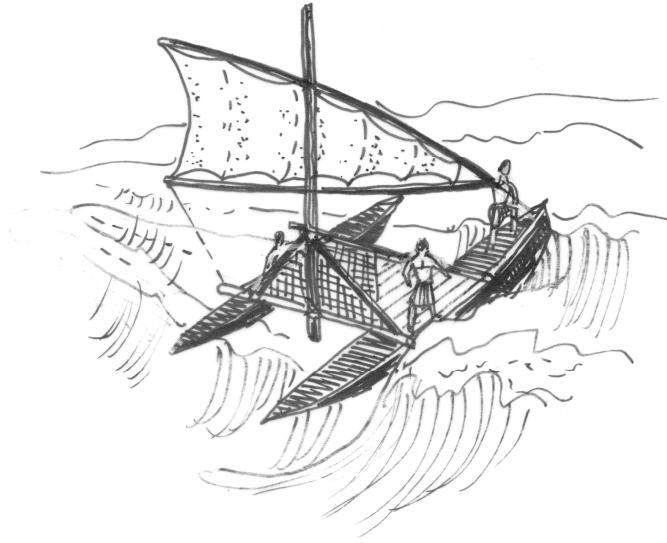


Elikana



“There’s a big storm coming up over there. I hope we can reach Rakaanga before it hits us,” observed Elikana anxiously. He was the leader of a group of nine people who were paddling home by canoe to Rakaanga from Manihiki, a journey of about thirty miles. They had been attending a special conference of their church. in the Penrhyn Islands group, about 1000 miles north-west of Tahiti. There were six men, two women and a child in the group. It was the year 1861.

“That’s Rakaanga straight ahead. You can just see the mountain through the rain over there. Perhaps we can get home before the storm hits,” said another man.

The men strained hard to steer the canoe. The wind blew stronger and colder. The rain-filled clouds rolled across the waves towards them, blocking their view of the island. Suddenly the storm hit their vessel and they were being tossed about on a raging sea.

Powerful gusts of wind tossed the canoe about. Darkness fell as the men worked hard to keep their vessel on course for Rakaanga but the strong winds were against them.

“Let’s turn and go back to Manihiki,” suggested one of the men, an experienced sailor. “The wind is blowing us that way, anyhow.”

The others agreed, so they turned the canoe about and steered it all night in the direction of Manihiki, or so they thought. By daybreak the storm had passed, but to their dismay, when the sun rose there was no sign of land anywhere.