

Notes and trial drafts for The Migrations of a  
Pandanus People.

(duplicate)

Food. (Meals & Cannibalism)

## Meals.

Mealtimes depended much upon the supply of food, but normally a Gilbertese household liked to eat after returning from the early morning labours, which would be at about 9 o'clock; and after the evening's cutting of toddy had been brought home, at the hour of sunset.

A meal was also often eaten after the noontide cutting of toddy, but this was an extremely movable feast.

A universal habit was to awake at about midnight and make an impromptu meal of whatever remained over the evening's repast. This kind of meal, called tairā, was however never indulged in by those who wished to cultivate their babai pits next morning, and was often avoided by people busied with magico-religious observances.

Every Gilbertese household would habitually awake from sleep and sit down to a supper of boiled fish when one of its members returned at night with a catch.

Individual inclination played a great part in the ordering of mealtimes, and though the majority of people would be seen eating at the times indicated above, there was no etiquette which bound <sup>a</sup> ~~ea~~ native either to take his meals at any particular hour, or to do so in the company of his fellow householders.

Generally speaking, however, the meal may be said to have been common to the household. The whole household ate together, <sup>without</sup> distinction.



of age or sex. Children were generally seen to sit in company with those who ranked as tibu, i. s., grandfather or grandmother, it being their duty to tara wi-n (watch the mouth) of the aged, that is, to minister to their wants. The only persons excluded from the general board were women during menstruation. These must eat alone, which is to say, separate from the household and separate also from each other if there were two. They would generally take their meals ~~at~~ at the same time as the rest, sitting on a mat at a distance from the house, or perhaps in an outhouse well away from the dwelling. They used special eating implements and drinking utensils at this period, which might not be brought into the dwelling, and were stowed away after washing in seawater until next needed. The period of isolation was from the first day of the menses until the fourth day after complete cessation. On that day, after washing her eating utensils and stowing them away in the mat upon which she had sat, the woman might return to meals with the family, being careful to bring with her no remnants of the food she had eaten during her time of ao-nako, going-outside. Upon this seclusion is based the emphemistic term e tei i-so (she stands outside) referring to women at the time of menstruation.

It was the office of women at meals to bring in the food and set it before the males. As soon as the man or men had started eating, the women might also begin, if food was in plenty; but at a time of scarcity, the men ~~men~~ must first be allowed to appease their hunger, the remnants being taken by the women.



These were not thrown to them by their lords as elsewhere, but left on the raurau (platters) of leaf wherupon the food was <sup>served.</sup> ~~served.~~

The elder men, having the rank of tibu, were given the first choice of all foods. This at least was the theory, which was in accord with the privileges everywhere supposed to be allowed to the aged; but the degree of piety varied much from household to household, and in practice the old people were very often half <sup>t</sup> ~~served.~~

No ceremonies appear to have been used as a rule at the beginning or end of a meal. I have a note from Marekei that one old man used to break off a portion of his first dish and offer it to the skull of his grandfather; but the local natives look upon this as an idiosyncrasy peculiar to this individual, and I have not heard of the practice from any other island.

The food is not cut up or handed round by attendants. Everyone breaks or cuts off what he wants from the platter; but a grandchild will often do this on behalf of the grandparent and carry the morsel in his hands to his elder.

A passing stranger, by which term I mean any one not a member of the utu, might be called in to partake of the household meal. He could hardly refuse such an invitation without giving offence. To him the first choice of food would be offered unless the meal had already begun. In any case, ~~before~~ before eating, he would break off a piece of the article he



had chosen as his first dish, and offer it to the master of the house, who would then eat it. After this the stranger might proceed with his meal. The custom was called te t̄arika, it was believed that unless it was observed, the guest would be maraja, and would probably vomit back all the food eaten by him in that house. No special formula of words was used.

A stranger must never eat to repletion if invited to a ~~meal~~ meal; otherwise he would acquire the reputation of trading on other people's hospitality. Nevertheless, it was considered very graceful in him if, in spite of a meagre repast, he showed every sign of repletion at the end of the meal. There was no special method of doing this, and no formula of thanks for such an occasion, but a rubbing of the stomach and a remark that "a good meal makes one sleepy" would be considered delicately to the point. An eructation, followed by the explanation that the stomach was riba, or packed tight, was a favourite method of praising a host's entertainment.

After the first share of a meal had been offered to a stranger, no further notice of a particular native was taken of him.

Food at mealtime was taken in no special order. It was all served at once, and each individual followed his taste. The only strongly marked gastronomical preference I have been able to find among the natives is that something sweet ought to be eaten simultaneously with fish as a tanna, or relish. This seems to apply especially to fatty fishes, such as the baneswa



or the deep-sea conger; and to porpoise flesh. Under modern conditions on Banaba, an especial delicacy is made by mixing store sardines and raspberry jam, the horrible result being eaten rapturously with a tablespoon.

A meal was generally rounded off by a drink of kamaimai, kabubu, or cocoanut-water, though these might also be drunk during the repast.

Fish was always eaten in the fingers, except by suckling mothers who used a noko, or piece of cocoanut riblet, to convey it to the mouth. They were not allowed to use te aria, or flat, tapering bone of fish or turtle, which was generally employed as a spoon; but I have not been able to find any magico-religious reason for the prohibition. Another method in which suckling mothers ate fish was to get someone else to put it into their mouths. The idea underlying this was hygienic: in serving the breast to an infant a dirty hand might come in contact with the nipple, which was thought to dry the milk.

As I have said in another place, nobody engaged in the cultivation of babai would eat fish. *sort of pudding were te aria, made of any*

Implements used in eating sticky things, such as any flat tapering bone, and te kauae, which was of exactly the same shape, but made of turtle-bone exclusively. Curved scoops of turtle shell called borg (turtle-shell), about 2 inches wide and six long were also employed. Te kai-ni-mōi (the-instrument) (the-instrument-to-drink) was a ladle made of half a small coconut shell attached to a wooden handle, used for filling



cups with liquid from the larger vessels. Te Kumete was the bowl dabled out of a solid piece of timber in which Kamaimai was mixed ready for the ladle; this vessel was also used for pounding foodstuffs.

A sort of brush called te kai-n-nengenenge was made for sopping up kamaimai. It consisted of the roro or dried spathe of the coconut bloom, of which the end was pounded until soft and fibrous. This was teased out, dipped in the kamaimai, and sucked by the user.

At the time of the pandanus harvest, which in a normal season would be about September or October, it was forbidden to eat of the products of the fruit, e.g. te kabubu, until the first fruits had been ceremonially offered at the monolith shrine of the clan-god, and a ritual meal eaten there by the clan-members. For the purposes of this ritual a man and his wife would follow the ceremonial of their respective clans.

A woman whose husband had performed the ritual and might therefore eat the kabubu made by her, might not herself partake of it until her own clan had observed the rule.

There were few table-manners. A clumsy eater was derided, but according to English standards, the clumsiness had to be of a highly exaggerated order before it was recognised as such. Small eaters were pitied, and encouraged to eat more. What we should regard as gross eating commanded respect, especially in Abemama and Butaritari, where fatness is admired. A man had to be a stupendous trencherman to earn the unsavoury title of buabeka, or mangai-n-rang

(jaw



(jaw-of-slave), which was applied to those whom the native considered to be truly gluttonous.

### Cannibalism.

Eating human flesh cannot be regarded as a general or even frequent practice of the Gilbertese for many generations. But there can be no doubt whatever that sporadic cases have been known on practically every island until very recent times. A man was pointed out to me on Butaritari in 1922, whose father, just deceased at the age of about 70, was known to have strangled his wife just before the establishment of the Protectorate in 1892 and eaten raw her breasts, thumbs and great toes. It seems that he did this when he was drunk with sour-toddy and angry with his wife : his object was not to procure food, but to load the dead woman with the last indignity imaginable. He is reported to have said while eating her breast, "Ai beka-u mamma-m sei" This thy breast shall be my excrement).

In the same manner, on eight islands I have collected tales of individual cases of cannibalism, from one to five generations old, the motive of which seems to have been the desire to bestow an ultimate indignity upon the dead person. A pretty common practice with this motive behind it was to pluck out the eyes of an enemy slain in battle and crush between the teeth. The mere biting in two appears to have sufficed as a rule, but there are still many old men living who can be brought to admit that they actually swallowed the eye. An idiom in common



common use at moments of extreme anger is "I bia orai mata-n teuarei." Would that I might eat raw the eyes of that man.

It is only with difficulty and shame that a native will talk of cases of cannibalism of his island. This seems to be the only subject about which his emotions spread beyond the limits of his utu. On other topics, he will discuss freely the affairs of local personages not connected with him by blood, but in the matter of cannibalism, his mouth is closed whether for his own or any other utu. I have been able to elicit a confession from old men of Onotoa that human flesh was used as food in times of drought within their own memory; but this is the only island where I have heard any such ~~rumor~~, and I think it is generally correct to regard cannibalism as occasional and sporadic in the Gilbert Islands.

An interesting story from Banaba relates that, four or five generations ago, a Tabiteuean canoe containing five starving occupants drifted ashore there. The castaways were kindly treated, and were eventually given land by the village of Buskonikai. After a year or two, one of their number named Tebuke was missing from the village, and after a vain search was given up as dead. From that day onward many other people of that village-district began to be missed, and it was believed that they had become the victims of the same evil power that had spirited away Tebuke. Apparently this went on for some years, when Tebuke reappeared, sick and on  
the



the point of death. He was nursed by his daughter; just before dying, he confessed to her that he had lain hidden all the time in a hollow rock, which stood near one of the paths taken by fishermen to reach the eastern shores of the island. Whenever a man or woman passed the rock alone, Tebuke had followed and killed the victim, and dragged the corpse back to his hiding place there to eat it at leisure. I see no reason to doubt this story, which shows that in some Tabiteueans at least of past times there was a tendency to revert to cannibalistic practices.

I use the word "revert" advisedly, because myth and legend seem to indicate that cannibalism was common practice with the race ancestors who came from Samoa. The Butaritari and Makin tradition of Batuku and his people on Upolu gives a very detailed account of the methods used to obtain human flesh, and the Beru version also supports it. Apparently, these people took their victims from among the unwarlike inhabitants of Manono, Savaii, Tonga, and Futuna. Organised raids were made, the victims preferred being the "first born," which may mean simply the elder men, because it is definitely stated that those with beards and bald heads were selected from the slain. The corpses were heaped on the canoes of the aggressors, and it appears that their heads were cut off and hung upon the mast and rigging. On arrival, the heads were taken to Batuku, who appears in the tradition as chief or ancestor, but from the



circumstances of the tale was much <sup>more</sup> probably a god or ancestral spirit; the heads may therefore be regarded as a sacrificial offering. The bodies were divided among the people. If this tradition is an account of facts (and I think there can be no doubt about that) this race must have eaten human flesh in an advanced stage of decomposition, since corpses brought from Tonga or Futuna could not be less than three or four days old, which in the tropics would mean complete putrefaction.

It seems then from the Butaritari and Beru tales that cannibalism among the Samoan ancestors of the Gilbertese was a religious<sup>in</sup> social institution. The flesh was eaten by the people, but its consumption was preceded by a sacrificial offering of the head to the ancestral deity. The truth of the tradition is supported by the story attached to the canoe-crest of the clan descended from the Samoan immigrants representing these cannibals, the crest consists of flags, and balls of stuffed matting, the latter being recognised as the representations of human heads, "which were the food of the Kings of Samoa."

As I have pointed out elsewhere, the set of traditions to which I am referring belongs to the clan of Karongoa, and is guarded with the utmost secrecy. Members of other clans have versions of the tale told not in terms of fact, but in terms of myth, which they relate without realising in the least their true significance. Set side by side with the factual versions they form a most interesting study. They are, of course, renderings of the Karongoa clan's history which that group



has itself allowed to become current in order to conceal the more completely the true account. Therein it is related (~~see chapter~~) strife arose on Samoa on account of the unfair distribution of the flesh of some stranded porpoises; just as in the Karongoa version ill feeling was aroused by the faulty division of the corpses ~~of the~~ brought from overseas.. From this it would appear that the cannibal clan of Karongoa had the habit of euphemistically referring to human flesh as porpoise flesh. Another deduction that can reasonably be made from the parallel versions is that Batuku, the god-ancestor of the Karongoa folk to whom the sacrifice of heads was offered, was probably a personification of the Moon, because it is always under the name of Namakaina that he appears in the "Expurgated" or "Bowdlerised" edition of the ~~the~~ tale. And it seems possible that Batuku or Namakaina can also be indentified with the Polynesian god Rongo; for (a) the name of this deity appears to have been preserved in the clan name of Karongoa, and (b) the cult of the god Rongo throughout Polynesia is particularly associated with human sacrifice and cannibalism of a ceremonial nature.

Assembling therefore the details concerning the cannibalism of the Gilbertese forefathers, with which tradition furnishes us, we have the following information:-

- (i) The eating of human flesh was accompanied by the offering of the victim's head as a sacrifice;
- (ii) The god to whom the sacrifice was made was of the ancestral type; but he seems also to have been associated with the Moon, and was possibly identical with the Rongo and Oro of Polynesia;



- (iii) Whether for religious or gastronomic reasons, the "first born", or elder men, were chosen as victims by the cannibals;
- (iv) Victims were chosen from people of other races or islands;
- (v) The name used to designate a corpse to be eaten was Kua, porpoise.
- (vi) ~~The~~ people of the Karongoa clan are the modern representatives of the cannibals.

The traditions connected with the immigration of the Tropic Bird folk into Butaritari appear to furnish us with another example of cannibalism. It is related in terms of myth that the Red Tailed Tropic Bird (Te Take) flew from Samoa first to the side of heaven in the east, there to "eat the redness (i.e. of sunrise) of the east." Thence it made for Makin, and settling upon a pandanus tree by the Maneaba of the "Sacred ~~Sacred~~ hillock" began to eat the people of the place. It ate so many that the inhabitants were nearly consumed. This is probably a Euphemistic rendering of real events which followed the invasion of Makin by the folk from Samoa whose totem was the ~~the~~ Red Tailed Tropic Bird. What is quite certain is that a people with this totem did invade Makin from Samoa, as I have shown elsewhere, and that their descendants in the Group today are the clan of Keaki. It is not quite so clear, however, that the "Eating of men" referred to in the tradition



may be construed as cannibalism; this may be merely another way of saying that the Tropic Bird folk were fierce fighters, or that they inflicted heavy carnage in their struggle for a foothold on Makin. I have not been able to find a parallel "rational" version of this tradition, and so it must remain an open question whether the ancestors of the Keaki Clan were addicted to cannibalism or not. But before leaving this topic, I should like to point out that the Tropic Bird folk are shown elsewhere to have been the importers of the Maunga-tabu style of maneaba into the Group (via Makin), and Maunga-tabu was the place where their totem creature is said to have landed on Makin. Maunga-tabu means Sacred-Hill or Sacred-Mountain, and in the tradition of the Karongoa Clan examined above it was on a sacred mountain (evidently a volcano by the text) that the ancestral-god Batuku received his sacrifice of human heads. This may be a link connection the Keaki with the Karongoa clan, since both certainly came from Samoa, though at different times. But it seems insufficient evidence to justify a definite inference that the Keaki people practised cannibalism.

Again, in the legend of the arrival of Towatu-of-Matang on Beru in the time of Tanentoa, this personage is said to have landed on the middle of the island and eaten the flesh of the inhabitants. But the term tia-kakang applied to him, though its primary sense is certainly "cannibal;" may also be construed to mean a fierce fighter. Failing therefore further evidence to clinch the matter, we cannot be sure that the people of the Karumaetoa clan, of which Towatu was the ancestor, practised cannibalism.



cannibalism. I cannot, however, help <sup>e</sup> feeling that it is extremely probable that they did so. If they did, it follows either that they acquired the habit in the land of Matang in the west, whence they invaded Beru; or else that they already practised it in Makin, which was their home before they were driven to emigrate to Matang (via Tabiteuea) by the arrival of the Tropic Bird folk from Samoa.

Whatever may have been the customs connected with the eating of human flesh observed by the Gilbertese ancestors, there can be no doubt that a prejudice against cannibalism became general after some generations of the settlement, until on Butaritari at least, some nine or ten generations ago, it was regarded as an offence for which a man might be expelled from his island. A well authenticated tradition of Butaritari relates that Mangkeia, the brother of the High Chief NaAtanga, was sent on the perilous <sup>errand</sup> of pacifying the Beru conquerors at Marakei (~~see chapter~~), because he had developed the habit of killing and eating men, and the people wished to be rid of him. He was told that if he refused the errand he would be killed. He went, and as a matter of fact saved the island from invasion, but rather than return to his home risked his luck on Abemama, where he became an ancestor of the present High Chief. I can hear of no tradition on the latter island in which he is reported to have continued his cannibalistic habits in his new home.



Food.

Manufacture and use of te Kabubu (deseccated pandanus fruit)

Manufacture.

1. The pandanus drupes are broken up into their constituent seed-cones, which are heaped on a mat at the left hand of the worker as she sits. Another mat, or a screen of plaited coconut leaf, lies before her. The seed-cones are taken one by one, and their juicy golden ends (tabataba) are sliced off upon the empty mat, and their hard outer ends containing the seed are thrown away.
2. The tabataba (juicy halves) are steamcooked in the closed hearth elsewhere described, for about an hour. They are then taken out and heaped upon a ngabingabi, or small mat about 3ft square, of very close texture.
3. The sides of the ngabingabi are raised on stones so that it forms a shallow crater, and the cooked fruit is pounded (ikikaki) with a pestle of pemphis-wood into a smooth mash. It must be absolutely smooth (manti), without a single lump (taribi).
4. The mash is then separated with the hands into clots about as big as a four pound loaf, and these are placed side by <sup>side</sup> on a separate mat. This process is called <sup>ka</sup> te ka-eve-nako, the separation. The shaping with the hands is termed te buabua (rubbing between palms.)
5. Each clot is taken now individually before the worker, and

pummelled



with closed fists, and kneaded with the knuckles, until it assumes the shape of a rectangular slab a couple of inches thick, and perhaps eighteen by eight in area. After this kneading it remains pretty close packed and solid.

This process is called te Kabōrā.

6. As each slab is completed, it is covered with a green mat of plaited coconut leaf (te raurau, the plate), and tipped over upon it, as a pancake on a dish.

The plates with their contents are then set out in rows to dry in the sun, the slabs being continually turned, to equalise the desiccation.

7. This goes on for the whole of the first day until sunset. Then the cakes are taken and steam-cooked in the closed oven, being laid upon a foundation of green coconut midribs to keep them clear of the hot stones. They are left in the oven until the next morning.

8. Again they are laid out (tāwāki) in the sunlight, for seven or eight days in succession, but are not cooked again until the sun-drying is complete. When this moment arrives, the slabs are of a pale golden-yellow colour. Now comes the browning process.

9. The cakes are heaped in piles of ten or more upon a clear open fire in the ordinary cooking hearth. The undermost slab of a pile is not allowed to remain more than a few minutes in place, when it is removed to the top, and so on until all are nicely browned on one side. Then the process is repeated for the other sides. This process is called (te ā-karababa



(ā = underside; Karababa is the name of the dried slabs.)

10. When all the cakes are browned they are laid out on a mat to cool and covered with another. Being quite cold, they are broken up into bits and thrown into the largest aubunga (tridacna) shell procurable, wherein they are pounded into dust with a pemphis-wood pestle.

11. The dust is the finished article. In this state it will remain perfectly fit for use for a period of one or seven two years. It is particularly durable if packed in the manner to be described a little later.

### Use.

I. If a little dry Kabubu be eaten, it has a pleasantly aromatic taste to the European, being quite sweet, and having preserved to some extent the bonquet of the fresh pandanus-fruit. But it is too absorbent to be eaten in its dry state, and is seldom so consumed by the native. The usual way to take it is in water, the proportions of the mixture being one part of Kabubu to two of cold water. That is to say, the drinking-vessel of coconut shell (mangko) is half filled with the powder and water then poured in up to within half an inch of the brim. Before being drunk, the powder is allowed to soak a little, and is then stirred with a piece of pandanus leaf. It imparts a sweetish taste to the liquid, which seems peculiarly gratifying to natives, but to Europeans is distinctly lacking in character. Stirring precedes each fresh draught of the mixture.



When the cup is finished, there is always a thick sediment of liquescent Kabubu at the bottom of the vessel. To finish this, etiquette demands that more water should be added and the mixture again stirred before drinking; and so on, until only a little sediment is left. If a man judges that this will make no ~~more~~ more than a good mouthful, he is allowed to tip it into his open mouth with head thrown well back. The action is called te tara-rake, the looking upwards. But if he has misjudged the quantity, or is so maladroit as ~~to~~ to spill some down his cheeks<sup>or</sup> chin, he will be ~~a~~ unmercifully chaffed by his companions, as this is counted a distinct breach of good manners.

The sediment is never scooped out, either with the fingers or an implement of any sort, the prohibition being apparently a matter of pure etiquette rather than of magico-religious origin.

2. Another use of Kabubu is to mix it with Kamaimai, the molasses made by boiling fresh toddy. In this condition it is called te Korokoro, and is in consistency and appearance rather like the ingredients ~~of~~ of a plum/pudding ready for steaming. It has a very pleasant taste, and is particularly in favour with children.

The property of both Kabubu and Korokoro, and particularly of the former, is gently purgative for the native, sometimes violently



violently so for the European. This quality is recognized and valued by the Gilbertese, who consider that they cannot keep for long good health if deprived of Kabubu. It is used liberally as a cure for constipation among children.

Kabubu is also esteemed by the natives to be the most sustaining of all foods known to them, and indeed this would seem to be true, for a man will cheerfully perform a full day's work with no food save a handful of Kabubu in water at sunrise and the same at sunset, if other rations fail him. Kabubu indeed seems to be to the Gilbertese what porridge is to the Scots crofter and shepherd, save that it is not supplied also to his dog. Fishermen will remain at sea for three or four days with nothing but a couple of pounds of the powder and half a dozen coconut-shells (ibu) of water. But as a rule they are able to add to their diet by catching fish of the kinds that are eaten raw.

It is a striking fact that Kabubu, which is universally used from the island of Marakei in the North <sup>to</sup> ~~of~~ Arorae in the extreme south, is unknown to the people of Makin and Butaritari. On these two islands the pandanus has never apparently been cultivated, and its fruit never used as a food. It is a common rumour among Europeans in the Group that the Butaritari and Makin people formerly cultivated the pandanus, but cut down all their trees in order to be exempt from the making of pandanus thatch for their houses, which, on account of its great superiority over the



coconut thatch, is enforced by the Government on other islands. But this is pure invention. It is quite certainly established by enquiry that the pandanus has (a) never grown in great quantity on these islands and (b) has never been used as a food-bearing or a thatch producing tree within the last dozen generations. I cannot discover any conscious magico-religious belief to explain this, but it may be connected with the mythical portion of the Butaritari account of the immigration from Samoa, wherein the Tropic Bird totem representing the invaders is said to have lived in the branches of a pandanus tree, and the human progeny issuing from its head also had their home in the same place.



Food.

Animal.

The beru (lizard, (<sup>2?</sup> scinens) sp) was often cooked and eaten. After being killed it was wrapped, without gutting, in a piece of pandanus leaf, in which it was laid in the steam over beside any other food that was being cooked. It was allowed to remain in the oven for about half an hour. The natives say that it was fatty and delicious, having a taste rather like that of porpoise flesh.

The gecko lizard (th-kunai) was never eaten.

The rat (kimoa, prob. mus exulans) was never eaten in the Northern islands.

The dog (kiri) was considered a great delicacy, but under the influence of European ideas it is no longer eaten, the native being now almost ashamed to remember that dog-flesh once formed part of his diet.

It is commonly believed among Europeans that dogs were first introduced into the Gilberts by Europeans, but this is an error, which is demonstrated by native tradition. A dog is mentioned in the legend of To<sup>u</sup>atu-of-Matang (~~which see~~) which described his landing on Beru 20-odd generations ago. Again, in the traditions connected with the Beruan conquest of the Group, ten generations back, the warrior Uākeia is reported to have owned a dog which he fed exclusively on fish: for this reason, when he had <sup>victoriously</sup> ~~victoriously~~ invaded an island, he always seized the islets and the extremities of the land, where fish was plentiful.

Six generations ago, a Tarawa man named Tokitoba is said to have owned a dog, and there are still old men living who as children remember to have

heard



of dogs before the first animal of this species was introduced from Europe.

But it seems that native dogs were growing scarcer and scarcer during the generations that preceded the coming of the Flag, so that at the arrival of British Government in 1892, it is doubtful if there were any animals of the indigenous breed in the Group.



Food.Poisons : fish.

Few poisons are known to the Gilbertese. The seed of a tree called baireiati was formerly used to stupefy fish in pools on the reef, and even in deep water on calm days. The seed was grated on a rasp of stingray skin : the gratings were then taken in a leaf and thrown into the pools. It is said that very little sufficed to poison a large sheet of water. On a calm day, fragments were allowed to sink in the neighbourhood of fish playing about the edge of the reef. It appears that the fish would eat them and float almost immediately to the surface dead.

Fish caught in this manner were eaten with no further precaution than gutting before being put in the oven or on embers.

Poisons: human.

The baireati was not used for human beings. Its odour is said to have been too easily discernible for a man to be caught by it. The bunī or globefish (*Diodon* sp.) provided the most efficacious poison known to the native. The flesh of this creature may be eaten with perfect safety in these waters, but the ari (gall sac), bia (roe), and ninika ( ) — especially the first — provide a poison which first robs a man of his balance, causing him to stagger like a drunkard, and then very quickly kills him. The native cure is to administer seawater immediately and in copious

quantities.



quantities, causing the patient to eject the poison by vomiting.

Another poison used was the crab called Kaveana ( ) which has a cream coloured carapace spotted with orange and is found on the ocean reef. All parts of this creature are poisonous : the eater is said to become āwa (heavy or comatose : cp. Kava, Polynesian), and to die in a lethargic condition.

These were the sole stock-in-trade of the usual poisoner south of Butaritari and Makin. The poison was mixed with the solid food of the victim, without, apparently, any magico-religious<sup>u</sup> ritual, and offered to him as occasion presented itself.

I heard of a horrible method in Butaritari. An old man lately dead was said in his youth to have collected a great number of man-ni-barabara insects (Cantharides, sp.) and wrung out their juice in a piece of ing (the fibrous envelope at the base of a coconut-leaf); this liquid he mixed with Kamsimai and offered the drink to his victim. The fluid secreted by the cantharides fly is an extremely powerful vesicatory, and causes acute inflammation of the bladder and <sup>u</sup>wrethra if mixed in minute quantities of fresh toddy, as many Europeans know to their cost in these islands. The torments of the poisoned man, with the extract of hundreds of these insects in his system, must have been terrible. This method of poisoning was not, to my knowledge, used outside Butaritari and Makin.

A poison but rarely used, because seldom obtainable at



(3)

the right moment, was the liver of the blue shark. Under normal conditions this is a perfectly safe food, but individuals of the species are said by natives to have a liver of aberrant shape, one end of which is bent back like a hook. In this condition it is said to be extremely poisonous, and the recent death of two Tarawa natives is attributed to the ignorant eating of a shark liver thus deformed. The symptoms of poisoning are said to be first, loss of the use of the legs; second, coma; third, death about three <sup>hours</sup> ~~hours~~ after eating.



Food.

Prohibitions on food for (apparently) other than totemistic reasons.

1. Divination.

Four fish frequenting clear water among rocks, on shoal, and the edge of the reef, are tabu for those who practice divination with the leaves of pandanus or coconut (see Divination), namely — Te nari ( ), Te buki buki ( ), Te arinai ( ), and Te bawe ( ).

These fish are believed to swallow the ashes of the leaves used in divination, which are always burned after they have served their purpose, and thrown into the sea by the edge of the reef. If a diviner eats the forbidden creatures, it is believed that his eye will lose the power of interpreting the movements and attitudes of the divining-leaves.

2. Women. (a) Pregnant women may not eat the following fish for fear of affecting the unborn child in the manners described :-

- (1) Te baibai (a sole): causes child's eyes to squint, or even to be set on one side of the head as a sole's.
- (2) Te baua (mulloidae, sp.): causes ngenge, hungeriness or thinness of child, in sympathy with thinness of the fish.
- (3) Te nneve (crayfish): makes child's eyebrows stand on end, as nneve's.
- (4) Te on (greenback turtle): causes cowardice in sympathy with



with turtle's habit of "crawling on its belly."

5. Te aubunga (Giant Clam) and smaller varieties neitoro and batua: causes baldness, because its skin is so smooth.
6. Remnants of fish used used as bait: causes child's hands to be knotted and unshapely as it hacked by a knife in the manner of bait. Also breeds a tendency towards incestuous habits, on account of the close union of the bait with its "brother the hook."
7. A woman with child would also refuse to eat any of the fish avoided for one reason or another by her husband or brothers, in order to save her child from the particular consequences feared by them.

(b) Women in general should not eat the following:-

Te kuu ( ) because of its name, which means "crinkled", or what the French call ratatine. It was believed that a diet of this fish caused the mats plaited by the eater to have a crinkled and uneven surface.

Te inasi ( ), because it was supposed to cause the ends of the hair to become mangarua, forked, i.e. , to split.

Te Kua ( porpoise). Elder women might eat this mamal. But young girls were not allowed to take it in small quantities at a time, as it was said to make the teeth rotten if eaten by them in morsels. If, however, a large catch of porpoise were made, sufficient to provide food for several days, the young ~~girl~~ girl was allowed to take her fill, as under these conditions no <sup>evil</sup> ~~self~~ effects were to be feared. Probably an economic arrangement, devised to limit the distribution of the prized flesh to a smaller circle when the catch was meagre.



meagre.

### III. War.

In time of war, or when an individual had a private quarrel to settle, the following fish were avoided:-

Te koinawa (                    ); ~~on account of its name~~ believed to make a man peculiarly liable to wounds in battle. Also prohibited on medical grounds (see below).

Te buki buki (                    ); on account of its name which means "to throb", it was believed to induce a hurried beating of the heart, and thus cowardice.

Te kakarikaki ( a long, thin stinging jellyfish of a bluish colour, found at sea); also on account its name, meaning "to retire", "to go backwards," it was thought that this creature caused a warrior to run away from ~~its-see~~ his foe.

Te batua (                    ). The similarity of the name of this fish with the word batika, to bow or bend the body, was considered a bad omen for a warrior, who avoided it for this reason.

Te ato-n ika ni-bane ( The liver of all fish). A fish's liver was much used as a shark-bait. Just as the shark snapped up the bait, so would a man's enemy "eat him up" if his stomach contained liver.

Te on (turtle) caused cowardice.

### IV. Medical.

Te koinawa (                    ) eaten in large quantities was believed to cause the skin disease called Te nimanu, a scabrous, itching complaint specially affecting the hands (nima = Pol. lima, hand).



Te arinai ( ). Not completely avoided; but if largely consumed was believed to cause falling of the hair, especially the beard, in sympathy with the smoothness of its skin.

Te kima, aubunga ( Giant Clam) also caused baldness.

Te nuwe ( crayfish). Large quantities believed to cause leprosy and Kinaka ( ).

Te on(turtle). Eaten sparingly because believed to encourage Kinaka.

Te ane ( ). Forbidden to young boys and girls. Said to induce waiwai, <sup>u</sup>wrethral and bladder inflammation.

#### General.

The buare of any fish was forbidden to all, being called "slave's food", but not even slaves would eat it. The buare is the "keel" of the fish, within which are ~~found~~ found the ~~viscera~~.viscera.

The bukiri of a coconut, i.e. the distal end where <sup>the</sup> shell comes to a point, was forbidden to men. Women might eat it.

No man would drink the water of a nut from the bukiri end, the correct method being to pierce one of the eyes of the "face", i.e. proximal end, and suck.

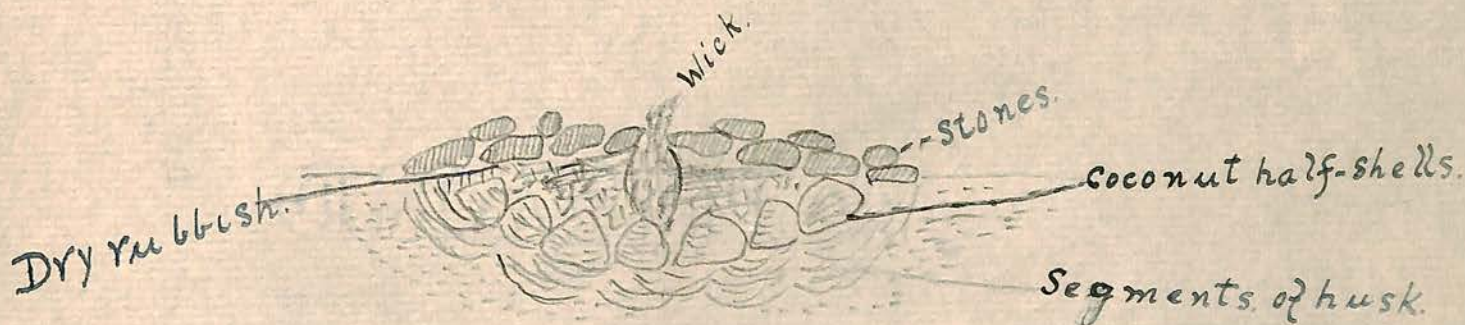


Food, Cooking.

(a) Te umum; cooking in a covered hearth.

The hearth.

A shallow depression of perhaps 10 inches depth and 20" - 24" diameter is scooped in the sand. This is lined with fuel in a manner much more clearly described by diagram than words. The lowest layer in the sectional view below represents a lining of segments of dry coconut husk.



This lining is generally doubled. Upon this is superimposed a stratum of coconut half shells, mouths downward, as pictured. As a top-dressing over the coconut shells is thrown in a layer of small dry rubbish, generally composed of the chewed and discarded seed cones of the pandanus fruit. In the centre of this top-dressing is scooped a hole which is filled in with a "wick" of the dry cloth-like material which grows at the base of the coconut leaf. The whole is then covered with a layer of stones, preferably flat or flattish, and about as big as a man's hand.

The "wick" of ing is then lit and covered with another  
stone,



stone, and the flame descends into the fuel. The fire is allowed to burn clear, the stones settling down as the embers are consumed. When the stones are redhot, and neither flame nor smoke issue from the interstices between them, the hearth is ready for cooking.

### Cooking.

Before the food is laid upon the hot stones, a little fence of stones or green husk is raised around the lip of the hearth. This serves to keep clear of the hearth the mat with which it is to be covered.

The food is then "put in the oven," and an old mat is laid over it, totally concealing the hearth. For most foods except fish, steam is used in the process of cooking (umum). One side of the mat is lifted, and about a half-pint of fresh water is poured on the outer edge of the fire. The mat is quickly pressed down again, and the process repeated on all four sides of the hearth. The edges of the mat are then buried in sand and the oven left to complete its work.

This is the umum pure and simple. Its salient feature is the use of steam. Another method in which no steam is used is called te si-n-Ruanuna, the hearth of Ruanuna, or te si-ni-Bukiroro, the hearth of Bukiroro. It is said that this was imported by ancestors mai i-nano, from the West, supposedly from the lands called Ruanuna (Lieueneue?) and Bukiroro (Kiroro= Gilolo?). The method of Ruanuna and Bukiroro is simply to cook dry, in a hearth exactly the same as that described, the covering mat being entirely

buried



buried in sand. It is surprising to note the great difference of savour between a babai-root or a pandanus-cone cooked by steam and one cooked by the Ruanuna-Bukiroro method.

(b) Boiling on embers. (Te tin-tin).

The boiling method was used only for fish, and generally only for flying-fish (onauti) and baneawa ( ), or other of the smaller varieties.

There was no particular method in building the fire, save that the embers across which the fish was laid were generally selected for their straightness, and were laid parallel to each other on top of the lower layer. No depression <sup>was scooped</sup> in the ground to hold the embers. The wood of the uri (*Fragraea*, sp.) was always used for the fire. Fish could also be boiled on the hot stones of the ai-n-unum. In this case, the hearth was left uncovered and no steam was used.



Food. Cooking : magic.

A Tarawa woman, <sup>u</sup>Nei Batiānea, Roman Catholic convert, aged 25, learned from her <sup>materna?</sup>maternal grandmother a magic formula held to be efficacious<sup>u</sup> in spoiling the cooking-fire of an enemy. According to her own account, she doubted the power of the formula, owing to her religious education, but determined to test it. She chose her unfortunate mother-in-law as a victim, although she was on the best of terms with this lady.

At about midday, when a cooking-hearth was being prepared by her mother-in-law for the reception of some buatoro puddings, she covered herself with a sleeping-mat as taught by her grandmother; turned on her side to face the fire, which was not far from the hut in which she lay; lifting the edge of the mat, so that she could direct her eyes towards the hearth, muttered the following formula three times in succession :-

Antena ai are e bubu arei-ee?      Kai, ana ai  
Whose fire which it smokes that ee?      Why, her fire

Nei Tuta ! Ba ai-tina-na      Kanounou;      (Footnote :- The  
Nei Tuta ! For aunt-her      Make rough;

nou is the monacanthus fish. It has a dirty, rough, and wrinkled skin: Kanounou = to cause to be like the nou.)

ba ai-tama-na      Kanounou;      ba a ira      te tanga      n  
for uncle-her      Make-rough;      for they accompany the host of

tikinono!      (Footnote :- Tikinono = hauled taut, and so bad cooking!

secondarily, ill-cooked or heavy.)

Tikii - tikii - tiki-tiki-tiki !      (Footnote :- Tiki,  
Heavy - heavy - heavy-heavy-heavy!

tiki = pulled, taut, etc.

At the words tikii-tikii, etc., she clasped her hands, closed



her eyes, and stiffened every muscle in her body as in a rigor, with the object of transmitting the quality of stiffness or heaviness to all food cooked in the fire. According to the testimony of my witness, the poor mother-in-law from that moment was unable to make a success of anything she cooked until she changed her hearth! What seemed to please my informant was that it was upon her own solicitous and filial advice that the change was made.



Food.Te Kamaimai : manufacture and use.

Kamaimai is the treacly product obtained by boiling and reboiling the fresh sap of the unopened coconut blossom called Karewe. In consistency it varies from a state of liquidity about the same as that of olive oil to the solidity of a piece of the indiarubber used in drawing. It has a special name for each recognised stage of rendering down. For its manufacture, the toddy collected at midday, which is the fruit of the early morning cutting (see description of toddy-cutting under Agriculture), is considered the best. Consequently, as the toddy used must be quite fresh, the boiling of Kamaimai is an afternoon occupation.

Only women do this work, and only women related to a man (through his father or mother, or by adoption) may make Kamaimai of the toddy brought in by him. It is still believed that if an outsider attempt the task, her Kamaimai will not thicken.

The vessels in which the toddy is boiled are ordinary mangko, or half-shells of the coconut. The fire is made of wood, preferably uri (<sup>*Cuettarda speciosa*</sup> ~~*Prograsa, sp.*~~), not in a scooped hearth but above ground.

The mangko are filled almost to the brim with toddy, and set in rows of three or four on the embers, perhaps as many as twenty or thirty together in a big boiling. I shall take as a standard the number twelve, which seems to be about the normal.



The toddy is allowed to boil at a gallop until the contents of the mangko are reduced to one half. At this stage, it has turned to a light tawny golden colour, and is of olive oil consistency : it is already Kamaimai, of the first variety, called Mai-nakoian (boiled-towards-north) because it is drunk in this state more in the northern islands than in the southern. But as a matter of fact, it is nowhere very much favoured, being not yet sweet enough to satisfy the majority.

For the second boiling, the contents of half the vessels on the fire are emptied into the remaining ones, thus leaving six full mangko to proceed with. These again are allowed to gallop until half their liquid has evaporated. The Kamaimai is now of a rich golden brown colour, and as thick as linseed oil or the heavy lubricant used by marine engineers. In this state it is called Maran (smooth), because of its oily consistency, and also Iranatu (hair of the head), because if sampled it drips in long trailing threads, as the golden syrup that delights the hearts of English children. This is the usual kind of Kamaimai seen abroad in the houses. To a European palate it is sickly-sweet, even when mixed liberally with water. A native drinks it copiously in about its own quantity of cold water.

(Paragraph) For further boiling, half of the vessels on the boil are again emptied into the other half, leaving now only three full mangko. These are kept boiling until the bubbles that rise to the surface no longer scatter drops as they



burst, but swell lazily and glutinously from the now sluggish liquid. When it has gone thus far, it is called Mata-warebwe (broad-eye), in reference to the size of the bubbles.

The contents of one vessel are now divided between the ~~the~~ two that remain, filling them pretty well to the brim. These are allowed to boil on until, when a test is taken on a slip of pandanus leaf, the cooled liquid sets about as hard as a soft caramel. This is a great favourite with children, whose mothers will generally dip in a piece of wood and take out a "bloom" of the richly sticky mass for their benefit: <sup>it</sup> is called Karebwerebwe (make-burst), because of the crackling noise of the bubbles as they burst.

The last stage arrives when a test shows the kamaimai to set about as hard as drawing-rubber. It is then scooped out into a single one of the two vessels remaining and allowed to cool off. While still slightly warm it is moulded by the hands into a ball about the size of a large fist and put by until cold. Its name now is te Baka-mai-eta (fall-from-above) for no reason that I can discover. This is a great luxury. When needed as food, slices are cut from it, and it is eaten as a tanna or relish with such vegetable foods as babai or coconut. A sparing portion is considered enough for one meal and the remnant is carefully hoarded.

Next to Kabubu, Kamaimai is esteemed as a food by the native. As I have said before, the usual form seen is that which results from the second boiling. A drink of this generally makes the breakfast of the Gilbertese man or woman before

setting



(4)

setting out to the early morning labour; and it usually forms a part of every other meal of the day among the more prosperous householders.