

Manwarhichi and the Whale—A True Story

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Note: In olden times people were punished by being set adrift in a canoe with no paddle. They were given fish and taro and coconuts and towed out about five miles past the reef and abandoned.

One time this happened to a young boy named Manwarhichi. The men who towed him out did not want him to survive so they broke up his canoe. As he was about to drown, he grabbed his outrigger and started to swim towards the island. Soon a bird flew up and landed on his head. Since he knew a lot of magic from his father, he caught the bird and made it call a shark. The shark came but his skin was too rough for the boy to ride on so he sent it away and made the bird call a whale. When the whale came, the boy climbed on it, still carrying the bird and they set off toward the island.

It was late afternoon when they finally approached the reef and saw a man in a canoe headed out toward them. This man watched what he thought was a big canoe suddenly disappear leaving a boy holding a bird in the water.

Manwarhichi called the man over, and as they were paddling toward the island, he asked “What was that thing you were riding on?”

“That was my canoe, my friend whose name is whale.”

As soon as they got to the beach the man ran to tell Manwarhichi’s father that his son had survived his punishment. The father made a flower ring for his son’s head and went to his canoe house to wait for him.

When the boy came, his father put the flowers on his head, took the bird from him and they killed it and ate it.

Manwarhichi’s Catholic name is Felipe and he is now living in Eang in Koror. He is about 80 years old.

Note: He died many years ago. Peter W. Black, 2005.

From the Fishing Lore of Tobi. Peter W. Black 1968, 2017. <http://www.friendsoftobi.org/tobithings/fishing/fishinglore/fishingloreattobiisland.htm>

The Fishing Lore of Tobi Island

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