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SOME PONAPEAN PROVERBS

BY SAUL H. RIESENBERG AND J. L. FISCHER

PONAPE is a high island in the Eastern Carolines and is the third largest land mass in Micronesia, following Guam in the Marianas and Babelthau in the Palaus. It has been subject to foreign contact for over a century and in the last seventy years has had four successive foreign regimes: Spanish, German, Japanese, and now American. The people have been Christianized and engage in copra production for cash with which to buy Western clothes and other imported goods, but they still retain their language and many of their old customs and traditions. Present population is about 7,000, of whom perhaps 2,000 are immigrants from other islands in the Carolines.

The senior author collected proverbs while on Ponape, during the year 1947, under the Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology sponsored by the U. S. Navy and the Pacific Science Board. The junior author collected proverbs during the years 1951 and 1952, while employed by the Trust Territory Government as, first, Anthropologist and, later, Island Affairs Officer for Ponape District.

Riesenberg is most indebted to William Helgenberger of Matolenim district, son of a German father and Ponapean mother, while Fischer has received the most assistance from the *Naniken* of Net district, Joseph Iriarte. Both informants possess unusual intelligence and verbal facility. They were very helpful both in the number of proverbs they contributed and in the explanations they provided.

Proverbs do not seem to be unusually abundant on Ponape, although many more than are cited could probably be found. Twelve of the proverbs given here were collected independently by both authors. Fischer noted that the most any of his informants could cite on the spur of the moment was three, even when he followed up with such promptings as "Aren't there some more proverbs in which birds or fish are involved?" or "Aren't there proverbs about parents and children? . . . clansmates? . . . old people?" etc. Moreover, most of the informants would cite at least one or two of a certain half-dozen which appear to come easily to mind (Nos. 1, 9, 31, 32, 45, and 52). Some informants could recall none by themselves, although they recognized examples given to them.

We have tried to restrict this article to true proverbs and proverbial phrases. This is a refinement of classification not made by the Ponapeans themselves. Ponapeans most commonly refer to proverbs as *lepin kahs*.¹ This term has a broader meaning than proverb and might best be translated as 'saying,' for it is also used for any short

¹ Spelling of Ponapean is in the newly adopted standard orthography which eliminates diacritical marks. *h* signifies a prolongation of the preceding vowel. Vowels have continental values with an additional digraph, *oa*, intermediate between *o* and *a*. In the speech of many there is a seventh vowel phoneme intermediate between *a* and *e* for which the digraph *æ* has been proposed. We have written this as *e* also, since many speakers fail to distinguish these two sounds. Consonants are roughly as in English except that *d* corresponds to English *t*, while Ponapean *t* is a retroflex alveolar stop.

stereotyped figure of speech as well as certain legendary quotations. Some of these quotations seem to be used solely as mnemonic devices for recalling the legends or lore to which they are attached, and are not applied to situations outside the legend. Others are attached to legends but may be used independently also, such as Nos. 31, 45, and 52. Very probably, there are legendary connections which we have not heard for some of the other proverbs. Many legends in their complete form are considered valuable secrets by the Ponapeans and are by no means universally known. Some informants knew one of the three proverbs just mentioned but denied knowing the attached legend.

Below we have grouped the proverbs into several categories by subject matter: I. The nature of men and women; II. Love affairs and marriage; III. Clan and family; IV. Speech and gossip; V. Chiefs and commoners; VI. Difficult situations and fallibility; and VII. Miscellaneous. Some of the proverbs could just as easily have been put in another category. We have commented at varying length on each proverb and, where a legend was given in connection, we have given a summary or, in one case, a full translation.

I. THE NATURE OF MEN AND WOMEN

1. *Kiden menihke-ieu ohl* 'A man is a piece of shellfish garbage.'

The 'piece of shellfish garbage' refers to the empty shell left after its contents are consumed. The shell is of no importance and may be thrown away any place. Likewise, in the old days, a man was supposed to be a warrior and prepare himself to die in any place or in any fashion.

2. *Mweli-ieu ohl*, or *Mwelin-wol* 'A man is a boulder' or 'A boulder of a man.'

A boulder is heavy and hard to move. When a man decides things he and his thoughts should be hard to move like a boulder.

3. *Tehn keleu marahra* '(He is) a light hibiscus leaf.'

Leaves of the wild hibiscus tree are fairly large, light, and flutter in the wind. This phrase is applied in derision to a man whose opinions are fickle or who cannot follow through on things he has started.

4. *Peluhs men ohl* 'A man is a brown dove.'

The bird named *peluhs* eats a bit of fruit, leaves it, and flies to another fruit. The idea is that a man, in contrast to women and children, should eat very sparingly. In wartime, if a man was speared in the stomach, its contents would not spill out and he would not be shamed. Also, in war, a slain man's stomach might be cut open and its contents examined, and he would be disgraced if it were full. Even today, the few men who are reputed to eat much are a constant subject of discussion and ridicule.

5. *Ohl kin mwengemwengeieng lekelek* 'Men eat to be cut.'

'Being cut' refers to the former practice of semi-castration or removal of one testicle, to which all young men were formerly supposed to submit. The meaning of the proverb is that the care a man receives from his family is justified by this ritual. The practice was outlawed about forty years ago, but there are still a number of older men alive who underwent the operation.

This may be considered as one example of a general extreme attitude that men should be prepared to undergo pain without objection or complaint. This attitude

still strongly influences the action of Ponapean men. In 1950, a man from Kiti district died of burns he reportedly received at a feast when his grass skirt caught fire and was not put out in time. According to the custom which he is said to have followed, a man in such a public situation must let others put out the fire. He may not even call the matter to anyone's attention, much less perform any such cowardly and undignified measure as rolling on the ground to extinguish the flames.

6. *Lih kin mwengemwengeieng neitik* 'Women eat to bear children.'

This proverb is paired with the preceding one to contrast the roles of women and men.

7. *Sengen wol ete lahl* 'The crying of men is babble.'

Men are not supposed to weep in public but, when they are deeply disturbed and feel moved to weep, they may indulge in a stream of dramatic, irresponsible chatter instead. Such chatter is regarded neutrally if there is sufficient provocation: it is not admired but neither is it censured as actual crying would be.

8. *Sepwil ieu ohl*, or *Sepwilin wol* 'One fall for a man' or 'The fall of a man.'

The informant giving this proverb noted especially that while a woman might have many falls a man could have but one.

The word for 'fall' here is a special word which is used for the accidental falling to the floor of a chief's food at feasts. By custom, the chief relinquishes such fallen food, even if it is undamaged. Likewise, according to this proverb, a man whose reputation is once stained has lost his good name forever.

Ponapeans, especially men, are very sensitive about their public reputation. Nevertheless, there are prominent Ponapean men who have several stains on their reputations which are the subject of wide-spread gossip, but which do not seem to lower their status seriously.

9. *Tikin wol* 'Small (but a) man.'

This phrase is used both to praise and to warn against a man who is not impressive physically but still considers himself the equal of any man and acts accordingly. Ponapean men are normally very modest and humble before others of equal or higher rank. However, if a man fails to observe these standards of behavior toward an equal, the other will feel insulted and may feel inspired to retaliate by verbal insult, fighting, sorcery, etc. This phrase may, therefore, be used to warn a man to behave with proper modesty before all men regardless of how insignificant some may appear.

10. *Mengihngihn oapwoat ahk* 'The core of a mangrove log.'

This phrase refers to old men. In some kinds of mangrove a hard core is left after the softer outer wood has rotted away. Likewise, old men are supposed to have been purified of the laziness, fickleness, and ignorance of youth.

11. *Nennenin sarau kommwoad* 'Fierceness is (like) the quietness of the barracuda.'

The barracuda reputedly hangs in the water like a log and suddenly dashes forth to attack its prey. Similarly, the bravest or most ferocious men do not boast of their intentions but take whatever action is needed decisively and without unnecessary talk at the proper time.

12. *Sohte ohl kin musekihla mehkot ahm pil pwurehng kangala* 'No man vomits up something and swallows it down again.'

This is said to mean that once a man has said something he should not 'swallow' his words and so reverse himself.

13. *Mwenge reirei lih* 'Women eat much.'

This is in contrast to men. People laugh at men who are gross eaters and say 'You are not a real man.'

14. *Sohte ohl kin sansara mwahl* 'No man opens his mouth idly.'

Loud laughter and much conversation are feminine traits and signs in a man that he is a coward.

15. *Kousoren Wenik* 'Games of Wenik.'

Kousor is a violent but friendly game. *Wenik* is the old geographical name for U and Net together. The phrase refers to the fratricidal wars between these formerly united districts. These wars were looked upon simply as manly games, and reconciliation followed.

II. LOVE AFFAIRS AND MARRIAGE

16. *Uhn sehu ieu pwopwoud* 'Marriage is like a clump of cane.'

In growing sugar cane for display at feasts, the Ponapeans tie a clump of it together and fasten it to a tree, a house post, or other support, so that the cane will grow as long as possible without breaking. Cane over twenty feet long is common. This proverb admonishes that a married couple must be kept together and allowed to grow without breaking, with the same sort of care that is needed to grow long sugar cane.

17. *Sohte me kin pwekada nah seri ned?* 'Aren't there those who lift up their children and sniff?'

This is a rhetorical question. It is a mark of affection for a parent to lift up a small baby and sniff his genitals. However, certain other relatives, namely, children of any male clansmate, are also called 'children' in the Ponapean kinship terminology. It is considered improper for sexual relations to take place between some of these classificatory 'children' and 'parents' although they do take place illicitly. In case a man is accused of having improper relations with a classificatory daughter he could make this retort.

18. *Perek soh lipwe seu* 'A clansman (leaves) no traces on the mat.'

By 'mat' is meant a sleeping mat. A man would normally let a visiting clansman sleep in his house without fear or worry. Likewise, it is implied that the clansman may sleep with the man's wife, who is likened to a sleeping mat, without harm. A man might have an affair with a clansman's wife but he would 'leave no trace'—that is, he would not try to steal her away or make her dissatisfied with her husband.

19. *Lipwen sile mwahu (saut)* 'Our clansmen (leave) the mark of a good adze.'

This proverb likens a woman to a canoe. A clansman will do no harm if he comes to help one hew out a canoe, nor will he do harm if he has an affair with one's wife. On the contrary, clan solidarity may even be aided by this. Non-clansmen, of course, have no concern with a man's canoe hewing or wives.

20. *Sohte pelen kot nahnahn Soun Kawad* 'There are no taboos (on) crossing the mountains of the *Soun Kawad* clan.'

Clan exogamy is the normal rule on Ponape. However, according to legend, the

Soun Kawad clan used to live up in the mountains in an isolated place and marry among themselves. This proverb is used to excuse an illicit love affair among two people of the same clan.

21. *Sohte pelen kot madau* 'There are no taboos on crossing the sea.'

This proverb is used for the same purpose as the preceding one. It appears to express the feeling that clan exogamy is not very important between geographically and genealogically remote clan members.

22. *Neitiķin Net Soķehs* or *Pwopwoudin Net Soķehs* 'Sokas [also spelled Jokaj, etc.] was born of Net' or 'Sokas (started from) a Net couple.'

The two versions of this proverb are said to have the same use as the two preceding proverbs, although the informant was not clear why. Perhaps it may be a further reference to the legendary endogamy of the *Soun Kawad* clan. According to legend, the *Soun Kawad* clan conquered Sokas district after it conquered Net.

23. *Sel omp lih* 'A woman is an *Ipomea gracilis* vine.'

Ipomea gracilis is a vine with weak runners which break easily. The bond of a woman with a man is weak; a man loves his children and blood relatives more than he does his wife.

24. *Se sohte pahn won nan pwoahr te ieu* 'We will not lie in only one grave.'

A man and wife should not be jealous of each other since, after all, they have two bodies and will be separated at death. This injunction is limited to liaisons with the spouse's clansmates.

25. *Tuhpene pohn ahlek pwoat*, or *Mwohdpene pohn ahlek pwoat* 'Meet on a single *Saccharum* reed' or 'Sit together on a single *Saccharum* reed.'

This saying refers to the relationship between a man and his wife's brother's wife; it can also be used as a kinship term. The two are supposed to behave like brother and sister; any incestuous behavior would break the reed.

III. CLAN AND FAMILY

26. *Selin peneinei sohte ķin ohla*, or *Selin pwopwoud ķin mwei, selin neitiķ soh* 'Family ties do not break' or 'The ties of marriage can part, not the ties of parentage.'

A man may love his wife, but after a child is born she sinks to second place. Husband and wife often separate, but children remain firmly bound to their parents.

27. *Tipwen ķih pirien* 'Brotherhood snaps like *ķih* wood.'

The *ķih* is an unidentified tree said to be common on the low islands. Its wood is said to be very hard and strong but when it snaps it breaks clean. According to the proverb, the relationship of brothers has the strength of *ķih* wood but once brothers become estranged it is completely and forever.

28. *Se ķin damasang saut, damehng samat* 'We stop being a canoe float for our clansmen, and become a canoe float for our father.'

The canoe float assists the canoe in keeping balance. According to this proverb, if compelled to make a choice, Ponapeans will leave their matrilineal clansmen and take the side of their fathers instead.

29. *Kahmahmen olen neitiķ* 'The dishonesty of a man with children.'

This phrase is used to describe a father who defends his child against charges which he refuses to consider impartially.

30. *Deidein pwilahk seu* 'Clans (have) the vengeance of the *pwilahk* fish.'

The *pwilahk* is a fish with sharp, stiff, knife-like rays on its tail. A person handling it carelessly will receive severe wounds. An entire clan is compared to this fish. If any member of the clan is touched, the clan as a whole will revenge the injury on the offender's clan.

IV. SPEECH AND GOSSIP

31. *Seri mi nan kapehd nokon rong wasa* 'Children in the womb also hear things.'

According to legend, there was once a High Chief of Net (one of the five main districts of Ponape) who did not want to have any sons. One day, while he was away, his wife bore a son. She did not want to kill the child, so she hid it and gave it to a woman to take to the island of Sapwitik (a small, formerly inhabited rocky island off Net) and raise there. They told the chief that a son had been born but had died. The boy grew up and knew without anyone telling him that his father was the High Chief of Net. He kept questioning his nurse who finally confirmed his belief. The boy then sailed to his father's place on a feast day, and on approaching shore failed to lower his sail in respect for the High Chief, in violation of custom. The boy wanted to show his father and the people who he was. (Chief's sons are given special privileges of familiarity with their father and his clan, although titles are inherited matrilineally). On reaching shore the people questioned him angrily. In reply, he identified himself to the gathering in a speech which included this proverb. The proverb itself appears to mean that children often hear more than we think, or more generally that 'walls have ears.'

Similar stories are also told of Isohkelekel and his son, and other legendary figures. Isohkelekel, according to legend, conquered Ponape and deposed the preceding Sau Deleur dynasty, rulers of all Ponape, whose seat of government was at the famous artificial islands of Nan Matol (or Nan Matal) on the reef off Matolenim district.

32. *Rongorong paina* 'Heard (at) the reef.'

Gossip is likened to the meaningless sound of the waves which is heard at the reef.

33. *Pilen pahn mweli (soupeidi)* 'Water under boulders (for the chiefs).'

Beneath the piles of basalt boulders at the foot of Ponapean cliffs there is often water flowing. Such water cannot be seen but, if one listens carefully, it may sometimes be heard gurgling softly below. Gossip, especially about the chiefs, is likened to this: it is not really anything to get excited about, since it is hidden from view, although its faint gurgling may occasionally come to notice.

There is perhaps an added meaning here. Springs which come from these piles of boulders have cool, clear water suitable for chiefs to drink. Perhaps the proverb also implies that gossip is an inevitable accompaniment of high position as is the privilege to receive the best of everything.

This proverb may be used by a commoner to excuse himself when a noble has caught him in a piece of malicious gossip.

V. CHIEFS AND COMMONERS

34. *Menin kasohr soupeidi* 'The chiefs make things vanish.'

The meaning of this is that the chiefs make nothing of disturbances among their subjects or to themselves, and the troubles, being overlooked, eventually disappear

of themselves. The chiefs are believed to be able to overlook or forgive things as insignificant which a less powerful person would feel obliged to challenge.

35. *Menin kao aramas* 'The commoners are destroyers.'

This and the previous item refer to the fact that commoners have base natures and make trouble by their hasty and selfish actions, but the chiefs ought to ignore offensive acts. These proverbs are quoted at feasts of atonement, whereupon the chief is obliged to forgive and accept reconciliation.

36. *Keleun-ieng soupeidi* 'A chief is a hibiscus in the wind.'

The wild hibiscus tree sends up tall, flexible shoots which bend easily in any direction. According to two informants, this proverb sets a standard of fairness for the chiefs, who are supposed to respond to the needs and requests of any of their subjects, just as the hibiscus tree bends with a wind coming from any direction. According to a more caustic informant, the proverb refers to the readiness of the chiefs to favor anyone who will bring them plenty of food at feasts, regardless of the other requirements of the situation.

37. *Kilang seupwa, soupeidi* 'See but don't say—the chiefs.'

The meaning of this is that whatever violation of custom a commoner finds a chief committing he should keep it to himself and not talk about it. A chief is theoretically exempt from penalties for breach of custom which might have formerly resulted in severe punishment, even death, to a commoner. This is a rule probably more honored in the breach than in observance, as gossip about the chiefs appears to be especially entertaining to the Ponapeans. It is true, however, that the people make less attempt to reform the chiefs than other people, and do not usually repeat gossip to a chief's face except to inform him about the iniquity of the person speaking the gossip.

38. *Kepindau pilen soupeidi* 'In the bottom of the channel (there is) the water of the chiefs.'

Formerly, large quantities of food and goods were given as tribute to the chiefs. It is said that there was supposed to be a constant flow of tribute at all times. Much of the tribute was brought by canoe through shallow channels in the mangrove swamps and the fringing reef. These channels are passable with ease only at high tide. The point of this proverb is that there's always enough water in the channels to bring food to the chiefs, even if the bottom is dry.

39. *Peden seupwur soupeidi* 'The chiefs are hollows of no return.'

The chiefs used to have considerable power to requisition the labor and goods of their subjects. This proverb expresses the resignation of the commoners to the insatiability of the chiefs. It is said ironically that under the old Sau Deleur dynasty (see explanation of No. 31) a man could not so much as catch a louse without having to offer it as tribute.

40. *Sakanakanen soupeidi* 'Wickedness of the chiefs.'

The meaning of this is that however wicked they may be they are still chiefs. There is an implied contrast between the wickedness of chiefs, which is excusable by virtue of their high position, and of commoners, which would bring punishment.

41. *Net en nemenem* 'Net (district) of gobbling.'

Nemenem is a derogatory word for eating, comparable to the German *fressen*.

This is a scurrilous saying against Net chiefs, who, it is said, give titles just to get food from the title-paying feasts.

42. *Meh-tik uhmas (kainene ie)* 'The younger stands in front (and goes directly there).'

This refers to the fact that junior subclans are sometimes in superior political positions to senior subclans of the same clan. It is also used to refer to cases where a man holds a higher title than his older brother. There is a belief expressed in some legends that younger brothers are generally more capable than older brothers and sometimes they assume the older brother's rightful position for this reason.

43. *Takain wel* 'Stone of the bush.'

In the old days, commoners could not drink kava by themselves, so they sometimes went into the bush to do it secretly. 'Stone' refers to the kava pounding stone.

VI. DIFFICULT SITUATIONS AND FALLIBILITY

44. *Se pel, se mehla; se seu pel, se pil mehlah te* 'We observe taboos and we die; we don't observe taboos and we still die.'

Under Ponapean custom, certain relatives are forbidden from caring for each other in sickness, most notably brothers and sisters, and clan members of opposite sex. When a person is considered to be near death, however, this saying may be invoked to loosen the taboos and permit a greater degree of intimacy. It is felt that the dying person will suffer nothing more for violating the taboo at this time.

45. *Men pihr nokon lo (Dewenikep)* or *Men pihr nokon lo (a ke alialu a kahpw sohte lo?)* 'Even birds were caught (at Dewenikep)' or 'Even flying birds get caught (and you walk and won't get caught?).'

This proverb in its fullest form is self-explanatory. It is used as a retort to another who has done one some injury. It is said that it refers to an episode in the legendary fall of the Sau Deleur dynasty at the hands of invaders from the East under a man named Isohkelekel (see also No. 31). As Isohkelekel's war canoe was approaching Ponape, a bird which had been perched on the mast flew off to warn the Sau Deleur of the invaders. However, one of Isohkelekel's lieutenants pursued the bird and caught it in his hands just before it reached the ruler. According to one version, the bird was caught at Dewenikep, the entrance to a small harbor in the reef adjacent to the artificial islands of Nan Matol, where the Sau Deleur and his court resided. Since he failed to receive the warning, the Sau Deleur greeted the foreigners as honored guests. The invaders used this opportunity to gain military information which they later put to good use when fighting broke out.

46. *Kadohdo mwirin wahr serek* or *Kadohdo mwirin mwomw-ohla* 'Following after a sailing canoe' or 'Following after an escaped fish.'

These are the equivalents of our crying over spilt milk.

47. *Men diar wihn, ned pwohn mehla* 'Wanting to find profit, smells the scent of death.'

A man said this of the crew of an Okinawan fishing ship who were caught poaching trochus shell on the reef and sentenced to prison. Listeners identified this as a *lepin kahs* 'saying.' It appears to be of post-contact manufacture, as it contains a derivative of the English word 'win.' (Some English words were taken into Ponapean in the nineteenth century from missionaries, traders, and sailors.)

48. *Lihk me pwohng a loahl soh* 'Outside it is night but not inside.'

This proverb refers to someone who is master of himself in a difficult situation.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS

49. *Kenen serehd mwenge (a ke pahn pil mehkilahr?)* 'Food is for parakeets to eat (and you are about to die from it?)'

This proverb encourages moderation in eating and recommends that people should emulate the eating habits of the parakeet, which is said to go about eating moderately and does not stay at one place and stuff itself.

50. *Imwin wahr* 'Ends of canoes.'

This refers to fast friends, the comparison being with canoes traveling in file, the bow of one canoe coming close to the stern of the canoe ahead.

51. *Wahn pehn eni* 'Fruit of the hands of the gods.'

This is a reference to breadfruit, which grow freely and require no care beyond the initial planting. Hence the crop is considered to be the gift of the gods and has no real prestige value, in great contrast to yams, which require much care every year.

52. *Seren mwahnakapw roht* 'A young man's light is darkness.'

Several informants said that this saying is used as a joke to hurry up someone who is looking for a flashlight. One older man said that it referred to the ability of youth to accomplish seemingly impossible tasks, such as seeing clearly in the dark. The saying also occurs in a rather gruesome legend given below in close translation of the native text, omitting only repetitions and a few mistakes in memory which the informant corrected by himself:

A Story about the Sting Ray

The Soulik of Na² sent to the Kiroun of Lehdau³ for some bananas to eat. He sent a family—a man and his child. They went and told the Kiroun of Lehdau of their errand for the Soulik of Na.

At the time they went there a pregnant woman had died. And the Kiroun of Lehdau simply gave them the body of this woman in a coconut frond basket. So the man and child took it and started to paddle away.

As they were paddling the child said he was hungry for bananas.

So the man said, "Take some but don't just pick from the largest hand of bananas; pick from the smallest hand."

So the child climbed to the basket and tried to pick some bananas, but was unable to for he was actually pulling on the breasts of the woman. So he told the man that he couldn't pick any; they were too tough.

So the man climbed forward to look at them and saw the woman who had just arisen to devour the child.⁴ The man then chased her and threw her into the water.

They paddled on to the island of Na and told this to the Soulik of Na.

And the Soulik of Na said, "I would like to have a fish called Queen of the Sea Bottom [sting ray] in my family to fulfill my anger!"

It is said that the people then looked toward the shallow water off Na and the water

² Na is a sand island on the reef beyond Matolenim Harbor. It was formerly inhabited permanently, but is no longer.

³ Lehdau is that part of Matolenim district adjacent to the main streams and estuaries emptying into Matolenim harbor.

⁴ Another informant said a giant clam was about to engulf the child.

was darkened with sting rays. The sand bottom no longer showed, being covered with the multitude of rays.

And the Soulik of Na told them to go and get the Kiroun of Lehdau. And they lined up in a column which stretched from Na into the mountains above Lehdau.

When they got there, the Kiroun of Lehdau was preparing to go to drink some kava. The sting rays had heard that there was a woman who lisped living in the house, so they sent a sting ray who lisped to call the Kiroun of Lehdau so that its voice would be the same as the woman's.

And when the sting ray called him, the Kiroun of Lehdau thought it was the woman who was calling him. Maybe the sting ray told him to be quick.

And the Kiroun of Lehdau said, "Wait a moment while I get my torch."

But the sting ray said, "Don't bother! 'A young man's light is darkness.' Just use the tips of your toes for a light."

So the Kiroun of Lehdau did not prepare a torch after all, but dashed out of the house and immediately slipped on the sting ray. The ray flipped over on top of the Kiroun of Lehdau and they all rolled and flipped him all the way to Na [i.e., flipping him from one to another in the line].

The rays then informed the Soulik of Na, and the Soulik of Na said, "Take him away and give him some land."⁵

And they took him away and simply stung him and stung him until he died and there was nothing left of his body.⁶

*University of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii*

*Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts*

⁵ This expression, which occurs also in another story in which sharks eat up a man who has offended their relative, seems to be equivalent to our slang expression, 'Give him the works.'

⁶ Other informants say that there is a deep place on the reef to this day which was made by the rays as they thrashed around stinging the Kiroun of Lehdau.