

Gilbertese traditional texts

Designer

← use this as a type of running head

← with major emphasis on this

(A)

Banaban series,

(B)

(1)

(i) The Darkness and the Cleaving Together,

(1) The first thing was Te Bo+ma+te+maki [the Darkness and the Cleaving Together]: no men were within it, for it was pitch-dark [rotongitong] and Heaven lay upon Earth.

(2) Heaven stirred [ing], Earth stirred: they rubbed together as the hands of a man [are rubbed], and behold! Tabakea grew between them. Tabakea was the Eldest, for he was the firstborn.

(3) Heaven stirred again, Earth stirred: Nei Tituaabine was born - the sister of Tabakea. After her grew Na Kaibuariki, a man, and Nei Te-nganga-atu [The-thousand-headed], a woman. This was the first generation.

(4) Tabakea lay with his sister Tituaabine, and these were their children: Auriaria, Taburimai, Tabu+ariki, Ri+ki, Nei Te+veni, Naka+ the Elder, Korereke, Karabinobino, Nawai, Aorao. There was another child of Tabakea, who grew from no woman, for he grew from a cleft in the forehead of Tabakea: his name was ^{Nareav.} ~~Na Areak.~~

(5) Na Kaibuariki, the brother of Tabakea, begot children: we know not the name of his wife. These were the children of Na Kaibuariki: Na Mareve-ni-buariki, Nan Tabon-te-buariki, Nan Te-tae, Nang Konim, Na Bouri-rai, Na Aba-ia, Na Nouo, Nan Tokiara, Te-bike+n-taing, Birong.

(6) Nei Te-nganga-atu, the sister of Tabakea, bore children: she lay with no man. These were the names of her children: Na Kibono [Virgin], Na Manakiaki, Te-bwebwe+n-nang, Nei Taorabab² Koetoa, Taningana-ieie [Flap-ears], Katutetanga, Kororania, Bakauaniku [a stingray], Kammari, Na Unima²ne [Old man], Baa+n-onauti, Nei Manibere, Na Un [Anger], Ranga-aba [Land of Ranga], Aba-neneao [Land of Neneao], Atu-tebubua [Hundred-headed], Tanginga-roba [Huge-eared], Karamakuna, Te-buto-rairaki [The-navel-inverted], Nimta-ereere, Te-iti [The lightning],

Square brackets

TAORABABA

STING-RAY

Koro-buto [Cutter of navel ^{from} or umbilical cord], Timunang [Ashes],
Kau-kate-aba, Na Karabebe.

(7) [All these people, the children of Tabakea, and Nei Tituaabine, and Na Kaibuariki, and Nei Te-nganga-atu, dwelt on the overside of Heaven, for Heaven was [made of] rock: it had lands. Many were the lands of Heaven, and their name was ^{Te Bu-Kiuro} ~~Te-bengiroro~~. The Navel of Te+^Bongiroro was Banaba, and the Ancestors who dwelt on Banaba were Tabakea, Nei Tituaabine, Na Kaibuariki, Nei Te-nganga-atu, and their progeny. Each land of ^{Te Bu-Kiuro} ~~Te-bengiroro~~ was separate [tan-nako lit. [#]turned away] with its Ancestors.

(8) [The land to North and East of Banaba was called Nangiro: the Ancestors there were Nei Teueroa and Baimatoa (star names)].

(9) [The land to South and West was called Roro, and the Ancestors were Nei Beia, Matiriki [a star], Nei Nangitano, and Matinaba (a star)].

(10) [The land to East was called Aba+riringa (~~Land of burning sunlight~~ [a collective name for the Gilbert Group]): Tarawa was its head. The Ancestors of Tarawa were Tabakea, Nei Tituaabine, Auriaria, Bakoa, Kaitetara, Tauororo.

(11) [The land to West was called Matairango, also Te+Bike+n-onioniki (The changing island), and Tanabai, and Waituru, and Kabi+n+tongo. The Ancestors there were these: first Nei Tetoroa, and then the progeny of Nei Tetoroa: Nan Takataka, Buatua, Nan Ruru (a star), Ranga-aba (~~Land of Ranga~~), Bu-aba. (~~Land of Bu~~).

(12) [Nabanaba was also a land to West: the Ancestors there were Tau-aba, Nei Tekarara, Taibake, Taubareroa, Na Kekea, Bainano, Buariki.

(13) [All these lands were in ^{Te Bu-Kiuro} ~~Te-bengiroro~~, on the overside of Heaven: they were the first lands, and the Ancestors there were the first Ancestors.

(14) [Heaven lay on the face of the Earth, and it was not yet light. Then Auriaria, the child of Tabakea and Nei Tituaabine]

Te Bu-Kiroo

arose and walked over Te-bongirere. He was a giant. He saw that Heaven clove to Earth, so he asked Tabakea, saying, "What shall I do to separate them?" Tabakea gave him a staff, so that he might pierce the rock of Heaven and enter beneath it: the name of that staff was Te-^Rraakau. Then Auriaria opened a path through the rock with the end of his staff: he entered beneath, and behold! he pushed Heaven upwards from below, and carried it aloft on his shoulders [amoia-rake]. Then he called his brother Korereke [a ^Sstingray] to cut the roots of the rock where they clove to Earth, and he told Riiki the Eel to lift Heaven on high. So Heaven was separated from Earth, but it was not yet light; and the lands of ^{Te Bu-Kiroo} Te-bongirere broke away from the body of Heaven and fell into the sea, they and their Ancestors.

(15) Then again came the time for Tabakea to beget children: he lay with Nei Unikaai [species of shark]; his children were Auriaria the Younger, ^{Taburimai the Younger} Tabu-ariki the Younger, Nawai the Younger, Aorao the Younger, and many others. These also were ^{ancestors} Ancestors.

(16) Tabakea stayed on Banaba with his children, ^{His last child} but his son ^{Na Areau} Na Areau, ^{who sprang} who had sprung from his forehead [lit. ~~trans.~~ ^{who was} the contents of his forehead], ^{Na Areau} went to Beru, where he begot a daughter named Nei Angi-ni-maeao.

(17) But Auriaria the Elder, the son of Tabakea with Nei Tituaabine, went South over the sea, for it was his work to make ready all the lands of the Earth. He trod the sea to Southward, and behold! his foot struck a reef which stood in his path. That reef he raised out of the depths, and he made of it a great land: he called it Tamoate-ingoa [Tamoate-the-namesake], for Tamoate was the name of his house-place [kainga] on Banaba.

(18) Auriaria finished making Tamoate with its mountains. When that was done, he took a katati shell [mollusc, like a huge mussel] and flung it to the East: it became the Sun. Then

sting-ray

he took a nimataanin shell (Merita plicata) and flung it to the West: it became the Moon. After that, it was light. When it was light, he planted his staff Te-raakau upon Tamoa, and it became the Tree of Tamoa.

(B) [(a) tin = The Breaking of the Tree of Tamoa,

~~(1)~~ The Tree stood upon the mountain of Tamoa, and people grew upon its branches. After a time, Auriaria was not content with the Tree, so he cut off a branch and threw it Northwards: that branch became Nonouti. He cut off another branch: its name was Nukunau. He cut off a third branch: its name was Nuku-betau. He cut off the principal branch: it became Abemama. Again, he cut off a long branch: it became Tabiteuea. Again, he cut off a branch which he did not whittle down but threw away as it was: that branch made the eight islands to Southward of Abariringa. Another branch became the rest of the lands of our people (i.e., the Gilbertese-speaking communities). And behold! he took a branch that grew just below the crest, and that became Butaritari.

~~(2)~~ Then the Tree leaned to the side, and fell: its people dropped upon the land of Tabeuna, and the people of its crest settled in Bu-kiroro and the line of Western islands. The roots followed the trunk: they floated North from Tamoa and stayed at Tarawa. Many things were in the roots of the Tree: these are their names - Te kai+ni-kaewaewa, Te kai+ni-kakiki [two forms of magic ritual used by composers of dancing chants], Te ati+ni-kaioro [one of the forms of ritual used for the initiation of youths into manhood], Ma+n Na Areau [The fish-trap of Na Areau], Te kere [the female organ], Te kabanga [the male organ].

~~(3)~~ Now were all lands complete with the things that were therein. And behold! the root of the Tree on Tarawa threw up a new shoot: the stem grew straight, without branches, to Heaven. Then Ngaina-buaka [Stormy Dawn] mounted and lay with

the crest of the Tree: it was pregnant and a child came forth, who was called Obaia.

spacing as for a (B) heading →

(B) [(3) The third section of this series consists of the tale of Obaia the Feathered and his voyage to the Western land called Onouna, almost exactly as related in section 3 of the Tarawa series.

text face →

(B) [(4) The progeny of Auriaria on Beru,

← When Auriaria had cut off all the branches of the Tree of Tamoā, he left that land and went North to Beru. There lived Nei Angi-ni-maeao, the child of ^{Na Areau} Na Areau, at Tabiang on the Northern end of the land.

Auriaria lay with Nei Angi-ni-maeao: two children were born. The first-born was called Te-anti-ma-aomata [The half-spirit half-man]; the second was called Na Boborau [Sir Traveller].

After those children were born, Auriaria said to his wife, "Woman, let us go to my kainga [house-place] which is at Banaba. She prevented him not: they arose and mounted upon their canoe named Tabera-ni-kai-ni-buti-ni-Beru [Summit-of-tree-of-swiftness-of-Beru].

When they arrived at Banaba, these were the ancestors who landed with them - Nan Tebubu, Kouteba, Namakaina, Nang Kabutia, Nei Teborata, Na Mane-ni-mate; and their leader [matanwi] was Nei Angi-ni-maeao. It was these who portioned out the land, and dwelt in the three places Tabiang, Uma, Buakonikai. Their children dwell there to this day; and the fourth place is Tabwewa, where dwell the children of Tabakea and Titua^bbine, who remained on Banaba when Auriaria and ~~Na Areau~~ went voyaging.

>

[(A detailed description of the apportionment of Banaba is here omitted) (2)

>
Te-anti-ma-aomata

← The first progeny of Nei Angi-ni-maeao was Te-anti-ma-aomata. His seed was Te Bu-n-anti [The Breed of Spirits] who had mastery some over the wind, and some over the rain, and some over the sunshine. These spirits are forever at variance

between themselves, and thus it is that sometimes the rain wins the victory on Banaba, and sometimes it is conquered by the drought.

From the Breed of Spirits sprang the Breed of Birds, which live in the branches of the kanawa tree [^ccordia subcordata].

From the Breed of Birds sprang the Breed of Men^o