

The story of Bue and Rirongo: an Ababou tradition

Bue's voyage to the Sun.

There was a woman of Te^tbongi^roro named Matamona, whose habit it was to bathe on the ^eeastern beach at sunrise. And when the Sun rose, he saw her every day; so he loved her, and sent one of his rays to her as she bathed. The ray entered between her thighs and pierced her genitals. Behold! she was pregnant.

These were the names of the children of Matamona by the Sun: Tongea and Tangea, Na^kkianga and Maqu^kkitekite, and Bue, and one girl, their sister Nei Te^rra^titi. There were six children of the Sun, but the first four died, and only Bue with his sister Te^rra^titi remained alive. The Sun took Te^rra^titi away, and built her an enclosure (^{roki}roki) of rock in the ^eEast. Only Bue remained in Te^tbongi^roro.

Some say that it was not a ray (rayokayo) of the Sun which entered Matamona, but the slime of the rocks in her bathing pool called nongonon^u Te^ti (the slime of the Sun); but put away this thing, for it is of no account.

This was the manner of Bue: he desired to visit his father in the ^eEast, even the Sun. He told his mother that thought of his, and she said, 'It is good. Go, make thy canoe'. He made his canoe of the shell of a coconut, and named it Te^kuo^taine; he returned to his mother and said, 'It is ready'. Then she gave him certain things to take with him to the Sun, and these were the names of them: Two smooth stones of red coral (ati^uti^u), one fruit of the non^ttree (^MHorinda citrifolia), one old fallen coconut, the first leaf of a seed coconut, and the strong green leaf of an old coconut tree: six things Matamona gave her son Bue, and she said, 'Thou shalt pelt thy father with the red coral, and the fruit of the non^ttree, and the old coconut; thou shalt fan him with the young leaf, to make him cold; thou shalt bind him with the strong green leaf'.

So Bue set forth in his canoe, Te Kuo+u+aine, and sped to the ^elast side of heaven, for it was his thought to catch his father when he rose above the sea. But first he visited the rock in the East where dwelt his sister Te+ra+iti. He came to his sister, and she asked him, 'Who art thou?' He said, 'I am Bue, and I go to visit our father the Sun.' 'And what dost thou carry with thee?' 'I carry six things: two stones of red coral, one fruit of the non+tree, one old coconut, the first leaf of a seed nut, and the strong green leaf of an old tree.' 'And what wilt thou do when thou hast caught our father?' 'I will beg him to give me cleverness (te rabakou) and knowledge (te atai+bai).' Then said Te+ra+iti, 'It is good. Visit our father, but when thou hast met with him, return to me.'

Bue set forth; he came to the side of heaven where the Sun was about to rise; he arrived in the ^(itingaro)fast before dawn; he waited. The Sun began to rise, and Bue smote him at his ^{mounting-platforms}six ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ (kai+ni+patou); for there were three rocks upon which he began to move up from the depths, and three rocks upon which he climbed up over the sea. And when the Sun reached his first rock in the depths, his first ray sprang up to the sky: Bue saw it, and hurled his first stone of red coral, and the ray fell dead in the sea. And when the Sun reached his second rock in the depths, his second ray sprang up to the sky: Bue saw it, and hurled his second stone of red coral, and the ray fell dead in the sea. The third ray he smote with the fruit of the non-tree, and the fourth ray he smote with the old coconut. Then the Sun reached his fifth rock, which was ~~the~~ rock above the sea: his face burned fiercely, and Bue was scorched (bue) in his fire. But this man was not afraid: he ran forward and fanned his father's face with the young coconut leaf; and

when the wind of it came to the Sun, he winced (kui) and his heat died. He spoke to Bue, saying, 'Who art thou? Whence comest thou?' Bue answered, 'I am thy offspring indeed, and Bue is my name'. The Sun crawled up to his sixth rock, the rock of his blazing (ati-ni-kanenea), but he was tired, and Bue ran forward and embraced him in the strong green coconut leaf. He floated upon the sea, and Bue bound him with the leaf; he said, 'My ancestor (tibu) art thou. I beg thee'. The Sun said, 'Who is thy mother?' He answered, 'Matamona is my mother'. 'And what is thy will?' 'I visit thee to beg thee to give me cleverness and knowledge'.

Then the Sun gave knowledge to Bue: he gave him the building of the mancaba - the building of the mancaba of Kings, which is called Te Namakaina (the moon); and the building of the mancaba called Te Tabanin (the foursquare); and the building of the long mancaba which is called Maunga+tabu; and the building of the mancaba of which the breadth is greater than the length, called Te Ketoa. And he gave him the magic for raising the wind, and stilling the wind, and making the rain; and the magic that is done at the new moon, called Te Kabue+ari, for the protection of children, and the health of men, and the safety of the mancaba, and skill in making songs for the dance. And he gave him the manners of burying the dead - one manner for Kings, and one manner for the people, and one manner which is called the ^ggrave of Bue.

All that knowledge learned Bue in the ^efast. And before he left, his father gave him a white stick ringed with black rings, saying, 'Take this staff with thee, as a memorial of thy coming to me. It shall go with thee always. Set it aloft upon thy canoe sail, and it shall be thy protection (bonotain) against death at sea'. And the name of the staff was Te Kai+ni+kamata, and it is the canoe-crest of the ^sclan of Abo+^{and Maerua,}bou the offspring of Bue, to this day. And the Sun gave also to Bue the magic called Te Tiri-kua (the slaying of the porpoise), by which fierce fish and the waterspout

at sea are prevented.

Bue's voyage to the West.

When Bue returned from the Sun, he went first to the rock of his sister Nei Te^{ra}ra^{ti}. She went with him, and they set forth towards the ^wWest, but they did not mount upon their canoe, they swam in the sea beside it. And while they were swimming, their bodies met: they made love, they committed incest.

The Sun saw his children committing incest, and he was angry: he said to the porpoise, "Go, overturn their canoe". The porpoise overturned their canoe, and they sank down to the land of Mone. There they met with ancestors.

Nei Te^{ra}ra^{ti} was led away to the ⁿNorth by two ancestors, but Bue followed the ancestor who went ^wWest, and he was led to the enclosure (roki) of Nei Bairaro. There he hid himself, for he wished to steal the magic of that old woman. He waited until the Sun came over to the ^wWest; and when his father was above the enclosure of Nei Bairaro, he was lucky, for his father said to Nei Bairaro, "Woman, repeat the spell for thy first Wind". She repeated the spell, and Bue learned it. Then said the Sun again, "Repeat the spell for thy second Wind". So all the Winds of that old woman were stolen by Bue.

The Sun went on, and Bue disclosed himself to the old woman; and when she saw that he had stolen all her Winds, she said, "Stay. Await thy father". But Bue feared his father; he stayed not, but ran away ^wWestwards. He went ^wWest until he trod the confines of Roro.

In Roro he met the old woman Nei Te^{maing} (the left-handed). Nei Te^{maing} was the keeper of the rain and the winds that carry the rain-clouds, so he stayed with her and learned her magic. There was none of her magic that he did not learn, for he tricked that old woman when the Sun went down over Roro, even as he had tricked Nei Bairaro before her.

Bue's coming to Tarawa.

When Bue was about to leave Nei Te+maing, he said to her, 'Woman, I go: wilt thou come with me?' She refused, so he said, 'Give me then, I beg thee, that uri+tree of thine for making fire-sticks, for I will use it as my craft for sailing ^eEastwards?' She refused to give him her uri+tree (*Guettarda speciosa*), saying, 'Go upon thy own craft'. So Bue stole ~~the tree~~ her uri+tree, and ran off with it.

Nei Te+maing saw that he had stolen ~~the tree~~ her tree; she arose and ran after him, she began to catch him up. Bue knew that he would be caught, for she ran faster than he. So he thought how he might save himself. And behold! he raised the Winds that the Sun had given him: the Sun's Wind blew, but it stayed her not. He raised the Winds that he had stolen from Nei Bairaro: Nei Bairaro's Winds blew, but they stayed her not. He raised the Winds that he had stolen from Nei Te+maing herself: the Winds blew, the rain fell, and behold she was stayed by her own wind and rain. He escaped, and he carried with him the uri+tree for making firesticks that belonged to Nei Te+maing: its name was Te Uri+ni+Kabuebue (The Uri-to-make-burn).

This was the way of it, when Bue stole the tree. Pieces of broken coral had been washed up by the waves, and they had dug beneath the roots of the tree, so that it was loose and easily uprooted.

So Bue sailed ^eEast until he came to Tarawa, and behold! the man Rirongo of Tarawa received and fed him in the midst of the sea. When Rirongo came to him, Bue said, 'Who is thy father?' Rirongo answered, 'Kirata is my father, and Nei Tetauti (the Porcupine fish) is my mother. I live in the sea on the West side of Tarawa. This is my place'; and he left, and Bue went up to the land.

← The sister of Bue, Nei Te+ra+iti, had long before arrived at Tarawa, for the ancestors had led her there when

their children today, even the people of Ababou and Maerua, who are the builders of the maneaba for the Kings of Karongoa. And the boti of Ababou in the maneaba of Maungatabu is under the middle rafter (kiaro matua) on the western side, face to face with Karongoa. That boti was given to the children of Bue by the Sun, when he gave Bue the building craft, and so it is today.

F'n In Polynesian story the exploit of catching the Sun in a noose is attributed to the famous person called Maau, who is sometimes called Tikitiki and is represented in Samoan tradition by a being called the Sun-child. All these elements are seen concatenated in the Gilbertese story. The names Maau and Tikitiki are united in that of Maukitekite, who is shown as the fourth child of the Sun, while the ensnarement of the luminary is attributed to Maukitekite's younger brother Bue.

Tebongiroro is the line of lands in the west. For the connection of Tebongiroro with the red food called renga and the Kiroro cooking-oven see Grimble 1933:8-9, 55-9.

The six mounting-platforms of the Sun, the six weapons of Bue, and other associations of the luminary with this particular number, are commented on in Grimble 1921:

(The Sun and Six in Man)

The grave of Bue is identified on Marakei as the sitting burial reserved for those who practice the pandanus frustification ritual - see p

There is an illustration of the kai ni kamata in Grimble 1921:

Line knots in Man

The Uri is commonly used for making fire-sticks to this day.

The story of Bue's theft of fire-sticks is obviously a version of the Polynesian story of Maui stealing fire from the old woman Hahauke.