

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN AND MIGRATIONS

THE questions as to the whereabouts of the original home or homes of the early ancestors of the people whom we call Polynesians, and the courses and characters of their migrations from those homes to the islands of the Pacific, and of subsequent inter-island movements in the Pacific, have been the subjects of considerable discussion. I propose to confine myself for the present to the fundamental question of the early migrations into the Pacific of at all events some of these ancestors; for, though I have collected material, legendary and otherwise, bearing on the subject of subsequent inter-island movements, a discussion of these matters must be postponed till we are in a position to regard them in the light of our knowledge of the points of difference and similarity between the social and political systems, religious and other beliefs and traditions, and customs and practices, found in the several islands. I shall, however, refer in subsequent chapters to a few of these inter-island movements and local traditions as to origin, which help to throw light upon other subjects with which those chapters deal. In dealing now with original migrations, I shall, speaking generally, confine myself to statements and hypotheses of some past writers on the subject; any attempt by me to enter into the discussion of these matters before I have collected the material available would also be premature.

The subject of the original migrations has been discussed by a number of the earlier writers, such as Hale, Quatrefages, Lesson (whose theory was that the Polynesians originated in New Zealand), and others; but their views were based largely on more or less local data, and had not behind them the weight of evidence afforded by the logs and legends to which I shall refer presently. It has also been discussed by a number of more modern writers. I propose, however, to content myself with a mere reference, in the first place, to the writings of Fornander and Percy Smith, and to pass on from them to a few more recent investigators, after which I shall return to Fornander and Smith.

Fornander approached the subject from the point of view of a Hawai'ian student, and his views were embodied in his classic

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work on *The Polynesian Race*, published in 1878. Percy Smith, with special knowledge of the Maori, and of the earlier Polynesian people from whom they were descended, had at his disposal in 1910 a large store-house of fresh material, especially legends and logs; and his book *Hawaiki* forms a fitting sequel to, and continuation of, that of Fornander, dealing, as it does, with the earliest history of certain migrants, with which Fornander mainly occupied himself, and adding a large amount of fresh information as to the movements of the people after they had reached the Pacific.

The question has since been discussed by Churchill in 1911 and 1912<sup>1</sup>. He deals with it at considerable length; but as his data and arguments are almost entirely linguistic in character, I am not qualified to follow them. I will, however, draw attention to certain conclusions at which he arrives. He divides the ancestors of what we call the Polynesians into two groups or streams, the former of which he calls the Proto-Samoans, and the latter the Tongafiti folk. He treats both of them as having come from the Asiatic Archipelago, the former some 2000 years ago, and the latter some 1000 years later. He traces the supposed movements of these people on a chart; in this he shows by dotted lines certain movements of the Proto-Samoans among the islands of Indonesia; he then by continuous lines indicates two streams of the Proto-Samoans into the Pacific; one of these passes to the north of New Guinea, between New Britain and New Ireland, thence through the whole length of the Solomon group, and finally reaches Samoa as a termination; the other passes through the Torres Straits, south of New Guinea, and through the New Hebrides, and terminates in Viti Levu of the Fiji group. From Samoa he indicates by continuous lines further radiating movements to Tonga, Niue, Hawai'i, Mangareva, and southward to New Zealand. He makes no attempt to trace the movements of the Tongafiti migrations into the Pacific; but by means of dot and dash lines he indicates radiating movements from Samoa (not Fiji) to the Marquesas, Hervey Islands, Society Islands and elsewhere and further movements from these groups to other islands<sup>2</sup>.

Churchill thus credits the people whom we call Polynesians with a double ancestry, the two elements of which have reached the Pacific at different periods, one long before the other. It

<sup>1</sup> *Polynesian Wanderings*, and *Easter Island*.

<sup>2</sup> Churchill, *P.W.* p. v and map.

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has long been recognized that the Polynesians were a mixed race, and though this would not necessarily be inconsistent with a belief that they were all descended from one group or stream or succession of streams of migrants, the view has been held that this was not so. Writers have spoken of a conquering people, and have identified these as the ancestors of the families of the chiefs, this view being based in part upon the general superiority in physique of the chiefs, and the frequency among them of a skin fairer than that of the common people. This reason, taken by itself, would hardly be convincing, in view of the special care usually devoted to the upbringing and nurture of the chiefs' children, and the habit of artificially promoting fairness of skin among their daughters by protection from the scorching rays of the sun.

Another hypothesis to which I must refer is what Churchill calls the "sieve" theory and dismisses; it is that the islands of Melanesia and Polynesia were merely meshes of a net that caught drifts of castaways from Central Polynesia blown away from home and carried westward by the prevailing winds<sup>1</sup>. The contention that the Polynesians must have come from the east, and not the west, has, I think, been founded mainly on the basis of ocean physiography—upon the suggested impossibility of their distant ancestors having been able to accomplish migrations eastward in the teeth of the prevailing trade winds. This was a difficulty which could not be dismissed lightly, and Smith meets it by drawing attention to the extraordinary skill and daring of the people as navigators, as disclosed by recorded voyages, and to the belief that in days gone by, when the voyages under discussion were taken, they had larger and better sea-going vessels than those used by them in later days<sup>2</sup>. However sufficient or otherwise may be Smith's contentions on the question of navigation, we have to bear in mind the significant character of the ancient records of the migrations, the beliefs of the people as to the westward direction of the home of their ancestral gods and destination of the souls of their dead, the suggestive nature of many of their myths and legends, and their religious beliefs and customs. Whatever may be the answer to the navigation difficulty, I find it impossible to believe that the place of origin of at all events the ethnic elements in the Polynesians with which we must associate the bulk of our knowledge concerning them was eastward, and not westward,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 14–19.<sup>2</sup> Smith, pp. 166–89.

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of their Pacific home; and I do not imagine that the contrary theory has now any substantial volume of support.

Tregear, writing in 1914, states his views on the migrations as follows. The Polynesians are a people who either originated in India or in Central Asia, and passed through India. Leaving the mainland, they journeyed eastward through the Malay Archipelago, occupying perhaps many generations in the voyages from island to island. At the time of their passage the Archipelago was not occupied by Malays, who are a subsequent migration from the Mongolian seaboard. The Maori expedition or expeditions passed by the Melanesian and Polynesian islands, inhabited by black people (New Guinea, New Caledonia, etc.), and reached the Fiji group, where they settled for a long time. From Fiji as a centre they colonized Samoa, Tonga, Hawai'i, the Marquesas, Mangareva, and extended their colonies even as far as Easter Island. In process of time they either hived off or were expelled from Fiji, and the waves of migration passed to and fro among the groups of the islands. On one of these waves an expedition, starting probably from Ra'iatea, landed at Rarotonga, and pushing on to the south-west, reached New Zealand, where the occupants of their large double canoes were known as the Maoris from Hawaiki<sup>1</sup>.

The general question of the origin of the Polynesians has been opened up on highly scientific lines, entirely different in character from those pursued by other writers, by Rivers in his great work, published in 1914, *The History of Melanesian Society*, a book which, though it deals primarily with Melanesia, necessarily involves, as will be seen, the discussion of Polynesia also.

Rivers's investigation of the matter carries us back to a period long before that dealt with definitely by Fornander and Smith. He has no direct evidence to adduce, such as the Polynesian "logs," to which Fornander and Smith refer so frequently. He is dealing with the unknown; and necessarily his evidence is largely circumstantial, a form often more to be relied upon than direct testimony. Under these circumstances he adopts the method of hypothesis, surveying his data in the first instance from one or two special points of view, such as that of systems of relationship, suggesting a hypothesis which seems to be in better accord than any other with the result of his scrutiny, and then putting his hypothesis to the test by examining it afresh in

<sup>1</sup> Tregear, *Maori*, p. 559.

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the light of other matters; and thus finally accepting it, modifying it, or abandoning it and formulating a fresh hypothesis, according to the result of his tests. It is obvious that I cannot here reproduce Rivers's data and contentions; and I am in no way qualified to enter into a critical discussion of his views; but I may be allowed to say that, so far at least as his main fundamental propositions are concerned, the cumulative effect of his copious and widely different data, and of his minute and critical investigation and comparison is strong. He presents us with a past history of Melanesian and Polynesian society, based, it is true, on hypotheses, but upon hypotheses tested with considerable care, and from divergent points of view; and the way in which many and various features of Melanesian and Polynesian culture seem to fit into the compartments which these hypotheses provide for them is remarkable. At the very least it must be admitted that the general scheme of Rivers's theories—the only truly scientific theories yet evolved—seems to offer explanations of many of the puzzles and complications by which the study of Melanesian and Polynesian ethnology has been beset.

It may be my duty from time to time, in subsequent chapters of this book and in later books which I hope to write hereafter, to refer to specific matters discussed by Rivers, which I shall consider in the light of the purely Polynesian material I have collected; and with a view to this it is necessary that I should now refer to a few of the main points which enter into his scheme. The following are the conclusions to which I would draw attention<sup>1</sup>.

I. Melanesians and Polynesians are descendants of several different peoples, who have reached the Pacific at successive periods. These were

(1) An aboriginal people, about whom we know practically nothing, whose habitat was probably confined to Melanesia.

(2) Migrants into Melanesia and Polynesia. These were people who buried their dead in a sitting position. They were probably the original population of Polynesia. In Melanesia they fused with the aborigines, thus forming a dual people, with mutual exogamy and matrilineal descent.

(3) The kava people. These consisted of two groups of migrants, of which the earlier practised mummification, and the

<sup>1</sup> A few of the statements made here are based upon information supplied to me by Dr Rivers since the publication of his book.

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later interment in the extended position. They spread over most parts of Melanesia and spread widely and had a predominating influence in Polynesia. The migrants spoken of by Percy Smith belong to these people, probably the later ones.

(4) The betel people, whose influence has been mainly confined to north-western Melanesia. They may have had some influence in Polynesia, but this is difficult to detect. They were head hunters.

(5) The cremation people, who reached north-western Melanesia.

II. It is probable that the kava migrants did not all arrive in one body; but that their influx was spread over a considerable period of time, band after band of the wanderers arriving, some settling permanently, others passing on after a time and settling elsewhere.

III. They were not a conquering people who reduced the earlier inhabitants to a condition of complete subservience. They were in relatively small bodies; but their reception by those inhabitants was peaceful. They were of higher culture, and were superior to the latter in material equipment and mental endowment, and so, in spite of their inferiority in numbers, were able to exercise great influence over the people among whom they settled, these being folk of but lowly culture, easily receptive of the new customs and beliefs which the migrants introduced. They brought with them few, if any, women; and so had to mate with the women of the earlier people, thus producing closer ties of intimacy and friendship between the two races, and causing further racial mixture of blood.

IV. The culture of the people in certain parts of Melanesia, especially Pentecost Island (in the New Hebrides) and also the Banks and Torres Islands, the mountainous interiors of Fiji, and Buin (in Bougainville Island) is relatively primitive and archaic. In other parts it is more advanced; it is especially so in the small island of Ulawa, near the southern extremity of Malaita, in the district of Saa in Malaita, and in Eddystone Island, near New Georgia. It is still further developed in Polynesia.

V. In places where the culture is relatively archaic the elements of that culture to be attributed to the dual people are relatively extensive and important; but where the culture is



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more advanced, one or more of the later elements, including those of the kava people, predominates.

VI. The islands with the more archaic cultures are those in which the systems of relationship are the most complex, the relationship nomenclature the richest, and the special functions, rights, privileges, duties and restrictions associated with bonds of relationship most numerous, well defined and important. Advance in culture has been attended by simplification of systems of relationship, comparative poverty in nomenclature and disappearance to a greater or less extent, according to the degree of advance, of these special functions, etc.

VII. The dual people were influenced by a belief in magic rather than by religion; but it is possible that the existing magic of Melanesia is a product of the interaction between the dual and kava people. The beliefs of the kava people were based mainly on religion, and involved religious practices, that is, practices which were believed to bring them into relation with powers higher than themselves, to whom they appealed and offered sacrifices, whom they regarded with awe, wonder and love, and who were able to withhold that for which they were asked.

VIII. The beliefs of the dual people were centred mainly on spirits which had never been men, though it is possible that these spirits had an origin in ghosts. Those of the kava people were based largely upon ghosts; they were, or included, a cult of the dead.

IX. The dual people believed that the dead dwelt underground, the way to this home beneath the earth being sometimes through volcanic vents, volcanoes entering into their beliefs. The kava people thought that their dead passed to spots on earth or above it.

X. The dual people regarded the body of a dead man as a thing to be removed as completely as possible from all contact with the living. The kava people treated it as a thing to be preserved and cherished.

XI. Secret societies originated with the kava people, being instituted to enable them to engage in their religious rites without intrusion of the dual people among whom they were living. The cult of the dead formed an important part of these rites; and the beliefs as to this, stimulated by the secrecy and mystery in which the rites were enveloped, and the unearthly noises and apparitions by which in some of the societies those not initiated were terrified, were conducive to the privacy which the kava

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people desired. The elements of secrecy, and fear on the part of outsiders, were most marked in the parts of Melanesia where the comparative strength of the kava people was weakest, because it was there that they were most needed. In other parts the kava people could engage in their religious devotions more openly, the need for secrecy and mystery was less, and the societies lost some of their supernatural importance.

XII. The social system of the dual people, so far as marriage was concerned, was one of gerontocracy, the old men of each moiety appropriating to themselves the young women of the other moiety. They had no chiefs, or, if they had, the position of these chiefs had not developed into importance. The kava people, with their more advanced social culture, had a system of definite hereditary chieftainship.

There are many other important questions raised by the book, to some of which I may refer hereafter, but those enumerated above are, I think, sufficient to give a broad idea of Rivers's views, so far as they affect the general question of Polynesian origin and migrations.

Setting aside the question of the betel people, we should expect, if Rivers's deductions are correct, to find in Polynesian culture features which he attributes to the kava people and to the sitting interment people, the former of these being perhaps specially associated with the chiefs and their families. Unfortunately we have but little material for dissecting the culture of the dual people of Melanesia, so as to eliminate from it features to be attributed to the Melanesian aborigines, who, according to Rivers's scheme, probably did not reach Polynesia, and confine it to that of the sitting interment people<sup>1</sup>.

Rivers refers to Churchill's scheme in a paragraph which I will quote verbatim as follows. "The other scheme recently put forward by W. Churchill has many points of resemblance with my own. Churchill deals especially with Polynesia and with Polynesian influence on Melanesia, and his general conception of the double nature of Polynesian culture, of the nature of the interaction between the two elements, and of the mechanism by which the Polynesian influenced the languages of Melanesia has many striking similarities with my own scheme. In one important respect, however, there is a profound difference. Churchill supposes the population of Polynesia to have been formed by the interaction between two peoples, whom he calls

<sup>1</sup> See Rivers's observations on this point (*H.M.S.* vol. II, chap. xxxviii).



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the Proto-Samoans and the Tonga-fiti. If there is any correspondence between his scheme and mine, the Proto-Samoans should correspond with the people who interred their dead in a sitting posture and the Tonga-fiti with the kava people. Churchill is unable, however, to find any evidence for the influence of the Tonga-fiti upon Melanesian language. I can only hope that the scheme of this volume may act as a guide in the search for the influence of this Polynesian element in Melanesia. It may be noted that Churchill's treatment is largely based on a study of the language of Efate which, according to my scheme, is shown by its plant-totemism to occupy a peculiar position in Melanesian culture. If the Tonga-fiti are to be equated with the kava people, it is rather in places such as the matrilineal region of the Solomons and the Banks Islands that their influence should be sought." Rivers then proceeds to discuss Churchill's denial of the close relation between the Polynesian and Indonesian families of language<sup>1</sup>.

Two volumes by Friederici were published in 1912 and 1913<sup>2</sup>. These deal with the question of the migrations from Indonesia to New Guinea and Melanesia, and the conclusions arrived at are based mainly on linguistic data, though some technological material is introduced also. Friederici's tracing of the movements he discusses does not carry them further east than Melanesia; but certain linguistic and other data disclose Polynesian affinities. On this ground it is proper that I should refer to the books; but it would be out of the question to attempt to introduce into this chapter any discussion of their contents or the Melanesian conclusions at which the author arrives. It may be that at a later date it will be possible to dissect out from Polynesian cultures some elements which may seem to be conceivably attributable to the pre-kava people who, according to Rivers's hypotheses formed one of the two elements of his dual people of Melanesia, but who reached the islands of Polynesia; and when this stage of investigation is reached Friederici's data may afford material for comparison.

I have quoted Rivers's reference to Churchill's division of migration streams into Proto-Samoans and the Tonga-fiti people, and his suggestion that, if there is any correspondence between Churchill's scheme and his own, Churchill's Proto-Samoans should correspond with his (Rivers's) sitting interment people and Churchill's Tonga-fiti with Rivers's kava people. It

<sup>1</sup> Rivers, *H.M.S.* vol. II, p. 584.

<sup>2</sup> Friederici (1) and (2).

seems to me, however, that if we consider the general contents of Churchill's book, we may recognize that, setting aside the question of the interval suggested by him between the two migrations (obviously a highly speculative and uncertain matter), it is possible that both his sets of migrants might have been groups of people whom we should regard as typically Polynesian in character, in which case both groups might well be Rivers's kava people. This is, I think, suggested by Churchill's reference to the Proto-Samoans having been driven out of Indonesia by advancing Malaysians<sup>1</sup>; by his entry into the well-known discussion as to the division of the stream into two currents, of which one passed north and the other south, of New Guinea; by his reference to Polynesian traditions of their migrations and their idea of Bulotu<sup>2</sup>; by his quotations from Tregear<sup>3</sup> and Percy Smith<sup>4</sup>; and indeed by the whole contents of the book. As to this matter, I may refer to Rivers's suggestion that the migrants spoken of by Smith were probably the later of his own two migrating groups of kava people, and point out that the bulk of the information given by Smith seems to relate to the migrants whose movements eastward were recorded in the Rarotongan logs, who afterwards spread over and colonized the Pacific, and who appear to have been the last stream to enter the Pacific in the neighbourhood of Fiji, Tonga or Samoa. Smith suggests of these people that on reaching Samoa the people with whom they came in contact would be "the original migration of Samoans—Polynesians like themselves"<sup>5</sup>; and if he is right in this, might not these earlier Samoans have been Churchill's Proto-Samoans and Rivers's earlier kava migrants?

Churchill has extended his investigations, and has recorded the results in his more recent book *Sissano*. Here again his data are almost entirely linguistic, so I must only record some of his conclusions and their illustration in his chart No. 16. He still adheres to his two Proto-Samoan streams, of which what he calls the Samoa stream passed to the north, and his Viti Levu stream to the south, of New Guinea; and as to this he says that the Polynesian element in the speech records found along the south coast are appreciably nearer to the type normal to that speech family than are those found on the north coast<sup>6</sup>. In connection with this matter he discusses the suggestions that

<sup>1</sup> Churchill, *P.W.* pp. v sq.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, p. 156.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 21 sq.

<sup>6</sup> Churchill, *S.* p. 159.