

# FRAZER JAMES GEORGE

THE BELIEF IN  
IMMORTALITY AND THE  
WORSHIP OF THE DEAD,  
VOLUME 2 (OF 3)

**James Frazer**  
**The Belief in Immortality**  
**and the Worship of the**  
**Dead, Volume 2 (of 3)**

*[http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio\\_book/?art=24858483](http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24858483)*

*The Belief in Immortality and the Worship of the Dead, Volume 2 (of 3) /*

*The Belief Among the Polynesians:*

# Содержание

PREFACE	5
CHAPTER I	7
§ 1. The Polynesians	7
§ 2. The Maoris of New Zealand	14
§ 3. The Beliefs of the Maoris concerning the Souls of the Living	22
§ 4. The Beliefs of the Maoris concerning the Souls of the Dead	35
§ 5. Taboo among the Maoris	62
§ 6. Conclusion	82
CHAPTER II	84
§ 1. The Tonga or Friendly Islands	84
§ 2. The Tonga Islanders, their Character, Mode of Life, and Government	92
§ 3. The Tongan Religion: its General Principles	102
§ 4. The Primary or Non-human Gods	109
§ 5. The Temples of the Gods	117
§ 6. Priests and their Inspiration	123
§ 7. The Worship of the Gods, Prayers, and Sacrifices	126
§ 8. The Doctrine of the Soul and its Destiny after Death	134
§ 9. The Souls of the Dead as Gods	143

§ 10. Temples and Tombs: Megalithic Monuments	155
§ 11. Rites of Burial and Mourning	204
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	205

**James George Frazer**  
**The Belief in Immortality**  
**and the Worship of the Dead,**  
**Volume 2 (of 3) / The Belief**  
**Among the Polynesians**

**PREFACE**

The first volume of this work, which comprised the Gifford Lectures given by me at St. Andrews in the years 1911 and 1912, dealt with the belief in immortality and the worship of the dead, as these are found among the aborigines of Australia, the Torres Straits Islands, New Guinea, and Melanesia. In the present volume I take up the subject at the point at which I broke off, and describe the corresponding belief and worship among the Polynesians, a people related to their neighbours the Melanesians by language, if not by blood. The first chapter formed the theme of two lectures delivered at the Royal Institution in 1916; the other chapters have been written for lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1921 and 1922. But in the book the lecture form has been discarded, and the treatment of the subject is somewhat

fuller than comports with the limits imposed by oral delivery.

Should circumstances allow me to continue the work, I propose in the next volume to treat of the belief in immortality and the worship of the dead among the Micronesians and Indonesians.

*J. G. FRAZER.*

No. 1 Brick Court, Temple, London, *19th July 1922.*

# CHAPTER I

## THE BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY AMONG THE MAORIS

### § 1. *The Polynesians*

The Polynesians are the tall brown race of men who inhabit the widely scattered islands of the Pacific, from Hawaii on the north to New Zealand on the south, and from Tonga on the west to Easter Island on the east.<sup>1</sup> Down to the eighteenth century they remained practically unknown to Europe; the first navigator to bring back comparatively full and accurate information concerning them was our great English explorer, Captain James Cook. Thus at the date of their discovery the natives were quite unaffected by European influence: of our civilisation they knew nothing: of Christianity, though it had existed in the world for nearly eighteen hundred years, they had never heard: they were totally ignorant of the metals, and had made so little progress in the arts of life that in most

---

<sup>1</sup> Horatio Hale, *The United States Exploring Expedition, Ethnography and Philology* (Philadelphia, 1846), pp. 4 *sqq.*, 9 *sqq.*; J. Deniker, *The Races of Man* (London, 1900), pp. 500 *sqq.*

of the islands pottery was unknown,<sup>2</sup> and even so simple an invention as that of bows and arrows for use in war had not been thought of.<sup>3</sup> Hence their condition was of great interest to students of the early history of man, since it presented to their observation the spectacle of a barbaric culture evolved from an immemorial past in complete independence of those material, intellectual, and moral forces which have moulded the character of modern European nations. The lateness of their discovery may also be reckoned a fortunate circumstance for us as well as for them, since it fell at a time when scientific curiosity was fully awakened among us, and when scientific methods were sufficiently understood to allow us to study with profit a state of society which differed so widely from our own, and which in an earlier and less enlightened age might have been contemplated only with aversion and disgust.

The question of the origin of the Polynesian race is still

---

<sup>2</sup> J. Deniker, *The Races of Man* (London, 1900), pp. 154, 501; *British Museum, Handbook to the Ethnographical Collections* (1910), p. 147.

<sup>3</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages* (London, 1809), v. 416; W. Mariner, *Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands*, Second Edition (London, 1818), i. 67; W. Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, Second Edition (London, 1832-1836), i. 220; E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, Second Edition (London, 1856), p. 212; J. Deniker, *The Races of Man*, p. 501. In Polynesia "the bow was not a serious weapon; it was found in some islands, *e. g.* in Tahiti and Tonga, but was principally used for killing rats or in shooting matches" (*British Museum, Handbook to the Ethnographical Collections*, p. 153). As to the limited use of bows and arrows in Polynesia, see further E. Tregear, "The Polynesian Bow," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. i. no. 1 (April 1892), pp. 56-59; W. H. R. Rivers, *The History of the Melanesian Society* (Cambridge, 1914), ii. 446 *sqq.*



unsettled, but the balance both of evidence and of probability seems to incline in favour of the view that the people are descended from one of the yellow Mongoloid races of South-Eastern Asia, who gradually spread eastward over the Indian Archipelago and intermingling to some extent with the black aboriginal inhabitants of the islands formed the lighter-tinted brown race which we call the Polynesian.<sup>4</sup> A strong argument in favour of this theory is drawn from the Polynesian language, which belongs essentially to the same family of speech as the Melanesian and Malay languages spoken by the peoples who occupy the islands that intervene between Polynesia and the south-eastern extremity of the Asiatic continent.<sup>5</sup> The black Melanesian race occupies the south-eastern portion of New Guinea and the chain of islands which stretches in a great curve round the north-eastern coasts of New Guinea and Australia. The brown Malays, with the kindred Indonesians and a small admixture of negritoës, inhabit the islands westward from New Guinea to the Malay Peninsula.<sup>6</sup> Of the two kindred languages,

---

<sup>4</sup> Compare (Sir) E. B. Tylor, *Anthropology* (London, 1881), p. 102; R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesian Languages* (Oxford, 1885), pp. 33 *sqq.*; S. Percy Smith, *Hawaiki, the Original Home of the Maori* (Christchurch, etc., New Zealand, 1910), pp. 85 *sqq.*; A. C. Haddon, *The Wanderings of Peoples* (Cambridge, 1919), pp. 34 *sqq.*; A. H. Keane, *Man Past and Present*, revised by A. Hingston-Quiggin and A. C. Haddon (Cambridge, 1920), p. 552.

<sup>5</sup> On the affinity of the Polynesian, Melanesian, and Malay languages, see R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesian Languages* (Oxford, 1885), pp. 10 *sqq.*; S. H. Ray, "The Polynesian Language in Melanesia," *Anthropos*, xiv. – xv. (1919-1920), pp. 46 *sqq.*

<sup>6</sup> J. Deniker, *The Races of Man*, pp. 482 *sqq.*

the Polynesian and the Melanesian, the older in point of structure appears unquestionably to be the Melanesian; for it is richer both in sounds and in grammatical forms than the Polynesian, which may accordingly be regarded as its later and simplified descendant.<sup>7</sup>

But whereas the three peoples, the Polynesians, the Melanesians, and the Malays speak languages belonging to the same family, their physical types are so different that it seems impossible to look on the brown straight-haired Polynesians and Malays as pure descendants of the swarthy frizzly-haired Melanesians. Accordingly in the present state of our knowledge, or rather ignorance, the most reasonable hypothesis would appear to be that the Melanesians, who occupy a central position in the great ocean, between the Polynesians on the east and the Malays on the west, represent the original inhabitants of the islands, while the Polynesians and Malays represent successive swarms of emigrants, who hived off from the Asiatic continent, and making their way eastward over the islands partially displaced and partially blent with the aborigines, modifying their own physical type in the process and exchanging their original language for that of the islanders, which, through their inability to assimilate

---

<sup>7</sup> *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits*, vol. iii. *Linguistics*, by Sydney H. Ray (Cambridge, 1907), p. 528 (as to the relation of the Polynesian to the Melanesian language). As to the poverty of the Polynesian language in sounds and grammatical forms by comparison with the Melanesian, see R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesian Languages*, p. 11.

it, they acquired only in corrupt or degenerate forms.<sup>8</sup> Yet a serious difficulty meets us on this hypothesis. For both the Polynesians and the Malays, as we know them, stand at a decidedly higher level of culture, socially and intellectually, than the Melanesians, and it is hard to understand why with this advantage they should have fallen into a position of linguistic subordination to them, for as a rule it is the higher race which imposes its language on its inferiors, not the lower race which succeeds in foisting its speech on its superiors.

But these are intricate questions which await future investigation. I cannot enter into them now, but must confine myself to my immediate subject, the beliefs of the Polynesians concerning the human soul and the life after death.

In spite of their diffusion over a multitude of islands separated from each other by hundreds and even thousands of miles of ocean, the Polynesians are on the whole a remarkably homogeneous race in physical type, language, and forms of society and religion. The differences of language between them

---

<sup>8</sup> This seems to be the hypothesis favoured by Dr. R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesian Languages*, pp. 33 *sqq.* Compare J. Deniker, *The Races of Man*, p. 505. On the other hand Sir E. B. Tylor says (*Anthropology*, pp. 163 *sq.*), "The parent language of this family may have belonged to Asia, for in the Malay region the grammar is more complex, and words are found like *tasik* = sea and *langit* = sky, while in the distant islands of New Zealand and Hawaii these have come down to *tai* and *lai*, as though the language became shrunk and formless as the race migrated further from home, and sank into the barbaric life of ocean islanders." Dr. W. H. R. Rivers suggests that the Polynesian language "arose out of a pidgin Indonesian" (*The History of Melanesian Society*, ii. 584).

are inconsiderable, amounting to little more than some well-marked dialectical variations: all dwell in settled homes and subsist partly by fishing partly by the fruits of the earth, tilling the soil and gathering coconuts and bread-fruit from the trees:<sup>9</sup> all are bold and expert mariners, making long voyages in large well-built canoes: all possess a copious and comparatively well developed mythology; and all at the time of their discovery enjoyed, or perhaps we should rather say suffered from, a singular institution, half social, half religious, which may be summed up in the single Polynesian word taboo. Hence it would no doubt be possible to give a general account of the belief in human immortality which would hold good in outline for all the different branches of the Polynesian race; but such an account would necessarily be somewhat meagre, inexact in detail, and liable to many exceptions. Accordingly I shall not attempt it, but shall describe the creed of each group of islanders separately. As the beliefs of the various islanders on this momentous topic are characterised by a general similarity, the method I have adopted will no doubt involve a certain sameness and repetition, but for the serious student of comparative religion I hope that these disadvantages may be more than outweighed by the greater accuracy and fulness of detail which this mode of treating the subject renders possible.

The principal groups of islands included in Polynesia are

---

<sup>9</sup> J. Deniker, *The Races of Man*, p. 501. On the apparent homogeneity of the Polynesian race see W. H. R. Rivers, *The History of Melanesian Society* (Cambridge, 1914), ii. 280, who, however, argues (ii. 280 *sqq.*) that the race has been formed by the fusion of two distinct peoples.

New Zealand, the Friendly or Tonga Islands, the Samoan or Navigators Islands, the Hervey or Cook Islands, the Society Islands, including Tahiti, the Marquesas Islands, and Hawaii or the Sandwich Islands.<sup>10</sup> All of them, except New Zealand, are within the tropics; and all of them, except Hawaii, lie to the south of the equator. I shall deal with them in the order I have mentioned, beginning with New Zealand.

---

<sup>10</sup> Horatio Hale, *United States Exploring Expedition, Ethnography and Philology* (Philadelphia, 1846), pp. 4 *sqq.*

## § 2. *The Maoris of New Zealand*

The Maoris of New Zealand are not aborigines of the islands which they inhabit: they possess long and apparently in the main trustworthy traditions of their migration to New Zealand many generations ago. The circumstances which led to the migration, the names of the canoes in which it was accomplished, the names and genealogies of the chiefs who conducted it, are all recorded, having been handed on by word of mouth from generation to generation, till they were finally written down from the lips of the natives by English enquirers.<sup>11</sup> The place from which the Maoris came is unanimously designated as Hawaiki, an island or group of islands lying far to the north or north-east of New Zealand. Among English scholars there is some difference of opinion whether Hawaiki is to be identified with Hawaii, that

---

<sup>11</sup> E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand* (London, 1843), ii. 85 *sqq.*; Horatio Hale, *United States Exploring Expedition, Ethnography and Philology* (Philadelphia, 1846), pp. 146 *sqq.*; Sir George Grey, *Polynesian Mythology* (London, 1855), pp. 123 *sqq.*, 136 *sqq.*, 162 *sqq.*, 202 *sqq.*; E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, Second Edition (London, 1856), pp. 1 *sqq.*; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui, or New Zealand and its Inhabitants*, Second Edition (London, 1870), pp. 26, 27, 289 *sqq.*; John White, *The Ancient History of the Maori, his Mythology and Traditions* (London, 1887-1889), ii. 176 *sqq.*; Elsdon Best, "The Peopling of New Zealand," *Man*, xiv. (1914) pp. 73-76. The number of generations which have elapsed since the migration to New Zealand is variously estimated. Writing about the middle of the nineteenth century Shortland reckoned the number at about eighteen; Mr. Elsdon Best, writing in 1914, variously calculated it at about twenty-eight or twenty-nine (on p. 73) and from eighteen to twenty-eight (on p. 74).

is, the Sandwich Islands, or with Savaii, one of the Samoan or Navigators Islands, since Hawaii and Savaii are both dialectical variations of the New Zealander's pronunciation of Hawaiki.<sup>12</sup> Though Hawaii is more than twice as far as Savaii from New Zealand, being separated from it by almost the whole breadth of the tropics and a great stretch of ocean besides, some good authorities have inclined to regard it as the original home of the Maoris, but the balance of opinion appears now to preponderate in favour of the view that Savaii was the centre from which the Polynesians dispersed all over the Pacific.<sup>13</sup> However, the question is one that hardly admits of a positive answer.

The Maoris are not a pure-blooded Polynesian race. Among them even at the present day two distinct racial types may be distinguished, one of them the comparatively fair Polynesian type with straight nose and good features, the other the swarthy, thick-lipped, flat-nosed, frizzly-haired Melanesian type. They have a tradition that on their arrival in New Zealand they found the

---

<sup>12</sup> E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> H. Hale, *Ethnography and Philology of the U.S. Exploring Expedition*, pp. 119 sq.; E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand* (London, 1843), ii. 85 sqq.; E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, pp. 33 sqq.; A. S. Thomson, *The Story of New Zealand* (London, 1859), i. 57 sqq.; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 26; E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary* (Wellington, N.Z., 1891), pp. 56 sqq., s. v. "Hawaiki"; A. C. Haddon, *The Wanderings of Peoples* (Cambridge, 1919), p. 36. Of these writers, Dieffenbach, Shortland, and Taylor decide in favour of Hawaii; Thomson, Hale, and Haddon prefer Savaii; Tregear seems to leave the question open, pointing out that "the inhabitants of those islands themselves believe in another Hawaiki, neither in Samoa nor Hawaii."

country in the possession of a dark-skinned folk of repulsive appearance, tall, spare, and spindle-shanked, with flat faces, overhanging brows, and noses of which little but the upturned nostrils could in some cases be discerned. These savages wore little clothing and built no good houses, nothing but rude shelters against the inclemency of the weather. They were ignorant and treacherous, and the Maoris regarded them with dislike and contempt; but their women looked with favour on the handsome Maori men, and a mixture of the two races was the result. This tradition both explains and is confirmed by the two different racial types which still exist side by side or blent together among the Maoris. It seems, therefore, highly probable that before the advent of the Maoris the North Island of New Zealand was occupied by a people of inferior culture belonging to the Melanesian stock, who may themselves have had a strain of Polynesian blood in their veins and some Polynesian words in their language. This at least is suggested by some features in the Maori traditions about them. For these savages told the Maoris that they were the descendants of the crews of three fishing canoes which had been driven to sea from their own land in past times, and that their original home was a much warmer country than New Zealand. All these various indications may perhaps be reconciled by supposing that the dark predecessors of the Maoris in New Zealand were a Melanesian people, who had accidentally drifted from Fiji, the inhabitants of which have long been in contact with their Polynesian neighbours on the



east, the Tongans.<sup>14</sup> They received from the Maoris the name of

---

<sup>14</sup> Elsdon Best, "The Peopling of New Zealand," *Man*, xiv. (1914) pp. 73-76. The Melanesian strain in the Maoris was recognised by previous writers. See J. S. Polack, *Manners and Customs of the New Zealanders* (London, 1840), i. 6, "The nation consists of two aboriginal and distinct races, differing, at an earlier period, as much from each other as both are similarly removed in similitude from Europeans. A series of intermarriages for centuries has not even yet obliterated the marked difference that originally stamped the descendant of the now amalgamated races. The first may be known by a dark-brown complexion, well formed and prominent features, erect muscular proportions, and lank hair, with a boldness in the gait of a warrior, wholly differing from that of the second and inferior race, who have a complexion brown-black, hair inclining to the wool, like the Eastern African, stature short, and skin exceeding soft." The writer rightly connects the latter people with the stock which we now call Melanesian. Compare also R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 13 *sqq.*, who says (p. 13), "The Melanesian preceded the Polynesian... The remains of this race are to be seen in every part of New Zealand, especially among the Nga-ti-ka-hunu, to which the derisive name of Pokerekahu – Black Kumara – is applied. The Maori traditions preserve both the names of the canoes which brought them to New Zealand, as well as of the chiefs who commanded them; several of these records make mention of their having found this black race in occupation of the country on their arrival." The blending of two distinct races, a light-brown and a dark race, among the Maoris is clearly recognised by E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 8-11. The dark race, he says (pp. 9 *sq.*), "has undoubtedly a different origin. This is proved by their less regularly shaped cranium, which is rather more compressed from the sides, by their full and large features, prominent cheek-bones, full lips, small ears, curly and coarse, although not woolly, hair, a much deeper colour of the skin, and a short and rather ill-proportioned figure. This race, which is mixed in insensible gradations with the former, is far less numerous; it does not predominate in any one part of the island, nor does it occupy any particular station in a tribe, and there is no difference made between the two races amongst themselves; but I must observe that I never met any man of consequence belonging to this race, and that, although free men, they occupy the lower grades; from this we may perhaps infer the relation in which they stood to the earliest native immigrants into the country, although their traditions and legends are silent on the subject."

Maruiwi,<sup>15</sup> and were perhaps of the same stock as the Moriori of the Chatham Islands; for two skulls of the Moriori type have been found in an old deposit at Wanganui, near the south end of the North Island of New Zealand.<sup>16</sup>

At the time of their discovery the Maoris had attained to a fair level of barbaric culture. They lived in comfortable houses ornamented with carved work and with scrolls painted in red and white on the posts and beams. Their villages were fortified with earthworks, palisades, and trenches, and surrounded by large gardens planted with sweet potatoes, taro, and melons.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Elsdon Best, "The Peopling of New Zealand," *Man*, xiv. (1914) pp. 73 *sq.*

<sup>16</sup> (Sir) Arthur Keith, "Moriori in New Zealand," *Man*, xiii. (1913) pp. 171 *sq.*

<sup>17</sup> E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the Maoris*, p. 202. The elaborate system of fortification employed by the Maoris, of which the remains may be seen by thousands, seems to have no exact parallel in Polynesia. See Elsdon Best, "The Peopling of New Zealand," *Man*, xiv. (1914) p. 75. These native forts or *pas*, as they were called, had often a double or even quadruple line of fence, the innermost formed by great poles twenty or thirty feet high, which were tightly woven together by the fibrous roots of a creeper. They were built by preference on hills, the sides of which were scarped and terraced to assist the defence. Some of them were very extensive and are said to have contained from one to two thousand inhabitants. Many of them were immensely strong and practically impregnable in the absence of artillery. It is believed that the habit of fortifying their villages was characteristic of the older race whom the Maoris, on landing in New Zealand, found in occupation of the country. See W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand* (London, 1835), pp. 122 *sqq.*; G. F. Angas, *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand* (London, 1847), i. 332 *sq.*; Elsdon Best, "Notes on the Art of War as conducted by the Maoris of New Zealand," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. xii. no. 4 (December 1903), pp. 204 *sqq.*; W. H. Skinner, "The Ancient Fortified Pa," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. xx. no. 78 (June 1911), pp. 71-77.

"They excel in tillage," says Captain Cook, as might naturally be expected, where the person that sows is to eat the produce, and where there is so little besides that can be eaten: when we first came to Tegadoo, a district between Poverty Bay and East Cape, their crops were just covered, and not yet begun to sprout, the mould was as smooth as in a garden, and every root had its small hillock, ranged in a regular quincunx, by lines, which with the pegs were still remaining in the field.<sup>18</sup> They understood the arts of irrigating their gardens<sup>19</sup> and of manuring them so as to render the soil light and porous and therefore better suited for the growth of the sweet potato, their favourite food. For this purpose they used sand, and in the Waikato district, where the root was formerly much cultivated, deep excavations, like the gravel pits of England, may still be seen, from which the natives extracted sand to fertilise their gardens.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, they cultivated various species of native flax and used the fibre for the manufacture of garments, first scraping it and drying it in the sun, then steeping it in water, and afterwards beating it with wooden mallets. Thus prepared the flax was dyed black or reddish brown and woven into cloth with broad borders of neat and varied patterns. The stronger and coarser fibres were made into string,

---

<sup>18</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages* (London, 1809), ii. 50.

<sup>19</sup> The ruins of native irrigation works are to be found in New Zealand as well as in other parts of Polynesia (J. Deniker, *The Races of Man*, p. 501).

<sup>20</sup> E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, pp. 202 sq.

lines, and cordage of all sorts.<sup>21</sup> The Maoris also built large and magnificently adorned canoes,<sup>22</sup> in which they made long voyages; for example, they invaded and conquered the Chatham Islands, which lie to the eastward across the open sea about five hundred miles distant from the nearest coast of New Zealand.<sup>23</sup> In hunting they had little opportunity to shine, for the simple reason that in their country there were no beasts to hunt except rats;<sup>24</sup> even birds they could not shoot, because they had no bows and arrows to shoot them with,<sup>25</sup> but they made some amends by catching them in ingeniously constructed snares.<sup>26</sup> They caught fish both with nets, some of which were of enormous size, and with hooks made of bone or shell.<sup>27</sup> They displayed great skill and infinite patience in fashioning, sharpening, and polishing their

---

<sup>21</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, ii. 30 sq., 40 sq.; W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand* (London, 1835), pp. 157 sqq.; E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, pp. 204 sqq.; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, ii. 47 sq.; W. Yate, *op. cit.* pp. 161 sqq.

<sup>23</sup> A. Shand, "The Occupation of the Chatham Islands by the Maoris in 1835," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. i. no. 2 (July 1892), pp. 83 sqq.

<sup>24</sup> R. Taylor, *op. cit.* p. 496; A. R. Wallace, *Australasia* (London, 1913), pp. 442 sq.

<sup>25</sup> E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, p. 212; Elsdon Best, "Notes on the Art of War as conducted by the Maori of New Zealand," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. xi. no. 4 (December 1902), p. 240.

<sup>26</sup> E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, pp. 212 sqq.; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 442 sq.

<sup>27</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, i. 49 sq.; W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, p. 160.

stone implements and weapons.<sup>28</sup> In council they were orators, and in the battlefield warriors whose courage has merited the respect, and whose military skill has won the admiration of the British troops opposed to them.<sup>29</sup> In short, the Maoris were and are one of the most highly gifted among the many uncivilised peoples which the English race, in its expansion over the world, has met and subdued. It is therefore of peculiar interest to learn what conceptions they had formed of man's spiritual nature and his relations to the higher powers.

---

<sup>28</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, ii. 49; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 4. The Maoris delivered set speeches composed according to certain recognised laws of rhetoric, and their oratory was distinguished by a native eloquence and grace. See E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, pp. 186 *sqq.*

### § 3. *The Beliefs of the Maoris concerning the Souls of the Living*

Like most other peoples, whether savage or civilised, the Maoris explained the mystery of life in man by the presence of an invisible spirit or soul, which animates his body during life and quits it at death to survive the separation for a longer or shorter time either in this world or another. But like many others who have sought to fathom this profound subject, the Maoris would seem to have experienced some difficulty in ascertaining the precise nature of the human soul. When the natural man, on the strength of his native faculties, essays to explore these dark abysses and to put his vague thoughts into words, he commonly compares his soul either to his breath or to his shadow and his reflection, and not content with a simple comparison he is led, by a natural confusion of thought, to identify more or less closely the imperceptible entity which he calls his soul with one or both of these perceptible objects. To this general rule the Maori is apparently no exception. He has two words which he specially uses to designate the human spirit or soul: one is *wairua*, the other is *hau*.<sup>30</sup> Of these words, *wairua*, the more usual name, is said to mean also a shadow, an unsubstantial image, a reflection, as

---

<sup>30</sup> Elsdon Best, "Spiritual Concepts of the Maori," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. ix. no. 4 (December 1900), pp. 177 *sqq.*, 189 *sqq.*

of a person's face from a polished surface;<sup>31</sup> and we may surmise that these were the original and proper meanings of the term. Similarly *hau*, which is described as "the vital essence or life principle" in man,<sup>32</sup> appears primarily to mean "wind,"<sup>33</sup> from which we may infer that in its application to man it denotes properly the breath. The idea of the soul as a breath appears in the explanation which was given to Dumont d'Urville of the Maori form of salutation by rubbing noses together. The French traveller was told that the real intention of this salute was to mingle the breath and thereby the souls of the persons who gave each other this token of friendship. But as his informant was not a Maori but a certain Mr. Kendall, the truth of the explanation remains doubtful, though the Frenchman believed that he obtained confirmation of it from his own observation and the testimony of a native.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand the comparison of the soul to a shadow comes out in the answer given by a Maori to an Englishman who had asked him why his people did not prevent their souls from passing away to the nether world. The Maori replied by pointing to the Englishman's shadow on the wall and asking him whether he could catch it.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, pp. 591 *sq.*, s. v. "wairua."

<sup>32</sup> Elsdon Best, *op. cit.* p. 189.

<sup>33</sup> E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, p. 52, s. v. "hau"; Elsdon Best, *op. cit.* p. 190.

<sup>34</sup> J. Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage autour du Monde et à la recherche de la Pérouse, Histoire du Voyage* (Paris, 1832-1833), ii. 558 *sq.*

<sup>35</sup> William Brown, *New Zealand and its Aborigines* (London, 1845), p. 81.

Thus far the Maori conception of the soul does not perhaps differ very materially from the popular notion of it current among ourselves. But we come now to a marked difference between the Maori idea of the soul and our own. For whereas the European commonly believes his soul to be fixed during life immovably in his body, and only to depart from it once for all at death, the soul of the Maori is under no such narrow restrictions, but is free to quit its bodily mansion at pleasure and to return to it without prejudice to the life and health of its owner. For example, the Maori explains a dream by supposing that the soul of the sleeper has left his body behind and rambled away to places more or less distant, where it converses with the spirits of other people, whether alive or dead. Hence no well-bred Maori would waken a sleeper suddenly by shaking him or calling out to him in a loud voice. If he must rouse him, he will do it gradually, speaking to him at first in low tones and then raising his voice by degrees, in order to give the truant soul fair warning and allow it to return at leisure.<sup>36</sup> Believing in the power of the soul to wander far away and converse with other spiritual beings in sleep, the Maoris naturally paid great attention to dreams, which they fancied were often sent them by the gods to warn them of coming events. All dreams were supposed to have their special significance, and the Maoris had framed a fanciful system for interpreting them. Sometimes, as with ourselves, the interpretation went by

---

<sup>36</sup> Elsdon Best, "Spiritual Concepts of the Maori," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. ix. no. 4 (December 1900), pp. 177 sq.



contraries. For example, if a man dreamed that he saw a sick relative at the point of death, it was a sign that the patient would soon recover; but if, on the contrary, the sufferer appeared in perfect health, it was an omen of his approaching end. When a priest was in doubt as to the intentions of the higher powers, he usually waited for his god to reveal his will in a dream, and accepted the vagaries of his slumbering fancy as an infallible intimation of the divine pleasure. Spells were commonly recited in order to annul the effect of ill-omened dreams.<sup>37</sup>

But the departure of the soul from the body in life was not always voluntary; it might take place under the compulsion of a hostile sorcerer or magician. In a Maori legend called *The curse of Manaia* we read that "the priests next dug a long pit, termed the pit of wrath, into which by their enchantments they might bring the spirits of their enemies, and hang them and destroy them there; and when they had dug the pit, muttering the necessary incantations, they took large shells in their hands to scrape the spirits of their enemies into the pit with, whilst they muttered enchantments; and when they had done this, they scraped the earth into the pit again to cover them up, and beat down the earth with their hands, and crossed the pit with enchanted cloths, and wove baskets of flax-leaves to hold the spirits of the foes which they had thus destroyed, and each of

---

<sup>37</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 333-335. As to omens derived from dreams see Elsdon Best, "Omens and Superstitious Beliefs of the Maori," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. vii. no. 27 (September 1898), pp. 124 *sqq.*

these acts they accompanied with the proper spells."<sup>38</sup>

This mode of undoing an enemy by extracting and killing his soul was not with the Maoris a mere legendary fiction; it was practised in real life by their wizards. For we are told that when a priest desired to slay a person by witchcraft, he would often dig a hole in the ground, and standing over it with a cord in his hand would let one end of the cord hang down into the hole. He then recited an incantation which compelled the soul of the doomed man to swarm down the cord into the pit, whereupon another potent spell chanted by the magician speedily put an end to the poor soul for good and all.<sup>39</sup>

It seems obvious that spells of this sort may be used with great advantage in war, for if you can only contrive to kill the souls of your foes, their mere bodies will probably give you little or no trouble. Nor did this practical application of the magic art escape the sagacity of the Maoris. When they marched to attack an enemy's stronghold, it was an ancient custom to halt and kindle a fire, over which the priest recited certain spells to cause the souls of his adversaries to be drawn into the fire and there to perish miserably in the flames. In theory the idea was admirable, but unfortunately it did not always work out in practice. For magic is a game at which two can play, and it sometimes happened that the spells of the besieged proved more powerful than those of the

---

<sup>38</sup> Sir George Grey, *Polynesian Mythology* (London, 1855), pp. 168 sq.

<sup>39</sup> Elsdon Best, "Spiritual Concepts of the Maori," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. ix. no. 4 (December 1900), p. 187.

besiegers and enabled the garrison to defy all the attempts of the enemy to filch their souls from their bodies.<sup>40</sup> But even when the assailants were obliged to retire discomfited, they did not always lose heart, the resources of the magic art were not yet exhausted. On their return home the priest, nothing daunted by a temporary discomfiture, might betake himself again to his spells, and by crooning his incantations over a garment or a weapon belonging to one of his party, might dash in pieces the arms of the enemy and cause their souls to perish. Thus by his ghostly skill would he snatch victory from defeat, and humble the pride of the insolent foe in the very moment of his imaginary triumph.<sup>41</sup> One way in which he effected his purpose was to take a bag or basket containing some sacred food, hold it to the fire, and then opening the bag point the mouth of it in the direction of the enemy. The simple recitation of a spell then sufficed to draw the souls of the adversaries into the bag, after which nothing was easier for him than to destroy them utterly by means of the appropriate incantation.<sup>42</sup>

But valuable as are these applications of magic to practical life, the art, like every good thing, is liable to abuse; and even where it is employed with the best intentions, the forces which

---

<sup>40</sup> Elsdon Best, "Spiritual Concepts of the Maori," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. ix. no. 4 (December 1900), p. 181.

<sup>41</sup> Elsdon Best, "Notes on the Art of War as conducted by the Maori of New Zealand," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. xi. no. 3 (September 1902), p. 141.

<sup>42</sup> Elsdon Best, "Notes on the Art of War as conducted by the Maori of New Zealand," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. xii. no. 2 (June 1903), p. 72.

it controls are so powerful that in spite of all precautions an accident will sometimes happen. For example, in sickness the patient often had recourse to a priest, who would lead him down to the nearest water, whether a pool or a stream, and there perform the magical rites necessary for the relief of his particular malady. While the wizard was engaged in this beneficent task, all the people in the village kept strictly indoors, lest their souls should wander forth to the water-side and there colliding, if I may be allowed the expression, with the mystic forces of the priest's spells be damaged or even annihilated by the collision.<sup>43</sup> In such a case the fatal consequences were the result of a pure accident, but sometimes they were intentional. For this fell purpose a malignant wizard would dig a hole, invoke the spirit of the man against whom he had a grudge, and when the spirit appeared over the hole in the form of a light, he would curse it, and the man whose soul was cursed would be sure to die, sooner or later; nothing could save him. The Uriwera, who dwelt dispersed among the forests and lonely hills of a wild mountainous region in the North Island, were reputed to be the greatest warlocks in all New Zealand. When they descended from their mountains to the coast, the lowlanders scarcely dared refuse them anything for fear of incurring their displeasure. It is said that in their magical rites they made a special use of the spittle of their destined victims; hence all visitors to their country were careful to conceal

---

<sup>43</sup> Elsdon Best, "Maori Medical Lore," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. xiii. no. 4 (December 1904), p. 225.

their spittle lest they should give these wicked folk a handle against them.<sup>44</sup> Another mode in which a Maori wizard could obtain power over a man's soul was by working magic on the footprints of his intended victim. The thing was done in this way. Suppose you are walking and leave your footprints behind you on the ground. I come behind you, take up the earth from your footprints, and deposit it on the sacred *whata puaroa*, that is, a post or pillar set up in the holy place of a village and charged in a mysterious manner with the vitality both of the people and of the land. Having laid the earth from your footprints on the sacred post, I next perform a ceremony of consecration over it, and then bury it with a seed of sweet potato in the ground. After that you are doomed. You may consider yourself for all practical purposes not only dead but buried, like the earth from your footprints.<sup>45</sup>

From some of the foregoing facts it seems to follow that the souls of the Maoris are not, so to say, constitutionally immortal, but that they are of a brittle and perishable nature, and that in particular they are liable to be cut short in their career and totally exterminated by the insidious arts of magicians. So frequently, indeed, did this happen in former days that the Maoris of old apparently recognised no other cause of death, but imagined that every man and woman would naturally live for ever, if the thread

---

<sup>44</sup> E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand* (London, 1843), ii. 58 sq.; E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, pp. 116 sq.; id., *Maori Religion and Mythology* (London, 1882), p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> Elsdon Best, "Spiritual Concepts of the Maori," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. ix. no. 4 (December 1900), pp. 194 sq., 196.

of his or her life were not prematurely snipped by the abhorred shears of some witch or wizard. Hence after every death it was customary to hold an inquest in order to discover the wretch who had brought about the catastrophe by his enchantments; a sage presided at the solemn enquiry, and under his direction the culprit was detected, hunted down, and killed.<sup>46</sup>

The Maoris tell a story to explain how death first came into the world, or at least how men were prevented from enjoying the boon of immortality. The story runs as follows.

The great mythical hero of Polynesia is Maui, a demigod or man of marvellous powers, who lived in the early ages of the world, and whose mighty deeds are the theme of tales of wonder told far and wide among the islands of the Pacific.<sup>47</sup> In his childhood his mother prophesied that he should thereafter climb the threshold of his great ancestress Hine-nui-te-po, and that death should have no more dominion over men. A happy prediction, but alas! never destined to be fulfilled, for even the would-be saviour Maui himself did not escape the doom of mortality. The way in which he became subject to death was this. His father took him to the water to be baptized, for infant baptism was a regular part of Maori ritual.<sup>48</sup> But when the baptism was

---

<sup>46</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 51.

<sup>47</sup> E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, pp. 233 *sqq.*, s. v. "Maui"; Horatio Hale, *United States Exploring Expedition, Ethnography and Philology* (Philadelphia, 1846), p. 23.

<sup>48</sup> J. L. Nicholas, *Narrative of a Voyage to New Zealand* (London, 1817), i. 61 *sq.*, "The New Zealanders make it an invariable practice, when a child is born among

over and the usual prayers had been offered for making the lad sacred and clean from all impurity, his father bethought him that through haste or forgetfulness he had omitted some of the prayers and purifications of the baptismal service. It was a fatal oversight, and the anxious father was struck with consternation at the thought, for too well he knew that the gods would punish the omission by causing his son Maui to die.<sup>49</sup> Yet did his son make a brave attempt to rescue all men from the doom of death and to make them live for ever. One day, after he had performed many feats and returned to his father's house, his father, heavy at heart and overcome with a foreboding of evil, said to him, "Oh, my son, I have heard from your mother and others that you are very valiant, and that you have succeeded in all feats that you have undertaken in your own country, whether they were small or

---

them, to take it to the *Tohunga*, or priest, who sprinkles it on the face with water, from a certain leaf which he holds in his hand for that purpose; and they believe that this ceremony is not only beneficial to the infant, but that the neglect of it would be attended with the most baneful consequences. In the latter case, they consider the child as either doomed to immediate death, or that, if allowed to live, it will grow up with a most perverse and wicked disposition." Before or after sprinkling the child with water the priest bestowed on the infant its name. See W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand* (London, 1835), pp. 82-84; A. S. Thomson, *The Story of New Zealand* (London, 1859), i. 118 *sqq.*; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, Second Edition (London, 1870), pp. 184 *sqq.* Compare J. Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage autour du Monde et à la recherche de la Pérouse, Histoire du Voyage* (Paris, 1832-1833), ii. 443 *sq.* (who says that the baptism was performed by women); E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand* (London, 1843), ii. 28-30 (who, in contradiction to all the other authorities, says that the naming of the child was unconnected with its baptism).

<sup>49</sup> Sir George Grey, *Polynesian Mythology* (London, 1855), p. 32.

great; but now that you have arrived in your father's country, you will perhaps be overcome." Then Maui asked his father, "What do you mean? what things are there that I can be vanquished by?" And his father answered him, "By your great ancestress, by Hine-nui-te-po, who, if you look, you may see flashing, and, as it were, opening and shutting there, where the horizon meets the sky." And Maui answered, "Lay aside such idle thoughts, and let us both fearlessly seek whether men are to die or live for ever." And his father said, "My child, there has been an ill omen for us; when I was baptizing you, I omitted a portion of the fitting prayers, and that I know will be the cause of your perishing." Then Maui asked his father, "What is my ancestress Hine-nui-te-po like?" and he answered, "What you see yonder shining so brightly red are her eyes, and her teeth are as sharp and hard as pieces of volcanic glass; her body is like that of a man, and as for the pupils of her eyes, they are jasper; and her hair is like the tangles of long sea-weed, and her mouth is like that of a barracouta."

Now Hine-nui-te-po was the Great Woman of Night, the Goddess of Death, who dwelt in the nether world and dragged down men to herself. But Maui was not afraid, for he had caught the great Sun himself in a snare and beaten him and caused him to go so tardily as we now see him creeping across the sky with leaden steps and slow; for of old the Sun was wont to speed across the firmament like a young man rejoicing to run a race. So forth fared the hero on his great enterprise to snatch the life of mortals from the very jaws of death. And there came to him to bear him



company the small robin, and the large robin, and the thrush, and the yellow hammer, and the pied fantail (*tiwakawaka*, *Rhipidura flabellifera*), and every kind of little bird; and these all assembled together, and they started with Maui in the evening, and arrived at the dwelling of Hine-nui-te-po, and found her fast asleep.

Then Maui addressed them all, and said, "My little friends, now if you see me creep into this old chieftainess, do not laugh at what you see. Nay, nay, do not, I pray you, but when I have got altogether inside her, and just as I am coming out of her mouth, then you may shout with laughter if you please." But his little friends were frightened at what they saw, and they answered, "Oh, sir, you will certainly be killed." And he answered them again, saying, "If you burst out laughing at me as soon as I get inside her, you will wake her up, and she will certainly kill me at once; but if you do not laugh until I am quite inside her, and am on the point of coming out of her mouth, I shall live, and Hine-nui-te-po will die." And his little friends answered, "Go on then, brave sir, but pray take good care of yourself."

Then the young hero started off, and twisted the strings of his weapon tight round his wrist, and went into the house, and stripped off his clothes, and the skin on his hips was as mottled and beautiful as the skin of a mackerel by reason of the tattoo marks cut on it with the chisel of Uetongo, and he entered the old chieftainess. The little birds now screwed up their little mouths to keep back their laughter when they saw him disappearing into the body of the giantess; their cheeks swelled up and grew purple,

and they almost choked with suppressed emotion. At last the pied fantail could bear it no longer, and he suddenly exploded with a loud guffaw. That woke the old woman, she opened her eyes, and shut her jaws with a snap, cutting the hero clean through the middle, so that his legs dropped out of her mouth. Thus died Maui, but before he died he begat children, and sons were born to him, and some of his descendants are alive to this day. That, according to Maori tradition, is how death came into the world; for if only Maui had passed safely through the jaws of the Goddess of Death, men would have died no more and death itself would have been destroyed. Thus the Maoris set down human mortality at the door of the pied fantail, since but for his unseasonable merriment we might all have lived for ever.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Sir George Grey, *Polynesian Mythology*, pp. 56-58; John White, *The Ancient History of the Maori* (Wellington and London, 1887-1889), ii. 98, 105-107. For another version of the myth, told with some minor variations, see S. Percy Smith, *The Lore of the Whare-wānanga*, Part I. (New Plymouth, N.Z., 1913), pp. 145 sq., 176-178. For the identification of the bird *tiwakawaka* see E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, p. 519, s. v. "Tiwaiwaka."

## **§ 4. *The Beliefs of the Maoris concerning the Souls of the Dead***

When a chief died, a loud howl or wail announced the melancholy event, and the neighbours flocked to the scene of death to testify their sorrow. The wives and near relations, especially the women, of the deceased displayed their anguish by cutting their faces, arms, legs, and breasts with flints or shells till the blood flowed down in streams; it was not wiped off, for the more the person of a mourner was covered with clotted gore, the greater was esteemed his or her respect for the dead. Sometimes relatives would hack off joints of their fingers as a token of grief. Mourners likewise cut their hair, the men generally contenting themselves with clipping or shaving it on one side only, from the forehead to the neck. The eyes of the dead were closed by the nearest relative; and the body dressed in the finest mats, decked with feathers, and provided with weapons, lay in state for a time. After the first day a brother of the deceased used to beat the body with fresh flax gathered for the purpose; this he did to drive away any evil thing that might be hovering about the corpse. In the olden time one or more of the chief's wives would strangle themselves, that their souls might accompany their dead lord and wait upon him in the other world, and with the same intentions slaves were killed, lest the great man should lack attendants in

the spirit land.<sup>51</sup>

The body was kept for three days because, we are told, the soul was believed not to quit its mortal habitation till the third day.<sup>52</sup> The mode of disposing of the corpse differed in different districts and according to the rank of the deceased. In some places a grave was dug in the house and the body buried in a sitting posture, the legs being kept in that position by bandages or doubled up against the chest. In the grave the dead man retained the fine garments in which he had been dressed together with the family ornaments of jade and shark's teeth. With him also was usually interred his property, especially the clothes which he had worn and everything else that had touched him during his last illness. The weapons of a warrior were laid near him that he might be able to fight his battles in the spirit land. In other places the corpse was laid in a box on a stage; or two pieces of an old canoe were set upright in the earth, and in the hollow between them the body was seated on a grating so as to allow the products of decomposition to drip through on the ground.

---

<sup>51</sup> W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, pp. 135 *sqq.*; J. Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage autour du Monde et à la recherche de la Pérouse, Histoire du Voyage* (Paris, 1832-1833), ii. 541 *sq.*; Servant, "Notice sur la Nouvelle-Zélande," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xv. (1843) p. 25; E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 62, 118; W. Brown, *New Zealand and its Inhabitants*, pp. 15 *sqq.*; G. F. Angas, *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand*, i. 331; A. S. Thomson, *The Story of New Zealand*, i. 185 *sqq.*; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui, or New Zealand and its Inhabitants*, Second Edition (London, 1870), pp. 217 *sq.*; E. Tregear, "The Maoris of New Zealand," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xix. (1890) pp. 104 *sq.*

<sup>52</sup> J. Dumont d'Urville, *op. cit.* ii. 541.

In other places again, the corpse was laid in a sort of canoe-shaped coffin and deposited among the branches of a tree in a grove, where it remained for several months. This burial in the branches of a tree seems to have been usually adopted for the bodies of commoners; the corpses of chiefs, enclosed in coffins, were placed in mausoleums, carved and painted red, which were raised on pillars. Whether buried in the earth or placed in a tree or on a stage, the body was left until the flesh had so far decayed as to permit of the bones being easily detached; there was no fixed time allowed for decomposition, it might vary from three months to six months, or even a year. When decay was thought to have proceeded far enough, the bones were dug up or taken down from the stage or tree and scraped; the ornaments also were removed from the skeleton and worn by the relatives. In the south, where the custom was to bury the dead in the ground, this disinterment took place four weeks after the burial; the bones were then buried again, but only to be dug up again after a longer interval, it might be two years, for the final ceremony. When this took place, all the friends and relatives of the dead were summoned to assist, and a great feast was given: the bones were scraped, painted red, decked with feathers, and wrapped up in mats. The precious bundle was then deposited in a small canoe or a miniature house elevated on a pole; or it was carried to the top of some sacred tree and there left on a small stage. Sometimes the bones were concealed in a hollow tree in a secret place of the forest, or hidden away in one of the numerous limestone caverns

or in some lonely and inaccessible chasm among the rocks. The motive for secret burial was a fear lest an enemy should get possession of the bones and profane them by making fish-hooks out of them or converting the skull into a baler for his canoe. Such a profanation was deemed a deadly insult to the surviving relatives. After a burial the persons who had dressed or carried the corpse, and all indeed who had had anything to do with it, repaired to the nearest stream and plunged themselves several times over head in the water.<sup>53</sup>

In some districts the removal of the bones from their temporary to their final resting-place was the occasion of a grand annual festival in which several neighbouring tribes took part. The bones of all members of the tribes who had died within the year were taken down from the stages or trees where the bodies had been temporarily deposited. The grave-clothes having been removed, the mouldering remains were wrapped in new blankets and carried in procession, attended by the crowd, to a place where they were deposited on a carpet of leaves. Should any putrid flesh be found still adhering to the bones, it was scraped off and buried on the spot. A few old women, dressed in their best, oiled from

---

<sup>53</sup> J. Dumont d'Urville, *op. cit.* ii. 543 *sq.*; W. Yate, *op. cit.* p. 137; Servant, "Notice sur la Nouvelle-Zélande," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xv. (1843) p. 25; E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 62 *sqq.*; G. F. Angas, *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand*, i. 331; A. S. Thomson, *The Story of New Zealand*, i. 188; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 218 *sqq.*; E. Tregear, "The Maori of New Zealand," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xix. (1890) p. 105; Elsdon Best, "Cremation among the Maori Tribes of New Zealand," *Man*, xiv. (1914) p. 110.

head to foot, and plastered with raddle, received the skulls into their laps. While they held them thus, a funeral ode was sung and speeches, loud and long, were delivered. Then the bones were tied up, decked with feathers of the gannet, rolled up in blankets, and carried to their last place of rest in a sacred grove, where they were left, securely fastened up and gaudily decorated with red and white. Having thus discharged their duty to the dead, the living gave themselves up to festivity; they ate and drank, danced, sang, whistled, wrestled, quarrelled, bought and sold. This Holy Fair, which went by the name of Hahunga, lasted several days. At the end of it the mourners, or revellers, dispersed and returned to their homes, laden with food which had been made ready for them by their hosts.<sup>54</sup> Great importance was attached to the final disposal of the remains of the dead. According to one account, the soul of the dead man could not rest till his bones were laid in the sepulchre of his ancestors, which was often a natural cave or grotto. There they were deposited on a shelf or platform a few feet above the floor of the cavern.<sup>55</sup>

Not uncommonly the bones of the dead, instead of being preserved, were burned.<sup>56</sup> But cremation, though not unusual,

---

<sup>54</sup> W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, pp. 137-139; Servant, "Notice sur la Nouvelle-Zélande," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xv. (1843) pp. 26 *sq.* The name *Hahunga* is doubtless connected with the verb *hahu* which means "to exhume the bones of dead persons before depositing them in their final resting-place." See E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, p. 42, s. v. "hahu."

<sup>55</sup> J. Dumont d'Urville, *op. cit.* ii. 543, 545.

<sup>56</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 220. This was called *tahunga*, "burning," a word no

seems never to have been a general custom with the Maoris. They resorted to it only in exceptional circumstances, for example, in order to stay the spread of disease, or in cases where a tribe occupied open country and found no suitable place where to lay the bones of their dead after exhumation. Cremation for the latter reason is said to have been practised by the Ngati-apa tribe in the Rangatikikei District, and also by the tribes who occupied the Waimate Plains. An old earthwork fort near the present township of Manaia was the scene of many cremations of the Maori dead in former days. Again, it was a common custom for a raiding party to cremate their dead in the enemy's country, when there was no time to carry them home for the usual obsequies. The intention of burning them was to prevent the enemy from eating the bodies and making fish-hooks out of the bones. For a similar reason even the wounded, whom they could not carry with them, were sometimes thrown into great fires and burnt alive. If the slain man was a chief, only his body would be consumed in the flames; his head would be cut off, steamed, cured, and carried home, to be wept over by his friends. In the Bay of Plenty district the bodies of persons who died of a certain disease called *Kai uaua*, apparently consumption, used to be burnt to prevent the spread of the malady, and all the ashes were carefully buried.<sup>57</sup>

Often enough the heads of dead relatives were cut off, dried,

---

doubt derived from *tahu*, "to set on fire, kindle." See E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, p. 444, s. v. "tahu."

<sup>57</sup> Elsdon Best, "Cremation amongst the Maori tribes of New Zealand," *Man*, xiv. (1914) pp. 110 sq.



and preserved by the family for many years in order to be occasionally brought forth and mourned over. Sometimes a widow would sleep with her husband's severed head at her side. After a victory, too, it was customary to decapitate the slain foes and dry their heads, which were then carried home and used as scarecrows or stuck on short stakes in the village, where they were jeered at and reviled. When the time came to plant the sweet potatoes, and the priests recited their spells for the sake of the crops, the dried heads were sometimes brought out and placed at the edge of the field, for this was believed to promote the growth of the sweet potatoes.<sup>58</sup> Apparently the spirits of the dead were thought able to quicken the fruits of the earth.

At all events the Maoris undoubtedly believed that the souls of the departed survive the death of their bodies for a longer or shorter time and in their disembodied state can influence the living for weal or woe. The belief in the survival of the soul is strikingly manifested in their old custom of killing widows and slaves to serve dead chiefs in the other world. It found expression in the more harmless custom of laying food beside a dead person or burying it with him in the grave; but, as usually happens in such cases, the ghost only consumed the spiritual essence of the victuals, considerately leaving the gross material substance to be

---

<sup>58</sup> Elsdon Best, "Notes on the Art of War as conducted by the Maori of New Zealand," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. xii. no. 4 (December 1903), pp. 195-197. Compare W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, pp. 130 *sqq.*; E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 66.

despatched by the priest.<sup>59</sup> A dying Maori, unable to eat a loaf which a missionary had offered to him, begged that it might be kept for his ghost, who, after his death, would come and fortify himself with it for the journey to his long home.<sup>60</sup> At Tanaraki the child of a chief was buried in its father's house, grasping in each of its little fists a taro for consumption in the other world. Over the grave were laid boards, and the family slept on them. When they thought that the child's body was sufficiently decayed, they dug it up, scraped the bones, and hung them in the verandah, where from time to time the priest recited spells to assist the soul in its ascent to heaven. Every spell was supposed to raise the soul one stage nearer to the abode of bliss. But the ascent was long and tedious, for there were no less than ten heavens one above the other; the tenth was believed to be the principal abode of the gods. When the parents of the child who had been despatched to the happy land with taro in each hand were asked, "Why taro, if the little one is gone to heaven?" they answered that they were not quite sure whether it went up or down, and therefore as an additional precaution they planted a seed of taro in the grave, so that their offspring might find something to eat either above or below.<sup>61</sup>

Similar ceremonies were performed to facilitate the ascension

---

<sup>59</sup> J. Dumont d'Urville, *op. cit.* ii. 542; G. F. Angas, *op. cit.* ii. 71; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 220.

<sup>60</sup> J. Dumont d'Urville, *l. c.*

<sup>61</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 220.

of the souls of chiefs and priests. Before the body was taken to the place of burial, it was laid out with its feet towards the north, and all the blood-relations of the deceased, men, women, and children, assembled round it. Then the priest, standing at the head of the corpse, between the rows of the people, chanted two incantations, of which the second was supposed to assist the soul to ascend to heaven. The priest next put a bulb of taro in the left hand of the corpse and chanted another incantation. After that, flaxen cords were tied with a slip-knot to a tassel of the mat in which the body was enshrouded, and a cord was placed in the hand of each child, boy and girl, present at the ceremony. When the priest had chanted one more incantation, each child pulled the cord with a jerk, to disconnect the soul from the body, lest it should remain and afflict the relatives.<sup>62</sup> This last rite, with the reason assigned for it, is significant at once of the dread which the Maoris felt for departed spirits, and of the very materialistic conception which they entertained of the human soul, since they appear to have imagined that it could be detached from the body by jerking at a cord.

The wish to raise the soul to heaven was perhaps the motive for another curious rite performed at the obsequies of a chief. When the body had been buried, the chief returned to the village; but the men who had carried the body went to the nearest swamp,

---

<sup>62</sup> John White, "A Chapter from Maori Mythology," *Report of the Third Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Christchurch, New Zealand, in January 1891*, pp. 362 sq.

and having caught a swamp-sparrow (*matata*) sent word to the priest, who forthwith rejoined them. Each of the bearers was then provided with a stick to which certain of the feathers of the bird were tied. Then, holding the sticks in their hands, they sat on their heels in a row opposite the priest, who stood facing the east with a stick similarly adorned in his left hand. Next he moved to the south end of the row of men and chanted, and as he chanted he gradually raised his stick, while at the same time all the bearers, holding their sticks at arm's length, gradually raised them and their bodies simultaneously, keeping perfect time, till the priest had concluded his chant, when they all stood erect with outstretched arms. After that the priest collected the sticks and threw them down in front of the *mua*, which seems to have been a kind of altar.<sup>63</sup> We may surmise that the ceremony was intended to waft the soul of the dead chief upward, the feathers of the bird being naturally fitted to facilitate its heavenward flight.

At other times, however, with the inconsistency so common in such matters, it appears to have been supposed that the soul set out on its far journey across the sea, and steps were accordingly taken to equip it for the voyage. Thus we hear of a *wahi tapu* or sacred repository of the property of a deceased chief, which contained, among other things, a little canoe with sail and paddles, "to serve as a ferry-boat for the spirit to enter in safety

---

<sup>63</sup> John White, "A Chapter from Maori Mythology," *op. cit.* p. 363. As to the meaning of *mua*, see E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, p. 267, s. v. "mua."

into the eternal abodes." Nevertheless in the same enclosure, which was fenced with a double set of palings, "calabashes of food and water, and a dish prepared from the pigeon, were placed for the ghost to regale itself when visiting the spot; and the heathen natives aver that at night the spirit comes and feeds from the sacred calabashes."<sup>64</sup>

Many people in the Taranaki district thought that souls went neither up nor down, but always stayed near their mouldering bodies. Hence the sacred grove in which their remains were buried was full of disembodied spirits; and when a man died a violent death his soul wandered about disconsolate, till a priest by his spells and enchantments had brought the poor ghost within the spiritual fold.<sup>65</sup>

When a chief was killed in battle and eaten by his foes, as often happened, his departed spirit entered the stones of the oven in which his body had been cooked, and the stones retained their heat so long as the ghost was in them. Meanwhile his sorrowing friends at home recited their most potent spells to draw his soul out of the oven and back to the sacred grove (*wahi tapu*) the burial-place of his people; for otherwise the soul could find no repose, but must roam about for ever, wreaking its spite on the living, for all disembodied spirits were deemed malicious. Hence after a battle, if people could not obtain the body of a slain friend, they sought to procure at least some drops of his blood or shreds

---

<sup>64</sup> G. F. Angas, *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand*, ii. 70 sq.

<sup>65</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 220 sq.

of his raiment, that by crooning over them the appropriate spell they might draw home the vagrant spirit to his place of rest. The burial-grounds were regarded with awe and fear, for sometimes a restless ghost would break bounds and spread sickness among the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Within their sacred precincts stood altars or stages for offerings to the gods, and any living man who entered them did so at his peril. For the same reason no one would set foot in a house where a dead man or woman had been buried. Hence in nearly every village half the houses stood empty and deserted, falling into decay, tenanted only by ghosts. The living had constantly before their eyes the mansions of the dead.<sup>66</sup>

The common belief of the Maoris seems to have been that the souls of the dead pass away to a region of the underworld, which was sometimes called Po and sometimes Reinga. Properly speaking, Po was night or the primaeval darkness out of which all forms of life and light were evolved or created;<sup>67</sup> and Reinga was not so much the spirit land itself as the leaping-off place where the souls bade good-bye to earth and took their departure for the far country. This leaping-off place was at the North Cape, the Land's End of New Zealand. The cape terminates in a steep cliff with a sea-cave at its foot, into which the tide rushes with a thunderous roar. There the evil spirit Wiro is thought to dwell, lurking for his prey; for he battens on such of the passing souls of

---

<sup>66</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 221.

<sup>67</sup> E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, p. 342, s. v. "Po."

the dead as he can get into his clutches. On their passage to the North Cape the ghosts stop by the way at two hills; at the first, which is called Wai-hokimai, they wail, cut themselves, and strip off their clothes; at the second, which is called Wai-otioti, they turn their backs on the land of the living and set their faces to the land of the dead. Arrived at the cape they pass outward over a long narrow ledge of rock and then leap down on a flat stone. There they see a mass of sea-weed floating on the water, its roots hidden in the depth, its upper branches clinging to a *pohutukawa* tree. When they perceive an opening in the sea-weed they dive and soon find themselves in the lower world. But before they reach the abode of spirits they must cross a river by a plank; the river is called Waiorotane or the River of the Water of Life; and sometimes the warden of the plank will not suffer the ghosts to pass the river, but drives them back with friendly violence and bids them return to their friends on earth. Such souls come back to the bright world of light and life, and tell their friends what they have seen and heard on the journey to that bourne from which so many travellers return no more. Hence when any one has recovered from a dangerous sickness or escaped some great peril, they say of him that he has come back from the River of the Water of Life. Even if a soul has crossed that sombre stream, he may still return to the land of the living, if only he refuses to partake of the food set before him by the ghosts; but should he taste of it, he cannot come back. They say that people living near the North Cape can hear the spirits of the dead passing through

the air on their way to the spirit land; and in the old days, when a battle had been fought and before the news of it could reach them by word of mouth, the natives near the cape were made aware of what had happened by the rushing sound of a great multitude flitting by overhead in the darkness.<sup>68</sup> Perhaps the sighing of the night-wind or the clangour of birds of passage winging their way out to sea may have contributed to create or foster these fancies.

On the day after a burial the priest used to perform a ceremony to facilitate the passage of the soul to its final rest. For this purpose some men would go out in the morning and kill a small bird of the swamps called *kokata* and pluck up some reeds of a certain sort (*wiwi*). These they brought to the priest at the grave. He asked them, "Whence came ye?" They answered, "From the seeking, from the searching." He asked them again, "Ah! what have you got? ah! what have you gained?" Then the men threw the bird and the reeds on the ground. Next the priest chose a stalk of grass or fern and put it near the grave in a direction pointing towards Hawaiki, the land far away from which the forefathers of the Maoris came long ago. Another stalk of grass or fern was laid near the place of death, and along these stalks the soul of

---

<sup>68</sup> E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, pp. 150 *sqq.*; *id.*, *Maori Religion and Mythology*, p. 45; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 52, 231; W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, p. 140; E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 66 *sq.*; E. Tregear, "The Maoris of New Zealand," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xix. (1890) pp. 118 *sq.*; *id.*, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, pp. 407 *sq.*, 591, s. vv. "Reinga" and "Waiora"; John White, "A Chapter from Maori Mythology," *Report of the Third Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Christchurch, New Zealand, in January 1891*, pp. 361 *sq.*



the dead man travelled to rejoin his friends and kinsfolk who had gone before.<sup>69</sup>

As might be anticipated, the accounts which the Maoris gave of the spirit world and of life in it were neither clear nor consistent. According to one account, while the heavens increase in beauty as they ascend one above the other, the lower regions increase in darkness and horror as they descend, each being darker and worse than the one above it, till in the lowest of all complete darkness reigns. There the souls, deprived alike of light and food, wasted away and ultimately ceased to exist; or according to another account they assumed the shape of worms and in that guise returned to earth, where they died a second death and so finally perished. But it was only the souls of common folk which came to this melancholy end. Chiefs and priests were believed to be descended from the gods, and at death their souls ascended to heaven, there to live for ever.<sup>70</sup>

Other reports, however, paint the nether world in more cheerful colours. We are told that the souls of the dead live there very much as people do on earth, but all good things are

---

<sup>69</sup> E. Shortland, *Maori Religion and Mythology*, p. 44. Such a stalk to aid the spirit on its passage was called a *tiri*. Compare E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, p. 517, s. v. "Tiri." The ceremony described in the text resembles in some points the one which seems intended to raise the soul of the deceased to heaven. See above, p. 25.

<sup>70</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 232; John White, "A Chapter from Maori Mythology," *Report of the Third Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Christchurch, New Zealand, in January 1891*, pp. 361 sq.

more plentiful there than here. The staple food of the ghosts is sweet potatoes, and the quality of the potatoes appears to be remarkably fine; for once a woman, who had the good fortune to go to the spirit land and come back, received from her dead father in the nether regions two roots of sweet potatoes of a most prodigious size. These the ghost told her to take back to earth and plant for the benefit of his grandchild. So she hurried away with them and arriving at the foot of the North Cape had begun to clamber up the face of the cliff, when two infant spirits overtook her and attempted to drag her back to dead land by tugging at her cloak. To divert their attention she threw the two roots of sweet potato behind her, and while the sprites were munching them she made good her escape up the cliff and succeeded in reaching home. Her friends were very glad to see her again, but they always lamented that she had not brought back at least one of those gigantic roots of sweet potato, since it would unquestionably have done much to improve the quality of sweet potatoes grown here on earth.<sup>71</sup>

But the spirits of the dead are by no means strictly confined to the lower world; they can quit it from time to time and return to earth, there to influence the actions and fortunes of the living and to communicate with them through the priest, who can hear their voices. They speak in whistling tones, which even common

---

<sup>71</sup> E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 48 sq., 67, 118; E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, pp. 153 sqq.; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 233 sq.

folk can sometimes distinguish as they walk about in the dark. Often their communications are made to the priest or chief in dreams, and he announces the glad or mournful tidings to other people in the morning. Any commands conveyed in this manner from the other world are, or used to be, implicitly obeyed and might decide the course to be pursued in the most important affairs of life.<sup>72</sup> In some tribes, especially among the natives of Wangunui, it used to be customary to keep in the houses small carved images of wood, each of them dedicated to an ancestor of the family, who was believed occasionally to enter into the image in order to hold converse with his living descendants.<sup>73</sup> But even without the intervention of such images the priest could summon up the spirits of the dead and converse with them in the presence of the relatives or of strangers; at these interviews, which were held within doors and in the dark, the voices of the ghosts, or perhaps of the priestly ventriloquist, were sometimes distinctly audible even to sceptical Europeans. Nor was the art of necromancy confined to men; for we read of an old woman who, like the witch of Endor, professed to exercise this ghostly office, and treated an English visitor to an exhibition of her powers.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 67, 118; E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, ii. 83, 84.

<sup>73</sup> E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, p. 83.

<sup>74</sup> E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, pp. 84 *sqq.*; *Old New Zealand*, by a Pakeha Maori (London, 1884), pp. 122 *sqq.* As to the belief in the reappearance of the dead among the living compare R. A. Cruise, *Journal of a Ten Months Residence in New Zealand* (London, 1823), p. 186: "The belief in the

The spirits of the dead were sometimes useful to the living, for commonly enough they would appear to their kinsfolk in dreams and warn them of approaching foes or other dangers. Again, they might be and were invoked by spells and enchantments to avenge a murder or even to slay an innocent person against whom the enchanter had a grudge.<sup>75</sup> But for the most part the ghosts were greatly dreaded as malicious demons who worked harm to man.<sup>76</sup> Even the nearest and dearest relations were believed to have their natures radically changed by death and to hate those whom they had loved in life.<sup>77</sup> And so powerful were these malignant beings supposed to be that they were confused with the gods, or rather the spirits of the dead became themselves gods to all intents and purposes, and played a much more important part in the religious life of the Maoris than the high *primaeval* deities, the personifications of nature, who figured in Maori mythology and cosmogony.<sup>78</sup> The gods whom

---

reappearance of the dead is universal among the New Zealanders: they fancy they hear their deceased relatives speaking to them when the wind is high; whenever they pass the place where a man has been murdered, it is customary for each person to throw a stone upon it; and the same practice is observed by all those who visit a cavern at the North Cape, through which the spirits of departed men are supposed to pass on their way to a future world."

<sup>75</sup> Elsdon Best, "Spiritual Concepts of the Maori," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. ix. no. 4 (December 1900), p. 182.

<sup>76</sup> Elsdon Best, *op. cit.* p. 184.

<sup>77</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 104.

<sup>78</sup> E. Shortland, *The Southern Districts of New Zealand* (London, 1851), p. 294; *id.*, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, pp. 80, 81; *id.*, *Maori Religion and*

the Maoris feared, we are told, were the spirits of the dead, who were believed to be constantly watching over the living with jealous eyes, lest they should neglect any part of the law relating to persons or things subject to the sacred restriction called taboo (*tapu*). These spirits, however, confined their care almost exclusively to persons among the living with whom they were connected by ties of relationship, so that every tribe and every family had its own worshipful ancestral spirit or god, whom members of the tribe or family invoked with appropriate prayers or spells (*karakias*). Ancestral spirits who lived in the flesh before the Maoris emigrated to New Zealand were invoked by all the tribes in New Zealand without distinction, so far as their names and memories survived in tradition. Thus the worship of these remote ancestors constituted what may be called the national religion of the Maoris as distinguished from the tribal and family religions, which consisted in the worship of nearer and better remembered progenitors. The great importance attached by the Maoris to the worship of ancestors may account, we are told, for the care with which they preserved their genealogies; since the names of ancestors often formed the groundwork of their religious formulas (*karakias*), and any error or even hesitation in repeating these prayers or incantations was deemed fatal to their efficacy.<sup>79</sup> "Ancestor worship, or rather the deification

---

*Mythology*, pp. 10 sq.; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 108, "Maori gods are so mixed up with the spirits of ancestors, whose worship entered largely into their religion, that it is difficult to distinguish one from the other."

<sup>79</sup> E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, p. 81; *id.*, *Maori*

of ancestors, was essentially a Maori cult. It was a form of necrolatry, or hero worship. A man would placate the spirit of his father, grandfather, or ancestor, and make offerings to the same, that such spirit might protect his life principle, warn him of approaching danger, and give force or effectiveness to his rites and charms of black or white magic."<sup>80</sup>

---

*Religion and Mythology*, p. 11. As to the *karakias*, which were prayers or invocations, spells or incantations, addressed to gods or ancestral spirits, see E. Shortland, *Maori Religion and Mythology*, pp. 28 *sqq.*; E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, p. 128, s. v. "karakia." Apparently the *karakia* partook of the nature of a spell rather than of a prayer, since it was believed to be so potent that the mere utterance of it compelled the gods to do the will of the person who recited the formula. See R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 180 *sq.*: "The Maori, in his heathen state, never undertook any work, whether hunting, fishing, planting, or war, without first uttering a *karakia*; he would not even take a journey without repeating a spell to secure his safety; still he could not be said to pray, for, properly speaking, they had no such thing as prayer. As in war, they armed themselves with the most formidable weapons they could procure, and laid their plans with the greatest skill they possessed, so to secure the fruition of their desires, they used their most powerful means to compel the gods to be obedient to their wishes, whether they sought for victory over their foes, fruitful crops, successful fishings, or huntings, they called in the aid of potent incantations; when they planted their *kumara* [sweet potatoes], they sought to compel the god who presided over them to yield a good increase; when they prepared their nets and their hooks, they must force the ocean god to let his fish enter them; as the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by storm, so the heathen Maori sought, by spells and incantations, to compel the gods to yield to their wishes; they added sacrifices and offerings at the same time, to appease as it were their anger, for being thus constrained to do what they wished them. Their ancestors were addressed as powerful familiar friends; they gave them offerings, and if it can be said that any prayers were offered up, it was to them they were made. The word *karakia*, which we use for prayer, formerly meant a spell, charm, or incantation."

<sup>80</sup> Elsdon Best, "Maori Religion," *Report of the Twelfth Meeting of the Australasian*

The ancestral spirits who particularly watched over the fortunes of a tribe were the souls of its dead warriors and great men. In war these powerful, though invisible, beings were thought to attend the army and direct its movements on the march by communicating advice or warning through some one or other of their nearest living kinsmen. In battle they hovered over the combatants and inspired courage into the hearts of their own tribe. Hence when, on the eve of battle, any young man showed signs of the white feather, recourse was immediately had to the family priest, who repeated a charm, invoking the aid of his friendly spirit; for the sensation of fear was ascribed to the baneful influence of a hostile spirit. If the friendly spirit prevailed, and the craven spirit was expelled, the young man would rush into the thickest of the fight and prove himself the bravest of the brave.<sup>81</sup>

The interest taken by the spirits of the dead in mundane affairs seldom extended beyond the limits of the tribe to which they belonged. Hence a captive in war, who was carried away and enslaved by another tribe, ceased from that moment to be under the protection and care of any ancestral spirit or god. For the ancestral spirits of his own tribe did not trouble themselves to follow him among a hostile tribe and hostile spirits, and the ancestral spirits of the tribe whom he served as a slave would not deign to give him a thought. Hence being forsaken of god and

---

*Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Brisbane, 1909*, p. 459.

<sup>81</sup> E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, pp. 81 sq.

left to their own devices, slaves were relieved from many of the burdensome restrictions which the Maori gods laid upon their worshippers; they were therefore free to perform many menial offices, particularly in regard to carrying and cooking food, which no free Maori could discharge without sinning against the sacred law of taboo and incurring the wrath of the ancestral spirits, who for such a transgression might punish the sinner with sickness or death.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to their deified ancestors, who had lived as men of flesh and blood on earth, the Maoris believed in certain great *primaeval* deities, who had existed before the human race came into being, and whose doings were the theme of many mythical stories. These mighty beings appear to have been personifications of the various forces or elements of nature, such as the sky and the earth. But though fancy wove round them a glistening web of myth and fable, they were apparently believed to stand aloof in cold abstraction from human affairs and to take no interest in the present race of men. The practical religion of the Maori was concentrated on the souls of his deceased kinsfolk and forefathers: "neither in any existing superstition nor tradition, purely such, is there to be found internal evidence that an idea of God existed more exalted than that of the spirit of a dead ancestor."<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, pp. 82 sq.; *id.*, *The Southern Districts of New Zealand*, pp. 296 sq.

<sup>83</sup> E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, p. 80. Compare



The word which the Maoris applied to a god, whether a personification of nature or the spirit of a dead ancestor, was *atua*. The name is not confined to the Maori language, but is the common word for god throughout Polynesia.<sup>84</sup> When the Maoris attempt to define the nature of an *atua*, they have recourse to the same comparisons with a shadow and with breath which appear to underlie their conception of the human soul.<sup>85</sup> But though "god" is the nearest English equivalent of the word *atua*, we must beware of assuming that the Maori idea of godhead coincided with ours. On this subject one of our best authorities tells us that

---

*id.*, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, p. 81; *id.*, *The Southern Districts of New Zealand*, p. 294; *id.*, *Maori Religion and Mythology*, pp. 10 *sq.* In Maori mythology Rangi is the personification of the sky, and Papa of earth. They were the primal parents, and the other great gods were their offspring. See Elsdon Best, "The Maori Genius for Personification," *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute*, liii. (1921) p. 2. Among the great primordial deities who were worshipped by all tribes of New Zealand may be mentioned Tane, Tu, Tangaroa, and Rongo. Of the four, Tane was the origin and tutelary deity of forests and birds: no tree might be felled and no bird caught till certain rites had been performed to placate him. Tu was the god of war. Tangaroa was the god of the ocean, the origin and tutelary deity of fish. Rongo was the god of peace, and presided over agriculture. See Elsdon Best, "Maori Religion," *Report of the Twelfth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Brisbane, 1909*, p. 458. The same four gods, with names only dialectically different, were, as we shall see later on, the principal deities of the Sandwich Islanders, the most distant geographically from the Maoris of all the Polynesians. The coincidence furnishes an example of the homogeneity of religion which prevailed among the various branches of the Polynesian race.

<sup>84</sup> E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, pp. 30 *sq.*, s. v. "Atua."

<sup>85</sup> J. Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage autour du Monde et à la recherche de la Pérouse, Histoire du Voyage* (Paris, 1832-1833), ii. 516 *sq.*

the term "god" is really not applicable to the *Atua Maori*, the so-called gods of the Maoris. For these beings, he says, "were, with few exceptions, malignant demons, to be feared and placated or conciliated, but not worshipped. Their principal task seems to have been the inflicting upon mankind of diverse evils, pains, and penalties. Of the few good offices performed by them, the warning of the people in regard to coming troubles, seems to have been the most important. The vast majority of the so-called gods of the Maori were simply deified ancestors."<sup>86</sup>

In order to illustrate the difference between the Maori conception of deity and our own, I will quote the words of another eminent authority on the native religion of the New Zealanders. He says, "Before the mythology of the Maori is further considered, it will be necessary briefly to state what were the ideas of God entertained by the natives. The word *atua*, or spirit, which is used for God, formerly had various significations; a plague or disease was also *he atua*, or God; a thief was an *atua*, thus also a thievish dog was *he kuri atua*, a god-like dog, so also *he tangata atua ki te muru*, a man equal to a god in stealing; a child who pilfered was *he tamaiti atua*, a divine child; there were great spirits and small ones, a man's spirit was an *atua pore pore*, a little spirit, but Maru Rongomai and other gods were *Atua nui*, great gods; there were *atua ika*, reptile or fish gods; a great chief was called *He ika*, a fish, sea monster, or reptile, and was

---

<sup>86</sup> Elsdon Best, "Notes on the Art of War as conducted by the Maori of New Zealand," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. xi. no. 2 (June 1902). pp. 63 sq.

regarded as a malignant god in life, and a still worse one after death; there were likewise *Atua marau*, as the *toroa*, albatross, the *ruru*, owl; and *karu karu*, the film which shades its eye from the light, was also an *atua*; male and female spirits presided over dreams, and were regarded as *atuas*, *Ko nga atua moe moea o te poko*, the gods of dreams; *Tunui a rangi*, a male, *Pare kewa*, a female deity, both were prayed to as gods; the *atua kore* and *atua kiko kiko* were inferior gods. The *Atua ngarara* or reptile gods were very abundant, and were supposed to be the cause of all diseases and death, being always ready to avail themselves of every opportunity of crawling down the throat during sleep, and thus preying upon the lives of unfortunate creatures. *Atuas* or spirits of the deceased were thought to be able to revisit the earth and reveal to their friends the cause of their sickness. Everything that was evil or noxious was supposed especially to belong to the gods; thus a species of euphorbium, whose milk or juice is highly poisonous, is called *wai u atua*, the milk of the gods."<sup>87</sup> "In fact, in the accounts which the natives give of their gods and their exploits, we have but a magnified history of their chiefs, their wars, murders, and lusts, with the addition of some supernatural powers; they were cannibals; influenced by like feelings and passions as men, and were uniformly bad; to them were ascribed all the evils incident to the human race; each disease was supposed to be occasioned by a different god, who resided in the part affected; thus, Tonga, the god who caused

---

<sup>87</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 134 sq.

headache, took up his abode in the forehead; Moko Titi, a lizard god, was the source of all pains in the breast; Tu-tangata-kino was the god of the stomach; Titihai occasioned pains in the ankles and feet; Rongomai and Tuparitapua were the gods of consumption, and the wasting away of the legs and arms; Koro-kio-ewe presided over childbirth, and did his worst to unfortunate females in that state. In fact, the entire human body appears to have been shared out amongst those evil beings, who ruled over each part, to afflict and pain the poor creatures who worshipped them."<sup>88</sup>

Anything, indeed, whether good or evil, which excited the fear or wonder of the Maoris would seem in the old days to have been dubbed by them an *atua* and invested with the attributes of divinity. For example, when a traveller in the early years of the nineteenth century showed his watch to some Maoris, the ticking struck them with such astonishment that they deemed it nothing less than the voice of a god; and the watch itself, being looked upon as a deity (*atua*) in person, was treated by the whole of them with profound reverence.<sup>89</sup> Other travellers have had similar experiences among the Maoris,<sup>90</sup> and compasses and barometers have also been accorded divine honours by these

---

<sup>88</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 137.

<sup>89</sup> J. L. Nicholas, *Narrative of a Voyage to New Zealand* (London, 1817), i. 254.

<sup>90</sup> J. Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage autour du Monde et à la recherche de la Pérouse, Histoire du Voyage* (Paris, 1832-1833), ii. 516.

ignorant savages.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 118.

## § 5. *Taboo among the Maoris*

But the most momentous practical consequence which flowed from their belief in the spirits of the dead was the enormous influence which that creed wielded in establishing and maintaining the system of taboo, the most remarkable and characteristic institution in the life of the Maoris and of the Polynesians in general. I shall first give some account of the taboo or *tapu*, as the Maoris called it, and afterwards show how this extraordinary system of society and religion was directly based on a belief in the existence of ghosts and their mighty power over human destiny.

First, then, as to taboo or *tapu* itself. This curious institution, as I have said, prevailed throughout all the widely scattered islands of Polynesia, but nowhere to a greater extent than in New Zealand. It pervaded the whole life of the natives, affected their plans, influenced their actions, and in the absence of an efficient police provided a certain security both for their persons and their property. Sometimes it was used for political, and sometimes for religious purposes; sometimes it was the means of saving life, and at other times it was the ostensible reason for taking life away.<sup>92</sup> It may be defined as a system of consecration which made any person, place, or thing sacred either permanently or for a limited

---

<sup>92</sup> W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, pp. 84 sq.

time.<sup>93</sup> The effect of this consecration was to separate the sacred person or thing from all contact with common (*noa*)<sup>94</sup> persons and things: it established a sort of quarantine for the protection not only of the sacred persons themselves, but of common folk, who were supposed to be injured or killed by mere contact with a tabooed person or object. For the sanctity which the taboo conferred on people and things was conceived of as a sort of dangerous atmosphere, charged with a spiritual electricity, which discharged itself with serious and even fatal effect on all rash intruders. A tabooed person might not be touched by any one, so long as the taboo or state of consecration lasted; he might not even put his own hand to his own head; and he was most stringently forbidden to touch food with his hands. Hence he was either fed like a child by another, who put the food into his mouth; or he had to lap up his victuals like a dog from the ground, with his hands held behind his back; or lastly he might convey the nourishment by means of a fern stalk to his mouth. When he wished to drink, somebody else poured water into his mouth from a calabash without allowing the vessel to touch his lips; for mere contact with the lips of the tabooed man would have rendered the vessel itself sacred or tabooed and therefore unfit for common use. Similarly, when he desired to wash his hands, water had to be poured on them from a distance by his attendant. This state of consecration or defilement, as we might be tempted

---

<sup>93</sup> W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, p. 84; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 163.

<sup>94</sup> E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, pp. 268 *sq.*, s. v. "Noa."

rather to call it, was incurred by any person who had touched either a young child or a corpse or had assisted at a funeral. The taboo contracted by association with the dead was the strictest and most virulent of all. It extended not only to the persons who had handled the corpse or paid the last offices of respect to the departed; it applied to the place where the body was buried or the bones deposited. So sacred, indeed, was deemed the spot where a chief had died that in the old days everything upon it was destroyed by fire. Hence in order to avoid the destruction of a house, which a death in it would have entailed, it was customary to remove a sick or dying man to a temporary shed just large enough to shelter him from the sun or screen him from the rain; for if the man died in it, the destruction of the wretched hovel was no great loss to the survivors.<sup>95</sup> A widow was tabooed and had to observe the aforesaid restrictions from the death of her husband until his bones had been scraped and deposited in their last resting-place; and the same rule applied to a widower.<sup>96</sup> These taboos were temporary and could be removed by a priest, who performed certain rites and repeated certain spells (*karakias*), and thereby relieved the tabooed person from the state of sanctity or consecration under which he had laboured. The performance of the ceremony put an end to the spiritual quarantine; the man ceased to be sacred, he became common

---

<sup>95</sup> W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, pp. 85 sq.; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 163, 164.

<sup>96</sup> E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 40.



(*noa*) once more, and could mingle freely with his fellows. One of the ceremonies of desecration, as we may call it, was to pass a consecrated piece of wood over the right shoulder of the tabooed person, then round his loins, and back again over the left shoulder, after which the stick was broken in two and buried, burned, or cast into the sea.<sup>97</sup> Again, a temporary taboo was laid on all persons who were engaged in planting sweet potatoes, or in sorting the seed, or in digging and preparing the ground; they might not leave the fields where they were at work nor undertake any other labour. The fields themselves were sacred during these operations; none but the persons who were tabooed for the purpose might set foot on the ground or pluck up the weeds which grow rankly round the roots of the vegetable.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, in their great fishing-expeditions to catch mackerel, all concerned in making or mending the nets were under a taboo: the ground where the nets were made was sacred, and so was the river on the banks of which the work went on. No man but the tabooed

---

<sup>97</sup> J. Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage autour du Monde et à la recherche de la Pérouse, Histoire du Voyage* (Paris, 1832-1833), iii. 685; W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, p. 86; E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 104 sq.; Servant, "Notice sur la Nouvelle-Zélande," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xv. (1843) p. 23; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 166 sq.; *Old New Zealand*, by a Pakeha Maori, pp. 104 sqq. The taboo could be got rid of more simply by the tabooed man touching his child or grandchild and taking food or drink from the child's hands. But when that was done, the taboo was transferred to the child, who retained it for the rest of the day. See E. Dieffenbach, *op. cit.* ii. 105.

<sup>98</sup> W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, p. 85; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 165 sq.; *Old New Zealand*, by a Pakeha Maori, pp. 103 sq.

persons might walk over the land or pass up or down the river in a canoe: no fire might be lighted within a prescribed distance: no food might be dressed while the taboo lasted. Not till the net had been finished and wetted with the sacred water, and the owner had caught and eaten a fish, did these burdensome restrictions come to an end by the removal of the taboo.<sup>99</sup> Once more, the men who took part in a warlike expedition were under a severe taboo and had to observe very strictly the customs which that mysterious state of consecration rendered obligatory.<sup>100</sup> Even after their return home they were not allowed to enter their houses or to hold any direct communication with their families who had remained there, till they had been rendered common (*noa*) by a ceremony of desecration. Before that ceremony took place, the warriors were obliged to throw away the remains of the bodies of their foes on which, as usual, they had been feasting; for being sacred food the flesh could only be touched by sacred or tabooed persons. One woman only, the *wahine ariki*, as she was called, that is the elder female of the elder branch of the stock from which the tribe traced their descent, was permitted to touch the sanctified meat; indeed, in order to carry out the ritual of desecration in due form she was expected and required to swallow an ear of the first enemy killed in battle.<sup>101</sup> A warlike expedition might lay even people at home under a taboo; for all

---

<sup>99</sup> W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, p. 85.

<sup>100</sup> *Old New Zealand*, by a Pakeha Maori, pp. 96, 114 sq.

<sup>101</sup> E. Shortland, *The Southern Districts of New Zealand*, pp. 68 sq.

who remained behind, including old men, women, and slaves, were often required to observe a rigid fast and to abstain from smoking till the return of the warriors.<sup>102</sup>

But in contrast to the temporary taboos which affected common folk and debarred them for a time from familiar intercourse with their fellows, a perpetual and very stringent taboo was laid on the persons and property of chiefs, especially of those high hereditary chiefs who bore the title of *Ariki* and were thought to be able at any time to hold visible converse with their dead ancestors.<sup>103</sup> Strictly speaking, "the *ariki* of a Maori tribe is the senior male descendant of the elder branch of the tribe, that is, he is a descendant of the elder son of the elder son of each generation from the time of the original ancestor down to the present day. As such, he was of old regarded almost as a god, inasmuch as he represented all that there was of *māna* and sacredness of his tribe. That he should have been regarded in this light is not astonishing, for the Maoris believed he was something more than human, in that he was the shrine of an hereditary *Atua*, the guardian spirit of the tribe, and could therefore at any time communicate with the tribal gods... Such a man was not only *tapu* in person but he made everything he touched so dangerously

---

<sup>102</sup> *Old New Zealand*, by a Pakeha Maori, pp. 114 *sq.*

<sup>103</sup> E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 40, 112 *sq.*, 356; E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, p. 104; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 149, 164, 212 *sq.*; E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, pp. 23 *sq.*, s. v. "Ariki." The word *ariki* signifies properly the first-born or heir, whether male or female, of a family.

sacred as to be a source of terror to the tribe. To smoke his pipe, or drink from any vessel he had touched, was death speedy and certain at the hands of the gods, who avenge breaches of the *tapu*."<sup>104</sup> "The gods being no more than deceased chiefs, the *ariki*s were regarded as living ones, and thus were not to be killed by inferior men, but only by those who had more powerful *atuas* in them; the victorious chief who had slain numbers, swallowed their eyes, and drunk their blood, was supposed to have added the spirits of his victims to his own, and thus increased his *mana* or power; to keep up this idea, and hinder the lower orders from trying whether it were possible to kill such corporeal and living gods, was the grand work of the *tapu*."<sup>105</sup> The godhead of a chief

---

<sup>104</sup> Lieut. – Col. W. E. Gudgeon, "Maori Religion," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. xiv. no. 3 (September 1905), p. 130. Compare *id.*, "The Tipua-Kura and other Manifestations of the Spirit World," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. xv. no. 57 (March 1906), p. 38.

<sup>105</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika a Maui*, p. 173. *Mana* means authority, especially divine authority or supernatural power. See E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, p. 203, s. v. "Mana"; and for a full discussion of the conception see Lieut. – Col. W. E. Gudgeon, "Mana Tangata," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. xiv. no. 2 (June 1905), pp. 49-66. "*Mana* plays a leading part in the ability of a leader, or successes in war of celebrated warriors. When a man frequently undertakes daring deeds, which ought under ordinary circumstances to fail, but none the less prove successful, he is said to possess *mana*, and thereafter is regarded as one peculiarly favoured by the gods, and in such cases it is held that he can only be overcome by some act or default; such as a disregard or neglect of some religious or warlike observance, which has been shown by experience to be essential to success in war, but which our warrior, spoiled by a long career of good fortune, had come to regard as necessary to ordinary mortals only and of but little consequence to men of *mana*" (W. E. Gudgeon, *op. cit.* p. 62). "There were cases in which the *mana* of a man depended upon the

was thought to reside in his eyes, especially in his left eye; that was why by swallowing the eye or eyes of a slain chief a living chief was believed to absorb the divine spirit of the dead man and thereby to strengthen his own divinity; the more eyes he swallowed, the greater god he became.<sup>106</sup>

Every such divine chief was under a permanent taboo; he was as it were surrounded by an atmosphere of sanctity which attached to his person and never left him; it was his birthright, a part of himself of which he could not be divested, and it was well understood and recognised by everybody at all times. And the sanctity was not confined to his person, it was an infection which extended or was communicated to all his movable property, especially to his clothes, weapons, ornaments, and tools, indeed to everything which he touched. Even the petty

---

facility with which he could communicate with the spirits of departed ancestors, that is, upon his capacity to enforce the aid and attendance of these minor deities. To this end every man with any pretension to *mana* had a knowledge of certain forms of invocation by which he could summon the spirits of long departed heroes and ancestors, but it must not be supposed that these invocations would necessarily have power in the mouths of all men, for such was not the case. The efficacy of a *karakia* or invocation depended in part on its method of delivery, and in part on the *mana* of the man who used it" (W. E. Gudgeon, *op. cit.* p. 50). Compare R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 172, 173; *Old New Zealand*, by a Pakeha Maori, p. 100.

<sup>106</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 147, 352. The soul was thought to reside especially in the left eye; accordingly it was the left eye of an enemy which was most commonly swallowed by a victorious chief who desired to increase his spiritual power. See J. Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage autour du Monde et à la recherche de la Pérouse, Histoire du Voyage* (Paris, 1832-1833), ii. 527; E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 118, 128 *sq.*

chiefs and fighting men, everybody indeed who could claim the title of *rangatira* or gentleman, possessed in some degree this mysterious quality.<sup>107</sup> However, in young people of rank the sanctity which appertained to them by virtue of their birth was supposed to be only latent; it did not develop or burst into full bloom till they had reached mature age and set up house on their own account. Hence noble boys and lads were under none of the irksome restrictions to which in their adult years they were afterwards bound to submit; they mixed freely with the profane vulgar and did not even disdain to carry fuel or provisions on their backs, a thing which no man of any standing could possibly do; at all events, if he did so demean himself, the food was thereby rendered taboo and could accordingly be used by nobody but himself. "If he went into the shed used as a kitchen (a thing, however, he would never think of doing except on some great emergency), all the pots, ovens, food, etc., would be at once rendered useless – none of the cooks or inferior people could make use of them, or partake of anything which had been cooked in them. He might certainly light a little fire in his own house, not for cooking, as that never by any chance could be done in his house, but for warmth; but that, or any other fire, if he should have blown upon it with his breath in lighting it, became at once *tapu*, and could be used for no common or culinary purpose. Even to light a pipe at it would subject any inferior person, or in many instances an equal, to a terrible attack of the

---

<sup>107</sup> *Old New Zealand*, by a Pakeha Maori, p. 94.

*tapu morbus*, besides being a slight or affront to the dignity of the person himself. I have seen two or three young men fairly wearing themselves out on a wet day and with bad apparatus trying to make fire to cook with, by rubbing two sticks together, when on a journey, and at the same time there was a roaring fire close at hand at which several *rangatira* and myself were warming ourselves, but it was *tapu*, or sacred fire – one of the *rangatira* had made it from his own tinder-box, and blown upon it in lighting it, and as there was not another tinder-box amongst us, fast we must, though hungry as sharks, till common culinary fire could be obtained."<sup>108</sup>

The head of a chief was always and at all times deemed most sacred, and in consequence he might not even touch it with his own hand; if he chanced to commit the sacrilege, he was obliged at once to apply his fingers to his sacred nose and to snuff up the odour of sanctity which they had abstracted, thus restoring the holy effluvium to the place from which it had been taken.<sup>109</sup> For the same reason the cutting of a chief's hair was a most difficult and delicate operation. While it lasted neither the great man himself nor the barber who operated on him was allowed to do anything or partake of any food except under the restrictions imposed on all sacred or tabooed persons; to use the scissors or the shell, with which the operation was performed, for any other purpose or any other person would have been a terrible

---

<sup>108</sup> *Old New Zealand*, by a Pakeha Maori, p. 98.

<sup>109</sup> W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, p. 87; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 165.

profanation of sacred things, and would have rendered the rash sacrilegious wretch, who had dared so to appropriate it, liable to the severest punishment. The severed hair was collected and buried or hung up on a tree,<sup>110</sup> probably to put it out of the way of common folk, who might have been struck dead by contact with the holy locks. But apparently the dangers incident to hair-cutting were by no means confined to chiefs, but extended to any one who was bold enough to submit his head to the barber's shears; for one of the early writers on the Maoris tells us that "he who has had his hair cut is in the immediate charge of the *Atua*; he is removed from the contact and society of his family and his tribe; he dare not touch his food himself; it is put into his mouth by another person; nor can he for some days resume his accustomed occupations, or associate with his fellow-men."<sup>111</sup> The hair of the first-born of a family in particular, on account of his extreme sanctity, might be cut by nobody but a priest; and for many days after the operation had been performed the priestly barber was in a state of strict taboo. He could do nothing for himself, and might not go near anybody. He might not touch food with his hands, and no less than three persons were required to feed him. One of them prepared the food at a safe distance, took it to a certain place, and retired; a second came forward, picked up the

---

<sup>110</sup> W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, p. 87; E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 104.

<sup>111</sup> Richard A. Cruise, *Journal of a Ten Months' Residence in New Zealand* (London, 1823), pp. 283 *sq.* Compare J. Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage autour du Monde et à la recherche de la Pérouse, Histoire du Voyage* (Paris, 1832-1833), ii. 533.



victuals, carried them to another spot and left them; finally, a third, venturing into the danger zone, actually brought the food to the priest and put it into his mouth.<sup>112</sup>

The atmosphere of taboo or sanctity which thus surrounded Maori chiefs and gentlemen not only imposed many troublesome and inconvenient restraints on the men themselves, it was also frequently a source of very real danger, loss, and annoyance to other people. For example, it was a rule that a chief should not blow on a fire with his mouth, because his breath being sacred would communicate its sanctity to the fire, and if a slave or a common man afterwards cooked food at the fire or merely took a brand from it, the chief's holiness would cause that man's death.<sup>113</sup> Again, if the blood of a high chief flowed on anything, though it were but a single drop, it rendered the thing sacred to him, so that it could be used by nobody else. Thus it once happened that a party of natives came in a fine new canoe to pay their respects to an eminent chief; the great man stepped into the canoe, and in doing so he chanced to strike a splinter into his foot, which bled. That sufficed to consecrate the canoe to him. The owner at once leaped out, drew the canoe ashore opposite to the chief's house and left it there.<sup>114</sup> Again, a Maori

---

<sup>112</sup> Elsdon Best, "Maori Religion," *Report of the Twelfth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Brisbane, 1909*, p. 463.

<sup>113</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 165.

<sup>114</sup> E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 101; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 164 *sq.*

gentleman, visiting a missionary, knocked his head against a beam in the house, and his sacred blood was spilt. The natives present thereupon told the missionary that in former times his house would after such an accident have belonged to his noble visitor.<sup>115</sup> Even the cast garments of a chief had acquired, by contact with his holy body, so virulent a degree of sanctity that they would kill anybody else who might happen in ignorance to find and wear them. On a journey, when a chief found his blanket too heavy to carry, he has been known to throw it very considerably down a precipice where nobody would be likely to light on it, lest some future traveller should be struck dead by appropriating the sacred garment. Once a chief's lost tinder-box actually caused the death of several persons; for having found it and used it to light their pipes, they literally died of fright on learning the sacrilege which they had committed.<sup>116</sup> Such fatal effects consequent on the discovery of a breach of taboo were not uncommon among the Maoris. For instance, a woman once ate some peaches which, though she did not know it, had been taken from a tabooed place. As soon as she heard where the fruit had come from, the basket which she was carrying dropped from her hands, and she exclaimed in agony that the spirit (*atua*) of the chief whose sanctuary had thus been profaned would kill her. That happened in the afternoon, and next day by twelve o'clock

---

<sup>115</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 165.

<sup>116</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, pp. 164 *sq.*

she was dead.<sup>117</sup> Again, a slave, a strong man in the prime of life, once found the remains of a chief's dinner beside the road, and being hungry ate it up without asking any questions. No sooner, however, did he hear to whom the food had belonged than he was seized with the most extraordinary convulsions and cramps in the stomach, which never ceased till he died about sundown the same day. The English eyewitness who reports the case adds, that any European freethinker who should have denied that the man was killed by the chief's taboo would have been listened to by the Maoris with feelings of contempt for his ignorance and inability to understand plain and direct evidence.<sup>118</sup>

In order that a thing should be consecrated or tabooed to the exclusive use and possession of a chief, it was not necessary that his sacred blood should flow on it, or that he should merely touch it; he had only to call it his head, or his back-bone, or any other part of his body, and at once the thing, by a legal fiction, became his and might be appropriated by nobody else under pain of violating the taboo which the chief had laid upon it. For example, when a chief desired to prevent a piece of ground from being cultivated by any one but himself, he often resorted to the expedient of calling it his back-bone; after that if any man dared to set foot on the land so consecrated, the transgression was equivalent to a declaration of war. In this simple and easy fashion a chief might acquire anything that took his fancy from an axe or

---

<sup>117</sup> W. Brown, *New Zealand and its Aborigines* (London, 1845), p. 76.

<sup>118</sup> *Old New Zealand*, by a Pakeha Maori, pp. 95-97.

a canoe to a landed estate, and the rightful owner of the property dared not complain nor dispute the claim of his superior.<sup>119</sup>

Nevertheless in daily life even ordinary people used the taboo to secure their property or to acquire for themselves what had hitherto been common to all. For example, if a man found a piece of drift timber, he could make it his own by tying something to it or giving it a chop with his axe; he thereby set his taboo on the log, and as a general rule the taboo would be respected. Again, with a simple piece of flax he might bar the door of his house or his store of food; the contents of the house or store were thus rendered inviolable, nobody would meddle with them.<sup>120</sup>

It is easy to see that this form of taboo must have greatly contributed to create and confirm respect for the rights of private property. The most valuable articles might, we are told, under ordinary circumstances be left to its protection in the absence of the owners for any length of time.<sup>121</sup> Indeed so obvious and so useful is this function of taboo that one well-informed writer supposes the original purpose of the institution to have been no other than the preservation of private property;<sup>122</sup> and another observer, after eulogising its beneficent effects, declares that

---

<sup>119</sup> E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, p. 111; *Old New Zealand*, by a Pakeha Maori, pp. 137 *sqq.*; R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 168.

<sup>120</sup> R. Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui*, p. 171.

<sup>121</sup> *Old New Zealand*, by a Pakeha Maori, p. 97.

<sup>122</sup> *Old New Zealand*, by a Pakeha Maori, p. 94.

"it was undoubtedly the ordinance of a wise legislator."<sup>123</sup> But to say this is greatly to overrate the wisdom and foresight of primitive man in general and of the Polynesians in particular; it implies a fundamental misconception of the real nature and history of taboo. That curious institution was not the creation of a prudent and sagacious legislator, who devised this system of checks and restrictions for the purpose of curbing the passions of a savage race and inducing them to submit to the salutary restraints of law and morality. It was in its origin, I believe, simply a crude and barbarous form of superstition, which, like many other superstitions, has accidentally led to good results that

---

<sup>123</sup> E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 100, "Ridiculous as this custom of the *tapu* has appeared to some, and as many of its applications really are, it was, notwithstanding, a wholesome restraint, and, in many cases, almost the only one that could have been imposed; the heavy penalties attached to the violation of its laws serving in one tribe, or in several not in actual hostility with each other, as moral and legal commandments. It was undoubtedly the ordinance of a wise legislator." Compare G. F. Angas, *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand*, i. 330, "Doubtless this law is the result of some wise regulation for the protection of property and individuals, and it has in many things a beneficial influence amongst a people who have no written or regularly established code of laws of their own." To the same effect another authority on the Maoris observes: "The most politic and useful of all the superstitious institutions of the Maori people is that which involves the rites of *tapu*. It has always seemed to me that this institution, with its far-reaching ramifications, must have been the conception of a very gifted mind, for, as a governing factor, it is very superior to the Hindu institution of caste. It must, moreover, have been initiated during a period of civilisation, to which the Polynesians have long been strangers, but with which at one period of their history they were sufficiently familiar." See Lieut. – Colonel Gudgeon, "The Tipua-Kura and other Manifestations of the Spirit World," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. xv. no. 57 (March 1906), p. 49.

were never contemplated by its ignorant and foolish votaries. It is thus that in the long history of mankind things which to a contemporary spectator might seem to be almost unmitigated evils turn out in the end to be fraught with incalculable good to humanity. This experience, often repeated, enables students of the past to look forward, even in the darkest hours, with cheerful confidence to the future.

The particular superstition which lies at the root of taboo and has incidentally exercised a beneficent influence by inspiring a respect for law and morality appears to be a belief in the existence of ghosts and their power to affect the fortunes of the living for good or evil. For the ultimate sanction of the taboo, in other words, that which engaged the people to observe its commandments, was a firm persuasion that any breach of these commandments would surely and speedily be punished by an *atua* or ghost, who would afflict the sinner with a painful malady till he died. From youth upwards the Maori was bred in the faith that the souls of his dead ancestors, jealous of any infraction of the traditionary rites, would commission some spirit of their kin to enter into the transgressor's body and prey on a vital part. The visible signs of this hidden and mysterious process they fancied to be the various forms of disease. The mildest ailments were thought to be caused by the spirits of those who had known the sufferer on earth, and who accordingly were imagined to be more merciful and more reluctant to injure an old friend and relation. On the other hand the most malignant forms of disease were

attributed to the spirits of dead infants, who having never learned to love their living friends, would rend and devour the bowels of their nearest kin without compunction. With these ideas as to the origin of disease the Maoris naturally did not attempt to heal the sick through the curative properties of herbs and other drugs; their remedies consisted not in medicine but in exorcism: instead of a physician they sent for a priest, who by his spells and incantations undertook to drive the dangerous sprite from the body of the patient and to appease the ancestral spirit, whose wrath was believed to be the cause of all the mischief. If the deity proved recalcitrant and obstinately declined to accept this notice to quit, they did not hesitate to resort to the most threatening and outrageous language, sometimes telling him that they would kill and eat him, and at others that they would burn him to a cinder if he did not take himself off at once and allow the patient to recover.<sup>124</sup> Curiously enough, the spirit which preyed on the

---

<sup>124</sup> E. Shortland, *The Southern Districts of New Zealand*, pp. 30 sq., 294 sq.; *id.*, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, pp. 114 sqq.; *id.*, *Maori Religion and Mythology*, 31 sq.; W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, pp. 141 sq. Most malignant and dangerous of all appear to have been thought the spirits of abortions or still-born infants. See Elsdon Best, "The Lore of the *Whare-Kohanga*," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. xv. no. 57 (March 1906), pp. 12-15; *Reise der Oesterreichischen Fregatte Novara um die Erde, Anthropologischer Theil, Dritte Abtheilung, Ethnographie*, bearbeitet von Dr. Fr. Müller (Vienna, 1868), pp. 59 sq. Even more dangerous than the spirits of dead infants were supposed to be the spirits of human germs, which the Maoris imagined to exist in the menstrual fluid. See E. Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, pp. 115, 292; *id.*, *Maori Religion and Mythology*, pp. 107 sq. As to disease inflicted by ancestral spirits (*atuas*) for breaches of taboo, see further J. L. Nicholas, *Narrative of a Voyage to New Zealand*

vitals of a sick man was supposed to assume the form of a lizard; hence these animals, especially a beautiful green species which the Maoris called *kakariki*, were regarded with fear and horror by the natives.<sup>125</sup> Once when a Maori of Herculean thews and sinews was inadvertently shown some green lizards preserved in a bottle of spirits, his massive frame shrank back as from a mortal wound, and his face betrayed signs of extreme horror. An aged chief in the room, on learning what was the matter, cried out, "I shall die! I shall die!" and crawled away on hands and knees; while the other man gallantly interposed himself as a bulwark between the fugitive and the green gods (*atuas*) in the bottle, shifting his position adroitly so as to screen the chief till he was out of range of the deities.<sup>126</sup> An old man once assured a missionary very seriously that in attending to a sick person he had seen the god come out of the sufferer's mouth in the form of a lizard, and that from the same moment the patient began to mend and was soon

---

(London, 1817), i. 272 *sq.*, ii. 176 *sq.*; E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 105, "The breaking of the *tapu*, if the crime does not become known, is, they believe, punished by the *Atua*, who inflicts disease upon the criminal; if discovered, it is punished by him whom it regards, and often becomes the cause of war."

<sup>125</sup> Richard A. Cruise, *Journal of a Ten Months' Residence in New Zealand* (London, 1823), p. 320; J. Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage autour du Monde et à la recherche de la Pérouse, Histoire du Voyage* (Paris, 1832-1833), ii. 517; W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, pp. 141 *sq.*; E. Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, ii. 117; Elsdon Best, "Maori Medical Lore," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. xiii. no. 4 (December 1904), p. 228. As to the superstitious veneration of lizards among the peoples of the Malay-Polynesian stock, see G. A. Wilken, *Verspreide Geschriften* (The Hague, 1912), iv. 125 *sqq.*

<sup>126</sup> G. F. Angas, *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand*, ii. 67.



restored to perfect health.<sup>127</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, p. 142.

## § 6. *Conclusion*

If now we attempt to sum up the effects which the belief in human immortality exercised on the life of the Maoris we may perhaps conclude that these effects were partly good and partly evil. On the one hand by ascribing to the chiefs the special protection of the powerful spirits of the dead, it invested the governing class with a degree of authority to which on merely natural or rational grounds they could have laid no claim; hence it tended to strengthen the respect for government and to ensure the maintenance of law and order. Moreover, by lending a supernatural sanction to the rights of private property among all classes it further contributed to abolish one of the most fruitful sources of discord and crime in the community and thereby to foster economic progress, which cannot exist without some measure of peace and security for life and possessions. These were great gains, and so far as the faith in immortality helped to win them for the Maoris, it certainly ameliorated their condition and furthered the cause of civilisation among them. But on the other hand the belief in the essential malignancy of the spirits of the dead and in their great power to harm the living added a host of purely imaginary terrors to the real evils with which man's existence on earth is naturally and inevitably encompassed: it imposed a regular system of needless and vexatious restrictions on social intercourse and the simplest acts of daily life; and it

erected an almost insuperable barrier to the growth of science, and particularly of that beneficent branch of science which has for its object the alleviation of human suffering, since by concentrating the whole attention of the people on a false and absurd theory of supernatural agency it diverted them from that fruitful investigation of natural causes which alone can strengthen and extend man's control over matter. This was a heavy toll to pay for the advantages incidental to a belief in immortality; and if we were asked to strike a balance between the good and the evil which that belief entailed on the Maoris, we might well hesitate to say to which side the scales of judgment should incline.

# CHAPTER II

## THE BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY AMONG THE TONGANS

### § 1. *The Tonga or Friendly Islands*

The Tonga or Friendly Islands form an archipelago of about a hundred small islands situated in the South Pacific, between 18° and 22° South latitude and between 173° and 176° East longitude. The archipelago falls into three groups of islands, which lie roughly north and south of each other. The southern is the Tonga group, the central is the Haabai or Haapai group, and the northern is the Vavau group. In the southern group the principal islands are Tongataboo and Eua; in the central group, Namuka and Lifuka (Lefooga); in the northern group, Vavau. The largest island of the archipelago, Tongataboo, is about twenty-two miles long by eight miles wide; next to it in importance are Vavau and Eua, and there are seven or eight other islands not less than five miles in length. The rest are mere islets. Most of the islands are surrounded by dangerous coral reefs, and though the soil is deep and very fertile, there is a great lack of flowing water; running streams are almost unknown. Most of the islands consist of coral and are very low; the highest point of

Tongataboo is only about sixty feet above the level of the sea.<sup>128</sup> However, some of the islands are lofty and of volcanic formation. When Captain Cook visited the islands in 1773 and 1777 there was apparently only one active volcano in the archipelago; it was situated in the small island of Tufoa, which lies to the west of Namuka. Cook saw the island smoking at the distance of ten leagues, and was told by the natives that it had never ceased smoking in their memory, nor had they any tradition of its inactivity.<sup>129</sup> In the hundred and fifty years which have elapsed since Cook's time volcanic action has greatly increased in the archipelago. A considerable eruption took place at Tufoa in 1885: the small but lofty island of Kao (5000 feet high) has repeatedly been in eruption: the once fertile and populous island

---

<sup>128</sup> Horatio Hale, *U.S. Exploring Expedition, Ethnography and Philology* (Philadelphia, 1846), pp. 4 *sq.*; F. H. H. Guillemard, *Australasia*, ii. (London, 1894) pp. 497, 499. As to the scarcity of running water, see Captain James Cook, *Voyages* (London, 1809), iii. 206, v. 389. He was told that there was a running stream on the high island of Kao. As to the soil of Tongataboo, see Captain James Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean* (London, 1899), p. 280, "The soil is everywhere prolific, and consists of a fine rich mould, upon an average about fourteen or fifteen inches deep, free from stones, except near the beach, where coral rocks appear above the surface. Beneath this mould is a red loam four or five inches thick; next is a very strong blue clay in small quantities; and in some places has been found a black earth, which emits a very fragrant smell resembling bergamot, but it soon evaporates when exposed to the air."

<sup>129</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 277. For descriptions of the volcano see W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, Second Edition (London, 1818), i. 240 *sq.*; and especially Thomas West, *Ten Years in South-Eastern Polynesia* (London, 1865), pp. 89 *sqq.* Both these writers ascended the volcano.

of Amargura, or Funua-lai, in about 18° South latitude, was suddenly devastated in 1846 or 1847 by a terrific eruption, which reduced it to a huge mass of lava and burnt sand, without a leaf or blade of grass of any kind. Warned by violent earthquakes, which preceded the explosion, the inhabitants escaped in time to Vavau. The roar of the volcano was heard one hundred and thirty miles off; and an American ship sailed through a shower of ashes, rolling like great volumes of smoke, for forty miles. For months afterwards the glare of the tremendous fires was visible night after night in the island of Vavau, situated forty miles away.<sup>130</sup> Another dreadful eruption occurred on the 24th of June 1853, in Niua Foöu, an island about two hundred miles to the north-north-west of Funua-lai. The entire island seems to be the circular ridge of an ancient and vast volcano, of which the crater is occupied by a lake of clear calm water. On the occasion in question the earth was rent in the centre of a native village; the flames of a new volcano burst forth from the fissure, belching a sea of molten lava, under which ten miles of country, once covered with the richest verdure, have been encased in solid rock, averaging from eight to fifteen feet in thickness. The lake boiled like a cauldron, and long after the more powerful action of the volcano had ceased, the waters of the lake were often rent by tongues of flame, which shot up from them as well as from the clefts in the

---

<sup>130</sup> Thomas West, *op. cit.* pp. 79 *sqq.*; J. E. Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise among the Islands of the Western Pacific* (London, 1853), p. 120; F. H. Guillemard, *Australasia*, ii, p. 497.

surrounding precipices.<sup>131</sup> In the island of Late, lying to the west of Vavau, a new volcano broke out with great violence in 1854; the roar of the volcano was heard at Lifuka, fifty miles away; the immense pillar of smoke was visible by day and the fire by night. The central portion of one side of the mountain (about 2500 feet high) was completely blown out by the explosion.<sup>132</sup>

But not only have new volcanoes appeared or long extinct volcanoes resumed their activity within the last century in the existing islands, new islands have been formed by volcanic action. One such island, emitting volumes of fire, smoke, and steam, issued from the surface of the sea, and was discovered by the missionary ship *John Wesley* in August 1857; its appearance had been heralded some years before by a strange agitation of the sea and by fire and smoke ascending from the water. This new volcanic island lies about midway between the two other volcanic islands of Tufoa and Late.<sup>133</sup> A third new volcanic island seems to have been formed to the south of Tufoa in 1886.<sup>134</sup> Another new island was thrown up from the sea about the beginning of the twentieth century; it was partly washed away again, but has again materially increased in size.<sup>135</sup> It is noteworthy that the

---

<sup>131</sup> T. West, *op. cit.* pp. 82 *sqq.*; George Brown, *Melanesians and Polynesians* (London, 1910), pp. 4 *sq.*

<sup>132</sup> T. West, *op. cit.* pp. 88 *sq.*

<sup>133</sup> T. West, *op. cit.* pp. 92-93.

<sup>134</sup> I infer this from the entry "Volcanic island, 1886," in Mr. Guillemard's map of the Pacific Islands. He does not mention it in the text (*Australasia*, ii. p. 497).

<sup>135</sup> George Brown, *Melanesians and Polynesians*, p. 6.

volcanoes, new or old, all occur in a line running roughly north and south at a considerable distance to the west of, but parallel to, the main body of the Tongan archipelago. They clearly indicate the existence of submarine volcanic action on a great scale. Even in the coralline islands traces of volcanic agency have come to light in the shape of pumice-stones, which have been dug out of the solid coral rock at considerable depths.<sup>136</sup> In the lofty island of Eua an extensive dyke of basalt is found inland underlying the coral formation.<sup>137</sup>

These facts lend some countenance to the view that the whole archipelago forms the summit or visible ridge of a long chain of submarine volcanoes, and that the islands, even those of coralline formation, have been raised to their present level by volcanic action.<sup>138</sup> That very acute observer, Captain Cook, or one of the naturalists of the expedition, noticed that in the highest parts of Tongataboo, which he estimated roughly at a hundred feet above sea-level, he often met with "the same coral rock, which is found at the shore, projecting above the surface, and perforated and cut into all those inequalities which are usually seen in rocks that lie within the wash of the tide."<sup>139</sup> Again, on ascending the comparatively lofty island of Eua, Captain Cook observes: "We were now about two or three hundred feet above the level of

---

<sup>136</sup> T. West, *op. cit.* p. 94.

<sup>137</sup> George Brown, *op. cit.* p. 4.

<sup>138</sup> T. West, *op. cit.* 95.

<sup>139</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 344.



the sea, and yet, even here, the coral was perforated into all the holes and inequalities which usually diversify the surface of this substance within the reach of the tide. Indeed, we found the same coral till we began to approach the summits of the highest hills; and, it was remarkable, that these were chiefly composed of a yellowish, soft, sandy stone."<sup>140</sup> In the island of Vavau it was remarked by Captain Waldegrave that the coral rock rises many feet above the present level of the sea, and he adds: "The action of fire is visible on it, and we saw several instances of its crystallisation."<sup>141</sup>

The view that even the coralline islands of the Tongan archipelago have been elevated by volcanic agency is not necessarily inconsistent with Darwin's theory that coral reefs are formed during periods of subsidence, not of elevation;<sup>142</sup> for it is quite possible that, after being raised ages ago by volcanic forces, these islands may be now slowly subsiding, and that it has been during the period of subsidence that they have become incrustated by coral reefs. Yet the occurrence of coral rocks, bearing all the marks of marine action, at considerable heights above the sea, appears indubitably to prove that such a general subsidence has been in some places varied by at least a temporary elevation.

---

<sup>140</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 381.

<sup>141</sup> Captain the Hon. W. Waldegrave, R.N., "Extracts from a Private Journal," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, iii. (1833) p. 193.

<sup>142</sup> Charles Darwin, *Journal of Researches, etc., during the Voyage of the "Beagle"* (London, 1912), pp. 471 *sqq.*; Sir Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, Twelfth Edition (London, 1875), ii. 602 *sqq.*; T. H. Huxley, *Physiography* (London, 1881), pp. 256 *sqq.*

In thus postulating elevation by volcanic action, as well as subsidence, to explain the formation of the Tongan islands I am glad to have the support of a good observer, the late Rev. Dr. George Brown, who spent the best years of his life in the Pacific, where his experience both of the larger and the smaller islands was varied and extensive. He writes: "I have seen islands composed of true coralline limestone, the cliffs of which rise so perpendicularly from the blue ocean that the natives have to ascend and descend by ladders in going from the ocean to the top, or vice versa. A large steamer can go so close to some of these cliffs that she could be moored alongside of them in calm weather. It is not at all improbable, I think, that in these islands we have the two factors in the formation of islands, viz. subsidence, during which these immense cliffs were formed, and subsequent upheaval. This is the only way, I think, in which we can account for these perpendicular cliffs in the midst of deep blue ocean."<sup>143</sup>

I have dwelt at what may seem undue length on the volcanic phenomena of the Tonga islands because the occurrence of such phenomena in savage lands has generally influenced the beliefs and customs of the natives, quite apart from the possibility, which should always be borne in mind, that man first obtained fire from an active volcano. But even if, as has been suggested, the Tonga islands formed the starting-point from which the

---

<sup>143</sup> George Brown, *Melanesians and Polynesians* (London, 1910), pp. 13 *sq.*

Polynesian race spread over the islands of the Pacific,<sup>144</sup> it seems very unlikely that the Polynesians first learned the use of fire when they reached the Tongan archipelago. More probably they were acquainted, not only with the use of fire, but with the mode of making it long before they migrated from their original home in Southern Asia. A people perfectly ignorant of that prime necessity could hardly have made their way across such wide stretches of sea and land. But it is quite possible that the myth which the Tongans, in common with many other Polynesians, tell of the manner in which their ancestors procured their first fire, was suggested to them by the spectacle of a volcano in eruption. They say that the hero Maui Kijikiji, the Polynesian Prometheus, first procured fire for men by descending into the bowels of the earth and stealing it from his father, Maui Atalanga, who had kept it there jealously concealed.<sup>145</sup>

---

<sup>144</sup> John Crawfurd, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Malay Language* (London, 1852), *Preliminary Dissertation*, p. 253, quoted by Thomas West, *Ten Years in South-Central Polynesia*, pp. 248 *sqq.* But the more usual view is that the starting-point of the dispersal of the Polynesian race in the Pacific was Samoa.

<sup>145</sup> Sarah S. Farmer, *Tonga and the Friendly Islands* (London, 1855), pp. 134-137; Le P. Reiter, "Traditions Tonguiennes," *Anthropos*, xii. – xiii. (1917-1918), pp. 1026-1040; E. E. Collcott, "Legends from Tonga," *Folk-lore*, xxxii. (1921) pp. 45-48. Miss Farmer probably obtained the story from the Rev. John Thomas, who was a missionary in the islands for twenty-five years (from 1826 to 1850). She acknowledges her obligations to him for information on the religion of the natives (p. 125). For the period of Mr. Thomas's residence in Tonga, see Miss Farmer's book, p. 161. The story is told in closely similar forms in many other islands of the Pacific. For some of the evidence see my edition of Apollodorus, *The Library*, vol. ii. p. 331 *sqq.*

## § 2. *The Tonga Islanders, their Character, Mode of Life, and Government*

Physically the Tonga islanders are fine specimens of the Polynesian race and generally impress travellers very favourably. Captain Cook, the first to observe them closely, describes them as very strong and well made, some of them really handsome, and many of them with truly European features and genuine Roman noses.<sup>146</sup> At a later date Commodore Wilkes, the commander of the United States Exploring Expedition, speaks of them as "some of the finest specimens of the human race that can well be imagined, surpassing in symmetry and grace those of all the other groups we had visited"; and farther on he says: "A larger proportion of fine-looking people is seldom to be seen, in any portion of the globe; they are a shade lighter than any of the other islanders; their countenances are generally of the European cast; they are tall and well made, and their muscles are well developed."<sup>147</sup> Still later, in his account of the voyage of the *Challenger*, Lord George Campbell expressed himself even more warmly: "There are no people in the world," he says, "who strike one at first so much as these Friendly Islanders. Their clear, light, copper-brown coloured skins, yellow and curly hair, good-

---

<sup>146</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 401 *sq.*

<sup>147</sup> Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, New Edition (New York, 1851), iii. 10, 25.

humoured, handsome faces, their *tout ensemble*, formed a novel and splendid picture of the genus *homo*; and, as far as physique and appearance go, they gave one certainly an impression of being a superior race to ours."<sup>148</sup> A Catholic missionary observes that "the natives of Tonga hardly differ from Europeans in stature, features, and colour; they are a little sallower, which may be set down to the high temperature of the climate. It is difficult to have a very fresh complexion with thirty degrees of heat, Réaumur, as we have it during four or five months of the year."<sup>149</sup> In appearance the Tonga islanders closely resemble the Samoans, their neighbours on the north; some find them a little lighter, but others somewhat darker in colour than the Samoans.<sup>150</sup> According to the French explorer, Dumont d'Urville, who passed about a month in Tongataboo in 1827, the Polynesian race in Tonga exhibits less admixture with the swarthy Melanesian race than in Tahiti and New Zealand, there being far fewer individuals of stunted stature, flat noses, and frizzly hair among the Tongans than among the other Polynesians.<sup>151</sup> Even among

---

<sup>148</sup> Quoted by F. H. H. Guillemard, *Australasia*, ii. p. 488.

<sup>149</sup> Jérôme Grange, in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xvii. (1845) p. 8.

<sup>150</sup> Horatio Hale, *United States Exploring Expedition, Ethnography and Philology*, pp. 10 sq.; Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, iii. 25; J. E. Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise among the Islands of the Western Pacific*, pp. 116, 155. The naturalist J. R. Forster thought the Tongans darker than the Tahitians. See his *Observations made during a Voyage round the World* (London, 1778), p. 234.

<sup>151</sup> J. Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage de la corvette Astrolabe, Histoire du Voyage*, iv. (Paris, 1832) p. 229.

the Tongans the physical superiority of the chiefs to the common people is said to be conspicuous; they are taller, comelier, and lighter in colour than the lower orders. Some would explain the difference by a difference in upbringing, noblemen being more carefully nursed, better fed, and less exposed to the sun than commoners;<sup>152</sup> but it is possible that they come of a different and better stock.

Intellectually the Tongans are reported to "surpass all the other South Sea islanders in their mental development, showing great skill in the structure of their dwellings and the manufacture of their implements, weapons, and dress."<sup>153</sup> They are bold navigators,<sup>154</sup> and Captain Cook observes that "nothing can be a more demonstrative evidence of their ingenuity than the construction and make of their canoes, which, in point of neatness and workmanship, exceed everything of this kind we saw in this sea."<sup>155</sup> However, the Tongans appear to have acquired much of their skill in the art of building and rigging canoes through intercourse with the Fijians, their neighbours to the west, who, though their inferiors in seamanship and the spirit of marine adventure, originally surpassed them in naval architecture.<sup>156</sup>

---

<sup>152</sup> J. E. Erskine, *op. cit.* pp. 155 *sq.*; Sarah S. Farmer, *Tonga and the Friendly Islands*, p. 140.

<sup>153</sup> F. H. H. Guillemard, *Australasia*, ii. pp. 498 *sq.*

<sup>154</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 264.

<sup>155</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, iii. 197.

<sup>156</sup> W. Mariner, *The Tonga Islands*, ii. 263 *sqq.*

Indeed we are told that all the large Tongan canoes are built in Fiji, because the Tongan islands do not furnish any timber fit for the purpose. Hence a number of Tongans are constantly employed in the windward or eastern islands of the Fiji group building these large canoes, a hundred feet or more in length, a process which, it is said, lasts six or seven years.<sup>157</sup> The debt which in this respect the Tongans owe to the Fijians was necessarily unknown to Captain Cook, since he never reached the Fijian islands and knew of them only by report, though he met and questioned a few Fijians in Tongataboo.<sup>158</sup>

When Captain Cook visited the Tonga islands he found the land almost everywhere in a high state of cultivation. He says that "cultivated roots and fruits being their principal support, this requires their constant attention to agriculture, which they pursue very diligently, and seem to have brought almost to as great perfection as circumstances will permit."<sup>159</sup> The plants which they chiefly cultivated and which furnished them with their staple foods were yams and plantains. These were disposed in plantations enclosed by neat fences of reeds about six feet high and intersected by good smooth roads or lanes, which were shaded from the scorching sun by fruit-trees.<sup>160</sup> Walking on one of these roads Cook tells us, "I thought I was transported into

---

<sup>157</sup> J. E. Erskine, *op. cit.* p. 132.

<sup>158</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 396 *sq.*

<sup>159</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 411 *sq.*

<sup>160</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, iii. 184, 195, v. 274, 316, 357, 416.

the most fertile plains in Europe. There was not an inch of waste ground; the roads occupied no more space than was absolutely necessary; the fences did not take up above four inches each; and even this was not wholly lost, for in many places were planted some useful trees or plants. It was everywhere the same, change of place altered not the scene. Nature, assisted by a little art, nowhere appears in more splendour than at this isle."<sup>161</sup> Interspersed among these plantations irregularly were bread-fruit trees and coco-nut palms, of which the palms in particular, raising their tufted heads in air above the sea of perpetual verdure, formed a pleasing ornament of the landscape.<sup>162</sup> There were no towns or villages; most of the houses were built in the plantations, generally surrounded by trees or ornamental shrubs, whose fragranc y perfumed the air.<sup>163</sup>

When Captain Cook surveyed this rich and beautiful country, the islands were and had long been at peace, so that the natives were able to devote themselves without distraction to the labour of tilling the soil and providing in other ways for the necessities of life. Unhappily shortly after his visit to the islands wars broke out among the inhabitants and continued to rage more or less intermittently for many years. Even the introduction of Christianity in the early part of the nineteenth century, far from assuaging the strife, only added bitterness to it by furnishing a

---

<sup>161</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, iii. 184.

<sup>162</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 274, 357.

<sup>163</sup> *Id.* iii. 196.



fresh pretext for hostilities, in which apparently the Christians were sometimes the aggressors with the connivance or even the encouragement of the missionaries.<sup>164</sup> In consequence cultivation was neglected and large portions of land were allowed to lie waste.<sup>165</sup>

Like all the Polynesians the natives of Tonga were ignorant of the metals, and their only tools were made of stone, bone, shells, shark's teeth, and rough fish-skins. They fashioned axes, or rather adzes, out of a smooth black stone, which they procured from the volcanic island of Tufoa; they used shells as knives; they constructed augers out of shark's teeth, fixed on handles; and they made rasps of the rough skin of a fish, fastened on flat pieces of wood. With such imperfect tools they built their canoes

---

<sup>164</sup> This is affirmed by the Catholic missionary, Jérôme Grange (*Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xvii. (1845) pp. 15 *sqq.*), and though he writes with a manifest prejudice against his rivals the Protestant missionaries, his evidence is confirmed by Commodore Wilkes, the commander of the United States Exploring Expedition, who on his visit to Tongataboo found the Christians and heathens about to go to war with each other. He attempted to make peace between them, but in vain. The heathen were ready to accept his overtures, but "it was evident that King George and his advisers, and, indeed, the whole Christian party, seemed to be desirous of continuing the war, either to force the heathen to become Christians, or to carry it on to extermination, which the number of their warriors made them believe they had the power to effect. I felt, in addition, that the missionaries were thwarting my exertions by permitting warlike preparations during the pending of the negotiations." See Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, iii. 7 *sqq.* (my quotation is from p. 16). The story is told from the point of view of the Protestant (Wesleyan) missionaries by Miss S. S. Farmer, *Tonga and The Friendly Islands*, pp. 293 *sqq.*

<sup>165</sup> John Williams, *Narrative of Missionary Enterprise in the South Seas* (London, 1838), p. 264; Charles Wilkes, *op. cit.* iii. 32 *sq.*

and houses, reared the massive tombs of their kings; and did all their other work.<sup>166</sup> The wonder is that with implements so imperfect they could accomplish so much and raise themselves to a comparatively high level among savages.

A feature of the Tongan character in which the islanders evinced their superiority to most of the Polynesians was their regard for women. In most savage tribes which practise agriculture the labour of tilling the fields falls in great measure on the female sex, but it was not so in Tonga. There the women never tilled the ground nor did any hard work, though they occupied themselves with the manufacture of bark-cloth, mats, and other articles of domestic use. Natives of Fiji, Samoa, and Hawaii, who resided in Tonga, used to remark on the easy lives led by the Tongan women, and remonstrated with the men on the subject, saying that as men underwent hardships and dangers in war and other masculine pursuits, so women ought to be made to labour in the fields and to toil for their living. But the Tongan men said that "it is not *gnale fafine* (consistent with the feminine character) to let them do hard work; women ought only to do what is feminine: who loves a masculine woman? besides, men are stronger, and therefore it is but proper that they should do the hard labour."<sup>167</sup>

---

<sup>166</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, iii. 199, v. 414 *sq.* Captain Cook says that the only piece of iron he found among the Tongans was a small broad awl, which had been made of a nail. But this nail they must have procured either from a former navigator, perhaps Tasman, or from a wreck.

<sup>167</sup> W. Mariner, *The Tonga Islands*, ii. 287. Compare *id.* ii. 124, note \*; Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 410 *sq.*

Further, it is to the credit of the Tongans that, unlike many other Polynesians, they were not generally cannibals, and indeed for the most part held in abhorrence the practice of eating human bodies. Still young warriors occasionally devoured the corpses of their enemies in imitation of the Fijians, imagining that in so doing they manifested a fierce, warlike, and manly spirit. On one occasion, returning from such a repast, they were shunned by every one, especially by the women, who upbraided them, saying, "Away! you are a man-eater."<sup>168</sup>

The government of the Tongan islanders was eminently monarchical and aristocratic. A strict subordination of ranks was established which has been aptly compared to the feudal system. At the head of the social edifice were two chiefs who bore some resemblance to the Emperor and the Pope of mediaeval Europe, the one being the civil and military head of the State, while the other embodied the supreme spiritual power. Nominally the spiritual chief, called the Tooitonga, ranked above the civil chief or king, who paid him formal homage; but, as usually happens in such cases, the real government was in the hands of the secular rather than of the religious monarch. The Tooitonga was acknowledged to be descended from one of the chief gods; he is spoken of by Mariner, our principal authority, as a divine chief of the highest rank, and he is said to have enjoyed divine honours. The first-fruits of the year were offered to him, and it was supposed that if this ceremony were neglected, the vengeance

---

<sup>168</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 194; compare *id.* i. 317-320.

of the gods would fall in a signal manner upon the people. Yet he had no power or authority in matters pertaining to the civil king.<sup>169</sup> The existence of such a double kingship, with a corresponding distribution of temporal and spiritual functions, is not uncommon in more advanced societies; its occurrence among a people so comparatively low in the scale of culture as the Tongans is remarkable.

Below the two great chiefs or kings were many subordinate chiefs, and below them again the social ranks descended in a succession of sharply marked gradations to the peasants, who tilled the ground, and whose lives and property were entirely at the mercy of the chiefs.<sup>170</sup> Yet the social system as a whole seems to have worked well and smoothly. "It does not, indeed, appear," says Captain Cook, "that any of the most civilised nations have ever exceeded this people, in the great order observed on all occasions; in ready compliance with the commands of their chiefs; and in the harmony that subsists throughout all ranks, and unites them, as if they were all one man, informed with, and directed by, the same principle."<sup>171</sup> According to the American

---

<sup>169</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 424 *sqq.*; W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 74 *sqq.*, 132 *sqq.*; J. Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage de l'Astrolabe, Histoire du Voyage*, iv. (Paris, 1832) pp. 90 *sq.*, "Si tout était suivant l'ordre légal à Tonga-Tabou, on verrait d'abord à la tête de la société le toui-tonga qui est le véritable souverain nominal des îles Tonga, et qui jouit même des honneurs divins."

<sup>170</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 424 *sq.*, 429 *sq.*; W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 83 *sqq.*

<sup>171</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 426.

ethnographer, Horatio Hale, the mass of the people in the Tonga islands had no political rights, and their condition in that respect was much inferior to that of commoners in the Samoan islands, since in Tonga the government was much stronger and better organized, as he puts it, for the purpose of oppression. On the other hand, he admitted that government in Tonga was milder than in Tahiti, and infinitely preferable to the debasing despotism which prevailed in Hawaii or the Sandwich Islands.<sup>172</sup>

---

<sup>172</sup> Horatio Hale, *United States Exploring Expedition, Ethnography and Philology*, p. 32.

### § 3. *The Tongan Religion: its General Principles*

For our knowledge of the religion and the social condition of the Tongans before they came under European influence, we are indebted chiefly to an English sailor, William Mariner, who lived as a captive among them for about four years, from 1806 to 1810.<sup>173</sup> His account of the natives, carefully elicited from him and published by a medical doctor, Mr. John Martin, M.D., is one of the most valuable descriptions of a savage people which we possess. Mariner was a good observer and endowed with an excellent memory, which enabled him to retain and record his experiences after his return to England. He spoke the Tongan language, and he was a special favourite of the two Tongan kings, named Finow, who reigned successively in Tonga during his residence in the islands. The kings befriended and protected him, so that he had the best opportunities for becoming acquainted with the customs and beliefs of the people. His observations have been confirmed from independent sources, and we have every reason to regard them as trustworthy. So far as we can judge, they are a simple record of facts, unbiassed by theory or prejudice. In the following notice of the Tongan religion and doctrine of the

---

<sup>173</sup> Mariner was captured by the Tongans on December 1, 1806, and he escaped from the islands in 1810, apparently in November, but the exact date of his escape is not given. See W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 43, ii. 15 *sqq.*, 68, 69.

human soul I shall draw chiefly on the evidence of Mariner.

According to him, the religion of the Tonga islanders rests, or rather used to rest, on the following notions.<sup>174</sup>

They believed that there are *hotooas*,<sup>175</sup> gods, or superior beings, who have the power of dispensing good and evil to mankind, according to their merit, but of whose origin the Tongans formed no idea, rather supposing them to be eternal.

They believed that there are other *hotooas* or gods, who are the souls of all deceased nobles and *matabooles*, that is, the companions, ministers, and counsellors of the chiefs, who form a sort of inferior nobility.<sup>176</sup> The souls of all these dead men were held to possess a power of dispensing good and evil to mankind like the power of the superior gods, but in a lesser degree.

They believed that there are besides several *hotooa pow*, or mischievous gods, who never dispense good, but only petty evils and troubles, not as a punishment, but indiscriminately to anybody, from a purely mischievous disposition.

They believed that all these superior beings, although they may perhaps have had a beginning, will have no end.

They believed that the world also is of uncertain origin, having coexisted with the gods. The sky, which they regard as solid, the

---

<sup>174</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 97 *sqq.*

<sup>175</sup> The word is commonly spelled *atua* in the Polynesian languages. See E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary* (Wellington, N.Z. 1891), pp. 30 *sq.*, who gives *otua* as the Tongan form.

<sup>176</sup> As to the *matabooles* see W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 84 *sqq.*

heavenly bodies, and the ocean were in being before the habitable earth. The Tonga islands were drawn up out of the depth of the sea by the god Tangaloa one day when he was fishing with a line and a hook.

They believed that mankind, according to a partial tradition, came originally from Bolotoo, the chief residence of the gods, a fabulous island situated to the north-west of the Tongan archipelago. The first men and women consisted of two brothers, with their wives and attendants. They were commanded by the god Tangaloa to take up their abode in the Tonga islands, but of their origin or creation the Tongans professed to know nothing.<sup>177</sup>

They believed that all human evil was inflicted by the gods upon mankind on account of some neglect of religious duty, whether the neglect is the fault of the sufferers or of the chief whom they serve. In like manner the Tongans apparently referred all human good to the gods, regarding it as a reward bestowed by the divine beings on men who punctually discharged the offices of religion.<sup>178</sup>

They believed that nobles had souls, which existed after death in Bolotoo, not according to their moral merit, but according to

---

<sup>177</sup> According to a later account, "on Ata were born the first men, three in number, formed from a worm bred by a rotten plant, whose seed was brought by Tangaloa from heaven. These three were afterwards provided by the Maui with wives from the Underworld." See E. E. V. Collocot, "Notes on Tongan Religion," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, xxx. (1921) p. 154.

<sup>178</sup> So apparently we must interpret Mariner's brief statement "and the contrary of good" (*Tonga Islands*, ii. 98).



their rank in this world; these had power like that of the original gods, but less in degree. The *matabooles*, or ministers of the nobles, also went after death to Bolotoo, where they existed as *matabooles*, or ministers of the gods, but they had not, like the gods and the souls of dead noblemen, the power of inspiring the priests with superhuman knowledge. Some thought that the *mooas*, who ranked next below the *matabooles* in the social hierarchy, also went after death to Bolotoo; but this was a matter of great doubt. As for the *tooas* or commoners, who formed the lowest rung in the social ladder, they had either no souls at all or only such as dissolved with the body after death, which consequently ended their sentient existence.

They believed that the human soul during life is not an essence distinct from the body, but only the more ethereal part of the corporeal frame, and that the moment after death it exists in Bolotoo with the form and likeness of the body which it had on earth.

They believed that the primitive gods and deceased nobles sometimes appear visibly to mankind to warn or to afford comfort and advice; and that the primitive gods also sometimes come into the living bodies of lizards, porpoises, and a species of water snake, hence these animals are much respected. When the gods thus entered into the bodies of porpoises, it was for the sake of safeguarding canoes or for other beneficent purposes.

They believed that the two personages in the Tonga islands known by the titles of Tooitonga and Veachi were descendants

in a right line from two chief gods, and that all respect and veneration are therefore due to them.

They believed that some persons are favoured with the inspiration of the gods, and that while the inspiration lasts the god actually exists in the body of the inspired person or priest, who is then capable of prophesying.

They believe that human merit or virtue consists chiefly in paying respect to the gods, nobles, and aged persons; in defending one's hereditary rights; in honour, justice, patriotism, friendship, meekness, modesty, fidelity of married women, parental and filial love, observance of all religious ceremonies, patience in suffering, forbearance of temper, and so on.

They believed that all rewards for virtue or punishments for vice happen to men in this world only, and come immediately from the gods.

They believed that several acts which civilised nations regard as crimes are, under certain circumstances, matters of indifference. Such acts included the taking of revenge on an enemy and the killing of a servant who had given provocation, or indeed the killing of anybody else, always provided that the victim were not a very superior chief or noble. Further, among indifferent acts was reckoned rape, unless it were committed on a married woman or on one whom the offender was bound to respect on the score of her superior rank. Finally, the list of venial offences included theft, unless the stolen object were consecrated property; for in that case the action became sacrilege and was, as

we shall see presently, a very serious crime.

They believed that omens are the direct intimations of the future vouchsafed by the gods to men. "Charms or superstitious ceremonies to bring evil upon any one are considered for the most part infallible, as being generally effective means to dispose the gods to accord with the curse or evil wish of the malevolent invoker; to perform these charms is considered cowardly and unmanly, but does not constitute a crime."<sup>179</sup> One such charm consisted in hiding on a grave (*fytoea*) some portion of the wearing apparel of an inferior relation of the deceased. The person whose garment was so hidden was believed to sicken and die. An equally effectual way of working the charm and ensuring the death of the victim was to bury the garment in the house consecrated to the tutelary god of the family. But when a grave was made use of for the malignant purpose, it was thought essential that the deceased should be of a rank superior to that of the person against whom the charm was directed; otherwise it was supposed that the charm would have no effect.<sup>180</sup> In either case the fatal result was clearly held to be brought about by the power of the ghost or of the god, who used the garment as an instrument for putting the charm in operation. These charms or superstitious ceremonies are what we should now call magical rites, and they were apparently supposed to effect their purpose indirectly by constraining the gods to carry

---

<sup>179</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 101.

<sup>180</sup> W. Mariner, *op. cit.* i. 424, note \*.

out the malevolent intention of the magician. If I am right in so interpreting them, we seem driven to conclude that in Tonga magic was supposed to be ineffectual without the co-operation of the gods, although its power to compel them was deemed for the most part irresistible. Even so its assumed dependence on the consent, albeit the reluctant consent, of the deities implies a certain decadence of magic and a growing predominance of religion. Moreover, the moral reprehension of such practices for the injury of enemies is another sign that among the Tongans magic was being relegated to that position of a black art which it generally occupies among more civilised peoples. Be that as it may, certain it is that we hear extremely little about the practice of magic among the Tongans.

## § 4. *The Primary or Non-human Gods*

Such are, or rather used to be, the principal articles of the old Tongan creed. We may now examine some of them a little more at large. But first we may observe that on this showing the Tongans were an eminently religious people. They traced all the good and ill in human affairs to the direct intervention of the gods, who rewarded or punished mankind for their deeds in this life, bestowing the reward or inflicting the punishment in the present world and not deferring either to a distant and more or less uncertain future in a world beyond the grave. Thus with the Tongans the fear of the gods was a powerful incentive to lead a virtuous life; morality was placed under the immediate guardianship of the deities. It is true that according to their notions morality consisted largely in the performance of religious ceremonies, but it was by no means limited to a simple observance of the prescribed rites; for we have seen that their conception of a virtuous life included compliance with the dictates of justice, modesty, and friendship, the fidelity of wives to their husbands, the mutual affection of parents and children, patience in suffering, and other modes of conduct which we too should not hesitate to rank among the virtues.

When we consider the nature of the Tongan gods, we perceive that they are sharply discriminated into two classes, namely, the primitive and superior gods on the one side and the secondary

and inferior gods on the other side. The primitive and superior gods are those who have always been gods and whose origin and beginning are unknown; the secondary and inferior gods are the souls of dead men, who consequently have not always been gods, because they were human beings before death elevated them to the rank of deities. The distinction between these two classes of gods is highly important, not merely for Tongan religion in particular, but for the history of religion in general. For whatever we may think of Euhemerism as a universal explanation of the gods, there can be no doubt that in many lands the ranks of the celestial hierarchy have been largely recruited by the ghosts of men of flesh and blood. But there appears to be a general tendency to allow the origin of the human gods to fall into the background and to confuse them with the true original deities, who from the beginning have always been deities and nothing else. The tendency may sometimes be accentuated by a deliberate desire to cast a veil over the humble birth and modest beginning of these now worshipful beings; but probably the obliteration of the distinction between the two classes of divinities is usually a simple result of oblivion and the lapse of time. Once a man is dead, his figure, which bulked so large and so clear to his contemporaries, begins to fade and melt away into something vague and indistinct, until, if he was a person of no importance, he is totally forgotten; or, if he was one whose actions or thoughts deeply influenced his fellows for good or evil, his memory lingers in after generations, growing ever dimmer and it may be looming

ever larger through the long vista of the ages, as the evening mist appears to magnify the orb of the descending sun. Thus naturally and insensibly, as time goes on, our mortal nature fades or brightens into the immortal and divine.

As our subject is the belief in immortality and the worship of the dead, we are not directly concerned with the original Tongan deities who were believed never to have been men. But since their functions and worship appear to have been in certain respects closely analogous to those of the inferior deities, the souls of the dead, some notice of them may not be out of place, if it helps to a fuller understanding of what we may call the human gods. Besides, we must always bear in mind that some at least of the so-called original gods may have been men, whose history and humanity had been forgotten. We can hardly doubt that the celestial hierarchy has often been recruited by the souls of the dead.

The original and superior gods, Mariner tells us, were thought to be rather numerous, perhaps about three hundred all told; but the names of very few of them were known, and even those few were familiar only to some of the chiefs and their ministers, the *matabooles*; "for it may easily be supposed," says Mariner, "that, where no written records are kept, only those (gods) whose attributes particularly concern the affairs of this world should be much talked of; as to the rest, they are, for the most part, merely tutelar gods to particular private families, and having nothing in their history at all interesting, are scarcely known to anybody

else."<sup>181</sup>

Among these original and superior deities was Tali-y-Toobo, the patron god of the civil king and his family. He was the god of war and was consequently always invoked in time of war by the king's family; in time of peace prayers were sometimes offered to him for the general good of the nation as well as for the particular interest and welfare of the royal house. He had no priest, unless it was the king himself, who was occasionally inspired by him; but sometimes a whole reign would pass without the king being once favoured with the divine afflatus.<sup>182</sup>

Another god was Tooi foom Bolotoo, whose name means "Chief of all Bolotoo." From this it might be supposed that he was the greatest god in Bolotoo, the home of the gods and of the deified spirits of men; but in fact he was regarded as inferior to the war god, and the natives could give no explanation of his high-sounding title. He was the god of rank in society, and as such he was often invoked by the heads of great families on occasion of sickness or other trouble. He had several priests, whom he occasionally inspired.<sup>183</sup>

Another great god was Toobo Toty, whose name signifies "Toobo the mariner." He was the god of voyages, and in that capacity was invoked by chiefs or anybody else at sea; for his principal function was to preserve canoes from accidents.

---

<sup>181</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 104.

<sup>182</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 105.

<sup>183</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 105 sq.



Without being himself the god of wind, he had great influence with that deity, and was thus enabled no doubt to save many who were in peril on the great deep.<sup>184</sup>

Another god was Alo Alo, whose name means "to fan." He was the god of wind and weather, rain, harvest, and vegetation in general. When the weather was seasonable, he was usually invoked about once a month to induce him to keep on his good behaviour; but when the weather was unseasonable, or the islands were swept by destructive storms of wind and rain, the prayers to him were repeated daily. But he was not supposed to wield the thunder and lightning, "of which, indeed," says Mariner, "there is no god acknowledged among them, as this phenomenon is never recollected to have done any mischief of consequence."<sup>185</sup> From this it would appear that where no harm was done, the Tongans found it needless to suppose the existence of a deity; they discovered the hand of a god only in the working of evil; fear was the mainspring of their religion. In boisterous weather at sea Alo Alo was not invoked; he had then to make room for the superior god, Toobo Toty, the protector of canoes, who with other sea gods always received the homage of storm-tossed mariners. However, Alo Alo, the weather god, came to his own when the yams were approaching maturity in the early part of November. For then offerings of yams, coco-nuts, and other vegetable products were offered to him in particular, as well

---

<sup>184</sup> W. Mariner, *op. cit.* ii. 106 *sq.*

<sup>185</sup> W. Mariner, *op. cit.* ii. 108.

as to all the other gods in general, for the purpose of ensuring a continuation of favourable weather and consequent fertility. The offering was accompanied by prayers to Alo Alo and the other gods, beseeching them to extend their bounty and make the land fruitful. Wrestling and boxing matches formed part of the ceremony, which was repeated eight times at intervals of ten days. The time for the rite was fixed by the priest of Alo Alo, and a curious feature of the ceremony was the presence of a girl of noble family, some seven or eight years old, who represented the wife of Alo Alo and resided in his consecrated house during the eighty days that the festal season lasted.<sup>186</sup>

Another god named Móooi was believed to support the earth on his prostrate body. In person he was bigger than any other of the gods; but he never inspired anybody, and had no house dedicated to his service. Indeed, it was supposed that this Atlas of the Pacific never budged from his painful and burdensome post beneath the earth. Only when he felt more than usually uneasy, he tried to turn himself about under his heavy load; and the movement was felt as an earthquake by the Tongans, who endeavoured to make him lie still by shouting and beating the ground with sticks.<sup>187</sup> Similar attempts to stop an earthquake are

---

<sup>186</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 205-208; compare *id.* 7, note \*, 108.

<sup>187</sup> W. Mariner, *op. cit.* ii. 112 *sq.* Compare Captain James Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean* (London, 1799), pp. 277 *sq.* Móooi is the Polynesian god or hero whose name is usually spelled Maui. See Horatio Hale, *United States Exploring Expedition, Ethnography and Philology*, p. 23; E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, pp. 233 *sqq.* s. v. "Maui."

common in many parts of the world.<sup>188</sup>

Tangaloa was the god of artificers and the arts. He had several priests, who in Mariner's time were all carpenters. It was he who was said to have brought up the Tonga islands from the bottom of the sea at the end of his fishing line;<sup>189</sup> though in some accounts of Tongan tradition this feat is attributed to Maui.<sup>190</sup> The very hook on which he hauled up the islands was said to be preserved in Tonga down to about thirty years before Mariner's time. It was in the possession of the divine chief Tooitonga; but unfortunately, his house catching fire, the basket in which the precious hook was kept perished with its contents in the flames. When Mariner asked Tooitonga what sort of hook it was, the chief told him that it was made of tortoise-shell, strengthened with a piece of whalebone, and that it measured six or seven inches from the curve to the point where the line was attached, and an inch and a half between the barb and the stem. Mariner objected that such a hook could hardly have been strong enough to support the whole weight of the Tonga islands; but the chief replied that it was a god's hook and therefore could not break.

---

<sup>188</sup> *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, i. 197 *sqq.*

<sup>189</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 109, 114 *sq.*; Horatio Hale, *United States Exploring Expedition, Ethnography and Philology*, pp. 24 *sq.*

<sup>190</sup> Jérôme Grange, in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xvii. (1845) p. 11; Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, iii. 23; Sarah S. Farmer, *Tonga and the Friendly Islands*, p. 133. According to this last writer it was only the low islands that were fished up by Maui; the high islands were thrown down from the sky by the god Hikuleo.

The hole in the rock in which the divine hook caught on the memorable occasion was shown down to Mariner's time in the island of Hoonga. It was an aperture about two feet square.<sup>191</sup>

---

<sup>191</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 272, ii. 114 *sq.* The Catholic missionary Jérôme Grange was told that the hook in question existed down to his time (1843), but that only the king might see it, since it was certain death to anybody else to look on it. See *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xvii. (1845) p. 11.

## § 5. *The Temples of the Gods*

Some of the primitive gods had houses dedicated to them. These sacred houses or temples, as we may call them, were built in the style of ordinary dwellings; but generally more than ordinary care was taken both in constructing them and in keeping them in good order, decorating their enclosures with flowers, and so on. About twenty of the gods had houses thus consecrated to them; some of them had five or six houses, some only one or two. For example, Tali-y-Toobo, the patron god of the royal family, had four houses dedicated to him in the island of Vavau, two in the island of Lefooga (Lifuka), and two or three others of smaller importance elsewhere.<sup>192</sup> Another patron god of the royal family, called Alai Valoo, had a large consecrated enclosure in the island of Ofoo; he had also at least one priest and was very frequently consulted in behalf of sick persons.<sup>193</sup>

To desecrate any of these holy houses or enclosures was a most serious offence. When Mariner was in the islands it happened that two boys, who had belonged to the crew of his ship, were detected in the act of stealing a bale of bark-cloth from a consecrated house. If they had been natives, they would instantly have been punished with death; but the chiefs, taking into consideration the youth and inexperience of the offenders,

---

<sup>192</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Island*, ii. 104 sq.

<sup>193</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii, 107 sq.

who were foreigners and ignorant of native customs, decided that for that time the crime might be overlooked. Nevertheless, to appease the anger of the god, to whom the house was consecrated, it was deemed necessary to address him humbly on the subject. Accordingly his priest, followed by chiefs and their ministers (*matabooles*), all dressed in mats with leaves of the *ifi* tree<sup>194</sup> round their necks in token of humility and sorrow, went in solemn procession to the house; they sat down before it, and the priest addressed the divinity to the following purport: "Here you see the chiefs and *matabooles* that have come to thee, hoping that thou wilt be merciful: the boys are young, and being foreigners, are not so well acquainted with our customs, and did not reflect upon the greatness of the crime: we pray thee, therefore, not to punish the people for the sins of these thoughtless youths: we have spared them, and hope that thou wilt be merciful and spare us." The priest then rose up, and they all retired in the same way they had come. The chiefs, and particularly the king, severely reprimanded the boys, endeavouring to impress on their minds the enormity of their offence, and assuring them that they owed

---

<sup>194</sup> The *ifi* tree, of which the leaves were used by the Tongans in many religious ceremonies, is a species of chestnut (*Inocarpus edulis*) which grows in Indonesia, but is thought to be a native of America. It is supposed that the Polynesians brought the seeds of this tree with them into the Pacific, where it is said to be a cultivated plant. See S. Percy Smith, *Hawaiki, the Original Home of the Maori* (Christchurch, etc., New Zealand, 1910), p. 146. To wear a wreath of the leaves round the neck, and to sit with the head bowed down, constituted the strongest possible expression of humility and entreaty. See E. E. V. Collocot, "Notes on Tongan Religion," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, xxx. (1921) p. 159.

their lives only to their presumed ignorance of the heinousness of the crime.<sup>195</sup>

Another case of sacrilege, which occurred in Mariner's time, was attended with more tragic consequences. He tells us that consecrated places might not be the scene of war, and that it would be highly sacrilegious to attack an enemy or to spill his blood within their confines. On one occasion, while Mariner was in the islands, four men, pursued by their enemies, fled for refuge to a consecrated enclosure, where they would have been perfectly safe. One of them was in the act of scrambling over the reed fence, and had got a leg over it, when he was overtaken by a foe, who struck him such a furious blow on the head that he fell dead within the hallowed ground. Conscience-stricken, the slayer fled to his canoe, followed by his men; and on arriving at the fortress where the king was stationed he made a clean breast of his crime, alleging in excuse that it had been committed in hot blood when he had lost all self-command. The king immediately ordered kava to be taken to the priest of his own tutelary god, that the divinity might be consulted as to what atonement was proper to be made for so heinous a sacrilege. Under the double inspiration of kava and the deity, the priest made answer that it was necessary a child should be strangled to appease the anger of the gods. The chiefs then held a consultation and determined to sacrifice the child of a high chief named Toobo Toa. The child was about two years old and had been born to him by a female

---

<sup>195</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 163 sq.

attendant. On such occasions the child of a male chief by a female attendant was always chosen for the victim first, because, as a child of a chief, he was a worthier victim, and second, because, as a child of a female attendant, he was not himself a chief; for nobility being traced in the female line only those children were reckoned chiefs whose mothers were chieftainesses; the rank of the father, whether noble or not, did not affect the rank of his offspring. On this occasion the father of the child was present at the consultation and consented to the sacrifice. The mother, fearing the decision, had concealed the child, but it was found by one of the searchers, who took it up in his arms, while it smiled with delight at being noticed. The mother tried to follow but was held back; and on hearing her voice the child began to cry. But on reaching the place of execution it was pleased and delighted with the bandage that was put round its neck to strangle it, and looking up in the face of the executioner it smiled again. "Such a sight," we are told, "inspired pity in the breast of every one: but veneration and fear of the gods was a sentiment superior to every other, and its destroyer could not help exclaiming, as he put on the fatal bandage, *O iaaóé chi vale!* (poor little innocent!)." Two men then tightened the cord by pulling at each end, and the struggles of the innocent victim were soon over. The little body was next placed upon a sort of hand-barrow, supported on the shoulders of four men, and carried in a procession of priests, chiefs, and *matabooles*, all clothed as suppliants in mats and with wreaths of green leaves round their necks. In this way it was



conveyed to various houses dedicated to different gods, before each of which it was placed on the ground, all the company sitting behind it, except one priest, who sat beside it and prayed aloud to the god that he would be pleased to accept of this sacrifice as an atonement for the heinous sacrilege committed, and that punishment might accordingly be withheld from the people. When this had been done before all the consecrated houses in the fortress, the body was given up to its relations, to be buried in the usual manner.<sup>196</sup>

The consecration of a house or a piece of ground to a god was denoted by the native word *taboo*, the general meaning of which was prohibited or forbidden.<sup>197</sup> It was firmly believed by the Tongans in former days that if a man committed sacrilege or broke a taboo, his liver or some other of his internal organs was liable to become enlarged and scirrhus, that is, indurated or knotty; hence they often opened dead bodies out of curiosity, to see whether the deceased had been sacrilegious in their lifetime. As the Tongans are particularly subject to scirrhus tumours, it seems probable that many innocent persons were thus posthumously accused of sacrilege on the strength of a post-mortem examination into the state of their livers.<sup>198</sup> Another

---

<sup>196</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 216-219. As to the rule that nobility descended only in the female line, through mothers, not through fathers, see *id.* ii. 84, 95 *sq.*; J. Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage de l'Astrolabe, Histoire du Voyage*, iv. 239.

<sup>197</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 220.

<sup>198</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 194, note \*; compare 434, note \*.

disagreeable consequence of breaking a taboo was a peculiar liability to be bitten by sharks, which thus might be said to act as ministers of justice. As theft was included under the general head of breach of taboo, a simple way of bringing the crime home to the thief in case of doubt was to cause the accused to go into the water where sharks were known to swarm; if they bit him, he was guilty; if they did not, he was innocent.<sup>199</sup>

---

<sup>199</sup> W. Mariner, *op. cit.* ii. 221.

## § 6. *Priests and their Inspiration*

Priests were known by the title of *fahe-gehe*, a term which means "split off," "separate," or "distinct from," and was applied to a man who has a peculiar sort of mind or soul, different from that of ordinary men, which disposed some god occasionally to inspire him. Such inspirations frequently happened, and when the fit was on him the priest had the same reverence shown to him as if he were the god himself; at these times even the king would retire to a respectful distance and sit down among the rest of the spectators, because a god was believed to exist at that moment in the priest and to speak from his mouth. But at other times a priest had no other respect paid to him than was due to him for his private rank in society. Priests generally belonged to the lower order of chiefs or to their ministers, the *matabooles*; but sometimes great chiefs were thus visited by the gods, and the king himself has been inspired by Tali-y-Toobo, the chief of the gods.<sup>200</sup> The profession of priest was generally hereditary, the eldest son of a priest becoming, on his father's death, a priest of the same god who had inspired his deceased parent. In their uninspired moments the priests lived indiscriminately with the rest of the people and were treated with no special deference.<sup>201</sup>

The ceremony of inspiration, during which the priest was

---

<sup>200</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 80 sq.

<sup>201</sup> W. Mariner, *op. cit.* ii. 136-138.

believed to be possessed by a god and to speak in his name, was regularly accompanied or preceded by a feast, at which the drinking of kava formed the principal feature. The priest himself presided at the feast and the people gathered in a circle round him; or, to be more exact, the people formed an ellipse, of which the priest occupied the place of honour at one of the narrow ends; while opposite him, at the other extremity of the ellipse, sat the man who was charged with the important duty of brewing the kava. At such sessions the chiefs sat indiscriminately among the people on account of the sacredness of the occasion, conceiving that such humble demeanour must be acceptable to the gods. The actual process of inspiration was often witnessed by Mariner, and is described by him in his own words as follows:

"As soon as they are all seated, the priest is considered as inspired, the god being supposed to exist within him from that moment. He remains for a considerable time in silence, with his hands clasped before him; his eyes are cast down, and he rests perfectly still. During the time that the victuals are being shared out, and the cava preparing, the *matabooles* sometimes begin to consult him; sometimes he answers them, at other times not; in either case he remains with his eyes cast down. Frequently he will not utter a word till the repast is finished, and the cava too. When he speaks, he generally begins in a low and very altered tone of voice, which gradually rises to nearly its natural pitch, though sometimes a little above it. All that he says is supposed to be the declaration of the god, and he accordingly speaks in

the first person as if he were the god. All this is done generally without any apparent inward emotion or outward agitation; but on some occasions his countenance becomes fierce, and, as it were, inflamed, and his whole frame agitated with inward feeling; he is seized with an universal trembling; the perspiration breaks out on his forehead, and his lips, turning black, are convulsed; at length, tears start in floods from his eyes, his breast heaves with great emotion, and his utterance is choked. These symptoms gradually subside. Before this paroxysm comes on, and after it is over, he often eats as much as four hungry men, under other circumstances, could devour. The fit being now gone off, he remains for some time calm, and then takes up a club that is placed by him for the purpose, turns it over and regards it attentively; he then looks up earnestly, now to the right, now to the left, and now again at the club; afterwards he looks up again, and about him in like manner, and then again fixes his eyes upon his club, and so on, for several times: at length he suddenly raises the club, and, after a moment's pause, strikes the ground, or the adjacent part of the house, with considerable force: immediately the god leaves him, and he rises up and retires to the back of the ring among the people."<sup>202</sup>

---

<sup>202</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 99-101. Compare E. E. V. Collocot, "Notes on Tongan Religion," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, xxx. (1921) pp. 155-157.

## § 7. *The Worship of the Gods, Prayers, and Sacrifices*

The worship offered to the gods consisted as usual of prayers and sacrifices. Prayers were put up to them, sometimes in the fields, and sometimes at their consecrated houses. On ordinary occasions a simple offering consisted of a small piece of kava root deposited before a god's house.<sup>203</sup> But in the great emergencies of life the favour of the gods was sued with more precious offerings. When the younger daughter of Finow, a girl of six or seven years, was sick to death, the dying princess was carried from her father's house into the sacred enclosure of Taliy-Toobo, the patron god of the kings, and there she remained for a fortnight. Almost every morning a hog was killed, dressed, and presented before the god's house to induce him to spare the life of the princess. At the same time prayers were addressed to the deity for the recovery of the patient; but as this particular god had no priest, the prayers were offered by a minister (*mataboole*), sometimes by two or three in succession, and they were repeated five, six, or seven times a day. Their general purport was as follows: "Here thou seest assembled Finow and his chiefs, and the principal ministers (*matabooles*) of thy favoured land; thou seest them humbled before thee. We pray thee not to be merciless,

---

<sup>203</sup> W. Mariner, *op. cit.* ii. 224.

but to spare the life of the woman for the sake of her father, who has always been attentive to every religious ceremony. But if thy anger is justly excited by some crime or misdemeanour committed by any other of us who are here assembled, we entreat thee to inflict on the guilty one the punishment which he merits, and not to let loose thy vengeance on one who was born but as yesterday. For our own parts, why do we wish to live but for the sake of Finow? But if his family is afflicted, we are all afflicted, innocent as well as guilty. How canst thou be merciless? Have regard for Finow and spare the life of his daughter." When despite of prayers and the sacrifices of pigs, the girl grew daily worse instead of better, she was removed to many other consecrated enclosures of other gods, one after the other, where the like fond prayers and fruitless offerings were presented in the vain hope of staving off the approach of death.<sup>204</sup>

But more precious sacrifices than the blood of hogs were often laid at the feet of the angry gods. When a relation of a superior rank was ill, it was a very common practice for one or more of his or her inferior kinsfolk to have a little finger, or a joint of a finger, cut off as a sacrifice to induce the offended deity to spare the sick man or woman. So common was the custom in the old days that there was scarcely a person living in the Tonga islands who had not thus lost one or both of his little fingers, or a considerable portion of both. It does not appear that the operation was very painful. Mariner witnessed more

---

<sup>204</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 350-360.

than once little children quarrelling for the honour of having it performed on them. The finger was laid flat upon a block of wood: a knife, axe, or sharp stone was placed with the edge on the joint to be severed, and a powerful blow with a hammer or heavy stone effected the amputation. Sometimes an affectionate relative would perform the operation on his or her own hand. John Williams questioned a girl of eighteen who had hacked off her own little finger with a sharp shell to induce the gods to spare her sick mother. Generally a joint was taken off at a time; but some persons had smaller portions amputated to admit of the operation being often repeated in case they had many superior relations, who might be sick and require the sacrifice. When they had no more joints which they could conveniently spare, they rubbed the stumps of the mutilated fingers till the blood streamed from the wounds; then they would hold up the bleeding hands in hope of softening the heart of the angry god.<sup>205</sup> Captain Cook understood that the operation was performed for the benefit of the sufferers themselves to heal them in sickness,<sup>206</sup> and the same view was apparently taken by the French navigator

---

<sup>205</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 438 *sq.*, ii. 210-212; Captain James Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean*, pp. 239, 278; John Williams, *Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, pp. 470 *sq.*; Jérôme Grange, in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xvii. (1845) pp. 12, 26; Sarah S. Farmer, *Tonga and the Friendly Islands*, p. 128.

<sup>206</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, iii. 204, v. 421 *sq.* However, in a footnote to the latter passage Captain Cook gives the correct explanation of the custom on the authority of Captain King: "It is common for the inferior people to cut off a joint of their little finger, on account of the sickness of the chiefs to whom they belong."



Labillardière,<sup>207</sup> but in this they were probably mistaken; neither of them had an accurate knowledge of the language, and they may easily have misunderstood their informants. Perhaps the only person in the islands who was exempt from the necessity of occasionally submitting to the painful sacrifice was the divine chief Tooitonga, who, as he ranked above everybody, even above the king, could have no superior relation for whom to amputate a finger-joint. Certainly we know that Tooitonga had not, like the rest of his countrymen, to undergo the painful operations of tattooing and circumcision; if he desired to be tattooed or circumcised, he was obliged to go to other islands, particularly to Samoa, for the purpose.<sup>208</sup> Perhaps, though this is not mentioned by our authorities, it would have been deemed impious to shed his sacred blood in his native land.

But sacrifices to the gods for the recovery of the sick were not limited to the amputation of finger-joints. Not uncommonly children were strangled for this purpose.<sup>209</sup> Thus when Finow the king was grievously sick and seemed likely to die, the prince, his son, and a young chief went out to procure one of the king's own children by a female attendant to sacrifice it as a vicarious offering to the gods, that their anger might be appeased and the health of its father restored. They found the child sleeping

---

<sup>207</sup> Labillardière, *Relation du Voyage à la recherche de la Pérouse* (Paris, 1800), ii. 151.

<sup>208</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 79, 268.

<sup>209</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 208 sq.

in its mother's lap in a neighbouring house; they took it away by force, and retiring with it behind an adjacent burial-ground (*fytoea*) they strangled it with a band of bark-cloth. Then they carried it before two consecrated houses and a grave, at each place gabbling a short but appropriate prayer to the god, that he would intercede with the other gods in behalf of the dying king, and would accept of this sacrifice as an atonement for the sick man's crimes.<sup>210</sup> When, not long afterwards, the divine chief Tooitonga, in spite of his divinity, fell sick and seemed like to die, one or other of his young relations had a little finger cut off every day, as a propitiatory offering to the gods for the sins of the saintly sufferer. But these sacrifices remaining fruitless, recourse was had to greater. Three or four children were strangled at different times, and prayers were offered up by the priests at the consecrated houses and burial-grounds (*fytoeas*) but all in vain. The gods remained deaf to the prayers of the priests; their hearts were not touched by the cutting off of fingers or the strangling of children; and the illness of the sacred chief grew every day more alarming. As a last resort and desperate remedy, the emaciated body of the dying man was carried into the kitchen, the people imagining that such an act of humility, performed on behalf of the highest dignitary of the Tonga islands, would surely move the deities to compassion and induce them to spare a life so precious to his subjects.<sup>211</sup> The same curious remedy had shortly

---

<sup>210</sup> W. Mariner, *op. cit.* i. 366.

<sup>211</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 438 *sq.*; compare *id.* ii. 214.

before been resorted to for the benefit of the dying or dead king, Finow the First: his body was carried into the kitchen of the sacred chief, the Tooitonga, and there placed over the hole in the ground where the fire was lighted to cook victuals: "this was thought to be acceptable to the gods, as being a mark of extreme humiliation, that the great chief of all the Hapai islands and Vavaoo, should be laid where the meanest class of mankind, the cooks, were accustomed to operate."<sup>212</sup>

The custom of strangling the relations of a sick chief as a vicarious sacrifice to appease the anger of the deity and ensure the recovery of the patient was found in vogue by the first missionaries to Tonga before the arrival of Mariner. When King Moomōoe lay very sick and his death was hourly expected, one of his sons sent for a younger brother under pretence of wishing to cut off his little fingers as a sacrifice to save the life of their dying father. The young man came, whereupon his elder brother had him seized, strangled, and buried within a few yards of the house where the missionaries were living. Afterwards the fratricide came and mourned over his murdered brother by sitting on the grave with his elbows on his knees and covering his face with his hands. In this posture he remained for a long time in silence, and then departed very thoughtful. His motive for thus mourning over the brother whom he had done to death is not mentioned by the missionaries and was probably not known to them. We may conjecture that it was not so much remorse for his crime as fear

---

<sup>212</sup> W. Mariner, *op. cit.* i. 367 *sq.*

of his brother's ghost, who otherwise might have haunted him.<sup>213</sup> Morality, or at all events a semblance of it, has often been thus reinforced by superstitious terrors.

In recording this incident the missionaries make use of an expression which seems to set the strangling of human beings for the recovery of sick relations in a somewhat different light. They say that "the prince of darkness has impressed the idea on them, that the strength of the person strangled will be transferred into the sick, and recover him."<sup>214</sup> On this theory the sacrifice acts, so to say, mechanically without the intervention of a deity; the life of the victim is transfused into the body of the patient as a sort of tonic which strengthens and revives him. Such a rite is therefore magical rather than religious; it depends for its efficacy on natural causes, and not on the pity and help of the gods. Yet the missionaries, who record this explanation of the custom, elsewhere implicitly accept the religious interpretation of such rites as vicarious sacrifices; for they say that among the superstitious notions of the natives concerning spirits was one that "by strangling some relations of the chief when he is sick, the deity will be appeased, and he (that is, the sick chief) will recover."<sup>215</sup> Perhaps both explanations, the religious and the magical, were assigned by the Tongans: consistency of thought is

---

<sup>213</sup> Captain James Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean*, pp. 238-240.

<sup>214</sup> Captain James Wilson, *op. cit.* p. 240.

<sup>215</sup> Captain James Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean*, p. 257.

as little characteristic of savage as of civilised man: provided he attains his ends, he reckes little of the road by which he reaches them. An English sailor named Ambler, who had resided for thirteen months in Tonga before the arrival of the missionaries, told them, "that when a great chief lay sick they often strangled their women, to the number of three or four at a time."<sup>216</sup> Such a sacrifice is more likely to have been religious than magical; we may suppose that the victims were rather offered to the gods as substitutes for the chief than killed to recruit his failing strength by an infusion of their health and vigour. A chief would probably have disdained the idea of drawing fresh energy from the bodies of women, though he might be ready enough to believe that the gods would consent to accept their life as a proxy for his own. It is true that elsewhere, notably in Uganda, human beings have been killed to prolong the life of the king by directly transferring their strength to him;<sup>217</sup> but in such cases it would seem that the victims have invariably been men and not women.

---

<sup>216</sup> Captain James Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 278. This Ambler was a man of very indifferent, not to say infamous, character, but he rendered the missionaries considerable service by instructing them in the Tongan language, which he spoke fluently. See Captain James Wilson, *op. cit.* pp. 98, 244 *sq.*

<sup>217</sup> See Adonis, *Attis, Osiris*, Third Edition, ii. 219 *sqq.*

## § 8. *The Doctrine of the Soul and its Destiny after Death*

Thus far we have dealt with the primary or superior gods, who were believed to have been always gods, and about whose origin nothing was known. We now pass to a consideration of the secondary or inferior gods, whose origin was perfectly well known, since they were all of them the souls of dead chiefs or nobles, of whom some had died or been killed in recent years. But before we take up the subject of their worship, it will be well to say a few words on the Tongan doctrine of the human soul, since these secondary deities were avowedly neither more nor less than human souls raised to a higher power by death.

The Tongans, in their native state, before the advent of Europeans, did not conceive of the soul as a purely immaterial essence, that being a conception too refined for the thought of a savage. They imagined it to be the finer or more aeriform part of the body which leaves it suddenly at the moment of death, and which may be thought to stand in the same relation to the body as the perfume of a flower to its solid substance. They had no proper word to express this fine ethereal part of man; for the word *loto*, though it might sometimes be used for that purpose, yet rather means a man's disposition, inclination, passion, or sentiment. The soul was supposed to exist throughout the whole of the body, but to be particularly present in the heart, the pulsation of which

they regarded as the strength and power of the soul. They did not clearly distinguish between the life and the soul, but said that the right auricle of the heart was the seat of life. They took the liver to be the seat of courage, and professed to have remarked, on opening dead bodies, that the largest livers belonged to the bravest men, in which observation they were careful to make allowance for the enlargement of livers consequent on disease.<sup>218</sup>

They acknowledged that the *tooas* or lower order of people had minds or souls; but they firmly believed that these vulgar souls died with their bodies and consequently had no future existence. In this aristocratic opinion the generality of the commoners acquiesced, though some were vain enough to think that they had souls like their betters, and that they would live hereafter in Bolotoo. But the orthodox Tongan doctrine restricted immortality to chiefs and their ministers (the *matabooles*); at most, by a stretch of charity, it extended the privilege to the *mooas* or third estate; but it held out no hope of salvation to *tooas*, who formed the fourth and lowest rank of society.<sup>219</sup>

Mariner's account, which I have followed, of the sharp distinction which the Tongans drew between the immortality of chiefs and the mortality of common people is confirmed by the testimony of other and independent observers. According to Captain Cook, while the souls of the chiefs went immediately

---

<sup>218</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 127 sq.

<sup>219</sup> W. Mariner, *op. cit.* i. 419, ii. 99, 128 sq.

after death to the island of Boolootoo (Bolotoo), the souls of the lower sort of people underwent a sort of transmigration or were eaten by a bird called *loata*, which walked upon their graves for that purpose.<sup>220</sup> The first missionaries, who landed in Tongataboo in 1797, report that the natives "believe the immortality of the soul, which at death, they say, is immediately conveyed in a very large fast-sailing canoe to a distant country called Doobludha, which they describe as resembling the Mahometan paradise. They call the god of this region of pleasure Higgolayo, and esteem him as the greatest and most powerful of all others, the rest being no better than servants to him. This doctrine, however, is wholly confined to the chiefs, for the *tooas* (or lower order) can give no account whatever; as they reckon the enjoyments of Doobludha above their capacity, so they seem never to think of what may become of them after they have served the purposes of this life."<sup>221</sup> One of these first missionaries was a certain George Veeson, who had been a bricklayer before he undertook to convert the heathen to Christianity. Wearying, however, of missionary work, he deserted his brethren and betook himself to the heathen, among whom he lived as one of them, adopting the native garb, marrying native women, and eagerly fighting in the wars of the natives among themselves. In this way he acquired a

---

<sup>220</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 423.

<sup>221</sup> Captain James Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean*, pp. 278 sq.



considerable knowledge of the Tongan language and customs, of which he made some use in the account of his experiences which he published anonymously after his return to England. Speaking of Tongan ideas concerning the immortality of the soul he says that he heard the chiefs speak much of Bulotu (Bolotoo). "Into this region, however, they believed none were admitted but themselves. The Tuas, or lower class, having no hope of sharing such bliss, seldom speculate upon a futurity, which to them appears a subject lost in shadows, clouds, and darkness."<sup>222</sup> The missionaries reported to Commodore Wilkes that the spirits of all chiefs were supposed to go to Bolotoo, while the souls of poor people remained in this world to feed upon ants and lizards.<sup>223</sup> With regard to the fate of the soul after death, the Tongans universally and positively believed in the existence of a great island, lying at a considerable distance to the north-west, which they considered to be the abode of their gods and of the souls of their dead nobles and their ministers (the *matabooles*). This island they supposed to be much larger than all their own islands put together, and to be well stocked with all kinds of

---

<sup>222</sup> Quoted by Miss Sarah S. Farmer, *Tonga and the Friendly Islands*, p. 131. As to Veeson, see *id.* pp. 78, 85 *sqq.* The title of his book is given (p. 87) as *Authentic Narrative of a Four Years' Residence in Tongataboo* (London: Longman & Co., 1815). I have not seen the book. The man's name is given as Vason by (Sir) Basil Thomson in his *Diversions of a Prime Minister* (Edinburgh and London, 1894), pp. 326, 327, 329, 331; but his real name seems to have been George Veeson. See Captain James Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean*, pp. 6, 230.

<sup>223</sup> Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, iii. 22.

useful and ornamental plants, always in a high state of perfection, and always bearing the richest fruits and the most beautiful flowers according to their respective natures; they thought that when these fruits or flowers were plucked, others immediately took their place, and that the whole atmosphere was filled with the most delightful fragrance that the imagination can conceive, exhaled from these immortal plants. The island, too, was well stocked with the most beautiful birds, of all imaginable kinds, as well as with abundance of hogs; and all of these creatures were immortal, except when they were killed to provide food for the gods. But the moment a hog or a bird was killed, another live hog or bird came into existence to supply its place, just as happened with the fruits and flowers; and this, so far as they could ascertain, was the only way in which plants and animals were propagated in Bolotoo. So far away was the happy island supposed to be that it was dangerous for living men to attempt to sail thither in their canoes; indeed, except by the express permission of the gods, they could not find the island, however near they might come to it. They tell, however, of a Tongan canoe which, returning from Fiji, was driven by stress of weather to Bolotoo. The crew knew not the place, and being in want of provisions and seeing the country to abound in all sorts of fruits, they landed and proceeded to pluck some bread-fruit. But to their unspeakable astonishment they could no more lay hold of the fruit than if it were a shadow; they walked through the trunks of the trees and passed through the substance of the houses without feeling any

shock or resistance. At length they saw some of the gods, who passed through the men's bodies as if they were empty space. These gods recommended them to go away immediately, as they had no proper food for them, and they promised them a fair wind and a speedy passage. So the men put to sea, and sailing with the utmost speed they arrived at Samoa, where they stayed two or three days. Thence, again sailing very fast, they returned to Tonga, where in the course of a few days they all died, not as a punishment for having been at Bolotoo, but as a natural consequence, the air of that place, as it were, infecting mortal bodies with speedy death. The gods who dwell in Bolotoo have no canoes, not requiring them; for if they wish to be anywhere, there they are the moment the wish is felt.<sup>224</sup>

It is said that in order to people Bolotoo the god Hikuleo used to carry off the first-born sons of chiefs and other great men, whom he transported to the island of the gods. To such lengths did he go in this system of abduction that men on earth grew very uneasy. Their ranks became thinner and thinner. How was all this to end? At last the other gods were moved to compassion. The two gods Tangaloa and Maui laid hold of brother Hikuleo, passed a strong chain round his waist and between his legs, and then taking the chain by the ends they fastened one of them to the sky and the other to the earth. Thus trussed up, the deity still made many attempts to snatch away first-born sons; but all his efforts were thwarted and baffled by the chain, for no sooner did

---

<sup>224</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 101-103.

he dart out in one direction, than the chain pulled him back in another. According to another, or the same story, the excursions of the deity were further limited by the length of his tail, the end of which was tethered to the cave in which he resided; and though the tail was long and allowed him a good deal of rope, do what he would, he could not break bounds or obtain more than a very partial view of what was going on in the rest of the world.<sup>225</sup>

In this curious story we may perhaps detect a tradition of a time when among the Tongans, as among the Semites, religion or superstition demanded the sacrifice of all first-born sons, a barbarous custom which has been practised by not a few peoples in various parts of the earth.<sup>226</sup>

---

<sup>225</sup> Sarah S. Farmer, *Tonga and the Friendly Islands*, pp. 132 sq. As to Hikuleo and his long tail, see also Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, iii. 23, "Hikuleo is the god of spirits, and is the third in order of time; he dwells in a cave in the island. Bulotu is most remarkable for a long tail, which prevents him from going farther from the cave in which he resides than its length will admit of." Here the god Hikuleo appears to be confused with the island of Bulotu (Bulotoo) in which he resided. Tradition wavers on the question whether Hikuleo was a god or goddess, "but the general suffrage seems in favour of the female sex." See E. E. V. Collocot, "Notes on Tongan Religion," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, xxx. (1921) pp. 152, 153.

<sup>226</sup> As to a custom of putting the first-born to death, see *The Dying God*, pp. 178 sqq.; and for other reported instances of the custom, see Mrs. James Smith, *The Booandik Tribe of South Australia* (Adelaide, 1880), pp. 7 sq.; C. E. Fox, "Social Organisation in San Cristoval, Solomon Islands," *Journal of the R. Anthropological Institute*, xlix. (1919) p. 100; E. O. Martin, *The Gods of India* (London and Toronto, 1914), p. 215; N. W. Thomas, *Anthropological Report on the Ibo-speaking peoples of Nigeria*, Part i. (London, 1913) p. 12. Compare E. Westermarck, *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* (London, 1906), i. 458 sqq.

The human soul after its separation from the body at death was termed a *hotooa* or *atua*, that is, a god or spirit, and was believed to exist in the shape of the body and to have the same propensities as in life, but to be corrected by a more enlightened understanding, by which it readily distinguished good from evil, truth from falsehood, and right from wrong. The souls dwelt for ever in the happy regions of Bolotoo, where they bore the same names as in life and held the same rank among themselves as they had held during their mortal existence. But their lot in Bolotoo was in no way affected by the good or evil which they had done on earth; for the Tongans did not believe in a future state of retribution for deeds done in the body; they thought that the gods punished crime in this present world, without waiting to redress the balance of justice in the world to come. As many of the nobles who passed at death to Bolotoo had been warlike and turbulent in their life, it might naturally be anticipated that they should continue to wage war on each other in the land beyond the grave; but that was not so, for by a merciful dispensation their understandings were so much enlightened, or their tempers so much improved, by their residence in Bolotoo, that any differences they might have between themselves, or with the primitive gods, they adjusted by temperate discussion without resort to violence; though people in Tonga sometimes heard an echo and caught a glimpse of these high debates in the rumble of thunder and the flash of lightning.<sup>227</sup> In the blissful abode of

---

<sup>227</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 110 sq., 130, 131, 139, 140.

Bolotoo the souls of chiefs and nobles lived for ever, being not subject to a second death, and there they feasted upon all the favourite productions of their native country, which grew also abundantly in the happy island.<sup>228</sup>

A less cheerful picture, however, of the state of souls in the other world was painted for Commodore Wilkes by the missionaries who furnished him with information on the native religion of the Tongans. According to them, the souls were forced to become the servants, or rather slaves, of the long-tailed deity Hikuleo, whose commands they had no choice but to execute. His house and all things in it were even constructed of the souls of the dead; and he went so far as to make fences out of them and bars to his gates, an indignity which must have been deeply resented by the proud spirits of kings and nobles.<sup>229</sup> How this gloomy picture of the fate of souls in Bolotoo is to be reconciled with the bright descriptions of it which I have drawn from the pages of Mariner and Cook, it is not easy to say. Apparently we must acquiesce in the discrepancy. That savages should entertain inconsistent views on the life after death need not surprise us, when we remember how little accurate information even civilised peoples possess on that momentous subject.

---

<sup>228</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 423.

<sup>229</sup> Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, iii. 23. The writer here speaks of Bulotu, where he should have said Hikuleo. See above, [p. 89, note 1](#).

## § 9. *The Souls of the Dead as Gods*

We have seen that according to Mariner, our best authority on Tongan religion, the souls of dead nobles ranked as gods, possessing all the powers and attributes of the primary or original deities, though in an inferior degree.<sup>230</sup> Thus, like the primary gods, they had the power of returning to Tonga to inspire priests, relations, or other people.<sup>231</sup> For example, the son of Finow, the King, used to be inspired by the spirit of Toogoo Ahoo, a former king of Tonga, who had been assassinated with the connivance of his successor, Finow. One day Mariner asked this young chief how he felt when he was visited by the spirit of the murdered monarch. The chief replied that he could not well describe his feelings, but the best he could say of it was, that he felt himself all over in a glow of heat and quite restless and uncomfortable; he did not feel his personal identity, as it were, but seemed to have a mind differing from his own natural mind, his thoughts wandering upon strange and unusual topics, though he remained perfectly sensible of surrounding objects. When Mariner asked him how he knew it was the spirit of Toogoo Ahoo who possessed him, the chief answered impatiently, "There's a fool! How can I tell you how I knew it? I felt and knew it was so by a kind of consciousness; my mind told me that it was Toogoo

---

<sup>230</sup> W. Mariner, *Tongan Islands*, ii. 97, 99, 103, 109 *sq.* See above, pp. [64 sq.](#), [66](#).

<sup>231</sup> W. Mariner, ii. 130 *sq.*; compare *id.* pp. 99, 103 *sq.*, 109 *sq.*

Ahoo." Similarly Finow himself, the father of this young man, used occasionally to be inspired by the ghost of Moomooi, a former king of Tonga.<sup>232</sup>

Again, the souls of dead nobles, like gods, had the power of appearing in dreams and visions to their relatives and others to admonish and warn them. It was thought, for example, that Finow the king was occasionally visited by a deceased son of his; the ghost did not appear, but announced his presence by whistling. Mariner once heard this whistling when he was with the king and some chiefs in a house at night; it was dark, and the sound appeared to come from the loft of the house. In Mariner's opinion the sound was produced by some trick of Finow's, but the natives believed it to be the voice of a spirit.<sup>233</sup> Once more, when Finow the king was himself dead, a noble lady who mourned his death and generally slept on his grave, communicated to his widow a dream which she had dreamed several nights at the graveyard. She said that in her dream the late king appeared to her, and, with a countenance full of sorrow, asked why there yet remained so many evil-designing persons in the islands; for he declared that, since he had been at Bolotoo, he had been disturbed by the plots of wicked men conspiring against his son; therefore was he come to warn her of the danger. Finally, he bade her set in order the pebbles on his grave, and pay every attention to his burial-ground.

---

<sup>232</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 104 sq.

<sup>233</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 110, 130 sq.



With that he vanished.<sup>234</sup> In such dreams of the reappearance of the recent dead we may discover one source of the belief in the survival of the soul after death.

But the gods appeared to mankind to warn, comfort, and advise, not only in their own divine form but also in the form of animals. Thus the primitive gods, according to Mariner, sometimes entered into the living bodies of lizards, porpoises, and a species of water snake. Hence these creatures were much respected. The reason why gods entered into porpoises was to take care of canoes. This power of assuming the form of living animals, says Mariner, belonged only to the original gods, and not to the deified souls of chiefs.<sup>235</sup> In thus denying that the spirits of the dead were supposed sometimes to revisit the earth in animal shapes Mariner was perhaps mistaken, for a different view on the subject was apparently taken at a later time by Miss Farmer, who had access to good sources of information. She writes as follows: "Bulotu (Bolotoo) was peopled with the spirits of departed chiefs and great persons of both sexes; and it was to these chiefly that worship was paid and that sacrifices were offered. These spirits in Bulotu were supposed to act as intercessors with the supreme gods, who were too highly exalted to be approached by men except in this way. The spirits were in the habit of revisiting earth. They would come in birds, or in fish as their shrines. The tropic-bird, king-fisher, and sea-gull, the sea-eel, shark, whale,

---

<sup>234</sup> W. Mariner, *op. cit.* i. 423 *sq.*

<sup>235</sup> W. Mariner, *op. cit.* ii. 99, 131.

and many other animals were considered sacred, because they were favourite shrines of these spirit-gods. The heathen never killed any of these creatures; and if, in sailing, they chanced to find themselves in the neighbourhood of a whale, they would offer scented oil or kava to him. To some among the natives the cuttle-fish and the lizard were gods; while others would lay offerings at the foot of certain trees, with the idea of their being inhabited by spirits. A rainbow or a shooting star would also command worship."<sup>236</sup>

This account seems to imply that the spirits which took the form of these animals, birds, and fish were believed to be the souls of the dead returning from the spirit world to revisit their old homes on earth. But even if we suppose that herein the writer was mistaken, and that, as Mariner affirmed, only the original and superior gods were deemed capable of incarnation in animal shape, the account is still valuable and interesting because it calls attention to a side of Tongan religion on which our principal authority, Mariner, is almost silent. That side comprises the worship of natural objects, and especially of animals, birds, and fish, regarded as embodiments of spirits, whether gods or ghosts. This worship of nature, and particularly of animated nature, was highly developed among the Samoans; it would be natural, therefore, to find the same system in vogue among their neighbours and near kinsmen the Tongans, though our authorities on Tongan religion say little about it. The system may with some

---

<sup>236</sup> Sarah S. Farmer, *Tonga and the Friendly Islands*, pp. 126 sq.

appearance of probability be regarded as a relic of a former practice of totemism.<sup>237</sup>

In recent years a considerable amount of evidence bearing on the subject has been collected by Mr. E. E. V. Collocot. He distinguishes the national Tongan gods from the gods of tribes, clans, and small groups of allied households; such a group of households, it appears, formed the ordinary social unit. Indeed, he tells us that there was nothing to prevent a man from setting up a tutelary deity of his own, if he were so disposed; he might adopt almost any object for the religious reverence of his household and himself. Thus there was "a gradation in the divine hierarchy from gods of populous tribes down to deities the private possession of a very few."<sup>238</sup> Further, Mr. Collocot found that most of the gods had sacred animals or other natural objects associated with them,<sup>239</sup> and that the worshippers were generally forbidden to eat the sacred animals of their gods. He concludes that "in the period of which we have information totemism has given way to a more highly developed polytheism, but there are indications that the development was by way of totemism."<sup>240</sup> Among the facts which appear to support this conclusion we may note the following.

There was a great god called Boolotoo Katoa, that is, "the

---

<sup>237</sup> See below, pp. [182 sqq.](#), [200 sqq.](#)

<sup>238</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, "Notes on Tongan Religion," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, xxx. (1921) pp. 154 sq., 159.

<sup>239</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* pp. 160, 161.

<sup>240</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* pp. 159 sq.

whole of Boolotoo (Bolotoo)," who had the dog for his sacred animal; while the deity was being worshipped, a dog lay at the side of the priest. This god had his principal shrine at Boha in the eastern part of Tongataboo: the district was of old the centre of government and the residence of the Tooitonga.<sup>241</sup> Another god, whose name was the King of the tribe or clan of Fonua (*Tui-Haafakafonua*), had for his sacred animal a lizard, and for the convenience of his departure, and presumably arrival, a tree or post was always provided for him to crawl along. A handy post or tree-stump was a regular part of his temple furnishings.<sup>242</sup> Another god, whose name signifies "Proud Boastfulness of the Season" (*Mofuta-ae-ta'u*), had for his sacred animal a great sea-eel, which dwelt in an opening of the reef opposite the village. This deity used to take it very ill if anybody appeared on the beach near his abode wearing a turban or whitened with lime; and should a man rashly disregard the feelings of the divine eel in these respects, it was believed that the deity would carry him off to his hole in the rock.<sup>243</sup> Another god, named Haele-feke, used to manifest himself in the form of an octopus (*feke*). Whenever an octopus appeared in a certain pool, it was at once recognised as the god, and the priestess immediately went and awaited him at the shrine, which seems to have been a small raised platform. Thither the people presently resorted, bringing bunches of coco-

---

<sup>241</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* p. 162.

<sup>242</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* p. 227.

<sup>243</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* pp. 227 *sq.*

nuts and coco-nut leaves and earth. The priestess thereupon spoke as in the person of the octopus, and apparently imitated the creature, presumably by sprawling in the ungainly manner of an octopus. The worshippers of this deity abstained from eating the flesh of the octopus, and even from approaching a place where other people were eating it. If any of them transgressed the taboo, he was afflicted with complete baldness. Should any of the worshippers find a dead octopus, they buried it with all due ceremony in Teekiu, their principal village.<sup>244</sup> The rail bird (*kalae*) was worshipped by some people, who used to tie bunches of the birds together and carry them about with them when they travelled; and the priest had a bunch of the sacred birds tattooed as a badge on his throat.<sup>245</sup> The clan Fainga'a had for its sacred animal the mullet; and it is said that young mullets were tabooed to the men of the clan.<sup>246</sup> A family group in Haapai had the owl for their sacred creature; if an owl hooted near a house in the afternoon, it was a sign that there was a pregnant woman in the household.<sup>247</sup> The god of Uiha in Haapai was the Eel-in-the-Open-Sea (*Toke-i-Moana*); as usual, the worshippers might not eat the flesh of eels or approach a place where an eel was being cooked.<sup>248</sup> The clan Falefa worshipped two goddesses, Jiji and

---

<sup>244</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* pp. 231 *sq.*

<sup>245</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* pp. 161, 233.

<sup>246</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* p. 234.

<sup>247</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* p. 234.

<sup>248</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* pp. 234 *sq.*

Fainga'a, whose sacred creature was the heron. Jiji was supposed to be incarnate in the dark-coloured heron, and Fainga'a in the light-coloured heron. When a pair of herons, one dark and the other light-coloured, were seen flying together, people said that it was the two goddesses Jiji and Fainga'a.<sup>249</sup> In the island of Tofua there was a clan called the King of Tofua (*Tui Tofua*), which had the shark for its god; members of the clan might not eat the flesh of sharks, because they believed themselves to be related to the fish; they said that long ago some of the clansmen leaped from a canoe into the sea and were turned into sharks.<sup>250</sup> Another god who appeared in the form of a shark was Taufa of the Sea (*Taufa-tahi*); but in another aspect he was a god of the land (*Taufa-uta*) and a notable protector of gardens. To secure his aid the husbandman had only to plait a coco-nut leaf in the likeness of a shark and to hang it up in his plantation; a garden thus protected was under a taboo which no one would dare to violate. A Christian, who ventured to thrust his hand in mockery into the maw of the sham shark, had both his arms afterwards bitten off by a real shark.<sup>251</sup> Other gods were recognised in the shape of flying-foxes, shell-fish, and little blue and green lizards.<sup>252</sup> We hear of two Tongan gods who had black volcanic pebbles

---

<sup>249</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* p. 232.

<sup>250</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* pp. 238 *sq.*

<sup>251</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* p. 229.

<sup>252</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* pp. 230, 231, 233.

for their sacred objects,<sup>253</sup> and of one whose shrine was the tree called *fehi*, the hard wood of which was commonly used for making spears and canoes.<sup>254</sup> The gods of Niua Fo'ou, one of the most distant islands of the Tongan group, were three in number, to wit, the octopus, pig's liver, and a large lump of coral. The worshippers of the two former deities might not eat the divine octopus and the divine pig's liver.<sup>255</sup> Christianity itself appears not to have wholly extinguished the reverence of the natives for the sacred animals of their clans. A much-respected native minister of the Methodist Church informed Mr. Collocot that to this day he gets a headache if he eats the sacred animal of his clan, though other people may partake of the creature, not only with impunity, but with relish.<sup>256</sup>

Thus the worship of natural objects, and especially of animals, fish, and birds, presents a close analogy to the Samoan system, as we shall see presently;<sup>257</sup> and it is not without significance that tradition points to Samoa as the original home from which the ancestors of the Tongans migrated to their present abode.<sup>258</sup> On the question of the nature of the divine beings who presented themselves to their worshippers in the form

---

<sup>253</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* pp. 230, 233.

<sup>254</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* p. 232.

<sup>255</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* p. 239.

<sup>256</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* p. 160.

<sup>257</sup> See below, pp. [154 sq.](#)

<sup>258</sup> E. E. V. Collocot, *op. cit.* p. 239.

of animals, the evidence collected by Mr. Collocot seems to confirm the statement of Mariner, that only the primary or non-human gods were believed capable of thus becoming incarnate; at least Mr. Collocot gives no hint that the worshipful creatures were supposed to be tenanted by the souls of the human dead; in other words, there is nothing to show that the Tongan worship of animals was based on a theory of transmigration.

The statement of Miss Farmer, which I have quoted, that among the Tongans the souls of the dead were the principal object of worship and received the most sacrifices, is interesting and not improbable, though it is not confirmed by Mariner. It may indeed, perhaps, be laid down as a general principle that the worship of the dead tends constantly to encroach on the worship of the high gods, who are pushed ever farther into the background by the advent of their younger rivals. It is natural enough that this should be so. The affection which we feel for virtue, the reverence and awe inspired by great talents and powerful characters, persist long after the objects of our love and admiration have passed away from earth, and we now render to their memories the homage which we paid, or perhaps grudged, to the men themselves in their lifetime. For us they seem still to exist; with their features, their characteristic turns of thought and speech still fresh in our memories, we can hardly bring ourselves to believe that they have utterly ceased to be, that nothing of them remains but the lifeless dust which we have committed to the earth. The heart still clings fondly to the hope, if not to the



belief, that somewhere beyond our ken the loved and lost ones are joined to the kindred spirits who have gone before in that unknown land, where, in due time, we shall meet them again. And as with affection, so with reverence and fear; they also are powerful incentives to this instinctive belief in the continued existence of the dead. The busy brain that explored the heights and depths of this mysterious universe – the glowing imagination that conjured up visions of beauty born, as we fondly think, for immortality – the aspiring soul and vaulting ambition that founded or overturned empires and shook the world – are they now no more than a few mouldering bones or a handful of ashes under their marble monuments? The mind of most men revolts from a conclusion so derogatory to what they deem the dignity of human nature; and so to satisfy at once the promptings of the imagination and the impulse of the heart, men gradually elevate their dead to the rank of saints and heroes, who in course of time may easily pass by an almost insensible transition to the supreme place of deities. It is thus that, almost as far back as we can trace the gropings of the human mind, man has been perpetually creating gods in his own likeness.

In a pantheon thus constantly recruited by the accession of dead men, the recruits tend to swamp the old deities by sheer force of numbers; for whereas the muster-roll of the original gods is fixed and unchangeable, the newcomers form a great host which is not only innumerable but perpetually on the increase, for who can reckon up the tale of the departed or set bounds to

the ravages of death? Indeed, where the deification of the dead is carried to its logical limit, a new god is born for every man that dies; though in Tonga against such an extreme expansion of the spiritual hierarchy, and a constant overcrowding of Bolotoo, a solid barrier was interposed by the Tongan doctrine which opened the gates of paradise only to noblemen.<sup>259</sup>

---

<sup>259</sup> We have seen (p. 70) that according to Mariner the number of the original gods was about three hundred; but as to the deified noblemen he merely says that "of these there must be a vast number" (*Tonga Islands*, ii. 109). In his "Notes on Tongan Religion" (*Journal of the Polynesian Society*, xxx. (1921) p. 159) Mr. E. E. V. Collocot remarks: "The number of the gods, moreover, was liable to constant augmentation by the deification of the illustrious or well-beloved dead." As a notable instance he cites the case of a certain chief named Fakailoatonga, a native of Vavau, who subdued or overran a large part of Tongataboo. He was a leper, but for a long time did not know the true nature of his malady. When he learned the truth, he in disgust buried himself alive, and after his death he was elevated to the godhead. But in this deification, if Mariner is right, there was nothing exceptional; as a chief he became a god after death in the course of nature.

## § 10. *Temples and Tombs: Megalithic Monuments*

On the whole it seems reasonable to conclude that in Tonga the distinction between the original superhuman deities and the new human gods tended to be obliterated in the minds of the people. More and more, we may suppose, the deified spirits of dead men usurped the functions and assimilated themselves to the character of the ancient divinities. Yet between these two classes of worshipful beings Mariner draws an important distinction which we must not overlook. He says that these new human gods, these souls of deified nobles, "have no houses dedicated to them, but the proper places to invoke them are their graves, which are considered sacred, and are therefore as much respected as consecrated houses."<sup>260</sup> If this distinction is well founded, the consecrated house or temple, as we may call it, of an original god was quite different from the grave at which a new god, that is, a dead man or woman, was worshipped. But in spite of the high authority of Mariner it seems doubtful whether the distinction which he makes between the temples of the old gods and the tombs of the new ones was always recognised in practice, and whether the two were not apt to be confounded in the minds even of the natives. The temples of the gods, as we have seen, did

---

<sup>260</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 110

not differ in shape and structure from the houses of men, and similar houses, as we shall see, were also built on the graves of kings and chiefs and even of common people. What was easier than to confuse the two classes of spirit-houses, the houses of gods and the houses of dead kings or chiefs, especially when the memory of these potentates had grown dim and their human personality had been forgotten? Certainly European observers have sometimes been in doubt as to whether places to which the natives paid religious reverence were temples or graves. In view of this ambiguity I propose to examine some of the descriptions which have been given by eye-witnesses of the sacred structures and enclosure which might be interpreted either as temples or tombs. The question has a double interest and importance, first, in its bearing on the theory, enunciated by Herbert Spencer, that temples are commonly, if not universally, derived from tombs,<sup>261</sup> and gods from dead men; and secondly, in its bearing on the question of the origin and meaning of megalithic monuments; for not a few of the tombs of Tongan kings and sacred chiefs are constructed in part of very large stones.

I will begin with the evidence of Captain Cook, an excellent observer and faithful witness. He paid two visits to the Tonga islands, a short one in 1773, and a longer one of between two and three months in 1777. Speaking of his first visit to Tongataboo in 1773, he writes as follows:

"After sitting here some time, and distributing some presents

---

<sup>261</sup> Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, vol. i (London, 1904) pp. 249 *sqq.*

to those about us, we signified our desire to see the country. The chief immediately took the hint, and conducted us along a lane that led to an open green, on the one side of which was a house of worship built on a mount that had been raised by the hand of man, about sixteen or eighteen feet above the common level. It had an oblong figure, and was inclosed by a wall or parapet of stone, about three feet in height. From this wall the mount rose with a gentle slope, and was covered with a green turf. On the top of it stood the house, which had the same figure as the mount, about twenty feet in length, and fourteen or sixteen broad. As soon as we came before the place, every one seated himself on the green, about fifty or sixty yards from the front of the house. Presently came three elderly men; who seated themselves between us and it, and began a speech, which I understood to be a prayer, it being wholly directed to the house. This lasted about ten minutes; and then the priests, for such I took them to be, came and sat down along with us, when we made them presents of such things as were about us. Having then made signs to them that we wanted to view the premises, my friend Attago immediately got up, and going with us, without showing the least backwardness, gave us full liberty to examine every part of it.

"In the front were two stone steps leading to the top of the wall; from this the ascent to the house was easy, round which was a fine gravel walk. The house was built, in all respects, like to their common dwelling-houses; that is, with posts and rafters; and covered with palm thatch. The eaves came down within about

three feet of the ground, which space was filled up with strong matting made of palm leaves, as a wall. The floor of the house was laid with fine gravel; except in the middle, where there was an oblong square of blue pebbles, raised about six inches higher than the floor. At one corner of the house stood an image rudely carved in wood, and on one side lay another; each about two feet in length. I, who had no intention to offend either them or their gods, did not so much as touch them, but asked Attago, as well as I could, if they were *Eatuas*, or gods. Whether he understood me or no, I cannot say; but he immediately turned them over and over, in as rough a manner as he would have done any other log of wood, which convinced me that they were not there as representatives of the Divinity. I was curious to know if the dead were interred there, and asked Attago several questions relative thereto; but I was not sure that he understood me; at least I did not understand the answers he made, well enough to satisfy my inquiries. For the reader must know, that at our first coming among these people, we hardly could understand a word they said. Even my Otaheitean youth, and the man on board the *Adventure*, were equally at a loss: but more of this by and by. Before we quitted the house we thought it necessary to make an offering at the altar. Accordingly we laid down upon the blue pebbles, some medals, nails, and several other things; which we had no sooner done than my friend Attago took them up, and put them in his pocket. The stones with which the walls were made that inclosed this mount, were some of them nine or ten feet by

four, and about six inches thick. It is difficult to conceive how they can cut such stones out of the coral rocks.

"This mount stood in a kind of grove open only on the side which fronted the high road, and the green on which the people were seated. At this green or open place, was a junction of five roads, two or three of which appeared to be very public ones. The groves were composed of several sorts of trees. Among others was the *Etoa* tree, as it is called at Otaheite, of which are made clubs, etc., and a kind of low palm, which is very common in the northern parts of New Holland.

"After we had done examining this place of worship, which in their language is called *a-fiat-tou-ca*, we desired to return."<sup>262</sup>

A little farther on, still speaking of his first visit to Tonga, Captain Cook observes: "So little do we know of their religion, that I hardly dare mention it. The buildings called *afiatoucas*, before mentioned, are undoubtedly set apart for this purpose. Some of our gentlemen were of opinion, that they were merely burying-places. I can only say, from my own knowledge, that they are places to which particular persons directed set speeches, which I understood to be prayers, as hath been already related. Joining my opinion with that of others, I was inclined to think that they are set apart to be both temples and burying-places, as at Otaheite, or even in Europe. But I have no idea of the images being idols; not only from what I saw myself, but from Mr. Wales's informing me that they set one of them up, for him

---

<sup>262</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, iii. 182-184.

and others to shoot at."<sup>263</sup>

Thus Captain Cook and his party were divided in opinion as to whether the house on the mound, within its walled enclosure built of great stones, was a temple or a tomb. Captain Cook himself called it simply a "house of worship" and a "place of worship," but he inclined to the view that it was both a temple and a burying-place, and in this opinion he was probably right. The native name which he applied to it, *afiatouca*, means a burial-place; for it is doubtless equivalent to *fytoea*, a word which Mariner explains to mean "a burying-place, including the grave, the mount in which it is sunk, and a sort of shed over it."<sup>264</sup> Moreover, the oblong square of blue pebbles, which Captain Cook observed on the floor of the house on the mound, and which he regarded as the altar, speaks also in favour of the house being a tomb; for Mariner has described how the mourners brought white and black pebbles to the house which stood over the grave of King Finow, and how they "strewed the inside of the house with the white ones, and also the outside about the *fytoea*, as a decoration to it: the black pebbles they strewed only upon those white ones, which covered the ground directly

---

<sup>263</sup> Captain James Cook, *op. cit.* iii. 206.

<sup>264</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 144, note \*. However, in another passage (i. 392, note \*) Mariner tells us that, strictly speaking, the word *fytoea* applied only to the mound with the grave in it, and not to the house upon the mound; for there were several *fytoeas* that had no houses on them. For other mentions of *fytoeas* and notices of them by Mariner, see *op. cit.* i. pp. 386, note \*, 387, 388, 392, 393, 394, 395, 402, ii. 214-218.



over the body, to about the length and breadth of a man, in the form of a very eccentric ellipse. After this, the house over the *fytoea*," continues Mariner, "was closed up at both ends with a reed fencing, reaching from the eaves to the ground, and, at the front and back, with a sort of basket-work, made of the young branches of the cocoa-nut tree, split and interwoven in a very curious and ornamental way, to remain till the next burial, when they are to be taken down, and, after the conclusion of the ceremony, new ones are to be put up in like manner."<sup>265</sup> This description of the house over King Finow's grave agrees so closely with Captain Cook's description of the house in the *afiatouca*, that we may with much probability regard the latter as a tomb, and suppose that the "oblong square of blue pebbles," which Cook regarded as an altar and on which he laid down his offering, marked the place of the body in the grave: it was at once an altar and a tombstone.

On his second and more prolonged visit to the Tonga islands, Captain Cook expressed, with more confidence, his opinion that the *fiatookas*, as he calls them, were at once burial-grounds and places of worship. Thus he says: "Their *morais* or *fiatookas* (for they are called by both names, but mostly by the latter), are, as at Otaheite, and many other parts of the world, burying-grounds and places of worship; though some of them seemed to be only

---

<sup>265</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 402. A little farther on (p. 424, note \*) Mariner remarks that "mourners were accustomed to smooth the graves of their departed friends, and cover them with black and white pebbles."

appropriated to the first purpose; but these were small, and, in every other respect, inferior to the others."<sup>266</sup> Again, in another passage he describes one of the more stately of these temple-tombs. He says: "Some of us, accompanied by a few of the king's attendants, and Omai as our interpreter, walked out to take a view of a *fiatooka*, or burying-place, which we had observed to be almost close by the house, and was much more extensive, and seemingly of more consequence, than any we had seen at the other islands. We were told, that it belonged to the king. It consisted of three pretty large houses, situated upon a rising ground, or rather just by the brink of it, with a small one, at some distance, all ranged longitudinally. The middle house of the three first, was by much the largest, and placed in a square, twenty-four paces by twenty-eight, raised about three feet. The other houses were placed on little mounts, raised artificially to the same height. The floors of these houses, as also the tops of the mounts round them, were covered with loose, fine pebbles, and the whole was inclosed by large flat stones of hard coral rock, properly hewn, placed on their edges; one of which stones measured twelve feet in length, two in breadth, and above one in thickness. One of the houses, contrary to what we had seen before, was open on one side; and within it were two rude, wooden busts of men; one near the entrance, and the other farther in. On inquiring of the natives, who had followed us to the ground, but durst not enter here, What these images were

---

<sup>266</sup> Captain Cook, *Voyages*, v. 424.

intended for? they made us as sensible as we could wish, that they were merely memorials of some chiefs who had been buried there, and not the representations of any deity. Such monuments, it should seem, are seldom raised; for these had probably been erected several ages ago. We were told, that the dead had been buried in each of these houses; but no marks of this appeared. In one of them, was the carved head of an Otaheite canoe, which had been driven ashore on their coast, and deposited here. At the foot of the rising ground was a large area, or grass-plot, with different trees planted about it; amongst which were several of those called *etooa*, very large. These, as they resemble the cypresses, had a fine effect in such a place. There was also a row of low palms near one of the houses, and behind it a ditch, in which lay a great number of old baskets."<sup>267</sup>

Between the departure of Cook and the arrival of Mariner the first Protestant missionaries were fortunate enough to witness the burial of a king of Tonga, by name Moomōoe. Their description of it and of the royal tomb entirely bears out the observations and conclusions of Captain Cook. The *fiatooka* or burial-ground, they tell us, "is situated on a spot of ground about four acres. A mount rises with a gentle slope about seven feet, and is about one hundred and twenty yards in circumference at the base; upon the top stands a house neatly made, which is about thirty feet long, and half that in width. The roof is thatched, and the sides and ends left open. In the middle of this house is the grave, the sides,

---

<sup>267</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 342 *sq.*

ends, and bottom of which are of coral stone, with a cover of the same: the floor of the house is of small stones. The *etoa* and other trees grow round the *fiatooka*."<sup>268</sup> Into this grave, or rather stone vault, the missionaries saw the king's body lowered. The stone which covered the vault was eight feet long, four feet broad, and one foot thick. This massive stone was first raised and held in suspense by means of two great ropes, the ends of which were wound round two strong piles driven into the ground at the end of the house. The ropes were held by about two hundred men, who, when the king's body had been deposited in the grave, slowly lowered the great stone and covered the vault.<sup>269</sup> Some years later Mariner witnessed the funeral of another king of Tonga, Finow the First; and he similarly describes how the tomb was a large stone vault, sunk about ten feet deep in the ground, the covering stone of which was hoisted by the main strength of a hundred and fifty or two hundred men pulling at the two ends of a rope; when the bodies of the king and his daughter had been laid side by side in the vault the massive stone was lowered by the men with a great shout.<sup>270</sup> The number of the men required to raise and lower these great stones gives us some idea of their weight.

Thus far we have been dealing only with the tombs of the civil kings of Tonga. But far more stately and massive are the tombs of

---

<sup>268</sup> Captain James Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean*, pp. 240 sq.

<sup>269</sup> Captain James Wilson, *op. cit.* p. 244.

<sup>270</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 387 sq.

the sacred kings or pontiffs, the Tootongas, which still exist and still excite the curiosity and admiration of European observers. The Tongan name for these tombs is *langi*, which properly means "sky," also "a band of singers"; but there appears to be no connexion between these different meanings of the word.<sup>271</sup> The tombs are situated in Tongataboo, not far from Mooa, the old capital of the island. They stand near the south-eastern shore of the lagoon, which, under the name of the Mooa Inlet, penetrates deeply into the northern side of Tongataboo. Beginning at the northern outskirts of the village of Labaha, they stretch inland for more than half a mile into the forest.<sup>272</sup> They are of various constructions and shapes. Some consist of a square enclosure, on the level of the ground, the boundary walls being formed of large stones; while at each corner of the square two high stones, rising above the wall, are placed upright at right angles to each other and in a line with their respective sides.<sup>273</sup> But apparently the more usual and characteristic type of tomb has the form of a truncated pyramid or oblong platform raised in a series of steps or terraces, which are built of massive blocks of coral. The number of steps or terraces seems to vary from one to four according to the height of the monument.<sup>274</sup> It is much to be regretted that no one has yet

---

<sup>271</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 213 sq.

<sup>272</sup> (Sir) Basil Thomson, "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) p. 86.

<sup>273</sup> Captain James Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean*, pp. 283 sq.

<sup>274</sup> The tomb described and illustrated by the first missionaries had four massive and

counted and mapped out these tombs and recorded the names of their royal or divine occupants, so far as they are remembered; but a trace of the religious awe which once invested this hallowed ground still avails to keep it inviolate. A proposal which Sir Basil Thomson made to clear away the forest and preserve the tombs was very coldly received; in the eyes of the natives, professing Christians as they are, it probably savoured of sacrilege. The ancient custom was to clear the ground about every new tomb, and after the interment to suffer the tropical undergrowth to swallow it up for ever. Nowadays no holy pontiffs are borne to their last resting-place in these hallowed shades; so the forest is never cleared, and nature is left free to run wild. In consequence the tombs are so overgrown and overshadowed that it is difficult to photograph them in the gloomy and tangled thicket. Great *ifi* trees<sup>275</sup> overhang them: banyan-trees have sprouted on the terraces and thrust their roots into every crevice, mantling the stones with a lacework of tendrils, which year by year rend huge blocks asunder, until the original form of the terrace is almost obliterated. Sir Basil Thomson followed the chain of tombs for about half a mile, but on each occasion his guides told him that there were other smaller tombs farther inland. The tombs

---

lofty steps, each of them five and a half feet broad and four feet or three feet nine inches high. See Captain James Wilson, *l. c.*, with the plate facing p. 284. One such tomb, rising in four tiers, is ascribed traditionally to a female Tooitonga, whose name has been forgotten. See (Sir) Basil Thomson, "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) p. 88 n.<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>275</sup> The Tahitian chestnut (*Inocarpus edulis*); see above, [p. 74, note2](#).

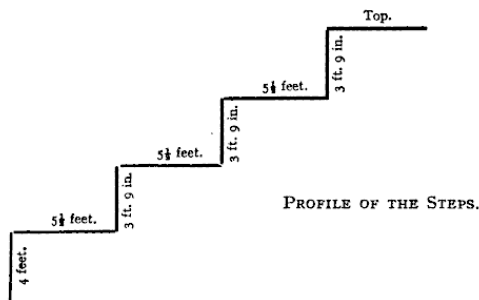
increase in size and in importance as they near the shore of the lagoon, and to seven or eight of the larger ones the names of the occupants can be assigned; but the names of the sacred chiefs who sleep in the smaller tombs inland are quite forgotten. Some of them are mere enclosures of stones, not squared, but taken haphazard from the reef.<sup>276</sup>

The tombs were built in the lifetime of the sacred chiefs who were to lie in them, and their size accordingly affords a certain measure of the power and influence of the great men interred in them. Among the largest is the tomb which goes by the name of Telea, though it is said to contain no body, Telea himself being buried in the tomb next to it. We are told that, dissatisfied with the first sepulchre that was built for him, he replaced it by the other, which is also of great size. The most modern of the tombs is that of Laufilitonga, the last to bear the title of Tooitonga. He died a Christian about 1840 and was buried in the tomb of very inferior size which crowns the village cemetery. The most ancient cannot be dated; but that some are older than A.D. 1535 may be inferred from the tradition that Takalaua, a Tooitonga, was assassinated about that time because he was a tyrant who compelled his people to drag great stones from Liku, at the back

---

<sup>276</sup> (Sir) Basil Thomson, *Diversions of a Prime Minister* (Edinburgh and London, 1894), pp. 379 *sq.*; *id.* "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) p. 86. According to an earlier authority, the Tongans could name and point out the tombs of no less than thirty Tooitongas. See the letter of Mr. Philip Hervey, quoted in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London*, Second Series, vol. ii. p. 77.

of the island, to the burial ground at Mooa; the distance is about a mile and a half.<sup>277</sup>



## Profile of the Steps

The first, so far as I know, to see and describe these remarkable tombs were the earliest missionaries to Tonga about the end of the eighteenth century. Speaking of the burial ground at Mooa, where lay interred the divine chiefs whose title was Tooitonga and whose family name was Futtafāihe or Fatafehi, the missionaries observe that "the *fiatookas* are remarkable. There lie the Futtafāihes for many generations, some vast and ruinous, which is the case with the largest; the house on the top of it is fallen, and the area and tomb itself overgrown with wood and

---

<sup>277</sup> (Sir) Basil Thomson, "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) pp. 86 *sq.*, 88 n.<sup>2</sup>. As to the legend of the tyrant Takalaua, see *id.* *Diversions of a Prime Minister*, pp. 294-302.



weeds."<sup>278</sup> Later on they had the advantage of being conducted over the august cemetery by the Futtafāihe or Tooitonga of the day in person, who gave them some explanations concerning these sepulchres of his ancestors. To quote their description, they say that the tombs "lie ranged in a line eastward from his house, among a grove of trees, and are many in number, and of different constructions: some, in a square form, were not in the least raised above the level of the common ground; a row of large stones formed the sides, and at each corner two high stones were placed upright at right angles to each other, and in a line with their respective sides: others were such as the brethren describe that of Moomōoe to be: and a third sort were built square like the first; the largest of which was at the base one hundred and fifty-six feet by one hundred and forty; it had four steps from the bottom to the top, that run quite round the pile: one stone composed the height of each step, a part of it being sunk in the ground; and some of these stones in the wall of the lower are immensely large; one, which I measured, was twenty-four

---

<sup>278</sup> Captain James Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean*, p. 252. As to Futtafāihe, the Tooitonga or divine chief of their time, the missionaries remark (*l. c.*) that "Futtafāihe is very superstitious, and himself esteemed as an *odooa* or god." Here *odooa* is the Polynesian word which is usually spelled *atua*. Mariner tells us (*Tonga Islands*, ii. 76) that the family name of the Tooitonga was Fatafehi, which seems to be only another way of spelling Futtafāihe, the form adopted by the missionaries. Captain Cook similarly gives Futtafāihe as the family name of the sacred kings or Tooitongas, deriving the name "from the God so called, who is probably their tutelary patron, and perhaps their common ancestor." See Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 425.

feet by twelve, and two feet thick; these Futtafāihe informed me were brought in double canoes from the island of Lefooga. They are coral stone, and are hewn into a tolerably good shape, both with respect to the straightness of their sides and flatness of their surfaces. They are now so hardened by the weather, that the great difficulty we had in breaking a specimen of one corner made it not easy to conjecture how the labour of hewing them at first had been effected; as, by the marks of antiquity which some of them bear, they must have been built long before Tasman showed the natives an iron tool. Besides the trees which grow on the top and sides of most of them, there are the *etooa*, and a variety of other trees about them; and these, together with the thousands of bats which hang on their branches, all contribute to the awful solemnity of those sepulchral mansions of the ancient chiefs. On our way back Futtafāihe told us that all the *fiatookas* we had seen were built by his ancestors, who also lay interred in them; and as there appeared no reason to doubt the truth of this, it proves that a supreme power in the government of the island must for many generations have been in the family of the Futtafāihes: for though there were many *fiatookas* in the island, the brethren, who had seen most of them, said they were not to be compared to these for magnitude, either in the pile or the stones which compose them."<sup>279</sup>

---

<sup>279</sup> Captain James Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean*, pp. 283-285. The description is accompanied by an engraved plate, which illustrates the three types of tombs mentioned in the text. In the foreground is the stepped pyramid, a massive and lofty structure, its flat top surmounted by a hut. To the right, in the

Some thirty years later the tombs of the Tooitongas were visited and described by the French explorer, J. Dumont d'Urville. His description is worth quoting. He says: "I directed my steps to the splendid *fai-tokas* of the Fata-Faïs. As these monuments are essentially taboo, in the absence of the Tooitonga no one looks after their upkeep, and they are now buried on every side among dark masses of trees and almost impenetrable thickets. Hence we had some difficulty in approaching them, and it was impossible for us to get a single general view of the whole of these structures, which must have a somewhat solemn effect when the ground is properly cleared.

"For the most part these mausoleums have the form of great rectangular spaces surrounded by enormous blocks of stone, of which some are as much as from fifteen to twenty feet long by six or eight broad and two feet thick. The most sumptuous of these monuments have four or five rows of steps, making up a total height of eighteen or twenty feet. The interior is filled up with shingle and fragments of unhewn coral. One of these *fai-tokas*, which I measured, was a hundred and eighty feet long by a hundred and twenty broad. At one of the upper angles I observed a block of considerable size with a deep cutting in it. I was told

---

distance, is seen the square walled enclosure, with high stones standing upright at the corners of the walls, and with a hut enclosed in the middle of the square. In the background appears a mound enclosed by a wall and surmounted by a hut. Thus a hut figures as an essential part in each type of tomb. However, Mariner tells us that "they have several *fytochas* which have no houses on them" (*Tonga Islands*, i. 392 note \*).

that it was the seat of the Tooi-tonga-fafine<sup>280</sup>; it was there that she sat to preside at the ceremony of the funeral of the Tooi-tonga.

"Some of these edifices were of an oval form, but they were much smaller. Each of them was surmounted by a small hut, which served as an oratory or house for the spirit of the dead; most of them have been destroyed by the lapse of time, and only

---

<sup>280</sup> The Tooi-tonga-fafine (or fefine) was the Tooitonga's sister and ranked above him. Her title means "the lady Tooi-tonga." "Her dignity is very great. She is treated as a kind of divinity. Her rank is too high to allow of her uniting herself in marriage with any mortal: but it is not thought wrong or degrading for her to have a family, and in case of the birth of a daughter the child becomes the *Tamaha*. This lady rises higher than her mother in rank, and is nearer the gods. Every one approaches her with gifts and homage. Her grandfather will bring his offerings and sit down before her, with all humility, like any of the common people. Sick people come to her for cure" (Miss Sarah S. Farmer, *Tonga and the Friendly Islands*, p. 145, apparently from the information of Mr. John Thomas). Captain Cook learned with surprise that Poulaho, the Tooitonga of his time (whom Cook speaks of as the king) acknowledged three women as his superiors. "On our inquiring, who these extraordinary personages were, whom they distinguish by the name and title of *Tammaha*, we were told that the late king, Poulaho's father, had a sister of equal rank, and elder than himself; that she, by a man who came from the island of Feejee, had a son and two daughters; and that these three persons, as well as their mother, rank above Futtafaihe the king. We endeavoured, in vain, to trace the reason of this singular pre-eminence of the *Tammahas*; for we could learn nothing besides this account of their pedigree. The mother and one of the daughters called Tooela-Kaipa, live at Vavaoo. Latoolibooloo, the son, and the other daughter, whose name is MOUNGOULA-KAIPA, reside at Tongataboo. The latter is the woman who is mentioned to have dined with me on the 21st of June. This gave occasion to our discovering her superiority over the king, who would not eat in her presence, though she made no scruple to do so before him, and received from him the customary obeisance, by touching her foot." See Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 430 *sq.*

traces of them are left scattered on the ground.

"The enormous blocks of coral employed in the construction of these monuments have all been brought by sea from Hifo to Mooa. They were got on the shore of the sea at Hifo, were hewn on the spot, and were transported in great canoes; then they were landed at Mooa and drawn on rollers to the place of their destination. These monuments are astonishing evidence of the patience which they must have demanded on the part of these islanders; they were ocular testimony to me of the high degree of civilisation which the natives had reached. Man must have risen to ideas of a much higher order than those of a simple savage before he would take so great pains for the single object of consecrating the memory of his chiefs.

"Such tombs are no longer built in Tongataboo: people content themselves with simple mounds surrounded by a row of posts or even an ordinary palisade. However, Singleton assured me that Finow the Younger had erected two great *fai-tokas* of stone in Vavao, one for the last Tooitonga, and one for his father."<sup>281</sup>

The Frenchman, De Sainson, who accompanied Dumont d'Urville on his visit to Tongataboo, has also described the tombs of the Tooitongas at Mooa from personal observation. I

---

<sup>281</sup> J. Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage de l'Astrolabe, Histoire du Voyage*, iv. (Paris, 1832) pp. 106-108. Singleton was an Englishman, one of the crew of the *Port-au-Prince*, the ship in which Mariner sailed. When Dumont d'Urville visited Tonga, Singleton had lived as a native among the natives for twenty-three years; he was married and had children, and he hoped to end his days in Tongataboo. See J. Dumont d'Urville, *op. cit.* iv. 23 sq.

will quote his description: "It is in the heart of the forest that the ancient inhabitants of these countries, who idolized their Kings (Tooi-tongas), placed the tombs of that sacred race. These monuments of a more enterprising age still astonish the beholder by their mass and their extent. The *fai-tokas*, as these burial-places are called, are artificial eminences, on the top of which, in the form of a square, are three or four crosses of great granitic blocks arranged as steps, of which each block may be four or five feet high. If there is only a single step on the top of the mound, it is because only a single Tooi-tonga sleeps there in the grave; if the bones of a whole family are deposited in a common tomb, three or four steps, one above the other, mark their union in death. Some of these monuments which contain only a single body are arranged in an oval. I counted more than twelve of these immense structures, and yet we left a great many aside. I counted more than one stone between eight and fifteen feet long; and I conceived a high idea of those men of ancient days who erected over the remains of their kings these imperishable mausoleums, in an island based on coral, where it would be difficult to find a stone of two feet square. I imagined them to be very different from their effeminate descendants, those men of old who went in their canoes more than a hundred and fifty leagues to look for the enormous blocks of which these tombs are built, who cut them without the help of iron, and succeeded, by means unknown, in planting them on these hillocks, where by their own weight they are fixed for ever, like the Druidical monuments of Brittany,

which one would say were dropped on earth rather by the magic of talismans than by the power of man.

"The present inhabitants of Tonga contemplate with a pious awe the fruit of the labours and patience of their forefathers, without dreaming for a moment of imitating them in their noble enterprises. A distant voyage affrights these degenerate scions of a hardy race, and the great canoes which still survive, sheltered under sheds very skilfully built, are little more than the useless encumbrance of chiefs grown languid in the long peace which has infected the whole people with habits of indolence.

"The most recent tombs consist of a small house enclosed on all sides, built on a rising ground, and shaded by a circle of mimosas, a tree sacred to the dead. Most of the illustrious graves are clustered together at Mafanga, a large village of which the whole territory is sacred on account of the hallowed relics which it contains. Along with the corpse they bury at the depth of a few inches small wooden effigies representing persons of both sexes. I had occasion to unearth a few of these little statues, and I remarked in them an astonishing feeling for artistic design."<sup>282</sup>

Some sixteen years later a Catholic missionary, living among the heathen population of Tongataboo, wrote thus: "Nothing equals the care which they take in the burial of their dead. As soon as a native has breathed his last, the neighbours are informed, and immediately all the women come to weep about

---

<sup>282</sup> "Extrait du Journal de M. de Sainson," in J. Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage de l'Astrolabe, Histoire du Voyage*, iv. (Paris, 1832) pp. 361 sq.

the corpse. Here the men never weep. The body is kept thus for a day or two, during which they are busy building a tomb near the dwelling of the deceased's family. The sepulchral house is neat, built on an eminence, surrounded by a pretty fence of choice bamboos; the enclosure is planted with all kinds of odoriferous shrubs, especially evergreens. Finally, the monument is covered by a roof artistically constructed. For the tombs of kings and the greatest chiefs they go to distant islands to find huge stones to crown the grave. I have seen one twenty-four feet long by eight broad and at least eighteen inches thick. One of these tombs was built by the natives of Wallis Island, who brought the enormous blocks in immense canoes. It is wonderful for these peoples."<sup>283</sup>

Captain Erskine, who visited Tongataboo in 1849, says that "near the landing-place at the village of Holobeka, off which we were lying, we saw overshadowed with trees, one of the *faitokas*, or old burial-places of the country, which, although no longer 'tabu,' are still in some cases used as places of sepulture, and very carefully kept. This one was an oblong square platform a few feet high, surrounded by a stone wall, the interior being beautifully paved with coloured corals and gravel; the house or temple, which Captain Cook and others describe as occupying the centre, having been, I suppose, removed. I saw but one other of these monuments during our stay among the islands, the largest of which stands on several rows of steps, as described by all former

---

<sup>283</sup> Jérôme Grange, in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xvii. (1845) pp. 12 sq.



visitors."<sup>284</sup>

Thomas West, who lived as a missionary in the Tongan islands from 1846 to 1855, tells us that "chiefs were usually interred in tombs, constructed of blocks of sandstone, cut from suitable localities by the seashore, where, at a little depth from the surface, layers of hard and durable sandstone are found, even on many of the coralline islands. In several of the ancient burial-places, similar stones, arranged in terraces, surround the whole enclosure. Some of these are of immense size, and seem to indicate the possession, on the part of former inhabitants, either of greater energy than the present race, or of better tools and appliances. The burial-places of the Tonguese are always surrounded by the most imposing foliage of the tropics, and placed in sequestered spots. A mound of earth is raised, of dimensions varying with the necessities of the place; and, whenever a grave is opened within the limits of this mound, it is always filled up with beautiful white sand, and never contains more than one body. No particle of clay or earthy mould is allowed to touch the remains of the dead. The sand is brought in baskets by the chief mourners, who sometimes sail or journey many miles to procure it; and each person pours the contents into the grave until it is sufficiently filled up. The top of the grave is, afterwards, carefully tended and decorated with black pebbles and red coral, arranged in various devices, which have a very

---

<sup>284</sup> J. E. Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise among the Islands of the Western Pacific* (London, 1853), p. 130.

pretty effect. Small houses are also placed over the tombs of the chiefs and gentry."<sup>285</sup>

In more recent years the tombs of the Tooitongas at Mooa have been visited by Sir Basil Thomson, who has described and discussed them.<sup>286</sup> From an anonymous pamphlet called *The Wairarapa Wilderness*, written by the passengers of the s.s. *Wairarapa* and published in 1884, Sir Basil Thomson quotes a passage containing a description of the tombs, with measurements which, he tells us, are accurate as far as they go. From it I will extract a few particulars. The writers inform us that the tombs are built of blocks of coral which vary in length and thickness; some of the largest they found to be from fifteen to eighteen feet long and from one and a half to two feet thick. The largest measured by them is twenty-two feet long and two feet thick and stands between seven and eight feet above the ground. This great stone, now split in two, is at the middle of the lowest step of one of the pyramidal tombs. The height of the steps varies much in the different pyramids; one step was found to be four feet high. The breadth of each step is three feet or more: it has been carefully levelled and covered with coral gravel. The stones fit very closely and are very regular at top and bottom throughout the tiers. The corners of one pyramid observed by the writers are

---

<sup>285</sup> Thomas West, *Ten Years in South-Central Polynesia* (London, 1865), pp. 268 sq.

<sup>286</sup> (Sir) Basil Thomson, *Diversions of a Prime Minister*, pp. 379 sq.; *id.* "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) pp. 86-88.

formed of huge rectangular stones, which seem to have been put in position before they were finally faced. On the upper surface of the largest stone is a deep hollow about the size and shape of a large chestnut mortar. Sir Basil Thomson, who has examined this hollow, believes it to be a natural cavity which has been artificially smoothed by a workman. He suggests that it may have been lined with leaves and used as a bowl for brewing kava at the funeral ceremonies. On one mound the writers of the pamphlet remarked a large flat stone, some five and a half feet square; and in several of the tombs they noticed huge slabs of volcanic stone placed indiscriminately side by side with blocks of coral. The writers measured the bases of three of the tombs and found them to be about two chains (one hundred and thirty-two feet) long by a chain and a half (ninety-nine feet) broad; the base of a fourth was even larger.<sup>287</sup>

Surveying these various accounts of the tombs of the Tooitongas or sacred chiefs, we may perhaps conclude that, while the type of tomb varied in different cases, the most characteristic, and certainly the most remarkable, type was that of a stepped or terraced pyramid built of such large blocks of stone as to merit the name of megalithic monuments. So far as I have observed in the accounts given of them, this type of tomb was reserved exclusively for the sacred chiefs, the Tooitongas, whom the Tongans regarded as divine and as direct descendants of the

---

<sup>287</sup> (Sir) Basil Thomson, "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) pp. 87 sq.

gods. The civil kings, so far as appears, were not buried in these massive pyramids, but merely in stone vaults sunk in the summits of grassy mounds.

It is natural, with Sir Basil Thomson,<sup>288</sup> to compare the pyramids of the Tooitongas with the similar structures called *morais* or *marais* which are found in Tahiti and the Marquesas islands. Indeed, the very name *morai* was sometimes applied to them by the Tongans themselves, though more usually they called them *fiatookas*, which was simply the common word for burying-ground.<sup>289</sup> In Tahiti and the Marquesas islands these *marais* were in like manner truncated pyramids, rising in a series of steps or tiers, built of stones, some of which were large, but apparently not so large as in the corresponding Tongan edifices; for in describing one of the largest of the Tahitian *morais* or *marais* Cook mentions only one stone measuring as much as four feet seven inches in length by two feet four in breadth, though he found several three and a half feet long by two and a half feet broad. These dimensions can hardly compare with the size of the blocks in the tombs of the Tooitongas, some

---

<sup>288</sup> (Sir) Basil Thomson, *Diversions of a Prime Minister*, p. 379.

<sup>289</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 424. Elsewhere (v. 364) he speaks of "a *morai* or *fiatooka*"; and shortly afterwards, referring to the same structure, he mentions it as "this *morai*, or what I may as well call temple" (p. 365). As to the equivalence of the words *morai* and *marai* (*marae*), see J. A. Moerenhout, *Voyages aux Îles du Grand Océan* (Paris, 1837), i. 466; and as to the significance of the word in its various dialectical forms, see E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, p. 213, s. v. "malae."

of which, as we have seen, measure fifteen, eighteen, and even twenty-two or twenty-four feet in length by eight or twelve feet in height. These Tahitian and Marquesan pyramids are commonly described as temples, and justly so, because the gods were worshipped there and human sacrifices were offered on them.<sup>290</sup> But they were also, like the similar structures in Tonga, used in certain cases for the burial of the dead, or at all events for the preservation of their embalmed bodies. Captain Cook seems even to have regarded the Tahitian *morais* primarily as burying-grounds and only secondarily as places of worship.<sup>291</sup> In the island of Huahine, one of the Society Islands, the sovereign chiefs

---

<sup>290</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, i. 157 *sqq.*; J. R. Forster, *Observations made during a Voyage round the World* (London, 1788), pp. 543 *sqq.*; Captain James Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean*, pp. 207 *sqq.*; David Porter, *Journal of a Cruise made to the Pacific Ocean* (New York, 1822), ii. 38 *sq.*; D. Tyerman and G. Bennet, *Journal of Voyages and Travels* (London, 1831), i. 240-248, 265 *sqq.*, 271, 274, 529 *sq.*, ii. 13 *sq.*, 38 *sq.*; W. Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, Second Edition (London, 1832-1836), i. 340, 405; J. A. Moerenhout, *Voyages aux Îles du Grand Océan*, i. 466-470; G. H. von Langsdorff, *Reise um die Welt* (Frankfurt am Mayn, 1812), i. 115, 134; H. Melville, *Typee* (London, N.D.), pp. 166-169 (*Everyman's Library*); Matthias G —, *Lettres sur les Îles Marquises* (Paris, 1843), pp. 54 *sq.*; C. E. Meinicke, *Die Inseln des Stillen Oceans* (Leipzig, 1875-1876), i. 49, ii. 180, 183 *sq.*; G. Gerland, in Th. Waitz, *Anthropologie*, vi (Leipzig, 1872) pp. 376 *sqq.*

<sup>291</sup> Capt. James Cook, *Voyages*, i. 157 *sq.*, "Their name for such burying-grounds, which are also places of worship, is *Morai*." Compare *id.*, i. 217, 219, 220, 224, vi. 37, 41; J. Turnbull, *Voyage round the World* (London, 1813), p. 151, "the *morais*, which serve the double purpose of places of worship and receptacles for the dead." Compare J. R. Forster, *Observations*, p. 545, "To ornament the *marais* and to honour by it the gods and the decayed buried there, the inhabitants plant several sorts of trees near them."

were buried in a *marai*, where they lay, we are told, in more than Oriental state.<sup>292</sup> William Ellis, one of our best authorities on the religion of the Tahitians, tells us that "the family, district, or royal *maraes* were the general depositories of the bones of the departed, whose bodies had been embalmed, and whose skulls were sometimes preserved in the dwelling of the survivors. The *marae* or temple being sacred, and the bodies being under the guardianship of the gods, were in general considered secure when deposited there. This was not, however, always the case; and in times of war, the victors sometimes not only despoiled the temples of the vanquished, and bore away their idol, but robbed the sacred enclosure of the bones of celebrated individuals."<sup>293</sup> Moerenhout, another good authority on the Tahitian religion, informs us that the *marais* which belonged to individuals often served as cemeteries and were only the more respected on that account; but he says that in the public *marais* almost the only persons buried were the human victims offered in sacrifice, and sometimes the priests, who were laid face downwards in the grave, for the curious reason that otherwise the gaze of the dead men would blight the trees and cause the fruit to fall to the ground.<sup>294</sup>

---

<sup>292</sup> D. Tyerman and G. Bennet, *op. cit.* i. 271.

<sup>293</sup> W. Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, i. 405. Elsewhere (p. 401), speaking of the Tahitian burial customs, Ellis observes that "the skull was carefully kept in the family, while the other bones, etc., were buried within the precincts of the family temple."

<sup>294</sup> J. A. Moerenhout, *op. cit.* i. 470. As to the Tahitian custom of burying the dead in the *marais*, see also C. E. Meinicke, *Die Inseln des Stillen Oceans*, ii. 183 sq., according

In the Marquesas islands the *morais* appear to have been also used occasionally or even regularly as burial-places. Langsdorff, one of our earliest authorities on these islands, speaks of a *morai* simply as a place of burial.<sup>295</sup> He tells us that the mummified bodies of the dead were deposited on scaffolds in the *morai* or family burial-place, and that the people of neighbouring but hostile districts used to try to steal each other's dead from the *morais*, and deemed it a great triumph when they succeeded in the attempt. To defeat such attempts, when the inhabitants of a district expected to be attacked in force by their enemies, they were wont to remove their dead from the *morai* and bury them in the neighbourhood.<sup>296</sup> Again, in their monograph on the Marquesas islands, the French writers Vincendon-Dumoulin and Desgraz recognise only the mortuary aspect of the *morais*. They say: "The *morais*, funeral monuments where the bodies are deposited, are set up on a platform of stone, which is the base of all Nukahivan constructions. They are to be found scattered in the whole extent of the valleys; no particular condition seems to be required in the choice of the site. Near the shore of Taïohae is the *morai* which contains the remains of a brother of the *atepeïou Patini*, an uncle of Moana, who died some years ago, as they tell us."<sup>297</sup>

---

to whom only the bodies of persons of high rank were interred in these sanctuaries.

<sup>295</sup> G. H. von Langsdorff, *op. cit.* i. 115.

<sup>296</sup> G. H. von Langsdorff, *op. cit.* i. 134.

<sup>297</sup> Vincendon-Dumoulin et C. Desgraz, *Îles Marquises ou Nouka-hiva* (Paris, 1843),

Thus to some extent, in function as well as in form, these pyramidal temples of Tahiti and the Marquesas islands corresponded to the megalithic monuments of the Tooitongas or sacred chiefs of Tonga; in fact, they were mausoleums as well as temples. We are not at liberty to assume, with one authority on the Polynesians, that they were mausoleums first and foremost, and that they only developed into temples at a later time.<sup>298</sup> It is possible, on the contrary, that from the outset they were temples dedicated to the worship of the high gods, and that the custom of depositing the dead in them was a later practice adopted for the sake of the protection which these holy places might be expected to afford against the efforts of enemies to carry off and desecrate the remains of the departed. Dr. Rivers propounded a theory that the custom of building these megalithic monuments in the form of pyramids was introduced into the Pacific by a people who brought with them a secret worship of the sun, and he apparently inclined to regard the monuments themselves as at least associated with that worship.<sup>299</sup> The theory can hardly apply to the megalithic monuments of the Tooitongas in Tongataboo; for the evidence which I have adduced seems to render it certain that these monuments were erected primarily as tombs to receive the bodies of the sacred chiefs. It is true that these tombs enjoyed

---

p. 253.

<sup>298</sup> C. E. Meinicke, *Die Inseln des Stillen Oceans*, ii. 180.

<sup>299</sup> W. H. R. Rivers, "Sun-cult and Megaliths in Oceania," *American Anthropologist*, N.S. xvii. (1915) pp. 431 *sqq.*



a sacred character and were the scene of worship which justly entitles them to rank as temples; but so far as they were temples, they were devoted to the worship, not of the sun, but of the dead.

Thus our enquiry into the meaning and origin of these interesting monuments entirely confirms the view of the shrewd and observant Captain Cook that the *fiatookas*, as the Tongans called them, were both places of burial and places of worship.

Finally, the evidence which I have cited appears to render it highly probable that these imposing monuments were built, not by a prehistoric people, predecessors of the Tongans in the islands, but by the Tongans themselves; for not only do the people affirm that the tombs were erected by their ancestors, but they have definite traditions of some of the chiefs who built them, and are buried in them; and they still profess to remember some of the islands from which the huge stones were brought to Tongataboo in great double canoes.

That the graves of the great chiefs were, like temples, regarded by the people with religious reverence appears plainly from a statement of Mariner. He tells us that a place called Mafanga, in the western part of Tongataboo, being a piece of land about half a mile square, was consecrated ground. "In this spot," he says, "are the graves where the greatest chiefs from time immemorial have been buried, and the place is therefore considered sacred; it would be a sacrilege to fight here, and nobody can be prevented from landing: if the most inveterate enemies meet upon this ground, they must look upon each other as friends, under penalty

of the displeasure of the gods, and consequently an untimely death, or some great misfortune. There are several of these consecrated places on different islands."<sup>300</sup> Thus the reverence paid to the tombs of the chiefs was like the reverence paid to the consecrated houses and enclosures of the gods; we have already seen what a sacrilege it was deemed to fight or to pursue an enemy within the consecrated enclosure of a god,<sup>301</sup> and we now learn that it was equally a sacrilege to fight within the ground that was hallowed by the graves of the chiefs.

Mariner has described for us the worship paid by the king and his chiefs to one of the sacred graves at Mafanga. One morning Finow the king, accompanied by several of his chiefs and their ministers (the *matabooles*), landed at Mafanga and immediately proceeded to his father's grave to perform a ceremony called *toogi*. Mariner attended the party and witnessed the ceremony. All who went to participate in it assumed the attire of mourners or suppliants, that is, they wore mats instead of their usual dress and they had wreaths, made of the leaves of the *ifi* tree, round their necks. They sat down before the grave, and the king and all of them beat their cheeks with their fists for about half a minute without speaking a word. One of the principal ministers (*matabooles*) then addressed the spirit of the king's father to the following effect: "Behold the man (meaning Finow, the king) who has come to Tonga to fight his enemies. Be pleased with

---

<sup>300</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 88.

<sup>301</sup> Above, pp. [74 sqq.](#)

him, and grant him thy protection. He comes to battle, hoping he is not doing wrong. He has always held Tooitonga in the highest respect, and has attended to all religious ceremonies with exactness." One of the attendants then went to the king and received from him a piece of kava root, which he laid down on the raised mount before the burial-place (*fytoka*). Several others, who had pieces of kava root in their bosoms, went up to the grave in like manner and deposited them there.<sup>302</sup>

Thus the king prayed to the spirit of his dead father at his grave and made an offering at the tomb. What more could he do to a god at his temple? And in general we are told that when a great blessing was desired, or a serious evil deprecated, if the people wished to enjoy health or beget children, to be successful at sea, or victorious in war, they would go to the burial grounds of their great chiefs, clean them up thoroughly, sprinkle the floor with sand, and lay down their offerings.<sup>303</sup> When Finow the king was dying, his friends carried him on a bier, not only to the temples of the great gods Tali-y-Toobo and Tooi-fooa-Bolotoo, where prayers for his recovery were offered; they bore him also to the grave of a chieftainess and invoked her spirit in like manner to pity and spare the expiring monarch.<sup>304</sup> Apparently they thought that the ghost of the chieftainess was quite as able as the great gods to heal the sick and restore the dying.

---

<sup>302</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 88 sq.

<sup>303</sup> Sarah S. Farmer, *Tonga and the Friendly Islands*, p. 127.

<sup>304</sup> W. Mariner, *op. cit.* i. 367.

But on no occasion, perhaps, was the assimilation of dead men to gods so conspicuous as at the annual offering of first-fruits, which seems to have been the most impressive of all the yearly rites observed by the Tongans. The ceremony was observed once a year just before the yams in general had arrived at a state of maturity; the yams offered at it were of a kind which admitted of being planted sooner than the others, and which consequently, ripening earlier, were the first-fruits of the yam season. The object of the offering was to ensure the protection of the gods, that their favour might be extended to the welfare of the nation generally, and in particular to the productions of the earth, of which in Tonga yams are the most important. At this solemn ceremony the new yams, slung on poles, were brought from distant islands, carried in procession to the grave of the late Tooitonga, and deposited in front of it, their bearers sitting down beside them. Thereupon one of the ministers (*matabooles*) of the living Tooitonga arose, advanced, and sat down before the grave, a little in front of the men who had brought the yams. Next he addressed the gods generally, and afterwards particularly, mentioning the late Tooitonga and the names of several others. In doing so he returned thanks for their divine bounty in favouring the land with the prospect of a good harvest, and prayed that their beneficence might be continued in future. In this harvest thanksgiving the spirit of the dead Tooitonga seems to have ranked on an equality with the original or superhuman gods; indeed, in a sense he took precedence of them, since the offerings

were presented at his grave. The first-fruits, we are told, were offered to the gods in the person of the divine chief Tooitonga.<sup>305</sup>

On the whole we may conclude that, however sharp a distinction was drawn in theory between the old gods, who had always been gods, and the new gods, who had once been men, the line which divided them in practice was wavering and blurred. The dead men and women were fast rising, if they had not already risen, to an equality with the ancient deities. We may even surmise that some of these old gods themselves were human beings, whose original humanity was forgotten.

The tombs of the kings and sacred chiefs may be described as megalithic monuments in so far as immense stones were often employed in the construction either of the enclosing walls or of the high steps which led up to the summit of the mound where the grave was dug. It is possible, and indeed probable, that great stones were similarly employed as ornaments or accessories of the consecrated houses or temples of the primary gods, but of such an employment I have met with no express notice among our authorities. So far as their descriptions allow us to judge, these megalithic monuments of the Tongans were purely sepulchral in character; they were dedicated only to the worship of the dead. But there exists at least one other remarkable megalithic monument in these islands of which the original meaning is quite

---

<sup>305</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 196-202, compare p. 78. The ceremony was also witnessed, though not understood, by Captain Cook (*Voyages*, v. 363 *sqq.*) and by the first English missionaries (Captain James Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean*, pp. 264 *sq.*).

uncertain, and of which consequently we cannot confidently say that it was erected for the sake of honouring or propitiating the spirits of the departed. The monument in question is situated near the eastern extremity of Tongataboo, at a distance of three or four hundred yards from the beach and facing towards the island of Eua. The land on which it stands was the private property of the Tooitongas, whose megalithic tombs are situated some eight or nine miles away to the west. In the intervening country, which is perfectly flat and partly covered with forest, partly under cultivation, there are said to be no other monuments or ruins. It is remarkable that this imposing monument, which naturally impresses the observer by its resemblance to the trilithons or gate-like structures of Stonehenge, should have apparently escaped the observation of Europeans down to the middle of the nineteenth century. It is not mentioned by Cook and Mariner, nor even by those who, like the first missionaries and Dumont d'Urville, described in some detail the tombs of the Tooitongas not many miles off. Perhaps the solitariness of the surrounding country may partly account for their ignorance and silence; for there are said to be few inhabitants in this part of the island and none at all in the immediate neighbourhood of the monument. It seems to have been first discovered by Mr. Philip Hervey of Sydney in 1850 or 1851, but his description of it was not published for some ten years. In August 1852 it was seen by Dr. Charles Forbes, Surgeon of H.M.S. *Calliope*, and his description of it was published by the Society of Antiquaries of London in

the following year. In 1865 it was seen and briefly described by Mr. Foljambe of H.M.S. *Curaçoa*. Some twenty years later the passengers of the s.s. *Wairarapa*, on a yachting cruise from New Zealand, visited the spot and published an account of the structure. Still later Sir Basil Thomson examined the monument and discussed its history.<sup>306</sup>

The monument in question is a structure of the type known as a trilithon; that is, it is composed of three large stones, of which two stand upright, while the third rests horizontally on their tops. All three stones are monoliths of hardened coral, rough and much weathered on the surface, and precisely similar to the coral of the neighbouring reefs. Indeed, about halfway

---

<sup>306</sup> See the letter of Dr. Charles Forbes, in *Archaeologia, or Miscellaneous Tracts relating to Antiquity*, xxxv. (London, 1853) p. 496 (with a woodcut); *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London* [First Series], iii. 19; *id.* Second Series, i. 287; letter of Philip Hervey, quoted by Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie, in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London*, Second Series, ii. 75-77; Julius L. Brenchley, *Jottings during the Cruise of H.M.S. "Curaçoa" among the South Sea Islands in 1865* (London, 1873), p. 132 (with a woodcut); (Sir) Basil Thomson, *Diversions of a Prime Minister* (Edinburgh and London, 1894), pp. 380-382 (with a woodcut on p. 393); *id.* "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) pp. 81-84 (with a photograph). Views of the monument, taken apparently from photographs, have also been published by Dr. F. H. H. Guillemard (*Australasia*, vol. ii. London, 1894, p. 501), Dr. George Brown (*Melanesians and Polynesians*, London, 1910, plate facing p. 410), and by Mr. S. Percy Smith (*Hawaiki*, Third Edition, Christchurch, N.Z., 1910, pp. 157 *sq.*). Dr. W. H. R. Rivers spoke as if there were several trilithons in Tongataboo (*History of Melanesian Society*, ii. 430 *sq.*; *id.* "Sun-cult and Megaliths in Oceania," *American Anthropologist*, N.S. xvii., 1915, p. 444); but in this he seems to have been mistaken. So far as I can gather, there is only one of these remarkable monuments in Tongataboo or indeed in the whole of the Pacific.

between the monument and the beach the coral rock is exposed in a hollow, from which it seems probable that the great blocks were hewn and brought to their present situation. The statement of Mr. Brenchley, that the stone of which the monument consists is not to be found elsewhere on the island, is erroneous. The uprights are quadrangular monoliths neatly squared. No measurements of the stones appear to be on record, but the two uprights are variously estimated to measure from fourteen to sixteen feet in height; their breadth or depth from front to back is variously given as from eight to ten or even twelve feet; but they seem to taper somewhat upwards, for the estimate which assigns twelve feet for the depth of the uprights at their base, mentions seven feet or probably more as their breadth at the top. The thickness of the uprights seems to be four feet. The space between them is variously stated at ten and twelve feet. The cross-stone, which rests on the two uprights, is reported to measure twenty-four feet in length, by four or five feet in depth, and two feet in thickness. Each of the uprights is estimated by Sir Basil Thomson to weigh not less than fifty tons. The tops of both are deeply mortised to receive the cross-stone, the ends of which are sunk into them instead of being laid flat on the top. The cross-stone lies east and west, so that the opening between the uprights faces north and south. On the upper surface of the cross-stone, and at about the middle of it, is a cup-like hollow, very carefully cut, about the size of a coco-nut shell. A large bowl of the same material is said to have formerly stood on the cross-stone, but the statement is



not made by an eyewitness and is probably mistaken.<sup>307</sup>

The name which the natives give to this megalithic monument is *Haamonga* or *Ho ha Mo-nga Maui*, which is said to mean "Maui's burden." The name is explained by a story that the god or hero Maui brought the massive stones in a gigantic canoe from Uea (Wallis Island), where the great holes in the rock from which he quarried them may still be seen. From the canoe he bore them on his back to the spot where they now stand.<sup>308</sup> This story can hardly be thought to throw much light on the origin of the monument; for the natives are in the habit of referring the marvels which they do not understand to the action

---

<sup>307</sup> For the authorities, see the preceding note. The measurements, to some extent discrepant, are given by Dr. Charles Forbes, Mr. Philip Hervey, and the passengers of s.s. *Wairarapa*, as reported by Sir Basil Thomson *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. 82 sq.), who had unfortunately mislaid his own notes containing the measurements. The statement that the monument was surmounted by a large bowl is made by Mr. Brenchley, in whose sketch of the structure the bowl figures. But Mr. Brenchley did not himself see the monument, and nobody else appears to have seen the bowl. I suspect that the report of the bowl may have originated in a hasty reading of Mr. Hervey's statement that "on the centre of it [the cross-stone] a small cava bowl is scooped out," though in Mr. Brenchley's account the bowl has seemingly increased in size. Similarly in his report the height of the uprights has grown to about thirty feet, which appears to be just double of their real size. Perhaps Mr. Brenchley's erroneous allegation as to the material of the monument similarly originated in a misunderstanding of Mr. Hervey's statement that "the material is the coral rock, or coral rag which are formed of stone brought from Wallis's Island."

<sup>308</sup> Charles Forbes, in *Archaeologia*, xxxv. 496 (who gives *Ho ha Mo-nga Maui* as the name of the stones); (Sir) Basil Thomson, *Diversions of a Prime Minister*, p. 382; *id.*, "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) p. 81 (who gives *Haamonga* as the native name of the stones).

of the god or hero Maui, just as the ancient Greeks fathered many natural wonders on the deified hero Hercules.<sup>309</sup> But from Mateialona, Governor of Haapai and cousin of the King of Tonga, Sir Basil Thomson obtained a tradition of the origin of the stones which is at least free from the miraculous element and connects the monument with Tongan history. The account runs thus: "Concerning the Haamonga of Maui, they say forsooth that a Tui Tonga (the sacred line of chiefs), named Tui-ta-tui, erected it, and that he was so named because it was a time of assassination.<sup>310</sup> And they say that he had it built for him to sit upon during the Faikava (ceremony of brewing kava), when the people sat round him in a circle, and that the king so dreaded assassination that he had this lordly seat built for himself that he might sit out of the reach of his people. And this, they say, is the origin of the present custom of the Faikava, it being now forbidden for any one to sit behind the king." At such wassails the presiding chief sits at the apex of an oval. To this tradition Sir Basil Thomson adds: "Mr. Shirley Baker told me that he believed the Haamonga to have been erected as a *fakamanatu*

---

<sup>309</sup> (Sir) Basil Thomson, "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) p. 81. Maui is the great hero of Polynesia, known in nearly every group of islands, generally regarded as a demigod or deified man, but sometimes and in some places rising to the dignity of full godhead. He appears, says Mr. E. Tregear, to unite the classical attributes of Hercules and Prometheus. See E. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, p. 233, s. v. "Maui."

<sup>310</sup> "Tui-ta-tui, lit. 'King-strike-King.'"

(memorial) to the son of some Tui Tonga, a view that finds support in the fondness of Tongan chiefs for originality in the burial ceremonies of their near relations – witness Mariner's account of the funeral of Finau's daughter – but on the other hand native traditions generally have a kernel of truth, and the legend of Tui-ta-tui and its consequences finds an analogy in our own custom of guarding against an assassin's dagger at the drinking of the loving cup."<sup>311</sup> The tradition receives some confirmation from the bowl-like hollow on the upper surface of the cross-stone; for the hollow might have served as the king's drinking-cup to hold his kava at the customary wassails. Indeed, Mr. Philip Hervey, the first to examine the monument, describes the hollow in question as "a small cava bowl";<sup>312</sup> and after giving an account of the monument Mr. Brenchley adds: "Its history seems to be entirely unknown, but it is very natural to suppose from its form that it was connected with some ancient kava ceremonies."<sup>313</sup>

The tradition which connects the erection of the monument with the reign of a Tooitonga named Tui-ta-tui is further countenanced, if not confirmed, by a list of the Tooitongas, in which the name of Tui-ta-tui occurs as the eleventh in descent from the great god Tangaloa.<sup>314</sup> This Tui-ta-tui is believed to

---

<sup>311</sup> (Sir) Basil Thomson, "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) p. 82.

<sup>312</sup> *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London*, Second Series, ii. 77.

<sup>313</sup> Julius L. Brenchley, *Jottings during the Cruise of H.M.S. "Curaçoa" among the South Sea Islands in 1865* (London, 1873), p. 132.

<sup>314</sup> (Sir) Basil Thomson, *Diversions of a Prime Minister*, p. 395. In this work the

have reigned in the thirteenth or fourteenth century of our era.<sup>315</sup> From the size and style of the masonry Sir Basil Thomson is disposed to assign the monument to a later date. He points out that for the quarrying and mortising of stones that weigh some fifty tons apiece the craft of stone-cutting must have been fully developed; and from a comparison of the megalithic tombs of the Tooitongas which can be approximately dated, he infers that the craft of stone-cutting in Tonga reached its culmination at the end of the seventeenth century, though it was still practised down to the beginning of the nineteenth century; for Mariner tells us that in his time a professional class of masons was set apart for building the stone sepulchral vaults of chiefs.<sup>316</sup> Yet on the whole Sir Basil Thomson concludes that "when one is left to choose between a definite native tradition on the one hand and probability on the other for the assignment of a date, I would prefer the tradition. If the Tongans had invented the story as a mere expression for antiquity they would not have pitched upon Tui-ta-tui, about whom nothing else is recorded, in preference to Takalaua, Kau-ulu-fonua-fekai, or any of the kings who loom large in traditionary history. Whether the Haamonga was built

---

author prints a list of the Tooitongas "as given by Mr. E. Tregear on the authority of the Rev. J. E. Moulton."

<sup>315</sup> (Sir) Basil Thomson, "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) p. 83; S. Percy Smith, *Hawaiki*, p. 158.

<sup>316</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ii. 266. As to the size of the stones, Mariner says, "The stones used for this purpose are about a foot in thickness, and are cut of the requisite dimensions, out of the stratum found on the beaches of some of the islands."

for a throne or for a memorial, doubtless it is connected with the reign of Tui-ta-tui, who lived in the fourteenth century."<sup>317</sup>

As an alternative to the view that the hollow on the cross-stone was a kava bowl Dr. Rivers suggests that it "may have been destined to receive the skull and other bones of the dead, so often preserved in Polynesia."<sup>318</sup> The suggestion accords well with the opinion that the monument is a memorial of the dead, and it might be supported by the Samoan practice of severing a dead chief's head from his body and burying it separately, to save it from being dug up and desecrated by enemies in time of war.<sup>319</sup> However, Dr. Rivers is careful to add that such a practice is not recorded in Tonga and appears to be incompatible with the mode of sepulture which prevails there.

In this connexion another megalithic monument of the Tonga islands deserves to be considered, though it appears to have been commonly overlooked. It was observed by Captain Cook in the island of Lefooga (Lifuka). He says: "Near the south end of the island, and on the west side, we met with an artificial mount. From the size of some trees that were growing upon it, and from other appearances, I guessed that it had been raised in remote times. I judged it to be about forty feet high; and the diameter of its summit measured fifty feet. At the bottom of this mount

---

<sup>317</sup> (Sir) Basil Thomson, "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) pp. 83 sq.

<sup>318</sup> W. H. R. Rivers, *History of Melanesian Society*, ii. 431.

<sup>319</sup> See below, p. [212](#).

stood a stone, which must have been hewn out of coral rock. It was four feet broad, two and a half thick, and fourteen high; and we were told by the natives present, that not above half its length appeared above ground. They called it *Tangata Arekee*;<sup>320</sup> and said, that it had been set up, and the mount raised, by some of their forefathers, in memory of one of their kings; but how long since, they could not tell."<sup>321</sup>

When we remember that Tongan kings were commonly buried in such mounds as Captain Cook here describes, and further that these mounds were commonly enclosed or faced with great blocks of hewn stone, we may be disposed to accept as reasonable and probable the explanation which the natives gave of this great monolith, which, if the reported measurements of it are correct, must have been no less than twenty-eight feet high. If it was indeed a memorial of a dead king, it might be thought to strengthen the view that the great trilithon was also set up as a monument to a deceased monarch or Tooitonga.

Another possible explanation of the trilithon is, as Sir Basil Thomson points out, that it served as a gateway to some sacred spot inland. But against this view he observes that he examined the bush for some distance in the neighbourhood without finding any trace of ruins or stones of any kind. He adds that the memory

---

<sup>320</sup> "*Tangata*, in their language, is man; *Arekee*, king."

<sup>321</sup> Captain James Cook, *Voyages*, v. 298 *sq.* To this description of the monument Sir Basil Thomson has called attention; he rightly classes it with the tombs of the chiefs. See his "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) p. 85.

of sacred spots dies very hard in Tonga, and that the natives do not believe the trilithon to have been a gateway.<sup>322</sup>

It is natural to compare the trilithon of Tongataboo with the famous trilithons of Stonehenge, which it resembles in plan and to which it is comparable in size. The resemblance struck Dr. Charles Forbes, the first to publish a description of the monument based on personal observation. He says: "The route we pursued led us over a country perfectly level, with the exception of occasional mounds of earth, apparently artificial, and reminding one very much of the barrows of Wilts and Dorset, which idea is still more strongly impressed upon the mind on coming in sight of the monument, which bears a most striking resemblance to the larger gateway-looking stones at Stonehenge."<sup>323</sup> But at the same time, as Dr. Forbes did not fail to note, the Tongan trilithon differs in some respects from those of Stonehenge. In the first place the interval (ten or twelve feet) between the uprights of the Tongan trilithon appears to be much greater than the interval between the uprights of the trilithons at Stonehenge.<sup>324</sup> In the second place, the cross-stone of the Tongan trilithon is mortised much more deeply into the uprights than are the cross-stones at Stonehenge. For whereas at Stonehenge these

---

<sup>322</sup> (Sir) Basil Thomson, "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) pp. 81 sq.

<sup>323</sup> Dr. Charles Forbes, in *Archaeologia*, xxxv. p. 496.

<sup>324</sup> I have no measurements of these intervals, but write from the impression of a recent visit to Stonehenge.

cross-stones present the appearance of being laid flat on the top of the uprights, the cross-stone of the Tongan trilithon is sunk deeply into the uprights by means of mortises or grooves about two feet wide which are cut into the uprights, so that the top of the cross-stone is nearly flush with their tops, while its ends also are nearly flush with their outside surfaces.<sup>325</sup>

As the origin and purpose of Stonehenge are still unknown, its massive trilithons can hardly be cited to explain the similar monument of Tongataboo. The rival theories which see in Stonehenge a memorial of the dead and a temple of the sun<sup>326</sup> are equally applicable or inapplicable to the Tongan monument. In favour of the mortuary character of this solitary trilithon it might be urged that the Tongans were long accustomed to erect megalithic monuments, though of a different type, at the tombs of their sacred kings, which are situated not many miles away; but against this view it may be argued that there are no traces of burial or graves in the immediate neighbourhood, and that native tradition, not lightly to be set aside, assigns a different origin to

---

<sup>325</sup> (Sir) Basil Thomson, "Notes upon the Antiquities of Tonga," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) p. 82, quoting the anonymous pamphlet *The Wairarapa Wilderness*.

<sup>326</sup> Lord Avebury, *Prehistoric Times*, Seventh Edition (London, 1913), pp. 132 *sqq.*; Sir Norman Lockyer, *Stonehenge and other British Stone Monuments astronomically considered* (London, 1906); C. Schuchhardt, "Stonehenge," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, xlii. (1910), pp. 963-968; *id.* in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, xliii. (1911) pp. 169-171; *id.*, in *Sitzungsberichte der königl. preuss. Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1913, pp. 759 *sqq.* (for the sepulchral interpretation); W. Pastor, "Stonehenge," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, xliii. (1911) pp. 163- (for the solar interpretation).



the monument. Against the solar interpretation of the trilithon it may be alleged, first, that the monument faces north and south, not east and west, as it might be expected to do if it were a temple of the sun or a gateway leading into such a temple; second, that, while a circle of trilithons, as at Stonehenge, with an opening towards the sunrise may be plausibly interpreted as a temple of the sun, such an interpretation cannot so readily be applied to a solitary trilithon facing north and south; and, third, that no trace of sun-worship has been discovered in the Tonga islands. So far as I have observed, the Tongan pantheon is nowhere said to have included a sun-god, and the Tongans are nowhere reported to have paid any special respect to the sun. Savages in general, it may be added, appear to be very little addicted to sun-worship; it is for the most part among peoples at a much higher level of culture, such as the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, and Peruvians, that solar worship becomes an important, or even the predominant, feature of the national faith.<sup>327</sup> Perhaps the impulse

---

<sup>327</sup> Adolph Bastian observed that "sun-worship, which people used to go sniffing about to discover everywhere, is found on the contrary only in very exceptional regions or on lofty table-lands of equatorial latitude." See his book, *Die Voelker des Oestlichen Asien*, iv. (Jena, 1868) p. 175. Nobody, probably, has ever been better qualified than Bastian to pronounce an opinion on such a subject; for his knowledge of the varieties of human thought and religion, acquired both by reading and travel, was immense. It is only to be regretted that through haste or negligence he too often gave out the fruits of his learning in a form which rendered it difficult to sift and almost impossible to digest them. Yet from his storehouse he brought forth a treasure, of which we may say what Macaulay said of the scholarship of Parr, that it was "too often buried in the earth, too often paraded with injudicious and inelegant ostentation, but still precious, massive, and splendid."

to it came rather from the meditations of priestly astronomers than from the random fancies of common men. Some depth of thought was needed to detect in the sun the source of all life on earth; the immutable regularity of the great luminary's movements failed to rouse the interest or to excite the fear of the savage, to whom the elements of the unusual, the uncertain, and the terrible are the principal incentives to wonder and awe, and hence to reflexion. We are all naturally more impressed by extraordinary than by ordinary events; the fine edge of the mind is dulled by familiarity in the one case and whetted by curiosity in the other.

Bearing in mind the numerous other stone monuments scattered widely over the islands of the Pacific, from the Carolines to Easter Island, Dr. Guillemard concludes that some race, with a different, if not a higher civilisation preceded the Polynesian race in its present homes, and to this earlier race he would apparently refer the erection of the trilithon in Tongataboo.<sup>328</sup> He may be right. Yet when we consider, first, the native tradition of the setting up of the trilithon by one of the sacred kings of Tonga; second, the practice of the Tongans of building megalithic tombs for these same sacred kings; and, third, the former existence in Tonga of a professional class of masons whose business it was to construct stone vaults for the burial of chiefs,<sup>329</sup> we may hesitate to resort to the hypothesis of

---

<sup>328</sup> F. H. H. Guillemard, *Australasia*, ii. 500.

<sup>329</sup> W. Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, i. 266.

an unknown people in order to explain the origin of a monument which the Tongans, as we know them, appear to have been quite capable of building for themselves.

## § 11. *Rites of Burial and Mourning*

The only mode of disposing of the dead which was practised in the Tonga islands seems to have been burial in the earth. So far as appears, the corpse was not doubled up, but laid at full length in the grave; at all events I have met with no mention of burying a corpse in a contracted posture; and Captain Cook says that "when a person dies, he is buried, after being wrapped up in mats and cloth, much after our manner." He adds that, while chiefs had the special burial-places called *fiatookas*

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.