In the last chapter, the study of the Maori’s relations with the ancestors and history led to a general characterization of his ethics. In the picture of the nobleman, we saw some of the main features of ethics in their plastic connection. An essential, indeed a fundamental concept, viz. tapu, is missing from this picture. We may form an estimate as to why the Maori does not emphasize it in the traditional ideal of the nobleman; for while hospitality, openhandedness, etc., contain demands which particularly apply to the nobleman, tapu contains demands which are respected by everybody without exception from slave to chief, although the demands made are different for these two extremes of society.

In his big monograph *Die Polynesischen Tabusitten*, F. Rudolph Lehmann has convincingly substantiated that the Polynesian word *tabu* has in itself a merely formal meaning which has nothing to do with “holy” or the like. He determines its basic sense as *Verbotensein*.\(^1\) His study therefore falls into a number of sections according to the special application of the concept to legal, religious, and other spheres, or, as he maintains when

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summing up, “dass der Tabubegriff nicht von vornherein eine moralische, religiöse, politische oder rechtliche Qualität besitzt, sondern eine solche erst durch seine praktische Verwendung, also durch die Materie, auf die er sich bezieht, empfängt.” Lehmann’s results can hardly be contested in their essential features; but yet they may in the main be both refined and elaborated. This also applies to the meaning of the word; Lehmann’s “Verbotensein” does not seem to me a completely felicitous rendering.

In continuation of the remarks above, we may illustrate the somewhat “formal” character of the word with a few textual passages. When Pongo’s companion wants to encourage him to propose to the high-born Puhihuiua, this is done in these words: “I always say that a tapu is a tapu, but one does not regard the tapu as tapu when one is wooing women.” Another instance is found e.g. in the peace terms named by a chief to his opponents: “The lower part of your fortress shall be tapu...but the part facing Katikati shall be open as a road for me and my troops to Katikati...”

The following statement by a Maori chief shows that the concept “prohibited” is not suitable as a rendering of tapu: “It is said that the Governor will be a protection to people. We like that. Let these words be tapu.” The meaning of course is: “Let these words be inviolable.” In countless cases, “inviolable” will be an excellent translation, but still we cannot stop at that; for there are two aspects of the matter. Something may be tapu either for its own sake, thus being “inviolable,” or for the sake of others, because it is dangerous. This is not, however, to be understood as if these two aspects preclude one another, indeed, they will very often be connected. This question will be discussed in more detail below and examples of both aspects will be adduced. In this place we shall therefore only draw the lexical conclusion, namely that the notion associated with tapu can be expressed in its general aspect by “requiring consideration.” The expression must of course be modified somewhat according as tapu functions as an adjective, a verb, or a substantive.

In an adjectival function, tapu thus always means “requiring consideration” and nothing else, which does not, of course, preclude that we often obtain the best translation in words like “prohibited,” “inviolable,” “sacred,” etc., as in this way we may draw the cultural context into the word. As a verb the word offers no new problems; its meaning corresponds completely to the adjectival one,

2. Loc. cit. 283.
3. White 1888a: 120.
5. Davis 1855: 154.
i.e. it means “to be (become) tapu.” The substantival application of the word does not offer any purely linguistic problems, either; its meaning is always “what requires consideration.” Still, the substantival use offers a peculiarity which points to a significant trait in the role actually played by tapu in Maori culture.

Ponga’s companion, whom we quoted above, speaks about “the tapu,” and the context clearly shows that he is referring to the young girl Puhihuia. Here “the tapu” thus stands for the whole human being; but this is an exception; “the tapu” is mostly something in the person or thing in question. It is said, e.g., that when “the tapus turn against you, then illness will befall you.”

We see it more clearly in some passages which show the relation between mana and tapu: “Matuakore was a famous sword (taiaha) and this sword was tapu, the mana of its tapus wrought aitia works and death to human beings.”

We hear about an “idol” (puhi) which strangers do not like to get near to “for fear of the tapu,” and somewhat farther down it is explained that people (i.e. strangers) cannot live “because of the mana of this ‘idol.’”

It is, however, decisive that this tapu is not inextricably bound to individual things or persons: “The tapu and the divinity are constantly inherited by the descendants in this line.” Tapus can be “made to crumble down” (whakahoro), “profaned” (whakanoa), or “pushed away” (tute); but the thing or person remains. The following words are used in a ritual text:

The great tapu, the eternal tapu
Is returned by me.

The tapu “that which requires consideration” thus is not simply man or thing, but something in them. This “something” may be mana or possess mana; it may be given or removed, indeed, it may be killed (patu) and die (mate). On the other hand, tapu things need not have mana, not even in the cases when something in them makes them tapu, viz. what is called “the tapu.” People

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8. White 1888b: 42.
of poor social standing, without any *mana* worth mentioning, thus may be, or rather, cannot avoid being *tapu* by contact with corpses of high-born people.\(^{18}\)

As a matter of fact, most *tapus* are of this kind, so that we can speak of “the *tapu*,” i.e. the *tapu* state arises from its own content. This content is what really “requires consideration,” i.e. is now honoured, now feared, now awe-inspiring. It can be nearly identical with *mana*, but need not be so. It propagates by contact. We cannot very well designate this “something” by any other word than “life,” but it must be admitted that this designation requires a further explanation. Provisionally, it may be stated that the word is justifiable because we see that everything which to the Maori contains life of a higher quality—the nobleman, the treasures, the sacred things, everything possessing any *mana* at all—is *tapu* as well, that is, be it noted, to the kinship group whose life is concerned.

The word *tapu* in itself thus involves few problems, but it may be significant for the student of comparative religion because it mostly has a content. Our understanding of this content and the Maori’s relationship to it makes us see his attitude towards life from a fresh point of view. An examination of this will elaborate and give further reasons for the brief suggestions made above.

Limiting ourselves to a consideration of the content, “the *tapu*,” we may in return to a certain degree discuss the different cases in a body. The way in which the content of the *tapu* manifests itself in the case of its violation is instructive. There are two aspects of the matter; according to circumstances the insult is most detrimental either to the violator or to the content. If the content is a hostile *mana*, the mere proximity may be deadly, as in the case of the idol mentioned above. Almost the same can be said about the famous sorcerer *Kiki*. He was a *tangata mana*, a man with a *mana* who could kill people only with a look. He was so filled with dangerous life that he did not appear on the public highway if the sun was shining, “in order that his shadow should not accompany him and the place become *tapu*.\(^{19}\)” The life found in him also fills his shadow and hence the things on which it falls; it seems to have had an effect on plants and trees in a similar way to the modern weed-killing hormone preparations: it was too strong and alien, for Kiki has given rise to a proverbial saying, “Descendants of Kiki-who-makes-trees-whither.”

Something similar is told by J. W. Stack about Tamaiharanui, Ngaitahu’s *ariki*, i.e. the first-born in the noblest family of the Ngaitahu tribe, a man who must have had a great *mana*. “His visits were always dreaded, and his movements, whenever he entered a *pa*, were watched with great anxiety by the inhabitants, for if his shadow happened to fall upon a *whata* (stage) or *rua* (pit for food) while he was passing through

\(^{18}\) E.g. Maning 1906: 127.

\(^{19}\) Grey 1855: 145; cf. White 1888b: 50.
the crowded lanes of a town it was immediately destroyed, with all its contents, because, the sacred shadow of the *ariki* (lord) having fallen upon it, the food, became *tapu*, and fatal to those who partook of it.  

The fact that the shadow falls upon things must be considered a kind of touch and it is just the contact with the *tapu* which is often so dangerous, for then the strong life is transmitted to the person or thing which it touches, whether the *tapu* person wants it or not. This derived or extraneous life furthermore offers a danger to others who might get into touch with it. There is a classic example of the terrible power even in this second-hand life. We call upon Maning to whom we owe it:

A chief of very high standing and *maua* was on a war expedition; with him were about five hundred men. His own personal *tapu* was increased two fold, as was that of all the warriors who were with him, by the war *tapu*.... The expedition halted to dine. The portion of food set apart for the chief, in a neat *paro* or shallow basket of green flax leaves, was, of course, enough for two or three men, and consequently the greater part remained unconsumed. The party, having dined, moved on, and soon after a party of slaves and others, who had been some miles or two in the rear, came up carrying ammunition and baggage. One of the slaves, a stout, hungry fellow, seeing the chief’s unfinished dinner, ate it up before asking any questions, and had hardly finished when he was informed by a horror-stricken individual—another slave who had remained behind when the *taua* had moved on—of the fatal act he had committed. I knew the unfortunate delinquent well. He was remarkable for courage, and had signalized himself in the wars of the tribe.... No sooner did he hear the fatal news than he was seized by the most extraordinary convulsions and cramps in the stomach, which never ceased till he died, about sundown the same day. He was a strong man in the prime of life.  

This case is not isolated. Johannes C. Andersen has adduced a couple of similar ones which he quotes from Campbell. One is quite parallel: a young girl eats a raw *kumara* which she has taken from some place without knowing that this was a famous chief’s grave and therefore *tapu*. No sooner had she been informed of the facts of the matter than she was struck with horror; she died three days later.  

The case described by Maning is, however, still of particular interest, as we have in it an eye-witness’s unmediated words for the fact that the effect was immediately connected with the food, i.e. with the *tapu* content. In other words, the story shows that the content can be directly effective without the

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intervention of gods or spirits. This must also be understood in a speech by *Te Matorohanga* to those whom he is teaching the sacral traditions: “I myself will break down the *tapus* in order that they shall not abide with you.”

In Campbell’s second story, the intervention of the spirits play a considerable part. A wounded Maori is lying in the same tent as a great chief and thus commits a *tapu* violation. The insult in the same way ends fatally, but only after an ancestor’s spirit had appeared before him in his dreams and prophesied his death. The whole story leaves an impression that it is this prophecy more than the direct contact with the *tapu* that causes death, which, of course, does not preclude that the prophecy to the man obtains power through the *tapu*, a question which, however, can hardly be decided from the story itself. A similar uncertainty appears in the case of a violation of *tapu* in which a man cut off a chip of a very sacred canoe and consequently died immediately afterwards since, as it says, the canoe “was regarded as a sacred treasure under the immediate guardianship of the gods.”

It is hardly allowable to force an answer to our question from a story told so loosely. This doubt is not so essential as it might seem at a first glance. When Best states that “any person who uses such (sc. *tapu*) fires, or a brand from such in cooking food or other unworthy object, would be slain by the gods,” this is, to be sure, a case of a conscious, not a mechanical effect of the violation of *tapu*; but when the effect is attributed to the gods, we may add that these in this case are no doubt identical with the content of the *tapu*, thus that this still has an immediate effect. The same interpretation naturally offers itself in the cases discussed above.

We need not leave it at conjectures. Some *karakias* (ritual texts) which are to remove the consequences of the violation of *tapu* for the violator, support us.

There is e.g. the case that a man has been eating while sitting on a *tapu* “pillow,” thus a flagrant violation of *tapu* causing illness. The priest takes the sick person down to the sacral water (a pond or the like), sprinkles water on the patient and holds a stalk or stem against his body. This is an *ara atua*, a way out for the demon (*atua*). The priest then recites:

1. (The) way, your way!  
2. If a pillow is your origin,  
3. Then you are *Te Hukita*.

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4. Go behind, go out.
5. Go by the Great-Sea.
6. Go by the Eternal-Sea.
7. Go by the Sea which is not profaned
8. To the day (i.e. life),
9. To the world of light.
10. Life enters.
11. Death leaves.
12. ?
13. It is a pillow striking the blow against you.
14. Go!
15. It is Te Hukita striking the blow against you.
16. Go to your origin,
17. Saved spirit,27
18. To the day,
19. To the world of light.

Lines 1-9, 14, 16 ff. are directed to the spirit causing the illness, 13 and 15
to the patient. The way in line 1 is of course the stem used in the ritual; the
sea in lines 5-7 is the sacral water in which the ritual is taking place; therefore
it is “great,” “eternal” and “is not profaned” (te takiritia); its special
character—indicated here by capitals—is emphasized by the fact that the Sea
occurs as a personal name in the text (a Moana). We now clearly see that
the being causing the illness is a demon or god (atua) named Te Hukita who
has entered the sick person. The Hukita originates from the thing the tapu
of which has been violated, indeed, it may be said that either the thing or Te
Hukita causes the illness (lines 13 and 15). When all these things are viewed
in relation to each other it cannot be doubted that Te Hukita28 is identical with
the content of the violated tapu, not—be it noted—in general, but in a definite
situation, namely the present one in which the tapu is the causer of illness.

The god or demon is thus a mythical expression of the extraneous
life which by the violation has entered the violator. Hence the ritual
is intended to conduct the god (demon) away from the sick person, back
to its origin (1. 15).29 The last feature is not insignificant, for it shows
that the violated life is to be restituted as well, an intention which

27. The ko rou ora of the text is read as korou ora; cf. Best 1925b: 1138.
28. This is only one out of many. Another is e.g. Tutakanahau (Gudgeon 1905b: 121).
Gudgeon there describes a rite quite analogous to the present one. Cf. also Taylor
1870: 137.
is accentuated by the addition: “to the day (i.e. life), to the world of light.”

The text may be varied for use with other violations of tapu of a similar kind.

There is hardly much doubt that the demon in the ritual text quoted above is actually the content of the tapu, but we find a direct juxtaposition of these notions in a ritual which is applied to sick violators of tapu in the cases in which the offence is especially grave, and, if anything, may be called sacrilege.

From a purely linguistic point of view this ritual causes several difficulties; in its main features it is, however, intelligible, but the interpretation is rendered difficult by the fact that the situation is more indefinite than in the preceding ritual. Best writes about its application: “Should any person trespass on a sacred place (tuahu), or a place where a sacred fire has, at some time, been kindled, or a cave containing the bones of the dead, such are causes of the most serious illness, and it will require all the arts of the priest to save him from death.”

Thus it is a question of very different contents of tapu, which also agrees with the fact that the text obviously includes rather different gods and demons; some being sent to the underworld, others to the world of light; some being requested to go away through the sky, others through the earth. The general situation thus is most indefinite. The actions of the ritual are as above, though the striking feature of the stalk that is a “demon way” is missing. In the main the same happens as before, even though some details are obscure. Therefore the ritual will not be discussed in its entirety, but only the end, which contains expressions of importance for the present question.

For it says:

34. It is these tapus,
35. It is these illnesses,
36. It is these great gods who kill.
37. Kahukura will rise on this sky.
38. Go, you whipping gods!
39. Go, you beating gods!
40. Go behind!
41. Go through the big toes!
42. ? (Mahihi ora)
43. To the day,
44. To the World of Light,
45. Saved spirit.

32. On korou ora see p. 179, note 27.
Lines 38-45 are directed to the gods. Kahukura is a god who reveals himself in the rainbow; line 37 refers to this. Kahukura’s importance in this connection seems to appear from the following piece of information, which may date back to John White: “Kahukura is appealed to as a reliever of afflictions caused by *atua ngau tangata*, or man afflicting demons.” What is of interest is the three lines (34-36) in which the tapus, the illnesses, and “the great gods who kill” are paralleled. (The plural forms come natural as a consequence of the great number of *tapus* included in this one ritual text). These three expressions are not in general synonymous, but in the given situation they very nearly cover the same concept and confirm to us that in the violator of the *tapu* the illness is fundamentally the presence of extraneous life, which can either be expressed by “the *tapu*” or by *atua* “demon” or “god.”

Violations of *tapu* presumably most often gave rise to complaints of the stomach, perhaps fatal; but besides they might involve a rich variety of miseries. Next to complaints of the stomach the most important traditional consequences of violations of *tapu* are lunacy, nervousity, anxiety, and cowardice, all that can undermine a brave warrior’s *maia*; in the last case the extraneous life has the form of a demon, Tumatarehurehu, “Dim-eyed Tu” (Tu is the divine warrior). Whaitiri in the myth is struck blind because she eats fish caught by a hook made of the bones from a human sacrifice. It is remarkable that women who were pregnant but did not wish to have babies, downright provoked a miscarriage by a suitable violation of *tapu*. Poturu, one of those emigrated from Hawaiki, never reached New Zealand. As the reason one version states that he lost his head and went astray because he ate from a sacrifice to Maru. This list of suffering might be made still longer.

“It is an *aitua* to interfere with a sacred tree,” writes Best. We may perhaps extend this to stating that any violation of a *tapu* with a dangerous content is an *aitua*. Best himself in a list of omens inserts a remark to that effect: “It is emphatically unlucky to disregard any rule of *tapu*, or trespass on any sacred place.” Furthermore, we find in Tregear’s list of ill omens not a

33.  Best 1924a: 122.
34.  The producer of disease is mentioned as the *tapu* in a *karakia* as well (Goldie 1904: 51), but unfortunately it is only found in translation.
35.  Best 1924b: 82; 192.
37.  White 1887a: 106; Wohlers 1874: 42.
38.  Best 1906a: 12.
39.  Hare Hongi 1893: 121.
40.  Best 1898b: 234.
41.  Best 1925b: 1007.
few cases of violations of tapu.\textsuperscript{42}

This is really what might be expected. The study of the violations of tapu falls in with the results of our investigations of aitua. The violation of tapu brings an extraneous life into the violators, and this is the very core of aitua.

The word “extraneous” gives the whole difference between aitua and mana. A slave who eats the chief’s food certainly gets part of the fellowship into him, but he lacks the tapu needed to assimilate it therefore it does not become mana, but an extraneous element, aitua.

Not until now can we fill in a gap in the elucidation of the custom of muru. We understood the purpose of the legal robbery of a man who had been unfortunate, but we passed lightly over the other cause of muru, viz. the violation of tapu.\textsuperscript{43} We now understand that in both cases the same factor comes in: an extraneous life has entered man. The diagnosis is the same, only the starting-point is different. The misfortune is a symptom of the extraneous life, the violation of tapu is a cause of it.

\textit{Muru} is a restoration to health of the contaminated life, but at the same time it may contain a rehabilitation of a violated person. This also applies here, for there is really a violated person. A man whose tapu is violated gets angry. Hotu got angry with Maru, who carried food over his tapu hand; he did not know that Maru was his son.\textsuperscript{44} Uenuku got angry because Ruatapu used his tapu comb.\textsuperscript{45} They got angry because the content of the tapu was their own life. We understand them now that we see the consequences of the violation of tapu from the other point of view, that of the violated person or thing.

The kumara fields were tapu during various phases of the work and growth. If strangers got too near, so that the tapu was violated, “then a poor crop would result, or the seed tubers would decay in the ground instead of germinating.”\textsuperscript{46} If the tapu of the forest is violated, then the consequences are correspondingly catastrophic for the birds of the forest; they will leave it or at least become scarce.\textsuperscript{47}

In these cases, the content of the tapu is hardly dangerous to the violator; but this is not decisive. A content which is so powerful that it may be dangerous may itself suffer by the violation. We have heard about people who suffered by eating from a sacrifice offered to the gods, but at the same time the

\textsuperscript{42} Tregear 1926: 212 ff.

\textsuperscript{43} E.g. Naha 1894:28; Maning 1906: 100; 106f.

\textsuperscript{44} White 1888a: 191 and 33.

\textsuperscript{45} White 1887c: 28 (cf. Grey 1855: 113 and others).

\textsuperscript{46} Best 1925d: 101 from White 1874; Maning 1906: 125.

\textsuperscript{47} Best 1901a: 7.
sacrifice loses its power. There is a story about a man, Tamaahua, who found his runaway wife dead. He then wanted to offer some birds as a sacrifice to the gods in order to revive her and ordered his slave to cook them in an oven. Unfortunately the slave burnt his fingers and thoughtlessly licked them. When Tamaahua saw this, he understood “that the karakias which make tapu had been violated.” He killed the slave and cooked him, too, but the misfortune had taken place, and his wife did not revive.

We have seen that a chief gets angry if his tapu is violated. We also know from innumerable reports how carefully a man avoided things which could violate his own tapu. But what will the consequences of a violation be to himself?

A priest, e.g., may lose his specific content of life by a violation of tapu, which is expressed by stating that his atua, “god,” leaves him. Several times we hear that the sacral knowledge was forgotten if one did not consider one’s tapu. This was of course of special interest to the pupils at the sacral school. Old Paitini admonished Elsdon Best: “Son!” he said, “do not place food over the entrance to your tent. You will lose all the knowledge I have imparted to you.” Tradition itself may also suffer: “The traditions told in the Wharewa-nanga (the sacral school) are tapu, they are extraordinarily tapu, that is why it is just in the tapu houses that the tapu traditions are told, in order that the traditions may possess mana.” From this it may be concluded that they will lose their mana by a violation of tapu.

The state of tapu is thus a necessary condition of life in tradition. Once when Best asked a historical question of an old Maori at the grocer’s, he answered severely: “Young man! This is not the place in which to speak of such things.”

But still the loss of the sacral knowledge is only a single point, although an important one. Ultimately, the whole nobility of man is at stake. Life cannot be great; the chief cannot live the life of a whole kinship group; no mana can exist if there is no tapu, for otherwise anybody may drain off life until it has become no more than a grey everyman’s life. When Ngatoro left Hawaiki, he left two sisters behind. Once they got into such a situation that they

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49. Best 1925b: 1081.
50. Best 1901b: 122.
52. Whatahoro 1915: 93.
54. See e.g. Best 1925a: 32.
had to threaten their enemies with their brother’s help, but they were met with this contemptuous answer: “Have people who have become vagabonds a tapu? When the tapu is given up, then the curse is given up (i.e. it will have no force), then the gods are given up.”

When Christianity was introduced the old life was broken down in the Maori. The ordinary method was that of washing one’s head in water which had been heated in an ordinary cooking-pot—the most profane of everything profane. The head was the most tapu of man, and as the tapu was violated, its content disappeared. It is not strange that many Maoris in this violation found the reason for the sad decline of the race during the time following.

We have hitherto seen only the most immediate effects of the violations of tapu. It is a fundamental Maori experience that life is a fellowship. A violation of e.g. the tapu of the fish and the sea cannot really be calculated as so much damage to the violator, so much to the person or thing violated. The order of the universe rests on the perfection and purity of life or rather of the different lives, and this purity of their lives is spoilt by the violation of tapu. History tells that a coastal stretch where hapuku were fished was tapu and therefore the fish must not be eaten directly from the ovens, but only at some distance inland. Now it happened, when the Maoris had recently arrived in the region, that some women who had been picking berries all day came up when the cooking of the fish had just been finished. One of the women thoughtlessly took a fish and ate it on the spot. “No sooner had night come on than the sea monster appeared! The sea fell upon the land. My friends! This people was killed!”

The same applies to a violation of the tapu of the great, sacral treasures. Their mana is so great that a whole world is involved in such a case; it is really hardly possible to take in the consequences of a violation. So much, however, is certain that the least interference, indeed, the mere proximity of intruders makes the universe rebel so that a violent storm breaks out and the thunder rumbles and crashes.

When the tapu institution disappears, fields, forests, and fishing grounds lie open to arbitrariness and a new protection is to be built up by the law as understood by the European. Furthermore, when the tapu disappears, how can the gods endure? Like all other great life theirs, too, must come to nothing without the protection of tapu.

56.  Best 1924b: 229; 388.
57.  Te Whetu 1893: 213; a similar story is found in Best 1905a: 222.
The revolutions produced by the arrival of the Europeans in the communities of the primitive peoples will easily appear distant and shadowy to us. We do not consider that in violence and often in bloodshed as well they match with the French or the Russian revolution. Indeed, this is too weak a comparison. It is not so much a revolution as a catastrophe which breaks in on these communities; the subversion does not come from within; it is not a consequence of deep-rooted ideals in culture. No! From outside come new ideals, new thoughts, new powers, and before they have really taken root in the minds of people, the whole of the old social order is shaken to its deepest foundations. But this is not all. Not only nobility and kinship, honour, open-handedness, and rehabilitation are suddenly devaluated; it is a whole cosmos that collapses.

To the Maori the central factor in this catastrophe is the fact that the customs of tapu cease. They are what keeps everything in its place. We understand the profound bitterness in Te Matahoro when he settles the result in these words: “The tapus are over; the eternal traditions are lost; the karakias (ritual words) are lost and are not understood any more today. For the tapu is the first; if there is no tapu, then all the acts of the gods become without life and force (mana), and if there are no gods, everything becomes insipid. The way of people, actions, and thoughts is now one whirling around; they are confused and desperate in this country now.”  

However formal the word tapu is in itself—what makes the tapu customs an institution is not strange and exotic rules of the game, but a profound respect for life, an awe in which now honour, now fear stands in the foreground. The awe does not regard life in general, but life in its various manifestations, and not even all manifestations, only life as included in the great fellowship of the kinship group as it extends into field, forest, and fishing grounds, and culminates in the chief, treasures, and sacred places.

Before the tapu of life the Maori stands with sublimity in his mind. A Maori may proudly point out that only the canoe Takitumu, in which his ancestors arrived, was tapu from end to end, not only at the stern as in the case of the others. Therefore no food could be taken onboard, but “the food on this canoe, Takitumu, was the fishes which were caught on the way; this is the reason why the name of Takitumu is the greatest of all the canoes’ names.”

We do not read the following eulogy of the star Canopus (Aotahi) without feeling some of what tapu may mean: “Canopus is a tapu star, a chief (ariki) it is to the stars of the year; it does not long for others, for it does not sit near any other star.... When Canopus rises in the east, the people recite litur-

59.  Whatahoro 1913: 12.
60.  White 1887c: 41.
gies, they weep, they are moved, they greet it, for Canopus is a tapu star.”

In other words, we stand before a tapu which corresponds to our “the holy.” When this is the case the damnation of a violator of tapu becomes correspondingly sharp: “The whites are a people who proceed recklessly (po-kanao) against the country of the Maori; he does not keep away from the least thing during his importunate (unene) behaviour. Does he give any consideration to possessing himself of the rock caves (i.e. the burial places), the Maori’s tapu places?” What shocks the Maori is of course that it is his friends who do so; he does not expect any consideration from his enemies. We note that he is not only very bitter against the whites, but also looks at them with a certain contempt: they are importunate like beggars (unene). Maning experiences the same contempt. Once when he was traveling with some Maoris, they came to a steep slope which had subsided so that some burials had been exposed. Maning touched a skull, but to his great annoyance his hands became tapu in this way. When they made a halt in the evening, some food was set aside for him, the idea being that he should eat without using his hands as it is the custom of the Maoris when they are in the same situation. He says:

I had, however, no idea of any such proceeding, and pulling out my knife, proceeded to operate in the usual manner. I was checked by an exclamation of horror and surprise from the whole band: ‘Oh! what are you about; you are not going to touch food with your hands?’ ‘Indeed, but I am!’ said I, and stretched out my hand. Here another scream: ‘You must not do that, it’s the worst of all things; one of us will feed you—it’s wrong, wrong, very wrong!’ ‘Oh, bother!’ said I, and fell to at once. I declare positively I had no sooner done so than I felt sorry. The expression of horror, contempt, and pity observable in their faces convinced me that I had not only offended and hurt their feelings, but that I had lowered myself greatly in their estimation.

This mixture of horror, contempt, and pity with which the violator of tapu is regarded is very significant. We find it in our own feelings towards insane people. Our parallel to those who deliberately violate the great tapus is the poor wretches who in distraction kill their next of kin or swallow razor blades and pins.

The minor violators of tapu are of course regarded more leniently; they are to be considered more or less impudent according to circumstances—still on the assumption that it is a question of deliberate violations. The reaction

61. White 1887a: 45.
63. Maning 1906: 130.
to the minor violations is after all exhausted in one word, *muru*, as mentioned above.

The violations have their character according to the various contents of the *tapu*, and it would be wrong to make the great violation dominate the picture completely. It is both amusing and instructive to see how close to the *tapu* the Maori can approach, just as people can who have an innate feeling of how far they may go. The nobleman’s head and back are *tapu*, much more so than his hands and feet. This information is necessary to understand an amusing story experienced by Maning on a journey in which he took part. There were two canoes and ill luck would have it that all the profane persons had left with one of them so that the remaining noblemen were left with the other canoe and furthermore all the provisions which were to be carried onboard, viz. several heavy baskets with potatoes, etc. If a nobleman carried a basket on his back, the provisions would at once be inedible to the others. What was to be done? A clever fellow among the Maoris found a way out: “I’ll tell you what we must do,” said he “we will not carry (pikau) the provision; we will *hiki* them.” (*Hiki* is the word in Maori which describes the act of carrying the infant in the arms). This was a great discovery! A huge handsome fellow seized on the baked pig and dandled it, or *hiki*d it, in his arms like an infant; another laid hold of a shark, others took baskets of potatoes, and carrying them in this way, deposited them in the canoe.”

Maning also has an amusing story about a visit to a village where he appeared as the first white man. Everybody flocked into and about the house in which he was sitting, in order to see him. An elderly gentleman who was working in the *kumara* field and therefore was *tapu*, could not, as a consequence of this, enter the house, and there were too many at the entrance for him to look in. He promptly bored his head in through the thatched gable, while the rest of his person was outside! The head, indeed, was the bearer of his own *tapu*, but it had not been in contact with the *kumara* as had his hands, whose *tapu* thus was not violated by this ingenious solution.

We have hitherto mainly dealt with the attitude towards a *tapu* to which one stands in a relation and the life of which must be immediately respected. The spectrum of fear, awe, and honour of the *tapu* which then is the normal, is reduced to fear-indifference in the case of a completely strange life. The fear of a strange *tapu* has been mentioned above (p. 187) in connection with an idol which killed all strangers who approached it. We find the indifference in an incident related by Shortland. He had come across a cave containing skulls and writes about this: “Fearing the desecration of this spot would give

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64.  Maning 1906: 121 f.
65.  Maning 1906: 123 f.
offence to the natives of the neighbourhood, I recommended the entrance of
the cave to be re-closed; but I soon found that the natives were already aware
of the discovery, and appeared quite indifferent as to the fate of the bones.
They did not belong to any of their tribe, nor had they even known of the
existence of the place.”

The nobleman’s personal tapu is not, of course, valid any farther than
the range of his kinship group. Wairangi’s wife had run off to a man of a
strange tribe. He came with his companion for her, but the strange tribe de-
cided to keep the woman and attack Wairangi and his people. Now it hap-
pened that her love of Wairangi and his men rose in her when she heard of
the attack planned. She sought him out and “stooped over Wairangi’s knee;
she slashed her arms with flint flakes in order that the blood should drip on
Wairangi so that he became tapu of her blood and would not be eaten.”

Wairangi was of course tapu in advance, but not, indeed, to this tribe. From
the moment he got blood upon him from one of the women of the tribe—al-
though she was but loosely attached to it—from that moment he had got so
much of their life into him that he could not be eaten.

The fellowship with life makes the difference, however slender it may be.
The tribe that cut down Tapaue were within their right; but when they made
fish-hooks of his bones they transgressed the bounds of decency in their
thoughtlessness: “This tribe did not remember that their daughter (i.e. one
of the women of the tribe) had been married to Tapaue and that these bones
were tapu; no! The bones were worked by them although he was their broth-
er-in-law.”

If we restrict ourselves to what belongs to the life of the kinship group—
what is really tapu to it—we may sum up the whole tapu institution like this: to
keep life strong and pure. We see that it is a form which amplifies deep-
rooted feelings in the Maori; for what examples of violations of tapu we have
seen supplement our previous understanding. We found that life is and must
be perfect and whole, i.e. it must flow unimpeded from the inner sources of
life into action; any weakening contains a deadly danger, just because life is to
be whole. This perfection manifests itself in tupu, mana, and maia, honour,
fellowship, and good fortune. Perfection is a matter of course; defeat and ill
luck, i.e. aitua, are extraneous life, an extraneous element which pollutes the
perfection of life. When all imperfection is ultimately rooted in pollution of
life, what then is more obvious, more rational, than carefully avoiding any

66. Shortland 1856: 147; Percy Smith had a very similar experience (Smith 1897: 41).
67. Rangihiroa 1910: 198; cf. Te Hata 1917: 96 f. where an event with the same point is
described.
68. White 1888a: 175.
pollution of life?

Every *tapu* has its content which constitutes its sphere. (That is, of the kind of *tapu* mentioned here). There goes the nobleman with his kinship life. It is in his blood, and for some reason it is otherwise particularly connected with his head and back including the lower part of it and the fork. To a somewhat lesser degree it asserts itself in his hands, but not at all in his feet. Only in very great chiefs it is strong even into his name, his shadow, and his breath. From the nobleman it passes into everything on which he sits, which he touches, indeed, perhaps everything on which he blows, or on which his shadow falls. This means that his seat, bed, clothes, ornaments, food, in short, all his personal belongings become *tapu* like himself although in different degrees. It is not easy to be a great chief; he must always be on his guard that his life shall not be diluted to become an everyday life and moreover fill the whole village so that nobody else can live there except a few, namely those few who have the same life as himself, not only in quality—for the whole kinship group has that—but in strength as well.

Only now we can completely understand a scene which we adduced in the beginning of the book when discussing kinship, viz. the orthodox way in which a son who has grown up away from his father enters the dignity of a son with his father. As will be remembered, the decisive factor is that the son sits down on his father’s seat. He is just one of the few who have a right to do so. 

This act has an important and immediate consequence; the young man before the eyes of the people is filled with the chief’s life and thus becomes *tapu*. Now nobody but the chief can touch him; but when he appears, the time has come for the son to reveal who he is.

The apparent violation of *tapu* is the core of the matter; this is where the son seizes his rights by a feat of strength and demonstrates that he has the same content of life as his father. Therefore the scene may be varied. Maru does not sit down on his father’s seat; instead, when they are eating, he passes his hand with the food over his father’s hand.

This is only externally another act; according to its meaning it is the same as sitting down on the chief’s (his father’s) seat and it ends in the usual explanation.

The nobleman and his eldest son and all their belongings, etc., as enumerated above, thus constitute a life sphere which may range widely by taking part in the life of the kinship group and the land, but which in its fullness is exclusive and closed to the surrounding world. “Complete strangers must not sit on these chiefly seats,” protests the Maori indignantly on a given

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69. If it is not the eldest son, the act does contain a violation of *tapu*, but then it is very slight.

70. 1887a: 91; 33.
Now there is a number of closed spheres. Some are permanent like that of the nobleman’s, e.g. that of the grave. Sacredness (the sacred place, tuahu, the priest, karakia) is another: “The priest tapu is different from the chief tapu (he rere ke te tapu tohunga i te tapu ariki).” Others are temporary, e.g. those which as their center have life in a critical state: the child-bearing woman and the new-born child, the woman during menstruation, and the sick person. Similar temporary tapus are found for war, the forest, the fishing grounds, and the kumara field, the house or canoe under construction. So long as such a tapu exists, it forms a closed sphere.

These spheres are of course closed in relation to each other; some of the highest bars perhaps are found between the contents of two different tapus. The mother of a new-born son of a chief is carefully kept isolated, more especially from those who grow kumara, it thus being emphasized that these two spheres, although they are both tapu, should be kept apart. Quite correspondingly, we are told in the myth about Tane’s ascension to the uppermost heaven that on the way he went through a ritual which subverted the tapus of the Earth (nga tapu o Papatuanuku), and inversely, that he could not live on the earth until “the tapus of the upper regions” were broken up.

We should expect beforehand that the greatest contrasts are to be found between the tapus mutually, i.e. between certain of them. However, we hear comparatively little about this, and no wonder, as this has hardly given occasion for any great practical difficulties. As a matter of fact, these tapus were like islands in a sea of profanity; it was not difficult to regulate the traffic between the islands; the great problem was that of keeping them apart from the constantly billowing and flowing everyday life, which from every direction threatened to wash over the shores of the islands of the tapus.

What is here termed “the profane” is called noa in Maori, a word which, when used as an adjective, can be translated by “not tapu,” “free,” but hence also “common,” “without purpose and destination.” This adjectival meaning agrees with the adverbial one, which, corresponding to “free,” tends in the direction of the intensive: “boundlessly,” “completely,” “simply,” and the like, partly, corresponding to “without destination,” in the direction of “in vain” and the like. The profane, noa, thus characterizes everyday life, in which everything happens more informally and freely, but also more casually and

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71. White 1888a: 79.
72. Best 1929a: 57.
73. Shortland 1882: 40.
74. Best 1924a: 249.
haphazardly.

The isolation of the *tapu* from the profane has several aspects. It is a main point to avoid contact (perhaps the mere proximity) between the *tapu* and the profane. (We disregard completely special ritual situations here). The house of the sacral school is *tapu*, not only so that ordinary people cannot go in there, but so that they may not even enter its courtyard (*marae*).\(^{75}\) The pupils of the school (*wharekura*) belong to the same sphere, they must not go near other children nor play with them. But if a pupil should happen to touch a profane child, then the latter becomes *tapu* and belongs to the *wharekura*, where he serves by fetching water and the like for the pupils.\(^{76}\) The pupils’ clothes are also kept apart and remain in the house, while they themselves leave it stark naked and put on their everyday dress outside.\(^{77}\)

Passing something over the *tapu* has the same effect as touching it. When Ruatapu in order to fetch his kite, climbed the roof of Uenuku’s house, the latter cried out: “Come down, boy! Go away from my house! Do you want to climb over my *tapu* head?”\(^{78}\) It may be an insult which is to be revenged, if a boy only jumps over the head of another who is lying down.\(^{79}\) Very *tapu* persons will climb over the stockade instead of availing themselves of the entrance to the fortress, where they are to pass under a carved figure or the like. In two of the versions of the story about Marutauhu he thus climbs over the stockade, and it is said expressly that this is due to his *tapu*.\(^{80}\) It has already been mentioned that it is a violation of *tapu* if food is passed over a chief’s hands.\(^{81}\)

Only rarely does the custom go to the length that *tapu* things must not be looked at, such as the rock Ngawhatu. It is said that a glance at it while one is passing it by sea, will provoke a violent gale so that the canoe will capsize.\(^{82}\)

Imponderables of course fall outside the question of contact or no contact, but are isolated otherwise. Ritual words (*karakia*) are not communicated to everybody, no more than the other sacral knowledge, myths, and genealogies.\(^{83}\) When the information is given, it takes place under particular

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75. Whatahoro 1913: 2.
77. Whatahoro 1913: 4.
78. White 1887c: 33.
80. White 1888a: 190 and 33.
82. Whatahoro 1915: 47.
83. E.g. White 1888b: 161.
conditions, in houses arranged for the purpose, in remote places, etc.

During the mention of the name we also discussed certain regards which were to be paid to it, but strictly tapu names do not seem to have been very common among the Maoris. When they did occur and contained words used in everyday language, these words were to be suppressed and replaced by synonyms.\(^{84}\)

However complicated and troublesome it even, at times, might be, it was possible to build an invisible wall round the tapus, to avoid contact and transgressions. It was possible in the case of sacred places, burial places, etc., in the sense that they were only entered with a display of ritual precautions. It was possible even for a chief except on one point, viz. food. Both chief and priest must eat. This became the weak point in the invisible wall round the tapu. Therefore the relation to food is the constant problem in the endeavour to keep life pure.

If it is a case of more temporary tapus, the problem is solved by complete fast. Those who are planting kumara do not eat anything until the day’s work has been finished.\(^{85}\) The same applies to those who are building a sacral house,\(^{86}\) a large canoe,\(^{87}\) etc.

We find the same fear that the food shall be a channel through which life runs away, will be weakened or polluted, and the same measure, viz. fasting, in a few cases in which the word tapu is not named. When Kairangatira had stolen into the enemy’s fortress, he had ordered his people not to eat or drink. They did so all the same, and the consequence was that he overslept himself and did not get out before day had broken.\(^{88}\) Ngatoro left the same order when he ascended the mountain Tongariro; but his people ate, and Ngatoro nearly perished.\(^{89}\)

As this shows, the fast gets its definite significance by keeping life pure and strong. This means is, of course, strongly restricted in its application, and therefore a network of tapu customs has been spun around the food in order to prevent the pollution of life. This pollution has two aspects, as there may partly be a pollution of the eater’s life, partly a pollution of a life which has entered the food, which has thus become tapu. Considerations for both aspects enter into the precautions as regards the food and will therefore be

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\(^{85}\) Best 1925d: 159.

\(^{86}\) White 1887a: 4.

\(^{87}\) Best 1925a: 38.

\(^{88}\) White 1888a: 194 and 40.

\(^{89}\) Grey 1855: 68.
discussed together. It is difficult to avoid certain repetitions, partly of previous examples of violations of tapu, partly of facts adduced when we discussed food as a gift. As to the latter, the point of view becomes a new one. Above, we only spoke about the positive side of the mixture of life, viz. that food creates a fellowship. Here it becomes the negative side, that life can be polluted. At any rate the importance of the subject seems to me, in spite of all repetitions, to require a summarizing treatment; for there is the complication that the content of the food can assert itself more or less intensely. In most cases, however, the cooking becomes a turning-point, so that the content of life only becomes of importance when it is acquired by or after the cooking. On the other hand, there are contents of tapu which are not influenced by the cooking and therefore makes any partaking of the food impossible.

After a number of deaths in a Ngaiterangi kinship group it was agreed that they were due to a sorcerer who had bewitched a bridge over which the food was driven. It was decided not to carry more provisions over the bridge until the curse had been ritually removed.90 The injurious content of the food in this case must be assumed not to have disappeared by the cooking. In some exceptional cases we hear about enemies whom people did not dare to eat, not even in a cooked state, even though they were not relatives.91

The content in these cases is hostile. On the contrary the typical case is that it is a content of kinship life which requires consideration, whether the food is cooked or not. Examples have been adduced above (p. 33) according to which the consumption of a kinsman’s flesh was considered something very wrong and might give rise to the typical consequences of violations of tapu, complaints of the stomach and cowardice. In this connection, we shall also remind the reader of the report according to which the food on which the tribal chief, Tamaiharanui’s shadow fell must be destroyed. Nor were prisoners of war eaten who had got the blood of the victors upon them, a fact which was ingeniously utilized by Ngatokowaru, who by a stratagem succeeded in wounding the victorious chief and smearing himself with his blood.92

The significance of this is brought out clearly when we look at certain eating tapus which in legends are just based on communal life and kinship life. Women might not eat dog’s meat, at any rate not in the tribes Ngatimahuta and Ngathau. This refers back to a myth known all over New Zealand. Maui’s sister was married to Irawaru. One day when Maui grew angry with his brother-in-law he transformed him into a dog, from whom all dogs are de-

92. Gudgeon 1904c: 251 f.
scended. As a woman was married to the first dog, dogs are *tapu* and are not eaten by women. The tribes Ngapuhi, Te Rarawa, and Ngatiwhatua do not eat a certain kind of fish, the trevally (*araara, Caranx georgianus*). Here, too, there is a kinship legend, according to which an ancestor of Ngapuhi and Te Rarawa by the name of Rongomai was drowned on a fishing expedition and was eaten by the fish mentioned.

With our attitude towards cannibalism it seems to us only too natural that it should be indecent to eat kinsfolk. Actually the matter is more intricate. After all, it is the same life which is in both. One might expect two points of view; one, that it is an insult to kinship life to eat it, since thus it is put on a level with that of the enemies; the other, that it gives strength to consume kinship life. As we have seen, the former point of view is dominant. There is, however, evidence from an isolated case in which the other point of view asserts itself. Cowan relates: “Patara told the tale himself as one of the little incidents of his earlier years. When the father died, the sons divided the corpse among them, and cooked and ate it, both as a mark of respect and in order to require the inherent sacred virtues and *mana* of their parent. This devouring of parents appears to have been looked on as a semi-religious act; but it could not have been a frequent practice; Patara’s is the only definite case of which I have heard among the Maoris.”

It does not sound confidence-inspiring that the body should possess *mana*; as, furthermore, the report stands isolated, it seems best to disregard it.

To sum up, it may presumably be stated that food with a particularly significant content, whether of kinship life and godly life or bewitched, is *tapu* under any circumstances.

If the content of the food is less strong it is the cooking that decides the matter. In several places it is emphasized that cooked food especially is dangerous to what is *tapu*. About a certain island, e.g., it is said: “This island is *tapu*; there no cooked food must be eaten...” Harua was passed over when the preserved birds were being distributed. “He was *tapu*, therefore his name

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93. White 1887b: 111 ff. It would seem that the legend might as well state the reason for a ban on eating for men, as the dog is a transformed man. The question here is, however, less about the conclusions that may be drawn than about those which were actually drawn by the Maori.

94. Smith 1897: 3; cf. 90 f.

95. Cowan 1910: 241. Is it imaginable that Patara had a twinkle in his eye when telling this? Cowan could lack an eye for the humorous, as appears from his translation of the canoe shanty (p. 315).

96. Davies 1912b: 110.
was not called at the distribution of preserved birds, which was cooked food.”

The way to behave when out hunting is very instructive: “When going hunting, no cooked food may be carried within the forest or the mauri of that forest would be unclean (tamaoa). Uncooked food may be carried, it has not the degrading qualities of the cooked article. When a hungered, the hunters or fowlers may cook and eat food, but if there is any of the cooked food remaining, they may not carry it away, it must be left.”

The facts are exactly the same in the case of sacral canoes. Uncooked food is taken onboard Takitimu, but it is expressly stated that “cooked food is not carried onboard, for this canoe is tapu.” It is in the nature of things that people eat onboard. Thus there is a complete parallel to what was stated above.

These two facts are significant because they show that eating, even cooking of food, is not an improper act, if only it is done completely within the tapu sphere. What is violation of tapu is the supply of food that is cooked outside, which of course means in the sphere of everyday life. The injury consists in a communion between everyday life and the tapu, by which the content of the latter is weakened and polluted, but this communion does not take place until the food is cooked.

The Maoris cook their food on hot stones placed in a flat depression in the ground so that the whole of it forms a steam oven. It is by this cooking that the food gets the property of fusing the life with which it comes into contact. Therefore every chief and his family have their own oven, just as all very tapu persons have their food cooked in a special oven. At the festivals connected with the more important rituals there were even several ovens. According to Best, the following four ovens (umu) were lit after a child’s “baptism” (tua):

1. Umu tuakaha—for the officiating priest.
2. Umu potaka—for the fighting-men.
3. Umu ruahine—for the kaihau woman.
4. Umu tukupara—for the bulk of the people.

For other rites there were also special ovens, but with other names. At any

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97. White 1888a: 95.
100. Tregear 1926: 283.
101. Best 1902e: 92; Best 1925b: 1120.
102. Best 1924a: 205. The kaihau woman = ruahine, see further p. 224 ff.
rate it was of decisive importance that only people with a *tapu* of the same content and strength partook of the food from the same oven.

As a consequence of all this, a nobleman may very well cook food for himself,\(^{103}\) which is worth noting as cooking otherwise was little esteemed, just because the *tapu* of the nobleman prevented him from cooking food for others. We shall therefore dwell on the matter for a moment. We shall disregard Pawa, who cooked a fish for himself, for this was a case of sorcery,\(^ {104}\) and proceed to two scenes from everyday life which illustrate the matter.

It is told somewhere that a band of travelers passed an elderly gentleman who was sitting alone under a tree roasting and eating a bird. When they saw him they laughed and asked, "Is this all your food?" The elderly gentleman did not say one word, and the travelers then again addressed him, saying, "Have you no son who can catch birds for you?" He had, however, a son who later learnt what had happened and took vengeance.\(^ {105}\)

We have here a party who are ready to poke fun at the elderly gentleman and offend him; still they do not with one word mention that he is roasting his food, but pounce upon something quite different: he looks like a man who is alone, which, translated, means: an insignificant person.

A somewhat different light falls on the matter when we turn to the story about Tuhourangi, who visited Kapu unannounced. It was particularly embarrassing because Kapu had nothing to set before the guests; but Kapu also felt unpleasantly affected by the fact that they had surprised him when toasting fern-root for himself as all the other people of the village were elsewhere.\(^ {106}\) We know this because it is carefully enumerated that he had both reasons for taking vengeance.\(^ {107}\)

On the other hand, Kapu’s resentment must be kept apart from our proper question, and thus the conclusion must be that a nobleman may cook his own food, but only under certain circumstances; for we note that in both cases it is a question of roasting food on a fire, a not inessential detail, because the fire and fire-place probably were made for that special purpose. Matters are different if it is a case of cooking in an oven, for if the hole in the ground is not a fixture, then at any rate the stones are. Here it will be of little avail if the nobleman is himself the only one who is partaking of the food; for the oven and the stones may form a bridge to new food which is consumed by

\(^{103}\) Earle 1832: 194.

\(^{104}\) White 1887c: 8.

\(^{105}\) White 1888b: 100.

\(^{106}\) White 1888b: 54.

\(^{107}\) White 1888b: 55.
others so that his tapu is still violated.

Probably it was a case of cooking in an oven when Rangihia returning from a journey came home and was shocked by seeing one of his sisters “cooking food like a common slave.” At any rate we must in what has been set forth here seek the cause of the apparent contrast between, on the one hand, the two noblemen who themselves roast their food and, on the other hand, the excessive care with which a nobleman shuns any contact with the cooking-shed and its ovens.

For it is not only so that he does not himself cook his food there, but leaves it to slaves and women of less noble birth, no, the mere steam from an oven is most injurious. This was the point in Rautao’s revenge on his own kinship group when he invited them into a house in which the back wall was false and actually was a partition which concealed some ovens. Suddenly he had the wall torn down and the ovens opened so that the steam struck all of them. “(Food-)steam was bad for the Maori,” explains the teller, “it made people’s tapu vanish.”

Fire from the oven must not, of course, be used in a tapu house, and the leaves in which the food was wrapped up, had a pernicious effect on a tapu which could profitably be used against demons.

When pots and pans were introduced, they became of course as injurious channels between the tapu and everyday life as were the stones previously.

There is perhaps nothing which more clearly shows a tapu Maori’s disgust for cooking-shed and oven than the following short story. A gentleman from Waikato who was on a visit to Ngatitoa had been walking in rainy weather and had got wet; but afterwards the sun came out and in the heat the moisture began steaming from him. It gave a Ngatitoa boy the disastrous idea of saying that it looked like the steam from an oven! The Waikato tribe could not help regarding this as an insult. It ended in a war with many casualties, and many events followed this remark.

Just as the nobleman is affected by being mentioned together with the oven, so the oven inversely obtains a special content by being put in a mere imaginative relation to the nobleman. Once it happened that a chief made up

111. Best 1906a: 15; Shortland 1882: 48 f.
112. E.g. Whatahoro 1913: 1.
113. White 1890: 10 f.
his mind to eat a young man who had just arrived as a guest. The oven and the firewood were ready when to his dismay he heard that the young man was his grandson. The action was of course called off at once but merely by the decision firewood and stones had become tapu and had to undergo a ritual purification.\textsuperscript{114}

It is hardly necessary to adduce more examples of the Maori’s deep-rooted aversion to any connection between the tapu and the cooked food or the oven meant for the people; the literature about him teems with examples. The aversion has got its own expression in his culture as it underlies his worst curses. When he curses his enemy he misses out the minor misfortunes, such as e.g. the enemy’s death; but this is only in order to go direct to the worst: he will eat him, and he will eat the most tapu, namely his brain.

It is odd that history includes a story about a real dissenter in this important chapter. When Te Wera died in his bed, he said to his people:\textsuperscript{115} “Let it pass that rottenness takes me, but you shall let the spears\textsuperscript{116} bring\textsuperscript{117} you to me (in the realm of the dead?) in order that you can get into the fragrant bed (i.e. the oven), so that you shall not be left behind and eaten by rottenness. It is good that men shall eat you.” It is probably impossible to offer any other comment on this unique statement than that it was given at a late period when the Europeans had made themselves conspicuous; but the comment is not worth much; it has never been the wish of the Europeans to be eaten by man. There is hardly anything to be done but to leave the passage in all its peculiarity.

To return to the normal Maori and his relationship to the cooking-shed: From the moment when the food is in the oven, it obtains its significant ability to fuse human lives together; therefore the serving of it must become a significant act.

As the oven is a kind of focus for this communion in the food, special arrangements are made to reduce the connection between the very tapu and the cooking-shed to the inevitable minimum, viz. the food itself. When the food was to be served for the most holy female chief Pare, it was done in the way that the food was given to slave no. 1, who passed it on to slave no. 2, who again took it to slave no. 3, and only slave no. 3 served it for Pare.\textsuperscript{118} A similar

\textsuperscript{114} Stack 1877: 68.
\textsuperscript{115} White 1887c: 123.
\textsuperscript{116} The “whata rakau” should presumably be corrected into “huata rakau,” in which, indeed, rakau seems somewhat superfluous.
\textsuperscript{117} For oake read hoake.
\textsuperscript{118} White 1887b: 158.
procedure takes place with high-born women in confinement\textsuperscript{119} and priests who have had intercourse with the most holy. Here it is not even sufficient to have intermediaries; every possibility of limiting the contact—even the indirect contact—with the cooking-shed is utilized to the full, the last person to whom it is entrusted to take the food to the priest, will also feed him, so that his tapu hands do not touch the food.\textsuperscript{120} The last trait has also, of course, the important aspect that the hands may have a content which it would be most violating as well as dangerous to eat. In one of Lindauer’s pictures a small girl is seen feeding a priest. She is completely naked in order that her clothes shall not be infected by the tapu.\textsuperscript{121}

These are the extreme cases, but under more ordinary conditions as well the consideration to the tapus stamps the form of the meal. This is never consumed in the houses in which people sleep. Noblemen and plebeians eat apart, or at least the greater chiefs isolate themselves.\textsuperscript{122} Men and women must have eaten apart in most places. This is maintained by scholars like Taylor and Colenso,\textsuperscript{123} who cannot possibly have been mistaken in a matter like this. When early travelers (Cook, Dumont d’Urville) are of the opposite opinion,\textsuperscript{124} it may be due to their inability to distinguish between slaves and free-men. Best, however, has a note to the effect that a woman must not eat together with a man wearing a kotuku feather,\textsuperscript{125} which would seem to indicate that the sexes otherwise ate together. It is therefore imaginable that there were local differences.

The food which the nobleman is eating, through the contact with his hands is highly saturated with his life and consequently becomes tapu. Possible scraps therefore must not lie about, but must be thrown in a special, tapu place (wahi tapu). For each meal a small flat basket is made which serves as a “plate” and afterwards is treated like scraps.

It may be added that a nobleman who is offered a drink of water from another man’s calabash, does not himself touch this, but has the water poured

\textsuperscript{119.} Best 1906a: 16.
\textsuperscript{120.} Best 1925b: 1080; Best 1924a: 253; Best 1902e: 92.
\textsuperscript{121.} Lindauer no. 1—Both the serving by stages and the different ovens for people with different tapus make the assumption unreasonable that the cooked food should be injurious to the tapu because it is “dead,” as supposed by O’Relly in the Histoire Générale des Religions I, 142.
\textsuperscript{122.} Grey 1855: 195; Yate 1835: 20; Shortland 1851: 292; Taylor 1870: 165; 340; Bastian 1881: 202.
\textsuperscript{123.} Taylor 1870: 168; Colenso 1868: 344; cf, Crozet 1783: 135.
\textsuperscript{124.} Dumont 1830-1831:427.
\textsuperscript{125.} Best 1902e: 109.
out to him in that he makes a kind of groove with his hands so that the water is manipulated into his mouth. This is a counterpart of the basket from the meal, for if he took the calabash in his hands, it would become his, as nobody else might drink from it.