

Canoe Ceremony^N

Each Step Of
Work Required
Help of Gods

By BARBARA LYONS

The building of a Hawaiian canoe, or waa, was a religious affair, and rigid ceremonies attended it. The services of a kahuna kalai waa were required.

The canoe was usually made from the trunk of a koa tree found in mountain forests. Other woods were sometimes used—kukui, ohia-ha, wiliwili and breadfruit—but koa was the principal wood for canoes.

When a tree had been selected by the man who wanted a canoe, the kahuna kalai waa spent a night before the shrine in his mua. The mua was the eating house of the men of a family, which sometimes contained the family heiau. In his sleep it would be revealed to the kahuna whether the tree chosen was sound.

Those who were to take part in the ceremony went to the site of the tree, taking with them a pig, coconuts, red fish (kumu), and awa, an intoxicating liquor. These were offered as sacrifices to the gods, and the night was spent beside the tree. The next day the pig was baked in an imu dug near the roots of the tree, and eaten.

When the tree had been examined and the length of the canoe decided upon, the kahuna took up an ax and called upon the deities of the forest and of canoes, first male and then female gods. "Listen now to the ax," he said. "This is the ax that is to fell the tree for the canoe."

When the tree was about to



The Hana Road along Maui's northeast coast dips into valley after valley, each with its waterfalls and pools. This is Puohokamoa Falls.