CLIFFORD GESSLER

ROAD MY BODY GOES

a
JOHN DAY
book

REYNAL &
TCHCO

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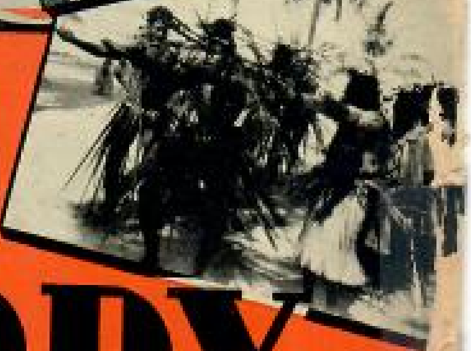

TO ALL who long to know what life really is on a South Sea island, this book will come like a fresh breeze across a lagoon. It is the honest, vivid account of months spent among an unspoiled people who had never known white men before, written by one who has both the newspaper reporter's passion for facts and the poet's perception of beauty.

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III

Isle of Peace

9. *Leaves Out of the Past*

Visitors at Tepuka and Tepoto are received very differently now than in the time when Commodore John Byron gave them the name "Islands of Disappointment."

The green interior of Tepoto must have looked inviting to Byron and his scurvy-crippled men on that June morning—their first landfall since April. They had passed through the Strait of Magellan, halted briefly at Mas Afuero, off the South American coast; had sailed over the reputed location of "Davis Land," and on through wide empty seas.

The old-fashioned hand-set type of his record, deeply impressed into the discolored pages, calls up as vividly today the picture of that landfall a hundred and seventy-odd years ago.

They tried to land on Tepoto, "which, as we drew near it, had a most beautiful appearance; it was surrounded by a beach of the finest white sand; and within, it was covered with tall trees, which extended their shade to a great distance and formed the most delightful groves that could be imagined."

They wanted badly to land, for they could see coconuts in abundance, and the shells of turtles on the shore indicated a supply of fresh meat. Their hardship-sharpened imaginations even conjured visions of limes, bananas and other fruits that these coral islands do not yield.

A violent surf was breaking on the red reefs. The ancestors of my Tepoto friends threatened the intruders with spears, which to the eyes of Byron and his men seemed "at least sixteen feet long," and enacted a savage pantomime, throwing themselves backward and lying as if dead, implying, the commodore surmised, that it would be death to set foot on these shores. The Tepoto men hauled their canoes up into the forest and went out into the water to seize the strangers' landing boat. The smoke of their signal fires on the shore was answered from Tepuka.

"They were of a deep copper color, exceedingly stout and well limbed, and remarkably nimble and active, for" (after the commodore, by way of impressing the islanders with the power of His Majesty's navy, had fired over their heads what was probably the first shot that ever woke the echoes of those groves) "I never saw men run so fast in my life."

Finding no anchorage, the explorers next day tried the neighboring larger atoll, where again men came to the shore with spears.

There appeared to be no chance of a landing without an armed encounter, so—

"At half an hour after ten, we bore away and made sail to the westward, finding it impossible to procure at the islands any refreshment for our sick, whose situation was becoming more deplorable every hour, and I therefore called them the Islands of Disappointment."

Such is the account of the first white man known to have looked upon the two lands of the pukā trees.

The next recorded visitors, an American naval party commanded by Charles Wilkes, seventy-four years later, found the natives much of the same disposition, but effected on both islands the first landing by white men of which any record survives.

Wilkes even exchanged presents with the chief, whom he describes as a very old man with legs enormously swelled and whitened by elephantiasis, and who pressed his face to that of the American commander, much to the latter's disgust, "making a noise like the purring of a cat."

Wilkes' Maori interpreter, incidentally, picked up "names" for the two islands, which they still bear on many charts but

which natives of the islands today do not recognize in any of their traditions. My own guess is that he repeated here the incident of the Spaniards at Yucatan. When asked for the name of the country, the native addressed probably replied, "Who are you?" and those words in the island language were solemnly written down, somewhat garbled, as the name.

Wilkes' memoirs of the voyage record an instance of what we could recognize as typical Tuamotuan humor. Noticing that no women or children were in sight, the visitors inquired where they were, whereupon:

"A general burst of laughter ensued, and they gave us to understand that they had penetrated our motive for visiting the island; that as we inhabited an island without any women, we wanted to have some.

"Nothing more was said to them on the subject," adds the prudent commander.

Drayton, artist of the expedition, made drawings of natives in which I can trace resemblances to men living there today. One of them reveals unmistakably the family traits of our acquaintance Varoa.

Catholic missionaries later entered through a local man who had been converted elsewhere and who prepared the way. Thus the islands became "tamed" for Christianity and incidentally for trade.

Perhaps we owe it to those black-robed priests of sixty years ago, that we were met with gifts of food and drink instead of spears. We should be grateful, no doubt, like that man in Hawaii who, long ago, inveighing to the king against the changes wrought by missionaries, expressed a wish that he could have been there in the pagan time.

"If you had," replied the king, "you might not have liked it so well. In the few minutes you have been in my presence, you have violated three tabus. Were this the pagan era, you would now have been dead three times."

But with the perversity of those who love Polynesians and

Polynesian life, we were most glad for the shreds of ancient tradition and custom that still remain; for old men's memories of the pagan time, for the simple ways of life that linger in that wreath-shaped land, and for the chants that sound thinly, solemnly, through the haunted night.

10. *Ghosts*

Some Time in the night of our first day on the island, I was awakened by a sound as of pebbles thrown against the side of the house. It was not a loud sound, but a definite one, and the pauses between were as of someone listening.

My first thought was that an early-rising pig or chicken had wandered against the house, but the beam of an electric torch, flashed into the darkness, revealed no living thing.

"Somebody is playing tricks," I concluded, though in view of the absence of cover for such a trickster to hide near the house, and the known reluctance of Tuamotuans to venture out at night without a light, this explanation was slightly lame.

"It was without doubt a spirit," said our neighbors next morning.

Such stone-throwing ghosts are common in the Tuamotu, the more so in the "civilized" iron-roofed islands where they can make more noise. All the islands are haunted; the imagination of the Polynesian has peopled his darkness, often with shapes of fear. The spirits of the newly dead wander abroad, seeking literally whom they may devour. This latter propensity of the nocturnal apparitions was less emphasized at Tepuka, and there may have been some connection of this omission with the contention, plausible enough, of the people of that island that they had never been cannibals. On the former

man-eating islands, such as Vahitahi and Hao, it is a natural transition, as Stevenson pointed out long ago, from the eating of the dead by the living to the eating of the living by the dead, and a certain kind of spirit is therefore as greatly feared as the werewolves and vampires of medieval Europe. Nevertheless, the haunted darkness of the coconut groves was regarded with extreme caution by our friends and neighbors; nor would they sleep at night without a light in the house: a dim and smoky lantern, turned low, or if, as often happened, oil failed, a wedge of copra burning, propped upon a stone.

Our friends, however, were not alarmed on our behalf. It seemed, or so I understood, that the pebble-tossing spirits were not especially harmful. The visitation of the night might be interpreted as a favorable omen rather than otherwise, signifying that the island spirits recognized our presence and were making us welcome. Moreover, the white man usually is immune from the attacks of the powers of Polynesian darkness. How else explain his recklessness in violating native custom, in sleeping without a light, in eating under a roof, in transgressing any number of prohibitions that have grown up in the half-light of remembered experience in these haunted lands?

I had occasion to observe this fear of the beings of darkness later when at her request I accompanied the daughter of Maru on an errand to the house of a relative, somewhat remote from the main village. Temata led me along the road that leads to the cemetery, but struck away from it into the forest before we reached that point. She was taking no unnecessary chances.

Among the trees, however, she showed increasing alarm. Every large bush, every oddly shaped shadow, caused her to clutch at me in fear. In the gloomiest portion of the wood, an ominous shape appeared suddenly out of the blackness and lurched across our path—a figure of more than human size, it seemed, and of scarcely human shape, with a great antlered head nodding through the gloom.

My companion, in terror, buried her face in my shoulder; I could feel her whole body quivering with fright.

"Let there be life!" said the apparition, and Temata burst out laughing with relief. She had recognized the voice of one of her own living relatives.

Our "ghost" was only an honest citizen of Tepuka who had been bold enough, or forced by necessity, to go out at night alone, and the oddity of shape was merely the effect, in the darkness, of the burden he carried on his shoulders.

On the way back, as we hurried over the stony paths that her bare feet knew so well and mine so poorly, I told her that she was safe with me, for the spirits had no power over a white man. She seemed to accept this, but I think she remembered it, not without a trace of malice, at a later time, when, the spirits having apparently punished me for some trespass, she said:

"It serves you right!"

Others told us that the dead rise at night and walk about the village, "in their habit as they lived," indistinguishable from the living, except as they are recognized for individuals who have long since departed this world. For that reason, the road that leads past the small and relatively new cemetery of Tepuka is avoided at night. Nor, we gathered, is this return confined to the dead there interred, whose demise scarcely can antedate the last hurricane. The more ancient dead, it seems, arise from the sea and visit the scenes of their former life.

Surrounded by an atmosphere of such beliefs, one easily slips into the feeling that, after all, anything might be possible. In a spirit half serious, half humorous, I walked out, on a fine evening, down the forbidden street. Far to the left, toward the lagoon shore, lights gleamed through the trees from the houses clustered there. A brighter light moved—a torch fisherman, probably, emboldened by hunger to venture abroad at night. If so, he was the only torch fisherman I saw in my time on the island. The early moon cast dense black shadows on the white sand of the road; the forest on either side was dark, and its clumps of pandanus and tournefortia resembled not at all their daylight aspect. It was easy to understand how the mind of the native could populate that darkness with menacing shapes.

The cemetery, however, looked harmless enough: a bare, low-walled quadrangle, lately weeded and swept, in which the few graves, with their wooden crosses, their withered wreaths, seemed lost and lonely in the expanse of moonlight. I walked slowly past; no vampire figure arose. At the end of the road, I sat for a while on the stone curbing, looking out at the sea which rustled softly on the reef. It was a peaceful spot: one could be alone here with the sea and sky, the hard clean stony land, and whatever spirits might be awake.

The evening meeting would be over by now; the dance would be beginning at the house of Maukiri. I walked back slowly through the sand of the road, pausing to sit for a few minutes on the cemetery wall. Perhaps it was the moonlight, perhaps my Western unbelief—but the enclosure of the dead gave up no visible spirit, emitted no ghostly sound. I was to remember, with a question, that moonlight vigil when, long afterward, the *tahunga* shook his head, saying, "You have walked too near a grave." But that evening, as I slid down from the wall and continued my way toward the lighted houses, I thought only of Walter de la Mare's traveler who knocked at the moonlit door, and nobody answered; how, as he turned to go, "Tell them I came," he said, and how "the silence surged softly backward, when the plunging hoofs were gone."

11. My Education Begins

Our Visitors in that first bright morning, however, were no ghosts, but warm Tuamotuan flesh and blood. The plump, good-humored looking dancer of our first evening on the island appeared at our door, bearing an orange-red flower and a ripe tree-melon.

"I am Tauhoa, daughter of Paunu," she introduced herself, "and I am going to teach you the language."

With her were her sister Roki, the same who had played the harmonica for the initial dancing, and their cousin Tauria, a handsome young man who became my chief instructor.

It was he, indeed, who conducted us, on that night of low melon-colored moon and many stars, to the house of Maké, for the first of many evenings with a family who became among our dearest friends.

It was one of a group of houses belonging to members of this family; built, like ours, of coconut leaves, but smaller and still more primitive, with no foundation or platform, but set flat upon the ground. The door openings were closed with spare panels of leaves or old canoe boards.

Mats comprised the furniture. A few garments hung from a cord: a waistcloth, a dress of white cotton with round red spots the size of a dollar, a shawl obtained at some time from a ship. Fishhooks, knives and a few small implements were thrust into the thatch. The usual large locked chest stood in a corner—a chest, they told us, that had come originally from Hawaii.

The grounds, like other dooryards on the island, were bare of plant life—a clean expanse of sand and broken coral. At one side stood the bathing enclosure, a semicircle of loosely piled stones, high enough to conceal a person in a crouching position.

There is something esthetically satisfying, when one becomes accustomed to it, in the clean bareness of an east-Tuamotuan dooryard. Swept clear of leaves, sticks and rubbish, and neatly sanded, it spreads beneath the palms, which cast bold patterns of shadow upon it under moon or sun. There is no clutter here, as there is little or none in Tuamotuan life; all is honest, unornamented, plain.

We sat in that dooryard, on mats laid over the crumbled coral, watching that melon-sliver of moon sink into the sea beyond Tepoto. There was singing; we, as guests, must contribute to the entertainment, so Keneti and I sang "Ahi Wela" and "Meleana," songs of Hawaii which these Polynesians could understand. Roki played the harmonica and Tauhoa danced, as she had danced the night of our arrival, but, in this comparative privacy, with more abandon.

Maké, our chief hostess, was, by European standards, unattractive in appearance, but as comely of spirit as she was plain of physique. Rather above average height for a woman of that island, darker and with coarser features, she had an almost masculine aspect. As we grew to know her, however, her kindness and her bubbling sense of humor made for her, along with her cousins, a definite place in our regard.

Keneti strung the island's only guitar, dilapidated but still playable; and they sang the popular songs of the young people, inferior in poetic quality to the more ancient chants we heard later in memorable midnight sessions with the old people, but with a certain naïve charm. A single bar of melody was repeated, in descending scale, with minor variations, as words in what might be described as free verse were fitted to it. I never was able to distinguish the melody of one from another; there seemed to be but one basic tune, of which all others were slight modifications.

We learned many of them, for as our friends found us interested, they provided them in quantity. "Write!" Roki would say, and dictate, while I lay prone by the smoking lantern and wrote on a scrap of copy-paper with a soft pencil. Then I must read aloud what I had written—often amid laughter as I made amusing errors or as the subject matter itself aroused the risibilities, for Maké and her cousins, in utmost good nature, were not above interpolating broad jests at our expense.

There must be a return for this hospitality. Our hostesses demanded that we teach them "the white men's dances." It was unfortunate, we reflected, that we, who appreciated so keenly the surviving simplicity and beauty of this island life, should be the ones to corrupt it thus. Yet we were under the obligation of Polynesian generosity: they were giving us their songs and dances; we must give them ours in return.

Most of them took to the fox trot readily enough, and a few learned to waltz. Only Roki, who learned with surprising ease, mastered the two step. Fangu, one of the cousins, to the end never could dance anything but a clumsy "toddle." In turn, they taught us the *hivinau*, and their male cousins initiated us into the vigorous and beautiful dance of the frigate-bird.

All of this dancing, after the first attempt, was done barefoot. We found the Japanese sandals, which we had adopted for wearing about the village, too clumsy for dancing on the uneven ground, and less protection from stones than we had hoped. The stones hurt our feet, but there was a patch of fairly smooth sand to which one could guide one's partner, and as the dancing continued night after night, our soles became toughened.

Along with this, Tauria began my more formal education with the native numerals. These are no longer in common use, having been supplanted by the Tahitian; nevertheless, I must learn them first of all. Evidently the notion of "mental discipline" has its roots in the primitive.

"Count!" he would command, and others would join in: "*Arari, aiti, angeti* . . ." It spread through the village: men and women would stop me on the street to command,

"Count!" and when we were visiting other parts of the island and sleeping among a row of natives, they would wake me in the night to recite that inescapable "*Arari, aiti.*" In one such recital I stumbled over the word for "seven," pronouncing instead a word which is almost as improper there as its translation would be in more civilized communities. A great laughter went up; and thereafter as I passed through the streets, people would call out that inadvertent four-letter word to me, in laughing memory of that ridiculous error.

In return I taught Tauria the Hawaiian numerals, which could be of no more practical use to him than his obsolete Tuamotuan ones to me.

Gradually the older folk took up the task and, as I showed promise as a pupil, began to teach me the "root speech," which differs considerably from the Tahitian. Keneti's previous knowledge of Tahitian and Tuamotuan was, of course, an indispensable aid to me in these studies.

My education, however, was not confined to language or to Tauria's elementary arithmetic. Laboring with pencil and paper, my instructor produced a roster of those present, with the names of their fathers and grandfathers, supplying verbally the relationships between them—relationships some of which, to my later sorrow, I never fully comprehended, important as they are in the island mind which is so precise in some respects, so lax in others. If some of my friends there were right, I could have saved myself much material pain by perceiving and remembering the blood relationship between Tauria and Temata.

Tauria also drew a rough map of the village, naming the various land districts, and the names and relationships of those who dwelt in each house.

"The true name of this island," he informed us, "is Tepuka Maruia. 'Napuka' is a foreign name which means nothing in our language." And so on—

Geography, history, genealogy—this was to be a comprehensive course!

Tauhoa, though she soon gave over my general education to Tauria, tried patiently to teach me the making of ingenious and illustrative string-figures, but I, never skillful at such tricks, found it late to learn, and Tauhoa finally gave up in despair at the awkwardness of the foreigner.

These somewhat practical occupations were interrupted by recurrent demands for song and dance. In the course of the evening, Tukua, the chief's daughter—a stalwart lass of about sixteen years and of a peculiarly savage beauty—caused much amusement when in suddenly jumping up and running out of the place, her dress caught on a projecting bit of thatch and was torn off, exposing momentarily a sturdy but comely body. Tukua, much embarrassed, would not return inside the house, but lingered in the shadows without.

Those evenings at the house of Maké, and later at that of Paunu, near by, remain among the happiest memories of the island. Evening is lovely on the atoll: sand and pebbles white under moon or stars, between black shadows of palm fronds; the sea lapping softly on the reef; around the doorway the low clang of a guitar and the skirl of the harmonica; soft, happy laughter, reed-thin singing. And later, perhaps, when the young people have stolen away to their mats under the stars, the low somber chanting of the old folk, intoned for ancestral spirits in the Great Darkness, a savage quavering song of ancient pagan things.

12. *Pestilence*

As We Returned from Maké's house, we heard a sneeze from one of the houses near by. The penalty of association

with white people was being exacted. The islanders were sickening with colds.

Day by day more fell ill, until on Sunday the coughing and sneezing almost drowned out the service in the church. This gathering completed the spreading of the contagion, and by Monday practically the entire village was laid low with the *bota*, as they called the respiratory infection acquired from the white men.

We went abroad with a bottle of aspirin and a rubbing mixture. The chief and his wife, on whom we first called, were very ill. We prescribed aspirin and hot water, and his family heated a drinking-nut by embedding it in hot coals. From house to house we repeated this procedure and handed out little swabs made by twisting cotton around toothpicks and dipping them in medicated petroleum jelly. Everywhere people were blowing noses with a sonorous trumpeting which we never were able to imitate. The island is not supplied liberally with handkerchiefs, and the few that had been acquired for ornament were inadequate to the demands of this epidemic. Most of the people frankly blew the nose in the hand and hurled the discharge out through the open doorways. At least, we remarked, their aim was good. They never hit anybody.

At the time, we were anything but amused. These people, not accustomed as we are to colds, have not built up resistance; they suffer with them more than we, and there was danger that some might develop pneumonia.

"Dying," was the word everywhere, "dying with *bota*."

There was something ominous in the very word, for it was the same term that had been applied to the wartime influenza that decimated Tahiti.

In the house of Maké, Roki was making a valiant effort. Weak and feverish, she kept creeping to the door. Finally she seemed to have no energy left to rise up, but turned up a corner of the mat and spat under it.

"If we can still be fond of her after that," I commented in English, "it will be a tribute to her personality."

"The best of our civilized friends," Keneti reminded me, "get seasick."

A hot drink, made with juice from those limes I had carried so laboriously over the mountain of Meetia, and sugar from our supplies, with water from the well, relieved the patient.

Tauhoa, too, had a touch of the malady, but was up and about, taming a pig by leading it at the end of a strip of bark.

Maké, jesting even in illness, said she would die, and we must give her a big funeral. Thence arose a discussion as to whither she would go after death. Maké expressed the opinion, shivering with chills as she spoke, that it was better to go to a warm place; she feared heaven would be too cold.

There was debate in the village as to the source of the infection. Some were inclined at first to attribute it to our ship's arrival, but others pointed out that the *Islander* had been preceded a day or so earlier by one of the rare visits of the colonial government vessel, some of whose sailors had had colds. So our party was absolved.

This absolution was confirmed when we caught the infection, in turn, as was practically inevitable, the habits of the villagers being as they were.

Had I not already been coming down with it, I surely must have contracted it that Monday afternoon, when the children began to lose their shyness and gathered around me in the doorway while I amused them and at the same time practiced the language by trying to explain the pictures in our magazines.

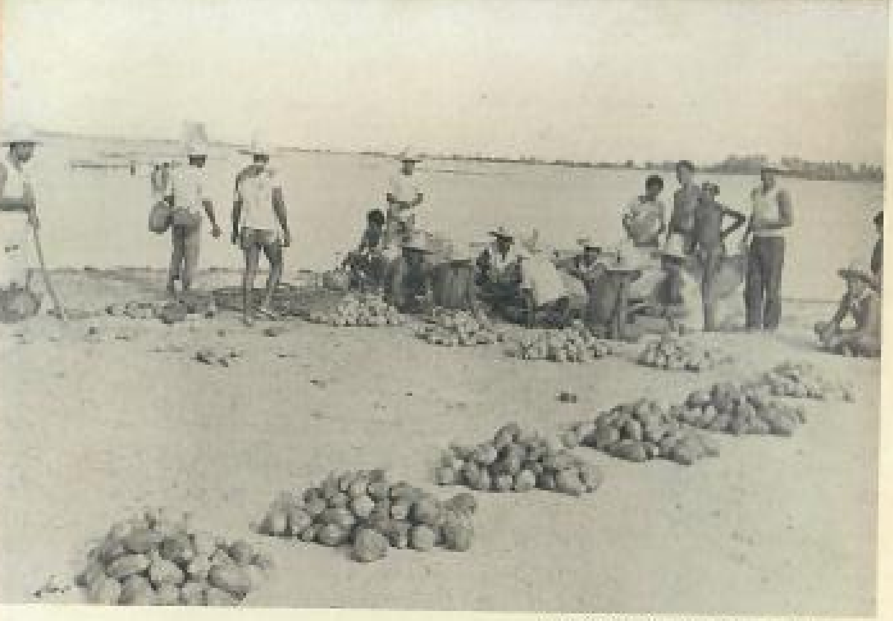
The children from the first had been interested in us, but cautious, like young wild things. They would sit in our doorways, lovely in red loincloths against the smooth brown skin, combing one another's glossy dark or reddish-brown hair and inspecting it for lice, now and then snapping one up with the teeth—shy little girls, watching our every movement from

B. P. Bishop Museum Photo by K. P. Emory

Tukua, the chief's daughter, when not dressed up for special occasions, wears the more comfortable house-dress of island custom: two yards of red cotton cloth wrapped around her like a towel.

B. P. Bishop Museum Photo by K. P. Emory

Tukua, in the cool gloom of Tiaki's house, was making string-figures as her companions chanted the legends which those intricate patterns of cord illustrate.

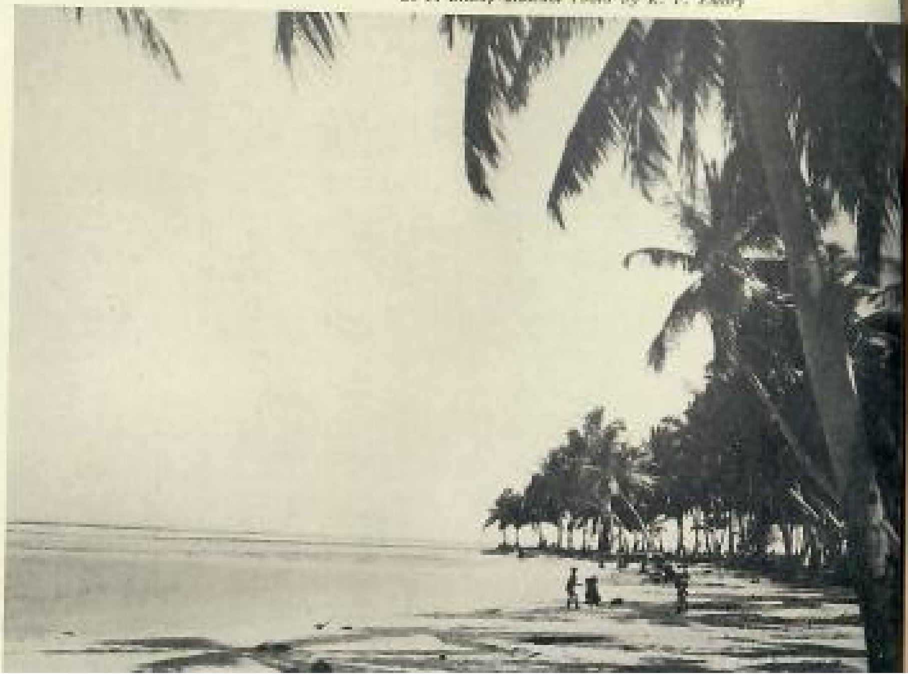


B. P. Bishop Museum Photo by K. P. Emory

At mid-week, the young men of Tepuka Maruia brought the papaya harvest from the windward side, cruising across the lagoon in canoes under a mat sail, for communal distribution on the lagoon shore.

The island lies like a wreath upon the sea, its coral islets curving in a broken oval around its many-colored lagoon.

B. P. Bishop Museum Photo by K. P. Emory



great dark shining eyes, but turning away bashfully when we looked at them; and bolder little boys, chattering incessantly.

By this time, however, they had begun to doubt that the white men really would eat them, and the lure of the pictures brought them around me so closely that there was scarcely room to turn the pages. Little Riua, Kararo's youngest daughter, even sat confidently beside me, holding my hand in hers.

Tauria, who seemed already to have adopted us as kinsmen, was as much interested as the children, and commented intelligently on many things, including some he could never have seen. The young men and boys were especially taken with a cartoon of Primo Carnera, when I told them he was "the great fist-fighter." A pole vaulter puzzled them, but with the aid of some gestures from me, Tauria solved it with a native word meaning to dive or jump. A spark plug advertisement was an even more difficult problem. All I could tell them was that this object was "a thing inside an auto." Tauria's quick mind leaped to the Tahitian word for it. An automobile tire was another puzzle, when viewed detached from the vehicle, but when it was pointed out in another illustration showing a complete car, Tauria identified it as "rubber."

There were many questions, not all of which could be answered readily with a limited vocabulary, but the session seemed profitable for both sides.

The magazines were in great demand. Callers came every day to look at them and to take them home; and the circulation of several widely known American periodicals was extended to "readers" undreamed of by the publishers, as the worn copies made the rounds of the entire village.

Scenes of America and foreign countries, and of athletic sports, pleased the men, and they never tired of being told that this view was in the country of the Chinese; this in Germany; and that one of icebergs and polar bears in "the cold country." Most cartoons, and reproductions of modern art, puzzled them; the only explanation they could fathom was that these were carvings like the crude sculptures of the ancient Polynesians—which, indeed, many of them resembled.

Pictures of women in slacks, riding-breeches or other semi-masculine attire, and with short hair, also were a source of wonderment.

"Are these men or women?" our visitors would ask.

Dress fashions, however, were something the girls and women understood and in which they showed a keen interest. It was amusing to see two or three of them gathered around a style sheet, comparing it with their own simple knee-length dresses and discussing it in rapid Tuamotuan with eloquent gestures that left no doubt of the meaning, even to one unacquainted with most of the words.

"A tuck here and a yoke there—and see these gores and pleats. . . ."

Their first reaction to most of these styles was that they were "bad," as anything unfamiliar was likely to be, but interest soon overcame opposition to the new and strange. Our "savage" friends were not so different from their "civilized" sisters, after all.

During the week or more that the epidemic was at its height, we distributed magazines among the sick, and no doubt this simple form of amusement took their minds off their sufferings and contributed to their recovery. To our own great relief, all our "patients" got well, and, to our embarrassment, attributed their convalescence to our ministrations. We had, for some time thereafter, the dubious distinction of being great foreign medicine men, and every Tepukan who had a stomach-ache came to us for treatment.

Though we told them frankly that we had no skill in medical science, they were convinced, by the subsidence of the illness, that even if our protestations of ignorance were true, the white man's remedies were infallible, and we were besieged for many days with requests for medicine.

Fortunately, the ills of Tepuka are few and mostly trivial.

Cuts and eel bites, and a run of minor digestive disturbances that followed the call of a schooner and the subsequent consumption of a quantity of wheat flour made up the bulk of our "practice."

I was sorry for the woman with toothache—the only toothache on the island, for the people of Tepuka, unlike those of Tuamotuan lands that have been more in contact with foreigners and foreign food, have, as a rule, sound teeth. This woman was from another island. There was nothing lasting that we could do for her, but Keneti relieved the pain temporarily with a mild opiate applied to the cavity.

Babies with colic were an easier problem. We were able to convince the mothers that the white man's medicine was too strong for babies, and the women seemed to believe us when we told them that if they would eat the food of the land and not the white man's food, their babies would be less likely to have trouble.

A case which distressed us for a time as much as that of the toothache was that of our landlord's blond grandchild. Maruia had been having earache, though she did not complain much, and we never heard her cry. Application of warm water relieved her, and apparently nature effected a cure, for after a few days we heard no more of the trouble.

Tu-tamahine, Kararo's handsome elder daughter, came to the house one morning, looking forlorn, and stating that she had had a stomach-ache for three days. Keneti and I held a consultation. He was for giving her castor oil, but I feared that in case her ailment was appendicitis, this treatment would do her more harm than good. We questioned her about her symptoms. In the course of this examination her mother Tangia, who was with her, revealed that she herself had suffered, in youth, from an ailment which, from her account of it, we concluded probably had been appendicitis. No, she had used no medicine. She had been very ill, but her father, Temae, had cured her by sorcery.

Tu-tamahine's trouble, apparently, was merely indigestion from too much soggy bread. We compromised on a prescription of milk of magnesia, on the theory that it was comparatively harmless and might do her some good; advised her to eat papaya, drink much coconut water, and rest. This treatment apparently was effective, for in a few days Tu-tamahine was her old cheerful self.

Temata, daughter of Maru, insisted upon treating her own wounds. Appearing one day with a broken toenail and a cut under it which had become infected, she opened it with a borrowed safety pin before I had a chance to sterilize the "instrument," and squeezed it out on a piece of paper. She also had a splinter driven deep into her heel. Borrowing a knife, she pared away the heel as a farrier pares a horse's hoof, then dug out the splinter with the same knife. It was a tribute to her constitution, or to the general healthfulness of the locality, that these injuries healed cleanly in a few days without benefit of antiseptics.

As I was applying myself one afternoon to the backbreaking task of typing notes, sitting on a box, with the typewriter on another box, Teufi, one of the four old men of the village who were among our best friends, came in with a finger nearly severed by an unlucky sweep of his coconut knife in the construction of a new house for the chief—an elaborate structure a little way down the street.

As usual I was called in consultation, and we treated his injury with a simple antiseptic, hoping that nature would accomplish healing. At first our treatment seemed successful, but eventually the cure was completed by native methods—a poultice, I think, of herbs.

My last "case" was that of a baby whom the mother brought to me, covered with a painful-looking rash. I dusted talcum powder upon it.

"Will he recover?" inquired the mother anxiously.

"He will recover," was my grave reply.

Luck was with us, apparently, for next day the rash had faded.

Our medical reputation suffered, to our relief, a severe blow when we drew the line at attempting to set a broken leg. There was an outcry in the street as men carried a boy from the beach. Women were wailing, and from a confused hubbub of talk emerged the information that Noere the younger had fallen over a canoe and broken his leg.

"It is broken in three places," the women said.

In his parents' house the boy lay, uncomplaining, on the mat. Toriu the tahunga came, and painted the limb with a reddish-brown liquid, the juices of two roots—a famous medicine of the island, whose virtues I was later to know very well.

"Keep him quiet," this local practitioner directed. "He must not move the leg for ten days. Then he may walk, leaning on a stick. The bone will knit, and he will not be lame."

Indeed, within two weeks Noere was walking about, leaning on a rude crutch, and playing marbles with the other boys in the street.

Teufi was, however, for a time quite convinced of our medical skill, or of the efficacy of the white man's drugs—so much so that he inquired, one day, whether we had a medicine that would restore youthful vigor. It seemed Teufi, who was about seventy, had designs on certain of his women acquaintances. We were sorry to disappoint Teufi, but the best we could do for him was to advise him to eat eggs and drink plenty of coconut water. At least, that wouldn't hurt him.

13. *Pillars of the Sacred Heart*

That First Sneezing Sunday initiated the first period of consistent churchgoing that Keneti and I had experienced in some years. Practically everybody on the island went to church; if we were to maintain our standing in the community and avoid the implication of being what is called *teoteo*, a fairly accurate translation of which is "high hat," we must also attend at least the Sunday services.

The church of the Sacred Heart is of white coral, with large unglassed windows, a clean cement floor, and a steeple visible from as far away as the neighboring island of Tepoto, eleven or twelve miles to the west.

A great deal of work and—for these humbly circumstanced people—considerable expense, must have gone into the building, which is larger and more elaborate than the island needs. The pit in the coral whence the lime was taken still remains, a little way off, but the ground around the building is neatly swept.

The church was not in use during our visit, not having been consecrated as yet, and the village was without a priest. Father Amedée, who had labored in that field, had risen in the clerical ranks and become a bishop. Services were conducted in a coconut-leaf shed a little way from the stone building.

This temporary church was full that first Sunday when we arrived in white and wearing shoes in honor of the day—the men squatting on the right hand side, the women on the left, some of them holding babies. We joined the overflow sitting on coconuts outside. The service seemed interminable. Teuri the second chief read from the Scriptures and made some remarks of which I understood little, and Teroro-tu, wife of Tehau the gendarme, led the congregation in excruciating

singing, mingled with the coughing and trumpeting of the stricken villagers.

It ended eventually, as all things do if one but waits, and the people filed gravely out and down the street to the assembly place at the intersection of the two main avenues: men in dungarees and tall hats; Teuri in his white coat; Tom the half-Chilean from Easter Island in his flat-crowned hat and dark jacket; the women in knee-length colored print dresses, high necked and long sleeved in deference to the church. The heavy, sharp breasts of Panitaka had burst through the worn material of her flimsy gown and protruded openly, but apparently caused her no embarrassment. She was wearing a dress; that was all that was necessary.

The gendarme, sitting on the low wall near the corner, received battered pieces of small change and written IOU's for the collection. The villagers sat on the curbing or on coconuts under the trees, spreading a little way down both streets, while Teuri announced work on the roads that was planned for the coming week. After some desultory discussion, the meeting dispersed.

Most of it dispersed to our house, which apparently offered the only available Sunday afternoon diversion. Sunday, throughout the Tuamotu, is the one dull day. As work is forbidden, no fishing is done, the men having made an effort to catch enough on Saturday to last until Monday. The result is that they have nothing to do but sit about aimlessly, and, fond of talk as they are, there is seldom enough fresh material on a small atoll for conversation to last an entire afternoon.

So for the first few Sundays the house was crowded as it had been the day of our arrival, with villagers looking at pictures in magazines, smoking, and asking questions. Tiring of this, after a time, we would close up the house and take refuge in the lagoon, or wander to some remote and little-frequented part of the forest, returning later to work at our notes or to converse quietly and, to us, instructively, with a few of our friends.

Keneti and I were, I fear, suspect in the matter of religion. When asked as to the nature of his faith, he, having ascertained that Tepuka was a Catholic island, had replied that he was a Protestant, so as to avoid repetition of an incident that had embarrassed him on an earlier expedition to another island. Being less experienced at that time, he had allowed the natives to think he professed the same faith as themselves, and perceived the unwisdom of this course only when he found himself conducted in state by a pair of local dignitaries to the front of the church, where he was expected to take part in services with which he was unfamiliar. Since then, on Catholic islands he has announced himself as Protestant; on Protestant islands, as Catholic. How he solves the problem on an island divided among several faiths, as is Anaa, I never learned. Perhaps he avoids such islands.

For myself, I told my friends playfully that I was "heathen"; or, to tease Turina, wife of Ah Kui, I would say that I was a member of the "Chinese church." Turina, who was one of the more devout members of the Sacred Heart congregation, would shake her head and reprove me mildly, if withal affectionately, for this levity. She was fond of having me read to her from a Tahitian religious periodical that arrived many months after date of publication. Though I understood but imperfectly, I could read aloud more fluently than Turina could, and she would listen, gravely smiling, while I read to her of angels and spirits, of the beneficence of the True God, the sacrifice of "Ietu Kirito," and the enmity of "Tatani." Once, when I came to a passage in a letter from the bishop, in which he exhorted his followers to "smite the heathen," Turina's delight was manifest. Laughing, she raised a light brown hand and slapped me gently on the cheek, crying out in glee: "Smite the heathen!"—and immediately

afterward, lest I be offended by this rough jest, affectionately pressed her small flat nose to my cheek.

If Turina was the most devout, Teuri was the most zealous. Borrowing one of our long-suffering typewriters, he would sit up to all hours of the night, typing heavily with his forefinger, letter by letter, extracts from the Scriptures, which he would distribute to Turina and others to commit to memory.

For this activity he inquired whether we had a Bible. Keneti produced a copy of the Book. Kararo, always suspicious, asked whether it was "Catholic" or "Protestant." On being informed that it was a Protestant Bible, he snorted, in high disdain, that it was "full of lies."

Teuri, however, was of an inquiring mind. Overcoming his fear of the "devils" that might be concealed between its black covers, and crossing himself piously, he examined the book and later, having compared it with such portions of the Catholic version as were available, pronounced, in some puzzlement, the two to be virtually the same.

I could not generate within myself any enthusiasm for the Sunday service, and neither of us ever attempted to attend those held during the week. We fell into the habit of going to church later and later until one Sunday, delayed longer than usual by drying photograph films, we arrived, wearing newly made hats, just as the congregation was leaving. The reputation of the Tuamotuan, according to some accounts, as being saturnine and unmirthful, was not borne out on this occasion. The villagers greeted us with unconcealed amusement and with piquant comments at our expense. Teingo, wife of the chief, ran and knelt before us in mock pantomime. Here, she implied, somewhat irreverently, were angelic visitors!

The next Sunday Keneti, who had been more severely called to account by his friends than had I, for whom they seemed to have lost all hope, went to the Sacred Heart very early. I remained at the house to guard the films; parried the onslaughts of children seeking onions; traded one to a daughter of Teuri for an egg. Then I drew on my near-white trousers which had been washed for me on Saturday, and walked across backyards, so as to be as inconspicuous as possible, toward the church.

I was not, however, to evade the keen eyes of the villagers. Temata á Maru, who, I had observed, was not altogether regular in attendance herself, and always sat outside, hailed me from her seat under a coconut tree.

"Where are you going?"

"To church," I replied virtuously.

"It is over," she taunted. "Bad man!" she called after me as I took refuge behind the new house that had been built for the absent missionary. I waited till the crowd had emerged, then moved out in as dignified and unconcerned a manner as possible to join the procession, but this transparent ruse did not deceive the parishioners.

After that, I gave up attendance entirely, and let Keneti uphold the devotional honor of our household.

I was unable to detect what influence, if any, religion had on daily life. Perhaps it had softened the savage ways of the islanders, as described in old accounts; though our informants in the village told us that the violence that had characterized many of the islands had never been true of Tepuka. Nor could the church be charged with having done the islanders any great harm. It had substituted a new set of ceremonies for the old, and provided a community gathering place and a reason for assembling. The singing, and participation in the service, gave them a mode of social expression to replace, in a way, the old pagan rites. Beyond that, it did not seem greatly to affect their life. For the most part, they kept, as they probably had done before they were "converted," all the commandments save, in its broad interpretation, one—and that

one was so foreign to their rooted custom that it surely could have no meaning for them.

After one of those religious discussions with the serious-minded Teuri, we went out and across the street to the house of Te Uru te Po, one of the old men of the village whose memory runs back beyond the time of the church and the black-robed priests. Te Uru te Po, clad only in a scanty loincloth, was squatting beside his fire of coconut husks, broiling a fish on hot stones.

"I am not of this age," he said. "I am of the heathen time. I have eaten the turtle on the marae."

"What was life like in the heathen time?"

"It was very good," he replied. "There was no fuss about going to church. One day was like another. We wore the loincloth and the wrap of matting; the women did not spend their time washing and ironing clothes, as they do now. If people fell ill, there was no nonsense about foreign medicines. They got well, or they died. We did not pray, except to the ancestors for food."

"Tell us, Te Uru te Po, which was better, the ancient time or the new time?"

Te Uru te Po looked out toward the sea from eyes blue with age.

"The men of Tepuka have not learned to lie," he said. "The heathen time was better. . . . We had no Sunday then!"

14. *"Kawkaw"*

"We Shall Have," said Keneti, the third week of our stay, "to ration our cigarettes."

For our position in the community at that time seemed to be first as objects of curiosity and second as a source of free tobacco.

The word for it is written, in Tuamotuan, *kavakava*, and pronounced, in the Tepuka dialect, *kawkaw*. It was the word we heard oftenest during our stay. Though the Polynesians did not know tobacco until the white man brought it, they took to it readily from the time of the first voyagers. Of the people of Tepuka, I knew only three who did not smoke.

Our American cigarettes were a novelty, and though the islanders insisted they did not like them as well as their own tongue-biting varieties, they never neglected an opportunity to consume ours—on one occasion when, out of curiosity, I kept count, more than two hundred in a day.

Callers in our house received them as a matter of courtesy, but people merely passing by would come to the doorway and ask, or meeting us in the street, would bring up the familiar subject. Even the children would scramble, like chickens after corn, for discarded glowing "butts." Everywhere we went we heard: "*Kawkaw!*"

The "native" tobacco, which is not really native in the Tuamotu but brought from Tahiti in the copra schooners, is of two kinds. Most in favor at Tepuka is "kavakava Tahiti," a heavy, black, evil-smelling twist of leaf tobacco, tightly pressed into a hard cake and rolled in coconut leaves, forming a bar a yard or so long, which is chopped off in lengths and sold by weight. Thirty cents buys about a pound.

Leaves are peeled off the roll and carried about in empty match boxes, with a supply of the papery inner surface of a dried pandanus leaf. A bit of tobacco is spread out and dried over the flame of a match or of a small brand from a fire; then rolled tightly in a spiral of leaf and ignited while held not in the mouth but in the hand. I never mastered the natives' trick of pushing the fire down into the cigarette with a finger, or, except when very skillfully rolled, the art of keeping it lit at all.

This Tahiti tobacco has the advantage of economy: a little of it goes a long way—though this advantage is somewhat offset by the number of matches it consumes, for even the natives' cigarettes are continually going out. A native, however, rarely smokes one all the way down at a sitting, though they are small—mere wisps of tobacco in a slender roll of leaf. He will smoke a few puffs, then hand the cigarette on to a friend, or deposit it behind an ear for future use.

The burning tobacco mingles with the fragrance of the burning pandanus leaf to make a heavy but not unpleasant odor, as of incense. Nor does it taste as vile as, in the raw state, it smells, but if smoked in quantity it rasps the throat.

The more fastidious preferred a long, stringy shag or birdseye, which comes in little paper packages of astounding ugliness, put up in Holland, and at Tepuka is called "Samasón," from the circumstance that the brand imported by Ah Kui the storekeeper is "Samson."

Half a franc buys a package of French cigarette papers, but the Samasón is also often rolled in pandanus leaf, which costs only the trouble of gathering it, though the feat of coiling the spiral around the loose cornsilk-like shag is even more difficult than with the sour and villainous "twist."

Our native friends couldn't understand our hoarding. We had either to dispense cigarettes freely or say that the supply was exhausted, which they wouldn't believe. Were not all white men fabulously wealthy, and was not our borrowed house stacked high with boxes of all kinds of luxuries? If we tried to plead poverty in tobacco, we were but miserly. However, the cigarettes would soon be gone unless we contrived some way of easing the draft upon them. If, as they professed, they liked Tahiti twist better, why not give it to them? So I went out to Ah Kui's meager little store and laid in a supply, peeled off the leaves, dried them and laid them out in a large coconut shell in our one-room house. But we must also have wrappers. So I gathered dead leaves from a large pandanus tree that stood near Maono's house, and prepared to receive company.

Tangia was the first to appear.

"The Tahiti tobacco," I quoted, "is better than the American cigarettes."

She was pleased with the tobacco, but laughed long over the wrapper, which, it seemed, was not the right kind. She returned to her house and brought a long leaf, at the proper stage of maturity, showing me how to separate the papery portion and strip it from the less flexible parts.

Temata, passing by with her jaunty stride, looked in while this was going on.

"Come with me," she said, "and gather some good wrappers."

She led the way over heaped cobble-like broken coral, which at that time still cruelly hurt my unaccustomed feet, to the great pandanus tree near a ruined marae. This tree had not been picked clean of leaves suitable for the purpose as had the one I had tried, nearer the village. From that time the problem was solved, until Ah Kui ran short of both kinds of tobacco soon after which our relief boat arrived from Tahiti, bringing large quantities of shag.

Tukua, the chief's daughter, revealed a greedy side of her otherwise amiable nature, in respect to this adopted luxury. We were fond of Tukua, but after she had several times, when a cigarette was offered her, taken the whole package, for the sake of our other guests we had to declare an embargo on smokes for her.

It lasted but a few days. Falling asleep after supper following a strenuous excursion into the lagoon for shellfish, the story of which will be told in its place, I was awakened by a voice at the door, calling my name softly: "Pari!" Tukua and her cousin were on their way to the community song practice. Tukua came up to me very gently, with a timid and sorrowful look in her large eyes.

"Greet me!" she pleaded.

I hadn't really wanted to be angry with Tukua, and this overture of friendship disarmed me completely. Granting her request, I buried my nose in her neck, in the Polynesian gesture of greeting. She put her arms around me and laid her head on my shoulder—a head smelling faintly of perfumed coconut oil and very clean and sweet.

So American-made cigarettes gave way to Tahitian twist, and that in turn to shag, but I seldom think of Tepuka without a reminiscent imaginary whiff of the slow-coiling, incense-like smoke of strong black leaf in pandanus wrapping, or without hearing an echo of the otherwise usually fairly melodious voices of my friends and neighbors in their one raucous phrase:

"*Kawkaw.*"

15. *Harvest*

"We Are Going," said Tauria, "to the windward islets to get papaya."

Tauria and Tupu, having volunteered, with others, for the weekly harvest of the tree melon which, after the coconut, is Tepuka's principal fruit crop, were inviting me to accompany them on the overnight excursion to the opposite end of the lagoon from the site of the present village. There, in deeper and more fertile, if sandy, soil, the seeds of Carica papaya (known perhaps to some readers as papaw) had been planted—not without, one may suspect, a regard for strategic location, the fields being as far as one could possibly get from the haunts of the children, who, in the Tuamotu, are much like children anywhere else in respect to fruits of the forest and field.

"These expeditions," Teuri explained, "are voluntary, though in the long run everybody is expected to do his share. The groups go forth, making a picnic of it, and living on the land as they go. They may eat all they want of the fruits of the land while on the expedition, but may not carry away anything except the harvest which is the purpose of the trip and which is divided equally among the villagers."

The canoe lay under the trees near the lagoon shore: one of the larger boats built of planks in the Tahitian fashion, painted light blue and bearing the name *Marama.* Tupu, Tauria, Tetauru and I hoisted it on our shoulders and carried it over the beach flats to the water. Two women and two or three boys joined the party. One of the women sat on the narrow bench with me, looking up with large soft eyes and conversing as much as my small vocabulary would permit. She seemed pleased when I told her that her name was the same as that of a former princess of Hawaii, in the Hawaiian language, Kinau.

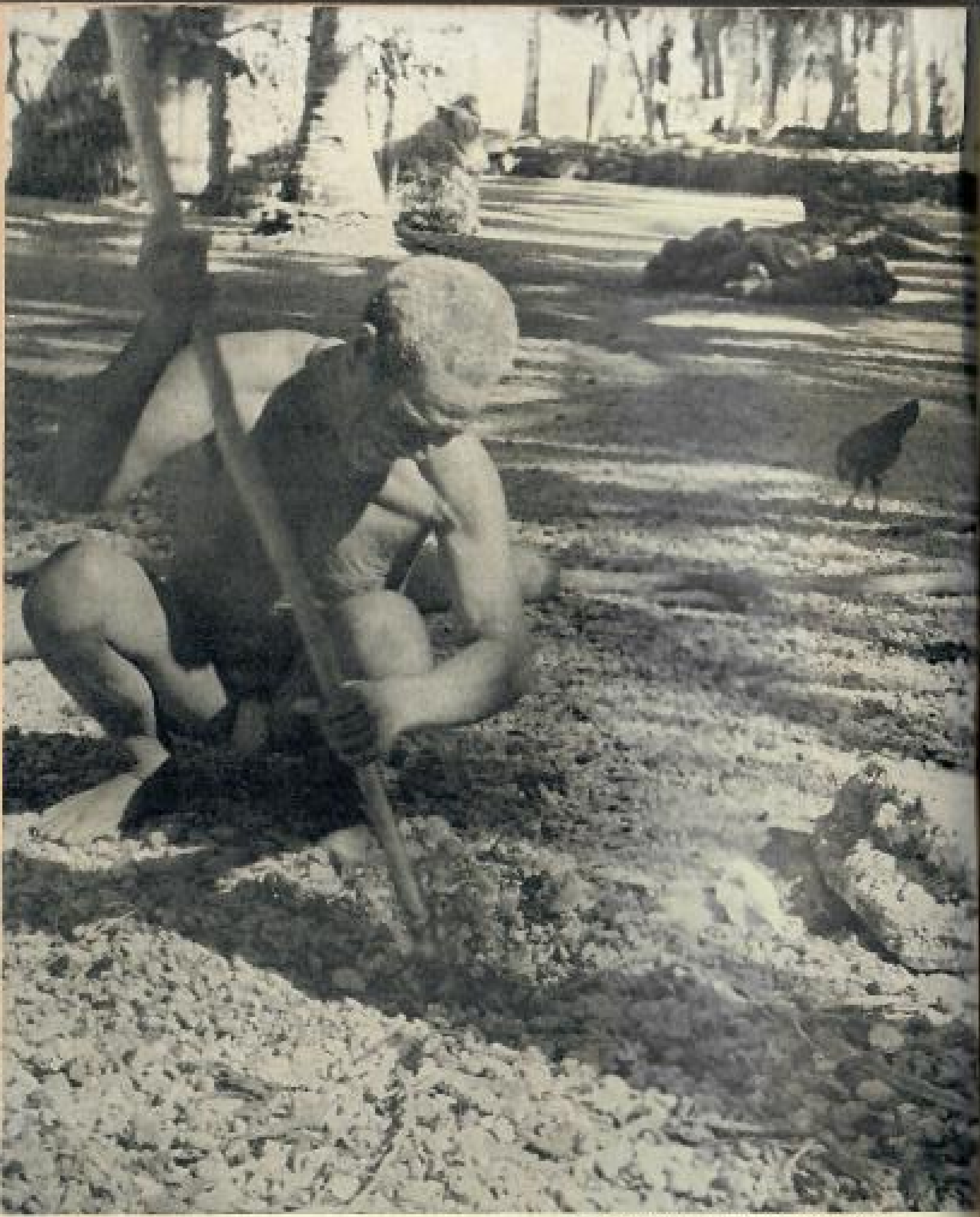
"Your skin is hot," she exclaimed, touching my hand, and then put her hands up to my face to see whether my cheeks, too, were "feverish." The skin of a white man seems so to a native, and the native skin cool to us. Some difference in texture and hence in radiation, in response to centuries of climatic influence, must account for it.

Other canoes hailed us as we set out over the lagoon. Tauria pointed out and named the "lands" as we passed them: the wells, the sacred places and assembly grounds. Once, pointing to a sandy islet where, beneath an overgrowth of shrubbery, lay the stones of an ancient temple, he remarked: "*Te ariki no Tepuka Maruia, ko Mokio-ariki.*"

Misunderstanding, I thought at the time that this was the name of a land district, and it is so written in the faded, water-spattered list I brought home from that voyage, but now I know that he was saying: "The chief of Tepuka Maruia, Mokio-ariki," and pointing out some land as associ-

B. P. Bishop Museum Photo by K. P. Emory

"The food of the land is good food," said Te Uru te Po as he and his family gathered around the evening meal in his coral-strewn dooryard at Tepuka Maruia.



E. P. Bishop Museum Photo by K. P. Emory

"The heathen time was better," said Te Uru te Po, as he demonstrated the use of the digging-stick, Tepuka's only agricultural implement.

ated with the memory of that famous chief, his ancestor, who was to become, by adoption, mine as well.

The canoe drew up on the sands of a place called Mahora, and we waded in through the shallows. Men who had arrived before us were spreading copra on the ground to dry, and women came to take my hand and accept cigarettes.

Tauria and Tupu led the way to a small glade in the forest, denser here than on the village side of the atoll. They pulled down drinking-nuts with a hooked pole, husked them on a sharpened stake, and cracked off the ends of the shells with a large knife. Tauria brought me some of the orange-colored fleshy phalanges of a pandanus fruit, larger and sweeter than that of Hawaii, though somewhat fibrous in texture.

The women passengers remained at Mahora when we reembarked. I took up a spare paddle and used it as I had learned to do in the canoes of Waikiki. The Tepuka paddles are easier to wield; they are shorter and lighter, with a longer and narrower blade, the older ones curved backward to slip more easily through the water. There was one such curved paddle in the *Marama*. Carved roughly on its surface was its name: "Hupiaparakau."

"You paddle well," praised Tauria, in surprise that the white man knew this native art. "Where did you learn?"

As we moved on over the smooth water, a large bird flew overhead, gleaming in the sunlight with a greenish sheen.

Tauria identified it as a "havana."

"Do you hunt these birds?"

"Yes, with nets and with traps."

Tauria guided the canoe toward a coral shoal and grounded its outrigger upon the rock. Tupu donned goggles and dived with his spear, swimming about and peering under ledges, seeking fish. Resuming our journey, we drew into an inner lagoon and landed at a more heavily wooded portion of the island than I had yet seen.

Several houses stood along the curving shore, and a thatched church, with a fragment of a bell hanging by a cord from a tree.

The papaya plantation stands in the midst of the forest, some way back from the houses. The trees grow thickly, as if the seed had been sown broadcast, making a dense grove. Despite this crowding, they were loaded with fruit in all stages of growth. Coconuts and pandanus grew among them, and squash vines twined beneath. Tauria even pointed out proudly a single pineapple, stunted but struggling bravely, in the meager soil, surrounded by a ring of rusty iron—the islanders' crude attempt at soil chemistry.

The young men shook down papayas and ate them as we passed through the grove, breaking down branches and whole trees with no apparent compunction, so plentifully does this untended crop flourish. Half a dozen men were sitting around a pile of the fruit in a small clearing. They greeted us heartily, and asked to be photographed with the harvest. With the big knives they all carry, they were peeling the melon-like fruit and eating them like apples, or, more frequently, cutting off the end and sucking the pulp, like an orange. Tauria ate half a dozen or more while we lingered there.

More drinking-nuts were produced. Tauria led us back through the maze to the shore, stopping to point out one of the few survivors of the forest of puka (Pisonia grandis) trees which must originally have given the island its name. The puka is a large tree to grow in this soil and on this small island—a tree with a thick trunk and spreading branches; as old Teufi told us later, a sacred tree. Even the somewhat gnarled specimen that spiraled skyward from the midst of the fruit garden had a dignity from which one could realize the impressiveness of the forest in olden times, when such trees covered the land.

Men were eating on a beautiful curving beach. Somebody spread a large leaf as my plate, and laid upon it a broad slice of raw parrot-fish. Heaps of food stood everywhere: fish of

half a dozen kinds, coconuts, papaya. Mindful of Polynesian proprieties, I passed out crackers and chocolate, which vanished quickly among these voracious eaters, and tobacco.

Tupu led me to a shed, behind the main group of houses, and showed me a canoe of the old Tuamotuan type—deep and narrow, made of planks of tou (Cordia subcordata) wood sewn together with coconut fibers. This was the last of the old Tuamotuan ships on this island. The great trees are few now; the coconut has been planted over the land; foreign fashions have entered. The canoes in which the men of Tepuka voyage to Tepoto and across the lagoon of their own island are built in the Tahitian manner, and held together with nails. But the old *pahi* stands in its leaky shed, still sound after many years, a monument to the past of a seafaring people.

The windward side, my companions said, was anciently inhabited permanently, and was then politically independent of the northwestern half of the island. All coconuts drifting ashore on one side of a certain midway point belonged to one nation, and those drifting beyond it, to another. In the course of time, the clans had intermarried and finally merged, and with the coming of ships and such little trade as these brought, the permanent village was established near the ship landing. At certain seasons, however, a large part of the population moves to that part of the island and lives there for several weeks or months, harvesting copra.

Men came in from the lagoon, with octopus hanging from their spears like moss from the trees of a cypress swamp. With a spade made of turtle bone lashed to a pole, a shallow oven was dug in the pebbly ground, and fire made therein; the squid were laid on a flat stone and beaten with a club to soften the tough flesh, then wrapped in fern leaves and laid in the earth oven, covered over with leaves and small stones. Fish, fruit and coconuts completed the meal, as before. I contributed a tin of corned beef.

The amount of food consumed was tremendous. Tauria alone must have eaten, if computed at American café prices for comparable dishes, five dollars' worth, and Tupu devoured even more than he. No one seemed to mind the flies that clustered thickly over everything. We ate with our fingers and washed them in the lagoon; hurled away the smeared leaf-platters, then lay on the mats and smoked. Tupu pointed out some houses farther down the beach:

"Let us go to the house and sleep."

As we started, a shout went up from the boys: "Keneti! Keneti!"—and indeed, there was Kenneth, coming down the shore with Tauria. He had waded across the shallow passes and walked around the rim of the atoll to join us. His arrival was the occasion for another meal, carried in a turtle shell to the beach in front of the sleeping-houses.

There was much talking, as we lay on the mats in the cool evening: talk of the old times and the new; of Tepuka and of the world that to these island fishermen is but a dream world far away at the very edge of the earth, a country less real to them than the dark world of the Polynesian dead, and known to them only vaguely and at second and third hand through the tales of men who have been away to sea, as "the white men's country." They were eager to know of this world outside, especially of the Land of the Burning Mountains, whence we had come. Question and answer shuttled back and forth, of their country and of ours.

"No, the people of Tepuka Maruia did not eat the flesh of men. Nor did they sacrifice human lives to the gods. The gods of our people were our own ancestors; they ate fish and turtle, as do we ourselves. Nor was there fighting in our country. We are all of one kin. The four clans dwelt together in peace. The spears were for fish. The men fought only with their mouths. It was not necessary to waste the blood of the land. . . .

"But tell us, is it true, as we have heard men say, that in Hawaii there are mountains higher than the coconut trees?"

"It is indeed true. We ourselves have climbed those mountains, and upon them we have walked in clouds."

"It must then be true. It is indeed marvelous. We should like to see such a country, though it must be a grievous thing to do so much climbing, and a great danger to live in a country that stands on end."

With pardonable curiosity they inquired about the work of the scientists and the purpose of their activities, and listened attentively as Keneti explained: how the distribution of land shells, which cannot swim the seas, may throw light on the ancient geography of the Pacific and the possible whereabouts of the ancestral Havaiki of native lore; how the botanist's study of plants may aid in tracing the migrations of the Polynesians; how research among insects may reveal new ways of combating pests that harm the American crops of sugar and pineapples in Hawaii, and, again, how his own study of ethnology preserves the ancient wisdom that is fast crumbling away.

Despite their narrow experience of geography and of other matters familiar to the white man, these men showed an understanding that transcended their actual knowledge—this and, with it, a deep respect for science.

"It is a profound study," they commented.

I fell asleep on the mat under the moon, as the conversation was still rambling on. Tupu awakened me and showed me to the sleeping-house, a fairly large structure of the usual construction, with a few poles, spears and bird nets hanging up, and other odds and ends.

"Birds are hunted with these nets at night," said Tupu. "Some time we shall hunt them together."

I stretched out on the mat, between Keneti and one of our hosts, with my ragged sweater for warmth—since there was no cover—and my head on the log over which the end of the mat was rolled. It was not an altogether restful night; the wooden pillow of the Tuamotuans induces stiffness in an unaccustomed neck; the wind blew cold from the sea in the early morning, with a squall of rain that sifted through the open door; and the dozen or more men who shared the house for the night were wakeful and talkative.

We were up at dawn, breakfasted frugally on papayas, coconuts and what was left of my chocolate, and proceeded to the serious business of harvesting. Piles of fruit were collected in the grove; the men and boys wove large temporary baskets of coconut fronds, and, two by two, carried them on poles to the canoes.

The mats on which we had slept were tied to spear shafts, making square sails supported by a mast and a diagonal boom attached to the mast at the base and manipulated from the stern by cords attached to small sticks tied into the upper and lower corners of the mat.

The heavily loaded canoes sailed gently, shipping water constantly over the low gunwales, to nobody's apparent concern. I bailed with a coconut shell, until relieved by one of the boys. Another steered with a paddle. We sailed straight across the lagoon, making the return voyage in much shorter time than the trip over.

One of the small boys climbed out on a shell-mound islet, half a mile or so from port, and we left him there—perhaps to pick up shellfish. Nobody worried about him. After all, the lagoon was only his front yard; when he had finished whatever business took him there, he would swim and wade back, walking barefoot over the sharp shells.

Other canoes were there before us when we landed at the lagoon beach near the village; a crowd had assembled and the papayas were being divided. Women and children were wading through the shallows to the temporary mooring places of the canoes, with baskets on poles, and carrying the fruit to shore. There they laid the papayas one by one in eight piles of ripe and eight of unripe fruit. Each pair of heaps

represented twenty-four people. When those heaps were completed, they were subdivided into smaller ones, each for four people, thus arriving at an average of four ripe and four green papayas for each person.

Some of the softer fruit, crushed under the load in the canoe, were eaten at once and not counted in the communal distribution. It was a lively scene at the lagoon edge: the women, with garments tucked up around their hips, wading to and fro with baskets of yellow fruit; the men in shorts and tall hats carrying the unloaded canoes on their shoulders to the shade at the edge of the forest; the children running about, their faces smeared with the orange-yellow flesh of the papayas, eating an incredible number of the smaller and softer ones; old folk squatting beside their baskets, awaiting completion of the division—and all keeping up a continuous chatter, with much laughing and jesting.

When the last subdivision had been made, representatives of the various households gathered up their shares in baskets and trooped away homeward. A special basketful was laid aside for us visitors; Tehau offered us in addition a share of his, and our landlord somewhat tardily brought forward those which it was his duty, in island courtesy, to provide. We thus had more than we could eat in the few days they would keep, but the always hungry children who crowded about our doors could relieve us of any surplus.

The people greeted us, as we stepped ashore and walked through the village, as if we had been on a long journey, instead of a matter of five miles—as, indeed, we had been to the farthest limit of that ring of coral which, except for twelve-miles-away Tepoto, is for most of them the world. Citizen after citizen stopped to clasp our hands, and our friends at Maké's house pressed their noses to our cheeks, when Tupu conducted us there to the evening's social gathering.

The singing and dancing on the pebbled space was a soothing, gentle relaxation in the shadowy cool of evening; and, afterward, rest was deep upon the mats laid on our coral floor. This was home; these were our friends; the stars over Tepuka Maruia were kind.

But within the next few hours, a calamity of sorts was to fall.

16. *A Chief Takes Leave of His People*

THE NEXT DAY there was shouting and running to and fro, for a ship had been sighted. The flag was planted on the shore, and we joined the crowd that trooped to the "harbor" to view the arrival. She was a copra schooner from Papeete, on her last trip, as we learned, the Chinese company that owned her having fallen into difficulties.

We looked upon this, the first vessel to call during our sojourn, with mixed feelings. She might bring mail—though, as developed, she brought none for us; we might send mail out by her, and did; but obscurely we rather resented the intrusion of this craft from outside upon the peace of our island world.

Two weevily-looking Chinese came ashore in a whaleboat and walked, followed by a small crowd, to the store of Ah Kui and Ah Siun. Men began carrying copra to the landing, in sacks of two hundred to three hundred pounds each, on their shoulders. I photographed Rangina in the act of bearing one of these loads the half-mile length of the village. Grinning, he stopped to chat and take a cigarette, without setting down the burden. Later I saw Tanerairua carrying not one but three sacks of copra with as apparent ease.

Loading, and such other business as they had, including the ordering of meager stock for the store, took all day, as the

schooner stood off the island. One by one the sacks were carried to the beach and boat loads rowed to the ship.

But the *Ruahatu* had brought something more than goods to exchange for copra. She had brought the most extraordinary news that had reached the island in many years—precipitating an event that assumed, to the islanders, almost world-shaking importance.

"Maono is summoned to Tahiti!" the word ran through the streets.

The chief himself confirmed this. He had received a summons to the colonial capital to answer, as we then understood, questions regarding his administration.

The villagers discussed the matter at a special meeting in the street. Ordinarily the village meeting is held on Sunday after church, when work is planned for the coming week, grievances aired and adjusted, and official announcements made. But this was an emergency, Maono having decided that he must go at once, by the same ship that had brought the call. There might not be another schooner for months.

Talking with various natives, we learned something of the background of the case. The island, a few years earlier, had harbored a criminal of unusual anti-social activity, for this peaceful place. After this man had been convicted and fined for robbing the store, the store had burned. He had been convicted of that crime as well, and was serving a term in prison at Papeete. He had complained that he had not had a fair trial, and had obtained a rehearing, at which Maono was now called to testify.

It was feared, however, that the vengeful convict might bring charges which would place the chief in an embarrassing position. Like many another native executive in these islands where a foreign system of government has been implanted upon the simpler native organization, Maono could give no account of the few dollars that had been collected in fines, or otherwise, for the district treasury. The money was gone.

If he, as chief, had spent it, this was understood as a matter of course by his fellow-citizens, for was he not their chief, and as such, entitled to any proceeds of government? But the colonial officials, with their different notions of responsible administration, might take an attitude that would be awkward for the chief. It was even possible that he himself might become a prisoner.

We discussed this possibility with the villagers. What would happen if Maono were convicted of embezzlement and kept in prison at Papeete?

That would not be allowed to happen, they said. If Maono were found guilty, he would be fined, or sentenced to imprisonment if unable to pay. The people of his island would levy upon themselves a special assessment to pay Maono's fine. They would not permit their chief to go to the "Iron House."

They saw nothing illogical in this. Maono was "the father of the land" and they loved him; apparently he was in trouble, or in danger of it, from the workings of the strange ways of the white men; that was his misfortune, and the misfortune of his fellow-citizens. It was all very stupid, they thought: Maono had governed wisely and well; the people had enough to eat; the roads and grounds were neatly kept; everybody at Tepuka and Tepoto was satisfied with his administration.

For Maono had arisen, it seemed, partly by birth and partly by natural ability to the position recognized by the colonial authorities who had appointed him "president of the district council." It was said he had derived his knowledge of tradition and his spiritual power, known to natives and scientists as *mana*, in part from having slept for a week on the grave of his father, who had been noted for these things.

Hence something of the sacredness of chiefs of olden time clung to this modern local governor. This barefoot man in shabby foreign clothes, with whom we spoke day by day,

was in touch with divine powers and himself regarded as a little beyond the human.

"When Maono embarks in his canoe for Tepoto," Teuri informed us, "the sky all around the horizon darkens, and the people of Tepoto know that the chief is on the way to them. I myself have seen this."

He was, Teuri added, one of two or three whose wisdom entitled them to the designation of tahunga, which connotes in the native mind all that is represented, for the white man, by science, theology and the learned professions. He was one of two qualified to perform the ceremony equivalent to circumcision for the boys of his people.

Maono himself said he did not mind any charges that might be brought, or the possibility of going to jail, but that he was grieved at having to be absent from his country and his people. He had never been away from his native islands before. He would return as soon as possible; meanwhile he would leave the government in the hands of Teuri, the second chief, and trusted that affairs would go smoothly.

Nor did he forget us.

"These two white men," he said at the meeting, "Keneti and Pari, are good men who are here for a good purpose. Treat them as my sons."

Maono's fondness for us was influenced somewhat, no doubt, by Keneti's gift of a bag of rice for his family and a handful of Banque d'Indo-Chine notes for the journey, but I am sure he really liked us, and the esteem was mutual. I also earned his particular regard by putting in working order, with parts out of my own reserves, an electric torch which he brought to me minus a battery and with a burned-out bulb —a small service for which he was touchingly grateful.

Maono instructed his eldest son to take over the duty of supplying us with drinking-nuts and occasional gifts of eggs, and to see that we had our share of the communal fruits of the land. As Maono the Younger walked home with the bag of rice, the always curious Kararo asked where he got it.

"From my papa, Keneti," he responded.

"Papa," in Tuamotuan parlance, means any male relative.

When we went to Maono's house to bid him good-by, the chief was dressed for departure as we had seen him the day of our arrival: the soiled helmet, the striped trousers, rolled to the knees for wading on the reef, plus a faded khaki coat.

The chief's house was one of the least pretentious: a coconut-leaf structure, small for his numerous family, and somewhat in disrepair. Near it stood a new house which was being built for him: a combined city hall, governor's mansion and court house. This was to be the most elaborate structure, after the church, in the two islands: it was more than twice as large and high as any other house and was to have a broad and high stone platform before it, where the chief might hold court and meet and address his people. Its walls were of no common weave, but of squares of coconut midrib laid diagonally in patterns, and nailed, instead of tied, upon the frame. In a few years the nails would rust and fall out, and the chief's house crumble away, but such was the impression some foreign things had made, that the natives preferred nails to the better and more durable ancient lashings of coconut fiber.

The villagers gathered near the shore, where the constable and the second chief had planted the pole and run up the flag. A group of girls sang plaintively a hastily rehearsed farewell song. "The land," they sang, "is left fatherless."

Nearly all were weeping, as their voices rose mournfully amid the sound of surf and the rustling of fronds. Facing them, under the flag, stood Maono, flanked by Tehau in the red-braided cap of civil authority and Teuri in a ceremonial white coat—all with heads bared and bowed, as if praying.

When the singing had ended, Maono spoke slowly, in a low voice, repeating some of his remarks at the village meeting and expanding them. This is substantially what he said, and I set it down as a notable document, as worthy of preservation, in its way, as the Gettysburg Address:

"My children: the waves are shimmering in the sun, and the air above this ancient holy place of Rangihoa vibrates with the noon. I stand here, where, in the former time, our fathers met to honor their gods, and look upon this land, my own country.

"My children, I must go on a far journey. I do not know what may await me there. My bowels are heavy—not for the voyage, or for the dangers of wind and sea, but that I leave my people and the land.

"I speak to you now from the store of ancient wisdom, from the Foundations. The old learning has not vanished utterly; though we no longer know all of the hidden meaning, a little lingers in the minds of the old men. But it is fading fast: the young people, lured away by foreign things, are slow to learn, and the old perish away. We few who know will soon be gone, and all these things will fade into the night, as water sinks in sand.

"Therefore, my children, I speak this to you from my deepest bowels: Among us are these two men from the white men's country: Keneti and Pari, men learned in the foreign wisdom, and in the use of the Thing-that-strikes-the-paper-as-it-writes. They have come here to seek the native wisdom while it still remains, and to keep it for the long time yet to come, so that the children of our children may turn to it at last, when we are gone and our breath has vanished with us.

"I declare now before you, all my people, these men Keneti and Pari are my sons. Give them therefore the ancient knowledge! Hold nothing back; give it fully and freely, lest it be lost in the whirl of changing times. I charge you with this duty, now that I shall not be here to give these new sons of mine this teaching.

"This is enough of words. I must go now. The path is dark before me; you remain. Life be to you, my children, in God! The ship awaits. Life be to you all in God! I go."

It was another strange picture of mingled civilization and primitive life: the villagers in their best clothes; the great tricolor flapping in the wind under a sun that made a white glare on the sand; the palms behind them and the white steeple of the Sacred Heart thrusting above the trees where the ancestral stones of the temple enclosure once had stood; the dark, grave faces, and the low, slow words of Maono, in the ancient language of those ancestors who had eaten the turtle on this spot and shared it with the gods.

Keneti and I, despite the chief's reference to us, had no part in this. For the moment, we were forgotten. We stood on the outer edges of the gathering, observing the scenes of a Polynesian leave-taking.

Maono made a brief formal transfer of his authority to Teuri and, followed by the men and women of his immediate family, walked across the glaring sands to the reef where the whaleboat lay. Sailors lined up on either side to launch the boat into the waves. Men took leave of Maono and his traveling-companion, burying their faces in his neck or side, holding the pose while Maono stood stiffly, gazing over their heads.

Teingo, his wife, shrieked and lamented shrilly, and would have fallen on the ground had not two relatives supported her. They bore her, still wailing, to a place under a tree at a little distance.

Maono and Machanga the Younger stepped into the boat and were rowed away to meet their uncertain fate.

We returned sadly to the village, sharing with its citizens the grief and anxiety they felt for their chief, who in that short time had become dear to us as well. The *Ruahatu* spread sail and disappeared slowly in the horizon. The people resumed their daily tasks. Hei and Tuata no doubt began that very day composing the first of that series of "hymns" which

were to be sung almost nightly, in preparation for the chief's return.

Keneti and I were more anxious than we were willing to admit. We had liked Maono since the first sight of his friendly, open countenance. We feared he would be helpless in Papeete and become entangled in legal procedure that would bewilder him still further. That uncertainty to some extent shadowed all our days on the island. It was to be months before we were to know. Meanwhile, we turned to our task of learning more of his people and their ways.

17. A South Sea Kulak

THERE WAS FLOUR in the village, the visiting Chinese from the *Ruahatu* having paid for copra in that commodity. With characteristic Tepuka procedure, thrifty in all things save preservation of food, a large community baking was immediately under way. Whether because wheat flour is a foreign luxury, or because of fear that, like most of their own produce, it will not keep, they must use it all at once. Probably it was for neither of these reasons, but proceeded rather from the established habit of the Tepukans, who each day catch enough fish for that day's food and do not try to keep it over for the next day. A striking instance of this disposition was furnished later by Temae, when Keneti, in return for the old man's services in guiding him to a temple ruin on the windward side of the island, gave him a bag of rice. Temae pressed into service all the pots, pans and oil cans he could find, and cooked all the rice at one time.

Earth ovens were prepared. Flour and water were mixed and wrapped in coconut leaves, making a small but solid loaf. Tepuka knows not the uses of yeast, or has none to use.

Stones were heated and rolled into the shallow excavations; upon these were laid fragrant leaves; the bread upon these, more leaves above, and the whole covered with earth and a top layer of palm branches.

About two hours sufficed to "cook" the bread. The villagers received their shares, apparently determined on the same basis as the papaya distribution, the loaves being taken out of the ovens and arranged in eight heaps.

The acting chief brought us our share of four loaves, which we regarded, privately, with dismay. I sliced off some of the heavy, soggy mixture, and tried to toast it, without success. We did eat some of it, but a large portion of our part of the baking found its way, after dark, to Kararo's pigs.

The next day a discussion arose over the division of food. It developed that the distribution on a basis of the number of persons, not including babies in arms, was no longer accurate. Some people had gone to Tepoto and their families were still receiving a share for them, which, it was pointed out, disequalized the distribution.

So there was great argument after which Teuri, as acting chief, began making a new list of all the inhabitants, to arrive at a reapportionment.

Matters of state are settled thus speedily in Tepuka. There is no congestion of the calendar, no delay. Disputes and questions of policy are thrashed out in public meeting; everybody speaks his opinion, and a decision is reached by expression of community sentiment. The meeting is without benefit of recognizable parliamentary practice; there is a tendency for many to speak at the same time; but after a while Temae and a few other cool-headed old people speak moderately and wisely; the debate subsides, and the meeting disbands without formal adjournment, as spontaneously as it assembled. No vote has been taken, no minutes have been kept, but the chief and the peace officer know, as a result of that meeting,

the sentiment of the adult citizens, and they proceed to execute the community mandate.

The village baking, however, had a sequel which kept Keneti and me busy for several days thereafter, dosing the populace with castor oil and preaching to them the advisability of adhering to their own foods and their own customs, thus avoiding the ills that proceed from the ways of the white man.

There was further to-do a few days later. Kararo, the miser of the island, had laid claim to the village well, asserting that it was situated in land belonging to his family.

Just why Kararo had not pressed his claim earlier was not apparent. The matter came up, however, coincidentally with a project for rebuilding and improving the well. Perhaps this activity suggested the notion to Kararo, or perhaps this merely seemed to him a suitable time to advance his contention.

In our own country such a matter would have meant protracted litigation, appeals from court to court over a period of years, much trouble and expense, and more than likely Kararo would have been permitted to keep the well. In the Soviet Union, Kararo doubtless would have been, none too gently, expropriated and sent to hew wood in some inhospitable northern region.

We were again impressed with the simple good sense of Tepuka people. The men discussed the case, and decided against Kararo, on the ground that the well had been in community use from ancient times, as mentioned in the chants in praise of the land:

"I set my foot upon the stones of the well Tefano Maruia."

Kararo, it appeared, was a descendant of Maruia, but the well had been in use by the entire community so long that communal title to it was considered established.

Kararo accepted the decision, as is the custom, and we saw him, later, working, in apparent harmony with the others, at the well site. He, as one of the older men, was assigned to the group that procured and prepared food for the actual workmen. He was broiling fish on hot stones over a fire of coconut husks, across the street from the well, where the young men were digging up stones and redressing them or replacing them with new.

The methods of labor have changed little since the ancient times. A few steel tools are the only contribution made by the white man's civilization. New stones for the well were pried up with levers of wood and dragged to the scene, or more often carried, bound to a log which rested on the shoulders of men. There is no wheeled vehicle—not even a wheelbarrow—at Tepuka Maruia.

As the stones were brought they were dressed neatly with such axes as the Tepukans have, and fitted in place, though without mortar, securely.

In such manner were the sacred places no doubt constructed centuries ago, the stones being carried by like laborious methods and trimmed by means even more arduous; the great stone slabs that stood upright at the head of the sacred platforms were borne thither likewise by hand.

The work on the well continued for a week or more, on a regular working schedule. So many men carried, dressed and placed the stones; so many fished, harvested papayas, and cooked the food for the workers. The job proceeded in Polynesian fashion, with voluntary organization and apparently quite without a "boss" or definite instructions. Tehau chose the workers for the major divisions, but in the labor itself everybody seemed to know spontaneously what to do. It was an eloquent example of primitive communal organization: "From each according to his ability; to each according to his need."

When finished, the well was indeed a workmanlike job. About four feet square, the stone curbing rose from the bottom of an excavation perhaps six feet deep, and to a height

of a yard or so above the surface of the ground, a rectangle of smooth coral blocks on which the arms of the women might rest as they dipped from the few inches of water that stood at the sandy bottom, and poured it into the larger containers. The wall also protected the well from contamination by surface trash, and prevented anybody from falling into it—though as everybody knew where it was, even in the dark, that was an unlikely occurrence.

Teuri, the acting chief, meanwhile was very busy with one of our typewriters, laboriously pounding out a long document in Tahitian. About noon of the third day he carried it in triumph to the well and tacked it up on a coconut tree. It was a list of prohibitions and rules for the use of the well.

"It is utterly forbidden . . ." began nearly every article in this remarkable decree, and these prohibitions were fortified with a fine of twenty-five francs for each infringement, though it is doubtful whether anybody on the island had that much money.

The rules themselves were mainly reasonable enough, largely concerned with elementary sanitary precautions:

Pigs were not to be allowed within thirty yards of the well; children under seven years of age were not to draw water from it, or approach it unless accompanied by an adult; and among other things, no one was to draw water between the hours of six P.M. and six A.M. This latter provision would, we foresaw, be somewhat difficult to enforce, inasmuch as neither Teuri nor any other of the citizens had any means of telling the time.

Conservative opinion in the village regarded Teuri's waterworks code with mild amusement, not without an undertone of derision, although the rules were observed strictly enough. Twenty-five francs is a large sum in Tepuka—even in an IOU.

The popular criticism was that these laws were unnecessary. The well had been in use for a long time, and the villagers knew very well how to use it; they had been keeping, as a matter of custom, most of the regulations, and as for the new one restricting the hours of use of the well, few people would draw water at night anyhow; it was too much trouble.

We were inclined to agree with them that Teuri's legalistic activities were superfluous. The island life had been regulated very well by unwritten common law, and we felt that the introduction of written statutes tended to upset the smooth working of the old system.

Teuri is an able man, but infected, through earlier residence in the Society Islands, with foreign notions. He would be founding a Rotary Club in Tepuka if he had ever heard of such a thing.

A few nights after the posting of the water laws, Teuri, returning late from fishing, stopped at our house and inquired, rather sheepishly, the time. With bucket in hand, he was on his way to the well and was, it appeared, on the verge of being the first to violate his own law.

Stifling a temptation to tell him it was half past six, we reflected that, salutary as the lesson might be, he needed water; so we told him that if he hurried he could just get his supply within the legal time. Teuri, much relieved, hastened to the well. After all, it wasn't six o'clock yet everywhere in the world.

From that day on, Teuri was noticeably careful to draw water early.

18. *"The Ancestors Know"*

The Old Folk, despite Chief Maono's parting instructions, were reluctant at first to give up their chanted lore. These are sacred things, intimately connected with the spirit-world

where the ancestors dwell; moreover, family proprietorship caused them to be guarded jealously, as are the genealogies with which some of them are related.

No such prohibition, however, applied to the art expression of the young people. They consented readily to chant for recording the song of the frigate-bird which accompanies one of their most vigorous dances. On an evening soon after the chief's departure, a male chorus gathered in our house and, with strong expression and amazing tempo, chanted the rude but beautiful lines of that spirited composition, which, splendid example of native poetry as it is, would scarcely bear translation.

Kararo, curious if scornful, came out of his nearby doorway to listen.

"Nnnnnnnnh!" he observed. "The white men are taking up their time with the worthless modern rubbish of the young people. Why don't they learn the old things that are good and genuine?"

This was just what we wanted, as Keneti had been trying for some time to induce the elders to intone for him their ancestral chants. But when he asked Kararo to produce examples, that self-appointed censor protested, mendaciously, that he didn't know any.

Persevering, we continued to record the literature of the younger set. Their meetings for that purpose presented an even more savage scene than those of the old people which we later experienced. In the dim light, Roki's crest of reddish hair plumed roofward as she blew into the harmonica the three clanging chords of the "tune." Tupu, a wild enough figure at any time, with his low brow and flaring nostrils that hinted of some obscure Melanesian ancestry, blew hollowly on a bottle to mark the time, and the voices of the singers rose and fell in the furious tempo of the love-chant. Tukua girded a scarlet waistcloth about her as a sash and stamped into a violent dance; others joined, till the place seemed to rock with the spirited, erotic movement. As they rested from that violent exercise, they sang more tender love-songs, in which their voices are now preserved among the collections of a great institution of research.

They stayed late. Little Riua crept in and snuggled against my knee, pressing my hand with sisterly affection. Tohu and other boys lay under the table, whence, as the hour advanced, snores began to sound. A mischievous throng of children milled outside.

Tauria and Tupu remained after the crowd had left, to write for me the words of half a dozen chants—most of them quite unprintable in translation, but seeming natural enough in their simple, honest originals. Riua lingered after nearly all had gone, and left reluctantly at our bidding. I fell asleep while Tauria and Tupu laboriously spelled out the words of more chants, which I have before me, in their cramped penciling, as I write.

We learned, that night, that not all is peaceful in the Isle of Peace. Tepongi, who had become angry and gone elsewhere to sleep, returned with charges that in her absence her husband Rangina had been over-friendly with Tauhoa. This accusation caused mutual recriminations, in the course of which stones were thrown, blows struck and Tepongi tried to tear off Tauhoa's clothes—an assault which shocked and bewildered that usually placid young woman to tears. Ariki got up from his mat and separated the combatants, beseeching them to be quiet and let him and Tukua sleep. Keneti, arising also in his wrath, announced that if they did it again he would beat on a tin can all night.

But our attention to the young people's literature had its effect in wearing down the opposition of the conservative elders. Kararo stopped at our door next day.

"Come to my house at midnight," he said. "We are going to chant."

So after midnight we lay on the mats in the house of Kararo—a large house, raised high on a platform of stones. A smoky lantern cast a small circle of light in the center, leaving the corners in shadow.

Tangia raised her weatherbeaten face and began, in a low, muffled tone, slowly, syllable by syllable, each sound carrying equal weight:

> "The ringoringo comes on the southern wind. . . ."

With equal deliberation and solemn intensity, the others joined in:

> "O bird of death, O bird of life,
> Give courage in this hour of wondering!"

It was a lament, Kararo said, "the mourning of parents for an absent child." The child, as Kararo's daughter who had gone to Fakahina, is absent; the parent, in these islands where communication is so infrequent, has had no news of his dear one. The parent chants, both to soothe his own troubled spirit and to reach, in some telepathic way, the spirit of his loved one in the far land.

"The ringoringo," Kararo explained, "is a spirit, a spirit-bird out of the Great Darkness, where the ancestors dwell. We do not know what it looks like. No one has ever seen the ghost-bird, but we hear its voice at night. It is a gentle voice; one can hardly hear it above the surf and the rustling of the leaves. When we hear it, we know there is going to be some change in our lives. If it comes from the south, the meaning may be either good or bad; if it comes from the north, it is a messenger of death."

Is the child well or ill in that far land?

> "Is it the bird of death
> or the bird of life that comes? . . .
> The remote islands are hidden in cloud
> in the search for my child.

O ghost-bird, essence of the god,
come from the south!
Give courage in this hour of wondering!"

For the first time I felt drawn to the avaricious old Kararo, as his face softened and lit up with the chanting. Kararo never seemed quite the same after that; we had had a glimpse into his deeper heart. When I think of him now, I see that dim room of leaves, the mats over the white pebbles, the earnest singers around the lantern, and Kararo's face lifted in the chant: no longer the crafty, scheming face of a banker, but that of a simple, kindly old man, grieving for his child.

Hour after hour it went on, in quavering monotone, broken by fractional intervals. Older than memory, that chant, and we were the first white men to hear it.

"It is East Indian," said the pianist Ignaz Friedman, when I reproduced for him, in a San Francisco café, a fragment of it. And no doubt in form and melodic construction it does go back to the mainland of Asia, to that mysterious Havaiki whence the Polynesians came.

One could fancy that ancestral spirits hovered around us and that the voice of the ghost-bird sounded, low and ominous, in the night. Rain pattered on Kararo's roof; and the children stirred on their mats, as they slept, in the shadows.

"There is a murmuring within," the old people chanted:
"the murmur, the whisper, stir toward the sea,
searching for my lost canoe,
love murmurs gently. . . ."

Sleep pressed down upon me. I was climbing a flight of stairs, hand in hand with my little son—my own "lost canoe," dead these eight years—and at its top stood my father, gone too, a year and more. I heard their voices speaking in the Tuamotuan tongue. Out of the blur I heard someone saying aloud: "He does not understand." I awoke to hear the slow, somber chant still sounding through the night.

I would not willingly have missed this survival of prediscovery culture, which has remained alive because it has still an active function. Not only do the chants comfort the spirits of the living, but, even more important, they please the spirits of the ancestral dead.

"An ancestor," said Kararo, "comes in a dream and tells us where a turtle will be caught. We go there and catch the turtle. Then, after we have brought it ashore, we must watch all night, still chanting, or the ancestor may become offended and take the turtle away."

It is clear that these solemn invocations are very old.

"They were composed," Tehau told me, when he told the story of my adopted ancestor Mokio-ariki, "by no living being, but by spirits in the Great Darkness. For that reason they are sacred and are never changed."

Some of the words have become obsolete, and the precise meaning is not always clear to the chanters themselves.

Temae, who was most likely to know, said, when pressed, that it didn't matter.

"The chants are not for us," he explained. "They are for the ancestors. What if we don't know what they mean? The ancestors know."

19. *Old Men of Tepuka*

Surf Rolled High on the coral ledges, and the channel was hilled with waves. Men were fishing from their frail canoes, despite rough weather. Theirs is no soft land: hunger does not wait for calm at sea. I saw that ragged line of battered dugouts, and the yellow pandanus hats above, as I strolled in a bright morning around the edge of the islet.

"We're going today," Keneti announced, "to call on Mokio."

The house of Mokio the Elder stood apart from the main group, looking out through fresh young palms to the lagoon. It was small but cozy, its furnishings few and practical, even more bare in their simplicity than those of other houses we had seen.

Mokio, a handsome man of perhaps sixty-five years, in a scanty loincloth, was making cordage. He had beaten the green husks of coconuts and drawn out the fibers, laying them in neat bundles. Selecting half a dozen of the longer ones, he was rolling them on his thigh, with his right hand, into a tight cord—a practice more difficult than it sounds or looks. At his side lay larger cords made by braiding the smaller ones together.

Squatting in his doorway, Mokio held out his hand as we approached, his beardless, finely furrowed face crinkling in a friendly smile. Looking straight at us out of intelligent, kindly eyes, he greeted Keneti, then turned to me, saying, "A good man.

"Your name had come to me," he continued, "but not your face. I am glad you are here."

As we sat on his mats, talk turned to the old times.

"I was a young man," he said, "when the first missionaries came. I ate of the turtle, on the sacred place.

"The marae was thus. . . ."

He drew a diagram in the fine sand before his door.

"The god-houses were here, and here a small altar, and here the standing stones.

"This part was for the men. Here stood the priest, and he chanted thus. . . .

"Here stood the chief, and he responded. . . .

"The priest laid a bunch of puka leaves, twisted so"—he illustrated with a bit of coconut leaf—"on the altar, and

prayed. Then he laid the leaves under the neck of the turtle to catch the blood as its throat was cut.

"The men ate what they could of the turtle, and came back the next day and the next, until it was gone. If a second turtle was caught, it was given to the boys. The turtle was kept alive on the marae all night, and the men chanted over it until dawn."

"What were the god-houses of which you speak?"

"They were like small boxes. When a relative died, a hair of his head was threaded through a pierced stick, and the stick was laid in the god-house. Offerings of food were placed before it regularly for a year. Then the relative became a god and was able to guide turtles to us for food. And when we caught the turtle, we called up the spirits of our ancestors; they came to the feast and leaned their backs against the standing stones. . . . And the spears of the chiefs quivered in the wind from the Great Darkness. . . ."

He told us how the roll of spirits was called, beginning with the primal gods, as this company of the dead was bidden to the feast of the living. There could be no doubt of the genuineness of his account, for it was clear that he was telling of things that he had experienced; and indeed, as later developed, it checked in every essential with those given by other old men of the island. It was an amazing experience to sit in the presence of these men whose lives reached back into a vanished world. The marae is down now; its very stones have disappeared. The people meet in the chapel that stands near that sacred site, and pray to the god of the black-robed priests. But Mokio, and Teufi, and Temae, and Teuru te Po remember.

Our host accepted an American cigarette of a brand which is said to "satisfy," but disapproved of it. It was, he said, "just wind." He preferred the one I rolled for him of Dutch shag which was, he said, "good, and mild." Leaving him a tin of sardines, which vie with corned beef as a delicacy to the native palate, we walked out in the bright windy day to the house of Teufi. His is a larger house, with more possessions scattered about it: a wash tub, a coconut grater, and the only grindstone on the island. Constructed of palm midribs, and roofed with pandanus, it is airy and strong; it had stood, he said, eight years.

Teufi was a traveled man.

"I went to sea in my youth and visited many countries. On one voyage, I was in a boat that was being towed between two islands, when the boat turned over. My chest went to the bottom, and with it the copy of my genealogy."

This was a severe loss, since it is through genealogies that land rights are determined, but I fancy that Teufi, like most men of his generation, had his lineage fixed firmly in memory.

He had lost land, however, in the hurricane of 1906.

"When the storm had passed, the boundaries were gone; the face of the land had changed. Since boundaries could not be determined, and claims of different families clashed, the land was made public property."

Teufi led us on a walk around the end of the islet, pointing out, as we went, the exact site of the great marae Rangihoa, no stone of which remains, unless some of them repose in the foundations of the Sacred Heart, but still marked by a grove of sacred trees. This, he said, had been the principal temple, and the only one which really counted. The others had been temporary affairs.

The walk took us through a more densely forested part of the island, Teufi revealing knowledge at every step. Of this plant, he had heard that the roots were eaten, though he never had tried it himself. The root of this fern, when dried, was fragrant, and in olden times was hung in the ears of women. This plant was the "prickly leaf" mentioned in the chants, and this one was used as a laxative. He recited the names of the "lands" through which we passed, and described the sacred place of each. We came upon one of them, of

which some stones still stood—a lonely monument overgrown with shrubs. It had not been used in his time, he said.

"It was customary," he explained, "to use only one marae in a district. But disputes arose; a chief, considering himself slighted in some way, would withdraw and build his own temple; later the quarrel would be composed, and he would abandon the new marae and go back to the old one."

This, he said, accounted for the large number of these ruins on small islands.

As we came out on the lagoon shore, boys were in the shallows, sailing ingeniously contrived toy yachts fitted with sails made of strips of red cloth. The tiny craft skimmed swiftly over sand and sea before the wind.

Karere, handsome daughter of Varoa, bare from about the region of the navel, was tossing a ball made of woven leaves to other young women. As we passed, she stood up and danced eloquently, shouting to us as she twirled her magnificent torso—a savage, beautiful sight in the vivid sunlit landscape of sand and forest and lagoon.

Temae, the oldest man on the island, was slower to give up his wisdom, but his mood seemed to soften after the birth of his grandchild Teahio-ariki, who was more familiarly called, in my companion's honor, Keneti. Temae and his daughters fancied that the ethnologist resembled Temae's son who had died a few years before of injuries received in a fall from a tree while hunting birds.

Temae was a sturdy, grizzled man, of medium height but broad shouldered and muscular. Like others of his generation, he disdained the dungarees and shorts of the younger men, wearing only the loincloth. He was more hairy than most of the islanders; his cheeks were rough with short gray beard, which grew out over his mouth in broad drooping mustaches; on his legs and thighs small dark curls gave the effect of circular tattooing.

He undoubtedly knew more about the ancient life than any of his contemporaries, but gave it out only a little at a time, often holding back vital particulars. Sometimes his mood would change abruptly, and he would wave aside all questions and talk no more. When he did talk, it was rapidly and indistinctly, and with no patience to repeat that we might understand.

Yet, as we talked with Temae, we realized how rich and full was his life, with his vast knowledge of the land and its lore, and in comparison how empty the life of the young people who have abandoned these things and try to imitate Tahiti. Every little section of land lived, to him; he knew its name, the meaning of it, its history. He had passed through the epidemic of dysentery that had slain nearly all his generation; he had been ill himself, but had recovered. He remembered clearly the arrival of the first missionary. Doubtless he was one of those of whom Montiton relates, who hid their women and children in the bush when the ship arrived.

Temae made for us old-fashioned knives of eels' teeth, and his wife Ngohe wove the ancient garment of pandanus matting, a stiff and awkward garb, abandonment of which for the softer and more convenient imported cotton is easy to understand.

"There is nothing that was made in the old time," he boasted, in one of his more garrulous moments, "that I cannot make. There is nothing that was done that I cannot do."

We marveled at Temae's appetite. When he went with Keneti to visit a marae that was better preserved than any at our end of the island, the supplies that had been intended to last three days were consumed in one morning, before the party had reached its destination. People at the windward side, however, had food. Temae took a huge fish, slit it lengthwise with his thumb, and devoured it entire, raw, covering himself with blood and scales, while swarms of flies settled on him from head to foot. Then he finished off with

such shark, octopus, and coconut as he could lay hands on, and was hungry again whenever food became available.

That trip furnished an illustration of Temae's uneven temperament. On the way, they came across a man making a canoe on land in which Temae had family rights. This so annoyed Temae that he would say no word about the marae, but kept muttering about the trespass. Only food could stir him to any other interest.

When I was visiting him one evening, he was cutting up a tuna which he had just caught. Ripping out a huge internal organ—a liver, perhaps—he swallowed it, raw as it was, with evident enjoyment. No doubt this instinct for raw food is one thing that has kept the people of the island healthy in an environment that offers little variety in diet.

Temae, however, confirmed, bit by bit, what other old men had told us, and added details.

"Teufi and Teuru te Po were boys who ate the leavings of the turtle. I myself was taught, in youth, the ceremonies and the prayers."

All this was long ago, he said, and these were "things of Satan." Of what use were they now?

Weeks afterward, Keneti and Temae went again to the windward shore. Younger men crowded about, and Temae would not talk. Keneti, frantic with apprehension, had about given up hope when at last he lured the old man forth upon Temae's own ancestral marae. Alas! Temae wasn't in the mood. All he would talk about was food. But Teufi appeared, and then Teuru te Po, and before long they were vying with one another to display knowledge.

"It was thus," said Teufi, tying a bunch of puka leaves to Keneti's wrist.

"And thus," rejoined Teuru te Po, sprinkling an imaginary congregation with holy sea water.

Temae was not to be outdone on his own marae. Before he could check himself, he launched into a heathen prayer, and between them, on those tumbled ancient stones, the whole ceremony was unfolded, as it had been performed for generations past—as, we suspect, parts of it still are performed, secretly, when a turtle is caught, for the old men know these invocations too glibly to have remembered them from a childhood sixty-odd years ago without frequent repetition since that time.

These may be "things of Satan," as they say, but I am sure turtles are staked out on Maono's land near the old sacred enclosure, and that Temae and the others meet there and chant at least portions of the old ceremonies, and invite the ancestors to the feast.

I am sorry that no turtle was caught while Keneti and I were there. We would have sat with our friends on the improvised marae in Maono's land, and eaten of the turtle, and invited our adopted ancestors. I would have invited Mokioariki. Perhaps he would have come.

20. *Singing in the Street*

Night After Night, as our stay lengthened, the villagers gathered on the low wall and in the sand of the street to practice the singing for Chief Maono's return.

The full moon slanted mellow light against the palms as Tupu and I went out to join them. I sat on a rock, with Maono's little daughter Tiare leaning against my shoulder, and listened. The singers sat in shadow, but I could recognize the cracked voice of Teroro-tu, leading in solo:

"O Maono our chief . . ."

whereupon the rest joined in, singing three parts in the nasal but not unpleasant Tuamotuan style:

the women and some of the men carrying the air, other men beating a counter-rhythm, with repetitions, but always coming out even. A few, leaning forward, elbows on knees, and cupping their hands, played a weird bass upon their hollowed fingers. Above the others, the voice of Tuata sounded reedily, like an organ, through the night.

The effect, especially at a little distance which heightened the blending, was rich and moving. I never heard it without being stirred.

Tukua, who, as the chief's daughter, apparently could not participate officially in her father's public welcome, sat beside me, joining with me softly in the singing when I could remember the words. Tauhoa walked to and fro, cradling in her arms Brains of Heaven, her daughter by Maono's son Pini; and eventually sat down opposite me, soothing the child, who cried softly.

The chanting ceased. Old Temae, seated on the curb opposite, began to speak, slowly and in a low voice, as if praying. The children squatted about him. The young people, at first attentive, apparently lost interest as he continued. Showing the corruption of foreign contacts, they began to laugh and talk among themselves. They were modern, Tahitianized—what had this old-fashioned man to do with them? An obscure resentment stirred within me at their lack of respect for that authentic representative of a more genuine life than anything they could know. To me, the old savage was intensely impressive.

As he ceased, an old woman farther down the street took up the strain, in a voice that sounded as if she were scolding.

I asked Tauria what the row was about.

"There is no row," he replied; "these are patriotic chants."

I had been listening to Tuamotuan eulogies. Temae, whose language, like that of many of the old people, was more difficult to understand than that of the young, had been reciting the glories of his country and applying them to the accomplishments of Maono's administration.

Later I was to learn some of these patriotic poems. These people have loved their country, hard and meagerly productive as it is, and have made songs in praise of it.

One of them became especially dear to us for its delightful description of the children playing in the lagoon, where they joined us day after day, shading their eyes, as they ran, against the dazzling sunlight that flooded the island wherever there was a break in the dense roof of palms. The unknown composer had improved upon the standard pattern which merely lists the name of the land, the sacred place, the assembly ground, the well, and the ancestor, by introducing concrete images which, I submit, are beautiful with the bare sunlit beauty of his island:

"Tepuka Maruia is the land
where noble warriors sit at the sacred place Rangihoa.
I set my foot upon the stones of the well Tefano Maruia;
Tepuka Maruia is my country.
Kikiviri is the place of the children:
splashing and playing in the glittering shallows,
bending their necks in the glare of the noonday sun.
The assembly ground Hirioro is a shaded place.
Let the shade fall on my own land Titoro-mata-uiui;
come there gently to me, beloved woman,
flower of my country, Tepuka Maruia!"

While the chanting was going on, little Maruia ran into the glow of a dying fire, seized a coconut-husk ember, and danced, whirling it above her head till it streamed a spiral of orange-colored flame around her tiny body and flimsy garment. Had this occurred, I reflected, in a civilized community, the elders, in alarm, would have rushed, with severe admonitions, to rescue the child; but here, nobody appeared to notice. The children of Tepuka know how to take care of themselves. Running back, she gave the burning brand to Tauria, who lit a cigarette and passed the light on.

As I was adjusting my mat for the night, after the singers had dispersed, the sound of a harmonica drifted in and a voice called me to a dancing party of the young people, where a childish jest caused much merriment. Temata, removing her pareu, slipped up behind and bound Roki and me together as we danced opposite each other—whereupon all present laughed themselves out of breath.

The violent exercise of the frigate-bird dance which followed was fun, in the cool evening. After the dance, we trooped back to the house. On the way, I must confess, Tauria and Tupu, bending over, made themselves into a "horse," and Tohu and I, leaping upon their backs, "rode," to the huge delight of the onlookers, down the main street. Thus does one renew one's childhood, among the children of the sun!

21. A Tuamotuan Epic

"Moeava Was One of the great ancestors," said Hiti.

It was after midnight, when the children were asleep and the young people absorbed in lovemaking under the palms. We lay in a row around the dim light in Maké's house.

In a low, somber voice, scarcely audible outside, Hiti chanted of the Great Foundation and the Lesser, and the Thresholds of Night and Day. His tale of Moeava was long and repetitious, but stripped of native verbosity, it still contains the elements of an epic—a savage tale, full of slaughter and vengeance, a glimpse of the Tuamotu in their wildest years.

Moeava, then, was a chief of the far-away isles of Takaroa and Hao, some five hundred years ago. In a great double canoe, with twin sewn hulls, a thatched cabin, a mast and a mat sail, he visited all of the islands and conquered most of them. Somewhere in his voyaging he heard of the beauty of Huarei, offspring of Maruia and the gods of the Darkness, and chiefess of Tepuka, and he sailed to seek her for his bride.

His ship arrived off that island in the dawn; Huarei was sitting at the most sacred place of the temple, where she alone of all women had the right, and from afar Moeava beheld her beauty as he approached the ruddy fringe of the island. Tradition has preserved the very words of this wanderer of the sea.

"You are a rare wreath of flowers," he sang, "for Moeava, in the land of the puka trees."

Their child was Kehauri, who became a mighty chief from whom some of our friends at Tepuka claim descent.

After some years, the old restlessness stirred in Moeava's heart, and with his new family he sailed for Takaroa. There, however, a dispute arose between the Tepuka-born son and his half-brothers of Takaroa over the division of the turtle, and to appease the boy, Moeava returned with him and the mother to Tepuka.

In his absence, the eighteen tribes whom he had subjected leagued to attack Takaroa, and killed and ate three of Moeava's sons. The remaining son and his sister hid in a tree, called ever afterward "The Leaves of Sorrow," and sent a pair of white terns to carry the sad news to Moeava.

"White terns, fly to Huarei, woman of great excellence and beauty; fly to Moeava, that mighty warrior. Tell them the white terns of Takaroa have fallen!"

The terns carried the message, and Moeava set out on a war of vengeance that lasted many years. Stopping at the isle of Makemo to replenish provisions, he fell in with the men of one of the hostile tribes, and heard their boasts. The tale relates that he strung them, like fish, upon a cord attached to a sharpened bit of wood, and dragged them behind his canoe till he came to Takaroa, where he cast his captives upon the still smoking ovens that had cooked his slain sons for the feast.

Then, pursuing his remaining enemies from island to island, he killed them wherever found, and brought all their islands under his rule. The rest of his life, the story naïvely relates, "he lived quietly at Takaroa."

That was the only warlike story I heard at Tepuka. Relatively remote and out of the track of voyagers among the better-known islands, it seems to have escaped the fighting and cannibalism that ravaged the central and western Tuamotu.

Drowsiness swam over me as we sat silently, hour after hour, while Hiti chanted of more ancient and sacred things. The lamp burned low. The spirits clustered more thickly. . . .

Before my sleep-bemused eyes, Moeava himself seemed to stand in the doorway: tall and broad-shouldered, nude save for a mat of pandanus wrapped about his loins. A band of pandanus leaf supported tall plumes in his reddish-brown hair, and feathers of the frigate-bird were threaded through openings in his ear-lobes. In his right hand he carried a spear pointed with a porpoise-jaw; thrust into his girdle was a short knife set with the teeth of eels.

In the shadow behind Hiti stood Mokio-ariki, fierce and powerful as he. His left hand rested on the shoulder of his wife, Fangu, for whose sake, a Polynesian Orpheus, he had descended into the Great Darkness. In face and form she resembled Tukua, daughter of the present chief. She, too, wore a pandanus mat; about her ankles, twists of green leaves; fragrant fern-roots twined from her ears, and on her head a band ornamented with shells and crowned with feathers.

Shadowy and vague, they clustered around: Hiro from far Tahiti, wearing the crimson loincloth; Maruia, her red-goldhair streaming over pale brown queenly shoulders, catching ruddy gleams from the dying lamp. . . .

I awoke as the roar of surf deepened on the outer reef. All was still in the house, save for the deep snoring of Hiti. My neck was cramped from the wooden pillow. Someone had thrown a mat over me to keep out the early morning chill. Through the doorway the sky showed faintly light. Keneti had completed his recording of Hiti's chant and gone. Leaving a twist of tobacco where Hiti would find it when he awoke, I rose and went through the lightening street, pondering the mysteries of that country where they say the gods still walk with those who chant their names.

22. *Shipwrecked*

"A SHIP! a ship!"

Ship day in the Tuamotu has something of the atmosphere of Sunday: work is abandoned, except for loading copra, and people sit about, idle and curious, stirred by the unwonted contact with the outer world.

Children ran past the house toward the beach, that June day, shouting. Looking out toward the landing, we recognized the *Vaite,* from Papeete, calling for copra—a chance to mail letters and replenish supplies.

Keneti boarded the ship first, with Teuri. The canoe came back for me, its occupant becoming overbalanced as he neared the "harbor" and tipping unceremoniously out of it.

"Let's go," invited Tupu, as the boat was drawn up on the reef.

It was one of those tiny dugout canoes with a light outrigger, attached in the old fashion of the island which, as far as I know, is the only style of canoe in those seas that resembles in that respect the canoes of Hawaii. Tupu held forth two chickens:

"Hold them!" he requested.

One of Chief Maono's sons ran up with a letter addressed to his father in Tahiti.

"Don't get it wet," he admonished.

There was rougher sea than I should have cared to traverse alone, but Tupu, of a race accustomed to go to sea in canoes in all but the most severe weather, seemed unperturbed. I scarcely expected to reach the ship, as wave after wave tilted our precarious shell of paper-thin wood and spilled over the low side.

Tupu bent to the one paddle, now and then turning the boat sharply to avoid an unusually menacing wave. At last we were nearly alongside the *Vaite*, and I drew a long breath, thinking, "Well, he made it!"

Just at that moment, Tupu miscalculated. The canoe rose on a wave, plunged head on into the ship's boat, which was moored alongside, and overturned. I dived, shoulders first, into the sea, and came up, still holding the chickens and Maono's letter, just in time to receive the overturning outrigger-float full on my nose and upper jaw.

"Never mind about the canoe," called Tupu, as he struggled to right it. "Just climb aboard with those chickens."

The deck was crowded with natives, mostly men, who had come aboard to sell fish, or just to gaze. Ah Siun and Ah Kui, merchants and copra brokers, were there to renew their scanty stock in trade.

The infrequent calls of these schooners and the government ship about once a year are normally the sole contact of these outlying islands with other places. The *Vaite,* to Tepuka, represents the great world—all the islands of the Tuamotu, and Tahiti, center of life and civilization. It brings mail and foreign tools, clothing and foreign foods, and the rare messages from the government.

Returning with Keneti in the ship's boat, in imminent peril of its turning over on the reef and crushing us beneath its weight, we landed safely, though not without another wetting as we plunged into waist-deep water while the Tahitian sailors dragged the boat up on the dripping slope of rock.

Toward evening the *Vaite* sailed away, the last ship, save our own belated little cutter, to call there during the remainder of our stay. From then on, we were utterly cut off from the world.

Thinking nothing of these things, however, any more than of the sharks that inhabited both the inner and outer waters and whose flesh we ate occasionally with our native friends, we swam in the lagoon, under a cold wind, and in the evening joined the singers and dancers in Teuri's dooryard.

Keneti caused astonishment and provoked applause, in an intermission of the music, by walking on his hands across the sanded enclosure. Tauria tried to imitate him, but could not keep his balance. We played leapfrog with Tauria and Tupu; I dived over Keneti and created further astonishment by high-jumping over a stick held aloft by two of our friends. The native method apparently is to run at the stick, as if to jump over it, and then suddenly duck under it. Pressed for more feats of agility, Keneti and I carried each other standing on each other's shoulders. Then we must practice the frigate-bird dance, which we liked better.

All in all, it was a fairly strenuous evening, and the mats felt good, on the stone floor, after the unaccustomed exercise.

My mishap "off port" produced no ill effects beyond a slight soreness which I forgot in the excitement of the entertainment. The air filtered coolly through the interstices of our woven walls; the palm fronds clashed softly overhead in darkness peopled by friendly spirits. Not all of those spirits were to be so friendly, but this we could not know.

23. *A House is Built*

Toward the End of our second month on the island, work began on construction of a house for the absent priest. Women plaited coconut leaves for the walls. Men brought timbers for the frame.

Each man laid down a stone. Tehau divided the stones into two heaps, and divided one of these again. There were forty in all. Half the men were told off to procure and prepare food, and half to work on the house.

The twenty workmen cleared a place near the new church, laid out the timbers, matching the ends to fit together, and digging holes for the posts. I saw Takina raising a big stone and hurling it repeatedly into a hole to break up the rock beneath so he could dig.

By evening they had the frame up. The fishermen came back with food. It was Monday, and there had been none in the village. The men had worked all day with nothing to eat but bits of copra which they nibbled as they dug and chopped.

The second day they cut and fitted the rafter poles and the third day covered the sides with panels of coconut leaf. Women wove the panels, and men fastened them in place, green and fresh-looking while new. The panels ran straight across; the doors and windows—for this house, unlike others, was to have the latter—were to be cut through later.

The house made a fairly neat appearance, but it was apparent that the use of foreign tools was vitiating the old skills.

"They're not doing a really good job," commented Keneti. "The panels would look much better with the old-time lashings of cord. The whole thing has an air of haste—not the careful, loving pride of a builder."

Was it possible that the spirit of hurry had begun to infect our simple islanders?

The house was finished, closed, and stood empty for the remainder of our stay on the island. The priest would come, some time, and when he came, he would have a suitable house.

The old houses of the priest stood at the other side of the main street: two small shacks of the intermediate style of construction, now falling to pieces. A rude bedstead stood in one: a frame of poles, across which were tied cords to uphold the bedding. A mat would have been more comfortable. In the other house stood an equally rude table and bench. The priests of the Tuamotu have no easy life.

The eastern Tuamotu were reached by missionaries rather late—about 1870—but at a time when they were still relatively savage and even more difficult of access than today. An early missionary at Tepuka, who later volunteered for service at Molokai and ended his days there, is said to have suffered in his later years from the hardships of his life in the low islands—sleeping on mats and subsisting on coconuts and fish.

Their labors seem to have been successful, as in most Polynesian lands. The people of Tepuka and Tepoto are at least nominally Catholic, and the change seems to have been accomplished in a single generation. It had been predicted, according to legend, by a priest of the pagan faith, as it had in Tahiti and Hawaii:

"Strangers will come, bringing the teaching of another god, and the old gods will pass away, and with them the ancient customs."

The old men told us, however, of a curious relapse. Temae, who, being the oldest, had the most vivid memory of those times, recalled the native convert Teuru-rehu, who became Father Montiton's assistant, and who accompanied the missionary through various islands. Teuru-rehu, said Temae, later reverted to the faith of his ancestors and reconverted many of his countrymen, causing the nearest approach to civil war in the island's history.

"A quarrel arose, in the windward islets, over this matter. Teuru's father raised an ax to strike my father, but my father caught the upraised arm and saved himself, and the quarrel ended."

As often happens, the first generation of converts were the most devout and zealous in casting away the old customs.

"The middle-aged people today," said Roki, "know more about the ancient times than the old people, for the old have forgotten; also, when the people who were mature at that time were busy going to church and learning the new things, their children were at home with the grandparents, learning the ancient wisdom. Maono knows more than any of them. He is a tahunga, and was taught by his grandfather. Paunu also is a tahunga, and when he comes from Tepoto he will teach you many things."

We were eager to meet Paunu, and the time came when we did. Meanwhile the old men continued, little by little, to reveal glimpses of surviving customs.

24. *The Manhood Rite*

"YES," confirmed Teufi, "the rite of *kiri* is still performed. Only lately several boys passed through it. When a boy is about twelve years old, he is ready."

Teufi was speaking of the manhood rite, common to the Polynesians, somewhat similar to the custom of circumcision which exists among various peoples of the Old World.

"The day before the ceremony, the father visits the tahunga and makes the preparations. The boy is not told about it until the morning of the day.

"Maono and his brother Tokoriu are the qualified tahunga for this ceremony. The tahunga has an assistant and a nurse, who attends to the bandaging and medication, and who purifies the boy by washing him in salt water. The cutting is done nowadays with a razor blade instead of the old-fashioned wooden knife, but the flat piece of bone on which to cut is still used.

"After the operation the boy sits on a stool—a place of honor—in the house and his male and female relatives console him by singing. There are special chants for this purpose.

"In the afternoon there is a feast. Only brothers who themselves have passed through the ceremony partake of this feast. The father and his brothers do not attend it. Usually a pig is killed. In the old days a bread was made from the scraped starch of the pandanus, but now we use flour from the Chinese store. The drink is coconut water. No other food may be eaten until all of this is used up. It takes about three days.

"When the food has been eaten and the wound of operation has healed, more food is prepared, and a general feast is given for all relatives and friends. This feast is called the lifting of the tabu."

"In my time," said the aged Ngohe, "such ceremonies were also held when a girl's ears were pierced.

"This was done when the girl had taken her first sweetheart. Her sweetheart pierced her ears and partook of the feast. There were ceremonies; the parents chanted in recognition of the passing of childhood and the coming of womanhood.

"Our ears were pierced with larger holes in those days," Ngohe continued, showing her own. "They were thrust through with a sharp piece of wood, and ornaments of fragrant fern were hung in the openings.

"Now the old customs have fallen away; the meaning of the ear-piercing has been lost. The young people do not know or care for the old traditions. Why, the young women, at the time when they should be separated for the tabu days, no

longer wear the skirt of green leaves and—worst of all—they even sleep in the house on the same mats with the men!"

Nowadays, Maukiri told us, the ears are pierced by a relative, usually rather early in life. The opening is made with a needle; a thread is worked in to enlarge it, and eventually a piece of the small purple spine of a sea-urchin is inserted to hold it open until earrings can be obtained. I saw many sea-urchin ear-plugs, and few earrings. Earrings are costly. Tekava, wife of Ah Siun, wore them—great hoops of thinly gold-plated brass, like curtain rings—and Tinaku, who had been to Fakahina, had them nodding about her head.

"Yes," said Maukiri, "I know the ear-piercing chant."

Ngohe had refused to repeat it, saying it was sacred.

I sat in Maukiri's house, listening to the chant and admiring its beautiful erotic lines and its references to heroic legend—"the red skin of Tahaki" and "the sacred crimson bird."

Fangu and Tauhoa brought me a pillow—one of the modern fashion favored by the young people, stuffed so tightly with raw tree-cotton that it was almost as hard as the wooden pillow of their elders—and I reclined in state while we discussed and compared modes of circumcision—Ah Kui joining in the conversation from the doorway and little Tiare listening. As the chant went on, the child, at risk of transferring certain fauna from her head to mine, gently combed my hair. And we all drowsed in the mellow late afternoon, as the droning chant went on.

25. *Island Love-dance*

We Learned, too, more of another surviving ancient custom than Teuri had told us on the first night of our stay, when we had seen its preliminaries—a custom about which, I find, questioners who have not visited Polynesia are so curious that no account of a sojourn there would be complete without it. So, then . . .

Evening nestles over the atoll, buttoned with stars. A wide moon climbs the worn stairway of night. Above the rough broken coral land, palm fronds clash softly in the sea wind. Unseen, vague terns fly over, their low cries descending eerily among the houses woven of leaves. Beyond the narrow sand, the restless Pacific claws at the red reef.

At the end of the road, beyond the last house of the village, the young people gather for the dance, their bare brown feet ruffling noiselessly the white ribbon of sand or rattling the dry dead branches of old coral, the broken flowers of the sea. A rapid chant, staccato, erotic, throbs down the whispering night.

In couples, not embracing as the foreigners do, but following two and two around a circle or turning face to face and posturing with eloquent bodies, the young folk of the coral island dance the ancient love-dance of their tribe. Hands and feet gesture ardently; hips shake and seem to revolve as on a pivot; knees oscillate beneath the crouching form—and, stirring, kindling, provocative, the chant sounds on.

Hour after hour the bare feet shuffle and stamp the pebbled sand, and the chant thuds like a drum-beat into the island night. The moon sinks lower over the sea. Shadows stretch and blend under the palms. Two by two the dancers drift away to the leaf-woven houses, or to mats laid in the clean-swept dooryards, under the sky. Quiet surges over the village; the low murmur of voices, the hushed laughter, blend stealthily into the shuffle of wind in the trees and the trampling of surf against the reef.

Such may be the scene on almost any moonlight night at Tepuka Maruia. The dancers are the young unmarried people, whose trial matings are a recognized custom.

They range in age from about fourteen to eighteen or nineteen. By the time a Tuamotuan is twenty, he or she usually is ready to settle down and raise a family. But society in this still relatively primitive land concedes what among us is considered "advanced modernity"—the right of youth to its period of experimentation. It is not merely a matter of letting youth have its playtime. The people of Tepuka believe it is necessary for normal development. It is a custom as old, probably, as the Polynesian people; as old, perhaps, as the lost Central Asian race from whom, in the dim beginnings of humanity, both they and we may have evolved.

These young people who, in America, would be high school students, constitute a definite class in the community, the name of which, if I interpret it aright, conveys the Polynesian idea of the business of youth—literally, "the age of pleasure."

Their youthful mating apparently is based on mutual attraction. It is casual, but tends to become more or less permanent. That is, the same girl and boy normally will remain sweethearts for some time, perhaps a year or so, until they quarrel or one of them goes away to another island or becomes interested in another partner. Eventually, as the couples grow older, one or another of these attachments becomes established; the girl goes to live in the man's house or he in hers, and perhaps in the course of time and opportunity it may occur to them to have the relationship blessed by the church.

Affairs are likely to start at dancing parties. That is what the dances are for. The chants that accompany them are called "that which causes one to think about it"—apparently a Tuamotuan way of defining erotic suggestion. Sometimes attachments are promoted by the elders. A matron may call a young man aside and say, "My younger sister, over there, would be a good sweetheart for you. Why don't you take her home with you tonight?" Or an elderly man may say to the son of a neighbor, or to a newly arrived bachelor, "You will be looking for a girl. Do not choose hastily. Look them all over carefully. And do not make your choice until you have considered my two granddaughters." But the selection is usually more spontaneous.

Advances may be made by either the young man or the girl. It is quite proper for a young woman to inquire of a newcomer to the village, "Do you want a girl?" It is equally proper for the man to make the proposal, either to the girl direct or through members of her family.

Young people rarely have houses of their own, as had Maono-iti and his sweetheart Teuringa-iti. They live usually with parents or relatives. The young man, however, is welcome in the home of the girl's family, or she in his. If the house is somewhat crowded, as often is the case, the climate favors a mat under a coconut tree, which offers greater privacy than the huddle of a Polynesian household. In that event, they will tell an elder where they are going, since it is a breach of etiquette to leave without announcement. The mother or grandmother will then respond: "Go, my children, and sleep under the coconut tree; and if it rains, come back into the house." It is customary, however, as a matter of courtesy, to spend at least the first few nights in the house with the family.

There is a certain delicacy in these relations, at their best. The association, when the customs are strictly observed, is at first, we were told, strictly what is sometimes called in other countries a "white marriage." Two or three nights, perhaps a week or more, go by, in which the young couple sleep side by side, without further intimacy—a custom that seems to have survived, in the European branch of the race, in the form of our celebrated New England "bundling." After they have become, as they say, "accustomed" to each other, they become lovers, but ordinarily continue to reside separately with their respective households, meeting only at night.

Though frankness increases as one travels farther from the more "civilized" places, it is curious to note that there is some pretense even in so relatively primitive a community as Tepuka. There, the young man does not go to his sweetheart's house, or she to his, before dark, and he or she always leaves before daylight. The origin of this custom would be difficult to trace. In a community of two hundred people, where everybody knows everything everybody else is doing, this stealing in and out by night obviously doesn't fool anybody. Nor, in a community which not only tolerates but encourages these unions, is there any practical reason for trying to keep them secret. I am inclined to think secrecy is not the purpose, but that the gesture of concealment proceeds from the instinct for privacy. There is little enough privacy, at best, in a Polynesian village.

When a relationship of this kind has become established, it is recognized by a mutual exchange of gifts. The girl weaves a hat for her sweetheart, and he gives her such presents as he can provide: scented soap and perfume are popular, when obtainable, or it may be a new pareu or a few yards of cheap cotton dressgoods from the Chinese store. As the association continues, perhaps he provides food for her from his fishing. She, in turn, washes, irons and mends his clothes.

Children, it seems, rarely result from these early companionate relationships. Tauhoa, with her two children by Pini, was rather the exception. Just why this is, is difficult for an outsider to determine. The people themselves say they understand limitation of offspring, but their explanations are rather vague. I am satisfied that infanticide, which early missionaries reported in Tahiti and Hawaii, is not now practiced, if it ever was, in the Tuamotu. If a girl does become a mother, as has Tauhoa, no disgrace is attached to the matter. In Tuamotuan society, an unmarried woman has an equal right to bear children, if she wants them. As children more often than not are taken care of, in any case, by their grandparents rather than by their parents, there is no social penalty upon either mother or child for what in our language is called illegitimacy.

The partners ordinarily remain faithful during the life of the association. A man has the right, according to custom, to beat his sweetheart if she strays, but only if he himself meanwhile has been faithful. If he, too, strays, he loses that right. Sometimes, as may happen in other lands as well, the customary order is reversed—our acquaintance Tepongi frequently beat her stalwart husband Rangina. In general, however, these couples seem to live in harmony.

Whether "love," in the sense in which novelists write of it, exists among them, is doubtful. There is no word in their language exactly equivalent to our word "love." Three words are often so translated: one of them means pity, compassion, Christian charity; another means friendly affection; the third means desire. If this and other evidence be significant, the indication is that the primitive Polynesian has no notion of love in the romantic sense. Affection, often lasting affection, undoubtedly does exist and forms a basis for companionships that continue for many years. Temae and Ngohe, for example, more than rated a golden wedding anniversary.

These people have not been exposed to romantic literature, with its emphasis on the complex of correlations comprehended by our term "love." Apart from that, however, the pattern of marital history there and here, when stripped of conventional notions, is similar. Natural selection proceeds through mutual physical attraction; a more or less brief period of adjustment ensues, which we call courtship and engagement and they call "becoming accustomed"; then intimacy and a recognized relationship are established, which in both cases may be of short or long duration. If all goes well, it develops into a lasting association based upon mutual friendly affection. These Polynesian matings, like ours, are not indissoluble, but tend to become permanent.

Expression of affection, however, is not the same as among

Americans or Europeans. There is little caressing, as we understand the term. It is perhaps significant that before arrival of foreigners the kiss was unknown in Polynesia, and that it is still rare in the more remote islands. The Polynesian embrace, often somewhat erroneously described as "rubbing noses," is mainly a formal expression between relatives. There is a whole set of varying degrees of this salutation, according to degree of relationship. The lower down it is performed, the closer the tie indicated. It consists in pressing the nose to the face, neck, chest, or the region of the diaphragm, and holding the pose for several seconds. It is not mutual. The person who is being greeted looks off solemnly into space, while the active greeter performs the ceremony.

Among Polynesians, as elsewhere, there are exceptions to nearly all rules. It is a mistake, at least in the Tuamotu, to assume, as is sometimes asserted, that the members of a group of primitive people are all alike, conforming rigidly to a prescribed pattern. They observe in general the conventions of the society in which they live, but they vary in character and disposition as much as we. Some are affectionate, faithful, passionate or what-not, in greater or less degree than others. There are young people, and a few older ones, such as was gossiped of Tekaviu, who prefer not to choose a single partner, but to vary their associations. There are girls who are shy and who do not, as the island idiom has it, "fall down in the street." Popular belief is that such girls will grow up without breasts. Indeed, Fangu the daughter of Maukiri frankly attributed her lack of mammary equipment to untimely continence in youth.

Occasionally, we were told, young men take such a situation in hand. They seize the shy maiden, carry her off to a secluded place, and initiate her forcibly. It was not clear just how frequent this practice is, and whether it is a genuine old custom or a modern one that has grown up with the decay of the older culture and the consequent relaxation of native restrictions. We gathered the impression that such an assault is not considered, as in the white man's country, a serious crime, though I am sure the more thoughtful members of the community hold it in poor taste. The girls, at least, often resent it, but there apparently is no such community indignation as is stirred by such an act in America. The procedure seems to be regarded rather as a rude sort of play among the young people.

Paunu, a Tuamotuan of the finest type, had been accustomed to guard his daughters, keeping them in the house when a ship was "in port," and locking them up at night—for he at one time possessed, like Kararo, a house that could be locked—to protect them from the wild young bloods. But this was a sanitary rather than a moral precaution. Paunu wisely feared contamination from Tahitian sailors and from young men of his own island returning from Fakahina.

The principal tabu is based on consanguinity: one may not become involved with relatives, up to and including first cousins, and perhaps further. In view of the custom of Hawaiian royalty in pre-Christian times to marry within those limits so as to maintain rank by birth, we were curious about this prohibition. From all we were able to learn, it is native and ancient. At any rate, it operates by accepted tradition rather than by external compulsion. It simply would not occur to most people to violate it. In a community of fewer than two hundred and fifty inhabitants, in which most families have become rather closely related in the perhaps eight or nine hundred years they have occupied the island, it may cause hardship. Some young people may be without eligible mates. We were told that this was the case at Tepuka since a number of the young men had gone to Fakahina. This scarcity may account for possible clandestine infringements.

As in other communities, some of the old customs have worn away with the impact of foreign influence and the changing times. As Ngohe and Maukiri told us, the ceremony

of piercing a girl's ears as a community recognition of her maturity is no longer observed, or has lost its former significance, though the corresponding ceremony in the case of the boys still exists.

Such, in general, seems to be the organization of that phase of life in the Tuamotu. Customs vary somewhat from island to island; the more sophisticated communities have adopted more pretense, in response to ecclesiastical and other foreign influence, but the underlying pattern is the same.

On other islands, too, more or less secretly on some of them, the young people meet by the shore, on moonlight nights or on wide nights of stars, to dance, and fade two by two into the shadows as the chant goes on. Their elders, if they do not, as at Tepuka, encourage them, tacitly ignore the young people's experiments. The church now and then attempts to interfere, but this seems to be the last of Polynesian customs to go. Under the moon and stars that have known all peoples and all gods, the pagan love-dance circles on. The old folk, remembering their own youth, nod their heads indulgently and talk about the weather. Has it not been handed down from the sayings of wise men who talked with the gods in the elder time, that "all things created by Tané are good and beautiful"?

26. *The Lagoon Yields Food—and Wounds*

Morning at Tepuka is a draught of freshness and clean beauty. Long before daylight, cocks have been crowing noisily from the thatched roofs of the village. As the darkness begins to fade and the first faint streaks of lighter color appear on the horizon, the quality of the roar of surf on the reef changes, too subtly to be distinguished by an unaccustomed ear, but carrying a summons as clear as that of an alarm clock to the people of this South Sea island where time is still recorded by its ancient denominators the sun and stars, the wind and tide.

As light begins to filter through the fronds that spread a dense shade over the sanded street, there is a stirring in the houses. Men rise and stand in their doorways, looking out toward the sea, their weather-wise eyes and ears and skins testing delicately the promise of that day's fishing. Women comb long glossy-black or reddish-brown hair, rinse their mouths with coconut water, roll up the sleeping mats and stack them in a corner for the day. Younger girls, red loincloths swinging about their sturdy hips, step down the street, stealthily or jauntily according to their humor, their bare brown feet stirring noiselessly the fine white sand—going home from the mats of their lovers, in the dawn.

Kararo, his face keen beneath his graying hair, inspects his spears and lines, and sagely sniffs the wind. Little Riua manipulates a long hooked pole, bringing down a young coconut for her breakfast. Tiny blond-haired Maruia, an old flour sack twisted about her middle, dances merrily over the broken coral of Kararo's dooryard, whirling a knife almost as long as herself. The nuts crash down around the little girls; deftly they chop off the ends, and lift the nuts to their lips for long, cool draughts of the life-giving juice. They cleave the nut apart, scoop out its jelly-like meat with bits of husk, and toss the remains to the clean, lean pigs that crowd up for their share.

There is little breakfast at Tepuka. That land lives from day to day, and food is scarce until the men return from fishing. Teuru te Po, perhaps, chews a bit of dried tridacna clam. Pakiuma, in the chief's house, takes down from a rafter a piece of boiled shark left over from the night before. Tanerairua nibbles a wedge of half-dried copra. But there are drinking-nuts and the sweet young flesh of the immature coconut for all.

Teuri, always one of the first to sea, drags his dugout canoe to the water. Nobody calls out to wish him luck with his fishing; if anybody were so tactless, Teuri would turn back and not go to sea. It is very bad luck to mention such a matter.

Other canoes push out, and lie in a long row off the shore, with lines cast deep for tuna or floating on the surface for flying fish to be used as bait—a seven-inch fish cut in two slices and tied on either side of the large hook, wrapped between two stones; the hook then tied with a slip knot and released at about fifty yards' depth.

By this time the village is astir with life. Women go about their household tasks, and children run laughing and shouting in the street, playing games not very different from those of our own country, though with ruder materials.

In such a morning I walked out into the shade-dappled streets. Teingo, the chief's wife, and women of her household were weaving mats of long strips of cured pandanus leaf, such as hung in heavy coils on every house wall. In and out they plaited the strong, pliable material, gossiping as they worked.

Turina and Tetahoa were washing clothes on the bare ground of Turina's land—not rubbing, as in America, or beating the clothes with a paddle or club, as in France and Tahiti, but dipping the garments in an oil tin of fresh cool water, coating them with the strong yellow laundry soap from Ah Kui's store, and wringing them out repeatedly till clean. As the clothes were rinsed and wrung, they were spread on the broken coral, their corners weighted down with bits of stone to dry.

Tukua, the chief's eldest daughter, was burning coconut shells, on the land of her grandparents, to make charcoal. Ngohe, her grandmother, tottered out to help, as I stopped to greet Tukua. Withered and ancient, her back bent beneath the years, Ngohe's wrinkled face was bright with love as she fed bits of shell into the fire of husks and spread the coals with a branch. Even in age, her sunken features bore still a lingering trace of the barbaric beauty that blossomed now anew in her sturdy grandchild.

Tukua, with a steady hand, picked up the cooling pieces of charcoal between two bits of shell which she used like chopsticks, and filled the large iron; then laid a mat on the ground and ironed clothes, steadily, unhurriedly, while Ngohe chopped young coconuts for the pigs and fowl.

Tauhoa called to me from the doorway of Maukiri's house.

She was plaiting a hat of pandanus leaf. She had finished molding the tall crown around a block of smoothed coconut wood, and slipped a band of twisted pandanus leaf around it to hold it in place while she wove the broad rim. Scraping the long strip of dried leaf with a shell, smoothing it with a bit of wood, she wove swiftly and skillfully in and out, holding down the edge with a broad bare toe, to make the light, strong hat that is the pride of her family. Wear one of Tauhoa's hats in any place where there are people from Tepuka or Tepoto, and they will recognize it.

"It is a good hat," they will say. "One of Paunu's daughters has woven it."

Tauhoa stretched her plump, tawny-white arms, and sighed.

"I cannot offer you food," she lamented. "There is none in the house. I have not even a drinking-nut."

"I have eaten," I replied, as is the custom.

But Tauhoa, this time, meant more than mere courtesy.

"I am hungry," she announced.

"Let us go to the lagoon," I suggested, "for shellfish."

I had eaten the tridacna clam, both raw and cooked, but I was curious to see just how it was gathered. She accepted the suggestion, and without waiting to change her dress, picked up a short spear and a small knife. We walked toward the lagoon, stopping for my diving-glasses and light fishing shoes.

Arriving at the lagoon shore, I discovered, with some dismay, that I had brought along two right shoes and no left—and as they were of the Japanese style with a split toe, they were not reversible. Not wishing to go back, lest Tauhoa abandon the notion of going fishing at all, I laid the shoes under a stone and followed her, barefooted as she, across the shallows.

With the consideration that these people always showed after they learned how tender are the feet of the white men, she took my hand and led me by the easiest ways. We walked to the south, sometimes crossing exposed land, sometimes wading ankle deep in the warm water. Fortunately most of the bottom was sand. Now and then she warned me:

"Go softly; here are sharp rocks and shells."

The sand of the shallows was pitted with crater-like burrows, recalling the gopher-holes of American prairies.

"Things that crawl on the ground," she explained, "large things."

As nearly as I could gather, she was saying that these holes were made by a long snakelike creature that lives in the sand—not an eel, for she added that they did not bite, having no teeth, or none large enough to inflict damage. She was unable to point out one of them, but I concluded that it was perhaps a large marine worm, a water-snake, or an elongated variety of sea-slug.

"We'll go to Oninganinga," she said, "and join Fangu."

The lagoon stretched before us like a canvas upon which some imaginative artist had painted a fairyland scene.

After a walk of half an hour or so, we came upon a great bend in a partly enclosed pool. Tauhoa stopped and pointed out, against the sun, a mound of shells far out in the lagoon.

"There is Fangu. Swim to her. I go to the forest to get drinking-nuts."

Fangu, with a spear, stood beside a basket half filled with shelled tridacna. She held out a hand to help me land on the curving slope of shells. I walked gingerly over them, stepping on their rough, thick backs.

The phrase "diving for shellfish," and the sight of the children diving in the pools near the village, where the tridacna had been thoroughly fished out of the shallower places, had misled me, and I still supposed it was necessary to dive for them. Adjusting the water goggles, I went down, head first, as I had been accustomed to do, and peered about in the green gloom beneath the quiet water. This proved to be an ineffective method. Not being accustomed to this sport, I misjudged the distance and missed the clam embedded in the sand, thus roiling the water and destroying the visibility.

Fangu laughed heartily.

"It isn't necessary to go so deep. There are plenty in the shallow places."

She showed me how it was done, wading about in the shallows and producing the shellfish with puzzling celerity, until I detected her taking them from a collection in her pareu and palming them as if freshly caught—one of Fangu's friendly jests at my expense.

The tridacna lay half buried in the sand, their open mouth-slits showing a wavy line of green or blue or purple, strikingly beautiful in the rippling water. As I bent to pick one up, Fangu caught hold of my arm.

"Do not touch the open shell," she said. "If it closes down on your finger, it will never let go. Even a little one can hold you."

She showed me how to work the shells loose from beneath, with the foot, and lift them on the top of the foot or in the palm of the hand, in which position they are harmless.

Soon, however, she went back to the more serious business of hunting where the tridacna are most plentiful—thickly studding the crevices of reddish-brown coral where the reef lies partly exposed, partly just awash, beside the mound of shells. Walking over the reef, barefoot as she was, she thrust the spear-point into the wavy mouth-slits, twisted sharply right and left, and pried the shell from its position in the rock.

The pile of freshly caught shellfish grew. Fangu took my hand, led me carefully over the mound of shells and made me sit down on a smooth stone beside her where she squatted by the newly gathered clams.

Fangu beat the shells with the iron to break off adhering fragments of rock. Then, holding a clam in the palm of her hand and thrusting the middle finger into the opening at the back, she inserted a small knife between the halves of the shell in front, cut the muscles holding the animal to the shell, and scraped the whole meat loose, throwing the shell on the heap—as shells had been thrown there for generations.

She cut away two small black portions, saying they were bitter, and a tough portion which may have been the gills or perhaps a limb to attach the creature to the rock. She squeezed and shook the meat to wring out the salt water, and handed it to me. The taste was cool and slightly pungent, not unlike that of a raw oyster, but more penetrating. Untying a folded pareu, she brought out a bit of ripe coconut and several of the long, yellow, sweet phalanges of the pandanus fruit.

As we sat on the shell mound, eating and talking, Tauhoa returned with half a dozen small drinking-nuts tied by strips of their husks to her short spear, and the menu was complete. It was a strange luncheon party, on that white heap of shells, under that tropic morning sun. And I thought how many such meals must have been eaten in this ancient lagoon, since the day when Maruia, the voyaging queen, first drew up her canoes on the outer reef and gave the island the name it still bears among her descendants: Tepuka Maruia, Maruia's forest of puka trees. The puka are few now; the coconuts wave green and yellow fronds over all that coral land, but the dotted lagoon still spreads its rich colors under the sun, the shellfish abound in its waters, and the blondest little girl in the village bears the name of Maruia, her ancestor thirty-five generations away. And this day I sat eating tridacna with Tauhoa, my friend, and Fangu, whose name is Song. And who knows whether some of these very shells in the mound on which we sat might not have been tossed here by Maruia herself in that far-off time?

We spoke of these things as we ate the food of Maruia's land and sea.

"Maruia was chief of three islands. Pukapuka is the head of the fish, Tepuka its body, and Tepoto the tail."

"How did Maruia come to this land?"

"She did not come in a dugout canoe, such as our men use for fishing, nor in the Tahitian canoe of planks in which we go to Tepoto. She came in a ship, like the one that lies in a shed at the windward settlement, but much larger—a boat made of curved hewn slabs of wood, sewn together with cords of coconut fiber. It had a tall mast, and a sail woven of pandanus leaves, and the helmsman steered it with a tiller.

"You have seen the small ship at Tematahoa. It is still sound though it has not been used in years. We no longer make the great voyages; our men have forgotten the star-roads on the sky that mark the paths over the sea."

"At Vahitahi, far south from here, I have heard there are three Tuamotuan ships, and the men of that land still voyage in them to Nukutavake and to Vairaatea, many miles away."

"It is true. I have heard men tell, who have been away to sea in the schooners. The men of Vahitahi still sail the ancient ships."

"I will tell you another thing. In Hawaii, in the house where the Americans keep many things of the olden time from many lands, there is a Tepuka boat, and the white men come from far countries and marvel at its construction."

So we talked on, opening more shells and tossing the meat into the coconut-leaf basket. My companions were as solicitous for my comfort as a pair of maiden aunts. Every few minutes one of them would ask whether I was hungry or thirsty, or uncomfortable sitting on the sharp shells. Tauhoa took off her pareu and spread it under me to make a softer seat; Fangu dragged up a drifted coconut for a footstool and covered my knees with a flour sack, that the sun might not burn my supposed tender skin.

Spreading drifted fronds over the shells, and covering our faces, we slept. Awakening and looking out upon the mottled landscape of lagoon, I thought: what can harm this race who are so hardy that they sleep on shells and stones, and relish their food raw from the sea? What cares can harass them? Knowing nothing of offices and desks and machines, they whom none can hold helpless in the chains of their own hunger, with no vital need that cannot be met out of their own land and sea, theirs is a contentment that we, in our more complex and fevered life, can never know. For their sake I could pray that they might remain so—defended by distance and isolation from the ills that have overtaken their kinfolk in the nearer islands. Free and unharried, they have food, sleep and fulfillment of passion: even the wild beasts, whom we envy, have no more than this.

It was peaceful in that quiet, dreamy place; we had no wish to move. But Turina and little Puré and old Maukiri would be hungry. We set out over the shallows toward home.

As we walked over a stretch of reef thinly strewn with sand beneath very shallow water, I felt a thornlike stab in the sole of my left foot. Something small and sharp crumbled beneath my weight.

"A bit of coral," I thought. "It will do no harm."

The wound became increasingly painful, however, as we left the water and emerged upon a long expanse of dry, hard-packed sand and sediment near the village. Something was working into the flesh. When Fangu turned off toward the forest to bring more coconuts and cut a carrying-stick, I sat down to examine the injury. Tauhoa inspected it critically.

"*E mukó*," she pronounced it.

"And what is a *mukó*?"

She pointed out a small shell like those in my hatband. "Something like that."

I gathered that I had stepped on the point of some sharp shell and that it had broken off in the flesh. Tauhoa laid thumb and finger to the spot and tried to grasp the end of the shell, but it eluded her.

Fangu returned, a bunch of drinking-nuts swinging from the carrying-stick over her shoulder.

"Alas, the pain!" she commiserated. "The *mukó* is an evil thing."

Fangu took the foot in her lap. Tauhoa held it firmly with her hands as Fangu probed the wound with the point of the knife, making a grating sound as the blade struck the intruding fragment of shell. With amazing gentleness, she dug around the thorny thing, using the knife point as a lever, and prying upward, while Tauhoa's ample body rocked with laughter at my half-serious, half-jesting protests.

At last the shell was partly loosened.

Placing thumb and finger very carefully to the wound, she drew out the intruding substance with a sharp movement, and held it in the palm of her hand for me to see.

It was a tiny thing to have caused such pain—a mere fragment of brittle tubular shell, looking not unlike some small hard fungus growth.

"The wound is deep," she said. "I must probe it further. There are pieces broken off inside."

She dug determinedly with the knife point, then beat the foot with the handle of the knife and with the heel of her hand to dislodge any stray particles and also to stimulate bleeding and thus cleanse the wound.

Tauhoa tore a strip from her pareu and bound up the foot.

"When you get home," she advised, "pour a little warm

water into the wound. You will not die, but you will have much pain. Tomorrow the pain will be greater; the third day there will be itching. But if we got all the pieces out, it will heal in three days."

So we returned to the village, carrying our load of coconuts and clams. Fangu bore the latter to the house of Maukiri, but divided the coconuts with me.

Feeling slightly faint after the minor surgery at Tauhoa's hands and the long walk on the injured foot, I felt that a drink might be indicated. I recalled that a bottle of rum, brought for possible entertainment of distinguished guests, or other emergency, was standing on the house-frame behind a pile of packing-cases, out of sight and reach of chance callers. Putting a hand down in the darkness behind the boxes, I drew out a bottle and took a draught of the fiery liquid. It didn't taste just like rum. I reflected, after replacing the bottle, that Keneti's photographic developer and "hypo" stood in like bottles on the same timber. Had I poisoned myself on this remote island, hundreds of miles from medical help and with no communication? If I had, I would make sure of that drink. Being alone in the house, I took out all three bottles, replaced the two chemical containers, and took a very careful drink of what was surely rum.

Whether the rum acted as an antidote, or whether the developer was non-poisonous, no ill effects followed; moreover, the puncture made by the shell healed without the painful symptoms predicted by Fangu.

"You are very fortunate," said our neighbor Tangia. "The *mukó* often causes much suffering."

Keneti, meanwhile, had cut his finger in opening a can of pineapple juice, and the cut had become infected.

"Keep it covered and do not show it to anybody until tomorrow noon," Roki had directed. "Then it must be opened with two fish bones."

"Noon," being any time from late morning to mid-afternoon, had come, and Roki was here to see that her instructions were followed. She treated the finger—not, however, with a fish bone, but with a needle which had to be sterilized several times, because she kept touching it with her fingers. Roki is not accustomed to foreign sanitation. Bystanders, watching the operation, suggested a tobacco poultice, but Keneti decided to forego that remedy.

After the others had gone, Temae lay on the mat, intoning chants in a low but fairly clear voice.

> "The son is a wanderer," he repeated,
>   given to voyaging,
> flying afar like a migratory bird.
> Prostrate with grief,
> the son will weep for the mother.
> The wanderer . . ."

The ancient words flowed slowly from his lips—the lament of Huauri for her son Tahaki when he journeyed to the Great Darkness. Thinking, no doubt, of his own dead son, whose remembered features he fancied Keneti's resembled, the old man intoned the chant—an old man in a faded red pareu, leaning on one elbow on the mat—but in voice and manner deeply affecting, reciting his island's version of one of the noblest poems of his race.

27. *I Acquire an "Ancestor"*

"Your Name," said Tauria, "shall be Mokio-ariki."

As we had been residents of Tepuka Maruia nearly two months, it was felt that Keneti and I should be adopted into a family and receive names more intimately connected with local history than that of Ri, the friend of Maui, early conferred upon me out of his own plentiful supply of names by our neighbor and guide Tupu, or the Hawaiian translation of my own given name, which meant almost nothing in the Land of the Puka Trees.

There had been discussion as to which family should be permitted to adopt us and what names we were to bear. These are delicate matters; it is necessary to avoid offending any prominent family and to steer carefully between conflicting claims. Kararo, for instance, felt a certain proprietorship in consideration of the fact that we dwelt in one of his houses. The family of the chief had been furnishing us with coconuts, as often as his son Maono-iti thought of it in his father's absence. Paunu's people were our best friends in the two islands. And Temae seemed to extend to both of us the liking he had taken to Keneti because of fancied resemblance to his own dead son. A survey of these possibilities had resulted in the choice of Tehau the peace officer and his wife Teroro-tu as our foster parents. For, in the complex interrelationships of a small community, preserved in long genealogies, Tehau and Teroro-tu were near kin to Kararo's family and through them to the families of Temae and Maono; moreover they were distantly related to Paunu and Maupeke; hence everybody would be satisfied.

For Keneti, the name had been chosen of Tuhoe, seventh in line of descent from Tanu-ariki, a chief who had come to the island from Tahiti long ago, and great-grandson of the original Mokio-ariki for whom Tehau's son had been named.

Tehau was a small, wiry man in middle age, with formidable black mustaches framing a friendly smile. Like many Tepuka people, he showed in feature and build the Caucasian strain that is from ancient times a heritage of the Polynesian. We were fond of Tehau; I had liked him from the moment he boarded our ship to examine the ship's papers and grant "*pratique*."

His wife Teroro-tu, though less prepossessing on first acquaintance, was as friendly and lovable as he. Her somewhat harsh features, and the cracked voice in which she led the singing at the church of the Sacred Heart, belied the genuine kindness of her spirit. Tekava, her sister, wife of Ah Siun, was the only fat woman in the village. Tekava was handsome, in a large way, with melting eyes and long dark hair which she rolled in a huge wave on top of her head and transfixed with a comb, leaving the sunburnt ends to stand aloft in the strange fashion of the island. Her disposition matched her girth. Early in our sojourn, we had suspected Tekava of designs on us, but later reflected that her apparent interest probably had been only friendliness and curiosity.

Tauria, acknowledged leader of the young men, was a nephew of Tehau and lived in that citizen's house, as did his sister, tiny blond-haired Atera. Tauria was a traveled and educated youth. Some years earlier the community—at the instigation, no doubt, of the priest who was then resident there—had subscribed a fund to send Tauria to school in Papeete. He had gone there aboard one of the infrequent schooners, to marvel at his first sight of high land and vehicles and shop windows. We gathered that Papeete had been too much for Tauria.

"A pandanus hat wasn't good enough for me," he admitted. "I bought a panama. And I wore white shoes and white trousers, like the white men, and wrote with a fountain pen."

In a very few months Tauria had spent all of the fund, and arrived eventually in his home land, working his way as a sailor. A few scraps of Latin, the English affirmative rendered by him as "Yaas," and, most appropriately, the French word *fini*, clung to him, in the way of scholastic accomplishments.

He had been also at Hikueru, diving for pearls, just before the pearling industry suspended, and had brought home from there the version of the *kotaha* dance which had supplanted the indigenous Tepuka figure of that name.

Altogether, Tauria enjoyed tremendous prestige among the young people.

"We have talked it over," he explained, "and decided that the best name for you is that of Mokio-ariki. Since Mokio-ariki has gone to Fakahina, he no longer needs his name in Tepuka, so the family is willing that you exchange with him, taking his name and giving him yours. If you accept this name you will become a son of Tehau, and will be treated in all respects as one of his family. You may sleep in his house whenever you wish, and eat his food, and the coconuts of Tehau's family land shall be yours.

"I must also tell you," he added with characteristic Tuamotuan humor, "that as you will be a near relative, none of the women of Tehau's family can become your sweetheart."

Borrowing a pencil and paper, he wrote, somewhat laboriously, the following document in Tahitian, which has supplanted the "root speech" as the legal and official language of the island:

"This writing bears witness to our mutual desire, in consideration of our dear friendship, to exchange names; wherefore I this day hereby give you, my friend, this name. My name shall be yours, and your name mine, from this day until the day of our deaths."

I must then sign this document with my American and Hawaiian names, and with the names of my father and grandfather transliterated into Tahitian. Tauria signed for Mokio, and produced a faded snapshot, which he said had been taken by the priest who formerly conducted the island mission. In this picture Mokio-ariki, a stalwart, open-faced young man with amazingly wide shoulders, stood between his pretty sister Teuringa-iti and their brother Tehau the Younger, since removed to Tepoto. I must kiss this picture, and give Tauria a photograph of myself to send, when opportunity arose, to my namesake at Fakahina.

"Since this is the only picture we have, and since Teuringa-iti and Tehau-iti are in it as well as Mokio, we can't give it to you to keep," he explained.

Apparently the "adoption" lost none of its effectiveness from being somewhat mixed with modern innovations such as photography and documentary evidence. The family, at least, seemed to take it quite seriously.

"Let us go now," said Tauria, "to the house of Tehau."

Half a dozen members of the family were sitting on the mats in Tehau's house—a large structure, for that island, constructed of the usual materials, but with a floor of larger and rougher bits of coral than is usual, producing the most uncomfortable footing possessed by any house on the island.

Teroro-tu motioned me to the seat of honor—a low stool, doubtless modeled on the temple-thrones of the chiefs, but used in these latter days as a seat for Tehau himself in church. Teuringa the Elder, hobbling stiffly to the center of the room, stood before me and began to chant:

> "Mokio-ariki, enter into your house of judgment
> and take your stand among the chiefs."

One by one, the members of the family embraced me and pressed their faces to mine, laying their noses alongside my own or burying them in my neck. Tauria, who in his wanderings had learned foreign ways, kissed me on both cheeks in the French manner. Little Atera, who hitherto had been shy, running around a corner whenever Keneti or I looked at her, now came up confidently with a grave smile, looking at me steadily out of bright gray-brown eyes, and took my hands.

Sitting in the cool, breezy house, we drank the sweetly pungent juice of young coconuts, Tepuka's only beverage, while Tauria filled a basket with more of the young nuts for me to take home.

Tehau unlocked the chest that stood in the far corner and took out the family book—a notebook such as is used in Papeete schools, filled with writing.

"This is your genealogy," he said. "Later we will make a copy of it for you.

"In the old days, before we learned to write," Tehau continued, "we carried these genealogies in our minds. They were the only way of proving our land rights. If a man or woman claimed right in a certain land, the genealogy was chanted very rapidly by one who knew it well; the chanter stopped suddenly, and the one who claimed the land right must pick up the line at that point and continue without a break.

"Nowadays we have the writing. We keep the genealogy locked up in the chest. When we give you your copy, be careful never to let anyone see it who is not a true relative."

"I will guard it as would you yourself," I promised.

"You must also," said Tehau, "give Mokio-ariki, with your name, which is to be his, a copy of your own genealogy, so that he may take his place in your family line as you take your place in his."

"I shall do so." And I chanted for them that portion of the *Nibelungen Lied* which mentions "Gunther und Gernod und Geiselher der Junge."

"My ancestors," I told them, "were also chiefs, in the white men's country. There was a dragon, a great lizard that ate men. . . ." And I related what I could remember of that noble tale, while my newly acquired kinfolk nodded approval.

"And now," said Tehau, "I will tell you the story of our ancestor Mokio-ariki.

"He was a chief of this country. His marae was Rangihoa. Mokio-ariki was a blond, like yourself. His wife was Fangu-taku-ariki. She too was of chiefly blood, and she was very beautiful.

"Now, Mokio-ariki went to the windward side of the island to hunt birds, and while he was there he stayed with a woman called Koa. This would have caused no trouble if Koa had been a friend of Fangu, but she was not. Moreover, Koa was a commoner, not of chiefly descent. So when Fangu heard of it, she was very angry. She went to Tepoto, and lived with Toriu, a chief of that island.

"When Mokio came back from the windward side, she was gone. He ordered out his canoe and followed her. There was great festivity when he arrived at Tepoto, for Mokio-ariki was a great chief. The conch shell blew; there was feasting, and chanting, and the young women danced. He did not recognize Fangu among them at first, for she was so decked out with feathers and other ornaments that he could scarcely see her face. At length she danced very close to him, looking straight into his eyes, and laughed mockingly as she swayed her hips before him.

"Mokio-ariki was very angry. He rose from his place and struck her. He struck so hard that she vanished from sight and sank through the earth, down to the Great Darkness.

"When Mokio-ariki saw what he had done, he was sorry. He had been angry with Fangu, but he didn't want to lose her. However, his spiritual power was so strong that he was able himself to descend, living, into the spirit-world to bring her back. Toriu also went to the World of Darkness, but his power was less than the power of Mokio-ariki, and it was Mokio-ariki who brought Fangu back to the world of living men.

"He stayed three months among the ancestral spirits in the *Po*. He learned there the sacred chants that are called *fangu*, and many dances, and after he came back here, he taught them to the people.

"Mokio-ariki was the greatest of our chiefs since Maruia."

"I will try to be worthy of so noble an ancestor," I replied.

When, much later, I sat with Tupuhoe, the young chief of Vahitahi, in his cement-floored government house on whose broad veranda the guitars were tuning for the nightly dance—

"What were you called at Tepuka?" he inquired.

"Mokio-ariki."

Tupuhoe smiled broadly and surveyed his own expansive body.

"The people of our land," he said, "know also of Mokio-ariki. He was a chief with a very large belly. He was a great chief."

28. *A Wreath of Shells*

"Here Is a Hat for you," said Tauhoa, with her slow, broad smile.

She had worked all day weaving the narrow strips of cured pandanus leaf to make a fine specimen of the light, strong headgear for which the women of her family are famous.

"But there is no band for it," she added.

She held up a red bandanna that I had given her in the exchange of handkerchiefs which is a symbol of friendship among the people of the island.

"If I cut it here, I can make a hatband of the border."

"Don't spoil it. I want you to keep it. A wreath of shells will hold the hat down more safely in the wind. You have made the hat; that is enough, and I am very grateful. I shall ask another friend to make a shell wreath for it."

She accepted a box of tiny cakes of scented soap as the exchange gift that is always expected in Polynesia, and went on her way. Temata, passing on her way to the well, inspected the hat.

"It needs only," I suggested, "a band of shells to go around it and hold it down in the wind."

"I will make one for you," she offered. "Come with me now, and we shall gather shells."

As we walked down the shore, she chatted gaily, juggling small bud coconuts. Tiring of the juggling, she bit off the end of one and chewed it like an apple, offering another to me. It had a cool, fresh taste, if slightly flat to a Western palate. She herself seemed to relish it immensely.

"I have traveled," she remarked. "I have seen Fangatau and Tatakoto, Amanu, Apataki, Tahiti. Fangatau is a good country; all the houses are of wood."

I objected that coconut-leaf houses were better for warm climate; wooden ones for cold places.

Temata disdained to argue the matter.

"Reao is not a good place," she continued. "The people there are falling to pieces with the Chinese sickness.

"My mat is a Rurutu mat. Rurutu mats cost six dollars and they're not of good quality. They are rough. The mats of Fangatau cost only sixty-five cents and they are better than Rurutu or Tepuka mats. . . .

"The ancient name of Tepoto is the Leaping Place of the Souls. . . . Your ship, I think, is safe, but far away. It will be long in coming, because of strong wind."

To make the task easier, I suggested a string of large speckled brown shells, alternating with flat yellow ones, such as Roki wore; but Temata pointed to a small delicate pointed shell that grew abundantly on the rocks near the sea. Collecting a supply of these, we took them to Tiaki's house, where Temata pierced the shells with a nail. She had no needle—such is the poverty of these people—until I brought her one.

A few days later Tukua called me to Tiaki's house to fit the wreath to the hat. Three strands of the small shells made a surprisingly heavy band, which would hold even the broad-brimmed sunshade of Tepuka in an ordinary wind.

The next time I picked up the hat, however, it was crawling with small brown ants, attracted by the shells. Brushing them off and spraying the hat with an oil preparation recommended for discouraging insects, I thought no more of it until, a few days later, the house was filled with a powerful odor of decomposing fish. Temata, whether from laziness or in one of her sometimes disconcerting practical jokes, had strung the shells without cleaning out the shellfish within them, and the hat smelled like one of the wreaths of oysters that the women of Reao wear about their necks as a handy food supply.

I threw the wreath on the sand, expecting the ants to return, but the anti-insect preparation was even more effective than advertised. Once thus discouraged, they never came back. So, augmenting the value of one of Kararo's trees by driving a nail into it, I hung the shells there, to let air and sunlight do the work, and walked seaward to gather shells of another kind for a new hatband.

Rangihoa was bright with sun; my feet sank into its heaped sand and crunched among its pebbles of coral and its broken shells. Here and there were whole ones: empty shells of the large dark kind and small white flat cowries. Fishermen in canoes offshore regarded me impassively, as I moved slowly southward along the shore and around the end of the islet, past the streets and the arm of the lagoon that cuts deeply into the land. Following the edge of that canal-like stream, I came upon some of the worst walking I had yet seen, where the storm apparently had picked up the reef and dropped it on the land, and weather had sharpened its fragments to cutting edges. Even there, children were walking barefoot over the needle-sharp rocks, gathering pandanus fruit.

It is surprising how long a walk one can take on a small island. I gave up trying to make a complete circuit of the islet, as the land ahead did not look promising, and returned.

Carrying the shells—all uninhabited ones, this time—and a bit of cord on which to string them, I went to Maukiri's house. Tauhoa, majestic and tranquil, was sitting in the amazing native fashion, with her feet close to her body and her knees drawn up, a posture which no white man can endure for more than a few minutes, ironing clothes for Sunday. Fangu, who was working outside, came in with Turina and strung the shells by stuffing them with paper over the string passed through their open sides, producing a handsome garland. They even provided a few shells of their own, but finding many of these distinctly ripe, threw them out in the yard to dry and be cleaned by ants.

It was a Saturday afternoon, the busiest time for women at Tepuka, when they are preparing clothes and food for the day of rest to follow; yet in their kindness they interrupted their occupations to do me this favor, that I might wear the shell hatband next day.

When they had finished, Fangu took up the ironing and Tauhoa resumed work on a hat, while Turina went out to finish the work in the yard. Tepuka people seldom are idle for long at a time.

So I acquired one more symbol of the island life. And time lengthened, with still no news of the ship that was to take us elsewhere.

29. *Isle of Peace*

Thus Week flowed into week, in contentment shadowed only by two slowly growing anxieties: one for our relief ship, as she became longer and longer overdue; the other for the chief, of whose fate likewise we had no word. During the greater part of the day, time stopped; but when at evening we set down our daily records, dated according to the white man's calendar, it came to us with a shock that, pleasant as life was on the island, we were already late for duties elsewhere.

Even these reminders but nipped briefly at the edges of

tranquillity, as we became more and more absorbed in the affairs of the community. It is so on such islands. Peace flowed into the spirit. The surf curling over the ruddy reef; the wind in the tall fronds; the sunlight glowing over the rude land—these made our world. Concerns and conventions of that other world receded and lost meaning. The country of the white men became but a confused and troubled dream. Reality, for the moment, was this sun-washed ring of coral, hard and clean in the vast sea.

Imperceptibly we glided into the rhythm of village life; the doings of each neighbor assumed importance in our thought; each minute variation in the pattern from day to day acquired stature.

After the first few days our friends had grown less shy. The carefully washed white shirts, minus sleeve-buttons; the tattered but clean print dresses, appeared less frequently on week days; the more comfortable and suitable pareu was resumed. The children no longer ran from us, but crowded about us, asking to have their pictures taken, begging for cigarette butts, marbles, and onions. Their elders resumed their usual tasks; the men, of fishing and making copra; the women, of weaving mats and hats. Teuri, the acting chief, proclaimed a clean-up week, and all not engaged in more vital duties swept the streets and dooryards with flower-stalks of coconut, picked up loose pebbles from the roads, and spread sand before their doors.

Between times, they besieged us with requests for copies of Hawaiian songs that we sang to them in the evenings or played on Keneti's portable victrola. Only the livelier songs were in demand. The slow, wailing compositions, in which steel-guitars dripped Hawaiian moonlight, and the soaring Hawaiian falsetto were beyond their comprehension. Nor did they care for American songs, especially jazz, which, they said, sounded "like Chinese music." One, however, the tenderest and saddest of all Hawaiian melodies, despite its comparatively slow tempo, remained a universal favorite. Men would wake me at night in the communal sleeping-houses of the windward shore, women would halt me on the streets, to sing "King's Serenade," with its lovely lines which they understood: "I search for you, beloved, among the fragrant forest-walls of Puna." Haltingly, they sang it after me, the song they loved most, of all the songs of their far-away kindred in the American isles. Holding a match, once, to the cigarette of the aged widow Kavai, I saw tears in her sunken eyes, the mirror of who knows what memories awakened by that song of a vanished love.

Meanwhile we, on our part, grew more accustomed to the lack of a private life and more at ease under constant observation. For even as we were increasingly accepted as members of the community, we still remained somewhat foreign and strange. Our rite of brushing teeth, and our daily shave continued to draw an attentive audience.

Most enthralling of all our foreign ways were the processes of photography, which we practiced under extreme difficulties. Keneti would get up at three or four o'clock in the morning, when the house was dark and quiet, the water temperature down to seventy-eight degrees or so, to develop film and hang them on cords across the house. In the morning the people would flock around to examine them, exclaiming, "No good," for they had no notion of a negative. To them a picture was a picture. They indicated only the vaguest comprehension when we explained that these pictures must go to Tahiti or even to Hawaii before they could be finished, and that the small size of the miniature films, which disappointed them, would be corrected by enlargement in our own land of wonders. Keneti, meanwhile, was in a frantic state lest they disregard his repeated injunctions not to touch the drying film.

One could almost never be alone, and gradually we ceased to demand solitude, though we always preferred the company

of a few to that of many. Once, seizing a moment when most of the villagers were at the evening school, I walked toward the lagoon to watch the moon rise over the shell-islets, thinking how I must soon leave the peace of this remote and simple land.

The little daughters of Tohitika, catching sight of me, took my hands and walked with me, chattering, laughing, begging for small gifts. At the shore I sat on the curbing, looking out at the strange, unearthly beauty of the scene, while the two children, quiet now, sat in the road at my feet, reaching up firm little hands to pinch my cheeks and leaning their cool, bare bodies against my knees.

The sound of singing and the throb of a guitar blew faintly down the shadowed street. A party was beginning in the village.

"Why," asked Omi, "do you sit here by the lagoon?"

"Why," pursued Ngaroro, "are you not singing and dancing in the village?"

"I have come to look at the moon over the water."

The children considered this. Perhaps it had never occurred to them that this accustomed scene was beautiful. Yet they, too, felt the spell of the calm evening. Little Omi turned her dark, laughing face up to mine.

"As the moon fades," she recalled some bit of overheard lore, "so fades Hina."

For Hina, after exploring the earth, sailed to where the moon was rising at the sea's rim, and entered the moon country, whence she watches over travelers at night, and the shadows on the moon are a tree from whose bark she makes clothing for the gods. When the moon's light dims, Hina sickens and her power wanes—but the moon and Hina always come back to fullness and strength together.

Our household arrangements, too, were a source of wonderment. Keneti had installed a small gasoline stove in a corner of the house, surrounded by cases of tinned food, and we cooked and ate in the house, contrary to native custom. I would have been willing to subsist upon the rude but wholesome native fare, and in part did so. Almost every day someone would give us a slice of red-fleshed tuna or hard, nutty cakes of roasted bread, fragrant with chopped papaya and coconut, baked in wrappings of leaves on hot stones. For drink, we had the young coconuts provided by the chief's son or our landlord, or later our adopted parents Tehau and Teroro-tu. In the three months we were there, we drank little else.

As I passed through the village, people would call from their doorways, "Come and eat." I would reply, as is the custom, "I have eaten." This formality having been fulfilled, they would repeat the invitation, until I realized that they meant it and would be grieved if I refused.

"Eat heartily!" they would insist. "Eat until you are round with fullness."

So I would squat with them around the fire in the dooryard, with raw or cooked fish, luscious tentacles of octopus which were the most delicious sea-food I ever tasted; raw or boiled shellfish, pounded shark, bits of ripe coconut and juicy tree-melon, while children ran to hack open great cool drinking-nuts, and women brought bowls of well-water to pour over my hands.

"Is the food good or bad?" the old men would inquire.

"The food is good," I would reply.

And they would answer, nodding approval: "The food of the land is good food."

I soon learned that I was welcome to eat or sleep in any house on the island. After a meal, the mats would be drawn up in the shade, and we would recline, smoking and talking, and drift away to short naps that left one dreamily refreshed.

Ah Kui, the Chinese storekeeper, cultivated our acquaintance as a fellow foreigner in, as I guessed, a desire to heighten his local prestige. For he and his partner, the feeble Ah Siun,

seemed to have neither the standing in the community that their countrymen enjoy on most islands, nor the growing dislike that is their portion in Tahiti. Allied, like most of their kind throughout the Tuamotu, to two of the handsomest women of the place, they participated, through them, in land rights; handled copra and negotiated with masters of schooners. But they were not the capitalists that their countrymen are on most islands. Theirs was a wretched little store; they had little means with which to maintain stocks of goods, and their customers had less wherewith to buy. Tobacco and matches, a few folds of cheap cotton cloth, a few bottles of ill-smelling hair oil, and, after the visit of a schooner, a little flour, rice and grated cassava, were about all they had to offer.

Their association with their native wives was their principal link with the people. Save when a ship was "in port," they took no part in the village assembly; they were seldom seen outside the store, their wives' houses, and the land adjoining. Even in marital association, they were a group apart, preparing and eating their own Chinese-style food in a cooking-shack behind the store, while their wives cooked and ate Tuamotuan viands on the coral-strewn ground of their own ancestral estates.

I fancy that Ah Kui and Ah Siun, in their inarticulate way, were lonely. At all events, there was an eager friendliness in Ah Kui's smile as he greeted me from the door of the house which his wife Turina shared with her mother and sisters. That house, too, was in its way a show place, as was ours. For it boasted a great iron bed with brass knobs, which occupied almost half the floor space—the only bed on the island. It was a symbol, rather than an article of use. People lay under it, if the house was crowded, but never upon it. Turina and Ah Kui slept on a mat under an upturned canoe outside, with a dim lantern beside them to keep away prowling ghosts. But the bed was prized as a rare ornament. No doubt it was

Ah Kui's ability, in more prosperous times, to provide such foreign novelties, as well as his control of the supply of dress-goods, that had won him the favor of the lovely Turina.

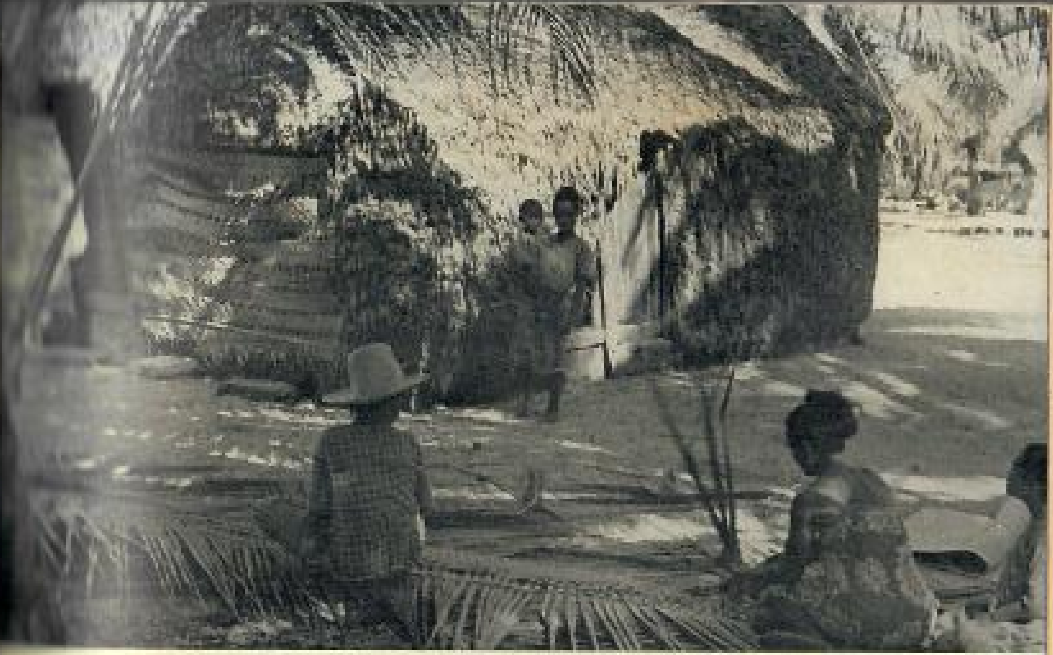
Ah Kui was pleased that I recognized the features of the two Chinese generals in the luridly lithographed poster on his wall, which depicted, from a strongly pro-Chinese point of view, events of a few years ago in Manchuria and around Shanghai. In that picture, a Chinese bomber hurled destruction upon Japanese warships, and Chinese soldiers with glistening bayonets were routing the invaders. As I called Tsai Ting-kai and Ma Chan-shan by name, Ah Kui's smile became a veritable sunburst. I could imagine him telling his neighbors later: "The white man knows these warriors; he knows that I come from a great country, a land of conquerors."

He was a Kuomintang man, he said; he had been in Honolulu and imagined that he could speak English.

"Hawaii, too muchee Chinee stop," he remarked in proof of this claim. (See, he prided himself, I am talking to the American in his own language!)

When I whistled a few bars of the "Song of the Jade Princess," his joy was complete. Producing, from some recess of his store, a pile of dusty Chinese records and a few ancient American hill-billy tunes, he spent the rest of the afternoon playing them on Keneti's long-suffering phonograph. Here, in this far country, among a people of whom he never could become quite a part, was the music of home. And as the "Song of the Jade Princess" tinkled into the sub-equatorial afternoon, I recalled the chant that records the compassion of these gentle islanders toward the stranger in their land:

"Pity it is for the land of the Chinese:
the children have no rice to eat.
The heart is sad from dawn until the night.
Women, be kind to the poor Chinaman!
Go, Chinaman, and satisfy your desire!"

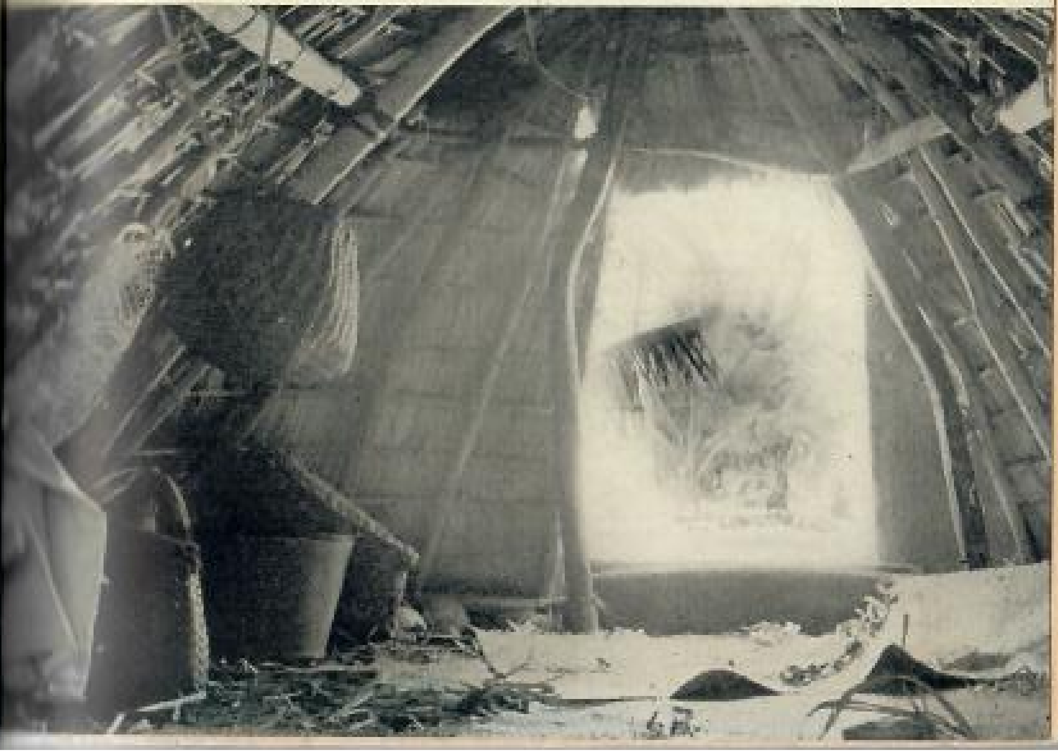


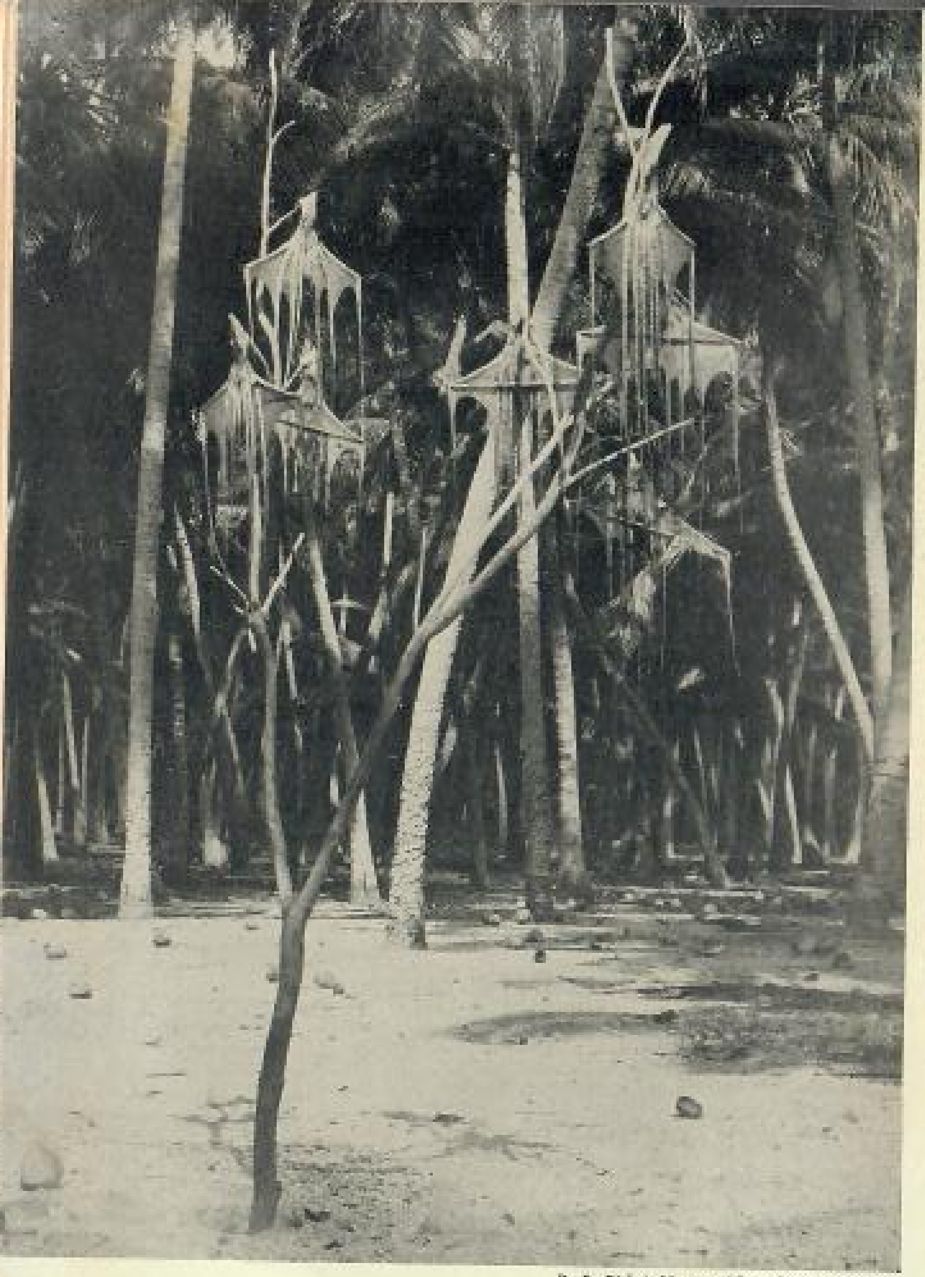
B. P. Bishop Museum Photo by K. P. Emory

Women were plaiting coconut fronds to make the walls of a new house.

Temae's house was of the genuine old Tuamotuan style: strongly woven of pandanus and shaped like an inverted clothes-basket around its dark and rather close but scrupulously clean interior.

B. P. Bishop Museum Photo by K. P. Emory





B. P. Bishop Museum Photo by K. P. Emory

Octopus—commonly called "squid"—when properly prepared is the most delicious sea food of the islands. Hung from branches to dry, they give the appearance of weird foliage.

Thus I would make the rounds of the village, each day learning more of the language, customs, and mode of thought of the people. Some of the information thus acquired was trivial; occasionally it was authentic new data, clearing up puzzling questions of ethnology. This subject is better left to Keneti, whose specialty it is; I was interested in penetrating into the atmosphere of the place, to discover the secret of its peace—a peace which, I became convinced, proceeded from the simplicity of its life, which admitted so few wants and entailed so few cares. But to do so, I must learn. And my education proceeded apace.

As the islanders realized my eagerness to be instructed, they took pains to teach. "Learn!" they would say, offering a section of ripe coconut or the almost cloyingly sweet haustorium of the sprouted nut, which is their only confection: "Learn the root speech!" And they would give me words—fine, large, mouth-filling words, that I would savor as I savored the island food; learning to say, for example, instead of our dry "Thank you," the delightful expression: "There is joy." Memorizing these words one by one, I wrote them down each day, and the list grew with surprising rapidity. Before the end of our stay I had a vocabulary of more than a thousand words.

The speech of individuals varied in intelligibility. A slurring, muffled enunciation obscured much of what I heard. But the more thoughtful of our friends took pains to speak slowly and clearly, and to repeat in simpler language if not at first understood.

A detailed record of our days would be a repetition of small incidents: this or that kind of food, a new dance or chant; conversation with this or that old man who remembered pagan times; the arising and adjustment of some dispute in the community, to which we were interested witnesses. We arose at dawn, and walked by the shore, marveling at its peace and beauty; then went together or separately to continue our study of the people, returning at noon for a swim in the lagoon and a meal at home or as guests of some native family. In the afternoon we slept, as is customary, awakening to resume the same business, or to take pictures, on Sundays, of people in their best clothes, that we might photograph them later in a nearer approach to "native" costume. In the early evening we wrote our notes of the day's doings, while the people were at "evening school," for after they returned, there could be no work. The later evenings were gay with singing and dancing, and the midnights solemn with old chants.

One evening at Maukiri's house stands out in memory because it brought me weariness thereafter. It was a strange enough scene: the dimly lit room, its corners and doorways crowded with dark figures sprawling in shadow; that oddly out-of-place device, the phonograph, playing in the lantern light, and we hurrying to keep step with our partners, barefoot on the cool mats, occasionally treading on spectators in the narrow, shadowy place.

"Dance a Hawaiian dance!" they urged.

Our respective versions of the hula were far from harmonious, but our audience seemed not to mind. Keneti changed the record, and the voice of Rudy Vallée rang out upon the Tuamotuan air in "The St. Louis Blues."

"Dance!" our friends demanded. Something special seemed called for. We began shadow-boxing in time to the music, as the crowd shouted delight. Thus encouraged, I improvised upon memories of cakewalks seen in childhood, the mixed Polynesian movements of Hugh Greig's daughters at Fanning Island, and whatever more or less fancy steps came to mind. This proved quite to the taste of the entertainment-loving natives. When, footsore with stamping on the thin mat over the pebbles, I desisted, they demanded repetition.

I was to regret that exhibition, for I never quite lived that evening down. One Hiti, in particular, was so delighted with

my "art" that I could never meet him thereafter without being urged to do "the dance you did at Maukiri's house."

We saw men filing nails and hammering them into fishhooks, on stone anvils—hooks after the pattern of the shell or bone ones they replaced, a barbless curve like the curve of a shell. It must have taken great skill to pull a fish out of the water with them, but if the old shell hooks had been barbed they would have broken.

They told us how, with a larger hook and a short line, or with bare hands, aided only by their faith in the power of ancestral spirits, they grapple with huge and powerful sea turtles which those ancestral spirits have guided to them through dreams. Leaping upon the backs of these sea monsters, they steer them, by holding to the flippers, into shallow water and to shore.

Temae showed us how to make the strongest cord his people know, scraping the fibers from a plant of the nettle family and twisting them into a line. He told us how this line is used to tie the bait to an eel hook, while a longer but less tough line sinks the hook with a stone. When the eel is hooked, the sinker line breaks, but the cord made from the nettle holds.

When there were no more matches, Tuata rubbed a sharpened bit of wood up and down a larger stick split to expose the dry pith, till a wisp of smoke curled from it, and a thin, almost invisible flame, from which Roki ignited a coconut husk for the cooking-fire.

"Isn't that better," I inquired, "than spending half a franc a box for matches at Ah Kui's store?"

"It is better," Tuata agreed, "but it is much trouble."

This was a desultory life, perhaps, but one that sufficed at the time. And through this maze of small things, definite currents began to take form. We could detect an obscure rivalry between the clans, reflected in the mutterings of Kararo or the dry comments of Temae. In some way this inner conflict was connected with Maono; in his absence the unity of the tribe seemed to become less firm.

The subtle jealousies extended to the younger people as well. The daughter of Maru, gossiping in our doorway as she stopped to beg cigarettes, revealed a touch of prejudice against other young women: "Temaru has no sweetheart because she doesn't bathe often enough. And Tauhoa consorts with Chinese and sailors."

"It is not true," protested Tauhoa, as we walked together to the lagoon to receive our respective shares of the community papayas. "Who has been telling you lies?"

"How about Esua, the supercargo on the schooner? Did you tell me he was your first lover?"

"Esua is no sailor—he is a white man. Besides, he gave me this dress I am wearing."

But Tauhoa, too, could gossip: "Temaru has never had a sweetheart."

"Why not?"

"She has not fallen in the street."

As an afterthought, Tauhoa added: "Besides, she has many lice. Large ones—as big as this shell."

Gossip in the Tuamotu is indeed frank.

On the low wall before her father's house sat Temaru when I next passed that way. Sharing a wedge of coconut and conversing as far as my ignorance and her indistinct enunciation permitted, I examined the dark, ruddy-tinged hair that waved over her bare bronze shoulders. It was, indeed, densely inhabited. As I picked the vermin off, she showed no embarrassment, looking at me shyly out of wide-set brown eyes, as if grateful for this friendly service.

"I would make a new wreath of shells for your hat," she said, "but I haven't enough shells."

At all times they were asking, "When will your ship arrive?" For it was expected that our ship would bring home their chief. The singing continued in the street, of nights, in

preparation for his coming, while Tangihia, giving a barely recognizable imitation of an old-fashioned drum-major, clowned stupidly with a rude baton.

It was during that interval that I made the social error which, not long later was, according to native interpretation, to cause me much pain. Temata, passing our house one morning on her way home from some nocturnal tryst, called, as she and nearly everybody else did, to beg tobacco. Confident of my increasing acquaintance with the language, I presumed upon it in an attempt to imitate Keneti's facility in making jokes. Jestingly, I inquired of the girl:

"With whom did you spend the night?"—a question perfectly proper in that country.

"With nobody," she replied demurely, helping herself to a liberal portion of tobacco.

"With Tupu, perhaps?" I persisted.

"Tupu was my sweetheart long ago, but he was no good."

"Pahoa, then?"

"Pahoa is very good, but he has another sweetheart."

"Ha! It must have been Tauria!"

To my consternation, the girl cast herself violently upon the ground and wept, and never afterward treated me with the same friendliness as before. I was at a loss to explain the embarrassing effect of my ill-bethought effort at native humor, until Tauria himself enlightened me.

"Did you not listen when I told you, long ago in Maké's house, the relationships among the people? Temata and I are near relatives," he revealed.

Tauria launched into a detailed account of the complicated blood relationship between Temata and himself, which I was unable to follow, but I gathered that I had unwittingly done the girl a tremendous wrong. The tabu of consanguinity, I already understood, is almost never violated, being so deeply rooted in community life that no one would think of doing so. It appeared that this was a matter about which one did not joke.

Tauria, with his broader experience of the ignorance of the white man, forgave me readily, but, as I learned, not so Temata. I was to be reminded of that unlucky jest.

But meanwhile, days and weeks slipped on, without prominent incident save the deep, quiet adventure of learning to know a simple, kindly people, into whose life we merged; though out of it arose from time to time those troublesome questions: What has happened to the chief? Where is our ship?

For the day provisionally set, after several forced postponements, as the "final" date of departure, brought no sign of means for that departure. The people had begun to realize that we really didn't know when the *Tiare Tahiti* was coming, and to seek the answer in their own observance of the weather and in more occult ways.

"The wind is from the north," said Temae. "Your ship will be delayed."

"Your ship," said Temata, "is in harbor at Hao or Amanu to escape storm."

As we later learned, she was approximately right, but how she knew, she never revealed.

But it was pleasant, that afternoon, to lie on the smooth sand, eating the delicate centers of coconut-leaf stalks, looking out over the lightly ruffled lagoon and the merry children; the air full of their happy voices and the water alive with their smooth wet bodies, like brown glistening fish. As I joined them, they hailed me with cries of welcome, diving under me, clinging to my legs or climbing on my back, a chain of them trailing behind me as I swam.

Always hungry, they dived and brought up tridacna, or turned over the weathered shells on the islets to find small black oysters, or caught, with their hands, in the shallows, flat

sandfish and small slim horie, cleaning them with deft fingers and eating them fresh from the lagoon.

Sitting under a tree, later, while Omi ran inland to fetch drinking-nuts, they juggled, made delicate streamers of unopened leaves, wove little playballs out of mature leaves, and compared their tiny breasts to see whose were the most developed.

They appealed to me to judge. Kaupaki, the slim, dark, flashing-eyed daughter of Teuri's wife, clearly had the best claim to the title. But Riua seemed disappointed at the decision. How could I tell her that in five years more her beauty would be a thing to be chanted in gold-brown chant words; that even Huarei, daughter of gods, for whom Moeava voyaged far through perilous seas, could not have stirred men's hearts more deeply than will Riua when she comes of age? Soon enough, little Riua, you will know. He will be a lucky lad who will dance the love-dance with you beneath the moon.

In the beginning dusk, rain fell, and children ran into the street, laughing and shouting, to splash in puddles and feel the wet coolness of the shower on their skins. Older ones came forth, their coppery bodies gleaming with rain above their waist-folded garments. Under a corner of the church, where the water sprayed down in a natural shower bath, they soaped hair and bodies and bathed in the fresh rain. We joined them there, rejoicing in the refreshing shower and running up and down the street afterward to counteract the chill.

In Maukiri's house later, however, we found Puré, still in her wet garment, rolled up in a mat, shivering. She was ill for days. Thus the benefits of "civilized" clothing.