

The Story of Noubwehwe

narrated by

Tororo and Mautake of Tarawa.

Notes

1.

When Beiamatekai was a man, he lived at Buariki and he had a servant, Noubwehwe, whose job it was to cook fish. If Noubwehwe turned or even tasted the fish, he used to be beaten about the head and sent away with bits of the belly and the heads of the fish as his portion.

2.

Noubwehwe lived at Taboukelike at Tarawa and, one day, he was sleeping under a new tree on the ocean beach when he dreamed that a woman was coming towards him from the east. The woman he saw in his dream was Nei Nimanooa, who is said to have been descended from Teuritaba of Tamoia, and when he awoke he was surprised to see her standing closely beside him.

'Is there a well nearby', she asked, 'I'd like to draw some water'.

'Aye, it's just over there', he replied and, as they walked towards it, he added,

'Nei Nimanooa, why don't we get married?'

Nei Nimanooa did not know that Noubwehwe had learned her name in his dream, or that it was always in his mind ~~that~~ he was unmarried, and was surprised. But she consented and Noubwehwe took her as his wife. He did not return to his work nor did Nei Nimanooa's family look for her. In time, Nei Nimanooa became pregnant but it was the wind that she bore, not a human child. Later, she gave birth to four children: Nei Uamumuri, Nanikain, Tabutoa and Nei Nouo.

3

When the maelo were shoaling, Noubwehwe returned to Buariki. Beiamatekai was very fond of this fish and, when Noubwehwe burned it, he was beaten about the head as usual and sent away with only pieces of the belly and the heads of the fish as his share. He returned slowly to his home and his children asked him where he had been. 'I've been with people who live up north but don't speak about them or they'd do

me harm. Don't even think that they've hit me
on the head or how wicked a thing that is or
they'll harm you too'

'What should we do then?', asked the children.

'What we've always done.'

'No', they replied, 'we think we ought to go and
look for somewhere else to live.'

Now, Rei Nimanua had died some time before so
Nouhwehwe took his children quietly away. They
launched their canoe, Akabeia and set sail.
They sailed first to Araruka but Beiamatekai
learned where they were and, following them in
the Akabeia, landed at Kareaki on Abemama. When
Nouhwehwe heard of this, he and his family set
out for Nonouti but they ran into calm weather
and adverse currents and drifted westwards towards
Baraba. The elder boy then set course again
for the lee shore of Nonouti but he did not
make it. Nor did the younger boy when he
tried, so they asked Rei Nono to take the
helm. She did so and made landfall in the
lee of Nonouti. They pulled the canoe on to the
beach at Temotu on the southern tip of the island
and went to look for the missing oar which they
had lost coming ashore. They found it at Baretau,
stormed the beach, killed all the people living
there and settled down. Among the dead was
Tabaka whose wife, Rei Teueia, Tabutoa
married.

When Beiamatekai heard that Nouhwehwe and
his children had reached Nonouti, he followed
them. He made a landfall and set course for
the islet of Noumatang. Nouhwehwe and his
family saw the canoe arrive and sent Tabutoa
to the lagoon beach to see if he could recognize it.
He saw it was the Akabeia and cried out, 'He
won't leave us alone! The time of the Bakambe
draws near. If he won't talk peace, then it
will be war.' Beiamatekai advanced through
the island and everyone quailed before him;
and, as he drew nearer, he called out:

'What is that man doing who dares to talk about me?'

'Is was just talk', answered Noubuehue carefully.

'And who is that woman sitting at Taburoa's head?', demanded Beiamarekai.

'That is Nei Teweia', replied his friends.

'Who is her husband?'

'Taburoa, of course'.

'That's of no importance', said Beiamarekai, 'I want her'.

Nei Teweia got up and went over to him even though she was already pregnant by Tabaka, while Taburoa and Beiamarekai each waited and watched, — to see what would happen next. Days passed, then Noubuehue slipped quietly away from Anouti, taking his children with him, and made for Taliteneua.

For Taliteneua

When Nei Teweia told Beiamarekai that they'd gone to Taliteneua, he decided to go there too. Meanwhile, Noubuehue had reached Temanoku and Kabunarengana where Obaia had settled some time before. They sacked those places and killed all the inhabitants except Obaia and his family. It was not long before Beiamarekai followed them, just at the time when Nei Teweia was due to give birth to her baby. On the way, she pleaded with him, 'Look, I'm about to have my child. Please take me home to Beru'. Beiamarekai

agreed ~~and~~ so they went on to Beru where Nei Teweia's son, Tanaroa, was born. They became man and wife ~~there~~ and Nei Teweia died there, when she gave birth to another child with a split skull.

After Nei Teweia's death, Beiamarekai sailed back to Taliteneua where he met Obaia.

'Where is your daughter, Nei Kizine', he asked.

'She's here'.

'I'd like to take her for my wife'.

'I don't object', Obaia said.

So, Beiamarekai asked Nei Kizine to

marry him and they had a son, Teboi.

One day, some travellers from Outoa came to Tabiteuea and sang the praises of Anei Komao who was held in high regard in Outoa. Very soon, a great fleet of canoes sailed in to Atamanakuku with Anei Komao on board.

Beiamatekai went down to the lagoon to pay his respects to her and he carried her ashore as bride for his son Teboi. Anei Komao and Teboi were married and conceived two children, Tekiari and a Naei Tabiria. When he had grown up, Tekiari was married and his son was the Chief, Mata Kobu, who was the father of Tonganibea.

Notes

1. Beiamatekai, sometimes written Beia na Tekai in the Gilbertese text but always referred to in the singular.
2. Ren = *Messerschmidia townesfortia*
3. Maeto = a barbed lagoon fish (goat fish), *Sabatia*.