

FROM THE GILLS OF THE FISH: THE TAHITIAN  
HOMELAND OF HAWAII'S CHIEF MO'IKEHA

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This study attempts to locate the Tahitian homeland of Mō'ikeha, an ancient hero of the migrations to Hawai'i from the place identified in tradition as Mōa'ula (red-fowl).<sup>1</sup> Its full name, Mōa'ula-nui-ākea, led Abraham Fornander a hundred years ago in his studies of the Hawaiian migrations to favor the island of Ra'iatea in the Society Group as the most probable site of Mō'ikeha's departure. He linked the *-ākea* of Mōa'ula-nui-ākea to the *-ātea* in Ra'iatea, noting, too, that the reef pass into the lagoon on Ra'iatea is called *Ava-moa*.<sup>2</sup> A comparative study by Teuira Henry in the 1920s disputed Fornander's conclusion. She favored, instead, the island of Tahiti-nui some 130 miles southeast of Ra'iatea. The following detailed examination of the available Hawaiian and Tahitian traditions will substantiate Henry's designation of the island of Tahiti, not greater Tahiti-nui as she suggests, however, but its peninsula to the south, Tahiti-iti or Tai'arapu, as the original homeland of our Hawaiian ancestors.

One of our Hawaiian creation chants by Ka-haku-kū-i-ka-moana describes Mō'ikeha's grandson, 'Ahukini-ā-la'a, as a "chief from the foreign land, from the gills of the fish."

*Kū mai 'Ahukini-ā-la'a  
He ali'i mai ka nanamū  
Mai ka 'api ō ka i'a  
Mai ka 'ale po'i pū ō Halehale-ka-lani*

Now stands forth 'Ahukini-ā-la'a  
A chief from the foreign land  
From the gills of the fish  
From the overwhelming billows of Halehale-ka-lani.<sup>3</sup>

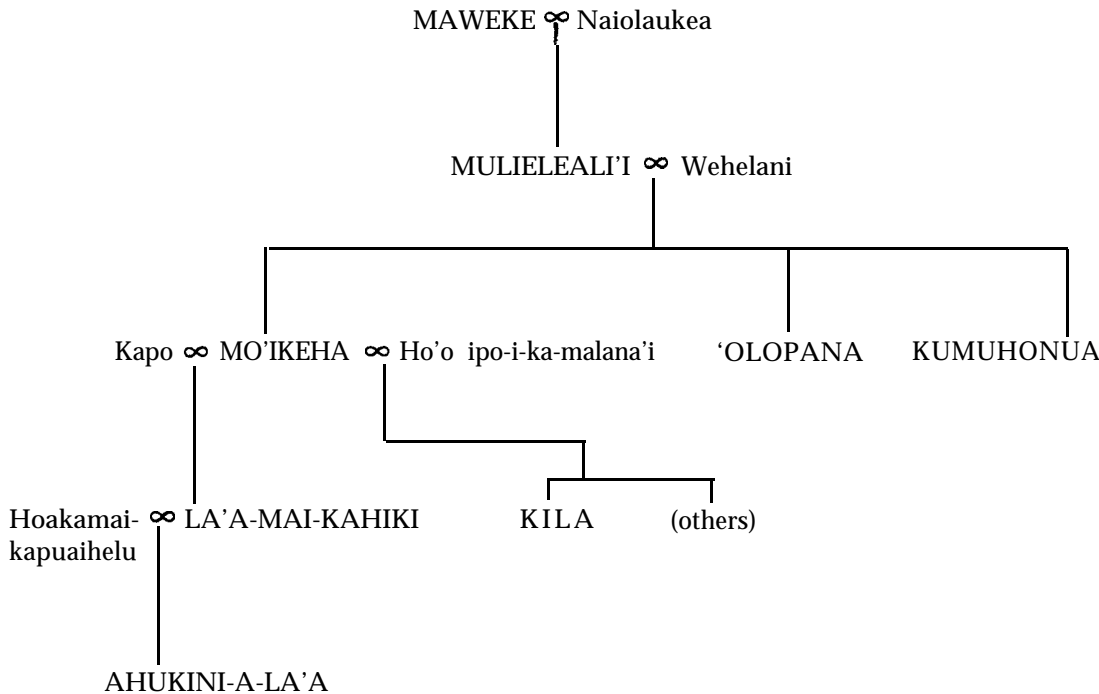
Is this Hawaiian reference to the "gills of the fish" just an idle figure of speech, or does it have a significant bearing upon tracing the Mō'ikeha family back to their homeland in Mōa'ula-nui-ākea?

<sup>1</sup>Mō'ikeha may be dated some time near the twelfth century.

<sup>2</sup>Abraham Fornander, *An Account of the Polynesian Race*, 3 vols. (London: Trubner, 1878-85; reprinted 3 vols. in one, Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1969), II, 50-52. See also Samuel M. Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools Press, 1961).

<sup>3</sup>Abraham Fornander, *Hawaiian Antiquities and Folklore*, Memoirs of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum, vol. 4, 5, 6 (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1916-17; reprinted New York: Krans Reprints, 1974), 4, pt. 1, 2-4.

## GENEALOGY OF THE MO'IKEHA FAMILY



Source: Fornander, *Polynesian Race*, I, 194-95.

Male names are CAPITALIZED.

In one story,<sup>4</sup> Moa'ula-nui-ākea-*nui* is the place where Mō'ikeha's home was located. After an affair with his brother's wife Lu'ukia and the subsequent courting of her favors by another jealous suitor, Mō'ikeha decided to depart from Tahiti. He set sail with a retinue of skilled navigators and kinsmen, leaving behind his son by Kapo, La'a-mai-kahiki. In another version,<sup>5</sup> 'Olopana (brother of Mō'ikeha) and Lu'ukia are chiefs of Waipi'o Valley, Hawai'i. They are swept by a flood to Tahiti where Mō'ikeha and Kapo are the chiefs of Moa'ula-nui-ākea-*nui*. A similar conflict develops, and Mō'ikeha finds the solution: leave Tahiti.

The journey brings Mō'ikeha to Hawai'i, first along the Ka'ū-Kona coast of the Big Island. As his canoe passes each island, some of the voyagers get off until only a skeleton crew remains. Mō'ikeha lands on Kaua'i

<sup>4</sup>Fornander, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, 4, pt. 1, 114.

<sup>5</sup>Fornander, *Polynesian Race*, II, 49.

to the northwest and there settles down as a chief with two sisters for wives. After many years and when Mō'ikeha was nearing death, he yearned to see his Tahitian son La'a-mai-kahiki. From among his Hawaiian sons, he chose Kila to take members of his original Tahitian crew home to fetch La'a from Tahiti so that he could catch a last, fond glimpse of his son before dying.

Thus, Kila's canoe sets out from Hawai'i. It arrives at Moa'ula-nui-ākea-*iki* (small) from where Kila glimpses his father's old house on Moa'ula-nui-ākea-*nui* (great). Because one place was easily seen from the other, the Ra'iatean location for Moa'ula-nui-ākea seems most reasonable. Ra'iatea could be the one island and Bora Bora the other since they are in close range. Fornander's choice of Ra'iatea would appear to be a logical conclusion on this basis.

More evidence comes from a chant by Kamahualele, who was Mō'ikeha's companion on the first migration north from Moa'ula-nui-ākea. In his chant, Kamahualele refers to the island of Polapola (Bora Bora?). However, his Polapola is placed next to Nu'uhiwa, an island in the Marquesas, and not by Ra'iatea where it should be. It is doubtful, then, that the proximity of names in Kamahualele's chant provides any real clue for locating the exact departure site.

The Kamahualele chant cites Kahiki (Tahiti) as the home of chief Mō'ikeha, a "royal flower (*pua Ali'i*) from Kapa'ahu." Ancestors who are named, like Hawai'i, a "grandson" of Kahiko, son of Papa, daughter of Kū-ka-lani-'ehu (father) and Kapu-(or Kupu-)lana-kehau (mother) place Mō'ikeha in the famous Papa-Wakea chiefly lineage:

*Eia Hawai'i, he moku, he kanaka  
 He kanaka Hawai'i--e  
 He kanaka Hawai'i  
 He Kama na Kahiki,  
 He pua Ali'i mai Kapa'ahu  
 Mai Moa'ula-nui-ākea Kanaloa,  
 He mo'opuna na Kahiko lāua 'o Kapulanakehau  
 Na Papa i hānau  
 Na ke kama wahine o Kūkalani'ehu lāua me Kauakahakoko  
 Na pulapula 'āina i pae kāhi  
 I nonoho like i ka Hikina, Komohana,  
 Pae like ka moku i lālani  
 I hui aku, hui mai me Holani  
 Puni ka moku 'o Kaialea ke kilo,  
 Nahā Nu'uhiwa lele i Polapola  
 'O Kahiko ke kumu 'āina*

*Nāna i māhele ka'awale na moku,  
 Moku ke aho lawai'a a Kaha'i,  
 I 'okia e Kū-kanaloa,  
 Paukū na 'āina, na moku,  
 Moku i ka 'ohe kapu a Kanaloa.  
 'O Haumea manu kahikele,  
 'O Mō'ikeha ka lani nāna e noho.  
 Noho ku'u lani iā Hawai'i--a  
 Ola! Ola! 'O Kalanaola.  
 Ola ke ali'i, ke kahuna.  
 Ola ke kilo, ke kauwā;  
 Noho iā Hawai'i a lūlāna,  
 A kani mo'opuna i Kaua'i.  
 'O Kaua'i ka moku -a  
 'O Mō'ikeha ke ali'i*

Here is Hawai'i, the island, the man.  
 A man is Hawai'i,  
 A man is Hawai'i,  
 A child of Tahiti,  
 A royal flower from Kapa'ahu  
 From Moa'ula-nui-ākea Kanaloa  
 A grandchild of Kahiko and Kapulanakehau  
 Papa begat him  
 The daughter of Kū-ka-lani-ehu and Ka-ua-kaha-koko  
 The scattered islands are in a row  
 Placed evenly from east to west  
 Spread evenly is the land in a row  
 Joined on to Holani  
 Kaialea the seer went round the land,  
 Separated Nu'uhiwa, landed on Polapola;  
 Kahiko is the root of the land,  
 He divided and separated the islands.  
 Broken is the fishline of Kaha'i  
 That was cut by Kū-kanaloa  
 Broken up into pieces were the lands, the islands  
 Cut up by the sacred knife of Kanaioa<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>The citing of Kanaloa as the god or chief who had the sacred bamboo knife (*'ohe kapu*) with which to cut up (or distribute) land brought up by the fishline of Kaha'i (a role usually played by the hero Maui) is an association which holds particular importance for the island of Kaho'olawe, the old name of which is Kanaloa, where the high point is Moa'ula! According to the Kamahualele chant, the full name of Mō'ikeha's home land was Moa'ula-nui-

O Haumea Manukahikele  
 O Mō'īkeha, the chief who is to reside,  
 My chief will reside on Hawai'i  
 Life, life, O buoyant life!  
 Live shall the chief and the priest  
 Live shall the seer and the slave,  
 Dwell on Hawai'i and be at rest,  
 And attain to old age on Kaua'i.  
 O Kaua'i is the island  
 O Mō'īkeha is the chief.<sup>7</sup>

In another fragment of Hawaiian chants, Moa'ula-nui-ākea is referred to in the plural as: *I na pae-moku o Moa'ula-nui-ākea*. (The islands of Moa'ula-nui-ākea):

*'O Wahilani, 'o ke ali'i o O'ahu  
 I holo aku i Kahiki  
 I na pae-moku o Moa'ula-nui-ākea  
 E ke'eke'ehi i ka houpo o Kāne a me Kanaloa.*

*Wahilani, chief of O'ahu  
 Who sailed away to Tahiti  
 To the islands of Moa'ula-nui-ākea  
 To trample the bosom of Kane and Kanaloa.<sup>8</sup>*

Teuira Henry noticed that the principal names of the Hawaiian Mō'īkeha legend had Tahitian counterparts. She correctly deduced that

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ākea-Kanaloa. It is interesting to note that Kamakau's history (p. 93) indicates that Moa'ula was connected with the name of Lono-i-ka-makahiki, son of Keawe-nui-a-'Umi, who had gone to Tahiti. The Hawaiians, who looked forward to Lono's return, which had become confused with the seasonal migration of the god Lono for whom Lono-i-ka-makahiki the chief was named, identified Captain James Cook as Lono when his ships arrived in 1778. "Then, both chiefs and commoners, hearing this report said to each other, 'this is indeed Lono, and this is his *heiau* come across the sea from Moa'ula-nui-ākea across Mano-wai-nui-kai-'ō'ō!' " The association with the god Lono explains why a number of *heiau* (*marae* or temples) are named Moa'ula in Hawai'i: Waipi'o, Hawai'i; Waikolu, Moloka'i; and Kīpapa, O'ahu. The *heiau* in Waipi'o was named during the time of Ka-lani-opu'u when his son Ki-wala'ō was made heir to the kingdom of Hawai'i and the war god Kūka'ilimoku was assigned to his nephew, Kamehameha. This event would have taken place after the death of Captain Cook in 1779 and before the Battle of Mokuohai in 1782. Moa'ula *heiau* on the ridge of Waikolu gulch, Moloka'i, is credited to the architectural feats of the *menehune*. See Thomas G. Thurm, *Hawaiian Annual* (Honolulu: Honolulu Star Bulletin, 1938), pp. 126 and 133.

<sup>7</sup>Fornander, *Polynesian Race*, II, 10-11.

<sup>8</sup>David Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, trans. Nathaniel B. Emerson (Honolulu: Honolulu Star Bulletin, 1951), p. 241.

‘Olopana in the Hawaiian legend is also the name of a chiefly Tahitian family, the ‘Oropa‘a of Tahiti-nui. That the names Kū-kanaloa and Moa‘ula-nui-ākea-Kanaloa are cited in the Kamahualele chant of Mō‘ikeha, in which Kanaloa is the one who wields the sacred bamboo knife (*‘ohe kapu*) by which to “cut the fish line of Kaha‘i,” is an association of three gods: Kū, Kanaloa, and Kāne. The sacred bamboo knife is a symbol of Kāne, god of procreation.

When Kila arrived at Moa‘ula-nui-ākea-*iki*, he visited his uncle Kūpōhihi (or aunt Kāne-pōhihi). Kūpōhihi was called a ‘rat’ (*‘iore*) in the story, meaning no doubt that he belonged to the Rat Clan, the ‘Iore. The ‘Iore were identified by Teuira Henry as the Tumu-nui family who lived in Te-pori-o-nu‘u (north Tahiti-nui). Te-pori-o-nu‘u stretches from Mahina (Point Venus) in the north through Matavai, Pape‘ete, to the border of Fa‘a‘a in the northwest where the present airport now stands. According to Aurora Natua, librarian at the Pape‘ete Museum, the original location and principal home of the ‘Oropa‘a family was at Mahina in the north, a fact confirmed by Teuira Henry. Aurora Natua’s family traces a line of descent back to some of the ‘Oropa‘a chiefs of Mahina.<sup>9</sup>

#### Moa‘ura, Tautira, Tai‘arapu Peninsula, Tahiti-iti

From the standpoint of corroborative evidence in Tahitian place names for the Hawaiian Moa‘ula-nui-ākea, there is a subdivision by that name, Moa‘ura, in Tautira to the south, recorded by Henry: “After ‘Ati-viri came to Ho‘ata-uri . . . *Moa‘ura*.”<sup>10</sup> She must have overlooked this important detail since she was comparing family and island names rather than district names.

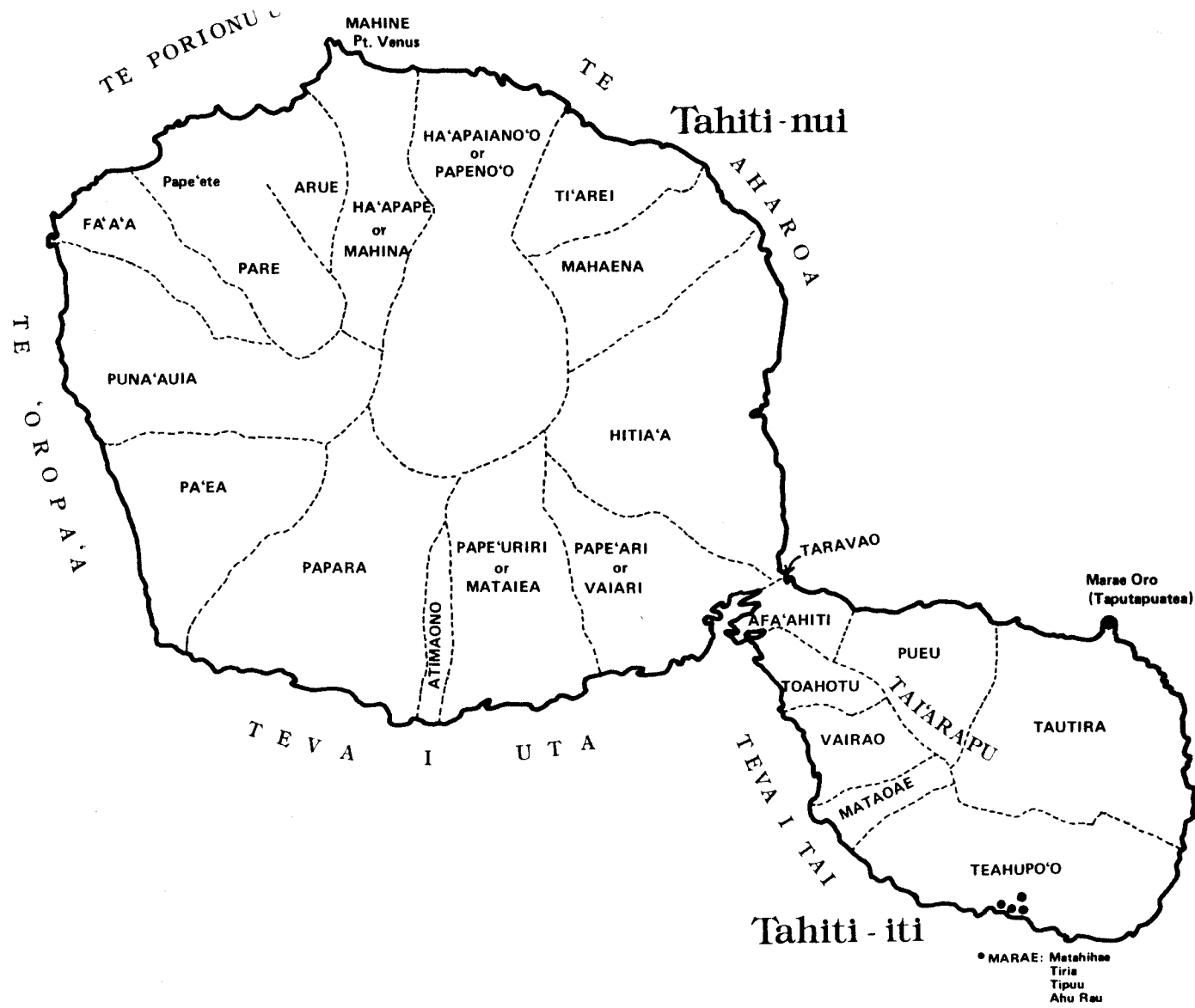
According to their traditional history, the chiefs of Tautira were displaced after battle by the chiefs of Te-ahu-upo‘o district just south of Tautira. Since the names of the orators and chiefs of Tautira are identical with those of Te-ahu-upo‘o, and since the southern (Te-ahu-upo‘o) chiefs won rule over Tautira, then the Tautira names *Tira-hete* and *Te-ra‘a-roa* which suggest the roots for the names of Mō‘ikeha’s two beloved sons, *Kila* and *La‘a*, must have belonged originally to the chiefs of Te-ahu-upo‘o, the southern district of Tai‘arapu.<sup>11</sup>

The name ‘Oropa‘a does not appear, however, among the names of titles of chiefs or orator chiefs of Tai‘arapu, but the ‘Oro clans (‘Ati-‘oro, ‘Ati-‘oro-i‘oro) did occupy Tautira, and they also fell under the yoke of

<sup>9</sup>Oral communication from Aurora Natua, Pape‘ete, Tahiti, to the author in May of 1977.

<sup>10</sup>Teuira Henry, *Ancient Tahiti* (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1928), p. 87.

<sup>11</sup>Henry, p. 86.



Te-ahu-upo'o. The tradition of Mō'ikeha records that his brother 'Olopana had come to Moa'ula-nui-ākea-nui from Hawai'i.<sup>12</sup>

The name Ta'aroa (Kanaloa) is, according to Henry's description, significant in two ways. It is the name of a subdivision of land in Tautira district (Ta'aroa-i-te-fa'a), and it is also the name of the power, chief, or god Ta'aroa over the *marae* Pure-ora in Tautira. Again, as we have seen before, these names are found in close proximity in the Hawaiian chant by Kamahualele of the Mō'ikeha migration:

A man is Hawai'i  
 A child of Tahiti  
 A royal flower from Kapa'ahu  
 From Moa'ula-nui-ākea *Kanaloa*  
 A grandchild of Kahiko and Kapulanakehau  
 Papa begat him  
 The daughter of Kūkalaniehu and Kauakahakoko

. . . . .

Broken is the fishline of Kaha'i  
 That was cut by *Kanaloa*  
 Broken up into pieces were the lands, the islands  
 Cut up by the sacred knife of *Kanaloa* . . .

The evidence thus far strongly favors Te-ahu-upo'o, southern Tahiti-iti, as a place from which Mō'ikeha may have left and another district, probably Tautira, within close range of Mō'ikeha's home (Lanikeha) to which Mō'ikeha's son Kila sailed to get La'a on the earlier return voyage and to take back Mō'ikeha's bones on the later one. Could it be logically argued that Moa'ula-nui-ākea-nui is Tahiti-nui and Moa'ula-nui-ākea-iti is Tahiti-iti, large Tahiti and small Tahiti?

As was mentioned above, the 'Oropa'a high chiefs were not in control of the land subdivision of Te-ahu-upo'o or Tautira in Tahiti-iti. The Tahitian clan name of the 'Oropa'a chiefs is given, rather, to a major division of land called Papara or Vaitoru west of the Isthmus of Taravao between Tahiti-nui and Tahiti-iti (Tai'arapu Peninsula):

This subdivision was formerly named 'A-'Oropa'a (of strong warrior). The mountain above is Mou'a-tamaiti; the assembly ground below, Poreho; the points outside Maha'i-atea and Manomano; the rivers Fari'i-ore and Vai-poea; the marae, Maha'i-atea . . .  
 Upon on a high mountain of Papara is a great cavern which has

<sup>12</sup>The Hawaiian version pinpoints this Hawai'i as that of Waipi'o Valley in the Hawaiian chain, but Hawai'i is also an old Tahitian name for the island of Ra'iatea.



been the family vault of the high chiefs, Te-ri'i-rere and Tati . . . Following is an archaic war song (*pehe-tama'i*) referring to the ancient history of these districts which evidently dates from a time when the dauntless warriors of the 'Oropa'a were subjugating different parts of Tahiti, and which seems to throw light upon this part of Papara being named 'A-'Oropa'a (of strong warrior) :

*Te Rua-i-tupua te Rua-i-tahito ra!*  
*Mai te tai maira vau,*  
*Mai te mahu fenua,*  
*Te-tou nohora'a aroha e!*  
*E hoatu anei ia Rua-i-tupua tahito*  
*Ia Vaitoru?*  
*E to'u fenua maita'i e,*  
*Papara to'u fenua ia mau.*  
*Tou ivaiva*  
*Ua fatata i tau ma te ono.*  
*Ho atu anei ia Rua-i-tupua tahito,*  
*Ia Vaitoru?*  
*Papara to'u fenua ia mau.*  
*Te ruma nei ra 'Oropa'a e!*  
*Mai tana nei te fanau'a 'oura ri'i marae*  
*E tere Hiro, e fete e feta*  
*Pati fenua ia 'oe.*  
*Tu ra, e oroi, pua,*  
*Te manu mou'a ri'i*  
*Papa tane te fenua e mau e!*

Rua-i-tupua (source of growth)  
 Rua-i-tupua (source of growth)!  
 From the sea have I come,  
 From the misty land [Te-'oro-pa'a]  
 The Cordia, O residence beloved!  
 To Rua-i-tupua of old shall  
   Vai-toru (three-waters) be given? [The three Paparas]  
 O my good land,  
 Papara is the land I'll hold.  
   Raging warrior,  
 The time of vengeance approaches.  
 To Rua-i-tupua of old shall  
   Vai-toru be given?

Papara is the land I'll hold.  
 O 'tis lowering over 'Oropa'a!  
 From its mountain sacred to gentlemen  
 Clamor is brooding.  
 The little shrimps [people of little power] of the  
*marae* are crying,  
 As the sweep of Hiro comes the outbreak.  
 Thou wilt make them leap upon the land,  
 Stand, turn, blown away,  
 Shall the mountain birds [people] be.  
 Rock the man shall be in possession!<sup>13</sup>

In this context, the Kamakau genealogy of the brothers Kumuhonua, 'Olopana, and Mō'ikeha provides additional evidence in favor of this part of Tahiti-nui and in particular the district of *Vaiari* where Lake *Vaihiria* is located in the mountains and from which come the waters flowing into the valley that borders on *Vai'uriri*:

*Ua 'ōlelo 'ia ua kaula 'o Kumuhonua me kona Kaikaina me 'Olopana, a ua he'e 'o 'Olopana a kaula i ka moana, a he'e i ka moana 'a'ohē wahi e pe'e ai i uka, a ua lawe-pu'e 'ia 'o La'amaikahiki e 'Olopana, a me Mō'ikeha. 'A'ole wahi e pae ai i Hawai'i. Ua holo loa 'o 'Olopana i Kahiki, a noho iloko 'o Moa'ulanuiākea. Ua lawe'ia 'o La'amaikahiki i Waihilia a noho i uka 'o ke kua ka i'a a Mō'ikeha i lawe pū 'ia e 'Olopana. I ka moe 'ana 'o Mō'ikeha iā Lu'ukia. 'Oia ke kumu i ho'i hou mai ai 'o Mō'ikeha, a noho i Kaula'i.*

It is said that Kumuhonua fought with his younger brother, 'Olopana, and 'Olopana fled and fought on the sea; (and he) fled to the sea (for) there was no land in which to hide upshore, and La'amaikahiki was taken by 'Olopana and Mō'ikeha. There was nowhere to land (the canoe) on Hawai'i. 'Olopana sailed to Tahiti and lived in Moa'ula-nui-ākea. La'amaikahiki was taken to *Vaihiria* and there lived inland the eel, the fish of Mō'ikeha taken by 'Olopana.<sup>14</sup> Then Mō'ikeha married Lu'ukia. that is the reason why Mō'ikeha came back again and lived on Kaula'i.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Henry, p. 80.

<sup>14</sup>This sentence may be translated also as: "La'a-mai-kahiki was taken to *Vaihiria* and lived inland of the eel, the fish of Mō'ikeha taken by 'Olopana."

<sup>15</sup>Samuel M. Kamakau, "Moolelō o Hawaii Nei," *Ka Nupepa Kū Honolulu*, 23 September 1865, Helu 14, 15, 16.

Hawaiian *Waiali*, equivalent to Tahitian *Vaiari*, means a base, foundation, or place for the king to speak at the rostrum for speakers, the *kahua Waiali* in the *heiau*:

*Nui make o nōla'ela'e mālamalama mo'akāka  
Waiho wale kahiko ākea; ike'a kahua 'o Waiali  
'Ike'a ke hipahipa o ka moku  
Ka pae ki'i, ka pae newenewe  
Ka hale hau a ke kua, ho'olono wale iho.*

Fresh coconuts of clear water, clear as the light  
Akea remained unknown in ancient times,  
Now appears upon the rostrum  
Appears the wonder of the island  
The image gods now stand full in their places  
In the house built for the gods,  
There the people hear the worship.<sup>16</sup>

Henry continues that the name 'A-'Oropa'a had long been dropped, and that the three subdivisions were united into one Papara under the chieftainship of Tati whose seat of government was there. Papara and all the southern districts of Tahiti as far as the Isthmus of Taravao were called Te-teva-i-uta (mainland plain) and all the districts of Tai'arapu are called Te-teva-i-tai (ultra plain) from the belief that "*They were united in the fish before its sinews were cut,*" a Tahitian reference to a fresh-water eel (*kuna*) alluded to in the Hawaiian story of Mō'ikeha.<sup>17</sup>

#### The Isthmus of Taravao, "the gills of the fish"

The myth of the "cutting of the sinews of the fish," or the cleaving of Tahiti at the Isthmus of Taravao by Tafa'i dates from the ancient past of Tahitian mythology. In 1822 and 1824, the story was recited by King Pomare of Tahiti. In the beginning, all of the islands were once attached to the sacred island of Ra'iatea. Once while the gods were sacrificing at Taputapuatea, they ordered all humans to remain in their homes. Disregarding this order, the young maiden Terehe secretly went swimming in a nearby river. The gods were angry at her disrespect and caused her to drown. As she sank below the billows, a giant eel (*tuna*) swallowed her, and it became possessed with her enraged spirit. The eel thrashed about so much that it tore the land in two between Ra'iatea and Huahine. The girl's spirit entered into the loosened land and like a great fish it started

<sup>16</sup>Fornander, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, 6, pt. 3, 379, note 29.

<sup>17</sup>Henry, p. 81.

swimming away. Only the god Tu took notice of the “fish.” He dashed away from the religious services being held and guided the “fish” safely south and eastward--the island of Tahiti had been formed. Now that the fish had become stable, it was necessary to cut its sinews to prevent it from moving. The victorious warrior Tafa’i with his miraculous axe (Te-pa-huru-nui-ma-te-vai-tau) chopped until the sinews of the throat were cut and the head of the fish drew back until there only remained two large mountains separated by an isthmus called Taravao (corner-plain).<sup>18</sup>

The head of the fish, therefore, is Tahiti-iti; while the main body Tahiti-nui is behind it to the northwest. This Tahitian reference may then explain the expression *mai ka ‘api o ka i’a* (from the gills of the fish) in the creation chant of Ka-haku-kū-i-ka-moana:

Kū mai Ahukinia-la’a,  
 He ‘ali’i mai ka nanamu  
 Mai ka ‘api o ka i’a  
 Mai ka ‘ale po’i pū o Halehalekalani.

Now stands forth Ahukini-a-La’a,  
 A chief from the foreign land,  
 From the gills of the fish  
 From the overwhelming billows of Halehale-ka-lani.<sup>19</sup>

Where else, then, would the gills of the fish be other than Tautira on the one side or Te-ahu-upo’o on the other? With the various associations of names and from the evidence cited, we may safely say that Te-ahu-upo’o was one of the possible sites mentioned as the homeland of Mō’ikeha.

### The ‘Oropa’a Burial Vaults

Another problem associated with Mō’ikeha’s homeland is where the burial vaults were located to which Kila went with La’a to return Mō’ikeha’s bones. Again, Teuira Henry favors the northern district of Tahiti-nui. In her work, she defines the three major districts of the ‘Oropa’a as (1) North Tahiti: Tahara’a, Tapahi, Mahina, Fenua’ura; (2) West Tahiti: Te-‘Oropa’a (Mano-tahi, Mano-rua; Puna’auia, Pa’ea); (3) Southwest Tahiti: Papara (Vaitoru, A’Oropa’a). Any one of these three districts could have been the destination of Kila and La’a. Henry affirms that the location of Mō’ikeha’s burial place was Kapa’ahu in northern Tahiti-nui, when she states, “the name of Ka-pa-ahu (heaped up shore) . . . is evi-

<sup>18</sup>Henry, pp. 437-42.

<sup>19</sup>Fornander, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, 4, pt. 1, 2-4.

dently identical with the hilly coast called Ta-pahi . . . in the district of Mahina, the home of Tafa'i.<sup>20</sup>

Again her identification of northern Tahiti-nui as the home of the Rata family, the 'Iore or Tumu-nui clan mentioned in the legends, is a strong argument in her favor. However, in the last part of the Mō'ikeha tradition, when the family removes the bones of the dead Mō'ikeha to Tahiti, it should be borne in mind that Mō'ikeha, as a member of the 'Olopana/'Oropa'a chiefs, would have qualified for burial in the vault of the 'Oropa'a "up in a high mountain"<sup>21</sup> in Papara and not in northern Tahiti-nui. If the migrating party of Kila and La'a failed to get back to Tahiti, it may explain the lack of Tahitian tradition about Mō'ikeha's return to the cave of the 'Oropa'a. No information is available on the whereabouts of burial vaults for other chiefs, such as those of Te-ahu-upo'o and Tautira in Tai'arapu. It is interesting, therefore, to note the concluding part of the Mō'ikeha tradition in Hawai'i.

It is said that because La'a-mai-kahiki lived on Kaho'olawe, and set sail from that island, was the reason why the ocean to the west of Kaho'olawe is called "the road to Tahiti" (Ke-ala-i-Kahiki) . . . After La'a-mai-kahiki had lived on Kaho'olawe for a time, his priests became dissatisfied with the place, so La'a-mai-kahiki left Kaho'olawe and returned to Kaua'i. Upon the death of Mō'ikeha, the land descended to Kila, and La'a-mai-kahiki returned to Tahiti [with his brother Kila whom he picked up in Kaua'i] . . . and the bones of their father which were to be deposited in the mountain of Ka-pa-ahu, Mō'ikeha's own inheritance, where La'a-mai-kahiki and Kila also lived until their death.<sup>22</sup>

Henry does not mention any other burial vault in a high mountain *except that in Papara* for the 'Oropa'a. It would be interesting to find out if there were other burial places for the 'Oropa'a chiefs in northern Tahiti besides that of Papara, for the Hawaiian account clearly states that his bones were to be deposited "in the mountain of Ka-pa-ahu, of Moa'ulanui-ākea-nui."

In looking over the maps of Tahiti-nui to locate the names of mountains qualified by "-ahu," or *marae* named 'ahu, Te-ahu-upo'o yields the same association of names that tend to link it with the Mō'ikeha-Kila migration. Te-ahu-upo'o in Tai'arapu Peninsula is itself an -ahu and it has the mountain, Te-*ahu*. the counselor of Te-ahu-upo'o district at the Fare-

<sup>20</sup>Henry, pp. 566-67.

<sup>21</sup>Henry, p. 80.

<sup>22</sup>Fornander, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, 4, pt. 1, 154.

'orometua-nui center of learning in ancient times was named Te-*ahu*-marua. Also of interest in this district is a group of *marae* at Matahihae, Tiria, Tipu'u and *Ahu-rau*. (See map.)

The meaning of Ka-pa-*ahu* in Hawaiian is uncertain. It may be *kapa-ahu* (cloak, covering, clothing) or *ka-pā-ahu* (platform enclosure, heaped-wall, platformed fence, terraced enclosure). It is important within this context of possible meanings to reflect upon the history of Te-*ahu*-upo'o and how it got its name. Henry states that the name was derived from a "wall of heads" taken from the people slain in battle between the districts of north and south Tai'arapu. A boundary dispute had begun the war that ended in bloodshed and the victorious southern district decapitated their slain foes and "made a wall of their heads for the boundary line" at Rapa'e.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, Henry's statement, "the name of Ka-pa-*ahu* . . . is evidently identical with the hilly coast called Ta-pahi . . . in the district of Mahina" must be reexamined in the light of the evidence we have suggested above, or until other traditions or archaeology bring forth evidence that the 'Oropa'a chiefs had more than one burial vault!

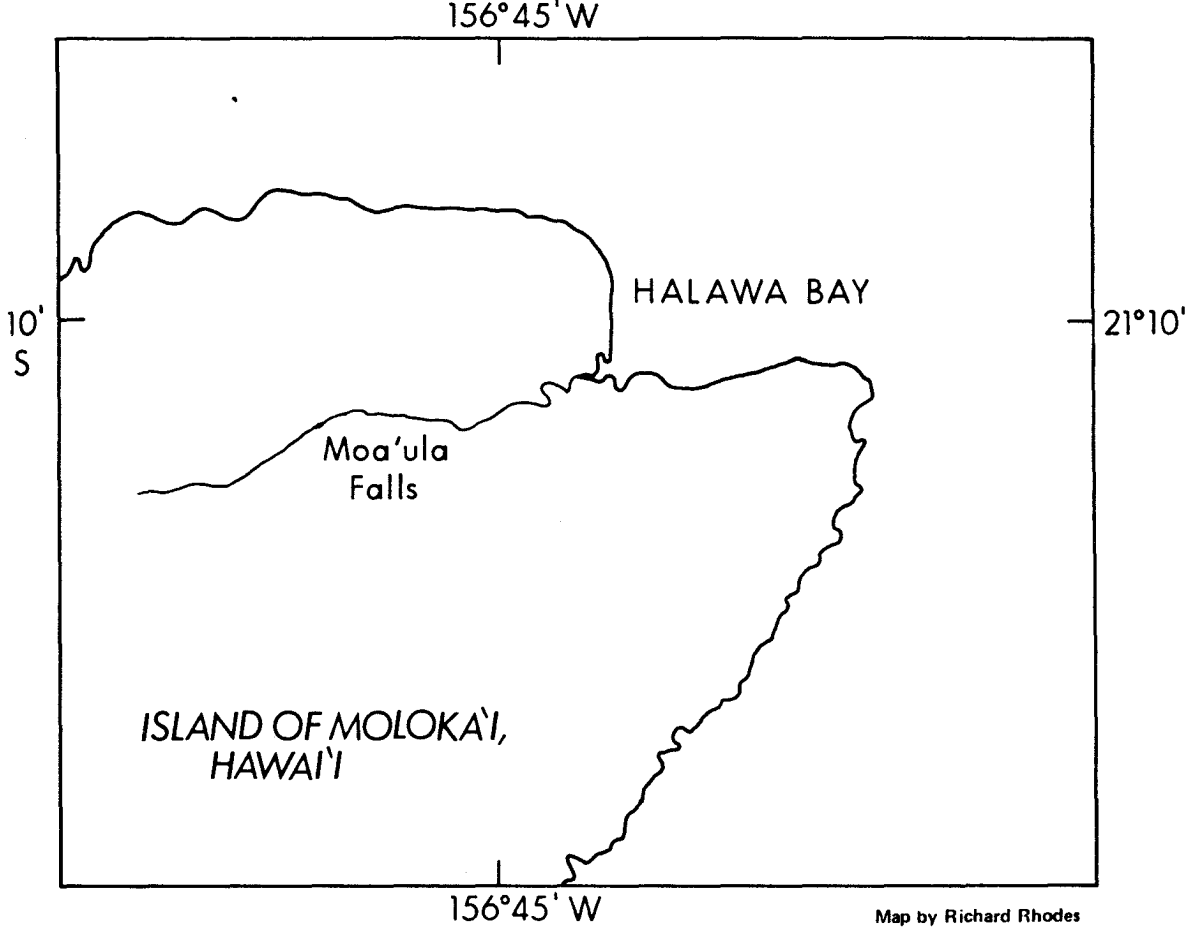
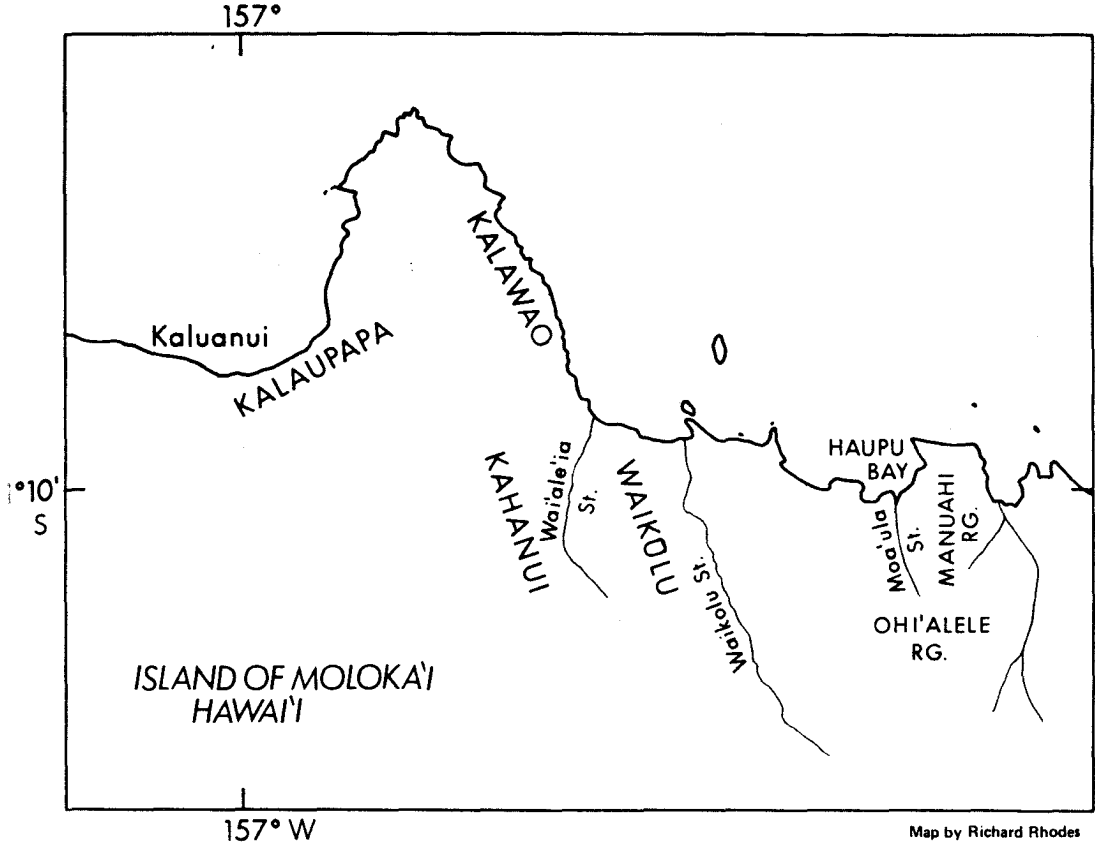
#### *Place Names in Hawai'i*

Now that the two departure sites (homeland) from Tahiti have been established, we shall attempt to locate the possible residences of the Mō'ikeha family in Hawai'i. Where in Hawai'i do we have place names in close proximity to suggest that they were named after similar locations in Tahiti by the Mō'ikeha family?<sup>24</sup> The juxtaposition of the names Taravao and Vaitoru of Tahiti may be identified with a similarly named district on Moloka'i: Kalawao (Taravao) and Waikolu (Vaitoru). (Refer to maps.) The Moa'ula tradition including the 'Olopana chiefs may have ties with the Ka-lua-nui district on O'ahu which includes Punalu'u and Hau'ula, the stronghold of chief 'Olopana! The western border of Ka-lua-nui district is situated by sacred Kualoa toward Kahalu'u in Kāne'ohe. Similarly, Taharu'u in Tahiti-nui is on the border between Papara district and Mataiea; the pass in front is Te-ava-ra'a.

Another good example on Moloka'i would be the prominent waterfalls named Moa'ula northeast in Halawa Valley and in Waikolu on the eastern side of Kalawao district. Waikolu also boasts of a Moa'ula *heiau* and this district borders exactly upon Kalawao, a remarkable coincidence of names with the districts of Papara (Tahiti-nui) and Tautira (Tahiti-iti)! We have already mentioned La'a living on the island of Kaho'olawe, anciently

<sup>23</sup>Henry, p. 86.

<sup>24</sup>See Mary K. Puku'i, Samuel H. Elbert, and Esther R. Mo'okini, *Place Names of Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1974).



called Kanaloa, whose high point is Moa'ula. All of these names were, perhaps, bestowed upon the places by Kila's voyagers who disembarked on Moloka'i, O'ahu, and Kaho'olawe during the several Mō'ikeha-Kila-La'a migrations.

### Conclusion

In reviewing the positions taken by scholars Abraham Fornander and Teuira Henry for the location of Mō'ikeha's homeland in Moa-ula-nui-ākea-nui, our detailed evidence from Hawaiian and Tahitian traditions favors a place in Tahiti-nui or Tahiti-iti. Ra'iatea may ultimately be the original home of the Moa'ula or the 'Oropa'a chiefs, but until more traditions have been evaluated, none of the recorded place names and chiefly titles for Ra'iatea present any exceptional proof in that direction. As for the exact location of Ka-pa-ahu where Lanikeha was situated and to which Mō'ikeha's sons, Kila and La'a, returned the bones of their father, the evidence thus far favors southern Tahiti, which is at variance with Teuira Henry's choice of northern Tahiti-nui. A cluster of associations between Hawaiian place names of districts, *heiau*, waterfalls, and chiefly titles with comparable Tahitian ones favors the districts of Te-ahu-upo'o and Tautira in Tai'arapu Peninsula (Tahiti-iti) as the home of Mō'ikeha and the probable location of Moa'ula-nui-ākea. The associations between Moloka'i and Papara for Waikolu/Vaitoru and Kalawao/Taravao suggest an early migration of 'Olopana/'Oropa'a chiefs from south Tahiti to Ka-lua-nui, O'ahu, and early contacts between north Moloka'i's Kalawao-Waikolu district chiefs and the 'Olopana/Luanu'u chiefs of Ka-lua-nui and Kualoa (O'ahu), hence the relationships of the descendants of those Tahitians who cleaved asunder Tai-arapu Peninsula from whence came La'amaikahiki and his son Ahukini-a-La'a from "the gills of the fish."

*Ma ke aho i lawai'a ka i'a nui a Kaha'i  
I kona lawe mai a ha'i i ka po'o o ka moku,  
Moku a nahā ka 'api o ka i'a  
Ma Kalawao i ka pu'u o Kahiki.*

*Ahu lau ka po'o o Kaukila i ka pā  
I ka pā o Ke-ahu-po'o i ka lā;  
Kulu mai ka maka i ka wai 'ekolu  
Mai Waikolu e kau i ka 'olu  
I ka 'olu o ka wai e keha i ka 'iu  
E keha i ka 'iu o Moa'ula.*



By the cord was the great fish of Kaha'i caught  
When he brought forth the head of the island to be broken,  
Severed and split were the gills of the fish  
At Kalawao in the throat of Kahiki.

Heaped at the altars were the heads of Kaukila in the wall,  
In the wall of Ke-ahu-po'o in the sunlight;  
The tears of three streams flowed at the source  
Of Waikolu set in the coolness,  
In the coolness of streams flowing from the heights  
From the dignity in the lofty zenith of Moa'ula.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Poem written by the author in 1977 commemorating the great deeds of Kaha'i.