From Birth to Death in the Gilbert Islands

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FROM BIRTH TO DEATH IN THE GILBERT ISLANDS.

By Arthur Grimble.

The primitive observances to be described in this paper are now no longer living things. The semi-civilized young barbarian of to-day cares nothing for the ancient rituals, while the old folk who still remember dare not practise them in the face of a jeering pseudo-Christian majority. It must always be a matter for regret that none of the earlier European residents used his chance of recording the old manners and customs of the Gilbert Islands ere their decay was too complete. A few explorers and scientists, of whom the first was Commodore Wilkes in the early 'forties of last century, have from time to time taken notes in the Group, but all were handicapped by the fugitive nature of their passages and by ignorance of the native tongue ; many of their accounts are inexact, Wilkes himself having been gravely misled by a wretched interpreter picked up on one of the islands.[1]

Pity it is that to one so ill-qualified as the writer should have fallen the privileged opportunity of living among the people, learning their language, and piecing together the fragmentary accounts they gave of things as they used to be. There are many and grave blanks in the record, for the facts were collected by one entirely unskilled in the methods of ethnography, yet so far as it goes the account may be relied upon as a correct statement of facts, for every piece of information given has been attested to, on the island of its origin, by old men and women already in the *ka-a-roro*, which is to say, *the fourth generation back ;* the witnesses were therefore either great-grandmothers or great-grandfathers, who had seen the ceremonies of which they talked. Where possible, they were chosen as informants on account of some reputed skill they had possessed, long ago, in the ordering of the rites they described.

The most convenient arrangement of our subject is under the consecutive heads—Marriage, Birth, Education, Death.

[1] For general information on the Gilbert Group see :—

Wilkes : *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, 1845.

Woodford : " The Gilbert Islands." *Journ. Roy. Geog. Soc.*, 1895.

Turner : *Samoa a Hundred Years Ago and Long Before*, pp. 293–304.

Hartzer : *Les Iles Blanches des Mers du Sud.* Vic et Amat, Paris, 1900.

Kraemer : *Hawaii, Ostmikronesien, Samoa.* Strecker and Schröeder, Stüttgart, 1904.

Sir Basil Thomson's work, *The Fijians,* contains a number of exceedingly well-informed notes on Gilbertese habits, which are worthy of careful attention.

MARRIAGE (*Te Iein*).

Kinship.

Sir Basil Thomson has written in his book on Fiji that descendants of brother and sister in the Gilbert Islands are forbidden to marry so long as their common origin is remembered, except on Abemama and Makin, where the rule is only violated by high chiefs.[1] This may have been the theory, though I have never heard it so expressed; the practice has long been otherwise. According to such a standard, local marriages would quickly become impossible on these small islands, where a population of 2000 is well over the average; and in this connection it must be remembered that local marriages are, and always have been, infinitely preferred by the natives.

No detailed analysis of Gilbertese family relationship is to be given here; it is sufficient for our present purpose to summarize the rules relating to consanguinity. A native was forbidden to marry—

(*a*) Lineal kin;

(*b*) All descendants of a common ancestor, on male or female side, out of his or her own generation;

(*c*) Descendants of a common ancestor in his or her own generation, to the second degree of cousinship.

Adoptive relationships and those of the half blood were counted the same as those of the full blood. The native catchword concerning the marriage of kinsfolk was, and is, "*E ewe te ka-a-roro,*" *i.e., the fourth generation goes free;* thus if three generations separated each of the parties to a marriage from the common ancestor, no ban of consanguinity rested upon them. Several such unions have taken place within my own experience in the Group; nevertheless, they were not regarded with any great favour by the old people of the respective families, who considered that, in the ideal state, collaterals should await the fifth generation before coming together. But a study of the island genealogies shows that third cousins could marry at least five centuries ago; for twenty generations back, on a Beru record which I possess, is shown the union of a certain ancestress named Tonga-Biri with her kinsman Kekeia, both of these persons having had the same great-great-grandfather.

Incest.

Incest was punished on Tamana and Arorae by laying the offenders face down in a shallow pool of water and suffocating them; in the Northern Gilberts the culprits were lashed to a log of wood and set adrift in the ocean; the lightest punishment awarded seems to have been to put the incestuous couple aboard a small canoe, with a few coco-nuts, a paddle but no sail, and thus abandon them to the elements. The belief was that the sun would hide his face from the place in which two such offenders were allowed to live unpunished. This superstition is connected with the story of a

[1] *Cf. The Fijians,* B. Thomson, p. 191.

great culture-hero named Bue, some of whose deeds were exactly similar to those of Polynesian Maaui. Bue, on his return from a wondrous voyage into the east, lay with his sister under the noonday sky; the sun (Gilbertese, *Taai*), their ancestor, seeing their act, was filled with rage and destroyed their craft; only the possession of a magic staff saved them from drowning. Ever since that day the sun has set his curse on incest, and in deference to him all offenders must be punished with the watery death that he would have visited upon Bue and his sister.

The Marrying Age.

The age at which a male Gilbertese married lay somewhere between 25 and 28 years. The actual date of a young man's marriage depended upon the length of time it took him to pass through his initiation into full manhood, while the inception of that initiation depended again on his physical development. A healthy, lusty boy might begin younger than a weakling, but as a rule it was not muscular development that was watched so much as the growth of axillary and pectoral hairs. When these were well in evidence, and not before, the lad was considered ripe enough to be *kaunaki, i.e., made into a warrior* (lit. *made angry*); this, among a people by no means given to great hairiness, would not normally be until he was 23 or 24 years old. Taking his age to be 23 at the beginning of the initiation period, we must allow a minimum of three years for the completion of the various rites he must undergo; reason for this will be seen later on under the heading "Education," where the ceremonies are described. The youth of 23 would thus be a man of 26 before he qualified for the title of *Roro-buaka*, or Warrior, and the right to take a wife.

A girl would be given in marriage on her release from the *Ko* (*Bleaching-house*, of which a description will appear in its place), wherein she was confined, as a rule, for about two years after the first menses appeared. Her age would thus normally be about 14 or 15 years at marriage.

Polygamy.

On islands where the chiefly system prevailed, which is to say, on all the units of the Gilbert Group north of and including Abemama, only a chief might take more than one wife. Slaves were at the most monogamous, and sometimes the poor creatures can hardly be said to have married at all, for they appear to have been brought together and separated like cattle, for breeding purposes, entirely at their masters' discretion. There was, of course, no sort of ceremonial used at the marriage of slaves, and all that is to follow applies only to the freemen of the democratic south or to the chiefs and landowning bourgeoisie of the aristocratic north.

Strictly speaking, a man had only one true wife in a lifetime, who was distinguished from the rest of his harem by the title *Rao-ni-kie*, signifying *Companion of the sleeping mat.* With her alone he underwent the marriage ceremony soon to be described. None of his other womenfolk were ceremonially married to him; they

were of two orders—*Nikira-n-roro* or Concubines, and *Taua-ni-kai*, which may be translated Concubitants.

The *Nikira-n-roro* were chosen promiscuously, for mere beauty, at the lust of the houselord. They were only to be found in the households of high chiefs, such as that of Tem Binoka of Abemama, so fully described by Stevenson; their status in the harem was regulated by favour, not right of custom.

The *Taua-ni-kai* accrued by customary right; they belonged to either one of two classes of women marked out as a man's potential, though not necessarily actual, concubitants. These were :—

(*a*) *The widows of his deceased brother*, who passed into his care by a custom akin to, if not quite identical with, the Hebrew Levirate. They might be more precisely termed *contingent concubitants*, as they would become *Taua-ni-kai* to a brother-in-law only if their own houselord died.

(*b*) *The uterine sisters of his wife*[1], who became his potential concubitants as soon as he married their sister.

In the Gilbert Islands it was considered unworthy for a man to exercise his physical rights over the persons of all his potential concubitants, the relationship being esteemed as a means of guaranteeing him against childlessness primarily, and secondarily of providing for surplus female population. Nevertheless, all *Taua-ni-kai* were theoretically at the disposition of their houselord, and any infidelity on their part was an adultery against him. He might elect to give one of his wife's sisters intact to a friend, in which case, as a virgin, she would have the right to become the ceremonial bride of her husband. Hence a curious result, for as *Rao-ni-kie* she would carry to her husband the right of *Taua-ni-kai* (a name applying equally to the relationship and to the persons subject thereto) over all her uterine sisters, one of whom was married, while she herself could never be free of the obligations of *Taua-ni-kai* to her sister's husband. Thus two men might share the same rights over a single group of women, the wife of each being the concubitant of the other, and upon this was established the system of *bita-ni-kie, changing of mats*, or *wife-exchange*, so common in the Group.

The issue of the *Rao-ni-kie* would take precedence over the children of *Taua-ni-kai* in whatever order they were born, but if the wife died barren her sisters' children would inherit the paternal lands.

The concubitant relationship of a man with his brother's wives and his wife's sisters appears to be identical with that recognized in Fiji, but here the resemblance between the two systems ends. Fijian marriage is, with certain exceptions, based upon the concubitancy of alternate generations, *i.e.*, of cousins german; the Gilbertese, while far from severe in matters of consanguinity as judged by the Samoan standard, is nevertheless distinctly Polynesian in its general character.

[1] Sometimes also, if his wife had no uterine sisters, her nearest female kin of the same generation; but this appears to have been a matter of arrangement, not inalienable right.

Betrothal.

Children might be betrothed at a very early age, sometimes before birth. Two friends not yet married would sometimes make a compact that if they should ever beget children of opposite sex, they should marry one another. When the girl child whose fate had thus been arranged was born, she was taken by the parents of the prospective husband and brought up by them.

But most often marriages were arranged by the negotiation called *te mata-mata, the envisagement.* When a father saw that his son was likely to become a strong and healthy man (*maiu,* meaning *full of life,* is the Gilbertese term), he would send his own or his wife's brother to the father of the girl desired in betrothal. This envoy would broach the subject and sometimes, but not always, leave a small present of food behind ; on his departure the girl's parents would take a few days to decide upon the proposal. If they decided against it, a message to that effect would be despatched and no offence taken on its receipt.

But if they regarded the match with favour, they would send one of their brothers to invite the boy's parents to visit them. As soon as possible after receipt of this invitation the couple would pay their call, and on arrival would be taken by their hosts to the land that was intended as the bride's marriage portion. On their return home it was their turn to consider. If the marriage portion did not satisfy them they would acquaint the girl's parents with their opinion, and this might lead to a perfectly peaceful breaking off of negotiations.

If, however, all seemed satisfactory, the boy's parents would send their brother to bring the girl to their house, where she would remain sometimes for a number of years until the time was ripe for her marriage. The act of transferring her from household to household was called, somewhat ungallantly, *te iaaki,* which means *the gathering-up-of-rubbish.*

The envisagement stage was now complete and the definite link of *kainro,* or *betrothal,* established between the boy and girl. This could only be dissolved by common consent of the contracting parties ; if one desired to do so without consulting the other, it must be prepared to pay for the privilege by the forfeit of a large piece of land, though in some cases the fine might be reduced to a seagoing canoe with sail, bailer and steering-oar complete.

Marriage Ceremonies.

On the islands of Nikunau and Beru there was very often no betrothal and no marriage ceremony, a wife being simply appropriated and carried off by her suitor ; this existed side by side with the more formal institutions dealt with and to be discussed. The nature of the practice, its difference from that in usual vogue, and its reminiscence of the habits of exogamous peoples, seem to indicate the presence on these two islands of a racial strain either foreign to, or submerged by, the other

islanders. There are distinct indications in the traditions of many families that a small Melanesian invasion struck Beru about A.D. 1325 (as reckoned by the genealogies) and resulted in the settlement of the central part of the island by a black-skinned, man-eating folk, who eventually intermarried with the autochthones. Again, it is provable that Nikunau, which lies only 28 miles east of Beru, was dominated at a very early date by settlers from the latter island. Lastly, among the inhabitants of both islands to this day are to be seen types which more nearly approach the Melanesian than any other in the Group. It seems not unwisely venturesome to infer that the ancestors responsible for the exceptional types were also responsible for the exceptional marriage by rape.

On Arorae Island marriages were often made without preliminary betrothal, by a fictitious fishing ceremony, which has been described as follows by Turner :— " In choosing a husband the lady sat in the lower room of the house, and over her head were let down through the chinks of the floor of the upper room two or three coco-nut leaflets, the ends of which were held by her lovers. She pulled at one, and asked whose it was. If the reply was not in the *voice* of the young man she wished to have, she left it and pulled at another leaf, and another, until she found him, and then pulled it right down. The happy man whose leaf she pulled down sat still while the others slunk away. The young couple then retired to their respective homes and prepared for a day of feasting, which was to be the marriage day as well. The ceremony of the union was performed by the father of either party. The two bowed their heads before him. He took hold of their hair with one hand, and with the other poured out upon them a purifying libation of the juice of the coco-nut palm." This account has been corroborated to me by old people of Arorae in all its details save two ; first, the purifying libation of the juice of the coco-nut palm was, as a matter of fact, an anointment with coco-nut oil, which was made for the purpose by the mother of the bridegroom ; secondly, fishing lines were more often used than coco-nut leaflets to catch the wayward bride, and to these lines were bent hooks of pearl shell especially made for the occasion.

On the island of Nonouti the same ceremony was in vogue under a slightly modified form. There the lovers, instead of fishing from a loft, stood outside the girl's house and introduced their lines through chinks in the screen of coco-nut leaves which hung around it. This practice, with the lines not vertically suspended but horizontally stretched, was a closer imitation than that used on Arorae of the trolling method of fishing for which pearl shell hooks were manufactured. The fishing fiction itself was possibly a reminiscence of the old migration days of the race, when warriors swarmed from group to group without their wives and, by marrying strange women overseas, might literally have been said to catch their mates from the ocean.

But the ceremony described by Turner was not the only one in use on Arorae or Nonouti. Far more generally known on those islands and throughout all other

Gilbert speaking communities was the practice which will now be described, and which must be understood as the sequel to the *mata-mata* betrothal above discussed.

A house for the reception of the bridal pair was first built on the land of the bridegroom's father, by the boy's kinsmen. From the outside this house looked like a large thatch, of which the eaves rested on the ground and the ridge was some 14 feet high. From the inside, which was accessible through doors in the gables, the thatch was seen to be supported by corner studs of coral rock about 2 feet in height. The floor space was about 18 by 18 feet; it was shingled with small white stones and covered with mats. Overhead, there was a loft or attic, of which the floor was so low that a man could not stand upright in the lower room; this was accessible through a small square trap in the middle.

In the lower room on a given day the families of the bridal pair came together, as soon as the sun had passed his zenith. When all were present and silent, the bride was brought into the house by her mother, mother's sister, mother's mother, or adoptive mother. The girl and the old woman immediately mounted into the loft, and there the younger was stripped of all her clothing and laid upon a new sleeping mat especially woven for the occasion. Thus she was left, awaiting the arrival of her groom.

As soon as the bride was known to be ready, the boy was brought by his mother or father's sister into the lower room. Aided by pushes and encouragement from all his nearest female relations he climbed into the loft; there he stripped off his waist mat and threw it down among the waiting people. As soon as it was seen to fall the whole audience broke out into clamorous exhortation to both the young people, beseeching them to cast off coyness and quickly to consummate the union. Nevertheless, the bride's kinsfolk would have been much disappointed and ashamed had she surrendered herself without demur to the embraces of the bridegroom, for that would have denoted a lack of modesty unseemly in a well-born maiden. Without moving from her mat, it was therefore customary for her to resist the advances of her mate, and to intimate to those below that she was so doing by struggles of which the reverberation could not fail to reach them.

At the moment when her virginity left her she emitted a single piercing scream. Soon after, the bridegroom would call from above, and at that signal his mother would mount into the loft. There she would at once search for traces of blood on the girl's sleeping mat and, having found them, would cry in a loud voice, "*Te tei! Te tei!*" (*A virgin! A virgin!*) She then descended alone to exhibit the mat to all eyes, whereupon, taking up the cry of the old woman, the father and uncles of the bridegroom rubbed each a little of the virgin's blood upon his cheeks, where it would remain for the rest of the day. The mat was afterwards carefully burned in order that no enemy of the family might obtain it and, by using evil magic upon the blood, curse the bride with barrenness.

Throughout the ceremony, an old man on behalf of the bridegroom and an old woman on behalf of the bride sat under the eastern rafters of the house mumbling auspicious or protective charms; and always before proceedings began, the girl and the boy were given philtres to drink, which were made of coco-nut milk mixed with infusions from the bark of the *ango* tree (*Premna taitensis*), and the orange-coloured petals of the *kaura* flower (*Wedelia strigulosa*). Of these ingredients, the last banished fear, the second promoted true love, and the coco-nut milk was a protection against foreign magic.

While the united families were rejoicing below, the girl and the boy dressed themselves in *riri* (kilts of coco-nut leaf) made by the bridegroom's mother's and father's sisters, anointed their bodies with oil from the same source, and girt themselves with dancing mats provided by the mother's and father's sisters of the bride. Then they descended from the loft. On their appearance a feast began which lasted for three days, and a great dance was given in which the young couple formed the *kabi* (keel), or leading pair.

On Banaba (Ocean Island) matters were rather differently arranged. A girl was married to her betrothed a few months after she reached the age of puberty, if the boy's initiation into manhood was by then complete. The test of virginity was the same as that described above, but the couple was housed in a hut while the families were assembled outside. They lay on a bed made of a single coco-nut leaf screen built up of two parts. The half on which the boy lay was made by his relations, that on which the girl reclined being made by hers. The two halves were joined together by roughly knotting the edges. When the ceremony of marriage was over, the two were obliged to live in the house until the girl was pregnant, or until it was evident that she was barren; during this time of waiting they went entirely naked nor were they allowed to set foot outside. No sleeping mats were given them other than the wretched things of coco-nut leaf above mentioned; these were renewed every day, and the old ones hung up under the eaves of the house to form a screen against sun and wind. The object of this Spartan treatment was to encourage the couple to beget a child quickly and so earn their freedom. When at last the girl became pregnant they were allowed to don clothes and to live in the communal dwelling of the husband's family.

If, on any island of the Gilbert Group, a girl was discovered at the marriage ceremony to have failed in the test of virginity, the bridegroom's mother, on establishing the fact, would cry aloud, "*Te kara! Te kara!*" (*An old woman! An old woman!*) and proceed to drag the poor naked creature from the loft. Below, the incensed families (her own in particular) would fall upon her and mercilessly beat her into the open air. On Banaba, exceptionally, she might be saved by her husband's love if she consented to disclose the name of her former lover, in which case the seducer would be made to forfeit land in expiation of his offence. But as a rule the unhappy girl was disowned from the moment of detection; she was

branded with the name of *nikira-n-roro* (lit., the *remnant-of-her-generation*) and earned her living by the favour of promiscuous suitors.[1]

When a young married couple had settled down, the girl entered into a special relationship with her husband's father's brothers which was known as *Tinaba*. To all these uncles-at-law she owed a particular deference, which, if duly bestowed, would be rewarded by presents of land. She must especially see to it, that at all festivities they were provided with wreaths of flowers, scented oil and dancing mats; she must give her long tresses, if demanded, to make plaited belts with which the mats were girt about the body. And she must be prepared from time to time to deliver her person to their embraces. All this was encouraged by the husband, both on account of filial respect and on account of the additional land acquired. The man, in his turn, owed similar obligations to his wife's mother's sisters.

But from amours outside the family wives were most jealously guarded in the old days. While still young and attractive they were prohibited from appearing at any public function and might take part only in family dances. They never went out alone, being accompanied either by their husband or his mother; if the latter was the chaperon, she carried a heavy stick with which to reward any erring glances, either of the young wife or her admirers. Often a hood of matting was affixed to the young woman's head, of which Turner has given the following account: ". . . . It was so folded in Corean style as to leave but a small hole in front for her to see the road before her. Any man observing her coming along would get out of the way till she passed. Any deviation from the rule would lead to jealousy and its revengeful consequences."

Divorce, unlike marriage, was effected without formalities. It might lead to the surrender of land-forfeits on one side or the other, but there was no fixed custom by which bonds were dissolved or penalties assessed. For a man to put away his wife he had simply to eject her from his house; equally well a woman might dissolve the partnership by returning to her parents, who, if there seemed good cause, would harbour her and take her part in any unpleasantness that might ensue. The right to decide in such a matter was thus accorded as freely to the wife as to the husband, and this is a fair indication of a woman's general status in the Group, where mother right and father right seem to have impinged upon one another and eventually come to a compromise.

On every divorced woman was pronounced the charm called *te anaa-ni-bung*, by which she was protected against the evil magic of her late husband's family, and at the same time absolved from her duty of concubitancy to him. During the recitation of the charm by her mother or aunt, her father gave her to drink a potion of salt water and coco-nut oil; this acted as an emetic, after the effect of which

[1] Wilkes mentions that women were offered in traffic to his sailors by the people of Tabiteuea and other islands, and deduces that the islanders had a low standard of morality. The fact was that the girls offered were *nikira-n-roro*, whose existence argues a high standard of virginity.

she was considered purged from all past associations with her husband, and capable of being loved by some other man.

BIRTH (*Te Bung*).

If it appeared that a wife was likely to prove barren, efforts were made to remedy the defect. Only a few old women on each island appear to have had any knowledge of the art required; there are some still practising their skill on the islands of Nonouti and Tarawa, but I have found it impossible to elicit information from those I have questioned. The method used was internal and external manipulation of the uterus; all operations were performed with the patient standing up to the waist in water on some lagoon shoal.

When a woman was known to be pregnant, the greatest care was taken to conceal her condition from all outsiders. For as long as possible the secret was shared only by the few people with whom she came into daily contact, for both she and the child within her were considered peculiarly liable to magic that dealt death (*wawi* and *wauna*) and magic that brought sickness (*maniwairaa*). Remnants of her food, toilet materials, old clothes, and all other things closely connected with her person were burned as soon as might be, for through such things some foreign sorcerer might most easily bring evil upon her.

Certain foods were forbidden her at this period. For the very sufficient reasons given she might not eat any of the following:—

The flat fish called *te baibai*, because, having both eyes on one side of the head, it would similarly distort the eyes of the child;

Turtle flesh, because it would cause the child to crawl like a turtle and to grow up a coward;

Garfish, because if the mother ate it and the expected were a son, he would never grow a beard;

Crayfish, because it would cause the infant's eyebrows to stand on end;

Porpoise flesh, because it would give the child bad teeth;

The great mollusc Tridacna, because it caused baldness. Finally, no expectant mother must eat the remnants of any fish that had been used for bait, for her child's limbs would thereby be twisted and its heart would become lecherous.

Of all the foods that she was allowed to eat, the land crab was most highly prized, as it was said to ensure a good supply of milk. Much fish was given her, and she was made to drink a good deal of coco-nut milk, though other vegetable foods were avoided.

From the moment that her motherhood was known the wife lay apart from her husband under the care of her mother[1], who came to stay with her; it was at such a time that the *taua-ni-kai* played the part of wife to the husband.

[1] Or mother's sister, or husband's mother, etc. The husband's female kin were often preferred, as they were considered more reliable sponsors for the general conduct of the wife.

The fifth month of pregnancy was considered to be the most dangerous of all to mother and child. When it arrived she was taken to the eastern shore of the island, where a small clearing in the bush had been prepared, and as she sat there a girdle of the inner bark of the *kanawa* tree (? *Cordia subcordata*) was bound about her middle. This was called her *bunna*, or protection against enemy magic, but incidentally it played the part of an abdominal support that helped her to bear the increasing weight of her child. The ceremony during which it was adjusted was called *te ere-mao—the cutting of the mao-bush* (*Scævola Koenigii*), not because that plant played any part in the scheme, but because the clearing of any area on the eastern side of an island would entail the cutting of the ubiquitous *mao*.

At the beginning of the seventh month the two kinswomen, who were to confine the mother, came and lived with her. If none of her family had the requisite skill, friends might be called in and heavily paid in land and food for their services. One of these old women was called *te tia-kabung, the deliverer*, and the other *te tia-tobi, the midwife*. Both paid constant attention during the last two months of pregnancy to the position of the child in the uterus, and if it seemed at any time unsatisfactory it was adjusted by extremely skilful massage. I have heard a competent medical authority speak in praise of the methods of these old experts, whose art is not yet quite extinct in the less visited islands of the Group.

When labour (*te ariri*) began the patient was given to drink a decoction of the bark, leaves and flowers of a shrub called *te i-nato*, which is rather like a privet in appearance. This was supposed to promote a swift birth. The old woman known as the deliverer then sat down at the north end of the house facing south. Crossing her legs tailorwise first of all, with the left on top, she thrust her right foot a little forward keeping the knee on the floor, so that the foot was " on edge " with its toes pointing straight ahead. On this foot, her back to the deliverer, sat the patient, the bony articulation of the great toe affording a perineal support. The deliverer then clasped her about the body from behind and pressed firmly downwards with the fingers of both hands upon the uterus. In this position they sat awaiting the birth of the child, the *tia-tobi* or midwife sitting in front of them. If the labour was protracted the patient was given repeated draughts of the *i-nato* decoction.

Shortly before presentation a small clean mat was laid before the mother, and when the child was born it was laid thereon, face upwards, with feet towards the patient. The umbilical cord was not severed before the placenta was born, the belief being that the loose end would otherwise recede into the mother.

The cord was measured for severance up to the child's forehead; the father of the child was called in to perform the operation, which he did with a shell-headed adze. For a girl a chopping-block of stone was used and there was no ceremony. If the child was a boy, the cord was cut upon the haft of a lance that had been used in battle, and the act was ceremoniously completed to the accompaniment of an incantation, in which the ancestral god of the family was invoked, the boy's name

named, and courage promised him by his father. This charm was a mixture of prayer and blessing, the name of the child forming the link between the two; it was the only baptism, to the best of my knowledge, used in the Group.

I must admit to negligence in not having found out how the infant's navel was attended to during the next few days,[1] for this was considered a most important part of the body, on the beauty of which depended success in the dance and in love-making.

All the debris of confinement was burned the same day or night as a precaution against enemy magic; the mother was anointed with oil and given water to drink as soon as she could stand, which was usually a few minutes after all was over, and she proceeded at once to the lagoon side alone to wash in salt water. For the next three days both she and her offspring must remain in that part of the house (north end) where the child had been born; there it was said to be passing its appointed time in the *uma-n-anti, house of spirits*, protected by the female spirit Aibong, whose home was on the northern horizon. During those three days a huge bonfire was kept alight close up against the eastern side of the house, and the united families of the child's mother and father danced in the open about it; this observance was called *kaura-n-te-ai, the reddening of the fire*, and was conceived to encourage the soul (*taamnei*) of the child to take up its abode in the little body. I have often asked why the fire should be lit on the eastern side of the house, and have invariably received the answer, "Because the light of day comes from the east," but no further explanation is obtainable; it would seem probable that the observance is a fragment of some rite connected with an ancient sun-worship.

On the fourth day the infant was removed to another house, which had been prepared to receive it; it was said then to have "gone over into the house of men" (*tobo nakon uma-n aomata*). All clothes, mats and other objects that had hitherto come into contact with its body were burned, and a complete new outfit provided. Mother and child were decked out in costume, and were now ready to receive visitors belonging to the family; no outsiders were allowed near. Every caller was expected to bring some small present for his (or her) majesty the baby, which was called *te karea, the gift*, and generally consisted of an article of clothing or toilet; to have paid a first call without some such offering would have been an insult to the child.

A nursing mother lay apart from her husband until her baby was weaned, which took place about eighteen months after birth. She was carefully protected from all sun-rays.

EDUCATION.

Under this rather loose title will be considered the chief of those observances counted necessary in preparing a man for war and a maid for marriage. The sexes will be separately dealt with.

[1] But see B. Thomson's *Fijians*, p. 211.

Boys.

From the moment of weaning, a boy was regarded as a potential warrior, and from first to last the ceremonies which he underwent were performed with that idea predominating. At about two years his hair was cut for the first time, being sawn through close to the scalp with the edge of a large shark's tooth while the ends were grasped in the father's hand. During the operation (which was performed by father, father's brother or father's father), a charm was recited many times over, by which the infant's heart was hardened against the love of women. Only the closest male relatives of the boy were present at this *kabaka-ira* (*haircutting*), as it was called. The hair was burned in a small fire on the eastern side of the house by him who had cut it, the child being held by one of the other assistants in close proximity to the flames; a second charm was recited, again with the object of protecting him from the wiles of the other sex, for all communication with women before ritual should have made him fit for marriage was considered liable to make a coward of him.

After this, until about his fifth year, he remained much in the company of his mother, and might play with little girls of his own age, for as yet he was not *wana-wana*, or *reasonable*. But at five he was taken by his father and, after being washed with fresh water in a bowl of wood (*te kumete*) as a sign that his infancy was done, he was set apart from his mother and sisters, forbidden the fellowship of all girls of his age, and obliged to sleep thereafter only beside boys and men.

During the next three years the little boy was allowed to eat as much as he could get or, as the natives say, "to carry a well-rounded stomach." But at about eight his diet began to be strictly regulated, though not so much in kind as in quantity. He was now approaching the age at which betrothal was usually arranged, and a girl's parents would not look favourably upon him if he were fat and sluggish; he was therefore put on very meagre fare, and from that time onwards helped his father in all hard manual exercise that food-getting by sea and land entailed. Before he was ripe for the next ceremonies to be undergone, a period of fifteen years would have to elapse, and in the meantime we must imagine him absorbing all that the various members of his family cared to teach him of their skill in dancing and the art of composing chants, in fishing and canoe building, in the use of dagger, lance and the throwing-stick, in the craft of the housebuilder, and in endless other useful things that a native must know. All these accomplishments had their attendant magic, allied to simple forms of ritual, for nothing of importance was done, or thought, or said, or, as it would appear, even dreamed, without a preliminary charm. As the boy accumulated practical skill he must therefore keep abreast in the esoteric science, lest the work to which he turned his hand should be unblest and fruitless.

At about ten years old he would probably leave his father's house for that of his paternal grandfather or grandfather's brother, to whom he had been promised in adoption. Arrangements for this transfer had very likely been made before his birth.

He called his new guardian *tibu*,[1] and owed to him the most particular devotion, becoming his food-getter, constant companion and, in time of sickness, unwearying nurse. From him he learned much of the arts and crafts of his people, and, above all, the old man was his sole tutor in the jealously guarded tradition of the family —the generations, the heroic deeds and the voyages of his ancestors; the cult of the ancestral spirit or spirits; the star-lore, the weather-lore, the geography, and the mythology of the race.

The boy would discard his baptismal name at this time and assume the name of his grandfather; but that would not prevent him at a later date from taking yet another, and another after that, if he willed. In addition to all the knowledge of his *tibu* he would also inherit a large piece of the old man's land under a special title known as *te aba-n-tibu* (*the land of the adopted*), which constituted the reward for his faithful care. This was left to him and to the issue of his body. If at any time his lineal descendants became extinct, even after three or four generations in theory, the land returned to the lineal descendants of the giver, or, failing such, to the nearest collateral.

The object of the Gilbertese father in giving his son in adoption to an elder of his family was to provide for his aged relation a companionship and support which he, as a busy breadwinner, had no leisure to afford. It was a very sensible arrangement, calculated to promote high reverence in the young for the old and responsible for a great family solidarity. But it had some curious results, not the least strange of which was the decay of the local genealogies, for, as these have been handed down from grandparent to grandchild since very early days, alternate generations have often been skipped, and it is a very tedious business to build up a complete record of any given line to-day.

When the boy's pectoral and axillary hair began to grow strongly, which would be between the ages of 20 and 25 in a normal subject, he was considered ready for the succession of trying ordeals called collectively *te kanna ni maane*, which name may be interpreted, *the diet of a full-grown man*, and alludes to the increase of rations allowed to one who reached this stage. For the fifteen years that he had been living thin, his hair had been allowed to grow untouched, so that by the time the *kanna ni maane* era arrived he was the owner of a plentiful mop. When the star *Rimwi-maata* (Antares) appeared above the eastern horizon at sunset, the elders of his family appointed a day for the cutting of his hair.

Just before sunrise on the chosen day a large fire was lit on the eastern side of his father's house, and the boy sat down before it, facing east, after having eaten a full meal of coco-nut flesh. On either side of him stood a father's brother, urging him to stare unblinking into the flames; behind him stood his father, armed with a large shark's tooth, with which he cut through the boy's tangled hair. The operation was

[1] The word *tibu* may mean any of the following:—Ancestor to the Nth degree, lineal grandfather, adoptive grandfather (as in the case above referred to), lineal grandson, adoptive grandson, and their female equivalents.

long and painful, but if the subject winced he was mocked by his watchful uncles, and if he attempted to turn his face from the scorching blaze of the fire they beat his cheeks with fans of coco-nut leaf until he gazed again into the flames. At the point of dawn the cut hair was divided into two portions, of which the smaller was thrown into the fire and the greater kept for future use.

This part of the ceremony was called *te kaura*, the *reddening* or *scorching;* the second part, known as *te kabue-ari*, the *burning of the eyebrows*, then began. The lad's adoptive grandfather approached, bearing a large shrivelled coco-nut leaf in his hand. This he set ablaze in the fire and, standing behind his grandson, shook over his naked shoulders and head a continuous shower of burning morsels. The heaviest of these were fanned away by the uncles, but the lesser sparks were allowed to burn themselves out on the bare skin, and if the lad flinched or attempted to wipe his streaming eyes he was taunted, pushed and thrashed by his stern guardians. When the leaf was burned out the rite was at an end, and all care was then taken to soothe the unfortunate and smarting subject. For two more months at the same phase of the moon this ceremony was repeated. At the fourth moon took place the ordeal named *te ati ni kana.*

Again at the dark before dawn a fire was lit up against the eastern side of the house, but this time only timbers giving the hottest flame were used, the iron-hard *Pemphis acidula* (*te engea*) being preferred. Close beside the fire was set a large stone[1], whereon the boy sat, facing east. There he was given to drink a mixture of fresh water, sea water and coco-nut oil in equal parts, stirred together in a coco-nut shell with the barb of a Sting Ray. This disgusting potion, administered to the recitation of a charm, was supposed to give him a courage that lasted not only through his ordeal but for the rest of his life. His father's brothers being beside him, his father stood behind, and with the point of a shark's tooth proceeded to lacerate his scalp about the cranium until the blood streamed over his eyes and cheeks. Thus they left him sitting on the stone from sunrise to sunset, only returning to replenish the scorching fire or to beat him about the face with coco-nut leaf fans if he turned his head away or allowed his shoulders to droop in faintness. At the same phase of the moon for three successive months the ordeal was repeated.

During the time occupied by these observances the boy's adoptive grandfather was engaged in making his first manly weapon—a lance of seasoned coco-nut timber from 10 to 12 feet long, with a double edge serrated by shark's teeth. The teeth were lashed into place with thin two-ply sinnet of which one strand was of coco-nut fibre and the other of the lad's hair saved over from the initial ceremony of cutting. The lance being finished, it was slung to the roof of his father's house to await the time when it might be claimed as of right by the full-fledged warrior.

A month after the third repetition of the rite of *te ati ni kana*, and as usual

[1] This stone (Gilbertese, *ati*) is, I think, referred to in the name of the ceremony, *ati ni kana*. The word *kana* means *feed or stoke* as applied to a fire.

at the same phase of the moon, the novice was taken to the eastern side of the island, where a small hut thatched with pandanus leaf had been built for him among the trees fringing the ocean beach. Accompanied by his adoptive grandfather, he was obliged to live in this dwelling until the thatch began to rot and leak above his head. This, in a succession of droughty seasons, might take four or even five years; in normal times it could hardly take less than two and a half years. The strictest watch was kept on him during this period. No woman, not even his mother or grandmother, might approach the place, and he was never permitted to go near the western or lagoon side of the island, where settlements were built. Youngsters were forbidden to have conversation with him; the senior members of his family brought his daily ration. He owed the most implicit obedience to the commands of his grandfather, who would set him tasks of strength, hardihood and endurance to perform. If ordered by the old man to go on an errand—perhaps, for example, to bring in some heavy stone on his shoulder from among the breaking surf on the ocean reef—he must walk straight to the task, turning his eye neither to right nor left, pausing at no impediment, wincing at no hurt, and shrinking from no danger. Every time he wished to leave his abode, he must ask the old man's leave, perform the permitted work, and return to his tutor. Nothing in the nature of amusement was allowed him; he was instructed to put away all soft and frivolous thoughts, and think only of deeds of strength, the day's task, the valour of his forbears, and all things befitting a worker and a warrior.

When the old man saw that the thatch came near to leaking, he put the physical strength of the young man to a series of severe tests. Logs of wood must be hewn with an adze of tridacna shell, in a given time; heavy boulders must be lifted and borne on the shoulder for certain distances; and saplings must be torn by the roots from the ground. If the pupil failed in his first effort, he was charmed by his tutor and given another trial, and another, until he succeeded, or until it was apparent that he could not succeed. Should he eventually not come up to the standard of strength required, a second house with a new thatch was built for him, and he was obliged to pass through the whole course again, from beginning to end. But failure was unusual, as I am informed. If a lad lacked strength, the efficacy of the family magic and the ancestral spirits might be relied upon, and such was the might of the spells whispered upon him that even with the puniest of arms he could easily perform the labours set.

So, when the thatch began to leak, the novice once more returned to his family; the new lance of manhood's estate was given him; a great dance and feast was held, and thus, without further ceremony, he was endowed with the title of *Roro-buaka, Warrior*. Often his marriage followed hard upon his release from confinement.

On Banaba the upbringing of a son was the same in idea but rather different in its ceremonial. At weaning, or shortly after, the first haircutting took place as in the lagoon islands, but a second shaving of the scalp, unknown (to the best of

my information) in other places, was performed when the child was about ten years old ; at this ceremony the hair was burned and its ashes rubbed over the boy's body.

When he was in the early twenties, which is to say when his pectoral hair began to grow strongly, his head was again shaved, the clippings being burned and their ashes this time mixed with a meal of coco-nut and eaten by the novice. He was then told to carry a heavy stone to the seashore from the house in which he lived ; if he failed, further ceremonies were delayed until he grew strong enough to do it ; but if he succeeded, he was at once made to sit on the beach, facing the sea, and heavily struck three or four times on the chest with the butt end of a coco-nut leaf swung by his father. He was required to take this punishment with unmoved face and even breath. His father then cast away the bludgeon and standing behind him actually kindled a small fire of twigs upon his shaven crown.

When the fire was well lit his grandfather, or sometimes one of his father's brothers, appeared before him, flourishing a solid staff called *te batiraku*, which he proceeded to sweep horizontally over the boy's head with all his force and with deafening yells, until of a sudden he struck the embers from the tortured scalp. It often happened that the weapon at the same time struck the boy's skull a glancing blow in its passage and stunned him, but this was considered a lucky omen, especially if blood was drawn ; this idea seems to be the same as that underlying the more formal ceremony of lacerating the scalp in the lagoon islands.

All these tortures had to be borne without a murmur, without a change of position, without even a wry face—otherwise proceedings would stop and the whole thing would have to begin again when the victim's hair had once more grown long enough to cut.

Girls.

Until the age of puberty a Gilbertese girl went naked, her virginity affording her all the protection she needed. The violation of maidenhood was everywhere looked upon as one of the most awful offences and was punished with great severity, unless of course it was part and parcel of the marriage by rape practised on Beru and Nikunau. On the island of Tamana, if a couple was found *in flagrante delicto* the man was floated off the ocean reef bound to a log of wood and the girl was taken to the family *maneaba* (*meeting house*), stripped naked, spread-eagled on the ground by lashing her hands and feet to stakes, and throttled by pressing a heavy beam of wood across her throat. Every one of her lineal kin alive, and every brother and sister down to the latest born infant, must have a hand on the beam as the dreadful sentence was executed. Her body was thrown into the sea.

But on other islands the man only seems to have been punished, usually by death if the girl's parents were strong enough to enforce it ; but if they were not, the offender's own family would, unless they were sworn enemies of the complainants, generally oblige him to forfeit a large piece of land in amends or, if he refused, would make an end of him themselves in order to prevent a blood-feud.

A girl's arrival at the age of puberty was a time of great anxiety to the parents, for then she was considered dangerously sensitive to enemy magic and especially to that sort which caused sterility. At the first menses she was made to sit, with her legs stretched straight before her and knees closed, on a mat at the western side of a house set apart for her; she faced west, that point of the compass being as important to a girl as was the east, apparently, to a boy undergoing the initiation rites. The hair of her father, mother, and their male and female kin was cut to provide for her toilet, and if she were already betrothed, that of her future husband's relations was added. For three days she was obliged to remain in her place, moving as little as possible, and during that time her diet was very meagre, no cooked food at all being allowed her.[1]

The girl's father and mother made a great quantity of coco-nut oil, which was thickened by boiling to the consistency of a syrup and used day and night for the anointment of her body. It was applied by her adoptive grandmother, who had supervision of all the charms recited in this and other operations. Such charms were nearly all directed towards parts of the girl's body with the object of increasing her beauty and making her a mother of men. To protect her against enemy spells, she wore a girdle of young coco-nut leaf split down the midrib and fastened about her so that the pinnules stood out like the rays of the sun. It may here be noted that the coco-nut leaf was greatly used in the magic, and especially in the protective magic, of the Gilbertese, being considered of great efficacy in preventing the attacks of fierce fishes at sea and the influence of death-spells on land.

While the girl was confined to her house, her mother's sisters sat about her making the first *riri* she would wear, which was of coco-nut leaf softened by chewing. Outside the house a continual feast was kept up by the members of her family, the food having been provided by both father's and mother's people. After three days and three nights she was allowed to leave her place and was taken by her grandmother to a well of fresh water, where she performed her ablutions, the old woman meanwhile reciting over her the spell known as *te katebo-n-rara* (*the washing of blood*). Three further days of purification she must pass in her separate quarters and then might return to her family.

Sometimes a maid might marry within a few weeks of coming to puberty, but far more often she would pass the next year or eighteen months in the *ko*, or *bleaching house*, where her skin might be whitened ere she became a bride. For this purpose a small thatched house was built at a good distance from the family settlement, and generally, but not always, on the eastern side of the island; from the eaves to the ground all round the house a screen of coco-nut leaf was hung; and in the interior

[1] Her urine was made into a coco-nut shell and most carefully destroyed, for fear of evil spells. The urine was, throughout the Group, considered one of the most powerful mediums through which magic might be directed against a man or woman. Therefore, a native will always, if possible, make water into the sea.

a small cubicle of mats was rigged up on a light framework, leaving an alleyway of 3 or 4 feet clear between its sides and the outer screen. The deepest gloom reigned within this cubicle, and therein the girl must live, deprived of sunlight and unseen by the people. Only her parents and grandparents were allowed near her; her only constant companion was her adoptive grandmother, who attended to all her wants. She was allowed to wash and perform her toilet between the outer screen and the cubicle, but as soon as that was done she must retire again into the inner darkness. Thus she was obliged to live in utter manual idleness, since there was not enough light to guide her fingers at work, but to compensate for this she learned all the spells that her grandmother could teach her, most of them being connected with love, healing and the culinary arts.

During this time of solitary confinement the girl's skin was carefully attended to. Every day at sunrise her body was rubbed over with the creamy juice expressed from the flesh of ripe coco-nuts, and when this was dry it was washed off with fresh water. At mid-day her ablutions were made in sea water, and at sunset the cream was again applied, left to dry and washed away. In addition to this she was constantly massaged from head to heel by her grandmother, coco-nut oil being used as an unguent; special care was given to the moulding of her arms, shoulders and breasts so that these parts might eventually appear to advantage in the sitting dance.

After a few months of such treatment, in a seclusion which no sunray ever pierced, the rich and dusky olive tint left her skin, and she became pale with the dark paleness of some Spanish lady, who never leaves her house until sunset. One still has the chance of judging what her appearance may have been because, though the formalities of the *ko* have long been abandoned, many Gilbertese women to this day continue to bleach themselves in private. The constant massage leaves the skin silken in texture, and the beauty of the subject, though no longer of a merry and full-blooded type, is certainly enhanced by etiolation.

To call a girl *kanoa n te roki, i.e., an inhabitant of the bleaching-house* (lit., *contents of the screens*), to this day, in allusion to the fairness of her skin, is to pay her the highest compliment, nor would it be taken amiss by a man. The whole idea underlying the bleaching process is closely connected with a race-memory of certain ancestral gods who, like the famous Tangaroa of Polynesia, were fair of skin and of a marvellous beauty. These lived in Matang, a bourne of departed souls and one of the ancient fatherlands of the folk, and although their descendants have become dusky by inter-marriage with Melanesian and (as I believe) negrito peoples, they still attempt by artificial methods to hark back to the glorious ancestral type.

When the grandmother thought that her skin could be improved no further, the girl was conducted from the bleaching-house to her home. There she was arrayed in festal ornaments and led by her mother and grandmother to a dance given in her honour, of which she was to be the central figure. Taking her by the right hand her mother brought her to her place, and when she was seated

drew a circle on the floor around her with her fingertip; this she did three times over, muttering the spell called *te tae-ibennao*, the *vanquishing of misfortune*, and supposed to bring success in all undertakings. Around the maiden's neck were then hung garlands of flowers, generally by the uncles of her betrothed, and these must not be removed save by the givers; nor must she leave the magic circle drawn by her mother until led by the right hand therefrom.

While the dance was in progress it was considered a very lucky omen if a frigate bird (*te itei*) should poise on moveless wing overhead, while it was believed that the creature would descend and hover around the head of a girl of very high birth, if she had been fittingly prepared. The dance continued through the afternoon, evening and night until just before daybreak the next day. At the hour of *kaara-ngaina* (*dark before dawn*) the poor, tired girl was led away by her mother and grandmother and taken to the lagoon beach, where she was bathed all over with sea water in order to prevent enemy spirits from assailing her during her first sleep at home and destroying the effect of all the protective and auspicious spells that had been cast upon her.

The Banaban practice seems to have coincided with that of the lagoon islands in all this ceremonial, but it appears that there the girl was put in the bleaching-house very often before instead of after the age of puberty.

(NOTE.—Compare Gilbertese *ko* with Rarotongan *noo are pana* alluded to by Wyatt Gill, *From Darkness to Light in Polynesia*, p. 29.)

DEATH.

The formalities to be described were observed whether the deceased was a man or a woman, and with but slight local variations among all the Gilbertese-speaking communities.

On the three nights following a death the ceremony of *bo-maki* was performed. All the people, irrespective of their kinship to the deceased, gathered together in the darkness, with sticks of pandanus wood and the butt ends of coco-nut leaves in their hands, at the southern extremity of the village, and, forming a line abreast from east to west, slowly advanced northwards, beating the ground and trees before them with their staves. Not a word was uttered. When the line had swept through the settlement from south to north it stopped, and the participants disbanded in silence. All pedestrians who happened upon the party while it was at work would seize a staff without a word, join in, and when it was finished pass on their way. The object of the ceremony was to encourage the soul of the dead to leave the neighbourhood of the body and also to drive away any evil spirit that might wish to possess it.

Immediately life was extinct the family began a great wailing and yelling, which was kept up by relays for three days without intermission, except when the ceremony of *bo-maki* was being performed; to have sustained it during that rite would have

been to encourage the soul of the dead to linger about the body and to haunt the living.

The privilege of attending to the corpse was generally claimed by the women of the household, though a loving son or grandson might also take part; no *tabu* lay upon the attendants when the task was done. Their first duty was to anoint the body from head to foot with coco-nut oil, which had been scented with flowers of the *uri* tree (*Guettarda speciosa*), or with a handful of the desiccated pith of the wild almond. The latter substance was much used on Banaba, where almond trees grow profusely; it was much valued, as the *kunikun* (wild almond) was considered to be the favourite tree of the ancestral goddess Tituaa-bine, who dwelt in Matang, one of the bournes of departed souls.

If necessary, the attendants, having finished the anointing of the body, would provide it with a new sleeping mat and waist mat; but unless a native had died very suddenly he would have asked for these before his decease, for the Gilbertese will always pass out like a gentleman if he can.

The body was disposed, after being dressed, on its back with head to east and feet to west, arms beside it, and open palms upward. On the lagoon islands its legs were straightened together with toes pointing up, but on Banaba they were first bent a little and then the knees were pressed outwards, away from one another, until they touched the ground, which resulted in a frog-like position. In the open palms were then laid two *waea*, or small shrivelled coco-nuts, which were supposed to prevent the soul from returning to trouble the family. For this interesting belief I have not, in four years of questioning, been able to find a reason; all that I have obtained from the natives has been an emphatic denial that the coco-nuts provided food of any sort, either for the soul of the dead or for the spirits that barred his passage to the land of shades.[1]

The body was kept for three or nine days, being buried on the fourth or tenth, as the case might be. Those who kept it for the shorter period were of the opinion that, as the soul had finally been driven from its neighbourhood on the third repetition of the *bo-maki* ceremony, it might safely be laid to rest on the fourth day. But many families, and particularly those of Tarawa and Butaritari, believed that the soul might reinhabit the body at any time during the nine days after death, and so, though they took the greatest pains to prevent it, still kept its fleshly tenement available until the last moment. This belief may have been founded upon cases of suspended animation experienced long enough ago to have become garbled in the telling; there are stories on the northern islands of the Group of souls that have returned to bodies already far gone in decomposition, with results unnecessary to relate.

Sometimes the dead body was kept in a dried state for indefinite periods; this will be returned to later.

[1] Shrivelled coco-nuts are much used in native magic. A *waea* was one of the missiles used by the culture-hero Bue to pelt the sun and cool his heat.

A short while after death in these tropical islands the corpse would begin to cause offence, but it was a deadly insult to the departed to exhibit signs of disgust. Bundles of leaves were burned close to the skin, while into the mouth, ears and nostrils were inserted sweet-smelling flowers. If the skin began to peel it was carefully picked off and dropped into a coco-nut shell (called for this purpose *te mangko-ni-kanei*) containing scented oil. In the lagoon islands, both receptacle and contents were afterwards thrown on a fire on which a few large, flat seeds called *itu* were roasting; these seeds were found among the jetsam of the western beaches, and had a sweet savour when burning, which was said to be pleasant to the dead. On Banaba, the *mangko-ni-kanei* was emptied of its contents far out to sea on the western side of the island.

On the third night, after the final performance of the *bo-maki* ceremony, one of the female relations of the deceased came to utter the final spells, which would—to translate the native idiom—" straighten the path of the soul to the land of ghosts." She was called *te tia-tabe-atu*, the *lifter of the head*, because she held the dead person's head in her lap while muttering her spell. If her work was well done, it was believed that the body appeared to shine like fire (possibly with the phosphorescence of decay) in the eyes of the soul, who turned away in fear and at once set out on his journey to the last bourne. If the body was kept for nine days, the *tia-tabe-atu* performed her office every evening, from the third to that preceding the day of burial.

The night before burial, the assistants dressed the body in a new waist mat, and laid it upon a fresh sleeping mat with wreaths of scented flowers about its neck. Everything that had hitherto come into contact with the dead was then burned, except the shrivelled coco-nuts, which remained on the upturned palms.

The grave was generally dug in the floor of the house, though sometimes it was outside; its depth was about 18 inches, or at most, 2 feet. The body, wrapped in its sleeping mat, was first laid face upwards in the hole; over it was drawn a coarse screen of coco-nut leaf, and this again was covered with a finer mat. The grave was then filled in with sand and its limits demarcated with a rectangle of small white stones; but often there was nothing to distinguish it at all. For three days after the burial the family feasted and danced while, at the same time, the closer relations of the deceased cast themselves upon the grave and wailed at the top of their voices. These mourners very often composed songs or dirges for the occasion, the most memorable of which remained in the family for generations; a few are still extant.

A dear relation of the deceased would make a bed of the grave, and open it from time to time to look on the loved remains—or to appropriate a bone or two for the manufacture of the family fish-hooks, thatching tools, and other useful things. The skull was very often removed and, after being carefully cleaned in sea water, was wrapped in a mat of fine mesh and preserved in a box of pandanus wood.[1] The widow or child of the deceased would sleep and eat beside this reliquary,

[1] An example of such a box, from the island of Beru, is to be seen in the British Museum.

carry it about in all excursions, and anoint the skull frequently with coco-nut oil. When the teeth dropped out they would be kept and the canines used for making dancing necklaces.[1] After several years the skull was buried again with the skeleton ; or it might be planted in the ground near the dwelling-house, in such a manner as to leave the cranium protruding above the earth. Around this a small, square, white-shingled enclosure was demarcated by a low curb of trimmed coral, and the place became a sort of shrine, *kamaraia* or *death-to-approach* for all strangers, but whither the relations of the deceased regularly resorted to anoint the cranium with coco-nut oil and to claim help from the spirit of the departed in their various ventures. Sometimes successive generations of skulls were thus planted side by side, at a distance of about 2 feet apart ; a row of five existed until about 1898 in the village of Noto on Tarawa.

Rarely, a whole skeleton was dug up and the bones were hung to the ridgepole of the family meeting-house, whence they were lowered from time to time and anointed for good luck in fishing, war or love. The bones of one Kouraabi, dead for eighteen generations, still hang in a village on the island of Tabiteuea.

The position of the body in the grave was a matter of great moment. On Banaba it invariably lay with head east and feet west. In the lagoon islands, the feet (which, in my opinion, deserve particular attention) might point either west or south ; other orientations were forbidden, the belief being that they prevented the soul of the dead from reaching the land of shades, and thus turned it into a lost soul (*te taamnei ae bua-nako*). The migration tracks along which the population of the Group swarmed led back precisely to west and south, so far as the lagoon islands were concerned, while Banaba was peopled from the west alone. Hence the alternative dispositions of the dead man's feet in the former and the absence of alternative in the latter.

In lieu of immediate interment the body sometimes underwent an interesting process of sun-curing, with a view to its preservation. Of this I had an account from Toakai of Maiana, a very old man, who remembers having seen his adoptive grandfather's remains so treated. The corpse was attended to during the first nine days exactly as if it were to be buried on the tenth, with the exception that the fumigations with burned leaves were more thoroughly carried out than usual. Until the twelfth day, growing ever more bloated as the processes of corruption advanced, it was kept in the semi-darkness of the house, which had been screened about with coco-nut leaves for the occasion, and during that stage all crawling life that appeared on its surface was removed and burned. On the thirteenth day the abdomen collapsed[2], and the protruding eyeballs began to return into their sockets. A platform

[1] Several specimens of tooth necklaces from Abemama are in the British Museum ; they belonged to the High Chiefs of the island, and are said to contain teeth from the skull of Tem Mwea, who founded the present dynasty nine generations ago.

[2] This might be caused artificially, by puncturing. The joints of arms and legs were also sometimes punctured.

of *te ba* (midribs of the coco-nut leaf) was raised about 4 feet from the ground on corner-posts of *pemphis* timber, in a place chosen for its lack of shade, and upon it the body was laid to cure in the sun. There it remained diminishing daily in size, the process of desiccation being helped by the continued removal of organic life, fumigations with burned leaves, and frequent anointings with coco-nut oil thickened by boiling, until all that remained of it was a skeleton whose salient bones were held together by a parched and blackened hide.

In this condition it was removed to the house and laid upon a special shelf reserved for it under the northern gable. It might be kept for several years. My old informant's grandfather remained unburied for a period which, though not clearly defined, seems to have been little less than a lustrum, being constantly rubbed over with oil to keep the hide in condition. The bereaved relations would often mount upon the shelf to sleep beside the dead; they would anoint the head with oil to the accompaniment of charms for good luck; and they would deck the body out in garlands of flowers on days of feast and dance. On one or two occasions the beloved mummy was taken to the dance, and lay on its back among the audience, the recipient of all the courtesies extended to a distinguished guest. After a few years of such treatment the family seems, however, to have tired of its ancestor, who was then buried in the usual manner, his head having first been cut off, scraped and deposited in a box as described above.

The Destination of the Soul.

To Turner belongs the honour of first recording a Tamana belief that the soul went to a paradise in the western horizon called Mane. The following is an extract from his account: "As soon as life was extinct in any member of a family the living cast lots about the spirit's destiny, as boys play at 'odds and evens.' If the small pebbles used turned out 'odds,' then the soul at the horizon was crushed between two great stones and blotted out of existence; if 'evens,' the soul passed on to Mane, where there was plenty of food and fine streams. The dying were urgent in begging those around them to see and make the Tapunea, or pessomancy, to go all right, and so secure an entrance to the Mane paradise."

The pessomancy was actually called *te kiri-kiri, the pebbles*, the name *Tabunea*[1] applied by Turner being a generic term covering the whole of magic in the Group, but the other details of his record are corroborated by the few old pagans left by the advance of Christianity on the island. However, there was an entirely different belief about the destination of the dead, which Tamana shared with the other units of the Group; this will be referred to later.

[1] The spelling Ta*b*unea is certainly more suggestive of the sound of the word than Turner's Ta*p*unea. There is no true *p*-sound in Gilbertese.

Certain families on Banaba had the Mane tradition, and I think it was from Banaba that it was carried to Tamana, for on each island there is independant evidence that Tamana was populated for the first time in its existence by Banaban fugitives led by a chief named Nawai (called Noai by Turner), who had been driven from their home by the hero Au-Ria-Ria.

Another fragmentary Banaban tradition mentions a paradise reserved to the souls of dead fishermen, which is called Matennang, lies in the west, and, according to report, is buried under the sea; but, though the words "under the sea" are understood in a literal sense by the natives of to-day, they should be interpreted figuratively, "over the horizon," which is to say, very far away.

Mane and Matennang are the only two bournes of departed souls explicitly located in the west, and both these, as it seems, were known only to the Banabans and their descendants on other islands. On the lagoon islands, including Tamana, a vast majority believed that the soul's destination lay in the north, not in the west.

But here a point of extreme importance must be made. *The north of the stories means north in respect of Samoa, not of the Gilbert Islands.* Seven hundred years ago (28 generations of 25 years) the Group was invaded and its people dominated by a fugitive host from Samoa; it is the traditions of these conquerors that the modern race, with few exceptions, has inherited. To this day, the people call themselves with pride "the children of the Tree of Samoa (*Tamoa*)," or simply "the breed of Samoa" (*te bu-n Tamoa*), and every genealogy that they possess leads back to that land. It is impossible, in a paper of this length, to enter into detail; all that it is necessary to emphasize here is the fact that the paradise-tradition, like the immense majority of those race-traditions now remembered, was developed in Samoa, and, although long transplanted to the Gilbert Group and interpreted in a perfectly literal local sense by the natives, must be regarded by us as purely Samoan in its orientations. It would indeed be convenient to believe otherwise. Clearly, the road to paradise was the way back along the old migration track to the ancient fatherland of the race; and if, falling to insidious temptation, we persuade ourselves to agree with the modern native in assuming that the dead go north out of the Gilbert Islands, we are brought with immediate plausibility to the Marshall Group, whence it is easy and delightful to be lured by way of the Carolines along the Equator to the very gates of Indonesia. Undoubtedly, I think, the Gilbert Group was first populated from that precise direction, but that was long before the coming from Samoa, and to prove such a case we must rely upon other evidence: it would be disingenuous to use the "north" of the paradise tales as meaning anything but "north of Samoa."

The following is an epitome of the paradise tale common to many islands of the Northern Gilberts; it represents fairly well all the units from Nonouti to Butaritari, though some of the families do not remember all the details to be given, while others record matter peculiar to themselves, which cannot appear here.

For three days after death, the soul remained near the body, but, frightened at last by its burning appearance, hurried away to begin its journey to the land of shades. Turning first to eastward, it crossed the island to visit the ancestral spirit Tabakea, who lived among the trees by the ocean shore, awaiting there the souls in search of the last bourne. "Delay not," said he, "but go at once forward to the Lady Tituaa-bine, the ancestress, who dwells in Matang-of-Samoa; she will direct thee to thy northern home."

Southward then went the soul to Matang-of-Samoa, the wonderful land that harboured the fair-haired ancestors, but yet was only a counterpart of that other and final Matang in the north, whither the spirits of the dead must ultimately tend. "This is not thy place," said the Lady Tituaa-bine; "turn again to northward and journey until thou comest to Nakaa's land of Bouru, which is hard by Matang, for that is thy place."

So, in the path that she had pointed out, the soul returned to northward, treading the sea as far as the southern islands of the Gilbert Group, then leaping from isle to isle until Makin in the extreme north was reached, and thence again walking on the face of the waters. Soon, in the middle spaces of ocean, its way was barred by the fearsome hag Kara-ma-kuna, daughter of Nakaa, the guardian of Bouru. Fast she clutched the soul and searched it for the marks of the tattooing-needle; these she scraped away with her long nails and swallowed, saying, "Pass from Manra, land of the living, to Bouru, land of the dead." Then she touched the soul's eyes with her hand, bestowing upon them the vision of spirits, so that the way seemed no more dark, but clear and easy. But if she found no tattoo-marks, since food she must have, she plucked out the pupils of the soul's eyes and devoured them: and some say that it went blind thereafter, and never came to the land of Bouru, but most men believe that Kara-ma-kuna would touch the sightless eyes, giving spirit's vision, and send it forward in peace.

Onwards again into the north went the soul until it came to the land of Bouru, and Neineaba, and Matang. At the southern gate of Bouru sat the guardian Nakaa, awaiting the souls that came from Manra, land of the living. And as he sat he was for ever making nets[1], with his back turned to the path that led to the entrance of his dwelling-place, but well he knew when a soul crept up behind him. So, when it was near by his right hand, he reached forth and enmeshed it in the strand of his netting-needle; he laid it across his knees; he searched its heart for evil. And if he found incest therein, or thievishness, or cowardice, he straightway cast the soul out of his sight into a place of everlasting nightmare called *Te Kai-ni-kamatene* (lit. *The punishment of unrestful sleep*); or he impaled it upon the terrible stakes, the *Kai-ni-kakeke;* or he flung it into the midst of a company who

[1] Cp. Gilbertese Nakaa with Akanga of the Cook Islands. Akanga also had a net, in which he caught the souls descending (or going west) to Avaiki. Philologically, there is no irreconcilable difference between the two names.

writhed together in eternal entanglement, called *Te Reke-rua* by some, *Te Anou* by others.

There are who say that if a soul was adroit, it would pass craftily by Nakaa's left hand, so avoiding entanglement in his strand: then it might look upon the land of Bouru for awhile and again return to its earthly body. But most men believe that escape from the guardian at the gate was impossible, and judgment inevitable.

So if the soul passed muster with Nakaa, it must dwell for three days in his village, at the entrance to the land of Bouru and Neineaba. In that place was a fish-pond no more than ankle deep, but of a vast size, wherein lived but a single fish called *te mon;* and beside the fish-pond grew a tree named *Tara-kai-maiu* (lit. *Behold the living tree*), upon which grew only one nut. And during its sojourn in Nakaa's place the soul must live on the food of the fish-pond and the tree. Yet was its hunger always appeased, for when the fish was caught another appeared in its place, and when the nut was plucked a new one grew in its stead.

When three days were accomplished Nakaa said to the soul, "Enough! Thou hast repaid thy days of waiting beside thy body in Manra: pass on now into Bouru and Neineaba." So it went forward into its final home, where it was joined with the other spirits, and sat with them feasting on the food called *Renga*, which is red in colour and therefore dear to Tituaa-bine, the ancestress, whose home is hard by in the land of Matang. And sometimes the soul went northwards again, out of Bouru to the place called Marira, where the dead may also live.

Such is the tale most usually heard. In Butaritari and Makin the families have a version that is more detailed in its account of the beings who bar the soul's progress to ultimate rest. These beings are mostly black man-eating hags, who frighten it with horrible mouthings, and are strongly reminiscent of the bogeys met by Fijian souls on the road to Ndelakurukuru (*cf.* B. Thomson, *The Fijians*, p. 117 *et seq.*); there is also an ancient black-skinned idiot-god named Noubwebwe, who forces the soul to admire his skill in the game of *Wau* (*catscradle*), of which he was the inventor and patron.[1]

Butaritari and Makin give Matang alone as the land of departed spirits. On every other lagoon island Bouru and Neineaba, coupled together, are most generally accepted, though among certain families of Beru, Nikunau, Onotoa, Nonouti, and Tabiteuea, a land called Mwaiku is mentioned as the home of Nakaa the guardian. Lastly, Manra, which is the name applied, as a rule, to all the world of living men and women, is sometimes used in the Northern Gilberts to designate that particular space of sea trodden by the soul immediately before arriving at Bouru.

[1] Noubwebwe's association with Cats' cradles suggests that he may be a submerged Melanesian creator. I have been told by old natives that those who were skilled in this half-forgotten art could picture in the twisted strings the successive stages of creation.

As already pointed out, a vast majority of Gilbertese-speaking peoples place these spirit lands in the north. Hitherto, the only exception to the rule that we have seen is the Banaban belief, also held on Tamana, in the two lands of Mane and Matennang to westward. But a much better-known paradise with the Banabans is the Bouru of the lagoon islanders ; and with the Banabans Bouru is neither west nor north, but *up*—up in the skies above the island ; this opinion is shared by several families of Nui, which is a Gilbertese-speaking community of the Ellice Islands, not Banaban in origin, but Tarawan.

If the paradise of an island folk is up in the heavens, it generally means that the people have been for so long resident on their morsel of land that they have forgotten the direction from which their forefathers came ; they can no longer direct their dead back along the old migration-track to the ancient fatherland. Naturally, such folk must consider themselves autochthones of their island home. Do the inhabitants of Banaba and Nui answer to this test ? The Banaban creation-myth makes Banaba the first of all lands, the navel of the universe, the home of the first ancestors, and far more ancient than Samoa. The appendices to the creation-myth tell how certain ancestors, whose names were Taburi-mai and Au-ria-ria, set forth from Banaba to sail the southern ocean, where they found a barren rock in the sea ; called it Samoa-the-Namesake in memory of a small district of their home-island ; made it their home and, ultimately driven out, returned northwards to the Gilbert Islands seven centuries ago. *They never returned to Banaba,* which is now populated by descendants of those who did not take part in the migration to Samoa.

The Banabans therefore believe themselves to be autochthones, belonging to the parent stock of that race which ultimately invaded the lagoon islands from Samoa. Again, the Nui families assert that Banaba and the Gilbert Islands were first of all created lands, wherein lived the first of peoples—the Children of Night and Day, whose continual pleasure it was to play in the sea among the islands : that is to say, they were a race of sailors. After a great time certain families of the Children went southwards to Upolu of Samoa, lived there many generations, until at last, being driven forth, they returned to their first home, the Gilbert Archipelago.

These accounts cannot be mere distortions of the tale believed by the huge majority of the Gilbertese, that Samoa was the home of the first ancestors. Why and how should units so far apart as Banaba and Nui conspire to subvert the race dogmas—the prideful claim to Samoan origin, the belief in the northward destination of the dead ? How, indeed, could the Banabans be accused of distorting a Samoan dogma, since they can show that the Samoan invaders never came near them ?

It is impossible to enter into great detail, in a paper of this scope, without appearing to wander from the main subject, which is, the destination of the dead. But for the purposes of the discussion on hand I would state that, after six years of research among the traditions and " log-books " of the islanders, I believe the Banaban and Nui claims to be correct. Originally, in the Northern Gilberts at least (and

probably in the Marshalls and Eastern Carolines), there lived a Polynesian or Melano-Polynesian folk, a great number of whom ultimately swarmed southwards to Samoa ; some stayed behind in the Line Islands. Those who had invaded Samoa remained there for at least seven centuries, during which time they grew to believe themselves autochthones of Upolu ; but still they remembered the names of a few ancient fatherlands, whither they sent their dead in a northerly direction, along the last and only stage of their migration track of which rumour continued to subsist among them, to the Gilbert Islands. Those who had stayed behind in the Line Islands forgot that their ancestors had ever come over the sea, and despatched the soul upwards.

Then came the return from Samoa. The lagoon islands were overrun, and their inhabitants dominated, by a swarm whose doctrines still centred about Nuclear Polynesia ; the invaders still conceived Samoa to be the navel of the universe. So their dead must first go back to Matang-of-Samoa, and thence return on the northern track that had been established while the people were in Upolu. It must go *northward in respect of Samoa.* This direction was the dogma of a conquering people, and therefore altered not ; but during the centuries that followed its transplantation to the Gilbert Islands it became confused, so that it was ultimately taken to mean *northward in respect of the Gilberts ;* now, therefore, the soul passes over the sea to north of Makin.

As for Banaba, it was never invaded by the returning swarm ; its original faith was therefore never corrupted ; its dead continued to be despatched upwards. The Tarawan ancestors of the Nui people certainly suffered the Samoan invasion, but they hived off to Nui soon enough to preserve their traditions fairly intact ; hence their agreement with the Banabans.

If the above is a correct statement of the facts, it certainly offers a good explanation of the generic likenesses which underlie the specific differences between initiation rites, marriage ceremonies, etc., as practised respectively on Banaba and the lagoon islands. The inference is that in Banaba are to be seen the original forms, which in the lagoon islands we see modified by contact with other peoples and conditions in Samoa.

THE IDENTITY OF THE ANCESTRAL LANDS.

Whither must we look to find those fatherlands to which the departed souls returned ? The Mane and Matennang traditions point to the west, and the natural tendency is to search for those two places among the islands of Indonesia ; but I, for one, have never found them there. Bouru, of course, reminds us at once of Bouro in the Molucca Sea, especially as several attempts have been made to identify Polynesian Pulo-tu with the same island. If this were the only coincidence to be noted, it might well be a matter of chance ; but several places near Bouro bear the names of Gilbertese paradises, which can hardly be ascribed to chance, and I think we behold

in them an ancient home of the race. Matang has its counterparts in Mattang of Borneo, Medang of Sumatra, Maddang of Sumbawa, Malang of Java—possibly also in Sa-marang and Pa-malang of the same island. Makian of Gilolo may be a variant of the same name; Gilolo itself is well-known in Gilbertese song and tradition as Kiroro, and the people of the Marshall Islands are called to this day the Bu-Kiroro, *the breed of Gilolo.* Manra, known in some islands as the space of water south of Bouru, can hardly be other than the Banda Sea which washes the southern shores of Bouro. Mwaiku, name of one of the spirit lands, is but a variant of Waigiou, an island a little to the east of Gilolo. And if Bouru, Matang, Manra, Kiroro, and Mwaiku do not sound sufficiently convincing, some of the place-names of the Gilbert Group may be quoted to help the discussion. There is Tarawa in the North Gilberts, and Talowa in Celebes, and Salawa-ti hard by Waigiou in the Spice Islands; Manipa, a village name of the Gilberts, and Manipa, an islet between Bouro and Cerm; Bangai, a village of Tabiteuea, and Bangaai of Celebes; Bura-Bura, a Gilbertese land-name, and Pura-Pura by Timor. Lastly, there is Beru of the Southern Gilberts and Berou, the western peninsula of New Guinea, on the coast of which lies Waigiou, which we have already connected with Mwaiku.

In addition to the above, it would be possible to quote from Gilbertese songs and travel-tales the names of many other places in and around the Banda Sea. But these things will be dealt with at length in a fitter place; it is sufficient here to have indicated a possible direction in which to look for those spirit lands whither the Gilbertese soul tended on release from the body.