

The Melanesians: Studies in their Anthropology and Folklore — Chapter X

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1891

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CHAPTER X.

SPIRITS.

BEINGS of a more or less distinctly spiritual nature, who at any rate never were men, have their place in the beliefs and in the stories of the Banks' Islands and the New Hebrides very much more than in the Solomon Islands. Koevasi, already mentioned, in Florida and Kahausibware in San Cristoval belong to the latter group, and may well be supposed to be the same personage under different names. Both were never human, yet in some way originators of the human race; both were female, both subjects of stories, not objects of worship. Kahausibware was a Hi'ona, a being of super-human character, dwelling on the mountain of Bauro, the central mass of San Cristoval, in the time of the infancy of the human race. She was a snake in outward form. There was in the same place a woman, a human being, the offspring in some way of Kahausibware. In those days all the fruits of the earth grew without labour, and all was of the best; it was Kahausibware who made men, pigs, and other animals, cocoa-nuts, fruit-trees, and all the food with which the island is now furnished, and death had not yet appeared. The woman one day went to her work, and left her infant in the house in charge of the spirit snake, who was so much annoyed by the screaming of the child that she coiled herself round it and strangled it. The mother came in

while the folds of the serpent's body were still wound round her child, and seizing an axe she began to chop the snake to pieces. As she chopped it asunder the parts came together again; but the snake at last could bear it no longer, and cried out weeping, 'I go, and who will help you now?' She made her way down to the sea accordingly, and her track became a watercourse. Leaving the island, she swam across first to Ugi, but from thence she could see the Bauro mountain; she went on further to Ulawa, and thence again to the south-east end of Malanta, but even there in clear weather she could see her former home. She crossed therefore to Marau, the south-east part of Guadalcanar nearest to San Cristoval, where the view of the mountain of Bauro is shut off by the nearer hills; there she rests till the present day. Since her departure all things in San Cristoval have deteriorated. Snakes upon the Bauro mountain are venerated as the progeny or representatives of Kahansibware; but they are simple snakes, and she was a Hi'ona, or Figona.

In the Banks' Islands and in the Northern New Hebrides the purely spiritual beings who are incorporeal are innumerable and unnamed. These are they whose representative form is generally a stone, who haunt the places that are sacred because of their presence, and who connect themselves with certain snakes, owls, sharks, and other creatures. There is in these things a medium of communication with them, and they are powerful to assist those who can approach them, and also to injure men, though they are not of a malignant nature. They are certainly believed to have no body; yet it is

impossible for the natives to conceive of them as entirely without form. Men, therefore, have declared that they have seen something, indistinct, with no definite outline, grey like dust, vanishing as soon as it was looked at, near a stone, and this must have been a spirit, *vui*, *wui*. But the same word is used to describe beings who are corporeal, and individually known and named. The natives will deny that these have bodies as men have, and assert that they are of the same nature as those which are incorporeal; but yet in the stories that are told about them they figure as men, though possessed of powers which men can never have. Consistency can hardly be expected; the native mind indeed aims high when it conceives a being which lives and thinks and knows and has power in nature, without a gross body or even form; but it fails when it comes to deal with an individual being of such a nature. Hence the stories represent a *vui* like a man with larger powers; a native seeing some new and wonderful foreign work will cry 'A *vui* made it!', and receiving home a boy grown up in absence cries '*Me vui gai!* He's a *vui* to be sure!'

It is remarkable again that of these superhuman beings who are called *vui* or *wui*; in the Banks' Islands and New Hebrides, and whose actions are like those of men, there seem to be two kinds or orders. Qat in the Banks' Islands stories and Tagaro in the New Hebrides stories move like heroes or demigods amidst a lesser folk of dwarfs and trolls as full of mysterious magic power as they are, but comparatively rude and easily deceived. These lingered in

the islands when Qat and his brothers and Tagaro and his brothers left them; they have been seen of late in human form, smaller than the native people, darker, and with long straight hair. Marawa, the friend of Qat, was one of these. A man living in Vanua Lava but a few years ago, named Manlepei, going to the river side in early morning, saw a little man with long hanging hair, and followed him up the valley in which the river runs, till they came to a narrow gorge closed by a rock. The *vui* rapped upon this with his hand and it opened to him; and as Manlepei followed close behind, it shut again upon them both. They were in a cave which was the *vui*'s house. He said that he was Marawa, and that he would appear again to the man if he would go back to the village and bring him money. Manlepei prospered ever after through Marawa's aid, and he made no secret of the source of his prosperity; he was always ready to receive money from his neighbours on Marawa's behalf, and to procure for them a share in his good will. It is not long either since a female *vui* with a child was seen in Saddle Island, close to the house of a man who had often found a fine yam laid for him on the seat beside his door, and had observed that his money-bag was still full after he had paid a debt. There was a woman living a few years ago in Mota whose father was a *vui*. Popular stories shewed how these beings were believed to be at hand in the affairs of men. A woman working in her garden heard a voice from the fruit of a gourd asking her for food; when she pulled up a caladium or dug a yam another immediately came into its place; but when she listened to another *vui* playing on his

panpipe, the first in his jealousy conveyed away the garden and all. In these stories, and no doubt in common belief, there was a certain confusion between these spirits and ghosts of the departed.

Some *vui*, spiritual beings, yet in some way corporeal, figure strangely in the stories of Mota as *Nopitu*, and of Motlav, in another form of the same word, as *Dembit*. There is often a difficulty in understanding what is told about them, because the name *Nopitu* is given both to the spirit and to the person possessed by the spirit, who performs wonders by the power and in the name of the *Nopitu* who possesses him. Such a one would call himself *Nopitu*; rather, speaking of himself, will say not 'I,' but 'we two,' meaning the *Nopitu* in him and himself, or 'we' when he is possessed by many. He would dance at a festival, such as a *kolekole*, as no man not possessed by a *Nopitu* could dance. He would scratch himself, his arm or his head, and new money not yet strung would fall from his fingers; Vetpepewu told me that he had seen money fall from a *Nopitu* at a *kolekole*—bags full. One would shake himself on a mat and unstrung money would pour down into it. He would take a cocoa-nut to drink, and the bystanders would hear money pouring out instead of the liquor, and rattling against his teeth, and he would spit it up upon the ground. Tursal has seen at Mota a woman vomit native money—a *Nopitu* possessed by such a spirit. To obtain the favour of the *Nopitu* men would offer, *oololo*, as at a sacrifice, to the man possessed; would give him a red yam and almonds; he

would eat the yam raw, and be heard crunching money with his teeth. If a young cocoa-nut was offered he would open the eye and drink, and then give it back full of money. But a Nopitu would also manifest itself in a different manner. A party would be sitting round an evening fire, and one of them would hear a voice as if proceeding from his thigh, saying, 'Here am I, give me some food, I am hungry.' He would roast a little red yam, and when it was done fold it in the corner of the mat on which he was sitting. In a little while it would be gone, and then the Nopitu would begin to talk and sing in a voice so small and clear and sweet, that once heard it never could be forgotten; but it sang the ordinary Mota songs, while the men drummed an accompaniment for it. Then it would say, 'I am going;' they would call it, and it was gone. Then a woman would feel it come to her, and sit upon her knee; she would hear it cry 'Mother! Mother!' She would know it, and carry it in a mat upon her back like an infant. Sometimes a woman would hear a Nopitu say 'Mother, I am coming to you,' and she would feel the spirit entering into her, and it would be born afterwards as an ordinary child. Such a one, named Rongoloa, was not long ago still living at Motlav. The Nopitu, like other spirits, were the familiars only of those who knew them, and these were often women. If a man wished to know and become known to a Nopitu, he gave money to some woman who knew those spirits, and then one would come to him.

The place of Qat in the popular beliefs of the Banks' Islands was so high and so conspicuous that when the people first became known to Europeans it was supposed that he was their god, the supreme creator of men and pigs and food. It is certain that he was believed to have made things in another sense from that in which men could be said to make them. To the present day a mother chides a sleepy, fractious child, or one crying with hunger, with the words, 'Do you think you are going to die? Don't you know that Qat made you so?' If a pig comes indoors to sleep in bad weather, the man who drives it out says to it, 'Qat made you to stay outside.' These are not serious sayings; but it was believed that Qat had made some creatures and fixed the natural condition of things in the world. The regular courses of the seasons are ascribed to him, the calm months from September to December, when the *un*, Palolo sea-worm, comes, the yearly blow, and the high tide in the month *wotgoro*; but irregular rains, winds and calms are put to the account of the men who could influence other *vui* spirits so as to produce them. The name of Qat is given also to remarkable objects and effects in nature; when fish die in the sea from excessive heat of the sun, Qat is said to have poisoned them; a kind of fungus is his basket, a fungia coral is his dish, the sulphur at the volcanic vents in Vanua Lava is his sauce, a beam of light shining through the roof in the dusty air is his spear; and the flying shadow of a solitary cloud over the sea is the shadow of Qat. With all this it is impossible to take Qat very seriously or to allow him divine rank. He is certainly not the lord of spirits. He is the hero of

story-tellers, the ideal character of a good-natured people who profoundly believe in magic and greatly admire adroitness and success in the use of it; Qat himself is good-natured, only playfully mischievous, and thoroughly enjoys the exercise of his wonderful powers^[1]. When he is said to create he is adding only to the furniture of the world in which he was born, where there were already houses and canoes, weapons, ornaments, products of cultivated gardens and of such arts of life as the natives possessed when they were first visited by Europeans. It is difficult for the story-tellers to keep him distinct from ordinary men, though they always insist that he was a *vui*; and though he certainly never was a man, the people of the place where he was born in Vanua Lava, Alo Sepere, claim him as their ancestor.

It would be in vain to look for a connected history of Qat from his birth to his disappearance; he is the central figure of a cycle of stories which vary in different parts of the islands of the Banks' group. All agree that he was born in Vanua Lava, and that finally he departed from the world. There are no doubt many of his feats and adventures which the natives have kept to themselves. The story which follows is translated, with additions from other sources, from the Mota of the late native Deacon Edward Wogale, himself of the Sepere stock.

The Story of Qat. Qat was not without a beginning, but he had a mother whose name was Qatgoro (otherwise Iro Ul), and this mother was a stone that burst asunder and brought

him forth. He had no father, and he was born on the road. He grew up and talked at once. He asked his mother what his name was, saying that if he had a father or an uncle on his mother's side, one of them would name him; then he gave himself the name of Qat. He had brothers also. The first was Tangaro Gilagilala, Tangaro the Wise, who understood all things, and could instruct the rest; the second was Tangaro Loloqong, Tangaro the Fool, who was ignorant of everything, and behaved like a fool; the others were Tangaro Siria, Tangaro Nolas, Tangaro Nokalato, Tangaro Noav, Tangaro Nopatau, Tangaro Noau, Tangaro Nomatig, Tangaro Novunue, Tangaro Novlog; eleven of them, all Tangaro, twelve in all with Qat. The names of the last nine are made up of the names of the leaves of trees and plants, Nettle-leaf, Bread-fruit-leaf, Bamboo-leaf, Cocoa-nut-leaf, Umbrella-palm-leaf, added to Tangaro, which is no doubt the same with the Tagaro of the New Hebrides and the Tangaroa of the Polynesians. These all grew up as soon as they were born, and they took up their abode in the village Alo Sepere, where their mother, turned into a stone, may yet be seen. There Qat began to make things, men, pigs, trees, rocks, as the fancy took him. But when he had made all sorts of things he still knew not how to make night, and the daytime was always light. Then said his brothers to him, 'Hallo! Qat, this is not at all pleasant, here is nothing but day; can't you do something for us?' Then, seeking what he could do with the daylight, he heard that there was night at Vava, in the Torres Islands; so he took a pig and tied it, and put it into his canoe, and sailed over to Vava, where he

bought night, *qong*, from I Qong, Night, who lived there. Others say that he paddled to the foot of the sky, to buy night from Night, and that Night blackened his eyebrows, and showed him sleep that evening, and taught him in the morning how to make the dawn. Qat returned to his brothers with the knowledge of night, and with a fowl and other birds, to give notice of the time for the return of light. So he bade them prepare themselves bed-places; and they platted cocoa-nut fronds and spread them in the house. Then for the first time they saw the sun moving and sinking to the west, and called 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; 'this 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^[2]; the light over which the night had spread itself shone forth again, and Oat's brothers awoke. After this he occupied himself again in making things.

According to 'the story told at Lakona, in Santa Maria, Qat and Marawa (another *vui* who here corresponds to the Supwe of Maewo and Araga) dwelt in their place at Matan, near to the mountain Garat, where the volcanic fires still

smoulder. They two made men in this way. Qat cut wood of dracæna-trees into shape; he formed legs, arms, trunks, heads, and added ears and eyes; then he fitted part to part, and six days he worked about it. After this he fixed the time of six days for them to come to life. Three days he hid them away, and three days he worked to give them life. He brought them forth and set them up before his face; then he danced to them and saw that they moved a little; he beat the drum for them, and saw that they moved more than before. Thus he beguiled them into life, so that they could stand of themselves. Then he divided them, setting each male by himself and giving him a female, and he called the two husband and wife. Three women he made, and three men. But Marawa made his of another tree, the *tavisoviso*; he worked at them six days also, and set them up, and beat the drum for them, and gave them life as Qat had done for his. But when he saw them move he dug a pit, covered the bottom of it with cocoa-nut fronds, and buried his men and women in it for six days. Then when he scraped off the earth with his hands to view them, he found them all rotten and stinking; and this was the origin of death among men.

According to the story as told in Mota, Qat made men and pigs at first in the same form, but on his brothers remonstrating with him on the sameness of his creatures, he beat down the pigs to go on all fours and made men walk upright. Man was made of clay, the red clay from the marshy riverside at Vanua Lava. The first woman was Iro Vilgale. Qat took rods and rings of supple twigs and

fashioned her as they make the tall hats for the *qatu*, binding on the rings to the rods, and covering all over with the spathes of sago-palms: hence her name from *vil* to bind, and *gale* to deceive. When all was finished he saw a smile, and then he knew that she was a living woman.

Qat had, however, a wife, a female *vui*, Iro Lei by name, but he had no children. His brothers, who had no wives of their own, envied him the possession of the beautiful Ho Lei, as well as of his excellent canoe, and were always conspiring to get both into their own hands. When his work of creation was completed, Qat proposed to his brothers that they should cut canoes for themselves, and they began to work, each choosing a different kind of tree. Qat cut down a large tree well suited for a canoe, and worked secretly every day, but made no progress in his work; every day when he returned to work he found the wood that he had chopped away replaced, and the tree made solid again. At length one evening when he had finished his day's work he lay down to watch, making himself small, and covering himself with a large chip which he drew away from the rest and hid. Presently he saw a little old man with long white hair creep out of the ground and begin to replace the chips, each in the place from which it had been cut, till the tree trunk was almost whole again. But there was one defective place to which the chip belonged which Qat had hidden, and the old man began to search for it, and Qat watched. After a while he saw it and advanced to take it; but Qat leapt up from under it, lifting up his shell axe to cut him down. But

Marawa, the spider, another very powerful *vui*, for this was he, entreated Qat, 'Ah, friend, don't kill me, and I will make your canoe all right again;' and he worked at it, and soon finished it with his nails^[3]. When all the canoes were finished, Qat bade his brothers launch their own, and as each was launched he lifted his hand, and one by one they sank. Then Qat and Marawa appeared in the one that they had made, paddling swiftly about, to the astonishment of the brothers, who had not known that Qat had even begun to work. Having amused himself with their mortification, he recovered their canoes for them in the night. After this his brothers tried with many deceits to destroy Qat, so that they might possess themselves of his wife and his 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 Eo 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. On another occasion they cut half through the bough of a fruit-tree, and persuaded Qat to go out for the nuts. When he fell as the branch broke, and as they thought was killed, Marawa again saved him; and when they ran to seize his wife, they found him lying with his head upon her lap. Qat was himself always ready to play tricks on his brothers, but not in malice. One moonlight night he induced them to go

and shoot flying foxes, and as they were going covered himself with boards, and flew up into a pandanus-tree and hung there like a bat. His brothers saw him, shot at him, and hit him. He spat out blood upon the ground, and they, making sure that he was wounded, mounted one after another into the tree to take the bat. As each one shot and climbed after him he flew off, and returned to hang again. When all had shot and climbed up he flew home, took out the arrows which had stuck into his covering of boards, and hung them up in the *gamal*. When his brothers returned he asked them what sport they had; and when they told how they had shot and hit a wonderful bat, he made them look at the arrows and judge whose they were. Iro Lei took her part in these tricks. One day when Qat and his brothers were sailing in their canoes they saw a woman on a point of rock, who called each of them as he came near to come and have some of her food. Each as he drew near and saw that she was an old woman rejected her offer; but Qat came up and took her into his canoe. They had rejected his much-coveted wife, for this was Ro Lei in disguise.

Again they consulted how they might destroy him, and determined to entrap him while snaring birds. They prepared each one for himself his place in a nutmeg-tree, each in succession further and further from the village, and the tree for Qat much further away than all. Then they took Qat out and shewed him his place. Qat mounted into his tree, and as soon as he was busy with his snares his brother nearest to him descended from his own place, ran beneath

the tree where Qat was sitting, and said, 'My nutmeg, swell!' The nutmeg-tree instantly grew so large in the trunk that Qat's arms could never clasp it, and all its boughs and branches equally swelled out. But Qat did not at first discover this, because he was busy setting his snares; his brother who had laid the spell upon the nutmeg-tree ran back, collecting the others as he went into the village; they seized and carried off Ro Lei, dragged down the canoe into the sea, and paddled off at once. The island had already sunk out of their sight when they blew their shell trumpet to let Qat know that they were gone. When he heard it he knew what had happened, and would have followed them, but the size of the swelled branches of the nutmeg-tree made it impossible for him to descend; he tried and tried in vain, and then lifted up his voice and wept. His friend Marawa, the Spider, heard his cries, and came to ask him what was the matter. 'I can't get down,' said he; 'my brothers have played me this trick.' 'Down with you,' said Marawa, whose hair was exceedingly long and loose; and he sent up his hair to Qat, who descended by it and ran into the village. There he found the rollers of his canoe alone remaining, and sought his wife in vain, for his brothers had taken off his wife and his canoe to be their own. Then Qat went inside his house, and took his cock's-tail plume, and his string of the smallest shell-money, his red earth, and his shell hatchet, and asked his mother for his banana fruit. 'They have plucked them all,' she answered, 'except these little ones at the end of the bunch.' 'Pluck them all off,' said Qat. Then he took a cocoa-nut-shell bottle and stowed all his

things and his food within it, made himself small and took his seat within it, and bade his mother count three waves, and at the fourth small wave to throw it into the sea. So Qat floated on and on in the bottle till he came up to the canoe in which his brothers were, for they had not yet reached land. Then he floated along before the bow of the canoe, and where he drifted they were forced to follow. By-and-by he took one of his bananas and ate it, and threw the skin into the sea where the canoe would come along. His brothers saw it, and remarked that it was like those bananas of Qat's that they had taken; they enquired among themselves who had been eating a banana, and when all denied, Tangaro the Wise spoke out: 'You fellows,' said he, 'it is Qat who has eaten this banana, and has thrown the skin of it here for us, to give us notice that he is not dead, but that he has escaped and is following us.' But the rest of them would not listen to him, declaring that Qat was dead. The same happened again when he threw out for them another banana skin. After this they saw the bottle itself in which Qat was floating, close up to the canoe, and one of them took it up, thinking that it was a good cocoa-nut, but when he smelt it and found the smell bad, he threw it away again. This they did one after another, except Tangaro the Wise, who did not happen to observe it. Then dat floated quickly to the shore of Maewo, and emerged from his bottle; he colours his hair with the red earth, binds his small shell-money round his head, sticks his cock's-tail plume in his hair, takes his seat on the top of a male pandanus-tree on the beach, and there he sits and waits for his brothers to

come to land who were still in the canoe. Presently they came through the reef and up to the shore, and then they looked up and saw him sitting in the pandanus, and enquired one of another who it was sitting up there. 'It is Qat,' said Tangaro the Wise; but his brothers argued that he could not have made his way thither, seeing that he was already dead. 'That is Qat, and no mistake,' said Tangaro the Wise; for he knew better than his brothers about this and all other things. So they brought their canoe to land, but had no need to haul it up, for Qat made the rocks to rise and bear it high and dry. Qat leaped down upon them with his axe, and hewed the canoe to pieces for them with this song,—'Chop, chop the canoe; whose canoe is it? Marawa's canoe. My brothers tricked me about twisting a string—swell nutmeg-tree—and draw the snare. I had one canoe, my canoe slipped off from me.' So he chopped the canoe to pieces before their face. After this he made friends with them, and bade them live in harmony together.

Another remarkable series of adventures were Qat's encounters with Qasavara. This was a *vui*, very strong, a great fighter, tyrant and cannibal, who dwelt in the island which was the home of Qat and his brothers. One day the brothers went to bathe, and found floating down the stream a fruit of the Tahitian chestnut, a *make*. The others took it up one after another and rejected it, thinking it was not good, but Qat took it and found it good, and gave it to his mother to cook. Each of the brothers as he returned from bathing went to their mother for food. She had nothing but

Qat's *make*, and they each took a bit of it; Tangaro the Fool finished it. Qat sent them to get some more, and following up the stream down which this fruit had floated they came upon the tree. They climbed upon it to gather the chestnuts, and Tangaro the Fool dropped one upon the house of Qasavara, over which the branches hung. Out came the ogre in a rage, seized and killed the brothers, and put them in his food-chest. Qat waited five days, then took his bow and arrows and shell hatchet and went in search. Following the stream he found the tree, and divining what had happened, brought out Qasavara by dropping a *make* on his house. They fought, and Qat killed Qasavara; then, searching for his brothers, he found their bones in the food-chest. He revived them by blowing through a reed into their mouths, and bidding them, if they were his brothers, laugh. Another adventure not very consistent with this is thus narrated. Qasavara falling in with Qat and his brothers invited them to his village, and made a fire in his oven for them. When it was evening he told them that they were to sleep by themselves in his *gamal*; but they, knowing that they would be killed, were exceedingly afraid. Night fell and they were very sleepy, and Qat called them to come to bed. He rapped asunder with his knuckles one of the rafters of the *gamal*, and they all got inside and slept. In the middle of the night Qasavara and his men took clubs and bows and came to kill Qat's party, but not finding them in the sleeping places went back disappointed. At the approach of day the cock crew, and Qat awoke his brothers, bidding them crawl out at once, lest they should be seen leaving the rafter by daylight. So

they came out; and when it was clear day Qasavara and his men running to the *gamal* found Qat and his brothers chatting together. 'Where did you sleep?' asked they. All of them answered that they had slept in the place appointed for them; but Tangaro the Fool cried out, 'We slept in this rafter here,' to the great indignation of his brothers. Qasavara's party again as the night drew on took counsel how they might kill them in the rafter; but that night Qat rapped a side post with his knuckles, it opened and they slept within it. Qasavara's party came in the night and smashed the rafter, found no one there, and again retired. Next morning again they came into the *gamal* and found Qat and his brothers sitting unconcerned; and again Tangaro the Fool confessed they had been sleeping in the side post. Next night again Qat opened the great main post and they slept in it, and again Qasavara came and smashed the side post, and found no one there. Tangaro the Fool again made known their retreat, though he had been warned and scolded by his brothers. Qasavara now determined to try another course, and to kill them as they were sitting at a feast; that night Qat opened the ridge pole with a rap and they all slept in it. Knowing what was intended, Qat made his preparations to save his brothers by planting a casuarina-tree; and he gave them his instructions what they were to do. 'When they are getting the food ready,' he said, 'wash your hands with the salt-water in the bamboo water-vessels till they are empty; and then when they are looking for salt-water, and wanting some one to go and fill the vessels, two of you are to offer to go; and two are to go at once; and when you get some

way off smash the bamboo vessels on the ground, and climb up into the casuarina-tree. All of you are to do this.' They all agreed, and did as they were bid. Then, when the oven was all covered in, Qasavara's men cried out 'Hallo! there is no salt-water! who will fetch some?' 'We two,' said two of Qat's brothers; and they went, and smashed the water-vessels and climbed into the casuarina-tree. Qasavara's men waited for them till they were tired, and then asked some others to go; two more of Qat's brothers went, and smashed the vessels and climbed into the tree. So it went on till all his brothers were in the tree, and Qat alone was left beside the oven with Qasavara and his men. Then as they opened the oven Qat sat with a large handful of food-bags beside the oven, and as they were taking out the food Qasavara struck at Qat with his club and missed him. Qat leapt away from him to the other side of the oven, and taking up food from within it cried, 'This for my brother, this for my mate,' and stowed it in the bags. Qasavara leapt across after him, struck at him and missed him again; and Qat again jumped across, took up food with the same cry, and stowed it in his bags. So it went on till all the food in the oven was taken, and all the bags were full. Then Qat rose and ran to his brothers, and Qasavara after him, hitting at him with his club and missing him as he ran, chasing him till he reached his brothers. Then Qat jumped away from him into the tree, and Qasavara climbed after him. Qat's brothers were gathered together on the tree top, and Qat climbed to them, and there they sat still, for they could climb no higher. Then Qasavara climbed close to them, and stretched out his club

at arm's length to strike them; but Qat cried out 'My casuarina, lengthen!' So the casuarina elongated itself between Qat's party and Qasavara, and left him far below. But Qasavara climbed after them again, and again came close to them; and again Qat cried, 'Lengthen, my casuarina!' and again the tree lengthening itself carried Qat and his brothers away from Qasavara. So it went on till the tree top reached the sky. Then said Qat, 'Bend down, my casuarina!' and the tree bent its top down to Tatgan, and they all one after another got down to the ground there, and Qat the last of them. And as he reached the ground he held fast on to the top of the casuarina and waited before letting it go; and Qasavara followed down after them and reached the end. Then cried Qat, 'Now I revenge myself.' 'Ah, Qat!' cried Qasavara, 'do me no harm; take me kindly for one of your household, and I will work for you.' 'No, indeed,' said Qat, 'but I will revenge myself for the mischief you have done me.' So he let go the tip of the casuarina-tree, and the tree sprang back and flipped off Qasavara, and his head knocked against the sky, and he fell back upon the earth; and there he lay at length upon his face, and turned into a stone. And now they offer sacrifices at that stone for valour; if any one desires to be valiant and strong in fighting, he offers at that stone, which they say is Qasavara^[4].

The stone apparently is not at Tatgan in Vanua Lava, where it should be; so they say it is in Gaua; but it is agreed that Qat and his brothers took up their abode at Tatgan. It was, however, from Gaua that the story makes Qat to have taken

his departure from the world. Where now in the centre of that island is the great lake, the Tas, there was formerly a great plain covered with forest. Qat cut himself a large canoe there out of one of the largest trees. While making it he was often ridiculed by his brothers, and asked how he would ever get so large a canoe to the sea. He answered always that they would see by-and-by. When the canoe was finished he took inside it his wife and brothers, collected the living creatures of the island, even those so small as ants, and shut himself with them inside the canoe, to which he had made a covering. Then came a deluge of rain; the great hollow of the island became full of water, which burst through the surrounding hills where now descends the great waterfall of Gaua. The canoe tore a channel for itself out into the sea and disappeared. The people believed that the best of everything was taken from the islands when Qat so left them, and they looked forward to his return. When for the first time Bishop Patteson and his companions went ashore at Mota, some of the natives now living remember that it was said that Qat and his brothers were returned. Some years after that a small trading vessel ran on the reef at Gaua, and was lost. The old people, seeing her apparently standing in to the channel of the waterfall stream, cried out that Qat was come again, and that his canoe knew her own way home. It is likely now that the story will be told of eight persons in the canoe; but it is certain that the story is older than any knowledge of Noah's ark among the people.

It is very probable that Lata, who is said by the people of Santa Cruz to have made men and animals, is regarded by them as Qat was regarded by the people of the Banks' Islands; and Tinota is a *duka* of the same kind with Lata. A story which is told of Natei, now the chief man at Nelua in Santa Cruz, shews a belief also in such beings as the Banks' islanders believed to dwell with them in their islands, and called *vui*. The story is doubtless much older than Natei, as the similar story of Manlepei in Vanua Lava was doubtless told of some other man, and by some other man of himself, long before his time. The present younger generation at Santa Cruz seeing Natei a great man, and taking it of course that his greatness came by supernatural assistance, tell this story of him. When he was a young man, they say, he was following the upward course of a narrow valley looking for birds to make feather-money, and advanced far inland into the forest. A person met him and asked him who he was, and he answered that he was a man. To Natei's like enquiry the same answer was made. This person then took him by a very good path up the valley, which narrowed into a ravine. This opened again into a space in which were good gardens and a village. The people there enquired of Natei where he lived, and promised him that they would visit him at Nelua in five days; then he returned. Five days after the people of Nelua saw some people coming to their village, whom they took to be men from some inland place, and enquiring for Natei. His house was shewn to them and they entered it, and were never seen again. When he arrived and went into his house he found it hung round with feather-money brought

to him by his visitors. It was known then that these were not mere men, and it was remembered that they had long, straight hair. After this people would give Natei money and other things to obtain the favour of his friends, with whom he still kept up communication, and from that time he has thriven and risen in the world.

The nearest of the Banks' Islands to the New Hebrides is Merlav, Star Island, and there Qat and his brothers are the subjects of the stories common in the rest of the group. The northernmost of the New Hebrides and nearest to Merlav is Maewo, Aurora, and there Qat, though not unknown, is not recognised as a spirit, but Tagaro takes his place. Qatu they said was a great man of old times, very high in the *suqe*, as men used to be and are no longer now. But Tagaro was a *wui*. Of any *wui* the belief in Maewo was that he had no bodily form; any old man there would so describe one. Yet the stories of Tagaro, who was a *wui*, deal with him as the stories of the Banks' Islands deal with Qat. Of the brothers of Tagaro nothing is to be told, but his companion was Suqe-matua, who in all things was contrary to him. 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. Tagaro lived at Mambarambara, and particularly at Hombio, not far from Tanoriki. He was not born there, but there he lived, made his canoe, built his house and his *gamal*, and created and raised his food. His

life was full of wonders; his cocoa-nuts increased as he ate them; dry nuts out of which he scooped the meat filled up again. Finally Tagaro became angry because some one stole his pig, and went off to Mamalu, no one knows where; he turned the island upside down, and went off eastwards in his canoe from the east coast of the island, taking with him the best of everything, and never to return. He put out the fire, but threw back a fire-stick; his shell trumpet lies on the beach in the form of a rock; Lepers' Island is his canoe. His place at Hombio is very sacred; his yams still remain there, and trail over a *gamal* called the *gamal dam*, the yam *gamal*. There is also one *wui*, Gaviga, and some say another, who rules over the dead; but the multitude of the purely spiritual, incorporeal beings that are called *wui* belong to the sacred stones. In Araga, Whitsuntide Island, immediately south of Maewo, Tagaro has ten brothers, besides Suqe, who accompanies and thwarts him. Tagaro came down from heaven, made men and other things, and went back again to heaven. Suqe belonged to the earth; his head was forked, therefore he had two thoughts in it. Whatever Tagaro did or made was right, Suqe was always wrong; he would have men die only for five days; he wanted to have six nights to one day; he planted the scooped meat of the yam, not the rind. Tagaro sent him to a place where is a bottomless chasm, somewhere inland in Araga, where he rules over the ghosts of the dead. Tagaro when on earth, though a *wui*, had a human form, with superhuman power. He made the plain country by treading the ground with his feet; where he did not tread are the hills.

He had no wife or children of his own kind, but he became the father of a boy on earth. The boy kept asking his mother who his father was, and was told that he was in heaven. Then he must needs go to heaven to see his father, and his mother made him a bow and an arrow of an *ere*, a flowering reed. He shot up and hit the sky; his *ere* turned into something like the aerial root of a banyan, up which the two climbed to heaven. There they found Tagaro sitting in a *salite*-tree, and fashioning images of himself out of the fruit. One of these he threw to the boy, who took it to his mother. She recognised the features, and told the boy it was his father. Tagaro consented to go back with them; but as he descended he cut the line above them and below himself, and went back to heaven, while they came down to Atambulu, the original seat of men in that island.

There are also many *wui*, all connected with stones and sacred places, whose names are only known to those who have access to them. These also may be seen, in rain or towards nightfall, and they give men food. When they appear they have long hair, sometimes long nails, and wear an old *malo* waist-cloth. But these appear to be confused with the wild mountain creatures in human form, of whom tales are told in all the islands; for one that Tapera saw not long ago was a Sarivanua of the hills, standing in the rain by a banyan-tree, with bananas in his hand. He was like a man with small legs; when spoken to he did not answer, and when struck he did not feel. The multitude of *wui*, whose

stones and haunts are sacred, are unknown by name, and have no form of body.

In Omba, Lepers' Island, a spirit, *vui*, is thus defined: spirits are immortal; have bodies, but invisible; are like men, but do not eat and drink, and can be seen only by the dead. But there are others also that appear in bodily shape. Some are known by name, of whom the most remarkable are Nggelevu, who presides over the dead, and Tagaro and his brothers or companions. Suqe is not known in all parts of the island; his place is perhaps supplied by Tagaro-lawua, who answers also to Tangaro-loloqong in the Banks' Island stories. It was Tagaro who made fruit-trees, food, pigs, and lastly men, and he is still invisibly active in human affairs, and therefore invoked in sickness and all difficulties. Tagaro-lawua, the Big, was a boaster and incapable; Tagaro-mbiti, the Little, was exceedingly knowing and powerful; if Tagaro is spoken of it is Tagaro-mbiti who is meant. As Qat is represented by Tagaro-mbiti, so Merambuto, also a *vui*, answers to Qasavara. He, like the other, tried to catch Tagaro's party by night and kill them, but Tagaro made them all sleep in a shell. Next morning Tagaro-lawua let out the secret, and Tagaro-mbiti made them sleep elsewhere. All the stones that are sacred are connected with Tagaro, though other spirits also are concerned; all charms have their power from the name of Tagaro in them. There are besides, as in the neighbouring islands, spiritual beings, *vui*, not of the same order as Tagaro. They are superhuman in nature and in power, and

they can be seen. There is a man still living who one day followed his two wives down to the beach, and noticed there that some cocoa-nuts had been stolen from a heap he had made. Following footsteps he found two female *vui*, who said they were hungry. He promised them food and brought it to them—four baskets-full. One of the women was beautiful, the other full of sores. They asked him which he would have, and he answered that he would take them both. Thereupon each gave him a stone full of *mana*, one to get him ten barrow-pigs, the other for ten sows; and they promised always to help him to get pigs, that he might mount to greatness in the Suqe. These women were *vui*, whose power lay in pigs; nevertheless, to this day, when the man's wives go down to the beach for their fishing, they find fish caught and lying ready for them. It is well worthy of notice that Merambuto and his fellows are represented not only as to a certain extent mischievous and unfriendly, but also easily deceived and ignorant. This appears clearly in the story of Merambuto and Tagaro-mbiti in the tree, where Merambuto did not know and dreaded as something unknown the conch-shell trumpet, as a Motlav story also represents a *vui* as afraid of the sound of a drum. On the side of Lepers' Island which is nearest to Araga the story of Suqe is told, and he is represented as always in the wrong, though he shares the work of creation with Tagaro. They two made the land, and the things upon it; when they made the trees the fruit of Tagaro's was good for food, but Suqe's bitter; when they made men, Tagaro said they should walk upright on two legs, Suqe that they should go like pigs;

Suqe wanted to have men sleep in the trunks of sago-palms, Tagaro said that they should work and dwell in houses; so they always disagreed, and the word of Tagaro stood. It was Tagaro also who went to Maewo and brought back night in a shell. When he let it out and darkness crept over the sky, men wept and beat their houses. Tagaro is represented also as the father of ten sons, of whom Tagaro-mbiti, the Little, was the last, and exceedingly small. His brothers went out to work, but he stayed at home with a sore on his leg. They planted the leaves of the edible caladium, the top shoot of the banana, the vine of the yam; but when they were gone he took the crown of the caladium, the suckers of the banana, the rind of the yam, and planted them. His brothers scolded him for idleness, not knowing what he had done; but when the season came round and they had nothing to eat, he shewed them his garden full of abundant food. It was Tagaro also (but Qatu in the Maewo story) who married the winged woman—a Banewono-wono or Vinmara, Web-wing or Dove-skin—from heaven. This was not exactly a spirit, *vui*, but one of a party of women with webbed wings like those of bats. These women flew down from heaven 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 the 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.

Beings called Tavogivogi must be classed as spirits: they are certainly not human beings, and correspond to the mysterious snakes called *mae*, which in neighbouring islands are believed to assume the form of men. A Tavogivogi is not thought ever to have the appearance of a snake; one of them appears in the form of a youth or woman, in order to entice one of the opposite sex, and the young man or woman who yields to the seduction dies. There is no outward sign of the real character of the Tavogivogi, but the test is to ask the name of a tree, and a wrong answer will shew that there is deceit. Successful or not the Tavogivogi suddenly disappears, 'like a bird,' but in the form of a bird or other creature. The young man goes home and sickens; he remembers the sudden disappearance, knows what has befallen him, and never recovers. The name means 'changeling,' from the word, in the Banks' Islands *wog*, to change the form.

1. [↑] One can hardly help observing the absence of obscenity and ferocity from these stories. Obscene tales, or parts of tales, no doubt are told where they are acceptable, but they do not make any considerable part of the commonly repeated legend.

2. ↑ Hence the expressions, *o maran me teve*, the morning has cut, and *o mera ti lamasag*, the dawn strikes upon the sky, *mera* being a common word for red.
 3. ↑ Hence, when iron was seen in the form of nails, it was called at Mota Marawa's finger-nails, *pis Marawa*, and *pismarawa* is now a widely accepted name for nails.
 4. ↑ As Qasavara fell from heaven the women in their fright held their hands above their heads, but the men held theirs before their breasts; consequently from that time forth men grow bald and the breasts of women protrude.
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