Chapter

Tabitenean Cosmogony (given by Kaikai of Tabitena).

§1. In the beginning was a black darkness and there was nothing save a clearing together of the firmament; no being lived therein.

But the Darkness lay with the Clearing Together; their child was the Land.

The Land lay with the Sky; their child was the Void.

The Void lay with the Sundering; their child was Narean the First of All Spirits.

Narean lay with the Rock; their child was Night.

Night lay with Day; their child was the Dawn.

Dawn lay with Dust; their child was the Lightning.

Lightning lay with Thunder; their child was Narean the Younger.

§2. It was Narean the Younger who made all things and men that are in the world: the Sun, the moon, the stars, and all lands, north, east, south, and west; for every creature

1. The Sundering: i.e., the separation of heaven and earth. In this cosmogony it is notable that Narean the First of All Spirits,
obeyed his voice. But put away these matters, for we have nothing to do with them?

The first of all lands made by Naneau was Takoronga of Taitenesa. He commanded the Spring Tide to lie with the Smooth Water; they brought forth the sandbank Takoronga, and therefore lived the great white Ray, Bakanaenku. Bakanaenku lay with the First Woman; their child was Darkness-under-the-Sea.

Darkness-under-the-Sea lay with the Reef.

Rock; their child was the small grey Stingray.

Bakea. 4

Bakea the Stingray lay with the Tiga Shark.

Nei Unikai; their child was Taburnui the Ancestor.

[Here follows a genealogy of 4 generations leading down to the present chiefs of Abemama].

Son of the Void and the Sundering, was the grandchild of Land and Sky. In the Maori Creation Myth the beings who sundered the universe were the Sons of Rangi (Sky) and Papa (Earth).

2. "Put away these matters... etc." This is a stock phrase in Gilbertese traditions, equivalent to "But that is another story," or "sine nous a nos mortons."

3. Any observer may note at the bend of a current caused by the rising tide a broad streak of oily-calm water. Cause and effect are mixed in our story. It is a sandbank that causes the current to swerve and to form the oily band.
§3. When Takoronga was ready the First Tree grew upon it, for Navean planted it there.

After that, Navean went south to seek the Navel of the World; and as he walked southward over the sea his foot struck a reef of rock standing over the waves. There he stayed and raised the land of Samoa. And on the land of Samoa he planted the second Tree, whose name was Kaintikuna.

[Here follows a genealogy which, by collocation note and from the island of Beni, dealing with the same line, counts thirty-two generations from the Tree of Samoa.]

§4. The fruit of the Tree of Samoa was Konūkāi and the tufted sprout was Te Taka, the Red-Tailed Tropic Bird.

families trace descent. It is important to note that this context, with several others, bear witness to the Gilbertese origin of Taburrimi, long before Samoa comes into the story.

§5. Here, following in a Tabitenean version, we have talk of a First Tree that was antecedent to the Tree of Samoa, not of a Tree called the Ancestor Sun growing on the unknown land of Agata, but certainly an ancestral Tree and growing on a Gilbert Island. The native words used are "ton" for fruit ... tufted sprout: The native words used are "ton" and "rainbowbrow", respectively, which have special reference to the Pandanus Tree alone. In most versions the Tree of Samoa was certainly a Banyan.
And Komati had a son Barotoka, for whom he had chosen a wife from among the daughters of the Samoan Tree; but Barotoka would have none of her. He fled from Samoa ere yet the Tree was broken and burned. He fled northward to Tarawa, which was a fragment of Heaven.

And at that time Tarawa was not yet anchored in the sea; it followed the moods of the wind as a canoe that drifts at random, and the woman Batianaia held its mooring rope. But when Barotoka came to Tarawa he pierced it through the middle with a staff cut from the Tree of Samoa and fixed it fast to the bed of the sea. And the ends of the land swung round as the current bore them westward, so that it is bent to this day like a man's arm at the elbow.

Then the staff from the Tree of Samoa, that Barotoka had planted, sprouted and grew into a great Tree. And Barotoka died and was buried by its roots. Therefore some say that the Tree grew from Barotoka's head. And before he died he called the woman Weniibong and Nibongibong to cultivate the Tree. So it grew.

8. Nibongibong. This was the name of the wife of Nakaa, guardian of the land of Shades, as given in the Abemama myth. (d.t.)
A woman of the clan springing from that ancestors is clearly intended in the present context.
as high as heaven until Tan-Karawa, the Dweller
in Heaven saw it. He walked over its summit,
so that it grew no higher but was flattened.
Then Ingi-ni-ngaina (Flicker-of-Dawn) and
Uraura-ri-Maeo (Red-of-the-West) visited the
summit and a child sprang from the crest,
whose name was Terere. As Tan-Karawa,
the Dweller in Heaven went down to Terere and
begot a child on her, who was called Obai-
the-Bird-Man.

Obai-the-Bird-Man flew to the land of
Ononna and married the woman Nei Ante; they had three children, whose names were
Nei Kirimo, Nei Kiririmere and Nei Manrei.

Manrei came to the islands of Kuri,
and Abemana; Kuriimo came to Tamanaken of Tabilena, and Manrei stayed in Ononna.
And Kiririmere married Beia-ma-Tekai on Tabilena. Her sons

[Genealogy follows which from Flicker-of-Dawn to
trent day comes 2 generation]

was Telo' he lay with Kono, of Ononna. His son was
Manari he lay with Moena. Her son was Mange; he lay
with Tetev. His son was Hekeia; he lay with Tongabiri
sister of Tanenina of Bena. She had a daughter Tabina who
was the greatest of the chiefesses of Nonon.
Long after Barotoka fled from Samoa, the Fire that grew there was broken and burned by Naraen. And Itake (Red-Tailed Tropic Bird) lived on the crest of the Fire, but when it was broken she took her nest in her bill and flew away over the sea to Northward. The first land she reached was Bern (S. Gilberto). There she cast away some sticks from her nest and they grew to be the Lodge of Rurubac on Bern; and a second time she let fall some sticks, a little to the North of Rurubac, and they became the Lodge of the Ghost on Bern. Then Fataramiai of Bern arose and stoned her with stones as she flew by his lodge; and some feathers of her tail were torn out and fell into the lagoon, where they became the sandbanks by the village of Itenerio; their name to this day is Bike-n-Itake (The Banks of the Tropic Bird).

But Itake flew on to northward, staying her wing nowhere until she came to the land of Beberiki. She took into her to that place the Cast Beberiki; the old Gilbertese name of Dutanipiti, the most northerly island of the Group.
of Keaki. And when she was come there she stayed on the island and began to kill and eat all the people who lived near by. So they consulted together how they might kill her, and by divination they sought the weapon that should be the death of her. They said to their folded pandanus leaves, "Shall it be a sword or a dagger, a staff or a throwing stick?" But the folded leaves gave no sign. Then one of their number said, "Shall it be a fan of coconut leaves?" And the leaves gave a sign that the weapon should be a fan of coconut leaves. So they all arose and took fans, and

Leaki. The name of a certain rafter in the public meeting lodge, under which the clan of like name takes its customary place in feast and council. The crest of Keaki is the heraldic sign worn by members of that clan on their canoes. For information on this subject see Chapter 10.

Folded pandanus leaves. The most usual material in divination consisted of three folded pandanus leaves, which, by the manner in which they straightened themselves out again when allowed to lie on the floor, were supposed to give favorable or unfavorable answers.

A fan of coconut leaves; i.e., an instrument used for the lighting of a fire; hence, a probable method of expressing friends the means of killing the man-eating invader.
In the foregoing Cosmogony from Tahitenea, we have
a narrative that is more plainly stratified
than most of our island traditions. As the
arrangement of our material shows, the local
Creation-myths fall into reasonable distinctness
into two sharply defined categories: those which,
(in spite of small, recurrent contradictions) confess
Naneae the First Cause and Samoa the First
Land, and those which confess neither the one
nor the other. But our Tahitenean context
under reference cannot logically be grouped
with either of these classes. It appears to be a
compromise between the two schools of thought;
for while it admits Naneae to have been the
guiding force in Creation and Samoa to have
been in effect the Navel of the World, it shows
with great clearness that Takoronga of Tahitenea
was the first of all lands made; that the clan
of Taburumiai the Ancestor grew, as it were, from
the very soil of the place; and that on Takoronga
sprang the First Tree, planted by Naneae ere even
the rock that was to be Samoa was discovered
in the ocean to southward. The first three
sections of the tale are given over almost wholly
to an account of how Takoronga, the first land
came into being, with its people and its Tree.
Only in the latter part of the third section, when Naneau has finished his work in the North, does Samoa come into the story.

In the fourth section, the tale of Baratoka's flight from a repugnant marriage in Samoa, long before the children of the Samoan Tree were dispersed, gives us an interesting sidelight on the traffic that evidently went on between his homeland and Tarawa... "He fled from Samoa we yet the Tree was broken and burned. He fled northward to Tarawa, which was a fragment of heaven." It is clear that he knew the way to Tarawa, because he chose that island deliberately, as being a "fragment of heaven," which is to say, "a small piece of land on which lived his ancestral gods." It is clear also that Tarawa was inhabited before he invaded it from the south, because the woman Batianea was there, "holding the mooning rope," which is to say, "ruling the land." Last of all, it is clear that Batianea had a turbulent population to deal with; for although she "held the mooning rope," Tarawa was not yet anchored in the sea; it followed the moods of the wind as a canoe...
drew her away from her resting place. She soared into
the air when they flamed her, and fell dead on the
lagoon side of Bebeniki; her body became the rock
that is known as Na-Katkeke. Then the people took
part of her body and burned it together with a
shrivelled coconut that she had brought with her from
the South. Behold, the root sprouted; a tree grew,
and it was an Ancestor.

[Here follows a much mutilated genealogy of only
15 generations, showing the descent of the present
family from the Ancestral Fire of Bebeniki].
that drifts at random," which is to say, "the clans fought among themselves for the mastery, and the issue was never certain."

Thus we have a clear picture of Baratoka's arrival in a populated and troublous Tarawa, where lived a folk descended, not from Samoa, but yet from the same ancestral beings as himself. The clan of Bati au a, a female divinity, held the ascendency, though insecurely; he added the weight of his party to its ranks, established it securely, married into the family, and thus set up the new Isi of Tarawa, which was a hybrid between the autochthons of Tarawa and himself, a pure Samoan.

Notes by B. F. Grumble
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