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**Land and lineage:
the articulation of
social and physical space
in an atoll village**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology
at Massey University**

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Abstract

This thesis examines relationships between the social and physical environments of a village on Butaritari atoll in Kiribati. The system of ambilineal descent and land inheritance obtaining there results in complex networks of genealogical relationships which affect most aspects of social life, including land rights. While previous studies conducted in Kiribati have recognised the intimate connection between genealogy and land rights, none has investigated its ramifications for the distribution of land rights within a community. In contrast, this study engages that question as a central concern using a framework which integrates Bourdieu's concepts of social space, field and habitus with post-neo-Darwinian ideas about the relationship between organism and environment.

The social space was found to be primarily structured by relationships based upon genealogy and secondarily by age and gender, each of which constituted a field within the wider social space. The genealogical field was defined by a network of positions, each representing a particular descent group. In accordance with the prevailing system of ambilineal descent, residents could belong to more than one descent group and it was upon the resulting networks of relationships between descent groups that the disposition of those groups within the genealogical field was defined. Because land-use rights were associated with genealogical connections the reconstruction of the genealogical field encompassing all of the village residents was a necessary precursor to discovering the distribution of those rights and the genealogical field was a central point of articulation between the social and physical spaces. The fields of age and gender relations provided further points of articulation between the social and physical spaces, the natures of which are examined through discussion of the material culture of the village and village and island politics.

Despite a contemporary ideology of egalitarianism there were vestiges of a former hierarchy of social status groups. While the inter-group obligations, rights and responsibilities associated with this hierarchy were no longer practised, the association of contemporary residents with those social status groups bore a relationship to their position within the genealogical field and the amounts of land to which they shared rights.

Preface and acknowledgements.

This thesis examines the proposition that the aspects of reality commonly termed "society" and "nature" can be conceptualised as spaces, social space and physical space, and that the investigation of relationships between the social and natural realms can be approached in terms of the articulation of those two varieties of space. The proposition is examined through a case study focusing upon a village on Butaritari atoll in Kiribati. The choice of Kiribati as a place to conduct fieldwork was based upon several factors. The first was associated with my having worked there for seven years between 1978 and 1985 during which time I became proficient in the I-Kiribati language and familiar with the culture and way of life of the people. The second factor was, by happy coincidence, the availability there of small relatively self-contained communities in which to conduct fieldwork. In choosing a village on Butaritari I took advantage of relationships developed over ten years earlier while working on Butaritari as an independent trader in local produce.

Except where otherwise indicated, the data upon which this thesis is based was obtained by me from residents of Kuma. At the time this thesis was submitted, one academic paper based upon aspects of the research had been published (King, 1995).

While conducting this study I have received assistance from many people and it is a pleasure to acknowledge their contributions. It is sometimes difficult to decide upon an appropriate order in which to make acknowledgements, but in this case I have decided to acknowledge

individuals and groups in an order which reflects their position in relation to the social and physical spaces with which the study is concerned. First to receive acknowledgement, therefore, are the people of Kuma, without whose willingness to participate this study would never have been conducted. I am particularly grateful to the members of the Natirea Village Council in Kuma for their kind hospitality. From among the many Kuma people, who cannot be mentioned individually for want of space, I must single out Nan Ibutuna whose generous sharing of his knowledge of tradition and genealogy was invaluable.

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Linguistic Note

The language spoken throughout Kiribati is known as I-Kiribati (formerly known as Gilbertese). I-Kiribati is related to other Micronesian languages while having been modified by linguistic borrowing from nearby Western Polynesia. Slight dialectal variations exist throughout the islands of the Gilbert group, with the most noticeably different dialect being that spoken on Butaritari and Makin. However, the differences are small and confined to vocabulary and intonation pattern.

For the reader of this thesis the most important difference to note is the substitution on Butaritari and Makin of the prefixes Na, Nam, Nan and Nang for Te, Tem, Ten and Teng (which are used elsewhere in Kiribati) before the names of males. In usage, the form of the prefix varies, in the interests of euphony, according to the first letter of the name. In this thesis only the form Nan is used, to avoid confusion, despite the injury to euphony which sometimes results. The prefix Nei before the names of females is used universally throughout Kiribati.

A glossary of I-Kiribati words and terms used in this thesis begins on page xiii.

Note on Orthography

There are thirteen letters in the I-Kiribati alphabet: a, e, i, o, u, m, n, ng, b, k, r, t and w. The following guide to pronunciation is adapted from Cowell, 1951.

Letter	Pronunciation
a	1. ah as in father 2. a as in fatter 3. u as in but
e	1. a as in fate 2. o as in bonny 3. aw as in awful
u	oo as in boot
m	m as in English
n	n as in English
ng	as ng in singer
b	between English b and p
k	hard and close to English g
r	unrolled and close to English d
t	as in English <i>except</i> before i and u, in which cases it forms an s sound
w	1. as a consonant it sounds like a v 2. as a semi-vowel it sounds like English w

Glossary of I-Kiribati words used in this thesis

This glossary covers I-Kiribati words which are found in this thesis. When a word has more than one meaning, only the meaning associated with its use in the thesis has been included in the glossary. In compiling this glossary the following authorities have been used for both I-Kiribati and scientific terms: Catala, 1957; Cowell, 1950; Grimble, 1989; Koch, 1986 and Sabatier, 1971.

<i>aba</i>	Land, country
<i>abatera</i>	People without land in the place where they are so categorised
<i>aia botaki aine</i>	Gathering of women
<i>aine</i>	Woman
<i>aitoa</i>	A tree growing in marshy land (<i>lumnitzera littorea</i>)
<i>ang</i>	To heat
<i>anti</i>	Spirit, god or ghost.
<i>aomata</i>	Human being
<i>aon</i>	Surface
<i>ari</i>	Spathe of coconut
<i>ataei</i>	Children
<i>atama</i>	Gravel, pebbles
<i>ati</i>	Skipjack tuna (<i>katsuwonus pelamis</i>)
<i>ato</i>	Coconut leaf thatch
<i>aumaiaki</i>	Summer solstice (March to September)
<i>aumeang</i>	Winter solstice (September to March)
<i>ba</i>	Leaf
<i>ba ni</i>	Coconut leaf
<i>ba n te mai</i>	Breadfruit leaf
<i>baa</i>	Coconut oil

<i>Babai</i>	Swamp taro (<i>cyrtosperma chamissonis</i>)
<i>bai</i>	Thing or object
<i>bai n iaon te aba</i>	Things associated with the surface of the land. Used to refer to secular affairs
<i>baiura</i>	Yellow fin tuna (<i>thunnus albacares</i>)
<i>bakatarawa</i>	Drop blind woven from coconut frond
<i>bao</i>	Open-sided house with a raised platform floor. The platform is not integral to the whole structure and stands independently
<i>bara</i>	Wahoo (<i>acanthocybium solandri</i>)
<i>bareaka</i>	Canoe house
<i>be</i>	Cloth lavalava or sarong
<i>Beba</i>	Paper
<i>bekei</i>	A pudding prepared from grated <i>babai</i> , coconut and <i>kamaimai</i>
<i>ben</i>	Mature coconut
<i>benu</i>	Coconut husk for making string
<i>berita</i>	Promise or pledge
<i>binu</i>	Traditional sitting dance
<i>binoka</i>	Pinch of <i>benu</i> spun (<i>kakano</i>) with others to produce string
<i>Biti</i>	Fiji
<i>bo</i>	A gathering of kin to celebrate a rite of passage of one of their members
<i>bo ben</i>	Gathering mature coconuts
<i>bo rau</i>	Gathering pandanus leaf for thatch making
<i>bokaboka</i>	Mud, usually referring to the muddy soil of <i>babai</i> pits (<i>rua</i>)
<i>Boki</i>	Book
<i>bong</i>	Day, twenty four hour period
<i>bota</i>	To gather together things or people
<i>botaki</i>	Meeting or gathering
<i>botaki n unimane</i>	Old men's association, council or meeting
<i>boti</i>	A seating position in <i>maneaba</i> for the members of a particular descent group

<i>boti n uea</i>	A <i>boti</i> reserved for the High Chief of Butaritari and Makin in the south-east corner of Butaritari and Makin <i>maneaba</i> during the pre-colonial period.
<i>buakonikai</i>	Bushland outside a village
<i>buata</i>	Traditional sitting dance performed by men
<i>buatoro</i>	A pudding made from grated <i>babai</i> and (<i>karewe</i>)
<i>bubuti</i>	A request or demand; to request
<i>buia</i>	A raised platform, as used in a <i>bao</i>
<i>bukinibai</i>	Remains or surplus
<i>bukiraro</i>	A seedless variety of breadfruit (<i>mai</i>)
<i>buraena</i>	Something hairy or shaggy hanging down. Often applied to the untrimmed ends of thatch on a roof
<i>butika</i>	A long spade. Also a long stick with a knife attached for detaching breadfruit from high branches
<i>bwere</i>	Combing board for cutting strips of uniform width for mat weaving
<i>eka</i>	A unit of land size based upon the area of an unknown <i>maneaba</i>
<i>eta</i>	Top or upper part
<i>ewe</i>	To jump or move around. Connotes freedom
<i>iaongo</i>	Thought or idea
<i>ibu</i>	Toddy collecting container made from coconut shell
<i>ikaraoi</i>	Superior variety of <i>babai</i>
<i>ikuku</i>	Wooden mallet for pulverising
<i>inai</i>	Mat woven from coconut leaf
<i>inaki</i>	Row of thatch
<i>ingimea</i>	Species of tuna (<i>neothunnus macropterus</i>)
<i>iruwa</i>	Visitor, one who arrives by canoe
<i>itamaria</i>	Pudding made from grated <i>babai</i> and <i>kamaimai</i>
<i>iti</i>	Empty, without issue
<i>kabouoka</i>	To burn
<i>kabouoka ni buraena</i>	To burn thatch trimmings
<i>kabuibui ni babai</i>	Dried <i>babai</i>

<i>kai</i>	Wood and trees in general
<i>kai ni kakari</i>	Roofing lathe to which thatch is attached
<i>kai n raurau</i>	Wooden platform to hold cooking and eating utensils
<i>kai n tiri benua</i>	Wooden mallet used to beat <i>benu</i>
<i>kai n toro rau</i>	A wooden stake against which pandanus leaves are flattened for thatch making
<i>kaina</i>	Pandanus tree
<i>kainga</i>	Ancestral residence and its descent group
<i>kakano</i>	To spin string by twisting <i>binoka</i> together between hand and thigh
<i>kakawaki</i>	Important, significant
<i>kakibotu</i>	Relaxation, killing time
<i>kamaimai</i>	Toddy which has been reduced to a thick syrup by prolonged boiling
<i>kamaraia</i>	To be supernaturally potent. Anyone offending a person who was <i>kamaraia</i> would be automatically cursed
<i>kamei</i>	Traditional standing dance performed by men
<i>karewe</i>	Toddy obtained from the wounded spathe <i>ari</i> of the coconut tree
<i>karo</i>	Parents
<i>karoro</i>	Fourth generation
<i>kateitei</i>	Building work
<i>katiki</i>	Fishing by trolling a lure behind a canoe (<i>wa</i>)
<i>katura</i>	A bivalve (<i>atactodea glabrata</i> Gmel.)
<i>katutu</i>	Self-sprouting variety of <i>babai</i> known as <i>temaiaki</i> on Butaritari and Makin
<i>kaunikai</i>	Competition or combat between sorcerers, dancers or practitioners of various skills or methods
<i>kaunwae</i>	Literally fighting feet. Refers to the practise of joint landholders gathering coconuts on a first come, first served basis
<i>kawai</i>	Magico-religious practices involving ritual actions without accompanying incantations

<i>kiakia</i>	Small open-sided house with its <i>buia</i> integral to the whole structure
<i>kiaro</i>	Canoe outrigger platform
<i>kie ni matu</i>	Sleeping mat
<i>kie</i>	Mat
<i>kie n ataei</i>	Child's sleeping mat
<i>kikao</i>	Small octopus
<i>kima</i>	Giant clam
<i>koikoi</i>	Small bivalve (<i>asaphis deflorata</i>)
<i>kora</i>	Coconut fibre string
<i>koraki</i>	Family, kindred
<i>koro ato</i>	The work of collecting fallen coconut fronds to be made into thatch (<i>ato</i>)
<i>koro-buki-ni-kana</i>	Circular basket of plaited pandanus leaves to contain fertiliser around base of <i>babai</i> tuber
<i>koro m benu</i>	The work of husking green coconuts to obtain fibre (<i>benu</i>) for string-making
<i>kuka</i>	Cooking, to cook
<i>mai</i>	Breadfruit in general
<i>mairoun</i>	From
<i>makoro</i>	Fraction, segment or part
<i>makuri</i>	Work
<i>mamma</i>	Shame, embarrassment or shyness
<i>maneaba</i>	Village or island meeting house
<i>maniba</i>	Well for fresh water
<i>manena</i>	Brother of a woman or sister of a man
<i>mangkeia</i>	A <i>boti</i> reserved for immigrants without land rights (<i>abatera</i>) in the south-west corner of Butaritari and Makin <i>maneaba</i> during the pre-colonial period.
<i>marai</i>	tender flesh of young coconut
<i>maraia</i>	To be cursed
<i>marawa</i>	The ocean
<i>maroro</i>	Conversation
<i>matu</i>	Sleep

<i>maungatabu</i>	Meeting requiring full attendance
<i>moi</i>	Drink
<i>moimoto</i>	Drinking coconut
<i>motini wae</i>	Seedless variety of breadfruit
<i>mwiin</i>	After, following
<i>nakoa</i>	Profession, employment
<i>nano</i>	Soul, conscience, will desire, disposition
<i>nano raoi</i>	Calmness of spirit
<i>Natirea</i>	Name of a comet, after which the dance form of the same name is named. Village council in Kuma
<i>nenebo</i>	Land given in compensation for murder
<i>nga</i>	Unit of measure equal to one fathom
<i>ngea</i>	Bush of very hard wood (<i>pemphis acidula</i>)
<i>ni</i>	Coconut tree (<i>cocos nicifera</i>)
<i>nikawewe</i>	Shrine marked by an enclosure of stones where a spirit is venerated
<i>noko</i>	Midrib of coconut side leaves
<i>non</i>	Tree with pithy core (<i>morinda citrifolia</i>)
<i>nouo</i>	Conical shell fish (<i>strombus luhuanus</i>)
<i>nuka</i>	Meaning centre. Also the name of a land plot in Kuma village
<i>nunua</i>	Barracuda
<i>oka</i>	Rafter
<i>onoi-rau</i>	Thatch replacement
<i>oreia</i>	Hit
<i>oro ben</i>	Cutting open mature coconuts to make copra
<i>rai ben</i>	Purchasing whole mature coconuts for the purpose of making copra
<i>rake</i>	Upwards, eastward
<i>raku</i>	Sword fish (<i>istiophoridae</i> sp.)
<i>rama</i>	Outrigger float for canoe
<i>ran</i>	Fresh water, liquid
<i>ran i ben</i>	Fluid of mature coconut

<i>raoi</i>	Calm, tranquil
<i>rara</i>	Blood
<i>rau</i>	Pandanus thatch
<i>raurau</i>	Plate or other round vessel
<i>ribana</i>	Process of fertilising <i>babai</i> plants
<i>riiringa</i>	Massage and bone manipulation
<i>rio</i>	Downwards, westward
<i>roba</i>	Small pandanus sitting mat
<i>roki</i>	Enclosure, often refers to a bathing enclosure
<i>rorobuaka</i>	Warrior, young man. On Butaritari and Makin the term is also applied to the former commoner social status group
<i>rourou</i>	<i>Babai</i> cultivation
<i>rua</i>	Pit for cultivating <i>babai</i>
<i>rua ni benu</i>	Retting pit dug in the lagoon reef flats in which to soak <i>benu</i> for string making
<i>ruoia</i>	Traditional standing dance
<i>taan bukinibai</i>	Shareholders
<i>taan takakaro</i>	Players
<i>tabokororo</i>	A <i>boti</i> reserved for aristocrats (<i>toka</i>) in the north-east corner of Butaritari and Makin <i>maneaba</i> during the pre-colonial period.
<i>tabonibai</i>	Fingers; the commoners who worked on the lands of the former High Chiefs of Butaritari and Makin
<i>tabunea</i>	Magico-religious practices involving chanting incantations without ritual actions
<i>tae-benu</i>	Removal of <i>benu</i> from the <i>rua ni benu</i>
<i>takakaro</i>	Play
<i>tan</i>	Facing
<i>tangitang</i>	Complaint, appeal, weeping
<i>tanikamotu</i>	Bushland to the east and south of Kuma village
<i>tanraki</i>	Ocean coast of atoll, also refers to the east
<i>tanreo</i>	Lagoon shore of atoll, also refers to the west
<i>tao-benu</i>	Process of retting coconut fibre (<i>benu</i>) for string making

<i>Tarawa</i>	An atoll in the Gilbert group, capital of the Republic of Kiribati
<i>tarina</i>	Brother of a man or sister of a woman
<i>tatanga</i>	Roof plate of house
<i>tataro</i>	Prayer
<i>Taubati</i>	Dance style imported from Samoa
<i>tangi ni wenei</i>	A dance accompanying dirges to the newly dead
<i>te</i>	Definite article in the I-Kiribati language
<i>teanikabai</i>	A <i>boti</i> reserved for the conquered, slave class in the north-west corner of Butaritari and Makin <i>maneaba</i> during the pre-colonial period.
<i>Tekanangaraoi</i>	A <i>tabunea</i> to bring good fortune to a third party
<i>temaiaki</i>	Self-sprouting variety of <i>babai</i> known as <i>katutu</i> elsewhere in Kiribati
<i>tia</i>	One who does or performs some function or occupation
<i>tia babaaire</i>	Chairperson, person guiding proceedings, master of ceremonies
<i>tia kateitei</i>	Builder
<i>tibutaratara</i>	A person's ancestor at a distance of six generations
<i>tiki</i>	Unit of measure for coconut fibre string, equal to ten <i>nga</i> (ten fathoms or 18.3 metres)
<i>tingaro</i>	Dawn
<i>tiri-benu</i>	To beat <i>benu</i> with a wooden mallet (<i>kai n tiri benua</i>)
<i>toka</i>	The aristocratic social status group of the former Butaritari and Makin social structure
<i>tongo</i>	Mangrove tree (<i>rhizophora mucronata</i>)
<i>toro rau</i>	Flattening pandanus leaves to use for thatch
<i>uea</i>	High Chief
<i>uma</i>	Any dwelling, building or shelter
<i>uma n aia</i>	Fuel shelter
<i>uma ni kuka</i>	Cooking house
<i>umatoro</i>	Large communal living house used in the pre-colonial period

<i>unimane</i>	Men over fifty years old respected for their knowledge and wisdom. Traditional leaders
<i>uri</i>	A tree with fragrant flowers (<i>guettarda speciosa</i>)
<i>utu</i>	Family, kin
<i>utu ae kaan</i>	Close kin
<i>utu ae raroa</i>	Distant kin
<i>wa</i>	Canoe
<i>wawi</i>	Magico-religious practices intended to kill or maim
<i>wenewene</i>	double sleeping mat
<i>wi</i>	Tooth or teeth; sharp bladed or point
<i>wibokaboka</i>	Process of loosening soil around base of <i>babai</i> tuber