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'O LE TALA IA TAEMA MA NA—FANUA.

By the Rev. Samuel Ella.

DR. FRASER'S papers of "Some Folk-songs and Myths from Samoa"¹ will be an addition to the folk-lore of Polynesia which is being preserved in your valuable Journal. Dr. Fraser is not an expert in the language or customs of the Samoans, so your readers must allow for inaccuracies in both the Samoan text and renderings. The MS. records were written by natives, and therefore it is difficult for one not familiar with the language to transcribe them. No attention is given by the natives to punctuation, and words are divided which should be joined, and united that ought to have been separated.

To these legendary tales very little importance, as to their mythological character, can be attached; and although they portray much of the manners and customs of the people of a past age, useful to the ethnologist, some allowance must be made for sensational exaggerations. They should be taken in the same way as we receive Scandinavian songs and fairy tales, or as the lately published work of "Australian Legendary Tales," by Mrs. K. Langloh Parker, of the Narran river: fabulous, but useful as depicting aboriginal habits and customs.

The Samoan legendary tales were composed originally by the *fatu-pese* (song-compilers) of the tribes, and were handed down orally from generation to generation, and several are found in varied versions throughout the eastern islands of the Pacific. This fact of the wide-spread character of these tales denotes that they are of great antiquity, and that the people of the various groups had a common ancestry. These myths and songs formed part of the night entertainments of the *mata-pō* (night watch) and *siva* (Maori, *hiwa*). They comprise mostly recitatives given by the *fatu*, and songs or choruses by the assembly.

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Any remarkable event would supply a foundation for a legendary tale. Probably the birth of a monstrosity, such as these twins, started the cue for beings like Taema and Na-fanua.² I do not suppose there is any reference to the Hindu gods. The fishermen's idol of Hualine, Society Islands, represents twin figures corresponding with *Tū-ma-Tū*. The same figures are used to ornament their canoes and handles of fans, &c.³ That the continent of India, and not the Malay Archipelago, was the original seat of the Polynesian race is not a new theory. It has been entertained for many years by several of the missionaries familiar with the people. "Malayo-Polynesian" has been retained as a distinctive name, without endorsing the old exploded idea.

A few additional notes on this *Tala 'o Taema ma Na-fanua* may be helpful. To facilitate reference I will give them by the numbers of the sections adopted by Dr. Fraser:—

9. The genealogy given goes back to a very early period; *fatu ma Le-èlèlè*, as one might say, to Adam and Eve.

Mavaega.—A farewell offering, or parting instructions. See 16.

Tilafaiga.—The origin of tattooing in Samoa is attributed to two amphibious goddesses, Tilafainga and Taema, who swam from Fiji to Samoa, and on reaching the land, sang—

“Tattoo the men, but not the women!
Tattoo the men, but not the women!”

It is said they meant the reverse, but in their excitement sang as they did. The result was that males only were tattooed in Samoa. Among the Melanesians females only are tattooed, or cicatrized, on the face, arms, and breasts. In Samoa the tattooing extends, in artistic figures, from the waist to the knees. In Rarotonga and Marquesas the tattoo in some cases covered the whole body. The age at which a young man was tattooed, was at a time when he was thought fit to contract marriage, or engage in war. The operation (a very painful one) was seldom performed off-hand, but in patches, as the sufferer was able to endure it, and would occupy some weeks.

10. The introduction of taro, yams, &c., to the islands is generally attributed to the goodwill of some *aitu* or other. There is an extensive variety of taro in Samoa, with some legends connected with each kind.

Masi is composed of fermented bread-fruit. The trees produce more fruit than can be consumed at once, so, towards the close of the season, large quantities are gathered, and after being denuded of the outer skin, are placed in deep pits lined with *ifi* (chestnut) leaves, and

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pressed together with layers of stones. In course of time the fruit ferments, and forms into a close mass. It is then dug out as required, and cooked for food, generally at a season when other vegetables are scarce. It is an ensilage highly prized by the natives.

Lafō ai lea (then threw).—The respectful mode of passing anything to another was to throw it, as it was disrespectful to stand up before a superior or elder. Samoans are a punctiliously polite people.

Pulou 'ulu (bread-fruit covering).—A bread-fruit leaf used as a wrapper for the *masi* when placed in the oven for cooking.

11. *Lega* (turmeric).—Employed in anointing the hair and body with coco-nut oil, and in colouring and scenting native cloth (*siapo*).

● *na la feausi, ua taitasi ma lo la la'au* (Then they two swam off, each with her board, or stump of a tree).—When natives designed to swim long distances, they selected floats for the purpose, such as a board or a light trunk of a tree, or a collection of coco-nut husks, which helped to sustain them in the sea. A favourite sport of the young people is to ride over the surf of breakers on light floats of dried banana stumps.

Tufou ma Filelei.—Tattooers of Fiji. From them Taema and Tila-fainga obtained tattooing instruments, which they conveyed to Samoa, according to another legend, and became the presiding spirits of the *tufuga ta tatau* (tattooers). Filelei and Tufou were also invoked at the operation, as in the verses given. The implements consisted of a miniature hoe, serrated with long fine teeth. These teeth are dipped into a preparation of charcoal from the candle-nut, and then tapped over the skin by a stick or small mallet. The punctures penetrate to the *cutis vera*.

12. *Malo* and *Toilalo*.—Samoa for many generations was divided into two parties: the *malo*, conquerors, and the *toilalo*, conquered and enslaved. Hence the frequent wars in the inevitable struggle for supremacy.

Here we have a familiar incident of Samoan domestic life. Visitors entering a house; the heads of the family are away, and have to be summoned to receive and entertain the visitors, although strangers. Samoans are noted for their hospitality. In every important village there is a caravansary (*fale tele*) for the reception and entertainment of travellers, where they are provided with every requisite free of cost.

13. *Ali'itia lo outou fale*.—An additional incentive to the proprietors to hurry back home to receive their guests. It was honoured by important visitors.

Ua oulua maliu mai; lau atāla na! (You two have come; welcome!).—A very general and respectful salutation. At their *fonos* (councils) speakers would call out the names and titles of the assembled chiefs, adding after each “*atāla na!*” (your honour is welcome).

The goddesses made known their *mana* (supernatural powers) and demanded the food which was sacred as the tribute to the conquerors,

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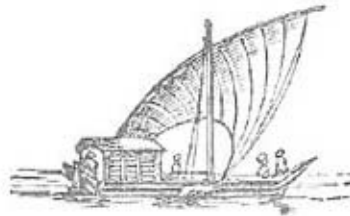
and declared that they would change the condition of the conquered party to become the *male*. The tribute (*tauianga*) of the district was to be henceforth paid to them.

14. *Ua fataai i ai Savai'i uma i ia aitu*.—On account of this deliverance of A'ea-i-sisifo (A'ea in the west) the whole of Savai'i honoured these *aitu* from Manu'a. Each district in Samoa had its tutelary deity, and each family its totem. Some were more especially respected as national deities in different districts.

15. *Tu mua le tava la Na-fanua, ua la tatalo* (The cup was given first to Na-fanna, who prayed), &c.—The kava cup at feasts was borne to chiefs in rotation, according to their rank. As it was offered, the cup-bearer called out their names and titles, adding "this is your *kava*, may you live!" The first receiving it would offer an oblation to the household deity, by pouring some on the fire-hearth, and praying for protection and prosperity. Here the names of the ancestors were invoked. *Ia tonumai se latou tapua'i*.—May their prayers be directed aright, and accepted.

16. *La la fa'amavaega* (their parting agreement).—Much importance was attached to these valedictory arrangements by chiefs and members of a household, and great reverence was shewn in their observance. Like Jacob and Laban at Mizpah.

The neutrality of Manu'a in intertribal wars is regarded to this day. It is a land of peace. Tutuila, although connected by political and family relations with Atua, the eastern division of Upolu, is very rarely involved in the conflicts which agitate Upolu, Savai'i, and Manono.



¹ Journal of the Polynesian Society, vol. v, p. 171.

² Such a birth, exactly similar to that of Titi-ma-Titi, occurred at Lifu, Loyally Islands, during my residence there.

³ Fans were carried much as in China, Japan, and Corea, more for marks of dignity than for ordinary use. Specimens of the idol, &c., may be seen in the museum of the London Missionary Society.