

**BREAKING THE BIBLE TO BRING IT IN:
THE *KAINIKAMAEN* AND READING THE
BIBLE**

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ABSTRACT

It can be very hard to understand the deeper meaning of God's word if we are very foreign to the language of origin, culture, tradition, and socio-political life of the people in the Bible. Understanding the deeper meaning of God's word is more than just the meaning of a word or a phrase itself, the deeper meaning of God's word evolves from the people's socio/politico/cultural milieu. From my perspective as an I-Kiribati, a foreign reader (and we are all foreign readers), a reader must provide a reading method that can bring the word in to a reader's cultural context. In this thesis the reading method is provided through the I-Kiribati cultural figure of the *Kainikamaen*. The people in Kiribati who have the knowledge of the *Kainikamaen* are considered to be composers. They compose and interpret songs, narratives, and poems using their own *Kainikamaen* terms to define meanings.

To complete a song so the people can understand its meaning, the *Kainikamaen* will 'break' it. This thesis will guide our people to read through the *Kainikamaen* hermeneutical lens by using the *Kainikamaen*'s notion of breaking, here 'breaking the Bible to bring it in' to our own traditional understanding, to make it more meaningful for us to address our own life situation in Kiribati. This *Kainikamaen* reading through breaking has no negative implication, in that it does not seek to change or damage the word of God. 'Breaking' through the *Kainikamaen* concept of composing as it is used here involves analysing the word of God using a countercyclical approach to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct the text, leading to an understanding of the i-Kiribati relationship with the biblical word. The *Kainikamaen* hermeneutical lens is further shaped by utilizing some crucial aspects of philosophical theories and other biblical criticisms whenever they are needed. The *Kainikamaen* reading is 'applied' to three

texts, one from each of the three divisions of the TaNaK: Exodus 19:10-25 from the Torah; Ezekiel 3:1-11 from the Prophets; and Psalms 84:1-12 from the Writings.

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis, which is approximately twenty-seven thousand words in length (excluding the bibliography and front matter), has been written by me, that it is the result of work carried out by me, and that it has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, in any previous written work for an academic award at this or any other academic institution.

I also declare that this thesis has not used any material, heard or read, without academically appropriate acknowledgment of the source.

Signed: 

Date: 10 Sep 2019

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work in memory of my loving father Timau Ieiera Tira.

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*Kam na aki bua, kam na aki Taro, ma kam na maMauriaki iroun
te Atua te Tama, te Atua te Nati, ao Te Atua te Tamnei are Raoiroi*

List of Abbreviations

BDB	-	<i>The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>
BCE	-	<i>Before Common Era</i>
KUC	-	<i>Kiribati Uniting Church</i>
NRSV	-	<i>The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible</i>
OT	-	<i>The Old Testament</i>
SBL	-	<i>Society of Biblical Literature</i>
Deut	-	<i>Deuteronomy</i>
Josh	-	<i>Joshua</i>
1 Sam	-	<i>1 Samuel</i>
1 Kigs	-	<i>1 Kings</i>
Psalms	-	<i>Psalm</i>
Jer	-	<i>Jeremiah</i>

Introduction

Christianity neglects most of the Pacific rituals that are regarded as black magic or involved with witchcraft. In Kiribati, most of our traditional knowledge and wisdom from our ancestors have been lost, but some are still practiced today. For instance, the Kiribati people are still aware of the knowledge and wisdom of composing songs, narratives, and poems known as *te kainikamaen*. *Te kainikamaen* is not accepted in the Church because it has a connection to witchcraft, as those who seek to acquire this knowledge and wisdom must undergo a ritual process which involves *te kainikamaen* spirits. *Te kainikamaen* knowledge and wisdom is unique in its ways of composing, using the Kiribati language in the school of *te kainikamaen*, where words are made to restore broken families, motivating the young ones, fulfilling one's love for the other, entertaining, educating, and more.

The result of the *kainikamaen* way of composing is what derives me to understand their knowledge and wisdom, not to focus on strengthening their ritual ways, which involve witchcraft, but to understand their method of composing. I am interested in their ways of putting together words to produce meaningful pieces such as songs, poems, and speeches. Their knowledge and wisdom to define and interpret words through their concept of composing known as *te ototo* (to produce or to break), which carries a dual meaning to define and to interpret words, in breaking and in producing meanings that are relevant to the context they address in their composition.

The language that we speak today in Kiribati is considered by those who have the knowledge and wisdom of *te kainikamaen* to be the new language of the Kiribati people. According to those whom I interviewed, they recognize that most of our indigenous language is not used in our everyday language. Our indigenous language or an old Kiribati language can only be heard from those who practice *te kainikamaen*,

choirs who compose their songs following *te kainikamaen* ways of composing, and of course the Bible, which also preserves most of the old Kiribati language. The problem I experience, and this also goes to most of the Kiribati people, is that the Bible becomes more and more complicated, especially in the Old Testament. It is difficult to determine the meaning of words in the Old Testament. What most people do nowadays is to do a comparison with English words, defining the meaning of our Kiribati words from an English word. Most of the time this does not produce a proper meaning or apply to our own context.

The knowledge and wisdom of *te kainikamaen* is one way to restore the richer vocabulary of the old Kiribati language that is no longer commonly used in Kiribati but still exist in the Kiribati Bible. It is also my concern that *te kainikamaen* knowledge and wisdom is dying out. Without their knowledge of indigenous Kiribati interpretation, we will definitely lose the deeper meaning of our own language. We will grow more dependent on English definitions and we no longer understand what the word actually means from our own cultural understanding. It is a challenge for the Kiribati people to study and to preserve the knowledge and wisdom of the *kainikamaen* before it is too late. This thesis seeks to honour the knowledge and wisdom of *te kainikamaen*, and to serve as a record of a small part of this traditional way of being in Kiribati. I hope to present here some of the knowledge and wisdom of *te kainikamaen*, and how it can be used as an hermeneutical lens to read the Bible.

This thesis is structured into three main chapters. Each chapter has a brief introduction to clarify its contents, at the end of each chapter I will provide a brief summary to identify important ideas of each chapter.

Chapter one has six main parts. The purpose of the first part is to describe *te kainikamaen*, introducing first different kinds of intermediary figures to get a brief

understanding of how the Kiribati people understand *te kainikamaen* as an intermediary figure. The second part is to define the meaning of the word *kainikamaen*, from a popular sense and from a technical sense. The third part will explain the traditional history of *te kainikamaen* from an oral tradition, to illustrate how the Kiribati people acquire this traditional knowledge and wisdom of the *kainikamaen*. The fourth part will look at the ritual dimensions of the *kainikamaen* in explaining the different stages and concepts of how one becomes *te tia kainikamaen* (the composer). The fifth part will discuss the place of *te kainikamaen* in and outside the Church, and lastly is the summary of chapter one, to identify vital points to bear in mind as we move to the next chapter.

Chapter two is the methodology which discusses the method that I will be using to approach biblical texts. First of all, this chapter will identify some difficulties encountered by the thesis in three areas to be discussed in this part. The second part will illustrate the relationship between hermeneutics and *te kainikamaen*, namely how both can be related within their own individual functions. The third part will explain the *kainikamaen* hermeneutical lens through the concept of breaking, while the fourth part illustrates the three main exegetical implications of the *kainikamaen* hermeneutical lens, known as *te ototo*, *te m'anewe*, and *te m'amira*.

Chapter three is an application chapter. Here the *kainikamaen* hermeneutical lens will be applied to interpret selected biblical texts from the three categories of the TaNaK, Exodus 19 from the Torah, Ezekiel from the Prophets, and Psalms 84 from the Writings. The structure of this chapter will be divided into three sections, where each text is interpreted through the three main exegetical implications of the *kainikamaen* toward drawing out a cultural understanding through *te ototo*, *te m'anewe*, and *te m'amira*.

The concluding chapter offers a summary of the vital ideas of the thesis, and further explains the relevancy of the *kainikamaen* knowledge and wisdom. It will present a brief overview of the ways that the *kainikamaen* hermeneutical lens brought light for Kiribati readers to understand the three selected texts, evidencing the importance of our own ways of reading, using our own indigenous knowledge and wisdom to understand the Bible from our own cultural context.

Chapter 1

Describing the *Kainikamaen*

1.1. Introduction

I think the first question to pop up in your mind is to ask the question, ‘What is *te kainikamaen*?’ The purpose of this chapter is to answer that question. This chapter therefore will be divided into seven sections, with each section serving the purpose of explaining in detail one aspect of the concept of *te kainikamaen*. The first section will briefly explain intermediary figures to draw out how the Kiribati people understand *te kainikamaen* as an intermediary figure in the way it function. In the second section I will define the word *te kainikamaen*, focusing on the popular meaning of the word, and also looking at the technical meaning of the word. Section three will deal with the traditional history of *te kainikamaen*, which will involve the classifying the historical basis of oral tradition, the Kiribati traditional creation story, and how *te kainikamaen* is also part of that creation. The fourth section will talk about the four ritual dimensions of *te kainikamaen*. The fifth section will discuss the place of *te kainikamaen* ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the Church. The last section is a summary that will identify additional important aspects of *te kainikamaen* to consider before moving on to the next chapter.

1.2. Intermediary Figure

The purpose of this section is to explain briefly how to understand the role and purpose of intermediary figures such as necromancers or witches, prophets, and *te kainikamaen* in order to comprehend the role of *te kainikamaen* as an intermediary figure within the Kiribati context. This section is divided into four parts and each part

serves to explain the role and purpose of intermediary figures using three examples to delineate how they function within their own different roles as intermediary figures.

The first part will define the term ‘intermediary figure’ in order to comprehend its meaning and purpose. The second part will look at witchcraft to illustrate how witchcraft played a role of an intermediary figure in the way it functions in a biblical context and in my own context. The third section will focus on biblical Prophets who are also intermediary figures, receiving and proclaiming the words of God. Lastly is *te kainikamaen*, this final part defining the word briefly and explaining how *te kainikamaen* can also be considered to play the role of an intermediary figure, receive sacred words from the spirits and composing songs.

1.2.1. What is an Intermediary Figure?

An intermediary is a mediator or go-between, someone who carries messages between people or tries to help them reach their agreement, or something that functions as a means or medium for bringing something about (Perrault 2004a, 653). The word figure means bodily shape or form especially of a person acting on behalf of another (Perrault 2001, 467). The two meanings illustrate that an intermediary figure is someone acting as a mediator between two persons or two worlds. These people have the skills to understand the languages and the terms of those who are not from our world, such as the spirits, and also have the ability to see what is unseen by ordinary eyes, such as ghosts, evil spirits, Divine spirits, and so on. The following part will illustrate three figures, the witch, the prophet, and the *kainikamaen*, that are considered to function as intermediaries.

1.2.2. Witch as Intermediary Figure.

Witchcraft is often understood as the use of sorcery or magic to communicate with a devil or with a familiar (Perrault 2004c, 1438). This is a traditional European Christian understanding, but even if the witch is not thought to commune with the devil, the witch is sometimes regarded to communicate with spirits which are considered evil by Christians. Their involvement with evil spirits enables them to do things supernaturally. Witches are thought to be able to see things like ghosts, and to have the ability of knowing that someone is possessed with evil spirits, interacting variously with all kinds of spirits, perhaps even offering the spirits service to please them and gain what they desire. Their role in society is seen as witch doctors helping to cure sicknesses which some people might see as a curse from evil spirits. They are considered to be mediators between the world of evil spirits and the human world. An example of this is the 'witch' or necromancer of Endor in I-Samuel 28: 11-14, who brings up the dead Samuel when Saul requests information about the battle the next day.

1.2.3. Prophet as Intermediary Figure.

In the Old Testament, Prophets are considered to be messengers of God in proclaiming the word of God to the people of Israel. They dialogue with or receive the message from God, and can mediate between God and the people of Israel. Moses is perhaps one of the best known intermediaries between God and the people of Israel (Reinhard Feldmeier 1999, 557). In Exodus 19, for instance, Moses ascends and descends the mountain to intercede between God and the people. Prophets are appointed or called by God to do the work of an intermediary. This is the case with Ezekiel, who was commissioned by God to speak the very words of God to the people (Ezekiel 3:1). The dialogue between the Prophets and God differentiated them from the ordinary ones,

and are unique in what they do in serving two worlds, the Divine world and the human world.

1.2.4. *Te kainikamaen* as Intermediary Figure.

Te kainikamaen refers to the knowledge and wisdom of our ancestors in composing songs given by Nareau (the spider god), the one who is regarded in the Kiribati traditional creation story to be the creator. Those who possess the *kainikamaen* are known as *taan kainikamaen* (composers) or *te tia kainikamaen* (the composer). To become *te tia kainikamaen* a person is required to undergo rituals that involve communicating with *antin te kainikamaen* (spirits of the *kainikamaen*) in drinking *Te tounene*, smoke steaming known as *Te ariri*, and *Te kauti*, early morning bath in the ocean. All of these will be explained in the following sections of this chapter, but what is important to understand is that in undergoing all the rituals of the *kainikamaen*, a person is then regarded as *te tia kainikamaen* and he or she is recognized by *aintin te kainikamaen* (spirits of the *kainikamaen*).

This recognition marks the beginning of how *te tia kainikamaen* becomes the intermediary figure between the world of *atin te kainikamaen* and the world of the Kiribati people. *Te tia kainikamaen* has the ability to receive *te m'anewe* (sacred words) the words of *antin te kainikamaen* which they put together in their composition. Their ability to interpret the meanings of *te m'anewe* to the people define their place in society as a sage not just within their ways of composing songs but through utilizing words in speaking. They are considered to be orators in addressing the life situations of the I-Kiribati. The people of Kiribati look up to *te tia kainikamaen* to have an amazing knowledge and wisdom especially with words. With the words are believed to belong to *antin te kainikamaen*, *te tia kainikamaen* becomes a mediator between two worlds,

receiving and interpreting words from *antin te kainikamaen* to address the people's situation to comfort them.

1.3. The Meaning of the *Kainikamaen*

I encountered the word *kainikamaen* for the first time when I was young, when people made jokes about someone who was using old Kiribati words not suited to the context of their speech. The language of the *kainikamaen* is sometimes confusing to the Kiribati people nowadays, for most of its vocabularies are not commonly used in our Kiribati language today. The word *kainikamaen* itself is also complicated to understand. For us in Kiribati, we are only familiar with its popular meaning, but there is also a definition of the word *kainikamaen* which is more technical. There are various Kiribati words which have meanings related with the word *kainikamaen*, and it would be confusing to determine the exact meaning of the word. The words *Kario* and *Ototo* are some of the Kiribati words which have meanings related with the word *kainikamaen*. These words will be fully explained below to illustrate the related meaning and functions.

1.3.1. Popular Meaning of the *Kainikamaen*

The word *kainikamaen* in its popular meaning, according to Tiare Kaitu, is simply an art of composing local songs (Kaitu 1985, 3). According to the *Gelbertese Dictionary*, the word *kainikamaen* is defined as a method or school or composition for dance, singing, dances with magic rites and formula; *kainikamaen* is to compose or conduct these dances where a pillar in the *Maneaba* (meeting hall) is set apart for the composer (Sabatier and Oliva 1971b, 142). According to Hughes, the *Kainikamaen* is an art of musical composition by magical means (Hughes 1957, 171). However, there are other Kiribati words that have similar meanings to composing, which are *Kario* and

Ototo. Kario according to *the Gelbertese Dictionary* is also understandable as composing a song, poetry or music (Sabatier and Oliva 1971c). The word *Ototo* is also understood as composition, invention, to break, to smash, to bend, to compose and to make (Sabatier and Oliva 1971f).

The word *kainikamaen* is an umbrella term that accommodates various ways of composition in the Kiribati tradition, from using the definition for a school of composing, the way of composing which includes dance, songs, narrative and poets. Therefore, the word *kainikamaen* is not bound by composing local songs only, but also touches other areas of composition such as narratives and poems. Through composing, the *kainikamaen* produces songs, and the words of the songs are put into action through the *Ruoia* (traditional dancing). The movement of the body in the *Ruoia* reflects the words of the songs produced by the *kainikamaen*. Therefore, the popular meaning of the *kainikamaen* is simply a general term that covers the various traditional Kiribati ways of composing. The major aspect of the *kainikamaen* in its popular meaning is the use of old Kiribati words through compositions of songs, poems, and narratives.

1.3.2. Technical Meaning of the *Kainikamaen*

It is important to address the technical meaning of the *kainikamaen* because it speaks more on how the word as a whole is formed, which elaborates not only the different parts of the word *kainikamaen*, but also its different functions. The word *kainikamaen* is formed from three Kiribati words, which are *kai*, meaning ‘stick’, *ni*, a preposition ‘for’, and *kamaen*, meaning ‘bend’ (Kaitu 1985, 4). The three words that formed the word *kainikamaen* bring a new dimension that weaves metaphorical meanings with literal to illustrate the right sense and meaning of the word *kainikamaen*.

The technical meaning of the word *kainikamaen* then is ‘the stick for bending.’ The word signifies a traditional understanding of the Kiribati people that *te tia kainikamaen* (the composer) is to otea (produce) his song, and when the song is complete it is then called *e a maoto te kuna*, the literal meaning of which is ‘the song is broken’ (Kaitu 1985, 5). The word *otoea* comes from the word *ototo* that carries two meanings: the word can be used as ‘to break’; and it can also mean ‘to compose.’ The completed work of the composer is regarded as *maoto* (broken).

There is a significant aspect to this technical meaning of *maoto*. The word itself allows the listener of the complete song to find him- or herself within that opening space *maoto* (broken). The broken (complete) song is an opening gap for recipients to connect themselves to the song. Therefore, the *M'aoto* makes an available space for individuals to seek meaning and try to fit themselves within the rhythm and wording of the song. Songs are composed to address a specific situation or occasion; *te tia kainikamaen* (the composer) can use common words mixing it with *te m'anewe* (sacred words) that apply to anything in life in order to denote the purpose of his song.¹

The technical meaning of the *kainikamaen* addresses the completion of the composition, where a complete composition must be related to the listener. If *te tia kainikamaen* (the composer) and the listener cannot find connection in relating themselves to the song, then the song is not successful. As Kaitu states, the *kainikamaen* is “highly ritualistic and involves unexplained practices that were thought to effect miracles like the tradition of its powerful impact on anyone (even to the point of death)” (Kaitu 1985, 3). This indicates that the complete song can be seen as a curse if the song is not successfully done in its own ritual process and can also be seen a blessing in itself if it is done successfully.

¹ There are also women regarded as *te tia kainikamaen* (the composer).

1.4. The Traditional History of the *Kainikamaen*

The traditional myth of the *kainikamaen* begins with our oral traditional creation story of *Nareau* (the spider), the creator. There are different versions of the Kiribati traditional creation story from different islands in Kiribati, but the common understanding that unifies these creation stories is that everything is created by *Nareau*. The utilized version of the traditional creation story in this thesis will be from the island of *Beru*. Their story is known as *te bo ma te maki*.² Before doing so we shall focus on discussing the oral tradition of the Kiribati creation story so that we can understand the traditional myth of the *kainikamaen*.

1.4.1. Historicity and Oral Tradition

Orality has traditionally been looked down upon in the academic world. Mercer talks about the use of oral tradition as it was first regarded by R. H. Lowie, who stated that “I cannot attach to oral tradition any historical value whatsoever under any condition whatsoever” (Mercer 1979, 130). Such a pessimistic view also shared by Vansina in stating the view of A. Feder: “As oral tradition *sensu stricto*, it is always anonymous, it can never be relied upon with any certainty as a true account of those who subsequently transmitted it” (Vansina 1973, 4). The two views express an understanding of how oral sources are not reliable. Feder states that oral tradition should be considered to be a reliable historical source only if:

it refers to comparatively recent events, if an adequate capacity for critical judgment existed at the time when it was handed down, and if other sources of information existed which would enable persons possessing this capacity to exercise it, in which case, the tradition

² The meaning of ‘te bo ma te maki’ comes from two verbs connected with a conjunction ‘ma’ meaning (and), the first verb is ‘te bo’ meaning (the meet), and the second verb is ‘te maki’ meaning (the squeezed). The word refers to something like a close giant clamshell where the creation myth says that *Nareau* opened te bo ma te maki and that is where the world comes into creation.

must be trustworthy if it has not been questioned by such persons.(Vansina 1973, 4)

As times went by the view of oral tradition started to change from negative to more positive. According to Uriam, using Bruce Briggs' definition of oral tradition, "oral tradition is any culturally defined, word of mouth way of intentionally passing on information about the past" (Uriam 1988, 1). Whatever the academic world might think of it, oral tradition was the only means available to our ancestors in the Pacific for transmitting information of the past from generation to generation, from the past to the present, and it is fundamental for the people to understand their own history through oral tradition (Mercer 1979, 130). Oral tradition involves our social relationship within a family, a village, or an island preserving the history of our ancestors where elders in the family or village told mythical stories about our existence, lands and gods. Even so, it is good to place oral tradition in relationship to other types of knowledge.

Such work as so far been done makes it clear that oral tradition ought never to be used alone and unsupported. It has to be related to the social and political structure of the peoples who preserve it, compared with the traditions of neighbouring peoples, and linked with the chronological indications of genealogies and age-set cycles, of documented with literate peoples, of dated natural phenomena such as famines and eclipses and of archaeological finds. (Vansina 1973, 7-8)

The use of oral tradition is by far the most significant trend that speaks about the past events utilized to shape the history of a particular context. Our lives in the Pacific are built upon stories of the past through oral tradition where we come to understand our own true identity in this physical and spiritual world. Oral tradition allows the people to reconstruct their past which is reflected in their social lives and political structure. Thomas Spear clarifies the importance of oral tradition, which is "part of our overall cultural system, a system of meanings which emerges out of a people's historical experience" (Spear 1981, 139). Spear also acknowledges the work of Maude through his research on the Kiribati *Boti* (sitting place inside the *Maneaba*) by saying that the

Kiribati tradition is a trustworthy historical record, similar to written records (Spear 1981, 153). Oral tradition is confirmed by the Pacific historians mentioned above as a reliable historical source. This leads us to our next part of this section where I am now able to share the traditional creation story of Kiribati from the island of Beru.

1.4.2. Kiribati Creation Story

The creation story begins with nothing but darkness and one person whom no one knows neither where he grew nor where he came from, his parents are also unknown to the people of Kiribati for there was only he Nareau (Courtney. and Maude 1994, 34). Nareau made Earth to lie with Water, and Earth gave birth to children known as Natibu (the rock) and *Nei Teakea* (void), these two laid together and these were their children: *Te ikawai* (the elder), *Nei Marena* (space between), *Te Nao* (the wave), Na Kiika (the Octopus), and *Riiki* (the Eel), and a multitude of others, and the youngest child is Nareau the younger (Courtney. and Maude 1994, 34).

The names of Natibu (the rock) and *Nei Teakea* (void) sons and daughters describe a structure of life on land, in the ocean and in the sky. *Te ikawai* (the elder) represent the people of the land whom are most respected in the Kiribati tradition. *Nei Marena* (space between) is a gap that makes a distinction between the people of the land and the Ocean where *Te Nao* (the wave) breaks. Na Kiika (the octopus) and *Riiki* (the eel) are representations of creatures in the sea. But later *Riiki* (the eel) lifted the Heavens so high, to where we come to know now as the sky. The sons and daughters of Natibu (the rock) and *Nei Teakea* (void) symbolize Land, Sea, and Sky.

Nareau the elder left them never to return, for he has given the task of creation to Natibu (the rock), to create men. Nareau the younger is the smartest among them; he was the one who completed the creation. Nareau the younger worked with his brothers and with beings that are regarded as fools and deaf-mutes. Nareau the younger gave the

fools and deaf-mutes the energy, knowledge, and senses to move, to speak, and to hear, so they all have a right mind (Courtney. and Maude 1994, 34-35). Nareau created the heaven by giving order to his brother *Riiki* (the eel) to lift the heaven on his snout, and when the heaven was really high Nareau the younger struck *Riiki's* (the eel's) legs so that he has no legs to this day and his body can be seen as *Naiabu* (milky way) in the middle of the Heaven (Courtney. and Maude 1994, 35).

This part of the story portrays the idea that strength and knowledge come from Nareau the younger by giving the right mind to the fools and people who are deaf-mute. The source of knowledge in singing is also formed by Nareau the younger when he created the sun, moon and stars by slaying his father Natibu, taking his eyes to be the light of the land as sun and moon, and scattering his brain as stars in Heaven through singing a song (Courtney. and Maude 1994, 36-37). The story identifies some of the crucial sites where the knowledge, strength and singing are part of Nareau the younger's creation that enable him and other beings to complete the creation. This traditional creation story continues on where knowledge and skills required for survival are passed down through the basket called *Te Abi*, and leads us to the next section to discuss the *kainikamaen* also as a part of Nareau's creation.

1.4.3. The *Kainikamaen* as Part of Creation

The Kiribati people are blessed with much knowledge and skill on land, sea and sky just like any Pacific islanders, but somehow we can question the knowledge of our ancestors by asking how this is possible for them to perceive all this knowledge and skills. In our own traditional myths there is always an answer, for the Kiribati people believed through their traditional myths that our ancestors acquired their knowledge and skills from Nareau, the spider god.

According to Rev Dr Kambati K. Uriam, the Kiribati people acquire knowledge and skills from the basket called *te Abb* that was descended upon the village of Tebabu on the island of Marakei. The basket contains smaller baskets called *Te Kete*. The amount of Kete inside the basket is equal to the amount of knowledge and skills needed for survival (Uriam 1983, 24). In Hughes' research on the 'Origin of the Ruoia and the *kainikamaen*' in 1957 he also mentioned that the traditional myth of the *kainikamaen* is the wisdom given by Nareau the creator in the Kiribati traditional creation story; the myth says that this wisdom was descended in *Te Abi* (basket) from the heavens by *te tie n Nareau* (Nareau's cord) (Hughes 1957, 173).

The two views are similar, stating the basket of knowledge and skills as *te Abb* and *Te Abi*, descended on the same island Marekei in the same village, Te Babu. The same basket with the same content shapes the life of the Kiribati people. For Uriam, his concern is based on the dimensions of the *Katei ni Kiribati* (Kiribati culture), nevertheless Hughes' main focus is on the origin of the Ruoia and the *kainikamaen* which is also part of the *Katei ni Kiribati* (Kiribati culture). The content of '*Te Abi*' is the knowledge and skills of the Kiribati people that is needed for survival, and one of the kete (small baskets) inside *Te Abi* (big basket) is the Ruoia and the *kainikamaen*. This signifies the importance of the *Kainikamaen* to be part of the *Katei ni Kiribati* (Kiribati Culture) which also plays a significant role in the life of the Kiribati People.

According to Hughes' research, the content of *Te Abi* basket is *Taari* (brothers and sisters). The brothers are named *Te Buka ni Akang*, and *Te buka n Eitei* , and the two sisters are *Nei Banereere* and *Nei Kamatuatawa* ; these were taan *kainikamaen* (composers) (Hughes 1957, 172). There are nine *anti* (spirits) of the *kainikamaen*, the four are placed on land known as Nareau, *Rurubene*, *Te tounene* and *Timuniman*, two on the eastern side of the lagoon known as *Tab'akea* and *Bakoa*, and three in the ocean

Naikamawa, *Nareiwawa* and *Newekabane* (Hughes 1957, 173). These spirits are representatives of three important areas for *te tia kainikamaen* (the composer) to receive *te m'aneve* (sacred words) from land, between land and sea (where land and sea meet), and the deep ocean. The seven spirits provide *te m'aneve* for *te tia kainikamaen*, but in doing so, *te tia kainikamaen* must go through a certain ritual process to acquire *te m'aneve* for composing. In the next section will focus on explaining this acquisition, and the ritual dimensions of the *Kainikamaen*.

1.5. Ritual Dimensions of the *Kainikamaen*

Following the definition of the word 'ritual' as a ceremonial act or series of acts regularly repeated in a set precise manner (Perrault 2004b, 1076), this section will explain in detail the requirements of *te tia kainikamaen* in performing certain rituals that are necessary for acquiring the skills and knowledge of the *kainikamaen* in composing. For us I-Kiribati, the skills and knowledge of the *kainikamaen* are sacred, and therefore traditionally passed to no other but father-to-son or grandfather-to-grandson (Bataua et al. 1985, 49). As time changed, the skills and knowledge of the *kainikamaen* is possessed by those who are interested, and it is shared by *te tia kainikamaen* to those whom they trust.

In order for me to describe the ritual dimension of the *kainikamaen* I would like to thank Katokita Natanga and Tekawa Tokaman for allowing me to do my interview with them in their respective homes. I am honored to share the story of the *kainikamaen* from both of these so called taan *kainikamaen*, Katokita Natanga from the Island of Maiana, and Tekawa Tokaman from the island of Beru, explaining their own experience on how this knowledge and skill of the *kainikamaen* was first given to them by their grandfathers, and their experience in the composing using the knowledge and skills of the *kainikamaen*.

According to what I have been given by Katokitaa and Tekawa, they both say that there are four ritual dimensions or levels of how one can achieve the knowledge and skills of the *kainikamaen*. These four ritual dimensions are recommended for *te tia kainikamaen* to undergo if he wants to be an expert *kainikamaen*. This part of the chapter will be divided into four parts to illustrate the four important ritual dimensions:

(a) The first is the drinking of *Te tounene* (drink made from young coconut, *Nimoimoi*) and after that *Te ariri* (smoke steaming), and the last is the *kauti* (early morning bath);

(b) The second is receiving *te m'aneve* (sacred words for composing; Katokitaa and Teekawa are unique in their ways of receiving *te m'aneve*);

(c) The third level after receiving the *Manewe* is *Te ototo* (composing), this is where *te tia kainikamaen* puts *te m'aneve* together to compose a song;

(d) The last level is *te m'amira*, the blessing of the song to please the ears of spirits of the *kainikamaen* and to the people where the song is *M'aoto* (complete).

1.5.1. *Te tounene, Te ariri, and Te kauti.*

To acquire the first level one has to undergo the drinking of the *Te tounene*. This is a special drink prepared from the *Nimoimoi* (a young small green coconut). According to Tekawa Tokaman, drinking the *tounene* should be completed within a specific kind of *Nimoimoi*, a specific time and place. Tokaman explains that the *Te tounene* is a juice made out of three small young coconuts which are green. One should look for a bunch of small young coconuts facing the ocean and pick out three *Nimoimoi* which are facing the middle of the sky. He says it is hard to find them, but you should carefully look for them. Once you have found these *Nimoimoi* you mark them, for you will wait for the right time to drink.

When it is one day after the half-moon you get the first *Nimoimoi* and drink it. You should drink each of the three *Nimoimoi* only one day after the half-moon. Therefore, you repeat the same routine that will take three half-moons. There is also a specific place for drinking the tounene. You should drink the tounene outside your house facing the eastern side, for our ancestors say that the east belongs to *Tab'akea*, one of the *Kainikamaen* spirits placed in the lagoon side. Making the tounene involves *Te tabunea* (magical incantation and spells), which is witchcraft, where you invite the *bunanti*, the spirits of the *Kainikamaen*, to accompany you as you drink the tounene.

Te ariri is also part of the tounene. After drinking the tounene you are then ready to take another step that is *Te ariri*. *Te ariri* also follows the same moon phase as one day after the half-moon, repeating it in the same way you drink the tounene. For *Te ariri* you will need to find nine small stones, the size of a finger, on the beach at the ocean side, which are also red and white. After doing so you collect some *Te beti* (rotten bandanas fruits) for fuel. Natanga claims that you should prepare yourself nicely as if you are to attend a *Botaki* (party) before collecting the items needed for *Te ariri*. Making the fire for *Te ariri* is to dig a small hole the size your palm and then you lay *Te beti* as the foundation and placing the nine small stones on top and then you light it up. If you see that the fire is creating a lot of smoke you are to put out the fire to start *Te ariri*. You are to pull the smoke with your hand towards your chest to again invite the *bunanti*, the spirits of the *kainikamaen*, to be part of you, in reciting the words that are required for calling the *bunanti*. You are to perform *Te ariri* three times. Each time is done one day after the half-moon.

After drinking the tounene and performing *Te ariri*, then you are to fulfil the last part of this stage of the ritual process, which is *Te kauti*, an early morning bath in the ocean side. According to Tokaman, *Te kauti* is also done through the same process of

timing it to one day after the half-moon. Before this time comes you should go to the beach and watch the sea as it reaches its high tide, looking for *te aibura-ni-man*, the only rock you can see the top of, which is closer to where the waves break. It is important to spot that rock, for you are to wake up early around three to four in the morning to go and sit on *te aibura-ni-man*, facing the deep ocean to perform the last ritual. You are to repeat this the next morning, not waiting for another half-moon. In doing so you are to select a strong wave that you can really feel its strong current when it hits you. I-Kiribati believe that strong waves are possessed with the *bunanti*, the spirits of the *kainikamaen*, therefore you are to catch three of these waves on those three days. Again this is also done through reciting ritual words as you fetch the sea water from the bubble of the wave into your mouth, and as you release the water from your mouth you are to recite the ritual words to once again invite the spirits of the *Kainikamaen* to make you speak the words of the *kainikamaen* spirits.

If one has successfully completed the three stages, *Te tounene*, *Te ariri*, and *Te kauti*, then one is prepared to be *te tia kainikamaen*. From the overall view of what has been discussed, entering the world of the *kainikamaen*, being recognized by the *bunanti*, the four spirits of the *kainikamaen* descend down by Nareau. The spirits of the land and sea are now ready to work alongside you as you begin your composing. This is similar to baptism, where one is to be baptized in order to be one of the members of the Church.

After completing the ritual process required by to be *te tia kainikamaen*, it is a must to celebrate the completion. According to Katokita Natanga, when he had completed all the rituals of the *kainikamaen* he was told to prepare food to celebrate his achievement with the spirits of the *kainikamaen*. This will be done secretly, where the household of Natanga prepared food and no one was to be invited to this celebration. The spirit of the *kainikamaen* will attend the celebration by embodying themselves

within those people who come to your house and eat with you. It was required for the family of Natanga to prepare a lot of food to feed whoever came. If there was not enough food to feed those who came, it is said by the ancestors that the spirits of the *kainikamaen* will eat you instead. Natanga was instructed by his grandfather that he must accompany everyone who comes throughout the whole time whenever they came, it is a must for Natanga to accompany those people in their time of eating, because they represent the spirits of the *kainikamaen* eating together to mark the new beginning of their new relationship with each other.

1.5.2. *Te m'aneve* (Sacred Words of the *Kainikamaen*)

Te m'aneve is very sacred to *te tia kainikamaen*, words or terms that are highly regarded as the words of the *kainikamaen* spirits. They are highly respected in the Kiribati tradition. Our ancestors of taan *kainikamaen* say that *te m'aneve* of the *kainikamaen* can either bring life or death. If *te m'aneve* is not interpreted well, *te m'aneve* will reveal its meaning by doing to either someone or to a group what *te m'aneve* literally means. It can be good and it can also be bad. To mention a few, they have the ability to bless, to heal, to reunite the divorced or the village, to comfort the mourning, to restore good health, good fortune or, conversely, to bring bad fortune.

Te tia kainikamaen consider that *te m'aneve* only comes to them from *te Tokotu-ni-man*, a place in the deep ocean where the eyes cannot see. The word *te Tokotu-ni-man* is a combination of three words: the word *Tokotu*, literally meaning a place for something either to hang something or a resting place for birds; the word *ni*, a preposition for; and *man*, translated as animals. In this case *te Tokotu-ni-man* is a resting place for birds. Tokaman claims that *te Tokotu-ni-man* is a place where Nareau, *Rurubene*, and *Timuniman*, the spirits of the *kainikamaen* rest. Therefore, in order to