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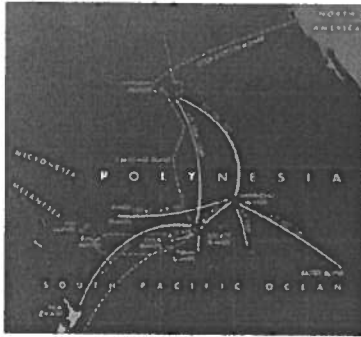
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Since prehistory, Polynesians have been seafaring people whose origins cannot be completely traced. In anonymity and out of Asia, the ancestors of the Hawaiians began millennia ago to work their way across the vast, trackless Pacific.



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Generally believed to be the first inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands, the Polynesians migrated throughout the Pacific in sailing canoes. The Polynesian migrations most likely began from the islands of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa, spreading east, south and north, covering millions of square miles of ocean.

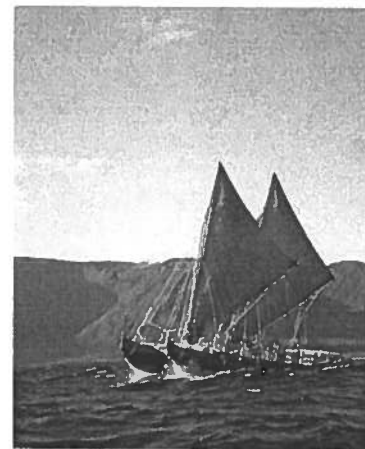
Archaeological evidence combined with the degree of similarity in languages, cultural practices and transported plants indicate that the order of migration was first to the east to the Cook Islands, then on to Tahiti Nui, the Society Islands, the Marquesas islands, Easter Island, Hawaii, and finally south to New Zealand.

The Polynesian Voyaging Society

The Polynesian Voyaging Society was founded more than 25 years ago with a primary goal of finding out if the canoes and navigational skills were sufficient to intentionally cross the vast distances between the islands.

Since 1975, the Society has built and launched two replicas of ancient sailing canoes - Hokualea and Hawaiiloa - and completed six voyages to the South Pacific to retrace migration routes and recover traditional canoe-building and wayfinding (non-instrument navigation) arts.

Hawaiians regard the voyages as tangible proof of the nautical abilities of their ancestors, and see the canoes as symbols of their heritage as an exploring, pioneering people.



Hawaiiloa ©Monte Costa

Some historians claim that sometime around the fourth or fifth century A.D., the first planned migrations came from the Marquesas, in extreme eastern Polynesia. For five centuries the Marquesans settled and lived peacefully on the new land - Hawaii. Around 1,200 A.D., the Tahitians arrived and subjugated the settled islanders. Tahitian customs, legends, and language became the Hawaiian way of life.

Traditional Hawaiian society before contact with the outside world was characterized by a complex religious, governmental and cultural system that reflected the harmonious relationship the early Hawaiians had with the natural world. Like all societies, the Hawaiians had a set of rules or laws (*kapu*) to help guide their people. The *Kapu* System outlined actions that were appropriate and inappropriate for people of different ranks. For example, in the case of conservation, an *alii* (chief) could forbid people from eating or using certain plants, animals, or other resources. These restrictions could be for certain people and for certain times of the year. With the aid of *kapu*, the scarce island resources were protected from over-exploitation.

The *Kapu* System separated Hawaiian society into four groups of people:

- the *alii*, chiefs who ruled specific territories and who held their positions on the basis of family ties and leadership abilities - the chiefs were thought to be descendants of the gods and the highest chiefs, *alii kapu*, were considered gods;
- the *kahunas*, priests or skilled craftsmen that performed important religious ceremonies and served the *alii* as close advisers;
- the *makaainana*, commoners (by far the largest group) who raised, stored, and prepared food, built houses and canoes, and performed other daily tasks; and
- the *kauwa*, outcasts forced to lead lives segregated from the rest of Hawaiian society.

The *kapu* (laws) regulating conservation of natural resources were usually farsighted and just. However, prohibitions upon the commoners were sometimes severe. There were different *kapu* for different infractions. The most serious were laws of the gods, *kapu akua*, and laws of the chief, *kapu alii*. The chief had power over life and death. All he had to do was utter the word and a person would be killed. The chief could also utter a word to spare a life. As formidable as some *kapu* were there was also a *kapu akua* (a law of the gods) providing for pardon, clemency, absolution, and mercy. This was known as *puihonua* or "refuge" from capital punishment.

No one knows the origins of the *kapu* system. Some say the Hawaiians remembered the One Supreme God Io and worshipped him in relative peace until Paao, a high priest and famous navigator, came from Tahiti around A.D. 1300. Forlander writes that prior to the arrival of Paao "... the *kapus* were few and the ceremonials easy; human sacrifices were not practiced; and government was more of a patriarchal than of a royal nature."

...the mana that is a legal history.

Many believe the *kapu* were established as a result of the Tahitian migration. The *mana* (spiritual power or energy) which existed in all living things. In particular, the four principal ones being: Kane, the God of Life; Ku, the God of War; Ocean. These gods took many shapes and forms and presided over their domains. The *aumakua* were both "guardian angels" and were spirits that could be invoked for protection.

In its brochure *Yesterday and Beyond: Archaeology and Hawaii's Past*, the histories tell of illustrious chiefs who led expeditions between 'Kahiki' (probably around 1200 A.D. - 1400 A.D. These chiefs founded the later ruling dynasties. The archaeological evidence for the Kahiki Connection is as yet inconclusive. Not until after A.D. 1200 lends support to the idea that new rituals were

Because the early Hawaiians depended on the land, they were deeply connected with reverence and respect for the land. The *kapu* system, one of the earliest examples of a social hierarchy, was a

Hawaiian society was turned upside-down



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