

North

Middle

South

Pleiades

Rigel

Antares

Corona Australis

Aldebaran

Spica or Carina

Cancer

Sirius

Southern Cross

5 stars in Pegasus

Orion's belt

Betelguese

Star in Pegasus

3 stars in

Venus (Morning Star)

Capricornus

Na Karanga

(unidentified)

Note:

No explanation of this list is given in the Gilbertese text. It clearly relates to the Gilbertese navigator's conception of the heavens as a roof supported by imaginary rafters, three on each of the eastern and western slopes. The apexes of each pair of rafters are where the Pleiades, Rigel and Antares pass across the celestial meridian. The concept is still in use in the form of a meridian transit instrument - a telescope mounted on an east - west axis used to time the passage of a star across the meridian. The second to fifth bodies in each line presumably extend in order down to the horizon when the apexes pass across the meridian. (See <sup>Grimble, Rosemary (ed)</sup> *Migrations, Myths and Magic from the Gilbert Islands* pp 216 - 218. 1972: 216-8). ( See Grimble, Journal RAI Vol LIV 1924 p 128 )

Sailing in the Day time

When you are sailing, watch for a sea bird called Manningonigo(1) which is a bird you can see flying high up in the sky. When you see it far off it will fly towards the north, south, west or east. Land lies in the direction it flies so follow it closely. Cloud is another guide. It is first seen rising up from the land and then its top bends down towards the land which lies below it.

(1) Man = bird; Ningonigo = ascending high in the air. Probably the sea bird known as maningonigo (seabird).

Sailing at Night

When sailing at night in rough and rainy weather, you can tell where your land lies by the waves. If the waves toss the outrigger of your canoe and then the hull you know you are far from land but if the prow first is lifted and then the stern you know that land is near.

+The Ninima at Sea

Lift up <sup>the drink</sup> ninima of Matairua and Mataironga, lift it up. For I know <sup>(looking abroad)</sup> not the north nor the south, neither heaven nor <sup>(looking persistently)</sup> hell. I lift you up <sup>the underworld</sup> ninima ni borau lest they tell me and give me mataba e mataba o, my God through Jesus. You are the land O God, you the sea. The weather is unkind. I mitia oreia karara nakoa abana marawa.

+ I find this difficult. It is an offering of food and drink for better weather.

( Reproduced and translated by Grimble, Journal RAI p 129 and by R.G. p238. I have my doubts about the translation but it would require a lot of work to do better. I would omit it.) *see Reid's attestation*

(See Rosemary Grimble pp 117 - 8)

The Story of Nei Auti (1)

Nei Auti was a woman of the earth and Rimwimata (2) dwelt in the heavens. The woman sought pleasure in the heavens and, on arriving there, found a game of bo ano (3) in progress which she stood to watch. Many stars were playing and among them were Kama (4) and Te Baraitoa(5). They played in this fashion: when the ano dropped near her, they did not pick it up for they scorned the woman and were ~~defiled~~<sup>offended</sup> by her presence. The woman wept and told her father and mother who made her a lotion of the sweetest-smelling coconut oil. When she had bathed herself in the oil, the perfume rose to the heavens and a man, Katimoi (6), was attracted by it. And Katimoi was sent from the heavens to seek out the source of the perfume. When he reached the earth he was drawn to Nei Auti and took her up into the heavens with him saying to her: "Woman, when you arrive, approach no man but Rimwimata." And when she arrived, Nei Auti saw two men, Kama and Rimwimata. She saw that Kama was handsome but Rimwimata had hidden himself and changed his skin before she came. When Rimwimata ~~xx~~ saw that Nei Auti was sitting down in front of Kama, he again transformed himself and Nei Auti saw him and got up and ran to him but he sped off ahead of her. And that is why the chase goes on to this day.

(1) Nei Auti = the Pleiades

(2) Rimwimata = Antares

(3) Bo Ano = A ball game played with a woven pandanus leaf ball  
(Te Ano )

(4) Kama = Southern Cross.

(5) Te Baraitoa = Southern Crown.

(6) Katimoi = lit. make a knot or ball.

( See Grimble Journal RAI pp 127 - 8 )

Sailing during the season of Nei Auti (1)

1. If you want to know whether there will be calm seas study the ants. If they are scurrying into a post with food in their mouths taking it to their nest and they shut the nest with sand, then do not launch your canoe for there will be rain and rough weather at sea, and ocean currents. But if the ants open up their nest and swarn out of it, you may launch your canoe for the weather will be calm.

2. If you see a spider weaving its web inside a house and it remains in the centre of the web, you know there will be calm weather. But if the spider flees from its web and hides, rain will soon fall and you should not put to sea because of the currents.

3. If you see the moon casting a halo and there are not ten stars within it you know that heavy rain will soon fall. But if, when you next look, there is again a halo which has many more than ten stars

within it you may put to sea for there will be no bad weather. (the rainbow)

4. If you see the moon casting two halos, one reddish like Nei Wirara (2) and the other a greenish blue you know there will be even heavier rain.

5. If you wish to sail for a distant land such as Beru or Butaritari, disregard the preceding signs for there is a better one. Go to the ocean beach at low tide and look for the smooth-shelled Nimatanin(3) and if you find it is hiding in a crevice so narrow you cannot get your finger into it, that is a sign of strong currents and torrential rain. But if you return to the ocean beach and find <sup>the shell-fish</sup> the Nimatanin out of hiding then there will be a long enough spell of calm weather to allow you to reach distant places such as Beru and Butaritari. - (see Gull 1924:1279)

(1) Nei Anti = the Pleiades; the westerly season (December - May)

(2) Nei Wirara = a rainbow.

(3) Nimatanin = the shell-fish, *Merita plicata* (Grimble)

*Turbo setosus* (Sabitier)

( see Grimble Journal RAI p. 128 )

(6) Sailing during the season of ~~Rimwimata~~ Rimwimata (1)

If you want to know whether the sea will be rough, study the high spring tide. If the sea is turbulent you know there will be ocean currents farther out but if the surface is flat there will be no currents. ✓

(1) Rimwimata = Antares; the easterly season ( June - November ).

(7) Signs of rough and calm weather

1. If you see the leading Kauki (1) <sup>scuttling</sup> towards their holes <sup>(1) Ghost crab</sup> above the tide mark, very rough weather is about to break. But if they are scurrying out of their holes you know the weather will be calm.

2. If you go to the edge of the beach at neap tide and see something which spurts in front of you, it will be Ten Ikatiti. If it spurts up sand from below, it is the sign of currents at sea and if there is no sand there will be no currents.

(1) Kauki = Ghost crab (SAB)

(2) Ten Ikatiti = lit. hissing fish, sea slug (?)

Traditions and superstitions connected with stars

1. The Southern Cross Gilbertese believed that when the Southern Cross was at its zenith in early evening, skin diseases were rampant. The spirit of the Cross was called stupid and leprous.

2. Nakoranga ( unidentified star ) When this star was on the prime vertical in early evening great dances and feasts were held.

3. Ina n te Koron The scales of the Koron ( large green fish *Cheilinus undulatus* )  
The tradition of this star follows on, p. 12.

4. Te Anoi ( part of constellation Scorpius ) The brother of Taburimai; when he had carried him to Samoa, he disappeared and went to live in <sup>the</sup> heavens <sup>where</sup> he became the constellation that bears his name.

5. Te Toubuki (Rigel) Considered the central star in the heavens for the Gilbertese. In native "navigation classes", when young men were

being instructed, they sat facing a long, straight pole driven into the ground due east of them. The summit of this stake represented Rigel. According to the angular height of the star, so they would approach the pole or retire from it.

6. Nei Auti (Pleiades) The constellation of the "Northern Rank" held to lead the row next northward of Rigel's.

7. Te Boto n Aiai (Aldebaran) So called because it stands in the V-shaped portion of Taurus which is like the ribs (ai ai) of a canoe.

8. Kameang ( six stars of Ursa Major) Considered to be a Cross and two pointers and therefore a replica of the S. Cross. (But on his list of stars etc. at pp 7- " Grimble identifies this star as Capella while Sabatier retains the original identification given here.

9. When Baba ni man (Sirius) and Baikare (Alpha Hydrae) were in right ascension at sunset came the seasons of strong easterly winds.

N.B. Above typed from Grimble's English.

Constellations, Stars and other Heavenly Bodies

The following list is a copy of that which was contained in Grimble's paper, Canoes in the Gilbert Islands, to the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1924 (Journal, Vol LIV 1924 January to June pp 135-136 ) except that Nos 64 - 68 are additions found in other papers. In presenting the list, Grimble stated:

" The following is a list of star names, collected from the islands of Torawa and Beru, against which I have set a few equivalents. Of these I am reasonably sure, but nevertheless except in the cases of the more brilliant stars, I should not care to dogmatise on my interpretations". (Journal p.134).

The Gilbertese names in the list have been checked against entries in Father Sabatier's dictionary and his further or alternative identifications have been elaborated by reference to The Penguin Dictionary of Astronomy 1962 - 1968; and principal cross-references, usually linking stars of particular constellations, have been added.