

# A Nukuoro Origin Story

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Nukuoro [ISO 639-3: nkr] belongs to a family of Polynesian Outlier languages, which are spoken by island populations in Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia. These languages, though geographically outside the primary region of Polynesian influence, are more closely related to Polynesian languages like Samoan and Tongan than they are to their Micronesian and Melanesian neighbors. There are an estimated 1,000 speakers of Nukuoro. In recent decades, due to limited living space and arable land on Nukuoro Atoll, large numbers of Nukuoro speakers have relocated to Pohnpei, the state capital of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and to various locations in the United States; in fact, the diaspora population of Nukuoro now outnumbers the in-situ population approximately two to one.

Like many Pacific island cultures, Nukuoro boasts a vibrant oral tradition of chants, songs, and narratives, which center the culture and the language distinctly within both Polynesia and Micronesia. The knowledge contained within these materials is vast, encompassing the topography and directional systems of the atoll, family and social organization, ethnic origins and contacts, material culture, and spiritual cosmology. Much of this knowledge, integral to the cultural heritage of the Nukuoro people, is only known by a handful of speakers or has been forgotten entirely. In order to preserve this material, Nukuoro speakers have chosen to share narratives, chants, and songs both within and outside the Nukuoro community. Chants and songs are performed at cultural heritage celebrations, yearly events that take place in the Nukuoro Cultural Center in Pohnpei, and storytellers narrate for younger audiences. Storytellers have also recorded narratives with linguists outside the community for publication in books (Carroll 1980) and online.

In this paper, we present the creation myth of Nukuoro, recorded in June 2015 by Johnny Rudolph at Swarthmore College.<sup>1</sup> The Nukuoro text was later translated by the primary author, working with Rudolph during a field trip to Pohnpei in June 2016. The narrative identifies three distinct creation events within the Nukuoro cosmology: the creation of the circular coral reef, the creation of the islets which sit on top of the reef, and the arrival of human settlers on the atoll. The first of these stories, which describes the formation of the coral reef after a pearl is planted in the ocean, is not widely known in the Nukuoro community and does not appear in the collected canon (Carroll 1980). The Nukuoro creation myth employs motifs and plot elements found in myths throughout the Pacific, which we survey in Section 3 to provide context for the narrative, which appears in Section 4. Analysis of these myths as a collective body of knowledge can provide evidence for the migration patterns, land settlement, and material culture of prehistoric Polynesians. In Section 5, we offer a cursory analysis of the linguistic, discourse, and narrative features of the text. The presentation of this narrative, along with its thematic contextualization and linguistic and ethnopoetic analysis, supplements a growing collection of Nukuoro materials carefully preserved by the community with the support of linguists and anthropologists outside the community.



Figure 1: Johnny Rudolph tells the Nukuoro creation story at Swarthmore College.  
Photograph by Jeremy Fahringer.

### **The Nukuoro Community and Its Oral and Written Traditions**

Nukuoro Atoll is a ring-shaped coral atoll in the Caroline Islands, located in the Western Pacific, and it is an outlier atoll of the FSM. It lies approximately 480 km southwest of the state capital of Pohnpei. While the ring-shaped atoll is comprised of a single coral reef, there are more than forty islets that sit on top of the reef; the largest of these is Nukuoro islet, which is by far the most populous. The low-lying nature of these islets makes them susceptible to damage by storms, and many islets have become smaller or disappeared in living memory. Life on the atoll is typical of many small Pacific Island communities, with food production generally limited to fishing and the farming of taro and coconuts. In recent decades, the food supply on the atoll has been supplemented by monthly boat deliveries of rice and other goods.



Figure 2: Nukuoro Atoll from space.  
Photograph by NASA.

The Nukuoro community is fairly localised to Nukuoro Atoll and the surrounding Micronesian islands, although there are significant diaspora populations in the United States. Estimates for the total size of the Nukuoro speech community range from 800 to 1,200. Based on data from the 2000 FSM Census, there are currently around 700 Nukuoro speakers living in Micronesia, with 400 speakers residing in the district capital of Pohnpei and 300 living on Nukuoro Atoll.<sup>2</sup>

Almost all Nukuoro speakers on Nukuoro Atoll are ethnically Nukuoro, acquire Nukuoro as their first language and speak Nukuoro at home; furthermore, about half of Nukuoro Atoll residents are monolingual. On Pohnpei, however, less than half of the 400 attested speakers speak Nukuoro as their first language or in the home. Multilingualism is much more common on Pohnpei: an estimated 97% of speakers living on Pohnpei speak another language, typically Pohnpeian or English. There were only 10 attested monolingual Nukuoro speakers in Pohnpei in 2000.

Table 1: Nukuoro Language Usage in the FSM

	Total	Place of Usual Residence		
		Pohnpei	Nukuoro Atoll	Other
Total Speakers	716	397	314	5
First language	486	175	309	2
Spoken at home	495	185	310	0
Monolingual	173	10	162	1

Source: 2000 FSM Census of Population and Housing.

Census data about Nukuoro communities in the United States is scarce, and often includes members of other Pacific Island populations. It is estimated that about 200 Nukuoro speakers live in the United States, with the largest communities in Oregon, North Carolina and Arkansas. Based on anecdotal evidence, it is very common for diaspora speakers to have immediate family living in Micronesia.

Nukuoro is almost exclusively a spoken language, most widely used in the home, with almost all residents of Nukuoro Atoll speaking the language with family members. Throughout the course of our fieldwork on Pohnpei, we observed Nukuoro usage in a variety of settings. In our experience, nearly all of the Nukuoro speakers we met on Pohnpei spoke Nukuoro in the home, and many elderly speakers were monolingual. This is more robust usage than would seem to be indicated by the 2000 census, which suggests that only half of the Nukuoro on Pohnpei speak the language in the home. Speakers were generally trilingual in Nukuoro, Pohnpeian, and English. On social media sites like Facebook, we observed that speakers often use some or all of these languages within the same post, indicating that they are posting for a trilingual readership. At community gatherings we observed, such as funerals, feasts, canoe- and house-building events, and weekly church services, Nukuoro was spoken and sung exclusively. However, in public settings, such as at the market, speakers defaulted to Pohnpeian. This was especially true when Nukuoro speakers worked in a professional capacity, such as at a library or in the local government, with Nukuoro only spoken between friends or after confirmation that the other was a Nukuoro speaker as well.

The robust oral tradition of Nukuoro includes chants (*mou*), folk narratives (*kai*) and instruction in traditional skills. There are also a number of neo-traditional songs (*daahili* is the general word for song), written from the mid-20th century and onwards. These songs are described by their composers as not derivative of older traditional material and were composed by Nukuoro musicians using Western instruments. The contemporary Nukuoro community has adopted these songs as part of their oral repertoire, teaching them to children and performing them at cultural ceremonies. The songs tend to be secular and present narratives about activities on the atoll like sailing in the lagoon, fishing, and playing on a rope swing. Videos of several renditions of these songs by a Nukuoro group called Marangi Boyz are posted on YouTube<sup>3</sup>. Here is a sample lyric from a song authored by Jason Gideon and Koisemy Rudolph in 1961.

<i>Hagaleva hagatili</i>	We swing, let go,
<i>Pago gi lausedi</i>	And hit the water,
<i>Ga kau moso age</i>	And swim back
<i>Gi lalo de hedau</i>	Underneath the tree
<i>Ga tolo bala age gi lunga</i>	We crawl back up,
<i>Ga bele hagaleva e hagatili angeange</i>	Swing, and let go again,
<i>Te daea donu de hai hanu mee</i>	Helpless to do anything,
<i>Gai gu pago gi lalo</i>	And hit the water below

A standardised orthography was developed in the early 20th century by the late Chief Leka, who may have been assisted by visiting Europeans or missionaries in Pohnpei (Carroll 1965a). This orthography, which is also adopted in this paper, is generally phonemic and uses Latin script, and is accepted by the Nukuoro community as the written standard. Nevertheless, there is very little written literature in Nukuoro. The two noteworthy texts written in Nukuoro are the Bible and a book of traditional Nukuoro stories, and neither of these texts are readily available to the Nukuoro community. The Nukuoro translation of the Bible was begun in the 1980s starting with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, and a full working draft was completed in 2014; however, this draft has not been published and is currently only available to the Bible translation team (Smith 2014). In 1980, anthropologist and linguist Raymonde Carroll published a book of 280 traditional Nukuoro stories, which are transcriptions of recorded narratives edited by Tobias Soulik, a Nukuoro speaker. The circulation of this book is limited to a handful of libraries in the U.S., meaning that most Nukuoro speakers have never read it and have no access to it. Furthermore, the stories are not translated, rendering the book inaccessible to anyone who does not speak Nukuoro.

### **Nukuoro Origin Stories in Comparative Context**

The text and video<sup>1</sup> presented herein were recorded in June 2015 by Johnny Rudolph, an expert storyteller and former chief of Nukuoro, at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. It comprises three related but distinct myths, a small fraction of the many traditional stories of the Nukuoro people. The first of these, which is not attested in the collected canon (Carroll 1980), describes the creation of Nukuoro's coral reef. It is said to have grown after the culture hero Leibaaligi and his family (two wives and fourteen sons) descended from the rainbow in a double-hulled canoe (Kubary 1885) and planted a pearl in the ocean.

The second is the tale of Sogo, a type of ghost or spirit (*eidu*), a supernatural being who can take on a human form and meddle in the affairs of humans (Emory 1949). The myth, attested in six collected narratives (Carroll 1980), relates how Sogo inadvertently creates the islets of Nukuoro while carrying a leaking basket of sand. The motif of supernatural beings or ghosts creating islets out of sand is a common one in Micronesia. In Kapingamarangi, an islet named *touhou* is said to have been built by men, assisted by gods (Ashby 1989: 36–37). On Nukuoro itself, as on Kapingamarangi, archaeological evidence indicates ancient human constructed islets (Davidson 1992), while islanders report that man-made islets have been created in recent memory.

The third myth, the story of culture hero Vave, is perhaps the most salient of the three in modern Nukuoro culture, with ten versions in the collected canon (for one example, see Carroll 1965b). The Vave story was noted by German ethnographers in the 19th century, who wrote "...according to oral tradition, they immigrated, led by their chief Vave and his brother, both of

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<sup>1</sup> Video may be viewed online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZVl0yg7sL4>

whom are still venerated in images in the temple and the *marae* (sacred ground)” (Schmeltz and Krause 1881 [2013]). This tale begins in Samoa, where a king has died, and his two sons fight over who should inherit the throne. Vave, the younger son, loses the fight; disgraced, he leaves Samoa with his family and friends looking for a new island to rule. They come to Kapingamarangi, an atoll three hundred kilometers south of Nukuoro, but Vave cannot take control of the people who are living there. He moves on to Nukuoro Atoll, where his sorcerer performs magic to keep Sogo and Sogo’s lesser accompanying spirits at bay.

The Vave story positions the Nukuoro within Polynesia—specifically, Samoa—and also accounts for close linguistic, folkloric and ethnic ties between Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi (Fischer 1958). Both of these Polynesian outliers are believed, on the basis of archeological evidence (Kirch 2000), linguistic evidence (Ray 1912), and commensal animal genetic evidence (Matisoo-Smith and Robins 2004) to have been settled as the result of a back migration from Polynesia. Radiocarbon dating places initial settlement in the 8th or 9th century CE, but cannot confirm whether it was Polynesian in origin (Davidson 1992). Additional evidence of a migration from the south (Kapingamarangi lies due south, and Samoa to the southeast) is provided by the directional orientation system of Nukuoro (Carroll 1964).

While the Nukuoro creation story is unique in many respects, it exists within the broad framework of Polynesian island mythologies, which often share themes, crucial events and deity names. The vast scholarly literature on Pacific and Polynesian cosmogeny cannot be adequately referenced here, but we mention here some comparative sources to help contextualize the Nukuoro mythical motifs.

The rainbow is often used in creation myths as a bridge between heaven and earth. Throughout Polynesia, the god Lono (Logo, Ono, Rongo, Ro’o) is identified with the rainbow, along with other natural phenomena of the sky such as clouds, storms, thunder and lightning (Craig 1989: 142). In the Tahitian version of the story, Ro’o was the first god to break through the boundary between earth and sky; in Hawaiian lore, Lono comes to earth on a rainbow to marry a human woman. Some versions of this story state that Lono brings an oyster with him so that he can present a black pearl to his bride as a gift.

A broad and contiguous swath of Pacific peoples tell an island creation story that involves islands being “fished up” by a deity, a myth centrally located in parts of Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands, and the Society Islands of French Polynesia (Nunn 2003: 350). Some of these myths involve actual fishing, commonly performed by the trickster Maui, while others describe the emergence of islands from the sea. A Truk legend describes a hidden underwater island catching fast to the anchor of the youngest of five brothers, who then pulls the island up to the surface in a contest of strength (Ashby 1989: 17–18).

A smaller subset of Pacific Island origin myths involves rocks or land being “thrown down” from on high by mythical beings or demigods. A variant of this motif involves earth being spilled to create small, discontinuous atoll or island forms, a myth often told by low-lying Pacific atoll populations. An origin myth of the Marshall Islands describes “earth spilling from a basket carried by Etao as he flew through the air” (Knappe 1888, as cited in Nunn 2003). Similarly, a Kiribati myth tells how sand and stones were poured from a bag to create islands (Hyde 1886). A Pingelap legend tells how a mischievous god from the Marshall Islands scooped up a gigantic handful of sand, creating a channel between two islets at Pingelap. When this god was pursued by Isopaw, the god of Pingelap, he dropped his sand at Jaluit Atoll, thus creating a new islet (Ashby 1989: 74–75). On Romulum, an island in Truk lagoon, a sand beach is said to have been created when ghosts brought sand as a gift in recompense for soil they had stolen (Ashby 1989: 56–57). A Majuro

trickster figure, Letao, scooped up sand and coral to form reefs and sandbars in order to stymie his pursuers from overtaking him (Ashby 1989: 87). In the origin story of Kapingamarangi (Lieber 1994: 5), the atoll closest to Nukuoro both linguistically and geographically, the founding ancestor Utamatua, after defeating a sorcerer who was inhabiting the island, transforms a small sandbar into a habitable islet. These mythical accounts of island construction are supported by toponymic and archeological evidence indicating that the Nukuoro built islets being out of coral and sand, thus supplementing their limited living space (Carroll 1964).

Many other Pacific myth motifs resonate with the Nukuoro story. For example, the Hawaiian story of Pélé and Hi'iaka (Green 1923: 18–27) has key parallel plot elements. It begins with an introduction of the story as being about the creation of the island. The main character Hi'iaka sets out by canoe in search of a homeland, bypassing unsuitable locations. Having found a good location, she makes modifications to the land by digging craters. The population grows to exceed the capacity of the island, a secondary site is sought and found, a house built, and comfort and abundance attained. Later, sibling rivalry (two sisters) ensues, the influence of sorcery is revealed, and the heroine has an encounter with a deity (Pélé). Further journeys are needed to accomplish magical feats and complete a quest. The heroine finally undergoes death and transformation, with her body being turned into rock and lava.

#### A Nukuoro Origin Story<sup>4</sup>

- 1 *Taiao danuaa goodou. D-ogu ingo go Soni.*  
 DET.morning good 2PL DET-GEN.1SG name FOC Soni  
 'Good morning to you all. My name is Johnny.'
- 2 *Au se dangada Nuguolo mai*  
 1SG COP person Nukuoro VEN  
 'I am a Nukuoro person'
- 3 *i Pohnpei State, Federated States of Micronesia.*  
 LOC Pohnpei State Federates States of Micronesia  
 'from Pohnpei State, Federated States of Micronesia.'
- 4 *Taiao nei au e lodo e tala hanu momo daalanga mai*  
 DET.morning PROX 1SG NPST want NPST tell some few story VEN  
 'This morning I want to tell a few stories'
- 5 *i taalanga laumalie o Nuguolo.*  
 LOC DET.story big of Nukuoro  
 'from the big story of Nukuoro.'
- 6 *Tahi au e lodo e tala de hai o de ango*  
 DET.one 1SG NPST want NPST tell DET way of DET pearl  
 'First, I want to tell how the pearl'

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- 7 *aabe-go de agau Nuguolo e daamada ai.*  
or-FOC DET reef Nukuoro NPST begin RES.PR  
'or the reef of Nukuoro began.'
- 8 *De lua au e lodo e tala*  
DET two 1SG NPST want NPST tell  
'Second, I want to tell'
- 9 *de hai o de-nga modu o Nuguolo ne daamada ai.*  
DET way of DET-PL islet of Nukuoro PFV begin RES.PR  
'how the islets of Nukuoro began.'
- 10 *Tolu au e lodo e tala de hai o de gau Saamoa*  
DET.three 1SG NPST want NPST tell DET way of DET people Samoa  
'Third, I want to tell how the Samoan people'
- 11 *ne loo mai ai ga nnoho i hongu Nuguolo*  
PFV come VEN RES.PR ASP stay.PL LOC on Nukuoro  
'came to settle on Nukuoro'
- 12 *gai hai ai de gau Polynesian i Micronesia.*  
DM make RES.PR DET people Polynesian LOC Micronesia  
'and brought Polynesian people into Micronesia.'
- Taalanga o de Ango**  
**(The Story of the Pearl)**
- 13 *Madagidagi madagidagi loo, madagidagi loo*  
long.ago long.ago come long.ago come  
'A long, long time ago, a long time ago'
- 14 *gai dahi hai-bodu, dahi daane ma luu ono bodu*  
DM one make-spouse one man and two GEN.3SG spouse  
'[there was] a couple, a man and his two wives'
- 15 *taane nei d-ono ingo go Leibaaligi*  
DET.man PROX DET-GEN.3SG name FOC Leibaaligi  
'this man, his name was Leibaaligi'
- 16 *aama luu ono bodu aama alaau dama dogo madaangahulu ma haa,*  
and two GEN.3SG spouse and GEN.3DU child CL.ANIM ten and four  
'and his two wives and their fourteen children'

- 17 *gilaadeu ne loo mai i de-laadeu moni.*  
 3PL PFV COME VEN LOC DET-GEN.3PL canoe  
 ‘they came in their canoe.’
- 18 *Go de moni go de vaga e hai ange laa bolo go de hao-lua.*  
 FOC DET canoe FOC DET canoe NPST say AND DIST COMP FOC DET tie-two  
 ‘The canoe, the *vaka*,<sup>5</sup> is called the *haolua* (two canoes tied together).’<sup>6</sup>
- 19 *Gilaadeu e loo mai e ssala de momme e doo ai de ango.*  
 3PL NPST COME VEN NPST look.for DET place NPST plant RES.PR DET pearl  
 ‘They came to look for a place to plant the pearl.’
- 20 *Gilaadeu ne loo mai i lote umada, de umada,*  
 3PL PFV COME VEN LOC inside.DET rainbow DET rainbow  
 ‘They came from inside the rainbow, the rainbow’
- 21 *gai gilaadeu e loo mai e ssala*  
 DM 3PL NPST COME VEN NPST look.for  
 ‘they came to look for’
- 22 *dahi momme heohi ange laa i de doo ai de ango*  
 one place correct AND DIST LOC DET plant RES.PR DET pearl  
 ‘a suitable place to plant the pearl.’
- 23 *gai dahi laangi huu gai gilaadeu gu loo mai*  
 DM one day when DM 3PL PRF COME VEN  
 ‘So one day, they came’
- 24 *gi dahi momme i lote huaa dai o de Pacific*  
 to one place LOC inside.DET whole ocean of DET Pacific  
 ‘to a place in the whole Pacific Ocean’
- 25 *gai gilaadeu ga gidee dahi momme*  
 DM 3PL ASP see one place  
 ‘they saw one place’
- 26 *gai gilaadeu gu manadua-age bolo*  
 DM 3PL PRF think-up COMP  
 ‘and they decided that’
- 27 *de-nei de momme heohi ange i de doo ai de ango*  
 DET-PROX DET place correct AND LOC DET plant RES.PR DET pearl  
 ‘this [was] the right place to plant the pearl’

- 28 *gai gilaadeu ga loo mai gi aagena.*  
 DM 3PL ASP come VEN to destination  
 ‘so they came to [their] destination.’
- 29 *Tae mai huu gilaadeu gai gilaadeu ga hai alaadeu huahuaamee*  
 reach VEN when 3PL DM 3PL ASP do GEN.3PL magic  
 ‘When they arrived, they did their magic’
- 30 *ga lava gai de agau o Nuguolo ga daamada i de hai ga molomolo.*  
 ASP finish DM DET reef of Nukuoro ASP begin LOC DET make ASP clear  
 ‘then the reef of Nukuoro started to become clear.’
- 31 *Gai de masavaa huu ne hai ai de agau ga molomolo*  
 DM DET moment when PFV make RES.PR DET reef ASP round  
 ‘So the moment the reef formed, it was round’
- 32 *gai gilaadeu ga tuu ga tilo gu heohi*  
 DM they ASP stand.PL ASP look PRF correct  
 ‘so they stood and saw [that it] was good’
- 33 *gai gilaadeu ga doo ange de baa gi aagena.*  
 DM they ASP plant AND DET black.pearl to destination  
 ‘so they planted the black pearl in its proper place.’
- 34 *Ga tilo naa huu gidaadeu de ango*  
 ASP look MED when 2PL.INCL DET pearl  
 ‘When we look at the pearl,’
- 35 *ne hu-mai i de-nga leebunga i lote umada*  
 PFV come-VEN LOC DET-PL color LOC inside.DET rainbow  
 ‘the colors come from inside the rainbow’
- 36 *gai de ango e kave.*  
 DM DET pearl NPST take  
 ‘and the pearl took them’
- 37 *E maua gidaadeu gidee ai denga leebunga nei i lote ango.*  
 NPST able 2PL.INCL see RES.PR DET.PL color PROX LOC inside.DET pearl  
 ‘We can see the colors inside the pearl.’
- 38 *De-laa de mahamaha o de umada*  
 DET-DIST DET beauty of DET rainbow  
 ‘That is the beauty of the rainbow’

- 39 *adaadeu e gidee mai laa i de ango.*  
 GEN.2PL.INCL NPST see VEN DIST LOC DET pearl  
 ‘that we see in the pearl.’
- 40 *Go kilaa o dangada soa e vaasuu ai laa i de ango.*  
 FOC there of person many NPST like RES.PR DIST LOC DET pearl  
 ‘That is why many people love pearls.’
- 41 *Gai dua huu de-laadeu doo ange de baa gi aagena*  
 DM back when DET-GEN.3PL plant AND DET black.pearl to destination  
 ‘So after they planted the black pearl in the proper place,’
- 42 *gai gilaadeu ga maalanga ga hulo gee*  
 DM 3PL ASP depart ASP GO.PL away.from  
 ‘they departed and left’
- 43 *hiidinga gilaadeu ne gaa mai de ango,*  
 reason 3PL PFV bring VEN DET pearl  
 ‘because they brought the pearl,’
- 44 *abe-go de baa lote gili-langi*  
 OR-FOC DET black.pearl inside.DET skin-sky  
 ‘or the black pearl inside the atmosphere’
- 45 *i de umada ga loo mai gi henua-i-lalo*  
 LOC DET rainbow ASP come VEN to land-LOC-under  
 ‘from the rainbow and came down to earth’
- 46 *ga doo ange gi de agau Nuguolo.*  
 ASP plant AND to DET reef Nukuoro  
 ‘and planted [it] in the reef of Nukuoro.’
- 47 *Gai dahi laangi huu gai gilaadeu gu hulo gee.*  
 DM one day when DM 3PL PRF GO.PL away.from  
 ‘So one day they left.’

**Taalanga o Sogo  
 (The Story of Sogo)**

- 48 *Gai ni ngadau se masavaa dau looloa i muli mai loo*  
 DM COP.PL year COP.SG time count long LOC after VEN come  
 ‘So after many years, after a long time coming’

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- 49 *muli mai loo i muli mai loo gai a Sogo ga hu-mai*  
 after VEN come LOC after VEN come DM PERS Sogo ASP come-VEN  
 ‘after a long time coming, [a ghost named] Sogo came.’
- 50 *ga hu-mai huu a Sogo ga gidee ia de henua*  
 ASP come-VEN when PERS Sogo ASP see 3SG DET island  
 ‘When Sogo came, he saw the island’
- 51 *gai ia gu lodo ai i hiidinga*  
 DM 3SG PRF wanted RES.PR LOC reason  
 ‘and he wanted it because’
- 52 *ia ne hu-mai ma dahi bolobolo gelegele e ssala dahi momme*  
 3SG PFV come-VEN with one basket sand NPST look.for one place  
 ‘he came with a basket<sup>7</sup> of sand looking for a place’
- 53 *i de moana i lote dai laumalie o de Pacific.*  
 LOC DET open.sea LOC in.DET ocean big of DET Pacific  
 ‘in the sea in the big Pacific Ocean.’
- 54 *Gai ga hu-mai hoga ga gidee de agau*  
 DM ASP come-VEN also ASP see DET reef  
 ‘So he also came and saw the reef’
- 55 *gai ia ga hu-mai gi aagena, a Sogo ga hu-mai gi aagena*  
 DM 3SG ASP come-VEN to destination PERS Sogo ASP come-VEN to destination  
 ‘so he came to this place, Sogo came to this place’
- 56 *ga duu i hongade agau ga galo gi de momme mao*  
 ASP stand LOC on DET reef ASP look to DET place distant  
 ‘and stood on the reef and looked to the far side’
- 57 *gai ia gu lodo e seese gai ia ga seese.*  
 DM 3SG PRF want NPST walk so 3SG ASP walk  
 ‘and he wanted to walk so he walked.’
- 58 *Dono masavaa huu e seese ai*  
 GEN.3SG time when NPST walk RES.PR  
 ‘When he walked,’
- 59 *gai denga gelegele i lotana bolobolo gu malili ga malili ga malili*  
 DM DET.PL sand LOC in.GEN.3SG basket PRF fall ASP fall ASP fall  
 ‘the sand in his basket fell and fell and fell’

- 60 *gai ia e seese ma e hano ga seese ga hano*  
 DM 3SG NPST walk and NPST go ASP walk ASP go  
 ‘so he walked and went and walked and went’
- 61 *ga dae gi de haga-odi gai dana bolobolo gu odi.*  
 ASP reach to DET CAUS-finish DM GEN.3SG basket PRF finish  
 ‘and reached the end and his basket had emptied.’
- 62 *D-ana bolobolo gelegele gu odi gai ia ga huli dua mai huu*  
 DET-GEN.3SG basket sand PRF finish DM 3SG ASP turn back VEN when  
 ‘His basket of sand had emptied so when he turned around,’
- 63 *gai ia gu lele ono mouli ia gu malangilangi.*  
 DM 3SG PRF jump GEN.3SG life 3SG PRF happy  
 ‘he was surprised and he was happy.’
- 64 *De-nga modu o de henua gu tuu mai gai ia gu malangilangi.*  
 DET-PL islet of DET island PRF stand.PL VEN DM 3SG PRF happy  
 ‘The islets of the atoll stood there so he was happy.’
- 65 *Gai ia ga ahe dua mai ga hu-mai ga hu-mai ga hu-mai*  
 DM 3SG ASP return back VEN ASP come-VEN ASP come-VEN ASP come-VEN  
 ‘So he turned around and came and came and came’
- 66 *ga tilo de henua hugadoo laanui go Nukuoro*  
 ASP see DET island most big FOC Nukuoro  
 ‘and saw the biggest island, Nukuoro,’
- 67 *gai ia ga hano ga noho ssala dono momme ga hai dono momme noho*  
 DM 3SG ASPgo ASP sit look.for GEN.3SG place ASP make GEN.3SG place live  
 ‘and he went and sat to look for his place to make his home’
- 68 *momme laa haga-ingo ange go Lodoaalohi.*  
 place DIST CAUS-name AND FOC Lodoaalohi  
 ‘that place was called Lodoaalohi.’
- 69 *Gai ia ga hano kilaa ga noho ai ga hai ai ana mee kilaa*  
 DM 3SG ASP go there ASP stay RES.PR ASP make RES.PR GEN.3SG thing there  
 ‘So he went there and lived there and made his things there’
- 70 *ga noho ga dau looloa, dau looloa dono noho.*  
 ASP stay ASP count long count long his stay  
 ‘and lived for a long time, he stayed for a long time.’

**Taalanga o Vave  
(The Story of Vave)**

- 71 *Dahi laangi huu gai de hodooligi o de gau Saamoa*  
one day when DM DET king of DET people Samoa  
'One day, the king of the Samoan people'
- 72 *de momme haga-ingo ange go Manua*  
DET place CAUS-name AND FOC Manua  
'the place was called Manua,'
- 73 *de hodooligi laa gu magau gai e dogo lua ana dama daane.*  
DET king DIST PRF die DM NPST CL.ANIMTWO GEN.3SG child male  
'that king died and he had two sons.'
- 74 *Gai tagodo donu de hagatau go tama daane madua*  
DM according truly DET tradition FOC DET.child male older  
'So according to tradition, the older son'
- 75 *e gaave ina tiba a de hodooligi*  
NPST take TR duty of DET king  
'takes the duty of the king'
- 76 *e hai ai de hodooligi o Saamoa.*  
NPST make RES.PR DET king of Samoa  
'and becomes the king of Samoa.'
- 77 *Gai de masavaa huu alaau ne loo mai ai e kalo ange tiba nei*  
DM DET moment when GEN.3DU PFV come VEN RES.PR NPST look AND duty PROX  
'So when they [two] came and considered this duty,'
- 78 *gai taina tama gauligi go Vave dono ingo*  
DM DET.brother DET.child small FOC Vave GEN.3SG name  
'the younger son, whose name was Vave,'
- 79 *gu lodo hogi go go ia de king.*  
PRF want also FOC FOC 3SG DET king  
'also wanted himself [to be] the king.'
- 80 *Gai tama madua e dee lodo hiidinga go ia e madua*  
DM DET.child older NPST NEG want because FOC 3SG NPST older  
'The older son did not want [this] because he was older'
- 81 *gai tama gauligi e lodo go go ia*  
DM DET.child small NPST want FOC FOC 3SG  
'and the younger brother wanted himself [to be king]'

- 82 *hiidinga kona i dono lodo gi lunga.*  
 because very LOC GEN.3SG want to above  
 ‘because his desire for power was great.’
- 83 *Ga lava gai gilaau ga heloongoi bolo gilaau ga daudau aabe hibagi*  
 ASP finish DM 3DU ASP agree COMP 3DU ASP wrestle or fight  
 ‘Finally they agreed that they would wrestle or fight’
- 84 *gai go ai naa huu e kii*  
 DM FOC who MED when NPST win  
 ‘and whoever won’
- 85 *gai ia ga hano gee donu i de henua go Saamoa.*  
 DM 3SG ASP go away truly LOC DET island FOC Samoa  
 ‘he would leave the island of Samoa.’
- 86 *Gai tangada— go ai naa huu e kii*  
 DM DET.person FOC who MED when NPST win  
 ‘So the person— whoever won’
- 87 *ga noho i de henua o Saamoa gai go ai naa huu e magulu*  
 ASP stay LOC DET island of Samoa DM FOC who MED when NPST lose  
 ‘would stay on the island of Samoa, and whoever lost’
- 88 *gai ia ga hano gee donu i de henua o Saamoa.*  
 DM 3SG ASP go away truly LOC DET island of Samoa  
 ‘would leave the island of Samoa.’
- 89 *Gai ga hebagi huu gilaau aabe daudau gai a Vave gu magulu.*  
 DM ASP fight when 3DU or wrestle DM PERS Vave PRF lose  
 ‘So when they fought or wrestled, Vave lost.’
- 90 *Magulu huu a Vave gai a Vave ga tilo dono bodu*  
 lose when PERS Vave DM PERS Vave ASP find GEN.3SG spouse  
 ‘When Vave lost, Vave found his wife’
- 91 *ma ana dama ma ono soa alodahi ma madua o dono bodu*  
 and GEN.3SG children and GEN.3SG friends all and parents of GEN.3SG wife  
 ‘and his children and all his friends and his wife's parents’
- 92 *gai gilaadeu ga hulo gee i Saamoa.*  
 DM 3PL ASP go.PL away LOC Samoa  
 ‘and they all left Samoa.’

- 93 *Dae huu gi de laangi alaadeu ne hulo gee ai i Saamoa*  
 reach when to DET day GEN.3PL PFV go.PL away RES.PR LOC Samoa  
 ‘When it reached the day that they left Samoa,’
- 94 *gilaadeu ga tele mai ga tele mai ga loo mai ga tae mai gi dahi modu*  
 3PL ASP sail VEN ASP sail VEN ASP come VEN ASP reach VEN to one islet  
 ‘they sailed and sailed and came and reached an islet’
- 95 *gai a Vave e dee lodo ai i de modu laa.*  
 DM PERS Vave NPST NEG want RES.PR LOC DET islet there  
 ‘but Vave didn't like that islet.’
- 96 *Gilaadeu ga duu-dagi de tele ga hulo ga hulo*  
 3PL ASP stand-extend DET sail ASP go.PL ASP go.PL  
 ‘they continued to sail and went and went’
- 97 *ga tae ange gi dahi modu a Vave e dee lodo ai hogi.*  
 NPST reach AND to one islet PERS Vave NPST NEG like RES.PR also  
 ‘and reached an islet, but Vave didn't like [this one] either.’
- 98 *De-nei donu huu de-laadeu hai e hai ai heda e ange dahi modu*  
 DET-PROX truly when DET-GEN.3PL way NPST do RES.PR meet AND one islet  
 ‘This was their way of doing [it], [they would] meet another islet’
- 99 *gai a Vave e dee lodo ai*  
 DM PERS Vave NPST NEG want RES.PR  
 ‘and Vave never liked them’
- 100 *gai dahi laangi huu gai gilaadeu ga loo mai ga tae mai*  
 DM one day when DM 3PL ASP come VEN ASP reach VEN  
 ‘so one day, they came and reached’
- 101 *gi de henua go Kabingamaalangi abe-go Kilinisi*  
 to DET island FOC Kapingamarangi or-FOC Kilinisi  
 ‘the island called Kapingamarangi, or Kilinisi,’
- 102 *gai a Vave gu vaasu i Kilinisi*  
 DM PERS Vave PRF like LOC Kilinisi  
 ‘and Vave liked Kilinisi’
- 103 *gai ia gu lodo e hai go go ia de hooligi*  
 DM 3SG PRF want NPST make FOC FOC 3SG DET king  
 ‘so he wanted to make himself the king.’

- 104 *aabe gi ni-oona de modu go Kilinisi.*  
 OR to COP-3SG.GEN DET islet FOC Kilinisi  
 ‘or [take] for himself the island of Kilinisi.’
- 105 *Gai de masavaa huu aana e hai ai ana hagatau nei*  
 DM DET moment when 3SG.GEN NPST make RES.PR 3SG.GEN process PROX  
 ‘So when he tried to arrange this,’
- 106 *gai e haingadaa hiidinga gu hanu donu dangada*  
 DM NPST difficult because PRF some truly people  
 ‘it was difficult because there were already people’
- 107 *e noho i Kilinisi, Kabingamaalangi*  
 NPST stay LOC Kilinisi Kapingamarangi  
 ‘living on Kilinisi, Kapingamarangi,’
- 108 *gai e hagatale de kave de henua*  
 DM NPST try DET take DET island  
 ‘so he tried to take the island,’
- 109 *abe-go de modu go Kilinisi m-oona*  
 OR-FOC DET islet FOC Kilinisi for-3SG.GEN  
 ‘or the islet of Kilinisi for himself’
- 110 *gai e kona i de haingadaa de-laa ai.*  
 DM NPST much LOC DET difficult DET-DIST RES.PR  
 ‘but it was very hard.’
- 111 *dau loloa d-ana hai de mee nei d-ana hagatau nei*  
 time long DET-3SG.GEN make DET thing PROX DET-3SG.GEN process PROX  
 ‘For a long time he tried to do this’
- 112 *gai tigi maua gi sula gai ia ga hai ange gi ono soa*  
 DM NEG.yet able to succeed DM 3SG ASP say AND to 3SG.GEN friend  
 ‘and he was not able to succeed, so he asked his friend,’
- 113 *de aaligi be e maua laa gilaadeu i de hulo gi de moana*  
 DET leader if NPST able DIST 3PL LOC DET leave to DET open.sea  
 ‘the leader, if they all could go out to sea’
- 114 *duu-dagi ai de ssala be hanu angeange modu*  
 stand-extend RES.PR DET search if some other islets  
 ‘to continue the search for some other islets’

- 115 *aabe ni henua alaadeu e gidee.*  
 or COP island 3PL.GEN NPST see  
 ‘or islands that they could find.’
- 116 *De masavaa huu olaadeu ne hulo gee ai*  
 DET moment when 3PL.GEN PFV go.PL away RES.PR  
 ‘When they left’
- 117 *llanea maasina olaadeu ne tele ai aabe ne llanea boo ma laangi*  
 many moon 3PL.GEN PFV sail RES.PR or PFV many night and day  
 ‘many moons that they sailed, or many days and nights’
- 118 *olaadeu ne tele ai ga tae mai gi Nuguolo*  
 3PL.GEN PFV sail RES.PR ASP reach VEN to Nukuoro  
 ‘that they sailed to reach Nukuoro’
- 119 *gai gilaadeu gu gidee Nuguolo gai gilaadeu ga loo mai gi aagena.*  
 DM 3PL PRF see Nukuoro DM 3PL ASP come VEN to destination  
 ‘so they saw Nukuoro and they came to their destination.’
- 120 *Masavaa huu olaadeu ne loo mai ai gi aagena*  
 moment when 3PL.GEN PFV come VEN RES.PR to destination  
 ‘When they came to this place,’
- 121 *gai gilaadeu gu gidee de mahamaha o de henua go Nuguolo,*  
 DM 3PL PRF see DET beauty of DET island FOC Nukuoro  
 ‘they saw the beauty of the island of Nukuoro,’
- 122 *de llanea gai aagena aama hua lausedi kona i de llanea.*  
 DET many food destination and fruit ocean much LOC DET many  
 ‘the plentiful food there and plentiful sea creatures.’
- 123 *Gilaadeu ga noho i de modu go Gausema.*  
 3PL ASP stay LOC DET islet FOC Gausema  
 ‘They stayed on the islet of Gausema.’
- 124 *Gilaadeu ga noho ga haga-mabu*  
 3PL ASP sit ASP CAUS-rest  
 ‘They sat and rested’
- 125 *ga nnoa de-laadeu moni ga makaga taula.*  
 ASP tie DET-3PL.GEN canoe ASP tighten DET.rope  
 ‘and tied their canoe and tightened the rope’

- 126 *Gai de masavaa huu olaadeu ne gaav-age ai alaadeu mamu*  
 DM DET moment when 3PL.GEN PFV take-up RES.PR 3PL.GEN fish  
 ‘So when they brought their fish’
- 127 *gi uda henua ga dunu e gai-mee ai gilaadeu*  
 to inland island ASP cook NPST eat-thing RES.PR 3PL  
 ‘inland and cooked and they ate,’
- 128 *gai a Sogo ga gaa mai ono eidu vaaligi gi vaivaihai de gau nei.*  
 DM PERS Sogo ASP bring VEN 3SG.GEN ghost small to threaten DET people PROX  
 ‘Sogo brought over his small ghosts to threaten these people.’
- 129 *Gai ga loo mai huu denga eidu nei*  
 DM ASP come VEN when DET.PL ghost PROX  
 ‘So when these ghosts came’
- 130 *ga hulo ga tala de moni o de gau o Vave*  
 ASP go ASP untie DET canoe of DET people of Vave  
 ‘and went and untied the canoe of Vave's people’
- 131 *gai de moni laa ga dahea*  
 DM DET canoe DIST ASP drift  
 ‘the canoe drifted [away]’
- 132 *gai gilaadeu ga kau ga hulo ga gaa mai.*  
 DM 3PL ASP swim.PL ASP go ASP bring VEN  
 ‘so they swam and went and brought [it] back.’
- 133 *E hia hanonga ne hai ai de mee nei*  
 NPST how.many times PFV do RES.PR DET thing PROX  
 ‘How many times they did this’
- 134 *gai gilaadeu gu langona-iho ma de tonu ange bolo*  
 DM 3PL PRF feel-down and DET understand AND COMP  
 ‘so they felt and understood that’
- 135 *denga eidu o Nuguolo e vaivaihai gilaadeu gai gilaadeu gu maatagu.*  
 DET.PL ghosts of Nukuoro NPST threaten 3PL DM 3PL PRF afraid.PL  
 ‘the ghosts of Nukuoro were threatening them so they were afraid.’
- 136 *Gai gilaadeu ga manadu-age bolo gilaadeu ga aahe donu gi Kilinisi*  
 DM 3PL ASP think-up COMP 3PL ASP return truly to Kilinisi  
 ‘So they decided that they would return to Kilinisi’

- 137 *i daho Vave e tala ange ai gi a Vave de-laadeu longo.*  
 LOC with Vave NPST tell AND RES.PR to PERS Vave DET-3PL.GEN message  
 ‘where Vave was to tell Vave their message.’
- 138 *Gai de masavaa huu olaadeu ne aahe ai ga hulo gi Kilinisi,*  
 DM DET moment when they PFV return RES.PR ASP go to Kilinisi,  
 ‘So when they returned and went to Kilinisi,’
- 139 *aabe-go Kabingamaalangi,*  
 or-FOC Kapingamarangi,  
 or Kapingamarangi,
- 140 *gai gilaadeu ga tala ange gi a Vave de longo.*  
 DM 3PL ASP tell AND to PERS Vave DET message  
 ‘they told Vave the message.’
- 141 *Gai de masavaa huu a Vave ne langona ai*  
 DM DET moment when PERS Vave PFV hear RES.PR  
 ‘So when Vave heard’
- 142 *bolo e dahi henua e mahamaha*  
 COMP NPST one island NPST beautiful  
 ‘that there was a beautiful island,’
- 143 *hiidinga de-nei de-laadeu hai ne hai ange ai*  
 because DET-PROX DET-3PL.GEN way PFV say AND RES.PR  
 ‘because this [was] their way of telling [him]:’
- 144 *E Vave! E dahi henua e baa mai gi odaadeu gaogao i kinei*  
 VOC Vave NPST one island NPST close VEN to 3PL.GEN near LOC here  
 ‘“Vave! There is an island close to here—’
- 145 *kona i de mahamaha de henua nei!*  
 much LOC DET beautiful DET island PROX  
 ‘how beautiful this island is!’
- 146 *E llanea gai e gai-mee ai, e llanea hua o lausedi,*  
 NPST many food NPST eat-thing RES.PR NPST many fruit of sea  
 ‘There is plenty of food to eat and plenty of sea creatures’
- 147 *ma de gili-malali. Gai de masavaa a Vave ne langona ai*  
 and DET skin-smooth DM DET moment PERS Vave PFV hear RES.PR  
 ‘and [it is] clean.” So when Vave heard’

- 148 *tangada ne daala ange de longo gai de-laa donu huu de mee.*  
 DET.person PFV tell AND DET message DM DET-DIST truly when DET thing  
 ‘the person tell the message, “There is only [one] thing there.’
- 149 *E dee ai donu dangada gai ni eidu i aagena*  
 NPST NEG RES.PR truly person DM COP ghost LOC destination  
 ‘There are no people, but there are ghosts there,’”
- 150 *gai a Vave dulagi be gu langona-iho laa i ono lodo*  
 DM PERS Vave appear like PRF feel-down DIST LOC 3SG.GEN want  
 ‘Vave seemed to feel his desire’
- 151 *gu langaa ono lodo ga ssili gi danuaa ga hai ange,*  
 PRF lift 3SG.GEN want ASP ask to good ASP say AND  
 ‘growing and [he] asked and said,’
- 152 *Koe hai mai naa e dee ai donu dangada i de henua naa?*  
 2SG say VEN MED NPST NEG RES.PR truly people LOC DET island MED  
 “‘You tell me there are no people on that island?’”
- 153 *Gai taane laa ga hai ange ua.*  
 DM DET.man DIST ASP say AND yes  
 ‘So that man said, “Yes.”’
- 154 *Gai ia ga haga-ahe ange ga hai ange,*  
 DM 3SG ASP CAUS-return AND ASP say AND  
 ‘So he [Vave] replied and said,’
- 155 *E bei naa de henua naa ni oogu?*  
 NPST like MED DET island MED COP 1SG.GEN  
 “‘It’s as if the island is mine?’
- 156 *Go au de hooligi o de henua naa?*  
 FOC 1SG DET king of DET island MED  
 ‘I am the king of that island?’”
- 157 *Gai ia ga hai ange, Iainei donu gai gidaadeu ga maalanga e hulo.*  
 DM 3SG ASP say AND right.now truly DM 3PL ASP take.off NPST go  
 ‘So he said, “Right now we are setting off to go.”’
- 158 *Gai gilaadeu ga kave alaadeu mee alodahi mai*  
 DM 3PL ASP take 3PL.GEN thing all VEN  
 ‘So they took all their things’

- 159 *i hongā de henua Kilinisi*  
 LOC on DET island Kilinisi  
 ‘on the island of Kilinisi’
- 160 *ga gaav-ange i hongā de moni go hao-lua*  
 ASP put-AND LOC on DET canoe FOC tie-two  
 ‘and put [them] on the canoe, the *haolua*’
- 161 *gai gilaadeu ga aahe gi Nuguolo.*  
 DM 3PL ASP return to Nukuoro  
 ‘and they returned to Nukuoro.’
- 162 *De masavaa huu olaadeu e tele ai gi Nuguolo*  
 DET moment when 3PL.GEN NPST sail RES.PR to Nukuoro  
 ‘When they sailed to Nukuoro’
- 163 *gai a Vave ga hai ange gi taane hai huuhuaamee ga hai ange,*  
 DM PERS Vave ASP say AND to DET.man do magic ASP say AND  
 ‘Vave said to the man who knew sorcery, he said,’
- 164 *Iainei gai goe saalaa de hai e maua ai au*  
 right.now DM 2SG find DET way NPST able RES.PR 1SG  
 ‘“Right now you must find a way for me’
- 165 *i de kave ssauaa mai i ssauaa*  
 LOC DET take control VEN LOC control  
 ‘to take control over’
- 166 *be go ai e ssauaa i hongā de henua nei*  
 if FOC who NPST control LOC on DET island PROX  
 ‘whoever controls this island’
- 167 *gai ssauaa laa gi maua ngau go de hodoologi*  
 DM control DIST to able 1SG FOC DET king  
 ‘so that control will make me the king,’
- 168 *aabe ni oogu de henua go Nuguolo*  
 or COP 1SG.GEN DET island FOC Nukuoro  
 ‘or make the island of Nukuoro mine.’”
- 169 *Gai gilaadeu ga loo mai gai taane e hai ana huuhuaamee.*  
 DM 3PL ASP come VEN DM DET.man NPST do 3SG.GEN magic  
 ‘So they came so the man did his magic.’

- 170 *De masavaa huu olaadeu ne tae mai ai*  
 DET moment when 3PL.GEN PFV reach VEN RES.PR  
 ‘When they reached [the island]’
- 171 *gai taane hai huuhuaamee ga hai ange gi a Vave,*  
 DM DET.man do magic ASP say AND to PERS Vave  
 ‘the man who does magic said to Vave,’
- 172 *Gidaadeu ga hulo naa huu ga tae gi de ava*  
 1PL.INCL ASP go MED when ASP reach to DET channel  
 ‘When we go and reach the channel’
- 173 *ga tau-age gi dahi modu gai ga tala de moni ga hai gi lua.*  
 ASP land-up to one islet DM ASP untie DET canoe ASP make to two  
 ‘and land on an islet, untie the canoe to make it into two.’
- 174 *Gai goe ga dele i dahi ga dagi gidaadeu*  
 DM 2SG ASP sail LOC one ASP lead 1PL.INCL  
 ‘You will sail in one and lead us’
- 175 *gai dau dama-daane ga dele i dahi*  
 DM 2SG.GEN child-male ASP sail LOC one  
 ‘and your son will sail in one’
- 176 *ga dagi gidaadeu gi Tulugi tele i lote lodo*  
 NPST lead 1PL.INCL to Tulugi sail LOC inside.DET lagoon  
 ‘and lead us to Tulugi sailing through the lagoon’
- 177 *delaadeu tele i lote lodo gi modu vaaligi, de-nga modu vaaligi.*  
 3PL.GEN sail LOC inside.DET lagoon to islet small DET-PL islet small  
 ‘that we sail through the lagoon to the small islets, the furthest islets.’
- 178 *Gai ga tae naa huu gidaadeu gi dahi momme*  
 DM ASP reach MED when 1PL.INCL to one place  
 ‘When we reach the place,’
- 179 *gai au ga hagamaba naa huu ga aahe dua*  
 DM 1SG ASP call.out MED when ASP return back  
 ‘I will call out and turn around’
- 180 *gai gidaadeu ga llui alodahi, ga llui-age gi de henua laanui.*  
 DM 1PL.INCL ASP turn all ASP turn-up to DET island big  
 ‘so we will all turn around, turn around toward the big island.’

- 181 *Daadeu ga tele-age naa huu koe ma dau dama goluu e tele be nei*  
 1PL.INCL ASP sail-up MED when2SG and 2SG.GEN child 2DU NPST sail like PROX  
 ‘When we sail, you and your son, you two will sail like this,’
- 182 *tele maavaevae be nei, ga tae naa donu huu goodou ga—*  
 sail separately like PROX ASP reach MED truly when 2PL ASP  
 ‘sail separately like this, and when you all reach [the big island], you will—’
- 183 *goluu ga tau-age be go hee oo dahi ma dahi ne dau-age ai*  
 2DU ASP reach-up like FOC where 2SG.GEN one and one PFV reach-up RES.PR  
 ‘when you two reach whichever two [places] you reach,’
- 184 *goluu ga iho, goluu ga seese ange goluu ga seese ange be nei.*  
 2DU ASP down 2DU ASP walk AND 2DU ASP walk AND like PROX  
 ‘You will get down, you will walk, you will walk like this [toward each other].’
- 185 *De momme naa huu oluu e hedae ai laa*  
 DET place MED when 2PL NPST meet RES.PR DIST  
 ‘[At] the place where you two meet,’
- 186 *gai koe Vave ga seese gi uda henua*  
 DM 2SG Vave ASP walk to inland island  
 ‘you Vave will walk inland’
- 187 *gai dau dama ga seese gi dai*  
 DM 2SG.GEN child ASP walk to lagoon<sup>8</sup>  
 ‘And your son will walk to the lagoon,’
- 188 *de momme o de laa e danu ai.*  
 DET place GEN DET SUN NPST bury RES.PR  
 ‘the place where the sun sets.’
- 189 *Gai de masavaa naa huu tai gu dae-age ai gi luu ono vae*  
 DM DET moment MED when DET.sea PRF reach-up RES.PR to two 3SG.GEN leg  
 ‘So when the sea reaches to his knees’
- 190 *gai ia ga aoo gai koe Vave koe ga maaga de-naa*  
 DM 3SG ASP shout DM 2SG Vave 2SG ASP mark DET-MED  
 ‘he will shout, and you Vave, you will mark there’
- 191 *de momme i uda de ngaadonga i uda.*  
 DET place LOC inland DET end/limit LOC inland  
 ‘the place in the east, the border to the east.’<sup>9</sup>

- 192 *Gai goluu ga aahe mai ga seese gi ngaage ma ngaiho*  
 DM 2DU ASP return VEN ASP walk to north and south  
 ‘So you two will return and walk to the north and south’<sup>10</sup>
- 193 *gai ga dae naa donu huu gi tae lodo*  
 DM ASP reach MED truly when to reach lagoon  
 ‘and when you reach’
- 194 *de haadinga uda ma dai*  
 DET measurement inland and lagoon  
 ‘the measurement [you walked] east and west’
- 195 *e bei donu huu ngaage ma ngaiho gai goluu ga maaga.*  
 NPST like truly when north and south DM 2DU ASP mark  
 ‘when it is the same as north and south you will mark [it].’
- 196 *Gai de-laa de masavaa oodou e haga-duu ai*  
 DM DET-DIST DET moment 2PL.GEN NPST CAUS-stand RES.PR  
 ‘So then you will create the place’
- 197 *de momme hai ange laa go de malai gilaadeu ga nnoho ai kilaa*  
 DET place say AND DIST FOC DET malai 3PL ASP stay RES.PR there  
 ‘that was mentioned, the Malai (sacred place), they will stay there.’
- 198 *De-laa de-laadeu hai ne noho ai de hai o de gau Polynesia*  
 DET-DIST DET-3PL.GEN way PFV stay RES.PR DET way of DET people Polynesia  
 ‘That [is] their way of staying here, the way that the Polynesian people’
- 199 *ne loo mai ga settle aabe loo mai ga noho i Micronesia.*  
 PFV come VEN ASP settle or come VEN ASP stay LOC Micronesia  
 ‘came and settled or came and stayed in Micronesia.’
- 200 *De abo donu mai i oodou daha.*  
 DET goodness truly VEN LOC 2PL.GEN around  
 ‘Thank you very much.’
- 201 *Hanu momo mee o taadeu daalanga o de gau Nuguolo.*  
 some few thing of DET.1PL.INCL story of DET people Nukuoro  
 ‘[These are] a few things from our story of the Nukuoro people.’
- 202 *Go au go Soni.*  
 FOC 1SG FOC Soni  
 ‘I am Johnny.’

### Structure and Ethnopoetics

In this section, we note some of the narrative, grammatical and prosodic phenomena of the text. These merit further analysis, and will also necessitate further fieldwork, and are discussed only in a preliminary way in this paper.

Authorship is established at the beginning and end. In the introduction, the author identifies himself, and the story, as belonging to Nukuoro, Federated States of Micronesia, and to greater Polynesia (a construct that is both imagined and geographic). The introduction also includes autobiographical information about Johnny himself, likely for the benefit of this particular audience, a group of non-Nukuoro researchers and an online viewership. In most other attested Nukuoro stories, such as those recorded by Raymonde Carroll (1980), no such introduction is present. Within the story, historical connections are described linking Nukuoro to the peoples of Samoa and Kapingmarangi. At the end, the author ends the narrative rather abruptly by repeating his name. The particular construction that he uses, *Go au go [name]*, is formulaic at the end of most, if not all, narratives recorded in the collected canon, suggesting that this line is an established storytelling convention that both signals the end of the storytelling event and reaffirms the identity of the storyteller.

[202]      *Go au go Soni.*  
              ‘I am Johnny.’

The structural organization of the spoken text is previewed in the introduction. Johnny Rudolph explicitly outlines the narrative content in lines 4-12, citing three distinct stories from the “big story” of Nukuoro. The first is the story of how the underwater reef of Nukuoro was formed by heavenly visitors, the second is the story of how the islets were formed by a spirit, and the third is the story of how voyagers came from Samoa to settle on the atoll.

The introduction is just one of several framing devices used in the text. The progression of the story is supported by temporal framing, which bookends each of the three smaller tales with an indication of the passage of time. The narrative begins with line 13, which sets the story in an unspecified and very distant past. After the story of the reef’s creation, Johnny uses long, repetitive phrasing in lines 48-49 to convey a vast stretch of time that has passed, and to clearly delineate the boundary between the two stories. Lastly, the story of Sogo ends in line 70 with another lengthy passage of time indicated, before Johnny begins telling the third and final story of Vave.

[13]      *Madagidagi madagidagi loo, madagidagi loo*  
              ‘A long, long time ago, a long time ago’

[48-49]   *Gai ni ngadau se masavaa dau looloo i muli mai loo muli mai loo i muli mai loo*  
              ‘So after many years, after a long time coming, coming, coming’

[70]      *ga noho ga dau looloo, dau looloo dono noho.*  
              ‘[he] lived for a long time, he stayed for a long time.’

These instances of temporal framing use repetition to emphasize the length of time that has passed, a common strategy used throughout this narrative. Often, this repetition takes the form of a serial verb construction, as in line 59, where a verb and a tense/aspect marker are repeated to

indicate a continuous action that occurred over a long stretch of time. In this case, the sand in Sogo's basket fell intermittently as he walked around the reef of Nukuoro. The serialization of *malili* 'fall' draws attention to the falling sand as an important narrative detail and emphasizes the passage of time.

[59]     *denga gelegele i lotana bolobolo gu malili ga malili ga malili*  
          'the sand inside his basket fell, fell, fell'

It is worth noting that the serial verb construction in Nukuoro need not use the same tense/aspect marker with all iterations of the verb—the first instance of *malili* uses the perfect aspect *gu*, indicating a completed action, while the next two use a different aspectual marker *ga*, the default storytelling aspect in Nukuoro. In lines 61-62, we also see different verbs used together in a serial construction.

[61-62] *ia e seese ma e hano ga seese ga hano ga dae gi de hagaodi*  
          'he walked and went, walked, went, reached the end'

In this example, the verbs *hano* 'go' and *seese* 'walk' are used in an alternating serial verb construction, fittingly ended by the verb phrase *dae gi de hagaodi* 'reach the end'. This serial construction, as well as in line 65 with the verb *humai* 'come', establishes the duration of time it took Sogo to walk around the entire reef, which is six kilometers in diameter.

[65]     *ia ga ahe dua mai ga humai ga humai ga humai*  
          'he turned around, came, came, came [back]'

While serialization emphasizes the length of time or a continuous action, the repetition of a particular verb throughout the narrative maintains focus on a particular action as new information is added. In the first story about the creation of the reef, the phrase *gilaadeu ga/ne/gu loomai* 'they came' is used six times referring to the family from the rainbow, each time with a new addition to the story: 'in their canoe' [17], 'from the rainbow' [19], 'to search for a place' [20], 'to look for a suitable place' [21-22], 'to a place in the whole Pacific Ocean' [23-24], 'to the right spot' [28]. This repetition allows the storyteller to embellish upon the event while emphasizing the importance of a particular plot point. In this manner, the word *do* 'plant' is used six times to announce the planting of the pearl, and the arrival of Sogo is announced six times using the term *humai* 'come'.

The default storytelling tense/aspect/mood in Nukuoro is indicated using the preverbal particle *ga*. Carroll (1965a: 210) defines *ga* as 'anticipatory aspect', "used where the verbal idea is indefinite, where permission or assent is being sought, or to indicate the passage of time." This morpheme reflects Proto-Polynesian *\*ka(a)* 'verbal aspect particle marking inception of new action or state' in both form and meaning (Greenhill et al. 2011). Cognates in closely related languages, such as Tuvaluan *kaa* and Vaeakau-Taumako *ka*, are described as indicating future, though neither is entirely temporal in nature and may be used to express conditionality or uncertainty. Besnier (2000: 476) notes that Tuvaluan *kaa* can mark temporal sequencing, and Vaeakau-Taumako *ka* can mark "futurity with respect to a reference time, a point in the narrative, rather than with respect to the time of speech" (Næss and Hovdhaugen 2011: 298). Though the contemporary Polynesian literature uses the term 'future', temporal future is rarely indicated using

*ga* in Nukuoro; thus, we have chosen to follow Carroll (1965a) and gloss *ga* as ASP (anticipatory aspect) to avoid any association with temporality.

In the story narrative, the first time any given action or event is introduced, it will appear in anticipatory aspect, while subsequent mentions of the now-established event appear in perfective aspect. The *ne* morpheme formulaically appears after the phrase *de masavaa huu* ‘the moment when’ [31].

[31]     *gai de masavaa huu ne hai ai de agau ga molomolo*  
          ‘so the moment when the reef formed, it was round’

Thus, the narrative unfolds as a step-by-step series of events, with each new event building on the last. If we consider line 30 in addition to 31, we see that *daamada i de hai* ‘start to form’ is first introduced using anticipatory *ga*. It is then restated using *de masavaa huu* ‘the moment when’ and the perfective *ne* to convey completion of the event, ensuring that *molomolo* ‘be round’, which returns to anticipatory *ga*, occurs after the first event has finished.

[30-31] *Gai de agau o Nuguolo ga daamada i de hai ga molomolo. Gai de masavaa huu ne hai ai de agau ga molomolo.*  
          ‘So the reef of Nukuoro started to become clear. So the moment when the reef formed, it was round.’

### Conclusions

The persistence of Nukuoro origin myths, together with the oral storytelling traditions still expertly practiced by Johnny Rudolph and others, comprise an important part of the intangible cultural heritage and intellectual property of the Nukuoro people. The stories’ thematic content anchors the Nukuoro people in time and space, and in the temporal and spiritual realms. They reference significant elements of Nukuoro topography (atoll geography, ocean currents, spatial orientation systems), material culture (pearls, sailing canoes, ancestor figures), social organization (hereditary chiefdoms, fraternal rivals for succession, marriage, kinship), ethnic origins and contacts (Samoa, Kapingamarangi), and the spiritual cosmology (sky, rainbow, sorcerers, spirits). As such, these stories present a lesson in cultural values and collective memory, intentionally transmitted across the generations. They also supplement the existing historical-scientific record, as well as scientific findings yet to come, in domains such as genetics, archeology, oceanography, and human migration, thus yielding a more complete and culturally grounded historical record.

That the owners of this cultural resource—members of the Nukuoro community—have exercised their ownership by choosing to share it is noteworthy. They have done this firstly, through many interpersonal communications and acts of storytelling at locations both within and remote from the Nukuoro homeland; secondly, in a process of digital documentation carried out by community members in collaboration with outside linguists; and thirdly, via digital publications and archives (Nukuoro Talking Dictionary,<sup>11</sup> YouTube, social media, and academic journals). All three of these types of sharing represent intentional strategies of language conservation and have produced a rich corpus of materials generated by the Nukuoro community in the service of their language revitalization agenda.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The following students were present and assisted with this recording: Sarah Babinski, Joseph Corcoran, Lydia Ding, Lewis Esposito, Jeremy Fahringer, Joey Haavik, James Howard.

<sup>2</sup> We also consulted the 2010 census, but it combines the data for Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi and does not provide separate numbers for the ethnic groups or speaker populations.

<sup>3</sup> One of these songs, entitled *Solo iho de moni* (Launch the canoe), can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fw0XsLpz1mE>

<sup>4</sup> In addition to abbreviations from the Leipzig glossing rules (Comrie et al. 2015), we use the following non-standard abbreviations: AND andative; ANIM animate; ASP (anticipatory) aspect; DM discourse marker; MED medial; PERS personal marker (used preceding proper names in the narrative); RES.PR resumptive pronoun; VEN venitive.

<sup>5</sup> While *moni* is the general Nukuoro word for canoe, the term *vaka* (~*vaga*, *waka*) is more widely used throughout Polynesia and is used in Nukuoro to identify a canoe intended for long-distance sailing. When outsiders first visited Nukuoro atoll, no such sailing canoes were found on the atoll, and the Nukuoro do not consider such canoes to be part of their material culture.

<sup>6</sup> Di Piazza (2016: 2) notes: “Although ocean-going double canoes are often thought of as the quintessential voyaging craft...no specific shared terms differentiate their sailing rigs or manoeuvres from those of outriggers. The only term that marks them is ‘doubled’ as in Fijian *drua* (twin) and PPN [Proto-Polynesian] \**rua* (two)... There is also no evidence for their existence during the early Oceanic settlement period, that is, during the time of P[roto] Oc[eanic].”

<sup>7</sup> A *bolobolo* is an elongated basket of coconut palm leaves, roughly 3 feet in length and 1 foot wide/deep, often used to carry coconuts, but unsuitable for materials such as sand, as it has many holes. See <http://talkingdictionary.swarthmore.edu/nukuoro/?entry=2833>.

<sup>8</sup> Carroll (1964: 9) reports these directional terms as *i dai* “lagoonward” (literally “on the water”) contrasting with *i dua* “seaward” (literally “on the back”).

<sup>9</sup> In current usage, *i dua* (~ *i uda*) “inland/seaward” (literally “on the back”) may be used to reference “east”, since most of the habitable islets of Nukuoro are positioned such that the two directionals coincide, e.g., when one walks east, one is walking with one’s back to the lagoon, which means both towards the open sea and inland at the same time. See Carroll 1965.

<sup>10</sup> Carroll (1965: 8–9) explains that in the relative Nukuoro directional system, going *ngaage* means to be traveling away from the *ngaiho*, the northwestern terminus of the backwards C-shaped islet chain (such movement may take place in any cardinal direction), while going *ngaiho* means to be travelling away from the *ngaage*, the southwestern terminus of the backwards C-shaped chain (again, such movement may take place in any cardinal direction). He further notes that this system has been reinterpreted in terms of cardinal directions north/south under influence of education.

<sup>11</sup> The Nukuoro Talking Dictionary (Anderson et al. 2016) was created in June 2013 at a workshop organized by IREI and the Living Tongues Institute, with funding from the National Geographic Society and private donors Jack Daulton and Roz Ho. It was continued and expanded at a second digital lexicography workshop in Pohnpei in June, 2015, which coincided with the field visit by a group of nine US-based linguistics students and faculty, and a reciprocal visit by Johnny Rudolph to Swarthmore College in July 2015, all funded by NSF award #1461056. The dictionary continues to expand thanks to collaborative work between Nukuoro community members and linguists, and currently has 2,368 entries, 1,082 audio files, and 59 images.