

Little appears to be known of the history of the Paumotu Islands, or their inhabitants. At Tahiti I obtained some information from one who had been much among the group, and believe that it is as authentic as can be obtained, and may be relied on.

The Island of Anaa, or Chain Island, has been the principal seat of power, the natives of which had frequently waged war on the others, and succeeded in conquering all to the west of Hau or Bow Island, with which they have frequently fought.

In the reign of the first Pomare, under Tomatiti, they even attempted the conquest of Tahiti, and succeeded in overcoming the small peninsula of Taiaarabu. The story is, that they were about to continue their attack on the larger island, when Tomatiti received a written letter from Pomare, which caused hostilities to be suspended; and after further negotiation, finally led to Tomatiti's retiring from the island with a large present of hogs, tapa, &c. Notwithstanding this, the Chain Islanders remained nominally under the government of Tahiti, and now acknowledge their dependence on it.

Anaa, or Chain Island, is one of the smallest, yet it is the most thickly-peopled island of the whole group. It is said to contain five thousand inhabitants, which large number is accounted for by the conquest of the other islands, and taking their inhabitants off as captives. In the list of the islands and their population, it will be seen how few remain on the other islands in comparison with this number. The whole island is one cocoa-nut grove, and the principal food is fish and cocoa-nuts. The former are caught in large quantities in the lagoon. A great change has been brought about in the character of these islanders within the last twenty-five years, during which the Tahitian missionaries have been established at Anaa. Before this period, the inhabitants were cannibals. Since the residence of the missionaries, they have imbibed better tastes; and the Christian influence has also made them more peaceful. This change was first evinced by the treatment of their captives, whom they allowed to return, if they chose, to their own island; but very many of them had married at Anaa, and became permanent residents there, and few have taken advantage of the permission to return. Notwithstanding the numerous population, they are said to have an abundance of food. The people of Anaa still consider the inhabitants of the eastern islands as cannibals; but their statement in this respect is little to be depended upon, for they have no communication whatever with those whom they class under this denomination, seldom extending themselves beyond Hau or Bow Island.

The Paumotuans are considered more warlike than the Tahitians, for which reason Pomare I. kept a body-guard of them in preference