

The Canoe that Brought the Maori to New Zealand:

Or, POLYNESIA IN THE PAST.

By Kennet Watkins.

Pahi no Rata, was the Eastern Pacific canoe, and the name it was known by in Tahiti. "Pahi" is a word for ship, common to both races. "No," means, of, "Rata," the navigator of that name, and "Pahi no Rata," would have the same significance when applied to ourselves as "Cook's ship" or "Drake's ship." Rata was reputed in Tahiti as a bold navigator; he was vice-admiral of the flotilla which came to these shores, and is mentioned in both Tahitian and Maori legend. That the Tahitian should have associated his name with this particular form of canoe, to our times, is evidence that it held place among the various craft, single and double outriggers, pertaining to these people.

The ship of voyage was a very spaci-ously decked double canoe, capable of not alone holding, but also of housing quite a number of people, and it is reasonable to suppose fairly comfortably. That it would have sleeping accommodation, room for storage of provisions, water, and what not besides, has been demonstrated. To suppose that a maritime people came all those thousands of miles in the undecked structure we see in our museum, for instance, would be as absurd as believing that the Maori rode there upon his water-monster. It is true it might have jerked at a pinch some hundred or so of warriors who might, there is no saying, have passed a night upon it, and that not too cheerful a one, particularly in rough weather, but how about all those women? We can dismiss the idea once and for all as a delusion.

Mr. J. L. Young fortunately obtained the exact representation of this double canoe, the "Pahi no Rata," or ship of voyage, and holds the only perfect model we believe, in existence. Mr. Young, when a resident in Tahiti 30 years ago, was friendly with a patriarchal chief, who knew the traditions of his race; and of this canoe which had been used by his people for the purpose of extended voyage, hundreds of years before the advent of Cook. It was under this old man's direction, and from drawings furnished by him, that the mission youths constructed this model.

Mr. J. L. Young is a well known authority upon matters Polynesian, and acknowledged by all; but, supposing it were not so, this would be sufficient ground to more than theorise, in that we have something of guarantee, and for guidance, better than ancient wood-cuts, by more or less ignorant engravers, however worthy the original drawings may have been and doubtless were.

After going through all the Polynesian, Melanesian, and Micronesian types, besides models of Samoan, Tongan, Karo-tongan, Basutoan, Morquesuan, Mangabikian, Paimotau canoes, etc., etc., not one resembles our Maori war-canoe like this one.

That the Maori should have retained all the top-hammer necessary for making protracted sea-voyages is not likely. He would become after a short period a settler and agriculturist after his fashion, in which case he would retain only those parts that were needful for his coastal purposes, or inter-tribal visitings. That he would preserve the tradition of his ancestors is, however, probable; and if we look close at the hull of the Pahi we see a marked resemblance in this latter respect. The "Pahi no Rata," or ship of voyage, then, was in structure two canoes joined together at a distance of six or less feet apart, according to the size of the larger one, for they were never of the same dimension, by reason of the extra strain involved; the smaller was therefore a species of outrigger. These canoes were fastened to transverse beams at intervals, as many as four in some, six and eight in others. These beams were also the supports to the deck or decks, for there were two only visible, the windward one being covered by a deck house. The central or promenade deck was smooth and composed of wider timber, in planks. The two others were slightly lower, and

composed of lighter woods or bamboo strips. These decks projected somewhat beyond the gunnels of the canoe underneath; they ran fore and aft, and terminated square with a transverse bulk-head three feet high at either end, so that when a person stood midway upon the central promenade and looked ahead the effect would be that of a narrow oblong, say, 70 by 18 feet, for all the world like some cunningly constructed raft, which it was in reality.

Judging from other structures in the Pacific, these canoes would be from 5 to 6 feet in depth from keelstone to deck-plate, and as there were two, the larger canoe could not have measured less than 100 feet from stem to stern, and the smaller one about 10 feet less. In width neither would differ, their beam was never more than 5 to 6 feet at widest. The interval between the two canoes was four to six feet, according to their size.

These crafts were buoyant to a degree; they stood the roughest weather, their holds remaining bone dry after a voyage of many days. The "Pahi no Rata" had no stem (ihu) or stern (rapa) like the Maori, it went either way.

The form given in Parkinson's plates belonged to another type of canoe, of which I shall have more to say.

The body of the "Pahi" was built up of separate pieces, thus varying materially from the Maori, which was hollowed of one piece of heavy timber. The fore and aft noses of the Pahi were all that was solid, these however, had large openings. The weather board, or top-side was identical in all respects with the war canoe; the joining was the same, so also the protecting strip, henga (Maori), the lashings (nimira) being run through perforations (matapupuni) above and below.

The deck was slightly raised along the entire centre in the Pahi, the rudder was a paddle 14, 16, and 18 feet long, and needed two or more men to handle it. According to ancient drawings, it pivoted through a fork which projected at the end of the smaller canoe; there were two of these forks, or rowlocks—one at each end.

As we have previously remarked, these canoes were neither stemmed nor sterned, but either, as required; when tacking, so to speak, they went backward, then turned again, and so on. Their rate of sailing was nearly as fast as a schooner's; they did their 6 to 8 knots with ease. They sometimes carried one, sometimes two sails (legend). These were very large and shaped like a harp; 40 to 50 feet of strong matting in narrow pieces, loosely threaded at the overlaps (the same as the Fijians do now). The mast was in triplicate, a perpendicular supporting two obliques. The mainmast had a ladder ending with a look-out stage at the top. The outer carried the sail, and the one that was perpendicular

supported the pair, which explains the fore, the main, and the mizzen, so mystifying in the rendering of the "Arawa" legend.

Having defined the "Canoe of Voyage" of the Tahitians, we turn to the illustration in Parkinson's plates of Cook's voyage, and there see the high-stemmed "Rapa" of the Maori war canoe (in exaggeration), belonging to inter-island or pleasure craft. In this case, the mast was double only, the frame of the ladder being retained without rungs. The sprit did not stop half-way, as in the Pahi-no-Rata, but arched over, giving the sail a shape like that of a long bow when strung (not extended). Owing to this peculiar form, as well as rigidity of sail, these craft in the drawings appear to us as going the wrong way; an appearance shared by the Pahi-no-Rata, the sail of which, though truncated by many feet, was fashioned on the same lines. We may state here that, without such model as Mr. J. L. Young's before us, it would have been hard to understand, and still harder to explain, the rig of these vessels at all, whereas it is now easy for any one who takes the trouble.

The following is an endeavour on our part to describe that wonderful Tahiti of legend, from accounts given by those great navigators, Cook and Bougainville, and later by missionaries and others, amongst whom Ellis takes foremost rank. The intention hitherto has been to pourtray the ancient canoe, now it is a question of that great Polynesian centre of navigation from whence it emanated—its marine. These crafts, then, were of all sizes, with arc-shaped sails, clipper yachts, for they were the skimmers of those seas, some single with outriggers, some double with masts 80 feet, and sprits 10 feet higher.

On the occasion of festival, a century and a-half ago, these crafts would assemble from every island, near or far, in some vast lagoon, where the translucent water would image in its calm all things above, and reflect in the wavelets rainbow tints of the coral beds beneath. The chiefs vied each one with his neighbour as to which possessed the faster, or carried the more picturesque ornament upon his canoe, or canoes. On their prows were representations of myths (see Ellis), serpentine monsters of air or water, with beaks or maws. Their prodigious sterns rose 20 and 30 feet above water, like phantasmas. From their topmasts were suspended huge gossamers, and from their gaffs floated airy pennants, the down of sea-birds (see Cook). Their sails were blazoned with devices; their war-canoes each one paddled by nude warriors in scores. Their Aitus, or chief fighting men, placed upon central platforms, were armed variously, with quarter-staves, short clubs, or massive, long-handled bludgeons, curved like scimitars and edged with sharks' teeth. For head ornament they wore scarlet plumes in ordinary. The lord arikis and tohungas, upon higher stages at the end and in front, on what was called the sacrificial platform, carried tall lances, feathered at their shafts. The arikis were recognisable by their magnificent "maru," or scarf of war, composed entirely of scarlet feathers; the tohungas by their paliums of black, patterned with discs (to represent suns), chevroned with zig-zags or bars. The higher dignitaries wore superb head-dresses formed of aureoles of scarlet and green or orange and scarlet plumes; that of the arch-tohungas towering above all others. And here it may be well to mention the trade car-

ried on principally for feathers with those far-distant Melanesian groups and New Guinea, mention of which is made in their legends (Fenton). Red, pale straw, brown, or black, were the drap colours of the Polynesian, and matchless, therefore, as to contrast with the light copper of his skin. The men wore the hair in two ways, either long or knotted up, with comb insertion, like our ancient Maoris. Their chiefs were tattooed from neck to heel; some were turbaned, and some wore cloaks, like the Maori; others, naked to the waist, wore girdles of tinted strips of pandanus, or sashes of banana fibre.

The women wore the hair short and spreading to the outer shoulders, like the Maori, with narrow head circlets of finely woven bleached pandanus, embroidered with flat pieces of iridescent shell, with, for edging, bands of green, gold and scarlet feather work. Crescent-shaped bibs of pandanus were suspended from their necks to above the bosom, and they wore skirts or aprons to below the knee. They also wore wreaths, necklets, and beltings of crimson and orange hibiscus, with other white blossoms intermingled. For aquatic splendour, combining originality with harmony, these Polynesians excelled, and probably were never surpassed in the history of the world.

The Malay has been called "The Gipsy" of his Archipelago; the Polynesian is, by heritage, the Pharaoh of the Pacific.

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