

ChapterTabitevean version of Creation myth, with appendices

§1. In the beginning was the First Tree; its name was Te
Bakatibe Tai (The Ancestor Sun), and the name of the
land where it stood was Abatoa, and the names of the
people of the land were Teba, Te atibu, ^{and} Teatinari,
with Nanokai and Nanomaka, the two great Eels.

Nanokai and Nanomaka lay together and the
name of their child was Nareau. Then came the
Darkness and the Clearing together. There was
nothing at that time save only Nareau the Giant.
His work was to find a way of separating heaven
from earth, for they were stuck fast together. So he
performed a great magic; these were his words:—

I ti toutoua aoni Kurawa raka
nakoianq. Kanga--o--o, Ko
ski ataia, te Bo ma Te Maki,
te toa Nareau!

Akea anti, akea aomata ba
bon ti te toa Nareau!

See how I stamp up the heavens
northward. How now, thou
Darkness + Clearing together,
knowest thou not the giant
Nareau? There are no spirits,
no men, only the giant Nareau!

Then he made ready to lift heaven from earth; there
was no light but a great darkness. These were the

words that Nareau Sang:-

Kai tona¹ ni karawa ma Kainga, boa
ni karawa ma Kaeua - boa ni
karawa!

Ma katoka i aomi bona-na Kainti-
-kuaba; a na wai waka n au Kai
Tamoā. E raranakoaiaki, totok-
-oia; Kam aki meni Kona!

Kai, Nei Aumaiaki, anue O! Kē
riki Maiaki! Kai, Nii Aumeang,
Kē riki Meang! Kai, Nei Aumai-
-miku, Kē riki Mainiku! Kai,
Nii Aumaeao, Kē riki Maeao!

Ai karawa ma Mone.. O!

E a tū be riki te aba.. O!

E a tū be toro te aba.. O!

Ani ngongo, ba ti' nangi ngongo;
an taetae, ba ti' nangi taetae.

Konakomaia? Mai Maiaki.

Ko nakomaia? Mai Meang.

Ko nakomaia? Mai Mainiku.

Ko nakomaia? Mai Maeao.

Antena taetae te taetae? Ana
taetae Nareau.

Ha, the trampling of heaven and
its dwelling-places, the smiting of
heaven - the smiting of heaven!

Set it up upon its prop the Tree of
Samoa; let the roots of the tree
sprout fast. Heaven leans to the
south, prop it up, ye cannot!

Ho there, Woman of the South, let the
South grow! Woman of the North,
let the North grow! Woman of the
East, let the East grow! Woman of
the West, let the West grow!

And then Heaven & the underworld!

It is done; the land grows... O!

It is done; the land sits firm... O!

Answer, it is the time for answering;
speak, it is the time for speech.

Whence comest thou? From the South.

Whence comest thou? From the North.

Whence comest thou? From the East.

Whence comest thou? From the West.

Whose words are these? They are
Nareau's words.

And at that magic heaven separated

a little from earth; and Nareau found that there were living things between, whose names were Riiki the Eel, Rorontika, ^{his wife} and Karitoro; Nabawe, Ngkoangkoa and Jenriakina; Jengāngana, Jematana and Hamatana; Reireitia, Rouroutia, Tabetabekia, and Teukenenanti (Whirlwind)

So when heaven had moved a little from the face of earth Riiki the Eel pushed it up with his snout, and when it stood on high he followed it up and lay across the middle of it. He became Naiabu, the Milky Way. Then grew the land of Samoa, and after it Tarawa, and after that Bem, and the fourth land was Tabiteneu.

§ 2.

After that Nareau went to live on Tarawa. But he was insolent and mischievous; he was forever stealing the fruit of his companions' trees. Now the giant Taburimai had two sandnipes, and he told them to go and watch for the thief. So when Nareau climbed Taburimai's trees to steal food the sandnipes saw him and called aloud; but he caught them in his hand and twisted their tongues so that they could not speak. They returned dumb to their master. Yet he knew that the evil doer was Nareau and his heart overflowed

with anger; he said to his companions Tabuariki and Avriaria, "Let us do him to death;" they answered, "We will do him to death."

² [So on a day, they were all gathered in the Council House, Taburimai, Tabuariki, Avriaria, and their companions, all great men with beautiful skin of a light brown colour, as though they had been shut away from the burning sun; their hair stood high and straight from the head and curled at the top]. And of a sudden, Nareau appeared among them. [He was of mean stature, his skin was black and shiny, his body and face were covered with scars, his ears were like the sails of a canoe, he stank vilely; his hair stood out in woolly curls all round his head; he was very ugly, but marvellously skilled in war and magic].

When Nareau came into the Council House they began to flatter him. They said, "^{Thou} ~~you~~ alone art skilled in magic and in the art of building. We beg ^{thee} ~~you~~ therefore to dig the ~~bed~~ ^{hole} for a new corner-post to our Council

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2. The descriptive passages in brackets do not belong to the Tabiteuean story, but are ^{copied} excerpted from the Maiana version of the same tradition given by Ten Joakai of the latter island.
3. The actual text runs "Kangai Kanoa n te roki", lit. "as it were inhabitants of the bleaching house."

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House." He knew what was in their minds, but he pretended not to know and answered them fairly, "I will dig the ^{hole} bed." So he dug a deep hole, and in the side of the hole he scooped out a small cavern in which he could hide. When his work was finished he crept into the cavern and hailed Taburimai in a loud voice, "Ho there, is it deep enough?" They all answered together, "It is deep enough," and rushed with one accord to the hole and filled it up with great rocks, which they held ^{ready} in their hands, for they wished to crush him. But he lay safe in the cave he had dug for himself. Then he changed himself into a lizard and crawled through the rocks and up to the roof-plate of the Council House. There he sat and waited.

So when Taburimai and his companions thought that Narean was dead they went back to their places and began to feast merrily and to make jest of their victim. Taburiki held up a piece of sweet cake made of toddy and coconut and babai, and making a pretence of tears, called out, "Would I might share this with our brother Narean!" Then Narean answered in a small voice from the roof, "Give me my share, then, brother."

They were astonished and afraid; but before their

amazement was at an end Nareau ran to his canoe
"The Black One" and set sail across the shallows.
Then anger filled the heart of Taburimai, he flung
himself into the chase, a giant in stature, and as
he ran the water of the lagoon was not above his
ankles. But Nareau cast off his lizard's tail and
set it point upwards in the path of Taburimai.
Alas! he trod upon it; it pierced his foot, and he
returned limping to the Council House.

§3

Then Nareau went to dwell with the man
Nautimia of Tarawa, and Nautimia entreated him
kindly and gave him food to eat. But Nareau
looked upon his wife; he desired her for his own,
but she would have none of him, so he pondered
upon his revenge. One day he said to Nautimia,
"Tell ^{thy} ~~your~~ wife to make a hot fire, a very great fire."
So Nautimia told her and she did as she was com-
manded. When the fire was blazing, Nareau said
to his host, "Sir, ^{then} ~~you~~ shall see how I procure my
fish, for I am a very great fisherman. Look well
at me; I shall lie down in the midst of the fire.
^{Then} ~~you~~ and ^{thy} ~~your~~ wife shall press me down with
sticks and rake the burning embers over my body.
When I am well covered, leave me and go to your
house." So they did what he told them, greatly

marvelling when they saw that the flames did not consume him; then they went and sat in their house.

After a long time they heard a man come walking from the eastward, and behold! Nareau himself appeared from among the trees. He said, "Nautimia, the fish is well cooked, go and take it from the embers of the fire, for we will eat." And lo, when Nautimia went to the fire, there he found a great heap of fish ready for eating.

So when he was alone with his wife he whispered to her, "What a wonderful manner of fishing he has," and she answered, "Nautimia, it were a good thing if ~~you~~^{thou} went with him the next time, to learn how he does it." The next day Nareau said to his host, "I am about to leave ~~you~~^{thee}," but Nautimia held him back for his heart was set on learning that manner of fishing. He said to Nareau, "Go not, I beg ~~thee~~^{thee}, before ~~thou~~^{thou} hast taught me thy marvellous manner of fishing." ~~and how you fish~~ Nareau answered, "It is well. Go tell ~~your~~^{thy} wife to feed the fire, and let it be a great blaze for there are two of us." So the woman made a mighty pile of faggots and set light to them. When it was ready Nareau said "Woman, when we fall in the midst of the flame, cover us

up well; heap the faggots over us." She said, "I will". Then he took a firm hold on Nautimia's hand and they lay down in the fire. When Nautimia felt the heat he began to struggle furiously, but Nareau held him tight and his wife heaped great faggots over them, so he died.

Then the woman went back to her house to wait for the fishermen. She heard the sound of feet among the trees to eastward; she arose in impatience calling to her husband, "Nautimia, are the fish cooked?" But alas! Nareau came from among the trees and he was alone. She said to him, "Where is my husband?" He answered, "He is coming in a little while. Go take the fish from the embers so that it may be ready before he comes." She went in haste and gladness to do his bidding. But alas! When she raked away the hot embers she uncovered the body of her husband. So she died of grief, and thus was Nareau revenged.

§4.

As for him, he fled from Tarawa to Tabitenea and landed at the place called Takoronga; but Tabumiai and his companions lived also on that island, so Nareau was afraid that he might

be killed. Therefore he called to a man named Tarānga and, when he came near, seized him and striking off his head wore it himself. His own head he put on the shoulders of Tarānga. But this was done by magic and Tarānga did not know what had been done to him. So when he had walked a little to eastward he met Taburimai; and Taburimai thought he was Nareau, so he began to chase him with threats and blows and Tarānga fled before his face.

Then Nareau changed himself into a little child and lay down beside a well of fresh water, where Tarānga's wife came every day. She was barren, and when she saw an infant lying without its²⁰⁰ mother she was happy of heart, saying, "I have a child at last." She took and fondled it and when night fell she laid it beside her on the mat.

But behold, she was great with child for Nareau lay with her at night. Three children she bore but none knew that Nareau was the father; the first was Nauterarangaki, the second Nautewewene and the third Autetabanou.

When Autetabanou grew up he went to Samoa, and when his canoe was in midocean ~~at sea~~ outrigger ~~split~~ his brow swelled and

burst asunder; two children broke forth from his
brow, whose names were Batiku and Koururu.
So they all came to Samoa and lived there for a
time. But Auriania of Samoa arose and thrust
them out of Samoa. He threw them over the sea
northwards, and they fell in the place called
Jauma on Tabitenea, and there they married
and their children are there to this day. ⁴

This series of tales needs comment, which will be
given more fully in another place. For especial
remark we here register the first paragraph of section
1, from which we gather that Samoa was not the
first of created lands but Abatoa, where grew the
Tree called "The Ancestor Sun." This will be used as
evidence in our discussion of the possible origins
of the present race. Very remarkable also are the
inserted Maiana descriptions of Taburimai with
his fair-skinned companions and Nereau the

4. Here begins a genealogy, which, it may be added is very defective,
as it brings one in only nine generations from the period
of the story to the teller of the tale, Te Kawakawa of
Tabitenea.

black and stinking dwarf, so skilled in war and magic. These details are confirmed on every island of the Group where traditions are still available and are indeed so strongly imbedded in the popular belief that they exist apart from any particular context, forming themselves a tradition and an unspoken ^{h-6} commentary on any tale dealing with the characters concerned. In the two descriptions we clearly see Iabururiri and Iabuririki as olive skinned giants of pure Polynesian type, while Nareau is the typical Melanesian negrito; the latter triumphing over the former by his sinister skill in the black arts. It is no matter of surprise that the two breeds were at conflict. We shall be able to show in its proper place other proofs of the continual feud that they waged, and much will be said of their simultaneous presence in this corner of Micronesia.