



Fig.1

## Female Figures from Aitutaki: Traces of Genealogy and Descent

### Introduction

The Munich State Museum of Ethnology holds a unique female figure from the island of Aitutaki in the Southern Cook Group in Central Polynesia.<sup>1</sup> It was originally described as a »God from Otahiti carved out of wood and horizontally painted black; figure standing upright two feet in height reminding of Egyptian deities,«<sup>2</sup> before it was attributed to Aitutaki by Te Rangi Hiroa through stylistic comparison. The sculpture has well-defined eyebrows which meet the upper end of the nose; eyes and mouth are formed by elliptical incisions. It has got prominent ears which show holes pierced through the back, a sharp angular chin, pointed shoulders, rectangular raised nipples, a protruding round navel, female genitals and straight legs with solid feet. The thin forearms lie horizontally upon a rounded abdomen and terminate in three pointed fingers. The black paint marks from head to foot obviously represent body paint or tattoos, and the figure shows a carved serrated zigzag line on both sides from the shoulders down to the hips. In fact, it was this »serrated line with sunken triangles opposite alternate teeth« characteristic of Aitutaki carved objects which enabled Te Rangi Hiroa to identify its true locality<sup>3</sup> (Fig. 1–3).

<sup>1</sup> The Southern Cook Group comprises the islands of Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Atiu, Mauke, Mitiaro, Mangaia, as well as the uninhabited islands of Manuae and Takutea, the Northern Group the islands Manihiki, Nassau, Penrhyn (Tongareva), Pukapuka, Rakahanga, Suvarrow and Palmerston. Aitutaki has about 2000 inhabitants (Beaglehole 1957: 6, 15). In 1876, the missionary William Wyatt Gill described it as a »beautiful and fertile island [...]. It is hilly and park-like, and about eighteen miles in circumference, with an encircling reef extending, on the S.W., for seven or eight miles. A number of islets, shaded by a dense growth of cocoa-palms, stud the outer edge of the reef. There are two settlements on the island; the principal one, on the sheltered N.W. side is almost hidden amongst groves of orange and citron. This picturesque village is built opposite an opening in the reef, which enables the boats to land in safety under the guidance of expert natives« (1876b: 6–7; compare Pakoti and Nicholas 1895: 66; Kloosterman 1976: 8, 55). Like many islands of the Pacific, the island of Aitutaki is thought to have been fished up from the bottom of the sea. Though not shaped like any known fish, is divided into head, body, fins, and tail. According to myth, this fish is anchored to the bottom of the sea by a strong vine, and its permanent position depends upon the security of the knot with which the hawser is tied (Buck 1938: 50, 56–57).

<sup>2</sup> »Ein Gott der Otaheiter aus Holz geschnitzt, in die Quere schwarz gemahlt. Aufrecht stehende, an ägyptische Gottheiten mahnende Figur von 2' Höhe« (No. 2 of accession list (»Verzeichniß«) of 1825 in the Archives of the Museum).

<sup>3</sup> Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 339–341 (Fig. 211), 403. Te Rangi Hiroa had made a field study on material culture on Aitutaki in 1926 (published 1927), before he visited our Museum on 15 July 1933 during a trip to European museums (1944: 3; Inventory book of the Museum 1859 (SMV 17)).



Fig. 1–3: Female Figure from Aitutaki, Munich State Museum of Ethnology, H. 58,5 cm, 190  
(Photos: Marietta Weidner)

The figure is part of a collection of 48 artefacts from Polynesia and elsewhere which Johann Georg Wagler (1800–1832), a German herpetologist, who worked for the Royal Bavarian Academy of Sciences found in London in June 1825. These objects were finally acquired by King Ludwig I. of Bavaria for 400 guilders in July 1827. They were said to have come from Captain Cook’s voyages and from the estate of Sir Joseph Banks (1743–1820), which was dispersed after the latter’s death. Banks accompanied Cook on his first voyage (1768–1771), but he also obtained objects from Cook’s second and third voyages and other expeditions through gifts and purchases (Kaeppler 1978: 40). Cook, however, never visited the island of Aitutaki.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Cook discovered the small coral atoll of Manuae in 1773 and named it »Hervey Island«, a name which was afterwards applied sometimes to all the southern islands. In 1777 Cook discovered Mangaia and Atiu. It was the Russian Captain Adam Johann Krusenstern who introduced the name Cook Islands in honour of Captain Cook at the beginning of the 19th century. In 1888 the southern islands became a British protec-

It was first discovered by Captain William Bligh of the *Bounty* in 1789,<sup>5</sup> and, to my knowledge, there are no records of objects collected at that time. But the discoveries of James Cook, William Bligh and Samuel Wallis created a new enthusiasm in late eighteenth-century Britain and led to the argument that the recent voyages of exploration had providentially opened an entirely new field: the field of missionary activity, salvation and conversion of the heathen in the Southern Seas (Murray 2007: 1; see also Wilson 1799).

As a consequence, the surviving god figures and artefacts from Aitutaki – and from the other Cook Islands like Rarotonga, Mangaia or Atiu – were collected in the 1820s or 1830s when these islands were »rediscovered« for missionary enterprises by John Williams of the London Missionary Society (LMS).<sup>6</sup> The process of proselytizing the people of Aitutaki – as it was described by him – occurred within eighteen months, and after that no figures remained. Hooper explains that the extirpation of »idolatry« was a major preoccupation of the LMS missionaries. They abhorred the practice while at the same time being obsessed by it and by the objects which were the focus of such behaviour (2007: 136). According to John Campbell »Williams employed the capture of the idols to deepen the people’s horror of idolatry« (1842: 21). David King puts it that the missionaries started out reviling the idols and considering them best suited as »food for the flames«, but soon changed their minds and began the practice of saving them to be the »ocular demonstration« of Christian conquest (2011: 86). This is the reason why at least some of these »idols« survived in European, United States and New Zealand collections. The purpose of this paper is, on the one hand, to try and trace the route the Munich figure took from Aitutaki to London, on the other hand, to try and interpret some of its iconography.

### **The Overthrow of Idolatry on Aitutaki**

On October 26, 1821, Reverend John Williams of the London Missionary Society arrived at Aitutaki on the ship *Westmoreland* (King 2011: 60) bound for Sydney (Captain Jonathan Pottton).<sup>7</sup> In his book he describes that the ship was very soon surrounded by canoes; some of the natives were tattooed from head to foot, some were painted with pipe-clay and yellow and red ochre, others were smeared with charcoal and »presented in their persons and manners all the wild features of savage life« (Williams 1842: 14).<sup>8</sup> The young chief Tamatoa was invited on to

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torate, but it was not until 1915 that the name »Cook Islands« was officially adopted for the northern and southern island group (Kloosterman 1976: 59–62).

<sup>5</sup> The main island of Rarotonga was probably also visited by the *Bounty* mutineers in 1789 and unofficially discovered in 1814 by Philipp Goodenough, captain of the brig *Cumberland* in search of sandalwood (Beaglehole 1957: 7; Maude and Crocombe 1962; Gilson 1980: 4–5). William Bligh accompanied James Cook as sailing master of the *Resolution* on his third voyage 1776–1780. He was acquainted with Joseph Banks who sent him on the *Bounty* expedition to obtain bread fruit in Tahiti to transport it to the Caribbean.

<sup>6</sup> In the end of 1811 missionaries Henry Bicknell and William Scott in the *Endeavour* called at the island of Aitutaki on their voyage from Port Jackson to Eimeo (Mo’orea). The people of the schooner had some friendly intercourse with the inhabitants and bartered with them for provisions. That seems to be the reason why Bicknell and Scott thought the island a convenient place to attempt a mission (Davies 1961: 317–318).

<sup>7</sup> Australian Shipping 1788–1968: Event Details File 256 (<http://www.blaxland.com/ozships/events/3/256.htm>, 25.12.2013).

<sup>8</sup> There are two early articles on tattoo in Aitutaki (Gudgeon 1905 and Te Rangi Hiroa 1911; see also Te Rangi

the vessel and informed of what had taken place in Tahiti and the Society Islands »with respect to the overthrow of idolatry« (Williams 1842: 14). He was told that the principal gods of Tahiti, Tangaroa and Koro, had been burnt. Finally he agreed to allow ashore under his protection the two Tahitian missionaries, Papeiha and Vahapata, whom Williams had brought with him.

In July 1823 Williams returned to Aitutaki on the chartered British schooner *Endeavour* captained by John Dibbs (King 2011: 61)<sup>9</sup> to enquire after the »success« of his native teachers.<sup>10</sup> He found many signs of »success«: sacred places (*marae*) had been burned, gods not burned were in the possession of the teachers; »the profession of Christianity was general, so much so, indeed, that not a single idolater remained«; a large chapel 200 feet long and 30 feet wide had been erected; the Sabbath was regarded as a sacred day; all the people attended divine Service, and »family prayer was very general throughout the island« (Williams 1842: 16).

According to Papeiha's narratives reported by Williams »the progress of Christianity in Aitutaki appears to have been gradual, the converts at times suffering much from the rage of their heathen countrymen, until the month of December 1822 [...] when two circumstances contributed to the utter overthrow of idolatry in this island. The first was the arrival of a vessel from Ra'iatea [...]. The teachers had told the people that a ship would come to inquire after their welfare, and to bring them presents and information from their friends. This was believed by a few; but the greater part called them »two logs of drift-wood, washed on shore by the waves of the ocean,« and said no ship would ever come and enquire after them« (Williams 1842: 18). When the vessel arrived, however, the captain gave presents of axes, pigs and goats to the king's grandfather who distributed them among the various chiefs of the island. »A powerful impression was thus very generally produced in favour of Christianity. »Behold,« said the people, »we called these men drift-wood, and they have rich friends, who have sent an English ship to inquire after them, and bring them property, such as we have never seen before! We

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Hiroa 1927: 363–367; 1944: 125–133). According to Gudgeon it is claimed, that each canoe that arrived at Aitutaki was carved on the bow with a certain pattern, as a kind of heraldic sign of the chief of the canoe, and that this pattern was adopted by those who came in the canoe as the tattoo (*ta-tatau*) which should for all times distinguish them from other tribes (1905: 217). Recently, Therese Mangos and John Utanga have written an inspiring book on tattoo revival in the Cook Islands which includes a study of patterns generally and also refers to the Munich female figure (2011: 121–128).

<sup>9</sup> John Dibbs (1790–1872) joined the *Westmoreland* (Captain Potton) in Leith, Scotland, as second officer in 1820. The *Westmoreland* transported immigrants and cargo from Leith to South Africa and Australia. On his arrival in Sydney in 1821 on the *Westmoreland* John became acquainted with Robert Campbell Sr. (of the Sydney traders Campbell & Co) and Reverend John Williams of the London Missionary Society, who offered him command of the schooner *Endeavour* to trade in the Tahiti region (Wikipedia John Dibbs ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Dibbs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dibbs), 25.12.2013)).

<sup>10</sup> Apart from William's book ([1837] 1842) there are several other sources on the voyage of the *Endeavour* in July 1823: the Journal of the voyage by Robert Bourne and John Williams, which is not lost – as David King says (2011: 165) –, but held by the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in the Archives of the Council of World Mission (CWM), London Missionary Society (LMS), South Seas Journals, Box 5, 1823–1826; a letter of Messrs. Bourne & Williams dated Ra'iatea August 11, 1823 addressed to Rev. D. Tyerman & G. Bennet Esqu. (Tahiti) (see p. 250, note 13); and a 47-page manuscript »More Joy for Christians«, i.e. Williams' account of the respective voyage, consisting mainly of Papeiha's narrative of the conversion of Aitutaki. They are all held by SOAS, CWM/LMS Archives and were completely or partly published by David King (2011: 162–164; 165–168; 168–188).

ridiculed and called them liars, and behold they are men of truth!« A few days after the vessel had sailed a general wish was expressed by the people to renounce heathenism, and place themselves under Christian instruction« (Williams 1842: 18–19). The old grandfather of Tamatoa, however, was still adamant in his opposition to the missionaries. As he was in the midst of an important feast of several weeks' duration, the old chieftain – contrary to the wishes of the people – determined to remain at the *marae* and complete the sacred ceremonies. But then – as the second circumstance – a beloved daughter was taken dangerously ill. »The priests were immediately on the alert, presenting numerous offerings, and invoking the gods from morning to evening, day after day, in order to induce them to restore the child to health. The disease, however, increased and the girl died. The chief was so much affected at the death of his daughter that he determined at once to abandon the gods who were so ungrateful as to requite his zeal with such manifest unkindness, and therefore sent his son early next morning to set fire to his *marae*.<sup>11</sup> Two other *maraes* near it caught fire, and were also consumed. From thence the son, enraged with the gods for destroying his sister, proceeded to a large *marae*, before which the people were presenting their offerings, and attempted to set it on fire; but was prevented by the worshippers, who seized and dragged him away. [...] So general and powerful was the impression on the minds of the people of Aitutaki, by the circumstances [...] narrated, that, on the Sabbath day after the death of the chief's daughter, the people of several districts came, cast their idols at the feet of the teachers, and professed themselves worshippers of Jehovah. During the week the rest followed; so that, by the next Sabbath, not a professional idolater remained in the whole island. On the third Sabbath in December, just about fifteen months after the teachers landed on their shores, they had the delightful satisfaction of seeing the whole of the inhabitants convened to worship the one living and true God« (Williams 1842: 19). The next day Papeiha held an important meeting at which he proposed, firstly »that all the *maraes* in the island should be burned, and that all the remaining idols should be brought to him«, and secondly »that they should commence immediately building a house in which to worship Jehovah« (Williams 1842: 19).

»To both these proposals the assembled multitude yielded their cordial assent. As soon as the meeting broke up, a general conflagration of the *maraes* took place; and so complete was the destruction, that, on the following morning, not a single idol temple remained unutilated. The whole population then came in procession, district after district, the chief and priest leading the way, and the people following them, bearing their rejected idols, which they laid at the teachers' feet, and then received from them in return a few copies of the Gospels and elementary books« (Williams 1842: 20).<sup>12</sup>

At the end of his visit to Aitutaki Williams reported: »The gods and bundles of gods which had escaped destruction, thirty-one in number, were carried in triumph to the boat; and we came off to the vessel with the trophies of our bloodless conquest, rejoicing as one that findeth great spoil. [...] With grateful hearts we now turned our faces homewards [to Ra'iatea]; where,

<sup>11</sup> Dangerous illness of a member of the regal family was also the reason for the surrender of idols and the acceptance of Christianity on the island of Mangaia (Gill 1894: 333–334).

<sup>12</sup> See also Beaglehole (1957: 14–18) who distinguishes several steps in Papeiha's description of the process of persuading the people of Aitutaki nominally to accept a new religion. Compare the description of the surrender of images in Rarotonga in May 1827 below p. 260, note 26.

after eight or ten days sail, we arrived in safety. And, as other warriors feel a pride in displaying the trophies of their victories, we hung the rejected idols of Aitutaki to the yard-arms and other parts of the vessel, entered the harbor in triumph, sailed down to the settlement, and dropped anchor, amidst the shouts and congratulations of our people. [...] I obtained from the chief of Aitutaki a short account of the relics of idolatry. Twenty-five of these I numbered, and transmitted, with their names and history, to the deputation<sup>13</sup> then at Tahiti; six others were sent to England and many of them are now in the Missionary Museum«<sup>14</sup> (Williams 1842: 17, 28–29). In his book Williams only included the description of five of those, but in the manuscript »More joy for Christians« all 31 idols are described, the 25 given to the deputation as well as the six sent to England (see Appendix 3).<sup>15</sup>

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- <sup>13</sup> Reverend Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet, Esq. were deputed from the London Missionary Society to visit their various stations in the South Sea Islands, Australia, China, India, Madagascar, and South Africa, between the years 1821 and 1829. In the South Sea Islands they were between 1821 and 1824 (Montgomery 1840).
- <sup>14</sup> The Museum of the London Missionary Society opened in 1814; it was first located in the Old Jewry, Austin Frairs and later in 8 Blomfield Street, Finsbury (Colley 2005: 78; Hooper 2007: 176, note 6). The first description of Mission house in Blomfield Street by Rev. John Campbell in 1843 and one of the first catalogues of the South Seas Division of the same period is published in King (2011: 205–206; 190–199). – Sivasundaram (2005: 177–201) has discussed the importance of the LMS Museum in relation to contemporary scientific and religious attitudes towards South Sea Islanders. But the costs of maintaining the museum were high, and, as a consequence, in 1890 the pieces of the LMS collections considered most important were deposited on loan to the British Museum, before they were finally transferred legally to British Museum ownership in 1911 (Hooper 2007: 146).
- <sup>15</sup> For comparison the description of the five Idols in Willams book are: »No. 2: An idol named Te-rongo, one of the great deities, called a *kaitangata*, or man-eater. The priests of that idol were supposed to be inspired by a shark. No. 8: Tangaroa; the great national god of Aitutaki, and of almost all the adjacent islands. He holds the net with which he catches the spirits of men as they fly from their bodies, and a spear with which he kills them. No. 15: A rod, with snares at the end, made of the fibres of the cocoa-nut husk, with which the priest caught the spirit of the god. It was used in cases of pregnancy, when the female was ambitious that her child should be a son, and become a famous warrior. It was also employed in war-time to catch the god by his leg, to secure his influence on the side of the party performing the ceremony [a drawing of no. 15 can be found in Williams 1842: 18, no. 2]. No. 18: Ruanuu; a chief from Raiatea, who, ages ago, sailed in a canoe from that island and settled at Aitutaki. From him a genealogy is traced. He died at Aitutaki, and was deified, as *Te atua taitai tere*, or the conductor of fleets. The Raiateans have several interesting traditions connected with Ruanuu. To this idol was appended an old tattered silk handkerchief, and the foot of a wine glass; both of which were obtained from Captain Cook's vessel, and dedicated to Ruanuu, »the god or guide of fleets«, for conducting that celebrated navigator to their shores. No. 25: Taau, with his fan &c.; the god of thunder. When the thunder peals, the natives said that this god was flying, and produced this sound by the flapping of his wings.« And Williams continued: »While procuring from the chief the descriptions above given, he begged of me to allow the idols to be burned in cooking food, and not sent to England, as it would expose his folly« (1842: 29). [The willful conjunction of the commonness of food with the sacredness of a god figure is a sign of chief Tamatoa's total rejection of the old religion (see Beaglehole 1957: 21)]. Contrary to this, the Tahitian chief Pomare, in handing over a number of family idols to the missionaries in Mo'orea, had written in a letter dated February 19, 1816: »If you think proper, you may burn them all in the fire; or, if you like, send them to your country, for the inspection of the people of Europe, that they may satisfy their curiosity, and know Tahiti's foolish gods« (Missionary Sketches 3, 1818: 2; Ellis 1859, II: 174; Hooper 2006: 65; Hooper 2007: 137).

David King has found out that the six idols were dispatched to England via the Colony of New South Wales on the schooner *Active* (Captain Richard Charlton) on October 6, 1823. He quotes a letter written by John Williams from Ra'iatea to Reverend George Burder, Secretary at the London Missionary Society, on September 31, 1823 [i.e. October 1, 1823?]:

»All the Idols in this case that are not directed are for the Society. The greater part – from No. 1 to 25 are in the possession of the Deputation as they were pleased to express a wish to take them round with them on their journey. Please to forward the various parcels to the friends to whom they are directed« (CWM/LMS, South Seas, Incoming Correspondence, Box 4, folder 2, document 8; see also King 2011: 62). This letter King relates to another one written by Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld (Ra'iatea) to George Burder on September 26, 1823: »Another host of Gods are now forwarded from the Island of Vaitutake who have embraced the Gospel [...] The *Active* sails on Monday next to the colony« (King 2011: 62, note 79). With David King (2011: 62, 63, 65, note 97) I am of the opinion that more than 31 idols were dispatched to England at that time, for instance by Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet, who found other means of transportation from Tahiti to England. After having stated that he lost the opportunity to forward letters from Papeete to England on May 21, 1823 via the French Corvette *La Coquille* (Captain Duperrey), George Bennet continued in the same letter to Reverend John Arundel, Home Secretary of the LMS, from Haweis Town, Papara, Tahiti on September 29, 1823: »The above opportunity was lost, the Expedition having sail'd before I could dispatch the letter. But we now have an opportunity still more favourable by the Sidney Packet Captn Emmets of sending our dispatches and letters and also some boxes &c of curiosities. Our official communications are very full and I hope will prove satisfactory to the Society and encouraging to the Christian public« (CWM/LMS, Home Odds, Box 10, folder 2, document 3). And Daniel Tyerman wrote on October 3, 1823: »N.B. If there be any thing acceptable to the Society in the two packages which Captn Emmet is kind enough to bring home, bearing my name – I beg that you will appropriate it to the Museum, and let the remainder be repacked in the same boxes, 'till my return. Several other packages containing my best curiosities, the Captain was unable to take on Board«<sup>16</sup> (CWM/LMS, Home Odds, Box 10, folder 2, document 2). But Daniel Tyerman never returned to England, he died in Madagascar on 30 July 1828, and George Bennet did not return until 1829 (King 2011: 65, note 97).

The letters, however, that were dispatched – together with the boxes of »idols« – from Tahiti at the end of September and beginning of October 1823 reached London in the beginning of April 1824.<sup>17</sup> And it is very probable that the Munich female figure from Aitutaki was part of one of those ship loads, although we cannot identify it by any of the descriptions, which

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<sup>16</sup> Of the British whaler *Sydney Packet* (Captain William Emmett from Sydney) we know that it discovered Birnie Island, one of the Phoenix Islands, in 1823 (Wikipedia Phoenix Islands([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenix\\_Islands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenix_Islands), 29.12.2013)).

<sup>17</sup> For instance April 5 and April 7, 1824 (CWM/LMS South Seas, Incoming Correspondence 1823–1824, Box 4, folder 2, document 8; CWM/LMS, Home Odds, Box 10, folder 2, document 9). The arrival of two boxes of curiosities from Tahiti for the Literary and Philosophical Society of Sheffield, the home town of George Bennet, was mentioned on 10 May 1824 and confirmed in the Annual Report of the Society of the same year (King 2011: 65; Twells 1999: 60; Woronczow 1981; see also Jacobs 2014).



often did not make a difference between male and female god figures (see for instance the description of a female deity in note 40). It also means that it could have reached London early enough to have been acquired there by Johann Georg Wagler fourteen months later, in June 1825. And it would explain its assumed origin from Tahiti.<sup>18</sup>

### **Interpretation of Aitutaki Sculpture**

As we do not know anything about the significance of the Munich female figure, an interpretation can only be attempted by means of comparison with anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic representations from Aitutaki, and other Cook Islands like Rarotonga, Mangaia and Atiu, as well as from Rurutu and Ra'ivavae in the Austral Group.<sup>19</sup>

Hjalmar Stolpe (1890), Charles Read (1891), and Colley March (1893) were the first scholars who compared and discussed the forms of Polynesian and especially »Hervey Island« ornaments and came to the conclusion that its meaning was related to human origin and descent. Te Rangi Hiroa's famous work on the »Arts and Crafts of the Cook Islands« (1944) is still indispensable. And more recently the topic of genealogical symbolism in Polynesian images was further elaborated, for instance, by Adrienne Kaeppler (1982), Anita Volland (1987), Alfred Gell (1995), and Anne D'Alleva (1996).

Anita Volland (1987) has pointed out a genealogical concept of time and existence for Eastern Polynesian societies. In her opinion genealogies play a central role in the thinking of Polynesians because they have a major influence on many areas of life. The social emphasis on descent lines and the complexity and ambiguity of the rank system of Eastern Polynesian societies made the preservation of personal and, in many cases, group genealogies indispensable to the interpretation of land-rights and kinship statuses, including hereditary political positions. Thus, in many areas an individual's personal genealogy could turn out to be his or her most precious possession (Volland 1987: 117).

Central to Eastern Polynesian societies was a complex of institutions that linked kinship, land, and rank. The descent group was a corporate unit consisting of descendants of a known ancestor, a group in which affiliation could be established through either male or female links.

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<sup>18</sup> From a portion of a letter discovered by David King we know that at least one Polynesian idol, probably from Tahiti, was brought back from the voyage of the first ship sent out by the London Missionary Society. It was the ship *Duff*, captained by James Wilson, which reached Tahiti in 1796 and returned to London in July 1798 (Griffin 1822: 138). The letter was written on July 4, 1799 by Thomas Haweis, »father of the South Sea mission« and director of the London Missionary Society, to Joseph Banks, offering him an idol of *toa* (iron wood or casuarina): »I don't know whether an image in toa wood of a female, whether goddess or native, but sufficiently ugly would be acceptable to you. If you will please to tell me, I shall convey it to you« (King 2011: 206 (287)). The letter documents that at least one female figure was brought back from Tahiti to England before missionary activity really started and the family idols of Pomare II, King of Tahiti, reached there in 1818. In fact, Banks and Haweis did not only know each other, but their correspondence suggests that Banks was kept well informed on the activities of the London Missionary Society and that his influence on the British government was directly responsible for the ascendancy of the Society in the Pacific Islands (Strauss 1964: 247; see also Gunson 1965).

<sup>19</sup> The Austral Group lies in the Southeast of the Cook Group and comprises the small islands of Rimatara, Rurutu, Tubuai, (also known as Tupua'i), Ra'ivavae and Rapa.

Such groups usually held corporate rights to land. Hereditary rank was designated in accordance with rules of primogeniture, first born individuals of either sex having higher rank because their founding ancestors, unlike the founding ancestors of other groups, were first-borns.

The hereditary rank of an individual typically depended on the relative status of his or her descent group within the society and on the individual's personal position in the hierarchy based on primogeniture. Because of the high value placed on hereditary rank, individuals sought to affiliate themselves with whichever descent group, maternal or paternal, that offered the best opportunities for inheritance of land-rights and privileges. People also sought to trace descent through whichever of their ancestors had higher rank. This was particularly evident among members of high status groups where high-ranking individuals occupied political offices affecting the entire society.

The clearest concretization of Polynesian concepts of genealogical time was the genealogical chant used to establish the social position of an individual or group. Such chants were almost universal in Polynesian cultures and took the form of lists of names. The chant began with a specific ancestor and continued, often with pairs of names, representing ancestral couples, down the generations to the present. Where genealogical depth was a factor in the system of hereditary rank, the personal pedigree of a high-status person could be lengthened by connecting it to a genealogically structured creation chant, such as the famous Hawaiian chant of Kumulipo, who had his »ultimate source« (*kumu*) in the »night« (*po*) (Beckwith 1972: 58). Maori creation chants show that, in the beginning, thoughts and creative consciousness brought forth first *po*, the »night«, the world of darkness and of the gods, and then *ao*, the »day«, the world of light and of humans (Taylor 1855: 14–15). A Tahitian chant (see below p. 283 and note 54) shows that Ta'aroa was the »ultimate source« (*tumu*) (Moerenhout 1837, I: 419) by creating the whole world from his own body and separating the night (*po*) from day (*ao*), the sky from the earth. He positioned four posts (*to'o*) in order to keep the sky up and open a space for the *ao*, the world of light and humanity, and at the same time connect it to the earth (Alpers 1970: 56; Beckwith 1940: 310–313).

In many Polynesian languages, anthropomorphic figures are designated as *tiki* or *ti'i*, said to mean »ancestral spirit« or, literally, »fetched (by the gods)«. <sup>20</sup> *Tiki* figures are always portrayed with a large, round belly (*manava* or *opu*: belly and womb respectively) considered to be the seat of life and feeling, and with thin, angulated arms, sometimes ending in three-fingered hands, held protectively against the torso (March 1893: 308–310; Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 337).

The rotund belly gives expression to the idea that the primordial deity or first ancestor brought forth the world and all creatures from his or her own body. In the context of this act of creation, *vari*, »to ooze«, and *pua*, »to bud«, are pivotal terms in the language of the island of Mangaia.<sup>21</sup> And indeed, a few of the images of creator beings from Rurutu and Rarotonga that have survived to this day actually do show small figures sprouting from the body and covering

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<sup>20</sup> Ellis 1840, I: 334; Gill 1876a: 181; March 1893: 310.

<sup>21</sup> Vari is the first female spiritual being in the world view of Mangaia. Her full name is Vari-ma-te-takere, »The-very-beginning«, or literally »the-beginning-and-the bottom« of the hollow of a vast coconut shell which the people of the island of Mangaia conceived as the universe. The interior of this imaginary shell is named Avaiki, and in the lowest depth of it, where the sides of the shell nearly meet, is the dwelling place

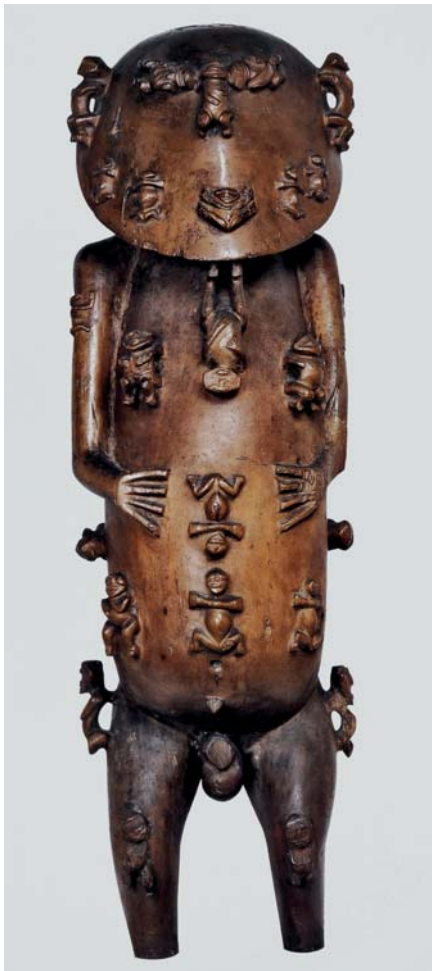


Fig. 4 Standing casket figure (front view)

Fig. 5: Standing casket figure known as A'a, Rurutu, Austral Islands, H. 117 cm, British Museum London, LMS 19 © Trustees of the British Museum

of the woman Vari-ma-te-takere. Such is the narrowness of her territory that her knees and chin touch, no other position being possible (Gill 1876a: 1–10). According to Te Rangi Hiroa the word *vari*, however, also means »mud«, and, taken in conjunction with *takere* (canoe bottom or keel), the name literally means »The-mud-and-the bottom«; it suggests the mud on the bottom of the figurative coconut shell. Vari is the mud of the taro swamps and connotes potential plant growth. As applied to a female, it means the menses and conveys a connection with the female womb and the origin of human growth. Six beings with human characteristics (*tangata*) grew within Vari. They evidently sprouted up successively from either side of her body from the region of the thorax below the armpits. That they became external growths is indicated by the fact that they were picked off from Vari. The term for picking (*'aki 'akia*) is used with reference to mature or ripe fruit. The six were not torn or pulled up (*'u 'uti*). According to Manganian concept, growths within fertile mud (*vari*) sprouted up like plants and were picked off when they reached maturity. The fruit picked off had human characteristics, indicated, perhaps, by the double meaning of *vari*, but the plant idea predominates. Vari had no husband and her children no father (Te Rangi Hiroa 1934: 11–15; see also Siikala and Siikala 2005: 227–228).



Fig. 6:  
Standing Figure, Rarotonga, Cook Islands,  
H. 56.5 cm, George Ortiz Collection Geneva  
(from: Barrow 1979: 80 (88))

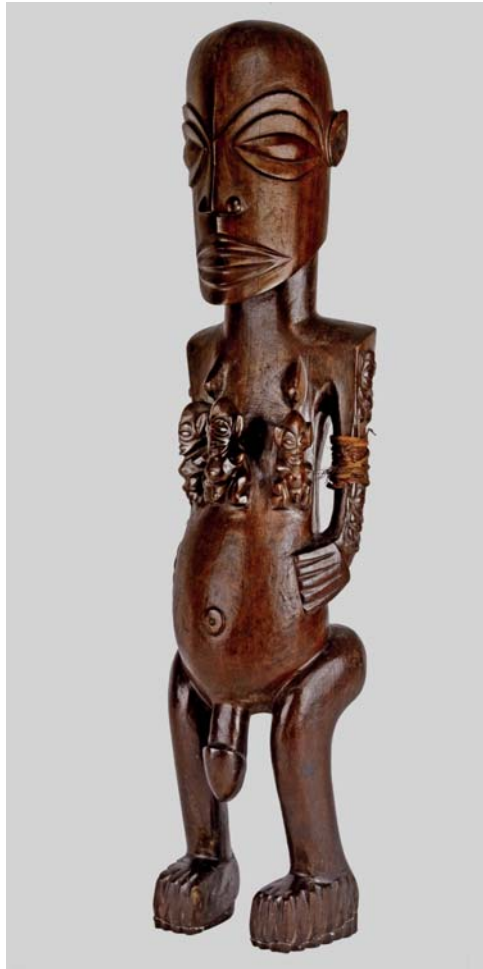


Fig. 7:  
Standing Figure, Rarotonga, Cook Islands,  
H. 69.8 cm, British Museum London, LMS 169  
© Trustees of the British Museum

it. There are two pieces in the British Museum in London, both of which are from the collection of the London Missionary Society (LMS 19 and LMS 169) (Fig. 4, 5, 7), as well as one piece in the private collection of George Ortiz, which was collected between November 1833 and January 1835 by the artisan member of the London Missionary Society, Elijah Armitage<sup>22</sup> (Fig. 6). The most spectacular of the three (LMS 19) was described by Ellis as »Ta'arua, the supreme deity of Polynesia; who is generally regarded as the creator of the world, and the par-

<sup>22</sup> Idiens 1976: 359–362, plate 2; 1990: 17 (5 and 6); Barrow 1979: 81 (89); see also Hooper 2006: 194–195 (cat. no. 156) and 221 (cat. no. 191).

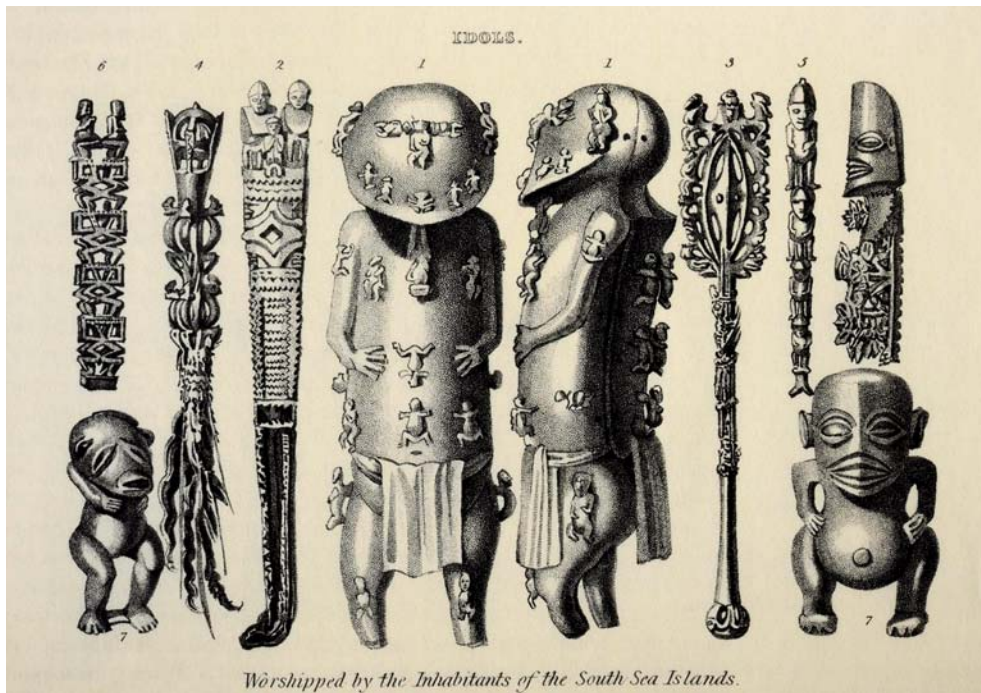


Fig. 8: Idols Worshipped by the Inhabitants of the South Sea Islands [1: A'a] (Ellis 1829, II: frontispiece)

ent of gods and men«<sup>23</sup> (Fig. 8), while Williams commented on that figure which was exhibited in Ra'iatea in August 1821: »One in particular, A'a, the national god of Rurutu, excited considerable interest; for, in addition to his being bedecked with little gods outside, a door was discovered at his back, on opening which, he was found to be full of small gods; and no less than twenty-four were taken out, one after another, and exhibited to public view. He is said to be the ancestor by whom their island was peopled, and who after death was deified«.<sup>24</sup>

Next to these figures there are representations that describe the creation of the world from a single source and signify an unbroken succession of generations. Some of these, like the Marquesan genealogical counters or *to'o*, meaning »rootstock«, consist of a tuber-like or anthropomorphic form made of coconut fiber twine and appended elements consisting of several

<sup>23</sup> Ellis 1829, II: frontispiece and 220. Ellis continues: »The image from which these views were taken, is nearly four feet high, and twelve or fifteen inches broad, carved out of a solid piece of close, white, durable wood. In addition to the number of images or demigods forming the features of his face, and studding the outside of his body, and which were designed to shew the multitude of gods that had proceeded from him; his body is hollow, and when taken from the temple, in which for many generations he had been worshipped, a number of small idols were found in the cavity. They had perhaps been deposited there, to imbibe his supernatural powers, prior to their being removed to a distance, to receive, as his representatives, divine honours. The opening to the cavity was at the back; the whole of which, as shewn in the profile view, might be removed«.

<sup>24</sup> Williams 1842: 12; Gill 1876a: 21; March 1893: 312; Siikala 1991: 50–53. For a detailed discussion on A'a see Hooper (2007), who is of the opinion that A'a was a bone reliquary for an important chief.

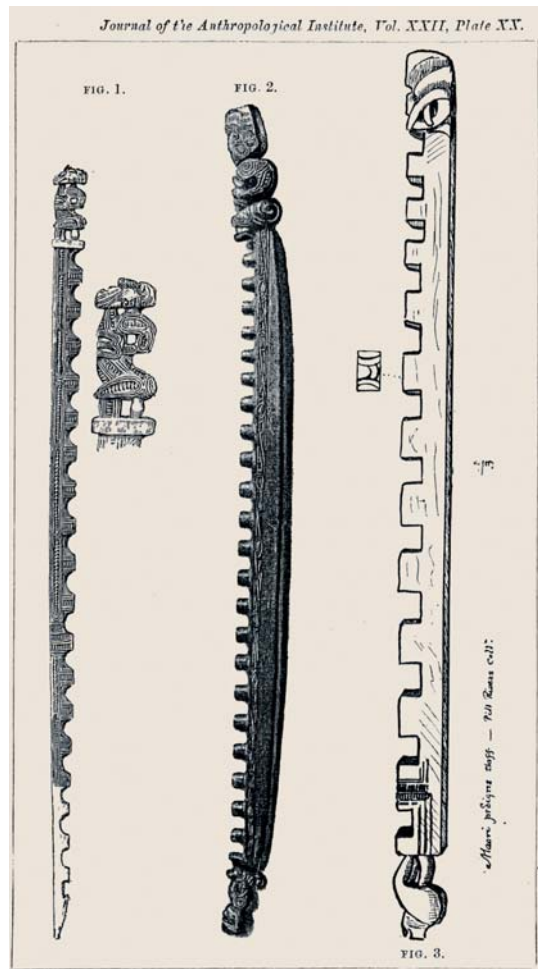


Fig. 9:  
Genealogical Staffs (*rakau whakapapa*),  
New Zealand/Aotearoa (from: March 1893:  
Plate 20)

knotted cords. In the absence of written records each knot represented a generation in a linear genealogy or a verse-line from a chant. In Marquesan creation myths the primal parents created the great *to'o*, that is, the original rootstocks, at the beginning of time. These rootstocks were the source of all life, for from them sprang, in a series of linear roots, all other living things in generational order. In the chants these original rootstocks are referred to as *te to'o o te fenua*, »the rootstocks of the earth«, or *te tumu o te fenua*, »the source of the earth«. The Marquesan *to'o* was, thus, not only a mnemonic device for reciting but also a visual metaphor for the origin of the cosmos and the generations that connected living beings to the source of existence at the beginning of time. The New Zealand Maori, on the other hand, used so called *rakau whakapapa* or »genealogical staffs« when reciting important genealogies. An anthropomorphic head or a figure on the upper end symbolizes the first ancestor or the »origin« of the line, while a series of projections along the stick, reminiscent of the vertebrae of a spinal column, represent the successive generations of high-ranking individuals. The presence of a phallus at the lower end of the staff may represent the symbolism implicit in the Maori expression *ure tu*,



Fig. 10 and 11:  
Staff God, Rarotonga, Cook Islands,  
Munich State Museum of Ethnology,  
H. 73 cm, L. 900  
(Photos: Marietta Weidner)

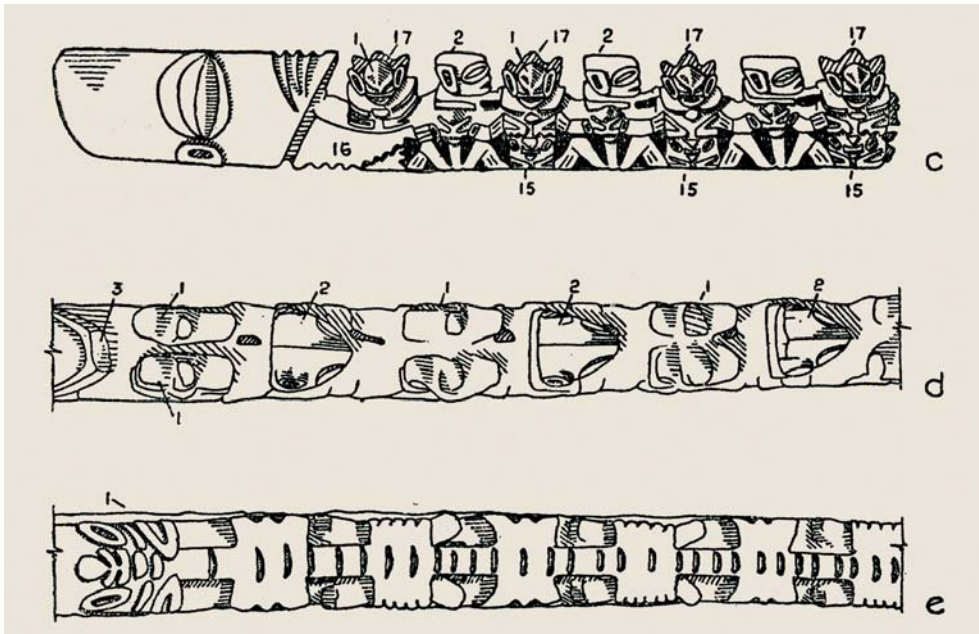


Fig. 12: Drawing of Staff God in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology Cambridge, Z.6099  
 (from: Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 321, Fig. 197 c-e)



Fig. 11



meaning »erect penis«, and referring to extraordinary descent lines consisting only of first-born males<sup>25</sup> (Fig. 9).

To return to the Cook Islands, the so-called staff gods from Rarotonga could therefore also be seen as symbols for successive generations; these are long, slim figures made of hard wood which were originally wrapped in large amounts of bark cloth. Characteristically, the wooden core has a large anthropomorphic head at the top end and a phallus at the distal end, connected by a row of sitting figures. However, only very few complete staff gods have remained. In most of the surviving examples the wrappings have been removed and the wooden element cut into pieces for reasons of easier transport or missionary concepts of decency – like our Munich example (L.900)<sup>26</sup> (Fig. 10). At the base of the neck and running down the staff god's back are stylized vertebrae forming a notched spine. Together with the small, seated figures the notches symbolize the succession of generations<sup>27</sup> (Fig. 11 and 12). The rounded shape of the head is reminiscent of a protective helmet and the fact that such figures were wrapped in bark cloth means that, in this way, their *mana* – or that of the genealogy represented – was supposed to be brought under control and directed into fertile life-giving channels.<sup>28</sup> Like the genealogical staffs (*rakau whakapapa*) of the Maori these objects may have served as a mnemonic device when reciting important genealogies. Another interpretation of the staff gods of Rarotonga is, if they are looked at horizontally instead of vertically, they could be representing a boat with its crew, presumably the boat of the founding ancestor.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Volland 1987: 119, Fig. 2; March 1893: 320, Plate XX, Fig. 1–3; Starzecka 1998: 31, Fig. 17; see also Skinner 1974b: 99–110.

<sup>26</sup> Williams described the surrender of those images to the missionaries on Rarotonga in May 1827: »On our arrival, we found that the teachers had very comfortable houses, one of which they most cheerfully gave up to us. A day or two afterwards, they requested us to take our seat outside the door; and, on doing so, we observed a large concourse of people coming towards us, bearing heavy burdens. They walked in procession, and dropped at our feet fourteen immense idols, the smallest of which was about five yards in length. Each of these was composed of a piece of *aito*, or iron wood, about four inches in diameter, carved with rude imitations of the human head at one end, and with an obscene figure at the other, wrapped round with native cloth, until it became two or three yards in circumference. Near the wood were red feathers, and a string of small pieces of polished pearl shells, which were said to be the *manava*, or soul of the god. Some of these idols were torn to pieces before our eyes: others were reserved to decorate the rafters of the chapel we proposed to erect; and one was kept to be sent to England, which is now in the Missionary Museum« (Williams 1842: 30; figure p. 31 and title page; see also Fig. 13).

<sup>27</sup> Apart from a kind of »twin« staff god in the British Museum (1910-6-9-1) (Idiens 1990: 22, Fig. 10; Buck 1944: 326, Fig. 201), there are at least three other objects from Rarotonga which seem to relate to the succession of generations: a canoe stern board in the British Museum (2086), the handle of a fan in the Cambridge University Museum (Z6102) and a staff in the National Museums of Scotland Edinburgh (A.1968.406) (Hooper 2006: 225 (196), 237 (217); 239 (221); Idiens 1990: 36, Fig. 27; 22, Fig. 11).

<sup>28</sup> Shore 1989: 152–154. Other Polynesian examples of so-called stick gods who are wrapped in coconut fiber and whose *mana* is thus brought under control are the »god sticks« (*tiki waananga*) of the Maori, the »stick gods« (*akua ka'ai*) of Hawai'i and the *to'o* or *toko* from Tahiti, which keep heaven and earth apart (Volland 1987: 120, 123).

<sup>29</sup> Personal communication with Uncle Leslie Kuloloio from Maui, Hawai'i, October 2004. This interpretation is strengthened by the traditions of Ta'aroa in Ra'iatea recorded by Tyerman and Bennet: »Taroa first existed in the shape of an egg, which was buoyant high up in the etherial firmament. Weary of rocking there, with every wind that blew, he pushed his hands through the shell and presently raised himself upright in it.



Fig. 13: »Natives from Rarotonga surrendering their National Idols« (from: *Journal of Civilization*, October 9, 1841: 369), see note 26

An image from Aitutaki, consisting of four superimposed figures, was pictured and identified by the missionary Ellis as »Terongo, one of the principal gods, and his three sons«.<sup>30</sup> This image and a very similar one, showing three superimposed figures, both once belonged to the collection of William O. Oldman and are now in the Otago Museum Dunedin (O50.038) and in

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Before this all had been darkness about him; now all was light. Looking down from this elevation he saw the sand on the sea-shore, and said to it, »Sand, come up to me.« The sand replied, »I belong to the earth, and cannot fly up to you in the sky.« Then he said to the rocks, »Come up to me.« The rock answered, »We are rooted in the ground, and cannot leave it to leap up to you.« Thereupon he came down to them and cast his shell, which, being added to the substance of the world, prodigiously increased its bulk. He then peopled it with human beings that were produced from his back. In the end he himself was transformed into a canoe; when, being out at sea, in a great storm, and carrying a crew of islanders, the hollow of the vessel was filled with liquor, which, being baled out with calabashes, proved to be his blood, and quickly discoloured the sea, from which, however, it was carried into the air and diffused over the morning and the evening clouds to add to the glories of day-break and sunset. Whether the canoe was metamorphosed back again into the god does not appear, but Taroa's skeleton, after his mortal career on earth had been run, was laid upon the land, the back-bone upwards and the ribs resting upon the ground. These became a house for all the gods, and thenceforward the idol-temples in Raiatea, were open sheds, consisting of thatched roofs, supported on posts, according to the cage-like model of Taroa's relics« (Montgomery 1840: 156); see also Stolpe 1892: 27.

<sup>30</sup> Ellis 1829, II: frontispiece and 220; Kaeppler, Kaufmann and Newton 1997: Fig. 44.

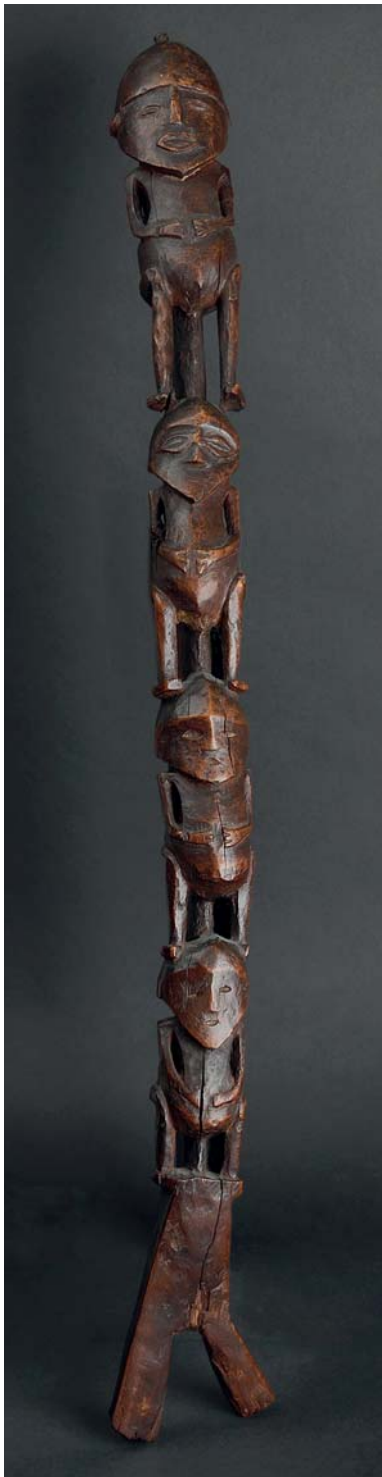


Fig. 14:  
Image of four superimposed  
figures [Terongo, one of the  
principle gods, and his three  
sons, compare Fig. 8, 5 and  
note 60 below], Aitutaki,  
Cook Islands, H. 42 cm,  
© Otago Museum Dunedin,  
New Zealand, O50.038

Fig. 15:  
Godstick [image of three su-  
perimposed figures], Aitutaki,  
Cook Islands, H. 72 cm, Old-  
man Collection, Canterbury  
Museum Christchurch,  
E 150.1057



Fig. 16: William Hodges, *Review of the War Galleys at Tahiti*, c. 1776, oil on panel, 24.1 x 47.0 cm. National Maritime Museum Greenwich (from: Hooper 2006: 13, fig. 1)

the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch (E 150.1057) respectively<sup>31</sup> (Fig. 14 and 15). William Wyatt Gill – speaking of Mangaia – states that Rongo, the twin brother of Tangaroa,<sup>32</sup> had three sons (or daughter-sons), Rangī, Mokoīro and Akataūira. The three brothers took up their permanent abode in the upper world and thus were the first inhabitants of the island of Mangaia, and in the course of the years gave rise to the original tribes which peopled the island.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See the pictures in Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 343, Fig. 213; Oldman 1953: 3, Plate 4, 437, 379; Duff 1969: 62 (116).

<sup>32</sup> Tangaroa and Rongo were the twin children of Vātea and Papa. Vātea and Papa were created by Vari-mate-takere, »The-very-beginning« (see above p. 253, note 21). Tangaroa and Rongo were the first beings of perfect human form, having no second shape (Gill 1876a: 10).

<sup>33</sup> Gill 1876a: 15–16; Stolpe 1892: 26; Oldman 1953: 3, Plate 4, 432. According to Te Rangi Hiroa the two high priests of Rongo on Mangaia, the Inland High Priest (*ariki-pa-uta*) and the Shore High Priest (*ariki-pa-tai*), were descended from Rangī and Akataūira, two of the three original settlers of Mangaia. A third high priest was responsible for the distribution of food on public occasions. He held the title High-chief-who-stood-at-the-head-of-the-food-platter (*ariki-i-te-ua-i-te-tapora-kai*). He also conducted the correct ritual at the shore before the fleet set out for the fishing grounds. It was his office to give each canoe a plaited symbol of coconut leaflets representing Mokoīro, a deified patron of fishermen. The symbol was placed in the bow of the canoe and brought success. The office was hereditary and its holders claimed direct descent from Mokoīro, the third of the original settlers at Mangaia. In addition to these national priests, each of the thirteen tribes had its own tribal priest who served as the medium between the tribal group and their god (compare below p. 277, note 44). The office of tribal priest was hereditary and he exercised great power. A custom of religious significance was the cutting of the navel cord of a newly born child. The navel cord was not cut until the afterbirth had come away. The person who cut the cord cleared away the coagulated blood

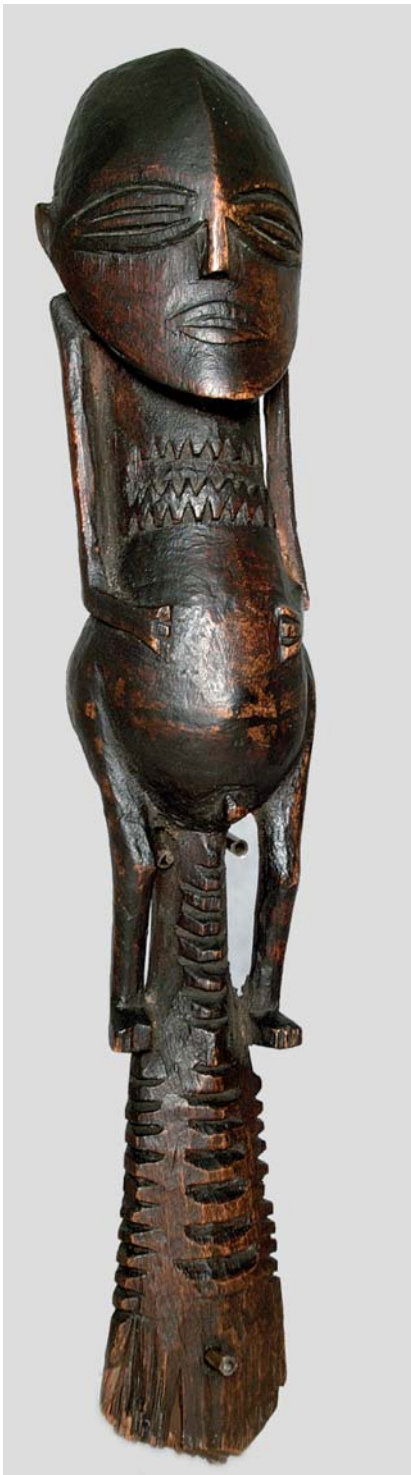


Fig. 17: Female Figure, Aitutaki, Cook Islands, H. 39.5 cm, The Hunterian, University of Glasgow 2014, E.360

Fig. 18: Female Figure, Aitutaki, Cook Islands [Hervey Islands. Figure of a goddess carved in the style of Aitutaki], H. 52.5 cm, British Museum London, LMS 35 © Trustees of the British Museum



Fig. 19: Drawing of Female Figure, Aitutaki, Cook Islands, British Museum London, LMS 35  
(from: Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 340, Fig. 210)

On the Society Islands, *tiki* figures standing on top of each other are said to have served as boundary markers of a chief's territory.<sup>34</sup> Similar figures were affixed to the sterns of war canoes (*pahi*) and sacred canoes which were called *va'a ti'i*<sup>35</sup> (Fig. 16). A female figure from the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow (E. 360) (Fig. 17) was also attributed to Aitutaki and is supported by a column which seems to have been cut off at the lower end and undoubtedly formed part of a larger object, perhaps a canoe;<sup>36</sup> the column shows notches which, again, suggest the succession of generations. Another goddess from Aitutaki from the London Missionary Society, which is now in the British Museum (LMS 35)<sup>37</sup> (Fig. 18 and 19), might also have been part

in the part severed. Before cutting, he asked the parents the name of the god to whom the child should be dedicated. Marriage usually took place between people of different tribes. Hence the father and mother of a child worshipped different tribal gods. It was usual for the father to give the name of his tribal god, but sometimes when the mother's tribe was in the ascendancy, the name of her god was given. The operator then announced, »I hereby cleanse the cord of this child to ...«, giving the name of the god (Te Rangi Hiroa 1993: 14; see also Savage 1962: 256; Siikala 1991: 55–56 and below p. 285, No. 11 and note 60).

<sup>34</sup> Ellis 1829, III: 116; March 1893: 310; D'Alleva 1996: 30, Fig. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Ellis 1829, I: 168–169; March 1893: 310; see Barrow 1979: 6, pl. 2; 34, pl. 37; Hooper 2006: 13, Fig. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 341–342, Fig. 212; Barrow 1979: 82 (89); Idiens 1990: 18, Fig. 7; Hooper 2006: 226 (197).

<sup>37</sup> It was labeled »Hervey Islands. Figure of a goddess carved in the style of Aitutaki« (Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 339, Fig. 210 and plate 13, A, B).

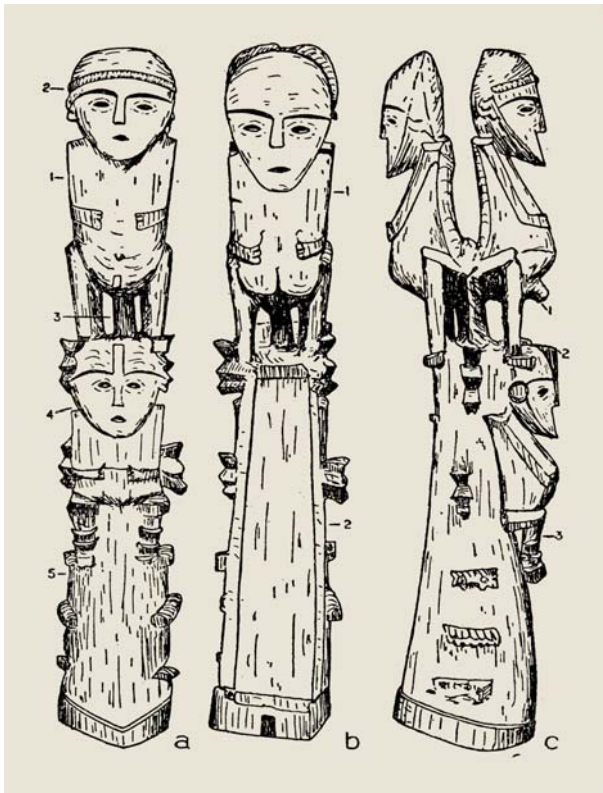


Fig. 20:  
Drawing of a wooden sculpture with  
several female figures [avant de piro-  
gue sculpté], Aitutaki, Cook Islands,  
Maritime Museum Brest, 486  
(from: Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 344,  
Fig. 214)

Fig. 21:  
Staff with two female figures back to  
back, Austral Islands, H. 113 cm,  
Munich State Museum of Ethnology,  
727 (Photo: Marietta Weidner)

of a larger object or canoe, while v-shaped excisions and a zigzag line carved in the front of the pedestal might be indications of a spinal column and thus a genealogy.<sup>38</sup>

A wooden sculpture from Aitutaki in the Maritime Museum in Brest (486) (Fig. 20), which was labeled »avant de pirogue sculpté«, is decorated with several female figures: two of them stand on top of each other, two others stand back-to-back, while the »buds« at the lower end of the object possibly represent descendants or adjoining generations (Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 344, Fig. 214 and Gell 1995: 29, Fig. 1.2 d). Alfred Gell interprets these back-to-back sculptures as complete immortal beings or gods, *atua*. The term *atua* is derived from the morpheme *tua* that means »back«, or the averted, invisible side of an object. Polynesians regard the back (i.e. the spine) and the head as especially sacred. William Wyatt Gill stated that occasionally, when ex-

<sup>38</sup> Kaeppler 1982: 96. Several artifacts from the Austral and Cook Islands show v- or chevron-shaped engravings: for instance an Austral Island panel of figures from Cambridge (D1914.34), a drum from the British Museum (LMS 94) and two whisk handles in the Auckland Museum (31925) and in the Barbier-Mueller Museum Geneva (5401) respectively (Hooper 2006: 198 (159), 199 (160), 200 (172); Newton 1999: 330 (15)); as well as a tall drum from the central Cook Islands (LMS 80) and a fan handle from Atiu (LMS 131) in the British Museum (Hooper 2006: 227 (199), 234 (210)), a staff from Rarotonga in Edinburgh (A.1968.406) (Hooper 2006: 222 (221)), and a small figure from Rarotonga in the Barbier-Mueller Museum Geneva (5303) (Phelps 1980: Fig. 1 and 2).



Fig. 21





Fig. 22: Female Figure from Ra'ivavae, Austral Islands, front view, H. 66 cm, Auckland War Memorial Museum, 31499 (from: Duff 1969: 31 (30))



Fig. 23: Female Figure from Ra'ivavae, back view

pressing their belief that the divinity is the »essential support«, they express it by the word *ivimokotua* the »backbone« or »vertebral column«, never by the mere *tua* »back«. *Atu* or *aitu* means »core« or »pith« of a tree and in this sense *atu* »God« – according to Gill – is the »very core of life« of man.<sup>39</sup>

*Tua* or *metua* also refers to the elders and the ancestors, as well as »rearward« or »bygone« ages, which were also regarded as sacred. Like the creator god, the figures standing back-to-back appear to replicate and, at the same time, protect the most susceptible and vulnerable section of the human body, the back, in actual fact the most exposed part in hidden ambushes (Gell 1995: 26 and 33).

A staff from the Austral Islands with two female figures standing back to back from the Munich Museum (727) (Fig. 21) which was already pictured in Stolpe (1892: 40, Fig. 46 a, 46 b) and March (1893, Plate 22, Fig. 11) can illustrate this, as well as another female figure from Ra'ivavae, who is seldom shown from the back, but her spine is represented by a raised ridge with notches<sup>40</sup> (Fig. 22 and 23).

<sup>39</sup> Gill 1876a: 33–34; see also Gunn 2014. The Hawaiian word for genealogy is *mo'o*, and descendants are *mo'opuna*. Genealogies are often likened to, and symbolized by, the spine or backbone, called *iwikuamo'o*, which also means »family«. A similar spine symbolism can also be found in Easter Island and Tahiti (Kaeppler 1982: 85–86, 95; D'Alleva 1996: 30).

<sup>40</sup> The figure was described as »Indian god brought to England by Revd. John Williams [...] and left by him with his friend Timothy East [...] (Williams) brought the God to England by the consent of the natives for the purpose of illustrating his lectures to procure funds on behalf of the Mission to the islands [...]« (Old-

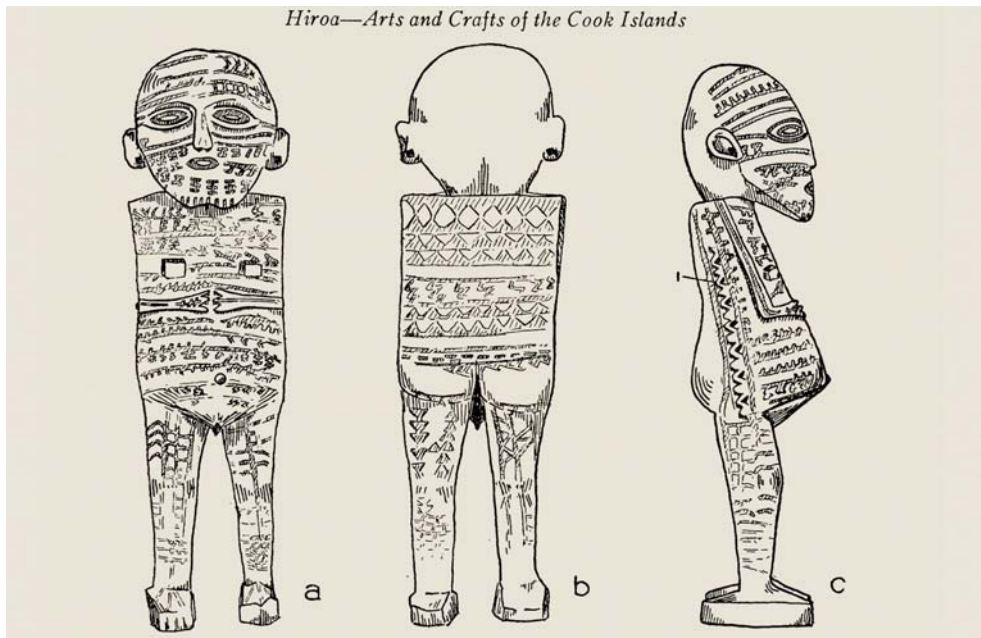


Fig. 24:  
Drawing of Female Figure from Aitutaki, Munich State  
Museum of Ethnology, 190  
(from: Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 341 (Fig. 211))

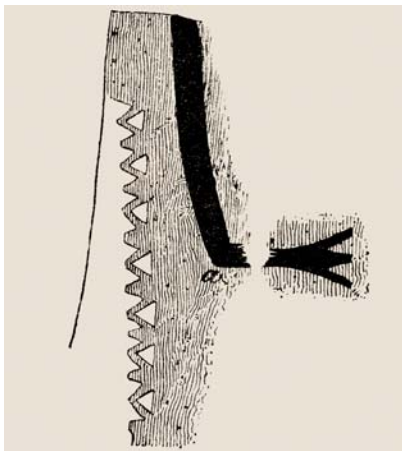


Fig. 25: Zigzag Ornament that reaches from just below the  
shoulders to the hips of the Munich Female Figure from Aitu-  
taki (from: Stolpe 1892: Fig. 58)

The female Aitutaki figure from the Munich State Museum of Ethnology displays on both sides an incised, zigzag ornament that reaches from just below the shoulders to the hips. According to Stolpe (1892: 50–51, Fig. 58) it shows six joined figures<sup>41</sup> (Fig. 24 and 25), which I interpret as symbols of the spine and successive generations. Like the notches on the genealogical sticks and staff gods described above, they could have served as a mnemonic device in reciting genealogies.

man 1953: 21). It later became part of the Oldman collection (413) and is now in the Auckland Museum (31499) (Duff 1969: 31 (30); Kaepler/Kaufmann/Newton [1994] 1997: Abb. 312; Hooper 2006: 196 (157)).

<sup>41</sup> Contrary to this, Te Rangi Hiroa regarded them as a »simple geometric combination in which any resemblance to degradation of the human form is accidental« (1944: 340).

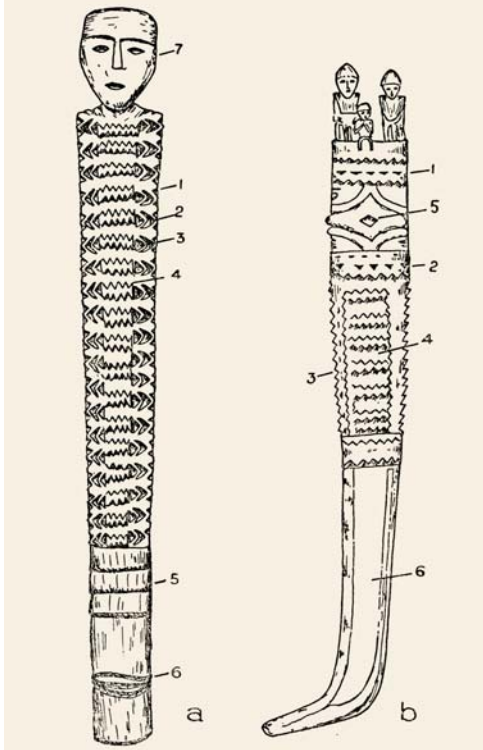


Fig. 26: Staff-like objects with human head, Aitutaki, Cook Islands, a: H. 66 cm, Auckland War Memorial Museum, 31502 (from: Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 338, Fig. 208 a)

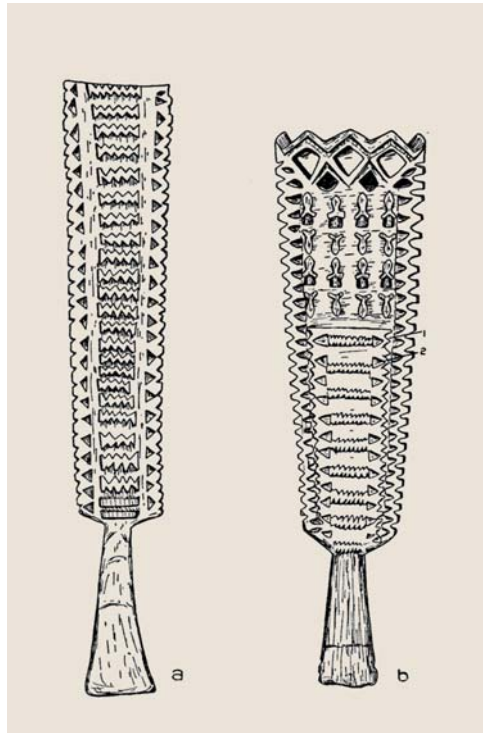


Fig. 27: Staff-like objects, Aitutaki, Cook Islands, b: H. 53 cm, Otago Museum Dunedin (O50.105) (from: Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 334, Fig. 205b)



Fig. 28:  
Large chief's seat (*atamira*), Aitutaki, Cook Islands, L. 420 cm, Auckland War Memorial Museum, Am12995  
© Auckland War Memorial Museum

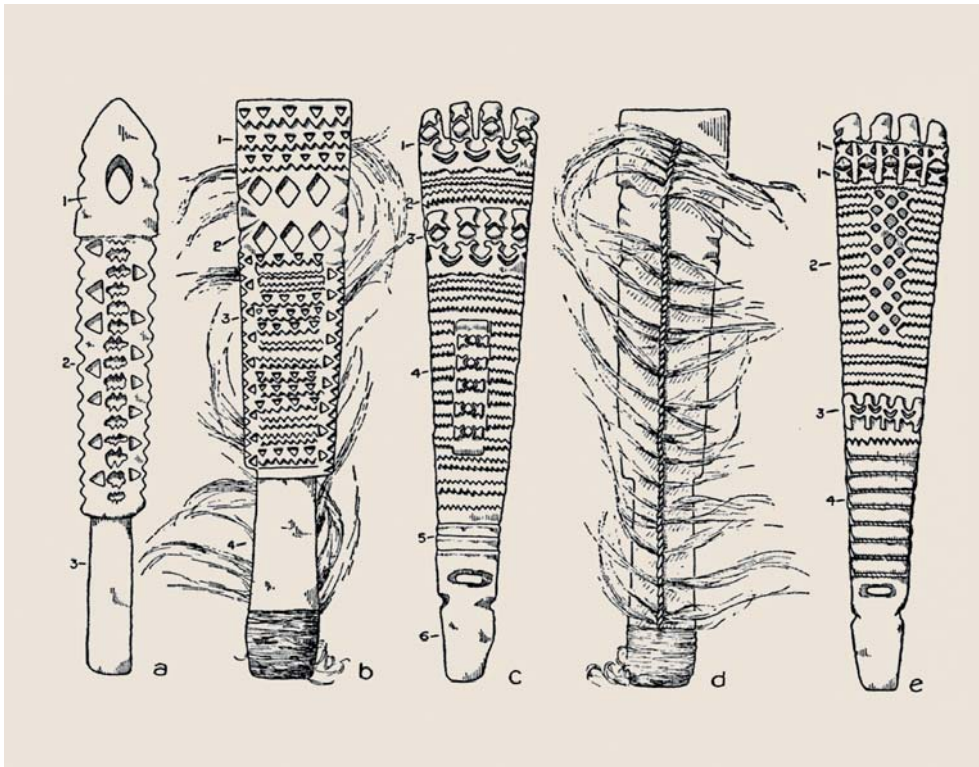


Fig. 29: Drawing of three carved slabs [Idols from the Hervey Group], Aitutaki, Cook Islands,  
 H. a: 45.7 cm, b/d: 49 cm, c/e: 60.7 cm, British Museum London, LMS 112, LMS 26, LMS 28  
 (from: Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 332, Fig. 203)

This highly stylized ornament bears resemblance to ornaments on sacred staff-like objects – one with a human head – from the Oldman collection which are now in the Auckland Museum (31502) and in the Otago Museum in Dunedin (O50.105) (Fig. 26 left and 27 right), and the large chief's seat (*atamira*) from Aitutaki in the Auckland Museum (Am12995) (Fig. 28) is ornamented with the same kind of carving along both edges of the seat (Te Rangi Hiroa 1927: Fig. 44, 45, and 315). Three similar carved slabs in the collection of the London Missionary Society (LMS 112, LMS 26, LMS 28) (Fig. 29) were first labeled as »idols from the Hervey Group«<sup>42</sup> before they were attributed to Aitutaki by Te Rangi Hiroa (1944: 332, 335). Two others are in the Museum of Natural History, Geology and Ethnography in Lille, France<sup>43</sup> (Fig. 30). Three similarly carved so-called mace or slab gods with pedestals identified as »the three

<sup>42</sup> Read 1891: 157, plate XIII, K, L, J; Oldman 1953: 3–4, plate 5, 429–431.

<sup>43</sup> Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 332–335, Fig. 203–206, 208; Duff 1969: 62 (117); Stolpe 1892: 51–52, Fig. 59–60; Idiens 1997: 157 (141, ill. 3).

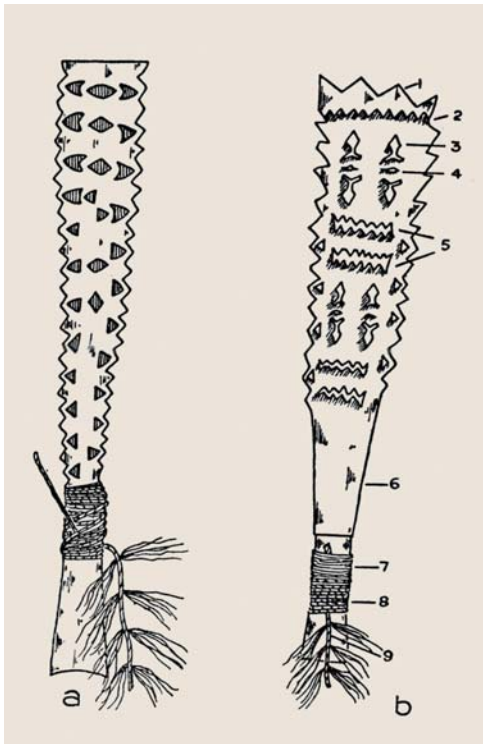
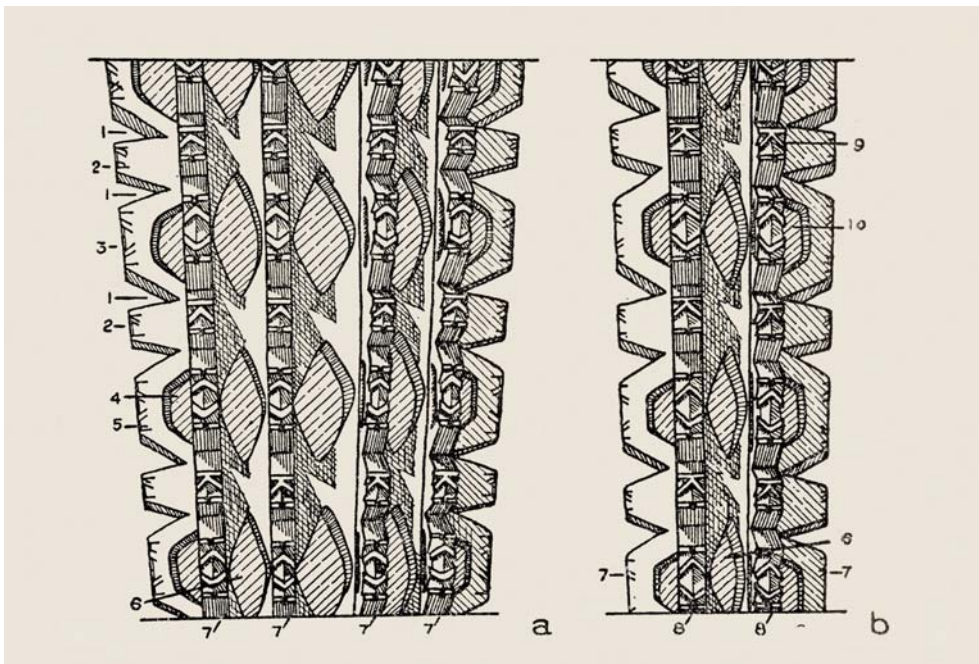
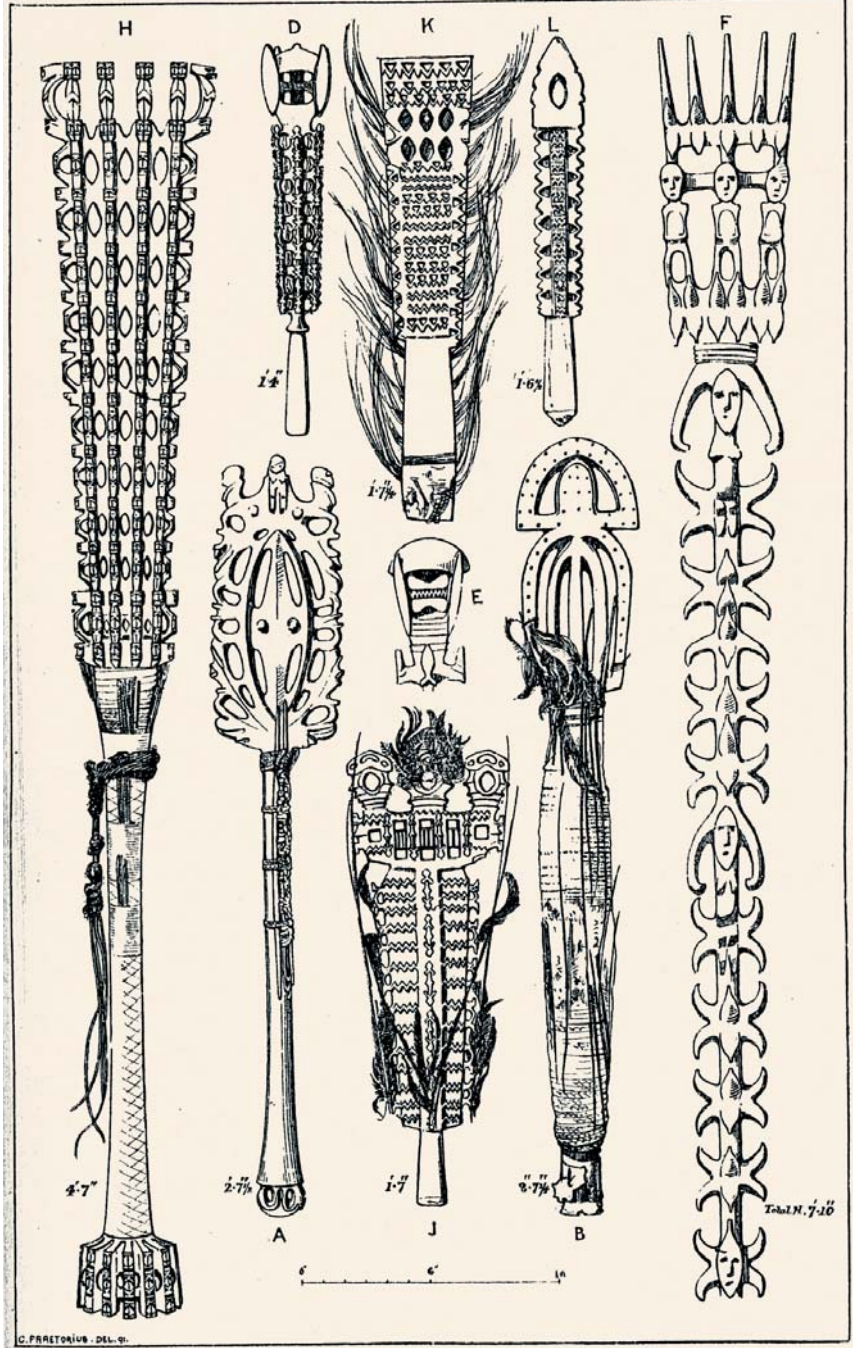


Fig. 30:  
Drawing of two carved slabs, Aitutaki, Cook Islands,  
b: 39.5 cm, Museum of Natural History, Geology and  
Ethnography Lille, France, 2099 c (from: Te Rangi  
Hiroa 1944: 333, Fig. 204)

Fig. 31:  
Drawing of details of district god from Mangaia,  
LMS 31, see Fig. 33 (from: Te Rangi Hiroa 1944:  
373, Fig. 238)

Fig. 32:  
Sacred Objects from the South East Pacific  
[H. district god from Mangaia, H. 140 cm,  
British Museum London, LMS 32]  
(from: Read 1891: plate 13)





S. E. PACIFIC. SACRED OBJECTS.  
(London Missionary Society Coll.)



Fig. 33:  
District god from Mangaia, H. 91.4 cm,  
British Museum London, LMS 31  
© Trustees of the British Museum



Fig. 34:  
Taringarue, the superior god from Atiu,  
H. 40.6 cm, British Museum London,  
LMS 49  
© Trustees of the British Museum



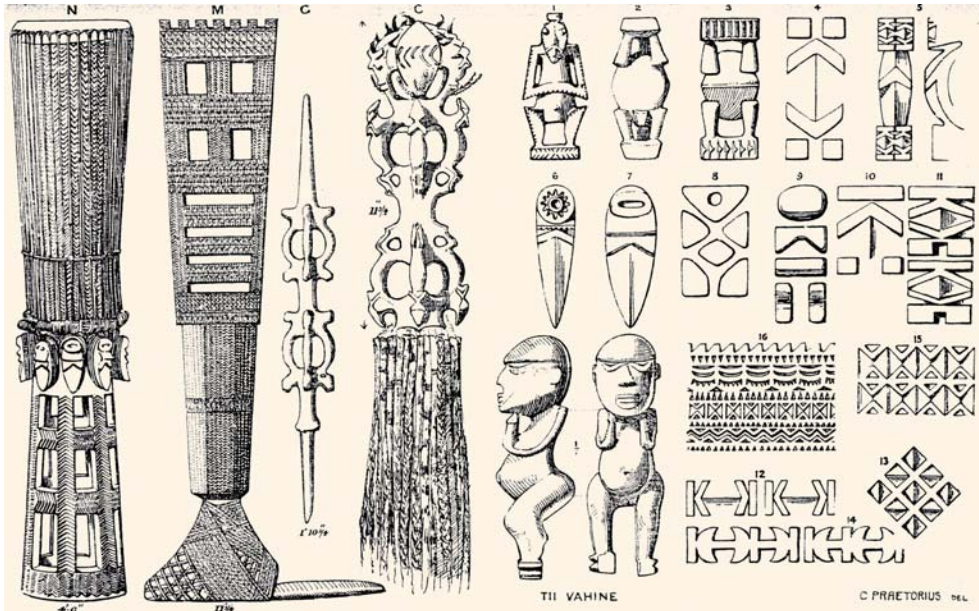


Fig. 35: Sacred Objects from the South East Pacific [C: Taringarue, the superior god of Atiu, see Fig. 34] (from: Read 1891: Plate 14)

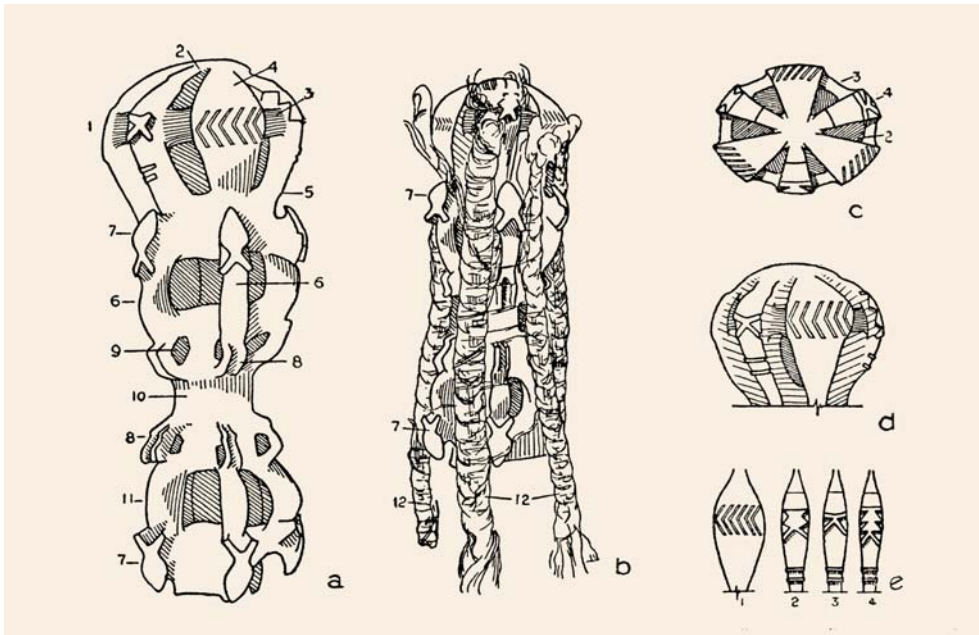


Fig. 36: Drawing of Taringarue, the superior God from Atiu, see Fig. 34 and 35c (from: Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 345, Fig. 215)

district gods of Mangaia« are now in the British Museum (LMS 30–32) (Fig. 31–33); another one from the Oldman collection is in the Otago Museum in Dunedin (O50.106), and a fifth one in the Peabody Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts (1354).<sup>44</sup> A less stylized form in the British Museum (LMS 49) (Fig. 34–36) was identified as »Taringarue, the superior god of Atiu« in the catalogue of the London Missionary Museum, a name which should probably be read as »Tangiia-nui«, an important God in Atiu, Mauke and Mitiaro.<sup>45</sup> Other even less stylized back-to-back figures are to be found on the handles of fans from Atiu and the central Cook Islands<sup>46</sup> (Fig. 37 and 38). And a staff in the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow (E.438/3) (Fig. 39), judging from the characteristic posture of the superimposed figures, is also from Atiu and symbolizes successive generations. As already noticed by Barrow,<sup>47</sup> this latter sculpture helps to explain how the serrated ornaments on the sides of the mace or slab gods from Mangaia are to be understood: They represent superimposed figures referring to the succession of generations. It was already put forward by Read and confirmed by Gill through his observations that the inhabitants of Mangaia called certain of these small abstractions *tikitiki tangata* »images of man«. <sup>48</sup> After having seen most of the originals of the figures illustrated by photographs and drawings in this article, I am personally convinced that the serrated ornaments on the sides of the carved slabs and the Munich female figure from Aitutaki (Fig. 40) are meant to represent superimposed images of man referring to the succession of generations.

<sup>44</sup> Read 1891: plate XIII, L and H; Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 371–378, Fig. 237–243, plate 14, F,G,H,I; Oldman 1953: 3, plate 4, 432; Duff 1969: 61 (115); Barrow 1979: 90, plate 100. The national god of Mangaia, worshipped by all the tribes was Rongo, a son of the sky father and earth mother. [...] Each tribe had its own tribal god with a temple (*marae*) in its tribal district. Material representatives of thirteen gods were kept in a god house in the Kei’ a district. After they were accidentally destroyed by fire, eleven of them were carved from wood by the skilled carver Rori around the year 1711. Their names were Motoro, Tane-papa-kai, Tane-ngaki-au, Tane-i-te-’utu, Tane-kio, Te A’io, Te Kura’aki, Utakea, Turanga, Kereteki, and Tangiia: Rori’s own god Teipe was beautifully carved by Tapaivi, a friend of Rori, while Rongo was represented by a shell trumpet (Gill 1876b: 95–100; Gill 1894: 331–333; Te Rangi Hiroa 1934: 169–171; 1944: 362–365; 1993: 13; Duff 1969: 61–62 (115)). So only five of the twelve carved representations are preserved and unfortunately their names were not recorded. One of the district gods in the British Museum (LMS 32) is covered with sennit in the beautiful lozenge pattern termed *ianere* which was also used on house rafters and in adze lashing (Te Rangi Hiroa 1934: 169; 1944: 375, Fig. 240, d; 47, Fig. 18; 171, Fig. 112; see also Te Rangi Hiroa 1970: 467–472). The act of lashing with sennit was a ritual of consecration in many parts of Polynesia (Hooper 2006: 229 (202), 266 (261)). After the acceptance of Christianity the gods were removed from their houses and their wrappings stripped from them and thrown into the sea as an act of desecration (Gill 1894: 334).

<sup>45</sup> Read 1891: 149 and 156, pl. XIV, Fig. C; Te Rangi Hiroa 1944: 345–347, Fig. 215; Hooper 2006: 233 (cat. no. 209).

<sup>46</sup> Read 1891: pl. XII, Fig. 2 and 3; Hooper 2006: 235 (cat. nos. 213, 215).

<sup>47</sup> Barrow 1979: 88–92, plate 77, 96–100; see also Duff 1969: 61–62 (115).

<sup>48</sup> Read 1891: 155–159, Plate XII–IV; see also Mangos and Utanga 2011: 106, 125.





Fig. 37:  
Fan handle/god image, Cook Islands, Atiu,  
L. 47 cm, British Museum London, LMS 78  
(from Hooper 2006: 235 (213))

Fig. 38:  
Fan handle, Cook Islands, Atiu,  
H. 43.5 cm, H. of figures 12 cm, David Shaw King Collection,  
ex LMS Collection (Courtesy David Shaw King)

Fig. 39:  
Staff with superimposed figures, Cook Islands, Atiu, L. 39 cm,  
The Hunterian, University of Glasgow 2014, E. 438/3





Fig. 40:  
Female Figure from  
Aitutaki (side view),  
Munich State Museum of  
Ethnology, 190  
(Photo: Marietta Weidner)

### Female Ancestors of Aitutaki

Although the best-known creation myths and genealogical songs speak of male gods or ancestors such as Tangaroa (Ta'aroa) (see below p. 283), the Mangaian story of Vari-ma-te-takere (see note 21 and below p. 284) as well as the abovementioned female representations from Aitutaki suggest that some female ancestors might also have been of importance in the succession of generations.

In the »Traditions of Aitutaki« recorded by Drury Low from the words of the *tumu korero* or traditional orator Timi Koro of Ureia settlement in Aitutaki, who died on 3 November 1933, there is the story of Ru's canoe and the discovery and settlement of Aitutaki. Although not of royal blood, Ru was a powerful young man and the chief navigator of the island of Tubuaki, an island far to the northeast of Aitutaki. The island was fertile and fishing was good, but during dry seasons food became scarce, and long-continued peace resulted in the island becoming overcrowded. Moved by a quarrel as to headship of his clan, Ru began to make plans. He decided to build a large sea-going canoe and to seek a new land together with his four younger brothers and his four wives. He took with him twenty *tamaine tapairu*, young maidens of royal blood, chosen for virtue, strength and good looks.<sup>49</sup> Finding the island of Aitutaki uninhabited, Ru divided it among the twenty *tamaine tapairu*, as they were of royal blood and consequently had first claim to the land. Ru told them that they were as mats on the floor, as other canoes were bound to come sooner or later bringing men with them. On these mats the men would sleep, and from them this new land would be populated. All the chiefs of a major lineage (*mataiapo*)<sup>50</sup> today can trace their descent back to the twenty *tamaine tapairu* who came with Ru, whereas the high chiefs (*ariki*) trace their descent back to an *ariki* named Ruatapu who came in the third canoe.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *Tamaine* means »girl, female«, *tapairu* means »eldest daughter of a chief« (Savage 1962: 344, 351). According to Koro and Low (1934: 18) their names were Vaine-pururangi, Maine-teaoroa, Vovoaru, Arakitera, Te Aroita, Te Nonoioiva, Tutunoa, Vaine-moana, Upoko-ara, Patapairu, Pau, Tuonoariki, Te Paku-oavaiki, Ruanoo, Arekponga, Kava, Maine-pirouru, Tutapuiva, Pakiara, Maine-pururangi.

<sup>50</sup> In the traditional hierarchy of the Cook Islands there were *ariki*, high chiefs or titular heads of a tribe; *mataiapo*, chiefs of major lineages of descent groups; and *rangatira*, lesser chiefs under an *ariki* or *mataiapo*; each *mataiapo* was titular head of a *tapere* or subdistrict of land and the people who resided there (Gilson 2003: glossary). According to Emroy (1939: 15) *matahiapo* means »first-born« in Tuamotu.

<sup>51</sup> Koro and Low 1934: 17–24. According to Pakoti and Nicholas (1895: 66–67) the second canoe that reached Aitutaki was headed by Te-erui, who took possession of the districts of Arutanga and Reu-reu. War commenced, and the tribe of Ru were exterminated, with the exception of the women, and Te-erui was left lord of the land. Te-erui gave a quantity of land back to these women who were saved, who were called Pa-aitu-vaine-a-Ru. He divided the land to these women, who were declared to be the legitimate owners of the land, as their descendants are to the present day. The following divisions were made: 1. To Maine Pirouru and Maine Pua-rangi he gave the district of Nukunoni; 2. To Are-kaponga and Kava he gave the district of Vaiorea; 3. To Tutapuiva he gave the district of Vaiau; 4. To Ruanoo he gave the district of Taravao; 5. To Tepaku-o-avaiki and Tetua-ono-ariki he gave the district of Tautu; 6. To Tekura-i-vae'a he gave the district of Mataotane; 7. To Pa'u he gave the district of Vaipae; 8. To Pa-tapairu he gave the district of Oako; 9. To Pakiara he gave the district of Avanui; 10. To Kura-i-te-ra he gave the district of Vaipeka; 11. To Tutunoa and Te-kura he gave the district of Vaitupa; 12. To Te-aroitau he gave the district of Taakarere; 13. To Arakitera he gave the district of Punoua; 14. To Kui-ono-tane and Roroara he gave the district of Anaunga; 15. To Te-vaine-piri-rangi he gave the district of Punganui; 16. To Ara-au he gave the district of Ureia.

There is no special study on land tenure on Aitutaki. Ron Crocombe – speaking of Rarotonga – says that under normal conditions a woman did not exercise rights of use in her own family lands after she married and left. »There was, however, one circumstance under which a woman who was absent could, as of right, plant, harvest, and control the disposition of a section of land in her natal lineage. This was when land was given to her as a »marriage portion« (*enua taonga rima*).<sup>52</sup> This occurred only when the favorite [i.e. first-born?] daughter of an important chief married a man of similar standing. Such land carried great prestige value, but it was not a dowry, for no rights in it passed to the husband or to his family. The woman could use the land herself, or could pass it on to one or more of her children for their use. [...] Unless she or her children made use of the land it would lose its character as a marriage gift and again be regarded as family land. This invariably happened if she died childless. Marriage land was most commonly used by the woman's children, and although they could use it while remaining members of their father's lineage, it was more usual for the mother to send a child back to live with her own lineage and use this land. It was thereafter transmitted to that child's issue by the normal processes of inheritance« (Crocombe 1964: 54).

As the land of Aitutaki was given by Ru to the twenty maidens in view of their prospective marriages, it is possible that it was given with rights comparable to the ones attributed to a marriage gift (*enua taonga rima*) on Rarotonga. And maybe the female figure from Aitutaki in the Munich Museum<sup>53</sup> refers to the genealogy of one of the families of *mataiapo*, who trace their roots back to those twenty *tamaine tapairu* or eldest daughters of chiefly descent. This could also be the case with the above mentioned three other surviving female figures from the island of Aitutaki.

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<sup>52</sup> *Enua* means »land« and *taonga rima* literally means »title of the hand«, and denotes »a present to be given, as of a person who visits another and takes a present on the occasion of his or her visit« (Savage 1962: 350). According to Siikala and Siikala (2005: 221–223) on the islands of Atiu, Mauke and Mitiaro, which were by tradition politically connected, there is a kind of duality of power: *mana enua*, »power over land«, can only be possessed by somebody who has a legitimate path to the original ancestor of the place. *Mana tangata*, »power over people«, in turn, is able to emerge on the basis of marriage alliances abroad, and thus is able to transcend the horizon of a single island. *Mana enua*, however, had precedence over *mana tangata*, as the latter power did not enable anybody to deprive the people of other islands of their land.

<sup>53</sup> It should not be omitted that in the 1980ies modern replicas of the Munich figure, which were obviously carved after a photograph in the book »The Art of the Pacific Islands« (Gathercole et al. 1979: 142, no. 4.4), were sold by Island Craft in Avarua, Rarotonga (Pryor 1988: 4, figures 1 and 2).

## Appendix 1

### Ta'aroa

»He was – Ta'aroa was his name.  
He dwelt in immensity.  
Earth was not, sky was not,  
sea was not, man was not.  
Ta'aroa called, but nothing responded to him,  
and existing alone, he changed himself into the universe.  
The ultimate source, that is Ta'aroa,  
the rocks,  
Ta'aroa is the sand,  
that is what he called himself.  
Ta'aroa is the day,  
Ta'aroa is the essence of all things,  
Ta'aroa is the germ,  
Ta'aroa is the foundation,  
Ta'aroa is the everlasting,  
Ta'aroa is the mighty one,  
who created the universe,  
the great and sacred universe,  
which is only Ta'aroa's outer shell,  
it is he who inspired it and gave it order.«<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> A myth from Tahiti, translated by M. Appel after Moerenhout 1959: 419–421: »*Parahi; Taarua te ioa, roto ia te aere, aita fenua, aita rai, aita tai, aita taata, tiaoro Taarua i nia, fuariro noa ihora oia i te ohe narea ei. Te tumu Taarua, te papa, Taarua te one, toro Taarua in naio. Taarua tei te ao, Taarua lei reto, Taarua te nahora, Taarua tei raro, Taarua te taii, Taarua te paari, fanau fenua hoaii, hoaii nui raa, ei paa no Taarua, te ori, ori ra fenua.*« See also Henry 1928: 336–338; Beckwith 1911: 300, note 3.



## Appendix 2

### Vari-ma-te-takere

»There came from among them Vari, a spirit. Through her were derived the human beings of this land.

This is the story of the ancestors that the method by which beings with human qualities were obtained from Vari was by plucking off Vari, three from one side, three from the other side. They were six.«<sup>55</sup>

## Appendix 3

Description of the Aitutaki Idols in possession of the Reverend Daniel Tyerman & George Bennet Esq – Deputation from Missionary Society<sup>56</sup>

- »No 1 'Kau<sup>57</sup> – A principal & powerful god – his name is taken by a fish of that name which pierces with its nose & by which the priests of Kau are inspired. Sacrifices were not offered to it but it was famous for Strangling and Inspiring-
- No 2 Te Rongo. The priests of this god were inspired by the shark. This is one of the great gods & Kai Tangata Man eater-
- No 3 A fan belonging to the great god Tangaroa – This is also an object of adoration as it is decorated with red feathers.
- No 4 A bundle Sacred fans used by the priests at worship before the Marae
- 5 An offering to the god or rather the first piece obtained from a large log of Aito<sup>58</sup> which they were splitting & of which were making Spears – this being the first piece obtained was deified & presented to the god.

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<sup>55</sup> A myth from Mangaia translated by Te Rangi Hiroa 1934: 10: »*Tera tei rauka mai no roto ia ratou, O Vari, e vaerua ra i. I a ia i pua'ia mai te tangata i teia 'enua nei. O te korero ia a te 'ui tupuna, tera te ravenga i rauka mai ai te tangata no roto I a ia ia Vari, i 'aki'akia mai no runga i a Vari, e toru i teta' i kaokao, e toru i teta' i kaokao. Ka tokoono ratou.*« See also Gill 1876a: 3–6.

<sup>56</sup> A passage taken from John William's manuscript »More Joy for Christians« held at SOAS (CWM/LMS South Seas, Journals, Box 4, Folder 59) and published by David King (2011: 169–188).

<sup>57</sup> According to King (2011: 186, note 8) probably Ka'ukura, a celebrated ancestor.

<sup>58</sup> Ironwood, also called *toa* (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) (see note 18 and King 2011: 186, note 9).

- 6 A piece of a jagged spear the point of which was broken off in a man & this was immediately presented to the God.<sup>59</sup>
- 7 Tongaiti (or Toahiti in Raiatea) The god of the mountains. The priests of this god are inspired by a lizard.
- 8 Tangaroa the great National God of Aitutaki & of all most all the Islands in the South Seas. He has his nett with which he catches men & the spirits of men as they fly from their bodies & his spear with which he kills them – & a piece of Aito an offering to him as No 5 –
- 9 An image of the powerful god Rongo belonging to a celebrated Chief & Warrior called Ruabu –
- 10 The handles of 2 sacred fans – & 2 pieces of platted Cocoa Nutt husk – by the Cocoanutt husk the priest prognosticates the fate of Canoes & when gone whether they have arrived at the place to which they were going – the Priest places the Coacoa nut husk in a certain position in the house of the god – if it remains a certain time in that position he assures the friends that the canoe has arrived – if it be moved in the least – it is lost –
- 11 Te Rongo & his three sons the name of the first is Te bua Kina – the second tu Ka rere – the third Tino Kura. They are Gods of the Sea – to them prayers are offered for the Safety of Canoes – at sea –<sup>60</sup>
- 12 Family god called Vei with a tail which the priests take off & decorate themselves with when they wish to be inspired.<sup>61</sup>
- 14 The handle of a Sacred fan & part of a Cocoa Nutt leaf that has been brought from an opposite party & presented. to their enemies as a prediction that they will be conquered in War – when they receive it they take it before the *marae* & say – We have received this Niau poke no tatou – leaf of death for us –
- 15 A rod with snares at the end which the priest uses in catching the Spirit of the god (Observe the snares at the ends of the strings.) It is used in cases of pregnancy. The woman is taken before the Mgr & the Priest uses this snare to catch the spirit of the god. Only chiefs had the honor of the ceremony – it was of importance both in Raiatea and Aitutaki & becomes an occasion of boast in succeeding years to all that had it performed for them. At Aitutaki it was used for catching the god by his leg in War to secure his influence on the side of the party who performed this Ceremony.<sup>62</sup>
- 16 O te Ao aka Maru – a great God to whom they applied in all cases of difficulty & perplexity in going to Sea – overtaken with storms – in War – in Sickness & to this great god also sacrifices of various kinds were offered & to him all persons killed in War were presented – he was considered very powerful in killing men –

<sup>59</sup> According to King (2011: 187, note 10) this could be No. 114 of the LMS Collection in the British Museum (see King 2011: 98, figs 83 & 84).

<sup>60</sup> According to King (2011: 72 and 187, note 11) this is No 437 of the Oldman Collection. It is now in the Otago Museum Dunedin (O50.038) (see above p. 262, Fig. 14).

<sup>61</sup> According to King (2011: 187, note 12) this could be the small Aitutaki slab god with detachable tail with the No. 46 in the LMS Collection in the British Museum (see King 2011: 114–115, figs 152 & 155).

<sup>62</sup> A drawing of No 15 can be found in Williams 1842: 18, no. 2; see also King 2011: 223 and 187, note 13.

- 17 Te I ma te tabu. A man from Raiatea ages ago who drifted to Aitutaki, distinguished himself in their Wars & was afterwards deified
- 18 Ruanuu<sup>63</sup> – a Chief from Raiatea ages past. He sailed from Raiatea in his Canoe & settled in Aitutaki. From him a genealogy is dated – he is termed – *Te Atua taitai tere* or a leader of fleets. He was drifted to Aitutaki & was a powerful & great God. To this God is ascribed the preservation of Rairai a chief of Raiatea – he was sailing a fleet to Tahiti, was overtaken with a foul wind, and drifted to Leeward. Raiatea offered prayers to Ruanuu – Tah nia a Shark by that name came up to eat them, but Ruanuu in answer to Rairai's prayer appeared in the shape of a Crane & settled upon the Canoe. Rairai said to the evil spirits that appeared in the shape of a shark – No do not hurt this canoe – it has been settled on by the crane – we are disciples of Ruanuu & out of our power- thus he & his fleet were saved & taken to shore. On Ruanuu there is an old tattered Silk handkerchief that was obtained from Captn Cooks Vessel & immediately presented to Ruanuu as the god or guide of fleets –
- 19 Bundle of fans – Sacred
- 20 Koke an inferior order of their gods that have no sacrifices – no disciples or offerings & are referred to in a degrading manner – as treating a man with courtesy they say He is a man. Is he not a Koke? That is – is he not a man without family – without house without food – without friends as the koke – so is he without honor
- 21 The remains of a garment in which a Warrior had been victorious & on his return presented to the god as a covering – the one with feathers is a girdle in which the King blows a conch shell at some of their large Feasts
- 22 A Sling & part of a spear by both of which men (perhaps many) have been killed – they are therefore presented to Rua tabu the great god of War – his fan & other things are also in the bundle
- 23 Other representations of the great god Te Rongo – No 2 inspired by the shark with the garment used by the Priests –
- 24 Tangi ia – A man formerly known from Opoa in Raiatea – drifted to Aitutaki – distinguished himself in war & deified – He is the god of War belonging to the district of Aipai<sup>64</sup> in Aitutaki
- 25 Ta' – with his fan & the God of Thunder – when the thunder claps – they say that this god is flying –<sup>65</sup>
- 13 Skipped – A Priests dress –

<sup>63</sup> Tahitian spelling of Ruanuku, the name of a god; see Buck 1944: 331.

<sup>64</sup> Vaipae district in east Aitutaki.

<sup>65</sup> According to King (2011: 188, note 16) LMS cat (no date) No. 46 »The god of thunder, of carved wood, adorned with feathers. From Rarotonga« (2011: 198) could well be No. 25, but the actual object remains unidentified.

### [Description of the Aitutaki Idols] Sent to England

- No 1 Representation of Te Rongo belonging to Orutanga a district in Aitutaki – Every district has an idol of the God to which it belongs See No 2<sup>66</sup>
- No 2 An Idol of the great god Tangaroa see No 8 This is perhaps their greatest god – he made the Heavens earth & all things – human sacrifices were offered to Tangaroa at Rurutu he is acknowledged as the greatest of gods – At Auau – Atiu & all the Islands at which we touched they acknowledged the greatness of Tanga roa – this representation of him belongs to the district of Atimama –
- No 3 Te Turere an idol belonging to the great god Ta'aroa from the district of Atineva – each district makes its Idol & dedicates it to the principle god & leaves it at the principal Marae as its representative –
- No 4 The District of Natipaki's Idol of Tangaroa left at the great Marae as its representative –  
<sup>67</sup>
- No 5 Nukunoni an idol of the great god Ruatabu – Nukunoni is the district to which it belongs – it is placed at the great Marae as their representative to superintend their affairs & make them victorious in their wars – I can get no explanation of the two figures upon this or others of a Similar description<sup>68</sup>
- No 6 A great god purchased with a fishhook. This was one hung at the yard arm on our entrance in the harbor – it is most likely a household or family god<sup>69</sup> – the Old Chief from Aitutaki is sitting with me & wishes that the idols may not be sent to England but burned to cook food with as they will expose his folly.«<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> According to King (2011: 188, note 17) this is the large sennit and feather figure No. 170 in the LMS collection in the British Museum (see also King 2011: 71 and 203, Fig. 280).

<sup>67</sup> According to King (2011: 188, note 19) this is the 74 cm openwork staff god No. 168 in the LMS Collection in the British Museum (see also King 2011: 71–72 and figs 178–182) although it is generally attributed to the Austral Islands.

<sup>68</sup> According to King (2011: 188, note 20) this is No. 430 of the Oldman Collection. It is now in the Auckland Museum (31502) (see above p. 270, Fig. 26a).

<sup>69</sup> According to King (2011: 188, note 21) this is No. 38 of the LMS Collection in the British Museum, figured in Williams 1842: 18, no. 1; Buck 1944: 337, Fig. 209; LMS cat (no date): 14, No. 3: »Another rude idol of wood, with a human head, from Aitutaki, figured by Mr. Williams [1837] p. 65«; LMS ms cat [95] 437 [692]: »A god from Aitutaki which on the introduction of Christianity was deposed and used as a post in a cook-house and afterwards given for a few fish-hooks to Mr. Williams«; see also King 2011: 137, Fig. 235).

<sup>70</sup> King 2011: 186–188, see also note 15.

## Zusammenfassung

Das Staatliche Museum für Völkerkunde München besitzt eine weibliche Figur aus Aitutaki, Cook-Inseln, die zur so genannten »Cook-Sammlung« des Museums gehört. Diese Sammlung wurde im Juni 1825 von Johann Georg Wagler (1800–1832), einem Adjunkten des zoologischen Kabinetts der Königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in London entdeckt und im Juli 1827 von Ludwig I. für 400 Gulden für den bayerischen Staat erworben. Der Aufsatz versucht einerseits den Weg zu verfolgen, den die Figur nach der Missionierung von Aitutaki 1823 über Ra‘iatea oder Tahiti nach London genommen haben könnte. Andererseits wird versucht, der Bedeutung dieser weiblichen Figur aus Aitutaki anhand von Mythen und ikonographischen Vergleichen mit anderen Götter- und Ahnendarstellungen nachzugehen. Die wenigen erhaltenen weiblichen Figuren aus Aitutaki könnten Darstellungen der jungen Frauen sein, die die bis heute überlieferten Abstammungslinien begründeten. Die geschnitzte Zackenlinie an beiden Seiten unserer Figur könnte als Rückgrat und symbolische Darstellung der Abfolge der Generationen als Hilfsmittel zum Rezitieren von Genealogien gedient haben.

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