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THIEBERGER, N

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Walking to Erro

Stories of travel, origins, or affection

Nick Thieberger

School of Languages and Linguistics, University of Melbourne, Australia

Abstract

In this chapter I discuss several stories, mostly recorded at Erakor village in Vanuatu, which have as a theme the relationship between the islands of Erromango and Efate in Vanuatu. They reinforce the observation that the water between islands is a pathway rather than an obstruction to communication, recalling the notion of the Pacific as an interconnected 'Sea of Islands' in Hau'ofa's (2008) terms. Together with this perceived connection between these two islands, linguistic features shared between Erromango and South Efate could be an indication of contact sufficient to lead to innovations in South Efate not found in neighbouring languages to the north. Lynch (2000a:337) concludes that the nature of the relationship between South Efate and its neighbours to the south requires further detailed research and this chapter is offered as a step toward understanding the type of contact there was between Erromango and Efate. I will also be concerned to show that the traditional stories on which this chapter is based are still part of Erakor life, in contrast to our expectation from the literature or from the fact that Erakor is the closest village to the capital city of Vanuatu, Port Vila.

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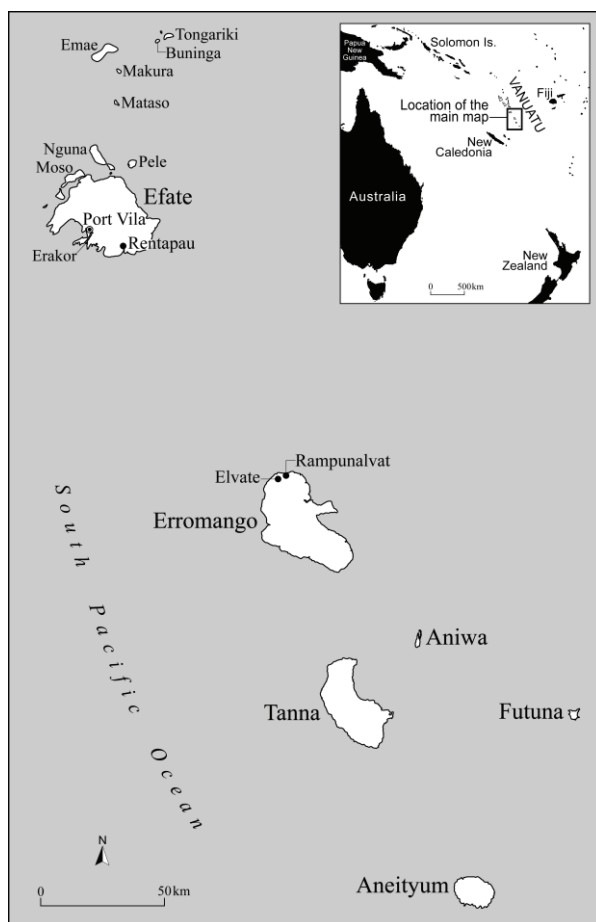
1 Introduction

Efate is an island in the chain that makes up the western Pacific nation of Vanuatu. The distance between Efate and Erromango, the next island to the south in the chain, as we see on *Map 1*, is some 100 kilometres. Efate is visible from northern Erromango. In his 1926 volume *The Southern New Hebrides*, Humphreys noted:

[Erromango is] "more akin to Efate in its culture and characteristics. The physical measurements tend to confirm this, and the language of the north point of the island, by its construction and native name, so much more like that of Efate than like Southern Erromango and

the islands of the south, suggests that perhaps we are wrong in including Erromango, other than geographically, in the group of five southern islands of the New Hebrides” (Humphreys 1926:203).

Unfortunately, no more information is given, and there is nothing more said about the language of the northern point of the island, which Humphreys calls *Elvate* (discussed further below). Spriggs and Wickler (1989:84) include a map with one of the northern traditional chiefdoms of Erromango listed as *Ralefati* (and they note that the boundaries of the Ura language and of that chiefdom seem to have been the same), and this name appears in a story in Ura in Crowley¹ (1999:92). A placename (in fact the only placename listed by GoogleMaps) in the north of Erromango is *Rampunalvat*. These terms—*Elvate*, *Ralefati*, and *Rampunalvat*—each containing *fat* / *vat* are suggestive of some connection to *Vate*² or Efate to the north.



Map 1. The southern islands of Vanuatu

¹ Crowley (1999: 42) notes that *ra* is a locative preposition, which, if interpreted as a prefix in the placename may explain the variation between *Ralefati* and *Ifate*. It should be noted, however, that the same source (ibid: 131) gives *u-* as a prefix for locational nouns, of which there is no example resembling the word Efate.

² The term *faat* in South Efate means ‘rock’, but is also the name used for the island of Efate (as seen in the sixth sentence of text 1, below).

The observation that Erromango shows cultural or linguistic similarities with Efate resonates to some extent with my experience of fieldwork in Erakor village recording the South Efate language. Erromango featured in a number of stories told to me by a range of villagers, sometimes it was magically linked to Rentapau, a place in south-eastern Efate that is known as a source of spiritual power on Efate (see Text 3 below). At the same time, only one of those stories mentioned any other island (Nguna, an island to the north of Efate). I also noted some linguistic features of South Efate that were shared with Erromangan languages, but not with other languages of Efate or to its north (Lelepa, Nguna, Namakira). These features, discussed below, have been articulated by Lynch (2000a, 2000b, 2001) far better than by my grammar of South Efate (Thieberger 2006) which was mainly concerned to present a description of the language rather than a comparison with Erromangan languages. In this chapter I will use oral accounts as evidence to support comparative linguistic work that shows there are shared features between the two islands.

2 Linguistic similarities between Efate and Erromango

According to the established classification of languages of Vanuatu, Efate is the southernmost language of the North-Central Vanuatu subgroup. To the south, all Erromangan languages are classified as part of the southern Vanuatu subgroup, based on a number of features that need not be discussed here. However, it is interesting that there are linguistic features shared by South Efate and Erromango that are suggestive either of shared inheritance or of contact between speakers of these languages in the past.

Lynch (2000b) observes that Southern Melanesian (a subgroup that includes Southern Vanuatu and New Caledonia) languages are most closely related to the languages of Central Vanuatu and, “specifically, that their closest relative is the South Efate language” (ibid:155). He concludes that there is an Efate-Southern Melanesian linkage (ibid:181) wherein “the original chains of dialects (presumably spoken in the south of Efate) became more and more distant from one another, linguistically as well as geographically, until a point was reached where contact was lost.” It is unclear if contact between Efate and the south was ever lost, or if another possible scenario involves a wave of influence from languages of the Southern Vanuatu group back to Efate after the initial settlement of the archipelago.

Lynch (2000a) has suggested that the phonology of South Efate forms “a transition between the phonologically more conservative central Vanuatu languages... and the more aberrant languages of Southern Vanuatu” (ibid:320). He goes on to speculate on phonological grounds that South Efate may in fact be part of the Southern Vanuatu group. He observes that a regular process of final-vowel deletion is common to the languages of Southern Vanuatu, and notes that it also occurs in the history of South Efate, but not in the neighbouring language to the north, Nakanamanga or Ngunesese. “If this is correct, then it would imply that final vowel deletion was a quite ancient process, since the southern islands were settled (presumably from South Efate) about three thousand years ago, after the South Efate language had separated from Nakanamanga. It is vowel deletion particularly which marks South Efate communalects off from those of northern Efate and the Shepherd Islands: see Table 1.

Table 1 – Cognate lexemes in Proto-Oceanic, South Efate and Nakanamanga (Lynch 2000a:333)

<i>POc</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>South Efate</i>	<i>Nakanamanga</i>
*tuRi	'sew'	<i>tur</i>	<i>turi-a, tutuuri</i>
*mate	'die'	<i>mat</i>	<i>mate</i>
*kapika	'Malay apple'	<i>n/kafik</i>	<i>na/kavika</i>
*patu	'stone'	<i>n/faat</i>	<i>vaatu</i>
*punut	'husk'	<i>na/un</i>	<i>na/vunuvunu</i>
*matakut	'afraid'	<i>mtak</i>	<i>mataku</i>
*tajis	'cry'	<i>tag</i>	<i>tagi-si</i>

Lynch (2001:189) identifies an innovation shared by South Efate and Southern Vanuatu languages—low vowel dissimilation to a mid-vowel when followed by *Ca (e.g. *na-saman 'outrigger' > South Efate *n-sem*). South Efate and Southern Vanuatu both share an ordered sequence of phonological changes which suggests a close relationship between these language groups (ibid). A further feature shared between Efate and Erromango is a preposed 1sg possessive, *nakte* in South Efate (Thieberger 2006:106) and *nagku* in Sye (Crowley 1998:162). In each case this is a unique form of marking only first person possession in the language and contrasts with the more general pattern of postposed possessive marking. An echo subject marker occurs as *kai-* in South Efate (Thieberger 2006:111) and as *m-* in both Sye (Crowley 1998:114) and Ura (Crowley 1999:215), and again this is a feature that is not shared by languages to the north of Efate.

François (2009) discusses structural correspondences in Vanikoro which he refers to as examples of structural isomorphism with divergent forms. He gives two accounts for how these divergent forms could arise: phonological change and lexical replacement. In the case he describes, he observes that the languages (which he has good grounds for analyzing as descending from a common ancestor) have diverged drastically at the phonological and lexical level but have retained structural isomorphism. In the case of Efate it is unlikely that the features discussed are a result of (recent) borrowing as they represent different forms in the source and recipient languages. If the features (preposed 1SG possessor and echo-subject) were borrowed, the forms could then have changed over time, an argument that could possibly be made for *nakte/nagku* but is less likely for the echo-subject markers whose forms are quite divergent (*m-/ kai-*). Alternatively, the forms could have arisen independently from a single original source which could provide evidence of shared ancestry of South Efate and Erromangan languages.

Shared linguistic features are one type of evidence of contact, and oral accounts, discussed in §3.3 below, also have value in aiding our understanding of potential contact.

3 Evidence of contact between Erromango and Efate

What little is recorded of the history of these two islands, and what is known from their prehistory, suggests a continual contact between them³. Speiser (1923/1990:180) quotes an

³ My host in Erakor, the late William Wayane, was brought up in Erromango because his father was a Protestant missionary there and it is possible that this missionary connection built on earlier networks,

earlier (undated) report by Lawrie that *tapa* (beaten bark cloth) was produced at Nguna, Tongoa and Emae, but then also notes (ibid:240) it was “encountered only in Efate and to the south” (presumably taking in smaller neighbouring islands). He attributes this distribution to Polynesian influence in Efate, Aniwa and Futuna. This also accords with a note in the missionary Joseph Annand’s diary of 1876⁴ which discusses the use of bark cloth by Fila people. Whatever its source, the distribution of *tapa* production is significant in connecting Efate to the south.

Humphreys (1926:ix) notes that “Eromanga certainly has more affinity with the Efatese culture to the north than with that of Tanna and the other southern islands”. He mentions the name ‘Elevate’ as referring to “the north part of the island, that in sight of the distant island of Efate on a clear day.” (ibid:191) and goes on to note that “[it] would be interesting to know if there is any affinity between the dialect spoken by the *Elevate* people on the north coast and that of the island of Efate to the northward, but no knowledge of this was gathered by the writer during his stay on the island.” (ibid:191-192—and note a slight contradiction with what Humphreys said in the quote on p.203, cited in the introduction). There is no more information about the group named as *Elevate* here. The name Mount Ifate, which is probably the same as *Elevate*, occurs in the story written by Pastor Sope and presented as Text 5 below but its apparent cognacy with ‘Efate’ is intriguing and suggestive of possible connections across the water (as noted in the Introduction above). Terry Crowley (*pers. comm.* 2000), who worked with Erromangan languages, says there is no particular awareness of Efate evident from stories he has recorded, but he notes that the northernmost language of Erromango, Ura, has few remaining speakers and little textual material could be recorded in that language.

Wilson (1999) in her discussion of Erromangan trade only mentions the islands of Tafea (that is, the southern islands of Vanuatu), Fiji, New Caledonia and not Efate as a trading partner of Erromango, but Tryon (1996:178) observes that the trading relationships we know about in Vanuatu bear a close resemblance to the language/ dialect distribution. He discusses the multiple contacts between communities and suggests that this helps to explain what he calls the ‘interlocking and criss-crossing language and dialect subgrouping patterns’ found in Vanuatu. However, the discussion of trading relationships in the same volume (Bonnemaison 1996:175) shows a line linking Erromango and Efate, which Tryon notes was a trading route for pigs, while the language map points to a linguistic separation of the two islands (no doubt based on the little that was known about them at the time). It is more likely that the language relationships are not as clear-cut as represented in this map, and that the language distribution could, to some extent, reflect the trading relationships, as suggested by Tryon. The fieldworkers of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre also note that “Oral tradition links South Efate and Erromango. Traditional Erromangan stone money was discovered at Teouma, supposedly brought by Erromangan women who floated from Erromanga [sic] to Efate.” (Tryon, 2010:28).

however I currently have no further information to support this theory.

⁴ Annand’s (2004) diary entry for February 7th 1876 notes, “The Fila people came in force today to our island [Iririki], building houses for cloth making”.

Finally, according to Chris Ballard (*pers. comm.*) at least 12 chiefly traditions in Shefa identify Erromango as a source and every single oral tradition from Emae, Tongoa and Mataso that nominates a location prior to Efate identifies it as Erromango (and some point to Tanna before that). An example is Tarilu of Panita (Guiart 1973:219), who voyaged from Cook's Bay in Erromango to Maniura the first time (possibly with others, as Maniura is the most common but not sole landing point) and then returned to Erromango before setting out once more for Pango.

3.1 Modernity and *kastom* in Erakor

Several narratives in circulation in Erakor village discuss a connection between Efate and Erromango. As little has been published representing oral tradition in Erakor, it is necessary to place on record that there is still today a circulation of traditional stories in Erakor. The work presented here is based mainly on fieldwork and the resulting body of textual material collected since 1995. The only anthropological work in Erakor has been by Philibert whose 1976 PhD thesis was concerned with the impact of modernity and in opposing Erakor with the fundamentalist *kastom*⁵ of the cargo cult John Frum on Tanna (Philibert 1976:6) He says these represent the two poles of New Hebridean reaction to cultural contact, with Erakor being very receptive to outside ideas:

“The inhabitants of Erakor cut themselves off from their past, now forgotten, to turn completely towards the future (...) to embrace the ‘world of the light’, they abandoned their wars, their festivals, and the dances between villages; they also left behind them their traditional religion, ancestor cults, and the men’s house” (ibid:7).

Erakor, he argues in later writings, exhibits ‘conspicuous consumption’ (Philibert 1990, 1992) implying that consumption, and the prerequisite entry into the cash economy, is an end in itself, rather than a means to an end. Further, this consumption is equated to an increase in focus on individual achievement in contrast to a supposed collective past. Philibert (Philibert & Jourdan 1996:65) says, “The ideal of the ‘good life’ in Erakor is, in fact, one of excessive consumption or over-consumption of [manufactured] goods”. In his article Philibert notes that there were forty refrigerators in a village of several hundred households at the time he is reporting on. I would argue that this is hardly excessive consumption, but rather an attempt to enjoy cool water and preserve food. It is quite possible that there was more consumption of manufactured goods than was found in villages on other islands, but this does not constitute the complete acceptance of cargo to the exclusion of *kastom* that Philibert suggests.

At the time of national independence in 1980, Philibert reports that Erakor villagers sent a recorded message to Radio Vanuatu saying that Erakor had sacrificed traditional culture so that the new world could come about. “Ni-Vanuatu from other islands now working and living in Port Vila were the beneficiaries of this sacrifice and they should not forget it” (Philibert 1992:128). Thus Erakor is known through the little literature in which it features as being the home of people who have abandoned *kastom* and embraced consumerism, in an essentialist all-or-nothing approach. This, together with Erakor’s proximity to Vila, the capital of the

⁵ *Kastom* is the Bislama term for customary knowledge and ways of behaving.

country, may lead one to expect little in the way of survival of *kastom* or traditional knowledge. But oral tradition is still imparted by Erakor villagers, and that tradition incorporates stories about Erromango that indicate a long association between Efate and Erromango.

3.2 The continuity of *kastom* in Erakor

A great deal of customary knowledge still circulates in Erakor. There is no doubt a breakdown in the intergenerational transmission of *kastom* stories that is common to many parts of Vanuatu, but Christianity and schooling over the past 170 years have not been entirely successful in eradicating *kastom* in Erakor. Spirits are widely known about and feared as the cause of mischief or worse. These spirits vary from *sputan*, small hairy creatures who eat unattended food, through to the major *natopu*, spirits who inhabit particular locations and who can appear in various forms, sometimes as people, to enforce their will. A few *kastom* ceremonies continue, notably weddings, which typically include both a *kastom* and a church event. Totemic sites, places where offerings can be made to particular local spirits, are still known, but I do not know if the rituals required to maintain them, such as making offerings of mats or food, are still widely observed. Erakor people avoid places known to be inhabited by dangerous spirits, and accord respect by way of offerings to those spirits if required. Individuals know their totemic matrilineal clan affiliation (or *naflak*) although the practice of marrying out of one's clan is not as strong as it used to be (Kalsarap *pers. comm.*, Philibert 1992). Swidden agriculture is still responsible for a large part of the food consumed in Erakor, and the labour of gardening is still seen by many as the proper way to live a healthy life.

3.3 Oral tradition in South Efate

Stories can tell us about history, for example, Rivierre (1996:433) talks of oral accounts of a volcano in Vanuatu that we know must be the Kuwae eruption that occurred in the 15th century. On Efate there is the story of Roi Mata, a Polynesian ruler whose grave was located from the oral accounts (Garanger 1997, Rivierre 1996:431), and subsequently found to be between four and five hundred years old. These are historical events passed down via oral tradition, but, as Rivierre notes, "historical facts carried by 'oral tradition' only come to us via quite variable and circumstantial versions, tied in to contemporary issues and debates" (1996:433). While this mediation of oral tradition by present-day ideology may be a factor in the frequency of mention of Erromango in the oral accounts presented in this chapter, it is not clear what purpose it is serving beyond recalling some kind of historical connection.

There is a core set of stories that Erakor people regard as being part of their canon and I would be asked by them if I had recorded particular stories, known usually by the name of the main character, *Katapel*, *Langtatalof*, *Adanman*, *Asaraf* and so on. Some of these were produced in a monolingual book in 1983 (Wai *et al.* 1983). These *kastom* stories provide explanations of the origin of the lagoon, the splitting apart of small islands, and the spirits that still inhabit specific places. It is striking that Erromango features in a number of these stories, in a way in which the islands to the north, or even the north of the same island, Efate, do not. The stories I am referring to I will call *Asaraf*; *Mantu (the story of the flying fox)*; *The vine from Erromango*; *Angels and Erromango*; and *Wota ni Manu (Adanman)*.

The first of the stories I want to present, and the one from which the title of the chapter is drawn, is *Asaraf* (Text 1) in which the theme is the closeness of the two islands before the giant Asaraf walked between them with the sea not reaching even to his knees, moving the islands apart and then making the sea rise. Part of the discussion following the recounting of this story included the fact that Asaraf's burial had been found at some point and that his long skeleton was clearly identifiable.⁶

In *Mantu, the story of the flying fox* (Text 2) a flying fox from Efate left two eggs at Erromango and then returned to live at Ewor, near Rentapau. This gift of two offspring implies an ongoing connection between the members of the families on the two islands. Rentapau is featured in several stories as the point of connection with Erromango, and is known by local people as a source of magical power for Efate people.

In the next story, *The vine from Erromango* (Text 3), there is a vine that grows at Rentapau which has its roots in Erromango, and, if you want anything (which could either be real or supernatural) then you just ask the Erromangan 'tabu man' who will oblige and it will be given via the vine in Rentapau. This vine with its unseen roots in Erromango is part of the reason for Rentapau being the most tabu place on Efate. In this story it is claimed that the spirit of the place uses this connection to abduct people from Rentapau and to punish them. The tree root is used as a symbol of connection between Efate and Erromango.⁷

In *Angels and Erromango* (Text 4) a group of young Efate women used to fly to Erromango to wash in a particular river. A local man watched them there, and hid the wings of one of the women, forcing her to stay and become his wife. She stayed and bore two children who then find her wings and she is able to fly back to Efate.⁸

The next story, *Wota ni Manu* (Text 5) was written in a manuscript collection apparently by Pastor Sope⁹ in the 1950s, that concerns Monument Rock or *Wota ni Manu*. Wota is a magician from Erromango who lives in Mount Ilfate in north Erromango. He decides to walk to Efate and does this by "putting down his spears on the sand and stand on them and praying saying if its true that Eromaga is one Tabu Island I will walk on my two spears across to that Island. When he finished his prayer he find himself stand on shore of Erontapau" (Sope c.1955:13). Tabulaba, the chief of the village allows his daughter to marry Wota, but Wota's powers threaten his father-in-law and Wota is cast out of Efate. He then breaks the

⁶ Discussions with archaeologists who have worked in Efate have not clarified the location of this find, but have raised the possibility that it discusses a burial method that includes placing the body in a crouching position.

⁷ The theme of the tree root connecting distant locations recurs in other stories from Erakor, and in Schütz's (1969:34-62) collection of stories from Nguna, in which Text 4 is about some brothers who chase a bird from Nguna to neighbouring Emau, then paddle to Erromango and find the way back by following the root of a tree from their village in Nguna. The same theme is also found in a story from south Malakula in which the roots of a banyan tree take the heroes of the story back to their nakamal (men's house) on a neighbouring island (Boulay 2004:17).

⁸ A reviewer has pointed out that there are also similarities to 'The voyage of Atafu' in *Nabanga* (Vanuatu Cultural Council 2005), in that there is movement between Efate (Bufa village) and Erromango. A woman with wings is involved who has two sons that ultimately get left with the father.

⁹ This story is rendered here directly as written. These papers were kindly given to me by the late Shirley McRae and a scanned copy is available in the PARADISEC repository. See link: <http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/NT3/items/sope>

landscape as he goes, smashing Nguna and Pele islands apart, then swims north to stand between Mataso and Makura (see Map 1 for locations of these islands). A similar story is known by villagers today and concerns a stone or spirit, called Wataneman,¹⁰ who flew to Efate from 'somewhere towards Erromanga' and settled around Erkau (just beyond Eratap). The stone/spirit came at the invitation of a local called Atap in order to marry Atap's daughter. But Wataneman then acquired too much land and Atap became jealous. A story of the same name was recorded by John Layard in around 1915 (Layard n.d.). Facey (1988:110) records the story of Wotanimanu and a story of the same name (this time spelled *Adanman*), but quite different content appears in a collection of South Efate stories by Wai *et al.* (1983) published by the University of the South Pacific. In this last version there is no mention of Erromango.

4 Conclusion

Rather than looking to the north, to the land-based neighbours with whom we know (from a number of oral accounts) conflict was a constant threat, the stories presented here show instead that Erakor people focus over the water to a neighbouring island. As Friedlander *et al* (2008:14) point out, recalling Hau'ofa's quote from the introduction to this chapter, "Inter-island water crossings in the central Pacific were often no more of an impediment to travel than the (already occupied) rugged terrain of the larger island interiors in the western Pacific. In many areas, the ocean was transformed from a formidable barrier into a highway."

In this chapter I have presented accounts of the relationship between Erromango and Efate to show that they are not so much a history of the time when people walked between these islands,¹¹ but rather, that they record an ongoing assertion of connection between Erromango and Efate that is reinforced with each retelling. The contact over time, recorded also in origins of chiefly titles, may have resulted in shared linguistic features which have since diverged in form, or they may have been inherited from the same source, suggesting the permeability of the subgrouping currently hypothesized for this part of Vanuatu. Unfortunately we know too little of Ura, the language of the north of Erromango, to be able to investigate its potential relationship to South Efate any further. Perhaps archaeology will give us more insight into relationships across the water that are suggested by the stories presented here.

¹⁰ A variant of *Wota ni Manu*, as also is the more common modern version *Adanman*.

¹¹ Which, it should be noted, is impossible, both because the human occupation of this part of the world dates to about 3,000 years ago, well after sea-level rises, and because the sea-floor between the two islands is over 1,500 metres deep.

5 Appendix 1. Texts from South Efate

Note that all texts are available in Thieberger (2011) and a link to a playable version is given after each title below.

Text 1. Asaraf (Speaker: John Maklen)

<http://www.eopas.org/transcripts/69>

Asaraf ga ipi natañol ni teetwei

‘Asaraf, he is a man from long ago.’

*Go komam unrogo kin apu me ati nigmam ruto
nigmam trausi na ipi natañol nen ipram,
ipram kotkot.*

‘We have heard our grandfather and grandmother tell us that he was tall, really tall.’

Malnen ina kefak, itu sa imur na kefak Ermag.

‘When he wanted to go, he was there and he wanted to go to Erromango.’

*Malnen isiwer ur ntas kin ipak Ermag, go ntas
ipañor nañutwen.*

‘When he crossed the sea to Erromango, the sea came to his knee.’

Esan mana ruta lom mau.

‘Here (indicating his chest) wasn’t wet.’

*Me ina ipak Ermag pan kaimer ler mai go naliati
iskei welkia Ermag, ipi, kutae to Efata go kuto
lek Ermag.*

‘He went to Erromango and he came back, and one day, well, Erromango it was-, you could be on Efata and you could see Erromango.’

Eñeltig ñas.

‘Just close.’

Me, teni, teni Ermag, teni Efata rupregi imaet

‘But those from Efata made him angry.’

*Go itrau to nrus ki Ermag ipak inrus pa, me
welkia ina ilao ki nñauñ pak ntas tefla.*

‘And he went to Erromango, he went, and, well, he put his head into the water like this.’

Me ipregi teflan ki nana go ntas ipo puk.

‘He did that with (his head) and the sea rose.’

*Welkia, ipreg na ñauñ pak ntas tefla me ipul ki
nñauñ tefla, nen kin ntas ina ifuk.*

‘Well, he put his head in the water and he twisted his head like this so that the water rose.’

Go, kupo kano lek Ermag.

‘And then you couldn’t see Erromango.’

*Go malnen kin itu san to, itu Efata toto panpan
malnen kin imat, go tiawi ni esan rupo tan ki.*

‘And now that he stayed there, he stayed on Efata until the time that he died, and the old people of that place buried him.’

Me nlaken ipram top go rupo ñelkin itol wes.

‘But because he was so tall, they bent him in three.’

Text 2. Mantu, the story of the flying fox (Speaker: John Maklen)

<http://www.eopas.org/transcripts/84>

*Natraswen ni mantu, kafo traus mantu nen kin
ito.*

‘The story of the flying fox, I will tell about the flying fox that is there.’

*Ore mantu nen ito Erontñau teetwei ga ito pan,
ito pak Ermag.*

‘Yes the flying fox that was at Rentapau long ago, it went to Erromango.’

*Ito esan to, pan pan imur kefak Ermag, kemer
pak Ermag pa, go naliati iskei ipan.*

‘It was there until it wanted to go to Erromango, to go back to Erromango, and one day it went.’

Go kipiatak na, atol, ipiatlak atol me,

‘And it had this egg, but’

ga, mantu nen, imai, ipsol ki atol,

‘that flying fox, it came, it laid an egg,’

atol inru ipsol ki atol inru.

‘two eggs, it laid two eggs.’

Go gar atol nra nen rapato Ermag.

‘And those two eggs stayed at Erromango.’

Go nañer ni Ermag runa rukwatgi. Runa rukwatgi.

'And people from Erromango wanted to hit him.'

Go kitli na, "Kafo gamus tao atol keto rakto san tok. Akam kofo teleekor atol, me kineu kafo mer ler pak naur ni Efate."

'And he said, "I will leave you the eggs. You will look after them and I will return to Efate."'

Go mees imai to Efate.

'And today he came to Efate.'

Go mantu nen ito esan rusoso ki Ewor, ito mees ne.

'And that flying fox is still at the place they call Ewor today.'

Text 3. The vine from Erromango (Speaker: †Kalsarap Namaf)

<http://www.eopas.org/transcripts/124>

[Switches between Bislama and South Efate are indicated in the English version below]

Kafo gaag traus naor sees a?

'I'll tell you about a small place eh?'

Ermag. Ag kutae Erontpau?

'Erromango. Do you know Rentapau?'

Erontpau ipiatlak natiel iskei itok. Aleka ki namtak.

'Rentapau has a vine there. I have seen it with my own eyes.'

Natiel wan rop mifala i talem natiel

'A vine ([Bislama] a vine that we call 'natiel').'

Me natiel nen ito, esan kin na fei kia, Thanh

'[South Efate] This vine is there, at the place where, who now, Thanh,'

Kutae ana katraus natiel nen kin, me

'You know, I want to talk about this vine, but'

kafo psa ki etog, me akam kin kofo ona, konrog sokso ki teplan ato traus me go kofo welu wou wes.

'I will talk about a foreign place, and you will listen carefully as I talk, and you will help me with it.'

I kat wan ples we hu ia, Thanh i putum haos long hem long Erontpau.

'[Bislama] There is this place where Thanh put his house at Rentapau.'

Hemia oli kolem Blue Hole.

'This one they call Blue Hole.'

I kat wan ol olfala. Mi wantem talem se natrauswen ni Ermag

'There's one-, all the old people. I want to tell a [South Efate] story from Erromango.'

Sernale nen kin rumai tu wes to, olgeta samting we oli kam stap long Erontpau oli blong Erromango.

'Everything that came came there to [Bislama] Rentapau came from Erromango'

Long taem bifo ol olfala blong Erontpau oli, taem oli wantem wan samting oli mas askem we,

'In the olden days the old people from Rentapau, when they wanted something they had to ask'

ol tapu man blong Ermag. Sapos yumi wantem wan samting bambae yu mas askem olgeta blong Erromango.

'the tabu men from Erromango. If we want something then you have to ask those from Erromango.'

Rupaoski, rupaos ki Ermag, Ermag ituer sernale.

'[South Efate] They ask Erromango, Erromango will give them everything.'

Kumur tenamrun Ermag kefo.

'If you want something, Erromango will.'

Ipiatlak natiel iskei ito san kin aa,

'There is a vine at the place which,'

Thanh ipreg nasuñ wes mees ne.

'Thanh has made his hotel there today [Blue water resort].'

Ipiatlak natiel iskei, natiel ður aleka ki namtak.

'There is a vine, a big vine, I've seen it with my own eyes.'

Ito pau pag ito pau elag nana, natog.

'It climbs up the mangrove.'

Me natiel ne hem i no gat stampa blong hem.

'And this vine [Bislama] hasn't got a trunk.'

Be yu ko yu luk we hem i stap antap long, long ol natongtong.

'You go and look at it where it climbs up the mangroves.'

Long ples ia. Yu luk we i defren, yu luk we yu no save faenem stampa blong hem.

'At this place. It is different, you can't find its trunk.'

Kutap lek na nlaken mau.

'[South Efate] You don't see its trunk.'

Ipi nmaagwen, me ipiatlak afsak iskei itok, naik, afsak. Rusoso ki afsak.

'It is unbelievable, but there was a turtle there, fish, a turtle. They call it a turtle.'

Ito na eluk sees nen kin Thanh ipo preg ptaki. Naik rupo tu wes to.

'It lived in the small pool which Thanh would make (into the Blue Hole resort). Fish would be in it.'

Itototo panpanpan malnen rustat klin ki Erontpau.

'It stayed and stayed until they started to clean Rentapau.'

Go namrun nen rusefler pan pak Ermag pa.

'And these things ran away back to Erromango.'

Ruto Ermag panpan tuk mees ne.

'They are at Erromango until today.'

Natiel ipuel. Afsak ipuel.

'The vine has gone. The turtle has gone.'

Teḗur knen nen amurin kanriki ki kin mees ne, natañol kin ruto pan puel Erontpau.

'The most important of this that I want to tell you about today, people go missing at Rentapau.'

Ipiatlak natlaken, ito watgir.

'There is its owner who hurts them.'

Akit tuf laap pa, akit iskei kefo puel.

'If many of us go there, one will go missing.'

Go Erontpau ipiatlak nlaken.

'And Rentapau has the trunk (of the vine).'

Nañer ni Ermag rutae, teflan sernale gar ruto mai pak, Erakor.

'Erromangans know, this is how all their things come to Erakor'

Erontpau. Erontpau itpau ser naor naor ilfek ki Efate,

'[corrected to] Rentapau. Rentapau is the head place of all places around Efate.'

Ipi naor nen kin itap top.

'It is the most tabu place.'

Text 4. Angels and Erromango (Speaker: †Metu Josef)

<http://www.eopas.org/transcripts/128>

In the prelude to telling this story, Metu Josef referred to the twelve winged women who flew to Erromango from Efate. She used the term 'angel' to describe the flying women, but makes the point that they are just mortal humans with wings.

Ruto los ena, ruto pan los Ermag me gar,

'They washed there, they would go and wash at Erromango, but they,'

rupi nana, rupi nafet nmatu ñas.

'they were a group of women.'

Nmatuerik. Me kin rulao ki nafarur runrir.

Runrir mai pak e

'Young girls. They would put on their wings and fly. They flew to,'

rupak Ermag pan rupan los.

'they flew to Erromango to wash.'

Me ruto pregi ser nrak.

'And they do this every time.'

Rupan los panpan inom tefla. Kin, pata preg tenen mau.

'They went and washed until it was enough. You don't do that.'

Me katraus teflan tukpe pei nrogo.

'And I'll tell it how we first heard it.'

Ina rupa, rupan me

'He said, they go, they go, but they'

ruto elag sanpe e ilakor pi

'they are far up there, it might be,'

rupato, rupato e Eḗuf me,

'they are far up there, it might be, they were there, at Bufa, and'

rumur na rukfak, e, rufan los sanpe.

'they wanted to go and wash over there.'
Rutrau stat nrir trau pa. Rupa.
 'They just started to fly and went. They went.'
Malen kin runa rukfa, rutmer, rutmer, runa runa rutmer ...
 'When they wanted to go, they ...'
mai ãonkir panpan inom tefla, rutmer fer panpan inom. Rutñalu.
 'they closed their wings until they were ready, they counted each other. They left.'
Rutñalu, kainrir panpanpan rupan lao Ermag.
 'They left, they flew until they landed at Erromango.'
Rupan lao Ermag, rulao tete nai nen kin, nai itop Ermag, me ata tae sef nai kin rupakes mau.
 'They stood up on Erromango, at a river. There's lots of rivers on Erromango, but I don't know which river they got to.'
Ale rupan na, rulos, rulos teflan pan inom.
 'Then, they went in order to wash, they washed until they finished.'
Me, kano iskei ga ikus to, ikus to leker.
 'But this man hid, he hid and he looked at them.'
Me rulos panpan inom teflan rumai
 'They washed and washed then came'
pak euut teflan, kutae rujenj panpan panpan go go inom.
 'to shore like this, you know they changed.'
Tefla. Rupreg na,
 'Like that. They did that,'
rulao ki nafarur tefla, me runrir, runa ruknrir.
 'they put their wings on like that, and they flew, they wanted to fly.'
Me iskei me iskei nafarun ipuel.
 'But one was missing her wings.'
Go inrogtesa wes. Ruileles panpan me rukano wes.
 'And she felt bad because of it. They looked and looked but they couldn't find them there.'
Me kano nen kin ikus to israkor na nafarun na teesa nmatu ne.
 'But the man who was hiding hid the girl's wing.'
Go mal tefla nen kin al ipak etan teflan, me tenen ruipa.

'And that time, the sun was going down, and these ones all went.'
Me nmatu, teesa nmatu nen nmatu nen ito kait nafarun.
 'But this girl cried for her wings.'
Ikaiten panpan.
 'She cried for them.'
Ruito, runa, "Ag ãato me mam kofan me."
 'They were there, they said, "You stay, but we will go."' *"*
Runa ruto kaipa me, ga ito.
 'They left, but she stayed.'
Ito panpan go natañol nen israkoro ipo mai.
 'She stayed and stayed until the man who was hiding came.'
Imai na ina, ipo psir na, "Ag kuto lel nafte?" Go ipo tli,
 'He came to say, he was going to lie, "Are you looking for something?" And he said,'
"E, Me nafarum ga ilakor to, ko naat ifla wesi."
 "'Hey, but your wings might be here, or someone might have taken them.'"
Me ga iwesi.
 'But he had taken them.'
Ipregkoro ito panpan mal skei mau nen kin.
 'He covered them up for all this time.'
Gar rukui mai go ina, "E, naat ilakor srakor, nana nafarum. Akit talakor pan nru pan matur.
 'They all came and he said, "I think someone hid your wings. You and me should go to sleep.'"
Go kiplake pa, kiplake pan, ranru matur.
 'And he took her and went, he took her and they both slept.'
Iplake pan ramatur panpan panpan, kipi nmatu ni kano nen to.
 'He took her and went, they slept until she became that man's wife.'
Panpan go, ita ãokoro ki puur lisan ito.
 'On and on and he still covers it (the wings) with a giant clam shell.'
Me israkor wi ki, me ito panpan go ipitlak teesa inru, teesa nanwei inru.
 'But he hid it well, and she stayed on until she had two children, two sons.'
Teesa ni kano ne. Kano nen ina ito pan go ina, "Koto me kamer pak talñat pa."

'Children of this man. The man stayed on, then he said, "You stay, and I will go to the garden again."'

Malnen kin ipak talmat pa, ipato panpan imalik, mai ki nmatu nen ito.

'When he went to the garden, he stayed there until dark, he came back to the woman who was there.'

Me ruta pañor namrun nen mau, me ito pan kaipe pi nmatu ga to, me

'But they didn't find this thing (the wings), and she stayed until she became his wife, but'

ito mro ki nañer ga nen kin ruipe pa.

'she still thought about her people who had gone.'

Ruto mai traem panrogo me, ina, "Nafaruk ita puel. Kapei to."

'They came and tried to go but, she said, "My wings are still missing. I will stay here."'

Ito pan panpan nrak iskei go

'She stayed and stayed until one time, and'

teesa sees nra nen, rato pan me ratili na rukgar preg nas a?

'the two children said they wanted them to make them a bow.'

Go rata tuṗ, go ratuṗ na. Go nas a go

'And they kept shooting, they shot. And the bow.'

teemol seserik nen kin ruto sil sil na, e, panpan ...

'And they shot small animals that go inside...'

Teemol iskei ina, kutae ofag?

'This animal, you know geckos?'

Ina isef pan trau sil puur lisan ne.

'It wanted to escape and it ran inside this clam shell.'

Malen kin kaaru ipo na inrea teflan trau pañor tenamrun þur ni Mama ga.

'When the other one turned like this he just found this big thing of his mother's.'

Me maarik nen ga kipe pak talmat pa.

'But the husband had gone to the garden.'

Ipak talmat pan pato talmat tu me,

'He had gone and stayed at the garden, but'

teesa ne ipañori me itrau slati pan.

'the child discovered it and just took it and went.'

Inrik iak ga ki na, "He, e."

'He told his mother, "Hey."'

Iak ga ki na, "Apañor namrun iskei me itrau wipewi."

'His mother, he told her, "I found these things and it is really beautiful."'

Ale ipeikin kin teflan go itrau mur me ina, "O atrau semsem lek namrun go."

'So he showed her and she laughed and said, "Oh I am glad to see this."'

Go itrau na, malfanen kaigar preg nafnag ki, me kafo traem wes. Ilakor ta wi to ki."

'And she said, "Now I'll make their food, but I'll see if these (wings) work. Maybe they still work."'

Igar preg nafnag panpan, nen kin ketaor ki.

'She made food for them, that she would leave for them.'

Igar preg nafnag panpanpan rato fam.

'She made food for them, and they ate.'

Isol kutae tenamrun ni tiawi nen kin ruto- runa ntae a?

'She took, you know this thing the old people had that they call 'shit'?'

Ilofir kin panpan rawi to.

'She rubbed them with it until they were good.'

Ipregi ralos panpan inom me rapo ipo gar pregi.

'She made them wash until they finished, she did it for them.'

Pan inom ina, "Raknrokof nafnag gamus to, me

'When they finished she said, "You finish your food, but'

kineu katraem nana, namrun ne, katraem wes. Ilakor ta wi to ko?"

'I will try these things (wings). Are they still good?'"

Malen kin ipo traem teflan itrau tae nrir a?

'When she tried them, she could fly.'

Isemsem wes, me, ina imai kaimer mai

'She was happy about it, and she came'

imai sog nañer nran ne, inakin, "Kafo tao mus ki.

'and kissed the boys and she said, "I will leave you.'

Me raktorek ki apap gamus to."

'But you wait for your father'"

Me maarik nen ipato me inrogo teflan kin
 'But the man was there and he heard how'
al ito pañas, me iwelkia tfa ito kat.
 'the sun was shining but there was the
 sound of thunder.'
Go ina, "Mes nen tfa kin ito kat neu me al ito pa."
 'And he said, "Today there is thunder, but
 the sun is shining."
Me mtulep ga ito þor na, ntali þur iskei ito eñau
ga a?
 'But his wife was breaking the branches of
 the big natapoa (tropical almond tree) that
 was in her yard.'
Me ito krakþorþor namrun ne, nen kin kenrogo
me kemai.
 'She broke them so he would hear it and
 come,'
Pregi panpanpan inom tefla, na nra ntali ien
 'So that when she finished, the branches of
 the natapoa lay around.'
Me mtulep kipe pa, a? Maarik nen imai mai mro
ki na ipo taos ser na, mal
 'And the woman was gone. The husband
 came and he thought it would be like every
 other time.'
Po na imai ki tenran rato, ina
 'He came to the two boys,'
ilek, ileka teflan kin rapi na, ntae ito a?
 'he saw that there was 'shit' there.'

Rupañor namrun nen, mtulep nen ipan kipak
nañlen pa.
 'They found this 'shit'. This woman had
 gone back to her place.'
Malen kin imai,
 'And when he came,'
imai na inrikin ki tefla, go ranrikin kin na na, "O
Mama nigmam kipe pa."
 'they told him, "Oh, our mother has gone."
Kipe pak nañlen pa.
 'She has gone back to her place.'
"Me fei kin ipañori?" Go rana, "Komam, komam
rapañori."
 "'But who found them (the wings)?" And
 they said, "We found them."
Go itraem laokin kia kunrog na, nra ntali nen ien
kia ruto ñaltelit. Go ina
 'And she was trying to put them on and you
 could hear her breaking all the natapoa
 branches. And he said,'
"O anrogo me amro ki nana tfa ito kat, me al ito
pa."
 "'O, I heard it, but I thought it was thunder,
 but the sun was shining."
"E ga kia ipregi." Panpan kipa. Ipan pan tuk
mees ne.
 "'She did it." Until she went. She went and
 is gone until today.'
Kipe pak nañlen pa.
 'She went back to her place.'

Text 5. The story of Monument Rock or Wota ni Manu stand between Mataso and Makura. (Written by Pastor Sope—see fn.9 p.248)

Wota is the native of Eromaga. He lives in a village in mount Ilfate in the north of Eromaga. One day when sea calm he think he look one island so he walk down to the seas, putting down his spears on the sands and stand on them and praying saying if it is true that Eromaga is one Tabu island I will walk on my two spears across to that island. When he finish his prayer he find himself stand on shore at Erontapau, near South Bay. He went up and stay with a chief named Tabulaba in his village near Mount MacKenzie in Erontapau in east of Efate.

Chief's daughter like Wota to be her husband, so chief gives his daughter to be Wota's wife. Wota is a good fisherman.

So Wota and his wife they live on fish every day. Chiefs daughter always bring fish to her father. One day her father ask her is any other food they live on, she say no. We only live on fish.

Chief cross and scold Wota saying If I know you are lazy man I may not give my girl to marry you.

So Wota told his wife he will make one garden for them.

One day he goes out and start it. Next day he find the garden finish cleared. When the garden is ripe he asked his wife to take his father and mother to their garden and gave them half of their garden. Wota have a paddock of pigs. He have hundreds and hundreds of pigs so when they came back from the garden he take them to his paddock and gave them half of his pigs.

So when the people of the village hear that they say good for Wota to be chief in the place of old Tabulaba.

When old chief hear this talk he put out Wota from Erontapau and Wota say to his father in law you are one high mountain of Efate but I will go way from you. You will fall down and no more mountain

But his father in law said you are a stranger and you can't make me fall. When Wota started to go away Tabulaba began to break down.

Tabulaba said he does not want to see Wota in somewhere of Efate so Wota walk around Efate to Emua near Undine Bay in Sama down to Faleararo he leaves his wives there and swims across to Guna and break Nguna into two island as Nguna and Pele and leaves the channel between two islands he swims toward northeast and stand between Mataso and Makura he said to his wives I break Nguna into two island and leave the channel to be the way you all standing here in Efate and look through the channel and find me standing there every morning

That is why from Erontabau to Eton theres no mountain because Mount Tabulaba is all breaking down by the morning away of Wotanimanu a Tapu man or wizard of Eromaga.

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