

The Sin at Awarua

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During the quiet hours before dawn, twin-hulled voyaging canoes from all around Polynesia began to gather off the coral reef fringing the southwestern end of Ra'iaatea, a high, volcanic island a day and a half's sail from Tahiti. *Hawai'iloa* and *Hōkūle'a* had just crossed the equator, sailing all the way from Hawai'i, the northernmost outpost of the dispersed Polynesian nation. The elaborately carved *Tahiti Nui*, the largest canoe of the fleet, had made its way from neighboring Tahiti. The smallest, lively *Takitumu*, had come from Rarotonga, a week's sail away to the southwest. The aptly named *Te Aurere* (the Flying Spray) represented Aotearoa, that massive land located still farther to the southwest beyond the warm seas and trade winds of the tropics. Two more voyaging canoes—*Makali'i* from Hawai'i and *Te Au o Tonga* from Rarotonga—were too far out at sea to arrive in time.

The sailors aboard the assembled canoes waited expectantly, maneuvering their vessels in the darkness, taking great care to keep clear of the reef outlined intermittently by white flashes of surf. Gradually the eastern horizon began to brighten, washing out the stars and bringing into focus the mountainous silhouette of Ra'iaatea. Then, when the sun rose above the island's green peaks and flooded over the almost windless sea turning it from black to a deep translucent blue, the crews stirred. Taking up their paddles, they stroked toward the break in the reef known far and wide as *Te Avamo'a* (literally, the Sacred Pass), into the lagoon that leads directly to Taputapuātea, a great stone temple built just beyond the shore.

Leading the procession was *Te Aurere*, the canoe from Aotearoa. As its twin hulls passed between the coral heads at the opening of the pass, Te Ao Pēhi Kara, a Māori elder, began to chant these somber words:

*Tiwha tiwaha te Pō, Tiwaha tiwaha te Ao
 He whare i mahue kau e He Whare i mahue kau e
 Ka whatinga ake te kura o te marama
 Ka pahuka mai te moana i ngā tai e ngunguru nei
 Tenei ko te toka kia tātou
 kua hinga rātou kua hinga
 kua takoto i te ringa kaha o Aituā*

Dark is the night, gloomy the day
 The house is left desolate and abandoned
 A fragment of the moon is torn away
 The sea froths as the waves rush ashore
 This is our rock, the rock is left to us
 For they have passed on
 Laid low by the strong hand of death¹

Those who had been laid low were his tribal ancestors, cruelly murdered centuries earlier at the temple, or *marae* to use the Tahitian term, of Tapu-tapuātea. But in his next utterance the elder signaled that his message was really about life, not death:

Tīhei Mauri Ora!

Let there now be life!

As he continued chanting, Te Ao Pēhi Kara developed this theme, declaring that the disastrous breach between his people and those of Ra'iaātea, Tahiti, and the other allied islands, and the centuries of desolate solitude that had followed the cessation of voyaging caused by the heinous crime, were now at an end. The *tapu*² that following the murderous assault had prohibited canoes from Aotearoa and other distant islands from sailing to Ra'iaātea had at last been lifted. Long-range voyaging could begin again, bringing the scattered Polynesian peoples together once more:

*Tēnei te nihinihi tēnei te nana
 Tēnei te wā hikitia ngā tapu
 ō runga i tēnei kokoru ki runga
 i ō tātou mātua Tūpuna
 E tangi ake nei te ngākau
 Turuturu o whiti whakamau kia tina
 Tina! hui ē, tāki ē.*

This is the neap tide and the raging tide,
 It is time to remove the tapu
 from this bay onto our ancestors.
 The heart is moved.
 So let it be for all time!
 We are united!

Waiting on board a paddling canoe in the Sacred Pass was a bearded Tahitian wearing a long cloak made of bleached bark cloth set off by a short cape of the darkly iridescent feathers of the jungle fowl and a tall headdress topped with more of these plumes. After Te Ao Pēhi Kara finished his chant, the costumed Tahitian stood up and declared in his own language that the tapu had been lifted, after which he greeted each successive canoe transiting the pass, intoning words of praise and invoking the gods.

As *Te Aurere* glided through the pass and entered the broad lagoon a Raiatean orator standing in the shallow water just offshore shouted out in Tahitian: “Come hither! Come hither o great canoe of Aotearoa!” A woman on shore, similarly bedecked with garlands made from the long shiny leaves of the *tī* plant (*Cordyline* sp), followed with a chorus of welcoming “come hithers”: “*Haere mai, haere mai, haere mai*” (photo 1). Then a masculine voice from the crowd commanded in Rarotongan that the conches be sounded: “*Tangi te pū!*” The assembly of trumpeters from Rarotonga then lifted spiraled conch shells to their lips, and blew with all their strength to make a buzzing, throbbing roar that overlaid the welcoming “come hithers” and spread over the crowd massed along the shore to welcome *Te Aurere* and the other canoes from overseas.

After the crew members of *Te Aurere* anchored their craft in the lagoon, they transferred to a smaller double canoe fitted with an especially wide platform between the hulls to accommodate passengers. As this canoe approached the narrow beach where the Tahitian dignitaries were assembled, the Māori sailors from Aotearoa were greeted by more “come hithers,” blasts from the conch-shell chorus, and then declarations that they had at last returned to Taputapuātea, the *marae pū* (the central temple) of Polynesia. After the crew waded ashore to be embraced by their hosts, who draped them with garlands made from scented leaves, they formed ranks and acted out a vigorous *haka*, the ritual challenge by which Māori warriors display with threatening words and defiant gestures their strength and resolve to groups they visit or are visited by.



PHOTO 1. Awaiting the arrival of the crews from the voyaging canoes. (Bishop Museum photo)

The sailors were then led by their Raiatean escorts from the landing beach to an adjacent structure, a large, rectangular enclosure bounded by low stone walls. This was Hauviri, a temple of the Tamatoa dynasty, the line of chiefs that had ruled Ra'ïātea for centuries. After being welcomed by the Tamatoa descendants, they were taken past the towering investiture stone, a basalt monolith in front of which each new ruler was girdled with the *maro 'ura*, a broad belt emblazoned with bright red feathers that symbolized chiefly office.

Then to the accompaniment of blasts from conch shells and the beating of drums, the crew was escorted inland over the "Road of a Thousand Flowers" to Taputapuātea itself. This grand temple is an open structure without walls. From a broad platform paved with volcanic stones rises a massive *ahu* or altar, a narrow rectangle over 140 feet long and in places twice human height, made from huge slabs of rough coral sandstone set on end and filled with coral rubble.

Against this imposing backdrop, the Māori voyagers mounted the platform and waited as each successive crew came ashore to be welcomed and then escorted to Taputapuātea. As the last of the sailors were taking their places, a spare Tahitian man in his early seventies, dressed in a wrap-around *pareu*, with a short, feathered cloak over his thin shoulders, welcomed the voyagers onto the marae with more “come hithers,” pronounced three times in Tahitian, then in Tuamotuan, and finally in Hawaiian. Then he told the assembled crews how “our mother,” by which he meant Taputapuātea, was throbbing with maternal joy because “you, the children, the descendants” of those who centuries before had set sail from here to find new lands, had this day returned on your canoes from the “four sides of the dark, dark sea of Hiva,” sailing through the Sacred Pass to at last remove the tapu that had isolated Ra‘iātea and their own islands for so long.

THESE EVENTS UNFOLDED not hundreds of years ago, but in early in 1995. They were the opening scene of a grand drama enacted primarily for indigenous benefit by chiefs, priests, orators, and dancers as well as by the captains, navigators, and crew members of the canoes, who, along with their supporters, had traveled to Ra‘iātea from around Polynesia to celebrate the revival of canoe voyaging that had been developing over the previous two decades.

I was there to document this celebration and the multi-canoe voyage of which it was part, but not at all as a detached observer. I had long been involved in reconstructing and sailing voyaging canoes, an endeavor initially stimulated by the need to obtain realistic performance data in order to challenge Andrew Sharp’s (1956) thesis that because their canoes and ways of navigating were so crude the Polynesians could only have accidentally drifted to their respective islands. In the mid-1960s my students and I had built *Nālehia*, a replica of a Hawaiian interisland canoe, and then tested it in Hawaiian waters. From the information gained, plus that provided by David Lewis’s sea trials of Polynesian navigation methods, I had worked out how a deep-sea voyaging canoe navigated by traditional methods could be sailed over the legendary voyaging route between Hawai‘i and Tahiti, islands separated by over two thousand nautical miles³ of open water (Finney 1967).

When, some years later, it came time to actually build a voyaging canoe and undertake the proposed voyage, my thinking had evolved toward

having the venture be as much a cultural experience as a research experiment. Toward that end, in 1973 I joined with Hawaiian artist Herb Kane and canoe-racing enthusiast Tommy Holmes to found the Polynesian Voyaging Society as a community organization to raise funds, build the voyaging canoe, and then sail it from Hawai'i to Tahiti and return. We saw the voyaging canoe as central to the identity, indeed, the very existence of Hawaiians, Tahitians, and other Polynesian peoples. Yet from our collective experience in Hawai'i, and mine in Tahiti where I had spent several years as a fledgling anthropologist, it was apparent that for most Hawaiians and Tahitians the voyaging canoes and navigational exploits of their ancestors were at best dim memories. We therefore structured the project to awaken those memories and bring back to Hawaiian and Tahitian consciousness a rightful pride in the courage and skills of their nautical ancestors. For example, we made sure that Hawaiians took leading roles in the design, building, and sailing of *Hōkūle'a*, as we christened our canoe, and also involved many Tahitians in the venture. So organized, the voyage from Hawai'i to Tahiti and return in 1976 helped to inspire what has become known as the Hawaiian renaissance, and made a similarly deep impression on the Tahitians, some fifteen thousand of whom greeted *Hōkūle'a* as it sailed into Pape'ete harbor (Finney 1979).

The series of long voyages that followed—to Tahiti and return once more in 1980; a two-year odyssey of twelve thousand miles all the way to Aotearoa and return, undertaken between 1985 and 1987; and a visit to the Pacific Arts Festival in Rarotonga in 1992—served to deepen the voyaging revival and to extend it to Cook Islanders, Māori, and other groups, as well as to stimulate the shift of scholarly thinking away from the cramped views of Sharp and other critics toward a perspective that gave Polynesians their due as pioneering seafarers who had intentionally explored the Pacific and deliberately colonized the islands they found there (Finney 1994). During this period I continued to sail on and chronicle the long voyages of *Hōkūle'a* whenever I could get away from my teaching duties. Then in 1995, thanks to a grant from the Bishop Museum's Native Hawaiian Culture and the Arts Program, I was able to take leave from my teaching duties again so that I could join the assembled canoes at Ra'iātea, witness the ceremonies there, and then sail with the fleet back to Hawai'i.

AS I WATCHED THE EVENTS THAT DAY at Taputapuātea, it occurred to me that analyzing them might be of some use in encouraging scholarly think-

ing about the wave of cultural revival that has recently swept across the Pacific to become more attuned to the thoughts and actions of those actually engaged in the process. In the early 1980s historians, anthropologists, and other scholars began to pay attention to self-conscious efforts of cultural revival among peoples from around the world, focusing particularly on how “traditional” rituals and practices often seemed to have been deliberately created or heavily adapted for political purposes. One of the most influential works published at this time was a collection of essays edited by historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger and entitled *The Invention of Tradition* (1983). To them, invented traditions were those that claim or appear to be ancient but had, in comparatively recent times, been “invented, constructed and formally instituted,” or had “emerged in a less easily traceable manner.” Their examples included the creation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of royal rituals and pageantry to increase respect for the British monarchy, and the earlier construction by Highland Scots of an identity designed to distinguish themselves from their British overlords, which featured carefully tailored kilts, distinctive clan tartans, and other elements the editors considered to be of “dubious authenticity.”

In the Pacific, a flood of journal articles and special issues that began appearing at this time similarly explored how people from the multitudinous cultures of the region were actively engaged in “inventing” or “socially constructing” their cultural values, traditions, and customs.⁴ Although most of these publications were probably not read by those whose efforts and beliefs were being analyzed, a few such works caught the eye of indigenous critics. Prominent among these were Jocelyn Linnekin’s (1983) essay on how contemporary Hawaiian nationalists were formulating traditions for political ends, Allan Hanson’s (1989) analysis of how contemporary Māori had invented key features of the culture they now present as traditional, and in so doing even borrowed constructs (including accounts of their ancestral migration to Aotearoa!) from late nineteenth and early twentieth century New Zealand scholars, and Roger Keesing’s (1989) exploration of how Pacific peoples are “creating pasts, myths of ancestral ways of life” that have little or no relation to the actual past as “documented historically, recorded ethnographically, and reconstructed archaeologically.”

That the subjects of such analyses might take exception to the rhetoric employed is not surprising. In particular, the use of such terms as “invention” and “social construction” can appear condescendingly insulting to

those whose beliefs and actions are being scrutinized—particularly when there is a postcolonial power relationship involved. Outraged Māori critics, for example, denounced Hanson's analysis of their traditions as shallow and uninformed (Grainger 1990; Nissen 1990; Noble 1990), while Professor Haunani-Kay Trask (1991), the Native Hawaiian director of the University of Hawai'i's Center for Hawaiian Studies, castigated Keesing, Linnekin, and other foreign academics for setting themselves up as authorities on Pacific Island cultures while ignoring that indigenous people do base their cultural constructs on a deep knowledge and study of traditional ways.

The response made in the name of culture theory that authenticity is a nonissue since in all cultures traditions are invented anyway can be taken as compounding the original insult. As Marshall Sahlins (1993, 4) and James West Turner (1997) have pointed out, arguing that traditions are neither genuine nor spurious but simply socially constructed in effect denies the possibility of expressing a valid cultural identity based on a remembered past. My own experience living and working in Tahiti and Hawai'i over the last four decades has impressed on me how strongly the Tahitians and Hawaiians value links to their past—to the point of going beyond Santayana's dictum about the perils of ignoring history by actively looking backward for inspiration in coping with present and future problems. For example, in an essay on cultural renaissance and identity in French Polynesia, Wilfred Lucas (1989) explained that his fellow Tahitians were "using the past to confront the future," gaining insights and strength from prior accomplishments to help them cope with the Nuclear Age into which they had been thrust. In her treatise on Hawaiian history, Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa (1992, 22), wrote, "It is as if the Hawaiian stands firmly in the present, with his back to the future, and his eyes fixed upon the past, seeking historical answers for present day dilemmas." Such a stance makes sense to those engaged in reconstructing ancient voyaging canoes and sailing them around the Pacific, or in taking part in the rituals of canoe launching, departure, and arrival. They feel that by reviving elements from their seafaring past they are gaining strength and inspiration for their voyage into the uncharted seas of the future. Yet, as I shall show in the case of the ceremony at Taputapuātea, they are selective about what customs to recall and revive, and what ones to ignore.

SELECTING IDEAS AND PRACTICES from the past, and then adapting them for present purposes, is hardly limited to today's Pacific. Consider that re-

discovery of classical civilization which western Europeans call their Renaissance. Forgotten texts from ancient Greece and Rome were retrieved from old monasteries and Arab libraries to become the basis for learning once more. Long-neglected ruins from antiquity were sketched and studied, and soon facades of new churches began to resemble those of the temples dedicated to banished pagan gods. Yet the architects of Europe's rebirth were not set on recreating all facets of ancient life. They looked for inspiration to those elements of classical wisdom, design, and practice that were in line with the thinking and needs of this new era, not those they considered anachronistic. To cite a more recent example of such selective inspiration, consider the founding of the Olympic Games late in the nineteenth century. When their founder, Pierre de Coubertin, was seeking a classical model to bring athletes of the world together he chose the pan-Hellenic competitions held periodically at Olympia, not the gladiatorial combat so bloodily celebrated in Rome's Colosseum. Furthermore, he did not seek to impose on the athletes of the reborn Olympic Games the ancient practice of competing in the nude (MacAloon 1981).

Today ethnic groups, nations, and would-be nations from around the world are engaged in selectively recalling their respective cultural heritages, bringing them forward, however altered, into the present. This is as much an age of cultural revival as it is of globalization, particularly in those regions, such as the Pacific Islands, where indigenous peoples are still under foreign rule or have only recently escaped from it to find that the outside world and its influences are still pressing on them. Reviving declining languages and other cultural elements has become a way to demonstrate cultural identity and worth in relation to both the old colonial structure and increasingly impinging pressures of globalization. From this perspective, it is no accident that the voyaging revival first took hold in Hawai'i, Aotearoa, the Cook Islands, and Tahiti and its neighbors, for their people suffered greatly from initial contact with the outside world and continue to bear the brunt of foreign impact. They therefore have much to reclaim, and a strong motivation for asserting their identity vis-à-vis their former or actual colonial overlords, and others who have settled in their islands or who now visit them in mass as tourists.

To begin with, continental diseases previously unknown in these islands ravaged their inhabitants, killing them outright and psychologically debilitating the few survivors. For example, by the 1890s the number of Hawaiians had fallen to around 40,000, a catastrophic drop even using conservative estimates of from 250,000 to 400,000 Hawaiians

living in 1778 when Captain Cook opened the islands to the outside world—and an even more horrific tragedy if revisionist estimates that there may have been upward of a million Hawaiians are accepted. The survivors of this biological onslaught were then economically overwhelmed by colonizing Americans and Europeans who eventually developed a sugar industry in the islands, after which the Hawaiians were demographically swamped by laborers brought in primarily from Asia to work the plantations. In the end, despite the Hawaiians' valiant efforts to join the world community of nations as the sovereign Kingdom of Hawai'i, foreign businessmen and sugar planters staged a revolution in 1893 with the help of marines landed from an American warship, declared a republic, and five years later convinced the United States to annex the islands. This left the Hawaiians as a largely dispossessed minority in their own islands, which became a territory and then later a state of the United States.

The Māori experienced a similar depopulation and occupation by foreign settlers, in this case predominantly from Britain. Although the Treaty of Waitangi signed by Māori chiefs and British representatives in 1840 supposedly guaranteed most of the land to the Māori, after the wars of the 1860s, the British took over vast tracts of native lands, opening the country for wholesale colonial settlement. This relegated the Māori to the marginal position of a deprived minority in an overseas territory of a European power that has since evolved into the predominantly white country of New Zealand. Those Tahitians, and their cousins in the neighboring Marquesas, Tuamotu, Gambier, and Austral archipelagoes who survived the biological onslaught of imported diseases, saw their islands taken over piecemeal by France between 1842 and 1888 to form a colony now called French Polynesia. Yet they were not so overwhelmed by foreign settlers and laborers as were the Hawaiians and the Māori, and remained a majority in their own islands, keeping control of much of the land. Nonetheless, being ruled by a proud European power has had its costs, the most recent of which has been the obligation to host France's nuclear-testing program. Even the Cook Islanders, now sovereign in their own islands, have not escaped unscathed from their brief period of colonial rule by and continued dependency on New Zealand.

When the *Hōkūle'a* project began in the early 1970s the ways by which Hawaiians had tried to accommodate to the annexation and Americanization of the islands were beginning to unravel. Hawaiians were starting

to demand the return of their lands and sovereignty, and were seeking to go back to their cultural roots. Learning to speak Hawaiian, tracing family genealogies, performing ancient dances and songs, and other explorations into the ancestral culture began to attract more and more young men and women. For them the launching of *Hōkūleʻa* opened up a new window into their past, and with the success of the 1976 voyage to Tahiti and back the canoe emerged as a cultural icon, a rallying symbol of an emergent Hawaiian Renaissance. *Hōkūleʻa* empowered young Hawaiians to explore the technology and skills by which their islands had been first discovered and settled. By sailing over the long sea routes of legend they could demonstrate how superbly adapted were their ancestral canoes and ways of navigating to the exploration and settlement of their island world, and also prove themselves worthy heirs of a great seafaring tradition. Even those who did not have the opportunity to sail on the canoe could with pride vicariously experience the first voyage to Tahiti, and the other expeditions to the South Pacific that followed.

After completion of the long voyage to Aotearoa and return in 1987, a new canoe, *Hawaiʻiloa*, was conceived to further the voyaging revival in Hawaiʻi. Whereas *Hōkūleʻa* had been built mostly with modern materials, the hulls, crossbeams, and other components of *Hawaiʻiloa* were to be carved from local trees, lashed together with lines braided from the fibers of coconut husks and other indigenous plants, and powered by sails woven from *laubala*, the leaves of the pandanus tree. The new canoe's first mission was to sail over a route never traveled by *Hōkūleʻa*: from Te Fenua ʻEnata, the archipelago almost two thousand miles southeast of Hawaiʻi and known to the outside world as the Marquesas Islands, to the Hawaiian chain. This voyage was planned to commemorate the original discovery of Hawaiʻi, for on linguistic grounds it is thought that the first Hawaiians came from Te Fenua ʻEnata.⁵

While *Hawaiʻiloa* was still under construction, several other voyaging canoes were being built in the South Pacific, a sure indication that the voyaging revival had by then spread beyond Hawaiʻi. When in 1992 *Hōkūleʻa* sailed to Rarotonga to take part in a gathering of these new canoes being held there during the Pacific Arts Festival, Nainoa Thompson, *Hōkūleʻa*'s navigator who was in charge of the *Hawaiʻiloa* project as well, invited all the new voyaging canoes, including any that might be built in the near future, to join in the commemorative voyage from Te Fenua ʻEnata to Hawaiʻi. One thing led to another, and the initial rendez-

vous of all the voyaging canoes, and accompanying ceremony, was set for Taputapuātea.

THE TEXTUAL INSPIRATION for celebrating the voyaging revival by gathering all the canoes at Taputapuātea came from a tale told around 1830 to a British missionary by Tu‘au, a Raiatean *ari‘i vahine* (female chief) who had learned it from her grandfather, Tai-noa, said to be one of the last Raiatean sages fully conversant with the old learning. It was not printed until almost a century later, when it appeared in English translation in *Ancient Tahiti*, a volume of Tahitian traditions compiled by the missionary’s granddaughter, Teuira Henry (1928, 119–128).⁶ The story begins with the marriage of Poiriri, a “prince” from the distant island of Rotuma located on the far western edge of Polynesia, and Te‘ura, a “princess” from Porapora, the island immediately to the northwest of Ra‘iātea that is often spelled Borabora. Their union led to the inauguration of the *Fa‘atau Aroha* (Friendly Alliance) of islands from across Polynesia, centered on the Opoa district of Ra‘iātea where Taputapuātea is located.

The islands in this alliance were organized into two sides called *Te-ao-uri* and *Te-ao-tea*, terms that Teuira Henry translated as “The-dark-land” and “The-light-land,” respectively. In one of the few sections of her account given in Tahitian as well as English, she quoted a song commemorating the formation of the alliance, which begins with these lines:

<i>Nā ni‘a Te-ao-uri,</i>	Above (east) is dark-land,
<i>Nā raro Te-ao-tea,</i>	Below (west) is light-land,
<i>E tō roa te manu ē.</i>	All encompassed by birds.

Actually, *nā ni‘a* and *nā raro* mean “above” and “below” in the sense of “to windward” and “to leeward” of Ra‘iātea with respect to the easterly trade winds. Tahiti and the other islands immediately to windward of Ra‘iātea belonged to The-dark-land, as did the islands of the Austral group which, although they lie south of Ra‘iātea are to windward of that island with respect to the trade winds blowing from the southeast. The-light-land was composed of the islands to the leeward of Ra‘iātea, starting with neighboring Taha‘a, Porapora and its outliers, continuing on to Rarotonga and the other islands of the Cook group, and then jumping from there all the way to Aotearoa and Rotuma.⁷

According to the text in *Ancient Tahiti*, for many generations, “priests, scholars and warriors” from the two sides periodically set sail from their

respective islands to meet at Taputapuātea and celebrate “great religious observances and international deliberations”—until a murder shattered the alliance. At the last of these reunions ever to be held a quarrel arose between Paoa-tea, a high priest of The-light-land, and a “responsible high chief” of The-dark-land who in his anger slew the priest. When the victim’s fellow delegates learned of his murder they in turn struck down the killer. Leaving him for dead (unbeknown to them he was later revived), they took to their canoes to flee back to their islands in the west. But they did not sail directly out to sea through *Te Avamo‘a* (the Sacred Pass) through which they had recently entered. Instead the aggrieved delegates slipped through the deep waters of Ra‘iātea’s broad lagoon to *Te Avarua* (the Double Pass), so called because an islet in the middle divides the channel, and then struck out for the open ocean. “Thus ended the friendly alliance which long had united many kindred islands.” The great canoes from the distant islands of The-light-land never again sailed together to Ra‘iātea.

Teuira Henry also cited oral traditions from Aotearoa and Rarotonga that corroborated this Raiatean account of the ancient crime and its consequences (1928, 127–128). These had been brought to her attention by S Percy Smith, the New Zealand scholar who founded the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* and who devoted much of his life to tracing Māori origins. In 1897, while traveling around Polynesia in quest of traditions that might indicate whence the ancestral Māori had set sail, he had visited Henry in Honolulu where she was preparing *Ancient Tahiti* for publication while teaching at the Kamehameha Schools, an institution founded by the will of the late Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop. Smith (1898, 47) was particularly excited to learn about the Raiatean tradition of the murder of the high priest of The-light-land and the subsequent flight of his delegation, for in it he saw the key to the meaning of lines of an old Māori song that hitherto had been opaque to him:

*Tenei ano nga whakatauki o mua—
Toia e Rongorongō “Aotea,”
ka tere ki te moana.
Ko te hara ki Awarua i whiti mai ai i Hawaiki.*

These are the sayings of ancient times—
Twas Rongorongō launched “Aotea,”
when she floated on the sea.
Because of the sin at Awarua they crossed over from Hawaiki.⁸

He reasoned that the Hawaiki whence the Aotea canoe “crossed over” the sea must have been Ra’iātea, since that island’s ancient name was Havai’i, the Tahitian way of pronouncing Hawaiki. (The /w/ in Māori and the /v/ in Tahitian are equivalent, as are the Māori /k/ and the Tahitian glottal stop /ʔ/.) Although the Māori tradition refers to multiple victims where only a single victim is featured in the Raiatean and Rarotongan accounts, this equivalence of Hawaiki and Havai’i, plus that of Awarua and Avarua, led Smith to conclude that the “sin” in question must refer to the same murderous assault and flight through the Double Pass as that memorialized in the Raiatean tradition. Teuira Henry noted other obvious links: *Aotea*, the name of the Māori canoe, appears also in *Te-ao-tea*, the Tahitian name for leeward half of the Friendly Alliance, as well as the place name Aotearoa.

The Rarotongan account of these events appeared in *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, a best-seller among pious British and American readers of the nineteenth century written by the missionary John Williams (1838). In his book Williams recounted how after the people of Tahiti, Ra’iātea, and neighboring islands had been converted, he and his fellow missionaries of the London Missionary Society sought to search out still more islands to gain additional converts. He was particularly anxious to find Rarotonga, an important island that Raiateans told him lay well to the southwest, but he failed to locate it in his first attempt. On his second try, thanks to precise sailing directions provided by the inhabitants of Atiu, a tiny island a day and a half’s sail to windward of Rarotonga, Williams finally located the sought-for island, and he and his Raiatean assistants went ashore. When the Rarotongans learned that the group were from Ra’iātea, they demanded to know why their ancestors had killed the Rarotongan high priest Paoa-tea, using the same name given in the Raiatean account. They also wanted to know what had happened to the great drum their priests had transported to Taputapuātea to present to the god ‘Oro, calling it *Tangimoana* (Sound-ing-at-sea), which but for a sound change is identical to *ta’imoana*, the name employed in the Raiatean account for all the big drums carried aboard the canoes making the pilgrimage to Taputapuātea. To Williams, this tale and other indications of previous relations between Raiateans and Rarotongans meant that “it is certain that at some former period more frequent communication must have existed between the islanders” (1838, 56, 104).

THE IDEA THAT A FORMAL TAPU on voyaging had been laid down came neither from the Raiatean text, nor from the Māori and Rarotongan versions, but from an inspired orator who spoke at Taputapuātea when *Hōkūleʻa* made its first visit there in 1976, right after reaching Tahiti. Well before then, *Hōkūleʻa* designer Herb Kane and I had pored over *Ancient Tahiti* and other writings that stressed the centrality of Raʻiātea in Eastern Polynesia, and we concluded that *Hōkūleʻa* had to make a pilgrimage to Taputapuātea to make the voyage more culturally meaningful. We knew that with the coming of Christianity early in the nineteenth century the temple had been abandoned as a formal religious center, and that although some rites may well have continued to be secretly practiced there for decades after conversion Taputapuātea no longer played a formal role in Raiatean life. When I had visited Raʻiātea in 1962 the stone structure lay deserted and crumbling, surrounded by rows of carefully laid out coconut palms. The once-sacred precincts around the marae had been turned into a plantation for the production of copra, the dried meat of the coconut sent to industrial countries for the manufacture of soap, margarine, and other products for the world market. Therefore, in the back of our minds was the hope that sailing *Hōkūleʻa* there might serve to awaken Raiatean interest in their ancient center.

The scene that greeted the canoe as it anchored offshore of the marae in 1976 made it clear that our coming had generated more than a little excitement. On hearing of the impending visit, the Raiateans had cleared the temple's broad stone pavement, cleaned the grounds around it, and repaired some of the worst damages to the long altar. Then, when the canoe finally arrived from Tahiti, the great mass of Raiateans assembled there to greet their cousins from across the equator demonstrated that *Hōkūleʻa* had indeed roused Taputapuātea from a long slumber. As the Hawaiians came ashore, they were welcomed with chants and then escorted to the temple proper where they were honored by songs, prayers, and speeches. Their Raiatean hosts expressed admiration for the long canoe voyage and their joy at the coming of their kin from Hawaiʻi, whose ancestors, they said, had long ago sailed from Raʻiātea, which, they emphasized, had then been called Havaiʻi, their way of pronouncing Hawaiʻi (Finney 1979, 278–286).

Then an unscheduled orator, a short, balding man, began to spin a tale that offered a somewhat different perspective on the cessation of voyaging to and from Taputapuātea from that recorded a century and a third

earlier. The orator—who we learned later was known by everyone as *Parau Rahi* (Big Talk)—began by telling how hearing that *Hōkūleʻa* was coming made him recall a prophesy told to him by his elders when he was a small boy. Long ago, they said, a migratory canoe called *Hotu te Niu* had set sail from Raʻiātea carrying a selection of the most skilled people from Raʻiātea and neighboring islands—the best sailors, farmers, healers, and the like, as well as fertile women skilled in domestic crafts, who had all been chosen for what they could contribute toward sailing the canoe to an uninhabited island and implanting a colony there. No family groups departed together, just these specially selected individuals. Parents who had to give up a son or daughter, as well as the husbands or wives of those who had been chosen, had been forced to accept that they would never see their loved ones again. As the years passed with no word of the success or failure of this expedition, a great sadness descended over Raʻiātea and the neighboring islands, leading the aggrieved parents, spouses, children, and other kin to declare a tapu on any further overseas voyaging that would be lifted only when a canoe bearing the descendants of those long-lost migrants returned to Taputapuātea.

Parau Rahi then told the enthralled crowd that when he had heard that a canoe from Hawaiʻi had reached Tahiti and that it was scheduled to sail to Taputapuātea, he thought that the canoe must be carrying the descendants of those who had left so long ago—particularly given the identity of the name Hawaiʻi with Havaiʻi, the ancient name of Raʻiātea. This, he told the crowd, filled him with joy, for he knew that the coming of *Hōkūleʻa* would therefore lift the voyaging tapu. Then, after a pause, Parau Rahi's expression changed totally. Glowering at the crew, he shouted out: "But, you have ruined everything! You made a terrible mistake! You did not sail in through the Sacred Pass!"

We had not at all been focused on exactly recreating the way canoes had once sailed to the marae. Instead of closely studying Teuira Henry's text and consulting Raiatean elders knowledgeable about how visiting canoes should approach Taputapuātea, we had followed the directives of Tahitian port authorities to sail directly to Raʻiātea's official port of entry, Uturoa, and register there before proceeding to the temple. This meant that instead of entering the lagoon through the ritually prescribed pass of Te Avamoʻa, *Hōkūleʻa* had sailed through Te Avarua, the pass that leads directly to the port of entry and through which the survivors of that fateful attack of centuries ago had fled. From Uturoa the canoe reached Tapu-

tapuātea through the lagoon instead of sailing back out to sea and then reentering through the Sacred Pass, which we gladly would have done had we known the importance of so doing. By the time we realized our error, it was of course too late to do anything about it. Even sailing *Hōkūleʻa* smartly out the Sacred Pass on leaving that evening for Tahiti did not set things right for Parau Rahi and those who had been impressed by his speech.

DESPITE PARAU RAHI'S CRITICISM, and the outrage expressed by some local Protestant pastors about the "pagan" ceremonies conducted at Taputapuātea, *Hōkūleʻa*'s coming stimulated Raiatean leaders to think more seriously than they ever had before about the importance of Taputapuātea in their history and what role the marae might play in contemporary life. A key person in this rethinking has been Pierre Sham Koua, a school administrator and sometimes vice-mayor of Uturoa, Ra'iaitea's port town and administrative center, whose name reflects his Polynesian, Chinese, and European ancestry. Before the voyaging revival started, Pierre had long been interested in Taputapuātea and its ancient role as a politico-religious center, but he did not fully realize how important voyaging was to that history until *Hōkūleʻa* first came there and he served as the orator welcoming the Hawaiians ashore. Soon thereafter he discovered that the voyaging connection could directly serve the cause of historic preservation. By citing the cultural importance of the site as manifest by our pilgrimage made all the way from Hawai'i, Pierre was able to shelve a government plan to bulldoze Taputapuātea and turn the grounds into a soccer field.

Pierre's vision of the role Taputapuātea could play in contemporary Ra'iaitea evolved further as he again welcomed *Hōkūleʻa* back to the marae in 1985 at the beginning of its two-year-long voyage to Aotearoa and return, and then once more in 1992, when it called there on the way to the Pacific Arts Festival in Rarotonga. He came to envisage Taputapuātea as more than just an ancient temple where "folkloric" ceremonies could occasionally be reenacted. He wanted it to become a vital cultural center that would bring together people from all the islands and archipelagoes of Polynesia for cultural exchanges, workshops, and scholarly meetings. As a former Catholic seminarian, as well as an ardent student of ancient Tahitian culture, Pierre was also well aware of the value symbolic action could have in promoting that vision. Hence, when he heard that in 1995 all the voyaging canoes would rendezvous at Tahiti before sailing together

for the Marquesas and Hawai'i, he worked hard to get them to call at Taputapuātea before heading north, and to take part in a grand ceremony at the marae to mark the opening of this new era of Polynesian voyaging.

At the same time, the indigenously controlled government of French Polynesia, which exercises autonomy over internal affairs, saw an opportunity to finance the preservation of Taputapuātea as a cultural monument that would serve as both a pan-Polynesian meeting center and a tourist attraction to help lure overseas visitors. Funds were therefore allocated to repair Taputapuātea and associated structures, and to clear the surrounding grounds in order to open the complex to public view. For this inaugural event, the government's Ministry of Culture and the Museum of Tahiti and the Islands also produced a handsome brochure, entitled *A Fano Rā*, a poetic expression that may be translated as "Sail On." It featured a chart, redrawn here as figure 1, showing the canoes and the routes each would take to Ra'īātea, and then collectively on to Te Fenua 'Enata and to Hawai'i.

In developing the scenario for the ceremonies to welcome the canoes to Taputapuātea, the organizers drew from both the tradition of how the murder of a priestly delegate from The-light-land led to the breakup of the Friendly Alliance and the cessation of voyaging, and Parau Rahi's idea that a formal tapu on voyaging needed to be lifted. (They conveniently forgot that *Hōkūle'a* had supposedly already lifted the tapu by sailing to Taputapuātea through the Sacred Pass, first in 1985 at the request of the followers of Parau Rahi, who had died earlier that year, and then again in 1992 while on the way to Rarotonga.) Despite differences in detail between the Raiatean, Rarotongan, and Māori accounts of the assault on the delegates from the The-light-land, they followed Teuira Henry in concluding that these must refer to one and the same event. The organizers then took S Percy Smith's reasoning that Māori voyagers had been the victims a step farther by proposing that if the tribal descendants of those who had suffered would forgive the assault on their ancestors then the tapu on voyaging that had been laid down following this ancient crime could at last be lifted. That would be an ideal way, they thought, to symbolize that the revival of Polynesian voyaging was fully launched, as well as to reestablish Taputapuātea as the sacred center of a reconstituted Friendly Alliance of Polynesian peoples.

So at a planning meeting held in Rarotonga the organizers approached Heke Nukumaingaiwi Puhipa, the builder and captain of *Te Aurere* canoe

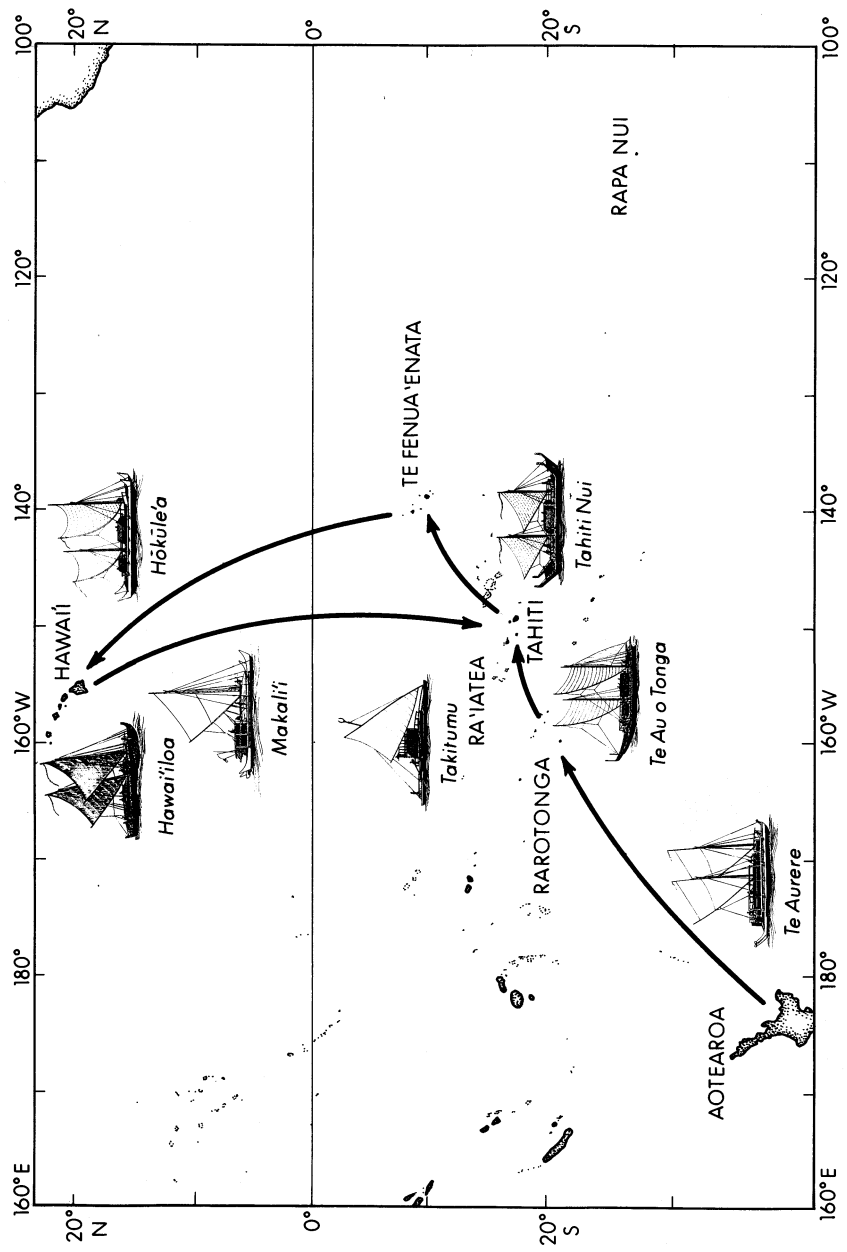


FIGURE 1. The canoes and their routes: first from Hawai'i, Tahiti, Rarotonga, and Aotearoa to Ra'iātea, and from there to Te Fenua 'Enata and on to Hawai'i. (Richard Rhodes)

who is more commonly known by his English name of Hector Busby. Hector, a large rough-hewn man in his early sixties who had retired from his bridge-building business in order to construct *Te Aurere*, told them that he had never heard anything about the “sin at Awarua,” but nonetheless agreed to try and find a knowledgeable Māori elder who could compose and then chant the words needed to lift the voyaging tapu as *Te Aurere* was entering the pass. Hector’s search led him to Te Ao Pēhi Kara, a scholarly, retired headmaster who was also a leader in Aotearoa’s *Kōhanga Reo* movement to reverse the decline of the Māori language by means of special preschools taught entirely in Māori. Yes, the elder told Hector, he had heard a tradition about the murderous assault at Hawaiki on crew members of the *Aotea* canoe, and would be honored to do his part in lifting the tapu.

ONCE THE CREWS WERE ASSEMBLED before the long altar of Taputapuātea, each was joined by delegates—government officials, elders, orators, dancers, chanters, and others—representing the islands whence the canoes originated. In addition, a cultural association composed of men and women from ‘Ua Pou, one of the ten islands of Te Fenua ‘Enata, joined the other delegations on the marae, as did a small group of men representing Rapa Nui, the lone island two thousand miles to the southeast of Tahiti known to the outside world as Easter Island. Neither group had a voyaging canoe, but both wanted their respective islands to be part of this celebration. The ‘Ua Pou delegates had come to express their solidarity with the voyaging revival and to request that when the canoes sailed to Te Fenua ‘Enata they pay a call on ‘Ua Pou as well as the main island of Nukuhiva. The Rapa Nui delegates, who were actually from an immigrant community long established on Tahiti, had come as would-be voyagers. They had learned about this happening far too late to even think about building a voyaging canoe, but did manage to hastily put together an outrigger canoe covered with reeds to recall the reed vessels their ancestors had been forced to make after centuries of human occupation had stripped Rapa Nui of trees. After shipping their canoe to Ra‘iātea the night before the ceremony, they relaunched it and made their way to Taputapuātea just in time to earn a place on the marae.

Each island delegation was given the opportunity to express their sentiments and thoughts, which they enthusiastically did through traditional

chants, songs of the *hīmene* type (an astonishing combination of missionary-introduced hymn singing with the indigenous chanting style), and dances, as well as by speeches and in one jarring instance a Christian prayer asking Jehovah not to be angry about this assembly on an ancient center of the old religion. Central to these presentations were recollections in prose, dance, and chant of the exploits of the voyaging heroes and migratory canoes of the respective islands. Many speakers also stressed how the history of their own islands was bound up with that of Taputapuātea. For example, Larry Kimura, a professor of the Hawaiian language at the University of Hawai‘i’s Hilo branch, spoke for the Hawai‘i delegation in his native tongue, stating how his people were tied to Taputapuātea through ancient kinship and because their ancestral blood had flowed on the marae.

No laila mākou e huli hele nei ho‘i i ke alahula i alahula ho‘i iā mākou i o ko mākou mau kūpuna i o kikilo a hiki maila ho‘i mākou i o ‘oukou i kēia ‘āina, ko mākou ‘āina ia ‘o ko ‘oukou ‘āina ho‘i ia. ‘O ko mākou ‘āina kupuna e moe maila ho‘i ko mākou ‘iewe i kanu ‘ia i loko o ka honua o kēia mau paemokupuni. I hiki maila ho‘i mākou no ka ho‘ōia ‘ana ho‘i i ko mākou koko ‘o ko ‘oukou koko he ho‘okahi nō ia. ‘Aohe nō mea e ho‘okānālua ai. Ua ‘ike ‘ia ho‘i ua kabe ho‘i ke koko o kūpuna o kākou i ola ho‘i ke kapu o kēia marae nei a kākou e kū nei.

This is our return in search of the well-traveled pathways that have become so familiar to us because of our ancestors of antiquity. And now we have arrived before you at this place which is ours as well as yours. These are our ancestral lands where our afterbirth remains still, where it has been buried in the earth of these island archipelagoes. We have come to affirm our blood ties with yours as one. There can be no question about this. It is recognized that the blood of our ancestors has flowed to bring life and sanctity to this marae we now stand on.⁹

With each island delegation delivering speeches, chants, and songs, the ceremony went on and on. By late morning the participants were suffering visibly from standing in the blazing sun on the unsheltered stone platform, which in turn caused a breakdown of the strict protocol that called for their isolation from the crowd surrounding the marae (photo 2). Green drinking coconuts, plastic bottles of water, and cans of soft drinks were being passed from the crowd onto the marae to provide fluid for the thirsty, heat-struck participants.



PHOTO 2. Hawaiian navigator Nainoa Thompson and a Tahitian orator standing before the massive altar at Taputapuātea, with the Hawaiian crew members and delegates off to one side. (Bishop Museum photo)

Except for these minor infractions, the presentations proceeded as planned until toward noon, when Gaston Flosse, the part-European president of French Polynesia, stepped onto the marae to join the Tahitian delegation. Early that morning when Pierre Sham Koua and I drove to Taputapuātea we had been met at the entrance to the grounds by earnest young Tahitians wearing headbands and draped in green *tī* leaves. They were members of the youth brigade of the pro-independence political party, *Tāvini Huira‘atira* (Servant of the People). They politely but insistently passed out their own brochure bearing a message in Tahitian, English, and French addressed to all their “cousins in the Pacific” and denouncing the collaboration of local politicians in continued French rule, and in particular France’s nuclear-bomb-testing program in the nearby Tuamotu Islands. After that they stayed in the background—until President Flosse joined the Tahitian delegation on the marae.

Then members of the youth brigade gathered at the inland end of the platform unfurled long banners condemning Flosse for selling the motherland to the French and their bombs. This display caused a stir among the crowd of spectators, but the canoe crews and delegates on the marae did not overtly react—not even the Cook Islanders, the closest neighbors downwind of the testing sites at the Tuamotu atolls of Moruroa and Fangataufa located well to the southeast of Ra‘iātea. So strongly did the Cook Islanders feel about the tests that later that year when French President Jacques Chirac broke the post–Cold War testing moratorium and announced a new series of nuclear explosions, they sent one of their canoes, *Te Au o Tonga*, to the testing area to protest the resumption of the deadly explosions there. Yet on this sacred occasion the Cook Islanders, and the other canoe crews and delegates on the marae, were totally focused on completing this ritual confirmation of the opening of a new era of voyaging. Flosse himself, an experienced politician who as a strong supporter of France’s right to use Moruroa for testing their deadly weapons was the main target of the demonstration, also paid no heed to the commotion and calmly went ahead with his speech.

With the additional backdrop of protesting banners, the ceremony continued without further incident to the concluding rituals, all meant to seal the reestablishment of the Friendly Alliance of voyaging nations: the drinking of kava by selected crew members of each canoe, the placing on the marae of a heavy stone from each of the represented islands, and the bundling together of lengths of sennit line from each canoe to assure a safe voyage on to Te Fenua ‘Enata and Hawai‘i.

PROTESTS AGAINST NUCLEAR TESTING. Plastic water bottles as well as bright red cans of Coca-Cola on the sacred marae. Dozens of professional and amateur photographers and also several film teams clustered around the platform and fighting for clear shots. Electronically amplified chants and speeches, and even the utterance of a Christian prayer. However impressive the ceremonial process that unfolded that morning may have been, it was obviously not a slavish reconstruction of the way, as portrayed in the text from *Ancient Tahiti*, delegates from the islands entered the Sacred Pass and then were welcomed ashore.

Among other things, there were no human sacrifices. Taputapuātea was dedicated to the war god ‘Oro who demanded human offerings. Indeed, Teuira Henry translated the name of the marae as “sacrifices” (*taputapu*)

“from abroad” (*ātea*) (1928, 123). According to the text, at the gatherings of the Friendly Alliance these “sacrifices from abroad” were delivered through the Sacred Pass by the canoes coming from islands belonging to the alliance (Henry 1928, 123–126). The narrative of that delivery starts out with a wide-angle view of “the long canoes in the wind” (*te va‘a roa o te mata‘i*) heading for the Sacred Pass, streaming behind them long pennants colored dark or light depending on which half of the alliance they represented:

Upon approaching the sacred passage of Te-ava-moa, just at daybreak, the canoes united in procession, and out from the horizon, as if by magic, they came in double file, each representing a separate kingdom. To the north were those of Te-ao-tea, to the south those of Te-ao-uri, approaching side by side, the measured strokes of the paddles harmonizing with the sound of the drum and occasional blasts of the trumpet.

Then, the focus shifts to a close-up of the canoes and the gruesome cargo carried on their decks:

Across the bows connecting each double canoe was a floor, covering the chambers containing idols, drums, trumpet shells, and other treasures for the gods and people of Raiatea; and upon the floor were placed in a row sacrifices from abroad, which consisted of human victims brought for that purpose and just slain, and great fishes newly caught from fishing grounds of neighboring islands. There were placed upon the floor, parallel with the canoe, alternately a man and a cavalli fish, a man and a shark, a man and a turtle, and finally a man closed in the line.

Once “this terribly earnest procession” reached shore, the voyagers were greeted by the chiefs, priests, and other dignitaries of the place. Then they silently set to work to suspend the sacrificial victims in the trees, stringing them up with long ropes run through their lifeless skulls. Still more bodies were then employed as rollers over which to draw the canoes onto the land.

Though well aware of this ancient protocol, the organizers of this gathering of reconstructed voyaging canoes obviously had no intention of recreating such a grisly spectacle. Instead, they focused on the idea of symbolically renewing interisland ties by ceremonially lifting the voyaging tapu that they believed had been imposed when the Friendly Alliance broke up after the assault on delegates from The-light-land. The organizers and the visiting canoe crews and delegates had gathered at Taputapuātea to celebrate their rediscovery of voyaging, not to recreate past practices in

their entirety. To do so, they drew on historical precedents, but selectively, choosing what they wanted in order to commemorate their revival of ancestral technology and skills.

This is not to say that the preparations for, as well as execution of, this event necessarily went smoothly. Indeed the whole process of reviving voyaging has been rich with controversy over such issues as which canoe design best represents an ancient vessel and what ceremonial protocols to follow at the launchings of the reconstructed canoes. In this problematic area of indigenous cultural authority and authenticity, consider the comments of *Hōkūleʻa* designer Herb Kane about a controversy among Hawaiian cultural authorities over the *ʻawa* drinking ceremonies that have come to be a regular feature of canoe launchings and departures.

An article in the August 1993 issue of *Ka Wai Ola O Oha*, the monthly newspaper of the quasi-governmental Office of Hawaiian Affairs, juxtaposed the views of Parley Kanakaʻole and Sam Kaʻai, both of whom were then well known around Hawaiʻi for presiding over ceremonies in which the soporific infusion of the pounded root of the *ʻawa* plant (known elsewhere in the Pacific as kava, *ʻava*, *yagona*, etc) is ladled out, formally presented to participants, and then solemnly drunk, and those of their critic, Kamaki Kanahale, a trustee of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (Clark 1993). Kanahale asserted that there was no such thing as a formal *ʻawa* ceremony in traditional Hawaiian culture, and that the principals in today's ceremonies appeared almost to be making up their ceremonies as they went along. In response, both Kanakaʻole and Kaʻai affirmed that they had not made up their ceremonies on the spot, and that they in fact were following distinctive procedures for the ritual consumption of *ʻawa* that they had learned from their elders on their respective home islands of Hawaiʻi and Maui.

In a subsequent issue of the newspaper, Herb Kane (1993) strongly supported the thesis that before the missionary era Hawaiians did have formal *ʻawa* ceremonies, and argued for the legitimacy of the particular practices followed by both Kanakaʻole and Kaʻai. But he did admit that knowledge of the specific chants and other details of the pre-missionary ceremonies have been lost with the virtual disappearance of *ʻawa* drinking among Hawaiians, and that contemporary Hawaiian *ʻawa* ceremonies have been heavily influenced by practices from Western Polynesia, where the drink has continued to be consumed without any hiatus caused by missionary or other foreign pressures. Kane traced this Western Polynesia-

sian influence to an *‘awa* ceremony over which he presided that took place at the launching of *Hōkūle‘a* in 1975:

This ceremony was offered to us as a gift from a *hānai* [adopted] member of the royal family of Tonga, including the use of the largest *tanoa* (*kanoa*, or bowl) in existence, and there was no pretense about it being Hawaiian. We felt honored by the offer. To decline would have appeared ungracious. Moreover the idea appealed to the cultural purpose of *Hōkūle‘a* as an instrument that might help bring all Polynesians closer together—an active symbol of a shared ancestry.

That subsequent *‘awa* ceremonies celebrated by Hawaiians might combine remembered Hawaiian practices with those of their cousins from Western Polynesia did not bother Kane:

We may also be experiencing the dawn of a new (or simply rediscovered) “Pan Polynesian” cultural development as a result of the increasing frequency of cultural exchanges among all Polynesians. When meetings occur between Hawaiians, Tahitians, Maori, or Western Polynesians, much enjoyment is derived from exploring the astonishing similarities within the basics of their respective languages, customs and traditions. From such similarities, bridges of communication and bonds of friendship are being created; out of these will grow cultural traditions that will be understood by all Polynesians. The Hawaiian *‘awa* ceremony as interpreted by Ka‘ai and Kanaka‘ole, because they express the fundamentals universal to the Polynesian concept of good manners, may be counted among these traditions.

One of my longtime Tahitian friends who specializes in oral traditions at the Museum of Tahiti and the Islands avoided the Taputapuātea ceremony, even though she conducted some of the research for it. Instead, she stayed at her family home on adjacent Taha‘a, where she helped to organize a low-key, community-oriented reception for the canoes when they called there a few days later. Like a number of other thoughtful students of Tahitian culture, she is disturbed by the practice of staging for tourists “folkloric” reenactments of supposedly ancient ceremonies—such as the elaborately costumed and choreographed ceremonies of chiefly investiture held annually at Tahiti’s Arahurahu marae. She would probably agree with Greg Dening’s comment about these and other similar ceremonies that such “re-enactments tend to hallucinate a past as merely the present in funny dress” (1992, 4–5, 203–205). The gathering at Taputapuātea might be similarly dismissed as so much folkloric play acting, but for a fundamen-

tal difference between it and such tourism-oriented events as the Arahurahu ceremonies. Those who had sailed to Taputapuātea from the “four sides of the dark, dark sea of Hiva,” were performing for themselves, and were profoundly affected by their pilgrimage.

Compare, for example, the experience of the crew of the Māori canoe *Te Aurere* with that of a famous Māori scholar who had visited the marae in 1929, the year after Teuira Henry’s *Ancient Tahiti* had been published. The scholar in question, Te Rangi Hiroa, was a physician who had already won fame for anthropological research among his own people of Aotearoa as well as those of the Cook Islands and Sāmoa, and who later was to be appointed Director of Hawai‘i’s Bishop Museum, Professor of Anthropology at Yale University, and then knighted, using his European name, as Sir Peter Buck.

For years this distinguished scholar had cherished the wish to make a pilgrimage to Taputapuātea. From his tribal traditions he knew that some of his ancestors had come from Ra‘iātea, and he felt that much of Māori theology had emanated from the island’s famous temple. In 1929 he had his chance. While he was conducting fieldwork on the atoll of Tongareva in the Northern Cooks, a passing British warship bound for Ra‘iātea offered him passage. After landing at the port town of Uturoa, with great expectations he took a small boat through the lagoon to Opoa, the region where the temple is located. When, however, he at last saw Taputapuātea, Te Rangi Hiroa was utterly devastated by the deserted marae, and brusquely left after a cursory inspection. Later he explained his disappointment:

I had made my pilgrimage to Taputapu-atea, but the dead could not speak to me. It was sad to the verge of tears. I felt a profound regret, a regret for—I knew not what. Was it for the beating of the temple drums or the shouting of the populace as the king was raised on high? Was it for the human sacrifices of olden times? It was for none of these individually but for something at the back of them all, some living spirit and divine courage that existed in ancient times of which Taputapu-atea was a mute symbol. It was something that we Polynesians have lost and cannot find, something that we yearn for and cannot recreate. The background in which that spirit was engendered has changed beyond recovery. The bleak wind of oblivion had swept over Opoa. Foreign weeds grew over the untended courtyard, and stones had fallen from the sacred altar of Taputapu-atea. The gods had long ago departed. (Buck 1938, 81–82)

Sixty-six years later the crew of *Te Aurere* experienced Taputapuātea in an utterly different way. Instead of the desolate, crumbling marae that

had so disappointed their distinguished kinsman, they found a restored temple alive with expectant people. Sailing through the Sacred Pass to remove the voyaging tapu, seeing the huge crowd waiting on shore, and then stepping on land and going through the long series of greetings and rituals to confirm the marae as a new center for pan-Polynesian gatherings totally uplifted these contemporary representatives of The-light-land of old.

Hector Busby, *Te Aurere's* skipper, was particularly affected by this transcendental experience. When first asked to play a role in lifting the tapu, he had been somewhat hesitant because he had never heard about the "sin at Awarua." But when he found that his friend Te Ao Pēhi Kara knew a tribal tradition about this event and would compose a chant of reconciliation, Hector became excited about the task. He told me right after the ceremonies that when *Te Aurere* entered the pass and Te Ao Pēhi Kara began chanting he fell into a trance-like state and personally felt the pain of the assault on his ancestors that day long ago. Then, when the chanting ceased and the tapu was declared to have been lifted, Hector came to, feeling exhilarated at having left the ancient tragedy behind to sail into a new age.

* * *

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Notes

1 Te Ao Pēhi Kara graciously provided me with both his Māori text, and his free English translation, of which only portions are quoted here.

2 Along with *marae* (temple), *tapu* was introduced into late eighteenth century English through publication in the journals of Captain Cook, and they both can be found today in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and some other large dictionaries. According to the *OED* entry, *tapu* first appeared in print as "taboo" in the 1785 edition of Captain James Cook's journal of his third voyage into the

Pacific. Although Cook's spelling is still used in English, *tapu*, the phonetically more accurate spelling, has long been employed in writing most Polynesian languages, including Tahitian and Tongan (from which Cook took the term), and is an alternate spelling in the *OED*. (Hawaiians spell the term *kapu*, reflecting their use of the /k/ sound instead of the /t/.) Although Cook wrote "morai," the phonetically more accurate *marae* is now employed in writing Tahitian as well as in the *OED*.

3 One nautical mile equals 1.85 kilometers. Hereafter, all distances given in miles are in nautical miles. One nautical mile equals 1.15 statute (land) miles.

4 Keesing and Tonkinson 1982, Linnekin 1983, and Handler and Linnekin 1984 were early leaders, followed by, among many others, Babadzan 1988; Chapman and Dupon 1989; Stevenson 1990, 1992; Linnekin 1991; Friedman 1992; Jolly 1992; Jolly and Thomas 1992; Sissons 1993; Norton 1993; White and Lindstrom 1993; Tobin 1994; Feinberg and Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1995; Lindstrom and White 1995; Turner 1997. In an essay on the synergism generated by our dual experimental and cultural approach to voyaging, I used the term "re-invention of Polynesian voyaging," but in the sense that because direct continuity with ancient voyagers had been broken we had been forced to employ information from oral traditions, early historical accounts, and the surviving navigational system of the Caroline Islands of Micronesia to literally "re-invent" Polynesian voyaging (Finney 1991).

5 Te Fenua 'Enata is often translated into English as "The Land of Men." However, since 'Enata is a gender-neutral term, the name can be more accurately, if inelegantly, translated as "The Land of Human Beings" (Le Cléac'h 1997, 27–28), but with the understanding that the 'enata (compare Māori *tangata*, Tahitian *ta'ata*, Hawaiian *kanaka*) are indigenous to the archipelago.

6 The missionary John Orsmond arrived at Mo'orea in 1817, soon after most of the Tahitians had converted, nominally at least, to Christianity. It is said that he proved so adept at Tahitian, which he had begun learning from Tahitian shipmates on the long voyage out from England, and had developed such good rapport with Tahitian sages, that King Pomare directed him to interview and record these keepers of oral tradition (Driessen 1982, 5).

7 As *roa* generally means "long," Henry initially translated Aotearoa as the "Long-light-land." Yet noting that since *roa* can also mean "distant," she also suggested that Aotearoa might have the meaning of "Distant-light-land," so called to distinguish it from the other islands nearer to Ra'iātea (Henry 1928, 123). However, pointing out that *ao* can also mean "day," Māori linguist Bruce Biggs translated Aotearoa as "Long Daylight," explaining that the first voyagers to reach this temperate land called it by that name because they were struck by how much longer the summer days were there in comparison with those of their tropical homeland (1990, 7).

8 Teuira Henry (1928, 128) suggested that the second line rendered into Tahitian would be *Tohia e roro'o Aotea* (Launched for prayer chanting was *Aotea*), and that this might have been its original meaning.

9 This is the central section of the text and translation that Larry Kimura kindly made available to me.

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Abstract

By focusing on the invented, socially constructed aspects of cultural revival in the Pacific, analysts have slighted the right of indigenous peoples to recall their remembered past and employ elements from it for contemporary purposes. The article contextualizes this issue by examining a ceremony conducted at the ancient temple of Taputapuātea on Ra‘iātea Island, in which reconstructed voyaging canoes from around Polynesia came together in 1995 to commemorate the recent revival of canoe voyaging. According to oral traditions, centuries before Taputapuātea had hosted meetings of a “Friendly Alliance” of peoples from around Polynesia. However, that alliance had been broken when a local chief killed a visiting priest, and the canoes ceased sailing to Taputapuātea from Rarotonga, Aotearoa, and other distant islands. By inviting canoes from all over Polynesia to come together once more at Taputapuātea, and then having a tribal elder from Aotearoa chant words of forgiveness for the long ago murder of their priestly delegate, the planners sought to create a new alliance of voyaging peoples. Although this event did not exactly follow ancient protocol, it nonetheless effectively served to dramatize the current renaissance in Polynesian voyaging and how it is bringing long-separated Polynesian peoples together again.

KEYWORDS: cultural revival, globalization, invention of tradition, oral traditions, Pacific Islands, Polynesia, voyaging