

7. THE CENTRE OF THE TRIANGLE

Havai'i, fanaura'a fenua.

Havai'i, the birthplace of lands.

TAHITIAN CHANT

THE main body of the Polynesian Expeditionary Force, following on the trail of the Manahune vanguard, moved into the leeward islands of a volcanic group that lay on their eastward course. Fate, fortune, and the urge of their own stout hearts had enabled them to penetrate into the centre of the widely spaced oceanic islands that, centuries later, were to be termed Polynesia (the many islands) and so give the name Polynesians to the descendants of the original discoverers and settlers.

The settlement of this group of islands in central Polynesia took place about the fifth century A.D. Over a thousand years later, the credit for their discovery was given to a British explorer named Wallace. The permanent geographical name was given by another British explorer, James Cook, who named the whole group the Society Islands after the Royal Society of London, under whose auspices he had made observations on the transit of Venus, with Tahiti as his base. These explorers of another race who came into the Pacific less than two centuries ago have been honoured rightly, but

the original discoverers of over a thousand years before have been forgotten through lack of written records. Perhaps their descendants conferred upon them the highest possible honours by promoting them to the rank of gods.

The Society Islands are divided into a leeward and a windward group. The islands of the leeward group were named by their first discoverers, but as time rolled on, new names were given. The old classical names were used in legend and song, but the later names were used in current speech and so were adopted by the European map-makers. The ancient names of the principal islands of the leeward group are given here with their modern equivalents in parentheses: Vavau (Porapora; European version, Borabora), Uporu (Taha'a), Havai'i (Ra'iatea), and Huahine. Of the windward group, Tahiti, the principal island, lies a little over a hundred miles from Ra'iatea. Mo'orea, formerly known as Eimeo, is seven miles from Tahiti, and a number of smaller islands complete the group.

Tahiti, because of its large size and great fertility, came to support the largest population in the Society Islands, and, in later times, the political power passed from its original centre in Havai'i to Tahiti. Still later, it became the seat of the government for French Oceania, which includes not only the Society Islands, but also the Marquesas, Tuamotu, Austral, and Gambier islands. It will be more convenient to allude to the myths and legends of the group as Tahitian than to use the longer term Society Islands.

The headquarters of the Polynesian main body was established in the largest island of the leeward group, named Havai'i after an ancient homeland. From this centre various groups later dispersed to people other islands, taking with them a common basic language, the same foodstuffs and

animals, a common religion, and a common cultural background of myth and tradition. Therefore all Polynesian cultures, wherever found in the wide spaces of the Polynesian triangle have common elements that can be traced back to a common period of reorganization in central Polynesia.

One basic language prevails throughout Polynesia. The vowels are consistently the same—*a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u*, pronounced as in French or German—and the consonants are always followed by a vowel. Dialects have developed in various island groups by changes in consonant sounds. *R* and *v* are used in central and eastern Polynesia where *l* and *v* are used in western Polynesia. In some dialects certain consonants are not fully sounded but are represented or should be represented by an inverted comma over its place in the word. In the Society Islands, *k* and *ng* were dropped; so the name for the ancestral homeland, pronounced Havaiiki in other dialects of central Polynesia, is here pronounced Havai'i. In New Zealand, where *w* is used instead of *v*, the ancient home is Hawaiki. In the Cook Islands, where *h* is dropped, it is 'Avaiki. In the Hawaiian islands, where *w* is used and *k* is dropped, the largest island of the group is named Hawaii'i. In Samoa, where *s* replaces *h*, *v* is preferred to *w*, and *k* is dropped, the largest island is called Savai'i.

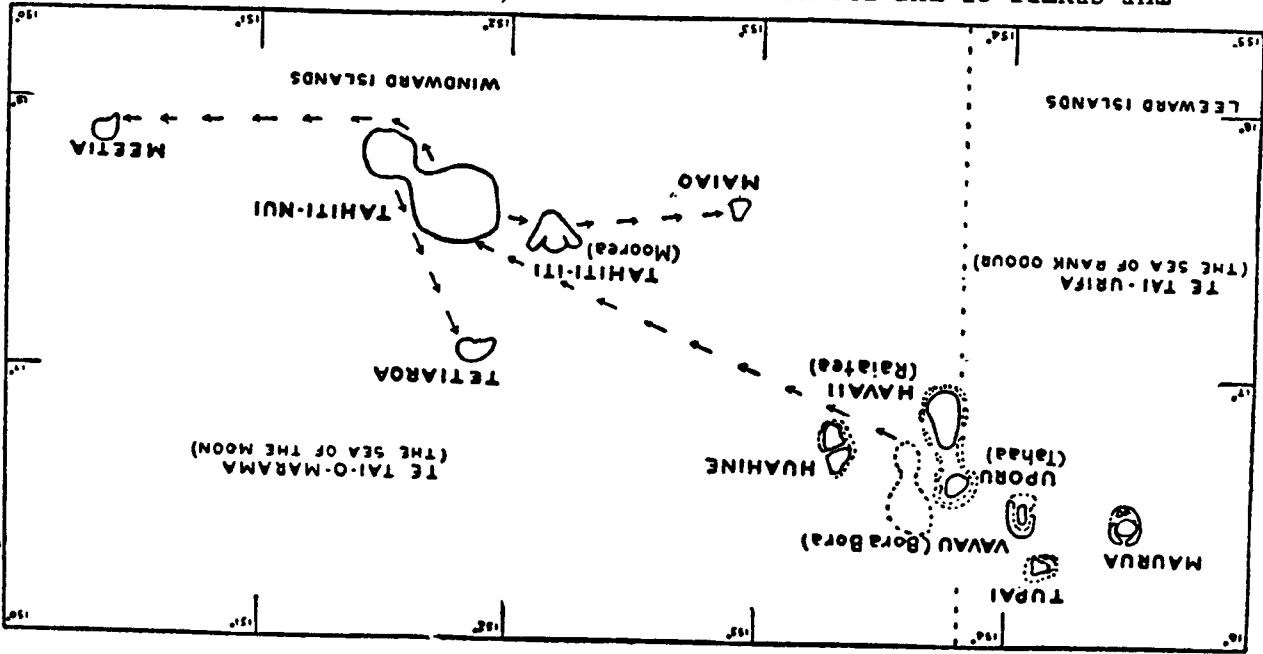
The food plants, the domestic animals, the raw materials and tools upon which Polynesian material culture is built, were probably first developed and tested in the leeward Society Islands and carried from there by explorers and settlers to other parts of Polynesia. We may imagine the wonder and the joy of those first voyagers from Micronesia upon beholding the lofty hills, the wide valleys, the running streams, and fertile soil of a large volcanic island after they and their ancestors had for centuries scraped a meagre exist-

ence from the unfriendly sands of coral atolls. Their whole physical background was miraculously changed. We may picture dimly the interest of the older people as they explored the profusion of plants, recognizing familiar ones, naming new species, and testing the useful value of woods, barks, and leaves. Here was an abundance of wood for building houses and canoes, and barks to furnish fibre for textiles and cordage. Most useful of all was the basaltic rock, which is absent in coral atolls. Food in the atolls had been cooked in earth ovens in which the heating agent had been pieces of coral rock and *tridacna* shells that crumbled away after each cooking. The volcanic islands provided basaltic stones which could be used over and over again and so formed a permanent medium for cooking. Basalt provided material for adzes and chisels that were vastly superior to those previously made from shell. Countless possibilities opened out in the arts and crafts, and progress in the development of new and improved techniques was rapid.

In the fertile soil of the rich valleys, food plants were cultivated to support an increasing population. All the food plants cultivated in Polynesia (except the sweet potato), and the domesticated animals were brought to central Polynesia at an early period from Samoa. The manner of their spread will be discussed later. The increase of food supplies in a volcanic group materially assisted the great cultural development that took place.

An exuberant new life opened up in central Polynesia, and new adjustments and progress took place, not only in the arts and crafts but in social and religious matters. The senior families and the most intelligent priests seem to have settled down in the Opoa district of Havai'i, which became the cultural centre of the group. A school of learning was

THE CENTRE OF THE TRIANGLE: SHOWING HAVAI'I, THE BIRTHPLACE OF LANDS



established, and, in the course of time, the school systematized the scattered fragments of myth and history that had been remembered by various voyagers from Micronesia. That systematization took place locally is borne out by the fact that the myths and legends were applied to the local area. The pattern established was ultimately carried by later voyagers in varying degrees of completeness to the remote angles of the Polynesian triangle. Tahitian mythology or theology, however, continued to evolve; and the myths, as recorded for Tahiti by Teuira Henry from the manuscripts of the Reverend Orsmond, include changes made after the long-distance mariners had left the near homeland of Havai'i.

Ta'aroa, the Creator, was self-begotten, for he had no father and no mother. He sat in a shell named Rumia, shaped like an egg, for countless ages in endless space in which there was no sky, land, sea, moon, nor stars. This was the period of continuous, countless darkness (*po iiniini*) and thick impenetrable darkness (*po ta'ota'o*). At long last Ta'aroa cracked the shell to hatch himself. He stood on the shell and called in various directions, but no sound answered from the void. He retired within Rumia into an inner shell termed Tumu-iti (Lesser-foundation), where he lay torpid for a further untold period. At last, he determined to act. He emerged and made the inner shell of Rumia into a foundation for the rock and soil of the world, and the outer shell he made into the dome of the sky which was low and confined. He breathed into the rock foundation the essence of himself and personified it as Tumu-nui to be the husband; likewise he personified the rock stratum as Paparahaha to be the wife. Both, however, refused to obey the command of Ta'aroa to approach each other, for each had a fixed appointed place in the earth structure from which they would not move.

Then Ta'aroa created rocks, sand, and earth. He conjured up Tu, the great craftsman, to help him in the task of creation, and together they formed the myriad roots. The dome of Rumia was raised on pillars, and thus space beneath was extended. The space was termed *atea* and pervaded with a spirit personified as Atea. Land and space were increased and the underworld was set apart. Forest trees and food plants grew, and living things appeared on the land and in the sea. At the back were the mountains, personified as Tu-mou'a, with land, springs, and rivers. In front was the ocean and its rocks ruled by the ocean lord, Tino-rua. Above was Atea (Space) and below was Rua (Abyss). The land was Havai'i, the birthplace of other lands, gods, kings, and man.

Darkness brooded under the confined dome of Rumia. The gods Tu, Atea, Uru, and others were created or conjured forth by Ta'aroa in darkness. Later the stars and the winds were born. From Ta'aroa and Atea, who figures in the early part of this mythological period as a female, the god Tane was born as a viable mass without form. Skilled artisans were called to shape Tane. They came in pairs, carrying their kits of stone tools slung over their shoulders, but at the sight of the majesty of Atea, they retired in fear. Then Atea herself assumed the task of shaping Tane, and successively formed all the anatomical details associated with the human body, including the boring of the external ear passages with a fine spiral shell. After these many plastic operations, duly enumerated in myth, Tane assumed perfect form and became the god of beauty (*te atua o te purotu*). Ta'aroa exalted Tane in power, and he became the god of craftsmen. Another of the major gods, Ro'o, was born of a cloud and became the colleague and messenger of Tane. At a later period, Atea changed sex with Fa'ahotu to become a

male, the sex attributed to Atea in the myths of other islands.

The Tahitian myth of the creation of man is lacking in detail. Ta'aroa with the aid of Tu, the great artisan, created Ti'i, the first human being. The word *rahu* (to create) is used, but as one of the names of Ti'i is given as Ti'i-ahu-one (Ti'i-mounded-from-earth) it is apparent that he was formed from earth. He married the goddess Hina, daughter of Te Fatu (Lord, Core) and Fa'ahotu (To-begin-to-form). The children of Ti'i and Hina intermarried in the period of darkness with the gods of that era. The children whom they conceived were the ancestors of the high chiefs entitled to wear the red feather girdles denoting the highest rank, but the children whom they simply conjured up became the progenitors of the common people.

In another version, Ti'i created a woman from earth at Atiauru, took her to wife, and committed incest with his daughter to beget the first man. Another story states that Ta'aroa married Hine-ahu-one (Earth-formed-maid) and produced Ti'i as the first man. The three versions are mentioned because we will meet them later.

In this period of confined darkness was born the famous Maui family of demigods. Ru had a daughter, Ruahea, who married Hihira (Sun-ray) and gave birth to five sons, all named Maui with a qualifying term, and a daughter, Hina. The last Maui was born prematurely and was cast into the sea. The gods took pity on him and nursed him to maturity in a coral cave beneath the ocean. He developed eight heads and hence was called Maui-with-eight-heads (Maui-upo'ovaru). When he grew up he performed miracles, but in the Tahitian version he is not associated with the fishing-up of islands, as he was in other groups.

Many artisans were employed to raise the sky and let

light into the world, but all retired with their kits of stone tools when they came before the dread face of Atea, the God of Space, beneath the dome of Runia. Ru, the grandfather of the great Maui, made the first attempt to prop up the sky. He managed to raise it onto the mountain peaks where it rested on the leaves of the arrowroot, which consequently became flattened. But his physical efforts made him humped-backed and so he desisted. The task was then attempted by Tino-rua, Lord of the Ocean, but he also failed. Maui, under the name of Maui-ti'ti'i, studied the problem and decided that the way to succeed was to remove the pillars on which Rumia rested, to detach the tentacles of the Great Octopus which were holding the sky, and to relax the grip of Atea who held the earth. After trying in vain, Maui sought aid of Tane in the tenth heaven. By means of shell cutting and boring instruments and great logs for levers and props, Tane detached Atea and pushed him up on high. Thus light came into the world, and the long night of Rumia was ended. Tane then employed Ra'i-tupua, who dwelt in the Milky Way, to restore order to the upper spheres of heaven which had been dislocated by the raising of Atea to his present position high above the world. The sun, moon, and stars were set in their appointed places, and peace and order reigned above. In the lower world, temples and houses were built, and man adjusted himself to an environment which provided food on land and sea.

The land that had been established had been termed Havai'i, and the Tahitian bards seem to have taken for granted that this Havai'i was the island now known as Raiatea. The ocean to the west of Havai'i was termed the Sea-of-rank-odour, and the ocean to the east was the Sea-of-the-moon. The births of new lands, conjured up as

was Havai'i, are described by the ancient poets as follows:

Let more land grow from Havai'i,
 From Havai'i, the birthplace of lands.
 The quickened spirit of the dawn rides
 Upon the flying scud beyond restraining bounds
 Bear thou on! Whence beats the drum?
 It beats beyond in the western sea,
 Where the sea boils and casts up Vavau;
 Vavau, the first-born of the family,
 With the fleet that strikes both ways.

Thus Vavau (Porapora), to the drumming of the surf, emerged from the depths. Again, to the beating of the ocean drum, the smaller islands of Tupai, Maurua (Maupiti), Mapiha'a (Lord Howe Island), Putai (Scilly Island), and Papaiti (Bellingshausen) emerged in quick succession from the deep. The bard then faced east and sang:

Bear thou on! Whence beats the drum?
 It beats beyond in the eastern sea,
 Where the drumming surf casts up Huahine,
 The land that reveres its chiefs,
 The land set in the Sea-of-the-moon.

The towering seas cast up Maiao-iti, and then the sound of the drumming waves receded to Tuamotu, Marquesas, Havai'i, distant lands that at present do not concern us. The family of islands forming the leeward group had been born around the motherland of Havai'i.

According to mythology, the windward group was created after the religious centre of Opoa had developed in Havai'i. At that time, the present sea channel between Havai'i (Ra'iatea) and 'Uporu (Taha'a) was filled by land. For an impending ceremony, sacred restrictions were imposed at Opoa. No cock must crow, no dog bark, and neither pig

nor man must walk abroad. The wind ceased to blow, and the sea became still. In the midst of this dread silence, a beautiful girl named Tere-he stole secretly away to bathe in a river that ran near her home. The gods punished the infringement of taboo by causing her to drown. A giant eel swallowed her whole and became possessed by her spirit. The eel became enraged and tore up the foundation of the land between Havai'i and 'Uporu. The loosened land floated away on the surface of the sea like a huge fish. The head of the fish had been at Opoa and the tail extended to 'Uporu. As it floated out toward the horizon, the gods did not interrupt their sacred ritual at Opoa, but Tu, the great artisan of Ta'aroa, took charge of the fish. He stood on its head, which is now Tairapu, and guided its course to the east and south to the horizon of a new sky. The fish was Tahiti-nui (Great Tahiti) possessed by the soul of the maid, Tere-he. The first dorsal fin of the fish stood up and formed the highest mountain of Orohena. The second dorsal fin detached itself and fell over the steering paddle to follow in the wake as Tahiti-iti (Little Tahiti). It became the island of 'Ai-meo, now called Mo'orea. The great fish dropped off other fragments which became the small islands of Meti'a and Te Tiaroa. The little fish also dropped a fragment which became Mai'ao-iti. Thus Great Tahiti and the smaller islands of the windward group were established from the land fish which floated away from Havai'i, the mother of lands. Tu, having finished his task as pilot, returned to the religious convention that was being held by the gods at Opoa.

Study the map on page 67, and you will see how accurately myths have been based on geographical position. The emergence of Tahiti from the gap between Ra'iatea and Taha'a does not require such credence as the western theory that the

moon emerged from the Pacific Ocean. The head of the fish (Tairapu) certainly points in the direction in which the fish was piloted, and Mo'orea lies behind in its wake. I have lived at Papeete (chief town of Tahiti), visited Tairapu, gazed across at the rugged skyline of Mo'orea, and come in and out on ocean liners, but I never realized the relative positions of the individual units composing the Society Islands until I restudied the map in the light of Tahitian mythology. The myths were composed from the verbal logs of deep-sea mariners, and the picture of the relative positions is as accurate as if the bards had had a modern chart spread out before them.

When the land of Tahiti floated down to the present location, there were brave warriors upon it, but, according to later traditions, there were no high chiefs of royal lineage among them. When Tu returned to Havai'i, Tahiti was left without gods, at least without the gods worshipped at Opoa. The early people of Tahiti were termed Manahune and were governed by warrior chiefs called *fatu*. Because the later chiefly families did not officially trace their descent through them, the term *manahune* came to mean plebeian. Tahiti was therefore termed Tahiti-manahuna, Tahiti without royal chiefs and without gods. Both high chiefs and gods have belittled the achievements of the early people who made their creation possible.

Native legend states that the land of Tahiti had been long standing; new generations were born in the land, bananas ripened, mountain plantains matured, the crowing of cocks resounded in the woods, dogs barked on the seashore, hogs' tusks turned upward, 'ava plants developed their roots, taro plants blossomed, sugar cane leaned forward, breadfruit fermented in the pits, and songs accompanying the beating of bark cloth were heard in the land.

In spite of this picture of happy contentment, the warrior leaders were uneasy regarding the stability of their fish. The fish that had swum from Havai'i might swim elsewhere. The warrior, Tafa'i, said that the sinews of the fish must be cut to render its position permanent. A number of warriors, whose names were personifications of varying moods of the ocean, hacked the land with their stone adzes but to no avail. Tafa'i then called upon the gods of the sky, the sea, and the moon to assist, but no god responded to his prayer. Tafa'i sailed south to Tupua'i in the Austral Islands to seek aid of King Marere-nui. The king asked what gods had assisted them in their efforts. Tafa'i replied, 'None! Tahiti-manahune stands there without gods.' The king after reflection gave Tafa'i a stone adze which bore the name of Te-pa-huru-nui-ma-te-vai-tau, and with it the sinews of the fish Tahiti were effectively divided. Formerly a chain of mountains extended throughout the length of Tahiti, but this was severed with the magic adze, and the gap forms the present isthmus of Taravao connecting the head, Tairapu, with the body of the fish. The throat of the fish had been cut and it became stable.

A time arrived when the gods of Opoa in Havai'i came down to the westerly winds of Tahiti, and the people fled in terror to the caves and ravines of the mountains. Like birds' peckings were the morsels of food at that time. The gods settled first on Mo'orea and then spread to Tautira in Tahiti, where their reign was tyrannous. They demanded the heads of warrior men, and the people deserted Tautira through fear of the gods. Nought remained but the birds. The people begged the gods not to destroy them, and the gods harkened to their prayers. The gods gradually spread throughout the land of Great Tahiti, and the people returned

to their homes, having no more fear. Temples were erected and dedicated to them, and the people adjusted themselves to the new theology.

Myths and traditions have been freely quoted to give a picture of the Tahitian method of narrating events that occurred so far back that they have become clothed with the supernatural. If this form of literary style is interpreted in the spirit and not in the letter, we may grasp the main order of human events as they occurred in the dim past.

From the mythical account of the origin of Tahiti, it is evident that the priests at Opoa imposed severe religious restrictions upon the people. The silence imposed on cocks and dogs, confinement on pigs and man, and stillness on the wind and sea are indications of a tyrannous rule. The action of the maid Tere-he may be interpreted as a rebellion by the Manahune against these restrictions. The name Tere-he may be translated as Floating-away-through-sin, and it aptly illustrates the Polynesian method of recording events by applying them as proper names to persons who figure in the story. Her death by drowning and the struggles of the sea eel imbued with her spirit indicate that reprisals followed and an upheaval took place. As a result of the social upheaval, a section of the warlike Manahune, who worshipped the god Tu, set out in their canoes to seek a new home. The later historians admitted the association of Tu with the Manahune by allowing Tu to pilot the fish, but they stole Tu by returning him to Opoa, thus leaving the Manahune without gods. The fish that broke away from Havai'i was not the island of Tahiti but the Manahune fleet that conveyed the first inhabitants to Tahiti. Hence the first name of Tahiti was Tahiti-Manahune, Tahiti-of-the-Manahune-people. The gods who followed after were the people influ-

enced by the priests of Opoa. They established themselves on the nearest island of Mo'orea and afterwards on the main island of Tahiti in the district of Tautira. They demanded the heads of Manahune warriors, which statement may be accepted literally as indicating that they killed many of the Manahune and conquered them. Finally, peace was made and the vanquished accepted both the rule and the gods of their conquerors.

So the priests and scholars at Opoa pieced together broken records and scraps of myths to compose a Genesis that would apply to their new home and oceanic environment. They deified the leaders of early expeditions who, in the course of time, became major gods, such as Ta'aroa, Tu, Tane, Ro'o, and others. As gods, they took part in the creation of the sky dome, the earth foundation beneath it, and the things that grew on land and in water. Man was connected with the gods through genealogies, for, in truth, the gods had been human ancestors before they were made divine. In addition to gods and demigods, certain natural phenomena and evolutionary concepts were added to the pantheon in the personifications of Atea (Space), Papa (Earth foundation), Te Tumu (Source, Cause), and Fa'ahotu (To being-to-form).

The mediums of family gods graduated into powerful priests, who composed appropriate invocations and a richer ritual. They developed the architecture of the temple from a simple pattern of a cleared space before a stone upright into a paved or gravelled courtyard before a raised stone platform. At Opoa, the great temple, or marae, of Taputapu-atea was erected to the new god, 'Oro, the son of Ta'aroa, and its fame spread far and wide. New temples were built in the Society Islands, but, in order to acquire religious prestige, a stone from Taputapu-atea had to be incorporated

in the building. It was the leaven from which new structures derived *mana* (power).

For years I had cherished the wish to make a pilgrimage to Taputapu-atea. From Maori traditions, I knew that some of my ancestors had come from Ra'iatea, and I felt that much of our theology had emanated from Opoa and its chief temple. Fortunately, during a Bishop Museum expedition to the Cook Islands in 1929, I found myself on the northern atoll of Tongareva (Penrhyn), and my quickest means of getting back to my base at Rarotonga was by way of the Society Islands. Through the courtesy extended by the New Zealand Navy Department to scientists in the field, I was picked up at Tongareva by H.M.S. *Veronica* en route to Ra'iatea. As we steamed southeast, I could not help feeling what a vast difference the centuries had made. Here we were on a steel-clad British man-of-war, steering a course by compass, observing the sun at noon with an accurate instrument, and plotting off the position on a chart with all the islands accurately located. The number of miles per day could be absolutely controlled, and we knew the hour that we would arrive at Ra'iatea. The Manahune vanguard had sailed down this identical course centuries before in wooden vessels made with shell tools, with matting sails and man power at the paddles, no compass, no sextant, no chart, but a firm faith that they would land somewhere.

'Porapora of the muffled paddles' rose sheer from the sea before us, a magnificent sight to one who had spent even a brief month on atoll islands. Farther on, Taha'a and Ra'iatea towered into view, and beyond lay Huahine. Here before us, in the Sea-of-rank-odour and the Sea-of-the-moon, lay the great islands where Polynesian history was made. We approached Ra'iatea, the ancient Havai'i, and steamed

through the capacious reef channel to tie up to a buoy in the deep lagoon before the chief village of Uturoa. The Commander went ashore to pay an official call, and I landed with him. I felt that I should reverently pick up some of the sacred soil of Havai'i from the first footprint that I made on stepping ashore. But it could not be done, for we landed on a modern wharf with wooden buildings forming the background. The old world atmosphere of Havai'i, the birthplace of lands, that I had been conjuring up in my imagination, was rudely displaced by a modern French trading village. It was all wrong.

My melancholy musings were interrupted by a familiar voice. Before me, with a welcoming smile, stood K. P. Emory, a member of the Bishop Museum staff who was to conduct an expedition into the Tuamotu Archipelago on a motor launch built at Tahiti. The boat had been completed and was being tried out on a trip from Tahiti to Ra'iatea. It had been given the ancient canoe name of *Mahina-i-te-pua* (The-crescent-wave-at-the-bow-that-bursts-into-foam-like-a-flower). Emory had been told when I would arrive at Ra'iatea and said, 'I have come to give the boat a trial and to take you to Taputapu-atea.'

The people of Ra'iatea had gathered at Uturoa to celebrate the French fête of the fall of the Bastille. In the evening, various village groups competed in singing and acting out some historical or legendary incident. One of these plays represented the origin of the little cluster of stars known as Pipiri-ma (The-twin-stars-in-Scorpio). The story goes that a selfish fisherman and his wife ate his catch of fish and sent their two children supperless to bed. The two children, therefore, ran away and ascended a mountain. Their parents pursued them. As the children stood on the mountain peak,

their parents besought them to return, but the children refused. When the parents ascended the peak, the children sprang up into the sky, where they became the stars Pipiri-ma. In the play, a rather corpulent man and his wife sat beside a burning coconut leaf that represented the cooking fire. The two children lying on the ground peeked through their fingers at their parents going through the pantomime of eating fish. Finally the parents lay down to sleep, and the two children crept quietly away toward a high pole in the show ground that represented a legendary mountain. At the foot of the mountain were two chairs fixed to ropes which ran through pulleys at the top of the pole. The parents woke up and, with exaggerated wailing, followed in pursuit. As they neared the mountain, the two children were hauled up in the chairs and suspended in the heavens. The corpulent father clasped the foot of the pole and besought the children to come back. The two children produced electric torches and took evident delight in flashing them down on the upturned face of their remorseful father. The flashes of light from the modern electric torches represented the twinkling rays of the star cluster, Pipiri-ma.

Next morning we sailed down the lagoon to deserted Opoa. The old people who might have conjured back some of the religious atmosphere were still at the fête of Uturoa. Taputapu-atea stands on a low, wide cape bounded on either side by beautiful bays. The court of the temple was overgrown with weeds, but the altar (*ahu*), 141 feet long by 25 feet wide, bore witness to past grandeur. The stone platform was walled with huge slabs of coral limestone embedded in the earth, and the enclosure was filled in with loose rock through which, formerly, skulls were scattered or piled in recesses until the people had to conceal them elsewhere from

the acquisitive fingers of foreign vandals. Some of the slabs rose twelve feet above the ground; some had fallen, revealing an inner row of lower wall slabs which showed that a larger platform had been built around and above a smaller structure. Thus modern decay revealed the evidence of previous growth whereby the first temple of Feoro had become Vai'otaha and finally had risen in size and importance to become the international marae of Taputapu-atea. Near the temple was an upright stone pillar, nine feet high, termed the White-rock-of-investiture (*Te Papa-tea-ia-ruea*). Here the head of the royal line of Opoa, girdled with a red feather belt and seated on his wooden seat of honour, was raised to the top of the pillar as part of the ceremony of investiture. Close to the beach was another marae on which the human sacrifices brought by canoe were laid to await their turn in the temple ritual of Taputapu-atea.

We took pictures of speechless stone and inanimate rock. I had made my pilgrimage to Taputapu-atea, but the dead could not speak to me. It was sad to the verge of tears. I felt a profound regret, a regret for—I know not what. Was it for the beating of the temple drums or the shouting of the populace as the king was raised on high? Was it for the human sacrifices of olden times? It was for none of these individually but for something at the back of them, all, some living spirit and divine courage that existed in ancient times and of which Taputapu-atea was a mute symbol. It was something that we Polynesians have lost and cannot find, something that we yearn for and cannot recreate. The background in which that spirit was engendered has changed beyond recovery. The bleak wind of oblivion had swept over Opoa. Foreign weeds grew over the untended courtyard, and stones had fallen from the sacred altar of

Taputapu-atea. The gods had long ago departed. To keep down the rising tide of feeling, I said bruskiy in the American vernacular, 'Let's go'.



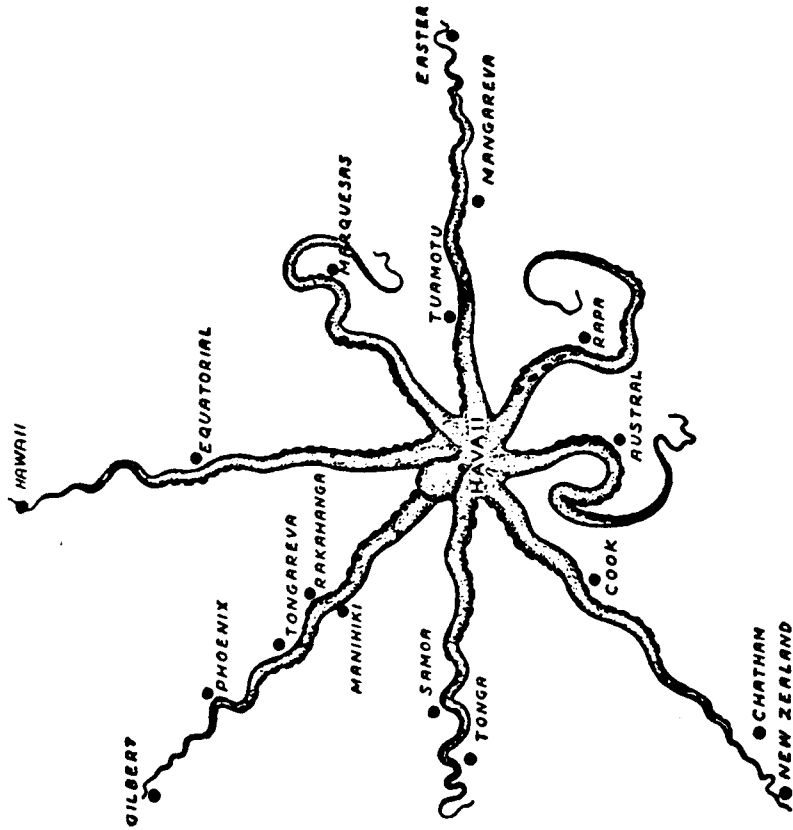
8. THE HUB OF POLYNESIA

They sailed east to Mangareva, south to the parrakeet islands, west to Samoa, and north to burning Vaïhi.

TAHITIAN LEGEND

HAVAI'I, the mother of lands, became the hub of the Polynesian universe. The daring mariners who had steered their ships through the unpierced horizon into the heart of the Pacific received the highest honour from their descendants by being elevated to the rank of gods. The priests at Opoa gathered the warp of myth and the weft of history together and wove them into the textile of theology. The male parents of the gods were Atea (Space) or 'Te Tumu (Source), and their mothers were Papa (Earth foundations) or Fa'ahotu (To-cause-to-take-form). Their children were given rule over special departments: Tane, forestry and craftsmanship; Tu, war; Ro'o, peace and agriculture; Ta'arua, marine affairs and fishing; and Ra'a, meteorology. However, there is evidence that Tane had the greatest sphere of influence. He was given the special function of forming the first female out of earth and procreating the first human beings. In the course of time, various islands of the Society group tended to pay deference to different gods. The general pattern of a Sky-father and an Earth-mother with their deified children ruling

over various departments of life was carried abroad by adventurers who navigated their ships over new horizons to reach the remote bounds of Polynesia. The marginal areas have retained the main principles of the early theology and so enabled the descendants of a later age to envisage the early pattern.



After the pattern had been carried to distant islands, the priests at Opoa elevated Ta'aroa above his brothers and made him creator of all things, not only of his brother gods and men, but of natural phenomena that had existed before he

came into being. I cannot help but the highest ranking chief and his priestly adviser to a lineage tracing descent directly from Ta'aroa are their selection of this particular god for promising power of Ta'aroa permeated to some of islands of the Cook group and the Tuamotu or Mangareva, but no farther. In the far lands of Tonga and Hawaii he remained in his original place.

The priests at Opoa elaborated it still further when they created 'Oro as the sea. This new god was established as the supreme great temple named Taputapu-atea. Ta'aroa waded and ceased to take an active part in the music of men. In order to spread their new cult in Tonga priests of Opoa organized the 'Arioi Society players, who took 'Oro as their tutelary deity. The organization has been regarded as a secret society with affinity with Melanesian secret societies. There was nothing secret about the 'Arioi; they played the open and in public halls to which both men and women were admitted. It has been assumed that the 'Amstitution for birth control because the female must not supposed to have children and were forced to have them. European actresses cannot afford to have them as to fulfil their engagements. Similar actresses were frowned upon if they were seen on the stage, and, when their methods failed, they destroyed their infants.

That the 'Arioi Society was a pose of spreading propaganda and winning support for cult may be seen by analogy with the methods of arioi sects usually associated with some form of magic or herbal

treatment. At the back of all these sects was the idea of *mana* (power) possessed by the leader through being the medium of a defunct ancestor. The leader and a band of followers, including good singers and dancers, travelled from village to village, not only to cure and win supporters, but to receive entertainment and rewards. The performances sponsored by members of the sect brought people into the fold more readily than would any other form of propaganda. The 'Arioi Society, like these, was founded on an appreciation of Polynesian psychology.

However, the people of Tahiti were not to be easily proselytized again. They persisted in adhering to their own god Tane, and a violent war broke out between 'Oro and Tane. In the end, 'Oro conquered Tane and ultimately became the principal god of all the Society Islands. A new temple, named Taputapu-atea after the temple at Opoa, was built in Tahiti as the centre of the new theology. That 'Oro was a late creation is amply proved by the fact that he is unknown in the marginal areas of Polynesia, even as a son of Ta'aroa. The Rarotongans, however, had some faint knowledge of what had been happening in Opoa for, when the missionary John Williams arrived in Rarotonga from Ra'iatea in 1823, he was asked if Koro ('Oro) was in power. Some of the faithful followers of Tane, who refused to accept 'Oro, left Tahiti and settled in the outer fringe of the Cook Islands. Thus in the Pacific, as well as in the Atlantic, religious intolerance played its part in causing the settlement of new lands.

Let us leave the priests and their intrigues on land and get back to the smack of the salt sea spray. The deified ancestors were succeeded by demigods, among whom are Maui and Ru. Maui we have met before and shall meet again on the various sea trails that radiate out from the centre. Ru as a

navigator may be Ru who assisted in propping up the sky. He appears in Tahitian legends and chants as a deep-sea mariner who guided his ship *Te Apori* to the leeward islands of the Society group. His sister Hina, perched in the swing-bow above the foaming waves, peered into the lifting horizon. Ru, feeling that land was near, sang to his ship:

I am guiding thee,

I am drawing thee to land,

O my ship, Te Apori.

Hina, the lookout, called, 'O Ru, what land is this rising upon the horizon?' Ru replied, 'It is Maurua, which will be great forever.' Maurua (Maupiti) is a small island to the west of Vavau (Porapora).

Soon Hina sighted another island, and Ru sang:

It is Porapora; let its watchword be—

Porapora the great, the first-born,

Porapora with the fleet that strikes both ways,

Porapora of the silent, muffled paddles,

Porapora of the pink leaf,

Porapora, the destroyer of fleets.

Porapora was the first large volcanic island sighted on a southeast course from the Gilberts and hence earned the name of 'the first-born'. In later times, its inhabitants raided the neighbouring islands in silent night attacks with their paddles muffled with bark cloth. In the period of Ru, the island bore the ancient name of Vavau, and it is evident that the poet has grouped later happenings around an earlier hero to enrich his composition.

Again Hina called and Ru, the deep-sea poet, sang:

It is Havai'i; let its watchword be—

Havai'i that rises in exceeding glory,

Havai'i, ever ready to defend its honour.

Let us leave Ru and Havai'i and pass from the demigods to the heroes. The heroes belong to the period when central Polynesia was definitely settled and the priests at Opoa were weaving the first pattern of Polynesian theology. They are more human because they belong to a later period and, though miraculous elements still enshroud them, they were not deified. The heroes were deep-sea mariners who began to explore the horizons beyond central Polynesia. The great explorers of the heroic period are included in the cycle of the four generations of Hema, Tafa'i, Vahieroa, and Rata. Space does not permit of our dealing with more than one and, as Rata has already been mentioned in connection with canoe building, let us take the Tahitian account of his great voyage and the incidents that led up to it.

In north Tahiti there lived King Tumu-nui, whose sister Mamae-a-rohi married Vahieroa and gave birth to a son named Rata. Tumu-nui had a daughter who married Tu-i-hiti, a chief who came from the distant land of Hiti-au-rereva, away to the east. In due course, Tu-i-hiti fitted up his ship *Kare-roa* and, with his wife, returned to his own land. Tumu-nui felt the loss of his daughter deeply and decided to visit her in order to persuade her to return to Tahiti with her husband. He built a voyaging ship named *Matie-roa* and a canoe named *Matie-poto*. After appointing his brother 'Iore-roa regent, he sailed for the east with picked crews.

It is but natural that the deep-sea mariners of the time should have recounted to wondering audiences the many difficulties encountered on their voyages and that native story tellers should have personified them into monsters imbued with magic power. The monsters encountered on the distant seas to the east were eight in number:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Pu'a-tu-tahi | Isolated-coral-rock. |
| 2. Ahifa-tu-moana | Sea-monster. |
| 3. 'Are-mata-roao | Long-wave. |
| 4. 'Are-mata-popoto | Short-wave. |
| 5. 'Anae-moe-oho | Fish-shoal. |
| 6. Tupe-'i'o-ahu | Animal-with-burning-flesh. |
| 7. 'Otu'u-ha'amana-a-Ta'aroa | Crane-empowered-by-Ta'aroa. |
| 8. Pahua-nui-api-ta'a-i-te-ra'i | Giant-tridacna-opening-on-the-horizon. |

Tumu-nui, having performed his religious duties correctly as a protection against the various dangers, had supreme confidence in himself. He encountered Coral-rock, Sea-monster, Long-wave, and Short-wave successively in the daytime, and his gods, in answer to his appeals, rendered each of these enemies inert. On a cloudy night, however, he sailed into the open valves of the Giant-tridacna, and both ship and canoe were swallowed by the monster. Their fate was made known to the people of Tahiti by the gods.

The regent 'Iore-roa decided to recover the bones of his brother and built a ship *Tumu-nui-mate* and a canoe *Mei'a-roa* for the voyage. Accompanied by Vahieroa, father of Rata, and a picked crew of brave men, he sailed forth. He had sacrificed a pig to his god and, as he was challenged successively by Coral-rock, Sea-monster, Long-wave, Short-wave, Fish-shoal, and Crane-of-Ta'aroa, he told them that their inimical powers, both above and below, had been overcome by his sacrifice of a pig. Coral-rock and Sea-monster let the ships pass safely, Long-wave and Short-wave subsided beneath their bows, Fish-shoal turned aside, and Crane-of-Ta'aroa flew out of sight. The Giant-tridacna was next encountered and the ship was drawn by suction toward its gaping valves. 'Iore-roa defied the Giant-tridacna too late to stay the way on his ship, and the vessel disappeared into the interior. The canoe *Mei'a-roa* had fallen behind and so escaped to tell the tale of disaster in Tahiti.

The three remaining brothers, 'Iore-poto, 'Iore-mumu, and 'Iore-vava successively built ships and sailed forth to avenge the deaths of the king, the regent, and their crews, but all were swallowed by the Giant-tridacna. Rata thus became king of Tahiti but his mother, Maemae-a-rohi, served as regent and issued the edict, 'Tread the earth, cultivate food, let people grow fat, and take care of your offspring that they may replace those who sleep on the pathways of the sea.'

The people prospered and Rata grew to giant stature. The Queen Regent decided that the time had arrived for her to retire in favour of her son. A feast was held and a wild boar hunt was organized to celebrate the assumption of power by the young king. The regent urged upon her son the necessity of remaining strictly neutral during the competition between the two parties, each composed of two of the four districts that comprised his kingdom. Rata, however, became excited and, dashing into the hunt on the side of one party, struck down competitors of the other side who got in his way. His strength was so great that some were killed and others badly injured. The sport ended on a tragic note. His mother bitterly upbraided Rata for killing his own subjects and, in spite of his shame and tears, she decided to go with her sister to the far land of Hiti-au-rereve to visit her sister's daughter. The great double canoe *Tahiri-a-varovaro-i-te-ra'i* was launched and set sail through the long chain of atolls of the Tuamotu Archipelago. The crew evidently steered a course that avoided the monsters of the sea, for the canoe arrived safely at Hiti-au-rereve.

Rata, by his deep contrition, regained the favour of his people. He determined to recover the bones of the dead from the bowels of the Giant-tridacna. His artisans told him that the finest trees in the lowlands had been used for the

previous ships and that he must seek suitable timber in the uplands. It was this scarcity that led Rata to trespass on the territory of the elves of the upper woodlands, the cliffs, and the mountain mists. Certain details of the adventures which befell him have been described in Chapter 4.

The fairy artisans who directed the building of Rata's ship were Tuoi-papapapa and Feufeu. On the completion of the ship, they made an offering of sennit braid to Ta'aroa, and the god responded by sending a shower of rain for the ceremony of making the new ship drink water. The ship was named *Va'i-ama* and, with the elves aboard, it was wafted by the mountain breeze into the air and deposited gently on the surface of the sea. Rata, early awakened by dreams of the promised ship, went down to the seashore. The rising sun threw a magnificent rainbow on the clouds facing him, and his magic ship under full sail appeared below the middle of the arch. Manned by its invisible crew, it sailed proudly into the waiting lagoon, furled its matting sails, and dropped anchor to await its human owner.

With such a ship, success was assured. Rata manned it with picked warriors and, before he sailed, made the necessary offerings of fish and coral rock on the altar of the gods of the land. Long strips of bark cloth were cast on the ocean billows to placate the gods of the sea, and large sharks immediately appeared to convey marine approbation. A skilled pilot took the steering paddle. He was termed the *hoa pahi*, friend of the ship, an apt term, for it was through his knowledge that the ship successfully avoided treacherous reefs and surmounted towering seas. The voyage went well until the pilot called, 'Behold! There is the Giant-tridacna'. It was a fearsome sight. The upper valve arched high over the horizon and, above the submerged lower valve, the purple fringe

of the huge mollusc waved up and down on the surface of the rippling sea in dreadful expectancy. Nothing daunted, Rata and his armed warriors stood erect on the bow, for the sea trail had led them to the end of their quest.

As the ship glided over the edge of the lower valve, the purple fringe, like monster tentacles, undulated forward and lapped against the sides of the vessel. The shining inner surface of the upper valve, with its indented edge like huge teeth, loomed above them, poised for the downward plunge. Before it could fall, however, Rata and his men with one accord drove their spears below the purple fringe and along the inner surface of the lower valve toward the hinge; they completely severed the great muscle that held together the upper and the lower valves. The huge upper valve that towered above the mast of the ship remained poised on its locked hinge, motionless and impotent.

The body of the Giant-tridacna was cut open and in the interior were found the undigested bones of Tumu-nui and those who had followed after him. In addition, there were found the bodies of Rata's mother and her crew who, returning to Tahiti from Hiti-au-rereva, had been swallowed by the Giant-tridacna but a few hours before. Their bodies were still warm, and the priests with the aid of the god Ta'aroa restored them to life. Thus the living and the dead met between the now impotent valves of the Giant-tridacna. The bones of the dead and the bodies of the living were transferred to Rata's ship, which stood off while the warriors with their spears pried the base of the great bivalve from its coral pedestal. With a gurgling sound, the lifeless Giant-tridacna sank to the bottom of the ocean, nevermore to menace the voyagers who sailed the eastern seas.

Rata returned to Tahiti, where he restored his mother to

her people and the bones of the dead to their weeping relatives. He then set out to rid the seas of the remaining enemies of deep-sea mariners. He slew the Sea-monster that had its base at the Coral-rock, and the Coral-rock, robbed of its mate, became innocuous. Next he killed the Animal-with-burning-flesh and the Fish-shoal. When the Crane-empowered-by-Ta'aroa, which was inimical only to evil people, flew over Rata's ship, it greeted him kindly and flew to a quiet lagoon to be seen no more. The Long-wave and the Short-wave are essential dangers of the great ocean, and they remain alive today to test seamanship.

Coming back to land, we must mention the development that had been taking place in social organization. In Polynesian society the family was ruled by the senior male, who was succeeded by his eldest son. As the family extended into a wider group of kinsmen, the senior family head became a chief of increasing power according to the number of men he could control in peace or war. The extended family groups developed into tribes which claimed descent from early ancestors. History, prestige, and social ceremony developed around chiefs descended from the tribal ancestors. The ruling family at Opoa claimed seniority above all others in the Society Islands, and their claim was admitted. Ritual was built around them as around the gods. Human sacrifices were offered to the god 'Oro, and human sacrifices were demanded for the chiefs on birth and through the varying periods of youth until they were invested with the famous red feather belt at the temple of Taputapu-atea. The red feathers of the parrakeet became the symbol of high chiefs and of the gods. Wooden images that represented the gods were abandoned in the course of time to sorcerers and were replaced by wood beautifully encased in twined coconut fibre. These were

islands and for a time communication was maintained between the new colonies and Havai'i. Teuira Henry states that the various colonies were grouped into two divisions termed the Ao-tea (Light-world) and Ao-uri (Dark-world), and each division had a high priest termed respectively Pa'oa-tea and Pa'oa-uri. The two divisions formed the Friendly Alliance, and representatives from the different islands came to Opoa with offerings to the gods on the temple of Taputapu-atea. The great drum used in the temple ritual was named Ta'i-moana (Sound-at-sea). During a convention, an altercation arose in which both the high priests were killed. The people returned home in disorder and the connection of the outlying colonies with the homeland ended. A memory of the Friendly Alliance is retained in Rarotonga for, when John Williams visited that island from Ra'iatea, he was asked why the Ra'iateans had killed the high priest, Pa'oa-tea, and what had become of the great drum, Tangi-moana (Ta'i-moana).

At some time following the period of discovery of lands within Polynesia, there occurred a dispersal from the central hub to permanently occupy the new lands. The dispersal was probably caused by conflict due to increasing population with the inevitable striving after power in the homeland. Organized expeditions were headed by junior members of chiefly families who saw no chance of advancement at home. Because of their social prestige they were able to have voyaging ships built and to command adventurous crews to man their vessels. They were accompanied by priests skilled not only in navigation but versed in the traditional lore that had been developed up to the time of departure. From our knowledge of the theology and traditional lore of the far-away colonies, such as Hawaii and New Zealand, we know that they left after the first pattern of theology had been evolved at

decorated with hanging cords of coconut fibre to the ends of which were attached red feathers. The symbol of the great 'Oro rests unrespected in the British Museum. It is a beautiful example of technique but it is dead spiritually, for the red feathers which symbolized the divinity of 'Oro have long since disappeared. The royal family of Porapora wore girdles of yellow feathers to denote that their line was junior to the royal house of Ra'iatea. Through intermarriage both forms of girdle spread to the chiefly houses of Tahiti. With greater fertile lands and a greater population, Tahiti became increasingly powerful. It acquired prestige, and the poets changed its name from Plebeian Tahiti to Tahiti-nui-mare-'are'a, Great-Tahiti-of-the-golden-haze.

Coincident with the development and progress in theology and social organization, the arts and crafts expanded. The development of shipbuilding has been described in Chapter 4. The voyagers who succeeded Rata made explorations and returned to the homeland, not only with tales of their discoveries, but with the sailing directions by which the new lands might be reached. The explorers followed a star over a new horizon, but ever they looked back at the stars over the homeland and, when winds were favourable, returned to the centre from which they had set forth.

Among the voyagers of the later period were Hono'ura and Hiro. Hiro was born in Havai'i but was brought up in Tahiti, whither he was sent to be educated by his maternal grandfather, Ana. He was too young to be admitted immediately to the school, but his thirst for knowledge was so great that he climbed on the roof of the schoolhouse and learned all that his grandfather taught below. Apart from his adventures at sea, Hiro was said to be the first to make a ship constructed of planks instead of the usual dug-out hull.

The tales of discovery led to the peopling of the nearer

Opoa and after the tales of Hema, Tafa'i, Vahieroa, and Rata had been incorporated in the traditions of the homeland.

The period of greatest colonizing activity probably extended from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. Settlement was by a process of infiltration by individual canoes arriving at different times and not by a migration of large numbers at one time. It is certain that the Marquesas was settled at an early period, for it became a secondary centre for distribution from which adventurers set out to the east and colonized Mangareva and Easter Island. It is probable that the Marquesas was also used as a place of call by some, at least, of the colonists who made their way north to Hawai'i. The emigrants who set out to the marginal areas took with them not only the myths, legends, and traditions of the central homeland but also a rich supply of food plants and domestic animals with which to stock their new homes. The later colonists found some of the islands already occupied by their kinsmen of an earlier infiltration. Though conflict ensued, time led to a blending of the two.

And so, from Hawai'i, the hub of the Polynesian universe, a more abundant life was carried to the outer isles by those brave navigators who directed their ships on the course of a star that led to a safe haven. Others there must have been, as daring and as trusting in their star, whose course led them into empty seas. Such unlucky ones sleep beneath the barren sea roads they so vainly followed. **I**f the sea ever gives up its dead, what a parade of Polynesian mariners will rise from the depths when the call of the shell trumpet summons them to the last muster roll! Their numbers will bear witness to the courage of those who dared but failed to reach land which was not there. For them no human songs were sung, but the sea croons their requiem in a language that they understand.