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"RUBBISH BOY AND THE TWO QUEENS, OR HUMBLING THE HAUGHTY IN-LAWS." FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN A FOLKTALE FROM THE GILBERT ISLANDS[1]

by Katharine Luomala

Introduction

This entertaining, suspense-filled, and fairly well-constructed folktale was written in Gilbertese sometime between 1910 and 1936 by Ten Tirora, a man of Tarawa, Gilbert Islands (Republic of Kiribati).[2] My somewhat literal translation is part of this paper. In the first two parts of this three-part story, a rejected, unpromising hero, who is a "Male Cinderella" and an "Ugly Duckling," overcomes his physical handicaps and his rivals to win completely the love of two queens. One is his mother whom he alienates from his father and brother. The other becomes his bride when she at last prefers him, although apparently a poor man, to his royal brother, who thus becomes a two-time loser. The third part climaxes his success when his royal bride's angry relatives arrive to insult the presumably starving couple with a gift of smelly wild fruit. However, they are humbled by the overwhelming display of wealth in food and shelter offered them.

It is not until early in the second part that the narrator tells his audience what the hero, although suspicious, does not know: namely, that his mother is really Queen of Mōne (Underworld), and it is her magic and authority that are changing his life. Even by the end of the story the narrator never explicitly states that the hero and his bride know the secret of his reversal of fortune.

As in any märchen one accepts the telescoping of time, fantastic events, repetitions, inconsistencies, and unexplained details, perhaps to puzzle over them and discuss them with the storyteller later.[3] The characters are either minor gods or demigods with problems like those of human beings but with supernatural means to resolve them.[4] My focus will be on their family relationships, which are distorted reflections of real life as are the opposite examples present in other narratives. Discussion of each of the story's three parts will be preceded by a summary.

Part 1

A. The hero is a deformed infant called Bebeti (Rubbish), who is never fed and is hidden in a basket so that neighbors cannot jeer and shame his father, Te-boka-marawa. When his handsome younger brother, Na-ikamawa, becomes their father's pet, Bebeti gets his sympathetic mother, Nei Baka-torotoro, to take his basket and flee with him.

B. During their flight he leaves his basket to catch many large fish, overcomes his undescribed deformity so that he can walk, and names himself Nā-ibunaki. His father, having followed the fugitives on three successive occasions to threaten them and demand their return, gives up after meeting them the third time and not recognizing them. The mother, as instructed by the boy, calls for Nā-ibunaki in an old woman's quavering voice and tells Te-boka-marawa that a woman with a basket has gone ahead of them. Te-boka-marawa, whose body blazes like a fisherman's torch, then settles down at Bikentoka, Tarawa.

As the father, now vanquished, disappears from the story, the hero, it is evident, has successfully displaced him and his brother in his mother's affection and is now her sole companion. He has shown amazing initiative, courage, and intelligence, and appears to have been the active agent of change while his mother passively followed his lead. It is he, not his mother, who twice defies Te-boka-marawa, and although it is she who speaks to Te-boka-marawa the third time, she is following her son's advice. The boy's courage and wit are indirectly emphasized by the narrator's comment about Te-boka-marawa's fiery body. His audience knows that Te-boka-marawa is the evil god who leads torchlight fishermen to their deaths. Perhaps his nature frightened his wife into initially agreeing to hide and ignore their deformed first-born son.

Gilbertese narratives do not all portray fathers hostile to some or all of their sons and mothers as nurturing. The best example of the opposite tells of Na Areau, a creator, culture hero, and trickster, protecting his three sons on a journey to Tāmoa from their cannibalistic mother, Tina-tau-te-koka, who is as evil as Te-boka-marawa.[5] To lure the party ashore for the night on her movable island in order to eat her sons, the goddess used three different disguises, two of which Na Areau told her did not deceive him. That the third did is not clear, but at any rate she got them ashore. However, Na Areau had the boys put white shells over their eyes as if they were awake watching her (a well-known Oceanic device) and she failed,, The next morning, at her request, he left one son to pick coconuts for her but told him how to evade her and rejoin the canoe. Again she pursued them in three different disguises, but at last Na Areau "killed" this would-be devouring mother and the party sailed on to Tāmoa.

Another protective father was the god Bakoa (Shark) who lived in the ocean with his sons by two wives.[6] He guarded one son, Taburi-mai, a human-looking youth, from his half-brothers who being fish were ashamed of Taburi-mai looking different and plotted to kill him. Bakoa had Taburi-mai's full brother Te-anoi (Hammerhead Shark) carry him to safety in Tāmoa. Subsequently, Taburi-mai voyaged to Tarawa where he married Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa; from this couple Anetipa, Sir Arthur Grimble's informant on Nui, Ellices (Tuvalu), claimed descent.[7] Nā-ibunaki's bride, it happens, was also named Te-arei-n-Tarawa. As neither woman's parentage is given it is unknown how or if they were related; however, the same name is often passed down in a family. A third woman with the same name, and also of unknown parentage, will be noted later.

In some narratives the contrast between the favoritism and love of one or both parents for a handsome son and their shame and rejection of one originating as a monstrous birth leads inevitably to the latter's jealousy and revenge against his brother. Na Areau is again a prime example.[8] According to one myth, he was hidden away in a basket under the eaves (like Bebeti), presumably because he too looked different, being tiny, very dark-skinned, and possessed of ugly teeth like black stones. His brother, Auriaria, did not know he existed. Auriaria, after being advised and dressed in his armor by their doting father, Tabakea (Hawksbill Turtle), led his warriors against Tangaroa's army to determine who would rule Tāmoa. For two successive days, Na Areau sneaked out of his basket to fight successfully on Tangaroa's side and nearly killed Auriaria. Tabakea, hearing about the mysterious warrior,

guessed it was Na Areau. On the third day he secretly told Auriaria that as the man had too much magic to be killed by weapons he should make him laugh, and when he covered his mouth to hide his ugly teeth of which he was ashamed, he should grab and thrash him. The plan worked except that Na Areau escaped and got into his basket before his pursuing brother arrived. When Tabakea told Auriaria that the warrior was his brother, the discouraged general negotiated with Tangaroa to divide the rule, while Tabakea advised Na Areau to leave home to escape his brother's wrath.

Another example of contrasting treatment of sons is in a clan tradition about Aro-matang, a first-born son who was a man-bird.[9] His ashamed parents hid him away, made him a nest, and treated him like a bird. When the rejected offspring became a cannibal and demanded his beautiful newborn brother as food, the unhappy parents gave the infant to fishermen to take away. They left him on a barren shore where, immediately and completely self-sufficient, he lived under a *ren*-tree *(Messerschmidia argentea)* until adolescence. At that time a king found and adopted him, named him Te-ibi-aro-ni-kai, and greatly indulged him. Eventually Aro-matang killed him but he himself died at the hands of Komoenga, Te-ibi's son and Aro-matang's heir.

Bebeti, or Nā-ibunaki as he preferred to be called, was luckier than both Aro-matang and tiny, black-skinned Na Areau in having a sympathetic mother who preferred him, although deformed, to his handsome brother and helped him overcome all handicaps. How fortunate he was is revealed in the second part of the story.

Part 2

A. Mother and son live, scorned by neighboring villages, in a barren area under a *ren*-tree but eat good food. Nā-ibunaki, unaware that Baka-torotoro is Queen of Mōne and has an entry to the Underworld under the tree, wonders how she gets the food and if she was responsible for their flight, his fishing luck, his cure, and his father not recognizing them. Meanwhile he has become disfigured with yaws.

B. Na-ikamawa, now king of a southern village, happens to see Nā-ibunaki, and thinking him unlikely to be a rival, invites him to Queen Te-arei-n-Tarawa's games in a northern village. Nā-ibunaki, urged by his mother, reluctantly goes along to watch. For two successive days, the young queen favors Na-ikamawa, so handsome that lightning flashes around him, but

insults **Nā-ibunaki** by worrying that, although he keeps moving farther and farther away, he might touch her ball or her swing.

C. Before the third visit, the mother's people beautify the unhappy **Nā-ibunaki** until his lightning outshines Na-ikamawa's. The now apologetic and enamored queen begs him to play, but he, as advised by his mother, refuses. He says that he is unclean, that she should play with Na-ikamawa. When she offers to follow him and be his slave, he again refuses because of his poverty. Ignoring her kinship group's commands and warnings, she follows him, saying that she will share his poverty. At the *ren*-tree Baka-torotoro welcomes her, and the queen is astonished by the fine meal, which she says is too good to be the drift food that **Nā-ibunaki** claims it is.

Nā-ibunaki has now won a second queen's love and for the second time has displaced his brother, who now disappears from the story. It is ironic that Na-ikamawa should have chosen **Nā-ibunaki** as his companion. The narrator not only uses Na-ikamawa to unite the first two parts of the story but gives **Nā-ibunaki** revenge over his brother, of which, however, he is unaware. The storyteller does not reveal whether the brothers ever recognized each other. That the mother may have recognized Na-ikamawa seems suggested by the storyteller's comment that she thinks the newly beautified **Nā-ibunaki** is now the best of her children. In this second part **Nā-ibunaki** displays none of the attractive qualities evident in the first part. Instead he is a passive, complaining beneficiary of his mother's help. Like Cinderella's fairy godmother she does everything for him.

Queen Te-arei-n-Tarawa fits the archetype of the Gilbertese "woman of the games" *(te aine n te **takākaro**)*, a highborn girl, sometimes of divine or semidivine parentage, who is a sheltered but strong-minded and impulsive virgin who meets her future husband (or one of them), a complete stranger often from another island, at games over which she presides. Then without further ado, she expresses her love and marries him, usually without consulting her parents or their even being mentioned in the matter. The intervention of Te-arei-n-Tarawa's parents and other kin is therefore of special interest.

The waywardness of these girls contrasts with the restraints on women in real life. As listeners are well aware, they are eloping--that is, completely circumventing the involved traditional arrangements that their well-to-do real or adoptive parents have surely made for their marriage, perhaps even before their birth.[10] Once both families' hopes

for the birth of a girl were realized, the prospective groom's side gave the other side a piece of land. On approaching puberty the girl was secluded in a special house *(kō* or *roki)* to bleach her skin, beautify her, guard her virginity, and by much magic ensure her a future good life. Both kinship groups now began to assemble food, mats, perfumed oil, and the like in order to outdo each other in their exchange of a series of ritual visits, feasts, and gifts. After the wedding, also an important event, came another series of ritual visits, feasts, and gifts. On the other hand, if the marriage did not take place or if the bride proved not to be a virgin, fighting broke out until a mediator halted it and indemnities were negotiated. Listeners realize all this and more as storytellers tell about these mythical or ancestral renegade women of the games for whom love outweighed obedience to kinship obligations. And the youths too, it must not be forgotten, were also defying custom by marrying them.

When in her sheltered adolescence could the daughter of a well-to-do family become a girl of the games and be swung by young, unmarried men and play ball with them? Traditional custom suggests when such an interval occurred. A family, a kinship group *(utu),* or a village may select a girl as their representative, someone like a Samoan *taupou.* She was *te karianako* "the superlative one," "the favorite," or as Tabiteueans said in English, "the favorite daughter." She was secluded at puberty in the *kō* to undergo the rituals and treatment. This would be a source of pride to her all her life, and she would brag that her parents showed her special love by having her become *te kanoa n te kō* "the contents of the *kō*." Once she emerged she was dressed in the "favorite daughter" costume and, until forbidden by British law, this debutante was paraded from village to village to display her beauty and at each to be the guest at feasts, games, sports, and dances in her honor, and to play with young, unmarried youths in games considered suitable for a girl.[11]

Swinging was eminently suitable and a means for all to admire her and for young men to show off their grace and dexterity.[12] Other myths besides that about Queen Te-arei-n-Tarawa emphasize swinging as the occasion when a headstrong girl of the games meets and falls in love with a stranger. In this game, a single sennit rope was fastened to a leaning coconut tree, with the free end of the rope knotted into a loop to be covered with a mat as the girl's seat, some six or seven feet above the ground. If an extra piece of rope was hung under the seat, the youth seized it to get the swing moving, then ran holding the rope to swing higher and higher and finally turn in midair so that he and the girl faced the spectators. When he returned to the lowest point, he jumped

away and another youth took his place. If there was no holding rope, the youth pushed the swing as high as he could and when it returned, leaped to grab the rope above the girl and whirl with her. If he missed, he was humiliated and another couple took his and the girl's place. If the seat was a four-foot club, secured to be parallel to the ground and the girl astride the rope, the youth held each end of the seat to swing as high and as often as he could. Spectators clapped and chanted praises for a good performance. Gilbertese would probably never have permitted a couple, as in traditional Hawai'i, to sit together on the seat facing each other.

That accidents happened is revealed in a clan tradition about an ancestress, Nei Komake, of unreported parentage and presumably a girl of the games, who "swung and swung under Karawa (Heaven) when lo! she accidentally slipped from her swing and fell on . . . the land of Namoto" who found her, miraculously uninjured, and took her to his wife Nei Nikuau.[13] Apparently having no previous marriage arrangements for their son, Ten Nautonga, they arranged a marriage for him with this woman from the sky.

A cryptic myth tells of Auriaria, son of Tabakea and Nei Unikāi (Blue Shark), looking across the ocean from the eastern side of Tarawa, his land of birth, to Marakei and seeing Nei Rēi being swung on her swing.[14] Auriaria, who had been performing the *Kauti,* or Awakening, ceremony to make him a brave warrior, left it to walk across the ocean to Marakei. It was highly improper and magically dangerous to leave the ceremony and even worse to do so for a woman. Lady Rēi, obviously something of a magician, told her companions that she had invited him and got down from her swing to meet him. When he was about to leave (what happened before then is not told), Lady Rēi declared, "Listen to me because I burn for you!" So they were married. Later he returned to Tarawa where, before resuming his interrupted Awakening ceremony, he married Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa and Nei Tituā-bine. The decision to marry was, it seems, entirely between Auriaria and these women, as well as three more he married later. However, Lady Rēi was the only one who had been swinging when he first noticed her. The Lady Te-arei-n-Tarawa he married is the third of that name I have found in the narratives, but how they are related, if they are, is unknown since the parentage is not given for any of them. However, names are passed down in families.

The most famous girl of the games was Nei Teweia, daughter of a royal couple on Beru and named in many genealogies. News of her superlative beauty and of her games spread in all four directions. On

Tarawa three brothers--Uamumuri, Nanikain, and Tabutoa, all of them giants and sons of the goddess Nei Nimanoa and Naubwebwe, the slave and cook of King Beia-ma-te-kai--decided to go to the games. Their mother, on arriving from Tāmoa, had fallen in love and married Naubwebwe, but she and the sons did not know he was a slave until the sons were grown. One variant states that she told the giants about the Beru girl, advised them to go to Beru, and pointed out that their future on Tarawa as sons of a slave was dim.[15] When, as most variants state, they stopped off at Tabiteuea, a man there warned them not to abduct the girl of the games, although they had not intimated that they were interested in more than the games.

One variant specifically mentions swinging as the game the giants first watched, then took their turn in swinging Nei Teweia, and, as the narrator comments, observed how desirably marriageable she was.[16] They fell in love with her, carried her off despite the crowd around her, put her on their canoe, and sailed away. According to the story, she became pregnant by the three brothers, but all of them died by magic not long before she married none other than King Beia-ma-te-kai. She named her child of these four fathers Tanentoa-of-the-West to distinguish him from her royal father Tanentoa-of-Beru. If, as the narrators of these variations frequently do, Beia-ma-te-kai is regarded as really two highborn lords, Beia and *(ma)* Te-kai, Nei Teweia's son had five fathers.

Another sudden marriage between two royal strangers was arranged but by surrogate parents who were as unusual as their planning.[17] While he and his squire were bonito-fishing, Te-ibi-aro-ni-kai's three pet pigeons happened to meet Nei Arotaim's three pet pigeons. After each flock had inspected the other's owner, they agreed the two should marry. The two were notified. Then Te-ibi's birds guided his canoe to Arotaim's land, where, since it was night, she was lounging around a big fire while her companions danced for her. Dismissing them, she greeted Te-ibi, who inquired about her father. Apparently already informed of the impending marriage, he was called and invited Te-ibi to make an extended visit. However, Te-ibi regretted that he and Arotaim must leave in the morning as his people would worry about his absence. Back in her husband's land, Arotaim became both Te-ibi's and his adopted father's wife and bore Komoenga, the son who was to kill Aromatang who slew Te-ibi before Komoenga's birth.

In all these narratives, family concern about a child's physical appearance has been obvious. Nā-ibunaki's "looking different" dominates the first two parts of the story. Family members express rejection

of Na Areau, Taburi-mai, and Aro-matang who also "look different." Te-ibi and Auriaria presumably were handsome although they lacked the lightning around them like Na-ikamawa. The headstrong girls of the games were doubtless beautiful if not as beautiful as Nei Teweia. An occasional narrative has an unattractive girl.[18] One was so repulsive the sky gods would not touch their ball if it fell near her. When her parents treated her with an irresistible perfumed oil, she chose to play with a handsome god instead of the ugly one her parents had recommended. When the ugly god turned handsome she pursued him but he ran away. She has never caught him for he is Rimwimāta (Antares) and she is Nei Auti (Pleiades).

That Nā-ibunaki's changed appearance and extra-bright lightning might have had social and economic significance did not occur to Te-arei-n-Tarawa, her clan, or Nā-ibunaki himself. Part 2 emphasizes the value of high rank and its associated wealth, respect, and authority, contrasting the status of Na-ikamawa, the queen, and her clan with that of Nā-ibunaki and his mother. The young queen's reaction throughout this part has been only to Nā-ibunaki's appearance, also very important to the plot. Her initial disgust has turned to infatuation strong enough for her to give up everything for him. This part ends on a happy note with her apparent sacrifice rewarded by Baka-torotoro's welcome and the good food ready for her.

Part 3

> About two days later, her clan *(utu),* reluctant, it said, to have the couple starve to death, fills canoes with *non*-fruit *(Morinda citrifolia)* for them. Seeing the canoes coming, Baka-torotoro orders Mōne to send up a large house filled with good food for the guests. Te-arei-n-Tarawa, seeing it on waking up from a nap, wonders where it all came from. When her arriving clan tells her what their cargo is, she orders them to dump it before they are shamed by insulting a household that eats only good food and has a large guest house full of food for them. They obey, and Baka-torotoro and Nā-ibunaki offer them food and eat with them. When, after three days of feasting, they decide to go home, Baka-torotoro orders up so much food (eight delicacies are named) for their journey that it swamps their canoes.[19] The place is now called Te Tebonoua "The Swamping," or "The Shaming of the Proud and the Lofty." Amen.[20]

It is traditional for a man's father to provide a young couple with everything needed. In Te-boka-marawa's absence, Baka-torotoro looks after the two. The arrival of the bride's clan within two days after the marriage ignores traditional protocol, but shows how eager its members are to gloat over her downfall and further humiliate her with food considered good enough only for poor people who live under a tree.

Traditionally, the first visit after a wedding is by the groom's relatives who, loaded with gifts, visit the bride's kin who await their visit with enough food to last a week or more. When the guests leave, the bride's relatives accompany them to carry gifts of food to their village where they will be entertained for as long as they wish to stay. Later, women of the groom's family will visit the bride's kin with gifts of mats, and will be given new grass skirts to change into and will be feasted and entertained. Ritualized greetings and farewells mark each visit. Each family tries to outdo the other in gifts and hospitality, and subsequently enjoys discussing what each family gave and which gave the most and the best.

The story reveals the bride's clan as ungenerous and insulting as well as unmannerly by initiating the series of visits and by bringing such a shameful gift. The groom's sole provider's hospitality and supply of fine food contrast with the visitors' behavior. The contrast is further sharpened by the narrator naming the delicacies ordered for the journey home, the amount of which swamps the guests' canoes. A special source of pleasure for the Gilbertese is to hear about Baka-torotoro getting so much food without the intensive labor necessary for most--particularly in the drier southern islands--just to get enough to eat to survive.

Nā-ibunaki is scarcely mentioned in Part 3. It is Baka-torotoro who acts as the agent, able to shame her daughter-in-law's clan with her generosity. However, the only direct conversations are between the bride and her mean clan members and then among the members themselves. The bride describes at length the good food she has eaten and, in a critical and often sarcastic tirade, has them get rid of the *non* before the household sees it. It is, of course, her triumph in having been right in choosing Nā-ibunaki as her husband and proving her clan wrong. But to the very end of the story she, and perhaps Nā-ibunaki, and of course her clan, do not know where Baka-torotoro gets all these things and have no inkling that she is Queen of Mōne.

In this story of make-believe, which turns many traditional Gilbertese family relationships and customs topsy-turvy to make dreams come true, are basic situations in which the ugly become handsome and the poor become rich and love conquers all, situations that would make this folktale appealing to people far beyond the Pacific area.

An Old Story from Northern Gilberts
[By Tirora, Buariki, Tarawa]

Information about Nā-ibunaki: Nā-ibunaki is the child of Nei [Lady] Baka-torotoro and Te-boka-marawa, and speaking of them (a) Te-boka-marawa is a person of the sea, a native of the ocean, (b) Nei-Baka-toro-toro is a person of the land.

Now after Te-boka-marawa has become Nei Baka-torotoro's husband, Nei Baka-torotoro gives birth one day to a baby, a male. Seeing that the child is badly deformed, they refuse to take care of him. And putting him inside an open basket, they hang him up in a place where people will not see him because they fear disgrace from him. Because the child is not like a human being, he being deformed in appearance, they name him Bebeti [Rubbish]--and the name Bebeti means a person who is inferior, who is, so to speak, an imbecile, or perhaps a spirit *(anti)* without value, without use, who has but slight power *(maka).*

Later Te-boka-marawa and Nei Baka-torotoro have two children, males. The name of one is Na-ikamawa, and the name Na-ikamawa means, it seems, "The beautiful and best one." The second child's name is unknown but he too is a child handsome in appearance, and the story says that perhaps his name is also Na-ikamawa. Te-boko-marawa and Nei Baka-torotoro have, then, three children.

Te-boka-marawa much loves his handsome, later-born child known as Na-ikamawa. He feeds him regularly and gives him something to drink. However, he unkindly neglects his first child Bebeti so that he just hangs inside the basket every day without being given food. And Bebeti, hearing his mother's voice when she walks near him, calls to her, and he says to her, "Baka-torotoro!" His mother hears his voice and questions her child, saying, "My child, so you are really healthy even though you hang up inside this open basket! I shall certainly take care of you, but you know that your father does not love you because of your being deformed, and he is ashamed to acknowledge you."

The youngster, Bebeti, tells her to untie the open basket in which he lives, and his mother unties it according to her child's request to her. When she has finished drawing the open basket down to the ground the baby, Bebeti, says to his mother, "Take me away, and the two of us will live in a place very distant from my father's land because I am very unhappy that my father hates me."

The mother lifts up the open basket in which her child stays and they start out. They stay in a very distant place and continue to reside there.

Bebeti tells his mother, "Get coconut fiber to twist into sennit." His mother twists it and it is ready. Bebeti comes down from inside the open basket and goes fishing in the ocean. When he returns from fishing he has very numerous large fish, and as they are unable to eat all they dry them in the sunshine.

Te-boka-marawa, his father, is determined to find Nei Baka-torotoro and his deformed child, Te-bebeti, and he just happens on the place where they are living. He joins them at the place but the baby, Bebeti, refuses to accompany him. The father leaves them but he says to them, "I shall come back to you again tomorrow." And he goes away from them. Bebeti, speaking to his mother, says, "We ought to leave again because Te-boka-marawa says that he will come back again tomorrow morning."

And they again travel. Going away, they betake themselves farther so that Te-boka-marawa will not see them. They arrive at a certain place where they again settle down, and Bebeti again goes fishing and catches many fish, and they are unable to eat them all, and they dry them in the sunshine.

And they are again looked for by Te-boka-marawa in the place where they first stayed, and they are again found in their [new] place. He says, "I am disgusted with having looked for you in the place where you first stayed and not finding you since you are really staying here. Now that I have arrived, you will accompany me to the place where I live." And Bebeti again refuses to go along, and Te-boka-marawa leaves again, but he says to them, "I shall return to call for you again tomorrow morning, so goodby now but don't leave here again if you want to stay healthy."

And Bebeti again speaks to his mother, saying, "We shall go again but do not lift me up again because I am now able to walk on my legs." And the two travel together, and Bebeti says to his mother, "Look, I tell you Te-boka-marawa will arrive soon--this night. He will have discovered us again by means of magical spells, and will again want to escort us to his place. Therefore, I want to tell you that when he discovers us again we will do a certain magic trick *(kunemān)* so that he won't recognize us. You shall call me Nā-ibunaki when Te-boka-marawa arrives, and you shall change your way of speaking to make your voice tremble. And then if we are changed in this way he will not be able to recognize us."

And when they are engaged in walking along on their very distant route they turn around and see Te-boka-marawa who has almost reached them. Her voice trembling, Nei Baka-torotoro calls and calls, calling the name of her child, thus, "Nā-ibunaki, wait for me." And she again calls and calls in this way, and Te-boka-marawa hears the name

Nā-ibunaki and the shaky voice of the woman. Te-boka-marawa halts and he says to them, "What people did you see while you were walking along?" And they say, "Well, there was a woman ahead of us, and she had a burden, a basket in which a deformed child stayed." And Te-boka-marawa says to himself, "I shall go back because I cannot again discover the place where they are now staying." He does not know who she is who addressed him! Te-boka-marawa turns around to go back and he goes to stay at Bikentoka, on Tarawa. And his body is the fire that blazes, for example, like the fire that is in a canoe fishing by torchlight.

And Nā-ibunaki, who is Bebeti, stays in an uninhabited land between villages, the narrow part of the island without trees on it, an "itimati" [isthmus], so to speak. The only tree on it is a *ren* [*Messerschmidia argentea,* tree heliotrope], and they—Nā-ibunaki himself and his mother, Nei Baka-torotoro--dwell under its shade. There are indeed several villages to the north where people live. In the village to the north there is a queen, Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa, and in the village to the south there is a king. His name is Na-ikamawa who is really his brother, the one his father, Te-boka-marawa, loves.

Nā-ibunaki and his mother, Nei Baka-torotoro, continue to live under that *ren*-tree. And there is something under that *ren*-tree, a cave down to Mōne [Underworld], which is really the village of his mother, Nei Baka-torotoro, for Nei Baka-torotoro is none other than the Queen of Mōne, but Nā-ibunaki, her child, does not know this yet. That cave's opening is screened by Lady Baka-torotoro, and they settle down under that *ren*-tree. When they have settled down a while they are hungry, and Nei Baka-torotoro lifts up the mat-screen to speak with that cave regarding her food and her child's. When she puts her hand in the cave she is given the food that has just come from the fire--fish, *babai* corms [*Cyrtosperma chamissonis,* taro], toddy molasses *(kamaimai)*--already mixed inside two coconut shells. She calls her child and says, "Come here because we are going to eat these things I luckily found here." Her child arrives, and he wonders at those things--good and hot besides--and they eat as well as drink.

He does not question his mother about a thing. He merely is preoccupied pondering his mother's daily habits: (a) First he ponders her way when she was afraid to look after him, and he thinks that maybe his mother cured him and he does not know about it. (b) He ponders her way when they rose and went away with hurt feelings; and when he went fishing, his catch was large, and he does not know if, perhaps, it was also through his mother. (c) He ponders, too, her way when their bodies could not be recognized by Te-boka-marawa on account of the

name and the speech, and he truly did not know them; and he supposes, in his thoughts, that perhaps this too was through his mother. More light is going to be shed on it by their dwelling in that section between villages where there are no food trees yet they eat good food and have cool water although there are no coconut trees or garden pits or a well either. However, daily without exception they keep on getting things.

A sickness comes on Nā-ibunaki's body--yaws, a skin disease, an unclean sickness. The two villages hear that there are people on the isthmus between them, pitiable people without a house, and the country also hears of a man who is sick and without food. However, there are none who want to befriend them, none who will help them.

The games! Yes, there are games in the northern village--swinging and *oreano* [usually a man's game played with a heavy ball]; yes, the games of Lady Te-arei-n-Tarawa, who is their queen. Na-ikamawa now hears about these games and he wishes to go there in order to play with her. None of his friends from his village accompany him because Na-ikamawa wishes no rival with him. He arrives at the isthmus and sees Nā-ibunaki sitting under this shelter, the *ren*-tree, and he calls to him, "Nā-ibunaki, you get ready, and we'll go to watch the games in the village north of here." Nā-ibunaki says, "Maybe I'd better not accompany you because I am sick and I am unclean." Na-ikamawa says, "Don't play but instead sit down idly watching and waiting for me, and then when it's nearly dark we'll come back again," He is heavy-hearted but his mother, Nei Baka-torotoro, says to him, "You go along." And so then he did go along.

They traveled, and the lightning preceded them, only one, assuredly the lightning of the one who is Na-ikamawa, to exhibit his beauty. That lightning is seen by the people of the games and it affirms that Na-ikamawa is going to arrive at their games. Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa is happy. She mounts the swing and she tells the people to swing her in front of Na-ikamawa. When they arrive they at first watch but Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa calls to Na-ikamawa to swing her.

Na-ikamawa goes to swing her, and she says to Na-ikamawa, "Now why do you have the diseased one, Nā-ibunaki, come here?" And Na-ikamawa says to her, "It's all right because he's far away from your swing." Nā-ibunaki certainly hears that Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa dislikes him, for he lifts up his seat, a rock, and he puts it at a distance from the swing.

When night falls, Na-ikamawa calls to Nā-ibunaki that they are going to leave, to return to their places, and they arrive again at their places, Nā-ibunaki stays under the *ren*-tree which is his place and Na-

ikamawa goes to his village. But he tells Nā-ibunaki that they shall return again the next morning.

Nā-ibunaki tells his mother how Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa hates him, and his mother says to him, "You'll go along anyway when Na-ikamawa calls for you tomorrow. Do not play but sit down again on the stone where you sat ."

When it is morning Na-ikamawa again arrives, and they again travel together. The lightning is also the same, only one preceding them, and the people of the games again know that Na-ikamawa is arriving, and Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa again makes preparations for the games before Na-ikamawa [comes]. They stand up and play *oreano* and *ikatokatoka* [a circle of male and female players keep a light ball aloft with their hands or other parts of the body].

When they arrive, Na-ikamawa is called to play *oreano* and *ikatoka-toka,* and Nā-ibunaki again returns to his place, the stone, to sit down on it. And the ball falls beside Nā-ibunaki, and Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa speaks thus: "See my ball! Did it touch Nā-ibunaki or not?" And they reply, "It is really very far from him." She again speaks: "Watch my ball! Because if it touches that one you shall burn it because his sickness which is very great is an unclean sickness," And Nā-ibunaki certainly hears Te-arei-n-Tarawa's words, and he is much shamed in people's eyes. And when it is nearly dark Na-ikamawa again says to Nā-ibunaki, "It is dark so we shall go." Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa tells him that they should return again the next day.

And Nā-ibunaki stays at his place and Na-ikamawa goes to his place. Nā-ibunaki again tells his mother he is not going to go back, not going to accompany Na-ikamawa when he arrives the next morning because he is greatly ashamed on account of having heard Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa's conversation about how unclean her ball would be if it touched his body.

Nei Baka-torotoro opens her door and speaks with the people of the village in Mōne. Several men arrive, and they lead Nā-ibunaki away to get ready to remove his sickness. When it is, perhaps, nearly dawn they again carry him to his place under the *ren*-tree, and his mother sees him as the best of her children, and she says to him, "Now at last you are all right! Surely no one is more handsome than you! And when Na-ika-mawa again escorts you to the games don't go to her but again go and sit down on your seat, the rock, where you stay and stay until you come back next. Now, don't join the games yet."

And when it is again morning and Na-ikamawa again arrives, he calls Nā-ibunaki as usual, and they again travel together, those two, and the

lightning again precedes them. The people of the games wonder because, yes, there are two lightnings arriving in their midst. And the brilliance of one lightning is mightier than the other. They certainly know that the lightning with the mightier brilliance has newly arrived because they are not at all familiar with that lightning. The lightning with the weaker brilliance they well know as the lightning of Na-ikamawa. They say, "Who is the man who is more handsome than Na-ikamawa?" Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa is happy about it and she prepares for her games before the men will have arrived.

When they arrive **Nā-ibunaki** is seen as the man who has the finest, the most brilliant, appearance. He goes as usual to frequent his spot, the rock that he sits down on, and Na-ikamawa goes to the games. When Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa sees him sitting down on the rock she says to him, "**Nā-ibunaki,** come here and swing me!" And **Nā-ibunaki,** referring to his skin disease, says, "I refuse to let your swing be soiled by me." Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa again speaks and she says, "If you don't swing me I'll get down from my swing!" **Nā-ibunaki** says, "Don't get down from your swing because Na-ikamawa will certainly swing and swing you. You well know that my sickness is much too unclean!"

Well, when **Nā-ibunaki** will not come, Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa hastily comes down from her swing, and she takes the ball, and she throws it to **Nā-ibunaki.** When the ball falls beside him--by Na-ibunaki--he gets the striking stick for that ball there beside him because he does not wish to grasp it with his hand on account of his refusing to soil the ball with his hands. Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa says to Sir **Nā-ibunaki,** "Don't strike it with the stick. Give it a push with your hand instead. Then you come here for us to *ikatokatoka* because I expect you now, and you hurry up!"

She finishes her command to **Nā-ibunaki,** and he says, "I really am unable to participate as I wish to leave for my place ahead of Na-ikamawa's departure. I wish to sleep on account of my sickness; my skin disease hurts so I'm going to go and Na-ikamawa can go later." And when he stands up and is going to leave, Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa leaves the game and begins to accompany **Nā-ibunaki.** However, **Nā-ibunaki** leaves her behind because he grieves about his sickness and poverty because there are no food trees on his land and no house in which she could rest comfortably. Te-arei-n-Tarawa says, "It does not matter because I shall share your pitiful condition, but don't leave me behind because I do love you, and I assure you that I cannot forget my wrong. That you well know. So I shall accompany you as your slave."

When it is seen that Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa is accompanying **Nā-**

ibunaki, her kinfolk *(utu)* arrive to seize her, and they say, "Woman! You stay away from this man because you will die piteously, for they have no food and no place to live. Their only place to live is under the *ren*-tree." That woman says, "All right! But don't prolong your remarks because I am going!" And those people join her again, and they say, "Goodbye! But we give you our word. We shall indeed go later when you suffer from hunger and we shall bring your food--fruits of the *non*-tree [*Morinda citrifolia,* Indian mulberry, a famine food]--because Nā-ibunaki and his mother are not accustomed to eat *babai* and *kabubu* [pandanus flour] because their food consists of the fruits of the *non* when they hunt for it."

Nei Baka-torotoro turns to the north and sees her child, and he has a companion, a woman. She speaks to Mōne to carry to her the food that is directly from the fire, and it has already reached her when her child arrives. They sit down under the *ren*-tree, and Nei Baka-torotoro is very happy with Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa. She hastens to lift up before their eyes her food to eat. And when Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa sees so much good food she speaks to her husband, and says, "Where does this food come from?" Nā-ibunaki says to her, "Nei Baka-torotoro happens to find it in the sea. Perhaps they are leftovers of Na-ikamawa's food which has been thrown away, or perhaps it has floated away and has stranded near our land." That woman says, "That is not how these things were happened on! Really these things have just now been palatably prepared."

They have stayed at Nā-ibunaki's place now, maybe about two days. Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa's clan *(utu)* decides to follow her because it would be pitiful for her to die of hunger with Nā-ibunaki since they have no food. Her whole *utu* assembles but first they go and get the *non* to bring to Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa. After finishing getting the *non* fruits, they launch their canoes and sail straight to Nā-ibunaki's place.

Nei Baka-torotoro sees the canoes making straight for her land and already knows that they are the canoes of Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa's village, Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa is asleep at this time. Nei Baka-torotoro again speaks and tells the people of Mōne to bring up a finished, well-made house because the people who are arriving are to live in it, and they shall also bring many foods--*babai* with fish, and toddy molasses as well as *tuae* [a tasty pandanus preserve], *kabubu,* drinking nuts. And a beautiful house is speedily erected, and there is much food inside of it, with each food gathered together in a certain place; and it is to be dedicated from end to end as the place for the people arriving.

Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa awakens from sleep and sees everything. Behold! She sees the great and beautiful house, and she goes there to view it and sees much food in that house. She certainly wonders at the extremely great amount of it and where it came from.

After a while Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa's canoes arrive, and Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa is the first to go down to the beach. They see her as she goes down and they shout from their canoes: "Hurry, you, come here! How are you? Are you alive or are you dead?" And she herself says to them, "What is your cargo that's in those leafy wrappings of yours?" And they say, "Fruits of the *non!* But call your husband to help lift them for these packages are extremely large."

Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa replies to them, "You will cause much shame by this food of yours. Quickly dump it in the sea. The household has yet to see them. They have yet to eat fruits of the *non,* from my first coming to them until now because we eat *babai* and *tuae, kabubu,* and fish, toddy molasses and drinking nuts. Yes, these are the foods for their nourishment. Come along here now, and you'll soon see a house that is like a village assembly house *(maneaba)* that has been prepared and completed on your behalf, for you are to stay there now. Soon you will see a surpassing amount of food that is gathered in one place. As soon as you see these things you will be ashamed as a result, and then your hearts will be sad at your insults to them in bringing here the fruits of the non for them, truly a bad food that is food for birds and *makauro*-crabs. Yet you yourselves bring it as canoe cargo, as food for Nei Baka-torotoro and Nā-ibunaki! The *non* must be discarded and prevented from being brought ashore!"

The people of these canoes say to each other, "We beg of you that you not bring these things as they are bad." And she says, "We are happy to eat food like the *non* as it is not a delicacy of ours! Most of our delicacies consist of food which has drifted away and we discover on the beach, and so we have just good foods."

And when they go ashore, they enter that house and see much food--good things!--on which they are to feast. Nā-ibunaki and his mother give them their food and the two eat with them.

After three days have passed they wish to return to their place, and when it is time, Nei Baka-torotoro again commands that food be brought to her as food for the voyages of these people to their land. It arrives: the *katī* and the *kabā,* the *tangana,* the *buatoro,* the *korokoro,* the *rīrīniman,* the *kamaimai,* and the *kaben*. The story says that when they have finished loading the cargo on their canoes they were

swamped! That place is known as the Tebonoua [The Swamping]. Its meaning: Shaming of the proud and the lofty. Amen.

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NOTES

1. I gratefully acknowledge support in my Gilbertese studies from the University of Hawaii, the Bernice P. Bishop Museum, the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Science Foundation, and the Smithsonian Institution. I also wish to thank Professor emeritus H. E. Maude for a copy of the Simmons and some of the Grimble manuscripts, and The Institute for Polynesian Studies at Brigham Young University--Hawaii Campus for typing and other assistance.

2. It is not known exactly when Ten (Mr.) Tirora of Buariki, Tarawa, wrote down this and other stories for Miss Beatrice Emmeline Simmons, a London Missionary Society trained nurse and teacher, with headquarters in Beru, between 1910 and 1936. For other of Tirora's stories, see Luomala 1965:31-33, "The Women's Forehandedness"; 1975:258-260, "Lady Cat and Lady Rat"; 1980:231-233, "Stories about Na Areau and Tabuariki"; 1981:232, "Nei Ue and Rabono" (abstract only). I have translated these stories into English from Gilbertese.

3. To some degree this folktale illustrates some of folklorist Axe1 Olrik's "epic laws of folk narrative" (1965). Stated informally, as applied here, they are: low-key openings and endings (for each of the three parts); use of the number three, particularly in repeating scenes for emphasis (Te-boka-marawa's pursuit; visits to the games); series of tableaux scenes with only two characters active in a scene, and if more than one has the same role he counts as one (clan; two brothers named Na-ikamawa); and the two characters contrast in some way (strong and weak, good and bad, rich and poor, ugly and handsome, old and young, high and low), Also the story has a single-thread development (no subplots) and if new information about the past is needed it comes mainly in dialogue (and in musings by Nā-ibunaki and his wife). The story sticks pretty well to providing details essential to bring about an event implied earlier without giving the story away. Further, the story concentrates on the leading character (but Nā-ibunaki appears only indirectly in Part 3; maybe his mother is the leading character after all). When a man and a woman appear in a scene together, the man is more important but the woman is more interesting (the women, Baka-torotoro and Te-arei-n-Tarawa, are indeed scene-stealers). One inapplicable "law" is that the principal person is named first in a series but the last arouses sympathy (Nā-ibunaki, the principal character, is the first-born son who at least arouses one's initial sympathy).

4. The hero's father is Te-boka-marawa, a god who deceives people. He manifests himself to those fishing by torchlight from canoes *(tatae)* as either a blazing light or a phantom canoe of *tatae* fisherman, and leads them far out to sea and death. His false torch leads people fishing with torches on the reef *(kibe)* to fall into deep crevasses (Luomala 1980:554). Sabatier (1954:840-841) divides the name as Te-boka-marawa, which may then mean, I suggest, The Ocean-Vitiator (or Spoiler). *Marawa* is the ocean; *te boka* refers

to spoiling, vitiating, decomposing, and, figuratively, to slackness and lack of effectiveness. *Teboka,* on the other hand, when applied to a fisherman's ritual, refers to his sprinkling himself or being sprinkled to purify himself, mark his transition from ocean to land, and ensure future good luck (Luomala 1980:530, 551).

Nā-ibunaki and Na-ikamawa are to Bingham (1908:47) "false gods." To Sabatier (1954:840-841) they are mythical demigods, and Nei (Lady) Baka-torotoro is Nā-ibunaki's wife. In Tirora's story she is his mother. I have not come across Baka-torotoro's name other than in Sabatier's dictionary and Tirora's story. Tirora explains later that she is Queen of Mōne (Underworld). Part of Mōne is under the sea, but Baka-torotoro's domain seems limited to that under the island.

Tirora does not explain Nā-ibunaki's name, but figuratively interprets the name Na-ikamawa as "the beautiful and the best one." An *ikamāwa* is an unidentified, glossy, green fish, eaten raw (A. Grimble 1933:26; Sabatier 1954:268). Perhaps Na-ikamawa was considered as nice-looking as this fish. Baka-torotoro and Te-boka-marawa are said to have had a third son, perhaps also named Na-ikamawa. No more is heard of him; the narrator has consolidated him with the handsome second son of that name to contrast with the ugly first-born. The name Bebeti (Rubbish) seems purely descriptive for the first son, although Bingham (1908:69) lists Bebeti as the name of a god. Sabatier lists Bebeti and Bebeta as names of *"anti (esprits)"* and "Bebeti-Bebeta" as the name of an undescribed game in which one player is Bebeti, the other Bebeta (1954:149).

5. Grimble Papers, from Mareko, a man of Taboiaki, Beru; R. Grimble 1972:105-106. Parkinson (1889:102-103) says the evil Tina-tau-te-koka keeps back the rain and sends storms to wreck canoes; no one worships her but seeks protection through Tabu-ariki, the principal god.

6. Grimble Papers, from Anetipa, a Nui man, in 1921; R. Grimble 1972:52-55.

7. The thirty-eight-year-old Anetipa traced descent from Nei Te-arei-n-Tarawa and Taburimai; their descendants moved from Tarawa to Nonouti, but around 1650 A.D. during the invasion from Beru of Kaitu and his magician Uakeia, they fled to Nui. I find no interpretation of the name Te-arei-n-Tarawa; if it were Te-arēi (long *e*), it might be freely interpreted as The Madcap of Tarawa, as *arēi* means heedless, carefree, weathervane.

8. Grimble Papers, source not given; R. Grimble 1972:96-100.

9. Luomala 1948, Tabiteuea Field Notes, from the Benuākura clan tradition, Kabuibui village. Grimble Papers, from an unnamed source, have two summaries of events up to Aro-matang's death when his feathers became part of Benuākura's canoe flag. A. Grimble 1921b:81, 82, Fig.1, contains a sketch and reference to the canoe crest. Not all bird-children are rejected by their parents. A Banaba myth in the Grimble Papers is about a woman who bore a black noddy, Te-kunei, who caught fish for her; also R. Grimble 1972:47.

10. On traditional marriages: Parkinson 1889:37-39; A. Grimble 1921a:26-34; Luomala 1950, Arorae Informants' Manuscripts. Example of a modern marriage: Lundsgaarde 1974:206-210.

11. Luomala 1948, Tabiteuea Field Notes; A. Grimble 1921a:41-44.

12. Colcord n.d.; Parkinson 1889:34; Krämer 1906:284-285; Luomala 1948, Tabiteuea Field Notes.

13. Luomala 1948, Tabiteuea Field Notes, in a family history and genealogy from Roteman, a Tekaman village man. Grimble Papers, from Nei Okobeta, Banaba, have a variant in which Nei Ni-karawa, daughter of a sky man and an earthly woman, falls from a broken tree branch in Karawa (Heaven) into a garfish *(make)* pond, takes the name Komake, and marries Na Utonga; also in R. Grimble 1972:149-150. From an unnamed source, Grimble Papers tell of a superbly beautiful girl, Nei Naobatia, who loves games and has a swing called Te Iti and Te Areau, The Lightning and The Splendour. When Na Tanoititi slipped and fell to his death while pushing her, she magically restored him to life.

14. Grimble Papers from two men, Nauoko of Tarawa and Toakai of Maiana.

15. Luomala 1948, Tabiteuea Field Notes, from Roteman's family history and genealogy.

16. Pateman 1942:45 from Beru. Luomala 1948, Tabiteuea Field Notes: a variant from Ten Are, Buariki village, mentions the giants playing with Teweia but not the names of the games.

17. Luomala 1948, Tabiteuea Field Notes, from **Benuākura** clan tradition, Kabuibui village.

18. A. Grimble 1931:203-204; R. Grimble 1972:117-118.

19. These festive cooked foods differ as to name and recipe from island to island and over time. Corms of *babai (Cyrtosperma chamissonis)* are usually reserved for celebrations. Two *babai*-based puddings named in the story are *buatoro* and *tangana;* three pandanus-based puddings are ***katī***, ***kabā***, and ***rīrīnīman***. The pandanus used is in the form of *kabubu* and *tuae,* also mentioned in the story. *Kabubu* is a coarse-textured, long-lasting flour pounded from sunbaked, previously cooked and mashed pandanus keys. *Tuae* is a sticky, sweet preserve made from the cooked and mashed, juicy ends of pandanus keys, spread out like *kabubu* in rectangles to sunbake, and then cut into pieces for puddings. *Korokoro* is a pandanus-based relish, *kaben* a coconut-based relish. Coconut ingredients added to puddings before or after the base has been cooked include coconut water, coconut cream, fresh toddy, toddy cooked once into syrup, toddy cooked twice into molasses *(kamaimai).* Toddies also serve as beverages. A. Grimble 1933:34ff.; Catala 1957:56-58, 74-75; Luomala 1948, Tabiteuea Field Notes.

20. Tirora's Gilbertese text: ". . . te Tebonoua. Nanona: Kamamaean te kainikatonga ma te **karietāta.** Amene." *Te Tebonoua* means "The Swamping" and "The Overwhelming." *Tekainikatonga* and *te* ***karietāta*** are synonyms. Tirora ends with "Amen" but usually he likes to add a moral or a Biblical interpretation. Perhaps he was unfamiliar with the proverb "Pride goeth before a fall" to apply to the haughty clan of Te-arei-n-Tarawa.

21. Parkinson 1889:37-39; Luomala 1950, Arorae Informant's Manuscripts.

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