

A close-up photograph of a person with dark hair, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt, focused on carving a large, light-colored wooden block. The person is using a chisel to shape the wood. The background is slightly blurred, showing another person's face in the upper left. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting an outdoor or well-lit workshop environment.

JPS

The Journal
of the
Polynesian Society

VOLUME 127 No.2 JUNE 2018

THE POLYNESIAN SOCIETY
THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND

ORAL TRADITION AND THE CANOE ON TAKŪ

RICHARD MOYLE
University of Auckland

This essay examines the canoe on the Polynesian Outlier of Takū, both as an artefact enduring in memory and existing as an ongoing survival necessity. It is in part from the remembered canoe—mythologised, and vaunted in songs ancient and modern—that Takū take their self-identity and from the existing canoe that they enjoy ongoing vitality, for, without the canoe, Takū could not have been colonised, nor could contemporary life be sustained nor the future contemplated. In adopting this perspective, I rely principally on the evidence of oral tradition as spoken and sung, but refer where appropriate to the somewhat meagre historical printed record. I expand on the place of the canoe to identify elements of Takū society influenced by the manufacture and performance of this one artefact that occupies much of a man's time, and which is celebrated more frequently and enduringly than any other in the performing arts by the entire adult community.

The Oceanic canoe has long been the object of academic study, from voyaging to design and performance capacity (e.g., the summaries in Clunie 2015: 405–18; Di Piazza 2015: 454–56; Genz 2017; George 2017; Irwin and Flay 2015: 440–43), but published information from Takū itself is rare and confined largely to incidental descriptions of varying detail and accuracy, due largely to the very low incidence of resident-based research. As members of arguably the last remaining Polynesian society still practising traditional religion (Moyle 2018), Takū place high value on adherence to matters of precedent in manufacturing items of material culture, in ensuring conformity with the responsibilities inherent in social relationships, and in maintaining positive and productive contact with watchful ancestors. By its very nature, precedent is backward-looking, for which reason understanding and preservation of knowledge of the past is a core value entrusted to authority figures within the community. Takū frame their past as *tuai* 'old' when referring to the speaker's own past experience and *sāita mua* 'first period' when speaking of the traditional era, optionally followed by the emphatic *ilō*. The third and most chronologically distant era, identified by descriptive phrases such as *sāita nā aitu* 'period of the spirits' or *sāita nā aitu nmui* 'period of the great spirits', relates to the island's discovery and colonisation, a period before the first island-born humans.

The canoe features significantly in all three eras, but is remembered unevenly within the present community because of the nature of Takū cultural knowledge. Privileged memory of clan mythology is the prerogative of the

male elders of Takū's five clans, aided where necessary by private consultation with knowledgeable age mates; the implied continuity of knowledge is applied through invocations as a counter to social discontinuities such as sickness, injury and death. Rising above even those lofty connections stands the figure of the island's *ariki*, Takū's supreme religious leader, who alone has the genealogical credentials to safely invoke the great spirit Pukena on behalf of the community in time of disasters of natural or epidemic form. Takū define an ancestor as a deceased family member who knew you—or at least saw you—while alive. Collective memory of canoes in the lives of family ancestors resides principally with the living male descendants, men whose personal knowledge of such matters depends in large part on their level of interest as evidenced by acts of initiative; a father may gladly impart family knowledge to a son but will await the son's request rather than offer the information outright. It is to such ancestors that a man calls while in his canoe to ensure fishing success both in the lagoon and on the open ocean. Current community canoe-building and canoe-sailing practice also relies on memory, the kind of memory that captures, retains and reproduces the family-based procedures and secrets of design and performance capabilities.

MYTHOLOGICAL PERIOD

By its nature, colonisation mythology embodies narratives of canoe voyaging, emphasising episodic travel and the details of crews and passengers rather than descriptions of the canoes themselves. Information on the colonisation myths and the role of canoes is fragmentary (e.g., Bladen 1961: 80–81; Elbert 1963), but Moir refers at length to several such accounts contained in the field notes of her fellow researcher Irwin Howard, summarising their canoe journeying (1989: 64–67):

Each patriclan's myth relates that the group originated in Sopokana, a name that translates as 'the place where the sun rises' (the east). In the myth of the first patriline to be established on the atoll, its progenitor was a man named Takuu who set out on the journey from his home, an island also called Takuu, travelling first to the island of Ttuila to collect his two sons who would accompany him. (Three of the five myths cite Ttuila as the point of origin or the earliest way station, where key personnel joined the voyage.)

Another patriline's ancestors, having left Ttuila, arrived at the island of Savaiki (cf. Savai'i) where they stayed long enough to carve a canoe, and to be given foodstuffs and a protective spear by the *ariki* of that land. They then travelled to Lotuma, where they lived for a time; the *ariki* of Lotuma gave this patriline's progenitor more provisions, including a magical sword, sacred charms, and ornaments now associated with the patriline.

Upon leaving Lotuma the canoe came upon an island called Taputapu, lying between Lotuma and Savaiki; later it anchored at the island of Niua (a third patriline's myth also mentions these landings). Eventually the ancestors reached Luanua (Ontong Java), then an uninhabited atoll, and there they left one of their party to found a settlement The canoe continued its voyage, discovering and establishing communities on the atolls of Takuu and Nukuria, returning to Savaiki to tell the ariki of these accomplishments, and making additional visits to Ontong Java and Nukuria before settling permanently on Takuu.

In two cases, patriline myths relate that, having found Takuu, some ancestors traveled on to points further west (referred to as "the Melanesian islands" or "Buka"), from which they brought back taro to plant in their new land.

The son of Takuu referred to as Tefuittuila ... resided on the island of Ttuila until his father came to take him to seek a new land. Following the discovery of Takuu Atoll, his father sent him back to Ttuila to bring more swamp taro, coconuts, and people who would found new patrilines. On the return voyage, Ttuila established the totems and tapu [regalia] for his patrilineal descendants.

Takū was discovered and founded by ancestor spirits who arrived by canoe, and their names, the locations where they landed and the sequence of their arrivals continue to be known and relevant to contemporary social life. When recounting myths, for example, Takū routinely align the narrative with contemporary Takū society, assigning the current name of a clan elder to the relevant ancestor. The following translated extract, recorded from Nes Mōmoa in 1994, illustrates such connections: founding canoe names are linked to the elders of the five clans, Tenehu, Pūtahu, Kikiva, Kīpū and Avo, all in office at the time of the recording:

The canoe *Vakaroa* belonged to Tenehu's ancestor, *Tāoa* belonged to Pūtahu's and Kikiva's ancestor, *Puraka* belonged to Kīpū's ancestor, and *Hakautu* belonged to Avo's ancestor. Those were the four founding canoes for this island. Those canoes brought the ancestors with them and saw this island as it was still emerging from below, rising like bubbles, together with heaped up sand to construct the dry land. After heaping it up in a dry pile, they dragged their canoes down to the water, and the land continued to rise up.

The canoe movements within the atoll's lagoon were commemorated by assigning names to specific locations where significant events occurred (e.g., Te Vakaroa is the name of an elongated rock outcrop in the lagoon, and Nā Marua Hakautu 'Hakautu's lagoon clearings' is an area offshore from Nukutoa Island).

Moir notes (above) that the initial colonisation was followed by voyages back to the points of departure to populate the new island with foodstuffs; as Nes related:

They went and constructed a large garden in which to plant taro and giant taro. The giant taro was called *puraka*. They brought a single *puraka* and planted it in the garden. Then that canoe, *Tāoa*, went off again leaving the other canoes anchored here. *Tāoa* went off to bring back taro and yams, but on their return, they found nothing for themselves because the people had already divided the land [i.e., Takū Island] among themselves.

Although this account of the prevailing arrival sequence has not been not immune from challenge (Leeson 1967; Moir 1989: 95–96), the significance of *Tāoa*'s crew—and subsequent descendants—being absent for the land distribution, and other privileges, is founded on the principle of primacy of access, a widely expressed principle in Takū society. The occupants of the first founding canoe to arrive, *Hakautu*, claimed social supremacy, a position which, following a period of alternating chieftainship between two patriline (Moyle 2007: 58), continues. The net result of the few published accounts and my own fieldwork is a patchwork of individual mythic episodes, varying widely in levels of detail across the five clans and not easily susceptible to chronologising, corroboration or rebuttal. Further, although founding canoes appear in several accounts, their mention with one exception occurs more or less in passing between more detailed narratives of events occurring at arrival points or waypoints. The exception relates to a round-trip journey by the canoe *Tāoa* to several island locations apparently located within West Polynesia (Moir 1989: 64–65; Moyle 2007: 259–60).

One contemporary character stands outside clan colonisation mythology, having no association with any of the four canoes or those on board. At an undefined period of time in the distant past, but one when Takū was inhabited by mythological creatures apparently unobserved by co-resident spirit and human ancestors, lived Hatuvave, shape-changing trickster supreme and bringer of fire to the island. The final episode of the myth, as recounted by Sēhuri Tave in 2000, illustrates the trickster's ingenuity with his canoe:

Hatuvave then sailed off with his crew, who were all subsequently killed. He went alone to the sticky sea (*tai ppiri*), so sticky that he couldn't sail or paddle through it. He cut his canoe in half, placed one piece on the surface, then lifted the second piece in front, pulled up the first piece behind, and so on, and leapfrogged the pieces until he safely passed through, thence to the end of the world.

The assignment of canoe-related narratives to either the mythological or traditional eras is a matter of referential convenience but is also to some extent arbitrary since the division between the two is now blurred, if indeed it was ever distinct. Elbert notes (1963: 3), for example, “The oldest genealogy lists 18 generations of mortals descended from three generations of deities”, and I myself recorded similarly divided lists. And one remarkable narrative, by Pūtahu E Lasi, listed the names of three captains of *Tāoa*, all human, together with a female crew member described as an *aitu*. Mythology records that at least some founding canoes brought to Takū the first humans, who coexisted with spirits and eventually produced human offspring, but it remains unclear whether one common Takū description of the former period as the “era of the spirits” is intended to represent an absolute distinction. More certain, and more widely believed, is the close symbiotic link between distant ancestors and other inhabitants of the natural world, even though the human or spirit nature of those ancestors remains unclear. The results of such links are, however, ongoing. As the *ariki* Avo explained:

If the canoe became damaged, we—the *ariki*—were forbidden to eat the giant clam. When the canoe struck rough weather and was damaged, the *ariki* had an amulet for that situation. He tied the amulet to his foot, and that’s why he is now forbidden to eat clam: because the clam drank the water from the bilge, the water could not rise high; it remained at the level where the amulet was tied to the *ariki*’s foot.

This and other similar eating bans pertain for some bird species, as Avo observed when describing voyages (*horau*) to neighbouring Nukumanu:

Each time *Hakautu* went on a voyage, there was a bird, a tern. While the canoe was at sea, that bird always flew in front of their bow. If it flew in another different direction, the canoe had to follow it because that was the correct direction. If the canoe came to the deep sea without any sign of an island, then the tropicbird appeared. On the bird’s arrival, it was already dark, and it remained with them. It came and cried to them, then flew away; it was just like a compass. If we were nearing an island, it would depart, and the tern took over, and if it flew in the other direction, crying, that meant our course was incorrect.

Takū society places high value on singing and dancing (see Moyle 2007), to the extent that the community of some 150 adults had more than 1,000 songs in their active repertoire during my fieldwork (1994–2010), and routinely spent 20 or more hours each week in semiformal singing and dancing. The two dances held in highest esteem—identified as such by the rarity of performance,

the protocols of eligible participants and the several amulets worn by each dancer to avoid personal disaster in the event of an error—were brought to Takū by canoe in the mythological era. Of these dances, the men’s *paki* and *paronu*, only the origin of the former is known. As recounted by Nes Mōmoa (in abbreviated form):

[The spirit leaders] each stayed in their houses and sang. And those canoes continued to sail and bring back songs. *Tāoa* went off, *Hakautu* went off, and brought back songs. The *paki* was brought here from Samoa. The canoe was anchored at the beach while the people on shore were singing, and somehow recorded the words and preserved it. There was the *paki* and the *paronu*, but nowadays nobody knows about the *paronu*—it’s all lost. Only the *paki* itself is still known; the canoe visited Samoa, Taputapu, Ttuila, Tikopia, Māori. And that canoe sailed on her journey for six months, returning after another six months with the eastern trade wind. It sailed out for the six months of the westerly trade wind, and returned home six months later on the easterly trade wind.

As the spirits traversed the ocean to and from Takū, they occasionally composed—or overheard from other spirits and memorised—songs called *llū* (singular *lū*). Present performance of songs of this genre is limited to adults who sing them in public only at predetermined times after a local death (Moyle 2007: 189–97). Current understanding of the lyrics is sporadic: some are clearly narrative in their content whereas others are almost opaque, even to the singers, as the original frames of reference passed from living members. As Nes Mōmoa summarised:

The *llū* were composed by spirits, composed on the ocean [i.e., during the voyage]. Spirits from that time composed about their voyages; people from that era didn’t yet look human—the ones who voyaged on those canoes—but they captured them.

Although several *llū* relate to a specific incident while voyaging, a spoken explanation of the voyage as a whole may omit any reference to such an event, so that information on the one is not necessarily derivable, or confirmable, from the other. One example relates to a voyage of Hare Ata clan’s mythical ancestors; the song is described as *te lū makavā* ‘song of the dimensions’, a reference to the canoe design, and the lyrics clearly depict potentially serious storm damage to the canoe:

Iāiē ko te makavā

*Ā ni tō mai e ko te horau i Nanoki, iāiē
ko te makavā.*

Oh, the [canoe’s] dimensions.

Brought here from the voyage from
Nanoki, oh the dimensions.

<i>Iāiē ko te makavā, ā ko te ā aku mō, ua aku mō hīāē.</i>	The dimensions ... [not understood].
<i>Āiē ariki e ko te kiato ku hahati.</i>	The <i>ariki</i> was told that the boom was about to snap.
<i>Ā Sikitonu ka te kiato ku hati.</i>	Sikitonu was told that the boom was about to snap.
<i>Ā ko te ariki e ā ko te sua ku hahati.</i>	The <i>ariki</i> was told that the starboard platform was about to snap.
<i>Ā te Kanutu e ā ko te sua ku hati.</i>	Te Kanutu [i.e., his other name] was told that the starboard platform was about to snap.
<i>Ā ni tukua nau ki te sau nā ariki.</i>	I was placed under the power of all the <i>ariki</i> .

The associated narrative, however, focuses on a quite separate incident:

This *lū* is about a sailing canoe going from place to place. The canoe's name was *Hakautu*. The captain's job was to oversee the canoe, and he was respected as a captain. When the canoe was ready, it left and she sailed on and on. One man became ill and, before dying in mid-ocean, begged the captain to return his body to Takū, but Takū was far away, and he died. After he died, they buried him at sea. When discarding his body in the ocean, they attached an amulet. Only the body was abandoned in mid-ocean, but his spirit returned to Takū, even though it seemed that the spirit was reluctant to return: it seemed to want to get back on board and stay there.

The earliest accounts of sails, contained in the lyrics of *llū* songs and accompanying narratives, speak of them as woven; eight or more were routinely carried on board because of their propensity to tear in adverse wind conditions. Indeed, one myth, recounting the origin of the *laki* and *anake* winds, details such events; the following is an excerpt, as recounted by Parasei Pūō:

Next day [the two mythical brothers] worked on their canoe. They worked until the canoe was complete, then made sails. They sewed their sails, and when they finished, there were eight of them.

Then they hoisted their first sail, and were on their way. They sailed on and on to the next place, and their first sail tore; they discarded it, hoisted the second one, and kept on sailing. They continued on until the second sail also tore. They discarded it and hoisted the third one. They kept on like that, until there were only two sails left.

When only two sails remained, they said to each other, “Hey, there’s an island rising up over there.”

They sailed over, but suddenly there was no island there. They passed over it. As they did so, they heard someone singing from the direction of the stern. They turned around and there was that same island, rising up from the stern. They shifted the sail position and returned to the place where it rose up. As they sailed towards it, it disappeared again, so they sailed back again to the same place. The name of that place was Manavio. Every time they sailed to that island, it kept on disappearing.

Then their sail tore, and they hoisted another one. Then they said, “Hey, if we go to where it keeps on rising up, we shouldn’t just pass over it—we should stay on top of it.”

So they hoisted their last sail. They sailed towards it and drifted on top of that place. There was nothing there, so they simply drifted over it.

While they remained there, something rose up from below. It rose up, carrying their canoe with it. It carried their canoe up, and there were two women sitting on a finger of exposed rock. They were singing on top of the rock. They asked the men, “What are you two doing here?” [etc.]

It is thus largely through the medium of singing and dancing that Takū as a community celebrate links to the mythological past, albeit in a fragmentary manner. Consolidation of the fragments into coherent narratives remains the prerogative of clan elders, but the frequent references to the superior knowledge of past elders, combined with the likely loss of a significant amount of such information in a 19th-century epidemic (Moyle 2007: 25) and a certain lack of interest by some elders, indicate that oral sources are in decline. Although, as an artefact of colonisation and exploration, the canoe retains its centrality in contemporary accounts, a degree of blurring is apparent.

TRADITIONAL PERIOD

Founding canoe names appear to have been perpetuated into the traditional period and, although not susceptible to confirmation or rebuttal, are commonly used when referring to inter-island voyaging. The conventional understanding is that pairs of canoes sailed downwind from Takū during the six-month period of the northwesterly *laki* wind, after which they could return on the southeasterly *anake* wind. As with the somewhat tenuous distinction between mythology and prehistory, so too the boundary between traditional and historic is blurred, and indeed unimportant to many Takū. From having spoken on the topic of voyaging with a large proportion of resident men, and

also expatriates, it is fair to say that Nes's account of traditional voyaging, below, is typical of the scope of general understanding and level of detail that Takū residents possess: any former individualities are smoothed into generalisations, and the typical and the exceptional are merged into accounts now said to reflect common practice.

Sometimes [voyagers] brought things with them, such as whale teeth, but they went on a [separate] canoe. The canoe used to store the teeth on board was *Taravati*; it was a companion canoe for *Hakautu*. Once on board that canoe, nobody could ask another person for something—it was forbidden. If you were hungry, you simply helped yourself. When we went and brought those things—the teeth—it was always on that canoe, and we returned on it. When we brought them on that canoe, along with the leader who divided them among the people from the island [of Takū]—some were for these families, others for those other families, to pay for women [as bride price]. When you married, you paid for your wife with it. The tooth was like money; that's how people on the island paid for their women, together with the complete back of a green turtle.

Sometime later, the canoe went again on her voyage; *Hakautu* went and brought frigate bird bones and whale bones to use for tattooing women. They brought them from Samoa—they brought them for tattooing fish designs on their legs. They called it the tattooing comb. Those are what they brought from Samoa, and other islands—the combs.

Not all voyaging was plain sailing, so to speak. Avo outlined a reaction to extreme weather while at sea:

If the canoe was at sea and the sea was rough, they put out an anchor rope about two metres long, but they would still remain anchored at that place [i.e., without any weight attached]. They stayed there for some time, then continued on the voyage. If the canoe then came ashore at Peilau, Liuania or Sekeiana, they had to cover the prow so nobody would see it; that's how *Hakautu* used to be on her voyaging.

Although no recorded account details the structure of a clan's mythological canoe, fragmentary information from several men suggests that it carried over into the traditional era. Some details of an ancient canoe type were noted by Parkinson (1999) after a visit in 1884. Models were routinely made by a few men as artefacts for sale from the 1960s (Fig. 1), although the source of the modellers' own information is not known, and the only known illustration (Haddon and Hornell 1991 [II]: 77) relies entirely on secondhand sources (Parkinson 1999; Sarfert and Damm 1931). When Andrew Cheyne visited the island in 1843 he observed “ten large canoes” approaching his vessel

(Shineberg 1971: 295); these could conceivably have been the community's entire fleet of voyaging canoes, although it seems unlikely and no details are provided. During his own visit, Parkinson saw such canoes in storage because of lack of manpower to crew them following a devastating epidemic, and provided the only firsthand description (1991: 235):

Years ago, on my first visit to Tauu [*sic*], I saw big canoes lying in separate huts on the beach. Even at that time they could no longer be used by the diminished population because they were too heavy to be launched into the water, even with the combined strength of all the men. These canoes were up to 14 metres long and 1.5 metres deep, and were built from the keel upwards from planks laid side by side. Both fore and aft they had long steeply rising end pieces, carefully carved, and also at both ends a canopy which depicted roughly carved relief figures. Unfortunately, on this first visit I did not have enough time to take a photograph, but I was able to throw together rapidly the following drawing of one of the end pieces [Fig. 2]. When I paid a visit to Tauu several years later wind and weather had destroyed the canoes to such an extent that only small fragments remained. The natives said to me that earlier, people had sailed in these vessels far out to sea to catch *lavenga* (*Ruvettus*) [oilfish], and that large triangular mat sails were used. The drawing shows an oval plate at the upper end, hollowed out a little, like a dish; this served as a seat, according to the headman.

In the course of gathering information for a Takū dictionary (which was not published), Irwin Howard collected names for parts of the ancient canoe. Twenty years later, while I myself was compiling a dictionary (Moyle 2011a), I obtained a copy of Howard's manuscript and with permission included the terms he collected. During that same period, however, knowledge of virtually all of the terms had disappeared. Howard's information, with acknowledgements, is incorporated into the dictionary. Both sets of research illustrate the significance of detail in canoe design: Howard recorded 34 names of canoe parts for the *vaka hailā* sailing canoe, and I myself recorded a further 65 terms applicable to contemporary canoes.

Current names for the ancient canoe itself vary, some men calling it *vaka henua* 'traditional canoe' (lit. 'island canoe'), others by its mode of locomotion: *vaka hailā* 'sailing canoe' (lit. 'canoe using a sail'). As one man told me, *Te inoa te vaka henua e ttapa te henua nei* 'It's the name of the traditional canoe that identifies this island'. Nomenclature for the accompanying canoe is less clear, some calling it *vaka toko* (lit. 'poled canoe'), *vakahānota* 'fishing canoe' or *soa vaka* 'companion canoe'. As Nes Mōmoa summarised: "Some were cargo canoes—there were sailing canoes and cargo canoes. When the sailing canoes departed, the cargo canoes followed behind them, and when the sailing canoes returned, the cargo canoes accompanied them."

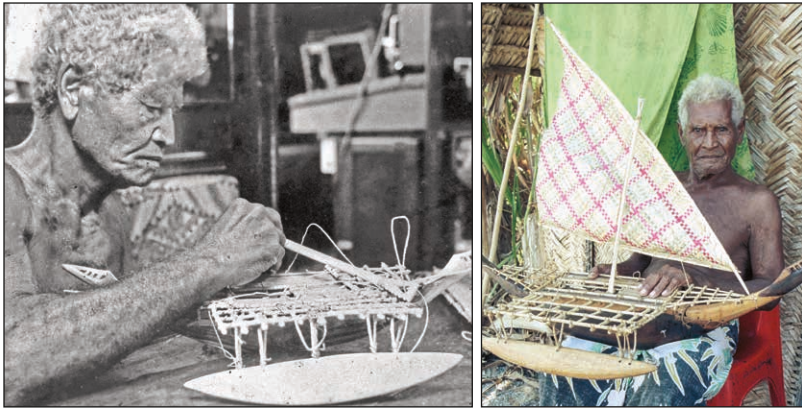


Figure 1. Models of the *vaka hailā* and their manufacturers. Left: Sante Tekapu. Photographer and date unknown; Right: Pūtahu E Lasi. Photograph by Hamish Macdonald, 2000.



Figure 2. After Parkinson (1999: Fig. 90, p. 235).

An assumption is that cargo canoes performed as well as sailing canoes in order to stay together during voyages, but Takū appear to have no information on the sailing characteristics of either craft. Using contemporary clan names as reference points, Takū identify the names of the ancient clan sailing canoes and their accompanying cargo canoes as:

Hare Ata clan: *Hakautu* and *Maraerae*

Hare Mania clan: *Te Puraka* and *Sukimarau*

Hare Māsani clan: *Matarākei* and *Purenakina*

Hare Nāoro clan: *Tāoa* and *Te Vaelani*

Hare Ania clan: *Te Vakaroa* [cargo canoe name not known]

Using stellar navigation to sail by day and night (see Chinnery 1897–1971: 77; Moyle 2003), canoes heading east from Takū followed a sequence of islands (*aturou*), all Polynesian Outliers—Nukumanu, Peilau, Sikeiana, Liuanuia, Taumako and Tikopia—although whether by making landfall at each or merely sighting and passing is not clear. Curiously, while on Nukumanu in 1984, Feinberg (1995:165) was told that canoes from Takū did not sail there, a claim not borne out by information given by Takū to Bassett in 1921 (1969: 106) and Chinnery in 1927 (1897–1971:77), and by the appearance in Takū genealogies of Nukumanu names three and four generations ago. Elsewhere (Moyle 2007: 22–30) I outline Takū understanding of traditional contact with other islands, summarised here in Table 1 (see also Fig. 3):

Table 1. Summary of contact with neighbouring Polynesian islands.

	Mythological era	Traditional era	19th century
Nukuria	Founding ancestor deposited there by canoe first visiting Takū		
Nukumanu		Waypoint en route to/ from Tikopia	Several drift arrivals, including Manauī, who taught a new fishing technique
Peilau		Waypoint en route to/ from Tikopia	Apuku, Takua drifted to Takū, introduced new fishing techniques and sets of <i>tuki</i> songs
Liuanuia	Founding ancestor deposited there; departure point for one canoe's discovery of Takū	Waypoint en route to/ from Tikopia	Drift canoes brought epidemic which decimated population
Sikaiana	Ancestral canoe visits	Waypoint en route to/ from Tikopia	
Tikopia	Ancestral canoe visits	Source of turmeric	
'Sāmoa'	Residence of several founding ancestors; ancestral canoe visits to obtain a dance; source of tattooing combs, food	Commonly suggested as land of origin	

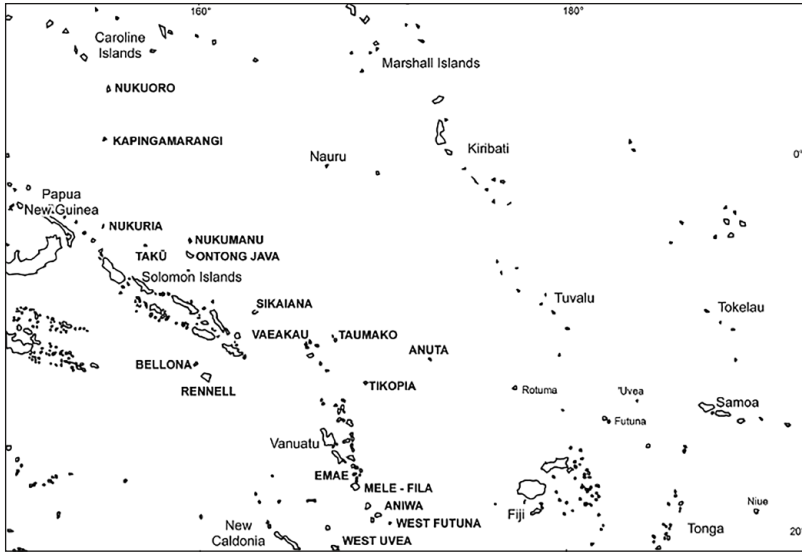


Figure 3. The Southwest Pacific, with Polynesian Outlier names capitalised (after Feinberg and Scaglione 2012, reproduced with permission).

With the exception of a myth in which Tikopia is a waypoint in the homeward voyage of the canoe *Tāoa* (Moyle 2007: 26), travel to that island was for the stated purpose of obtaining the highly valued turmeric, used in a variety of contexts on Takū itself (Firth 1939, 1940; Moyle 2018: 161–69). Narratives record that outward travel was via Nukumanu and Peilau, although only in song lyrics are details preserved. One *lū*, as recorded by Pōssiri Pōpī, commemorates such a round trip:

<i>Tū e te laki hau aokē, ko taku vaka nei.</i>	The west wind blows hard, here is my canoe.
<i>[te hati] A vausia taku laki ē, ko taku vaka nei, ia usu iē.</i>	[refrain] Give me a west wind, here is my canoe, <i>ia usu iē</i> .
<i>Hau nau ki aruna ē,</i>	So I can go “up” [i.e., to Tikopia],
<i>[hakamau hua] Ko taku vaka nei, ia usu iē.</i>	[refrain] Here is my canoe, <i>ia usu iē</i> .
<i>A ni tokia ko tuahenua ē,</i>	I arrived at the rear of the island,
<i>A moea ko Sikeiana ē,</i>	It was Sikeiana,

<i>A ni tokia ko Tuamarama ē,</i>	I arrived at Tuamarama,
<i>A terekia tua te ākau nei ē,</i>	I moved around the reef,
<i>A terekia tua o tonu ē,</i>	I moved around the mangroves,
<i>A terekia tua te henua ē,</i>	I traversed the island,
<i>A terekia tua Sāpai ē,</i>	I traversed Sāpai,
<i>A sura te mouna te henua ē,</i>	The island's mountains appeared,
<i>A tuku ki te atu hanohano ē,</i>	I left it for the outward chain,
<i>A sura te mouna Taumako ē,</i>	Taumako's mountains appeared,
<i>A tuku ki te atu hanohano ē,</i>	I left it for the outward chain,
<i>A rono te ariki te henua ē, ko te rena ni taria ma nei.</i>	The chief received the news that the turmeric had been collected.
<i>A rono te ariki Tikopia e, ako te hati nā ni saria maiē, ko taku vaka nei, ia usu iē.</i>	Tikopia's chief received the news, of my canoe, that the turmeric had been collected, <i>ia usu iē</i> .
<i>A moe Tupa mā ki Tikopia e, ia usu iē.</i>	Tupa and the others were there on Tikopia, <i>ia usu iē</i> .

A further *lū* recounts a challenge, ritual or otherwise, on the arrival at Tikopia of the (unnamed) *ariki*'s cargo canoe *Taumaraerae*:

<i>Ā iri ko te pū ka tū ki te noho tāua.</i>	The trumpet blew towards our group [i.e., from the shore].
<i>[hati] E ai taku roto ka vōvare, o aiē e iē.</i>	[refrain] My anger was uncontrollable.
<i>Ā iri ko Marae,</i>	Then <i>Taumaraerae</i> 's own trumpet sounded,
<i>Aimu ē ni tani ki Aniti, Aniti ni tani ki Aimu.</i>	Aimu cried out to Aniti, Aniti cried out to Aimu.
<i>Ā ni puia e ko tai ki te marae.</i>	[The canoe] was halted at the beach.
<i>[hati] O ai taku vaka ko kā raka ku ravea, aiē</i>	[refrain] My canoe almost passed it by, but it was discovered.
<i>Ai saruru ke te mouna Tikopia aiē usu e iē.</i>	I arrived at Tikopia's mountain, <i>iē</i> .
<i>Ā tere mai te vaka ka tere lāoi,</i>	The canoe had sailed in perfect conditions,
<i>Ā tere mai ko Marae ka tere lāoi.</i>	<i>Taumaraerae</i> had sailed in perfect conditions.

<i>Ā tū i mua ma te nāsau,</i>	But someone stood in the path with a spear,
<i>Ā tū i mua ma te lorokua.</i>	But someone stood in the path with a club.

In his own account of voyaging, Nes referred to the presence of non-Takū passengers on the canoe, although it is unclear whether the conveyance of such people constituted a reason for the voyages or was merely incidental, or whether such acts were common or rare:

They sailed to islands such as Peilau, Liuania and Sāmoa. They sailed on those canoes, such as *Tāoa* and *Hakautu*, travelling to Nukumanu to collect people from Nukumanu and take them to Liuania, where they left them. They took people from Liuania and dropped them at Tikopia and Taumako. They travelled about between all those islands.

Like that from the mythological era, much information about traditional voyaging is patchy and contains no chronological anchors to land-based events on Takū or the other islands visited, but it is free from the other's sequence-based areas of dispute. Canoe captains were men possessing skills that present-day Takū can describe but not explain or emulate, a situation they commonly attribute to the greater strength of contact with ancestor spirits. As with the mythological past, so too here, events are recounted in *llū* songs, evoked in group performances whose lyrics are known but frequently not understood or understood differently because of the opacity of their allusions, but sung nonetheless in what all those present hope are error-free performances out of fear of retribution from ever-listening ancestral spirits. Parkinson (1999) does not state how many large sailing canoes he saw on the beach at Takū Island in 1884, but their sheer weight would certainly require large numbers of adults to haul each one up to its storage area, numbers simply not available after the epidemic. The demise of the *vaka henua* and *vaka toko* spelt the end of planked canoes (although for different reasons) in eventual favour of a solid-hull type which has lasted until the present.

HISTORIC PERIOD

Relatively few voyaging narratives can be dated with any degree of confidence to the past 150 years, and culture-bearers' knowledge after the epidemic was confined to the survivors who, at least in a photograph of the entire community possibly taken by Parkinson (Fig. 4), included none who were very young or very old. But at around that same time Takū were introduced to a new style of pelagic fishing and perhaps also a new style of canoe capable of going

out into the ocean; oral tradition relating to both the activity and the artefact abounds, particularly in the form of group songs. Of the many song genres in Takū's repertoire, *tuki* are the most numerous, two or more composed after each local death. The function of the *tuki* is worded succinctly—*ki ahu te tautai* 'to praise the master fisherman'—and each song focuses on one aspect of fishing: catching tuna (*sī*), catching sharks (*pakū*), catching oilfish (*hakasoro*), constructing a new canoe (*tīhuna*). Within the *tuki* genre, most are in praise of a successful tuna expedition.

The multi-rod *sī* technique for tuna fishing is said to have been introduced from Wuvulu Island in Manus via Nukuria while Takū's epidemic survivors were living on Kapeatu Island, and proved so popular that the old single-pole trolling method called *aro i le pā* 'paddling with a lure' was abandoned. The new technique—in which the five crew members live-bait with small reef fish (Fig. 5), then stand and flick rods out simultaneously—requires a canoe around nine metres long, and establishment of the name *vakasī* 'tuna-fishing canoe' suggests that a canoe of that size was introduced at the same time. Of the several prestige pelagic fish known to fishers, tuna occupy a special position, as evident in expeditions exclusively for that species after a local



Figure 4. The population of Takū after the epidemic. Photographer unknown; possibly Richard Parkinson.

death, seeking confirmation in the form of a good catch of the soul's successful arrival at the appropriate afterworld (Moyle 2007: 72). But regardless of the fish species caught, the canoe itself is called *vakasī*. When fishing for tuna, the five crew members occupy set positions. From bow to stern, these are crew member, fishing leader (*tautai*), live bait dispenser (*tanata te maunu*), second-in-command (*kausaki*) and crew member. (One clan reverses this sequence, for unknown reasons.) The smaller canoes, *huāvaka* or *tamāvaka*, appear to have co-existed with the *vaka hailā*, and were in common use throughout the fieldwork years; in 1998, for example, 52 of these canoes were in use, and at one point a further ten were simultaneously under construction. The sole difference in *vakasī* construction that men say they themselves have observed is limited to the material for its sails (see below).

As in earlier times, so too in the historic period, foreign canoe occupants brought songs to the island. Takū's large repertoire of *tuki* songs includes ten or more which relate memorable events on neighbouring Outliers and which are said to have been composed and taught by drifters from those islands (Moyle 2007: 246), including Nukumanu and Liuanuia (Bassett 1969: 106; Sarfert and Damm 1931: 501), bringing individuals who became influential



Figure 5. Women weave the long basket (left) in which bait fish are kept alive when fishing for tuna (right). Note the two leaf amulets attached to the basket struts to attract the target fish. Photograph by Richard Moyle.

in several areas. Manauī, who drifted from Nukumanu in a canoe now known to Takū as *Te Arohi*, was adopted into the family of the then *ariki* Telauika who, having no son of his own, passed the title on to him. Manauī is credited with the introduction of the *hakasoro* technique of nightfishing for the oilfish. Similarly, two brothers, Apuku and Takua, drifted from Peilau in *Ssakaina* and *Te Manumanu* respectively, and were adopted into separate clans. The brothers are credited with the introduction of the *kū* and *pakū* techniques of ocean fishing, because of which some believe they alone deserve the title *tautai te noho* ‘clan master fishermen’. It is also believed that present knowledge of the phases of the moon derives from the drift arrival of Tevaru, a man from Liuanua. By contrast, and unsung for praise or any other function, the drift arrival carrying possibly the greatest consequences was the discovery offshore in the mid-1800s of a cluster of canoes from Peilau tied together at the bows; of the occupants, all but a few women were dead. Takū offered hospitality to the survivors, evidently unaware that these women were carriers of the same smallpox virus that they had tried to evade in their home island. Takū’s population plunged, ultimately reaching a mere 12 (Friederici 1912: 83).

THE CONTEMPORARY CANOE

Although Takū’s oral tradition relating to the mythological and traditional past is in the private custody of individuals, that relating to the present is largely the diametric opposite, being in the public custody of groups. The activities of canoes in this fishing-dependent community are crafted into song, previously by each clan’s specialist composer-poet but now by a wider spread of creative individuals, and performed for much of the 20 hours of weekly singing, dancing and drinking occurring during the fieldwork period. The intention is explicit: to acquaint the greatest number of people with the details of recent fishing successes.

The exception to the public knowledge of canoe exploits in fishing and racing lies in knowledge of the construction of canoe sails and hulls; indeed, such information is carefully restricted to individual families. By 1921, woven sails had been replaced by cotton (Bassett 1969: 105), replaced in turn by blue plastic bearing the initials of Bougainville Copper Limited, for which several Takū men once worked. A triangular shape is used, although precise dimensions may vary according to hull size and wind strength. Many men possess up to three sails, two for varying wind speed and one for racing. Although the mast base’s position is fixed for any canoe, resting on the central outrigger pole, there is scope for variation in the mast height and sail size. To achieve a full billow in the wind, and thus maximise speed through the water, fabric for the sail’s leech is cut curving slightly into the sail, whereas the other two sides are cut the opposite way. Variations in the extent and depth of the curves form a frequent topic of conversation among men, and more than a

little speculation as, for example, when one canoe in a race is clearly faster. Similar conversations focus on hull design. Some men claim their canoes are fastest under certain conditions, e.g., in a crosswind or tail wind, because of the cut of their sail and the design of the canoe hull, and indeed during the fieldwork period there were very few instances of a single canoe triumphing in a variety of weather conditions. Material for the mast is usually bamboo that happens to drift to the island, although poles from Bougainville were in steady demand when the island had relatively regular shipping. Canoe parts and canoe construction feature in *tuki* songs, as noted below.

As in the past, canoes of any size continue to be named. Five canoes, the *vakasī* of each clan elder, retained their names throughout the historical period and, according to oral tradition, long before. They are, respectively, *Te Amarua* (formerly *te noho i tua* group, now Hare Ata clan), *Tāoa* (formerly *te noho i tai* group, now Hare Mania clan), *Te Huaroto* (formerly *te noho i tokorau* group, now Hare Māsani), *Mauakena* (formerly *te noho i saupuku* group, now Hare Nāoro clan) and *Fauvaka* (formerly *te noho i loto* group, now Hare Ania clan). Any elder, and any man, may own a smaller canoe, freely named. The ownership, and therefore the name, of most canoes is known to resident adults, although a few had the name painted near the bow. A survey of *tamāvaka* canoe names in 2006 indicated a wide range of sources, both historical and contemporary, local and foreign. These can be grouped:

Nukuria (the Outlier closest to Takū and source of spouses for several generations):

<i>Te Rekireki</i>	A Nukuria term for a drifted log
<i>Te Maehe</i>	A Nukuria term for a type of canoe
<i>Te Inaho Tāmaki</i>	A personal name from Nukuria
<i>Tuiatua</i>	A personal name of Nukuria origin

Flora:

Te Ruturutu, *Te Hetau* and *Hukahuka* (tree types), and *Tiaravau* (the term for a drifting log)

Ancient canoe names:

Vaiano, *Sinārutai*, *Marihau* (a canoe which drifted here from Luaniua in the time of *te ariki* Telauika)

English origin:

3 ses (a transliteration of ‘threes’), *Te Tingky* ‘The Dinghy’. (Unusually, one of Takū’s canoes in 1999 was caught up in the personal name avoidance practiced after a local death. The name of the deceased man, Kanu, was considered too close to the word ‘canoe’, so his family thereafter substituted *te vaka* ‘the canoe’.)

Old personal and former canoe names:

Morona, Mauakena, Ahelo, Tuiatua, Marenahau, Haivelo, Takua, Hauvaka, Te Huaroto, Hakatautai, Simatara, Hakatautai, Hīmau. (Names may derive from the fishing exploits of canoes, especially outstanding success, e.g., *Te Rima Nā Lau* ‘500’, *Matahitu* ‘70’, *Matasivo* ‘90’, *Varu Nā Rau* ‘800’, *Simata* ‘1,000’.)

In addition to carrying and perpetuating a clan name, canoes whose fishing exploits are celebrated in *tuki* songs (and there were more than 300 in the active repertoire during the fieldwork years) are always named in statements (and occasional exaggerations) of precise praise.

The association of the *vakasī* with ancestral spirits—their initial embodiment in amulets and their routinely invoked presence while at sea—imbues the canoe with an enduring value which continues after it rots or is otherwise unable to put to sea. Unlike the smaller canoes, which are routinely chopped up for firewood, an elder’s *vakasī* hull is laid against the owner’s house (Fig. 6) to supplement the concentration of ancestral presence within ritual sacra stored inside the building (Moyle 2018: 155–61).



Figure 6. The rotting remains of a *vakasī* beside its owner’s house. Photograph by Richard Moyle.

CANOE CONSTRUCTION

Although canoe parts merit occasional mention in song lyrics, a more frequent nautical focus is on a canoe's sailing and fishing capability. However, the skills of constructing a canoe hull are formally acknowledged in a discrete category of praise song called *tuki tihuna* 'praising the craftsman'. The praise embodied in the lyrics is, however, indirect, focussing more on the techniques of building and the resultant superior performance of the finished canoe. For example:

<i>Tō iho te toki ki taku hare</i>	Bring my adze from my house
<i>Tō iho te toki ki Hareata</i>	Bring the adze from Hare Ata
<i>Aku mata tokatoka ki te lākau: ko nau se tama tihuna ē.</i>	My eyes gaze at the log: I am a canoe builder.
<i>Ni karana ko nau ki taku tama, vurusia tonu te lākau areha teretere ki ana murivaka.</i>	I called on my son to turn the log properly, going around on the stern.
<i>Ni karana Teata ki Tekaso, vurusia tonu te lākau areha teretere ki ana murivaka.</i>	Teata called on Tekaso to turn the log properly, going around on the stern.
<i>E taku vaka tā ki te noho a te mārama, hakaoti ai ko taku manava.</i>	I built my canoe according to the stage of the moon, using my techniques.
<i>E taku pinipini tā ki te noho a te mārama, hakaoti ai ko taku manava.</i>	My canoe of <i>pinipini</i> wood was carved according to the stage of the moon, using my techniques.
<i>E tū nau i tai a taku hare ni mamata nau ki taku vaka e teretere i te namo a taihare.</i>	I stood at the beach by my house, watching my canoe sail along the beachfront.
<i>E tū soko Peo i tai a Hare Ata ni mamata ko nau ki taku vaka e teretere i te namo a taihare.</i>	Apeo stood alone at the beach by Hare Ata, watching my canoe sail along the beachfront.

More than for other kinds of songs, the creators of *tuki tihuna* poetry make assumptions on several levels, including widespread awareness of the identity of the owners of named canoes and their relation to other named individuals (e.g., helpful grandparents, generous in-laws), and also techniques of canoe construction and sailing. During the fieldwork period, however, audience members present at some first public performances were observed asking one another for confirmation of their own first reactions. One such song, presented below as an example of the genre, spoke of two local practices, the first of which is adjustment to the vertical placement of the outrigger poles, by means of notches in the hull, to maximise performance under sail:

The sequence of actions in attaching an outrigger to a new canoe hull, a group activity called *hauhau* ‘lashing’, is fixed. The first act is to locate the exact centre of the hull: a length of sennet cord the length of the hull is cut, folded in two then laid along the gunwale from each end in succession to first locate and then confirm the position. It is here that the *hōhoa* notch is cut to accommodate the central outrigger pole. The canoe owner places his thumb on the mark, the first joint bent inside, and the distance down of the thumb tip is marked, representing the depth of the rectangular notch. The process is repeated on the other side of the hull. Both notches are cut slightly shallower than the thumb mark, to allow for adjustment following sea trials, should this be necessary. The depth of notches for the other outrigger poles—two more for a *tamāvaka*, four more for a *vakasī*—are measured by eye. (Field notes)

The second practice is the resetting of the gaff while at sea to compensate for a change in wind speed or direction:

Among the adjustments possible for a canoe under sail is the height above water of the gaff, and thence the sail itself. Several canoe masts have three marks (*hōuna*) near the top, consisting of sennit lashings a handspan apart indicating the point where the halyard is to be attached, and located by experiment to suit particular weather conditions, although they are used most regularly when racing either close to the wind, across or downwind. (Field notes)

Undaunted by the amount of technical information in its lyrics, the greatest of any I recorded, this particular song has been in the active repertoire for more than 40 years:

<i>Īē, ko nau ni tipu ake ma taku tīhuna hoki,</i>	<i>Īē, I simply grew up having my skills.</i>
<i>Saere nau ma taku toki nei.</i>	<i>I set off with my adze.</i>
<i>Īē, Tautea ni tipu ake ma tana tīhuna.</i>	<i>Īē, [I,] Tautea, grew up having my skills.</i>
<i>Āīē, huri ake te lākau i taku ahana, uhuki nau te toki a taku tamana hoki.</i>	<i>Āīē, a log was at my beachfront, so I simply took hold of my father’s adze.</i>
<i>Āīē, huri ake te ruturutu i tai a taku ahana, uhuki nau te paela ania Willie hoki.</i>	<i>Āīē, a ruturutu log was at my beachfront, so I took hold of Willie’s curved adze.</i>
<i>Āīē, uru atu nau ki loto o māua hare, taratara kiā nau ta koe lā se māramara pēhea e tuku iho i te tua vaka hoki?</i>	<i>Āīē, as I entered our house, my darling said to me, “What type of skills are you using on the hull of the canoe?”</i>

Āīē, uru atu Tautea ki māua hare, taratara mai Alapau kiā nau ta koe lā se tīhuna pēhea? Tēnei aki tatakai tō ia Willie hoki.

Āīē, tausua ko te henua ki te vaka e tauara sau ake nau te kini i katea, ko te Vaiano tuku atu nau ki te vasi taha, taku vaka tere ki te kaha e sokotasi, taku muri la e tū e hai matani hoki.

Āīē, tausua ko Nukutoa ki te vaka e tauara sau ake nau te kini i katea, ko te Vaiano tuku atu nau kit e vasi amo, taku vaka terekina kaha e lua, taku muri la e tū hai matani hoki.

Āīē, as [I,] Tautea, entered our house, Alapau asked me, “What kind of expert are you?” “That’s simply what I learnt from Willie” [I replied].

*Āīē, people joked about the canoe which could sail into the wind (I had removed a little from the starboard side notch) when *Te Vaiano* was put onto its port side. My canoe used the first sail-setting mark, and it simply caught the wind.*

*Āīē, the island joked about the canoe which could sail into the wind (I had removed a little from the starboard side notch) when *Te Vaiano* was put onto its port side. My canoe used the second sail-setting mark, and it simply caught the wind.*

Audience tolerance of such detail in songs is, however, neither universal nor unlimited, and new compositions routinely attracted comments both favourable and adverse. For example, in 2000, at a rehearsal for the first public performance of a new *tuki tīhuna*, a singer criticised the composer to his face, saying future songs by him would likely be so detailed as to include his early morning bowel movements. The rehearsal broke up in disarray.

Prior to Emma Forsayth’s purchase of the atoll in 1886 (Moyle 2007: 34), Takū—and in particular, Takū Island—was forested, and larger trees could be felled and planks cut for making canoes. After the subsequent gift of part of the atoll to Emma’s niece, Phoebe Caulder, canoe-building was not possible, not just because of a shortage of manpower but also because Caulder ordered her imported workers to fell the trees on Takū Island to make way for a coconut plantation, forcing reliance on the chance drifting to the atoll of large logs for canoe hulls, a practice still active. (Similar dependence is reported from Liuanuia (Woodford 1916: 33) and Peilau and Nukumanu (Feinberg 1995: 162), and use of drift logs is reported from Kapingamarangi (Lieber 1994: 6).) Some elders resisted, and indeed refused to leave the island when the others were transferred to nearby Kapeatu Island, to live there in longhouses for almost 40 years. Trees around the remaining elders’ houses were spared—indeed, they are still visible—but too small in number for sustainable lumber. The several remaining *vaka hailā* rotted and were not replaced with similarly planked craft.

Until the 1990s it was the practice for a man to report to the *ariki* the discovery of a log on the reef or in the lagoon or washed up on shore, and for the *ariki* to determine its fate. As with many established practices, non-adherence renders the culprits vulnerable to supernatural retribution, as identified frequently but privately by *post hoc ergo propter hoc* rationalisation after a local death or injury. Once ownership is decided, the log is refloated on a high tide and walked to a point on the shore close to one of the canoe-building yards, where it is dragged up using ropes by a team of men, in a process called *ssoro te lākau* ‘dragging the log’. The log’s considerable weight is believed to be reduced by invocations made by the *ariki* to local spirits. Elsewhere (Moyle 2007: 91–92) I have presented the texts and translations of two *ssoro* invocations, last used in 1997. The occasion of the dragging is the first in a series of canoe-related activities where the likely existence of unknown but potentially dangerous spirits is acknowledged, and appropriate invocation made to known ancestors used as a counter-measure. Indirectly, such practices reflect the high value attached to the successful completion of a new canoe on this fishing-dependent atoll.



Figure 7. Congestion in the storage area at Sialeva Point. Photograph by Richard Moyle.

An informal canoe-building yard lies on the ocean side of Sialeva Point (Fig. 7), informal in that it is chosen for convenience, lying less than 30 metres from the beach where the finished canoe will be launched. Until the space demands for completed canoes to be stored at Tālōki Point became great, a further yard existed there, its place now taken by an area on the island's north coast. Construction of the hull is undertaken by one or more senior clan men, if not the discoverer of the log, and normally takes around two months of daily work (see Moyle 2011b). (If a log is large, two small canoes can be cut from it; in 1997, three entire *tamāvaka* were cut from one very large log, said to be a record.) The hull shape is sketched on the log, the keel uppermost, and the general outline adzed before measuring and discussion allow the sides to be roughly cut, the log turned over and the interior marked and initially excavated, using a curved-bladed adze for the finishing work (whose strokes remain faintly visible in the completed canoe). The outside is then revisited, some adzing so delicate that the shavings are thin to the point of translucence (Fig. 8). Occupying many days, the whole process is punctuated by frequent pauses for solitary deliberation and shared discussions.



Figure 8 (left and right). Adzing the exterior of the hull. Note the collection of adzes at hand. Photographs by Richard Moyle.

Although no formal programme of apprenticeship exists, a young log-discoverer and future canoe owner may express an interest in learning the techniques, and attend for as long as daily family duties permit. Such are the numbers of new canoes under construction at any one time that most men can call on the services of at least one canoe builder within their own extended family, and there are no accounts of log ownership being abandoned for lack of available assistance. Metal adze blades have long replaced the former shell items, although Howard (1976) recorded the descriptive names of several types once in use (the names are reproduced in Moyle 2011a: 329). Although the general outline of a canoe hull is constant among Takū's canoes, deliberate variation may occur in the details as individual builders optionally experiment to improve performance both in itself and also in races against other canoes. Details (*sēkati*)—such as changes to hull symmetry or to the position on the keel where upward curving begins (*uhutana*)—are kept confidential but, if successful on the water, potentially form part of family or clan knowledge able to be passed to younger generations. The succession is, however, capable of subversion. Apeo was the *ariki* four generations before the present titleholder. While still a child (and therefore too young to learn canoe-building skills from his grandfather figure Teasi, a renowned builder), Teasi taught another man—Terupo—with instructions to pass the information on only to Apeo when the young man reached maturity. But Terupo passed on only part of this information to Apeo, saving the remainder for his own son, Marena. *Tuki tihuna* songs referring to the log typically use the first-person perspective—that of the recently deceased fisherman whose skills are being celebrated by the performance. The care and attention to detail is further reflected in the large number of terms pertaining to parts of the canoe (Fig.9).

On a remote atoll where fish constitutes the staple food, it is unsurprising that the object of a man's greatest pride is his canoe: more songs are composed and sung and more dances are choreographed and performed in enduring praise of canoe exploits than any other topic. And, although Takū society is egalitarian, exceptions are permitted, and most of those involve canoes. In a temporary and controlled departure from the normal authority of men over their wives, Takū organise occasional competitions involving men and women from either one or both parts of the village. Most competitions incorporate smaller canoes for either sailing around a predetermined course inside the lagoon (Fig. 10) or catching the most fish within a set time frame. The former are called *taki*; the latter are *tuata* and may optionally include fishermen's wives. The year 1994 was a highlight for Takū's canoe owners, with large numbers of crew on hand, large numbers of seaworthy craft, favourable winds and a brief abundance of material goods on the island for use as prizes. In the course of three months, four races were held, featuring 18, 22, 26 and

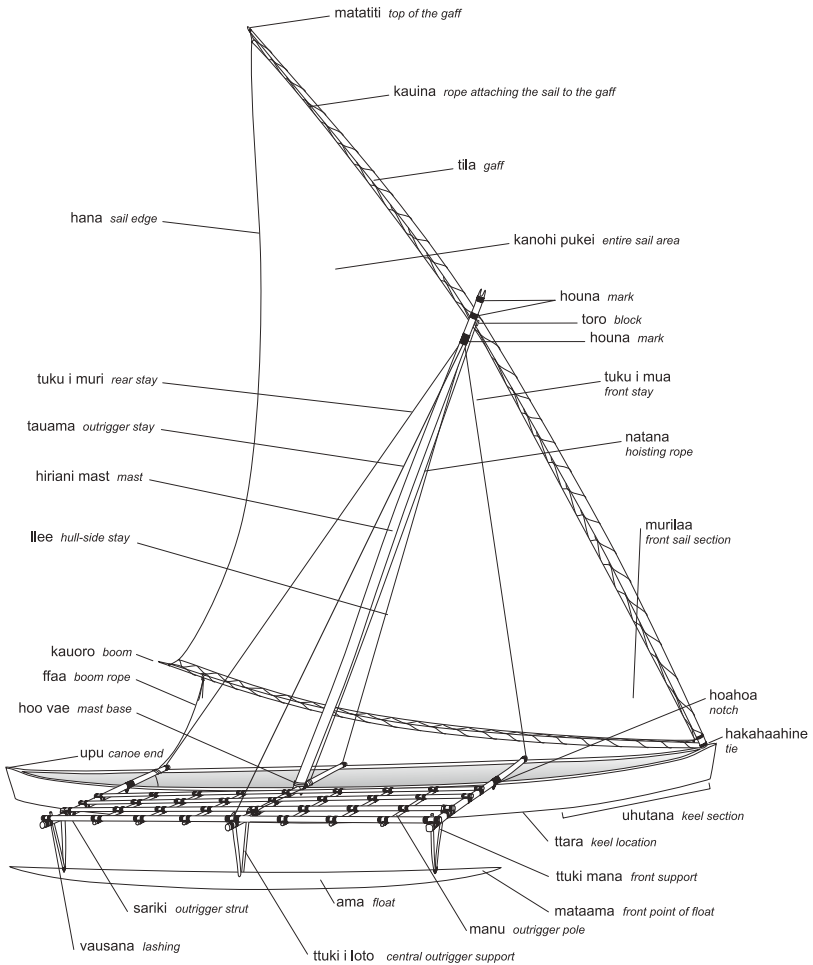


Figure 9. Principal parts of a Takū canoe (from Moyle 2011a: 58).



Figure 10. The start of a canoe race. Photograph by Richard Moyle.

23 canoes respectively (see also Moyle 2014). By 2007, however, of the seven intact hulls in the storage areas, only four or five craft were seaworthy, and racing itself using the large canoes had stopped; by 2010 that number had dropped further. (Most recently, canoe building has reportedly ceased in favour of fibreglass monohulls called *mona*, and these are not raced.) Despite the popularity of the races in the recent past, however, they are not the subject of songs.

The canoe may be the only item of Takū material culture incorporated into metaphorical speech. An expression relates to Nukutoa Island lying next to the larger Takū Island, in much the same way that a canoe float lies next to the hull. As the *ariki* Avo explained to me, *Takū rā ko te vaka, Nukutoa rā ko te ama, arā e ttapa i te henua nei ma ko Te Amaruā—Nukutoa*. ‘Takū [Island] is the canoe, Nukutoa [Island] is the float, and so we call this island—Nukutoa—the Second Float’. There is also a more or less straight line of rock on a raised reef outcrop between the southern point of Nukutoa and the northern point of Takū Island where people commonly walk en route to and from their gardens. One man, Apava, had no canoe of his own (relying on others to find fish for his family: atypical, but he was something of a recluse). Because Apava was obliged to walk to and from his garden on Takū, this line was privately called “Apava’s canoe”.

* * *

Takū's collective memory identifies two types of canoe that present residents have never seen—those of the founding ancestors and those of the traditional era—oral accounts of the one emphasising voyaging alone and of the other additionally detailing its captains' many skills. Of those skills, men say that although they understand the mechanics of particular actions taken at sea, particularly in times of danger, they can only surmise the existence of intimate links with supportive ancestors in animal or other form on a level unachievable for themselves. In both oral tradition and contemporary practice, Takū men invoke the ancestral presence for reasons of protection and productivity, both of which apply to canoe usage: safety of the vessel and its crew during travel or during bad weather, and a bountiful catch of target fish. Thus, although the means of achieving sea-based goals have changed, the general purposes have not, sustaining in part a sense of continuity and connection with the past that accompanies an enduring affection for the handmade, family-made artefact which, in some instances, retains the name of its former iterations. Such affection progresses into the arena of socially acceptable exaggeration when the fishing exploits of a single man are transformed through specially composed songs into group confirmations of idealised life sung by all the men, and potentially remain in the active repertoire beyond the composer's lifetime. Even in the finely focused lyrics of such songs, however, the canoe—always named—receives equal credit for the catch.

The arrival of the *vakasī* following the exit of the *vaka hailā* illustrates Takū's willingness and ability to adapt, in this case through the exigencies of feeding a remnant community with pelagic fish and the ability to exploit an introduced and superior catching method. Other forms of enduring adaptation relate to small changes privately made in hull and sail design alongside, of course, the many operational decisions about tactics a canoe owner makes each time he puts to sea.

General recognition of the skills of canoe builders and crews, bolstered by opportunities for immediate celebration in feasting and enduring praise in song, and by further opportunities for individual recognition and material rewards resulting from occasional competitive fishing or racing—all these arise from the sustained presence of large numbers of seaworthy canoes, which in turn reflect the high dependence on the canoe for the community's economic sustainability. As recorded in oral tradition as the material object that provided Takū with its first instance of the principle of primacy of access as instigating and controlling social privilege, the canoe's influence in that parallel plane has remained effective throughout the period of habitation.

To adapt the title of Lieber's (1994) book, use of the canoe provides indeed "more than a living". That said, the recent reduction in wooden canoe numbers and substitution of fibreglass paddle-only craft have the potential to bring about social as well as economic changes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funding for 20 months of research on Takū over a 17-year period came from the University of Auckland Research Fund, the MacArthur Foundation, the Marsden Fund, and the Archive of Māori and Pacific Music, but was made possible on location only with the approval and practical support of Takū's community and its *ariki* at that time, Avo Sini. I must, however, acknowledge the invaluable assistance from my two research assistants, Natan Nake and Tekaso Laroteone, and the useful contributions of three anonymous referees of the manuscript. Rick Feinberg and Richard Scaglion kindly allowed use of the map in Figure 1 from their 2012 edited volume.

NOTE

1. Raymond Firth (pers. comm. 27 July 2000) believed he had no information on such voyaging to Tikopia or of an *ariki* of that name, and suggested that the place names in this particular song might have been the result of "creative imagination rather than historical record". There is, of course, no way of telling.

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ABSTRACT

The article examines how Takū position the canoe in their understanding of the past and exploit it to achieve temporary individual prominence within an otherwise egalitarian society. The canoe on Takū exists in two spheres of reference: in the collective memory of two bygone eras preserved largely in fragmented mythology and ancient song lyrics, and as the item of contemporary material culture crucially involved in the economic life of the small community, whose fishing exploits and the skills of its builders and crews fill the lyrics of hundreds of songs in the active repertoire. The dearth of published information on Takū generally and its canoes in particular is offset by the strength of its oral tradition, which recounts and interprets the activities of two canoe types revered but never seen, as well as two more currently in use. As arguably the last location where Polynesian religion is still practiced as the norm, it is also possible to examine the roles of ritual and belief in the canoe's prominence, in particular the connections between voyagers, builders and ancestor spirits. In unequivocal statements most frequently formalised in song lyrics, creators and users of a canoe can be successful, let alone achieve enduring fame, only if they know and use the appropriate invocations, acknowledging as they do so the social force of precedent. At least in part, the ongoing significance of the canoe, particularly the manner in which it is used, depends on maintenance of such precedent.

Keywords: Takū, canoes, canoe songs (*tuki*), oral tradition, mythology, Polynesian Outlier, Polynesian religion, voyaging

CITATION AND AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Moyle,¹ Richard, 2018. Oral tradition and the canoe on Takū. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 127 (2): 145-176. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15286/jps.127.2.145-176>.

¹ Correspondence and Email: r.moyle@auckland.ac.nz