

5. The Legend of the Tree of Tarawa (given by Anetipa of Niue).

Part I

By Sir Arthur Grimble

On Samoa grew the Tree, the Ancestor, whose name was Kai-n-tiku-aba. The Tree blossomed and bore fruit; from the fruit sprang Kourabi. The Tree sent forth a root into the underworld; from the root sprang the woman Aeriki.

Kourabi lay with Aeriki; she bore him a son who was called Baretoka.

When Baretoka was grown to be a man, his mother and father set about choosing him a wife, and their favour fell upon a girl of Samoa whose name was Abinoko; she also was a daughter of the Tree, for her ancestors had sprung from the trunk.

But Baretoka looked upon the daughters of the Samoan Tree and had no heart for them. And when his father and mother named the name of Nei Abinoko as his wife, he would have naught to do with her. So they were grieved and angry with their son.

At last Baretoka could no longer suffer his

father's talk of marriage, so he took his canoe and fled over the sea Northwards from Samoa; he searched the sea for Tarawa, for it was one of the broken fragments of heaven.

So Baretoka came to Tarawa, the fragment of heaven and there he stayed. Now there was a woman of Tarawa whose name was Batia-nea; she held the mooring-rope of that land, for it was not yet anchored in the sea but followed the moods of the wind and waves. And when Baretoka saw Batia-nea he loved her; he took her to wife and he made the island of Tarawa fast in the sea so that it no longer drifted with the wind. So Baretoka and Batia-nea lay together, but they had no children for Batia-nea was barren. That was a great grief to her.

And it came to pass that Batia-nea fed it, because she was consumed with grief at her barrenness. And when she was about to die she said to Baretoka, "After I am dead, lay me in my grave, and watch every day by my grave for the thing that shall grow from my flesh." Then she died, and Baretoka buried her; he watched every day by her grave as she had told him; and

behold, in a little while, a young tree sprouted from the flesh of Bati-nea. When Baretoka saw the Tree he called the women Wi-ni-bong and Ni-bongi-bong, saying, "It shall be your work to care for this Tree; every day ye shall look to it and enrich the soil by its roots." So these two women cared for the Tree of Bati-nea until in a little while it began to grow marvellously; it grew into a mighty Tree whose crest was up against the very rock of Heaven over Tarawa.

So the Tree stood on Tarawa and the winds fanned it every day. Its crest swayed in the Wind; it swayed West it swayed East; and when it swayed East it met with Flicker-of-Dawn (Ingi-ni-Ngaina) and Stormy-Dawn (Ngainia-buaka); and when it swayed West, it met with Red-of-the-West (Krawa-ni-Maeas). And with all these it lay so that at last it bore a child: from the crest of the Tree sprang the woman Terere, the Ancestress.

§2. So Terere stayed on the crest of the Tree of Tarawa until she was a woman. When she was of marriageable age she was seen on the crest of the Tree by Jan-Karawa, the Dweller in Heaven. He went down to her and begot children upon her, whose names were Tabuariki the Wind and

Obaia the Feathered.

When Obaia was a grown man he said to his mother, "Terere, where is my father?" She answered, "He is Tan-Karawa and dwells in Heaven"; so he set forth to see his father. Much time he dwelt in Heaven with Tan-Karawa, but at last his father said, "It is time for thee to return to thy mother Terere"; Then he set forth from heaven to go back to his mother on Tarawa; but alas, when he came to that island he could not come near his home for his brother Tabuariki the Weid went out to prevent him and blew him back into the West. So Obaia fled Westwards until he came to the land of Onouna. There he stayed and married the woman Anti, who was the daughter of Karebanga and Katura, the chiefs of the place.

Obaia lay with Anti and begot two girls upon her, whose names were Kirivere and Kirimoi. Kirimoi he left with her mother on Onouna, and Kirivere he took with him to the island of Tabiteneua. With him at the same time he brought the Uke-uke, the Tree of Onouna, and the Giant-clam shell that is even now to be seen on Tabiteneua, at the place called Te-manoku.

So Obaia came to Tabiteuea; he planted the
Tree of Onouua, the Heke-neke, and lived with
his daughter Kirivere at the place Te-manoken,
until he died.

Kirivere married Beia and Tekai of Tarawa;
she bore a son Teboi;

Teboi married Komao of Onotoa; she bore a
son Mamanti;

Mamanti married Moeroa of Nonouti; she
bore a son Mange;

Mange married Feten of Nonouti; she bore
a son Hekeia;

Hekeia married Tongabini ^{9. Bern, the sister of Jansen-ton} of Nonouti; she
bore a daughter Tabirua, who was the grand
of all the chieftainesses of Nonouti; the descend-
-ant of Beia and Tekai of Tarawa, who begot
her ancestor Teboi upon Kirivere, daughter of
Obaia, of the Tree of Tarawa.
