The History of the Tahitian Mission, 1799–1830, Written by John Davies

C. W. Newbury

THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY

The History of the Tahitian Mission, 1799–1830, Written by John Davies, Missionary to the South Sea Islands

With Supplementary Papers of the Missionaries

Edited by
C.W. NEWBURY

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published by Ashgate Publishing

Published 2016 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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ISBN 13: 978-1-4094-1482-7 (hbk)

WORKS ISSUED BY

THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY

THE HISTORY OF THE TAHITIAN MISSION 1799–1830

SECOND SERIES
No. CXVI

ISSUED FOR 1959

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, Bentley House, 200 Euston Road, London, N.W.1.

THE HISTORY OF THE TAHITIAN MISSION 1799-1830

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JOHN DAVIES
MISSIONARY TO THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDS

WITH SUPPLEMENTARY PAPERS
FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE OF
THE MISSIONARIES

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CAMBRIDGE
Published for the Hakluyt Society
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
1961

PUBLISHED BY
THE SYNDICS OF THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Bentley House, 200 Euston Road, London, N.W. 1
American Branch: 32 East 57th Street, New York 22, N.Y.
West African Office: P.O. Box 33, Ibadan, Nigeria

E teie nei, e haere outou e faa riro i te mau fenua 'toa ei pipi, a bapetizo atu ai ia ratou i roto i te ioa o te Metua, e no te Tamaiti, e no te Varua Maitai.

Mataio, xxviii, 19

Printed in Great Britain
by Robert MacLehose and Company Limited
at the University Press, Glasgow

FOREWORD

THE writing and, even more, the editing of missionary history has largely remained the preserve of the metropolitan supporters of missionary organizations. Much of the work which has been so produced belongs in the border-lands between history and propaganda: the beliefs and practices of non-Christian peoples are blackened by caricature; the human frailties of missionaries are concealed; the character and extent of missionary success are oversimplified and exaggerated. Sometimes these faults have been the product mainly of ignorance and of an uncritical cast of mind; but at other times they have had their origin in a conscious desire to edify supporters and to win new friends. (In the latter circumstance, the writers have been guilty, in John Davies's opinion, of 'pious fraud'.) But there have always been writers equally committed to the missionary cause who have striven for a truer understanding and for the communication of the complex reality of the missionary situation with all the fidelity of which they were capable. To such writers —often, like Davies, men with long experience in the field—a great debt is owed.

The impact of Christian missions upon non-Western societies, such as those of Polynesia, has been both complex and profound. On the one hand, the quality and characteristics of the churches which have been created have depended not only upon the nature of missionary teaching but also upon that of other Western influences—political, social, and economic—and upon the values and institutions of indigenous society. On the other hand, the work of the missions has penetrated every aspect of the process of change by which non-Western peoples have adapted themselves to the conditions of the modern world. To anyone who knows Polynesia in our own times, these propositions require no more than brief, formal statement: the everyday speech and action of the people is their proof. It is a mark of John Davies's quality that he understood something of the complexity of cultural change in the early years of the Tahitian church

Dr Colin Newbury's interest in Davies's *History of the Tahitian Mission* arose out of his own awareness of the final indivisibility of a country's history. In 1953, as the first Ph.D. student in the Department of Pacific History of the Australian National University, he began a historical study of the administration of French Oceania. As he worked through the sources in Paris, London, Rome and

Papeete, and in the Australian libraries, and as he observed Tahitian society at first hand, the picture which took shape in his mind became one which embraced much besides politics and administration. As his supervisor at that stage, I was privileged to share something of the enthusiasm which this work aroused in him.

John Davies, himself, was acutely aware of the peril of entrusting his manuscript to an editor; and for this reason he never sent it to England. He wanted it to remain 'a faithful record of facts', not a statement in which difficulties, disappointments, and failures were glossed over or in which events were presented in such a way as to lend unjustified support to contemporary theories. It is a tribute both to Dr Newbury and to the London Missionary Society that the *History* is at last to appear in a form which satisfies the austere and rigorous standards of the author.

CANBERRA *J. W. Davidson*
November 1960

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DURING the preparation of this edition, my debt to the Librarian of the London Missionary Society, Miss Irene Fletcher, and to the Home Secretary of the Society, the Reverend R. O. Latham, for their assistance and encouragement has steadily accumulated. The obligation is further increased by the work of Miss Mair Evans and the Reverend R. L. Griffiths who undertook the translation of John Davies's Welsh correspondence. In return, it is hoped that the publication of Davies's Manuscript 'History' will be its own tribute to the Society and to the author who was one of its missionaries.

It is a pleasure to record my gratitude to the Trustees of the Mitchell Library, Sydney, for permission to consult and cite the collection of Tahiti British Consulate Papers and to reproduce watercolours by Lieutenant Tobin and C. Martens. I am grateful also to the officials of the Public Record Office, and the librarians of the National Library, Canberra, for their courtesy and service; to M. Kruger, archivist of the Société des Missions Évangéliques; and to Father Patrick O'Reilly, whose invaluable private collection has always been at my disposal. Professor J. W. Davidson of the School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, encouraged the early work which brought Davies to my attention; and my former colleague Dr Niel Gunson, provided a fund of information from his extensive knowledge of missionary activities.

Finally, at every stage of the preparation of the manuscript I was ably advised by Mr R. A. Skelton, Honorary Secretary of the Hakluyt Society, and ungrudgingly assisted by my wife. Each, in their own way, have helped to make this edition possible.

C. W. Newbury

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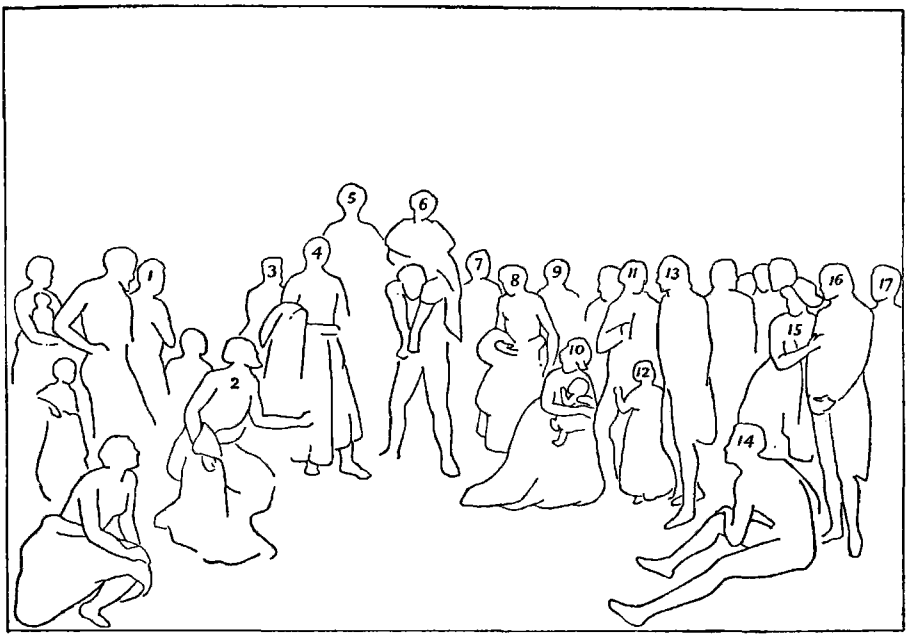

THE FRONTISPIECE

The Cession of the District of Matavai to the Missionaries,
16 March 1797, by R. A. Smirke, R.A.

KEY TO IDENTIFICATION OF THE FIGURES

1	A daughter of Teu	9	Itia (first wife of Pomare I)
2	Ha'amanimani, *Arioi* priest	10	Mrs Hassall and child
3	Teu, chief of Pare	11	William Wilson, First Mate
4	Tu (Vaira'atoa, Pomare I)	12	Child of Rowland Hassall
5	Tu (Pomare II)	13	Captain James Wilson
6	Tetua (Tu's concubine)	14	Paitia, chief of Matavai
7	Fareroa (Itia's paramour)	15	Mrs Henry
8	Peter Haggerstein	16	William Henry
		17	John Jefferson

In the background is Mt. Aora'i. The dwelling immediately behind the group is Bligh's 'British house'. The end section of the first missionary house is on the right.

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SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

This includes manuscripts, printed books and articles, charts and topographical drawings cited in the text and consulted by the Editor. Published translations into the Polynesian language are listed together in section III of the Bibliography. Codes of laws and other regulations are listed separately, with their archive location, in Appendix II.

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ABBREVIATIONS

C.O.	Colonial Office
F.O.	Foreign Office
H.R.A.	*Historical Records of Australia*
L.M.S.	London Missionary Society
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
Q.C.	*Quarterly Chronicle . . .*
T.M.S.	*Transactions of the Missionary Society*

INTRODUCTION

THE revelation of the South Seas to eighteenth-century Europe, like the opening up of the New World some three hundred years earlier, inspired Christian concern for societies at the periphery of the map. The coincidence of geographical discovery and evangelical revival was too striking to be anything less than a divine summons to convert the latest-known corner of the earth.

The missionary followed the seaman. But he derived his knowledge of the Pacific from the published voyages of Wallis, Byron, Carteret, Cook and Bougainville—albeit at second hand from the editors and translators of the day. It was, at best, a distorted and partial body of information, descending from the plain narrative of scientific discovery to picturesque reports, moral homilies, and the scurrilous and entertaining tracts of versifiers and pamphleteers. The seamen and the naturalists were concerned with fact; the romancers and the social philosophers used what they found to adorn a theory. The only outstanding thinker to comment on the material provided by the new discoveries was Diderot; and he did not claim to present an accurate picture of Tahitian customs.[1] England lacked a Diderot. But English readers had their Hawkesworth; and for those keen to see the Noble Savage in person there was Ma'i, brought back from Huahine in 1774, whose romantic influence, complete with exotic turban and plumes, was captured in a full-length portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds.[2] Less elegant, but widely-known, were the epistles and pamphlets of Major John Scott and John Courtenay who poked fun at Sir Joseph Banks, or compared the honest virtues of the Society Islands with public and private scandals at home.[3]

If the Tahitian way of life had its early champions, the English

[1] Gilbert Chinard (ed.), *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (*Paris*, 1935). Diderot's *Supplément* was written in 1772, but was not published till 1795. For a general discussion of the influence of Tahiti on European literature, see Jean Gautier, 'Tahiti dans la littérature française à la fin du XVIII^e siècle, quelques ouvrages oubliés', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, III (1947), 44–56.

[2] Ma'i, or Omai, was returned to Huahine by Cook in 1777. He had been lionized in England and was the subject of a number of literary works both there and in France.

[3] Major John Scott, *An Epistle from Mr. Banks, Voyager, Monster-Hunter, and Amoroso, to Oberea, Queen of Otaheite* (London, 1773); [John Courtenay,] *An Historic Epistle from Omiah to the Queen of Otaheite being his Remarks on the English Nation* (London, 1775).

Evangelicals were not among them. Their attention was drawn to the Pacific as a field for missionary enterprise for slightly contradictory reasons arising from their interpretation of the voyage literature: the location for a mission seemed ideal, but the Polynesian, despite his fortunate environment, was perilously near to eternal damnation. Publicity for their views was provided, after 1793, by *The Evangelical Magazine*; the Baptists in India set an example; and at the foundation of the Missionary Society in September 1795, the Rev. Dr Haweis persuaded the Calvinist-Evangelicals, Methodists, Presbyterians and others to provide the means.[1]

Haweis's conception of the Pacific and the nature of the mission to be established there dominated the first experiments of the Society. Chaplain to the Countess of Huntingdon, preacher, historian and scholar, he combined the imagination and energy necessary to plan and promote with a single-mindedness that occasionally overlooked the difficulties of the task he set others to perform. In his attitude to the South Seas he was closer than he knew (or would have cared to know) to King Carlos of Spain whose 'Royal and Catholic zeal' was in 1771 'kindled for the rescue of the natives from their miserable Idolatry' in Easter Island 'by discreet and gentle means to a knowledge of the true God and the profession of our religion'.[2] Haweis had a similar sense of the unique worth of his own faith; and his compassion for the fallen state of the heathen —to be saved by conversion and maritime trade—placed him in the same tradition as King Carlos, a tradition that reached back to the early expansion of Europe overseas.

It was some twenty years after the ineffectual Spanish attempt to maintain a mission in Tahiti that Haweis arranged to send four missionaries with Captain William Bligh in 1791 on his second voyage for breadfruit plants. The plan was thwarted by the refusal of two of the Evangelical candidates to venture forth without ordination. Such scruples did not deter the missionary pioneers directed by Haweis to his chosen field four years later. His attitude to this field was a mixture of delight in accounts of a South Seas

[1] Arthur Skevington Wood, *Thomas Haweis 1734–1820* (London, 1957), 190–208. See also F. A. Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society, from 1792 to 1842* (London, 1842), I, 20–8; R. Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795–1895* (London, 1899), I, 1–28; Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society. Its Environment, its Men and its Work* (London, 1899), I, 58–64.

[2] Cited in Bolton Glanville Corney (trans. and ed.), *The Quest and Occupation of Tahiti by Emissaries of Spain during the Years 1772–1776* (Hakluyt Society, series II, vols. 32, 36, 43, London, 1913–19), I, 265.

Elysium and horror at the unregenerate society living there. The two themes run through his letters of the period and his sermons preached in 1795 at the foundation of the Missionary Society.[1] The best statement of his views on the subject was printed in *The Evangelical Magazine*:[2]

> On frequent reflection upon all the circumstances of these islands, ever since their discovery, I have been persuaded, that no other part of the heathen world affords so promising a field for a Christian mission: Where the temper of the people, the climate, the abundance of food, and early collection of a number together for instruction, bespeak the fields ripe for harvest. No-where are the prospects of success more flattering, or the dangers and difficulties of the Missionaries less to be apprehended, except, as the worthy Admiral Bligh informed me, such as may arise from the fascination of beauty, and the seduction of appetite.

Haweis went on to regret the evil effects of European contact with the islands and described their climate and produce in terms matched only by the most imaginative of the social philosophers. To learn the Polynesian language (Bligh had assured him) would present no difficulty. Moreover, the missionaries would start with a psychological advantage in the 'consciousness of the superiority of Europeans' already awakened in the islanders. To teach them the 'arts of labour' and lead their souls to salvation would require but a few teachers. More daring still, if they were single men, advised Haweis, 'they would do well to form matrimonial connexions with the first converts of the natives, especially those connected with the superior families; who would thus, receiving them into their bosom, be more engaged to protect them'. In other ways his plan was closer to the form taken by the first enterprise. 'My idea is,' he concluded, 'that our society should have a transport ship, chartered to carry convicts to Norfolk Island or Botany Bay, and to have a home freight from China on account of the India Company.'

Four days after the Missionary Society was constituted, its Directors had decided to accept the services of Captain James Wilson[3] to command the first voyage and had determined the kind

[1] Haweis, *Sermons, preached in London, at the formation of the Missionary Society, September 22, 23, 24, 1795: to which are prefixed, Memorials respecting the establishment and first attempts of that Society* (London, 1795), 12–13.

[2] Haweis, 'The very probable success of a proper Mission to the South Sea Islands', *The Evangelical Magazine*, I (1795), 261–70.

[3] Wilson had retired from the service of the East India Company. See John Griffin, *Memoirs of Captain James Wilson, Containing An Account of His Enterprises and Sufferings in India, His Conversion to Christianity, His Missionary Voyage to the South Seas, and His Peaceful and Triumphant Death* (London, n.d.), 121–36.

of missionaries they wanted—not learned men, but 'Godly men who understand Mechanic Arts'.[1] At the same time as this decision was taken, the Directors appointed a committee to examine ways of transporting the missionaries to the South Seas. On it sat Wilson, Dr Haweis, and two other Directors, Hardcastle and Steven.[2] In the months that followed there were hesitations and queries; but Haweis would brook no opposition. He converted Wilson to his belief that the outright purchase of a vessel was the best financial course; he used his influence with the Admiralty to sponsor the sale; he interviewed candidates; and he interviewed a certain Mr Mason who had sailed with Cook and who reinforced his decision that the mission should be first established in Tahiti.[3] As a result, the *Duff* was bought at the end of April 1796.[4] Even so, there were still doubters; and as late as June 1796—some three months before the *Duff* sailed—Haweis and two other Directors were hastily questioning informants with some knowledge of the South Seas. Only one of these had actually been in Tahiti. But Haweis reported that they were all agreed 'that at Otaheite a sober & friendly sett of men would be welcomed very cordially & That Pomare, or any of the Chiefs would grant land readily to any extent that might be wanted'. Women and children, the Directors were told, would be safe; local provisions were abundant; and, as for the language, 'it was stated that any man of common sense may soon acquire it and improve it—it is simple and confined'.[5] It is not surprising that this optimism found its way into the Directors' final instructions to the missionaries, since Haweis had a large hand in their preparation.[6]

The missionaries themselves were of humble origins: only four

[1] Board Minutes, 28 September 1795 (L.M.S., Board Minutes 1, 1795–8).

[2] Joseph Hardcastle (1752–1827) was a foundation member of the Society. See *Memoir of Joseph Hardcastle, Esq., First Treasurer of the London Missionary Society* (London, 1860). For Robert Steven, see John Morison, *The Fathers and Founders of the London Missionary Society; with a Brief Sketch of Methodism, and Historical Notices of the Several Protestant Missions, from 1556 to 1839* (London, n.d.), II, 575–82.

[3] Board Minutes, 12 October 1795.

[4] It is not clear from the records what the Society paid for her. The total cost of the first expedition was estimated at £4,800. Circular, 21 April 1896 (L.M.S., Home Odds I, 1764–1829).

[5] 'Report of Dr Haweis—Mr Hardcastle & Mr Cowie of the information obtained from Doctor Barkshom & from Mr G. Lamport, the former of whom was Surgeon of two Ships in the South Whale & Nootka Sound trade—& the other first mate of the *Prince William Henry*—afterwards of the Jackall both employed in the fur trade', (L.M.S., South Seas, Odds 2). The *Prince William Henry* had called at Tahiti in 1792 and picked up the survivors of the whaler *Matilda* which had been wrecked off the coast of the island.

[6] 'Counsels & Instructions for the Regulation of the Mission &c.' (L.M.S.,

were ordained ministers; one was a surgeon; the rest were carpenters, artisans and mechanics.[1] With little conception of what their venture entailed, but with a certain dogged confidence in the eventual superiority of revealed truth and sturdy lower middle-class virtues, they went forth to reform the unenlightened heathen. In March 1797, eighteen, with five missionary wives, were landed in Tahiti; one was settled in the Marquesas Islands; and ten others were left in Tongatapu.

No sooner had the *Duff* returned in July 1798 than a second expedition was organized and sailed in September of the same year with no fewer than fifty new missionaries on board. Once again, Haweis took a leading part in the preparations, while another Director, Samuel Greatheed,[2] was detailed to compile an account of the Pacific Islands as a useful work of reference. In fact, this was never sent with the missionaries. Better instructions would have served no purpose: the *Duff* was captured by a French privateer and the missionaries were transported back to England. Worse, in August 1799, the Directors learned that the bulk of the missionaries already in the Pacific had left Tahiti for Port Jackson, abandoning the mission. From Tongatapu there was no news at all.

A difficulty similar to that faced by the early missionaries also confronts the historian of early European contact with Polynesia—lack of accurate data about Polynesian society towards the end of the eighteenth century. Most of the missionary histories and other works on the South Seas have attempted a statement of the political structure of Tahiti and neighbouring islands.[3] But the mission historians—Ellis and Lovett in particular—emphasized, rightly, the hardships of early settlement for the missionaries and, less accurately, the magnitude of the benefits of religious conversion compared with the 'barbarity' of pre-mission times. It was an easy comparison to make, though hardly compatible with the reports of some of the earlier visitors, and difficult to substantiate in detail.

South Seas 1); 'Instructions to Captain Wilson from the Directors, Aug. 5, 1796', in *A Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean, Performed in the Years 1796, 1797, 1798 in the Ship Duff, Commanded by Captain James Wilson, Compiled from the Journals of the Officers and the Missionaries* (London, 1799), lxxxviii-xcix.

[1] Lovett, I, 127.

[2] Samuel Greatheed, engineer, minister and scholar. See Morison, II, 287–94. His account of the South Seas formed an appendix to the 1799 edition. *A Missionary Voyage*, 139–409.

[3] Lovett, I, 127–45, 147; William Ellis, *The History of the London Missionary Society* (London, 1844), 101–14; C. Silvester Horne, *The Story of the L.M.S., 1795–1895* (London, 1894), 23–35.

It is an endless topic, full of hidden and overt value judgements on institutions and events which, in the main, are known to us from European sources, not the least valuable of which are the journals and letters of the missionaries. And they, like all the early observers of life in Polynesia, were present at a period when Tahiti and neighbouring islands were undergoing religious and political changes occasioned by the observers themselves.

Those among the missionaries who were interested in the customs of their converts—Henry, Jefferson, Davies, Orsmond and Ellis[1]—went beyond the usual pedestrian accounts of 'savage life'. But, of these, only the first three were early enough in the group to gather first-hand information on eighteenth-century Tahiti; and the calamities of their day did not permit scholarly reflection till their informants had renounced much of the religious basis of Polynesian society. Orsmond, fortunately, arrived in time to collect the legends and songs which, with much additional material, provided a basis for the work of Teuira Henry. Ellis, unfortunately, was never long enough in the group to fill out the framework of his classic study, though he had access to missionary reports long after his return to England. A still later and little-known missionary, Robert Thomson, attempted a full history of Tahiti from the early eighteenth century till the 1840's.[2] It was never completed, but it remains a valuable supplement to other sources, particularly the *Memoirs of Arii Taimai*.[3]

The theme of the mission histories is the rise of a single Tahitian dynasty to power accompanied by religious conversion to Christianity, though the extent of this conversion and the abandonment

[1] William Henry (1797–1859) spent over forty years in Tahiti, but has left no publications, though his letters and journals are full of valuable observations. John Jefferson (1760–1807) was, like Henry, one of the original *Duff* missionaries and the author of most of the early reports and letters to the Directors. John Muggridge Orsmond (1784–1856) was the most studious collector of local ethnological material and the most turbulent spirit among the later missionaries. For a short account of his career, see Teuira Henry, *Ancient Tahiti* (*Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin*, no. 48, Honolulu, 1928), iv–v. William Ellis (1794–1872) spent only a few years in the South Seas, mostly in Huahine. For a period he was Foreign Secretary of the L.M.S. and made two visits to Madagascar in the 1850's and 1860's. His best-known work is his *Polynesian Researches, during a Residence of Nearly Six Years in the South Sea Islands* (London, 1829). For Davies, see below, xlviii.

[2] Robert Thomson, 'History of Tahiti', MS (3 pts. L.M.S.). Thomson (1816–51) went to Tahiti as an ordained minister in 1835 and worked there and in the Marquesas till his death.

[3] Robert E. Spiller (ed.), *Tahiti, by Henry Adams. Memoirs of Arii Taimai e Marama of Eimeo, Teriirere of Tooarai, Teriinui of Tahiti, Tauraatua i Amo. Memoirs of Marau Taaroa, Last Queen of Tahiti* (New York, 1947).

of older beliefs remained a debated point. The theme runs into two major problems—apart from the obvious one of explaining religious and political change from contemporary and partial records. Descriptive terms for the political and sub-tribal divisions of Tahiti and Mo'orea are confused—as indeed they were by the Tahitians themselves—with geographical names. Chieftainship has sometimes been confused with 'kingship'; and other overtones from European feudalism have obscured the picture of Tahitian society and its rulers.[1]

Tahiti and Mo'orea belong to the high Polynesian islands of volcanic formation with deep verdant valleys and a narrow fertile littoral. The main island with its peninsula is about ninety miles in circumference and girdled, except on its rocky north-east coast, by intermittent banks of coral reef. Eighteenth-century maps of Tahiti are imprecise: the principal landfalls and the reefs were of more interest to the navigators than the interior. Consequently, there is some doubt about the classification and location of political divisions. Morrison, one of the *Bounty* mutineers, discussed these divisions at some length, but has left no maps.[2] Conversely, the charts of Cook and the Spanish visitors tell us little about sub-tribal distribution. The first detailed attempt to relate Tahitian political divisions to a map was made by William Wilson, First Mate of the *Duff* (and nephew of James Wilson), when he toured the island in 1797, using Cook's chart of 1769 as the basis for his survey.[3] He recorded the names of the coastal settlements, grouped them into districts, and divided the whole of Tahiti into six major political divisions. The smallest geographical components—the districts, or the *va'a mata'eina'a* of Teuira Henry—were fixed areas of settlement where lands and lagoons were worked by groups of inter-related families, or clans, ideally under the leadership of the family which stood in the most direct line of descent from founding ancestors.[4] The authority of the leading chiefs, or *ari'i*, however, was qualified by other requirements than birth. Success in war, fertile harvests and the wise use of local food resources in peace, and suitable marriage

[1] See Robert W. Williamson, *The Social and Political Systems of Central Polynesia* (Cambridge, 1924), I, *passim; Religion and Social Organisation in Central Polynesia*, ed. R. Piddington (Cambridge, 1937), xi–xvi; E. de Bovis, 'État de la Société tahitienne, à l'arrivée des Européens', *Annuaire de Tahiti* (1863), 217–301.

[2] Owen Rutter (ed.), *The Journal of James Morrison Boatswain's Mate of the Bounty describing the Mutiny & Subsequent Misfortunes of the Mutineers together with an account of the Island of Tahiti* (London, 1935), 139–240.

[3] *A Missionary Voyage*, 169–84, 212. See reproduction at end of this volume.

[4] Henry, 70–94.

connections with other *ari'i* families were of importance. Above all, the *ari'i*, as the intermediary between the clan and the gods, was priest as well as administrator; and though surrounded with the trappings of rank—messengers, sacred artifacts and ceremonial precedence—the chiefs were expected to be efficacious as well as high-born.

Clans were also segments of local sub-tribes, or the major political divisions of the island, which acknowledged the leadership of one of the *ari'i* title-holders. District and divisional boundaries were jealously maintained, and the humiliation of paying services and tribute to the chiefs of other sub-tribes was stoutly resisted, even if Polynesian courtesy and the social status of chiefs made it impossible to ignore marks of deference to the *ari'i* without risk of insult.[1]

Confusion over the names of districts and divisions (or local clans and sub-tribes) resulted from reference to prominent geographical features to describe what were basically maximal lineages and groups of lineages; or it resulted from the extension of a district name to other politically allied districts along the coast. After the turn of the century, the extinction of many of the older ruling families through warfare and disease and the amalgamation of small clans with their neighbours under one *ari'i* titleholder added to this confusion. A comparison between the names used by William Wilson and Teuira Henry illustrates the point.[2] On the whole Wilson's boundaries—villages and coastal features—agree fairly well with those cited by Henry. But the distribution of districts among the major divisions (*mata'eina'a*) reveals some important differences. The division of Te Porionu'u which included the districts of Pare and Arue is liberally extended by Wilson to cover the whole northern area of the island. Te Aharoa division which comprised five districts is omitted. The reason was probably Pomare I's political alliance with Te Aharoa in the 1790's and the tendency of Wilson, like most European visitors, to ascribe to the Pomare family, as the leading *ari'i* titleholders in Te Porionu'u, more sovereign power than they in fact enjoyed. This is consistent, too, with the missionaries' description of conflicts between Te Porionu'u and Te Aharoa as 'rebellions'.[3] On the other hand, in Wilson's map, the district of Hitia'a on the east coast, which was part of Te Aharoa, is termed a division in its own right, possibly because of its size and the prowess of its chief in the 1790's. In the Taiarapu peninsula the

[1] *The Journal of James Morrison*, 167.

[2] *A Missionary Voyage*, 186–215; Henry, 70–89; and cf. P. Ribourt, 'État de l'Île Taiti Pendant les Années 1847, 1848', *Annuaire de Tahiti* (1863), 304–13.

[3] Ellis, II, 53–9, 81–3, 87; and below, 116–22, 129–30.

confusion grows worse. Many of the coastal clans named by Henry have no place in Wilson's account; and some of Wilson's names are not easily identifiable. But his delimitation of the principal districts of Afa'ahiti, Anuhi, Tautira, Teahupo'o, Mata'oae, Varari and To'ahotu agrees with Henry's description of these. Wilson's account of the Teva-i-uta division on the south coast of the mainland is also consistent with Henry, allowing for the use of some old names for the districts concerned. Papara, whose chiefs were paramount among the mainland Teva, was made up of three local clans, according to Henry, though she omits to name two of these. The third, A'oropa'a, is not shown by Wilson. The outstanding difficulty with the area adjacent to Teva-i-uta is the identification of Atehuru, a name much in use in missionary sources. Wilson used the term to cover a broad political division; but it has no such place in Henry's description where Atehuru is roughly co-terminous with the district of Pa'ea. The more usual term for the western division was Te Oropa'a, comprising the old districts of Manotahi and Manorua. Manotahi later became part of the district of Puna'auia; and Manorua which included a number of clans has left one of these in Puna'auia, while the others have been included on later maps in Pa'ea (Atehuru). Atehuru, then, for important religious reasons, was used freely for a period to describe both a section of the west coast—the present Pa'ea—the clans there, and their allies from other parts of Te Oropa'a who fought against the Pomares. The last division in Wilson's map, Tetaha (*sic*, Te Fana) is consistent with the present district of Fa'a'a.

In his general description of the island for the period immediately prior to European discovery, Thomson, though he omits Te Fana, sums up the major divisions as well as anyone.[1]

At this period and probably for ages before, Tahiti was governed by several independent chiefs, and divided into 5 great political districts. Taiarabu was called *Teva-tai*[2] and was governed by many chiefs the principal one of whom was Vehiatua the greatest warrior of his day, perhaps even the greatest known in Tahitian history; *Teva-uta* the southern district extended from the isthmus to Maraa the western point of the island, and included Papara where the principal chief Amo[3] resided. Atehuru now called Teoropa the western district extended from Maraa to Outumaoro including Bunaauia where Tetofa[4] the

[1] Thomson, I, f. 16.

[2] [*Sic*]: Teva-i-ta'i.

[3] Amo, or Oamo of the voyage narratives (Teva-hitua-i-patea), paramount chief of Teva-i-uta.

[4] [*Sic*]: Teto'ofa whom Henry lists as titular chief of Manorua (Pa'ea). Henry, 78; and cf. Ribourt, 309.

principal chief of the district resided. Purionuu the northern district extended from Outumaoro to Tahara or One Tree Hill, and included Pare the residence of Tutaha the principal chief since become the seat of government of Tahiti. Teaharoa the eastern district extended from One Tree Hill to the isthmus and Reti of Hidiaa seems to have been one of the greatest chiefs although there were at the period several chiefs in the district of nearly equal power.

This balance was upset by two factors—by the introduction of a new religious cult from Ra'iatea in the Leeward Islands, some ninety miles to the north-west of Tahiti, and by increasing contact with Europeans and European firearms in Te Porionu'u.

The cult of Oro was first introduced by Ra'iatean priests to Tautira in the peninsula where a sacred temple or *marae* named Taputapuatea was founded after its namesake in the Leeward Islands somewhere about the beginning of the eighteenth century.[1] This was followed by the foundation of other *marae* dedicated to Oro and by the spread of the Arioi society in Tahiti under Oro's patronage.[2] About the middle of the eighteenth century, according to Thomson, the image or *to'o* of the god was brought to Atehuru and installed in the *marae* of Utuaimahurau.[3] Thomson cautiously connects these events with later conflicts between the political divisions of the island: 'It may not be improbable that a desire to posess the person of the new God may have influenced the first agressors; and in a small island where inter marriages have taken place among the districts a war with one chief may often involve the whole.' On the whole, the later history of Tahiti seems to bear out this assumption. But, at stake there was more than a mere image of ironwood and feathers. The *to'o* was ceremonially essential for the investiture of titles of Ra'iatean origin—that is, from the Mecca of Eastern Polynesia. For, at the same period as the cult of Oro spread

[1] Henry, 128–31. The date of this important event is not clear. There had probably been attempts to establish Oro in Tahiti from the time of Tamatoa II, paramount chief of Ra'iatea (i.e. *c.* 1650–1700). The image and insignia of the new deity were brought to Papara by Ari'ima'o, great-grandfather of Mahine whom Cook saw as a young man of about fifteen at Huahine in 1771. Henry, 252.

[2] Henry, 190–5. For the connection between the Arioi society and the cult of Oro, see Ellis, I, 230–45; Charles Barff, 'Mythology of Huahine', MS., (L.M.S., Miscellaneous 20); J. A. Moerenhout, *Voyages aux îles du Grand Océan, contenant des documens nouveaux sur la géographie physique et politique, la langue, la littérature, la religion, les moeurs, les usages et les coutumes de leurs habitans; et des considérations générales sur leur commerce, leur histoire et leur gouvernement, depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à nos jours* (2nd ed. Paris, 1942), I, 485.

[3] Thomson, I, f. 16. For a description of the *to'o*, or ironwood stave of Oro, see below, xliii

through Tahiti and Mo'orea, a number of important marriages took place between chiefly families of the Leeward and Windward groups. From one of these dynastic connections whose titleholders were consecrated under Oro were descended the immediate ancestors of the Pomare family.[1] One of the chiefs of Pare, Teu, himself descended from a Tuamotuan adventurer, married a Ra'iatean princess. From this union was born Tu (Pomare I, or Tu Vaira'atoa) about 1745. In addition to his royal Ra'iatean connections, Tu was also related to the Vehiatua paramountcy in Taiarapu. An aristocrat by birth, high priest and politician in Te Porionu'u, Pomare I had ample opportunity to appreciate the usefulness of foreign visitors and their revolutionary artifacts. His son, Tu (Pomare II) born about 1782, exploited these advantages.

The location of the *to'o* of Oro in Atehuru and the construction of a rival repository at the *marae* of Mahaiatea in Papara had already led to a bitter conflict between the Teva-i-uta division and Teva-i-tai (Taiarapu) at the time of Cook's first visit in 1768.[2] During the next two years the war spread to include Te Porionu'u under Tutaha and Teu. Papara was crushed for the pretension of her chiefs; and the Teva of the peninsula carried on the struggle against the Porionu'u and their allies from Te Aharoa. Tutaha restored the *to'o* to its rightful *marae* in Atehuru. But by the end of 1771, Teu and his son Tu had been ignominiously defeated; and Tutaha, who unwisely continued the war, ended as a sacrifice to Oro on the *marae* of Taputapuatea. This disaster left Teu and Tu as paramount chiefs of the Porionu'u with the right to wear certain *ari'i* insignia consecrated in Atehuru, but not the most important, which were still the prerogative of the chief of Papara.[3] At the time of Cook's third visit in 1774, the Pomares were strong enough to engage in war against the paramount chief of Mo'orea, Mahine, though most of the fighting was done by their temporary ally, Teto'ofa, paramount chief of the Oropa'a division. Mahine wisely called for a truce. By 1777, the attentions of European visitors and the Pomares' claims to new sacred insignia and titles had turned the Oropa'a division against them. Pare and Arue were ravaged; the livestock and gifts left by Cook were plundered, though Tu with some help from the *Bounty* mutineers restored his fortunes in Mo'orea—henceforth a

[1] For a genealogy of the Pomare family, see below, Appendix I.

[2] Thomson, I, ff. 27, 38–9; J. C. Beaglehole (ed.), *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyages of Discovery*, I (Hakluyt Society, extra series No. 34, Cambridge, 1955) 112, n. 2.

[3] i.e. the *maro tera* girdle worn by Teri'irere of Papara. Pomare wore the *maro ura*. See *The Quest and Occupation of Tahiti*, I, xxv–xxvii.

place of refuge for his family and a residency for Tu himself. When Captain George Vancouver visited the island in 1791, the situation was temporarily stabilized: Pomare I exercised a paramountcy over Mo'orea; his son, Tu the younger, was paramount chief of the Porionu'u. This for the moment was the limit of their titular authority, but not of their ambition. Vancouver noted the splendid claims of Pomare II, a boy of nine or ten, to titles in Huahine and Taha'a. He also observed a change in the mien of Pomare I who was no longer so timid as he had been in Cook's time, his manners and conduct being 'marked with an evident superiority, expressive of the exalted situation he filled'.[1]

But this exalted titular status by no means implied sovereignty over all Tahiti. For, in 1793 the Pomares were at war with Taiarapu and Papara, a war which gained them access to the *marae* of Oro in Atehuru and consolidated the position of Pomare II's younger brother, Teri'inavahoroa, as holder of the famous Vehiatua title in the districts of the peninsula. Such was their position on the arrival of the *Duff*.

The missionaries landed in March 1797 and were well received, after being exuberantly greeted off-shore by members of the Arioi society. Pomare I and his son they assumed to be sovereigns of Tahiti, an impression strengthened by the so-called 'cession' of Matavai, which was a ceremonial expression of goodwill towards the visitors rather than a freehold gift of a sub-district.[2] They met, too, the Arioi priest Ha'amanimani, Pomare I and his first wife, Itia, and two Swedes, Peter Haggerstein and Andrew Lind, who, as interpreters and informants, were influential if unreliable guides.[3] The *Duff* continued her passage to the Marquesas and Tonga. On

[1] Capt. George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean, and around the world . . . performed in the years 1790–1795, in the Discovery, sloop of war, and armed tender Chatham, under the command of Captain George Vancouver* (London, 1798), I, 144–7.

[2] The 'cession' is the subject of the famous painting by R. A. Smirke, R.A., now in the possession of the London Missionary Society. The ceremony was not, as the missionaries later discovered, a grant in perpetuity, but a gesture of hospitality and an invitation to partake of the produce of the area—in return for liberal use of the missionaries' artifacts and their services in war. See below, 33.

[3] According to William Henry, the missionaries were informed that Ha'amanimani was a person of great importance 'and as much respected as the King [Pomare II], being the Uncle of Pomaree, the King's father formerly Otoo, but who lately changed that name for the former on account of the recovery of his son the present King from a disorder that seized him in the night, called Pomarre i.e. Night Cough. These Swedes also informed us that

3. The *marae* at Pare

Watercolour by Lieut. George Tobin, R.N., 1792

4. View near the watering-place at Matavai
Watercolour by Lieut. Tobin, 1792

her return to Tahiti, before she finally sailed for England in August 1797, Wilson made his survey and calculated the island's population at some 16,000 persons.[1]

The first location of the mission was a large wooden house built for Bligh near Point Venus at the north-eastern end of Matavai Bay. So long as they kept to their own affairs—constructing a new dwelling, planting, helping Ha'amanimani to build a boat—the missionaries were left in peace. But this quiet domesticity was not the purpose for which they had come. They boldly denounced the practice of infanticide among the Arioi, beginning with Ha'amanimani and Itia, but without success. Yet this rebuff was not serious. Indeed, their greatest cause for alarm during the first six months came not from the Tahitians but from their own number. John Jefferson and John Cock went to live in the Papeno'o valley a few miles away—to the distress of their brethren, who threatened to cut off their supplies if they continued to expose themselves to temptation. Worse, Francis Oakes and Cock applied to the main body for permission to marry Tahitian women. After some debate, this was declared 'unlawful' and the two suitors were required to remain within the fold at Matavai.

The factors which placed the whole enterprise in jeopardy were missionary interference with trade and a political breach between Pomare II and his father. In March 1798 the brig *Nautilus* arrived from the north-west coast of America short of supplies. A brisk exchange of local produce for muskets and powder was interrupted by the missionaries, who offered to provide hogs and fruit for nothing from their 'district' rather than see the arms traffic continue.[2] They also offended the Pomares by trying to round up five

Otoo was *king* of the whole Island, and also of Eimeo'. William Henry, Journal, entry for March 1797 (L.M.S., Journals 1).

Peter Haggerstein, from Helsingfors, had been left by the *Daedalus* in 1793, and Andrew Lind, a native of Stockholm, was a survivor from the *Matilda*.

[1] A figure which should be accepted with some caution in view of the rapidity of the survey and Wilson's method of calculating the population. Wilson counted the *ti'i* belonging to each family of a district clan, located at the district *marae*. He allowed an average of six persons to a family and counted all the clans and their *ti'i* round the coastal settlements of the island. Some of the missionaries who toured Tahiti at the same time gave higher estimates. *A Missionary Voyage*, 179–84. There is a good discussion of early population estimates in *The Journals of Captain James Cook*, I, clxxiv–clxxvii. A missionary census of Tahiti in 1829 gave the native population as 8,568. In 1848, the first reliable census by the French administration gave a native population of 8,082 for Tahiti and 1,372 for Mo'orea. Ribourt, 315–16. For evidence of depopulation during the early years of the nineteenth century, see below, xlv.

[2] Thomson, II, f. 10.

Sandwich Islanders who had deserted from the ship. Relations grew more strained at the end of March when a deputation of four missionaries, on their way to Pomare I, were roughly handled and stripped of their clothing. Fearful of what might ensue when the *Nautilus* departed and unconvinced by Pomare I's peace offerings, eleven of the eighteen missionaries with their wives sailed with the brig for Port Jackson.[1] The breach became more serious when the young Pomare II (who had probably organized the ambush of the deputation) attempted to stir up a revolt against his father in Pare —which was speedily put down with the help of the Papara and Papeno'o districts. Pomare II then conspired with Temari'i, chief of Papara, to help him throw off paternal restrictions on his authority. Further hostilities were only avoided by the arrival of some Tuamotuans who had to be entertained, and by the accidental death of Temari'i who blew himself up while testing gunpowder purchased from a whaler.[2] Pomare I took advantage of this delay and humiliated his eldest son by transferring the chieftainship of Arue to Teri'inavahoroa. Deeply angered, and jealous of his father's association with the missionaries, Pomare II attacked the patri-clan chief of Matavai, making up for his lack of military skill by increased sacrifices to Oro. Furthermore, he declared his father's titular authority over Te Porionu'u at an end and he divided up Matavai between himself and his ally, the priest of Oro, Ha'amanimani. This youthful boldness brought disaster upon Ha'amanimani who was murdered. But the allies of Pomare II in Papara and Atehuru were defended, with the help of the Hawaiian deserters, against an attack from the Teva of the peninsula under Teri'inavahoroa. By July 1799 Pomare's position as paramount chief over the Porionu'u was acknowledged by his father and peace ceremonies were concluded in a riot of feasting.[3]

Pomare II, however, was still no great friend of the missionaries. And they, restricted in their work to the confines of Matavai, were further weakened by the defection and exclusion from their communion of two of their number,[4] and by the departure of a third, John Harris, for Port Jackson via Tongatapu in January 1800. At

[1] Those remaining were John Eyre, John Jefferson, Benjamin Broomhall, John Harris, Thomas Lewis, Henry Bicknell and Henry Nott. William Henry and his wife returned early in 1800.

[2] Ellis calls Temari'i 'Oripaia', a corrupted form of one of his titles—Ari'ipaea. Ellis, II, 32.

[3] Jefferson, Journal, entries for June and July 1799 (L.M.S., South Seas, Journals 1).

[4] Lewis, after living for some time with a Tahitian woman, was 'cut off' by his brethren and died (or was murdered) in November 1799. Broomhall, in

Tongatapu, Harris learned of even greater disasters. The missionaries who had landed there in 1797 had separated to reside in different parts of the island. One left when the *Duff* paid a return visit on her way to England. Another, George Vason, married a local Tongan woman and gave up all pretence of missionary work.[1] The others, though at first well treated, ran foul of deserters and a few escaped convicts; and, after the outbreak of war between the chiefs in April 1799, three were killed, and the remnant, in a pitiful condition, were grateful to be rescued by Harris.[2]

By the end of the century, then, the missionaries had made first-hand acquaintance with Polynesian society and been rebuffed with violence, or treated with suspicion and indifference.[3] They had been deeply impressed by the effects of European contact with the Tahitians and by the way in which Tahitian chiefs tried to use this association as an adjunct to more traditional methods of having their authority recognized and increased. The British flag left by Wallis had been converted into a *maro ura* insignia by the chiefs of Papara; the muskets of the *Bounty* mutineers or of the deserters from the *Nautilus* were instrumental in upsetting or maintaining the balance of district authorities who derived their rank and power from birth and timely alliance and from the new weapons of statecraft imported by aliens. The extent of this alien contact is sometimes forgotten. Between Cook's last visit in 1777 and the arrival of the *Royal Admiral* in 1801, about twenty ships called at Matavai. After the *Pandora* had taken off the last of the mutineers in 1791, muskets and European help were at a high premium among the chiefs; and though the number of deserters in the island was small, trade in firearms was extensive, especially during the visit of the *Eliza*, an English brig, which landed an eighteen pounder for Pomare in January 1800. Even the remaining missionaries were obliged to change their policy towards the arms traffic and to make occasional purchases for Pomare II. Moreover, the character of Tahitian warfare had altered since the last great naval battle in 1771 : manoeuvres

June the following year, voiced his doubts about the immortality of the soul, was excommunicated, and took a Polynesian woman as his wife.

[1] J. Orange (ed.), *Life of the Late George Vason, of Nottingham, One of the Troop of Missionaries first sent to the South Sea Islands by the London Missionary Society in the Ship Duff, Captain Wilson*, 1796 (London, 1840).

[2] After this experience, the L.M.S. left Tonga to the Methodists who first went there in 1822.

[3] Such had been the experience, too, of William Crook who had been left by the *Duff* at Tahuata in the Marquesas in 1797. A few months later he moved to Nukuhiva, where he was picked up by two whalers, *Euphrates* and *Butterworth*, in January 1799, and sailed to England in the latter.

in large fleets of canoes off the coast had given place to deadly skirmishes by land and widespread devastation of property. The change had been noted as early as 1791 by Vancouver;[1] and by the end of the century canoes were used solely for the transport of men and arms or for ceremony. This minor revolution in tactics was accompanied by intense rivalry for the possession of the sacred image of Oro, increase in human sacrifices and the wanton destruction of crops and houses.

Gradually the missionaries learned that the Pomares were neither soverigns nor even politically secure in their own districts. After the reconciliation between Pomare II and his father, the Porionu'u chiefs assisted in putting down a rebellion in Atehuru, where the small landholders (*ra'atira*) groaned beneath the heavy-handed demands for services and tribute for the Teva and Porionu'u *ari'i* who conducted their religious services at the *marae* of Utuaimahurau.[2] For safety, the clans of Atehuru removed Oro to a fort in the hills in order to keep the image of the god out of the hands of the Pomares. A truce was made in July 1800; and Oro was temporarily released and brought to Pare. Meanwhile, as costly ceremonies took place on home ground, the Pomares began to encounter opposition from the *ra'atira* of their own districts and their allies in Te Aharoa. 'It is reported,' wrote Jefferson, 'that the commonality are much moved against the principal chiefs, and are wanting to root them up altogether, and to restore the ancient form of government to the island: that is, every district to be subject to its own chief, without the acknowledgement of a superior over him.'[3] Mistrust of great titles assumed under Oro's patronage, reckless demands for produce, and dismay at the Pomares' methods of consolidating their power were the grievances; and, speculated Jefferson, 'perhaps also a desire to revenge the death of Mannemanne may be at the bottom of it'.

Though generally termed a 'rebellion' by the missionaries, this evidence of popular discontent, aggravated by food-shortage and disease, was a reactionary protest against tyrannical claims to services based on grandiose titles. In a sense it was the Pomares themselves who were the revolutionaries, enforcing their traditional prerogatives by non-Polynesian instruments and even, could they have had them, by a colony of European settlers 'as the means of establishing them in the sovereignty of the Island, which they are now in danger of losing,' reported William Henry.[4] Thus, as their

[1] Vancouver, I, 146. [2] Jefferson, Journal, September 1799.
[3] Ibid. [4] Henry to Directors, 1 January 1801 (L.M.S., South Seas 1).

knowledge of Tahitian politics increased, the remaining missionaries observed a great difference between the outward style of Pomare II's royalty compared with the real limitations to his power. If his house in Pare, like his political progress, was meagre, everything in it and about his person was exalted:

> The King's title is *Otoo-noo-ey-te Atooa*—the meaning of which we do not clearly understand, but as the word Atooa is used to express the object of worship, *te Atooa*, God, it is doubtless as full of arrogancy & pride as is possible. His house is called—*Yow-rye*—(clouds of heaven) his double canoe—*Anoonooa*—(the rainbow) his manner of riding on the shoulders of an attendant—*Mahowta*—(flying): his torch that gives him light at night—*Ooweera*—lightning: and a drum that is frequently beating for his amusement—*pateere*—(thunder).[1]

These royal affectations did not prevent the Aharoa people from rallying against him under the leadership of Teohu, chief of Hitia'a. But war was prevented by Pomare's new line of defence—his association with Europeans. Teohu came to Matavai to state his terms. He was shown a letter recently arrived from Governor King of New South Wales, and he was made to understand its implication of protection from powerful friends abroad.[2] The people of Atehuru, however, were not so easily swayed by Pomare's good connections and withdrew the image of Oro from Pare to its rightful *marae* in Pa'ea, where, according to Jefferson, they secreted it. 'The image of their god,' he continued, 'is nothing more than a piece of hard wood called Eito, about 6 ft. long, without any carving, wrapt up in sundry cloths, and decorated with red feathers &c. Into this log of wood the natives confidently affirm O'oro enters at peculiar times.'[3] To recover it, the Pomares made their preparations by arming their followers, sacrificing to the god itself, and by collecting nails and scraps of iron for their eighteen pounder. Once more, however, war was averted by the arrival of Governor King's vessel, the *Porpoise*, in July 1801 with presents for the Pomares and a load of muskets and axes to exchange for hogs. And with this trade the missionaries had learned not to interfere.

For, by 1801, Jefferson, Nott, Broomhall, Henry, Bicknell and Eyre had come to terms with their situation. They had seen the

[1] Jefferson, Journal, 26 May 1799. [*Sic*]: Tunuiea'aiteatua. Pomare's house was called Aora'i, his canoe, Anuanua, his torch, [O] U'ira, and his drum, Patire. '*Mahowta*' is a corrupt form of *mahuta* ('to leap or fly').

[2] King to Pomare, 13 October 1800 (South Seas 1). King's letter—which, in fact, contained little more than polite greetings—had come by the *Albion* at the end of 1800.

[3] Jefferson, Journal, 20 April 1801. The 'hard wood' was the *aito*, or *toa* (*Casuarina equisetifolia*).