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COLLECTED AND EDITED  
BY MARJORIE SINCLAIR

# THE PATH OF THE OCEAN

TRADITIONAL POETRY  
OF POLYNESIA

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The Path  
*of* the Ocean



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University of Hawaii Press  
Honolulu



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*For Leon*

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*I knew  
the language of the fishbone,  
the tooth of the hard fish,  
chill of the latitudes,  
blood of the coral, the silent  
night of the whale,  
for from land to land I went.*

Pablo Neruda

*Les migrations plus énormes que les  
anciennes invasions.*

Rimbaud



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# Preface

**T**HIS ANTHOLOGY of traditional Polynesian poetry was selected from translations made by missionaries, travelers, anthropologists, ethnologists, informed amateurs and a few persons with literary interest. Consequently the use of language has great variety. Some translators had a sensitive awareness of how English might render the meaning of the original text. Others were primarily eager to get down meanings. Most were concerned with the material as a record, an artifact or an account of societal and religious patterns and customs—not as poetry. My concern has been to present this anthology as a volume of poetry.

The language used by some translators presents difficulties. One is poetic inversion of syntax and another the use of archaic diction. In the anthology I have made certain small alterations—I have changed words, punctuation or syntax, and have rephrased lines when necessary. I have removed poetic archaisms and affectations. The diacritical marks, however, are those used by the translators. In the Hawaiian Pele and Hi'i-aka series I have retranslated several poems, using Nathaniel Emerson's work as a basis.

That these poems should be accompanied by some ethnological data is inevitable. I have limited myself to that which seemed necessary to make the poems as clear as possible. Persons who wish to pursue the ethnology can refer to the books and journals from which the material was taken. Such information will be found in the list of sources at the back.

I am very grateful to the following for their continued help in the work on this volume: to Renée Heyum, curator of the Pacific Collection at Hamilton Library, University of Hawaii, for invaluable advice about discovering sources, to Leon Edel and Galway Kinnell for a careful reading of the manuscript, and to W. S. Merwin for his reflections on poetry in translation. My primary debt is to the translators. I am also indebted to all those who through the years have guided and advised me in my pursuit of Polynesian poetry—Janet Bell, Alfons Korn, Katharine Luomala and Mary Kawena Pukui.



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# Introduction

**T**HE POEMS in this anthology were composed by a race of seafarers and island dwellers who crossed thousands of miles of ocean in frail vessels, guiding themselves by the stars and the feel of wave and wind. The poems reflect the ways in which they saw their universe of sea and sky and the scattered fragments of land they found and settled. Their chants tell of gods and rituals of gods, of heroes and heroisms—as well as the particulars of ordinary life. They sing of primary experience charged with emotion—birth, love, endurance, strife, death. Poetry was central to these people.

The islands of Polynesia fit neatly into a triangle with Hawaii at the north tip, New Zealand at the south and Easter Island at the east. The ocean area is vast, the land area small. There are tiny islands— atolls with mirroring lagoons; and large islands with mountains, volcanoes and even glaciers. Most of the islands are warm, usually comfortably warm; but there are more temperate climates as in New Zealand. The ancient voyagers found fair places to live.

Where did the Polynesians come from? They have a name for it: Hawaiki. The poets sing of a green and cherished place, a legendary homeland. Hawaii is named after it. Perhaps it is a place outside of Polynesia—the land from which they started. More likely it signifies an island or cluster of islands within the broad reaches of Polynesia itself.

There have been many theories about the original homeland of the Polynesians—that it was India, or

Indonesia or South America. A recent and widely accepted hypothesis suggests that a people, not yet Polynesian, started from the coastlands of Southeast Asia about the second millenium B.C. They moved slowly into and through the Philippines, through Melanesia and then out across the broad stretches of the sea toward the Polynesian Triangle. They reached the western tip about 1,000 B.C. Some recent research suggests an even earlier date. They settled in Samoa and Tonga, and they pushed eastward in long voy ages. No other people journeyed so far—and in such small vessels—across thousands of miles of sea. They found and settled the Cook Islands, the Society Islands, the Marquesas, the Tuamotus. They drove north to Hawaii and south to New Zealand.

Was this voyaging caused by human discord, human need? Warfare, overpopulation? The threat of starvation? Perhaps. We can only surmise; no absolute answers are available. There may have been among some people an inner restlessness to escape from island limits, a constant reaching toward sea horizons. Did they consciously set out to find new islands? Or were the journeys of discovery largely accidental—canoes blown off course into unknown seaways? What we know is that the Polynesians sailed resolutely east and north and south from their first settlements at the western edge of the Polynesian Triangle. They even found that remote “Navel of the World,” as the residents call it, Easter Island. The Polynesian dispersion and settlement are unusual in the history of the world, more like a flight of birds than an advance across the earth.

The Polynesians discovered and occupied the last uninhabited land area of the world, if we exclude the ice and snow of the polar regions. The area was

composed of island groups, usually far distant from each other. On these islands of beauty and isolation, they established their distinctive culture and a literature of subtlety and resonance.

When did the poetry and storytelling begin? Again we can only guess. Man starts very early to put his feelings into words. And words become patterns of rhythm. The literature which we identify as Polynesian was composed after those early people began settling in the western part of the Triangle and then traveled eastward. In this process of dispersion they were already creating their culture. Stories and chants among all the islands tell of the same gods and goddesses, the same heroes and tricksters, the same great voyagers; even the cosmogonies are similar. Language and song traveled in the canoes with coconuts, taro, children and dogs. As the language traveled, it acquired many variations and transliterations. Aloha is elsewhere *talofa* or *aroha*. The god Kanaloa in Hawaii is Tangaloa or Tangaroa in other islands.

Life was easier in the Polynesian Triangle than in the earlier stopping places of those voyaging peoples. Douglas Oliver points out that the concern for material things which was present in Melanesia declined as they settled on milder islands. The Polynesians poured their energies, he says, "into elaborating their mythologies, their religious rites, and their political interrelationships"; and into composing and memorializing lengthy genealogies which sometimes commenced with a beautiful cosmogonic poem. While they were elaborating their mythologies, they also extended their legends and folktales, often into long cycles. They recounted their history, delivered splendid orations, composed charms and riddles. They sang of universal things—warfare, love and hate, the

melancholy of growing old, birth and death, the beauty of rain, wind and sea.

In this process they developed their racial memory: they not only carried in themselves and transmitted to their children stories, myths and rituals, but trained themselves to remember long poems—the exact word orders, place names and allusions—even as the great epics were remembered in the west until the time came when they could be written down.

The Polynesian poet was trained in a formal school or by a master bard. When a student entered a course of instruction in poetry, chanting, music, dancing, he also entered a strictly patterned and austere way of life. His days were concentrated on learning—memory training—and perfecting his skills. In addition to chanting and dancing, many schools taught genealogies, myth and legend, temple ritual, the art of narrative, the art of oratory and astronomy. They trained troupes of chanters and dancers for both religious and secular purposes. The kind of training varied from island group to island group.

In the Marquesas, a father who wanted his son or daughter to be educated built a special house for a school and brought a bard to live in residence. The students were generally over twenty—they had to be serious and mature. Poetry, with music, dance and sacred lore, was a vital part of the pattern of society and as such could not be left to immature impulses. The bard himself had to exercise and maintain his skills and techniques. To prove that he was not in decline he often engaged in contests with other bards. In Mangareva there were experts, always of noble birth, called *rogorogo*. They had the role of historian, reciting genealogies, composing and singing chants which praised the aristocracy. The *rogorogo* were also

educators; from their teachings the song composers took themes for their poems. The Society Islands were famous for the Ariori, a complex and powerful organization which trained large troupes of dancers and singers and staged elaborate theatrical performances and pageants. Some troupes performed at parties and celebrations and others in the temple. At their height, the Ariori traveled in great fleets of canoes among the islands and put on elaborate and glittering programs—a living archive of music, chants, poetry and drama.

Of all the unwritten poetry which has been translated from Polynesian materials, the Hawaiian Pele and Hi'i-aka myth comes closest to epic scope and purpose. The poems were stored in the memories of many men and women and were widely scattered. They were collected in a volume of translations by Nathaniel B. Emerson, and I have included a selection in this anthology. It was Emerson's opinion that the Pele and Hi'i-aka story "stands at the fountain head of Hawaiian myth and is the matrix from which the unwritten literature of Hawaii drew its life-blood." The collection of poems is rooted in the primal elements of nature in Hawaii, especially the volcanoes and their raging fires. The psychology of the characters reflects all the passions—love, hate, jealousy, anger, tenderness. Pele and Hi'i-aka are goddesses. Lohi'au is a mortal. The goddesses, like those of the Greeks, possess the human passions. Their drama is played out against the background of the Hawaiian chain in such fashion that the islands themselves become characters in the story.

In the Pele and Hi'i-aka poems, places and their names are continually invoked—they serve as a source

of power and imagination. The power of place holds true in all of Polynesia. The many place names in Polynesian poems suggest a constant, minute and often intense observation of nature. When translated, the place name is usually descriptive—often a single feature of a beautiful or beloved spot. This feature can become symbolic. It may be identified with human experience. It may recall a person or an event. More profoundly, the place name reminds a Polynesian of his origin and bond with earth and sea. A name can also summon up a legend or a myth—or wondrous things that have happened in a given locality. The imagination seizes the word. It may reveal romantic or melancholy feelings about rain: the cold rain of Waimea or the rain which “sounds” like lehua flowers. It may summon up a wind: the dust-scattering wind of Ka‘u. The place name can be used for allusion, indirection and double meaning.

Such devices are important in Polynesian poetry. The Hawaiians have a word, *kaona*, for hidden meaning. Mary Kawena Pukui says of Hawaiian poetry that it has two meanings, the literal and the *kaona*. There are, however, some poems without the *kaona*. An illustration of the complexity of indirection is recorded in Thomas Barthel’s *The Eighth Land*. He presents two versions of a translation of a birth chant for a royal child on Easter Island. He calls the first version the “exoteric” or public; he calls the second the “esoteric.” He also suggests that there is a third level of interpretation possible, the erotic. His translation of the exoteric reads:

May the shadow of the king arise!  
The feathered staffs do not (yet) call.  
The many spears do not (yet) call.

One has been invested who rises and does not (yet)  
call.

One has been invested with supernatural powers  
who does not (yet) call.

The black shadow is yours, oh king!

The red shadow be yours, oh king!

The white shadow be yours, oh king!

Barthel admits the difficulty and tentativeness of presenting the esoteric. But he gives the following translation as example.

The king has been born!

Bare of all coverings is he who is lofty as a rainbow.

Like the red rays of the sun the god king triumphs!

Arrived has the successor, lofty as a rainbow;

Arrived has the one full of *mana*, the lofty  
triumphs.

Just now you have been born, oh king!

You shall grow, oh king!

You shall become great, oh king!

That one scholar could produce two such drastically different versions of the same poem illustrates the enormity of the problem of translating a literature so different from our own.

A great deal of work remains to be done with Polynesian poetry: more translations of untranslated work, new translations of what has already been done, and a continuing literary study of the poetry itself. Up to now, the translators have primarily been interested in recording history, material culture, social organization, religion, etc. Now we need to have translators who will treat the poems as works of literature, bringing to bear the penetration of literary scholarship. We

also need translators who are poets. Polynesian poetry can become a tradition within which the contemporary Polynesian can work as he composes poetry today.

The arrangement of this anthology does not attempt to follow a historical or ethnographic scheme; it is, however, roughly geographic. I begin with Hawaii and travel southward, sometimes to the east and sometimes to the west until finally New Zealand is reached. The structure of the anthology is in reality a metaphor, a north to south journey. This is reflected in the title: *The Path of the Ocean*.

The dates or periods of these poems are conjectural—just as the chronology of Polynesian history is open to continual inquiry. One cannot know how long many of the poems have lived in the memory of the people. Some scholars have attributed certain poems to the eighteenth century—the Hawaiian “Kumulipo” is believed to have been composed in that century. There are many poems which perhaps should be dated much earlier. If specific poets are named, an approximate time can be suggested. Where missionary or other western influence is observed—as in the sound of a piano, the name of a ship, an image which seems to come from the Bible—it is obvious that the poem was composed after the arrival of Captain Cook. Another clue is the period in which the poem was collected in the field; on occasion the anthropologist knew the poet who had composed the poem. In the nineteenth century, Hawaiian-language newspapers gathered and published poems and chants and in this way preserved some of the unwritten literature. It will probably never be possible to give Polynesian poems a



chronology in any western sense, for as we know the great library for this literature has been the human memory.

### **Notes**

For the origin of the Polynesians: Robert C. Suggs, *The Island Civilizations of Polynesia* (Mentor Books, New York).

Douglas Oliver, *The Pacific Islands* (Doubleday Anchor Books, rev. ed., New York, 1961).

For the education of the poet: Teuira Henry, *Ancient Tahiti* (Bishop Museum Bulletin 48, Honolulu, 1928); Katharine Luomala, *Voices on the Wind* (Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu, 1955); Peter Buck, *Ethnology of Mangareva* (Bishop Museum Bulletin 157, Honolulu, 1938).

Nathaniel B. Emerson, *Pele and Hi'i-aka* (Honolulu, 1915).

Thomas Barthel, *The Eighth Land* (University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1978).



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Hawaii





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# From

## “An ancient prayer”

Lono is the god of harvest and agriculture.

The spirit is within the smooth bones of the god.  
Here are the sacred signs of the assembly of Lono:  
The voice of thunder bursts forth;  
The rays of lightning flash;  
The earthquake shakes the land;  
The smoky cloud and the rainbow appear;  
Heavy rain and high wind blow;  
Whirlwinds sweep beneath the earth;  
Rocks fall on stream banks;  
Red mountain-streams rush to the sea.  
Here are the water spouts;  
The cluster clouds of heaven tremble;  
Springs in the cliffs gush forth.

...

Here is Lono the bone of glory;  
The bone placed in the clear sky.

# From “The Kumulipo”

“The Kumulipo” is a genealogical prayer chant of more than two thousand lines. This kind of chant celebrates the nobility of a chief’s family and connects it with the origin of things. The name, Kumulipo, means “beginning in deep darkness.” The poem is divided into sixteen sections called *wa*. The earlier part, from which these selections are taken, belongs to the period called *Po*, the night. The second part belongs to *Ao*, the day. More than half the chant is composed of straight genealogical pairings.

Queen Liliuokalani dates the poem 1700 and writes that Keaulumoku composed it.

## *Birth of sea and land life*

At the time when the earth became hot  
 At the time when the heavens turned about  
 At the time when the sun was darkened  
 To cause the moon to shine  
 The time of the rise of the Pleiades  
 The slime, this was the source of the earth  
 The source of the darkness that made darkness  
 The source of the night that made night  
 The intense darkness, the deep darkness  
 Darkness of the sun, darkness of the night  
     Nothing but night.

The night gave birth  
 Born was Kumulipo in the night, a male  
 Born was Po’ele in the night, a female  
 Born was the coral polyp, born was the coral,  
     came forth

---

Born was the grub that digs and heaps up the earth,  
came forth  
Born was his child an earthworm, came forth  
Born was the starfish, his child the small starfish  
came forth  
Born was the sea cucumber, his child the small sea  
cucumber came forth  
Born was the sea urchin, the sea urchin tribe  
Born was the short-spiked sea urchin, came forth  
Born was the smooth sea urchin, his child the long-  
spiked came forth  
Born was the ring-shaped sea urchin, his child the  
thin-spiked came forth  
Born was the barnacle, his child the pearl oyster  
came forth  
Born was the mother-of-pearl, his child the oyster  
came forth  
Born was the mussel, his child the hermit crab  
came forth  
Born was the big limpet, his child the small limpet  
came forth  
Born was the cowry, his child the small cowry  
came forth  
Born was the naka shellfish, the rock oyster his  
child came forth  
Born was the drupa shellfish, his child the bitter  
white shellfish came forth  
Born was the conch shell, his child the small conch  
shell came forth  
Born was the nerita shellfish, the sand-burrowing  
shellfish his child came forth  
Born was the freshwater shellfish, his child the  
small freshwater shellfish came forth

---

Born was man for the narrow stream, the woman  
for the broad stream

Born was the Ekaha moss living in the sea  
Guarded by the Ekahakaha fern living on land  
Darkness slips into light

Earth and water are the food of the plant  
The god enters, man cannot enter  
Man for the narrow stream, woman for the  
broad stream

Born was the tough seagrass living in the sea  
Guarded by the tough landgrass living on land

REFRAIN

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the  
broad stream

Born was the 'A'ala moss living in the sea  
Guarded by the 'Ala'ala mint living on land

REFRAIN

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the  
broad stream

Born was the Manauea moss living in the sea  
Guarded by the Manauea taro living on land

REFRAIN

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the  
broad stream

Born was the Ko'ele seaweed living in the sea  
Guarded by the long-jointed sugarcane, the  
ko'ele'ele, living on land

REFRAIN

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the  
broad stream

Born was the Puaki seaweed living in the sea  
Guarded by the Akiaki rush living on land



## REFRAIN

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the  
broad stream

Born was the Kakalamoa living in the sea  
Guarded by the moamoa plant living on land

## REFRAIN

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the  
broad stream

Born was the Kele seaweed living in the sea  
Guarded by the Ekele plant living on land

## REFRAIN

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the  
broad stream

Born was the Kala seaweed living in the sea  
Guarded by the 'Akala vine living on land

## REFRAIN

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the  
broad stream

Born was the Lipu'upu'u living in the sea  
Guarded by the Lipu'u living on land

## REFRAIN

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the  
broad stream

Born was the Long-one living at sea  
Guarded by the Long-torch living on land

## REFRAIN

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the  
broad stream

Born was the Ne seaweed living in the sea  
Guarded by the Neneleau living on land

## REFRAIN

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the  
 broad stream  
 Born was the hairy seaweed living in the sea  
 Guarded by the hairy pandanus vine living  
 on land  
 Darkness slips into light  
 Earth and water are the food of the plant  
 The god enters, man cannot enter

The man with the water gourd, he is a god  
 Water that causes the withered vine to flourish  
 Causes the plant top to develop freely  
 Multiplying in the passing time  
 The long night slips along  
 Fruitful, very fruitful  
 Spreading here, spreading there  
 Spreading this way, spreading that way  
 Propping up earth, holding up the sky  
 The time passes, this night of Kumulipo  
 Still it is night

*Winged life*

A male this, the female that  
 A male born in the time of black darkness  
 The female born in the time of groping in the  
 darkness  
 Overshadowed was the sea, overshadowed the land  
 Overshadowed the streams, overshadowed the  
 mountains  
 Overshadowed the dimly brightening night  
 The rootstalk grew forming nine leaves

---

Upright it grew with dark leaves  
 The sprout that shot forth leaves of high chiefs  
 Born was Po'ele'ele the male  
 Lived with Pohaha a female  
 The rootstalk sprouted  
     The taro stalk grew

Born was the Wood borer, a parent  
 Out came its child a flying thing, and flew  
 Born was the Caterpillar, the parent  
 Out came its child a Moth, and flew  
 Born was the Ant, the parent  
 Out came its child a Dragonfly, and flew  
 Born was the Grub, the parent  
 Out came its child the Grasshopper, and flew  
 Born was the Pinworm, the parent  
 Out came its child a Fly, and flew  
 Born was the egg, the parent  
 Out came its child a bird, and flew  
 Born was the Snipe, the parent  
 Out came its child a Plover, and flew

...

REFRAIN

This is the flying place of the bird Halulu  
 Of Kiwa'a, the bird that cries over the canoe house  
 Birds that fly in a flock shutting out the sun  
 The earth is covered with the fledglings of the night  
     breaking into dawn  
 The time when the dawning light spreads abroad  
 The young weak 'ape plant rises  
 A tender plant with spreading leaves  
 A branching out of the nightborn

Nothing but darkness that  
 Nothing but darkness this  
 Darkness alone for Po'ele'ele  
 A time of dawn indeed for Pohaha  
 Still it is night

*The Night-digger*

The time arrives for Po-kanokano  
 To increase the progeny of Po-lalo-uli  
 Dark is the skin of the new generation  
 Black is the skin of the beloved Po-lalo-uli  
 Who sleeps as a wife to the Night-digger  
 The beaked nose that digs the earth is erected  
 Let it dig at the land, increase it, heap it up  
 Walling it up at the back  
 Walling it up in front  
 The pig child is born  
 Lodges inland in the bush  
 Cultivates the water taro patches of Lo'iloa  
 Tenfold is the increase of the island  
 Tenfold the increase of the land  
 The land where the Night-digger dwelt  
 Long is the line of his ancestry  
 The ancient line of the pig of chief blood  
 The pig of highest rank born in the time  
 The time when the Night-digger lived  
 And slept with Po-lalo-uli  
 The night gave birth  
 Born were the peaked-heads, they were clumsy ones  
 Born were the flat-heads, they were braggarts  
 Born were the angular-heads, they were esteemed  
 Born were the fair-haired, they were strangers  
 Born were the blonds, their skin was white

---

Born were those with retreating foreheads, they were  
bushy-haired

Born were the blunt-heads, their heads were round

Born were the dark-heads, they were dark

Born were the common class, they were unsettled

Born were the working class, they were workers

Born were the favorites, they were courted

Born were the slave class, and wild was their nature

Born were the cropped-haired, they were the picked  
men

Born were the song chanters, they were indolent

Born were the big bellies, big eaters were they

Born were the timid ones, bashful were they

Born were the messengers, they were sent here and  
there

Born were the slothful, they were lazy

Born were the stingy, they were sour

Born were the puny, they were feeble ones

Born were the thickset, they were stalwart

Born were the broad-chested, broad was their badge  
in battle

Born were the family men, they were home lovers

Born were the mixed breeds, they had no fixed line  
of descent

Born were the lousy-headed, they were lice infested

Born were the war leaders, men followed after them

Born were the high chiefs, they were ruddy

Born were the stragglers, they were dispersed

Scattered here and there

The children of Lo'iloa multiplied

The virgin land sprang into bloom

The gourd of desire was loosened

With desire to extend the family line

---

To carry on the fruit of Oma's descendants,  
 The generations from the Night-digger  
 In that period of the past  
     Still it is night

*The nibblers*

Many new lines of chiefs spring up  
 Cultivation arises, full of taboos  
 They go about scratching at the wet lands  
 It sprouts, the first blades appear, the food is ready  
 Food grown by the water courses  
 Food grown by the sea  
 Plentiful and heaped up  
 The parent rats dwell in holes  
 The little rats huddle together  
 Those who mark the seasons  
 Little tolls from the land  
 Little tolls from the water courses  
 Trace of the nibblings of these brown-coated ones  
 With whiskers upstanding  
 They hide here and there  
 A rat in the upland, a rat by the sea  
 A rat running beside the wave  
 Born to the two, child of the Night-falling-away  
 Born of the two, child of the Night-creeping-away  
 The little child creeps as it moves  
 The little child moves with a spring  
 Pilfering at the rind  
 Rind of the 'ohi'a fruit, not a fruit of the upland  
 A tiny child born as the darkness falls away  
 A springing child born as the darkness creeps away  
 Child of the dark and child in the night now here  
     Still it is night

---

# The water of Kane

Kane is the major god of the Hawaiian pantheon. The other great gods are Ku, Lono and Kanaloa. The waters of Kane have a special mythical significance. They are the waters of life and are connected with the Hawaiian conception of an earthly paradise, sometimes a floating island, sometimes a place under the sea, sometimes a hidden land where the springs flow and the earth is fruitful.

A query, a question,  
I put to you:  
Where is the water of Kane?  
At the eastern gate  
Where the sun comes in at Haehae;  
There is the water of Kane.

A question I ask of you:  
Where is the water of Kane?  
Out with the floating sun,  
Where cloud-forms rest on the ocean,  
Lifting their forms at Nihoa,  
This side of the base of Lehua;  
There is the water of Kane.

A question I put to you:  
Where is the water of Kane?  
There on the mountain peak,  
On the steep ridges,  
In the valleys,  
Where the rivers flow;  
There is the water of Kane.

---

This question I ask of you:  
Where, pray, is the water of Kane?  
There at sea, on the ocean,  
In the driving rain,  
In the heavenly rainbow,  
In the rising mists,  
In the blood-red rainfall,  
In the ghostly cloud-form;  
There is the water of Kane.

One question I put to you:  
Where, where is the water of Kane?  
Up on high is the water of Kane,  
In the heavenly blue,  
In the black-piled cloud,  
In the black black cloud,  
In the purple blue cloud of the gods;  
There is the water of Kane.

One question I ask of you:  
Where flows the water of Kane?  
Deep in the ground, in the rushing spring,  
In the ducts of Kane and Loa,  
A wellspring of water to drink,  
A water of magic power—  
The water of life!  
Life! O give us this life!



---

# An appeal for rain

An offering is set apart for you  
O Ku of the long cloud, O Ku of the short cloud,  
O Ku of the intensely dark clouds of heaven;  
From that great black cloud hanging over the  
    horizon,  
Make fall a heavy shower,  
A rain of many small drops,  
A rain that moves in columns;  
Bring the cultivating rains,  
Drench the earth from that boundary to this,  
From that side to this,  
To soak the soil,  
To make our garden fruitful,  
To make our plants grow,  
So that you may eat of my food with me and my  
    family,  
So that you may eat of my bananas with me and my  
    family,  
And be clothed in tapa with me and my family.  
'Amama, the kapu of the prayer is freed.

---

# Prayer to Kane

O Kane of the water of life,  
Preserve us, thy offspring.

Here is an offering, a hog,  
A white fowl, coconuts,  
Potatoes, a mana taro.  
The power is thine, O Kane,  
To collect for us the fish  
And relieve the gauntness of the land.  
Come in and eat of the feast.  
Here is the snout of the pig,  
The tail of the pig,  
The spleen of the pig,  
The neck of the fowl,  
The juice of the coconut,  
The red sea moss,  
The white-leafed mana taro.  
'Amama. The kapu of the prayer is freed.

---

# Harvest prayer

O Kane, transform the earth!  
Let the earth move as one piece.  
The land is cracked and fissured.

The edible fern yet grows, O Lono.  
Let kupukupu cover the dry land.  
Gather potatoes as stones on the side hills.  
The rain comes like the side of a cliff,  
The rain falling from heaven.  
The potato also falls from heaven,  
The wild taro is the only taro now,  
The taro of the mountain patches.  
The only food is that of the wilds,  
    O Kane!

O Kane and Lono! Gods of the husbandmen,  
Give life to the land!  
Until the food goes to waste,  
Until it sprouts in the ground,  
Until the leaves cover the land;  
Such be the plenty  
Of you, O Kane and Lono.  
'Amama. The kapu of the prayer is freed.

---

# House dedication prayer

Cut the umbilical cord of the house  
A house that resists rain and storm.  
A house for man to dwell in.  
O Lono, behold the house,  
A house in the presence of the giver of life,  
Grant life to those who live there,  
Grant life to visitors that come,  
Grant life to the landlord,  
Grant life to the chiefs,  
Let it be life from the life-giver,  
Life until one creeps and is weak-eyed with age  
Until one sprawls like a withered hala leaf  
Until one reaches the end of life.  
Let this be the life granted to us by the gods.

O Ku, O Kane, O Lono,  
Let down the gift of life,  
And all the blessings with it.  
Till heaven and earth are heaped,  
Let them be raised up by Kane of the living waters.  
May there be life from one boundary to the other  
From above to below  
From roof to foundation.  
May there be life—everlasting life.

---

# Tree-felling song

They bear the god's ax up the mountain;  
Trampling the mud, like waves from Kahiki  
That beat on the rim of Kilauea.  
The people with offerings lift up a prayer;  
A woman strings wreaths in Olaa—  
My lehua grove bordering He-eia.  
And now Kukuena, mother god,  
Dresses in a ti-leaf skirt;  
She mounts the altar; she sits.  
Here we are, your many priests.  
Enter in, possess us!

# Pele and Hi'i-aka

The Pele and Hi'i-aka cycle of chants and legends takes on epic qualities in its length and its revelation of the Hawaiian voice. The poems show the Hawaiian concern for the primal elements of sea, fire, land: they reveal also a tie with landscape which is at once human and mythic. The story tells of Pele's settling in Kīlauea on the island of Hawai'i. During a deep sleep her spirit leaves her and goes to Kaua'i where she falls in love with a young chief, Lohi'au. Upon awakening, Pele sends her sister Hi'i-aka to bring Lohi'au to her. Hi'i-aka asks Pele to take care of her lehua forests while she is away. Hi'i-aka makes a voyage filled with encounters and dangers, a classic voyage out and voyage of return. Many of the poems of the cycle are a telling of the adventures of the journey. When she reaches the island of Kaua'i, she finds that Lohi'au is dead. She restores his life and begins the return. Pele betrays Hi'i-aka and destroys her red-blossomed forests. Hi'i-aka, distraught, makes love to Lohi'au on the edge of the crater Kīlauea. The fire goddess kills Lohi'au. But again he is restored to life.



## The coming of Pele

The color red is associated with Pele as goddess of the volcano.

From Kahiki came the woman Pele,  
 from the land of Polapola,  
 from the rising reddish mist of Kāne,  
 from clouds blazing in the sky, horizon clouds.  
 Restless desire for Hawai'i seized the woman Pele.  
 Ready-carved was the canoe, Honua-i-Ākea,

---

your own canoe, O Ka-moho-ali'i,  
for sailing to distant lands.  
Well-lashed and equipped, the canoe of high gods,  
your canoe, Sacred-hewer-of-the-land,  
stood ready to sail with the ocean current.

Pele-honua-mea embarked, the heavenly one  
stepped aboard to sail round Kahiki island.  
Multitudes of gods came aboard.

O royal companions, who handled the steering  
paddle at the stern?  
Pele-the-redhead herself was helmswoman, ruler of  
the Menehune.  
Ku and Lono bailed out the bilge water,  
carried paddles, placed them in station.

Hi'i-aka, the wise sister, next embarked,  
boarded the craft to dwell with Pele in her sailing  
quarters,  
close to Pele on the long voyage.

Jets of lava gushed from Kahiki.  
Pele hurled her lightning,  
vomit of flame, outpouring of lava was the woman's  
farewell.

---

## The spy

Early in her journey to bring Lohi'au to Pele, Hi'i-aka travels through a dangerous forest, the domain of a lizard goddess. She recognizes that a watching bird is a spy who tempts her to drink awa, a liquor.

The bird that sips lehua honey,  
Yellow awa collected  
In the uplands of Ka-li'u;  
The bird that carries the leaf of awa,  
The bitter plant of Puna:  
Her love pours sweetly forth  
urging me continuously to sleep.  
O tide of sleep!



---

## Watch your way

Though the awa cup is a temptation, Hi'i-aka realizes she must not sleep. She expresses this in song.

Watch your way in upland Puna.  
Don't pick a single flower—  
You might stray from the path.  
A shape is hidden beneath a stone.  
Flowers cover the path,  
It moves on overgrown stones—  
Swift the downfall!  
Is there love between us?  
Go! Enter the house of Pele!  
Erupt, Kahiki; flash, lightning!  
Pele, burst forth!

---

## Songs of the girl without hands

On Maui Hi'i-aka meets a girl without hands who is gathering shellfish. She dances with the waves and sings. She is, in reality, a spirit.

I love the fish of my land  
Caught by the light of the torch,  
The handsome fish embraced by women.  
Lost is my companion,  
The night is cold:  
O love which came for just a day!  
O Kona, my land of calm!

A wave knocks the basket of fish from her arms and she sings of her loss.

My fish dance on the waves,  
My arm danced from the basket:  
An artful dancer sways at noon,  
Muting the roar of the sea.  
Gone are my fish,  
Snatched from my arms.  
Gone, gone!

She sees a shark.

O little fish with wicked eye,  
With blunt nose, that swims the ocean,  
Fish that darts and strikes,  
That lashes in the dark blue sea.  
Alas, the great shark has destroyed me!

---

## Stormy weather

Hi'i-aka has reached the island of O'ahu. She sings of the stormy weather of Ko'olau.

Blustery is the weather of Ko'olau!  
One soaks and swells in Ko'olau rain,  
It pours at Ma-eli-eli,  
It gutters the land at He-eia;  
It lashes the sea with a whip.  
The rain dances in joy  
At 'Āhui-manu; shifting,  
It shakes the heaps of coral.  
The rain circles round and round at Kaha-lu'u.  
I am troubled and sad,  
My eyes are full of tears.  
Tears overflow.

---

## Kauhi

Hi'i-aka comes to a deep narrow gorge. She sees the shape of an ancestor, Kauhi, in the rock forms. The eyes are shining with dew and seem to look at her with longing. Manu'u-ke-eu is a mythical pandanus tree.

Kauhi, watchtower of the sky,  
Cliff, twisted and fluted,  
O mountain precipice,  
Slippery to climb as Ka-li'u-wa'a,  
Or the ranging heights of Puna and Hilo.  
O the hala fruits of Manu'u-ke-eu,  
Let me string a lei to wear:  
Kauhi, hung with flowers and ferns;  
The eye of the god,  
The eye of the bat, Pe'ape'a.  
As a bird, ruffle your plumage,  
Fly, soar as a kite;  
Taking the wind, taking the rain,  
Your feathers like the seagull's,  
Sail on the wings of a god.  
He is a god, yet he does not hear;  
A great wrath in his eyes.  
He wakes, he wakes.  
He wakes and turns to me.  
Awake, you who face the heavens,  
Awake, you who bring winter rain,  
Awake!

## Hi'i-aka's song at Ka-'ena

Ka-'ena reaches out like a bird flying overhead,  
 a sea gannet soaring in a still sky  
 above sandy Nēnē-le'a,  
 a bo'sunbird high over the channel of Ka-'ie'ie—  
 a flapping of wings.

Like a thirsty man drinking from a pool  
 so do rocks near Ka-'ena drink of foamy waves.  
 Silent pounding has darkened those quiet faces of  
 stone.

Bruised black and red, waterworn,  
 they have grown ghostly from long attending the sea  
 of Kāpeku,  
 a wintry season's song.

Blackened and red from perpetual pounding  
 stand these sea-wardens of the land:  
 naked god-forms, unstable god-forms,  
 assumed by Kanaloa who shaped them,  
 sea-washed bird-forms of the high god  
 guarding the shore at Cape Ka-lā'au,  
 sprayed by the sea of Ewelua.

In cliff-steep gullies at Unulau  
 I too drink of Kā-'apu's water.  
 (The countryman, with surly denial, would hide it  
 from strangers.)  
 Yet at Ka-'ena four shy streamlets wind seaward  
 in heat of summer sun.

Their living waters file before me in parade.  
Lei-honua's great wall beholds the procession.

With the rising of the wind I am caught by a sudden  
thought.  
What shall I, in my shame, give to the four bathers?

My sole gift is a song.

---

## Hi'i-aka's song for the Stone of Kaua'i

Ka'ena's brine-parched shore bakes in the sun.  
Streaked with flame, consumed, the great rock  
transformed  
sails into stillness, the sea's calm.

Sand holes sink underfoot. Coral heads twist upward  
quicken into life by the traveler wind Mālua,  
sea-borne companion of mine from Ko'olau.  
When Ko'olau blows inland shaggy plains bristle.

"Speed!" shouts the sailor to his canoe.  
"Speed on, while Nēnē-le'a's sands lie still.  
Here's no beating against storm blast,  
only Mālua's light sea-slap along the bow."

O foolish sailor boy, forgetting how hungry waves  
devour  
staunchest rocks!

Stone of Kaua'i, you've manned this watch for ages.  
Hold firm, kinsman mine.  
Endure, old settler.

---

## Songs to the ghost of Lohi'au

Hi'i-aka reaches Kaua'i. She sees a ghostly figure standing before a cave. She chants two songs to the ghost of Lohi'au.

This surely is not the man,  
Not the lover for the evening,  
Not the companion to love  
In the long darkness of a winter's night.  
My man, where? Where are you?

My man of the light and windy rain,  
Of the cold rain of the mountain,  
The mountain steeps at Ka-lalau  
Where we go together.  
With you, my friend, my love,  
My companion of the darkness  
When my face looks up—  
My man, oh my man!



## Hi'i-aka chants to restore Lohi'au to life

Hi'i-aka performs rituals for Lohi'au. This is one of the mele-pule which she chants. Uli is the goddess of sorcery and healing.

Speed, O Uli, this prayer for health;  
 Speed it to the brightness of heaven.  
 Ask the demigods above;  
 Who are the demigods above?  
 The blue cloud of the sky,  
 The white cloud, the red cloud;  
 The god Ku of the small cloud  
 Ku of the long cloud  
 Ku of the mackerel cloud  
 Ku of the red and ragged cloud in the sky.  
 The small gods of the mountains,  
 Our companions of the shady forest;  
 The goddesses of healing,  
 The god Laka who gives ripe mountain-apples.  
 The gods pour their healing water;  
 The pili grass waves;  
 The echo sounds in the distance.

...

I, Hi'i-aka, come  
 From love of my sister—  
 Be this a place of birth!  
 O life, give life!

---

## Vision of the burning

Hi'i-aka starts the return journey to Kīlauea with Lohi'au. On the island of O'ahu she climbs the slopes of Diamond Head and sees, with her special power, the burning of her ohia trees on the island of Hawai'i. Pele has broken her pledge.

Fire-split rocks strike the sun;  
Fire pours on the sea at Puna;  
The bright sea at Kū-ki'i.  
The gods of the night at the eastern gate,  
The skeleton woods that loom.  
What is the meaning of this?  
The meaning is desolation.

---

## A storm, a rough surf

Hi'i-aka takes revenge for the broken pledge. On the edge of the crater of Kilauea she approaches Lohi'au with love. The wrathful Pele pours fire on Lohi'au. Hi'i-aka bids him pray. The Pu'u-lena wind suggests sulphur.

A storm, a rough surf in Kilauea Pit,  
Combers of fire threatening, breaking;  
Flame splashes the lehua buds—  
The sound of Hiku, the woman who consumes lehua,  
Who destroys the altar of fishermen,  
The stone, clawed by fire, breaks;  
The Pu'u-lena wind strikes;  
The island shakes and trembles;  
A flood of rain in the lowland,  
A cold wind in the upland.  
A thunder boom from this cliff,  
A distant hum from that cliff,  
A soft breath from Kua-loi mountain—  
The home of the gods,  
The shrine of the god Ka-hoa-lii.  
The voice of the ohia rises,  
The voice of the sea cries,  
The plates of fire turn upward.  
The sea shakes hala trees at Kea'au  
The sea scatters lehua bloom at Pana-'ewa  
It breaks over the altar of Lono.  
Does she hear me? She is deaf,  
Deaf to my sighs, she does not listen.

---

## The fires of Pele

In his suffering Lohi'au hallucinates. Wai-wela-wela is a hot lake in Puna.

The stars, the moon are on fire;  
The cold months burn;  
Dust circles on the island, the land is parched.  
The sky hangs low, rough seas in the pit—  
The ocean tosses; lava surges in Kīlauea.  
Waves of fire cover the plain;  
Pele erupts.  
A crash of thunder brings rain from the sky;  
The earth quakes; the thunder roars.  
Once Puna was majestic;  
Now clouds of omen hang low.  
Foam looms over the fire of Laka.  
Wai-wela-wela is a warm skirt.  
I choke in lehua smoke—  
The heavy stench of burnt man!  
I am without breath, covered with fire;  
O Hi'i-aka, cry your tears!

---

## Lohi'au's song

Lohi'au is restored to life by a brother of Pele who, on his voyage from Kahiki (Tahiti), saw Lohi'au's spirit fluttering over the water. He captured the spirit.

I lived, but I was a spirit without body.  
Then came the king of Kahiki,  
The king who sails the dark blue sea,  
The black sea, the yellow sea,  
The purple, the red brown sea of Kane.  
The flooding sea of the Chief Hinali'i—  
The silent sea, the floating sea.  
Lohi'au flowers in the daylight.  
It is I, Lohi'au; do you hear?  
O life, new life for Lohi'au,  
Yes, for Lohi'au.

# From “Fallen is the chief”

By Keaulumoku. This poem, in fifteen cantos, is famous as a prophecy of the overthrow of Keoua by King Kamehameha the Great. The chief named in the first line is Kamehameha. “They” refers to the people of the districts he has conquered.

*from Canto III*

The chief takes hold, the work is done.  
 He bends his back—they are thrown into darkness;  
 They push each other on every side; with broken  
     bones they chase each other;  
 The bones of the island are broken, the bones of the  
     land creak;  
 Broken, they creak like a falling cliff.  
 The enemy gasps, he doubles up in pain, the air  
     around him is hot;  
 They move uncertainly. Sideways in the air they fall  
     like a kite.  
 The kingdom has become the toenail of the island;  
 Chin above, top of the head below,  
 Swinging back and forth.  
 Hawaii is a swing; it is like the rope that pulls the  
     swing;  
 They are routed by the followers of the chief, by this  
     chief.  
 They looked this way and that, afraid in the forest  
 While the slaughter raged; no one is spared.  
 They moved swiftly as a stream through a narrow  
     opening—

---

Like the burning oven of Pele  
When the steam rises to the sky;  
Like the constant restlessness of the high surf  
When the soft and hard coral are thrown on the  
    beach,  
So thrown together, the refuse of the island.

*from Canto IV*

To the chief belongs the island, the land,  
The chief holds the uplands and the ocean;  
For him is the night, for him the day,  
For him are the winter and the summer,  
The month, the seven stars of heaven now in view.  
All precious property, above and below,  
The chief holds all fixed property;  
All property that floats ashore, all birds that light  
    upon the land,  
The thick-shelled broad-backed turtle, the whale ivory  
And the yearly uhu fish.  
Chief of the highest rank! Let him live forever!  
Let him be borne with honor among the short gods  
    and the long gods.  
Let him go forth in peace, the chief who possesses the  
    island.  
Prepare the dance on the dance ground;  
Let the dancers rise and fall throughout the islands.

---

# From “A chant for the island of Maui”

By Keaulumoku

Let the rain fall, for rain is good.  
It patters down, it pelts down,  
It crushes the forest growth,  
It sprinkles musically on the lehua.  
The lehua trees blossom, the yellow lehua,  
When the rain comes to Kailua.  
The petals are heavy with raindrops,  
Heavy and full-blown.  
They do not know the thirst  
That wilts the first-blown pandanus bloom.  
Rain returns by way of Hane-ho'i,  
Along the brow of Pu'umaile to Hoalua,  
Over the ridge of Pu'ukoa'e,  
Before the face of the cliff of Huelo.  
There it pours down on Kaumealani,  
The rain that brings out the full-blown flowers  
And draws them close down to the shore.  
The rain goes out to sea,  
It falls on Hawini like teardrops,  
It passes along over the headlands,  
It creeps by the cliffs and capes  
Creeps by the cape of Mukupapa.

...



---

Oh for the light summer showers  
That brought forth the blossoms!  
The blossoms droop with stems half-broken,  
The blossoms hang wilted, uncared for;  
The fruit clusters, ripened above,  
Mildew and fall in piles to the ground;  
both fruit and flowers are mildewed.  
Hala fruit and mountain apples drop in the stream  
And are washed down in the water of Kakipi,  
Washed up on thorny weeds,  
On the flowers of coarse grasses  
Where we two have wandered,  
My wife and I, to the rain-wet hala grove of Kuloli,  
Fragrant among the leaves,  
The hala leaves over the resting place of Ko'olahale,  
Where we watched for the belated moon  
To rise over the cinder cone of Malama.

---

# A kapu is placed

From the legend of Halemano. Halemano chants two songs to his estranged wife.

1

The fire of Laka places a kapu over the roads of Puna;  
I see its reflection in my eyes.  
It is like the breadfruit in the lowlands of Kookoolau;  
I am almost tempted to pick it.  
Filled with shame, I do not touch it.  
Alas, my love!  
My love from the broad sea of Puna  
Whose waves beat on the sea cliffs,  
You forgot your lover when you went astray in  
    Kaimu,  
Your mouth was silent, you did not call.  
My love of the house where we were friendless,  
The house to which we had no right, though I did  
    not complain,  
Where I was warmed by the sun at Maliu,  
Listen as I call—  
My own, my love!

2

The sea is cutting down the hala trees of Puna,  
They stand like men,  
Like a crowd in the lowlands of Hilo.  
The sea surges, flooding Mokuola.  
I am alive again for love of you,  
For anger is a helper to man.  
As I walked, friendless, along the roads  
That way and this way, what of me my love?  
Alas, my own dear love!  
My companion of the low-hanging breadfruit of  
    Kalapana,  
Of the cold sun that rises at Kumukahi.  
The love of a wife is above all else,  
For my head is burning,  
My navel is tingling with love,  
My body is in bond to her.  
Come back to me, my companion of Koolau,  
My love, come back.

---

# Love song

Though on the surface this poem paints a landscape, its inner meaning concerns a love affair filled with anger and abuse.

Lehua flower that reddens the sea of Kona,  
The sea dyed red with scarlet,  
The red-glowing sea;  
The uplands of Alaea are red;  
The kapa of the women is dyed the red of fire,  
Stirred by gossip, tossed by love.  
The bright waterway shines with dew,  
The dew which lies on the coconut fronds.  
The foliage of the trees, the long leaves—  
They wilt in the heat of Kailua, the deep.  
A narrow and dusty mat spread out,  
A slope of land by the calm sea.  
Mount Kilohana looms—  
Your wooded slopes, your name continues,  
Your tabu is gone! Your forbidden ridge has been  
    climbed,  
It has been stepped upon, conquered.

---

# The salt pond of Mana

This is part of a name song for the chiefess Ohaikawiliula. Mana on the island of Kauai is celebrated for the beautiful mirages of its salt pond.

The salt pond of Mana  
Is breaking away.  
The water is breaking away—  
The water of Kamakahou is breaking away.  
Salt is the water,  
The water of Mana.  
Like the sea is the water,  
Like water is the sea,  
Like the sea is the water of Kamakahou.  
The land which I enjoyed and rejected and forsook—  
It has gone before,  
It is forgotten,  
It has gone, both back and front.  
The iliau bush has faded in the sunlight,  
As the heavy dew of the morning.  
The emblems of the god of the year have passed,  
Gone to bury the dead,  
On the barren sands of Nonohili.  
...

---

From  
“Ka-‘ahu-manu’s  
dirge for  
Ke‘e-au-moku”

The blazing fire in the last stanza alludes to the bedmate.

My father and chief,  
My beloved companion,  
My loved one.  
I am breathless with grieving for you,  
I weep for my companion in the cold,  
My companion of the chilly rain.

The chill encircles me,  
The cold surrounds me,  
Purple with cold not rejected.

Only two places to find warmth—  
The blazing fire within the house,  
The tapa covering is the second warmth,  
Found in the bosom of a companion.  
It is there, it is there, it is there.

# From “Birth chant for Kau-i-ke-ao-uli”

Kau-i-ke-ao-uli was Kamehameha III. His birth is connected with the origin of things. Kea, or Wākea, and Papa are the first man and woman, progenitors of the chiefs. Wākea is the sky-father and Papa the earth-mother.

## 1

The chiefess gave birth,  
she bore in labor above,  
she lay as in a faint, a weakness at the navel.  
The afterbirth stirred at the roots, crept in darkness,  
in waves of pain came the bitter bile of the child.  
This was a month of travail,  
of gasping labor,  
a writhing to deliver the chief.  
He is this chief, born of a chiefess.

Now a chief shall be here above.  
Who shall be below?

Born was the earth, rooted the earth.  
The root crept forth, rootlets of the earth.  
Royal rootlets spread their way through the earth to  
hold firm.  
Down too went the taproot, creaking  
like the mainpost of a house, and the earth moved.  
Cliffs rose upon the earth, the earth lay widespread:

---

a standing earth, a sitting earth was the earth,  
a swaying earth, a solid earth was the earth.  
The earth lay below, from below the earth rose.  
The earth was Kea's, to Kea belonged the earth.  
The earth was Papa's, to Papa belonged the earth,  
the earthly firstborn borne by Papa.  
He is this earth, the earth that was born.

The earth shall be here below.  
Who shall be above?

## 2

Born was the night above,  
born was the night up here.  
The heavens slid away into the night, swift came the  
afterbirth.  
The nights came closer together, stretching along  
until a separation came, making distinct the night of  
Mahina-le'a.  
The night turned, closeness became separated.  
This is the royal offspring of night borne by Kea,  
first child of the night, second child of the night,  
third child of the night.  
The night lay in travail  
to give birth to the night.  
He is this night, the night newly born.

Who shall be below?  
Who shall be upon the island?



## 3

Born was the island, it grew, it sprouted,  
it flourished, lengthened, rooted deeply, budded,  
formed tender leaves.

That was the island over Hawai'i.

Hawai'i itself was an island.

The land was unstable, Hawai'i quivered,  
moved freely about in space,

Wākea recognized the island, Hawai'i recognized  
remained.

Visible were island and earth,

held in heavenly space by the right hand of Wākea,

Hawai'i was held, Hawai'i was seen, an island.

Down here shall be an island.

Who shall be above—Who?

The cloud, that is who it shall be....

---

# A name song for Princess Nahi'ena'ena

A name chant for the princess,  
For Nahi'ena'ena a name!  
Chief among women!  
She warms the cold wind with her flame;  
A peace that is mirrored in calm;  
A wind that sheds rain;  
A tide that flowed long ago;  
The water spring of Mana,  
Life-spring for the people,  
Where the snarling dog  
Bites and barks at the sea.  
The spray drifts on the bloom  
Of the ili-au flower  
The scarlet flower of ohai,  
On the mat of wild grass,  
Woven with fern and long rushes.  
The spouting-horn, Kawelo-hea,  
Asks, "Who of right has the tabu?  
The princess Nahi'ena'ena!"  
The flowers glow in the pool,  
The bathing pool of Holei!

---

# Song

This poem can be a description of a hard climb up a mountain, or it can be a landscape which suggests a passionate love affair.

The climb to Hanalei woods is steep—  
To tread on clumps of grass over the swamp;  
To cling to the ledges  
And cling to the ladder of hanging roots.  
The buttocks of my companion swing over me,  
His loins are exhausted;  
Two beautiful forms!  
Sheltered from rain, I crouch under this bank.

---

# Shark song

In this poem the shark is the god of love.

Alas, I am seized by the great shark!  
The white fins and triple-banked teeth.  
The foundation of Lono is gone—  
Torn up by the monster shark  
Niuhi with eyes of fire  
That flash in the blue black sea.  
Auwe! Auwe!  
When the wili-wili tree blooms  
Then the shark god bites.  
Auwe! I am seized by the great shark!  
O blue sea, O black sea,  
The purple blue sea of Kane!  
The joy of my dancing!  
Alas! consumed by the great shark!

---

# Chant composed while drunk

By John Papa Ii

The clouds appear yellow over the sea,  
A sea that is the color of the clear sky.  
The 'ulae fishers sail out in the calm,  
The keel can be seen.  
A sky is reflected from above,  
Shadows are cast by the forest,  
Covering the brow of the mountain;  
They move before my eyes,  
The light appears in patches like 'oloa tapa.  
Night descends and I am drowsy,  
I am overcome by sleep.  
A damp coldness rouses me,  
I am chilled with the cold of Kawanui,  
With the dew that fills the canoe hulls of Maihi  
In the distant upland of Hainoa.

---

# Lament on the death of a first child

By Pa'ahana

This is a dirge, an expression of affection,  
For you, O Miss Mary Binning,  
My daughter in the dust-scattering wind of Na'alehu,  
In the home we shared together,  
Oh—my daughter!  
My daughter at the cliff of Lau-hu;  
Love for you makes my tears flow unchecked,  
Oh my daughter at the cold spring of Ka-puna,  
A beloved place to which we went,  
My daughter in the rain that passes the hill of Ha'ao,  
A place we were fond of going together,  
We used to go up the long trail,  
A little known trail, unattended by a friend.  
Oh my darling—how sad I am at losing you.  
You have gone on a road on which there is no  
    returning,  
Oh my darling—my pet.  
My constant companion in the homeland,  
Here I remain  
With this great load, a yearning for you,  
Oh my darling, precious as a necklace of pearls,  
My daughter in the warm sun of Waikapuna,  
Beloved is that place where we used to go.  
My daughter among the fragrant flowers,  
Oh my necklace, my golden chain, farewell—alas!

---

# From “A name chant for Kupake‘e”

I do not care for Kona,  
For Ka-‘u is mine.  
The water from Kalae is carried all night long,  
Wrung from tapas and sponges.  
This land is heard of as having no water,  
Except the water waited for at Mana and Unulau.  
Much prized water is found in the eye socket of the  
fish,  
The water prized and cared for by the man.  
The child carries a gourd container in his arms.  
It whistles, whistles as the wind blows into it,  
the voice of the water gourd is produced by the wind  
Sounding like a nose flute at midnight.  
The long-drawn whistling of the gourd, we hear.  
Listen, how fortunate you are!  
There is no going back, our ways are different.  
In childhood only does one regret in secret,  
Grieving alone.  
Look forward with love to the season ahead of us.  
Let the season pass that is gone.

---

# Song of the chanter Ka-‘ehu

What will become of Hawai‘i?  
What will leprosy do to our land—  
disease of the despised, dreaded alike  
by white or brown or darker-skinned?

Strange when a man’s neighbors  
become less than acquaintances.  
Seeing me they drew away.  
They moved to sit elsewhere, whispering,  
and a friend pointed a finger:  
“He is a leper.”

I bowed my head.  
I knew it was true.  
In my heart I hugged my shame.

Word reached the medical authorities.  
The doctors sent the military to fetch us.  
We were caught like chickens, like cattle herded  
along roadway and country land.  
Then they paraded us before the Board of Health  
But there was no health in that Board for such as we.  
Examining doctors eyed us, squinted this way and  
that.  
More fingers pointed Diamond Head way:  
“You go to Kala-wao!”



---

Again the militia took over.  
Soldiers escorted us to the wharf for farewell.  
Prisoners, we were marched aboard,  
victims of leprosy, branded for exile.  
Abandoned, cut off from family and dear ones,  
we were left alone with our grief, with our love.  
Rain of tears streamed from leper eyes.  
Leper cheeks glistened with raindrops in the sun.  
Never again would we look upon this land of ours,  
this lovely harbor town.

Quickly the sails were hoisted.  
Ropes dangled from the foremast,  
tails of wild animals writhing,  
whipping in the channel breeze.  
The *John Bull* drew anchor.  
In the stern the rudder turned.  
So sailed we forth to dim Moloka'i Island,  
enshrouded in fog.

So ends my song and this refrain.  
What will leprosy do to my people?  
What will become of our land?

---

# Piano at evening

By Palea. He composed the chant immediately after hearing a piano for the first time.

O piano I hear at evening,  
where are you?

Your music haunts me far into the night  
like the voice of landshells  
trilling sweetly  
near the break of day.

I remember when my dear and I  
visited aboard the *Nautilus*  
and saw our first looking glass.

I remember the upland of Ma'eli'eli  
where the mists creeping in and out  
threaded their way between the old  
houses of thatch.

Again I chant my refrain  
of long ago and a piano singing  
far into the night.

---

Samoa





---

# From a creation chant

This section of the poem tells of the origin of man from the “peopling vine.”

Now the sacred vine starts life,  
But its children only wriggle in the sun;  
They have no legs, no arms,  
No head, no face,  
No beat of heart!  
The god Tagaloa, descending to the west  
Speaks, and it is done:  
“These fruits, the product of the vine, are worms,  
But I fashion them into forms with limbs;  
I now give a will to each;  
Your bodies must remain opaque,  
Your faces must shine  
To entertain Tagaloa  
When he comes to walk this earth.”

---

# Chant for the whale

Pou sets out on a voyage to Hawaiki to get sweet potatoes.  
He uses a whale named "Wise Man" for a canoe. As he  
jumps on the whale's back, he chants.

Dive! Disappear below the surface.  
With swelling of the heart  
Urged on to the ancient of the heavens,  
Arise at the summit,  
Arise to the daylight  
At the island landfall.  
It's once, it's once, it's twice, it's twice  
It's thrice, it's thrice,  
A fish worn down at the ancient of the heavens.  
Arise, arise at the summit,  
Arise to the daylight,  
Arise at the island landfall  
To reach the surface at the landfall Marua-nuku.  
With determination the shore is reached,  
And a landing made on the sands of Hawaiki.

---

## Lovers' farewell

There are many stories of Sina and her family. In this one a man with the body of an eel is her lover. The two flee from the anger of her family. Finally the eel man is killed. As he is dying, he sings this song. Later a coconut tree springs from his grave.

Sina, let us part in love.  
When I am killed,  
Ask for my head as your portion.  
Take and plant it in a stone wall.  
You will drink its fruit  
And use it as water carriers, single and double.  
With its leaves you will plait mats and roofing,  
And make a fan to fan yourself  
When meditating on your love for me.  
You will see my face in the coconuts  
And kiss it each time you drink.





---

Tonga





---

# The weather shore of Vavau

In recitative style.

We were talking about the weather shore of Vavau  
when the women said to us,

“Let us walk to the weather side to watch the  
sunset, listen to the singing of the birds and the  
lamentations of the wood pigeon.

We will gather flowers near the cliff of Matawto,  
We will stay and share the provisions brought us  
from Likuone,

We will bathe in the sea, rinse in the water of the  
roots and anoint ourselves with sweet-scented oil,

We will string flowers and plait the ti we pick at  
Matawto.

While we stand on the precipice at Bird Cave, we  
will look breathless on the distant sea below.

As we are lost in thought, the great wind whistles  
toward us from the tall casuarinas inland on the  
plains.

My thought rises watching the surf below trying to  
tear away the firm rocks.

It is evening. Let us go to the village.

Listen! I hear a band of singers. Are they practicing  
a hula to dance at the malae at Tanea? Let us go  
there. It will remind us of other festivals before our  
land was torn by war.

War is terrible! Look how weeds take over the land.  
How sad that many men are dead.

---

Our chiefs remain disturbed; they do not often wander alone by moonlight to visit their mistresses.

Enough of these thoughts! How can we help being at war? The land of Fiji has brought war to our land of Tonga. Let us act like Fijians.

Enough of sadness! Tomorrow we may be dead.

Let us decorate ourselves with red dye and bind our waists with fine white tapa. We will crown ourselves with wreaths of fragrant gardenias and wear necklaces of huni flowers to show off our sun-reddened skins.

Listen to the praise of the people. Now the hula has ended; they are portioning out the food of the feast.

Let us go tomorrow to the village.

The young men beg eagerly for our flower wreaths. They flatter us: 'How beautiful these girls look coming from the weather shore! How beautiful their sun-reddened skins; their fragrance like the flowers at the precipice, at the lookout.'

I am anxious to go to the weather side. Let us go tomorrow."

---

# Love song

Blossoms of tetefa and budding of siale,  
Ah, my dear queen's longing that she be exalted;  
Oh, my heart is pained by our separation,  
Death's own self would not be to me such sore  
    agony.

*A-e.*

Am I a siale that my bloom should open?  
Or am I a tropic bird that I soar afar?  
Oh, my heart is pained by our separation,  
Death's own self would not be to me such sore  
    agony.

*A-e.*

---

# How I love her way

By Tangatailoa

How I love her way,  
Love her way that is hers alone,  
Little green pigeon still unlearned;  
The pigeon we're seeking is a maiden.  
Tug at the cord to entrap her.  
My joy is the pigeon who flees as the shadow.  
*He a e he.*  
Bead or ivory or floating star,  
Girdle or scented wreath.  
A venturesome bird is woman,  
I turned away and was grieved;  
Not for ever is her careless chatter,  
No matter what strange thing may happen.  
The eastern shore is weary of wonder  
About its man, where he may be.  
Tell them my joy is in dance and love,  
The road of the siale has kept me;  
On my neck the string of sweet blossoms,  
My belt entwined with siale.  
If Inumomea asks about me,  
Tell him Mulikihaamea  
Is still the most handsome of men,  
And his kindness has been moved  
To be forgetful of Vaea.  
Tell the king that they seek me,  
Set the course by the village Lakepa,

---

The stars, Maukuomaa and Tapukitea,  
Alotolu and Kaukupenga,  
Tapuatamata and the flowers, hingaroleka,  
Unuoisiale and tetefa,  
And bring Aoouvea  
To adorn her for a night of dancing.  
How I love her way.

---

# Poem of Falepapalangi to Mamaeaepoto

Falepapalangi and Mamaeaepoto were famous poets of the first half of the nineteenth century. They often composed in rivalry with each other. When the poet speaks of the gull seeking its food, he is saying metaphorically that the poet searches for subjects.

Ah, surely a most laughable thing  
Is sitting around Tonga and the isles  
While you ask one another of me:  
Have I been concerned in declaring a war?  
Or broken the sacredness of a gift?  
Or been defeated at the Sacred Reef?  
You may say moreover you're a poet,  
But you are foolish in his art,  
And you do not remember.  
There is no other but I  
Who am skilled on the left hand and the right  
When Tongatabu makes ready the dance.  
Leave a poor little poem of mine  
For Haapai and Vavau to take,  
And leave it in Houmahaaloau,  
Take it around to Anamanu;  
For you have shaken your hand—  
You have given up—  
In the place Falalatokelau.  
I came to shore freshly bathed *e*,  
And cut toa and feifai *e*,



---

And there came my summons to the court at  
Pangai *e*

That they might see this skill of mine *e*,  
For I had come from Vaoai *e*,  
And the king's majesty spoke to me *e*,  
That I should not gird myself with a mat *e*,  
But deck myself with the fatai *e*,  
And tell my poem at his bathing place *e*,  
Before their face in Onevai *e*.  
Ah me, ah me, the censure.

Be at ease in your justification,  
For I take no thought of blame;  
I heard from the windward canoe,  
It is said in the song of the deck,  
And I communed with my heart—  
There's a chief being whispered about.  
Has the mound of Kafoa been deserted?  
Teach a poem about it.  
Do you blame kava that I should be drunk?  
An ocean that I should swim?  
Am I a rainbow that I should not be?  
A tern who is wearied in flight?  
A siale to burst into bloom?  
Should I eat turned away in respect?  
Am I not even as you?  
Between us the relation of men?  
Like the quarrel of husband and wife,  
They part but cannot forget.  
The decision is with the chief,  
Who will then let him know.  
A bird, the gull, sought its food,  
Came to shore and slept on a headland:

---

For I am a beach where all meet.  
Take the poem *e*,  
Put it aboard a canoe *e*,  
To take it to Akana *e*,  
Or to Tamatuitala *e*,  
Anyone who likes it *e*,  
Then let him keep it for himself *e*,  
That he may speak in friendship with it *e*,  
In the Place-of-mutual-liking *e*,  
Where the huni blooms,  
The hau gleams,  
In Vavau on the line of headlands.

# Poem of Veehala

Veehala, a poet, is disturbed by the gossip circulating about him. There is, perhaps, a charge against him which could bring death. The meaning is not clear. Matamoana and the Sacred Reef are metaphors for the chief who protects. The man who goes early to fish for bonito is a metaphor for the wise man who approaches the chief with a presentation. When the poet speaks of wishing to be a war vessel which has not heard of the book left in Hihifo (the Bible) he is talking of a man who wishes he were a person of the old days.

It's a thing that has no end,  
 The talk and questioning about me.  
 Fear has risen in me,  
 And, despairing, I remember  
 This body of mine, so sweet,  
 Which is joined with a mention of death.  
 Were there a crime to be discovered,  
 Or a thing I had taken  
 Which is continually being sought—  
 But how should one forget  
 Matamoana, still haunted by pigeons,  
 And the Sacred Reef, where still there are fish?  
 Whoever has wise understanding  
 Goes early at the waning moon;  
 The rod is set on the handle  
 Because of the rising bonito;  
 The oar vainly strikes the waves  
 Trying to row swiftly.  
 Alas!  
 I am amazed  
 At this much talked about nothing.

---

If it were put in a boat she would sink,  
If it were on a tree it would fall.  
I wish I were a war vessel  
Cruising the distant sea,  
Not hearing the report  
Of the book left in Hihifo  
By the generation that was wise.  
It was done in the way of the foolish,  
And, look, it has come to the assembly.

---

# The Society Islands





---

# Creation chant

He abides—Taaroa is his name—  
In the immensity of space.  
There was no earth, no heaven,  
There was no sea, no mankind.  
Taaroa calls on high;  
He changes completely.  
Taaroa is the root,  
The rock—the foundation—  
Taaroa is the sand;  
He stretches out branches.  
Taaroa is the light,  
He is within,  
He is below;  
Taaroa is enduring,  
He is wise.  
He created the land of Hawaii—  
Hawaii the great and sacred,  
A shell for Taaroa.  
The earth is dancing.  
O foundation, O rock  
O sands, here.  
Brought here, press together the earth.  
Press, press again!  
Stretch out the seven heavens; let ignorance cease.  
Create the heavens, let darkness cease.  
Let anxiety cease within;  
Let repose cease;  
Let the period of messengers cease;  
It is the time of the speaker.

---

Fill up the foundations,  
Fill up the rocks,  
Fill up the sands.  
The heavens are surrounding,  
And hung up are the heavens  
In the depths;  
Finished be the world of Hawaii.



---

# Chant for a royal birth

Lay hold of the cord of the child,  
The sacred cord  
Of the god that has flown hither.  
Let it be long a cord of life;  
Tie it firmly with thread;  
Then sever the cord of the child god  
With the sacred knife of the flying bamboo,  
Perforate the cord, the vigorous cord  
That the godly cord be light.

---

# Anointing the royal child

This is the purifier, the heart of the banana,  
Banana tree of the gods,  
To pass over the smooth skin,  
The tender skin of the child.  
Anoint with oil of sweet odor  
The body of this child god  
That it be soft, that it be glossy  
With the sacred oil of the gods.  
Squeeze dry, and saturate with oil  
The cord that is flexible, be dry,  
For a garland for the neck of the child  
Encircle the neck with the cord  
As a garland a pledge of long life,  
For the child god here present.

---

# Chant to usher in the dawn

The clouds are bordering the sky,  
The clouds are awake!  
There are rising clouds  
That climb in the morning,  
Clouds that are carried—  
Floating are those dark clouds,  
Perfectly formed  
And lifted from 'Oro-pa'a,  
Lord of the ocean.  
In the shades of night  
The clouds that rise pile up,  
The clouds condense,  
Form an archway for the sun.  
The clouds are wafted—  
They are perfected early  
And lifted from 'Oro-pa'a,  
The lord of the ocean.  
In the shades of night  
The clouds rise, and part,  
Condense, and reunite  
Into an arch of red clouds,  
For the sun as it rises  
From 'Oro-pa'a of the ocean.

# The song of Ru's sister

Ru, who raised the sky from the earth, and his sister Hina set out in a canoe to explore the earth. Hina in the bow of the canoe sings.

O depths of the rivers!  
 O coldness of the rivers!  
 Little shrimp of the rivers,  
 Great shrimp of the rivers,  
 O prawns of the rivers,  
 O fullness of the rivers!  
 The waters inland reflecting flowers  
 That approach and withdraw!  
 Let the farsighted who dwell on land  
 Arise and see!  
 Look inland to the settled mountains!  
 Let the farsighted who dwell on land  
 Arise and see!  
 Look over the sea of Te-fatu-moana!  
 Let the farsighted who dwell on land  
 Arise, and behold Atea above!  
 Let the farsighted who dwell on land  
     Arise and see!  
 Look below in the presence of Te-tumu  
 At the jungles and rushing streams,  
 At the fountains of the deep,  
 At the fountains of the surface,  
 At the waves of the east,  
 At the waves of the west,  
 At the stable corners, at the burning corners,  
 At the great development over the eight directions.

---

# Warrior's taunting song

Clap hands on thighs,  
Rush headlong like an angry hog!  
I do not flinch at a fly.

A whirlwind is anger, O Te-aho-roa,  
A rock breaker is anger,  
A strong north wind is anger  
Which blows away grass sheaths.

Give me the fearless warrior  
With rage and endurance.  
This is I, Huriaau.  
My father was a greater warrior than yours.  
You cannot lift my spear.

---

# Song of Pa'ea

Pa'ea is a place name meaning wall-of-escape. The yellow sea reflects the yellow rays of the sun.

Let the great standing river  
Wall in its small-leafed ava.  
Tell it with the trumpet and drum,  
Wall in the ava upon Mount Mahu-ta'a.  
O rain of the rocks,  
Conceal your fish  
That go to the deeps of the long bonito!  
Go for parakeet feathers to Ra'iatea,  
To distinguish the handsome warrior  
Wearing the gardenia of Tupai  
Blended with the red feathers of Rarotonga,  
Deal kindly with the mountaineers.  
It is the great black Utu-ai mist  
Of the wall of the yellow sea,  
Of the land that Hiro splashed.  
When the parakeet gods are caught with gum  
Beware! Beware!

---

# Invocation for fire-walking

You who caused the fire in the fire pit—  
Put it out!  
O dark earthworm, O shining earthworm!  
Fresh water, sea water!  
Heat of the fire, red of the fire!  
Help the feet of the walkers,  
Cool the heat of the stones!  
O you cold beings,  
Let us pass through the middle of the fire pit!  
O Great-woman-who-tends-fire-in-the-skies,  
Hold tight the leaves  
That fan away the fire—  
Let us go through the fire pit!

---

# A chief's refusal

I will not give her up! Why should I give her up—  
I, Teuraiterai of the six skies! the Ura that clings to  
my eyes!

The Ura, sunshine from Raratoa, my dear treasure.

One king lulled to sleep his dear Ura.

Like two united, I should die without her.

Tie up the heavens like a net.

Tangle the clouds of the sky, the clouds of Pua.

Open the net, make me dry.

Dry the thousand thousand bonds that unite us.

The net, the net holds well.



---

# A chief's lament for home

From Mataoae I look toward my land, Tetianina,  
The mountain Tearatapu, the valley Temaite,  
My drove of pigs on Mourahi, the great mountain.  
Mist hides the mountain.  
My cloak is spread.  
Oh that the rain clear  
That I may see the great mountain!  
Aue! the wall of Mapuhi, dear land of mine.

The drums that sound above Fareura  
Draw the winds of the south to me  
For a fan to fan the chief Aromaiterai.  
I long for the sight of my home.



---

# The Tuamotus





---

# Creation chant

Life appears in the world,  
Life springs up in Hawaiki.  
The Source-of-night sleeps below  
    in the void of the world;  
    in the taking form of the world,  
    in the growth of the world,  
    the life of the world,  
    the leafing of the world,  
    the unfolding of the world,  
    the darkening of the world,  
    the branching of the world,  
    the bending down of the world.

Waves swerve aside,  
With the tide rising inland,  
With the tide rising seaward.  
The tide rises till it touches Atea,  
A sea below  
    in the narrowness, in the confinement;  
    in this, in that.

That gods may appear,  
That people may issue forth—  
Atea produces above,  
Fakahotu produces below,  
Through whom life was born into the world.

---

# Greeting of Tane

Hail my chief, Tane!

There is not a god traveling the region of the skies,  
Only one, Tane!

Tane thundering on the land,  
Tane thundering in the skies,  
Tane the thunderer,  
Tane the cloud,  
Tane standing at the temple,  
Tane standing within,  
Tane the braider,  
Tane the torch bearer,  
Tane with blood inspiring sympathy, that he be  
    given sympathy by Rongo and Tutavake.

He is the beloved one, the teacher of chiefs,

The whirlwind on the land,

The crimson of the sky,

The glowing red of the sky,

The scarlet of the sky,

The clearness of the sky.

It is the sacred sky of Tane.

Tane here is the supreme ruler of the skies.

Hail to Tane!

It is the highest acclaim!

He is the trumpet, the drum, the leaves of kava,

The maker of chiefs.

Come forth,

Emerge encircled by the rainbow, with the flashing of  
    lightning in the sky, with the crowding round of  
    the multitude!

Hail to the chief,

Hail to the ancestor of chiefs!

---

# Farewell to my land

From the legend of the demigod Rata, who built a great canoe in which he went to seek his lost parents.

O my land standing forth!  
Hide your face,  
Be lost, lost to sight in the voyage.  
Let me be lost in launching away from land  
With the temple;  
Let my land standing out be lost!  
Hide your face as I say farewell;  
And bid me conceal,  
Hide my feelings as I say goodbye,  
Say goodbye to the woods of my land  
    Till another time.

---

# Rata's lament for his father

This lament is chanted by two voices; the first presents the first line of each stanza and the second the second line. The chorus chants the rest of the stanza.

1

O tropic bird of remote seas braving the fury of the  
storm,  
Mount on beating wings as you launch into flight!  
O, speed onward to the shore, seeking the  
hidden dwellers of the land,  
Sweep out to sea, seeking the hidden dwellers of  
the deep!  
A father—

2

The father has long vanished into the place of the  
dead.  
Mount on beating wings as you flash into flight!  
O, speed onward to the shore, seeking the  
hidden dwellers of the land,  
Sweep out to sea, seeking the hidden dwellers of  
the deep!  
Alas for the father—dead in the dark pit.  
Where can the lost father be?



# Chant to announce a catch of turtle

“The foundation of Tongareva” is a term applied to the bottom of the sea where the turtle hides. “A plover without feathers” signifies the man who brings the news. Mata riki is the name for a female turtle.

Intone the chant to announce a catch!

Tiriri, tiriri,

Tarara, tarara!

Let it be a clinging girdle, a hanging girdle,

Wrap round, wrap round the girdle of Tu!

That is the girdle through which was uncovered,  
brought to view,

The foundation of Tongareva,

As a large coral, a shelf of soft coral, a hard limestone  
rock.

That bird above flaps its wings,

A plover without feathers.

So-and-so is the person by whom this turtle was  
taken—

A great fish, a fish taken on the grapple,

Grappled by my mighty hook presided over by  
Ruahatu.

Thus is flung down

The broken flipper of Matariki.

---

# Prayer offering turtle flesh to the gods

The victim is tied,  
The turtle is tied up.  
The tern twitters, the gray-back tern from Hiti.  
From the god Tamarua of Hiti,  
Shadow of the god, carry off the food!  
Here comes the flesh of turtle,  
For you, gods,  
Eat!  
Gods who stay, gods who wander,  
Tara, Kaipoa, Varoa, Te Ariki-putai, Haroa-mai-  
to-ragi;  
Muna-iti, Munariki;  
There is the flesh of turtle,  
For you, gods,  
Eat!  
It is beside you, there in the nether world,  
Now it is free of restrictions!  
Take it!

---

# Prayer for arrival of turtle at the temple

Tira means the mast of a ship but is used here as a symbol of the phallus.

1

Where is my tira?  
My tira comes running.  
Where is my tira?  
My tira gleams,  
My tira inquires.  
Now the procreant power of Ruahatu is loosed  
That it reach the ocean,  
That it be thronged.  
Exalt the ocean!

2

The sea is covered with great waves, the sea is  
whipped by winds,  
The sea is beaten down by the storm.  
Now the procreant power of Ruahatu is loosed  
That it reach the ocean,  
That it be thronged with fish.  
Exalt the ocean!

---

# Chant for Horahora

Chanted by two alternating voices and a chorus. The name of the sacred temple, Mata-arua-hau, means first wooing. The name of the field, Nuku-roa, means long thrusts.

Takaki is the lover  
Takaki is the lover  
Horahora is the maiden.  
You two shall live together within the sacred temple,  
Mata-arua-hau.

Ho, the sacred temple!  
There shall sleep—  
There you shall sleep together  
Within the sacred enclosure of the temple.

Takaki shall kneel over the maiden on the field of  
Nuku-roa.  
Ho, the sacred field of strife!  
A radiant princess,  
A radiant princess is the maiden.  
Horahora gives herself to her lover  
In the land of swirling flame.  
The sap of maidenhead flows.

---

Shall dwell together—  
You two shall dwell together  
Within Ahu-tu, house of the gods  
Until the day when wind breaks the sea surface.  
Until the lover departs—  
Horahora remains behind.

EPILOGUE

You shall dwell in the night realm of Kiho,  
The last place of repose.

# Chant of Kororupo

Kororupo is the entrance to the realm of death.

The portal of Kororupo—

Stretch your hand within, extend your groping  
hand—

My soul is a wild pigeon—

A petrel, a stormy petrel!

The far journey is bitter cold.

You are gatekeeper at the portal of Havaiki—

A pigeon, a wild pigeon,

My soul is a wild pigeon!

A sandpiper twittering at the portal of Kororupo.

Uttering a plaintive note, suddenly my soul starts  
up—

The soul—it is the soul!

There beside you lingers the spirit, like a bird

pausing at the Gate of Havaiki.

Chilled by the cold wind it begins to ruffle its

feathers, to spread them out—

My soul going its long way here!

A heron, uttering its mournful cry at the portal of

Kororupo,

Over and over and over repeating its night cry—

A pigeon, a wild pigeon!

Speed to the sky above, to the dawn, to the world of

light!

---

# The Marquesas







---

# Chant honoring a first-born son

A covering of mist shrouds Mount Feani,  
The cloud is a waist cloth for Matia,  
Sacred is the cloud,  
A wreath of smoke for the chief.  
A covering of mist shrouds Teheia,  
The cloud is the waist cloth of A'o Tona,  
Sacred is the cloud,  
A wreath of smoke for the chief,  
A wreath of smoke for the handsome youth.  
Here, with her hair handsomely done up,  
Is his mother, Viipohutu—it is her song!

# Love song

By Moa Tetua, a blind leper. He sings about the love affairs of his son Piu. A sudden change from third to first person is a common device.

The dream image fades away, the dream of the red  
 pandanus keys  
 Strung with ti leaves in a fine rain!  
 He is a handsome garland.  
 Brave is Tahia's mouth, but her eyes tremble at the  
 spring, Hoa-tuki,  
 Desiring the boy from the valley.  
 A precious fan of dotted feathers,  
 A piece of loincloth were given as a brave husband's  
 token of love.  
 Come, seek a fruit!  
 Hold your breath!  
 Pressed close to my lover in the mountain,  
 We hide away like children, my lover and I,  
 Until the shadows of the sun conceal the summit of  
 Fe'ani mountain.  
 The kava leaves are lifted high toward me!  
 Climb the high pukatea tree, break off, O Piu,  
 The branch of the precious treasure of Atea.  
 Swing over the precipice called Flowers-at-the-  
 mountain-peak.  
 The time with Ti'ahe'e-e-fatu.  
 My garland makes my lover happy.  
 Lightning flashes on the flowers of great Tonai'e  
 mountain,  
 Like my eyes beckoning

---

To sleep in shame  
In the house of songs at Fiti-nui.  
It is the first time your eyes have seen the lovely ripe  
breadfruit.  
I saw you before when you were tapu.  
When I mated with the chief the sun was hot,  
You were chiefly, you were handsome!  
You came along Akaka stream.  
My soul and lover, my palm leaf,  
My shiny leaf, farewell Piu!  
My robe is wet with tears,  
And my nose swollen at being left alone!  
With you on the silent Motu-tapu!

---

# Be careful

By Moa Tetua

Be careful lest the day come when you are old,  
And old, you leave behind the garlands and love-  
making.

You are despised, you are separated from Uriha.

The sky is darkened for the lover.

I dance in grief for the death of Vini,

For him I wound myself!

Who has foolishly taken my earrings,

Dripping with the rain of tears as I turn?

Like a reflection in the water, through tears I see you  
leave ...

I turn my head,

My head is in a shadow near a flower standing high.

I, Fau-ti'i-kohea, have come

To the clean cave ... of Ha'apape.

Pandanus garlands are cast away ... the day I leave  
for O'ova'u.

Uri of Anamea wept.

Love is cared for tenderly and presses deep  
within me.

Do you forget us,

Two straying sweethearts from Puanea,

The day we were lost in the strange grotto

And the moon was new?

Such was my real food;

When my husband was separated from me

There was only hunger ...

---

# Hiva'oa balances

By M'u. Hiva'oa is an island in the Marquesas. The flower wreath alludes to a lover.

Hiva'oa balances like a dancing flower-leaf  
As our canoe turns back,  
Sailing like a bird in flight!  
Swiftly the sun has fled, behold, it is night!  
Shadows lengthen on the channel  
Like wind-tossed flowers.  
Ti'i gives a garland and a feast and a dance,  
Singing and dancing until dawn whitens the heavens.  
I sigh for my wreath of sweet flowers!  
My wreath is perhaps torn,  
My wreath of sweet flowers!  
Pretty as a fruit-plucking pole harvesting perfume as  
    food  
Torn to shreds!  
Torn to shreds, my garland of sweet flowers!  
Beauty is torn to shreds!

---

# The faufe'e bird

By Puko'i. The girls who sing this song imitate the flight of birds, the stormy sea, the rain, wind and thunder. The ku'a is a red parakeet. Its feathers are highly prized.

The faufe'e flies in the sunlight, wings motionless.  
The tempestuous booby dives into the waters.  
The wild pigeon and the ku'a claw  
In changing sea and rain and hot sunshine,  
In thunder through the mists.  
The northeast wind strikes—  
Madly I dart away!  
Faster fly the birds!  
Faster sings the song!  
Faster fly the birds!  
Birds in the clouds! Birds in the mists!  
Song of clouds, song of mists!  
My fledgling flies to Fatu'uku,  
Flies straight into my famous song,  
Wings spread!

---

# Strong fires disturb

By Tamau

1

Strong fires disturb the girl, she is mad with love.  
My thoughts are sad, they are in the cruel mists and  
mountains.

I weep as I make my clothes and sing my song.  
Why has he gone?

REFRAIN

I wear a garland and grasp the hand of my beloved,  
Little Ku'a.

Dewdrops are in my song, dewdrops.  
A gift of a wreath, a wreath of peace.

2

I wrap my body  
In the mists of a night cooled by the west wind.  
Gentle is the path of the northeast wind.  
We go to the flowers of the plumeria tree,  
By the spring we wreath our garlands,  
For he and I are together.

3

I wear a garland of seven-petaled flowers.  
The mountains are our love,  
And the sky our clothing,  
And wreaths our destruction.

---

# When a man's body is young

By Kahu'einui Barsinas

1

When a man's body is young,  
At night he gives up his sleep  
And sings, and sings!

2

When love sickness comes,  
The singing sickness,  
This is the dizzy sickness,  
Even the earth and clouds are consumed with desire!

CHORUS

Until the body is like an old woman,  
Like an eel in a hole in the sea,  
Pounding, pounding!



---

# Easter Island





# A chant of creation

God-of-angry-look by lying with Roundness made the  
poporo berry.

Himahima marao by lying with Lichen-in-the-soil  
made the lichen,

Parent-mother by lying with Pipiri hai tau made  
wood,

Ti by lying with Tattooing made the ti plant,  
Elevation by doing it with Height made the inland  
grass.

Sharpness by lying with Adze produced obsidian,  
Twining by lying with Beautiful-face-with-  
penetrating-tongue produced the morning glory,

Parent-god by lying with Angry-eel produced the  
coconut,

Grove by doing it with Trunk produced the ashwood.

Veke by lying with Water-beetle made the dragonfly,  
Stinging-fly by doing it with Swarm-of-flies produced  
the fly,

Branch by lying with Fork-of-tree made Beetle-that-  
lives-in-rotten-wood,

Lizard-woman by lying with Whiteness made the  
gannet.

Hard-soil by lying with Covering-below made the  
sugar cane.

Bitterness by doing it with Bad-taste produced the  
kape,

Tail by lying with Hina oio produced the crayfish,

Killing by doing it with Stingray made the shark.

Tiki-the-chief by lying with Heap-of-earth made Hina  
kauhara;

---

Kuhikia by lying with Wetness made the bulrush;  
Kuhikia by lying with Pigeon made the seagull;  
Small-thing by doing it with Imperceptible-thing  
made the fine dust in the air.

It runs red, the blood of kovare.

Abundant the kovare, rough the eels.

The rain falls in long drops.

# A prayer for rain

A fragment.

O rain, long tears of Hiro,  
You fall down,  
You beat down,  
O rain, long tears of Hiro.

---

# Dampened by dew

A Miru girl, leaving her lover in the morning, is dampened with dew.

O Miru, you are dampened to the bones by dew  
By the dew of the Rano-aroi.  
You won't be dry when you go  
To soak the paper mulberry  
To make the cloth for the ribbon of your topknot.

---

# Love song

Sung by a girl whose younger sister loves the same man she does.

O Mea, for your body both the little one and the big  
one are fighting.

It is winter, my friend, the flower is very fragrant,  
The flower is very fragrant.

It is summer, the flower, my friend,  
Is withered on my breast, alas, alas.

The older wife is afraid.

Here is the wreath to hang an ornament,  
The ornament is your face.

O my brother, O Mea.

---

# You are sick with love

The girl is compared to a fish. The fins are her topknot.

You are sick with love

You are a crab that lives below at Ahu Akurenga.

You are a fish with topknot.

You go down,

O fish, you are my girl friend.

For a toro-miro tree that cannot break,

Seaweed of the parent separated by

The long rock.



---

# O Manu

A married girl, shut in the house of her father-in-law,  
wants to escape to meet her lover.

O Manu, my blood oozes  
When I dig under the house, O Manu.  
I do not eat the sweet potatoes  
Of this old man, Maea-te-renga.



---

Mangareva





---

# Tahaki's drum

From the legend of the demigod Tahaki, who had a beautiful red skin. The skin was stolen. In this poem he returns from the underworld where he retrieved the skin. His cousin Kirihi betrayed him, and Tahaki's drum reflects the doubt and confusion of Kirihi while the two journey home.

## REFRAIN

Drum so softly sounding, causing wonder,  
Drum that sounds so secretly,  
I have bedecked myself  
With beautiful flowers,  
But yet one wonders.

## 1

Let us go on the rising tide,  
Doubt rises with the breaking waves.  
The drum now sounding belongs to the younger  
cousin,  
And the elder is in doubt.

## 2

With Tahaki was the drum,  
With Kirihi was the scouting of the way in doubt.

## 3

Kirihi, move over  
Toward the first night-world,  
To the first night-world,  
Where doubt exists.

4

To the first night-world  
Where the woman planned  
To remove the eyes of Kirihi,  
Whom she doubted.

---

# Song of departure

From the legend of Tahaki. Tahaki leaves Nua, his lover, and she sings this song. His back is a symbol of his leaving her.

## REFRAIN

The body of the loved one  
warmed the back  
Of the chiefly lover who was  
loved so well.

1

Tahaki has arrived  
beside the green tree, alas.

2

Tahaki has arrived  
beside the tree of farewell, alas.

---

# The message of the frigate bird

A mother asks the bird for news of her son. She interprets the lowering of the feet and the bending of the beak to mean that he is dead.

## REFRAIN

O son, O son of mine,  
O son!

## 1

Listen, O bird  
that flies up above,  
Have you seen  
my beloved son dead  
Who stayed among  
the myriads of Tahiti?  
Feathers on your legs  
Feathers on your wings,  
Your beak bends low.  
O son!

## 2

As a torea bird were you  
flitting along the shore  
On the coast of distant Tahiti?  
O son!



3

The canoe I provided  
In which my son embarked,  
The son so dear to me,  
Cast up on a distant land.  
O son!

4

You are a moon  
That will not rise again.  
O son, O son of mine,  
    O son!  
The chill dawn breaks without you,  
O son, O son of mine,  
    O son!

---

# The rich and the poor

From the folktale of Toga. In this poem Toga, whose father lives in Po, the other world, sits with a rich young man at a beauty show.

## REFRAIN

The well-beloved has been rejected,  
So I shall hurry far  
Beyond to my mother, alas!  
The well-beloved has been rejected.

## 1

Sit on the high stone seat,  
Sit with high-held head,  
The one with a wealthy father.

## 2

Put on the feathered headdress,  
Sit with haughty glancing eyes,  
The one with a wealthy father.

## 3

Hang round your neck the ivory jewel,  
Sit with proudly heaving breast,  
The one with a wealthy father.

4

Grasp in your hand the chiefly staff,  
Sit with imposing dignity,  
The one with a wealthy father.

5

Gird round your waist the barkcloth kilt,  
Sit with chiefly arrogance,  
The one with a wealthy father.

6

Sit on the corner of the low house platform,  
sit with downcast head,  
The one with a father in poverty.

7

Hold in your hand the menial staff,  
Sit with drooping shoulders,  
The one with a father in poverty.

8

Tie round your loins the ti-leaf kilt,  
Sit with shame-bent back,  
The one with a father in poverty.

# The flower at the spring

From the folktale of Toga. Toga has climbed a tree hanging over a pool. His former wife, Ugaru, comes to draw water and sees the reflection of Toga. She uses a love name for him, Matahara.

## REFRAIN

Ah, we two! Here are we two,  
     Ugaru-te-ganagana and I,  
 We two were united in love,  
 We two!  
 Let us climb up to pick flowers,  
 We two!

## 1

Beside the spring,  
 I peered down,  
 You peered down,  
 We saw the image  
     of Matahara, the beloved.  
 Ah, we two!

## 2

Peering down I saw  
 The reflection of the water bottle,  
 The image of Matahara, the beloved.  
 Ah, we two!

---

# Joy turns to sadness

From the folktale of Toga. The poem tells of the meeting and final parting of Toga and his former wife, Ugaru.

## REFRAIN

Joy turns to sadness.

1

I stretched out my hand,  
O my beloved,  
It touched below your waist,  
Ah, joy will turn to sadness.

2

I stretched out my hand,  
O my beloved,  
It touched your sweetness,  
Ah, joy will turn to sadness.

3

I stretched out my hand,  
O my beloved,  
It fell into empty space,  
Ah, joy has turned to sadness.

---

# Sea burial of Toga's daughter

From the folktale of Toga.

## REFRAIN

I lowered you down.

1

You have been lowered down to the deep,  
Down to the depths, my loved one,  
And I lowered you down.

2

Our daughter, the Princess who  
    plaited precious things,  
She died on the open sea.  
My darling, I lowered you down.

3

A deep-sea fisherman I,  
Storm-bound at night,  
But the way was too long  
For the gods to hear,  
So your body, my dear one,  
I lowered you down.

---

# The sacred house

From a legend. Uru warned his daughter and her husband not to enter his sacred house. But they do.

## REFRAIN

O loved ones!  
O cherished wife,  
O beloved husband,  
O dear ones!  
Out of a clear sky  
Lightly falls the rain,  
Lightly drizzles down  
    the rain of Heagi-kura.  
O my loved ones!

## 1

I command you two,  
You two must not enter  
    into my house, a sacred house,  
A sacred house dwelt in  
    by a priest, by me.

## 2

I will reach up with my hands  
To draw down the heavy  
    drops of rain from Heagi-kura.

---

# The casting out of love

## REFRAIN

The love for you that gnaws within my breast,  
The casting out progresses now,  
cast out, cast out,  
That I forever may forget you.

## 1

The love is now torn out  
that once I felt for you.

## 2

Dear one, I die  
beneath the waves that sweep over me.



---

# I am left alone

## REFRAIN

Beloved, I am left alone,  
O Te Matererea, my dear one,  
The odor of the death of the beloved  
    assails me,  
I am left alone.

## 1

The waves flow over you,  
The waves recede,  
The waves lift up your body,  
The waves wash Te Matererea.  
I am left alone.

## 2

You were borne in  
By the waves of Pua-ragahia.  
Now we two are parted,  
O beloved, I am left alone.  
Washed up on the strand was  
    the precious one of Aiuragi.  
O beloved, I am left alone.

---

# Lament

A human husband laments for a wife taken by a non-human husband.

## REFRAIN

Spreading to seaward of Putatai-roa,  
O Te Tepeiru, fear spreads abroad,  
Because you are dead.

1

O Te Tepeiru, alas,  
My princess who departed so soon.

2

What is the evil thing  
that spreads fear abroad?

3

Fear of a cruel lover,  
That is the evil thing that causes fear.

4

The hand of the cruel lover,  
That is the cruel thing that causes fear.

5

The blood shed by an evil lover,  
That is the cruel cause that  
spreads fear abroad.

---

# The canoe of Mamau-ora

From a story. Mamau-ora was killed in her canoe by two evil nephews.

## REFRAIN

The wind arises, the wind arises,  
The waves from the south are calmed,  
The waves from the north are calmed.  
The wind arises!

1

From where returned  
the canoe of Mamau-ora?

2

From sailing in the west wind  
returned the canoe of Mamau-ora.

3

From the beach where small nuts grew  
returned the canoe of Mamau-ora.

4

From the far distant beach  
returned the canoe of Mamau-ora.

---

# Haul away

This poem speaks of a defeated people hurriedly putting their canoe in the water to escape the enemy.

## REFRAIN

Haul away, haul, haul away,  
Danger is near,  
Fear of the enemy,  
So haul away, haul, haul away.

1

What is the wind  
that brings the big seas?

2

The north wind is the wind  
that brings the huge waves.

3

The northwest wind is the wind  
that brings the great seas.

4

The west wind is the wind  
that brings the rough storms.

# Song of things in the upper world

A woman, Meiraga, was taken to the underworld. Her husband, Tako, went after her. On their return to the upper world, women along the way asked Meiraga what things in the upper world she had yearned for.

## REFRAIN

The beloved sincerely mourned for  
By a thousand thoughts of former days,  
I weep for love of you,  
O beloved, mourned for indeed.

## 1

O Meiraga the beloved, what is the thing  
That you weep for  
In the far-off upper world?

The leafy freshness of my land of Taupapa—  
A somber picture from the realm above.

## 2

O Meiraga the beloved, what is the thing  
That you weep for  
In the far-off upper world?

The green fresh leaves of taro growing at Te Puna-  
nui-a-tauga,  
A haunting picture from the world above.

3

O Meiraga the beloved, what is the thing  
That you weep for  
In the far-off upper world?

The firm straight stalks of taro planted at Tutuira,  
A yearned-for picture of the land above.

4

O Meiraga the beloved, what is the thing  
That you weep for  
In the far-off upper world?

The full sweet tubers of taro harvested at  
Te Matavarivari,  
A distressing picture from the home above.

---

# Lament for old age

## REFRAIN

Alas! We grow old, O beloved,  
We two.

## 1

We two indeed together, O beloved,  
When we two were little  
When we played together in the sea.

## 2

We two indeed together, O beloved,  
When we took our walks together  
As we were growing up.

## 3

We two indeed together, O beloved,  
When your breasts were firm and round,  
When your breasts drooped in motherhood.

## 4

We two indeed together, O beloved,  
When your hair floated down your back,  
When your body was strong and virile.

## 5

We two indeed together, O beloved,  
When our bodies grew old and thin,  
Like a flatfish resting on the bottom.

6

We two indeed together, O beloved,  
When so feeble we but sat apart,  
So feeble we could but rest the hours away.

7

We two indeed together, O beloved,  
When our dim eyes gaze at the misty skies,  
When vision fails to see their splendor.  
Ah, where does God draw me?



---

# Cook Islands





---

# Prayer over a human sacrifice to Rongo

Fragment of an ancient chant.

Stately, noble priest!  
Sweet peace, welcome offering!  
Securely fastened and well-tied,  
These human hands and human form  
Dedicated to this fate by the gods:  
Doomed to sacrifice by the god Rongo.

Great Vātea is the guardian of the ocean.  
It is ruffled by him:  
It is calmed by him.

Here is ironwood of noble growth—  
A graceful tree,  
With numerous branches.  
Cut down this ironwood tree;  
Divide its trunk;  
Split it with wedges,  
For the making of spears.

In every age the ironwood has provided  
Death-dealing spears  
For the use of warriors only—  
From time immemorial.

---

And bravely have we wielded them!  
The wild ti root of the hills was our food,  
But now we shall enjoy plenty.  
We rejoice on this day.

Lately we hid in the rocks—  
The refuge of the conquered.  
But now we shall enjoy plenty,  
We rejoice on this day.

---

# Where has she gone?

Composed by Naupata in memory of his wife. Avaiki is the land of the dead. The song is performed by a solo voice and chorus alternating.

Where has she gone?

She has gone to Avaiki,  
She disappeared at the edge of the horizon  
Where the sun drops through.  
We weep for you.

Yes, I will forever weep  
And continuously seek for you.

I shed bitter tears—  
I weep for the lost wife of my bosom.  
Alas! You will not return.

Oh, that you would return!

Come back to this world,  
Return to my embrace.  
You are like a branch torn off by the storm.

Torn off, and now in Avaiki—  
That distant land to which you fled.

# Puvai leading a band of ghosts to the underworld

By Iikura, ca. 1795. This poem was chanted by alternating chorus and solo voices.

## INTRODUCTION

A favoring breeze sweeps the entrance of the ghost  
cave;  
It is for Puvai about to depart.  
Lightly he skims over the crest of the waves.

## FOUNDATION

Farewell, beloved parents!  
Let a mourning procession follow  
Over the rugged shore of the south.  
Weep for a son of such tender nature  
Before a fair wind carries me to spirit-land.

## 1

A favoring breeze sweeps the entrance  
Of the ghost cave Anakura.  
Listen to the hum of the ghosts.  
It is the hum of spirits passing over rocks,  
Crowding along the beach by Double Cave.

He is about to depart.  
Lightly he skims over the crest of the waves.

## 2

There is the canoe of Puvai.  
 He bends sorrowfully over it.  
 Yes, very sorrowfully he bends over it.  
 Take your seat in front, son,  
 Clothed in ghostly network;  
 Turn your face to the other land.

He is about to depart.  
 Lightly he skims over the crest of the waves.

## 3

Let the southwest wind ruffle the sea.  
 Awake, northwest wind.  
 Tiki, sister of Ve'etini, leads the way.  
 Mangaia fades from the sight of Puvai,  
 Driven away by the violence of winds.

He is about to depart.  
 Lightly he skims over the crest of the waves.

## 4

Beloved child of Motuone—  
 Of Motuone, your weeping mother,  
 Glance tenderly back on the hills  
 And mountains of the interior.  
 Come back to the fair valley of Tamarua,  
 The place where you were born.

He is about to depart.  
 Lightly he skims over the crest of the waves.

*Ai e ruaoo ē! E rangai ē!*

# Death lament for Varenga

By Koroa, ca. 1817. "Sun-rising" refers to the ancient home of the tribe. Miru is the ugly spirit of the under world.

## INTRODUCTION

Varenga who came from the Sun-rising  
Is now wed in spirit-land.  
She was wooed by a shadow.  
Such was my dream on the mountain.

## FOUNDATION

My dream was of you at the Sun-rising—  
Your form dazzling as lightning.  
You were watching for the dawn  
When I awoke from my sleep  
On the steep mountain side.

## 1

Varenga who came from the Sun-rising;  
Yes, my Varenga!  
Miru will cherish you in your maidenhood—  
Your lovely maidenhood!  
In life you were admired by all  
Wherever your light steps wandered.  
Now you are wooed by a shadow.  
Such was my dream on the mountain.



## 2

You were buried in the ancestral marae  
On the side of steep Maungaroa,  
Hidden by the tall fern—  
Yes, hidden by the tall fern.  
Perhaps your spirit is revisiting the spot,  
Hovering among the wild rocks.  
Now you are wooed by a shadow.  
Such was my dream on the mountain.

## 3

Your house in the west is decayed,  
Your house at the gathering place of ghosts,  
Built by your ancestors where spirits  
Rest awhile and chatter in the evening  
Or wander about at the edge of the cliffs  
Or sit on the stones gazing at the interior.  
Now you are wooed by a shadow.  
Such was my dream on the mountain.

*Ai e ruaoo ē! E rangai ē!*



---

Tuvalu





---

# Vaitupu songs

1

I walked along the eastern shore  
Round the outskirts of Sapepe  
Your footprints are hard to forget.

2

I stand at Fangamotu  
I watch the dawn breaking  
Breaking over the mid-lagoon  
I decide to sleep  
But I remain awake  
My eyes remain open!

3

Birds sing among the puka trees  
To converse with me  
Ho! you there!  
I shall seek a mate on my accustomed path  
Oh! my accustomed love-sick path.



---

# Kapingamarangi







# The post standing in the sky

The post which stands in space;  
Insert it.  
May it be held firmly below.

---

# Love song

I was lying in my house  
When I thought of you.  
I stood up, went out to find you.  
I saw the place where you sleep.  
I crouched toward you in pitch darkness.  
I am not afraid because of my love for you.  
The premna tree leaf trembles, flashes,  
Then you know it is I.

---

# I go down to the lagoon

I go down to the lagoon,  
Steer my canoe straight to the reef.  
A trigger fish speeds by.  
I dive, go off, swim.  
My back is hot.  
I continue on, continue on, feeling fine.  
The rigging is tight, well secured,  
Speeding on, sailing on, quivering;  
Sailing on, sailing on, returning!

---

# I am on the water

By Timoweti

I am on the water, poling.  
This canoe exists to carry us sailing.  
When the wind blows, who will see you?  
That will be known when the sail appears and gleams  
    against the opening between the islets.  
Chanting is heard on the islets,  
As it was heard from the earliest times.  
When the shallows of Hangaeha are reached  
The tide in the pass is high.  
We land, turn, go out again, paddle on the lagoon.  
As the tide has come in, make your line ready  
    quickly.  
See if those who have arrived  
Are rapidly pulling in their lines to the canoes.  
Give bait so that a hand can cast it.  
There it goes!  
The kina fish smile as they wander from piece to  
    piece.

---

# Chant for the bonito canoe

by Timoweti and Korowe

He awoke in the lonely house standing at the border  
of the land; he lifted his canoe,  
Turned his canoe Hikumeruti, headed for the islets  
south.

Entered a branch of the pass and appeared paddling  
westward.

Birds, noddy terns, fed alone, appearing below the  
sky.

He stayed on his three-legged stool. As the birds  
moved, he trailed his hook.

He cast it in the foam of his wake.

A fish struck while waiting for the Pleiades.

His pole bends, cracks, breaks on the sacred ocean  
here.

The stick of Utamatua is broken, chant to the ocean!  
“May the god rest” he says to the tail of his bonito.

The news spread.

You all paddled your canoe until close to the  
breakers,

Then you saw and spoke truthfully when you were  
before the people.

Just carry up the canoe.

---

# Search for

This chant and the following one were recited at the time of a fishing ritual when a basket of coconuts was offered in a sacred place.

Turn, turn, search for;

Carry to the children.

I walk carefully

With the basket to the children, you.

Sacred power is there, the coconuts are there, the  
nuts are there.

The basket containing the coconuts is there pointed  
toward you.

This will bring sacred power.

The light travels, flames, goes forth.

Flames, goes forth.

---

# The man stayed

The man stayed on the promontory  
Waiting for the sun to rise.  
When it was bright, I picked up my paddle  
Then looked at my food, the bonito coming here.  
Then I went out on the ocean  
Then I wished I had stayed ashore  
Pulling up sea urchins on the reef,  
Just by the reef.





---

Tikopia





---

# Lament for a friend

My paddle from the stern of the canoe  
My paddle from the bow  
Has slipped away  
Buried beneath far skies!  
Now if it had slipped away at sea  
That you might sleep in sweet burial—

The unclasping of our hands  
Friend!  
But to be buried in the earth  
Indeed you have parted from the crew.

---

# Dream song

The dead man appears to the canoe owner in a dream and bewails his fate.

Turn your stern to me  
Turn your stern to me  
But the fish went in the path  
Of the ocean.

My swimming, my long swimming  
In the ocean wastes  
My body nuzzled by the grey birds.

---

New Zealand





---

# Creation chant

Io dwelt within breathing-space of immensity.  
The universe was in darkness, with water everywhere.  
There was no glimmer of dawn, no clearness, no  
light.

And he began by saying these words,  
That he might cease remaining inactive.

“Darkness, become a light-possessing darkness.”  
And at once light appeared.

He then repeated those self-same words in this  
manner,

That he might cease remaining inactive,  
“Light, become a darkness-possessing light.”

And again intense darkness supervened.

Then a third time he spoke, saying,

“Let there be a darkness above,  
Let there be darkness below.  
Let there be darkness to Tupua,  
Let there be darkness to Tawhito;  
It is a darkness overcome and dispelled.  
Let there be one light above,  
Let there be one light below.  
Let there be light to Tupua,  
Let there be light to Tawhito.  
A dominion of light,  
A bright light.”

And now a great light prevailed.

Io then looked to the waters which encompassed him,  
and spoke a fourth time, saying,

“You waters of Tai-kama, be separate.  
Heaven be formed.”

Then the sky became suspended.

“Bring forth Tupu-koro-nuku.”

And at once the moving earth lay stretched  
abroad ...



---

# Creation chant

In the beginning was the 'Night',  
The 'Night' begot the 'Light',  
The 'Light' begot the 'Light standing long',  
The 'Light long standing' begot 'Nothingness',  
The 'Nothingness' begot 'Nothingness the possessed',  
The 'Nothingness the possessed' begot 'Nothingness  
the made excellent',  
The 'Nothingness the made excellent' begot  
    'Nothingness the fast bound',  
The 'Nothingness the fast bound' begot  
    'Nothingness the first',  
The 'Nothingness the first' begot 'Moisture',  
'Moisture' married 'The strait, the vast, the clear',  
And their progeny were Rangi, the heaven, and Papa,  
    the earth.

---

# Creation chant

The first period: of Thought

From the conception the increase,  
From the increase the thought,  
From the thought the remembrance,  
From the remembrance the consciousness,  
From the consciousness the desire.

The second period: of Darkness

The knowledge became fruitful;  
It dwelt with the feeble glimmering;  
It brought forth night:  
The great night, the long night,  
The lowest night, the loftiest night,  
The thick night, the night to be felt;  
The night to be touched,  
The night not to be seen,  
The night of death.

The third period: of Light

From the nothing the begetting,  
From the nothing the increase,  
From the nothing the abundance,  
The power of increasing,  
The living breath;  
It dwelt with the empty space, and produced the  
    atmosphere which is above us,  
The atmosphere which floats above the earth.  
The great firmament above us dwelt with the  
    early dawn,  
And the moon sprang forth;

---

The atmosphere above us dwelt with the heat,  
And then came the sun;  
They were thrown up above, as the chief eyes of  
    Heaven:  
Then the Heavens became light,  
The early dawn, the early day,  
The mid-day. The blaze of day from the sky.

The fourth period: of Land  
The sky above dwelt with Havaiki,  
And produced lands:  
Taporapora,  
Tauwarenikau,  
Kukuparu,  
Wawau atea,  
Whiwhi te Rangiora  
...

---

# The creation of woman

Ha! It leaps into life,  
It is the first light,  
It is bright morning,  
Out of dawn comes the disciple.  
The people of Hawaiki  
Drawn in,  
Like the clenching of a hand  
On Hawaiki.  
Crouched within,  
Knees drawn up,  
Tiki, the spring—  
Hands, take shape.  
Tiki, the source, the kneeling one—  
Knees drawn up,  
He weeps for his food,  
And stretches  
Bold Tiki!  
Soft Tiki!  
Red rain falls from the skies,  
Open the great womb of the earth,  
Come forth! It is the daughter!  
The stranger, Hine-mana-hiri!

# Chant for bailing a canoe

A chant for the Aotea canoe, which sailed in the great migration from Hawaiki to New Zealand in the fourteenth century. Tawhiri-matea is the god of gales and tempests. Tu-Raka-maomao is the god of ordinary winds.

I will uplift my bailer now,  
 The Ririno-o-te-rangi,  
 To the extreme limits of the heavens,  
 To the girdle of the heavens,  
 To the stability of the heavens,  
 To the resting place of heaven.  
 Adhere to the foundation of heaven,  
 Adhere to the summit of heaven,  
 Affix it to great heaven above,  
 The uprising, the uplifting,  
 The insertion, the bailing out  
 Of the water of my canoe.  
 Dry up to above,  
 Dry up to below,  
 Dry up to seaward,  
 To the great heaven above,  
 The bailer, the Tipua-horo-nuku.  
 There stands the deep blue ocean,  
 There stands the reddish ocean,  
 There stands the breaking ocean,  
 There stands the surging ocean,  
 There stands the ruddy shore.  
 Houra,  
 Dry up  
 The water of my canoe,  
 Houra,

Dry up,  
Dry up that colored water  
Of my canoe,  
Houra,  
Dry up  
The sky of Tawhiri-matea at sea—  
Of Tu-Raka-maomao.  
Strike the prow of the canoe,  
Dry up completely  
The sea to Hawaiki.

# Arrival at New Zealand

I arrive where an unknown earth is under my feet,

I arrive where a new sky is above me,

I arrive at this land

    A resting place for me.

O spirit of the earth! A stranger humbly offers his

    heart as food for thee.

---

# From a lament for a son who burned to death

Hine-nui-te-po is death. Mahuika is the goddess of fire.

My ornamental ear-feather  
Has long been misty from the fog.  
My poor grieved heart  
Is now aroused because of a curse  
That was provoked.  
Move off, until far away.  
You were not left  
At the altar of Paki-o-matiti,  
Your skin was burning,  
Scorched by the fire.  
You must cover yourself  
With taramea water  
You must bathe  
In the life-giving water of Tane  
At Waipuna-atea.

Tide of Koroki  
Crying and wailing  
Sounding far off  
Within Mangamaire  
Stricken with the odor,  
The patches of small mountain beech trees.  
O departed son



---

Now within Pipiri  
You were not covered  
By the prized cloak,  
By the winter night  
So that your living spirit  
Might return  
In company to Wairau.

...

My greenstone neck ornament!  
It is but that alone;  
My prized ear-drop  
Is severed from the ear,  
My headdress of Tihauora,  
Who repressed you.  
Sleep on, O son,  
You, the pillar of Aotea,  
You must embark upon  
The gentle-blown spirit canoe.  
Your life oil then floats,  
Resembling that of crushed titoki  
To become an anointing  
By the assembled low born.  
Your near ones  
Look downward.  
My flock of sea terns  
There, moving off,  
Fill then  
Your small stomach  
With the food of the waters.

I see clearly  
The path to the spirit world  
There to be swallowed down

To Hine-nui-te-po.  
I must share  
In the fire of Mahuika  
That singed and scorched  
Your shriveled skin,  
Your long straight hair  
Burnt by the fire,  
My son.

---

# Prayer for victory in battle

Tu is the god of battle.

The heavens are clouded,  
Cloud-covered.

It is heard here below,  
    The thunder rolling,  
It is heard here below,  
    Echoing the expanse.

The quivering spear, surprise in flight,  
Like the double-sided shark,  
Is the fleetness of the footsteps,  
Is the raging of the footsteps,  
In blood are the footsteps,  
Here the footsteps rush headlong.  
It is the footsteps of Tu!  
Stride over the stars!  
Stride over the moon!  
Flee! Take flight!  
Now the death stroke.

---

# Chant to incite warriors

This chant, from a legend, is sung by the woman, Apa-kura. The spider's web is a reference to the path of a god to the upper world.

Listen, stars! Hearken, O moon!  
My arms and hands and feet  
Shall wage a lasting war.  
Wail the dirge of Apa-kura  
To her elder kindred,  
And wake the sleeping heart  
To act, and satisfy revenge  
For the death of him, Tu-whakararo.  
Drink, drink deep of the bowls—  
Those bowls kept on high.  
In vain I try to climb  
The spider's web; my path  
Is less than nothing beneath my tread ...

---

# A war chant

The land is slipping away;  
Where shall man find an abiding place?  
O God of the underworld!  
Hold fast our lands!  
Bind, tightly bind!  
Be firm, be firm  
Nor let them be torn from our grasp.

# Spiders, hide my face

Chant by a warrior who wants to remain hidden.

Spiders, hide my face;  
Ants, obscure me from the foe;  
O God of the underworld,  
Come from your pit,  
And let me enter it.  
Search all around,  
Gaze up and down,  
See nothing but the empty land.

---

# Te Rauparaha's farewell to Kawhia

Composed by Wharetiki, a warrior who had been taken prisoner. Before he was executed, he asked his captors to allow him to sing a song of farewell to his ancestral home, Kawhia. His father overheard and memorized the song. Te Rauparaha used the song for his farewell and substituted Honipaka for Kawhia. Te Kawau is a sea rock and Muri whenua an undersea burial cave. The bird is the spirit of Te Rauparaha.

There flow the tides of Honipaka,  
Now separated from me forever.  
In spirit, I still cling to you.  
And my aching heart  
Grieves over that world apart  
Which lies outspread above Te Motu Island.  
Heedless of my painful fate,  
O all you tribes that sleep  
In the last long sleep,  
A far-off tribute now I give.  
The tides will still ebb and flow,  
Flowing strongly, rising and leaping,  
Until, leaping over Te Kawau at Muriwhenua  
I see the waves rushing by!  
See to my cherished bird,  
It is distracted with grief;  
And early, within the House of Mourning,  
It will be hidden from my eyes.  
This gentle breeze of summer  
Brings the sound of wailing:

O you House of Mourning!  
O you House of Ati Awa!  
Lament, let the tears flow,  
You shall indeed be a sepulchre  
For this my song of sorrow,  
    Alas!



---

# Potatau's song of sorrow

Potatau was elected to the first kingship of the Maori. He was an old man who wished to live quietly and did not want to be king. He became king in 1859 and died in 1860.

Often these times, in pensive mood, I sit  
With thoughts heaped up  
Like entangled weeds:  
My name now always on the lips of men—  
Borne here and there with the winds that blow,  
As if it were a passing jest on frivolous lips,  
It is carried even to the distant South.  
At Repanga, it is said, live two wise birds  
Called Mumuhau and Takereto.  
And here I am like them,  
Pecked at and agitated by all the land.  
Who will work and clear this weedy soil?  
Look, I am now grey and worn with years;  
The last horizon has moved up quite close;  
Youthful, vigorous days are but a memory,  
And my fretful soul is now at rest from all these.  
Give me the life of women weaving,  
As they gossip and children play around them,  
Though my fame would then be enclosed  
By the peaceful shores at Mauina.  
It would indeed be a joy for me and mine:  
You and I should not have heeded  
The often-spoken seductive words,  
Which, I think, will but lead to endless sorrow  
For me ... Alas, ah me!

---

# Dirge for a chief

Alas, the bitter pain that gnaws within  
For the wrecked canoe, for a friend who is lost.  
My precious heron plume is cast on the ocean's shore,  
And the lightning, flashing in the heavens,  
Salutes the dead.

Where is authority in this world, since you have  
    passed  
By the slippery path, the sliding path to death?

Whakaahu Mountain stands alone in the distance,  
For you are gone, the shelter of your people.  
My bird that sang of ancient learning has flown,  
The keel of Tainui, the plug of Aotea,  
Now wailed by the women's flowing tears.  
Your body lies beautiful in your dogskin tasseled  
    cloak,  
But your spirit has passed like a drifting cloud in the  
    heavens.  
All is well with you who lie in state on a chieftain's  
    bier.  
Ah, my precious green jade jewel, symbol of departed  
    warriors!  
The dragon emerged from his rocky fastness  
And sleeps in the house of death.

---

# A ritual spell

Light, light the holy fire  
O Tiki, it burns on the sacred morning  
Give us, O give us, O Tiki,  
The sweetness of food; it burns,  
Burns for thee, the juice of the pigeon,  
Burns for thee, juice of the owl,  
Burns for thee, juice of the parrot,  
Burns for thee, juice of the fantail,  
For thee, the sweetness of the eel  
From what source?  
From the spring where the sky turns red—  
Give, let it be poured.

---

# Vision

By Kaitoke. A priest invokes the gods to tell him by second sight his success.

What says the god of the night?  
I will die at Mangawhai—  
Never!  
I will die in the ascent—  
Never!  
I will look on the place where the river  
Opens out to the western sea—  
Closed in, opened out—  
At Waihi your harbor will be  
Closed in.  
The woman laughs, the war god  
Tu will triumph, Tu  
The war god  
Tu will triumph, Tu  
The war god.  
The land breezes  
Already blow another way.  
Ah, I see the kahikatea trees  
Standing over Kaiwaka, there, out there  
Tu, the war god Tu  
Hunts up and down  
Up and down.  
You are gods and they  
Are small birds to be preserved  
In potted fat  
Forever.  
Yes  
Forever.

---

# Song of mourning

By Matangi-Hauroa. For the Maori, the distinction between the dead and the living is not great. Death is the gate between the living and the dead of one family.

I lie in darkness, as the dead shades gather,  
Feeling you here, at my side—  
I turn to greet you, reach out to grasp  
A world of nothing, no one, nowhere.  
You passed like a shadow in the night—  
Lie still, my aching heart.

Let the sharp blades gouge me.  
Let the children see.  
Take it, Whiro, blood, strength, spirit—  
I walk the path of our fathers,  
They speak well of the way you died,  
Your courage cries to the empty skies.

You were caught in Whanganui's coils.  
Remember, watch the son of Tuwhakairihau;  
Beware, there are other sons of Rakamaomao there;  
Motai's hundred sons lie in wait.  
Walk their beaches, scorn them—  
Your body lies here.

Your name will live  
In this place  
And perhaps here in this poor house of proverbs.

---

## A charm: Is it the wind?

Is it the wind that strokes your skin?  
Or perhaps it is desire, desire for the one  
To whom you clung, with whom you slept,  
Who held you,  
Who shared your griefs.  
Let the wind do his work  
Bring this, my love, to you  
So you turn in your sleep  
And weep for when we were  
As one together. Love comes  
Like a spring from the earth.

---

# Song of a second wife

By Matahira. Her husband married a young girl.

Within me, thrusting endlessly  
Against the belly that betrayed me—  
Swollen now like Wharerewa Hill—  
There's a little thing that would see  
If you are his father still.  
Let the wind blow, let the river flow,  
Am I cloud or water-weed to go where they go?  
You were a god and I but a child,  
Now having used me, you cast me aside,  
This little thing I gave, you deride,  
Am I worthless thus to be denied?  
O the misery of a second wife,  
For me a famine, for him a feast;  
I, the host, was least,  
While he, the guest, took most.  
But when he turned from me  
I burned the more fiercely—  
O Mare, do not tease me—  
This is your canoe, you launched it on the sea;  
I long to go to you, and yet—  
And yet—better men seek my bed.  
I'll be more careful who comes in your stead,  
Ears may flap, but nothing will be said.

---

# The deserted girl's lament

With quivering limbs  
And bowed head I weep,  
And restlessly turn on  
My lonely sleeping mat.

Once fondly I dreamed  
Your love never would wane.  
Ah me! it is dead;  
But mine ceaselessly burns.

Swamp-stains on the feet  
Are washed clean in the stream,  
But the heart-stains of love  
Forever remain.



---

# A mourning song for Rangiaho

By Te Heuheu Herea for his wife

Many women call on me to sleep with them  
But I'll have none so worthless and so wanton;  
There is not one like Rangiaho, so soft to feel  
Like a small, black eel.  
I would hold her again—  
Even the wood in which she lies;  
But like the slender flax stem  
She slides from the first to the second heaven  
The mother of my children  
Gone  
Blown by the wind  
Like the spume of a wave  
Into the eye of the void.

---

# A song of sickness

By Hine Tangikuku

Neap-tide and the ebbing days slide  
From my side as I stand  
Here beyond the land  
I love. The open doors  
Of Mihimarino call me no more.

Sing, cicada, for soon you will die,  
And so must I;  
The bitterns cry doleful death,  
The parrot chokes on his last breath.

The morning star swims in the sky  
To this shore, where I  
Lie washed in a sea of pain,  
Writhing like one insane.  
Fever-drunk, drifting  
Like pollen in a dream, sifting  
Like seed, I am not what I seem.

I see myself, twisted sinew,  
Wasted flesh; the body I once knew  
Has no substance, unsustained,  
Is itself the food of pain.  
I am dead weed cast upon the shore.

---

# Chant to restore breath to a dead person

Thy breath, my breath,  
Open out, close up, thy breath,  
Return inside then;  
It enters; it is sacred;  
It flays, it strikes;  
Slain be the atua that kills thee,  
Begone behind, begone outside,  
Begone to the stem, to the root of all things.  
It is possessed, acquired.  
Come forth to the world of being,  
To the world of light,  
The restored life.

---

# A lament for his house

By Uamairangi

This house will stand  
As once it was—  
Spin on, spiders,  
Build, you beetles—  
You, of the tribe of Hakuturi,  
Tribe of magic and madness,  
Build this house as it was—  
Every splinter, every chip—  
There. It stands. It lives!  
The fires of Tane burn within!  
This tribe of the stump,  
This tree cut short,  
This broken people of the land  
Will return from the ovens of the dead.  
Tangaroa strikes from the sea,  
The spear falls, blood runs  
Over the hot stones of a feast  
More terrible than the first,  
Heaped high,  
A return for the ovens of the dead.  
Grant me power  
Tane Mahuta of the forest  
Cut deep,

Slash the sinew of Papatuanuku,  
Thrust aside the barriers of Kupe,  
Break the lashings of Uenuku's house.  
Death take the thief.

Let this be a thought in the head  
Of Ririwai.

---

# How the trembling shakes me

By Pare-hokotoru. A chiefess seeks help to avenge herself for a tribal insult. Dogskin cloaks are symbolic of warfare.

How the trembling shakes me as the omen comes!  
I am like a rock the tide beats upon, a rock of  
    midnight delusion  
That moves in the waves, the billows of the ocean!  
It wearies me, but I am not angry.

Can the sun be brought down as he comes forth?  
He hurries on throughout the day!

Let me enter the house of Werawera  
That the dogskin cloak of Toka may be laid  
    upon me!  
You have kept it long enough! Let me have it, for I  
    seek revenge!

My great longing now is for Te 'Parana,  
The man who alone appears on the moonless nights!

---

# Oh! I am torn with fear

Composed by a woman who is the subject of gossip.  
Because of the death of her lover and the gossip, she  
believes she will die.

Oh! I am torn with fear,  
Do not take me in your hand like a thief!  
The tales lifted up over the groves at Te Tarua  
Are all about me—they talk endlessly!  
Clouds, farewell. Remain there alone.  
I am gone with the descending current,  
The sun disappearing at the river mouths at Kapenga,  
To my lover dead of disease, for whom my heart cries  
    out—  
Oh he is here! He grasps me, comes close!

# On the hilltops

Hilltops traditionally were places for melancholy feeling.

On the hilltops I visit the snares,  
And my heart keeps surging.  
Oh how can I quiet my heart,  
That is tossed from north to south?



---

## Love song

A woman is deserted by her husband. The clouds remind her of sorrow because they come from the district where he now lives. Line 6 addresses the clouds. Lines 7-8 address the husband.

Husband, it is well that you have left me.  
There is nothing that comforts me now.  
Who was it who turned away?  
I am forgotten, and put aside.

I am consumed by the clouds flying hither.  
You have come from my husband!  
Why did you not in my youth  
Release me when it first began?  
Now the time comes for me to sit  
Useless and unhappy. The sides of the canoe are  
shattered!

---

# An ancient flute song

O shining cuckoo, cuckoo  
with a long tail, calling  
down to me your news  
of the spring, come close!

The wind slams and pierces  
loosed from Maunganui  
where Ripiro lies under  
and rituals are forgotten.

Let rituals be forgotten.  
Rain on, O rain  
tangled over the broad earth,  
loom of the last darkness.

Come, cormorant at Te Taheke,  
fly out of the wind-sleep inward,  
make your nest here in the quiet  
skies of the mind.

---

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