

Chapter

Nauruan version of Creation Myth,
with appendices (given by Anweieda,
High Chief of Nauru).

§1. Areou' and the Darkness.

When all things clove together and it was dark, then nothing was. Only Areou the Old One lived above the Sticking Together and Buaminirongo lived beneath it.

At that time heaven and earth lay one against the other as the two shells of a clam, and the shape of them was round. And Buaminirongo walked between them, thinking how he might separate the high from the low.

So he called his companions by name; Riiki and Abowé (Nabawe), Amwanang and Kawitoto (Karitoto). These are but four names but they signify a great multitude. When Buaminirongo called they came, and he told them to separate heaven from earth; they obeyed and

1/ Areou: plainly the Nauruan form of Nārean. The prefixed Na- in the Gilbertese variant is doubtless the title of courtesy, "Sir", as in Na Kika, Siu Octopus, Nātibu, Siu Rock, etc.

2/ Buaminirongo: prob. Bue ma Rivirongo.

heaved upon the Sticking Together, and at their work they chanted, "Ededogo Karawa; ededogo-icda amwi."

But when Amwanang and Kawitoro heaved, the side of heaven where they worked was too heavy for them; it would not be lifted. Only that side which Riiki and Abowé heaved would move at all. So Riiki and Abowé went to help the others, and lo! the heaven was separated from the earth and stood on high, an arch of rock. Then the rock of heaven split asunder, and fell to earth, and overwhelmed Riiki and Abowé with his companions. They were crushed and cut to morsels by the falling rocks, and their fragments became the shells of the sea, and all beasts that crawl on land and trees.

When heaven stood on high the first man was born; his name was Tabakea.

Then Areon the Old One made the signs of heaven: Sun, Moon, Lightning and Thunder, and all other things that are in the firmament. And after that he made the Dwellers in Heaven, a vast multitude of stars; each star is called by its name, for it is a living person. And Thunder is like a great bird with flapping wings, the bird of Areon the Old One; and lightning is a woman, wife of Areon the Old.

52 Tabakea's children.

Tabakea was the first man. He dwelt on Nawaru, the first of lands. And behold, his forehead swelled; it was very sore. After a while the swelling burst, and four children leapt from the midst: ³/Awirieria, Toburima, Toukoukenanti, and Areon* Te Kitekite

When the four sons of Tabakea were grown men they went to the ocean beach to disport themselves. Areon Te Kitekite said to his brothers, "Let us tie ropes about our middles and sling one another aloft, and see who can reach heaven." So they all went and fetched their Kabane⁴ lines; and first they tied a line about the body of Awirieria. They whirled him around, as the plummet of the Kabane is whirled by a cunning thrower, and slung him skywards. But as he ~~started~~^{sped} aloft and was about to lay hold of heaven itself his brother Areon seized the line and jerked it back, ~~even as the Kabane player checks the~~

3. Plainly Gilbertese Awiraria, Taburimai, Te Ukenkenanti and Narean Tekikiteia (Mischief maker). (S. Gilbert - Te Kikinto)

* ~~cf. Kabane~~
4. Kabane: a game in which the player slings a plummet attached to a long line, with the object of entangling a feather tossed into the air by his partner.

plummet's flight. So Awirieria ~~and~~ ~~fell~~ ~~back~~ ~~to~~ ~~earth~~. Then again his brothers Toburima and Tonkonenanti suffered themselves to be slung aloft but Areon played the same trick on them, and they fell back to earth before they could lay hold of heaven.

So Areon Ikitekite said to his brothers "Bind me about the middle and sling me to heaven." They answered, "Where is thy line, that we may bind thee?" And he span himself a line that came out of his belly, saying, "Lay hold of the end and swing me around." They did as he told them, and he flew heavenwards; and as he flew, the line that he span from his belly grew longer, so that his brothers said "It has no end."⁵

Up sped Areon, for there was nothing to

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5. In this context Areon is clearly a spider. It will be remembered that the Gilbertese form Nareau means "spider" in modern speech; but the god himself is no longer connected in the native mind with the arachnidae. It has remained with the Naumans to preserve the tradition, though they have lost the ancestral language through later intrusions.

stay his flight. And so, he came to the ^{rock} ~~rocks~~ of heaven and laid hold upon it. His brothers awaited him below but he returned not; so at last they were weary of waiting and went home mourning, for they were grieved that he was gone from among them.

They came to their father Tabaken, saying, "We have lost a brother; he has left us ^{for} ~~for~~ heaven; he is gone from among us." And when Tabaken heard he was angry; they feared him in his wrath and fled from his presence. Awirieria went to live on the crest of the coconut tree; Toukoukenanti went to dwell among the clouds; and Joburima dwelt a little higher than Awirieria; and Buaminirongo lived upon the face of the waters.

§3 ~~There~~ Areon in Heaven.

When Areon Tekitekite came to heaven he looked around him, and he saw that the land was rich and pleasing to the eye. So he cast about for a while to find what manner of place it was, and he came upon a company playing Kabane under the shade of a banyan (Naurman: Saeo, Gilbertese: Kiriana). He climbed quietly into the

tree while none watched him, and he crawled along the branches until he stooped over the place where they stood at play.

And two chiefs were standing among them, whose names Areon desired to know; so when they slung their plummet in the game, he stretched forth his hand unseen from the tree and seized hold of their lines, and entangled them among the twigs. Then all the people began to shout their names aloud with much laughter, "Riniwimate" and "Mriowa,"⁶ so that Areon knew their names. Then he crept down from the tree and came at the people by a different path, openly, as a visitor. When they saw him they said to one another, "Hush! Who is this little fellow coming along? Let us take a good look at him." Areon approached them unabashed, and begged them to take him into their game of Kabane and lend him a line and plummet; but they refused him rudely, so he span himself a line from his belly and

6. Riniwimate: the star Antares (α Scorpionis).
Mriowa (Gilbertese Maiawa)

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omitted from here to
end in Gulle

tied a stone on the end for a plummet, and joined in the game. All were skilful throwers but none so skilled as he; behold, he had mastery over each in turn. And they were filled with jealousy and rage at their defeat; their hearts were hot to kill him and they whispered malice among themselves, but he was aware of their thoughts and slipped away unperceived.

He walked for a long while alone in the land of heaven, until he chanced upon an ancient man who was laboriously sweeping his garden place. It was Aroon the Old One. And when the Old One saw Aroon Jekitekite he was astonished and said, "Sir, whence art thou? Whose child art thou? By what means hast thou reached this place, whither none may come? Knowest thou not that this is Highest Heaven, the last of all Heavens?"

But Aroon Jekitekite answered nothing; he followed the Old One into his lodge and they began to talk about the catching of fish. And as they talked, there was suddenly a great plenty of fish heaped up beside the Old One; but Aroon Jekitekite saw no man carry it to that place. And the Old One told him to get fire, that the fish might be cooked; he

said, "The fire is with that old woman Teiti
(The Lightning), my wife. Go to her and beg a
hot ember, but say no word and make no
sound; do but lift thy hand and beseech her
with signs." So Aroon Tekitekite went to the
old woman Teiti; but he heeded not the
commands of Aroon the Old; he lifted up his
voice in a great shout, "Old woman, old
woman, Teiti - oh! Give me a burning
ember!" When Teiti heard, she lifted her
hand to stay him, saying softly, "Hush! Hush!"
But he continued to bawl with open mouth,
"Fire, old woman, give me fire!" So to
still him she drew fire from her body and
gave it to him. He carried it away, but
when he was gone out of her sight he dashed
it on the floor and utterly extinguished it
under his feet. Then he returned for more fire.
This he did many times, until the old woman
grew wroth at his continual returning and
railed at him, saying, "I have no more fire
left in me. Once again I will give it thee and
then no more, for there is none left." So she
gave him the last of her store and he went

away; as he went the Thunder, that mighty
bird, saw him and was angered that he
took the last fire with him; he flapped his
wings and all heaven shook with the noise.
But Areon Ikitokite was undismayed; he
ran towards that great bird and seized his
right wing; he burned it with the fire in
his hand, and behold the wing was broken.
Thus had Areon Ikitokite the mastery over the
Thunder. And he took the fire to Areon the
Old One.

But the Old One had heard the mumbling
of the Thunder and stood to see what had
befallen his bird; and behold, the bird's wing
was broken. He was filled with bitter anger,
and when Areon Ikitokite came before him
he said, "Fie! For shame! Thou hast wounded
my bird." But Areon Ikitokite answered
not a word.

So when ^{his} their fish was cooked in the fire,
Areon Ikitokite begged ~~that he~~ that he
might enter the lodge and eat ~~the fish~~;
the Old One answered, "Enter"; but death was
in his heart, for as Areon went in at the
~~door~~ doorway he heaved upon the door with

all his might, so that Areon was nearly crushed on the jamb. But he avoided swiftly and when the Old One opened the door, behold! he was safe and sound; and he began to curse very bitterly, saying, "Thou wast nearly the death of me, thou treacherous old man!" But the Old One answered, "Whist! Thou art but a child and silence is thy due portion."

§ 4. So Areon Ikitekite fled from the lodge of the Old One; he descended from High Heaven to the Second Heaven, and there he came upon a company who were busied in building a house. When the people saw him coming they said among themselves, "What strange fellow is this!" And they awaited him in silence. He was unabashed when they said no word to him; he sat him down beside a heap of food and pondered how he might have the upper hand. So they took no more notice of him but went on with their work. While they were busy Areon took all manner of filth and mixed it with their food; then he hid himself. When they came to eat they discovered the trick he had played them, so they

plotted to kill him; so they called him and entreated him kindly, giving him the best food to eat, in order that his fears might be deceived; and after a time they begged him to help them dig a hole for the corner-post of their house. And when he was digging at the bottom of the hole they lifted the corner-post and let it fall into the hole, with the intent to crush him; then they ~~rolled~~ rolled in rocks and earth to bury him where he lay. But he avoided cleverly, and dug himself a path from that place to the sea. Presently, as the people ~~were~~ ^{sat talking} with pleasure about the manner of his death, he waded ashore from the lagoon and appeared among them. Then they knew him for a wizard and were afraid; they sought to soften his heart, saying, "Stay awhile with us, and let us converse one with another". But he answered, "I will not stay among you. First I will go south, for I have work to do. Then I will return to you."

§ 5. So he went South. There he saw a woman sitting in her lodge, and he desired her greatly, but she would have none of him.

He was angered against her; so when she slept, he secretly cut away her genitals and took them with him. He arose and left her asleep, and he sought out her two sons, who were fishing on the shoals; and he gave them the genitals of their mother that he had cut away, but they knew not what manner of gift it was. So they left him and carried the thing home to their mother, telling her how Areon had given it to them; and when she saw it, she knew her shame; she lifted up her voice and wept in anger and bitterness, and all were sick with shame.

§ 6. Then Areon came upon a man and his wife sitting by their lodge; and he sat down by them. They greeted him courteously and kindly entreated him. And he began to desire the man's wife, but she would have none of him; he pondered upon revenge.

One day he said to the man, his friend, "How is it we never have fish to eat?" The man answered, "We have no fisherman, and I know not how to fish." Areon answered, "Make a large fire and I will get fish to cook."

Then he said, "Lay me in the midst of the fire and cover me with burning embers, and put a mat over me. They did as he said. After a little while they saw him come walking from the sea-shore, and they were amazed for they thought he had been in the fire they had made. He said to them, "The fish is cooked; let us eat." They went, and when they had uncovered the fire, behold, a vast number of cooked fish beneath it! They rejoiced, and carried the fish to the lodge, and sat eating.

In a few days the fish was finished and they began to hunger after more. Arcou said to the woman's husband, "It is thy turn to fetch our fish today; we will prepare the fire for thee." When the fire was blazing and the man was about to lie in the midst, Arcou said to him, "When you choose our fish for us, take only the best; be careful in thy choice." Then he took the man, and held him down in the flames, and covered him with embers and a mat. And he said to the woman, "What a fine smell of burning fat; what a rich smell! Surely there is good fish in the fire!" She answered, "It is truly

a savoury smell. Let us go and see." Aeron said, "Patience awhile, let it cook to a turn before we touch it;" and when he knew the woman's husband to be truly dead in the fire, he said to her, "Now! Go see the fine fish that is ready for thee." So she went and uncovered the fire, and behold! The body of her husband had been cooked in the embers.

Aeron laughed and left the woman alone. He returned to the company of builders who had tried to kill him in the hole. And when they saw him coming they were afraid, but they desired his death mightily; they said, "Look! Here he comes again. Let us kill him!" So when ~~they~~ he was near they set upon him and seized him. They lashed his hands and arms and threw him into the sea; and he floated on the waters until he came to his own land of Nawarn. When his people saw him washed ashore they carried him home; & he told them all things that had happened to him; all his family heard the tale. So he remained on Nawarn, for that was his homeland.