

there can be no reasonable doubt that considerably more than three thousand years have elapsed since it was first inhabited. But late researches have shown that the peopling of the Polynesian islands is a comparatively recent event. As is well known, when these islands were first discovered by European explorers, and the fact was disclosed that they were inhabited by a homogeneous population, speaking dialects of one language, a theory was proposed to account for this fact. It was suggested that the islands were the remains of a vast inhabited continent, which in some past age of the world had sunk almost entirely beneath the waters, leaving its scattered mountain-tops as the refuges for the surviving remnants of its population. The later investigations of geologists and ethnologists have disposed of this theory. The clear traditions of the islanders, and the decisive evidence of their language, show them to be emigrants who have reached their present abodes from south-eastern Asia in modern times. It is established by unquestionable proof that the two westernmost clusters of Polynesia, the Samoan or Navigator Islands and the Tongan or Friendly Islands, were the mother-groups whence all the eastern and southern islands from Hawaii in the north to New-Zealand in the south, and the Paumotus, the Gambier group, and Easter Island in the far east, have been peopled. The natives of those mother-groups (Samoa and Tonga) have themselves a tradition that their first inhabitants came from an island in the far west called Burotu, which has been supposed, with much probability to be the island of Bouro in the East Indian Archipelago. It is very unlikely, from all the circumstances, that the event commemorated by this tradition can have occurred more than three thousand years ago. But, however this may be, it is reasonably certain that the easternmost (as well as the northern) Polynesian groups have been peopled within the Christian era, and some of them at very recent dates. For these dates, and for the evidence by which they are established, I must refer to the masterly work of M. de Quatrefages, „*Les Polynésiens et leurs Migrations*“, and to the lucid summary of our latest knowledge on the subject contained in the recent