

# The clan and the Totem.

Each clan in the Gilberts is connected with some plant, animal or object which it holds in particular esteem. For convenience of reference, I ~~am going to~~ <sup>shall at once</sup> apply the term totem to these creatures and things; I do not think that the epithet will be found to have been misused after the exhibition of my material.

A few clans have only <sup>a single creature</sup> ~~some~~ or object associated with them, but most have a minimum of two, some three or four, and one even five. Sometimes several clans share the same totem or totems; in such cases, ~~with~~ the clans concerned, although having different names, are seen to possess the same ancestor and god.

The following is a list of the totems which I have been able to identify; ~~are shown in the order of their importance to the members of the clans to which they belong:~~

Clan.	Sum (secret)	Totem
Karongoa-n-nea	{	Shark; Kanawa-tree; Cockerel; Wind.
Karongoa-rereke	}	Shark; Kanawa-tree; Cockerel; Wind.
Taunnamo		
Ante Kanawa	}	Shark; Kanawa-tree; Cockerel; Wind.
Katawake		
I-Bakoa	:	Shark <del>name</del> (Tabuariki)
Karumastoa	:	Shark <del>name</del> (Bakoa)
Ibakabaka	:	Giant Ray; Shark; <del>name</del>
Keaki	:	Tropic Bird; Giant Ray; Beche-de-mer.
Kabwara	:	Giant Ray; Crabs called <del>name</del>

- Kaotirama: Stingray (small grey) called Buatara  
 Bangauma: Stingray (called "man-headed")  
 Te Ba : Sand snipe; a Carangoid fish.  
 Te Kirikiri : Sand snipe; a Carangoid fish.  
 Tabiang : Sand snipe; a Carangoid fish.  
 Namakaina: Sand snipe; a Carangoid fish.  
 Te O : Tern; Pemphis tree.  
 Umanikamauri: Tern; Pemphis tree  
 Ababou : Porpoise; Sun; Coral called rirongo.  
 Maema : Porpoise; Sun; Coral called rirongo.  
 Te Kokona : Porpoise.  
 Nei Ati : Octopus; Garfish.  
 Benuakura : A red bird of myth called Aromatang.  
 Katannaki : A stone called Nei Temaiti  
 Te Wiwi : Fragraea-tree; conch.  
 Nukumana : Eel; centipede.  
 Bakarawa : Brittle star fish.  
 Tabukaokao: Crab called Nei Tematarai.  
 Teboranea : Turtle; noddy; ladybird; a bush called ibi; and a legendary creature called Kekenu, which is described as a "lizard three fathoms long with a very hard skin" ~~handwritten description~~ almost certainly alluding <sup>to an</sup> alligator or other saurian.

Information about the totems is difficult to get. It is by no means every old man who ~~can~~ <sup>can tell one</sup> the animal or object associated with his clan; from which it appears ~~probably~~ that totemism as an institution was falling into decay for some long period before the arrival of civilization in the Gilbert Islands. This is emphasized by the comment of many <sup>0</sup> old <sup>M</sup> men, when asked whether all the members of their clans in former days refrained from eating the

flesh of their sacred animals. Their usual answer to this question ~~was~~<sup>is</sup>, "Those who took notice of such things were afraid to eat." This implies, that many disregarded the restriction. There were one or two clans, however, <sup>(iii)</sup> which respect for the totem ~~seems~~<sup>always</sup> to have retained its full force, and ~~of which no single member would dare to do injury to the sacred animal or object.~~

Of these, the most striking example is the clan of Keaki. This social group has preserved even to the present day an <sup>unconquerable</sup> aversion to eating the flesh of the Giant Ray or the Red-Tailed Tropic-Bird. Its members will still refuse even to share a pipe or a drinking vessel with a person who has been known to partake of the flesh of either of these creatures. The belief is that an offence against the totem will be visited by swellings of the skin, called te raba raba taki.

Among all the clans which have a variety of Ray as a totem, <sup>esteem</sup> respect for the sacred creature seems to have preserved its full strength, while those groups whose totem is the Shark are also notable in this respect. The regard for other <sup>creatures</sup> ~~totems~~ varies from island to island. For example, the ~~Red-tailed~~ fish called te Rereba, a creature associated with four of the groups listed above, is still held in the greatest deference on Berni, Nikunan, and other southern islands, while in Abaiang, Tarawa and the Northern Gilberts generally, it is hardly remembered in connection with these clans. On

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the other hand, the Sandonipe, a second totem of the same groups, retains a good deal of esteem in the North, while more or less disregarded (though still remembered) in the South.

The cause of such local inequalities as these may perhaps be found in the marked tendency of all the clans to pitch upon one particular creature or object among a group of perhaps several associated totems for especial veneration above the others.

With this eclectic tendency working towards the classification of sacred <sup>totems</sup> creatures and things into principal and subsidiary grades, it would need nothing more than some purely local circumstance to sway the preference in favour of this totem or that, and in such a way it might happen that mere accidents of environment would establish the precedence of the Sandonipe (to take a concrete example) over the Rereba in the North, and reverse the order of prestige in the South.

The form of respect paid to the totem naturally differed according to its nature.

A living creature must not be killed or injured; an edible creature must not be eaten. The theory about eating

the totem was that it resulted in vice. The totem was flesh of a man's flesh, it was a permanent member of his clan; it was, in fact, the clan. If a man was sufficiently shameless to eat his own clan, he would not scruple afterwards to

have connection with his own sister. This is the explanation exactly as given to me by the old man Teata of Abaiang, and corroborated by about thirty others present at the same time.

If ~~you~~<sup>the</sup> totem were a tree, it must not be climbed, for fear of offending it; nor must its flowers be picked.

A stone or a piece of coral must not be trodden upon. The wind or the sun must not be alluded to disrespectfully by those who claimed them as totems. For example, in waiting at sea for a breeze, a Karooya man must not make an impatient remark about its tardy arrival. And this obligation of respectful speech also applied to such mythical totem-creatures as the bird Aromatang of the Benuākura clan, and the Kekemu of Iboranea, which necessarily had to be honoured in absence.

In accordance with the patrilineal nature of descent in the clan, it was the father's totem which received the greatest deference, but a man would also respect the totem of his mother, and generally that of his wife too.

Although one might not pick the flowers of the totem-tree, it was permissible to gather up those which fell to the ground and to make wreaths of them. Such wreaths constituted in fact the badge of a man's social group, since no other clan was permitted to use the flowers of that species of tree for personal adornment. This rule was, however,

modified on the northern islands to the extent that the right to use such flowers could be inherited through the mother. But no such relaxation of the custom was made in respect of the feathers cast from the tail of the Red-tailed Tropic-bird, which might only be worn by the clan of Keaki.

There seems to have been no occasion in the life of a Gilbertese native when the totem was ceremonially eaten or sacrificed.

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The physical connection between the clan and the totem varies in degree. It has been seen above that in connection with edible creatures it is very evident, the animal being considered flesh of the clan's flesh. Sometimes there is a direct tradition of descent from a totem; at other times there is a belief in descent from some person closely allied to it; in a third class of cases there is only a vague ancestral link with the creature or object; and occasionally there is none at all discoverable.

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(a) Of the four totems of the Karongoa groups, although the Shark seems always to have been the most universally prominent, it is from the Kanawa tree that direct descent is the more explicitly traced. Tradition states that in the darkness of chaos grew two Kanawa trees, a male and a female. Their branches intertwined in the darkness, and from the union sprang the first ancestor of Karongoa, who eventually migrated from Samoa to the Gilbert Islands.

Another tradition which clearly reflects a

belief in descent from the totem is the migration story of the Tropic-Bird folk, which is examined in the section dealing with the origins of the various maneaba. After relating the manner of the invasion of Makin by the Tropic-Bird from Samoa, and the death of this creature, the tradition describes the birth of Koua and his red-skinned brothers from its decaying head. It is from the Koua blood that the clan of Keaki is descended, and the Tropic-Bird is one of the totems of this group.

A third clear case of totem-descent is that of the Ababou and Maena<sup>na</sup> clans. The ancestors of these groups were Bue and his brother Rirongo, who were themselves the sons of the Sun by their mother Mata-mona. The Sun is the most important of the three totems of these two clans.

# (b) In a slightly different category are the five clans of Nukumanea, Teboranea, Te Bakoa, Karumactoa, and Buatara. The ancestors, and at the same time the gods, of these groups are respectively Riiki-the-Eel, Tabakea-the-Turtle, Tabuaniki-the-Shark, Bakoa-the-Shark, and Buatara-the-Stringray. These <sup>ancestor-gods</sup> ~~beings~~ are anthropomorphically conceived by natives of the present day, but they are reputed to have had the power of assuming the forms of the creatures connected with their names. In every case, the beast thus physically associated with the ancestor is the totem of the clan, thus clearly suggesting a fundamental belief in descent from the sacred creature, or, to be more exact, from the ancestor in the form of the sacred creature:

Tabuariki-the-Shark is also the ancestor-god of the Karongoa groups, and it is in conjunction with this being that the shark totem is <sup>(by them)</sup> venerated. As I have already shown, these groups have also a tradition of direct descent from the Kanawa tree totem; we therefore have here an example of duplication of beliefs, in which the same clans trace <sup>lineally</sup> descent from two separate and distinct totems.

# (c) The tradition of the clan of Bernakura gives us an instance in which the sacred creature, while not a lineal ancestor, is believed to have been a close relation of the group-progenitor.

The following is a translation of the myth as given to me by the old man Rarawete of Bern: #

Nei Rarobu was a woman of Nabanaba in the west. She lay with the man Tangata; their first child was the bird Aromatang, the man-eater, and their second child was Tebiano. Tebiano was born before his time, and his mother threw him away into the sea with the afterbirth. He floated away, and stranded on the island of Roro. He grew up and lay with a woman of Roro, whose name was Nei Arotaing. She bore him <sup>two children</sup> a child, Komwenga, a ~~man~~ <sup>man</sup>, and Nei Arotiurenga, a woman.

When Komwenga and Nei Arotiurenga grew up, a canoe was built for them, a very great canoe, and they sailed eastwards away from Roro. As they went, the woman was snatched from the canoe by a great fish called Ika-tine-aba; and she went to live in <sup>the</sup> Mone under the sea. But Komwenga sailed the southern sea and came to the land of Samoa. There he lived, and

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he caused his hair to be cut and he did magic to make him<sup>self</sup> a fierce fighter. And when he was ready, he sailed back to Nabanaba, where his grandmother lived; and there he slew the bird Aro<sup>+</sup>matang, the man-eater, his father's brother. And he took its feathers, which were red, and he took its head<sup>also</sup> as a crest for his canoe. He called his canoe-crest te Nimta-wawa<sup>2</sup>; it is the crest of the people of Bennakura; and their totem (atua) is the bird Aro<sup>+</sup>matang; and their ancestors are Komwenga, and Kibiaro the brother of Aro<sup>+</sup>matang.

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According to ~~the~~ this tradition, therefore, the totem of the Bennakura clan is held to have been the own brother of the ancestor, a form of belief which still <sup>clearly</sup> emphasizes the physical connection between the creature and the social group.

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(d) The next category of totems consists of those creatures <sup>or objects</sup> which are said to have been particularly beloved <sup>or venerated</sup> by the ancestor-gods of the various clans, but from which there is no tradition of direct descent. These are as follows:

Giant Ray of Keaki and Tebakabaka; the creature of the ancestral goddess Tituafine.

Cockerel of Karongoa clans; beloved of the ancestor-god Tabuariki.

Tern of Te O and Umatini<sup>+</sup> Kamauri groups; belonging to <sup>the</sup> ancestor-god Awriara.

Sand snipe and Carangoid fish (Rereba) of Te Ba, Te Kirikiri, Tabiang, and Namakaina; the messengers of the ancestor-god Taburimai.

Crab of Tabukaokao; beloved of ancestral goddess Nei Tenaotara.

indent list

Wind of Karongoa 9. claus: one of the instruments of Tabuariki the ancestor god. It is difficult to understand why, on the same grounds, thunder + lightning are not also totems of this clan, since they too were believed to be directed by Tabuariki.

TE I-MOVE

Conch of Te Wiwi: held as a totem because the ancestor-god Te-i-Mone, who is sovereign of the region under the sea, is believed to have made the first conch, and to have used it for summoning to assembly the spirits of the underworld.

Noddy, and <sup>the</sup> mythical sawian called <sup>te</sup> Kekenū, of Teboranea: used as messengers by the ancestor-god Tabakea-the-Turtle.

Ladybird of the same group: supposed to be the terrestrial counterpart of the <sup>T</sup> Turtle, which is the principal totem of this

clan. Flax-bush of the same group: reputed to have been the favorite plant of Tabakea-the-Turtle.

# - (e) We now come to a class of totems, which tradition vaguely connects with a god or an ancestor, but concerning which any suggestion of physical association with the clans that might once have existed, has been finally submerged. To this class belong —

Indent Post

Porpoise of Ababou and Maerua. This creature is associated with the ancestor Bue, <sup>the story of</sup> whose visit to his father, the Sun, is exhibited elsewhere. One of the gifts made by the Sun to Bue was a ringshaked staff called the Kairini-kamate (the staff-to-kill) together with a complete set of incantations for the subjugation of the porpoise at sea. Since then, the descendants of Bue have refrained from killing the porpoise, and have made it one of their totems.

Brittle

Brittle Starfish of Bakarawa. Tradition says that this totem was taken in commemoration of the foolishness of their twin ancestors, Baba-ma-Bono (Fool-and-Dry-mate). On

a day when the people of Samoa were indulging in the sport of Kauni-batura, i.e. the matching of small fierce fish called Batura, these two ancestors brought a Brittle Starfish (Rikou-nang) to fight for them; since when, their descendants have used this creature as a totem in remembrance of their ancestral foolishness.<sup>3</sup>

Pemphis tree of Te O and Ua-ni-Ramau.

To the native mind, the small wigened leaves of the Pemphis acidula (te piga) are comparable to the hair of the ancestor-god Auriaria. The hair of this god and his companions, Taburimai and Tabuariki, is described in tradition as standing out from the head with small thick curls at the tips. The pemphis is taken as a totem in <sup>commemoration</sup> of this.

(f) The last category of totems is composed of creatures and plants which seem to have no connection at all with either gods or ancestors. I have no doubt that defective enquiry and the forgetfulness of informants are at least partly responsible for this lack of association. The following list may serve as a guide to others more skilled in eliciting facts:—

Bêche-de-mer (<sup>Kereboki</sup>) of Keaki;

Centipede (Roata) of Nukumana;

Hioplu of Teboranea;

Tarai, creeper of Kaburua;

Urit tree (Fraxea, sp.) of Te Wiwi;

Stingray (A-tu-n-aomata), a 'man-headed', of Bangauma;

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Kereboki

What list

Fraxea

Porpoise of Kotua Tekokona. In connection with this, it may be remarked that the clan-ancestor, Kotua, is said by tradition to have accompanied the ancestor Bue of Ababou on a migration from Tarawa to Bern. As we have seen, the porpoise is one of the totems of Bue's descendants. It may be that Kotua was a member of Bue's group and established a separate clan on Bern, taking the porpoise of Bue as a totem.

Octopus and Garpfish of Nei Ati.

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recognizable

This survey of our material has therefore shown us three totems from which <sup>direct</sup> descent in the clan is explicitly traced, and five more, which are hardly less clearly <sup>recognizable</sup> as group ancestors. Of a type very closely allied to these eight is the totem of Benuakura, from whose own brother the clan shows descent. Ten <sup>other</sup> ~~more~~ creatures and objects venerated by various groups were seen to be closely attached <sup>by tradition</sup> to the persons of ancestor-gods, while a further group of three was found, though more vaguely, to be associated with clan-progenitors. Only <sup>eight</sup> ~~seven~~ remain <sup>out of 20</sup> ~~which~~ <sup>recognizable</sup>, which cannot in one way or another be connected with the ancestor-idea. It is thus abundantly manifest that the totemism of the Gilberts was underlain by the belief in descent from the creature, plant or other object that was the object of esteem, or from some person or being to whom the totem stood in an intimate relation.

The services, if any, expected from the totem by the clan, were usually of a negative order, and in all cases were supposed to be conditional upon the individual's observance of a proper respect towards the creature concerned. A man of Nukunawan, who habitually refrained from injuring the centipede, expected exemption from the sting of this creature, and would even claim the power of handling it without harmful results to himself. In like manner, he would be fearless of injury from the eel, another totem of his clan, while swimming in some conger-infested part of the lagoon. Members of clans possessing the shark-totem had not the honor of this fish reviced by other folk; and the immunity <sup>from its attacks</sup> to which they pretended seems to have extended to all the species of man-eating shark known in these waters. The Abalon, Maerua and Tokokona clans similarly believed that they were not liable to the assault of the porpoise on the high seas; they also claimed the faculty of calling the sacred mammal to swim by their canoes and protect them from other fierce <sup>denizens</sup> creatures of the ocean. This protective capacity of the porpoise is an example of active services rendered by the totem. Another illustration of direct help given is seen in the story of Nareau's voyage to Samoa with his three sons, exhibited elsewhere. In this story, the heroes were given as food by the people of Samoa a heap of coconut husks and stalks, and were told that if they failed to eat it, they would be killed.

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NAREAU'S

To surmount this difficulty, Na'Arean said to his sons, "Hide it until tonight, and then the Kekenu will eat it." When night came, the Kekenu consumed the unsavoury food, and so saved their lives. As we have seen, this mythical creature is described as "a lizard three fathoms long with a very hard skin", ~~and is~~ <sup>is almost</sup> certainly an alligator or other saurian, and is the totem of the clan Teboranea.

Another example of totem-helpfulness is shown in ~~the~~ <sup>a</sup> belief of the three clans, whose creature is the Sandpiper; these groups claim that the bird constantly watches their coconut plantations, and will fly to warn them when any thief comes to steal their nuts or toddy. But of all the creatures, which are supposed to help their clansmen in danger or trouble, by far the best known is the ~~Amunt~~ Ray. It is still emphatically claimed by the people of Keaki ~~(Keaki)~~ and Tebakabaka (Giant Ray), Kastriama (small grey Stingray), and Bangauma ("man-headed" Stingray), that if one of the clan-members is in danger of drowning, an immense ray will float to the surface beside him and, ~~allowing him to~~ after he has taken his seat upon it, will carry him safe to shore. There is hardly a native in the Gilberts who does not know of this belief, though there are multitudes who ~~are~~ are ignorant of the totems of their own clans.

There seems to be no trace in the Group of a belief in the entry of the ghost

after death into the body of the totem, but throughout the islands there is a very intimate association of the sacred creature with death.

It was believed that, provided the proper ceremonial for "straightening the path" of the departing soul had been performed, it would be met by the ancestral shades and the clan totems, and conducted by them safely to the otherworld of Bouru and Matang. Some of the sacred creatures - the three species of Ray, the Turtle, the Pel and the ~~Rereba~~ <sup>Rereba</sup> - were considered to be the actual vehicles of the ghost, upon which it was transported to the land of shades; others, - the Tern, the Noddy, the Sandpiper and the Tropic-Bird - did not carry the departed, but flew before him as he followed in the company of his ancestors.

These beliefs only applied, however, if the body was buried in the extended position ~~in the case of extended burial with the~~ with feet to westward. And this orientation of the body, on the great majority of islands, was only permissible when the relations of the deceased knew how to perform, or could pay an expert to perform, the magic of "tabe+atu" (lifting-the-head) by which the path of the ghost was "straightened". The orientation of the body with feet to westward enabled the departed to arise from his grave facing the west, and so to proceed without confusion to the western horizon where the totems and ancestors awaited him.

Those who were buried with feet to North were not met by the totem.

We thus seem to have evidence of a culture complex, in which belief in the totem is associated with interment of the dead in an extended position, with feet to westward, and with the magic called tabefatu. To this complex we may also add the organization of society into exogamous clans with patrilineal descent, and the cult of the ancestor. This will be of material help later, when the attempt will be made to disengage the elements of the various <sup>systems</sup> ~~subsystems~~ which seem to have interacted one upon the other, to form the resultant culture of the present Gilbertese race.

A striking feature of the totemism of the <sup>Gilberts</sup> ~~Group~~ is the frequency with which several clans together are seen to share the same set of totems. Thus, no fewer than five groups — the two Karongoa, Jaunnamo, Anite-Ranawa, and Katanake — share between them the Shark, Kanawa, cockerel, and wind totems. A sixth, Te Bakoa, links itself with these by its possession of the Shark <sup>5</sup> ~~4~~. Three other clans — Te Ba, Te Kirikiri and Tabiang — have in common the Sand-snipe and the ~~Porpoise~~ fish called Pereba; while two more — Ababou and Maerua — share Porpoise, Sun and Coral. To these latter a third attaches itself by its Porpoise totem, namely the clan of Tekokona.

\* Note. The shark totem of Karumaetoa cannot be bracketed with that of Te Bakoa. The two creatures are distinguished traditionally by their names, the former being called Bakewa-the-Shark, the latter Tabuaniki-the-Shark.

And lastly, the two groups called Teo and Uma+ni+Kamawi have in common the Fern and the Pteris tree.

Almost invariably, when the totems coincide the names of the clan-ancestors are the same. The five groups having the Shark, ~~Ryama~~, cockerel, and ~~Karanga, Sasasano, Hute-Kanawa, and~~ ~~wild-totems in common~~ ~~Katanaka~~ all claim Tabuariki and Mata-warebwe as their progenitors. Te Bakoa, which shares the Shark-totem with these clans, also shares the ancestor-god Tabuariki. The three groups <sup>linked together by</sup> ~~having~~ Sand-snipe and Rereba in common all claim descent from the same ancestor-god Taburimai. Those <sup>sharing</sup> ~~possessing~~ Porpoise, Sun and Coral also trace their lines back to the same <sup>pair of</sup> brothers, Bue and Riongo. While the <sup>two</sup> Fern and ~~Pteris~~ groups have the common god-ancestor Awiarua. There is, in fact, only one exception to this rule - that of the clan Te Kōkōna, which has the porpoise-totem of Ababon and Maerna, but a different ancestor. But in this case too, tradition supplies an ancestral link, for the progenitor of Te Kōkōna, Kotua, is named as a companion of Bue and Riongo, the Ababon and Maerna forefathers, on their migration from Tarawa to Bern. It seems evident therefore that some close tie existed in early days between these groups.

Another noticeable feature connected with clans which share the same totems is that their <sup>sitting places (lots)</sup> ~~heads~~ in the maneaba are almost invariably grouped together.

\* See story exhibited in another chapter.

This becomes clear by reference to the sketch plan of the boti in a Marakei maneaba, which has been exhibited in another section<sup>6</sup>. The sitting place of An-te-Ranawa does not appear on this plan, as the clan so-named has no representatives on Marakei, but in a maneaba of the same style (Maungatapu) on Beru, this group takes its seat on the north side of Katanake. Thus it is seen ~~that~~ that the five clans — Karongoa-n-ua, Karongoa-raeske, Katanake, An-te-Ranawa, and Tannamo — which share the same totems, and trace descent from the same ancestors, have their sitting-places in the maneaba ranged in a solid and continuous block along the eastern side of the edifice. The sixth clan of Takoa, which has the Shark-totem in common with these, is also included in the compact array.

In the same manner it is seen on the plan that the three clans of Tekirikiri, Teba and Tabiang, descended from a single ancestor and <sup>generating</sup> ~~recreating~~ the same creatures, sit in an unbroken line under the northern gable; while Maerna and Ababou, whose totems and ancestors are identical, ~~choose~~ <sup>are</sup> together in the middle of the western side. The <sup>totem of the</sup> ~~clan~~ of Tekona is not shown in the sketch, as this group is unrepresented on Marakei, but in the southern islands it is placed on the northern flank of Ababou, which is what we should have expected in view of the fact that it shares the porpoise-totem with Ababou and Maerna. Last of all, the clans of Teo and Uma-ni-Ramari, who share the ancestor-god Auraria, and the

Tern and Purphie totems, though not side by side in the Marakei maneaba, are separated only by the clan of Keaki, while in Tabiteuea and Bern maneaba they may be seen actually united, the Kumatri + Ramauri group on those islands taking its seat between Te O and Keaki.

The possession of common ancestors, gods and totems obviously indicates <sup>that</sup> the closest <sup>relations</sup> of ~~these~~ <sup>once</sup> existed between the clans concerned. <sup>It seems a reasonable inference</sup> ~~We may safely infer~~ <sup>that</sup> whenever a group of <sup>two, or three, or more</sup> clans thus intimately associated may have come, they <sup>almost</sup> ~~undoubtedly~~ came from the same place, shared the same culture, and took part in the same migration. The compact arrangement of their sitting-places in the maneaba suggests further the most deliberate intention of keeping together, in order to show, as it were, a solid front in all public or ceremonial gatherings; and this of course connotes a clear recognition of common ties and a definite will to keep them in mind.

It is therefore rather surprising to find that each of these <sup>groups</sup> ~~clans~~ is an <sup>independent</sup> ~~exogamous~~ unit. ~~There is no restriction, outside the forbidden degrees of consanguinity, upon the marriage of persons~~ <sup>belonging to clans which share</sup> ~~who are also totemic~~ <sup>the same totems and ancestors.</sup> One would have expected that marriage would be prohibited between members of clans sharing the same totems and ancestors. But there is no such restriction. A man of Karongoa + n + uea may as easily marry a woman of Karongoa + raerke as a woman

of some group with totally different ancestors and totems.

This is so much at variance with the ideas underlying the strict organization of society into exogamous totemic groups, that it would seem at first sight to indicate that these ideas in the Gilbert Islands were in an advanced stage of decay. But this certainly does not agree with the facts. For although the totemism of the Group is not so clear-cut as it may have been originally, in that a certain laxity with regard to the sacred creatures or objects is sometimes apparent, the information collected in this section shows it still to have retained a considerable force of social significance up to the arrival of European civilization; and the dominance of the idea of clan-exogamy in the regulation of marriage is still one of the most striking features in the organization of the loti-system.

Yet it is obvious that intermarriage between clans using the same sacred creatures must be the result of some modification of the original system — that is to say, if, as I am assuming to be the case, the original system of Gilbertese totemism was generically the same as the most typical examples of totemism to be found in Oceania, and particularly in Melanesia. There are three primary processes through which such modifications might possibly have arisen. One is the fusion of cultures, in the course

of which a certain number of the elements of two systems blend to form a hybrid structure, while a certain number are discarded and lost. A second possible process is that of the progressive decay or abrasion of a system under the external influence of a foreign mode of thought, which while acting as the catalytic agent giving impetus to the change, leaves no concrete elements embedded in the organization thus affected. And a third process of social modification may take its inception from the action of material and physical necessity upon the organization of a migrant people.

It seems to be just within the range of possibility that the intermarriage of clans having the same sacred creatures may have come about, under rather special conditions, through the fusion of two social systems.

Suppose the Gilbert Islands to have been overrun by an immigrant people having a culture very similar to that of the invaded folk, and being, in fact, a branch of the same original race, with its social institutions only slightly differentiated by residence elsewhere: in such circumstances, both invaders and invaded might be found to acknowledge the same ancestors and gods, to venerate the same totems, and to have preserved approximately the same sitting-places in their respective maneaba. In the settling down that would follow the immigration, a reorganization of the

boti in the maneaba would take place; the conquering immigrants would wish to keep their own hereditary stations, and they would also desire to keep their clans separate and distinct from the corresponding clans of the conquered; at the same time, it would be the aim of the conquered to retain as far as possible their ancient boti, and they would take places as near to them as the space needs of the immigrants permitted. In this way it might happen that groups of several clans having identical totems and ancestors would be found sitting side by side in the maneaba. Intermarriage between such clans would be rendered possible by the refusal of the immigrants to recognise such close relationship with the clans of the conquered as would be implied by an admission of the strict prohibitions of exogamy. An incentive to such an attitude of the immigrants would be their need for a wide scope in the selection of wives, since probably but few women would have accompanied their migration.

That such an explanation of the problem is within the range of possibility appears from the examination of Gilbertese tradition, which in another section has led us to the conclusion that the Samoan invaders of the Group, some 25 generations ago, were but the returning remnant of a swarm which had passed through and colonised these islands, centuries earlier, on its way to Samoa. Such a

return, after some centuries of separate social development, of a people having the same ancestry as the invaded, gives us the conditions postulated in the foregoing hypothesis. Nevertheless, although a duplication of clans owning identical totems, accompanied by a possibility of intermarriage between them, might be satisfactorily explained by such a combination of circumstances as I have suggested (and actually did take place), it is difficult to see how the same conditions can have been wholly responsible for a multiplication into six, as illustrated by the Karongoa and associated groups. While bearing in mind, therefore, that the return from Samoa of a body of people, having a social organization closely related to that of the autochthonous Gilbertese, may have been one of the causes of an increase in the number of clans reverencing the same totems, and may ~~have~~ <sup>at</sup> the same time have contributed towards the facilitation of intermarriage among them, we cannot regard it as the sole cause ~~of~~ such social phenomena, nor indeed, I think, as the principal one.

The second process suggested, by which the modification of totemic exogamy might have been set in motion, is that of <sup>the</sup> progressive decay of a social scheme under the external influence of a foreign mode of thought. But as I have already pointed out, the vigour of totemic ideas in the Gilberts up to the coming of European civilization seems to put this <sup>proposal</sup> ~~idea~~ out of court.

We are left with the third suggestion, that

the condition under our observation came about in answer to the pressure of material and physical necessity upon the social existence of a migrant people. If it was indeed due to such causes, it seems to follow that it must have been a deliberately adopted social expedient — in fact, a primitive sociological experiment —, since a material and physical necessity is consciously felt and as consciously remedied.

The suggestion that I offer is that the multiplication of social groups having the same totems and ancestors, together with the permissibility of marriage between them, ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> a modification of the social system deliberately adopted to evade difficulties connected with marriage. Two difficulties of this kind would face a not very numerous swarm of people with a marriage-system based on totem-exogamy, such as I suppose the immigrants from Samoa into the Group to have been. First, it is almost certain that only a limited number of women would accompany them; and second, if (as our traditional evidence analyzed in another section leads us to suppose) such immigrants were only ~~the~~ <sup>a</sup> <sup>fragment</sup> of the race that was dispersed from Samoa, it is also probable that only a limited number of clans reached the Group. A strict adherence, under such conditions, to the rigid system of totem-exogamy would render it impossible for many of the young

men to find wives at all. This difficulty would find an easy solution if the people <sup>discovered</sup> ~~found~~ by the immigrants in occupation of the islands were of another race, with a different social organization; for in this case there would be no restriction on the choice of wives from among the autochthonous folk. But our traditional evidence has led us to the conclusion that the invaders <sup>from Samoa</sup> were a returned branch of the same race as that which inhabited the Gilbert Islands: they therefore must have found on arrival many <sup>of the</sup> exogamous clans which they themselves represented, and with which they consequently could not contract marriages, if they adhered strictly to custom. It may be argued that this again would constitute no real difficulty, as there were probably plenty of other local clans with which alliances would be permissible. But in answer to <sup>particular</sup> ~~particular emphasis must~~ <sup>be</sup> laid upon the point that the present <sup>clay</sup> ~~social~~ system, of which we are analysing the peculiarities, is essentially an one-island system: it was developed upon the single atoll of Berni, and spread through the whole Group (with the exception of Butaritari and Makin), by the Berni swarm which, ten generations ago, established conquering chiefs on every unit of the archipelago. Without a single exception, the clans of <sup>each</sup> ~~many~~ <sup>the thirteen</sup> ~~islands~~ islands thus conquered trace their descent from ~~to~~ a Berni conqueror. Our task is thus to <sup>search for</sup> ~~explore~~ the possible causes that led to certain social modifications on a single

unit of the Group, namely Bem, as a result of the immigration from Samoa some 25 generations ago.

Within the narrow limits of a single island, it is easy to conceive that only a restricted number of the social groups then existing (if many did exist) up and down the Group was represented. We have only to imagine the arrival on such an island of a relatively numerous body of immigrants, whose own women were very few, and whose social groups coincided with most of those found in occupation, in order to discover a possible reason for the multiplication of clans having the same totems and ancestors, and for the breaking down of prohibitions against intermarriage between them. First, the large addition to the male population would create an immediate local shortage of potential wives: there would not be enough women to go round invaders and invaded. And second, among the few local clans <sup>into</sup> ~~with~~ which marriage, by strict custom, would be permissible, the immigrants <sup>alone</sup> ~~themselves~~ would find but little scope for the selection of wives. If the principles of rigid totem-exogamy were adhered to, there would be no cure for the difficulty.

I suggest that deliberate expedients were adopted to meet the emergency. The first may well have been that suggested earlier in this discussion, namely, the refusal of the immigrants to recognise such close relationship with the clans of the invaded as would prohibit the members

of their own corresponding clans from inter-marriage with them. Such a resource would result in the duplication of intermarriageable totem-groups; and these groups would probably acquire different names in the course of time, if indeed their separate <sup>local</sup> histories had not already resulted in a disparity of names at the epoch of the return from Samoa.

This artificial enlargement of the scope within which a wife could be sought might possibly satisfy the immediate needs of the immigrants; but only if they monopolized the women of the island at the expense of the marriageable men among the autochthones. And we can hardly suppose that it was only the newcomers who entered into the marriage relation at this time. Further, even if they did create such a monopoly, the great surplus of men over women would make itself felt not only in that but in the succeeding generation, while the prohibitions attaching to consanguinity, as a concept entirely distinct from that of clan organization, would interact with totem-exogamy to create further impediments to easy marriage. It would require some additional expedient to adjust the organization to local requirements, and I suggest that the contrivance adopted was the breaking up of the clans into separate septs, still linked together by the same totems and ancestors, and still massed together on ceremonial occasions in the maueaba.

but regarded for the purposes of marriage  
as independent exogamous units.