

adopted from the first item in the
Preliminary draft of Part III of
'The Migrations of a Paradise People'
entitled 'Myths and Fables connected with
Food-plants'. This Part was never
published but the full text will be
found in the appropriate file ~~of~~ of the
series on the Book.

✓ 1 . Auriaria and Nei Tituabine

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Nei Tituabine was an inhabitant of Matang, in the west, where her brother Auriaria, with his wife Nei Tewenei, also had their home. They all continued to reside on Matang, where they were High Chiefs.

Auriaria was of exceeding beauty: he was red-skinned and of a giant's stature, and he was beloved by the women of that land.

One day Auriaria went for a walk, and he met Nei Tituabine. She was a woman of unequalled beauty, for she also was red-skinned, and the pupils of her eyes flashed like the lightning in heaven.

Auriaria came towards her, and when he reached her he said: 'Woman, how great in me is my love of you'. And Nei Tituabine answered: 'I also indeed love you',

And behold! Auriaria committed incest with his sister Nei Tituabine.

And Nei Tewenei, the wife of Auriaria, was angry when she heard, for she was jealous; and so she ran away from her husband. She got on her canoe and sailed to the east until she reached Tarawa. She stayed for a time at Tarawa, and then she set sail again to Maiana. She settled on that island, and named the place where she lived Arinnanona.

And Auriaria kept on making love to Nei Tituabine, but they had no children. And behold! Nei Tituabine fell ill: she felt her death approaching, and she spoke to Auriaria, saying: 'how sad it is now that I am about to die and there is no child of mine to remain with you and be the comforter of your sorrow. But come, still your heart, for there is a thing which will grow as a memorial of me with you. When I die, you bury me, and await the tree which will grow over me; and if any tree grow care for it.

She died, and Auriaria buried her. After a time a tree grew from the top of her head: and it was a coconut palm (1). And a second tree grew from her navel: an almond tree. And a third grew from her heels: a pandanus(2). These were the

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things which grew from within the body of Nei Tituabine, and they remained after her as the comforters of Auriaria's sorrow; for when he drank a coconut he rubbed noses with her, and when he was wrapped in his sleeping-mat, he felt her body; and his food, the first-fruits of the pandanus and the almond, was also the body of that woman.

And those trees were carried by Auriaria wherever he voyaged, as a memorial of Nei Tituabine for ever.

Adapted from Comments by A. F. Grimble

The western land of Matang described in this tradition is the island inhabited by the betel-chewing, fair-skinned ancestral deities of the renga-Paradise traditions, and the ancient fatherland of the head-hunting Tree-folk - the tawny-skinned breed of Matang - with their deities Auriaria and Nei Tituabine. According to oral testimony Matang is a foursquare island, peopled by 'old gods (anti n ikawai)', and is placed near to the land of Bouru in the west - an association which is confirmed in the renga-Paradise traditions. The 'old gods' who rule the land are Tangaroa with his brothers Timirau, Taubareroa, Rabaraba, Teborata, and Bwebwe-n-renga. All these are the 'fathers' of the heroine, Nei Tituabine, whose picture is that of a beautiful red-skinned girl with eyes as bright as lightning.

There is also said to be a second Matang close to Samoa but unattainable by living human beings because when approached it either 'flies to heaven' or 'sinks beneath the sea'. That is where Nei Tituabine lives today and it is visited by newly deceased Gilbertese, who are directed by her to Naka's island off Bouru.

This association of Nei Tituabine with lightning is not merely figurative. We know that the red lightning of the westerly storm-clouds is sometimes called 'the "renga" of Nei Tituabine'. Both in the Matang-stories and in general tradition her appearance upon the scene is commonly pictured as being preceded by a lightning flash; and the lightning is said by some to take vengeance upon those who disturb her totem at sea, the giant Ray; while, on the other hand, any person (whatever his totems may be) who does not harm this creature is believed to be safe from the lightning flash if

any kind of Ray appear near him during a storm (3). These facts, read together, leave us with little doubt that, although Nei Tituabine is no longer recognized as a deity of lightning, she once occupied that position among the gods of the Gilbertese forefathers; and this serves to stress her family likeness to all other gods which came from the ancestral tree - the red-skinned eaters of renga in the land of Matang - whose astronomical and meteorological associations are so plainly marked: Nei Tewenei, the meteor; Riki, the Milky Way; Tabuariki, the Thunderer; and, above all, her brother Auriaria, the presiding spirit of the Tree.

This tradition of redness, or fairness, of skin, which has been seen to cling so closely to the people and gods of Matang, is well supported by two pieces of evidence. The first is that the bleaching process called 'te ko', to which Gilbertese girls were once subjected, was undertaken with the intention of reproducing the ancient fairness of the Matang people (4); and the second is, that when Europeans first appeared in the Gilbert Group, they were immediately called, because of their fair complexion, I-Matang (Inhabitants of Matang), a name which they bear today.

The name of Matang is found attached to the weapon known as 'te koro-matang', a heavy cigar-shaped throwing stick, pointed at both ends, formerly much used in war. As a land name it is found everywhere, there being no Gilbert Island without its Matang. As a plant name it belongs to a variety of pandanus tree, te Ara-matang', still cultivated in the Gilbert Group (5).