

Daily Motions of Merging and Separation



As we will see in Chapter 4 and 5, cultural continuity in perceptions of the surrounding world and how things happen in it can be helpful in understanding characteristic qualities of Tongan ritual aesthetics and sociality, including central ideas about how to cope with the realities of the world and one another. In the concluding Chapter 6, such ideas in their turn are explored as affecting attitudes and responses to what is happening in the world, including the kinds of events and changes that were taking place on Kotu and *Namolahi* Lagoon in the first decades of the twenty-first century. Thus, I believe that answers to the puzzle of people's attitudes and responses to ongoing changes can only be found by patiently following threads offered in the detailed ethnography of the world and its workings. In this chapter and the next, I follow clues that have been produced by the exploration of marine dynamics in the previous chapter onto dry land and into the sky above to explore conceptualizations and practices related to other everyday activities. Most importantly, the ethnography of these chapters will bring out the significance of knowledge embedded in everyday fields of experience and practice as a source of meaning and cultural continuity. An ethnography of the world and its workings produced through an exploration of shifts and changes related to the diurnal cycle is the subject matter of the current chapter, while shifts and changes related to the lunar cycle is the subject matter of Chapter 3.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, solar panels were not yet in use on Kotu, and apart from one generator run once in a while to cool a catch of fish waiting to be shipped on the weekly ferry to Nuku'alofa or to illuminate ceremonial occasions, people relied on kerosene lamps. Since kerosene was considered

quite expensive, its use in both public and private spaces was limited. This clearly made the practical significance of nightfall and dawn much more important than what has been the case since affordable solar energy became available and began to illuminate all private and public spaces on Kotu in the new millennium. This clearly also made it much easier to produce an ethnography based on knowledge related to shifts and changes of illumination over the diurnal cycle (as well as over the lunar cycle).

Such Is Night and Day

It may seem particularly appropriate to say that night falls fast in the tropics. At least in contrast to Scandinavia, where daylight wanes slowly. Still, night did not appear to be perceived to fall abruptly on Kotu in terms of how people referred to the many nuances between daylight and darkness. Rather, darkness was described as something gradual until finally ‘overflowing’ and ‘engulfing’ the world of daylight. I shall argue that like the tidal cycle, the terminology of the diurnal cycle is also modelled as a process of transformation between diametrically opposed states. Like ‘high tide’ (*tau ‘a e tahi*) and ‘low tide’ (*mamaha ‘a e tahi*), the states of *pō* (‘night’) and *‘aho* (‘day’) were referred to in a way that made them phases in an ongoing process where numerous qualitative nuances relate opposite states to one another. Descriptive terms of the nuances of the diurnal cycle were characterized by being evocative, even quite poetic. In this chapter, I shall explore a body of temporal references related to diurnal dynamics. I believe that a focus on the descriptions of ‘qualitative nuances’ (Bourdieu 1963) with which people were familiar and routinely read ‘upon the surface of things’ (ibid.: 59) is helpful for the discovery of enduring aspects of Tongan ‘conceptions about the world and its workings’ (Gell 1992: 36).

Among the documents collected by the Tongan Tradition Committee, which was founded by Queen Sālote in 1950 ‘to conduct research into, and to maintain Tongan culture’ (Campbell 1992: 168), are some typed manuscripts. In the typescript referred to as the ‘Book of Havili Hafoka and Queen Sālote on Tongan Traditions’ (Havili Hafoka n.d), the author describes and discusses Tongan ways of ‘reckoning the passage of time’ (*lau taimi*). The author refers to more than fifty terms describing occurrences and changes in the diurnal cycle. In late twentieth-century Kotu, references to phases of the diurnal cycle covered broad categories. But many people were also familiar with a terminology of finer qualitative distinctions and nuances. Despite the fact that most people of Kotu owned a wristwatch, and that some everyday occurrences involved the occasional practice of consulting it, a number of terms related to qualitative shifts and signal events in the surroundings were still routinely used in everyday life. Through

semantic examination, I shall explore such terms as descriptions of moments in a perpetual process of becoming, analogous to the tidal motion explored in the preceding chapter.

Below are a few of the broad categories mentioned above that are most frequently referred to on Kotu:

<i>Hengihengi</i>	'Late night/Early morning' until the appearance on the eastern horizon of the golden red reflection of the sun immediately before sunrise.
<i>Pongipongi</i>	'Morning' from immediately before sunrise until the sun has ascended fairly high in the sky (around 10 AM). According to Havili Hafoka, "The expression <i>pongipongi</i> refers to the "dazzling brightness" (<i>pongipi</i>) of the sun' (Hafoka n.d).
<i>Ho'atā</i>	'Noon' from around 10 AM till about 2 or 3 PM. Described as the phase when persons and things 'cast no shadow' (<i>'ikai 'iloa hoto 'ata</i>). The sun was perceived to remain at a position of maximum elevation, and 'noon' was also associated with silence.
<i>Efi'afi</i>	'Afternoon/Early evening' described as commencing with 'the start of the decline of the sun' (<i>pale 'a e la'ā</i>). According to Hafoka, the expression <i>efi'afi</i> refers to the 'lighting of the cooking fire' (<i>efi 'o e afi</i>) (Hafoka n.d).
<i>Tūmaama</i>	'Evening after dark'. The expression refers to the 'lighting of lamps'. It was described to last from some time after sunset, when it has become 'very dark' (<i>po'uli 'aupito</i>), until most people have 'put out the light' (<i>tamate maama</i>) to go to sleep.
<i>Tu'uapō</i>	'Deep night'. A prolonged phase of stable, changeless darkness and silence.
<i>Longo'aho</i>	'Late night'. A phase of night containing the first vague signs that the stable state of darkness is about to end. The term <i>longo</i> has several meanings, the most common of which is 'to be silent'/'to hold one's peace', but in some expressions <i>longolongo</i> and also <i>longo</i> (weaker) means rather 'to feel as if something were happening or about to happen'. Thus the expression <i>'oku longolongo'uha</i> means 'it feels like rain' while <i>longo'uha</i> means 'it feels like it may rain'. The expression <i>longo'aho</i> seems to refer to a parallel vague feeling that day is about to come.

These broad categories were in their turn subdivided into finer qualitative distinctions clustered around phases of rapid transformation or specific qualitative shifts or diurnal turning points. For instance, finer distinctions operated to constitute a specific sequence within the phase of transformation referred to as *hengihengi*¹ ('Early morning') by distinguishing between:

<i>Ata 'a fa 'ahikehe</i>	'Twilight of the other kind/spirits/devils'
<i>Ata 'a puaka</i>	'Twilight of the pigs'
<i>Kuo mafoa 'a e ata</i>	'Twilight has shattered'
<i>Ata 'a tangata</i>	'Twilight of man'
<i>Kuo ma'a 'a e 'aho</i>	'Day has become clean'

Describing the quality of the 'twilight of the other kind' (*ata 'a fa'ahikehe*) or the 'twilight of the devils/spirits' (*ata 'a tevolo*²), Havili Hafoka writes:

First there is the twilight of the devils, the twilight of the other kind. This twilight was associated with the first springing up of light in the sky, but in a manner making it hard to know with certainty whether it was really the twilight of morning or just some peculiarity of the colour of night. People believed that only beings of 'the other kind' (*fa'ahikehe* i.e. spirits) truly knew the coming of the day, as this was the time when they should return to their holes in the burial ground. They believed that the spirits only roamed about during the night. (Hafoka n.d)

Koloa's description implied some of the same notions: 'This is a time when man is not yet up and about (*Koe e taimi ia teeki 'alu holo ai 'a e tangata*)'.

With regard to the two next phases of dawn, Koloa described 'twilight of the pigs' as 'the time of darkness immediately preceding "twilight has shattered"'. The latter phase he described as a time when 'night has divided off from/separated from the sky (*mavahe mei he langi*) so that the day sheds light.' Hafoka's manuscript sequenced them the other way round. Thus, after the 'twilight has shattered' (*kuo mafoa 'a e ata*), 'twilight of the pigs' was the time when the pigs woke up and started to stir. During this time, 'the Western parts of the sky are still dark' (*ibid.*).

Both stated, however, that men awake and start to stir in the 'twilight of man' (*ata 'a tangata*), 'when the sky is misty with the light of day' (*ibid.*), and that the expression 'day has become clean' (*kuo ma'a 'a e 'aho*) describes the final part of 'early morning' (*hengihengi*). Thus, Koloa described the 'clean day' (*ma'a 'a e 'aho*) as 'a time when the day illuminates well'. In Hafoka's manuscript, the same phase is described as 'The time when the "haze of day" (*nenefu 'o e 'aho*) has gone altogether' (*ibid.*).

The terms describing the transition from a night-time to a daytime state all involved some kind of sequencing of events of dawn. Shifts and changes in several different kinds of surrounding phenomena were sequenced in a parallel manner. Thus, a rich and nuanced vocabulary indeed was linked with every dawning day. Bird calls made up one other such sequence of signal events, progressively transforming the world from a night-time to a daytime state. Koloa and the author of the manuscript agree on the sequence of bird calls:

<i>Tangi 'a Teiko</i>	'Cry of the Teiko bird'
<i>'U'ua 'a e moamu'a</i>	First cockcrow'
<i>Kio 'a e manumu'a</i>	'First bird call'
<i>'U'ua tu'o ua 'a e moa</i>	'Second cockcrow'
<i>Kiokio tu'u ua 'a e manu</i>	'Second bird call'
<i>'U'ua fakaholo</i>	'Crowing all around'
<i>Kio 'a fulehe</i>	'Call of the Honeysucker bird'
<i>Kio fakaholo/Kio fe'ilo</i>	'Bird calls all around/Bird calls of mutual recognition'
<i>Manu tala'aho</i>	'Birds announcing day'

Finally, the rise of the stars known as *Fakaholofononga* and *Fetu'u 'aho* ('Daystar') was sequenced by Koloa as it is sequenced in Hafoka's manuscript. Thus, Koloa characterized the star *Fakaholofononga* as 'a star that rises shortly before the "Daystar" (*Fetu'u 'aho*)', with Hafoka writing: 'Immediately after the *Fakaholofononga* has risen, the "Daystar" rises' (ibid.).

A Feeling That Day Is Coming

In the transformation from night to day, there are moments that stand out as turning points or particularly significant qualitative shifts, including:

<i>Longo'aho</i>	'Feeling of day'
<i>Mokomoko 'aho</i>	'Coolness of day'
<i>Ata 'a fa'ahikehe</i>	'Twilight of the other kind' ³
<i>Lea fakamuimui 'a e manu tataki 'aho</i>	'Last cry of the bird leading the day'
<i>Kauata</i>	'Belonging to twilight'
<i>Fakalau 'a e ata</i>	'Twilight begins to come on'

These expressions all seemed to refer to the same transition. Thus, multiple terms from different fields of experience appeared to cluster around a point when a stable reality of night may be said to be about to 'crack' or 'come apart'; when the world is on the verge of changing from a state of all engulfing darkness to one in which distinctions may just 'barely be grasped' (*ata*: 'to be slightly clear', 'to barely grasp'. All of these descriptions dwell on phenomena obliquely indicating a shift in the quality of the night; they are vague signs that give rise to expectations that night may be about to end but that precede certain or definite knowledge of its ending.

The term *longo'aho* ('late night/early morning'), interpreted as 'a feeling that day may be about to come', indicates the vagueness of the sign of such a shift in a linguistically straightforward manner. The expression *mokomoko 'aho* ('coolness of day') similarly indicates such a shift in terms of a drop

in temperature said to sometimes occur late at night to bring news of the coming of day. As previously mentioned, *Ata 'a fa'ahikehe* ('twilight of the other kind') refers to a very fine change in the nuance of the darkness that may, according to Hafoka, either indicate 'the coming of day or be a peculiarity of the colour of night' (ibid.). This indefinable quality may only be interpreted dependably, however, by the spirit beings of 'the other kind' (*fa'ahikehe*) belonging to the night. Hence the description 'twilight of the other kind'.

Lea fakamuimui 'a e manu tataki 'aho ('last cry of the bird leading the day') seems related to a notion that a particular kind of seabird knows of the coming of day from sources still unavailable to man. Hafoka elaborated on this in his manuscript:

There is a name for the Teiko-bird which is 'bird leading/guiding the day' (*manu tataki 'aho*), because of the manner in which these birds fish in the direction of the sunrise. Being birds that 'catch fish' (*siu*) very far away they are said to be the first to know about the coming of day, and thus they leave off their fishing to return to land. When people heard their cries they said that 'first the Teiko birds return to land' (*mu'a mai 'a e Teiko*), 'day following in their wake' (*muimui mai 'a e 'aho*). The Teiko-birds keep on crying out until immediately before 'the shattering of the twilight' (*mafoa 'a e ata*) ... There is an expression for this time going like this; 'the day has been lead/guided' (*Kuo tataki 'aho*) and that is the 'turning point/end of the night' (*ngata'anga 'o e pō*) when 'the light is on the verge of appearing in the sky' (*meimeia 'asi 'a e maama 'i he langi*). (Hafoka n.d)

Similarly, the somewhat vague phenomenon referred to as *kauata* ('belonging to twilight') reflects a shift in the quality of the night, indicating that the turning point between a steady state of night and a phase of incipient day is at hand. Thus, the time of 'leading/guiding the day' (*tataki 'aho*) was said to coincide with that of the *kauata*:

They believed that 'twilight' (*ata*) was preceded by some phenomena and thus 'examined' (*fakasio*) the phenomena of night in their search for signs indicating the coming of 'twilight' ... The reason it was called *kauata* was the belief that this 'small portion of night' (*ki'i po'uli ko ia*) 'belongs to/is a part of the twilight' (*kau mo e ata*) ... After mid-night, 'day and night are joined together' (*'oku tau 'a e aho mo e pō*), and then the *kauata* is the 'last moments' (*'aho faka'osi*) of darkness on the way to light. The '(phenomena) belonging to twilight' (*kauata*) were not dependable (*pau*) but looking for signs of 'twilight' (*ata*), one may some nights learn about its imminent arrival by the appearance of a 'small rainstorm' (*ha ki'i taufa*) or a cloud (*konga 'ao*) or some 'night-time rain' (*fakapo'uli pē 'uha*). (Ibid.)

Finally, Koloa felt that the term *fakalau 'a e ata* ('twilight begins to appear') pertains to the same point of transition: "This is the "beginning of the preparation of the light of day to appear at the edge of the sky" (*kamata ia ke hā he tapalangi 'a e maama 'a e 'aho*).⁴

United Phases, Separating Motions

The mode of referring to the transformation from night to day is characterized by descriptive terms clustering around particular points of transition. Furthermore, the manner of codifying diurnal dynamics strongly recalls the manner of codifying tidal dynamics. In fact, one of the expressions used by Hafoka to describe the steady state of night was a precise parallel of the standard expression used by everyone on Kotu to describe the state of 'high tide' (*'oku tau 'a e tahi*). Thus, Hafoka described the phase of 'deep night' (*tu'uaopō*) as *'oku tau 'a e 'aho moe pō* ('day and night are joined together') (*ibid.*).

I have argued that many of the senses of the term *tau* have in common a forceful joining, merging or union of that which is otherwise apart. I interpreted the expression *tau 'a e tahi* ('high tide') as referring to the result of 'flood tide' (*hu'a mai ke tau*). Thus, flood tide may be described as a process that melds together the differentiated features of the lagoon seascape to establish a state in which 'sea and land are joined together' (*'oku tau 'a e tahi mo e 'uta*). This way of describing 'high tide' is clearly analogous to the description of 'deep night' (*tu'uaopō*) as one in which 'day and night are joined together' (*'oku tau 'a e 'aho mo e pō*).

Exploring the codification of tidal dynamics, I also argued that the process of 'ebb tide' (*mahu'i ke mamaha*) was referred to in terms of detachment or separation. The term *mahu'i* refers to the severance of a strong line of attachment or the forceful separation of that which has been integrated as one whole. Ebb tide can be described as a coming apart of the unity of sea and land that brings into being a seascape of multiple differentiation within the lagoon. Again, a comparison of modes of referring to tidal and diurnal dynamics reveals an intriguing analogy. The precise turning point of the tide could not be established with certainty by people on Kotu until the appearance of the line of debris on the beach; the *taka pau 'uluaki* ('first reliable sign'). Likewise, the exploration of the terminology of the transformation from night to day indicated that the diurnal turning point could not be established with certainty until some 'dependable thing' (*me'a pau*) made it quite obvious that the point of transition had passed. As we have seen, quite a number of descriptions were clustered around the point of transition when it may

be established *with certainty* that the union of night and day was at end from *Kuo mafoa 'a e ata* ('The twilight has shattered') to *Kio 'a fuleheu* ('The call of the Honeysucker bird').

Koloa stated, similarly to Hafoka in his manuscript, that the term 'twilight has shattered' (*kuo mafoa 'a e ata*) follows 'unreliable' (*ta'epau*) signs evoking a 'feeling that day is coming' (*longo'aho*). Hafoka elaborates on the expression 'twilight has shattered' (*kuo mafoa 'a e ata*) in terms of sequence: "'The twilight of the other kind" (*ata 'a fa'ahikehe*) precedes the time referred to as "twilight has shattered" (*kuo mafoa 'a e ata*)' (ibid.). Koloa focuses on this transition in terms of separation: "This is the time when "darkness has been separated/divided off from the sky" (*kuo mavahe ai 'a e po'uli mei he langi*) and the "day sheds light" (*maama 'a e 'aho*)."

Koloa's description in terms of 'separation' (*mavahe*), as well as the use of the term *mafoa* ('to shatter', like a broken bottle, or 'divided', like a split coconut), makes clear that the ebb tide 'separation/detachment' (*mahu'i*) and the transformation to a daytime state are codified in the same manner. The prefix *ma-* implies (among other things) 'a state or condition that has come about ... spontaneously ... or by some unknown agency' (Churchward 1953: 259).

'Twilight of man' (*ata 'a tangata*) may be described both in terms of human activity and the quality of illumination. Koloa described it as the 'time when man awakes', while in Hafoka's manuscript it was described as the 'time when the sky is misty with the light of day' (*kakapu 'a e langi 'i he maama 'o e 'aho*). 'Twilight of man' was described to coincide with the last moments of 'dawn' (*hengihengi*), referred to as 'day has become clean' (*kuo ma'a 'a e 'aho*). Thus, this phase of final separation was by Koloa described as 'a time when "day lights well"' (*maama lelei 'a e 'aho*) and in the manuscript as a time 'when "the haze of day has gone altogether"' (*'osi 'aupito 'a e nenefu 'o e 'aho*).

The expression 'day has become clean' (*ma'a 'a e 'aho*), descriptions of the disappearance of 'thick mist' (*kakapu*) and the ending of a 'blurred/hazy' (*nenefu*) state of appearances describe the final phase of transformation from night to day as one completing a process of separation. Indeed, the use of the term *ma'a*, denoting 'clean, free from dirt or impurity' (Churchward 1959: 348), makes the blurring fog appear as a remnant of night-time briefly lingering in a world of increasingly clear distinctions. Finally, the signal event of the 'twittering of the Honeysucker' (*kio 'a fuleheu*) was described as coinciding with 'twilight of man' (*ata 'a tangata*), when 'night-time has come to an end' (*'osi ia 'a e taimi po'uli*) and when people should 'rise from their beds' (*'a mei honau mohenga*).

Motions of Merging

The period of ‘morning’ (*pongipongi*) may be subdivided into six phases coordinated to the positional relationship between the sun and the ‘land’ (*fonua*). The relatively prolonged phase of ‘midday’ (*ho’atā*) may similarly be subdivided into three phases. Also, there are several terms clustered around a particular point of transition between ‘midday’ (*ho’atā*) and ‘afternoon’ (*efiafi*), when it may first be established with certainty that the sun has started to move west, or decline, or lose some of its potency. All in all, however, qualitative nuances were far fewer during prolonged and silent periods of the day (from around 10 AM until about 3 PM, and from around 10–11 PM until about 3–4 AM). The vocabulary describing environmental conditions and events became much richer, however, with reference to the transition from day to night. A short period sometime after sunset stood out both in terms of the sequencing of several rapidly passing phases and in terms of several terms clustering around a particular point of transition.

I have emphasized that the transformation from night to day (as well as from ‘high tide’ to ‘low tide’) is codified as a motion of detachment or separation. If such an interpretation is sensible, it can be no surprise that the inverse transformation from day to night is codified in terms of the merging of that which has been separate. The qualitative descriptions made by Koloa and by Hafoka’s manuscript are illuminating. Five terms refer to dusk, from some time after ‘sunset’ (*tō ‘a e la’ā/tapalika*) until night has become an undeniable, stable reality. Descriptions of the qualities of dusk all describe ‘light’ (*maama*) and ‘darkness’ (*fakapo’uli*) as intermingling properties creating different degrees of mixedness and blurredness. In Hafoka’s manuscript, the phase known as ‘evening of dim light’ (*ataata efiāfi po’uli*) was described:

This is the time when ‘the colours of the night appear in the lingering light of the evening’ (*‘asi mai ‘a e lanu ‘o e po’uli ‘i he kei maama ‘o e efiāfi*). When the sun sets the light is still strong, and then comes the dim evening when ‘this strength has perished’ (*mole ‘a e malohi ko ia*) but the light is not altogether spent. (Hafoka n.d)

Likewise, the time referred to as ‘the blackness of the dirt/soil/ground’ (*‘u’uli kelekele*) was described as ‘... the time when “the night is known in the ground while the light still appears in the free/open space” (*‘oku mahino ‘a e po’uli ‘i he kelekele ai, kae kei ‘asi ‘a e maama ‘i he ‘atā*)’ (ibid.).

Koloa elaborated on this expression in slightly different terms, but this too involved the merging of elements that had been apart during the day: ‘This is the time when “the sun falls into the soil/ground” (*tō kelekele ai ‘a e la’ā*).’ One should note that this expression refers to qualities of illumination

far past sunset. It does not, then, refer to the sun descending or falling below the horizon, which is referred to as *taitai tō 'a e laā* (probably 'gradually descending towards the sea') and *tō 'a e laā* ('the sun sets'). What may 'fall into the ground', then, would not seem to be the sun itself but the light lingering on after sunset. Whether described in terms of 'light falling into the ground' or 'darkness growing out of the ground', the notion of merging appears to remain central to the conceptualization of the process of transformation from day to night.

Connotations of the term *'u'uli kelekele* ('blackness of the ground') suggest that it mirrors the transition between 'early morning' (*hengihengi*) and 'bright morning' (*pongipongi*). I described the final phase of separation (morning) as a transition between a state in which a 'thick mist, fog/haze' (*kakapu/nenefu*) lingers on and where remnants of night-time have been swept away to leave a 'clean day', 'free from dirt/impurity' (*kuo ma'a 'a e 'aho*). The terms *'u'uli* and *kelekele* connote a similar mixed state as day turns into night. As mentioned, the term *'uli* means primarily 'dirt' and 'dirtiness'. In the form of complete reduplication, *'uli'u'uli* means 'black'. According to Churchward, such reduplication indicates intensification (Churchward 1953: 264; Naylor 1986). In the form *'u'uli*, the partial reduplication probably operates to moderate *'uli* in the same way as *māmāfana* ('lukewarm') moderates the meaning of *māfana* ('warm'). The verbal form *'uli'i* means 'to make dirty' and also 'to work with the soil'. The term *kelekele* means 'land, soil, earth, ground' but also 'dirt' as 'matter out of place' (James, see Douglas 1966: 165), as, for instance, on the hands at a meal, on the feet at a kava party or in the water that you want to drink. It is possible, then, to interpret the expression *'u'uli kelekele* as referring to an incipient 'soiling' of the daylight world by properties of the ground below starting to blend with the properties of the sky above to constitute a phase that is both day and night and neither of them at the same time. This phase, then, has a truly liminal quality. For Mary Douglas, the 'blackness of the ground' as a liminal phase in the process of merging may be described as 'Dirt ... created by the differentiating activity of mind' (Douglas 1966: 162). In her terms, this would be a different kind of 'blackness/darkness' than that of true night: 'In ... [the] final stage of total disintegration, dirt is utterly undifferentiated' (ibid.: 163).

Another term of reference in use on Kotu related the phase of merging, or blurring, directly to human perception. It was known as 'the time of mutual recognition', or *fē'ilo'ilongaki*. Koloa described it as '... a time when people can still recognize each other, so that if two men meet they are each able to recognize one another in the "deep shade of the night" (*he mamalu 'a e po'uli*)'. The 'time of mutual recognition' was the temporal site of a great number of Kotu people's encounters with 'devils' (*tevolo*) or those of 'the

other kind' (*fa'ahikehe*); the kind of beings that were believed to emerge from the ground to which they were said to return in the 'twilight of the other kind' (*ata 'a fa'ahikehe*) in the 'early morning' (*hengihengi*). From the point of view of Kotu people, a part of the liminality and magic of dusk may have been the mingled presence of people still going about their business and potentially 'naughty' spirits (*pau'u*) of the night. Routines of exchanging greetings on Kotu indicated this. As 'mutual recognition' (*fē'ilo'ilongaki*) becomes increasingly more difficult, routines of exchanging greetings tend to turn into a practice of identifying that which is rapidly blurring. The identity of any shape moving through the village at dusk is thus routinely ascertained by people tentatively calling out the name of the person they resembled (e.g. *Sione ē?*, 'John isn't?') and the person calling out in return. This made the routines of greeting someone quite different at dusk than during the day. In the daytime, the conventional way of greeting someone was consistently *alu ki fē?* (lit. 'Where are you going?'). That the question of identity should take precedence over the question of direction of movement as it becomes harder to decide who people are is not surprising. Given the fuzzy border between the realm of people and the realm of 'the other kind' (*fa'ahikehe*) in the liminal phase of late evening, the effort to identify someone makes sense, not only in terms of distinguishing one person from another but also in terms of distinguishing people from 'beings of the other kind'.

Finally, the conceptualization of the transition from day to night implies an expansion of darkness, an overpowering of daylight by the growing strength of night. Koloa described the phase of *mamalu efiāfi* ('evening of deep shades') as '... the time when "darkness comes to cover the surface of the land" (*oku 'ūfia ai 'e he po'uli 'a e funga fonua*). In the manuscript, the term *efiāfi fakapo'uli* is said to refer to '... the time when "darkness has become stronger than the light of day" (*mālohi ange 'a e po'uli he maama 'o e 'aho*)' and represents 'the "ultimate stage of the reckoning of day" (*ngata'anga ia 'o e lau 'aho*)' (ibid.).

Images of Constitutive Motions

This brings us full circuit from one state of stable darkness to another. As a whole, the vocabulary of the diurnal cycle described ongoing dynamics that I have chosen to refer to as a motion of merging and separation. Intriguingly, such a process or motion is quite clearly paralleled in characteristic narratives of pre-Christian Polynesian cosmology. Before elaborating further on this parallel, however, I shall briefly re-present the image of the diurnal motion, emphasizing what appears to be the most significant features of the way in which it was conceptualized.

Taking as a point of departure a ‘united state’ of stable night (*tau ‘a e ‘aho mo e pō*), the sky and the ground are seamlessly joined together to constitute one dark whole. As such, it is wholly undifferentiated. An appropriate graphic image of such an undifferentiated whole would be the shape of a seamless sphere. In the ‘Deep night’ (*Tu‘uapō*) nothing much happens; then numerous nuances of the night in the form of ‘unreliable’ (*ta‘epau*) signs give rise to a ‘vague feeling’ (*longo‘aho*) that some shift is about to occur. Keeping within the image of the sphere, it is ‘cracking’ or ‘shattering’ (*māfoa*), so to speak. Coming apart, the crack grows into a widening gap, and elements of the two parts of the sphere cling to one another in decreasing degrees of intermingling, captured by terms of qualitative nuances read upon the surface of the components of the surrounding world. When man rises at the ‘Twilight of Man’ (*Ata ‘a tangata*), the two halves of the sphere have come apart (*mavahe ua*), although a few remnants of the night-time linger in the form of ‘haze/fog’ (*nenefu/kakapu*) in the growing gap before disappearing altogether. The gap between the half below and the half above keeps on growing steadily in the ‘dazzling morning’ (*pongipongi*) as the sun rapidly moves through stages to arrive at its station of maximum elevation (*tu‘u tonu ‘a e la‘ā*), brilliantly illuminating the space between the half below and the half above. Then, for a while, nothing much happens (*ho‘atā*) until the ‘small step of the sun’ (*malē‘ei ‘a e la‘ā*) indicates that the daylight world has reached a turning point and the gap starts to decrease again. As the gap shrinks, the world passes through phases of increasing degrees of intermingling. Thus, fine qualitative nuances describe how properties of the half sphere below emerge to mingle with the properties of the half sphere above, challenging the human capacity to discriminate in the shrinking gap in between. Finally, the gap narrows down to a thin line, which disappears as the two halves merge to reconstitute the all-encompassing shape of a seamless sphere. Expressed graphically, such a diurnal motion might look like Figure 2.1.

The conceptualization of the tidal motion explored in the previous chapter may be graphically expressed in an identical model (Figure 2.2).

Steady State of Cosmic Order

Intriguingly, a very similar dynamic may seem intrinsic to many Tongan and other Polynesian mythological narratives. First of all, it appears to resonate strongly with pre-Christian myths of creation. In an attempt to reconstruct the ‘spiritual geography of the shaman’s world in Western Polynesia’ (Gunson 1990: 15), Gunson describes Tongan cosmological beliefs in the following manner:

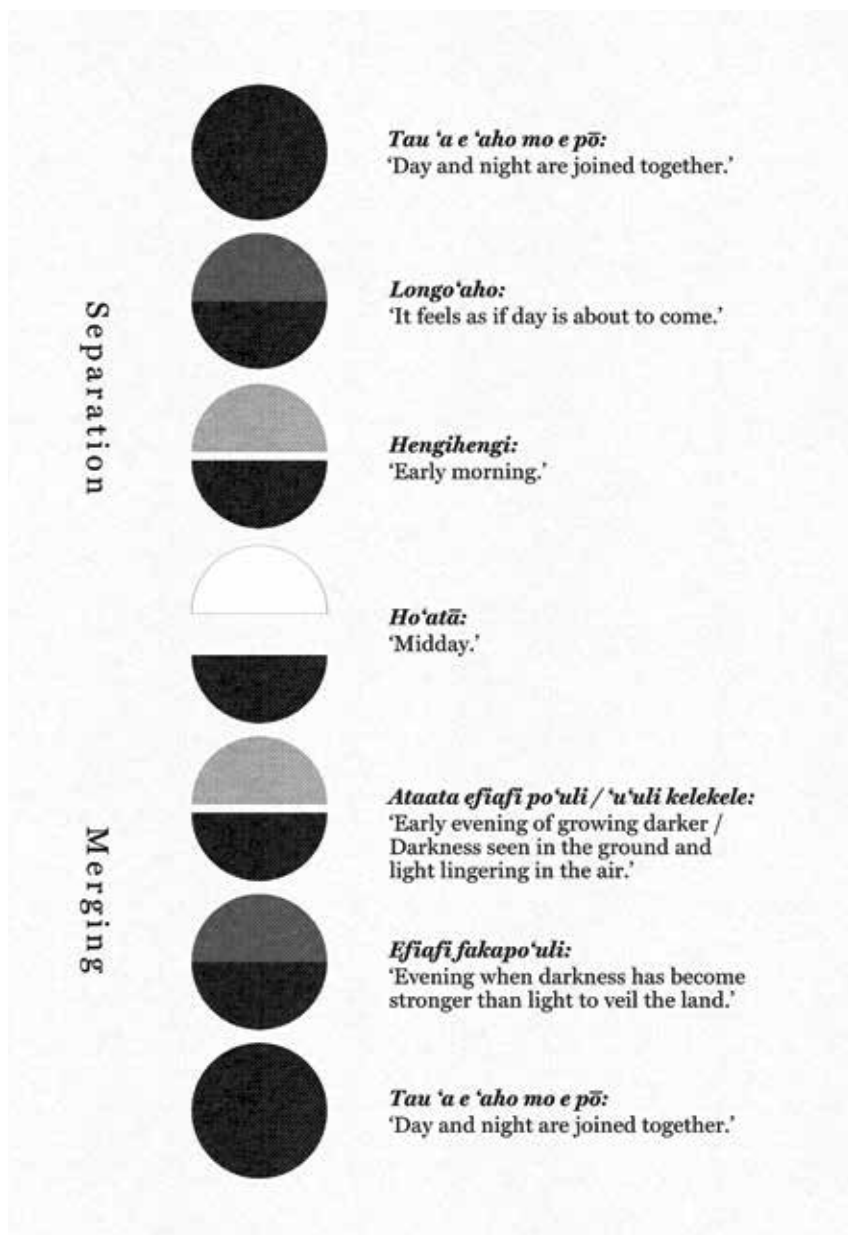


Figure 2.1. Figure of diurnal dynamics. The illustration shows the main phases of day and night in Tonga. © Arne Aleksey Perminow and Kristine Lie Øverland.

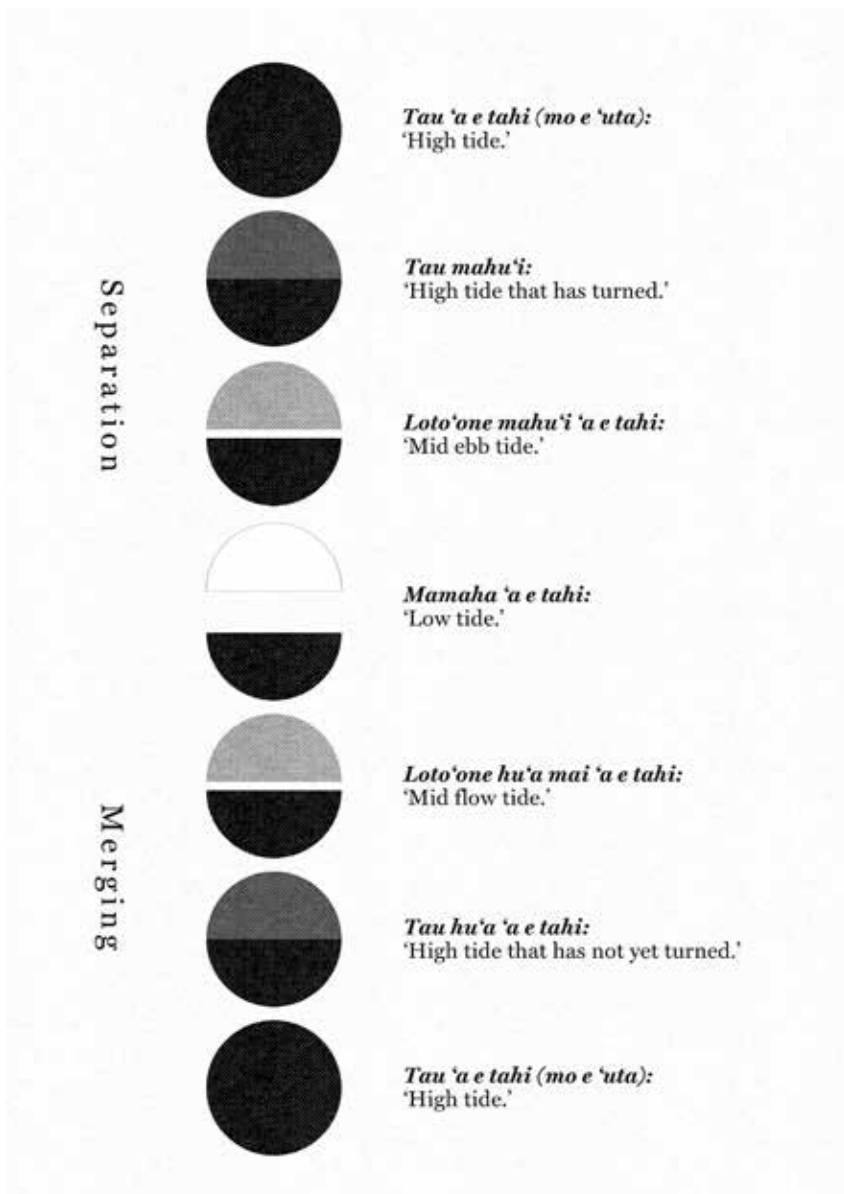


Figure 2.2. Figure of tidal dynamics. The illustration shows the main phases of ebb tide and flow tide in *Namolahi* Lagoon. © Arne Aleksej Perminow and Kristine Lie Øverland.

By way of illustration take a coconut and cleave it in two. Imagine the ocean floating in the lower half. The rock of creation rises in the centre. The world in the shape of one's particular islands rises to one side. On the other, out of sight because it is far away, is Puluṭu, a mirror image of the world ... Under the Ocean is the Underworld, known in Tonga as Lolofonua, the realm of Maui. At the base of the coconut shell is a cavern of volcanic fire ... Under the top half of the coconut are seven layers of heaven which appear to rest on the tops of gigantic trees. The tree on the home island is a huge toa tree used by one of the gods or *ʻotua* to come to earth. The tree on Puluṭu is known as either *ʻAkaulea* or *Pukolea* ... At its roots is a lake or spring called *Vaiola* ... The seven heavens constitute the Sky ruled by the gods or ancestors known as *Tangaloa*. The Underworld constitutes the realm of the gods or ancestors known as *Maui*. The Ocean is the realm of the *ʻotua* *Hea Moana* *ʻUliʻUli* ... Puluṭu constitutes the realm of *Hikuleʻo* represented by a kind of lizard whose tail is tied by a sennit cord secured in the Sky above and the Underworld below. (ibid.: 16)

Graphically, Gunson has described these cosmological beliefs in Figure 2.3.



Figure 2.3. Gunson's figure of Polynesian cosmology. Figure taken from Herda, Terrell and Gunson (eds), *Tongan Culture and History* (Target Oceania, 1990), courtesy of Neil Gunson.

Comparing Figure 2.3 with the figures used to illustrate the referential wholes of the diurnal and tidal motions, it clearly represents the middle figure in the series; the one depicting a prolonged steady state of optimally differentiated 'day' (*'aho*) and 'low tide' (*mamaha 'a e tahi*). What seems to be elaborated, then, is a steady state of separateness rather than the dynamics of separation and merging. To my mind, the significance of exploring the referential wholes of tidal and diurnal dynamics is that they invite us to look beyond the steady state of differentiated order. This is a point of fundamental importance because later on it will enable us to fathom local attitudes and responses to environmental change, which this book aspires to do.

Separation, differentiation and orderliness are themes that have received much attention from Polynesianists as well as from Polynesians themselves. The discovery of a dynamic of separation and merging in the referential wholes of transformations that keep recurring in the world that people experience and work with on a daily basis implies a regenerative dynamic in which separation and orderliness is but a passing phase. The discovery of how the fundamental rhythms of the surrounds with which people engage appeared to be caught up in a motion between separation and orderliness, on the one hand, and unitedness and indistinguishability on the other is a very important finding for the ethnographic analysis to follow. It will be important for the ethnographic analysis of ceremonial aesthetics and sociality undertaken in later chapters in this book, which in its turn will constitute an important ethnographic basis for understanding local perspectives on why things happen and what to do about it and thus for understanding people's somewhat puzzling responses to ongoing environmental changes. Furthermore, the discovery of a strong resonance between Polynesian pre-Christian cosmological dynamics and perceptions of fundamental dynamics in the environment of everyday experience is quite important in identifying a source of cultural continuity in a society where Christianity has become a cultural cornerstone. Before undertaking the ethnographic analysis of ceremonial aesthetics and sociality, then, it is necessary to delve somewhat deeper into this resonance between what went on in Pre-Christian cosmology and myths and in the world which still surrounded people in the last decades of the twentieth century. As we saw in the introduction, Tongan Christianity appears to have played a significant role in informing people's attitudes and responses to environmental events and therefore it is quite important to understand what kind of Christianity this was.

We can also see continuity between myths of the past and practices of the present in the lunar cycle. Thus, I shall first sum up the exploration of the conceptualization of diurnal dynamics on Kotu and then in the next chapter go on to explore the conceptualization of lunar dynamics, which constantly

transform the surroundings by producing varying conditions of illumination, varying conditions for growth and varying conditions for socializing.

Let There Be Light

The phases that transform night to day and day to night were paid intense attention in the codification of diurnal dynamics. In quantitative terms, there was a certain difference between expressions describing the nuances of the night to day transition and those describing the transition from day to night. Almost half the collected terms described qualitative nuances of daybreak, while about a third described those of nightfall. In qualitative terms, there was also a difference. A sense of inevitability and liminality comes through more strongly in the nuances describing the ‘late evening’ (*ataata efiāfi pō’uli*). The qualitative nuances of ‘early morning’ (*hengi-hengi*), on the other hand, evoke a very strong sense of uncertainty and impatience. This may seem consistent with what Gell refers to as a Polynesian preoccupation with elaborating separation and differentiation (Gell 1995), and what I would refer to as a continuous struggle to separate and differentiate that which inevitably and productively merges. However, the sense of impatience and uncertainty may also reflect the significance of these qualitative nuances for practical purposes of timing specific activities. In a discussion about the practical utility of wristwatches for people on Kotu, Koloa claimed that a watch was very handy if you wanted to go octopus fishing (*maka feke*):

If you want to go octopus fishing in your canoe at Putuputua [about 3 km north-east of Kotu Island] and wake up during the night, it is hard to know when you must leave in order to arrive at Putuputua before sunrise. The fishing should start around sunrise, but when you look at the dark sky it is very hard to find a dependable thing telling you when you must get going. If you have no watch you very often end up arriving at Putuputua too late or much too early and get cold sitting in your canoe and fed up with waiting for the sunrise.

Additionally, however, the sense of impatience and uncertainty appears also to be linked to a general cultural emphasis that life is fragile and the future uncertain. Thus, the coming of a new day should not be taken for granted but is something to be looked upon eagerly and ascertained by the occurrence of some dependable signs to be received with joy and gratitude. Numerous conventions of greeting in Tonga seem to emphasize that individual survival through the night should not be taken for granted. What must be translated as ‘good morning’ means literally ‘congratulations on things being well until this morning’ (*malo e lelei ki he pongipongini*) or

‘congratulations on having reached all the way to this day’ (*Malo e tau mai ki he ‘ahoni*) or *Malo e tau lava* (‘Congratulations that we have all made it’). In contexts of more extraordinary circumstances or some crisis, the feat of surviving the night to see another day may be expressed by saying: ‘We may all of us be thankful for having lived through the night’ (*Malo pe ‘etau ‘ahoia*⁵). It may be argued that these are mere conventions of greeting and, as such, no more likely to evoke specific ideas about the human condition than the conventional greeting of ‘good morning’ among English speakers. I would argue, however, that the semantic implication that surviving the time of darkness to reach another day is an achievement is not merely a conventional greeting. Thus, it was paralleled by a general attitude to human existence as inherently fragile and the future as inherently unpredictable. People were very much aware that life comes with no guarantee of duration and were unwilling to speak about individual futures without expressing this awareness. For instance, all Kotu people with whom I discussed the grief and bereavement characterizing farewells among close kin as well as the intense joy characterizing reunions emphasized the bitter possibility that a farewell may very well be the last farewell, while the happy (*fiefia*) occasion of welcome (*tali*) called for a celebration that life had been granted to make a reunion possible. The intensity of expressions of bereavement that characterized the farewells among close kin on Kotu was rivalled only by the stylized expressions of *tangi* (‘crying’) and total bereavement as close relatives bid the deceased their final farewells at certain points during funerary ceremonies (See also Kaeppler 1993: 476): ‘*Oiaue, ‘Oiaue. ‘Alu a ‘alu a*, or ‘Alas! Alas! Farewell, farewell.’⁶ It is fair to say, then, that there existed a quite general emphasis on the inherent fragility of life and a marked consciousness of the inherent unpredictability of the future. Intriguingly, this emphasis is paralleled in the very mode in which diurnal transformations were codified. On the grounds of widely shared understandings of the world and its workings, then, an awareness of an inherent unpredictability of the future and the fragility of life figured prominently. In order to appreciate responses and attitudes to when things appear to go awry, I shall over the next chapters show how coping with such realities and achieving a good life, good relations and a good community on enduring grounds was not seen as something that may be taken for granted but as a challenge demanding knowledge, effort and discipline for it to be achieved.

Notes

1. Often the term *Uhu* was used when referring not to the phase of ‘early dawn’ itself but to some action undertaken in this phase. Thus, it was perhaps more common to speak about the timing of events in this phase by using the expressions *‘auhu*

(‘next early dawn’) and *‘aneuhu* (‘last early dawn’) than by using the expressions *‘ahengihengi* and *‘anehengihengi*.

2. The term *tevolo* is the Tongan word for ‘devil’. *Kautevolo* is used together with *fa‘ahikehe* (‘the other side/half’) to refer to ghosts or spirits of the dead that are associated with the *fonua* (‘land/homeland’), in general, and with the *vao* (‘uncultivated bush’) and *fa‘itoka* (‘cemetery’) in particular. These beings are basically supposed to keep to their *luo fonua* (‘pit, earth grave’) or *fonualoto* (‘vault, chiefly stone grave’) during the day, but they may sometimes roam about in the bush. During the night, however, their movements are less restricted, and they may be encountered even ‘within the village’ (*lotokolo*).
3. Although the English term *twilight* is strongly associated with the evening, I use it also to refer to ‘the light between’ or the ‘twilight of dawn’ (see Webster’s dictionary, 1979).
4. In Churchward’s dictionary, the term *‘oku fakalau mai ke ‘aho* is translated as ‘Daylight is just beginning to appear’ (Churchward 1959: 59).
5. The term *‘ahoia* is also used to describe the quality of nights during which the moon stays in the sky until after sunrise. This occurs a little beyond full moon, when the sun and moon alternate to provide illumination throughout the diurnal cycle.
6. *‘Oiaue* is an interjection expressing grief, pity, regret and annoyance, while *‘alu a* is the conventional expression for ‘goodbye’. From the point of view of the one who stays, it means literally ‘you go, leave’; for the one who leaves, ‘goodbye’ is expressed as *nofo a*, meaning literally ‘you stay’.