

TALES FROM THE LAND OF PAPUA
Cerita dari Tanah Papua

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TALES FROM THE LAND OF PAPUA

The Origin of the Bird of Paradise

The province of Papua is the easternmost and the largest province in Indonesia. The province comprised of mountains and jungle. It was said that in a time long, long ago there was a mount called Mount Rongkwri in Papua. Not far from the mount, there was a jungle wherein two trees grew, the marang and anambing trees. Both trees grew nearby and their stems had grown crossing into one another. When the wind blew, both trees would scrape against each other and make such a lovely sound. Every day, the wind blew hard. The scraping of both trees became intense. The two trees became thinner and thinner until they finally broke. Strangely enough though, from the two trees, two human beings emerged. From the marang tree a boy named Asari emerged, and from the anambing tree a girl named Woramanami came out.

That morning, the sun has just risen from its slumber. Birds were jesting to each other, making the morning very lovely. On that lovely morning, Asari and Woramanami met. They were astounded. Each couldn't believe they have met another human being. They then rubbed their own eyes.

“Errr, why are you here?” asked Asari.

“I have no idea why I am here,” replied Woramani “Where did you come from?”

“I came from a tree.” “From a tree?” “Yes, I came from a tree.”

They fell silent. Their environment turned quiet. The birds suddenly stopped chirping as if watching their meeting. They exchanged looks. They felt bizarre and frightened. Then, Woramani asked a question slowly

“Have you been living here long?” “No, I haven’t” “Who do you live with?”

“I’m alone. I have no place to live.” “Where did you come from?”

“I came from a tree,” replied Asari. “Really?” “Really. I came from a tree.”

“Then, we both came from trees.” “Yes, we both came from trees.”

Again, they fell silent after the words of Asari. Their environment returned to quietness. The roaring wind suddenly stopped making no leaves on the trees around them moving. It looked as though they were honoring the encounter of the two human beings that just realized that they both had come from trees.

They exchanged looks and smiles. “Wh... wh... what is your name?” asked Asari in a stutter. “Woramanami,” replied Woramanami softly. “Wh... what?”

“Woramanami.” “Mine’s Asari.” After some conversation took place, after one knew the origin of the other, Asari asked Woramanami to live together.

“Live together?” asked Woramanami. “Yes, we’d better live together,” replied Asari. “Where?” “We’ll have to find a place.”

Woramanami gladly accepted Asari’s wish. They then left, but no definite direction or place to go. As they reached Bayoman Cave, they stopped to rest.

“Would you agree to living in this cave?” asked Asari. “I would,” answered Woramanami “Alright, we shall live in this cave.”

Ever since, they lived in Bayoman Cave. Every day they ate fruits and leaves around the cave. Day by day, Asari and Woramanami grew up. Within them, the instinct of love, compassion, and affection to each other grew. Later, based on the directions from God, they united themselves in marriage. Their marriage was gifted with a boy they named Sikowai. God was so loving and caring for His creations. He introduced them to sago palms. Since then, the Asaris no longer ate leaves and fruits around the cave.

Every day Asari would toil in the sago field. He'd leave in the morning and return in the afternoon. As for Woramami, she remained in the cave to nurse for Sikowai and prepare meals for her husband, Asari. Asari was a tall and hefty man, no wonder he had an enormous strength. He worked dilligently and tirelessly. Being lazy was not his cup of tea. In his spare time, during the time when he didn't work in the sago field, he'd spend his time to catch fish in the river. As time passed, Sikowai grew up and became a man. He became an obedient son to his parents. Every day, if it wasn't helping his father in the field, he would help his mother. At one morning Asari didn't go to the field. He went to River Papuma to go fishing. Sikowai swapped place with his father in the field.

That noon, when he worked on the sago field, Sikowai suddenly received words that his father had caught a big-sized *bia garu*, a kind of fish, at the upperside of River Papuma. The Bia garu's name was Royam. Sikowai hurriedly left the field. He soon went to see his father in the upperside of River Papuma. "Father..., father..., father..." Sikowai called his father.

Sikowai's father turned around. He was surprised to see that his son had come.

"Why did you come here?" asked Asari. "I just heard that you caught a bia garu," answered Sikowai. "Where have you heard that I've caught bia garu from?"

“From the people in the field beside ours.” “Alright, help me to pull this bia garu.”

They pulled the bia garu to the cave. As they arrived at the cave, Sikowai cut the fish. Then his mother cooked it. But her husband suddenly stopped her.

“Don’t cook the bia garu just yet,” said her husband.

“Why did you prevent mother from cooking it, Father?” asked Sikowai.

“The bia garu might be poisonous.” “Is there any poisonous bia garu?” asked his wife. “You bet there is,” replied her husband shortly.

“How do we know if this bia garu is poisonous or not?” asked Sikowai.

“Well, if you want to know if this one’s poisonous or not, you could feed a piece of that bia garu off to dogs,” his father commanded.

Sikowai followed suit. He fed some dogs with a piece of the bia garu. It turned out that after eating the bia garu flesh, the dogs died. It seemed that Asari’s warning had been too late. Sikowai’s mother had almost finished cooking the bia garu, and the smoke from the cooked flesh had spread everywhere. The people living around the Bayoman cave could also smelled it. They asked to

each other, where the smell had come from. “Wow, what is this smell?” asked one of them.

“I have no idea. I’ve been smelling this for quite a while. It smells delicious,” replied another. “Yes, it smells so delicious. It seems like someone’s been roasting some meat,” said the first person.

“Yes, true. But where is the person who is roasting the meat?” asked another.

“I don’t know. The smoke came from a cave,” replied the first person.

“Yes, that’s where the smoke had come from. Let us go there,” said another.

“Wait. Let’s gather up some folks,” said another person.

In order to gather up some other folkmen, they beat a slit drum. Other people then came. The beater informed them that someone was roasting some meat nearby the cave. “Let us all go there.”

“Affirmative...!” said the folkmen in unison.

All of them went to the cave, where they think the smell of the cooked flesh had come from. There, they could see a young man roasting some meat.

“Oi, young man! What are you roasting?” asked one of them.

“Ah, this is the meat of bia garu,” answered Sikowai.

“It smells really delicious,” replied the person.

“It does smell delicious, but I’m afraid the meat isn’t edible,” said Sikowai.

“Don’t be such a stingy jerk,” said another. “I’m not, but…”

“Then what do you mean when you said it wasn’t edible,” that man interjected.

“Look at all these dogs. They died from eating the bia garu meat.”

“Don’t you lie to us,” said the man. “I’m not lying. If you don’t trust me, please have some of that bia garu.” Some of them believed that it was poisonous and deadly. They then asked some men to go home.

“Come on, let’s go home!” said one of them. “Alright!” answered another.

Meanwhile, some disbelievers kept on waiting till the bia garu meat was cooked. They soon ate it once it’s cooked. They edaciously ate the bia garu. Several minutes passed after they ate the meat, and they started to feel dizzy. They threw up and had seizures. Then they laid down lifeless. Dead bodies lied around the cave. Among those who died was a woman who had carried

her infant child. The baby was called Wowoi. That afternoon, a girl wanted to go to the river.

Her name was Windei. She came from Kampung Kaiwari, nearby Tanjung Raoreng. She was utterly surprised to find lifeless bodies had been lying around the cave. While observing those bodies, she saw an infant crying. Hesitantly, she headed towards the baby who started to cry even louder. Windei felt sorry the baby. She then carried her. The baby stopped crying at once. She cancelled her plan of going to the river and instead, she carried the baby home. Windei loved babies so much. She was thrilled with the idea of having a baby. She then cared for the baby and made the baby her foster child. Some years later, Wowoi had grown up. He'd turned into a handsome man with large posture. One day, Windei took Wowoi to go hunting in the woods. That day was bad for them. They couldn't get any animal. They finally rested under a shady tree. During their rest, Windei asked Wowoi whether he had found himself a future life-companion. Wowoi turned restless and said that the life-companion he'd always wanted was a woman of the similar nature to Windei, his foster mother. Windei was shock to hear that. Windei then advised him to pray to God and he did so. He prayed to ask God's guidance and help on the matter. By God's power, in an instant, Wowoi turned into a very beautiful bird-of-paradise. The bird flew away from Windei. Windei felt deep sadness for losing Wowoi who had now turned into a bird-of-paradise. But she then could let go.

Princess Youngest of the Lake

In Baliem Valley there was a very large lake. The water was very clear. In addition, the lake was home to many kinds of fish and the soil around the lake was very fertile. It was said that Baliem Valley was inhabited by a man named Humpa.

He lived alone. He was an incarnation of the gods. His lived off ferns and fish he found around Lake Baliem. Days kept on passing. Humpa was bored with the food he had been living off of. He wanted to eat other kinds of food.

“Eating ferns and fish really bored me. So what should I eat?” Humpa muttered to himself. From that moment on Humpa started to think about farming. He then cleared a plot of land. He’d go out in the morning, then went home after sunset. That’s how he lived his life since. One day, when Humpa was about to continue his work to clear the land, he was shocked to find his plot had already been planted with yams.

“Is this really my farm? Who had planted these yams in my farm?” said Humpa.

Humpa was curious. He wanted to know who had planted yams in his farm. He then made a plan. After an all-day work, he collected some dried grass around the lake.

As the night came, Humpa hid in the dried grass he had collected earlier. In the middle of the quiet night, he suddenly heard some people conferring and giggling cheerfully from the lake. He then peeked from behind the clump of dried grass. From where he was hiding, he could see five very beautiful princesses. The five princesses had each brought a bundle of yams. They then planted those yams in Humpa's farm. Humpa was very interested in the five princesses, especially Princess Youngest as she was the most beautiful. Thus, when he thought that the time was precise and he had a good opportunity, he soon captured Princess Youngest. Her four sisters ran back into the lake.

"This is the person who had planted yams in my farm. I've got you now and I won't let go," said Humpa. "Brother, let me go!" said Princess Youngest.

"No. I will not let you go." "Brother, let me go. My parents would come here to find me." "No. I won't let you go."

Princess Youngest wriggled. She tried to let go of Humpa's hands. She then transfigured herself into a serpent in the hope that Humpa would let her go. But Humpa held on to her tightly. She tried to do many other efforts to let go of the hands of Humpa to no avail. Finally, she returned to her original appearance, a very beautiful damsel.

Humpa fell in love with Princess Youngest. Humpa tried to tell her how he felt about her. Princess Youngest, agreed to Humpa's wish aversely. She then named him one condition.

“Alright, I concede and I will be your wife,” said Princess Youngest, “but before we're married, you'll have to agree the condition I'm naming.”

“What are the conditions I have to meet?” asked Humpa.

“It isn't a tough condition. I'm just asking you, after having children with you later, I must be allowed to return to my family.”

“Why do you have to return to your family?”

“Had I not return to my family, my parents would be enraged and the earth would crumble” “Alright, I concede myself to the condition you just named.”

Humpa then married Princess Youngest. They lived happily together as a family. Their lives were adorned with mutual understanding and thoughtfulness. They were hardworking farmers. Humpa's marriage to Princess Youngest was gifted with three children, one son and two daughters. One day, when Princess Youngest was heavy with their fourth child, She asked Humpa to hunt in the woods for nine days. Humpa followed his wife's craving. During the hunt, he managed to catch many animals. On the ninth day, Humpa returned home. His wife,

Princess Youngest had delivered a healthy and handsome baby boy. Several days later, Humpa threw a party that marked his gratitude to the birth of his son as well as a farewell for his wife who wished to return to her family in the lake. As promised, and for the benefit of the world and for the sake of his children's lives, Humpa let go of his wife. Finally, Humpa lived with his four children. They continued the life at Baliem Valley.

The Sun Never Meets the Moon

When dawn was about to break, a big, shiny star would rise in the east. The star, in the language of Southern Yapen was called *Makiwa Samur*. On the contrary, when the sun was about to set, a star would rise in the west. The star was called *Siwerere Numur*. It was said that Makiwa Samur was the son of Worai, or the sun, while Siwerere Numur was the daughter of Sembai, the moon. After they both grew up, they were bound in matrimony and had seven sons and seven daughters.

The seven daughters were the seven stars that composed a cluster. The cluster was called Mawini. Then, their seven sons were the seven stars comprised of three clusters. The first cluster, comprised the first three was called *Mambotaran*, or fishermen, the second cluster, comprised the second three was called *Mantawe*, or *Manapi*, or thief. Mambotaran and Mantawe loved the Mawinis very much. Every day they would send meat and fish to the Mawinis. In order to deliver those packages, they asked

Mananapi for help. Everytime he was asked to deliver meat and fish, Mananapi would always nick some of the package for himself. Thus, not all the Mawinis received the package. The Mambotaran then got suspicious about Mananapi. That night, one of the Mawinis came to Mambotaran's place. Her arrival there had not been intended to discuss about fish, but merely for a common visit. However, Mambotaran discussed the fish.

“How was the fish I sent for you every day?” asked Mambotaran.

“The delivery was received, but not enough for us all,” answered one of the Mawinis. “Not enough? I'd always sent many fish.”

“Really! Not everyone got them. Anyhow, we really thank you for that.”

“Then, from tomorrow, I'll send more fish.” “Thank you.”

The night grew late. The envoy of the Mawinis ask for her leave. As soon as she reached the house, she told everyone what had happened. But they didn't suspect or even accuse Mananapi for stealing fish. Several nights later, one of the Mawinis came to Mantawe's place. The visit was solely for a common hospitality purpose. Yet, during the visit, Mantawe asked about the meat.

“Every day I sent Mananapi to deliver meat to you,” said Mantawe.

“Oh yes, we thank you for that,” said one of the Mawinis.

“So, how about the meat? Everyone’s got equal share, right?”

“We all had meat, but in turn. If today I am receiving, the next day I won’t be getting. That how it is every day for the sake of equality.”

“Why so?” “The meat wasn’t enough for us all.”

“Alas, the meat I sent had always been in a great number.”

“That’s the fact. Anyhow, we really thank you for that.”

“Then Mananapi cheated. He must be reprimanded immediately.”

“Let it be, we will reprimand him later.”

After some discussion, one of the Mawinis ask for her leave. Upon getting home, she spoke with her sisters. Yet, the Mawinis didn’t make the matter a problem. They let Mananapi to nick fish and meat as a delivery wage. In contrast, Mambotaran and Mantawe couldn’t accept if Mananapi had nicked some meat and fish they had sent every day to the Mawinis. They wanted to teach Mananapi a lesson. One day, Mambotaran and Mantawe called Mananapi. When Mananapi arrived, they were climbing a coconut tree. From above, they dropped some coconuts into the river.

Then, they asked Mananapi to jump into the river. He did so without any knowledge that Mambotaran and Mantawe had previously put some kowoboi fish in the river. Mananapi was then

eaten by the kowoboi fish. Both their parents then heard that Mananapi had been eaten by the kowoboi fish. Their mother, Siwerere Numur was angry at their children. But their father, Makiwa Samur, forbade his wife from being angry at their children. Their dissent had caused them to separate. Siwerere Numur returned to her parent, Sembai, while Makiwa Samur returned to Worai. That's why, the sun never met the moon.

River Wabuayar

In one of the areas in Papua, there was a river called River Wabuayar. The river was very deep. The water was clear and potable. Everyday many people sailed from the lower to the upperside of the river. One time, there was a friction between some tribes in a village. The friction had caused one of the tribes to flee and set up a village on the banks of River Wabuayar that they called Worondaung Rorompi. The everyday life to the villagers of Worondaung Rorompi had been farming. Thanks to their toil in their farms, crops were abundant. However, they had difficulty to transport and sell their crops. The villagers then had an idea to make two large boats for transporting their crops and sell the crops to other villages. For days they worked together in making the boats. By the greatest morale, they finished making the two boats in no time. They then named the boats Weniki and Woray. One day, none of the villagers of Worondaung Rorompi

went for their trade. Weniki and Woray were belayed on the banks of River Wabuayar.

It was a time when the villagers both men and women went to work in their farms. As for their children, they were playing and joking around a courtyard. The fair-weathered day suddenly overwhelmed by dark clouds. But the kids kept on playing. They couldn't care less for the change in the weather. The change of weather was then followed by the arrival of a manatee-like creature to the village. Its arrival was followed by a very huge and high sea wave. The wave hit the houses of the villagers, as well as Weniki and Woray. After the wave hit the village, came a horrendous earthquake. The children ran in a helter-skelter as they cried out for help. Trees collapsed. Houses were devastated. The earth cracked. Many children died because they were hit by the earth from above them as the earthquake twisted the earth upside-down.

That afternoon, the villagers went home from their farms. They were really shocked by the event that struck their village.

The remaining children were wailing and they told the villagers of what had happened. That night, the remaining villagers of Worondaung Rorompi assembled. They raised question about who that manatee-like creature had really been. Why had it come to demolish their village.

“Perhaps the arrival of the creature had something to do with the making of the two boats,” said one of the villagers.

“Yes, maybe the creature was enraged for we haven’t held any thanksgiving ceremony for the completion of the two boats,” interjected another.

“If it were only about offering thanksgiving for the two boats, the critter would just smash the two boats,” said an elder villager.

“Then what was its point in destroying our village?” asked a younger villager.

“Let us all do some self-reflection on what had our mistakes really been that made the critter destroy our village,” asked an elder. At an instant they fell silent. They closed their eyes, attempted to concentrate and tried to remember mistakes they might have done. After a while, they opened their eyes. Then, one of the villagers expressed his opinion that the destruction had been caused by the sculptures on the two boats. Other villagers were shocked at hearing this opinion. They also confirmed that the cause of the destruction of the village had been the sculptures on both boats. Sculptures were a taboo as the lord of the sea, which they had called Wori Mambusi Woresi disliked sculptures.

After realizing the cause of destruction to their village, the villagers moved. Some moved to Kampung Randaway, while some others moved to Kampung Wadapi in South Yapen.

According to some sayings, the deck of the boat that sank in River Wabuayar still existed up to today, but in the form of a rock. The rock was called Rawui. The stern of the boat was located in Tanjung Aiwauref, Ambai Island, on the south of Adiwipi harbor. The rock was called ‘Wenikufui’ meaning ‘stern’.

The Origin of Salt Water in Yiwika

Yiwika Village was located in the eastern side of Wamena. In the village there lived a widow named Maben. According to some sayings of the ancestors, Maben was an incarnation of the gods and thus had magical power.

Maben loved her children very much, and her children loved her mutually. They had humble lives. All they need for their daily ends meet was *hipere*, a kind of yam and its leaves. Maben had this peculiarity that had never been performed by other people while feeding their children. Everytime she was about to feed her children, Maben had always rubbed the food to her eyes, making the food salted and delicious. One day, Maben’s children were playing with their friends. At playtime, they had some *hipere* with them, that had been salted with their mother’s tears. Those *hipere* were then split among the children. Friends of Maben’s children were amazed that the *hipere* they had had from Maben’s children had been salted and delicious. “Wow, the *hipere* from you is very delicious,” said one of the friends.

“Oh, come on, all hipere taste the same,” replied one of Maben’s child.

“No, not like the taste of the one you gave us.”

“What’s the difference from other hipere?”

“The hipere from you are salted and delicious. What’s the secret recipe?”

“There is no recipe.” “Then why is it salted and delicious?”

“Well, it tastes salty as it had been rubbed to my mother’s eyes.”

“Wow, your mother is great.”

The children became tired of playing. They returned to their homes. Friends of Maben’s children told their mother about the salted hipere.

“Mother, I was given a hipere by the children of Mother Maben. The hipere was salted and delicious,” said one of the children to his mother.

“Come on now, how can there be a salted and delicious hipere,” replied the mother of the child.

“That’s true, Mother. The hipere given by Mother Maben’s children were salted and delicious. They said that those hipere had been rubbed to Mother Maben’s eyes.”

The story about the salted and delicious hipere was quickly spread by the word of mouth. Finally, all mothers in Kampung Yiwika had heard about it. Since then, the wonder that Maben performed had spread all over Kampung Yiwika. Mothers of the village had come by the hundreds to Maben's house. They sought for help in making the food salty. Maben wholeheartedly tended to them all very well.

As they reached their houses, they enjoyed food that had been salted by Maben. At that moment, there was a woman who had come from Baliem. That woman told the story to the mothers in Baliem. The words about Maben's magical ability was then spread quickly even larger like wildfire. Women from as far as Baliem even came to Maben's house. They came to ask Maben's help to make the food they had brought salted. Still, Maben tended to them well. Maben grew older. Then finally, the end of her life was approaching. She must leave her beloved children behind. Maben was an incarnation of the gods. She knew everything that would befall her. Hence, when she was about to die, she brought together all her children beside a pond next to her house.

“My dear children. I implore you to maintain unity. Use the name Maben as the descendants of Maben shall always be in power in Yiwika territory.” That message came true. Up to present, descendants of Maben were still in power, as chieftains. After she

finished delivering her last words, Maben and her children were all crying. They cried because parting was inevitable. As they cried, their tears fell into the pond. Then, Maben washed her eyes with the water from the pond. Hence, the water of the pond became salty. The sobbing finally subsided.

Maben then asked her children to drink the water from the pond and said, “This is the token of my love to my children and grandchildren and to all villagers.”

Several days later Maben passed away. All villagers of Yiwika and Baliem came by the hundreds. They revered Maben’s kindness. In short, she might have passed away, but Maben was still revered, by her children and grandchildren, and even by the villagers of Yiwika and Baliem Valley.