

They add to the Samoan account that when the god Tangaloa had raised the islands to their present altitude, his hook broke and left them in that situation; otherwise, they would have continued to rise until they formed one great land. The New Zealanders and Tahitians have the same account of their islands having been drawn up by a god while fishing, and both give to this god the name of Maui, which, as we have before shown, is but another appellation for Tangaloa. The Tahitians have, besides, other stories, one of which,—to the effect, that the islands are fragments broken off from an immense rock,—has been already given. The word for rock is *papa*, which is also the name of the wife of Taaroa, and from this source some confusion may have arisen, as some of the traditions relate that the islands were born of Taaroa and Papa.\* The Hawaiians, according to the Mo'o-olelo, before quoted, have the same story, that the islands were born of Papa, the wife of Atea, the progenitor of the human race.

The belief, so generally prevalent, of the islands having been raised by a divinity, from the bottom of the sea, will appear natural enough if we consider the circumstances and character of the people. The situation of their islands, mere specks of land, surrounded by what must have appeared to the inhabitants an interminable ocean, and the fact that the Polynesians are emphatically a nation of fishermen, would be sufficient to suggest the idea. When the priests, to whom the religion and mythology of the race were especially committed, were called upon to account for the formation of the land which they inhabited, they would, of course, refer it to their great god Tangaloa, or Maui, and no other mode would be so likely to occur to them as that by which they themselves had frequently drawn up fragments of coral rock from the bottom of the sea.

The fact that two or more stories are sometimes current on the same group, shows in what light they are regarded by the natives,—not as articles of their religious creed, which they are bound to believe, but merely as traditions handed down from their fathers, which, though respectable for their antiquity, may, after all, not be true. Their opinions on this subject, therefore, differ widely from those which they hold with regard to the existence and power of their gods, of which none of them entertain a doubt.

\* Polynesian Researches, vol. i. p. 250, Am. edit.