

Honor and Harry Maude may well be in their 90's but they are still just as busy writing albiet a little slower due to failing eyesight.

Harry's latest monograph deals with the story of 3 Canoes which were blown from the Gilbert Islands to the Ellice Islands where they colonised the atoll of Nui, on which they speak Gilbertese to this day.

The story is based on oral tradition collected by Anetipa of Nui in 1924 who was a Gilbertese and descended from the voyagers. His collection contained genealogies which, on an average span of thirty years to each generation, gave us a comparable date to that obtained by the chronological reckoning given by Mendana of his sighting of Nui atoll in 1568.

This tradition gives us the story so dramatically phrased that it was hard on reading it to imagine it was not refering to a drift voyage in a storm which took place in our own time. Not so: these events took place when Elizabeth I was Queen of England and Shakespeare was writing his immortal plays.

The work constitutes the tenth book of a series intended for the Gilbert Islanders (now the Republic of Kiribati) as an attempt to encourage a renewed interest in their own history and traditions.

At the same time Honor has been continuing her life work of recording string figures from the Pacific Islands, including those of Australia. The first published was an article in the Bulletin of the International String Figure Association on Tuvalu, followed by a revised edition of The String Figures of The Yirrkala of Arnhem Land with Mark Sherman.

Honor was also invited to contribute an article for the Encyclopaedia of the Pacific Islands which has been accepted.

Currently, the Maudes are working at producing the factual material for a joint biography of their varied lives. After graduating from Cambridge University in 1929, Harry and

Honor married and soon after left for the Gilbert and Ellice Islands where Harry took up the position as District Commissioner for the Southern Gilberts which was followed by one of Chief Commissioner for Native Lands, Administrator of Pitcairn Island, Consul for the Kingdon of Tonga, Resident Commissioner for the Gilbert and Ellice Colonies before moving on to the south Pacific Commission and finally ending as Professorial Fellow in the School of Advanced Studies at the Australian National University. In the meantime, in addition to supporting her husband in his work, Honor developed her special gifts in the making and study of string figures, writing seven books on the subject figures of various Pacific Island groups and is now the Australian representative on the International Association of String Figure Makers centred in America.

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