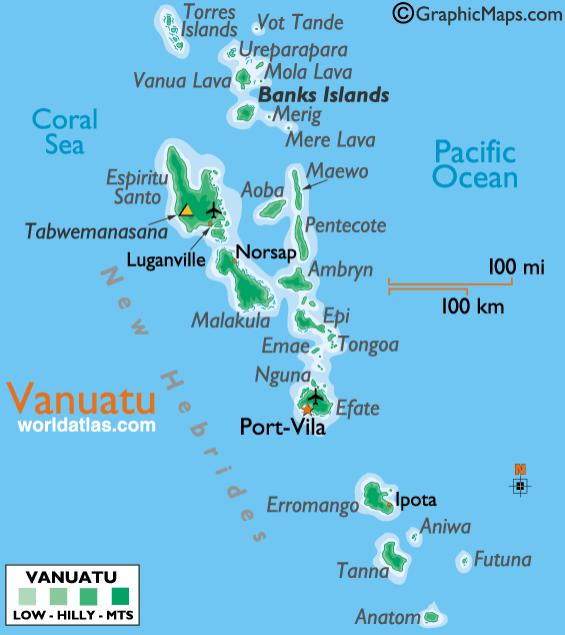
DIS-PAC-POLY-Vanuatu-

Superb old statue tree fern of the island of Ambrym, New Caledonia, VANUATU. Sculpture made in a tree fern trunk "black palm". Ferns used are coated with earth, resinous sap. This material is resistant in our climate to humidity, drought and that frost. It is very resistant and requires no maintenance. Superb object of curiosity and exterior and interior design. Dimensions: 35 cm at the base, 34 cm high and 23 cm wide front.

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Ambrym (*Ambrin*) was named by Captain James Cook, who anchored off there in 1774.(*"ham rim"* in the Ranon language).Ambrym has its own Austronesian languages. In the north is the North Ambrym language, in the southeast is the Southeast Ambrym language, in the south Daakaka language, in the west Lonwolwol language, and in the southwest Port-Vato language. These are all spoken by a few hundred to a few thousand speakers each. Located near the center of the long Vanuatuan archipelago, Ambrym is roughly triangular in shape, about 50 km (31 mi) wide. With 677.7 square kilometres (261.7 sq mi) of surface area, it is the fifth largest island in the country. The summit at the center of the island is dominated by a desert-like caldera, which covers an area of 100 square kilometres (39 sq mi). With the exception of human settlements, the rest of the island is covered by thick jungle.



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### A MAKER OF GODS: IMAGE CARVER AND HIS HANDIWORK The sacred grounds of the gods are said to have existed from time immemorial, but missionary work is growing apace in Ambryn Island, and it is doubtful whether posterity will regard the ground or gods with the same superstitious dread as did their forefathers. This grey-haired native, however, knows all the prayers and charms which control and appease the spirits dwelling within these sculptures. In the colonial [New Hebrides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Hebrides) ca.1920 (present day [Vanuatu](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Vanuatu)). Credits Photo, Field Museum, Chicago.

# [*Dixon, Roland*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland_Burrage_Dixon) (1916), "Oceanic", The Mythology of All Races (Boston: Marshall Jones), Vol. IX, pp. 101–150

**Melanesian mythology** is the folklore, myths and religion of [Melanesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesia) — the [archipelagos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archipelago) of [New Guinea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Guinea), the [Torres Strait](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torres_Strait) Islands, the [Admiralty Islands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Admiralty_Islands), [Solomon Islands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon_Islands), [New Caledonia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Caledonia) and [Vanuatu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanuatu). Professor [Roland Burrage Dixon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland_Burrage_Dixon) wrote an account of the mythology of this region for the [*The Mythology of All Races*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mythology_of_All_Races), which was published in 1916. What follows is his account of the topic.

Since that time, the region has developed new cults and legends as a result of exposure to advanced western civilisations and their missionaries. These include the [cargo cults](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cargo_cult) in which the natives attempt to restore the supply of material goods which were a side-effect of the campaigning in this region during the [Pacific War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_War).

## Contents

* [1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Geography) Geography
* [2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Summary) Summary
* [3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Myths_of_origins_and_the_deluge) Myths of origins and the deluge
  + [3.1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Creation_of_mankind) Creation of mankind
  + [3.2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Origin_of_mankind_from_other_sources) Origin of mankind from other sources
  + [3.3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Origin_of_the_sea) Origin of the sea
  + [3.4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Origin_of_the_sun_and_moon) Origin of the sun and moon
  + [3.5](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Origin_of_fire) Origin of fire
  + [3.6](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Origin_of_death) Origin of death
  + [3.7](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Deluge_and_Flood) Deluge and Flood
  + [3.8](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Geographical_flow) Geographical flow
* [4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Culture_Heroes) Culture Heroes
* [5](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Miscellaneous_tales) Miscellaneous tales
  + [5.1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Cannibals) Cannibals
  + [5.2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Women) Women
  + [5.3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Ghosts) Ghosts
  + [5.4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Animals) Animals
* [6](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "References) References
  + [6.1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Citations) Citations
  + [6.2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Sources) Sources
  + [6.3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_mythology" \l "Further_reading) Further reading

## Geography

Geographically Melanesia naturally falls into two divisions: [New Guinea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Guinea) with the smaller adjacent islands forming one, and the long series of islands lying to the north and east of it, from the [Admiralty Group](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Admiralty_Group) to [New Caledonia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Caledonia) and [Fiji](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiji), constituting the other. From the anthropological point of view the population of the Melanesian area is exceedingly complex, being composed of a number of different racial types. While detailed knowledge of the area is still too fragmentary to render conclusions other than tentative, it may be said that at least three groups can be recognized. Presumably most ancient and underlying all others, though now confined to certain of the more inaccessible parts of the interior of New Guinea and possibly to some few islands of the Eastern Archipelago, are a number of [Negrito](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negrito) or Negrito-like tribes in regard to which we thus far have only the scantiest details. The bulk of the population of the interior of New Guinea, of considerable stretches of its southern, south-western, and northern coasts, and of portions of other islands forms a second stratum known as [Papuan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papuan_people). Mythological material from them is exceedingly scanty. The third type is that which occupies much of south-eastern New Guinea, together with part of its northern and north-western coasts, and forms the majority of the inhabitants of the islands reaching from the Admiralty Islands to Fiji. Strictly speaking, the term Melanesian should be applied to this group only; and from it and the Papuo-Melanesian mixtures the greater part of the myth material at present available has been derived.

It is quite evident that no adequate presentation of the mythology of the whole Melanesian area, using the term in its broader geographical sense, can as yet be made; the most that can be done is to present an outline of the material derived from what is clearly the latest stratum of the population and to supplement this, when possible, by such fragmentary information as we possess from the older Papuan Group. Of Negrito mythology, here, as in the case of Indonesia, absolutely nothing is known.

## Summary

The material on the mythology of Melanesia, though incomplete and fragmentary, appears rather clearly to prove the existence of two distinct strata, one of which may be called Papuan, the other Melanesian. The former is best represented among the [Kai](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kai_people&action=edit&redlink=1) tribes of the region north of [Huon Gulf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huon_Gulf) in [German New Guinea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_New_Guinea), as well as by the [Baining](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baining) and [Sulka](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sulka_people&action=edit&redlink=1) of northern New Britain, and may be traced, more or less plainly, among the remaining coastal tribes of both German and British New Guinea; whereas it is much less apparent in the [Banks Islands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banks_Islands), the [New Hebrides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Hebrides), and [Fiji](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiji). The Melanesian stratum, on the other hand, is perhaps best developed in eastern Melanesia, i.e. [Santa Cruz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Cruz_Islands), the Banks Islands, the New Hebrides, and Fiji; though it is well represented throughout the New Guinea littoral districts, among the coast tribes of northern New Britain and in the [Admiralty Islands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Admiralty_Islands). What has been called the Papuan type of mythology seems to be characterized by a relative absence of cosmogonic myths, by the prominence of ghosts, and by a general simplicity and naivete; and this category also appears to show an extensive development of tales of local distribution only, corresponding to the discreteness and lack of relationship on the linguistic side. The Melanesian stratum, on the other hand, exhibits a considerably greater evolution on the side of cosmogony, an especial fondness for cannibalistic tales, and a rudimentary dualistic character which is revealed in the many stories of the wise and foolish culture hero brothers. Further examination of this Melanesian type seems to indicate that it is by no means a unit, although, because of the character of the material, any conclusions must be wholly tentative. The following grouping is suggested:

1. myths of general distribution throughout Melanesia;
2. those confined more or less strictly to New Guinea and the immediate vicinity; and
3. those similarly restricted in their distribution to Fiji, the New Hebrides, and the Banks and Santa Cruz Islands.

If now, instead of limiting our view to Melanesia alone, we include the whole of the Oceanic area and endeavour to discover the relationship of Melanesian mythology to that of the adjacent sections, it appears that, whereas of the two main types (the Papuan and Melanesian) the former shows little in common with any of the other Oceanic regions, the latter, on the contrary, exhibits numerous and interesting relationships with [Indonesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesia), [Micronesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Micronesia), and [Polynesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polynesia), and some even with [Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia). The Melanesian type of incidents which reveal similarities with these other areas may be divided into four groups:

1. those whose resemblances are only with Indonesia;
2. only with Polynesia;
3. with both Indonesia and Polynesia; and
4. with Micronesia.

The first of these groups is represented much more strongly in New Guinea than in the eastern archipelago; and in New Guinea it is far more prominent on the northern coast than on the southern. It would seem to manifest influences from Indonesia which, in the course of migrations eastward, did not extend beyond Melanesia, and which were greater in New Guinea and its vicinity than in the eastern and more distant archipelagos. The second group—rather unexpectedly—is, like the first, more prominent in New Guinea than farther east, but is better represented on the south coast than is the first group. From the character of the incidents and their distribution in Melanesia and Polynesia this group itself would appear to comprise (a) incidents preponderantly Melanesian, borrowed by the Polynesian ancestors and carried with them into Polynesia, and {b) incidents of Polynesian development which have been transmitted westward as a result of the probable late reflex of Polynesian peoples into parts of eastern Melanesia.

The third group, comprising myth-incidents from Indonesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia, is contrasted with both the others in that it is best represented in eastern Melanesia. Theoretically, these incidents may be regarded as a portion of those brought by the Polynesian ancestors from their Indonesian homes and still preserved by them in Polynesia. Their presence in Melanesia would thus be hypothetically due to their having been taken over from the migrant Polynesians, and their greater prominence in the eastern archipelago would be expected, as it was presumably in this area, rather than in New Guinea, that, during their migration, the Polynesian ancestors made their longest halt and exerted their greatest influence on the aboriginal population. The last group, which is composed of those incidents common to Melanesia and Micronesia, is about equally represented in New Guinea and the eastern archipelago. The relatively large number of similarities between Micronesia and Melanesia is only what we should expect, owing to the many evidences derived from other sources, of relationship between the peoples of the two areas; but the amount of agreement with eastern Melanesia is rather striking.

## Myths of origins and the deluge

Apparently one of the clearest characteristics of the mythology of the Melanesian area is the almost total lack of myths relating to the origin of the world. With one or two exceptions, the earth seems to be regarded as having always existed in very much the same form as today. In the Admiralty Islands a portion of the population believed that once there was nothing but a widespread sea; and one myth states that in this sea swam a great serpent, who, desiring a place on which he might rest, called out, "Let the reef rise!", and the reef rose out of the ocean and became dry land. Another version differs in that a man and a woman, after having floated upon the primeval sea, climbed upon a piece of driftwood and wondered whether the ocean would dry up or not. At last the waters wholly retired, and land appeared covered with hills, but barren and without life; whereupon the two beings planted trees and created foods of various sorts. In [New Britain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Britain), among the coastal tribes of the [Gazelle Peninsula](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gazelle_Peninsula), we find the familiar story of the fishing of the land from the bottom of the sea, a task which was accomplished by the two culture hero brothers, To-Kabinana and To-Karvuvu, some of whose other deeds will be recounted later. The same story in slightly greater detail is found also in the southern [New Hebrides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Hebrides). This conception of a primeval sea is found widely in central [Polynesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polynesia), [Micronesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Micronesia), and [Indonesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesia), and it is perhaps significant that it apparently occurs in Melanesia only on its northern margin, where contact with non-Melanesian peoples would theoretically be expected. A much closer affiliation with Polynesia is shown, however, in another class of origin-myths to which we may now turn.

If there is little interest in the beginning of the world in the Melanesian area, the same cannot be said of the origin of mankind, for on this subject there is considerable and widely variant material. Three types of myths may be recognized: one, that in which mankind is directly created by some deity or pre-existing being; second, that in which man comes into being spontaneously or magically; and, third, that where mankind descends to earth from the sky-land.

### Creation of mankind

In the Admiralty Islands it is said that Manual was alone and longed for a wife; so he took his axe, went into the forest, and cut down a tree, and after he had fashioned the trunk into the figure of a woman, he said, "My wood there, become a woman!", and the image came to life. In the [Banks Islands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banks_Islands) a somewhat more elaborate tale is told. Qat was the first to make man, cutting wood out of the [*dracaena*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dracaena_(plant))-tree and forming it into six figures, three men and three women. When he had finished them, he hid them away for three days, after which he brought them forth and set them up. Dancing in front of them and seeing that they began to move, he beat the drum before them, and they moved still more, and "thus he beguiled them into life, so that they could stand of themselves." Then he divided them into three pairs as man and wife. Now Marawa, who was a malicious, envious fellow, saw what Qat had made and determined to do likewise. So he took wood of another sort, and when he had fashioned the images, he set them up and beat the drum before them, and gave them life as Qat had done. But when he saw them move, he dug a pit and covered the bottom with [coco-nut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coco-nut) fronds, burying his men and women in it for seven days; and when he dug them up again, he found them lifeless and decomposed, this being the origin of death among men. According to another version from this same area, while the first man was made of red clay by Qat, he created the first woman of rods and rings of supple twigs covered with the spathes of [sago](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sago) palms, just as they make the tall hats which are used in the sacred dances.

A tale of the creation of man from earth is told in the New Hebrides. "Takaio made from mud ten figures of men. When they were finished, he breathed upon them, breathed upon their eyes, their ears, their mouths, their hands, their feet, and thus the images became alive. But all the people he had made were men and Takaro was not satisfied, so he told them to light a fire and cook some-food. When they had done so, he ordered them to stand still and he threw at one of them a fruit, and lo! one of the men was changed into a woman. Then Takaro ordered the woman to go and stay by herself in the house. After a while, he sent one of the nine men to her to ask for fire, and she greeted him as her elder brother. A second was sent to ask for water, and she greeted him as her younger brother. And so one after another, she greeted them as relatives, all but the last, and him she called her husband. So Takaro said to him, "Take her as your wife, and you two shall live together." A still different version is that from New Britain. In the beginning a being drew two figures of men upon the ground, and then, cutting himself with a knife, he sprinkled the two drawings with his blood and covered them over with leaves, the result being that they came to life as To-Kabinana and To-Karvuvu. The former then climbed a coco-nut-tree which bore light yellow nuts, and picking two unripe ones, he threw them to the ground, where they burst and changed into two women, whom he took as his wives. His brother asked him how he had come to be possessed of the two women, and To-Kabinana told him. Accordingly, To-Karvuvu also climbed a tree and likewise threw down two nuts; but they fell so that their under side struck the ground, and from them came two women with depressed, ugly noses. So To-Karvuvu was jealous because his brother's wives were better looking than his, and he took one of To-Kabinana's spouses, abandoning the two ugly females who were his own.

Another version from the same region brings out more clearly the distinction between the characters of the two brothers and serves moreover, to account for the two marriage classes into which the people are divided. To-Kabinana said to To-Karvuvu, "Do you get two light-coloured coco-nuts. One of them you must hide, then bring the other to me". To-Karvuvu, however, did not obey, but got one light and one dark nut, and having hidden the latter, he brought the light-coloured one to his brother, who tied it to the stem of his canoe, and seating himself in the bow, paddled out to sea. He paid no attention to the noise that the nut made as it struck against the sides of his canoe nor did he look around. Soon the coco-nut turned into a handsome woman, who sat on the stem of the canoe and steered, while To-Kabinana paddled. When he came back to land, his brother was enamoured of the woman and wished to take her as his wife, but To-Kabinana refused his request and said that they would now make another woman. Accordingly, To-Karvuvu brought the other coco-nut, but when his brother saw that it was dark-coloured, he upbraided To-Karvuvu and said: "You are indeed a stupid fellow. You have brought misery upon our mortal race. From now on, we shall be divided into two classes, into you and us." Then they tied the coco-nut to the stem of the canoe, and paddling away as before, the nut turned into a black-skinned woman; but when they had retumed to shore, To-Kabinana said: "Alas, you have only ruined our mortal race. If all of us were only light of skin, we should not die. Now, however, this dark-skinned woman will produce one group, and the light-skinned woman another, and the light-skinned men shall marry the dark-skinned women, and the dark-skinned men shall marry the light-skinned women." And so To-Kabinana divided mankind into two classes.

### Origin of mankind from other sources

Turning now to the second type of tales of the origin of mankind, the belief in a direct or indirect origin from birds may first be considered. In the Admiralty Islands, according to one version, a dove bore two young, one of which was a bird and one a man, who became the ancestor of the human race by incestuous union with his mother. Another recension has it that a tortoise laid ten eggs from which were hatched eight tortoises and two human beings, one man and one woman; and these two, marrying, became the ancestors of both light-skinned and dark-skinned people. At the other extremity of Melanesia, in Fiji, it is said that a bird laid two eggs which were hatched by Ndengei, the great serpent, a boy coming from one and a girl from the other. A variant of this is found in [Torres Straits](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torres_Straits) where, according to the Eastern Islanders, a bird having laid an egg, a maggot or worm was developed from it, which then was transformed into human shape.

Myths of the origin of men or of deities from a clot of blood are of interest in their relation to other areas in Oceania. One version again comes from the Admiralty Islands. A woman, named Hi-asa, who lived alone, one day cut her finger while shaving [*pandanus*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pandanus) strips. Collecting the blood from the wound in a mussel-shell, she put a cover over it and set it away; but when, after eleven days, she looked in the shell, it contained two eggs. She covered them up, and after several days they burst, one producing a man and the other a woman, who became the parents of the human race. In the neighbouring island of New Britain one account gives a similar origin for the two brothers To-Rabinana and To-Karvuvu. While an old woman was wading in the sea searching for shellfish, her arms pained her, and so, taking two sharp strips of *pandanus*, she scratched and cut first one arm and then the other. The two strips of *pandanus*, thus covered with her blood, she laid away in a heap of refuse which she intended to burn; but after a time the pile began to swell, and when she was about to set fire to it, she saw that two boys had grown from her blood—from the blood of her right arm, To-Kabinana, and from that of her left arm, To-Karvuvu. At several points in German New Guinea we find similar tales of children originating from clots of blood, although here, we must note, they are not considered as the parents of mankind.

An origin of the human race from plants seems definitely stated only in the Solomon Islands, where it is said that two knots began to sprout on a stalk of [sugar-cane](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sugar-cane), and when the cane below each sprout burst, from one issued a man and from the other a woman, these becoming the parents of mankind. With this we may compare the tales from New Britain. Two men (sometimes described as To-Kabinana and To-Karvuvu) were fishing at night, and while they were so engaged a piece of wild sugar-cane floated into the net, where it became entangled. Disengaging it, they threw it away, but again it was enmeshed and was once more discarded. When, however, it was caught for the third time, they determined to plant it, and did so. Taking root, the cane grew, and after a time it began to swell, until one day, while the two men were absent at work, the stalk burst and from it came out a woman who cooked food for the men and then returned to her hiding-place. The two came back from their work and were much surprised to find their food ready for them; but since the same thing occurred the next day, on the following morning they hid themselves to see who it was that had prepared their food. After a time the stalk opened and the woman came out, whereupon they immediately seized her and held her fast. In some versions, the woman then became the wife of one of the men, and all mankind are supposed to be descended from the pair. An origin of the first woman from a tree and of the first man from the ground is given by the Papuan tribes of [Elema](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elema) in British New Guinea; while in the New Hebrides the first female being is said to have sprung from a [cowrie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cowrie)-shell which turned into a woman.

An origin of man from stone is told by the [Baining](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baining) of New Britain. At first the only beings in the world were the sun and the moon, but they married, and from their union were born stones and birds, the former subsequently turning into men, the latter into women, and from these the Baining are descended. The origin of Qat himself is ascribed in the Banks Group to a stone, which in the beginning burst asunder and gave birth to the culture hero—a concept which recalls the tales of the source of the first supernatural beings in [Tonga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tonga), [Celebes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celebes), and the [Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_Islands) and [Gilbert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilbert_Islands) Groups. The third type of myths of the beginning of mankind has thus far been reported apparently only from one portion of German New Guinea.

### Origin of the sea

Although Melanesia seems characteristically to lack myths of the origin of the world, a tale recounting the source of the sea is quite widely spread. As told by the Baining in New Britain, the story runs as follows. In the beginning the sea was very small—only a tiny water-hole, belonging to an old woman and from which she got the salt water for the flavouring of her food. She kept the hole concealed under a cover of tapa cloth, and though her two sons repeatedly asked her whence she obtained the salt water, she refused to answer. So they determined to watch and eventually surprised her in the act of lifting the cover and dipping up the salt water. When she had gone they went to the spot and tore the cover open; and the farther they tore, the larger became the water-hole. Terrified by this, they ran away, each carrying a corner of the cloth; and thus the water spread and spread until it became the sea, which rose so that only a few rocks, covered with earth, remained above it. When the old woman saw that the sea constantly grew larger, she feared that the entire world would be covered by it, so she hastily planted some twigs along the edge of the shore, thus preventing the ocean from destroying all things.

### Origin of the sun and moon

Of the origin of the sun and moon various tales are told. In the Admiralty Islands it is said that when the sea had dried so that man appeared, the first two beings, after planting trees and creating food plants, made two mushrooms, one of which the man threw into the sky, creating the moon, while the woman tossed the other upward and formed the sun. A different account is given by the people of southern British New Guinea. According to this, a man was digging a deep hole one day when he uncovered the moon as a small bright object. After he had taken it out, it began to grow, and finally, escaping from his hands, rose high into the sky. Had the moon been left in the ground until it was born naturally, it would have given a brighter light; but since it was taken out prematurely, it sheds only feeble rays. With this we may compare a tale from German New Guinea which recounts how the moon was originally kept hidden in a jar by an old woman. Some boys discovered this, and coming secretly, opened the jar, whereupon the moon flew out; and though they tried to hold it, it slipped from their grasp and rose into the sky, bearing the marks of their hands on its surface. The people of [Woodlark Island](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodlark_Island) have another tale in which the origin of the sun and moon is connected with the origin of fire. According to this, in the beginning an old woman was the sole owner of fire, and she alone could eat cooked food, while other people must devour theirs raw. Her son said to her: "You are cruel. You see that the taro takes the skin off our throats, yet you do not give us fire with which to cook it"; but since she proved obdurate, he stole some of the flame and gave it to the rest of mankind. In anger at his action, the old woman seized what was left of her fire, divided it into two parts, and threw them into the sky, the larger portion thus becoming the sun, and the smaller the moon.

In all of these myths the sun and moon seem to be regarded as inanimate objects, or at least as such in origin. Another group of tales, however, considers them to be living beings. As an example we may take the version given by one of the tribes of the [Massim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massim) district of British New Guinea. One day a woman who was watching her garden close to the ocean, seeing a great fish sporting in the surf, walked out into the water and played with the fish, continuing to do this for several days. By and by the woman's leg, against which the fish had rubbed, began to swell and became painful until at last she got her father to make a cut in the swelling, when out popped an infant. The boy, who was named Dudugera, grew up among the other children of the village until one day, in playing a game, he threw his dart at the other children rather than at the mark, whereupon they became angry and abused him, taunting him with his parentage. Fearing lest the others might really harm him, Dudugera's mother determined to send him to his father; so she took the boy to the beach, whereupon the great fish came, seized him in his mouth, and carried him far away to the east. Before he left, Dudugera warned his mother and relatives to take refuge under a great rock, for soon, he said, he would climb into a *pandanus*-tree and thence into the sky, and, as the sun, would destroy all things with his heat. So Indeed, it came to pass, for excepting his mother and her relatives, who heeded Dudugera's advice, nearly everything perished. To prevent their total annihilation his mother took a lime-calabash, and climbing upon a hill near which the sun rose, cast the lime into his face as he came up, which caused the sun to shut his eyes and thus to decrease the amount of heat.

The concept that originally there was no night is rather characteristic of Melaneslan mythology: day was perpetual and night was discovered or brought to mankind. In the [Banks Islands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banks_Islands), after Qat had formed men, pigs, trees, and rocks he still did not know how to make night, for daylight was continuous. His brothers said to him, "Thls is not at all pleasant. Here is nothing but day. Can't you do something for us?" Now Qat heard that at Vava in the Torres Islands there was night, so he took a pig, and went to Vava, where he bought night from I-Qong, Night, who lived there. Other accounts say that Qat sailed to the edge of the sky to buy night from Night, who blackened his eyebrows, showed him sleep and taught him how to make the dawn. Qat returned to his brothers, bringing a fowl and other birds to give notice of the dawn. He begged his brothers to prepare beds of coco-nut fronds. Then for the first time, they saw the sun sinking in the west, and they cried out to Qat that it was crawling away. "'It will soon be gone,' said he, 'and if you see a change on the face of the earth, that is night,' Then he let go the night, 'What is this coming out of the sea,' they cried, 'and covering the sky?' 'That is night,' said he, 'sit down on both sides of the house, and when you feel something in your eyes, lie down and be quiet.' Presently it was dark, and their eyes began to blink. 'Qat! Qat! what is this? Shall we die?' 'Shut your eyes,' said he, 'that is it, go to sleep.' When night had lasted long enough the cock began to crow and the birds to twitter; Qat took a piece of red obsidian and cut the night with it; the light over which the night had spread itself shone forth again, and Qat's brothers awoke."

### Origin of fire

Myths of the origin of fire present a number of interesting types in the Melanesian area. We may begin with the form widely current in British New Guinea. According to a version told by the Motu, the ancestors of the present people had no fire, and ate their food raw or cooked it in the sun until one day they perceived smoke, rising out at sea. A dog, a snake, a bandicoot, a bird, and a kangaroo all saw this smoke and asked, "Who will go to get fire?" First the snake said that he would make the attempt, but the sea was too rough, and he was compelled to come back. Then the bandicoot went, but he, too, had to return. One after another, all tried but the dog, and all were unsuccessful. Then the dog started and swam and swam until he reached the island whence the smoke rose. There he saw women cooking with fire, and seizing a blazing brand, he ran to the shore and swam safely back with it to the mainland, where he gave it to all the people.

Some of the Massim tribes of eastern British New Guinea give quite a different origin, according to which people had no fire in the beginning, but simply warmed and dried their food in the sun. There was, however, a certain old woman called Goga who thus prepared food for ten of the youths, but for herself she cooked food with fire, which she obtained from her own body. Before the boys came home each day, she cleared away all traces of the fire and every scrap of cooked food that they should not know her secret; but one day a piece of boiled taro accidentally got among the lads' food, and when the youngest ate it, he found it much better than what was usually given him. The youths resolved to discover the secret, so the next day, when they went to hunt, the youngest hid at home and saw the old woman take the fire from her body and cook with it. After his companions had returned, he told them what he had seen, and they determined to steal some of the fire. Accordingly, on the following day they cut down a huge tree, over which all tried to jump, but only the youngest succeeded, so they selected him to steal the fire. He waited until the others had gone, and then creeping back to the house, he seized the firebrand when the old woman was not looking, and ran off with it. The old woman chased him, but he jumped over the tree, which she was unable to do. As he ran on, however, the brand burned his hand, and he dropped it in the dry grass, which caught the blaze and set fire to a *pandanus*-tree which was near. Now, in a hole in this tree, lived a snake, whose tail caught fire and burned like a torch. The old woman, finding that she could not overtake the thief, caused a great rain to fall, hoping thus to quench the fire, but the snake stayed in his hole, and his tail was not extinguished. When the rain had stopped, the boys went out to look for fire, but found none, because the rain had put it all out; but at last they saw the hole in the tree, pulled out the snake, and broke off its tail, which was still alight. Then making a great pile of wood, they set fire to it, and people from all the villages came and got flame, which they took home with them. "Different folk used different kinds of wood for their firebrands and the trees from which they took their brands became their *pitani* ([totems](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Totem))." A snake in this tale plays the part of the saviour of fire; but in other forms of the myth the serpent is the real source or bringer of flame. A version from the Admiralty Islands runs as follows: The daughter of Ulimgau went into the forest. The serpent saw her, and said, "Come!" and the woman replied, "Who would have you for a husband? You are a serpent. I will not marry you." But he replied, "My body is indeed that of a serpent, but my speech is that of a man. Come!" And the woman went and married him, and after a time she bore a boy and a girl, and her serpent husband put her away, and said, "Go, I will take care of them and give them food." And the serpent fed the children and they grew. And one day they were hungry, and the serpent said to them, "Do you go and catch fish." And they caught fish and brought them to their father. And he said, "Cook the fish." And they replied, "The sun has not yet risen." By and by the sun rose and warmed the fish with its rays, and they ate the food still raw and bloody. Then the serpent said to them, "You two are spirits, for you eat your food raw. Perhaps you will eat me. You, girl, stay; and you, boy, crawl into my belly." And the boy was afraid and said, "What shall I do?" But his father said to him, "Go," and he crept into the serpent's belly. And the serpent said to him, "Take the fire and bring it out to your sister. Come out and gather coco-nuts and yams and taro and bananas." So the boy crept out again, bringing the fire from the belly of the serpent. And then having brought the food, the boy and girl lit a fire with the brand which the boy had secured and cooked the food. And when they had eaten, the serpent said to them, "Is my kind of food or your kind of food the better?" And they answered, "Your food is good, ours is bad."

Similar to this in that the igneous element was obtained from snakes, but on the other hand suggesting aflinities with the fire-quest of the Polynesian [Maui](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maui), is a myth current in New Britain. There was once a time when the [Sulka](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sulka_people&action=edit&redlink=1) were ignorant of fire; but one day a man named Emakong lost one of his ornaments, which fell into a stream. Taking off his loin-cloth he jumped in and dove to recover the lost object, but was amazed, on reaching the bottom, to find himself in the yard of a house. Many people came up and asked him his name, and when he replied that he was called Emakong, one of them said, "Oh, that is also my name," whereupon he took the bewildered man to his house and gave him a new loin-cloth. Great was Emakong's astonishment to see a fire in the house. At first he was afraid of it, but after he had been given cooked food and had found this much better than the raw viands which he had always eaten before, he lost his fear of the new thing. When it became night, the crickets began to sing and this also alarmed him, for in the world above there was no night, and crickets were unknown. His terror became still greater, however, when he heard resounding claps of thunder from every side and saw all the people turn into snakes in order to sleep. His namesake reassured him, however, and said that he need not fear, for this was their custom, and that when day should come again, all would return to their human form. Then, with a loud report, he also changed into a snake, and Emakong alone retained the shape of man. In the morning, when the birds sang to announce the coming day, he awoke, and with a crash all the serpents again turned into men. His namesake now did up a package for him, containing night, some fire, some crickets, and the birds that sing at dawn, and with this Imakong left, rising through the water. On reaching the shore, he threw the fire into dry grass, but when the people saw the blaze and heard the crackling of the flame, they were greatly alarmed and all fled. Emakong, however, ran after them and telling them of his adventures, explained to them the use of the things that he had brought.

### Origin of death

Although not cosmogonic in the stricter sense of the term, we may conveniently include here the myths given to account for the origin of death. According to the version current in [Ambrym](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambrym), the good and the malicious deities were discussing man after he had been made. The former said: "Our men seem to get on well, but haven't you noticed that their skins have begun to wrinkle? They are yet young, but when they are old, they will be very ugly. So when that happens, we will flay them like an eel, and a new skin will grow, and thus men shall renew their youth like the snakes and so be immortal." But the evil deity replied: "No, it shall not be that way. When a man is old and ugly, we will dig a hole in the ground and put the body in it, and thus it shall always be among his descendants." And because the one who has the last word prevails, death came into the world.

With this we may compare another form of myth as told in the Banks Islands, according to which, in the beginning men did not die, but cast their skins like snakes and crabs, and thus renewed their youth. One day an old woman went to a stream to change her skin and threw the old one into the water where, as it floated away, it caught upon a stick. When she went home, her child refused to recognize her in her new and youthful form, and to pacify the infant, who cried without ceasing, she returned and got her old skin, and put it on again. From that time men have ceased to cast their skins and have died when they grew old.

According to other tales, death was due to a mistake. Thus in the Banks Islands it is said that in the beginning men lived forever, casting their skins, and that the permanence of property in the same hands led to much trouble. Qat, therefore, summoned a man called Mate ("Death") and laid him on a board and covered him over; after which he killed a pig and divided Mate's property among his descendants, all of whom came and ate of the funeral feast. On the fifth day, when the conch-shells were blown to drive away the ghost, Qat removed the covering, and Mate was gone; only his bones were left. Meanwhile, Qat had sent Tagaro the Foolish to watch the way to Panoi, where the paths to the underworld and the upper regions divide, to see that Mate did not go below; but the Fool sat before the way of the world above so that Mate descended to the lower realms; and ever since that time all men have followed Mate along the path he took.

Still another explanation is that death was due to disobedience. Thus the Baining in New Britain say that one day the sun called all things together and asked which wished to live forever. All came except man; so the stones and the snakes live forever, but man must die. Had man obeyed the sun, he would have been able to change his skin from time to time like the snake, and so would have acquired immortality.

As a last example of this class of myths we may take one which attributes the origin of death to ingratitude. In the Admiralty Group one account states that a man once went out fishing; but since an evil spirit wished to kill and eat him, he fled into the forest. There he caused a tree to open, and creeping inside, the tree closed again, so that when the evil being came, he did not see his victim and went away, whereupon the tree opened, and the man came out. The tree said to him, "Bring to me two white pigs," so the man went to his village and got two pigs, but he cheated the tree in that he brought only a single white one, the other being black whitened with chalk. For this the tree rebuked him and said: "You are unthankful, though I was good to you. If you had done what I had asked, you might have taken refuge in me whenever danger threatened. Now you cannot, but must die." So, as a result of this man's ingratitude, the human race is doomed to mortality and cannot escape the enmity of evil spirits.

### Deluge and Flood

Of deluge-myths from the Melanesian area, only a few have been reported which do not bear the marks of missionary influence. As told in British New Guinea, the story runs that once a great flood occurred, and the sea rose and overflowed the earth, the hills being covered, and people and animals hurrying to the top of Tauaga, the highest mountain. But the sea followed and all were afraid. Yet the king of the snakes, Raudalo, did not fear. "At last he said to his servants, 'Where now are the waters?' And they answered, 'They are rising, lord.' Yet looked he not upon the flood. And after a space he said again, 'Where now are the waters?' and his servants answered as they had done before. And again he inquired of them, 'Where now are the waters?' But this time all the snakes, Titiko, Dubo and Anaur, made answer, 'They are here, and in a moment they will touch thee, lord.'

"Then Raudalo turned him about, . . . and put forth his forked tongue, and touched with the tip of it the angry waters which were about to cover him. And on a sudden the sea rose no more, but began to flow down the side of the mountain. Still was Raudalo not content, and he pursued the flood down the hill, ever and anon putting forth his forked tongue that there might be no tarrying on the way. Thus went they down the mountain and over the plain country until the sea shore was reached. And the waters lay in their bed once more and the flood was stayed."

Another tale from this same region presents features of interest. One day a man discovered a lake in which were many fish; and at the bottom of the lake lived a magic eel, but the man knew it not. He caught many fish and returned the next day with the people of his village whom he had told of his discovery; and they also were very successful, while one woman even laid hold of the great eel, Abaia, who dwelt in the depths of the lake, though he escaped her. Now Abaia was angry that his fish had been caught and that he himself had been seized, so he caused a great rain to fall that night, and the waters of the lake also rose, and all the people were drowned except an old woman who had not eaten of the fish and who saved herself in a tree. The association of snakes and eels with the deluge in these tales strongly suggests the type of deluge-myth current in parts of Indonesia, and known also apparently in the Cook Group.

### Geographical flow

From the examples given it may be seen that the origin-myths of Melanesia show clear evidence of composite origins. From small groups like the Admiralty Islands several quite different legends accounting for the same thing have been collected, and throughout the whole area a striking variety exists. In how far we are justified in attributing one set of myths to the older Papuan stratum and another to the later Melanesian layer is very difficult to say, since but little from the purer Papuan tribes of the area has as yet been recorded. Comparison with Polynesia and Indonesia suggests that the myths of the origin of the sea, of mankind as originally having had the power to renew their youth by changing skins, and of the obtaining of fire from or with the aid of snakes, were primarily Papuan, for no traces of either appear in Indonesia, and only the former is found in somewhat mutilated form in Samoa, but nowhere else in Polynesia. Other themes, however, such as the origin of human beings from eggs or from a clot of blood, are widely known in Indonesia and also occur in western and south-western Polynesia, and would seem to be immigrant elements from the great culture stream which, passing from Indonesia eastward into the Pacific, swept with greatest strength the north-eastern and south-eastern parts of Melanesia.

## Culture Heroes

One of the most noteworthy features of Melanesian mythology is the prominence of tales relating either to two culture heroes, one of whom is, as a rule, wise and benevolent, while the other is foolish and malicious; or to a group of brothers, usually ten or twelve in number, two of whom, one wise and one foolish, are especially outstanding. Thus a rudimentary sort of dualism is developed which stands in rather marked contrast to Indonesian mythology, while showing points of contact with Polynesian and Micronesian ideas.

In New Britain we have already seen how To-Karvuvu unsuccessfully imitated To-Kabinana in the making of woman; and in the local forms of the myth of the origin of death it was To-Karvuvu who cried and refused to recognize his mother when she had shed her skin and become rejuvenated, so that he was thus directly responsible for the entrance of death into the world. A few other examples of his foolishness may be given from the same region. According to one of these tales, To-Kabinana and To-Karvuvu were one day walking in the fields when the former said to the latter, "Go, and look after our mother." So To-Karvuvu went, filled a bamboo vessel with water, poured it over his mother, heated stones in the fire, killed her, and laid her in the oven to roast, after which he returned to To-Kabinana, who asked him how their parent was and if he had taken good care of her. To-Karvuvu replied, "I have roasted her with the hot stones," whereupon his brother demanded, "Who told you to do that?" "Oh," he answered, "I thought you said to kill her!" but To-Kabinana declared, "Oh, you fool, you will die before me. You never cease doing foolish things. Our descendants now will cook and eat human flesh."

On another occasion To-Kabinana said to his brother, "Come, let us each build a house," and accordingly each constructed a dwelling, but To-Kabinana roofed his house outside, while his foolish brother covered his on the inside. Then To-Kabinana said, "Let us make rain!" so they performed the proper ceremony, and in the night it rained. The darkness pressed heavily on To-Karvuvu so that he sat up, and the rain came through the roof of his house and fell upon him, and he wept. In the morning he came to his brother, saying, "The darkness pressed upon me, and the rain-water wet me, and I cried." But when To-Kabinana asked, "How did you build your house?" the other replied, "I covered it with the roof covering inside. It is not like yours." Then they both went to look at it, and To-Karvuvu said, "I will pull it down and build like yours." But his brother had pity on him and said, "Do not do that. We will both of us live together in my house."

Many of the evil or harmful things in the world were the work of the foolish brother. One day To-Kabinana carved a *Thum*-fish out of wood and let it float on the sea and made it alive so that it might always be a fish; and the *Thum*-fish drove the *Malivaran*-fish ashore in great numbers so that they could be caught. Now To-Karvuvu saw them, and asked his brother where were the fish that forced the *Malivaran*-fish ashore, sa}ring that he also wished to make some. Accordingly, To-Kabinana told him to make the figure of a *Thum*-fish, but instead the stupid fellow carved the effigy of a shark and put it in the water. The shark, however, did not drive the other fish ashore, but ate them all up, so that To-Karvuvu went crying to his brother and said, "I wish I had not made my fish, for he eats all the others"; whereupon To-Kabinana asked, "What kind of a fish did you make?" and he replied, "A shark." Then To-Kabinana said, "You are indeed a stupid fellow. You have brought it about that our descendants shall suffer. That fish will eat all the others, and he will also eat people as well."

The characters of the two brothers are seen to be quite clearly distinguished, To-Karvuvu being in these tales (as in many others from this same area) foolish or stupid rather than designedly malicious, although his follies are usually responsible for the troubles and tribulations of human life; whereas To-Kabinana, on the other hand, appears as actively benevolent, his well-intentioned deeds in behalf of mankind being frustrated by his brother. Tales of a similar type have been collected at one or two points on the German New Guinea shore, but appear to be much less common than among the coast population of New Britain. From British New Guinea few tales of this sort seem to have been collected, although stories of the wise and foolish brothers are very prevalent in the Solomon, Santa Cruz, and Banks Islands and the New Hebrides, where they are of the second type, in that, instead of the usual two brothers, we have a group of ten or twelve.

In the Banks Islands Qat is the great hero, and many tales are told of him and his eleven brothers, all of whom were named Tagaro, one being Tagaro the Wise, and one Tagaro the Foolish. In the stories told in Mota, all seem to have combined against Qat and endeavoured to kill him; but in Santa Maria, another island of the group, Qat has his antithesis in Marawa, the Spider, a personage who in Mota seems to become Qat's friend and guide. Thus, according to one tale, when Qat had finished his work of creation, he proposed to his brothers, Tagaro, that they make canoes for themselves. Qat himself cut down a great tree and worked secretly at it every day, but made no progress, for each morning, when he came back to his task, he found that all that had been done the previous day was undone, and the tree-trunk made solid again. On finishing work one night, he determined to watch, and accordingly, making himself of very small size, he hid under a large chip which he carried away from the pile that he had made during the day. By and by a little old man appeared from a hole in the ground and began to put the chips back, each in the place from which it had been cut, until the whole tree-trunk was almost whole once more, only one piece being lacking, namely, that under which Qat had hidden himself. Finally the old man found it, but just as he was about to pick it up, Qat sprang out, grew to his full size, and raised his axe to kill the old man who had thus interfered with his work. The latter, however, who was Marawa in disguise, begged Qat to spare his life, promising to complete the canoe for him if he would do so. So Qat had mercy on Marawa, and he finished the boat, using his nails to scoop and scrape it out. When the canoes were finished, Qat told his brothers to launch theirs, and as each slipped into the water, he raised his hand, and the boat sank; whereupon Qat and Marawa appeared, paddling about in their canoe and surprising the other brothers, who had not known that Qat was at work.

After this, the brothers tried to destroy Qat in order that they might possess his wife and canoe. "One day they took him to the hole of a land-crab under a stone, which they had already so prepared by digging under it that it was ready to topple over upon him. Qat crawled into the hole and began to dig for the crab; his brothers tipped over the stone upon him, and thinking him crushed to death, ran off to seize Ro Lei and the canoe. But Qat called on Marawa by name, 'Marawa! take me round about to Ro Lei,' and by the time that his brothers reached the village, there was Qat to their astonishment sitting by the side of his wife." They tried to kill him in many other ways, but Qat was always the victor, and their plans were frustrated.

The element of the opposition of the wise and foolish brothers is better brought out, it seems, in the New Hebrides, where Tagaro becomes the chief actor and is pitted against Suqe-matua. "Tagaro wanted everything to be good, and would have no pain or suffering; Suqe-matua would have all things bad. When Tagaro made things, he or Suqe-matua tossed them up into the air; what Tagaro caught is good for food, what he missed is worthless." In a neighbouring island Tagaro is one of twelve brothers, as in the Banks Islands, and usually another of them is Suqe-matua, who continually thwarts him. In Lepers Island " Tagaro and Suqe-matua shared the work of creation, but whatever the latter did was wrong. Thus when they made the trees, the fruit of Tagaro's were good for food, but Suqe-matua's were bitter; when they created men, Tagaro said they should walk upright on two legs, but Suqe-matua said that they should go like pigs; Suqe-matua wanted to have men sleep in the trunks of sago palms, but Tagaro said they should work and dwell in houses. So they always disagreed, but the word of Tagaro prevailed. In this latter feature we have the exact opposite of the conditions in New Britain. Tagaro was said to be the father of ten sons, the cleverest of whom was Tagaro-Mbiti.

In another portion of this island Tagaro's opponent, here known as Meragbuto, again becomes more of a simple fool, and many are the tricks that Tagaro plays upon him." One day Meragbuto saw Tagaro, who had just oiled his hair with coco-nut oil, and admiring the effect greatly, asked how this result had been produced. Tagaro asked him if he had any hens, and when Meragbuto answered that he had many, Tagaro said: "Well, when they have roosted in the trees, do you go and sit under a tree, and anoint yourself with the ointment which they will throw down to you." Meragbuto carried out the instructions exactly and rubbed not only his hair, but his whole body with the excrement of the fowls. On the following day he went proudly to a festival, but as soon as he approached everyone ran away, crying out at the intolerable odour; only then did Meragbuto realize that he had been tricked, and washed himself in the sea.

Another time Tagaro placed a tabu upon all coco-nuts so that no one should eat them; but Meragbuto paid no attention to this prohibition, eating and eating until he had devoured nearly all of them. Thereupon Tagaro took a small coco-nut, scraped out half the meat, and leaving the rest in the shell, sat down to await the coming of Meragbuto, who appeared by and by, and seeing the coco-nut, asked Tagaro if it was his. "Yes," said Tagaro, "if you are hungry, eat it, but only on condition that you eat it all." So Meragbuto sat down and scraped the remainder of the nut and ate it; but though he scraped and scraped, more was always left, and so he continued eating all day. At night Meragbuto said to Tagaro, "My cousin, I can't eat any more, my stomach pains me." But Tagaro answered, "No. I put a tabu on the coco-nuts, and you disregarded it; now you must eat it all." So Meragbuto continued to eat until finally he burst and died. If he had not perished, there would have been no more coco-nuts, for he would have devoured them all.

At last Tagaro determined to destroy Meragbuto, and accordingly he said, "Let us each build a house." This they did, but Tagaro secretly dug a deep pit in the floor of his house and covered it over with leaves and earth; after which he said to Meragbuto: "Come, set fire to my house, so that I and my wife and children may be burned and die; thus you will become the sole chief." So Meragbuto came and set fire to Tagaro's house, and then went to his own and lay down and slept. Tagaro and his family, however, quickly crawled into the pit which he had prepared, and so they escaped death; and when the house had burned, they came up out of their hiding-place and sat down among the ashes. After a time Meragbuto awoke, and saying, "Perhaps my meat is cooked," he went to where Tagaro's house had been, thinking to find his victims roasted. Utterly amazed to see Tagaro and his family safe and sound, he asked how this had happened, and Tagaro replied that the flames had not harmed him at all. "Good!" said Meragbuto, "when it is night, do you come and set fire to my house and burn me also." So Tagaro set fire to Meragbuto's house, but when the flames began to burn him, Meragbuto cried out, "My cousin! It hurts me. I am dying." Tagaro, however, replied, "No, you will not die; it was just that way in my case. Bear it bravely; it will soon be over." And so it was, for Meragbuto was burned up and entirely destroyed.

Two points of special interest in connexion with these tales deserve brief discussion. One of the most characteristic features of Polynesian mythology is the prominence of the Maui cycle; and if we compare these Polynesian tales with the Melanesian stories of the wise and foolish brothers, there is a suggestion of some sort of relationship between them. To be sure, the similarity lies mainly in the fact that in both regions there is a group of brothers, one of whom is capable, the others incapable or foolish, whereas the actual exploits of the two areas are different. Again, it is only in New Zealand that even this slight amount of correspondence is noticeable. In spite, however, of this very slender basis for comparison, it seems, in view of the relative absence of this type of tale from the rest of the Pacific area, that the suggestion of connexion between the two groups of myths is worth further investigation. This is especially evident in view of the second of the two points to which reference has been made, i.e. the similarity between Tagaro, the name of the Melanesian brothers in the New Hebrides, and the Polynesian deity Tangaroa, who appears in several guises, i. e. as a simple god of the sea in New Zealand, as the creator in the Society and Samoan Groups, and as an evil deity in Hawaii. It is not yet possible to determine the exact relationship between the Polynesian Tangaroa and the New Hebridian Takaro, but it is probable that there is some connexion between them. It may be that the use of the name in the New Hebrides is due wholly to borrowing during the comparatively recent Polynesian contact; but on the other hand, it is possible that Tangaroa is a Polynesian modification of the Melanesian Tagaro. The general uniformity of the conceptions of Tagaro in Melanesia, contrasted with the varied character of Tangaroa in Polynesia, adds considerable difficulty to the problem. The final elucidation of the puzzle must wait, however, for the materials at present available are not sufficiently complete to enable us to draw any certain conclusions.

## Miscellaneous tales

### Cannibals

A very common class of tales in Melanesia deals with cannibals and monsters, and our discussion of the general or more miscellaneous group of myths may well begin with examples of this type. As told by the Sulka, a Papuan tribe of New Britain, one of these stories runs as follows. Once there was a cannibal and his wife who had killed and eaten a great many persons, so that, fearing lest they should all be destroyed, the people resolved to abandon their village and seek safety in flight. Accordingly, they prepared their canoes, loaded all their property on board, and made ready to leave; but Tamus, one of the women of the village, was with child, whence the others refused to take her with them, saying that she would only be a burden upon the journey. She swam after them, however, and clung to the stem of one of the canoes, but they beat her off, compelling her to return to the deserted village and to live there alone. In due time she bore a son, and when he grew up a little, she would leave him in her hut while she went out to get food, warning him not to talk or laugh, lest the cannibals should hear and come and eat him. One day his mother left him a *dracaena*-plant as a plaything, and when she was gone he said to himself, "What shall I make out of this, my brother or my cousin?" Then he held the *dracaena* behind him, and presently it turned into a boy, with whom he played and talked. Resolving to conceal the presence of his new friend. Pupal, from his mother, he said to her on her return, "Mother, I want to make a partition in our house; then you can live on one side, and I will live on the other" and this he did, concealing Pupal in his portion of the house. From time to time his mother thought that she heard her son talking to someone and was surprised at the quantity of food and drink he required; but though she often asked him if he was alone, he always declared that he was. At last one day she discovered Pupal and then learned how he had come from the dracaena. She was glad that her son now had a companion, and all three lived happily together.

Tamus was, however, more than ever afraid that the cannibals would hear sounds, and suspecting the presence of people in the deserted village, would come to eat them; but the two boys reassured her, saying, "Have no fear; we shall kill them, if they dare to come." Accordingly, making themselves shields and spears, they practised marksmanship and also erected a slippery barricade about the house, so that it would be difficult to climb. When they had completed their preparations, they set up a swing near the house, and while they were swinging, called out to the cannibals, "Where are you? We are here, come and eat us." The cannibals heard, and one said to the other, "Don't you hear someone calling us over there? Who can it be, for we have eaten all of them." So they set out for the village to see what could have made the noise, the two boys being meanwhile ready in hiding. When the cannibals tried to climb the barricade, they slipped and fell, and the boys rushing out succeeded in killing them both after a hard fight. The children then called to the boy's mother, who had been greatly terrified, and when she came and saw both the cannibals dead, she built a fire, and they cut up the bodies and burned them, saving only the breasts of the ogress. These Tamus put in a coco-nut-shell, and setting it afloat on the sea, said: "Go to the people who ran away from here, and if they ask, 'Have the cannibals killed Tamus, and are these her breasts?' remain floating; but if they say, 'Has Tamus borne a son and has he killed the cannibals, and are these the breasts of the ogress?' then sink!".

The coco-nut-shell floated away at once and by and by came to the new village built by the people who had fled years before. All occurred as Tamus had foreseen, and through the aid of the coco-nut-shell and its contents the people learned the truth. When they discovered the death of the cannibals, they were overjoyed and set out at once for their old home; but just as they were about to land, Pupal and Tamus's son attacked them, and the latter said, "Ye abandoned my mother and cast her away. Now, ye shall not come back." After a while, however, he relented and allowed the people to land, and all lived together again happily and safely in their old home.

Another cannibal story which introduces interesting features is told in the New Hebrides. There was once a cannibal named Taso, who came one day upon the sister of Qatu and killed her, but did not eat her because she was with child. So he abandoned her body in a thicket, and there, though their mother was dead, twin boys were bom. They found rain-water collected in dead leaves, and shoots of plants that they could eat; so they lived, and when they grew old enough to walk, they wandered about in the forest until one day they found a sow belonging to their uncle Qatu. He came daily to give it food, but when he had gone, the boys would eat part of the sow's provisions. Thus they grew, and their skins and hair were fair. Qatu wondered why his sow did not become fat, and watching, discovered the tmns and caught them; but when they told him who they were, he welcomed them as his nephews and took them home with him. After they grew bigger, he made little bows of sago fronds for them, and when they could shoot lizards, he broke the bows, giving them larger ones with which they brought down greater game; and thus he trained them until they were grown up and could shoot anything. When they were young men, Qatu told them about Taso and how he had murdered their mother, warning them to be careful, lest he should catch them. The twins, however, determined to kill the cannibal, so they set a tabu on a banana-tree belonging to them and said to their uncle: "If our bunch of bananas begins to ripen at the top and ripens downwards, you will know that Taso has killed us; but if it begins to ripen at the bottom and ripens upwards, we shall have killed him."

So they set off to kill Taso, but when they came to his house, he had gone to the beach to sharpen his teeth, and only his mother was at home. Accordingly, they went and sat in the *gamal* the men's house, to wait for him, and lighting a fire in the oven, they roasted some yams and heated stones in the blaze. Thereupon Taso's mother sang a song, telling him that there were two men in the gamal and that they should be food for him and for her; so the cannibal quickly returned from the shore, and as he came, he moved his head from side to side, striking the trees so that they went crashing down. When he reached the *gamal* he climbed over the door-rail, but the boys immediately threw at him all the hot rocks from the oven and knocked him down, and then with their clubs they beat him until he was dead, after which they killed his mother, and setting fire to the house over them, went away. Now Qatu, hearing the popping of the bamboos as the house burned, said, "Alas, Taso has probably burned the boys!" Hastening to see what had happened, however, he met them on the way and heard from them that they had killed Taso and had revenged their mother whom he had slain.

Although greatly feared, and capable of destroying people in numbers, the cannibals are usually pictured as stupid and easily deceived, as shown in the following two tales. In a village lived four brothers, the eldest of whom one day took his bow and went out to shoot fish. Those which were only wounded he buried in the sand, and so went on until his arrow hit and stuck in the trunk of a bread-fruit-tree; whereupon, looking up and seeing ripe fruit, he climbed the tree and threw several of them down. An old cannibal heard the sound as they dropped and said, "Who is that stealing my fruit?" The man in the tree replied, "It is I with my brothers," and the old ogre answered, "Well, let us see if what you say is true. Just call to them." Accordingly, the man shouted, "My brothers!" and all the fish that he had buried in the sand, replied, so that it sounded as if many men were near; whereupon the cannibal was frightened and said, "It is true, but hurry up, take what you will, only leave me the small ones." So the man took the bread-fruit, gathered up the fish which he had buried, and went home; but when his brothers begged him to share his food with them, or at least to give them the skins of the fish, he refused, telling them to go and get some for themselves.

The next day the second brother went off, followed his brother's tracks, imitated his procedure, and came back with fish and fruit; the third brother did the same on the following day; and then it came the turn of the fourth to go. He, however, failed to bury the wounded fish, but killed them, and when the cannibal asked him to call his brothers, there was no reply. "Aha," said the cannibal, "now I have got you. You must come down from the tree." "Oh, yes!" said the youngest brother, "I shall come down on that tree there." Quickly the ogre took his axe and cut down the tree, and in this way he felled every one that stood near. "Now, I surely have you," said he, but the youngest brother replied, "No, I will come down on your youngest daughter there." So the cannibal rushed at her and gave her a fatal blow; and thus the man in the tree induced the stupid monster to kill all his children and his wife and lastly to cut off his own hand, whereupon the man came down from the tree and slew the ogre.

The following story presents striking features of agreement with certain Indonesian tales. A man and his family had dried and prepared a great quantity of food, which they stored on a staging in their home; and one day, when the man had gone off to his field to work, a cannibal came to the house, and seeing all the provisions, resolved to get them. So he said to the man's wife, who had been left alone with the children, "My cousin told me to tell you to give me a package of food." The woman gave him one, and he hid it in the forest, after which he returned and repeated his request, thus carrying away all the food which the people had stored. Finally he seized the woman and her children, shut them up in a cave, and went away, so that when the husband returned, he found his house empty. Searching about, he at last heard his wife calling to him from the cave where she had been imprisoned, and she told him how the cannibal, after stealing their food, had taken her and the children. Hard though her husband tried, he could not open the cave, but was forced to sit there helpless while his wife and family starved to death, after which he returned to his town and plaited the widower's wristlets and arm-bands for himself. One day the old cannibal came by, and seeing him sitting there, he admired the plaited ornaments which the man wore, but did not know what they were. He asked the man to make him some like them, and the widower agreed, saying, "You must first go to sleep, then I can make them properly." So they went to seek a suitable place, and the man, after secretly telling the birds to dam up the river, that the bed might be dry, led the cannibal to a great tree-root in the channel of the stream and told him that this would be a good place. Believing him, the cannibal lay down on the root and slept, whereupon the man took strong [rattans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rattan) and vines and tied the monster fast, after which he called out to the birds to break the dam and let the flood come down the river. He himself ran to the bank in safety, and when the cannibal, awakened by the water which rose higher and higher, cried out, "What is this cold thing which touches me?" the man replied: "You evil cave-monster, surely it was for you that we prepared all the food, and you came and ate it up. You also killed my wife and children, and now you want me to plait an arm-band for you." Then he tore off his own arm-bands and signs of mourning and threw them away, while the water rose above the head of the cannibal and drowned him.

### Women

The theme of the woman abandoned by the people of the village, one form of which has already been given, is very common in Melanesia, and another version presents several interesting features for comparison. A woman named Garawada one day went with her mother-in-law into the jungle to gather figs. Coming to a fig-tree, Garawada climbed up and began to eat the ripe fruit, while she threw down the green ones to her mother-in-law. The latter, angered at this, called to Garawada to come down, but when she reached the fork in the tree, the old woman, who was a witch, caused the forks to come together, thus imprisoning her daughter-in-law, after which she went away and left her. For many days the woman remained in the tree, and finally bore a son; but after a while the child fell to the ground, and though his mother feared that he would die, he found wild fruits and water, and lived. One day he looked up into the tree and discovered his mother, and from that time he gave her fruits and berries in order that she might not starve. Nevertheless, he longed for other companions, and one day he said to his parent, "Mother, teach me my party that I may sing it when I find my people, and that thus they may know me." So she taught him his spell:

"I have sucked the shoots of *dabedabe*;  
My mother is Garawada."

The child then ran off to seek his way out of the jungle. Once he forgot his song, but after hastening back to relearn it, he hurried away again and came to the edge of the forest, where he saw some children throwing darts at a coco-nut which was rolled upon the ground. He yearned to play with them, and making for himself a dart, he ran toward them, singing his charm and casting his missile. Not being used to aim at a mark, however, he missed the coco-nut and struck one of the children in the arm, whereat, thinking an enemy had attacked them, the children all ran shrieking to their homes. The next day he came again, and this time the children fled at once, but though he followed, he was unable to catch them, and so returned a second time to his mother. The children now reported their adventure to their parents, and the father of one of them determined to go with them the following day and hide that he might watch what happened. Accordingly, when the little jungle-boy came the third time, the man ran out and caught him and asked him who he was; whereupon the boy told him the story of his mother's bravery, and how he himself had grown up alone in the jungle, and then sang his song:

"I have sucked the shoots of dabedabe;  
My mother is Garawada"

At this the man said, "Truly thou art my nephew. Come, let us go and set thy mother free." So they went with many of the villagers and cut down the tree, for they could not separate the branches; but as the tree fell, Garawada slipped away and ran swiftly to the beach, and there, turning into a crab, crawled into a hole in the sand. Her son wept, because he knew that his mother had left him, but his uncle led him back to the village and took him into his own home, and the children no longer were afraid to have him for a playfellow.

The theme of the swan-maiden, which perhaps occurs in parts of Polynesia and widely in Indonesia, seems quite well developed in the New Hebrides. According to the version told in Lepers Island, a party of heavenly, winged maidens once flew down to earth to bathe, and Tagaro watched them. He saw them take off their wings, stole one pair, and hid them at the foot of the main pillar of his house. He then returned and found all fled but the wingless one, and he took her to his house and presented her to his mother as his wife. After a time Tagaro took her to weed his garden, when the yams were not yet ripe, and as she weeded and touched the yam vines, ripe tubers came into her hand. Tagaro's brothers thought she was digging yams before their time and scolded her; she went into the house and sat weeping at the foot of the pillar, and as she wept her tears fell, and wearing away the earth pattered down upon her wings. She heard the sound, took up her wings, and flew back to heaven.

Another version adds that the returning sky-maiden took her child with her; and when Tagaro came back to find his wife and son absent, he asked his mother regarding them, her reply being that they had gone to the house and wept because they had been scolded about the yams. Tagaro hurried to the dwelling, but seeing that the wings were gone, he knew that his wife and child had returned to the sky-land. Thereupon he called a bird and said, "Fly up and seek for them in their country, for you have wings and I have not." So the bird flew up and up and up, and perched upon a tree in the sky-country. Under the tree Tagaro's wife sat with her child, making mats, and the bird, scratching upon a fruit pictures of Tagaro, the child, and its mother, dropped it at their feet. The boy seized it, and recognizing the pictures, they looked up and saw the bird, from whom they learned that Tagaro was seeking them. The sky-woman bade the bird tell Tagaro that he must ascend to the sky-land, for only if he should come up to her would she agree to descend to earth again. The bird carried the message, but Tagaro was in despair, for how, without wings, could he possibly reach the sky? At last he had an idea. Quickly making a powerful bow and a hundred arrows, he shot one of them at the sky. The arrow stuck firmly, and he then shot another into the butt of the first, and a third into the butt of the second, and thus, one after another, he sent his arrows, making an arrow-chain, until, when he had sped the last one, the end of the chain reached the earth. Then from the sky a banian-root crept down the arrow-chain and took root in the earth. Tagaro breathed upon it, and it grew larger and stronger, whereupon, taking all his ornaments, he and the bird climbed the banian-root to the sky. There he found his lost wife and child, and said to them, "Let us now descend." Accordingly, his wife gathered up her mats and followed him, but when Tagaro said to her, "Do you go first," she replied, "No, do you go first." So Tagaro started, and they followed; but when they were half way down, his wife took out a hatchet which she had concealed and cut the banian-root just beneath her, so that Tagaro and the bird fell to earth, while she and her child climbed back again to the sky.

In its distribution the story of the Isle of Women presents a number of elements of interest. According to the version from New Britain, a man one day set some snares in a tree to catch pigeons. One of the birds was caught, but succeeded in tearing the snare loose and flew away over the sea. The man, thinking to secure it, followed it in his canoe, and after having paddled all day and all night, in the morning he saw an island and the bird perched upon a tree. Carefully concealing his canoe, he started after the bird, but hearing people coming, he hurriedly climbed into a tree and hid himself. The tree stood directly over a spring, and soon many women appeared, coming to get water. One of them preceded the others, and as she stooped to dip up water, she saw the reflection of the man in the surface of the pool; whereupon she called out to her companions, "I will fill your water-vessels for you," for she did not wish the others to know that there was a man in the tree. When all the vessels had been filled and the women had started to return home, she secretly left her sun-shield behind; and after they had gone a little way, she said, "Oh, I left my sun-shield! Do you all go on, I will catch up." So she went back to the spring, and calling to the man to come down, she asked him to marry her, and he agreed. She took him to her house and secreted him there, and thus she alone of all the women had a man for her husband; for all the rest had only tortoises. In due time she had a child, at which the other women were envious and asked her how her human child had been born but she refused to disclose her secret, although by and by she confided to her sister that she had found a man and agreed to let her also become his wife. When later her sister bore a child, the other women were again curious, and at last discovering the secret, each and every one of them wished to have the man for her husband, and they paid the sisters to let them all marry the man and become his wives; so that the man had very many spouses. After the man's first child had grown, he determined to leave the island; and accordingly, uncovering his canoe, which he had concealed, he paddled away to his own home, where he saw the signs that were put up in the house of the dead, for all thought him drowned. It was evening when he reached his village, and as he rapped on the drum to let his wife know that he had returned, she called out, "Who is there?" to which he answered, "It is I." She lit a torch and came out of the house and looked at him; but was angry, and saying, "You are the one who caused us to spend all our bead-money in vain on your funeral ceremonies, while you have been living shamelessly with other wives, *she seized an axe and struck him so that he died.*

Of tales in which inanimate objects become persons or act as such, and which arc apparently characteristic of the Melanesian area, we may take an example from German New Guinea. One night, while two women were sleeping in a house, a *tapa*-beater transformed itself into a woman resembling one of the pair, and waking the other, said to her, "Come, it is time for us to go fishing." So the woman arose, and they took torches and went out to sea in a canoe. After a while she saw an island of drift-wood, and as the dawn came on, perceived that her companion had turned into a *tapa*-beater, whereupon she said: "Oh, the *tapa*-beater has deceived me. While we were talking in the evening, it was standing in the corner and heard us, and in the night it came and deceived me." Landing her on the island, the *tapa*-beater paddled away and abandoned her; but she sought for food, and found a sea-eagle's egg which she held in her hand until it broke and hatched out a young bird, for which she cared until it grew large. Then the bird would fly off and get fish for her to eat, and also brought her a fire-brand, so that she could cook her food. Her great desire, however, was to return to her home; but when the bird said that he would carry her to the shore, she doubted whether he was strong enough. Then the bird seized a great log of wood and showed her that he could lift that, so she finally trusted him and thus was borne safely back to her own island. Her parents were delighted to see her, and she petted and fed the bird who had taken care of her so well; but since the sea-eagle could not be content, it flew away. Then the woman told her parents how the *tapa*-beater had deceived and kidnapped her; and her father was angry, and building a great fire, he threw the *tapa*-beater into it and burned it up.

### Ghosts

Equally typical of Melanesia are the many tales of ghosts; and an example from the Kai, a Papuan tribe of German New Guinea, runs as follows. One day a number of brothers who were gathering material for making arm-bands had climbed into a great tree, when the youngest made a mis-step, and falling to the ground, was killed. The other brothers, who could not see what had happened because of the thick foliage, called out, "What was that which fell?" The ghost of the dead brother, however, still stood in the tree and said, "I stepped on a dead branch which broke," and thus lying to his brothers, he descended from the tree before them, wrapped his body in leaves, and hid it. When his brothers came down, the ghost went along with them, but on the way he suddenly said, "Oh! I forgot and left something at that tree. Wait for me till I get it." Accordingly, they waited while the ghost went back, picked up his body, and brought it along, but hid it again before he came to the place where his brothers were. Then they all went on toward the village; but after a while he repeated the trick several times until his brothers, becoming suspicious, watched and found out how they had been deceived. Thereupon they all fled, and coming to the village, cried out, "We have seen something mysterious. Shut your doors." So all the people obeyed, all but an old woman and her grandson, for she had not heard the warning and left her door open.

By and by the ghost came, carrying his body on his back. He tried to throw his corpse into the first house, but it struck against the closed door and fell down again; so he picked it up and cast it at the next with like result. Thus he tried them all until he came to the last house, in which the old woman lived; and here, because the door was open, the ghost succeeded and threw his body into the house. Quickly the old woman seized the bundle and tossed it out again, but the ghost caught it and hurled it back. Thus they continued to send the body to and fro; but at last the old woman seized her grandson by mistake and threw him out, at which the ghost cried, "That is great! Now you have given me something to eat." The old woman then said, "Throw him back again," but the ghost replied, thinking to cheat her, "Do you first throw out my body. Then I will throw him back." So they argued until dawn was near, when the old woman shouted, "The dawn is coming. Does that mean something for you or for me?" Since the ghost replied, "For me!" the woman delayed until the day had come. The light of the sun put the ghost in danger, so he threw the grandson back and received his own body in return; but being no longer able to conceal himself, he was changed into a wild *taro*-plant, while his body became a piece of bark.

### Animals

In many parts of Melanesia a type of tale is found which seems to be rare in Polynesia and Indonesia, but is, on the other hand, common in Australia, i.e. the stories told to account for peculiar markings or characteristics of different animals, plants, or inanimate things. In the Banks Islands it is said that a rat and a rail, once finding a *gariga*-tree full of ripe fruit, disputed which should climb the tree. At last the rat went up, but instead of throwing ripe fruit down to the rail, he ate them himself and tossed down only stones. Finding that the rat refused to give him any fully ripe fruit, the bird said, "Throw me down that one. It is only red ripe," whereupon the rat took the fruit and tossed it at the rail, so that it hit him on his forehead and stuck fast. The rail was angry, and as the rat came down from the tree, he thrust the unfolded leaf of a *dracaena* into the rat's rump, where it stuck fast. So the tail of the rat is the leaf of the *dracaena* that the rail put there, and the red lump on the head of the rail is the *gariga*-fruit which the rat threw at him.

In Lepers Island in the New Hebrides the origin of good and bad yams is given as follows. One day a hen and her ten chickens came across a wild yam, which got up after a while and ate one of the chickens. The survivors called to a kite, which said to the hen, "Put the chickens under me," and when the yam came and asked the kite where the chickens were, the bird replied, "I don't know." Thereupon the yam scolded the kite, and the latter, seizing the yam, flew high into the air and dropped it to the ground. Then another kite took it up and let it fall, so that the yam was broken into two parts; and thus the two kites divided the yam between them, whence some yams are good and some are bad.

The story of how the turtle got his shell is told as follows in British New Guinea. The turtle and the wallaby, being hungry one day, went together to the hombill's garden and began to eat his bananas and sugar-cane. While they were thus engaged, the birds were preparing a feast, and Binama, the hornbill, asked one of them to go to the shore for some salt water with which to flavour the food. Several made excuses, for they feared that an enemy might kill them, but at last the wagtail agreed to go, and on the way passed through Binama's garden, where he saw the wallaby and the turtle feasting. The turtle was much frightened at being discovered and said, "Your master bade us eat his bananas, for we were hungry." The wagtail knew that this was not true, but said nothing, got the sea-water, and returning to the village by another path, cried out, "Friends, the turtle and the wallaby are eating in our master's garden." Then all the people were angry, and getting their spears, they ran and surrounded the garden. The wallaby, seeing his danger, made a tremendous leap and escaped, but the turtle, having no means of flight, was caught and carried prisoner to Binama's house, where he was tied to a pole and laid upon a shelf until the morrow, when Binama and the others went to get food to make a feast, at which they intended to kill the turtle. Only Binama's children were left in the house, and the turtle, speaking softly to them, said, "Loosen my bonds, O children, that we may play together." This the children did and then, at the turtle's request, got the best of their father's ornaments, which the turtle donned and wore as he crawled about. This amused the children and they laughed loudly, for the turtle had put a great bead necklace about his neck and shell armlets on his arms and a huge wooden bowl on his back. By and by the people could be heard returning; and as soon as the turtle became aware of this, he ran swiftly to the sea, while the children cried out, "Come quickly, for the turtle is running away!" So all the people chased the turtle, but he succeeded in reaching the sea and dived out of sight. When the people arrived at the shore, they called out, "Show yourself! Lift up your head!" Accordingly, the turtle rose and stuck his head above water, whereupon the birds hurled great stones at him and broke one of the armlets; they threw again and destroyed the other; again, and hit the necklace, so that the string gave way, and the beads were lost. Then for a last time calling to the turtle to show himself, they threw very large stones which fell upon the wooden bowl on his back, but they did not break it, and the turtle was not harmed. Then he fled far away over the sea, and to this day all turtles carry on their backs the bowl that once was in the house of Binama.

From New Britain comes the following tale of the dog and the kangaroo. One day when the kangaroo was going along, followed by the dog, he ate a yellow *lapua*-fruit and was asked by the dog, when the latter came up with him, "Tell me, what have you eaten that your mouth is so yellow?" The kangaroo replied, "There is some of it on yonder log," pointing to a pile of filth; whereupon the dog, thinking that it was good, ran quickly and ate it up, only to hear his companion laugh and say, "Listen, friend, what I ate was a yellow *laptua*- fruit like that; what you have eaten is simply filth." Angered at the trick played upon him, the dog resolved to have his revenge, and so, as they went on toward the shore, he ran ahead and buried his forepaws in the sand. When the kangaroo came up, the dog said: "Gracious, but you have long forepaws! Break off a piece of your long paws. I have broken off a piece of mine as you see, and now mine are beautiful and short. Do you do likewise, and then we shall both be alike." So the kangaroo broke off a piece of each of his forepaws and threw the pieces away, whereupon the dog jumped up and said, triumphantly, "Aha! I still have long forepaws, but you have only short ones. You are the one who deceived me and made me eat the filth," and as he uttered these words, he sprang at the kangaroo and killed him, and ever since the kangaroo has had short forepaws. In several cases the parallelism between the Melanesian and Australian tales of this type is very striking; its significance will be apparent later.

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