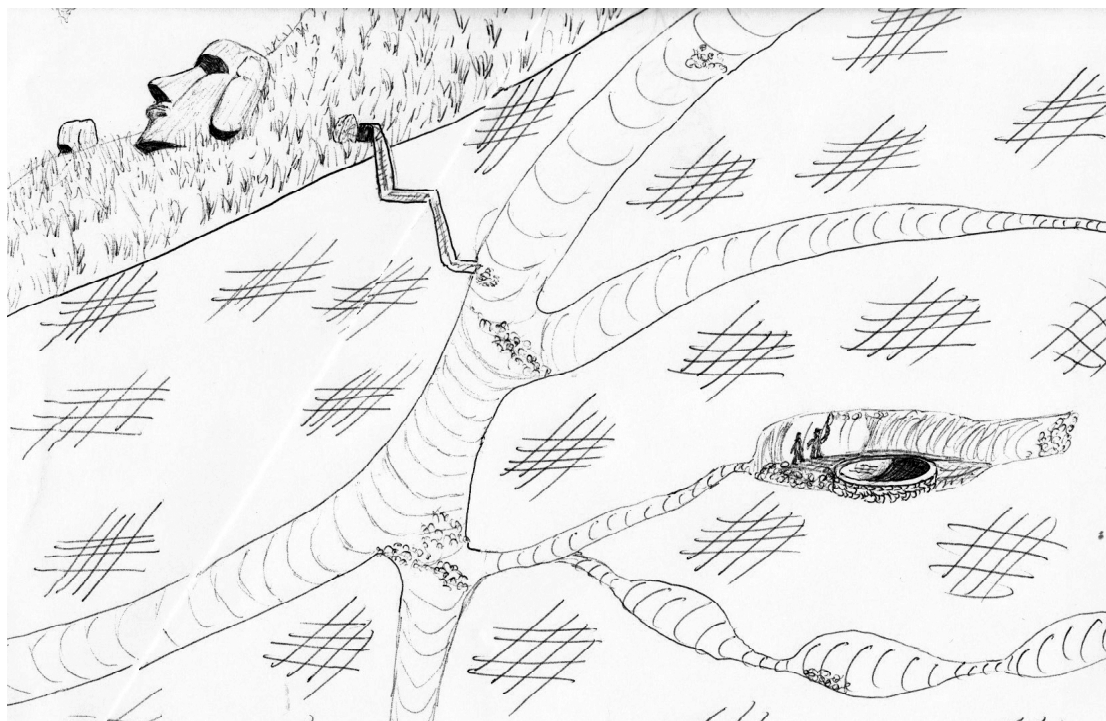


Figure 6: Cave system under Easter Island⁷⁵ (Illustrated by Dansereau, 2010).

There were other such rooms and more tunnels. The rooms were hewn by ancestors, but the tunnels appeared to be made by the gods.

“Princess *Hina*?” I inquired, “Why are there tunnels?”

Hina said, “*Hotu-iti*, this tunnel was made by *Nuku* and his wife *Kui* the blind.

They were here before the arrival of our first ancestor, *Hotu Matua*. They fled

story of *Kui* and *Nuku* tunnelling under the earth. When these deities return out of the ground many lives will be lost, perhaps a warning regarding the effects of earthquakes (Heyerdahl, 1958; Tregear, 1891). Though Heyerdahl is criticized for his theory of Polynesian colonization from the east, his Kon Tiki expedition did help motivate the Hawaiian *Hukole’a* team to restore the legacy of the early Polynesian wayfinders (Davis, 2009). For a more accurate picture of Easter Island archeology there are several important sources to consult (Barthel, 1978; Stevenson, Wozniak & Haoal, 1999; van Tilburg, 2007; Vargas, Cristino & Izaurieta, 2006). Also, consider Edmundo Edwards soon to publish work resulting from close to four decades of research on Easter Island (Davis, 2009).

⁷⁵ Drawing of an Easter Island cave as described by Norwegian scientist and adventurer of the Kon-Tiki expedition, Thor Heyerdahl (Heyerdahl, 1958). It is chosen here as the safe haven of the Narrator, *Hotu-iti*. Since he is a foreigner adopted at a time of war, there are many who want him killed to protect the original lineage of the island. Early Polynesians would hesitate to adopt foreigners until they were purified by various rituals from the powers and spirits of the land of their origin (Beckwith, 1970; Monberg, 1966; Taylor, 1855).

underground, just like you, to protect themselves and their sacred teachings. The world around us will change when they return from under the ground.”

I replied, “How will it change?”

“A child will lead us to the ancient sacred teachings of old,” *Hina* continued, “in order to protect us from a great desolation.”

Suddenly, *Hina*’s face lit up like the torch itself. “A child will lead us...! You! *Hotu-iti!* You!”

“What! What!” I said, only wanting to keep her content and at ease.

“No! It’s okay!...” she paused “It’s perfect... It’s wonderful! You are the child who will lead us!”

We entered a smaller room designed as a circular crawling space that *Hina* described as a ceremonial fasting room. My curiosity took over as I explored every corner of the room. There was a pile of stones that I rummaged through in the corner. In that pile were a number of stone carvings. “Hey! *Hina!* Look at this!”

Hina gasped and pulled me back, “*Hotu!* Those stones will kill you!”

“What!? What?!” The commotion caused me to panic and even wonder as I began to control my breathing and put my hand up to my throat.

Hina replied, “The stones are territorial markers to protect the cave from other tribes. They are considered *tapu*. Incantations are made over these stones during the *tohunga*’s yearly fasting rites. You must not touch them.

“The stone skull is the deadly one. The hole in the forehead has crushed bones of our ancestors in it and a *tapu* covering of the most serious kind. The *tohunga* chanted over this skull a curse for all who touch it. It is the curse of *manaia*, the curse of death.”

I did not touch the skull. I inquired about the two stones with fish carvings, which reminded me of my father, *Rangi-nui*, who was a great fisherman.

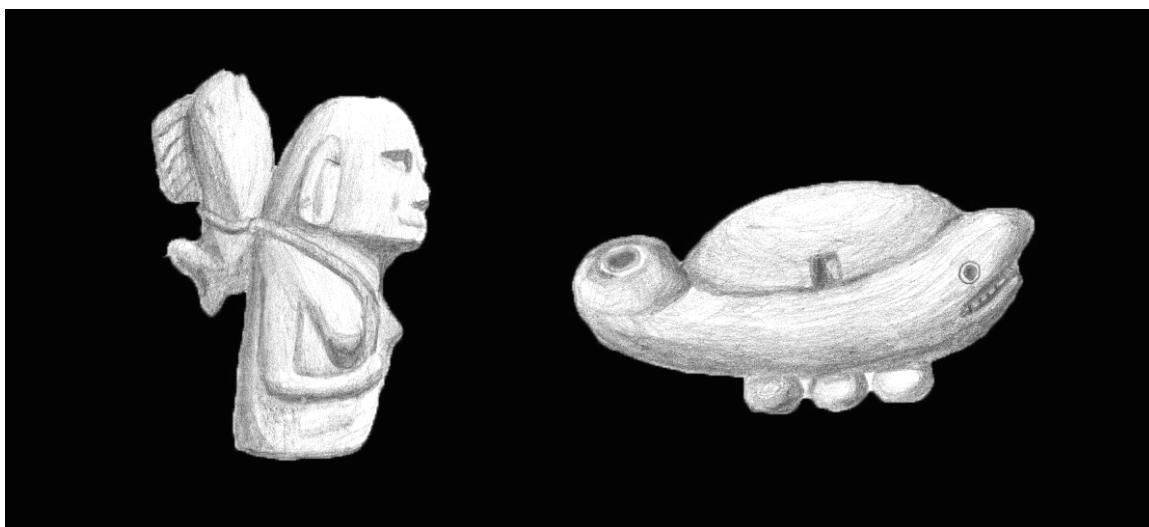


Figure 7: Sacred Statuettes passed down for generations in ancestral cave⁷⁶(Dansereau, 2011).

“What is their story?” I prodded.

Hina said, “Only the *tohunga* who has the transfer right for this cave and this bundle of stones knows the full story. The story itself will be lost if it is scattered to everyone who asked. Telling only a few makes it a desirable mystery and a gift of greater value to affirm our youth who are transferred the sacred rites.”

“That is where you come in, *Hotu-iti*. You have been given the right to enter our story, because our ancestors spoke of you before you came and our elders had dreams about your arrival. Our wisdom keepers are always so protective of the children, because

⁷⁶ These sacred carvings are true to those photographed by Thor Heyerdahl and kept in a clan cave as most sacred and *tapu* objects (Heyerdahl, 1958, p. 256g). On the left, the mythical story of the elder woman who carried the great *Tuna* on her back with a rope. On the right, *Ikaroa*, the long fish of the Milky Way, seated on six stars, and supporting the sacred house of the deceased. On the tail of the great fish is an *umu* earth oven. The hole in top corresponds to the mythical journey of *Maui* through the body of death and making a second door to sweep the ancestors to eternal enlightenment by the rays of dawn. In the earth oven, the first fish and *kumara* sweet potato are cooked to weave the story into the meal so that digestion itself will assist in the process of enlightenment. All the islanders participated in this first *tuna* offering at the sacred site of *Vinapu* weaving their story into the land itself to *Ikarao* above and the goddess of the underworld below. Therefore, *Ana-kai-tangata*, the cave of the Man-Eater, was named after the husband of the goddess of the underworld and links Easter Island place names to broader Polynesian story (Tregear, 1891).

they are hoping for the one to lead us. The elders, too, have spoken highly of you. But set against you are the young warriors who know little of our stories and more of the war. We must find a way for you to belong.”

Hina spent the rest of the day teaching me her plan and what I must do. She provided a line for me to follow to the fresh water and a ledge to place my meals in the skylight. *Hina* showed me how to enter the long end of the *harekura* behind a divide, meant only for the storage of provisions and where only a small child could sit. This side of the house was just a few metres from the cave entrance. There I could see through the seams, hear all things and learn the teachings of the *tohunga* priests.

“Why must I learn all these teachings?” I asked *Hina*.

“Before my mother, *Hina-nui*, died,” *Hina-iti* replied, “She shared with me what her grandmother had said. That when the men begin to lead from the head and not the heart, the women must provide a way to rescue them from their own fear.”

I prodded on, “How do you know they are not leading with the heart?”

“The way they treat you.” *Hina* continued, “We would always leave the first fish for a guest, even if no one came. Yet, when the guest is here, look how they treat you. And when sacred wood drifts in from the sea they no longer make sacred teaching boards, but clubs and spears. When our heads are full of fear, our vision is blurred. If danger were truly upon us, we would not even know it.”

I did not understand all the things that *Hina* told me. So I would ponder her words in my heart.⁷⁷ And there I sat, behind the *tohunga* priests, learning all that they

⁷⁷ The sayings of the wisdom keepers are treasured and kept in memory for the day they will unlock the essential values of life worth so much more than gold. For example, the prophecy of the Rainbow Warriors, from First Nations elders across the American plains, speak of a time of ecological crisis and instructions on how to restore the earth (Manataka American Indian Council).

taught their students. Some elders taught the sacred rites and stories of fishing, others of bird snaring, or house building, gardening, battle, courting, inter-tribal relations, food preparations and even sweeping out the sacred house. Other *tohunga* taught the science, mystery and stories of wayfinding, astronomy, string games, lineage recital, chanting, dancing and various other ceremonies and passage rites. But what I craved the most was the teachings of the *Rongorongo* boards, their chants, stories and ceremonial uses. For three and a half years I was hidden by *Hina*, to learn all that was taught by my new clan.

Hina and I would discuss much of what I was learning. She explained how meaningless all this knowledge of stories would be without the values associated with each story. “The Creator gave all the stories to the first man, *Hotu Matua*, and the first woman, *Rei Pua*. We know they are from the Creator, because they teach us how to protect the land. When you see a clan whose gardens grow poorly, season after season, or whose chickens are thinner than the wild ones, you know that they have forgotten the stories. Then, it is up to the elders to approach them. Our code of respect requires that the elders speak to them in humility when they make this request: ‘We want to hear your stories.’ A great feast is provided and the stories are sung. What is missing in the stories of those with poor land produce is added in turn by the elders with good produce. The next season, the gardens are bountiful and the chickens are plump.”

“Then why not teach all men and women all things, like I am learning from the *tohunga*?” I boasted.

Hina laughed and then let out a groan like my beloved *Kui*, when the men of the evil floating islands approached. “No, *Hotu-iti*! You must receive all these teachings with the heart of a child. Never regard yourself as superior when all sacred and *tapu*

knowledge is raised in front of you. This wisdom does not belong to you. It never will. If it does, it will crush you. Always find a way to let it go. Only *Maui*, our Lord of Life, can raise the world on his shoulders.”

I inquired, “How can I remain a child when I am in the cave of the rite of passage for a man?”

Hina-iti replied with words I will always take with me, “You are not here by the red-ochre blessing of a man, but you are here by the providence of the gods. The gods have anointed you and washed you clean by the great ocean of *Tane-tavake*⁷⁸ who brought you to us. You came to us in great need as a child from the gods and no one can take that innocence from you.” *Hina* continued, “When you learn the writing boards, it will also be by the blessing of the ancestors and the gods. Do not seek the approval of mere men. You need no *tohunga* or living priest, when you have the *wananga*, ancestral medium. Let the *tohunga* teach me.”

“But the *tohunga* cannot train women in the writing boards and I also want you to learn about them,” I said.

“You are just dodging me, little man!” *Hina* replied referring to the game of dodge that helped us boys develop the agility of a warrior. This captured my attention.

But then she added, “All that men need to know and take for granted has been given them by their mothers as infants.”

⁷⁸ *Tane* is the great bird deity of Polynesia. *Tavake* is the great bird deity of Easter Island, akin to the *tavake* birds of which the first egg is retrieved from the nest of *Motu-nui* (Birdman Island). As mentioned above, *Tavake* may well be a variation of the Polynesian mythical hero, *Tawhaki*. Therefore, the climbing of the rope to heaven and the raising of the first *tavake* egg might have been understood on Easter Island as parallel rites of attaining enlightenment (Routledge, 1917; Tregear, 1891).

Hina had this way of leading me to a greater understanding by the means of the knowledge I had already acquired. This was the way of our great wisdom keepers and story tellers.

Hina forbade me to teach her some of the *Rongorongo* chants.

I persisted, “But why not raise the *tapu* for the women also?”

Hina was pensive for a moment and then said, “Because the men would never learn that a woman can perceive all things in her heart, even when not understood by the mind.”

“Are you just dodging me now *Hina*?” I replied with a chuckle.

She said, “You are talking heavy for someone so young. I wish you were free to learn and play with the other children...” *Hina* stopped herself and continued, “... but here you are buried in a cave. Even here you have a calling and a purpose for our island. No matter what the circumstance, everyone has a particular role to play:”

In Makemake, the Creator’s stellar design, we all belong.

The tavake-birds? They humble us who cannot fly,

This compels us to dream.

And they call us to the enlightenment of the rising Sun.

In Makemake, the Creator’s stellar design, we all belong.

The plants? They cannot walk upon the earth

Yet they feed us who can run.

In Makemake, the Creator’s stellar design, we all belong.

The fish? They provide the first offering

By laying down their life in our place.

You will seek a lifetime to find a greater friend.

In Makemake, the Creator's stellar design, we all belong.

Yet, even if the wayfinder is lost at sea

The tortoise is willing to be noosed

So as to carve out a pathway in the sea.

In Makemake, the Creator's stellar design, we all belong.

And the smallest of all of our kin, the Mosquito,

Teaches us persistence, the greatest of all virtues.

And she reveals by satiated call the source of our mana power.

Hina concluded the chant by adding a line with my name to weave my identity into the song, the dance, the creatures, and the land.

And you, Hotu-iti, small as a naunau mosquito,

Are also little more than a buzz about the island,

But your song can be heard by the long eared moai statues.

Hina repeated the song like so many other chants of *Rapa Nui*, sung with the earth drum beating like a heartbeat, again and again, giving life and constancy to the ceremonies.⁷⁹

Hina continued, "These statues also are beginning to hum, so that the entire island will begin to stir. Indeed, the *tohunga* met in their sacred circle to determine how they would enable you to belong. For if there is no room in our circle for the little ones, how can we justify that there is room enough for the great? Yet, they believe you are dead."

⁷⁹ For more examples of Indigenous chants that weave personal identity into the environment, consider the ancient creation chants of Polynesia, Africa and the drum songs of the Blackfoot (Ford, 1999; Jefferson, 1955; Shand, 1895; Black Water, Weasel Fat & Wolf Child, 2010).

I sat there silently for a moment and then jested, “So can I teach you some *Rongorongo* chants?”

Hina nudged me and chuckled. Then she became pensive, looking off into the distance. “There are chants on the tablets that the grandmothers passed on to me. The garden of our hearts is beginning to fail. The rooster crows at noon. Perhaps it is time to teach the men these stories that they have lost.”

This saying from *Hina* taught me the meaning of kindness. That is, she would teach mercy to her own clan who refused her love. Since her father wanted to protect his rule with reigning sons, his eldest child, being *Hina*, was not allowed to marry, lest the husband’s family compete for the rule. This caused *Hotu-nui* to lose the devotion of his daughter whose heart was broken from a banished soul mate and at a cost of having no children of her own. *Hina* was left to lavish her nurturing qualities upon me in the finest training of the royalty, though without the knowledge of her father. From this time forward, *Hina* began to teach me the chants of her grandmothers, lost even to the *tohunga*.

It was at this time, when at night, I secretly began to sit outside the *harekura* of other clans and the tribes that were not too far away. If my rite of passage into manhood were denied me, at least I could endlessly learn as an apprentice the chants of *mana* power, *haka* strength and *aroha* devotion for these island people.

Then one night, I found *Hina* secretly meeting with her soul mate, *Turi*, from the *Koro-orongo* clan.

Hina was weeping. “But *Turi*, if we marry, the war will be over.”

Turi replied, “Our fathers will not allow it. Until they die or have a change of heart, we must wait.”

Hina tried to stir the envy of *Turi*, “But there are suitors from the clans of my tribe.”

“If you love me,” *Turi* replied, “You will brush them off.”

“I do love you,” *Hina* insisted, “But how do I brush off a tsunami of men?”

Turi suggested, “Men need to prove themselves. Set to them an unwinnable challenge and they will leave you alone to meet the task.”

From that moment on, *Hina* made the request that the man she would marry would be the one who could fasten the knot of *Hotu-iti*. And her father supported her, for only the man that could do the impossible was worthy of the royal line.

Yet, *Hina*’s greatest rite of passage was soul crushing in this lost love. She was painfully aware that the bitterness of her father was spiralling into the tribal wars and resulting in poverty for her people.

This sorrow was expressed in her walks along the shore as she lamented for the island with a petition to *Tane-tavake*, our sacred bird. On one of her seaside journeys her lament turned into joy, when she found drift wood from the rigging of a lost ship. I sat behind the veil as *Hina-iti* presented the wood in the *harekura* to the chief and *tohunga*.

I gasped in fear at the sight of the wood that could only have come from such a floating island as the one that stole and killed my wayfinding people. The *tohunga* must have heard my shock as he turned toward the screen, but was distracted by the request of the chief.

Hotu-nui said, “The rigging is of a design unknown to our island clans.”

Tohunga Tagaroa-ika replied, “We must discuss with the elders what this sign could mean. Our eldest seer has had fearful visions and I warn that this wooden sign is indeed a great portent⁸⁰ for our people.”

Later in the cave I pleaded with *Hina*, “This is a very bad sign. My first memory as a child was of the terror caused by the floating island.”

Hina tried to console me, “With every portent there is a sliver of hope. Why else did you survive from the torment of these people?”

Hina wore her new wooden tablet as a neck ornament that I would come to know as her princess *reimiro* pendant worn by all members of the royal line during ceremony. It was the sign of her sovereign authority over the island. On this wooden pendant were carved the words:

Tuhinapo-rapa – Guardian of Ocean Migration⁸¹

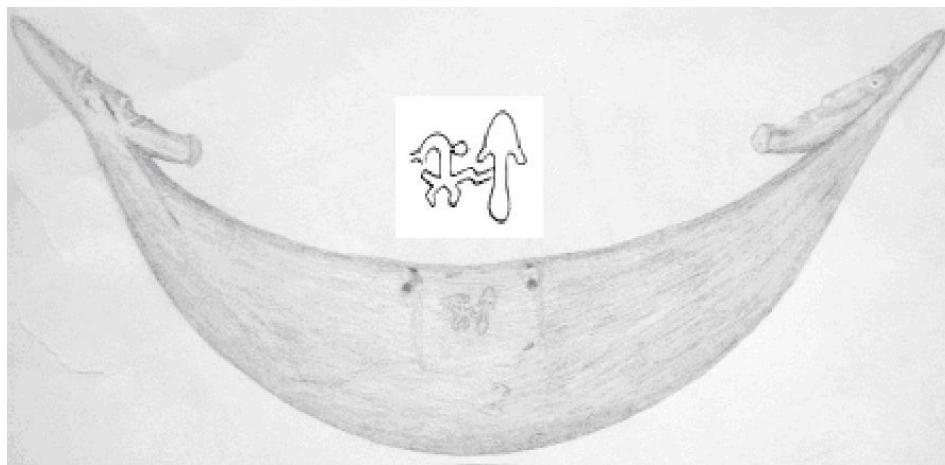


Figure 8: Chief's Reimiro neckband engraved with *Tuhinapo-rapa* (Illustrated by Dansereau, 2011)

⁸⁰ Indigenous elders share gifts unusual to Western thinkers. They have gifts of interpreting dreams, of prophesying and of reading the signs of the times (Black Water, Weasel Fat & Wolf Child, 2010).

⁸¹ *Reimiro*: neck ornaments worn by early Easter Island royalty. The syllables of *Tu-hi-na-po* unravel from the appearance of the glyph where each section forms a syllable from the symbol it signifies, starting from the bottom two legs: TU (representing to stand); HI/*hianga* (to stoop or to fall); NA/*nao* or *wha* (to feel for/to reveal); PO/*poi* (a ball) = TU – HI – NA – PO + the *RAPA* oar as the Guardian of Ocean Migrations (Dansereau, 2011; Tregear, 1891). The Easter Islanders have retained enough of the old *Rapa Nui* words to confirm: *Tu* (to crush); *Higa* (to fall); *Naonao* (a mosquito or one who feels for); *Popo* (a ball).

This was the first word I had learned. It represents an important deity of our people. *Tuhinapo-rapa* is the deity of ocean migrations. He is our guide on a very important migration across the sea of life to the underworld of death and back again. That is why he needs the most powerful oar. From this island, the fishermen and canoe wayfinders, call out to *Tuhinapo-rapa* above all other deities.

Suddenly, I realized that the wayfinder of my birth clan, *Kui*, called out to this deity against the floating island that destroyed my clan. Yet, this call to *Tuhinapo* was a powerful call that saved my life. This means that this deity was known both by the island of my birth and this island of my wanderings. I pondered this discovery in my heart and I learned to call, “*Tuhinapo!*” just as *Kui* did.

I learned the entire chant of *Tuhinapo* while I hid in the rocks at night watching a priest dance. I watched the priest carve a figure of *Tuhinapo* on a *Reimiro* chiefly neck ornament. Instead of dancing the chant of the clan according to protocol, he danced to a *Rapa* power-oar song. As I listened to the song being sung at a funerary rite, I noticed that *Tuhinapo-rapa* was repeated in the sacred whisper of the priest who stood close to my hiding place.

Early in the morning when the dawn was still dark, Princess *Hina* came to me, “We must go to a sacred fire.”

On our way, I shared with her the song of *Tuhinapo*. *Hina* listened with her hand over her heart.

She took me to a place under the stars where an old woman was sitting. She was blind. *Hina* told me not to speak. We sat there for a long time and, just before dawn, we lit up a fire. The old woman took a branch and began to pray:

O Tuhinapo!

She began with the same chant I had been pondering. I gasped in amazement.

O Tuhinapo! Ensure that my grandson, Hotu-iti has your protection.

Guide and protect us all with your mana-power.

Though he is too young, he knows your name.

Since this was your wish, to bring children to know you,

Teach him the sacred chant of the Sea that only the grandmothers knew.

O Tuhinapo, Guardian of Migrations,

Atua-lord, you have not forgotten us.

I asked *Hina*, “What does this prayer mean?”

“*Tuhinapo* will train you,” *Hina* declared, “to be worthy of the sea. He will not allow his canoe, this island, to be swamped by a crew who do not know so much as how to bail.”⁸²

“Surely not!” I responded with pride, “Not on my life! Princess *Hina*.”

Hina corrected me sternly, “This is not something you earned, but a very unusual and free gift from the gods!”

The old woman tapped *Hina* on the arm and said, “Granddaughter, do not scold the boy. In order to prepare us for a difficult time a child has been chosen!”

The old woman smiled and spoke to me, “Child, I am, *Iwi*, *Hina*’s grandmother. I want to introduce you to the first woman, who was named *Hina*, when the Creator

⁸² The history of *Rapa Nui* tells that *Rongorongo* tablet writing was practiced only by the men. However, after discovering the tattoo soothing chant upon the small *Reimiro* tablet, it suggests that the princess who wore this particular tablet of authority must have been singing the chant to ease the sufferings of her clan members being tattooed (Routledge, 1917). *Hina*, as a true leader, is aware that every occupation is essential, even the bailer who with every sweep of the gourd is saving the life of the clan. Also, *Hina* acknowledges the authority of the Creator, named *Tuhinapo*, who guides and influences the everyday actions and identity of the child (Tregear, 1891).

dreamed her into existence. I named my daughter, *Hina-nui*, who died in the fire, after her. My granddaughter, *Hina-iti*, is also named after her. She is the princess of the moon. The moon was the gift given to her for birthing humanity and the moon is her window to watch over us. She will forever be a faithful and kind mother. When you really need something, call out to her and she will answer your distress. But only if you are truly in need.”

Iwi continued, “She has taught us celestial navigation, so as to know our way about the ocean.”

Hina looked at me with a gaze that solidified her grandmother’s words in my memory.

Iwi pointed directly at the moon, though she was blind. She described how the first *Hina* pounds the mulberry bark into *tapa* cloth and that her face and mallet appear on the full moon.⁸³ “When *Hina* has finished making a white *tapa* dress, another deceased spirit is ready to dwell with the immortal ancestors among the stars.” The wisdom and power of *Iwi* reminded me so much of my Grandmother *Kui*, the wayfinder. And so I opened my heart to *Iwi* and harkened every word she spoke as if she were *Kui*.

“I thought the full moon was the flying cook and the three red hot stones of the *umu* oven?” I inquired.

“Yes.” *Iwi* replied. “You have heard the *tohunga* tell their stories. But in order to catch a giant fish, you have to use a net with many more threads.”

Then *Iwi* leaned toward me and said words I will always recall, “My daughter *Hina-nui* did not die in vain. She held the prayers in her heart, long before she held them in the fire.” Smoke billowed out of the mouth of *Iwi* as she spoke, caused by the cool air

⁸³ From Polynesian lore (Tregear, 1891).

of the dawn as she told her stories and I fell into a tranquil sleep. As I slept, I had a dream of being seated by *Hina*'s fire on the moon as she pounded her *tapa* cloth.⁸⁴ Then the goddess reached down and plucked the spirit of *Hina-nui* out of the house fire. The goddess, *Hina*, placed *Hina-nui* beside me and *Hina-nui* reached over and handed me the tablet she offered her life to save. I held the tablet close to my heart. As this great dream came to me, *Hina-iti* carried me back to the cave. *Hina* informed the elders that I was indeed alive.

As I slept the *tohunga* elders of the two leading clans were meeting privately to discuss what to do with me, the orphan boy, *Hotu-iti*. Their meeting was without the knowledge of the leading warriors and chiefs. Nor did they invite the sorcerer, *Punga-varevare*, from the *Koro-orongo* clan.

*Rega-varevare*⁸⁵, from *Koro-orongo* and the leading wisdom keeper of the island, began: “The warriors and chiefs want to kill the child. We have lost the ways of our ancestors in the fog of this war.”

⁸⁴ On the moon, *Hina* is forever pounding her *tapa* cloth from the bark of the celestial tree to make cloth for the dead to be clothed for Polynesian paradise among the stars (Tregear, 1891). In China, Wu Kang offended the gods and as punishment forever chops down the celestial tree on the moon. He is given the elixir of immortality and is built a jade palace by the deity, Archer I, husband of moon goddess, Heng O (Coleman, 2007). In India, it is the moon god Chandra who is identified with the drink of the gods, called Soma, from a tree lost in history (Mackenzie, 1985). The Polynesian moon goddess *Hina* belongs to the circle of deities, including *Rata*, whose tree was also restored every time he chopped it down. Eventually, this tree was made into the Canoe of *Rata*. *Hina* produced immortal clothes for ancestors by pounding the white *tapa* bark from this tree (Tregear, 1891). Archer I also built the palace of Hsi Wang Mu, who rewarded him with the elixir of immortality produced from her fruit tree. She flew on the wings of a crane. Weka and Mu (Tregear, 1904, p. 475) are the broken winged birds that support *Maui* carved on the back of *Hoa-hakanana'ia* at *Orongo* village, Easter Island. Heng O is transformed into a three legged toad on the moon for swallowing the elixir of Wang Mu. The three-legged toad appears pierced on the Easter Island tablets' tattoo soothing chant that produces the complete human being. Archer I of China shot down nine of the ten suns. *Tawhaki* of Polynesia stole 9 of the 10 sweet potatoes and in exchange healed *Whaitiri* of blindness. *Rata* in his canoe followed *Tawhaki* with lost spirits across the arch of the rainbow to the sky. (Coleman, 2007; Tregear, 1891). All these parallels with early Chinese and Hindu mythology confirm a global Indigenous symmetry among ancient storytellers.

⁸⁵ In Easter Island history, *Rega-varevare* was the visionary who shared his great dreams of the coming of the Europeans (www.rongorongo.org). Like Indigenous elders of the Blackfoot and so many other tribes, these dreams were shared to help prepare the people for the changes coming to their land (Soup, 2011).

Tangaroa-ika replied, “When the power of the sorcerers prevail, the *tohunga* and their clans are powerless to prevent wars and even the worst kinds of abuses, such as, infanticide and cannibalism. Even now, the cave of the great *Kai-tangata* is misunderstood in a twisted rite to eat flesh by a small group of young *tohunga* who meet privately.”⁸⁶

Rega-varevare was the eldest and wisest of all *tohunga*. He said, “Do not be afraid.”

Tangaroa slightly bowed his head as *Rega* continued, “*Kai-tangata* was the first man whose *Hau-ahua* strength is transferred in ceremony into a pig, a fish, or even a *kumara*, so we can eat the *mana* power of the first man. In this way, we can overcome the underworld goddess who married *Kai-tangata*, because she thought that his name meant that he also was an underworld man-eater.⁸⁷ But loathing his benevolence, she herself consumed him and became the deity of death. Yet, the Creator did not allow the first man to die. Instead his benevolence lived on in the underworld until *Hina*’s lament for his desolation could be heard from the *Rangi* heaven above. The timeless story tells that when *Hina* saw her precious son, *Kai-tangata*, she jumped into the abyss and swam to the underworld refuge of Turtle Mountain. There she gathered the frail body of the first man and cried a lament for all of us, her children. Her lament rose from the underworld like a great volcano, so great that *Rangi* and the gods fell from their seats in

⁸⁶ The first foreigner to stay on *Rapa Nui* for an extended period of time was Brother Eyraud. For several months he stayed with a clan leader that did not participate in any particular rituals. (Eyraud, 1864-66). Yet, there were tablet writers on the island (Routledge, 1917). This would indicate that there was a divergence of beliefs and devotions among the islands few thousand inhabitants, perhaps in stark contrast to one another (Eyraud, 1864-66).

⁸⁷ *Kai-tangata*, *Maui* and *Hoa-hakanana’ia* were plausibly one and the same mythical being. *Kai-tangata* is a mythical personage in Polynesian story representing the defeat of death and its manifestations, such as, cannibalism, much like the broader Polynesian story of the defeat of the man-eating *Paoa* bird (Tregear, 1891).

the tenth heaven of *Rehua*. In their discussion, their great anger and indifference was appeased by the song of the Sirens coming from the heart of *Hina*. All the gods confessed their faults and offered a morsel of their heavenly feasting to send to the underworld for *Hina* to feed her children. *Makemake*, the Supreme Being, was offended by their initial and meager benevolence. A great flashing of lightning and peeling thunder shook all of heaven opening a great chasm to the underworld. As a result, half of all divine treasures fell down into the underworld exposing the immeasurable benevolence of *Makemake*, the Creator of All. Far below, on Turtle Mountain a host of the lost climbed the chains of gold and beads of pearls that hung down from the gap. Others climbed the magic vines and trees of life that began to sprout. But most of the underworld was too lame, too broken and too decayed to climb. *Hina* remained. For the lost, *Hina* is building a paradise in the underworld and so has become the princess of the moon, where her work is constantly waxing and waning as she pounds the *tapa* cloth to dress the forgotten for the feast of paradise, the feast of *Kai-tangata*.”

Rega stumbled from his stance and *Tangaroa* helped him down and they sat together.

Perceiving his wisdom and his weakness all at once, *Tangaroa* lamented, “What are we going to do when you are gone, my teacher?”

Rega replied, “I will make a good song for you. A good *tohunga* always has a dream to leave you with in order to guide your way.” *Rega* added, “I have had a dream of the boy. The boy must live, for he knows much about the original teachings in his wayfinding years. Many of these teachings we have forgotten after only 1000 years.

Find the boy, and take him with the leading warrior to *Ana-kai-tangata* and he will remind us of the meaning of that sacred place. Take him to all the sacred sites.”⁸⁸

Tangaroa and *Rega* walked off into the misty darkness and they were hidden from the watchers over the miles to their *harekura*. They were hidden from all, but the island’s leading sorcerer, *Punga-varevare*, who in his heart declared, “The boy must die!”

⁸⁸ Indigenous trickster stories reveal a shape-shifter taking multiple forms to identify the Creator who is above any particular identity, yet encompasses them all. This Ultimate Reality speaks through creation to define the identity and essence of the real person as one who maintains harmony with others and harmony with the land (Black Water, Weasel Fat & Wolf Child, 2010).

Chapter 5 - *Tupahotu*: To Carry the First Man

The prophecy of the Rainbow Warriors comes from several separate Native American traditions (Fuller Stone, 1990; Manataka American Indian Council). There have been many Indigenous visionaries with tales of the bearded ones who would come from over the Eastern Ocean. The Indigenous Americans were given a list of signs to watch for as to whether these newcomers would be friendly or hostile. Like Maui and Hina-iti, the Indigenous people are always looking for relationships they can trust. The world has been waiting over 500 years for the Rainbow Warriors. How will these Warriors of the Rainbow be received? These are the warriors of peace who tread lightly on the land, giving back at least as much as received.

Many nights went by and I spent them finding the *harekuras*⁸⁹ of the other clans and listening to their chants, their stories and their lineages. I began to learn them and notice their differences and similarities. Each clan had its own unique stories, yet there was always a common thread that bound them all together weaving a patch-work quilt across the island. I would always return to my cave before sunrise.

I began to develop a growing interest toward the *Tupahotu* clan. There was something about that clan who watched over the volcano quarry, called *Rano Raraku*, since it was located on their territory. I hid at night just outside their *harekura*, listening to the *Tupahotu tohunga* tell their stories. These stories were most related to this volcano quarry where all the statues were made. They often spoke of how the *moai* statues walked from the quarry after a time being fed just like the winner of the birdman egg hunt. In fact, the statues were considered to be like baby birds hatching from the volcano

⁸⁹ *Harekura*, literally, House Ablaze or Red House; the sacred houses where the *tohunga* priests perform ceremonies and teach sacred knowledge (Tregear, 1891).

nest. Another story described them as baby turtles, where the entire island was the mother turtle.

My curiosity kept me going back to this clan night after night and I was developing a fondness of those who would kill me had I been discovered.

Then one night, when the moon was full, I easily found my way outside the *harekura* of the *Tupahotu* clan. I sat as if in open daylight, yet none of the watchers or warriors had noticed me.

However, far off on the hill toward *Poike*, was the silhouette of a sorcerer. *Punga-varevare* sounded the alarm and I was discovered and ran for my life. A half-dozen men were after me. I slipped around rocks and shrubs in a waning hope to escape. Though I ran very fast, a warrior caught me by the arm. He struck me with a strong man's blow. All at once, my head went numb and rang with the force of this adult hitting me on the nose. He hesitated at his assault on the innocent, so I broke away and ran down a ravine to the shore. There was a hollow in the rocks and I took refuge there. Nervously wiping the blood from my nose, I fully expected to be discovered and killed. I looked up at the stars and there was *Taranga*, all alone outside *Ikaroa*.⁹⁰

Taranga is the celestial mother of *Hina*. *Taranga* found lost children and put them back in the canoe which floats across the river of the Milky Way through the underworld. I prayed to her as I gazed at her in the sky during this time of terror.

“*Taranga*, come and rescue me, for I too am alone.”

Above an abrupt struggle began. Men were yelling; there was a number of swift thuds with a club and the noise of a great fight dwindled down to a final, “And don't

⁹⁰ *Taranga* is the star Canopus which lies just outside of *Ikaroa*, lit. the Long Fish, the Polynesian name for the Milky Way, where the ancestors live (Tregear, 1891).

come back!” Then silence. I listened with my heightened senses as a single set of steps approached. My heartbeat kept time with each second of suspense. My mind had nowhere to wander. I had already wandered too far into the enemies’ desolate territory, only to realize that fear mingled with loneliness produces despair.

I gazed up again at *Ikaroa*, the Milky Way, blurry now through tears of terror and I prayed:

Taranga, if this be my time, O Taranga,

Take my hand.

For I am outside the Great Canoe⁹¹

If only the Great Fish would swallow me

Then I would be hidden from the foe.

Take me to Ikaroa,

I am alone in the darkness just like you, Taranga, mother of Hina.

And what if Hina were left alone on Turtle Island?

Her own son, Maui would have died

In the same desolation I find myself.

Then you would have no grandson, to steal the fire from the Underworld,

To noose the Sun at the End of the Earth, Te Pito te Henua,

To fish up the islands of life, Maui, to replace my uncle, Rapa, who died

And now gazing upon me from Ikaroa, with compassion he beckons you

To swim to me and rescue me.

I know you are not just a spark of light

I know you are a spark of hope

93. The Great Canoe is another term for the Milky Way (Tregear, 1891).

I know you enlighten lost wayfinders

When they see you and the anchor, they are safe.

There you are; there is the anchor; I am safe.⁹²

How will you rescue me? Is it by magic? Is it by mana? Tell me.

I know you want me to imagine

The most astonishing event that will pull me out

Of this impossible pit.⁹³

In confidence I pause for your swift reply

For a grandmother can run unhindered

By age or obstacle to rescue her own children.

Suddenly, the face of *Rapa*, my beloved uncle stepped before me. My emotions overwhelmed me. It was actually *Maui*, for they looked so much alike. He was wounded though victorious over six men.

“There is my little starboy, *Hotu-iti*. Did you think the ancestors in the stars would watch down on you without sending their servant to intervene on your behalf?”

My face lit up with a wide uncontainable grin that made my bruised face sore, though I was too elated to care about the pain.

His face was focused on me and shone all at once with a concern and a relief that made me feel like I truly belonged in his circle.⁹⁴ My relief raised my heart to perceive the stars of our common ancestors glittering in his eyes.

⁹² *Tatauro* is the starry anchor or the constellation of the Cross (Du Feu, 1996). In *Rapa Nui archaeoastronomy & ethnoastronomy*, Edmundo Edwards writes that *Tatauro* is a modern name for the Crux constellation, while three of its stars are named *Mata te Tatoru*, the eyes of the three handsome ones, perhaps akin to *Tatoru*, Orion’s Belt, known as the chief and his two sons (Edwards & Edwards, 2010).

⁹³ One of the world’s most passionate prayers comes from the Hindu where the god asks us to think of the most amazing miracle that the deity in her benevolence is eager to provide (Shaivam.org, 1996).



Figure 9: Maui, Prince of Easter Island, who welcomed Hotu-iti⁹⁵ (Illustrated by Dansereau, 2010).

He lifted me up in his arms, my nose pressed out blood upon his shoulder to mingle with his wound. And then I was enlightened. Then I knew, I belonged to this island. True, I had not earned the right, I has not a claim on the land, I had nothing of

⁹⁴ Indigenous identity involves teaching the youth their active and useful roles within the clan, which highlight the values of belonging (Black Water, 2009).

⁹⁵ This is an illustration of the narrative's fictional character *Maui*, son of the island's chief, *Hotu-nui*. *Maui* has a wound on his shoulder after rescuing the boy, *Hotu-iti*, from six men. *Maui* is named after the deified ancestral hero, *Maui-potiki*, who noosed the sun (Tregear, 1891).

value to purchase a seat, nor was I as wise or as strong as any other. But someone greater than I has taught me that the blood beating from frail hearts pumps out the same sacred color in all people. And there is no reason for that Elixir of Immortality to flow red upon the earth apart from a testimony that all people, even all creatures, belong. By this blood, which came from the red clay of Mother Earth, all creatures will return to her embrace.

Maui began to carry me home to my cave. He had been watching my movements at night and was ready to protect me had there been such a discovery. We had not reached *Tuu* territory when over a dozen men began to pursue us. *Maui* made a high whistle, the kind of sound he used to gather his warriors. *Maui* thrust me over his good shoulder and began to run even faster than his enemies. Unfortunately, I had my face turned to the pursuers as *Maui* ran. Since he had a wound and a load, they eventually began to gain on us. I was quite concerned. Some spears were being thrown, but to no avail. More frightening was the slow gain of the dozen that seemed to drain the hope of my life. I had nothing to do but look at the face of the man who wanted to kill me. Closer he came, ten feet away; closer still, five feet. *Maui* was my guardian, my hope. Yet, this enemy had the look of rage. It was the look of men at war. My mind searched aimlessly for a hope, for I did not want to prepare for death. The hopelessness and fear caused me to begin to cry.

Maui whistled again, as if to command. This stirred me from my trance of despair long enough to notice the face of the enemy upon me turn quickly from a face of rage to a sudden cowering fear.

Then, all at once, the two giants, *Hanga* and *Honga*, were upon the dozen. I felt the arm of *Hanga* breeze past my head in time to connect with the neck of my pursuer.

Maui kept his run and I watched a dozen men being tossed like the reeds of *Rano Raraku*. My sobbing turned into chuckles of delight, not so much over the pain experienced by my enemies, but in the relief that my life was saved. It was a comical and terrible sight to see so many men, stronger and bigger than I, being scattered like twigs even as they threw themselves upon the giants.

Even with his wound, *Maui* had me at the cave, over a five mile run, in perhaps twenty minutes. Yet, we were scarcely at the cave entrance for a few minutes when *Hanga* and *Honga* had returned. *Maui*'s face and body glistened in the early dawn light, but the giants had no sweat upon them, not even a scratch or a bruise.

I broke the silence by asking, "Did you all know I was alive?"

Maui replied, "*Hina-iti* cared to share of your whereabouts to the circle that cares about you."

I added, "It is good to have *Hanga* and *Honga* in our circle."

The three men chuckled. They were good friends, in spite of all the pressures put upon the man by the business of the clan and the island.

Maui crouched down to my level and said, "Show me a giant and I will show you the two gentlest men of the island."

Hanga and *Honga* blushed like *harekura* children with the *tohunga*'s red-ochre blessing covering their faces.

Maui was their leader because he possessed a *haka-hau-ahua*⁹⁶ within as great and as able as the giants' external strength. It was this inner strength, this quick spirited confidence he expressed that drew others to his leadership. His example taught me true leadership. *Maui* never made opportunities to boast, yet he stood up when presented with

⁹⁶ *Haka, hau-ahua*: strength (Tregear, 1891).

a challenge. What impressed me the most was that I never felt *Maui* wield his power. He never used his influence to embarrass others or for malice or deceit. He would make the children of the clan laugh with delight a thousand times before he caused his enemy to shudder with fear. And in this benevolence was his *haka* strength. His amiable compassion enabled me to eventually trust my new island leadership and to even accept that *Maui*, was *Maui*, not *Rapa*.

Over the next few days, *Maui's* shoulder wound had festered and he fell into no small fever. Since I was hid in the cave, *Hina* brought me news of his waning strength.

Hina said, "He is falling in and out of a trance. The elders are discussing his words which he repeats: 'They are coming... unite the island... they are coming!'" *Hina* added, "They must be the floating islands of her grandmother *Iwi's* dreams."

I fell asleep and dreamt in my cave of these terrible things. I tried to wake myself, but was deep in the whirl-pool of unconscious fright.

Gratefully, I awoke with a nudging from *Hina* who had with her a very skinny uncle *Rapa* returning to me in my dark and sorrowful cave. But it was not *Rapa*, it was *Maui*, the brother of *Hina-iti*. His fever had broke and the sweat fever fast for four days enabled him to fit into the cave and visit me. *Maui* wanted to offer me the schooling of a prince, at least half as much as *Hina* was offering all of her royal wisdom.

"First," *Maui* said, "I want to place a hollow bone of my great grandfather, *Terahai*, in each of your ears, so that you may be able to listen to the teachings of our ancestors."

Maui paused to ensure I understood and then continued with, "Inside the hollow bones are tiny rolled banana leaves with an incantation written on them."

Maui pierced the bones through my ears. The fierce pain brought a tear to my eye on the side of the piercing, but I refused to flinch in order to honor the ancestors of this island with my courage.

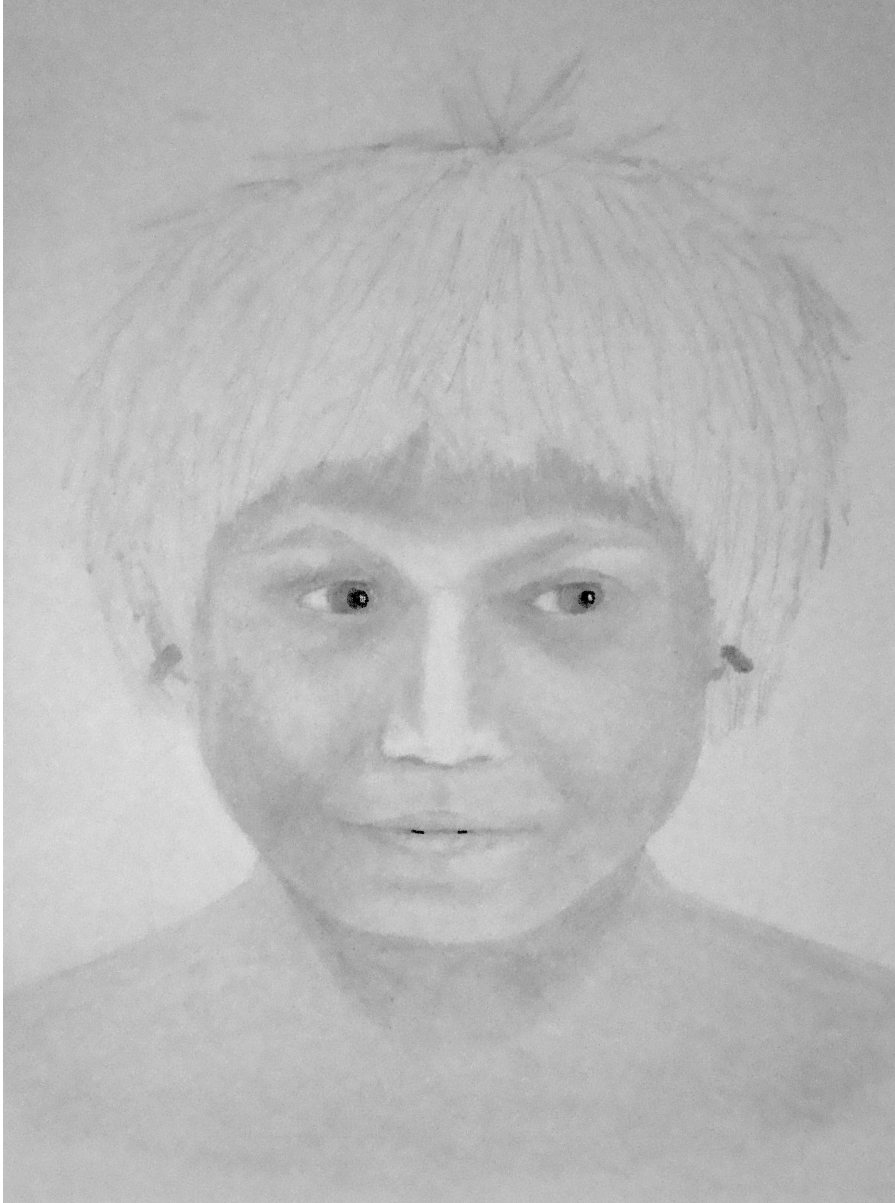


Figure 10: *Hotu-iti*, the narrator, after an ear piercing ceremony⁹⁷ (Illustrated by Dansereau, 2011).

Hina sang a comfort song that distracted me from the piercing:⁹⁸

⁹⁷ *Hotu-iti* is pictured here after his ears have been pierced by Prince *Maui*. The pain has been soothed when the island Princess, *Hina-iti* offers a song of acceptance into the *Miru* clan.

⁹⁸ Barthel, 1978.

Terahai o Rongo

Koroharua o Rongo

Riki-ka-atea o Rongo

Hotu-nui o Rongo

Hotu-iti o Rongo

Listen to the Ancestors

Our little brave blonde brother forever.

How did your hair light up

With the rays of dawn?

Our little brave blonde brother forever, Hotu-iti.

The power of a comfort song can never be exaggerated. In the depth of pain the sweetest gift is given. In the carving out of my spirit during the painful ritual, the song filled my entire being.

After *Hina* repeated the song for each piercing, *Maui* added, “In this way you belong to us and we belong to you, our true brother.”

“This is the purpose of this island’s ceremonies, to bind our identity to the land and to reinforce the character of the real person who in future difficulties will not feel too out of place. This is the making of a true leader.”

The pain was now throbbing in my ears to the tune of the beating of my heart drum. “What was the purpose of this pain?” I thought.

As if reading my mind, *Maui* said, “*Hotu-iti!* Pain happens in life. It takes on many forms and may occur on any occasion. I have given you the gift of pain to solidify in your memory the important teachings you are now receiving.

“For your learning in our clan has already begun with the song of *Hina-iti*. The song named the great-grandfather whose bones are now in your ears. It also shares the name of the god of listening written on the banana leaf wrapped up inside the bones in your ears.

“*Hina-iti* named you, ‘Hair-like-the-rays-of-dawn.’ And everyone on the island looks to you with the same spark of life we feel when dawn stirs us up to dance to the new sun.

“Never forget this affirmation that *Hina* and I have given you. Let the pain be the bottomless pit and let the song of *Hina* fill it with our *ngaro-aroha*⁹⁹, our hidden devotion for you. Our devotion is hidden in your heart like the roots of a great tree hidden in the earth, never to be exposed to decay; like the greatest trees of the island, which can only grow in the crevasses sheltered from the strong cool winds.”

The pain taught me to remember this moment and the Siren’s song satiated me with an endless fountain of hope and affirmation that I truly belonged with a sacred unbreakable family bond to *Maui* and *Hina-iti*. I was forever grateful to *Hina* and *Maui*, for I knew I belonged, in spite of the greatest pain of all, rejection. What would it be like to feel the peaceful embrace of acceptance by the broader circle of the island? For now, I clung to the affirmation of *Hina* and *Maui*.

Maui taught me how to light a fire from wood. He taught me the dances of various chants of the royal family. He showed me the trades of his clan that every prince was taught so the rites of dying elders were protected. *Maui* shared the lineage of the clan and ensured that I memorized every family tree, in every clan of the tribe.

⁹⁹ *Ngaro-aroha*: hidden devotion (Fornander, 1969; Tregear, 1891).

At the mouth of the cave, I pondered all these teachings in my heart that was swelling with affirmation, even as my ears throbbed with the bones of the ancestors, who addressed me with the name, Hair-like-the-rays-of-dawn, not as a mere token, but as a member of the clan, and so, I sat and listened to the sweetest throbbing pain of true belonging.

Maui was amazed when I shared with him the lineage of some of the clans of the *Hotu-iti* tribe. He was excited to know the early *wananga* and most of the deities of the eastern tribe were identical to their own western tribal clans.

Maui shared with me the importance of his name and how the deity *Maui* noosed the sun at the land at the end of the earth, which was our island of *Te Pito te Henua*. *Maui*, the trickster, needed the hair of his sister, *Hina*, Maiden of the Moon, for all other lines would burn up in the fire of the sun.

Maui concluded, “Only the wisdom of *Hina* was strong enough to resist the flames.”

Hina-iti nudged *Maui* over while laughing out, “I told you so!” And she whipped him with her hair. Just then a gust of fresh air came from the cave entrance close to where we sat.

Maui laughed and said, “Well okay then, *Hine-ngaro*! No more will I punch the face of your unwanted suitors.”

At that *Maui* scurried up the cave to the light of day.

“Why did *Maui* call you *Hine-Ngaro*?” I asked. I dared not ask about the suitors, for everyone knew that *Hina*’s love was *tapu* from the *Koro-orongo* tribe on the other side of the war. All the suitors from friendly clans she would brush off, and not a few of

them had black eyes for coming around a second time due to the fists of *Maui*, the protective brother.

Hina-iti turned to me with a sigh and said, “*Hine-ngaro*, is the greatest name of *Hina*, the moon goddess. Her name means the wind of the underworld land of spirits, the hidden breath of life. *Ngaro* also means to love and to hide. That is why *Maui* now calls me *Hine-ngaro*, because I have loved you like a son by hiding you in this underworld cave.

“Tell me more about *Hine-ngaro*!” I pleaded, if for no other reason but that she might forget about *Turi*, her *tapu* love.

Hina-iti said, “My child, among the gods, *Hina* saw how *Maui* was raised in the top-knot of his mother’s hair. So she helped us hide the statue, *Hoa- hakanana’ia* in the *Orongo* village house. The wisdom hair of *Maui*’s mother is the *Rongorongo* prayers themselves wrapped around the wooden tablets as they are recited by the priests of *Orongo* village. That is why the tablets are wound in the protective covering of *Hina*’s *tapa* bark and that is why the hair of the statue contains *Rongorongo* carvings. *Hina* went to the moon to gather all the prayers of *Orongo* by using the waning and waxing of the moon to weave the threads of those prayers. With these threads she pounds out the *tapa* cloth that forms our pure clothing making us acceptable to sit in the sacred circle of *Makemake*, the Creator. To wear the clothes of *Hina*, is to live a good life.”

I asked, “Why did *Hina* choose the moon?”

“My child, the moon is a mirror of our existence, called our *haka-hau-ahua*-strength and this mirror shares with us a view of the sacred spirits walking among us

from *maata*, the deep swamp of death seen in the swamp of the volcano *Rano Kao*.

There are many good spirits reflected in the moon that protect us from evil and death.”

I pressed for more, “How can they walk among us if they are in that swamp?”

“If the swamp of death is a heartbeat away from us, how can it not be right here, my child?” *Hina* explained, “The first *Hina* is the princess of the sky who in our story fell from *rangi* above as the first mother and the Maiden of the Moon. *Hina* has made a calendar to make it easier for us to understand the patterns and tides of the moon.”

I blurted, “I know these 30 days of the moon calendar...”

“That is a start, *Hotu-iti*,” *Hina* began to whisper, “but that is only the beginning of what only the *tohunga* priests recite from our sacred tablets.”

I gasped in amazement, “You know more than the grandmother’s chants! You also know the *tohunga* chants!... *Hina*?”

She nodded modestly, “I, too, would listen at times outside the *harekura* sacred teaching houses. Some of the *tohunga* chants I learned, since some of these chants are similar to the string game chants and other chants that we all know.”¹⁰⁰

I was puzzled with awe and fear, “Why *Hina-iti*? Why are we chosen to know these heavy and powerful things?”

Hina replied, “Perhaps so I would have the power to overcome the underworld spirits swimming in the swamp of *Rano Kao* that day I saved you from drowning there.”

Hina spoke again with words of the sort I would become accustomed to, yet always marvel at how they elevated me to a place above the misty clouds of my ignorance and fear to the enlightened view of day.

¹⁰⁰ Tregear identifies how females were also admitted to chant instruction: “...exception made in regard to women ... after being specially prepared and sanctified, were admitted to learn incantations” (Tregear, 1904, p. 382).

This is what she said, “Some things are given to you, *Hotu-iti*, from above.... Sometimes the Creator gives you something that no man would dare to give, yet no man has the right to keep from you. All the spiritual knowledge. These are the days of raising the *tapu*, or lifting the restriction on things to liberate us from all our failings.” She whispered, “There is a very sacred prophecy that states: The *wananga*¹⁰¹ will appoint a child to lead us back to our precious homeland and restore it.”

Hina left me in the cave with the promise she and *Maui* would take me to the graves of the ancestors in the cover of darkness. This was to further confirm that I was fully adopted into the clan.

Though I feared the trip to the wisdom-keepers’ graves in enemy territory, I desperately anticipated the company of friends for the cave’s darkness was surpassed only by its loneliness.

It was like being woken by angels. *Hina* lifted me to the cave narrows and I crawled out with them. *Maui* was thin from fasting, but strong like a whale carrying me on his shoulders all the way. *Hina* led the way. The feeling of their company heightened my senses and allowed me to take in the wonderful sky, the air and the sounds.

Apart from their footsteps there was the silence of no wind, yet the breakers could be heard in the distance. There were whistles of bugs and rats. The clan watchers were quiet tonight, though we were at war. The still air cooled my face as we walked along, not too fast for the age-old path worn deep in the rocks. Occasionally, *Hina* would stop at a bend or a hill to scout for watchers and then we would go on; sometimes on the main

¹⁰¹ The *wananga* were rarely spoken of and only in whispers due to their sacred status. The *wananga* represented the spirit medium of the deceased ancestor who was a great *tohunga* while living. A great *tohunga* was considered one who knew all the chants and ceremonies and how to implement them (Tregear, 1891).

path, sometimes by a hidden way. *Hina* pointed at the full moon as it broke through a small cloud.

“*Hina* gazes down her favor upon us,” she said.

It seemed that the moon lit up the earth as if it were day. The stars were bold and bright as every night of my life.¹⁰² This night sky brought me back to the wayfinding canoe of my first clan of origin. I tried to remember the stars *Kui* had taught me how to see and how to open the doors of their houses on the horizon. *Maui* told me the stories of the stars as he had come to know them. He did not labour to carry me, even after the moon was halfway across the sky.

When we neared the graves *Maui* whispered, “Reach out with your arm and feel the ancestors.”¹⁰³

I reached out and the hair stood on the back of my neck and I said, “*Rapa*, I can feel an ancestor.”

Maui replied, “And they can feel you, my son.”

Everything *Maui* did and said was just like *Rapa*, my uncle. When two worlds collide, there will be one from each world that looks exactly like the other. Their parents are from different worlds, but they appear as twins to teach the world about how all creatures belong to the same family.

On *Maui*’s back I felt he was truly *Rapa*, though deep down I knew he was not. And when I looked up to the stars that night I felt my mother and father, my *Kui* wayfinder and my clan looking down upon me. The feeling of kinship became so intense

¹⁰² Indigenous world-view includes a view of the night sky and the knowledge of the stories of the stars (Black Water, 2009).

¹⁰³ Black Water, Weasel Fat & Wolf Child, 2010.

I began to laugh with tears of joy. I wanted this walk to never end, since I knew at that moment I was walking with my mother and father.

“My mother and father are here,” I said.

Maui and *Hina-iti* looked at me with a smile. They understood that they were my mother and father. And they were, but my first parents were here, too. I did not need to see them, I perceived them. The cave taught me how to perceive things when my senses were turned off in the dark. I chanted a most sacred dirge within my heart:

Now that I am in the light enlightened after hiding my senses,

All these things I sense mean so much more

They weave together into a new reality

By perception learned in darkness and sorrow

When I asked Makemake the Creator

To become something more in me about life and love

Something more that I could never know before the pain.

And even more, the stories I have learned and their chants add meaning to all that I see. I am no longer afraid to go back to the cave, since it has given me these gifts that might be called enlightenment, at least when it comes to knowing some purpose for desolation, fear and sorrow.

Maui and *Hina* shared with me the importance of this trip to the graves of the ancestors. They shared how the fifteen *moai* statues were the first deified ancestors and all others buried there are permitted to share these stones as their common Standing Up Rods under the direction of the first fifteen spirit mediums.

Maui said, “My son, you will feel their power when we get there, like lightning. That is why the clan to the north is called, *Hiti-uiru*, Reappearing Flash of Lightning, to testify to the power or *mana* of heaven constantly sustaining us by the kindness of our Creator who is protecting us through our own grandparents.”

Maui and *Hina* spoke to me of the tribes whose territory we were passing through.¹⁰⁴ They did not tell me of the fatal danger if we were discovered on this night’s journey, but they did say that grandmother, *Iwi*, had been fasting for this important passage and she is currently chanting for us.

The full moon appeared as a giant blue stone and lit up the white sands of the shore almost like day. The white caps were easily seen on the sea, but the moon to the west appeared to carve a smooth path of light through the waves.

Hina-iti pointed this path out and said, “Look the ancestors travel to and from the stars tonight.”

“Why?” I asked.

Maui replied as he placed me gently on the sacred sand of our ancestors’ graves, “They bring our offering to *Rangi*, the sky father and return to us *mana* or power from *Rehua*, the tenth heaven.”

Up from the shore one could not miss the largest ahu on the island, called, *Tongariki*.

¹⁰⁴ *Miru* or *Miro* means boat. Each year there was a ceremony called *Miro-oone*, or Earth-boat festival to celebrate the migration to the prosperity of the first parents of this land. *Miru* dwells beside *Haumoana* to the south. *Haumoana* means Blue Stone in the Sea and represents the sign of the royal line. This sign is confirmed in the stars above and the stone in the sea off of the shore to the west (Barthel, 1978; Englert, 1970; Tregear, 1891). Even after the generations the means of sea travel was lost on Easter Island, the Polynesian clans maintained the traditions of reading the stars in the skill of the wayfinders.

The air was cool as was the sands on the feet as we walked. To honour their memory *Hina* wrote the calendar on the sands of the low tide.



Figure 11: The Sacred Temple Platform or Ahu of Tonga-riki¹⁰⁵ (Illustrated by Dansereau, 2011).

I nervously spoke, “No one has ever taken me to the sacred burial shores of our ancestors.”

Maui replied, “Feel their requests beckoning your feet burrowing in the sand.”

Hina added, “My child, this was the sand heaped upon the grave, so as to fill the body after decay. That way these sacred pebbles would fill their bodies to make our ancestors pure toward heaven with the *wananga*, who is the spirit of the deceased who, as a faithful wisdom keeper, knew all the incantations for our sacred ceremonies. The

¹⁰⁵ *Ahu Tonga-riki*. This statue platform is located on the beach below *Rano Raraku*, the quarry volcano where most of the statues were carved. This is the largest *Ahu* temple platform spanning over 500 feet, with fifteen *moai* statues. It is situated on the largest ancient gravesite on Easter Island (Barthel, 1978).

pebbles are sacred because the ocean is the belly of our most sacred bird deity, *Tane*, and these pebbles washed by countless waves of *Tane*'s heart are his very gizzard stones that purify our bodies after death.”

As *Hina* spoke *Maui* sifted a handful of stones from the shore that shone in the moonlight for they were polished perfectly by the waves.

Maui gave me a stone and said, “When you are alone in the cave of desolation and the wrath of the living begins to overwhelm you, place this stone under your tongue and a myriad of the dead will come to your aid. For it is the dead who look down upon you as the stars, so tender and full of *aroha* devotion for you.”

I looked up to the stars and that feeling of my parents watching over me came back as clear as ever. Then I clutched the stone in my little fist and did not let it go until I was back in the cave. After gazing at the stars, I looked down on *Hina*'s writing in the sand.

Maui crouched to my level, grasped my shoulders and looked me in the eye. He said, “We came when the moon was full, because this is when *Hina*, Maiden of the Moon, shines her light down on the words we write in the sand. The words will become clear to you in the moonlight.”

“*Rapa*,” I inquired, “why not just come here in the day?”

Maui replied, “My son, you will be seen and possibly killed, for the tribes fear your strange lineage. But even if there was peace, the sun would burn your eyes as you gaze at the white sands to memorize these words.”

I focused on the sacred words *Hina* had written on these most sacred pebbles and noticed a pure white bone of our ancestor protruding out of the sand to accent the sacred chant.

“Is this the way all the islanders receive their death rite?” I asked.

“No, just the royals and the most sacred *tohunga*.” *Maui* continued, “Most people are placed on a pile of rocks by the sea along the shore just to the east of here, for they must make the journey in their spirits through the stones of the *Rano Raraku* quarry like the statue *moai* themselves have. The *tohunga* have already made this journey in life and so when they die they are already akin to the stone *moai* standing on the platforms.”

Hina-iti whispered, “These are the first of *Hina*’s instructions. Memorize the symbols before the tide of *Tane* washes them away.” Within minutes the tide rushed in. She then instructed me to rewrite on the sand the symbols that I remember. Sure enough, only a few of them were recalled. Princess *Hina* taught me the meaning of these few symbols.

Hina continued to explain the symbols while writing them in the sand: “The moon’s arching left represent *Hina* herself. The moon’s arching right represent the moon or *marama* in its 28 to 30 phases.¹⁰⁶ Our language developed this way honouring the earth and sky with all its elements and creatures in order to weave us into it. That way we would learn how to rest on the earth as our mother who nourishes us and then gaze at the stories of the stars as our father, *Rangi* teaches us how to return all that we so graciously receive.”

¹⁰⁶ *Matau*, meaning right side, also means fish-hook, which is the moon as it begins to wax on the right side before it is half-full and is at the same time a sign of *Hina*’s baited fishhook used by *Maui* and *Tagaroa* to lift up the island of life. The word for left, *maui*, also means life (Tregear, 1891). That is why this symbol is tattooed on the left thigh of the island women, as a reminder that left represents life and *Maui*, is our life and helps give birth to children, helps garden and helps sustain all life on the island (Tregear, 1891).

Hina whispered, “I never look at the moon without reciting this prayer ... and my heart burns with devotion for the first mother’s love for us.”

She then stopped teaching and sat on the beach enjoying the soft sound of the surf in the moonlight.

I inquired, “Why have you stopped teaching?”

“I cannot teach you more than what you recalled before the tide washed it away,” she continued, “so another day we will try again to carve the moon calendar chant into the sand before the tide washes it away. Then I will teach you more, until you have consumed the nourishment of the chant and are enlightened to its hidden meaning. It is then that you will learn how the chant revolves in unison with the moon’s monthly cycle. This will be the ultimate test for you.” *Hina* knelt and gazed into my eyes to fix her words in my mind and heart, “*Hotu-iti*, to test you as a *harekura* apprentice you must learn every sacred place, every sacred story. You will only learn this by your own curiosity and your own discovery. Ask yourself, ‘How does the moon’s circle in the sky complete the moon on the tablets and complete the circle of your clan and this tiny island world of ours?’

This last question of *Hina* puzzled me and I pondered it in my heart.

All of this learning was getting to me and I inquired to my elders, “Why do I have to learn all these teachings about the moon and ancestors? I am getting tired of learning.”

Hina looked at me with a smile and said, “You are right! Tomorrow you will go to the ocean and meet *Hina*, face to face.”

This puzzled me more than ever.

Maui only laughed.

But the laughter was enough sound for the morning watch of the *Tupahotu* clan to send a dozen warriors bounding toward us across the sand.

Maui grabbed me under the arms and followed *Hina* at a speed I had only travelled on the sea. It was like I was walking on air, a true birdman of the island. The sense of urgency and the sacred atmosphere made it all seem surreal. We were running north toward the *ahu* temple platform, while the *Tapuhotu* came from the east and the west. The fifteen statues and their platform was a sacred site of refuge, meaning that the enemy could not kill us there. We arrived at the wall of the back of the *ahu*. *Hina* and *Maui* boosted me up and in turn joined me between the *moai* statues. We ran towards an open pit dug out of the lower region of the *ahu*. *Hina* jumped in and reached to grab me. Then *Maui* jumped in. I moved back under an overhanging rock. *Hina* and *Maui* stood like the guardians of the underworld gate protecting me.

Chapter 6: Called into the Light

The Shawnee have a saying, "We are all one child spinning through Mother Sky" (Quoteland.com). It is true global warming is an unprecedented crisis, but it is also an opportunity to redesign the way human beings coexist with each other and the environment (Gore, 2006). In spite of human disharmony against every ecosystem, there is a creative force that has sustained life on earth for millions of years. It holds together every system, every creature, every stone, and every molecule. Indigenous philosophy trusts that all things are related and rest in the arms of Mother Earth. Would such a mother ever forget her children? This wisdom also understands that within this embrace is a balance between chaos on the one hand and order on the other. Indigenous wisdom considers these extremes with a profound sense of hope (Black Water, 2009). There is no need to overemphasize the chaos. Rather it is more productive to focus on the shift towards a new harmony.

There were a dozen or so men with spears and clubs suddenly upon us, surrounding the empty grave at *Tonga-riki*. The men were talking amongst themselves as to whether or not we should all die then and there. Perhaps they could drag us off the *ahu* platform away from this sacred place of refuge. That was their decision. As they were dragging *Hina* and *Maui* away they reached for me. I was frightened to a feverish chill, not so much for me as for the loss of *Maui* and *Hina* who were like mother and father to me.

Thoughts were difficult to sort out in the dragging and screaming shuffle. *Maui* and *Hina* were halfway to the edge and I was still clinging for dear life to the stone overhang. Then I remembered one of the stories of the wisdom keeper when I had listened intently behind the *harekura* screen of this *Tupahotu* enemy clan. The story had

a word said that saved the last Long-ear¹⁰⁷ from being killed by the clan of the Short-ears in the ditch of *Poike*. I replayed the story in my mind again and again. What was that life-saving word?

“Please, *Hina* above!” I prayed, “The clubs are being raised against your daughter *Hina-iti*! The spear is about to be thrust into the heart of your child *Maui*!”

Just then a cloud drifted past the moon and as the sands of this sacred shore lit up, so did my mind.

And so I called, “*Orro! Orro! Orohie!*”

The madness came to a sudden standstill. Club was not swung and spear was not thrust. The weapons remained hung in the air and all eyes looked with bewilderment at me.

My look of terror turned into a worried quizzical pause as I called out another, “*Orro?*”

Yes. The story had *mana*. The story had power. The story meant something.

The warriors of *Tupahotu* showed honour to the story of our ancestors and they spared our lives. I hoped they had forgotten that the two were killed and only the one who called “*Orro!*” was spared.

Sure enough, back at the *harekura* or the house of the chief of *Tupahotu*, they discussed how only the one who cried, “*Orro!*” was spared. The *tapu* of my lineage was raised and an exception was made to spare the life of the ‘one’ and incorporate me into their clan. I was safe. But *Maui*, my *Rapa*, and his sister, *Hina-iti*, were bound and

¹⁰⁷ The Long-ears, were members of the tribe associated with the long-eared statues and the Short-ears were associated with the short-eared statues. There were only six short-eared statues and over 800 long-eared statues. In Easter Island lore the clans of the Long-ears went to war with the Short-ears. The Long-ears made pits with the island trees to burn the Short-ears. The Short-ears learned of the plan and burned up the Long-ears in their own trap. One Long-ear was mercifully left to reproduce his own clan (Métraux, 1957).

would be killed at the sunrise, so their father, *Hotu-nui* could be notified in the distance and watch in powerless humiliation the death of his heirs. It was believed that such humiliation would turn the strength or *haka* of the *Tuu* tribe over to the *Hotu-iti* tribe.

I was tied to the same rock of *Hina-iti* and *Maui*, since I had yet to prove their trust as an adopted servant. *Hina* and *Maui* knew of the fateful plan that would begin at sunrise with the offering of their lives.

I began to cry.

Hina-iti sang me a dirge of comfort:

There was a boy with hair so blonde,

He walked across the water from the East.¹⁰⁸

Some knew his name sounded softly

Like the oar down gently

Upon the White Sea Foam

The crystal clear White Sea Foam.

When he came he found his people surrounded,

He fought a good fight

But lost his two friends on either side.

And he was only spared when he made the call:

“Orro! Orro! Orohie!” The Call of the Dove.

The White Sea-foam Dove

Who walked across the waters from the East.

¹⁰⁸ Walking across the water from the east is a continuation of the ancient Inca story of Viracocha, the sea foam deity who disappeared from the ancient region of Peru by walking over the ocean west, toward Easter Island (Coleman, 2007).

For some reason *Hina*'s comfort song completely reassured me. I voiced my new found hope and premonition, "*Rapa and Hina!*? Something good is about to happen."

Maui was not so optimistic: "Killing us would send our father into despair. *Koro-orongo* would gain momentum and win the island. If this is true, there is a grave problem. Already in an act of war, the *Hotu-iti* tribe has destroyed the seedlings of our allies, the *Marama-ngaure* clan. If their power became greater, they would destroy the crops of the entire island, causing everyone on the island to risk starvation."

Though *Maui*'s tone rang true, I wondered how a people would turn on themselves so easily by the exploitation and abuse of all their resources from so kind and benevolent a Mother Earth.

Just before sunrise a prince from *Koro-orongo* came and said to the guards, "You must go get your princes to witness the killing. Alert the warriors, for *Hotu-nui* is approaching the hill of vision."

There was a look of joy upon the face of *Hina-iti*, though she tried to conceal it, and the reason was that this *Koro-orongo* prince was *Turi*, the love of *Hina-iti*, coming to rescue her. *Maui*, too, was holding back a grin. Then, when the guards had left, the man ran up with a knife. To my relief we were all cut free of the cords. It was *Hina-iti*'s love, named *Turi*. *Turi* was the son of *Mata-nui*, the chief of *Koro-orongo*, the enemy of *Hotu-nui*.

Hina-iti embraced *Turi*, "My father still refuses to consent to our love, my prince of the three hills of *Poike*."

Turi replied, "Go! Run for your lives. I will stall your enemy who pursues you."

As the sun rose on *Orongo*, the three of us fled west toward the safety of the territory of the *Tuu* tribe. We could see behind us a troop of warriors from *Tupahotu* and *Koro-orongo* in pursuit, maybe a half-mile back. The royal family with their warriors were about six miles ahead.

Hina-iti was about as fast as a strong warrior and *Maui* also, though I was on his shoulders. Soon we reached the border of *Tuu*. Those warriors with the *Koro-orongo* clan slowed their advance for they were too small to handle *Hotu-nui* without their own chief, *Mata-nui* and his guard of seasoned warriors. Instead of pursuing us further, the *Koro-orongo* warriors began destroying what they could of the green shoots of the *Hotu-nui*'s tribe of *Tuu*. With little time before the arrival of *Hotu-nui*, the enemy warriors retreated to the safety of their own territory. This violence to the gardens was a sure act of war. At the border of opposing territories the *Koro-orongo* warriors turned to taunt *Hotu-nui*.

As we were approaching the warriors of *Tuu*, they were hidden from view by a hill between us. However, I could see *Hotu-nui*'s chiefly headdress dancing across the terrain and revealing how quickly he was closing in on us.

“Quickly! Here!” *Hina-iti* commanded.

Maui shuffled me into a crevasse, where *Hina* had lifted a rock. Again, I was alone in a dark cave. I heard the company coming as their feet pounded the ground above and the voices muffled as I shuffled deeper into the darkness, hoping I was out of sight and out of mind.

Above *Hotu-nui* demanded, “Where is the child?”

Maui answered, “He is here in the cave of *Marama-ngaure*.”¹⁰⁹

Hina stepped over the cave and said, “He is brave and courageous as your own son, *Maui*, for saving our lives.”

Hotu-nui’s expression humbled as he imagined the loss of his own children, “He saved you?”

Maui explained the entire story as if I were a legendary hero.

At the words of *Maui*, *Hotu-nui* bent to one knee to gain his breath. He crawled to the cave entrance and called, “My son! My son! *Hotu-iti*! Come to the light where I can see the pillar of a little man who saved my *Hina-iti* and my *Maui*.”

I gazed up to the light hardly believing my ears until I saw *Hina-iti* hugged her father with the same joy that welled up from deep within my belly.

As I crawled out from my Mother Earth, I jumped into the arms of my new father, *Hotu-nui*.

Hotu-nui laughed again as in the days of *Hina-nui*. Then he said to me, “You are white like a spirit out from you *tupo*!”¹¹⁰ Then he turned to *Hina-iti* and *Maui*, “Your brother was dead and now he is alive.”

Both *Hina* and *Maui* placed a hand on their father’s shoulders. The heart of the chief had softened and I was free, at least on the west side of the island.

Back at the *harekura*, *Hotu-nui* gathered his clan. He then sent runners to the all the allied western tribes and called them to gather. The chiefs of the clans did not sit in his presence, since all had lost faith in their chief. Eyes of doubt and discouragement looked on from a wide circle of kin. Grumbling could be heard, even among the warriors

¹⁰⁹ *Marama-ngaure*: another clan between the western *Miru* and the eastern *Koro-orongo*.

¹¹⁰ *Tupo*: a grave or tomb (Tregear, 1891).

and matriarch of all the troubles of the island. It was no lie that there was a serious risk of famine with all the damage to the young shoots caused by the war. Many were still concerned I would contaminate the noble lineage. Perhaps a compromise could be made with the eastern clans if I were handed over.

Maui spoke out with strength in his voice, “Sit! My brothers and sisters, your father and chief is about to speak!”

Maui and *Hina-iti* were the first to sit and then the giants, *Hanga* and *Honga*, sat down. The twins then began knocking several others down as far as they could reach. The commotion caused a stir of laughter and everyone finally sat in turn.

Hotu-nui stood as a new man before his people. Even before he spoke, his commanding presence once again kindled a flicker of hope in everyone present. After a pause that set the tone, the chief said, “How do we determine the value of another? Is it by the color of their skin?”

Then giants chuckled, for they wondered why my skin, lightened to the appearance of a spirit of the dead, was not a sign enough to bring admiration and kinship from the clans.

The chief continued, “No! Not at all! The spirits of our ancestors would have abandoned us long ago.”

Others began to respond toward the chief, since they knew their deceased grandparents continually watched over them among the stars.

“But who have the ancestors dwelt with these past four years,” *Hotu-nui* said with a sure look my way.

The rising hum of the crowd confirmed a strong conviction that our greatest *wanangas*, who were faithful *tohungas* in their living years, chose the children to transfer their wisdom and power.

Hotu-nui rose his hand to silence all voices and spoke up with a rising strength, “Here is a child that we have called our enemy. We have not only spoke ill of him, but we plotted his own death.... Can one mere child cause us such harm? And yet what has he done with his *mana*, his life? He has hid himself outside our sacred circles just to hear of our wisdom.”

There was a plea in *Hotu-nui*'s voice as he continued: “Then he gathered the affections of my son and daughter, even against my wounded perception. Do you think he would then suddenly take advantage of the only friends he had on this island? No!”

Hotu-nui fell on his knees and cried out, “No!!! He saved the lives of my daughter and son, at the very moment they were under the spear and club of our enemy.”

All looked on in reverent silence as their chief pulled a bone knife and pointed to the east and his voice boomed on, “What does this pure act of valor make of this child?”

As every clan sounded benevolent suggestions in my favor, *Hotu-nui* reached out for my hand.

The chief continued as his voice rumbled out each word, “But by what standard do we know the heart of another? If not by the color upon the skin, I say it is by the color under the skin!”

The people gasped as *Hotu-nui* raised the knife and struck down upon my hand. He swiftly did the same to his own hand. Everyone gasped as we held our bleeding hands together.

No one could so much as breathe until the chief cried, "Because that color is one and the same, this child is my son!"

Even from the three hills of *Poike*, a cheer could be heard and loud enough for the birds of *Motu-nui* to take flight.

The great courageous voice of the many stirred the elders of the eastern clans to meet and beckon their warriors to seek a peaceful end of the war. Only *Ponga-vare-vare* disagreed, because deep within his heart he was bent on power without wisdom. But keeping his ambition unknown, he offered a compromise.

All ears of the eastern elders listened to *Ponga*, "When I was a child, my rite of passage to become a man was to crawl through the cave of *Miru*. In the cave we were to leave our hand print at the face of *Makemake*. If you want peace with the west, why not send our children from each clan into the cave. The first child out is the son of the island chief."

There was some suspicion among the elders, but the plan of *Ponga* did sound fair. However, the elders felt the death of *Hina-nui*, and the damage their warriors caused the crops would require gifts of appeasement and compensation for *Hotu-nui* and his allies.

With gifts of dried fish and other provisions, *Mata-nui* arrived at *Miru* with a peace procession under heavy watch by the warriors of *Hotu-nui*.

I sat in anticipation before the crowd.

Tangaroa-ika, our leading elder spoke first, "You have destroyed most of our green shoots and it is not certain that the precious seeds on reserve would even bear fruit if planted this late."

Maui added, “How could you be so foolish as to destroy the crop we trade to you, *Koro-orongo*, for the fish off your shores?”

Since the *Koro-orongo* clan had the two main beaches of the island, they were charged with the main catch of fish around the tides and shallows. The clans of *Tuu* also fished in the reed boats for deep sea *tuna*, but replenished their coastal fish stocks for garden trade.

The offering of dried fish and provisions was presented by *Mata-nui*. He also spoke of the plan for peace they requested *Hotu-nui* and his elders to consider.

The objection of our wisdom keeper, *Tangaroa-ika*, was sadly and quickly overcome by the warriors’ approval of *Mata-nui*’s request. They decided that each of the seven clans, four of *Tuu* and three of *Hotu-iti*, would choose the bravest boys and the most beautiful girls among their families. Of the seven boys and seven girls chosen, they would send them into the cave to determine who would rise from the earth a prince and princess. It is good that children were chosen, since many of the adults were not thin enough to fit into the cave. Such a cave could only be entered by an adult who had been fasting for several days.

All the clans had gathered at *Miru* with all the feathered crowns and *tapa* gowns for the inauguration celebration of their island chief. A great feast and dance was held. The *tohunga* prayed the chants on the tablets while the chosen 14 youth were covered in white dye, so that they would be welcome by the spirits of the underworld.

As the preparations of the *tohunga* were almost complete, *Ponga-vare-vare* slipped a bone knife into the *tapa* girdle of *Tura*. *Tura* was the youngest son of *Mata-nui* and brother of *Turi*. *Turi* was the strongest of the seven boys, as he had already been

training for over a year beside his elder brother among the warriors. His sister, *Poia*, joined him in the cave.

I, *Hotu-iti*, overheard *Ponga* giving instructions to *Tura* on how to rise from the cave the son of the island chief. It was at this time that I slipped away and hid in the cave before the 14 youth entered.

I watched from the darkness how they gathered at the entrance. There they lit their torches and made their plan to break up into seven pairs in order to search for the face of *Makemake*. As the youth entered I positioned myself just out of the light of *Tura* and *Poia*. As soon as the others were out of sight, I called to *Tura*.

“Can you spare a light?”

Tura replied, “Sure, how about a light bone knife!”

I anticipated his swing and clutched his arm with both hands, while biting down hard on the base of his thumb. The knife fell and I threw it off into the dark. Then I scurried off to find the others.

Tura and *Poia* were soon pursuing me wielding a torch and a knife. I chose the longest passage in the hope I would find another to help me. Here I was with a foiled plan to save others, now trying to save myself. My advantage of knowing the cave was useless if the person with the knife had a torch. That was it. How do I get rid of the torch? I just had to stay away until it burnt out. I knew of a room ahead that broke into a passage that could lead me here again. However, *Tura* and *Poia*¹¹¹ soon figured out my game and cut me off from both sides. I ran away from the knife and pushed the torch aside. It fell from *Poia*'s hands and splintered on the floor. The light was out. It was as

¹¹¹ It is not uncommon for names of mythical heroes in one region to resemble those in another. Here *Poia* is a name used in Polynesia and among the Blackfeet (Tregear, 1891; Black Water, Weasel Fat & Wolf Child, 2010).

dark as the underworld of *Po Reinga*. *Tura* and *Poia* held hands and charged toward me in the dark. I backed away as *Turi* blindly stabbed the bone knife at the path around my feet.

This prince and princess of *Koro-orongo* cornered me into the depth of the cave. The cave narrowed at this point and pressed in on my chest as I advanced away from the pursuers. *Hina-iti* and her grandmother, *Iwi*, taught me that even when I was hemmed in on all sides of the cave to remember that this was my mother earth, my *Oone-henua*, my *Papa*. And so, I was not afraid of the tight space. However, there was mud and, in order to advance, I had to hold my breath. Soon it would be the end of me.

Just as I was at the point of suffocation or capture by the children of the *Koro-orongo* clan, I felt ahead of me the bones of another boy. It was the brother of *Hotu-nui*, who had died in his passage rite through the cave to manhood. To me, this was not an encouraging sign in my struggle. Yet, I found a way alongside his living remains¹¹² and found a space to breathe. They were almost reaching out to me and could hear my breathing. I chanted an incantation of protection that my pursuers would not find me.

The boy chasing me laughed with what air remained in his lungs and he said, “You are right in front of me and trapped. Will you disappear?”

Then, I pulled the skeleton of *Hotu-nui*'s brother toward the voice of *Tura*, who was reaching toward me with the bone knife and he clutched the dead man's bones.

¹¹² Bones as living remains: there is an ancient Polynesian belief that the skull and bones are signs of the immortality of the dead, because they do not decay as easily as the flesh. Tregear writes of the ancient burial feast of the gods, where “a portion was also offered to the deceased person (present physically in their bones). Of course the dead man could not eat the substance of the food but its soul (*aria*) or the spirit of the food was supposed to be devoured (Tregear, 1904, pp. 396-397).

Tura screamed for his life thinking that my spell had turned me into a skeleton. The two retreated quickly out of the dead end in which I was cornered. As I was retreating to find my space, I felt a bracelet on the wrist of the skeleton. Then I remembered the story of *Hina-iti* and how her father and uncles were given a bracelet of protection from their mother as they entered the cave during their passage rite to adulthood.

After finding my way to the main hall I could hear several of the children crying and calling to each other: “We are lost! He is a skeleton! We are trapped!” They had burned out all their torches and some of the children were lost deep in the cave.

So I called out, “I know the way for you!”

Suddenly all the screeching came to a complete stop. It was the sound... of silence.¹¹³

Tura replied, “How can we trust you, *Hotu-iti*, with your trickery?”

“You will know me by my wonderful plan in the works.” I continued, “First we must save the others!”

I gathered those who were lost, one by one by guiding them to the skylight where *Hina-iti* and I used to sit. It took some time, but I instructed them how to use the thread to find the others. For over three years I had learned the deep hollows of this cave and I was able to give the children comfort with my knowledge. All the while I remained in the dark and kept my distance from *Tura*.

¹¹³ Silent Country or Mute Land was a mythical underworld beneath the ocean floor in Polynesian lore. It is where the hook of *Maui* lifts the ocean floor and all the deceased are released as fish from the underworld. Among the Norse, the final battle, called Ragnarok, is where Vidar, the Silent One tears off the lower jaw of the underworld wolf (Coleman, 2007).

Tura said, “What is to keep me now from killing you? If I rise to the surface as friends, my family will regard me as a senseless traitor.”

Some agreed with *Tura*, while others commended me for saving their lives.

“You are not yet saved!” I insisted. “Which of you knows how to find the narrow passage?”

Tura jeered with ingratitude, “Together we can do it and we do not need you.”

I replied with a conviction of the goodness in every human spirit, “If you want to live, follow me!”

They began to follow me, one by one. First, those who were the most lost and, therefore, the most grateful that I rescued them. Then eventually, even *Tura* came along. Instead of guiding them to the door, I brought them to the dripping pool.

Tura cried, “Where are we? This is a trap!”

I said, “It is your spring.”

Tura replied, “The springs come out with salt on the shore. There are no fresh water springs on *Rapa Nui*.”¹¹⁴

I splashed the water up at the face of my enemy who felt the cool water and tasted its sweetness, sweeter than the rain of *Ohiro*.¹¹⁵

At first there was silence in the dark, but you could cut with a knife the feeling in the air full of *Tura*’s softening thoughts. Then I heard the water of the pool moving around the hand of *Tura*.

Poia touched his shoulder, “I am your family and I say we follow this great sign across the waters to this land we make our own.”

¹¹⁴ Barthel, 1978.

¹¹⁵ *Ohiro*: deity of the rain (Métraux, 1940).

Tura washed his face with the water and drank and then he wept.

With the authority of a great chief, *Tura* said, “We have entered this cave as children, we will find our way as men and women to the face of *Makemake* and rise out of this cave to a new land of harmony with each other.”

There were no small cries of wonder and delight. In total darkness these fourteen children were enlightened by the pool and began to drink, splash and celebrate.

Tura cried, “This is the raising of the sacred *tapu vaiora o Tane-manawa*.”¹¹⁶

Our celebration was extreme, since only moments ago we were enemies and those once lost felt sure to die. Now, they marvelled in a new wonder of *vaiora* hidden beneath our island.

I shared with them the value of this experience in contrast to those who train for war: “When we train for war our identity is lost in the mob, where our soul becomes bound by a circle of deceit. Yet, in the circle of Mother Earth we are alone in a cave. This is the passage rite to your adulthood and in it we are intended to meet *Makemake*, the Creator, face to face.”

Poia replied, “It is true, then. I saw *Makemake*, when I was lost in the cave.”

Together we felt for the pit of bones where the handprints were made of former newly born adults. Once at the pit, we found enough organic matter to steal the flame of the underworld just like *Maui*.¹¹⁷ *Tura* scraped an impression of his vision of *Makemake* under the painted hands of many ancestors and we all gazed upon the Creator as if face to

¹¹⁶ *Vaiora/waiora o Tane-manawa*: the water of life from the heart of *Tane* (Tregear, 1891).

¹¹⁷ *Maui* is the trickster who stole fire from the underworld, much like the trickster Raven of the Tlinglet who also stole the sun. Raven as thief of the sun is a story told from Alaska down to ancient Mexico, where Quetzalcoatl is considered both Raven and Plumed Serpent. In China, Raven has three legs and is considered the sun deity also. His consort, Heng O, is a three legged toad on the moon. Heng O of China, is *Hina*, Moon Maiden of Polynesia (Coleman, 2007).

face. Not a word was said, but something happened there deep in the cave. It was powerful, it made perfect sense and it drew us together. At that moment we knew the spirit of the island would never die. We knew that we the children had a voice that would end the war.

I shared with them how to unite the island by saying, “Each of you repeat your lineage and we will find the common ancestral root.”

As they shared their lineage the children from every clan came to the realization that our first father was *Hotu Matua*¹¹⁸ and our first mother was *Rei Pua*. By these ancestors we all belonged to the same family. In the face of our struggles, we had forgotten the reality that our circles were linked together. But after meeting face to face, we have been brought together by our Creator, *Makemake*¹¹⁹.

One by one we stepped out of the cave. I was last and appeared as pallid as a ghost having not seen the sun for over three years. Some of the elders were convinced by this sign alone, for they painted the islanders with the white dye of the *reipua* root to mimic the likeness of ancestral spirits. *Tura* spoke and all the adults listened, for the heads of all the clans were present. The fourteen youth appealed to the clans for peace. I stepped forward and presented *Hotu-nui* with the bracelet of his brother whose clean bones were a testament of immortality to the stars.

Hotu-nui held the bracelet in his hand. His expression changed from bewilderment to gratitude.

¹¹⁸ *Hotu* dictionary names provide evidence that *Hotu Matua* is an important ancient Polynesian navigator and perhaps a name intended to identify the first father of humanity (Tregear, 1891).

¹¹⁹ Indigenous communities can find strength from discovering common mythological links that make their stories into expanded epic tales that further promote Indigenous ecological values with even more universal appeal (Reichard, 1921).

Poia said, “We had a vision of *Makemake* and placed his image with the seven impressions from *Hotu-nui* and his brothers, who made this same passage-rite in the cave. We have come out alive from a death trap as a sign that this island is intended for peace, freedom and vitality in all living circles.”

Hotu-nui replied, “You have been enlightened to the ways of *Maui*, the trickster and *Hina-ngaro*,¹²⁰ the mother who loves us. With the one who was your enemy, you have made a friend. Just as you have died in the cave and underworld land of our own demise, you will live long and prosper on this island under the guarantee of my life.”

There was a great celebration that day. It was one of the great moments in our island’s history: the day all clans made peace and vowed to restore harmony to the land.

Fourteen years later I am victor of the *Tangata-manu* Birdman Egg Hunt sitting on the side of *Rano Raraku*, where all the statues were carved. I am fasting for one year to acquire the perception of the Creator who keeps my island in balance. My clan’s *tohunga* feeds me morsels like a bird feeding a chick. As the winning *Tangata-manu* from past generations, I also prayed:

Cause to descend, outside, beyond

Cause to enter into these offspring...

The ancient prized knowledge... O Io-e!....

Be fixed in thy root and origin; affixed thy constant attention,

Firm be thy inspiration, thy ardent desire,

Within the roots, and rootlets of their thoughts.

May it grow, the fullness of this knowledge-

This ancient knowledge, this original learnings,

¹²⁰ Fornander, 1969, p. 217.

And be like thine,.... O Io-all-knowing....

May thy inspiration grow [equal to thine]. O Ruatau-e!

And to that of Tane and of Paia-who-acquired-all-knowledge-

And to Tangaroa [god of ocean] and Tawhiri-matea [god of strong winds]

In the beating and trembling of my heart.

Hold firm, for ever, with desire towards the ways of Tu [the god of war]

May he draw forth abundant knowledge.

And entwine in his desires, the ways of Rongo [the god of peace]

Let them combine with matured inspiration.

Be effective, the sanctifying meal of Tu-horo-mata,

And full advantage be taken of the teaching, by (these children),

For they are thy offspring, that desire thee, O Io-the-all-father e!¹²¹

So much has happened since that day Chief *Hotu-nui* included me in the circle of this island. This cave born passage-rite was such a small but necessary step. In the years that follow, my heart will be carved like these statues in order to make room for a dream of paradise we, the peoples of Turtle Island, call ‘Reality.’

I brushed my hands over this *Rongorongo* tablet given in exchange for the winning *tavake* egg. The writing board reminded me of all the elders. I pondered in my heart the words of Grandfather *Tangaroa-uri*:

Only when we become a guardian of the earth do we fully understand what makes us all akin to one another. Even the most impossible odds are overwhelmed by the circle that realizes that each individual has a different knot to tie in order to

¹²¹ Whatahoro, 1913. P. 96. *Tu-horo-mata*: the personification of knowledge absorbed by the *tauirahoromata* or student as they absorb the fern root morsel, *aruhe*, while simultaneously absorbing the teaching of the wisdom school or *Whare-wananga*. Also, see Tregear, 1904, p. 487.

complete the noose to snare the sun. For this purpose we have all been born to learn together the harmonious tune of that resonating call of *Orongo ma Tane*.

The focus of my gaze rose from the tablet, down the hillside of *Rano Raraku* from *Orohie harekura*¹²² and I saw the fifteen gravestones, the Standing Up Rods of *Tonga-riki*. These ancestors taught me how a birdman can fly into that void of the grave where lie hidden the mysteries of enlightenment.

For under the rainbow of Uenuku-kopako

*Hidden in the mist I am the warrior*¹²³ *crawling*

Out from the cave to my home upon the waters.

Like a little tortoise from the hatchling pit,

With cracking sounds abound our origin stories

And the Tangata-manu calls unhindered

Apart from the spreading brush of my wings

Toward the first soaring

Of the meek who inherit the earth.

¹²² *Orohie* is the house where the winning birdman was feed for a year. Due to its place in the history of island ceremony it is considered a sacred site (Chambers & Blood, 2009; van Tilberg, 1994).

¹²³ The story of the home of *Uenuku-kopako*, under the rainbow mist draws a parallel with the prophecy of the Rainbow Warriors among the early American First Nations about people of all races who will help restore the earth threatened by ecological crisis (Fuller Stone, 2011).

Epilogue

Are the stories, rituals and voice of these Indigenous wayfinders transferable for our situation and times? Given the current global ecological crisis, humanity is poised to respond affirmatively to the voices of Indigenous wisdom. *Hotu-iti* sits in the sacred house of the winning *Tangata-manu* Birdman beckoning a morsel from our hand for a share in his Indigenous wisdom.

This pillar of a little man speaks of *Finding Turtle Island* by gathering from the cave of fear many hidden treasures, be they the winning egg of the sooty tern, the *Easter Island* tablets or the common stories and experiences of human history. Polynesian wisdom keeper, Rangi Marie Rose Pere, supports an ancient tradition that enlightenment is not restricted to any particular world-view (Pere, 2011). If wisdom can come from any corner of the world, then in a time of crisis it is reasonable to seek over all the earth in order to find and hear the voice of that wisdom.

The winners of the *Tangata-manu* Egg Hunt are those little enough to search in every cave, even if it is a child leading them. These are the meek who shall inherit the earth with all its hidden treasures. One such treasure is the first egg of *Motu-nui*, which represents the life of Easter Island for the entire year. Another hidden treasure is a mystery writing tablet from this same island. Its carvings represent a sacred *tapu*, restricted from the untrained eye. The learner arrives and the sacred *tapu* covering is raised enough for one to enter under the covering of the *harekura* wisdom school. The raising of this mystery hidden from the earth can draw all people into the same Indigenous story. This Indigenous wisdom matters, because it contains the stories of harmony with the earth. This wisdom works to influence human activity to change the

story of human history for the better. These stories begin by giving hope, as in the Seven-Fire Prophecy:

“Look for an island shaped like a turtle that will be an instrument in the restoration of the earth.... And a child shall lead them” (Benton-Banai, 1979).

To be continued

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