

THE MIGRATIONS of a PANDANUS PEOPLE  
as traced from a preliminary study of  
FOOD, FOOD TRADITIONS, and FOOD-RITUALS  
in the GILBERT ISLANDS.

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PART I.      FACTS CONCERNING FOOD.

Introductory.

Part I of this work is a record of those Gilbertese practices relating to food which either are still extant, or else have been customary until quite recent times. The working axiom accepted from the outset is that the mere externals of material culture are almost valueless for evidential purposes when divorced from their historical, religious, and social setting. It is therefore without apology that, in the discussion of such objects as cooking ovens, the traditions concerning their origin and the rituals associated with their use <sup>are</sup> reviewed; that, in dealing with concrete food-avoidances, a condensed account of Gilbertese totemism and totem-groups is given; and that notes on many other aspects of native life, however remotely connected with the subject of food, are appended to the text.

The general effort, however, has been to keep the account of material facts as distinct as possible from the record of traditional, religious, and sociological data. Part I being allocated, roughly speaking, to the things and practices of open life, Part II is reserved for the analysis of certain traditions concerning foodstuffs not now in use, but believed to have been common, in other times and lands, among the Gilbertese ancestors; while Part III is devoted to a review of the myths and socio-religious observances associated with growing food-plants.

A single tree - the pandanus - will be seen to stand out with increasing salience as the evidence proceeds, and an inquiry into its meaning to the race will occupy the remaining Parts of this work. The quest will involve the cutting of a section through all that is most vital in Gilbertese myth, religion and social structure; it will carry us far beyond the confines of Micronesia, and lead to the discussion of matters anything but gastronomic; its ultimate goal will be the identification of a culture stream that once passed, by way of the Gilbert Islands, into Polynesia; yet its chief theme will remain throughout that of a food-plant and, far from being irrelevant, many of the facts concerning food recorded in Parts I and II

will be found highly pertinent to the final issue.

It is convenient to prelude the general subject with a rapid survey of the daily work of a Gilbertese woman: a useful insight into the common round of domestic life will thereby be obtained, and the ground will be cleared of a good many minor points concerning food. My information was collected in the Northern Gilberts, but may be taken as fairly descriptive of custom throughout the Group, including Baanaba (Ocean Island).

### 1. THE DAILY WORK OF A WOMAN.

The woman awakes and gets up, with the whole household, at the hour just before dawn called te itingaaro: one who sleeps into the daylight becomes the butt of derisive comment and, if unmarried, risks her chance of securing a husband. After a drink of kamaimai (boiled coconut sap - a food which will be described later) she begins work. The cool hours "before the sun is over the tops of the coconut palms" are dedicated to her heavier tasks, which roughly divide themselves into (a) those connected with the dwelling and (b) those concerned with agriculture.

In connection with the dwelling, the first duty is to examine the household's water supply and replenish it, if necessary, at the nearest seepage well (maniba). For the purpose of drawing water, a cluster of coconut shells (ibu) is slung over the shoulder at the end (or both ends) of a convenient pole. /

(Footnote.<sup>1</sup> See Plate 1. This method of carrying is called te amoamo, and is used indiscriminately for all types of burden. The ends of a carrying pole are often seen resting on the shoulders of bearers of mixed sexes, the burden being slung from the middle.)

The dawn-hour is also the moment for collecting certain raw materials for home manufacture, including pandanus leaf (rau)<sup>2</sup> for plaited articles, coconut fibre (benu) for string-making, and dry coconut leaves (rin)<sup>3</sup> for fishing torches. The incentive held

(Footnote.<sup>3</sup> See Plate 4.)

out to young girls to proceed early to such tasks is that the leaves - especially the prickly leaves of the pandanus - are marau, or soft, before the sun rises.

In connection with agriculture, a woman's early morning business is centred upon the preparation of black soil for the enrichment of the pits wherein the household's babai (alocasia indica) is cultivated. Her duty is to collect humus from beneath the ren and uri trees (tournefortia argentea and guettarda speciosa), for both her husband's pits and her own.<sup>4</sup>

(Footnote:<sup>4</sup> A woman inherits land or interests in land, and disposes thereof, quite independently of her husband in the Gilbert Islands.)

She carries the humus to the side of the pit, and sifts it into a heap through a string sieve called te kamareirei; there it remains for the man of the house to dig in. The woman also gathers old babai leaves and stalks, to twist them into ropes with pandanus leaves, so that they may be laid by the man around the growing babai-roots, forming paniers to contain the richer soil. A third important labour is the collection of the petals of the kaura flower (wedelia strigulosa), which, after drying in the sun for two or three days, she mixes with the sifted humus at the side of the pit.

When the sun shows signs of rising "over the tops of the coconut palms", the woman returns home, for the hour of the early meal is near, and it is her duty to prepare the food and set it before the men of her household.

The distribution of her tasks over the remaining daylight hours is almost entirely dependant upon the state of the tides. She is required to take advantage of low water by hunting in crevices of the reef for the smaller kinds of octopus (kiika); by fossicking in the lagoon shoals for the various sorts of cockle (koikoi; katura, nakoa-rikiriki), or other molluscs; and by fishing in the shallows with a dip-net (riena-n-urakaraka), or off the edge of the reef with rod and line. As her fishing duties depend upon the hour of the tide, it follows that she may have to perform them by night, in which case she is accompanied by a companion of her own sex authorised by custom.<sup>5</sup>

(Footnote:<sup>5</sup> If she be married, her Kainaba, husband's sister (On Baanaba Kainuma) is her natural guardian. The husband's mother, uterine or classificatory, comes next in order. If she be unmarried, an elder sister or any senior female relative, with preference for the father's sister, is the companion.)

When a husband accompanies his wife at night, the man handles the dip-net, while the woman bears the torches, fish-basket, and other gear. Women often go with their menfolk on deep-sea fishing excursions after dark - especially at the season when the moon sets at about midnight, this being the time when flying-fish are plentiful. The method of fishing is that called te tatae- the man standing slightly forward of the waist of the canoe, a raised torch in his left hand, and in his right a long-loomed dip-net held at the point of balance, wherein the fish is caught as it rises to the light. The woman's share of work on such occasions is to light and hand up fresh torches at need, and to paddle the canoe as ordered.

If a woman accompany one of her menfolk for purposes of cultivation or food-collection, her function is to hand him whatever implement or material he may need for his business at the place of labour. She does not carry his tools to or from work; she does not dig when a man is present; and she is at all times prohibited from climbing.<sup>6</sup>

(Footnote:<sup>6</sup> The prohibition seems to be founded on reasons of modesty alone; its tendency of latter years is to disappear. Several modern Gilbertese women known to the writer have won public respect by becoming experts in toddy-cutting, an occupation which necessitates much climbing.)

In the collection of nuts, pandanus-fruit or babai - the principal vegetable foods of the race - it is generally the man who wins the produce, and the woman who carries it home, walking behind him; but a very heavy burden may be carried between the two of them, and, as far as the winning is concerned, a girl or wife may, with the proper implements, pull down branches and knock off the fruit of coconut or pandanus palms.<sup>7</sup>

(Footnote:<sup>7</sup> The implement for pulling down branches, called te kai-ni-kereke (the stick-to-catch in a crook), consists of a fifteen-foot pole, at the distal end of which is lashed a small, barb-like crosspiece. The tool for knocking down fruit, called te butika, is often a plain pole, though it is more frequently seen with a knife lashed to the distal end. In former days, a blade of shell fashioned like a small triangular fin and attached in the manner of a flag took the place of a knife.)

During the hotter part of the day, if agriculture or fishing does not take her abroad, the woman's chief work is the

plaiting of mats and the preparation of food. It is generally an older woman of the household who does the cooking, builds the ovens, and collects firewood, but failing an elder there is no prohibition preventing a young girl from performing such duties, except at the time of menstruation.

From the first day of the menses until the fourth day after complete cessation every woman is absolutely prohibited from sharing in the cultivation of babai, and from touching any food - or implement, or utensil connected with food - save that intended for her own consumption. Pregnant or nursing mothers are usually held exempt from any but sedentary work, but are not obliged to abstain against their will.

Since the advent of European clothing ( and alas! its universal adoption by the native) the duty of household washing (if any) has been added to the Gilbertese woman's tale of work. Her other common daily tasks are - the care of children; the manufacture of coconut oil (ba); thatch making<sup>s</sup> (wai-rau); the making of riri, or kilts of leaf or grass - both her own and the men's; the  
(Footnote<sup>s</sup> - See Plate 5.)  
plaiting of wreaths (kaue) for the dance; and the preparation all ornaments for the personal use of her menfolk which do not require strength, skill in carpentry, or a particular magic ritual reserved to men, for their manufacture.

It is generally the men who make fire<sup>9</sup> with the kai-n-

(Footnote:<sup>9</sup> See Plate 6. The common ploughing method is used.)

(stick-to-rub), but a woman who learns to do this is considered, even in an age of matches, particularly clever and helpful.

## § 2. COOKING METHODS.

### (a) The covered hearth.

The word umuna means cook in a covered hearth. The process of cooking by this method is called te umum, the hearth itself being referred to as te ai-n-umum (the fire-to-cook.)

The hearth is made as follows. A shallow depression about 10 inches deep and 20-24 inches in diameter is first scooped in the sand. This is lined, as shown in Diagram A, with a layer (sometimes a double layer) of segments of coconut husk, quite dry and each about four inches broad in the middle. Upon the husk is laid a stratum of coconut half-shells, mouths downward, as pictured. As a top-dressing over the coconut shells is thrown in a filling of small dry rubbish, generally composed of the chewed and discarded seed-cones of the pandanus fruit. In the centre of the filling is scooped a hole, right down to the level of the coconut shells, and this is filled in with a wick of te ing, the fibrous material which grows at the base of the coconut leaf. The whole is then covered with a double layer of stones, preferably flat or flattish, each about as big as a man's hand.

The wick of te ing having been lit, it is covered with a capstone, and the flame descends into the fuel. The fire is allowed to burn itself clear, the stones settling down as the fuel is consumed. When the stones are red-hot, and neither flame nor smoke issue from the interstices between them, they are spread out in a single layer so that they form a pavement in the depression. The hearth is now ready for 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 stray sparks the mat with which the oven is to be covered.

The food having been put into the oven, an old mat is laid over it, totally concealing the hearth. For most foods except fish, babai, and pandanus fruit steam is used in the process of cooking: one edge of the mat is lifted, and about half a pint of water is poured on the outer edge of the hot stones; the mat is quickly pressed down again and the process repeated on all four

sides. The act of pouring in water is technically called teboka-na<sup>10</sup>.

(Footnote:<sup>10</sup> Teboka-washing; - na is the suffixed possessive, third person)

When this is complete, the edges of the mat are buried in sand and the oven left to do its work.

According to the nature of the food, it may be set direct upon the hot stones, or kept clear of them by "keels" of green coconut husk or midrib laid across the pavement of the hearth. For steam cooking, each kind of food has its particular form of jacket.

The pudding called buatoro<sup>11</sup> has a nira (winding) of babai-leaf,

(Footnote:<sup>11</sup> See section 8 for recipe.)

while that known as tangana has a baabaa (plaited basket) of coconut leaf. A fish, cooked dry, is enclosed in a spiral winding of coconut pinnules, knotted at head and tail, called a bara (hat).

The dimensions of an oven depend entirely upon the amount of food to be cooked. That which I have described and pictured is of the size appropriate to the daily need of a single household of three or four people, and is of the type known as te bora teuana - the single layer. This name refers to the single strata of husk and coconut shells respectively with which the bottom is lined: a larger oven generally contains two layers of each sort of fuel, laid alternately, and is called te bora uoua (the double layer). Four strata of husk and four of coconut shell are the most I have seen. In no case is there more than a single filling of small rubble.

A particularly deep and narrow form of steam-cooking oven is called te ai-ni-kiroro (the fire of Kiroro) or simply Te Kiroro. The mechanical arrangement of fuel in this type of hearth is different in no detail from that already described, but the depth of the pit prepared for the fire is so great in relation to its diameter that the sides are precipitous, and the hearth-stones eventually lie at the bottom of an almost straight shaft. This is one of the commonest forms of oven, being used when great quantities of food are to be cooked. It is stated to be "the fire of olden time", which is to say, a type long known to the Gilbertese ancestors who immigrated from Samoa some 22-25 generations ago.

An oven called te katura, which I have seen only in the

Northern Gilberts, is also used for steam-cooking. Its form is identical with that pictured, the highly technical difference being that a katura (smooth cockle) shell is set in the centre of the hearth before the first lining of husk is laid. But the method of producing steam distinguishes this oven very clearly from other types. The water used for the purpose is not introduced in four places, nor is it poured direct upon the hot stones: it is carefully directed through a single hole in the centre of the covering mat, with the object of saturating the food under treatment before it drips upon the hearth-stones and is turned into steam. A fundamentally different mechanical conception of cooking is thus involved.

The katura oven, together with the shell-fish of the same name, is said on Tarawa to have been introduced by an ancestress called Nei Katura, who came from a very distant Western land named Onouna. Local tradition is rich in allusions to Onouna, and evidence from all sources seems to indicate that a stream of immigrants came thence into the Gilbert Group about 25 generations ago.<sup>12</sup>

(Footnote:<sup>12</sup> Texts of the oral traditions of origin and migration among the Gilbertese should appear in print within the next two years.)

An oven called te ai-n-Nabanaba - the oven of Nabanaba - is precisely the same in construction and principle as the Katura oven; but whereas a smooth cockle shell is set in the centre of the Katura hearth, a nimataabin (nerita plicata) shell is laid in that bearing the name of Nabanaba. This is the only difference between the two. The land of Nabanaba is famous in Gilbertese tradition as the western home of an ancestress named Nei Tekanuea who married into a family of Tarawa Island some 27 generations ago, and became the grandmother of an illustrious local high chief named Kirataa. The stories connected with Nabanaba will be examined at some length in a later section.

Te ruanuna is the name of an oven used for dry - i.e., steamless - cooking. Its mechanism is similar to that of the ordinary steam hearth pictured, but the covering mat is entirely buried in sand as soon as it is put into position. The natives

state that the object of burying the mat is to prevent the free ingress of ~~air~~<sup>air</sup> and thus to control the heat of the oven, which might otherwise scorch the food in the absence of steam.

The tradition connected with the ruanuna oven is that it was imported from a Western land named Ruanuna. It is interesting to add that a certain kind of fish-trap made of coconut leaves is also called by the same name. No particular ancestor appears, however, to be associated with this oven, from which it might be inferred that the ruanuna form was not imported by a single strange group or stream of immigrants, but was generally known to a large section of Gilbertese ancestors before their arrival in their present home.

On Butaritari and Little Makin, the two most northerly Gilbert Islands, the name Ruanuna takes the form Ruaniwa.

The geographical associations of the different types of cooking oven are arresting, inasmuch as they point so decidedly towards the West. Regarding the Kiroro oven, it is interesting to observe that in old dancing chants dealing with the wars and voyages of Gilbertese ancestors, the ancestors are sometimes called Bu-Kiroro - the breed of Kiroro. Bu-Kiroro, often modified to Bongiroro, is also the collective name applied to what is otherwise called te tina-n aba i maeao, the line of lands in the West. If the Kiroro oven, which was brought into the Gilbert Groups by immigrants from Samoa, be connected with the Indonesian island of Gilolo, it follows that the immigrants represented a stream which, in earlier times, had migrated from Indonesia to Samoa.

There appears to exist no definite clue in local story as to the identity of Onouna, the homeland of the Katura oven, but it might possibly be connected with Unauna, an island in the northern bight of Celebes, some 250 miles to westward of Gilolo. That it is a land very far to westward of the Gilbert Group local tradition leaves no doubt. In Baanaban (Ocean Island) story, it is connected with a sister-land called Tabeuna, and both places are said to be situated on the western confines of Bu-Kiroro.

Ruanuna, under its variant form of Ruaniwa, strongly suggests Lieuenieua (Ontong Java), one of the Polynesian outliers of

Melanesia. It is pertinent to add that Lieuenieua is one of the somewhat strangely scattered areas wherein appears the Y-shaped stick attachment between a canoe-outrigger and its float, also seen in the Gilbert Islands.<sup>13</sup>

(FOOTNOTE<sup>13</sup>)

{Haddon : The Outriggers of Indonesian Canoes. J.R.A.I., Vol.1. Jan-June 1920, page 127:

Grimble: Canoes in the Gilbert Islands. J.R.A.I., Vol. Liv., Jan-June 1924, p. 122.)

(b) Broiling upon embers ( te tintin)

For the cooking of certain kinds of fish, especially the flying-fish, the broiling method is preferred. An open fire is built upon the ground, and when it has burned itself clear the gutted fish, complete with head and tail, is laid upon it. To keep the food clear of burning embers, it is sometimes accommodated upon supporting "keels" of green coconut-leaf midrib set parallel to each other across the fire.

The fuel preferred for the tintin method is dry coconut-husk, coconut shell, and pandanus seed-cone rubble, because all these materials burn clear very quickly.

When the fire is made by a dwelling house, it is generally built in the hearth place of the customary cooking-oven; if this depression be not used, a scooped-out hearth is prepared elsewhere for the purpose. But if the fire be built on the beach - as often happens when a midnight catch is brought home by the fishers - or if the cooking be undertaken far from home - as during a fishing excursion up or down the lagoon - no preliminary depression in the ground is considered necessary.

Fish may also be broiled on the hot stones of an ordinary cooking-oven, in which case no covering mat is used, and the food is wrapped in no jacket.

§ 3. COOKING MAGIC AND PROTECTIVE RITUALS.

A Tarawa woman, Nei Bataiauea - Roman Catholic convert, aged 25 - learned from her maternal grandmother, and later gave to me, a magic formula held to be efficacious in spoiling the oven of an enemy. According to Bataiauea's account, she doubted the power of the formula (owing to her religious education) but felt that it deserved a fair trial before being consigned to limbo. She chose her unfortunate mother-in-law as the victim of her experiment, although she was on the best of terms with that lady.

At about midday, when a cooking hearth was being prepared by the old woman for the reception of some Buatoro puddings, Bataiauea covered herself with a sleeping mat, turned on her side to face the fire (which was near the side of the house), and muttered the following formula three times in succession :-

Antena ai are e bubu aarei .. e-e ?	Whose is that fire which smokes .. e-e?
Kai, ana ai Nei Tuta !	Why, her fire Nei Tutua!
Ba ai-tina-na Kanounou, ba ai-tama-na Kanounou:	For her aunt is Kanounou, <sup>14</sup> for her uncle is Kanounou;

(Footnote:<sup>14</sup> Ka is the causative prefix;  
nou is the poisonous monacanthus fish,  
which has a dirty, rough skin. Kanounou  
therefore means, in this context, to cause  
to be as rough and dirty as the nou.)

Ba a ira te taanga n Tikinono.	For they (i.e., the male and female Kanounou) accompany the host of Tikinono. <sup>15</sup>
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(Footnote.<sup>15</sup> Tikinono means hauled taut, and  
is used to denote heaviness or sadness in  
a cooked pudding.)

Tiiki- - tiki - tiki-tiki-tiki!	Heavy - heavy- heavy- heavy- heavy !
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At the words "Tiiki - tiiki - tiki-tiki-tiki!" the performer of the ritual clasped her hands, closed her eyes tight, and stiffened every muscle of her body as in a rigor, with the object of transmitting the quality of stiffness or heaviness to all food cooked in the oven. According to her own statement, her mother-in-law was from that moment unable

to make a success of anything she cooked, until she changed her hearth. The change was ultimately made upon the solicitous and filial advice of Batiauea herself !

Food and cooking fires were formerly much used in connection with the sinister form of magic called te wawi - the death magic- which, though sternly prohibited by British law, is without any doubt still occasionally practised. A man is held to be particularly vulnerable through the embers or ashes of a fire upon which his fish is being broiled, and will keep a sharp look-out upon any individual not of his own household who approaches while cooking is under way. The method of the magician is to possess himself covertly of a handful of ashes, or a few morsels of charred wood, before the food is taken from the fire, and retire with them to a dark corner. Setting them upon the ground before him as he sits, he stirs the fragments slowly, in a counter-clockwise direction, with a piece of the riblet of a shrivelled coconut pinnule, muttering to himself the following formula :-

Ewara-n ai-ni kana-na :	The stabbing of the fire of his food:
Boa-rio, boa-rake,	Strike westwards, strike eastwards,
Boa-mate, boa-tabwe !	Strike death, strike rending apart !
A bung, kanoa-n-nano-na :	His bowels give birth( i.e. begin to labour):
A bung, ao a rai, so a mate, ao a tabwenaua.	They give birth, and they are overturned, and they are dead, and they are rent apart.
Maama - ia, bekebeke-ia !	Their shame, their unease !
Raira ato-na !	Overturn his liver !
E a tia, b'e a mate - o-o !	It is done, for he is dead -o-o!
Kokon-na ... konie-e-e! / <sup>6</sup>	Strangle him ... !
Kokon-na ... konae-e-e!	Strangle him ... !

(Footnote:<sup>6</sup> The words konie-e-e and konae-e-e are merely euphonic variants of kokon-na.)

The section of the formula beginning with the words "A bung kanoa-n-<sup>nano</sup>nano-na" and ending with the last line is repeated a second and a third time: after which the magician stabs the ashes and leaves his riblet of coconut leaf standing upright in their midst. It is claimed that, if the man against whom the

ritual is directed eat of the food cooked in the cursed fire, he will soon begin to vomit, after which he will be seized with stomach cramps and die within three days. His companions will feel no ill effects, as "their pictures have not stood in the heart of the sorcerer" during his performance of the spell.

Such is still the fear of all forms of the wawi ( and there are many) that one who believes himself to have eaten cursed food may, indeed, by force of auto-suggestion, induce upon himself all the symptoms described above and die, unless he possess a protective spell which he believes to be more powerful than his enemy's magic.

The protective spells are of particular interest, because they generally contain the names of the great ancestral deities of the Gilbertese totem-sibs, which never appear in any formula purporting to attack life and property. A very distinct set of religious ideas thus sets protective rituals apart from offensive magic.

Offensive magic appears to be purely animistic in attitude; the spiritual powers (if any) named in the formulae are held to be resident within the material of the ritual performed, and to be forced by the power of word and ceremonial to do the bidding of the sorcerer. On the other hand, the ancestral deities of the protective spells are not considered to be immanent in any material object, or to be constrained to obedience; their response to any spell is believed to depend, not upon the power of that specific ritual at all, but upon the past faithfulness of the performer in (a) observing the cult of his ancestors, and (b) abstaining from incest.<sup>17</sup> It is thus by favour that they are *believed to afford protection*

[Footnote:<sup>17</sup> Incest (te kanikira) according to authentic Gilbertese custom (not now so strict as it used to be) consists of the establishment of sexual relations between -

- (1) Persons descended into the same (patrilineal) exogamous totem-group;
- (2) Lineal ascendants and descendants not of the same totem-group, e.g., mother-son; maternal grandfather - grand-daughter; and so on;

- (3) Collaterals descended from a common ancestor (not being of the same totem group) down to the fourth generation of descent. The "fourth generation goes free;"

~~Footnote: Grimble: From Birth to Death in the Gilbert Islands. J.R.A.I. Jan-June 1921.~~

- (4) Collaterals of unequal degrees of descent from a common ancestor, thus standing to each other in the relationship, however distant, of classificatory parents and children.

The eating of the totem, or its desecration, was once considered a form of incest.]

~~believed to afford protection,~~ and it is the feeling of being justified before them that gives the performer of a protective ritual his confidence in their favour.

It would seem on the evidence that offensive and protective magic are the products of two sharply distinguished modes of religious thought, representing two different culture streams. The absence of the names of ancestral deities from offensive formulae seem to indicate that the patrilineal folk, to whom such deities belonged, originally possessed no magic of an aggressive kind. This leads to the interesting hypothesis that the protective formulae were invented by the folk possessing the ancestor-cult, when they came into contact with an animistic people, as a measure of safety against an alien system. The constant recurrence of ancestral names in protective spells lends much support to the conjecture.

The first example chosen in illustration comes from the island of Marakei. If a man fears that the food which he is about to eat has been cursed, he first takes a pinch of the suspected dish in his right hand, and quickly whispers to himself the following words:-

Taua-ni kana-ia aio-ee!

This, the holding of their food :

Taua-ni kana-ia Taburimai  
Auriaria, Nei Tevenei,  
Riiki, Nei Tituaabine !

The holding of their food  
Taburimai, Auriaria, Nei  
Tevenei, Riiki, Nei Tituaabine<sup>18</sup>

(Footnote)<sup>18</sup> These are ancestral deities of Gilbertese totem-sibs, into which descent is patrilineal. They are believed to be related to each other in varying degrees of brother-sisterhood, and so have a general importance to the race outside their respective totem-groups.)

I aki bua, I aki taro !

Te mauri, te raoi.

Te tabomoa Ngai-o-o!

I am not lost, I am not accursed!<sup>19</sup>

Safety, peace.

Excellent am I - o-o !

(Footnote:<sup>19</sup> Taro -- accursed. The term tataro is reserved for the essentially religious formulae pronounced in connection with the cult of the ancestor, and may be translated prayer or supplication: as such, it is sharply distinguished (both in fact and in the native mind) from the term tabunea, which denotes magic formulae of the purely animistic type already exemplified. The use of the word taro to mean accursed is thus in the manner of a misnomer, for curses are only effected by means of tabunea, never tataro. The inference is that taro was adapted to its present use by a race to whom the tabunea was a strange thing and its technical name foreign.)

After the third repetition of this formula, if his conscience be clear of the two offences already indicated, he eats the food with confidence.

I have a note of a rather more elaborate ritual from Tarawa. The suspected food is laid on a leaf upon the ground, and covered with any sort of mat. The performer of the ceremony sits, with no particular regard to orientation, holding in his right hand the fanlike tip of a dry coconut leaf: this he waves to and fro over the covered food, occasionally tapping the mat with light blows. While thus occupied, he mutters -

Unauna-ni mata-n anti !

Kang anti, Nei Tabaa, anti !

Kang anti, Nei Tabaa, anti!

The gouging out of spirits' eyes !

Eat up the spirits, Nei Tabaa, the spirits;

Eat up the spirits, Nei Tabaa,<sup>20</sup> the spirits!

(Footnote:<sup>20</sup> Tabaa means young pandanus bloom, and Nei Tabaa is the name sometimes given in song and ritual to the pandanus tree. It will be seen in a later place that the pandanus is the ancestress-tree of the Gilbertese.)

Antni ni Mauere, Mauere - o-o!  
O, naako-o-o-o!

Spirits of Mauere, Mauere<sup>21</sup> -o-o!  
O, depart -o-o-o!

(Footnote:<sup>21</sup> Mauere is the name of a host of evil beings, believed to be the familiars of sorcerers who practise the death-magic.)

Naako, te anti-o-o-o!

Ko ninibaao ni bong, ko

ninibaao ni ngaina,

Anti ni meangi-ra, maiaki-ra,  
mainiku-ra, maeao-ra  
maieta, mainano.

Depart spirit-o-o-o!

Thou art bent double at night,  
thou are bent double by day  
(i.e., unable to rise and  
walk),

Spirits of North of us, South of  
us, East of us, West of  
us, above, below.

Ko na kanna Neveneve;

Thou (Nei Tabaa) shalt eat up  
Neveneve:<sup>22</sup>

(Footnote:<sup>22</sup> Neveneve is the collective name  
for another host of familiars similar to  
those called Mauere.)

Ko na kanna te boka, ko na  
kanna te buni.

Thou shalt eat the boka,<sup>23</sup> thou shalt  
eat the buni.

(Footnote:<sup>23</sup> Boka: an old coconut much used in  
certain kinds of death magic. Buni: the  
trigger-fish (tetradon), of which certain  
parts are very poisonous (see post - Poisons).  
By implication, the performer of the ritual is  
asking his ancestress to consume everything  
harmful in the suspected food.)

Anti ni Mauere, Mauere-o-o!  
O, naako-o-o-o!

Spirits of Mauere, Mauere-o-o!  
O, depart -o-o-o!

Naako, ma kam a tai rikaaki  
maikoa.

Depart, and return not to this side  
(of the Unseen).

Kaanga-o-o, te anti-o-o  
naako-o-o-o!

As it were, spirit, depart !

As soon as the third repetition of this spell is  
accomplished, the performer rises and goes quickly to the lagoon  
beach; there he throws his coconut leaf, handle first and  
dartwise, into the sea. He may then return and eat the cursed  
food with impunity.

(a) Used in Fishing.

For stupefying fish in pools on the reefs the seed of a tree called baireati is used in the northern islands. One or two baireati trees grow in Butaritari and Little Makin, but the supply of seed is obtained, mainly, from the western beach of any island, where it is sometimes washed ashore in considerable numbers during the season of westerly gales. Its thick envelope of husk renders it capable of travelling great distances oversea. The baireati is conjecturally identified as Barringtonia butonica. The seed is taken out of the husk, and grated on a rasp of cured sting-ray skin; the gratings are then scattered in the pool as desired. A very small quantity suffices to poison a large sheet of water; on a calm day, fragments allowed to sink into five-fathom water off the edge of a reef will stupefy fish in the near neighbourhood.

Another stupefying agent used in both the North and the South is te ntabanin, a small, thin variety of sea-slug. The creature is taken alive and shredded on a grater, and the fragments are thrown into the water of a pool, where their effect is almost immediate. Some of the fish float in a comatose condition to the surface, others continue to swim lethargically below water; it is noticeable that the latter become quite blind, making no attempt to avoid any rocks that may stand in their way, or to escape the hand of the fisher.

Fish stupefied with te baireati or te ntabanin are eaten with no further precaution than gutting before being cooked.

(b) Used for homicidal purposes.

Neither of these poisons appears ever to have been used against human beings, their respective smells being considered to convey too clear a warning of their presence: the native of the Gilbert Islands uses that sensitive organ, his nose, to an extent undreamed of by Europeans.

The buni, or trigger fish (tetradon), formerly provided the most effective human poison known to the Gilbertese. The flesh of the buni may be eaten with perfect safety (in these

waters) if the gall sac (ari), liver (ato), alimentary canals (ninika), and roe (bia) be first removed without rupture; but these parts - and above all, the gall sac - contain a virulent poison, which is swiftly absorbed by the flesh if rupture takes place before the fish be gutted. The usual trick of the native poisoner apparently was to spill the contents of the gall sac into the abdominal cavity during the removal of the viscera. This was sufficient to secure the death of any who ate the flesh.

The symptoms of buni poisoning are well known to the modern race, as accidental cases still occur from time to time. The sense of balance is first affected, the knees give way, the legs become paralysed, and death quickly supervenes. The poison appears to be of a neurotoxic order. The native treatment is to administer copious draughts of sea water as soon as possible, in order to induce vomiting.

Te bwatua, a little teleost fish of the order Plectognathi, probably the small fry of one of the globe-fish, was also used by the poisoner of old days, the viscera being ruptured and inserted into the abdominal cavity of any other fish being cooked for food purposes. As described by an old man of Marakei, the symptoms produced in the victim seem to have been similar to those of buni poisoning.

Te kaveana, a crab with a light carapace and very long legs of which I have not been able to obtain a specimen, was known and used at Ocean Island (Bañaba) and in the Northern Gilberts. All parts of this creature are said to be poisonous. The meat was shredded and cooked inside the food intended for the victim. The symptoms are described as "sleepiness, heaviness of the senses (te aawa) increasing quickly to extreme lethargy, and final unconsciousness followed by death." No pain appears to have been caused by the poison.

A horrible method of killing was used in Butaritari, Little Makin, Marakei, and perhaps other islands. A great number of cantharides beetles were first collected by the poisoner, and "wrung out" in a piece of ing (the fibrous material at the base of the coconut leaf); the juice thus obtained was mixed with

kamaimai, and the drink offered to the victim. The fluid secreted by the cantharides beetle being a powerful vesicatory, causes inflammation throughout the uro-genital tract, accompanied by strangury, haematuria, priapism, and glairy urethral discharge: in some cases acute membranous cystitis may occur, as many Europeans know to their cost after having drunk coconut toddy in which a few cantharides beetles have accidentally fallen. The victim of a draught containing the juice of some hundreds of these creatures must have died a terrible, lingering death.

A poison rarely used, because seldom obtainable at the right moment, was the liver of a shark. Under normal conditions, this is a perfectly safe food, but individuals of the blue-shark species are said by natives to have a liver of aberrant shape, one lobe of which is recurved like a hook; in this condition it is stated to be very poisonous. The symptoms are those of neurotoxaemia.

§ 5. PROHIBITIONS ON FOODSTUFFS.

Totem-creatures. Gilbertese society is divided into exogamous groups, wherein descent is patrilineal, and of which each purports to be either descended from or closely connected with at least one totem. Most sibs possess a minimum of two totems, some have three or four, one has eight. Several sibs occasionally share the same totem or totems: in such cases, the social groups concerned, although having different names, are seen to trace descent from the same ancestor or ancestress, and to observe the cult of the same atua.

No member of a sib may eat the totem-creature of his group: the creature is held to be flesh of his flesh, and its use as food is considered to be the first step towards incest. The ceremonial eating of the totem on special occasions seems never to have been practised in these islands.

In accordance with the patrilineal system of descent, a native owes greater deference to his father's sacred creature than to his mother's, but he will generally refuse to eat the latter, and also his wife's. It must, however, be added that this applies nowadays to a very small class of persons - the majority of the modern race having definitely discarded the strict practice of earlier times. It is estimated that not more than ten per cent of Gilbertese now living remember even the names of their totems.

A remarkable exception to the general forgetfulness is afforded by the clans of which one or another of the varieties of the Ray is the sacred creature. The members of these groups will still refuse, in the Northern islands, even to share a pipe or a drinking vessel with a person who has recently eaten the flesh of a Ray. The belief is that any such offence against the totem will be resented by Nei Tituaabine, the ancestral spirit of the sibs in question, and punished by visitations of the skin-disease known as te rabarabataki.

The appended table contains a list of the food creatures avoided, for totemistic reasons, by those who continue to respect them.

Totems.

NAMES OF TOTEM-Sibs.

Names of sib-deities  
associated with totems.

Other totems of sibs named  
(associated deities in brackets.)

1. Béche-de-mer (Kereboki)

Keaki

Nei Tituaabine.

Giant Ray, Tropic Birds (both Nei Tituaabine)

2. Clam, giant (Kima aubunga.)

Karongoa

Auriaria

Sun (not specifically allocated) Rat. (Auriaria) Wind, thunder, cockerel, shark (Tabuariki). Kanawa tree. (Tevēia)

Te O  
Uma-ni-Kamauri

Auriaria  
Auriaria

Rat, tern (Auriaria).  
Rat, tern (Auriaria)

3. Cockerel (moa)

Karongoa  
Taunnamo  
Aa-n-te-Kanawa

Tabuariki  
Taburiki  
Tabuariki

See 2 above.  
Shark (Tabuariki)  
Ditto.

4. Eel (rabono)

Nukumātea

~~Raki~~ RIIKI

—

5. Garfish (ana)

Nei Ati

Nei Ati

Bonito (Nei Ati)

6. Giant Ray (baimanu)

Keaki  
Tebakabaka

Nei Tituaabine  
Nei Tituaabine

Same as 1 above.  
Shark (Tabuariki); tropic birds (Nei Tituaabine).

Kaburara

Kaburara

Sting Ray (Nei Tituaabine); a creeping plant, te ntaraai (Nei Tituaabine).

7. Toddy (Ku<sup>h</sup>ei, io)

Tebora<sup>h</sup>ea

Tabakea

A small tree, (te ibi); a mythical beast, te Kekenu, apparently a crocodile or alligator; the turtle (all Tabakea).

8. Octopus (Kake) *Riiki*

Nei Ati

Nei Ati

- - -

9. Porpoise (Kua)

Ababou

Bue ma <sup>Riirongo</sup> Kurongo

Sun and Moon (Bue ma Kurongo); the rock cod (Nakuaumai).

Maerua  
Tekokona

Bue ma <sup>Riirongo</sup> Kurongo  
Bue ma <sup>Riirongo</sup> Kurongo

Ditto.  
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<u>Totems.</u>	<u>NAMES OF TOTEM-SIBS</u>	<u>NAMES of Sibdeities.</u> <u>associated with totems.</u>	<u>Other totems of sibs named</u> <u>(associated deities in brackets).</u>
10. Rat. ( <u>Kimoa</u> )	Karongoa Te <sup>0</sup>	Auriaria Auriaria Auriaria Nakuanmai	Same as 2 above. Same as 2 above. Same as 2 above. See 9 above.
11. Rockcod* ( <u>Kuau</u> )	Uma-ni-Kamauri Ababou, Maerua		
12. Sandsnipe ( <u>Kun</u> )	Teba	Taburimai	Trevally and other carangoid fish (Taburimai)
	Tekirikiri	Taburimai	Ditto.
	Tabiang	Taburimai	Ditto.
	Namakaina.	Taburimai	Ditto.
<sup>3</sup> 13. Shark ( <u>bakoa</u> )	Karongoa	Tabuariki	Same as 2 above.
	Taunnamo	Tabuariki	Same as 3 above.
	Aa-n-te- Kanawa	Tabuariki	Same as 3 above.
	Katanrake.	Tabuariki	- - -
	Karumaetoa	Tabuariki	- - -
	Tebakabaka	Tabuariki	Same as 6 above.
<sup>4</sup> 14. Sting Ray ( <u>baiku</u> )	Kaotirama	Nei Tituaabine	- - -
	<u>buatara, bakananeku</u> ) Bangauma	Nei Tituaabine	- - -
	Buatara	Nei Tituaabine	- - -
	Kahurara	Nei Tituaabine	See 6 above.
<sup>5</sup> 14. Tern. ( <u>Kiakia</u> )	Te O	Auriaria	See 2 above.
	Uma-ni-kamauri	Auriaria	See 2 above.
<sup>6</sup> 15. Trevally and allied fish, carangoid	Tekirikiri	Taburimai	See 11 above.
	Tabiang	Taburimai	Ditto.
	Namakaina	Taburimai	Ditto.
	<u>Kuana</u>	Taburimai	Ditto.
<sup>7</sup> 16. Tropic Birds ( <u>Taake, Keaki</u> <u>ngutu, karara</u> )	Tebakabaka	Nei Tituaabine	See 1 above.
	All Giant Ray Sibs.	Nei Tituaabine	See 6 above.
	All Sting Ray sibs	Nei Tituaabine	See 6 above.
		Nei Tituaabine	See 13 above.
<sup>8</sup> 17. Turtle.	Tebora <sup>ea</sup>	Tabakea.	See 7 above.

### The Frigate Bird

In a class by itself is the Frigate Bird (itei), which, although not regarded as a totem by any social group that I can trace, is not eaten because, according to a tradition common in the Northern Gilberts, "it is the bird of the Sun, of High Chiefs, and of the dance."

### Creatures connected with Divination.

Four fish frequenting clear water at the edge of the ~~reef~~<sup>reef</sup>, and belonging to the Labridae, are tabu for those who practise divination with the leaves of the pandanus and coconut; these are te nnari, te bukibuki, te arinai, and te bave. They are believed to swallow the ashes of the leaves used for 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 seeing and interpreting the attitudes of the divining-leaves.

### Creatures avoided by pregnant women and nursing mothers.

Pregnant women may not eat the following fish, for fear of affecting their unborn children in the various ways indicated.

Te baibai (sole or plaice): is believed to cause the child's eyes to squint, or even to be set on one side of the head, like those of a flatfish.

Te baua (sp. mullidae): having a body very small in proportion with its head, this fish is supposed to induce a similar disproportion in the unborn child.

Te koinawa (sp. labridae): a small-mouthed creature, thought to convey its deformity to the unborn. A large (but not over-large) mouth is a mark of beauty among the Gilbertese.

Te buni (tetradon): is believed to prevent the growth of eyebrows. Thick eyebrows are greatly admired, especially those which meet in the middle.

Te nneve (crayfish) with its allied forms, te ura and

te mnao : is thought to make the eyelashes coarse and stiff, instead of silky, as most admired.

Te on, te tabakea (turtle): causes cowardice, on account of its crawling habit.

Te aubunga, kima, neitoro, batua (giant clam): causes baldness in the child.

Remnants of fish used as bait may not even be touched by expectant mothers, for fear of giving their children unshapely hands, having a hacked and raw appearance. The close union of bait with "its brother, the hook" is also supposed to induce incestuous prenatal tendencies. A woman with child must also avoid eating any of the creatures tabu to her husband or brothers for any reason at all, totemistic or otherwise, in order to save her child from the various and particular consequences feared by them.

Creatures avoided by women in general.

All women avoid the following foods:-

Ye kuu (unidentified fish), because of its name, which means "wrinkled". It is believed that a diet of this fish causes the mats plaited by the eater to have an uneven texture and a wrinkled surface:

Te inaai - a large fish with rough scales - because it is supposed to cause the ends of the hair to become mangaruā, or forked;

Any ill-formed pandanus fruit: for the same reason:

Te ũua (porpoise) Elder women may eat this mammal in any quantity, but young girls are not allowed to take it in small amounts at a time, as it is said to rot young teeth if eaten in morsels. If, however, a large catch of porpoise be made, a young girl is allowed to eat her fill. Probably an economic arrangement, devised in the first place to limit the distribution of the prized flesh to a smaller

circle in the event of a meagre catch.

Foods avoided by adults in time of war.

At a time of communal or private strife, fighting men used to avoid certain foods for the reasons indicated below:-

Te koinawa - a fish of the species Labridae - because it was believed, if eaten in anger, to cause the skin-disease called te nimanu, an itching complaint<sup>s</sup> especially affecting the hands:

Te bukibuki (sp. Labridae), on account of its name, which means "throb", was thought to induce a hurried beating of the heart, and thus cowardice;

Te Kekerikaaki - a long, thin stinging jellyfish of a bluish colour - also on account of its name, which means "retire":

Te batua - the giant clam at one of its stages of growth. The similarity of the name of this fish with the word batiku (to bow) was considered to predispose the eater to assume a bent or servile attitude towards his enemy.

Te on, te tabakea (turtle). As previously stated, the crawling habit of the turtle associated it, in the native mind, with cowardice.

The liver of any fish, being much used as shark-bait, was considered to put the eater into the position of a bait to be snapped up by a fierce enemy.

Medical avoidances.

Te arinai (see creatures connected with Divination) is not completely avoided, but, if consumed in large quantities is believed to cause falling of the hair, especially of the beard, in sympathy with the smoothness of its skin.

Te kima (giant clam) is eaten sparingly, because believed to cause baldness if taken to excess.

Turtle flesh in large quantities is supposed to

encourage kinaka (tertiary jaws).

Te ane (unidentified fish) is forbidden to young boys and girls, because it is said to induce te waiwai - an inflammatory condition of the bladder or urethra.

Creatures connected with healing magic.

A very interesting example of marginal diffusion is presented in the case of certain avoidances connected with healing magic (te wairaakau). This form of magic is not of Gilbertese origin, being, as now practised, a medley made up of Fijian and Ellice Island components. The Fijian elements were introduced (a) by members of the local Native constabulary recruited in Fiji and (b) by Gilbert Islanders returned to their homes after long residence on Viti Levu.<sup>24</sup> The Ellice Island components -

(Footnote:<sup>24</sup> A moderate number of Gilbertese are always to be found at the settlement of Nasese, near Suva.)

including the name wairaakau - were imported chiefly by Ellice labourers employed on Ocean Island (Baanaba), who diffused it among their Gilbertese fellow-workmen,<sup>25</sup> who in

(Footnote:<sup>25</sup> From 400 to 600 Gilbertese labourers, accompanied by their wives and children, are constantly employed in the phosphate industry at Ocean Island.)

their turn carried it back to their various home-islands.

The food creatures avoided by those who either practise or undergo this form of treatment are -

Te kiika (octopus);

Te rabono (eel);

Te bakoa (any kind of shark).

All these happen to be totem-creatures of Gilbertese social groups, but their connection with the wairaakau is, like the ritual itself, of purely foreign origin.<sup>26</sup>

(Footnote:<sup>26</sup> It seems probable that the Ellice Island form of the ritual had itself been learned from the Fijians before its conveyance to the Gilbertese. See Kennedy: Field Notes on the Culture of Vaitupu, Ellice Islands, page 264, supplement to J.P.S. No. 158, June, 1931. The avoidance of the creatures named appears to have originated in Fiji. But the subject needs further research.)

Other avoidances.

The buare (belly) of any fish is forbidden to all, being called "slave's food."

The bukiri of a coconut - i.e. the distal end, where the shell comes to a point - is forbidden to men: women may eat it. No man may drink the water of a coconut from the bukiri end, the correct method being to pierce the "mouth" of the face at the proximal end, and suck.

Raw fish is forbidden to children, for two separate and distinct reasons :- (1) It is said to make their breaths "heavy" which is to say, unpleasant: (2) a more mysterious reason is that "the child's head will be smitten (bo)" if he eat uncooked fish. The phrase is a catchword, of which the present generation appears to have lost the meaning but not the fear.

6. DIET: General observations upon  
food-articles.

The leading principle of diet is that foods, to give strength, must be mixed: a satisfactory meal cannot be made of one dish only: there must be a tanna, a second dish of a savour so contrasted that it relieves, and is relieved by, the taste of the first.

Of all qualities most prized in food, fattiness (nenea) comes easily first. Nevertheless, this is not listed as a gastronomical preference, inasmuch as the native, though admittedly fond of the taste of fat, sets an even greater value upon its food-properties, and, despite its scarcity in the atolls which he inhabits, regards it not as a luxury but as a necessity. For this reason he spends much care in the artificial conservation of the fish called te baneawa ( a kind of mullet), which is relatively rich in dorsal fat. The small fry of the baneawa ( called te tawna) is periodically netted on the shoals of the ocean reef, and confined in very carefully prepared ponds of brackish water, there to remain until it is about a foot long. When taken for the table, the fish may be eaten fresh-cooked, but is much more usually dry-salted and sun-cured, in which case it is eaten without cooking.<sup>27</sup>

(Footnote<sup>27</sup> A wealth of magico-religious ritual has attached itself to the care of the baneawa, which needs intensive study. On certain islands, communal nei (conservation ponds) are maintained, in connection with which is practised a series of fishing customs, prohibitions, and ceremonials that may be said to dominate the social life of the population).

On account of the same quality of fattiness, the porpoise (kua) is very highly valued, and a single stranded porpoise can still give rise to bitter dispute concerning the foreshore-rights of different social groups. On some islands, the single totem-si of Karongoa-n-uea (Karongoa-of-kings) claims ownership of the creature, irrespective of where it may have come ashore; elsewhere it is regarded as the perquisite of High Chiefs: everywhere, in former days, the proprietary interest was carefully defined. To whichever family group the prize may be awarded, its division and

sub-division is a matter of extraordinary care to every member: even though a scrap no bigger than a man's first phalanx be the portion of one person, he will feel much aggrieved if he be forgotten in the distribution.

If a sudden large supply of porpoise flesh be acquired, it is cut into strips and cured, without salt, in the sun: The somewhat leathery product is eaten in an uncooked state.

The deep sea conger (rabono-ni-man) is esteemed for its fat to a degree hardly less than the porpoise, and is eaten either fresh-cooked or dry-salted. Though highly prized, this creature is the object of no socio-religious reservations comparable to those connected with the porpoise.

The octopus (kiika) is held to be very nourishing: it is usually hung up in the sun to cure, without previous salting, the tough white interior flesh of the resultant product being eaten uncooked.

The following fish are often eaten raw, at the taste of the consumer:-

Te aubunga - giant clam (allied forms - te kima, te neitoro, te batua):

All other kinds of shellfish:

Te onauti - flying fish:  
Te baneawa - mullet (mugil cephalus ?):  
Te aua - grey mullet:  
Te rereba - trevally, cavally (allied forms - te kuaua, te urua):  
Te ati - bonito (allied forms - te atuara, te nari, te nariari, te ingimea, te baibo):  
Te baara - cero (scomberomorus regalis):  
Te koinawa - sp. Labridae:  
Te inaai - unidentified:  
Te ikamaawa - unidentified:  
Te imunai - unidentified:  
Te benu - unidentified:  
Te kobe - unidentified:

The habit of te oraora (the eating of uncooked food) seems to be founded upon taste alone: no tabu prohibits a man from eating any kind of fish in an uncooked state, but experience has found the varieties which are not wakaa (stringy or tough) when raw, and these only, as a rule, are the objects of te oraora.

Generally speaking, the native prefers the deep-sea varieties of fish to those obtainable in the lagoon shallows. His

taste is distinctly coarse, according to European standards; the flesh of shark (bakoa), spear-fish (raku) and sail -fish (raku-ika) is far more savoury to him than that of the baibai, a very delicate sole, which is plentiful in some lagoons. The red flesh of the bonito (ati), the barracuda (ika-baouea), and the horse-mackerel (baiura) ranks higher in the gastronomic scale than the white meat of the cero (baara) or the carangoids (rereba, urua, kuaua). A tubular, colourless jellyfish called te baitari, which has a strong salty taste, is very popular.

Among the crustaceans, te waro, a delicious member of the order Stomapoda, is largely neglected in favour of the commoner sorts of crab: <sup>eg.</sup> te manai, a russet-coloured land variety; te ntabaaba, found on the ocean reef; te ntabena, a pale greyish crab of the shoals; and te kauki, a white and grey speckled species with dark grey legs found on most beaches. The crustacean most admired as food is the formidable coconut-crab (aai), on account of the fat contained in its tail. The various kinds of crayfish-te nneve, te ura, te mnao -are eaten sparingly, because they are believed to cause diseases of the skin if consumed in large quantities.

Of molluscs, the oyster (baiao) is never eaten, though it is said to be non-poisonous, and no especial tabu appears to have caused the avoidance. The batua, neitoro, aubunga, and kima - each of which names signifies a giant clam at a particular stage of its growth - are much esteemed by some, but avoided by others because they are believed to cause baldness. The staple mollusc is the koikoi, with what are believed to be its allied forms, te koiriki, te koikoi-n-anti, te katura, and te nakoarikiriki, which include cockles, smooth cockles, and (possibly) trigonia. The sea-snail (natica), the warrener (nerita plicata), and a large kind of periwinkle, all called by the one name nimataanin, are also eaten.

Among mammalian fauna, the porpoise as already indicated, ranks easily first as a food-giver. The dog (kiri), which was known to the native from ancient times, but appears to have become extinct some five or six generations ago - was

eaten, according to the evidence of tradition, by the ancestors of the race. Nowadays, it is not a common article of diet, but is occasionally used as such by the people of Butaritari and Abemama.

The rat, locally represented by mus exulans, has never been eaten in the Northern islands; I have made no enquiries on this point in the South.

Reptiles appear in the Gilbertese dietary in the forms of the turtle (on, tabakea) and the lizard (sp. scincus: te beru). The latter is considered to be a very tasty morsel. After being killed, it is wrapped, without gutting, in a piece of pandanus leaf, and cooked in the steam oven. It is said to be very fatty. The gecko (tukunei) is never eaten.

The domestic fowl is not used for food except in Butaritari and Makin (the extreme northerly Gilbert Islands) and Ocean Island (Banaba). Its consumption in these three places may be the result of Western influences, but this is not quite certain; its avoidance elsewhere may possibly have originated from its connection with the spirit called Tabu-ariki who, besides being the ancestral deity of a local totem-sib, is also regarded as the god of thunder and tempest. The fear of offending Tabu-ariki may, in the first instance, have inhibited persons outside his actual totem-group from killing his creature, and so have caused an avoidance for which the modern race can give no definite reason. Fowl's eggs are also excluded from the bill of fare on most islands, but on Butaritari and Makin they are eaten raw with relish, being considered especially delicious when they contain a half-formed chick.

Sea-birds are rarely eaten in the North; I have seen the noddy (kunei,io) and the tern (kiakia) being cooked in the South, but conjecture that the habit may have been introduced by Ellice Islanders or Samoan Missionaries.

Two land-birds, the sandsnipe (kun) and sandpiper (kitiba), which are plentiful throughout the islands, seem to be eaten nowhere. The former is associated with one of the more important

ancestral deities, named Taburimai: the latter is used for sporting purposes as a fighting bird, in the manner of a game-cock, and is the object of many magico-religious rites in this connection.

#### Emergency diet.

In times of drought, when not only vegetable foods but all kinds of fish are scarce, the islander would formerly eat the stalks and foliage of certain creeping plants - te mtea (turtle grass), te wao (unidentified), and te boi (unidentified). It is curious to note that he seems never to have discovered the edible qualities of the Dioclea bean (riku), which grows on many islands. Hedley has noted a similar omission in the Ellice Group.<sup>28</sup>

(Footnote:<sup>28</sup> Hedley: Notes on the Ethnology of Funafuti. Memoirs of the Australian Museum, Sydney.)

Another emergency diet was the overripe fruit of the non (morinda citrifolia: commonly called the Malay custard apple). This most unpleasantly smelling food is still used as a stimulant by fishermen, during cruises of three or four days about their islands: it is said to be hot and comforting to a tired body. A variety of non particularly prized for the bigness of its fruit is called te non-nabanaba. The name of Nabanaba, a western land of tradition, has already been seen attached to a particular kind of cooking-oven.

The dessicated pandanus - fruit product called te kabubā, whereof the manufacture is described in section 7 (c), may be regarded as an emergency food, in the sense that it is carefully hoarded in times of plenty against periods of drought, and in olden times was kept in stock as "the food of fugitives" (i.e. the diet of people conquered in battle who had to flee their islands at a moment's notice), and "the food of voyagers."

#### European foodstuffs.

The pig, which was unknown to the islanders before its introduction by Europeans, is highly esteemed for its fat: for the same reason, fresh beef and mutton are eaten with avidity whenever obtainable, and tinned meats are very popular. The native has taken

very readily to tinned fish of all kinds, salmon being that most frequently seen at his board, on account of its moderate price: but the oily sardine seems to be his favourite from a purely gastronomic point of view.

Sugar, especially brown sugar, now ranks in the native mind almost as a necessity; mixed with water, it replaces in many households the molasses called kamaimai, which is made of boiled coconut toddy. Since this relieves the islander of much toddy-cutting, and enables him to conserve numerous trees for the sole purpose of copra-production, the advent of sugar may be regarded as an economic benefit, as far as it affects adults: but there can be little doubt that fresh toddy, with its vitamin-B content, forms a superior food for expectant mothers and children.<sup>29</sup>

(Footnote:<sup>29</sup> See in this connection Dr. G.W. Bray's remarkable monograph, "Dietetic Deficiencies and their Relationship to Disease", which has particular reference to toddy and its derivative foods on the island of Nauru; The Australasian Medical Publishing Company, Limited, Sydney, 1927.)

Rice and Navy Biscuits are now so generally used by the people that they may almost be called staple foods.

Tinned milk is bought for children, as a rule, on medical grounds only: it is regarded with complete aversion by most adults, who cannot understand the white man's liking for milk puddings, and consider that all food of this class is te bai ni kamumuta ( a thing to make-vomit).

Cod liver oil and castor oil appeal immensely to the native palate, and are rolled around the mouth with much puffing of the cheeks before being swallowed.

#### The stages of the coconut.

The Gilbertese recognise seventeen stages in the development of the coconut. The generic name of the nut is te uaa-n-ni ( the fruit-of-coconut palm), but each stage of growth is distinguished by a particular term, which is sometimes a name proper and sometimes a descriptive epithet.

Te nimoimoi is the name of the nut from the time of its first appearance until the water begins to develop.

Te onobua contains water, but as yet no flesh, save a little gelatinous deposit (marai) at the distal end.<sup>30</sup>

(Footnote:<sup>30</sup> By distal end is meant the point (bukiri) of the nut, opposite the stalk or "face" end.)

Te matari has a gelatinous deposit covering the whole interior of the shell. This marai is held to be the best food for infants, and is given with good results even to babies in arms.

Te moimoto is the drinking nut, wherein the marai has begun to form itself into a soft, milky-white flesh. The husk is still green and sappy. Moi means drink.

Te bukimaere (the end-striped). The flesh is now thoroughly firm, and fit to be the food of adolescents. The distal end of the husk begins to crinkle and turn a reddish brown.

E tangi ni kimoa ( it cries secretly). If shaken close to the ear, the nut gurgles a little, as the water is beginning to absorb. The water is considered to be at its best at this stage: the flesh is still food for adolescents.

Te aamakai is the nut of which the husk is nearly all turned a greenish and reddish brown.

Te ben. This is the ripe nut, of which the flesh has reached its maximum thickness. The flesh is adult's food: the husk is brown; but the fruit has not yet fallen from the tree.

Te moi. The freshly fallen nut. At this stage, the water begins to dry up quickly, and the sweet spongy substance called te bebe takes its place.

Te ranimauna X (the water-disappeared). The nut is dry inside.

Te maeke. The flesh begins to become oily. During this and the next three stages it is considered at its best for food purposes when eaten raw, and is called "the food of men."

Te bobo. The flesh begins to turn a yellowish brown.

E tawaa . ( it is ripe): e uraura ( it is red). The flesh is brown throughout.

E tenatena ( it clings or sticks.) The flesh is leathery, and no longer breaks off crisply when bitten; it is now held

in particular esteem by the aged of both sexes, on account of its sweet oily flavour.

E nananga nako ( it peels away) The flesh is easily separated from the shell, and begins to taste rancid.

Te boka<sup>~</sup>te bokakua. The flesh becomes pitted.

Te momoka. The flesh becomes spongy as the pitting increases, and eventually turns a dirty greyish black.

It is, of course, at the moi stage that the nut begins to sprout, if allowed to do so, and is selected or discarded for plantation purposes by the agriculturist. If opened at this stage, it is seen to be pushing out a tender white shoot from the hole which constitutes the "mouth" of the "face" at the proximal end. For agricultural purposes it is now called te buro: its further development, when planted, is as follows:-

E wi-n-taake. Literally translated this phrase means "it (has) beak of tropic bird", and refers to the young shoot which now begins to protrude through the husk.

E bas-raerae - it (has) leaf-pulled apart. The fan-like first leaf opens.

Te uto - the young tree, with leaves fully developed but as yet no sign of a trunk. Also called te ene.

Te uto ae e maiu noto-na. the uto whose base is vigorous. The first signs of a trunk are appearing.

Te uto ae e toro boto-na - the uto whose base sits firm. The young trunk becomes woody.

Te ni. The full-grown tree. When the first bloom (ari) appears, the ni is said to be ribaiai (coming into first flower): when it begins to bear nuts, it is called kai-ririeta(timber-growing high).

Coconut toddy.

Toddy is the sap extracted from the coconut blossom before the hard spathe which contains it has burst. The tip of the spathe is cut off, exposing an inch or two of compressed unopened blossom: the spathe is then bound around with string, in the manner of a cricket bat handle, upwards from the base to the cut-off end. A section of the exposed blossom is shaved off, and the toddy oozes from the cut surface: the spathe is pulled down, so that it protrudes horizontally from the tree, and lashed in that position: a coconut shell suspended below the tip catches the sweet liquid, which is guided into its mouth by a funnel of leaf. A leaf ~~shield~~<sup>shield</sup> prevents the intrusion of insects.

Numerous "schools" of toddy-cutting exist, nearly every family group having its own peculiarity of technique. The methods of binding the spathe are particularly varied, as the flow of sap is held to depend very greatly upon the skill with which this operation is performed.

The collecting-shell is changed twice (sometimes three times) a day, and on each occasion a fine wafer of the exposed bloom is sliced away, to stimulate a fresh discharge of sap. As cutting progresses, the binding of the spathe is gradually unwound, so that further lengths of the contained blossom may be exposed as necessity arises.

The hours of collection and renewal are usually just after sunrise and just before sunset, but some toddy-experts favour an intermediate operation at midday. A skilled cutter can win more than two pints of sap in twenty-four hours from a single spathe: the present writer, after several years of endeavour, was unable to achieve a full pint - which was politely attributed by the natives to lack of the proper magic. In point of real fact, the cutting process demands an extremely deft and sure touch, without which the sap refuses to run freely.

Toddy cutting is said by some to have been confined, seven generations ago, to the single island of Abemama, the secret having been brought thence by an individual named Nakuanu, and introduced into the Northern Gilberts. But this hardly

tallies with the evidence of other tradition, which connects the art with the ancestral being named Taburimai - one of the most important of the anti-ma-aomata (spirit-with-man) of the race - and seems to indicate that it was generally known from very early times.<sup>31</sup>

(Footnote:<sup>31</sup> A story of the trickster type describes how Na Areau, a son of the Creator of Heaven and Earth", was ignorant of "toddy cutting" and attempted to steal the todody of Tabuyimai. Taburimai's bird, the sandsnipe (kun), was set to spy upon the thief, who, however, caught it and reversed its tongue, so that it has only been able to say Kun, Kun & ever since.)

Toddy begins to ferment within fifteen hours of its collection, especially if allowed to stand in a previously used vessel: it is a popular intoxicant in its fermented state, though modern law prohibits its use. The effects of sour todody upon the native are such that it was early recognised as a social evil, and those who became addicts were sometimes, by communal consent, expelled from their islands.

7. PRESERVED FOODS.(a) The manufacture and use of kamaimai ( See Plate 7)

Kamaimai is the treacly product obtained by boiling and reboiling coconut toddy (kareve). In consistency, it varies from a state of liquidity comparable to that of olive oil to the solidity of a caramel, according to the number of boilings. For its manufacture, toddy collected at midday is considered the best; as the toddy used must be quite fresh, it follows that the boiling is an afternoon occupation.

Only women perform the work, and these must be related by blood or adoption to the man who has cut the toddy. It is still believed that, if an outsider undertake the task, her kamaimai will not thicken. The existence of such beliefs in connection with toddy is another indication of its use from very ancient times.

The vessels in which the liquid is boiled are ordinary mangko, half-shells of the coconut; the fire is made of embers, 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 fire, perhaps as many as thirty or forty together in a big boiling. I shall take as a standard the number 12, which represents an average boiling.

The liquid is allowed to boil at a gallop until the contents of the mangko are reduced by one half; at this stage, it has turned to a light, tawny-golden colour, and is already kamaimai of the variety called to mai-nakoiang (the boiling towards North), because it is drunk in this state more in the Northern than in the Southern islands; but, as a matter of fact, it is nowhere very much favoured.

For the second boiling, the contents of half the vessels on the fire are emptied into the other half, thus leaving six full mangko to proceed with. These are again allowed to gallop until half the liquid has evaporated. The kamaimai is now of a rich golden-brown colour and about as thick as boiled linseed oil. In this state, it is called te maran (smooth) because of its oily

consistency, and also te ira-n-atu (hair-of-head) because it drips, if sampled, in trailing threads, like golden syrup. This is the usual kind of kamaimai seen abroad in the houses. To a European palate, it is sickly sweet, even when liberally mixed with water: the dilution used by the native is in the proportion of half and half.

For further boiling, half of the mangko are again emptied into the others, leaving now only three full vessels. These are kept boiling until the bubbles which rise to the surface no longer scatter drops as they burst, but swell glutinously from the now sluggish liquid. When it has gone thus far, it is called te mata-warebewe (the broad eyed), with allusion to the size and shape of the bubbles.

The contents of one vessel are now divided between the two that remain. These 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. The food is now called te karebwerebwe (the make explode) because the bubbles make a crackling noise as they burst. Te karebwerebwe is a great favourite with children, whose mothers will generally dip a piece of wood into the boiling fluid and hand out a "bloom" of the sticky mass for their benefit.

The last stage arrives when a test shows the kamaimai to set as hard as a tough caramel. 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 into a ball and put by until cold. Its name is now te baka-mai-eta (the 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 relish with Babai or coconut. A sparing portion is considered enough for one meal, and the rest is carefully hoarded.

A drink of kamaimai (second boiling) forms the normal breakfast of the Gilbertese man or woman before setting out for the early morning labours.

(c) The manufacture of te kabubu, and its associations.

The product called te kabubu is a sweet powder of the consistency of sawdust made from the ripe fruit of the pandanus; it is mixed for purposes of consumption with water.

Extraordinary care is taken, in the manufacture of this food, to expel all moisture, as the durability of the finished article depends wholly upon the degree of dessication achieved. The following description of the method of manufacture was obtained at Yarawa, which island abounds in traditions concerning the food, and enjoys the distinction of producing the best kabubu in the Gilbert Group. The somewhat complicated procedure is set forth in the separate stages technically recognised by the native.

Stage 1. The pandanus fruits are broken up into their constituent seed-cones, which are heaped on a mat at the left side of the (sitting) worker. Another mat, or screen of plaited coconut leaf, lies before her. The seed-cones are taken, one by one, and their juicy proximal ends (tabataba) are sliced off upon the empty mat, their hard outer ends containing the seed being thrown aside to the worker's right.

Stage 2. The tabataba are gathered together in a net of coconut fibre string, and steam-cooked for about an hour. They are then taken out and heaped upon a mat of very close texture, about 3ft square, called the ngabingabi. The sides of the mat are raised on stones, so that it forms a shallow crater, and the worker, sitting close up against one edge, proceeds to pound the cooked fruit with a pestle (iku) of pemphis-wood into a smooth mash. Not a single lump (taribi) is permissible.<sup>3/</sup>

Footnote:<sup>3/</sup> See Plate D.8.

Stage 3. The mash is then separated into clots, each about as big as the lower half of a cottage loaf, and these are placed side by side on a separate mat. This process is called te buabua - the moulding - with reference to the

shaping of the clots between the hands of the worker.

Stage 4. Each clot is now taken individually upon the nagbingabi, to be kneaded and pummelled until it assumes the shape of a rectangular slab about two inches thick, and eighteen by eight inches in area. After kneading, the slab remains fairly close-packed and solid. This process is called te kaboraa (kneading). As each slab is completed, it is covered with a green mat of plaited coconut leaf called te raurau (plate) and tipped over upon it, as a pancake on a dish.

Stage 5. The slabs are then set out in rows to dry in the sun upon their respective raurau, being continually turned, to equalise the dessication. This goes on for a greater or less number of days, according to the weather: in a good, dry season, the process is considered complete after about thirty-six hours of exposure to the sun. During the whole of this stage the mash is called te karababa it is said to be mae ( a special technical term indicating dryness) when the sun-curing is complete.

Stage 6. The karababa is now ready for the stage called te evenako - the going away to another place. The slabs are taken to be dry-cooked in the Ruanuna oven, being set therein upon a foundation of green coconut-leaf midribs, which keeps them clear of the hot stones. They are left in the oven overnight. The next morning, they are again exposed (tawaaki) to the sun, and the process of curing continues for not less than seven or eight days in fine weather. At the end of this stage the slabs are hard, rather brittle, and of a pale golden-yellow colour. Now comes the browning process.

Stage 7. The cakes are heaped in piles of ten or more upon the hot stones of a cooking hearth. The undermost cake of a pile is not allowed to remain more than a few minutes in place: as soon as contact with the stones has browned its lower surface, it is removed to the top and another takes

its place. When the whole pile has been browned on one side, it is reversed and the process is repeated for the obverse sides. The name of this stage is te aa-karababa (the word aa meaning under-side.)

Stage 8. All the slabs having been browned, they are laid out on a mat to cool, a mat covering them. Being quite cold, they are broken up into bits and thrown into the largest aubunga (tridacna gigas) shell procurable, and there pounded into dust with a pemphis-wood pestle. The dust is kabubu, the finished article.

The kabubu is packed for storage in carefully prepared tubular containers of pandanus leaf called iria wherein, if securely tamped down, it will keep for as long as two years.<sup>32</sup>

(Footnote:<sup>32</sup> See Plate 9.)

#### Various uses of Kabubu.

This dessicated product of the pandanus is esteemed by the natives to be the most sustaining of all foods known to them. Above all, it was valued in earlier days as the ideal "food of voyagers". As long as a canoe's company had a good supply of Kabubu and water, it would venture ~~forther~~ on a voyage of almost any length.

A man will cheerfully do a full day's work on nothing but a handful of Kabubu in water at sunrise and the same at sunset, if other rations fail him. The gently purgative qualities of the food are also recognised and valued by the islander, who uses it freely as an aperient for his children.

The powder is occasionally eaten dry in these days, but its consumption in such a manner was formerly prohibited except on sea voyages, when it was consumed as the traveller wished.

Mixed with te Kamaimai ( see previous section) until

it assumes the consistency of a caramel, the food makes an aromatic sweet, called te korokoro. In this form also it will keep good for an indefinite period. It was under the guise of te korokoro that the first fruits of the pandanus harvest were formerly offered to the Sun. The first-fruits ritual will be described in a later section.

8. Luxuries: the manufacture of puddings.

A native considers himself provided with a suitable diversity of diet if he be possessed of the staple foods already described, but will nevertheless consider himself pretty poor if his wife or daughter cannot supply an occasional luxury in the shape of a pudding. The ingredients of the various puddings made in the Gilbert Islands are all vegetable. Though methods of manufacture vary slightly in different parts of the Group, the following descriptions and recipes may be taken as representative of the more prevalent ideas.

Te buatoro is a golden brown pudding, shaped like a large

crumpet: it is sometimes seen as an elongated rectangle: its usual weight is four or five pounds.

Ingredients: uncooked babai; kamaimai: te ran-ni-ben, the cream wrung out of grated coconut flesh.

Method. The uncooked babai is pounded into a smooth mash. Half its volume of kamaimai is mixed with coconut cream, in the proportion of two to one, and the mixed fluid is poured into a depression scooped in the mash. Solid and liquid are kneaded into a smooth dough. The dough is shaped into circular or rectangular form and wrapped in fresh babai leaves. The pudding is cooked in the Ruanuna oven, i.e., by the dry method, a special variation of the usual process being that hot stones are laid not only under but also over the food. About 3½ hours of baking are enough.

In spite of its apparent simplicity, a skilled hand is needed to make this dish: in inexpert hands it turns out heavy and sad. Ideally made, it is of the consistency of plum pudding. It is eaten cold, as a rule.

Te tangana. A round or rectangular pudding of the same shape and size as the buatoro. Also seen in globular form, about as large as a sixteen-pound shot. Tawny yellow in colour.

Ingredients: cooked babai: fresh coconut flesh;  
kamaimai.

Method. The coconut is grated on the kautuai  
(grater<sup>33</sup>: called koiriki in Southern Gilberts).

An equal quantity of cooked babai is scraped into

(Footnote:<sup>33</sup> See Plate 10.)

flakes with a cockle shell. The two solids are mixed, and kamaimai is poured into a depression scooped in the heap; the mixture is then kneaded until it binds. The amount kamaimai used is entirely at the taste of the maker, the general preference being to mix in only enough to make the pudding moist and firm.

In this form, the tangauri is generally eaten uncooked.

Another and commoner method of preparation is to omit the kamaimai, and to use sea-water instead: this is kneaded in in quantities only just sufficient to knit the mixture. The pudding is then dry-cooked for not more than twenty minutes in a jacket of babai leaves. Its consistency, when done, should be about that of firm putty.

Te tangauri. A sundried cake of pandanus fruit and coconut flesh, generally seen in rectangular slabs.

Ingredients: fresh grated coconut: double the volume of the juicy ends (tabataba) of pandanus fruit sections; a quantity of whole fruit (i.e. having the juicy ends still attached to the seed cones.)

Method. Dry-cook the tabataba and the whole fruit together in a bag of netting. Mash the cooked tabataba as if for making te kabubu. Scrape the juicy ends from the cooked whole fruit, and mix the flakes with the mashed tabataba. Mix in the grated coconut, and pummel the dough into cakes about half an inch thick. Lay the cakes in the sun until they

are brown and sticky. The result is te tangauri.

If the tangauri is treated from this point exactly as te kabubu, and the drying process already described is completed, a very highly esteemed variety of kabubu is obtained. The presence of desiccated coconut in the finished article is believed to render it especially suitable for the purpose of long canoe voyages.

Te tuaee is made of steam-cooked pandanus fruit, of which the juicy ends are scraped off upon a bed of uri (*guettarda speciosa*) leaves.<sup>34</sup> The resultant heap of moist scrapings

(Footnote.<sup>34</sup> See Plate 11.)

is then patted and stroked with the palms until it becomes a coagulated sheet about half an inch thick, and perhaps two feet by ten inches in area. This sheet is placed in the sunlight to dry, when it assumes a dark brown colour and a consistency comparable to that of a soft caramel. The sweet is aromatic and pleasant to the taste, and keeps good for months.

Te beo can be made by covering the surface of a sheet of tuaee with a rich layer of coconut cream, and then rolling the tuaee in the manner of a Swiss roll. Te beo is eaten at once, as it will not keep. The name of this pudding in the Northern Gilberts is te Kabaa.

Tekorokoro, a mixture of kabubu and kamaimai, has been described under the head "Various uses of kabubu."

Te Katii is a sweet made of Kabubu, Kamaimai, and finely shredded tuaee; it has, like te korokoro, about the consistency of a caramel.

Te manam is a mixture of cooked and grated babai with fresh grated coconut, bound together with coconut cream. A little salt water is sometimes added. The pudding is not cooked. The above list by no means exhausts the vegetable puddings made by the native, but represents the varieties most usually seen. It is said in the Southern Gilberts that the manufacture of these luxuries was invented in the Northern islands, and

has only been adopted of recent years by the poorer populations South of Abemama.

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### §9. MEALS AND MANNERS.

Mealtimes depend much upon the supply of food, but a Gilbertese household normally likes to eat after returning from the early morning labours, at some time between 8 and 9 a.m. and again after the evening's supply of coconut toddy has been brought home, at the hour of sunset. An intermediate meal is not infrequently eaten, in well-to-do households, after the noontide cutting of toddy: but this is a very movable feast.

A universal habit is to awake at about midnight, and make an *impromptu* meal of anything remaining over from the evening's repast. This kind of meal, called te tairaa, is however not under any circumstances taken by those who wish to cultivate their babai pits next morning; it is also avoided by people engaged in certain magico-ritual observances, especially those connected with love, puberty, and the composition of dancing-chants.

Subject to such exceptions, every Gilbertese household will habitually arise at any hour of the night for the purpose of supping on broiled fish, if one of its members comes home with a good catch, or if a present of fish be sent along by some other household.

Individual inclination plays a great part in determining mealtimes, and though the majority of people are seen eating at the times indicated, there is no etiquette which binds a native either to take his meals at a particular hour, or to do so in the company of his fellow-householders. In a very general sense, however, the meal may be regarded as common to the household.

The whole household eats together, without

distinction of age or sex. Children are generally seen to sit in company with those who rank as tibu (grandparents - lineal, adoptive, or classificatory), because it is held to be the duty of the young to "watch the mouth" of the aged - that is, to minister to their wants. The only persons excluded from the board are women and girls during menstruation. These eat not only apart from the rest, but also apart from each other, if there be two of them.

At this period, it is said of a woman that "she stands outside" (e tei iao), which signifies that, although she may take her meals at the same times as her fellow-householders, she must eat at a distance from the ~~main~~<sup>main</sup> communal dwelling. In fair weather, she occupies a mat on the ground a few yards from the house; at other times she may eat in some outhouse, provided that she takes care not to touch any agricultural or domestic implement in the neighbourhood. She uses special eating and drinking vessels, which may not be brought into the dwelling, and are carefully washed in sea water and stowed away in a secret place after each meal. On the fourth day after complete cessation of the flow, the woman wraps all utensils in the mat upon which she has sat, hides the bundle, and returns to the household board.

It is the office of women at meals to bring in the food, and ~~get~~<sup>set</sup> it before the males. As soon as the man or men have begun to eat, the women may also set to, if food be in plenty; but at a time of scarcity, the men are first allowed to appease their hunger, the remnants only being taken by the women. Neither remnants nor titbits are ever thrown at women by their houselords, all food being left on the raurau (leaf platter) whereon it is served.

The elder men, having the rank of grandfathers, are supposed to be given the first choice of all foods. This, at least, is the theory, but the degree of piety varies much from household to household, and in actual practice today the old people are not seldom half starved.

No ceremonies appear ever to have been used at  
*the beginning or end of a normal meal. I have a note from*

Marakei of one old man who used to break off a portion of his first dish and offer it to the skull of his grandfather; his habit was evidently analogous to the ritual used when offering first fruits at an ancestral shrine, but was regarded as a personal idiosyncrasy, as far as the ordinary routine of the daily meal was concerned, and I have not discovered the practice in any other island.<sup>35</sup> The food is not cut up

(Footnote:<sup>35</sup> At ritual meals connected with the cult of the ancestor, and celebrated communally by all the members of a given totem-sib, it is (or, rather, was) customary to reserve the first portion for the atua of the sib. After the offering had been laid before the stone which represented the body of the atua, and the proper formula of words accomplished, the rest of the meal was consumed by the human assistants. This aspect of eating will be dealt with in a later section.)

or handed round by attendants. Everyone breaks off what he wants from the platter, but a grandchild will often do this on behalf of the grandparent, and carry the portion in his hands to the elder.

A passing stranger (by which term I mean anyone not a member of the totem-sibs represented by a household) may be called in casually to partake of a meal, and can hardly refuse such an invitation without causing offence. To him the first choice of food is offered, unless the meal has actually begun. In any case, before eating, he will break off a piece of the article chosen by him as his first dish and offer it to the master of the house, who will accept and eat it. This done, the stranger proceeds with his meal. The custom is called te taarika, which name is also applied to the first portion given, at any ritual meal, to the ancestral diety of a clan. Failure to observe the taarika is believed to cause a guest to vomit back all the food given to him, and to become maraia, or accursed. No set formula of words is attached to the practice.

A stranger may never eat to repletion: if he be observed to do so, he will acquire a reputation of trading upon the hospitality of others. Nevertheless, good manners require

him to stimulate repletion, no matter how little he may have eaten. There is no particular method of doing this, and no formula of thanks is set for observance, but a rubbing of the stomach with the remark that "a full meal makes sleepy" is considered delicately to the point, and an eructation followed by the explanation that the stomach is riba (packed tight), or tibutaua (inflated), is particularly appreciated by the host.

Food at all meals is served together, without discrimination of variety, and each individual follows his taste as to the order of eating. The only gastronomical preference of a general nature that I have been able to discover among the natives is the principle that something sweet ought to be eaten simultaneously with fish, as a tanna (relish). This seems to apply especially to fatty fishes, such as the baneawa (sp. mullidae) and the rabono (deep sea conger) and to porpoise flesh. Under modern conditions on Banaba, an especial delicacy is made by mixing store sardines with raspberry jam, the horrible result being eaten rapturously with a tablespoon.

A meal is usually rounded off with a drink of kamaimai, kabubu, or water.

Implements used in eating are - te aria, made of any flat, tapering bone, and te kauae, of exactly the same shape but made of turtle-bone, both used as spoons for conveying sticky puddings to the mouth; te bora, a curved scoop of turtle shell, about 2 inches wide and 6 inches long; te kai-ni-moi, a ladle made of half a small coconut shell attached to a wooden handle, used for filling drinking bowls from larger vessels; te mangko, a drinking bowl made of the half shell of a coconut; te kumete, a large wooden bowl in which liquid foods are mixed ready for the ladle (this vessel is also used as a mortar for pounding footstuffs); and te noko, the riblet of a coconut-leaf pinnule, used in lengths of about 10 inches, in the manner of a fork, not a chopstick.

A brush called te kai-ni-kammamma (the implement-to-make suck) is often used to convey liquid food to infants and elders; it consists of a piece of the dried spathe of the coconut-blossom, pounded and teased out at one end. Alternatively, a two-foot tube is employed for the same purpose; this implement is called te

kain-n-tooree, and is made of a branch of the mao-bush (scaevola koenigi) from which the pith has been extracted.

To eat sticky food from the fingers is considered unmannerly, but fish is always taken by hand, except in the case of nursing mothers; these, for reasons of hygiene and not etiquette, abstain from touching with their fingers any strongly scented food, and either use the noko or else ask a friend to feed them. Nursing mothers must also avoid the Kause and the bora, because these implements are made of the bone and shell of the turtle, a beast which is believed to inform a mother's milk with the spirit <sup>of</sup> cowardice.

Except in the drinking of kabubu, and the consumption of other pandanus products, table manners are ill-defined. A clumsy eater is popularly said to be disgusting but, according to Western standards, the clumsiness must be highly exaggerated before it is noticed. Small eaters are pitied ( unless they be guests), and encouraged to eat more. What we should regard as gross eating commands respect, especially in Abemama and Butaritari, where high-chiefly dynasties are established and fatness is considered a attribute of royalty. A man must be a stupendous trencherman to earn the unsavoury title of bua-beka (bag-excrement) or mangai-n-rang ( jaw-of-slave) reserved for gluttons.

A very strict etiquette must however be observed in the drinking of te kabubu. In a dry state, this food is of the consistency of sawdust, and the correct way to take it is to mix it with water. The drinking vessel is first half-filled with the <sup>powder</sup> ~~solid~~, and water is poured in to within half an inch of the brim. After the mixture has stood for a few minutes, it is stirred with a piece of green pandanus leaf: the first draught may then be taken. Each fresh draught must be preceded by a renewed stirring. When the liquid is finished, there ~~always~~ remains a thick sediment of liquescent kabubu at the bottom of ~~the~~ vessel, to finish which manners demand that more water should be added, and the mixture stirred again before drinking. The process must be repeated until but a little sediment is left. Only when a man judges that the

remainder will make no more than a single mouthful, is he allowed to tip it into his open mouth, with head thrown well back; this action is called te tara-rake (the looking-upwards)<sup>36</sup>. But woe betide him, if he misjudge the quantity, or is so maladroit as to

(Footnote:<sup>36</sup> See Plate 12.)

spill even a little of the sediment down his cheek or chin ! The whole household will immediately interrupt its meal to deride him, and the elder folk will consider it their duty to express themselves in terms of real disgust. The necessity of performing a clean tararake is unqualified: though the sediment may be collected ( with the pandanus leaf scoop) in the bottom of the bowl for the purpose of convenient tipping, it may on no account be ladled out or touched with the fingers, and to leave it unconsumed is a serious breach of manners.

The remarkable attitude of the tararaka is still observed by a very small number<sup>37</sup> of old men in the Northern Gilberts when any product whatever of the pandanus, ~~or any product whatever~~

(Footnote:<sup>37</sup> I have personally met only two.)

~~of the pandanus~~, or any pudding containing such a product, is being eaten. Such purists take babai, fish, or coconut in the ordinary position of eating, with the face turned downwards to the platter, but the juicy seed-cone of the pandanus fruit is gnawed and sucked with the head tilted back, and the tuaee, Korokoro, or Katii puddings (see section 8 ) are dropped morsel by morsel into the open mouth with the face similarly uplifted.<sup>38</sup>

(Footnote:<sup>38</sup> It was the singularity of the tararake posture, and the somewhat elaborate nature of the behaviour observed towards pandanus foods by a race whose other table manners are of a rustic simplicity, which first led me to pursue the enquiries concerning the parent tree and its associations whereof the major part of the following pages is the result.)

§ 10

NOTES on the distribution of the KABUBU  
and the manner in which it is drunk.

It is a striking fact that Kabubu, which is universally used over fourteen islands of the Gilbert Group, and also on Baanaba, is nowadays almost entirely neglected by the populations of the two most northerly islands, Butari<sup>ā</sup>ri and Little Makin. Very little pandanus is grown on these two units of the Group, and it seems to be a fact that the local cultivation of this tree, wherever it does now exist, is due to modern influences emanating from the neighbouring islands of Marakei, Abaiang and Tarawa.

There is abundant evidence of the fundamental relationship of the Butaritari and Little Makin populations with the other Gilbertese communities;<sup>39</sup> Auriaria, the spirit of the

(Footnote:<sup>39</sup> Certain migration traditions which put the relationship beyond doubt will come under examination at a later section.)

pandanus-tree, is one of the most important local deities; and it can hardly be doubted that the manufacture of Kabubu once flourished on both islands to the same extent as elsewhere. It may be that the decline has been encouraged by environmental circumstances, for Butari<sup>ā</sup>ri and Little Makin lie outside the zone of periodic droughts which seriously afflict Baanaba and the rest of the Gilbert Islands<sup>†</sup>, thus liberating the inhabitants from the necessity, very keenly felt elsewhere, of hoarding supplies of desiccated food against a time of famine.

Certain ethnic factors may also have played their part. Some notable dialectic, physical and social differences distinguish the people of these two islands from other Gilbertese communities, and seem to indicate that they have been subjected to cultural influences which did not penetrate to the rest of the Group. A survey of these peculiar traits - particularly (a) of certain methods of disposing of the dead and (b) of the system of social grouping - suggests that the culture stream which

introduced the Kabubu - pandanus habit into this area of Micronesia found in occupation of Butaritari and Makin an aboriginal population different from that of the more southerly Gilbert Islands. It is possibly to the different conditions under which the immigrants fused with the ~~autochthones~~ <sup>autochthones</sup> that the decadence of the Kabubu habit on Butaritari and Makin may be partly traced.

Nevertheless, while the environmental and ethnic factors may have weakened the appeal of Kabubu to the two communities, and so facilitated its ultimate abandonment as a food, it seems probable that the main reason for the cessation of pandanus cultivation was religious in character. Old men of Little Makin state that the pandanus was formerly the anti<sup>40</sup> of

(Footnote:<sup>40</sup> Anti -- any spiritual power, not being the ghost of a recently dead person.)

(Footnote:<sup>41</sup> High Chiefs. Butaritari and Little Makin have been for many generations under the suzerainty of a single High Chief. They are, with Abaiang and Abemama, the only Gilbert Islands where a high chief dynasty has succeeded in remaining established until modern times.)

High Chiefs,<sup>41</sup> and that certain trees of the genus which once stood on Butaritari were, for this reason, sacred.<sup>42</sup> Clearly, therefore, the pandanus was well known to the people and, just

(Footnote:<sup>42</sup> The word applied to these pandanus trees, which I have translated sacred, was Kamaraia. Maraia is an epithet which denotes the state of being liable to punishment in consequence of having done a prohibited thing. Ka - ib the causative prefix. Kamaraia therefore means causing to be maraia (if in any way offended). and hence meet to be carefully or ceremoniously treated, i.e. sacred.)

as clearly, its religious history among them must have been an ancient one. The cessation of its cultivation as a food plant may have been due either to the gradual increase of its religious importance up to the point where it became, as a genus, Kamaraia, or else to the sudden imposition of a tabu upon its use by some member of the high chiefly dynasty whose anti it was. The latter seems the more likely hypothesis. Owing to the rapid decay of custom and tradition on Butaritari and Makin, it is doubtful now

whether anything more conclusive than a hypothesis will ever be reached.

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The distinctly ceremonious manner of throwing back the head when a draught of Kabubu is being drained cannot fail to arrest attention. It might be thought that the operation of te tararake (the looking up) was the product of two interacting local factors, namely (1) the esteem in which the food is held by a folk whom poverty has forced to be thrifty, and (2) the mechanical difficulty of handling the mixture, enforcing its treatment in a pseudo-ritual manner. Against this, however, must be set the facts that the dangerous tipping operation is very far from being the most obvious way to economy, and, in addition, seems to demand a standard of behaviour far more precise than the Gilbertese - judging from their other table manners - would naturally have adopted, had thrift and cleanliness been their only incentives.

That the original motive of the tararake was indeed not material but religious will appear beyond argument in Part III of this work, wherein certain rituals connected <sup>with the</sup> fructification of the pandanus and the offering of its first-fruits to the clan deity will be described. It will be seen that the upturning of the face, in one case to an elevated tuft of feathers called the Sun and in the other to Heaven, is an essential part of those rituals; and it is here most pertinent to add that, in former days, the persons whose function it was to fructify the pandanus were habitually buried at death in a sitting position, with the head thrown back in the tararake attitude. The looking-up when a draught of Kabubu is being drained clearly belongs to the same group of religious observances, and thus may be regarded, together with the careful treatment of the sediment, as a ritual act.

It cannot, however, be too clearly stated that, to the enormous majority of Gilbertese today, the tararake posture has no religious ~~c~~annotation whatever. The rituals which explain its true significance have been for many generations the secret of three social groups only, and the traditions which demonstrate the real meaning of the pandanus to the race have been no less jealously guarded. So close indeed has been the guard kept upon these monopolies, and so swift the concomitant decay of custom within the last half-century, that there are perhaps not now living as many as a dozen old people possessed even of fragments of the authentic ~~love~~ of the pandanus and its people.

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