

Disk #:
ABEMAMA

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No.: 1/1

Island: Abemama

Date obtained: c.1915.

Told to: A.F. Grimble

Original in: G.P. D/20

Abemaman Version of the Creation

The heavens lay upon the face of the earth; it was called the Darkness and the Cleaving Together. There was only a single person, who came into being long before all other things, and his parents are not known: his name was Nareau. He lived outside the Darkness and the Cleaving Together and he walked on the over side of heaven, knocking upon it with his staff. Then he found a place that echoed when he struck it so he thrust his staff through it and opened a cleft wherein he could enter. He crawled in; there was much mud in that place. So he crawled and he walked until he found an eel of mighty size coiled in the midst of the mud, whose name was Riki. Nareau told Riki to lift the heavens from the face of the earth, and he himself went and stood on a high place to overlook the work. These are the names of those who separated heaven and earth: Nareau the Chief of all; Riki the eel, for he was long and taut and strong, and he it was who pushed the sky up with his snout; and those who cut asunder the places where heaven and earth stuck together were Uka, Karitoro and Nabawe, Ngkoangkoa, Bakauaniku and Utoaba, with many others.

So heaven was raised to the height that Nareau desired and Riki the eel fell slanting like a tree into the sea. There he lay and his body becoming rock made the land of Nikunau.

And Nareau divided the heaven into three sorts: the first, the second and the highest heaven; the highest is of stone and on its overside live the greatest gods. The first land that Nareau made was Samoa; there he planted Kaintikuaba the Tree whence sprang the race of red-skinned people, our ancestors of Samoa. Tarawa was the second land.

So when his work was done Nareau went, never to return; he dwelt on the overside of the highest heaven, and behold it was not clean. He took a great basket which he called te ketenaiwa and therein he gathered all that was offensive to those who lived in heaven. These were the things he put in the basket: death, sickness, old age, grey hairs, decay of the teeth, hunger, and all necessity. Then he wove a long cord and lowered the basket to earth.

And there was a man named Nakaa whose wife was Nei Nibongibong. He was very wise. When he saw the basket lowered to earth he feared the feared the evil things that it contained. He hastened away with his wife; he fled northward until he came to Tarawa. And there they stayed for a time while Nei Nibongibong planted a Tree that was called Te Uekera, from whose summit grew the Kings of Tarawa, the line of Kirata and Beia.

When that was done they fled over the sea to the place called Bouru and Neineaba. There they live still, for it is the land of departed souls, and Nakaa with his wife await them as they arrive from Manra, land of the living.

1 Uka - a blow; Karitoro - untranslatable; Nabawe - In former days; Ngkoangkoa - long ago; Bakauaniku - a Stingray; Utoaba - source of lands.