

**KAMANNIPAH, THE ANCESTOR OF ENGGANO
PEOPLE**
Kamannipah, Leluhur Orang Enggano

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KAMANNIPAH, THE ANCESTOR OF ENGGANO PEOPLE

The Big Rafts

It was a fine day. The sun shone brightly and the sea water was blue and clear. The white sands on the beach were greeted by the rolling waves, whose sound mixed with the cries of the seagulls. It was such a beautiful scene. However, the group of men could not enjoy such beauty. They were busy felling coconut trees and cutting mangroves. They did not fell randomly; instead, they selected only those trees which were old and strong. The felled trees were then freed from their fronds or twigs. Then, they dragged the logs to the beach and tied them into one set using ropes made from tree skins. It seemed that they were making a big raft. The finished raft was then placed upon another raft and tied to make a two-layer raft. The result was a very big raft. A man was giving orders and directions to the workers. He was well-built, his skin was tanned due to the intense heat of the sun. Apparently, he was the leader of the working group. Although he was the leader, he did not hesitate to help his team do their work. He continuously gave encouragement to them. When the sun came to its zenith, he ordered his men to take a rest because it was too hot to continue working. They had a rest near a spring shaded by the coconut leaves. Some roasted yams and coconut had been

prepared for their lunch. While eating, a man came to the leader. This man was one of those who had tied the rafts into one.

“What’s up, mate?” asked the leader.

“Excuse me, Sir. The rafts that we have made seem too big. I am afraid the ropes won’t be strong enough to hold,” said the man.

“Do you reckon?” asked the leader. The man nodded his head as a sign of confirmation.

“So what can we do? The raft can’t take the whole tribe,” said the leader.

“What if we make it into two, Sir?” said the man hesitatingly. The leader was not an arrogant leader who dictated everything to his people. He encouraged them to express their ideas for the benefits of the whole tribe. And he appreciated their ideas. However, this time, he had something bothering in his heart.

“You know, mate. The sea is not always calm. I am afraid that if the sea is stormy and rough, we will get split,” he explained.

“On the contrary, I am more concerned if we unite the rafts into one, Sir. In case a storm hits, the raft may get broken and all of us will be drowned,” argued the man. The leader was silent. He considered the proposal thoughtfully.

“If we divide the people into two, in case something unexpected happens, we may hope that at least one group will survive,” said the man softly.

“I hope all of us will survive, mate. But I can see your point. We’ll do it. Tell them we’ll make two rafts,” ordered the leader. The man smiled cheerfully. He was happy that his idea got an acceptance from their leader. He proposed the idea because he felt concerned with the welfare of his people. So he immediately told the workers that they would make two rafts. The leader rose giving commands. His people stood up and continued their work. Now they worked with more vigour so they could finish the big rafts sooner. The dusk came to them on their third day of working with its orange colour filling the horizon. They had finished the two big rafts. The group assigned to organize provisions had returned to the beach. They came with the provisions as much as they could carry. Evening came, followed by night. After taking a rest, they gathered to have a traditional ceremony. They intended to request for blessings from their ancestors and the Great Spirit. A sorcerer stepped forward with his face turning towards the sky. He carried a stick which had banana leaves on its edge. He wore a headband made of special leaves. He then chanted some invocations while raising his stick towards the sky. After some time, the sorcerer gave good news that the ancestors and the Great Spirit had bestowed their blessings upon them. They were happy

because the journey they were going to take had been blessed, so they ate and drank to their satisfaction.

Then the sorcerer sang “Kahino Dubahay” which meant “The Song of Ants”. One by one, the tribe started to dance along. The dancer who came next held the hips of the last person in the line. They danced in line around the fire. That night, they took their time to enjoy themselves because the next day they would leave the land for a long time.

Wading Across the Ocean

They were no sailors in the tribe. All of them had no experience sailing in the open sea. To them, the sea was like a great river.

They had no knowledge on the good time for going sailing. They just set out when everyone had woken up and got ready on board after loading their provisions. The two rafts set sail, or more precisely, let themselves be carried by the currents of the ocean. Their condition forced them to leave, and their faith and bravery had been their sails and oars. The Almighty seemed to be in their favour. The sky was clear and the sea was calm. Although the scorching sunlight made them thirsty, they were not worried, because they carried a lot of water. Besides, they had a special way for desalination. They also brought a lot of food: sweet potatoes, banana, and other food from plants. They got fish and sea foods from the sea. Some of them were good at diving, and

they caught fish with spears. Sometimes they ate sea birds because they also carried arrows to shoot the birds. The farther they sailed, the more they learnt from the sea. They got to know the sea current and how to find directions from the stars. But they could do nothing more. The tools they carried were not for sailing. Rowing against the currents was a tiresome work. The poles they used for steering the raft could no longer touch the bottom of the sea, so they could only submit to the treatment of the nature. The farther they were getting from the land, the more difficult they carried on. The sea birds appeared no more. The sea had been too deep to dive, while the fish were also bigger and wilder. They could just rely on the provisions they brought along. After several days, it seemed that their provisions would not suffice them. Occasional light storms had also tested their courage. Fortunately, the ropes from the tree skin became stronger as they got wet so that their rafts were still intact. Some of them had started to ask the question: For how long more would they reach their destination?

The leader and the other optimistic members convinced them that soon they would see land. They kept saying encouraging words that everyone should believe and cooperate to reach the destination safely. This way worked for a few days. The condition got worse as they ran out of their provisions. Floating for days without food had made many of them grow weaker. One of them had lost his patience. He encouraged himself to ask the leader.

“Is the journey still long, Sir?”

“Just be patient,” replied the leader.

“I can’t stand it any longer. We have been floating for days without food and a little amount of water. At least, tell us, how many more days are we going to be in this condition? We want to hear some promising news,” urged he. The leader was quiet, and the man was enraged.

“Tell me, you don’t have any idea, do you?” he shouted as he was about to leap onto the leader. Several people got hold of him and took him to the rear part of the raft. The man who proposed to split the raft came to the leader and asked, “Please don’t act like this, Sir. Give us some hope!” The leader took a long and deep breath.

“Let me communicate with the Great Spirit,” replied the leader. The leader went to the front part of the raft. His face was directed to the sky. His eyes closed and he started chanting some strange words. He tried to communicate with the Great Spirit. While he was chanting, dark clouds started to gather. A storm was imminent, but the leader carried on with his chants. It was true that the weather in the ocean changed easily. At a moment the sun shone brightly, but in a few seconds, it disappeared. Soon lightning flashed and thunder blasted. The winds blew hard and the waves started to swing the rafts, followed by a heavy rain.

The two rafts swayed from one side to the other. The people on board tried to get close to one another. They took hold of anything to prevent themselves thrown into the sea. Fear spread among them, would they be able to survive? The leader was still singing his chanting

“Is this the answer from the Great Spirit, a storm to finish us?” shouted the man who had wanted to whack the leader. The man who proposed the split was annoyed to hear him, but he could not do anything. In his hopelessness, he gazed at the far ocean. He caught sight of a shadow on the horizon.

His vision was blurred by the rain. He tried to wipe the water from his eyes to convince himself that what he saw was a shadow of an island.

“Land! I can see land!” he shouted so that everyone could hear. He also told the leader on the other raft. The leader who heard the shout stopped his chanting. He looked at the direction pointed by the man. He smiled.

“The Great Spirit doesn’t leave us, after all. He has heard our invocation. Come on, fellows! Row the raft to the island,” he commanded his men encouragingly. Hearing the command, the rowers of both rafts increased their efforts to row faster. They could not wait any longer to reach the island. But the storms were getting rougher. The two rafts were on different currents. The

more they rowed, the more they were separated, and at one point, they were separated altogether that those on the one raft could not see the others on the other raft. The leader shouted loudly.

Initially he could hear some distant reply mixed with the sound of thunder, but after some time, neither could he see sight nor hear voice from the other raft.

“Where are they?” asked one of them anxiously.

“We’ll meet them on the island,” assured the leader. Then he turned his attention to the direction of their raft. The water was getting shallower and more sharp rocks appeared. The waves were also wild, but they would not give up. They exerted themselves to reach the shore safely, and finally their efforts were rewarded. They managed to reach a bay and they immediately jumped ashore. They poured their hearts out in happiness. They prostrated and hugged one another. They named the island ‘Ekkepu Yanipah’, which meant ‘A stopping after a long sailing’.

Staying at Kinen Bay

The island was uninhabited, but the condition was very favourable. The sea provided various fish and sea foods. The land was also rich with various kinds of animals to hunt, various kinds of birds, and edible plants. There were no wild animals but sea crocodiles and small snakes. The tribe immediately felt at home. They decided to stay in the island. They named the bay where

they anchored their raft Teluk Kinen (Kinen Bay). They erected a *yump kakadie*, a high-tilted house with a round top which shaped like a dome of a minaret, for their leader. Around the *yump kakadie*, they built *yump kadiops*, houses for common people which were rectangular and had no walls. Their foods were anything edible, like yams, roots, and raw bananas. For side dishes, those who could hunt hunted for birds and small animals. Sometimes they also got fruits like *tero* fruits. Some of them went to the sea to catch fish and sea turtles. They also knew some edible sea weeds. The people of Teluk Kinen lived in abundance of provisions. Although they had been prosperous, the leader was still worried. Several fullmoons had passed, yet there was no news from the group on the other raft. His heart got divided. On one side, he was sure that the raft managed to survive from the storm and landed safely somewhere on the island. On the other side, he was anxious that the raft was drowned carrying all the people on it to the bottom of the sea. He summoned several young men of the tribe. They were not capable enough to be assigned to hunt, nor to catch fish. Their duties were only collecting foods while playing. During their games, the brave boys often went to new places around the island.

“Hey, boys! Come here, will you?!” he invited them from the stairs of his *yump*. The boys gathered.

“Now listen up to me! There have been three fullmoons since we separated from our brothers and sisters on the other raft. In my heart, I believe that they had landed somewhere on this island. So I want you to traverse this island for me. Find them,” said he.

“Yes, Sir,” they replied enthusiastically.

“Now, go!” said he.

So the boy dispersed while chatting. This was a challenging as well as an exciting task for them. They were always curious and liked to try new things or come to new places. That was why they were happy to traverse to the distant places beyond the tribe’s zone. Sometimes they even entered the forest and walked far along the coast. They also swam upstream to the upper course of the river. However, until one fullmoon passed, they had not seen any sign of the other group. Among the boys, there was one who was very skillful besides being smart and courageous. He was also very adroit. His tongue was as quick as his legs. Because of his superiority, he was regarded a leader by his comrades. Every day, this boy was asked to give a report on the outcome of their search, and every day he saw disappointment on the face of the leader. Today he gave a report again.

“We have been searching for two fullmoons already, Sir! We have traversed almost all parts of the island, from the edge of the mangrove forest to the the edge of the sea well and the hollow

rocks. We have entered the forest, and we have checked the streams of the river, but we haven't seen the sign of our brothers' existence," he reported. The leader became gloomy.

"We thank you for all your hard work, my boys. I really want to believe that our brothers have united with the Great Spirit. However, one part of my heart wants to be convinced that they are not on this island."

The leader paused for a moment, then asked, "Tell me, my boy! Is there any place that you haven't visited?"

"The only place that we haven't visited is the Ekohe Nanuuwa hill, Sir," explained the boy. The leader threw his look at Ekohe Nanuuwa hill, which was at a good distance beyond their village zone. They did not know much about the way to get there. The journey to the hill could be a dangerous one.

"I feel heavy in my heart to see you go there, my boys. I won't force you, but if any one of you is brave enough to go there, please go! Check Ekohe Nanuuwa hill to its peak!"

The boys dispersed. On the way home, they had a discussion. "Ekohe Nanuuwa hill is very far," muttered one of them. The other one said, "Honestly, I am scared to go there."

"But we have to help the leader," said the adroit boy. He was seconded by some other brave boys.

“If you want to go, please go, but we don’t want to put ourselves in danger,” said one of the boys representing the opposing view. The other boys added, “Besides, there’s a possibility that our brothers on the other raft have drowned.”

The adroit boy was furious, but he kept silent. In his heart, he was determined to take the journey to the hill the next day. Those who seconded him gave him a hug. They went home with a split agreement.

The Tsunami

There was a big earthquake the previous night. The tremor caused some parts of the *yomp kadiop* to collapse. But soon it was fixed in the morning.

Some of the tilts needed replacing, but with the spirit of cooperation, they soon finished the fixing even before the sun rose. The adroit boy had been ready. The earthquake of the previous night did not discourage him. He agreed to meet those who would go with him to Ekohe Nanuuwa hill that morning. They agreed to leave very early to be on the safe side. So he waited for his friends on the agreed spot, but until the sunshine warmed the sand, none of them turned up. He could figure out why none turned up. From the dawn, the sea started to ebb. Initially it was a few meters from the beach, but as the sun rose and got higher, the tide ebbed farther. The sea had turned into

something like a desert. Big fish flapped on the sands, some of them were even trapped on the coral basins. The people rushed to the shore to take as much as they could. The fish could be their provisions for weeks to come. His friends must have joined those people. The boy took a deep breath. He had to hurry, so he set out to take his journey. Soon he reached the border of their village.

His adroit legs stepped on the soil as if they had been very familiar with the surface of the path. His legs moved skilfully without any obstacles on the soft soil, swamps, and rocky grounds. He ran like winds passing the forest. He also knew some shortcuts in the forest. He acquired beneficial knowledge from his recent searches of the condition of the route he was taking.

It was still a long while before midday when he reached the foot of the hill, much sooner than he had expected. He took a quick rest on the bank of a small river from which he drank sufficiently. He believed that he could reach the hilltop before midday, so he continued his journey at once because he wanted to get home before the sun set. He was not very familiar with the path, so he had to be careful, but his experience so far had helped him much. He could still move adroitly among the tree roots and big rocks. He did not pay attention to the tweets of the birds and the natural beauty of the virgin Ekohe Nanuuwa hill. His hard work had paid as he reached the hilltop by the time the sun reached its zenith. From where he was, he could easily observe all directions. With

his remaining spirit, he tried to find any indication of the existence of the people on the other raft, but to no avail. 'Could they have been drowned?' He sat hopelessly imagining the uncomfortable situation when he had to give his report.

He threw his look at Teluk Kinen. He could see his village from this place, but suddenly he could see something horrible from where he was: big waves, very big waves, perhaps as high as tall coconut trees coming from the horizon! The waves swept all the places he had passed very quickly. He was stunned! His village was in a great danger. He hurriedly ran to warn the people in his village. While running, he never turned his look away from the direction of his village. However, no matter how fast he ran, he could not race against the big flood which had already swept his village and everything in it. He looked at his village in bewilderment. But then he immediately realized that he had to save himself. He ran back to the hilltop because the water also inundated the last place he had reached. The floods came one after the other, drowning everything they came to on the land of Enggano island. What remained was only Ekohe Nanuuwa hill. The boy reached the hilltop just in time. He was safe from the raging floods. He was crying as he looked at the strong currents around him. He cried until he got tired. When he finished crying, he shouted the names of his people, hoping anyone survived. He shouted and ran hither and thither like mad. Until night came, he

had not stopped shouting. Not a single voice replied him although his voice was drained.

Fatigue forced him to collapse to the ground. He fell asleep for quite a long time until he was awakened by rain. Then he realized how thirsty he was. He caught the rain water with his hands. His hungry stomach found no comforter. He did not know what to do, so he was just silent. The boy remained on the hilltop for several days. Rain accompanied him day and night. His body ached from coldness and sickness, but his spirit to survive kept him alive. For several days he had nothing to eat. For drinking, he even got water only from the rain that he could contain with coconut shell container. After some time, he started forgetting his pains. He had even forgotten whether he was still alive or already dead. He hugged the top of Ekohe Nanuuwa hill and dreamt that he was in the warmth of his mother's cradle.

The Three Shell Princesses

He had no idea how long he had slept when he woke up. The flood was ebbing away. The boy was in a very poor condition. His lips were dry and full of thrush, while his skin creased and his body turned blue due to coldness.

His eyes blackened because of sleeplessness and his body was very thin and weak due to hunger. After a long while, he realized that he had not eaten for days. He tried to rise, but his muscles

stiffened. He felt pain up to the bones. When he tried to stand, his legs were numb. For a moment he could not feel anything. His head was spinning, but he tried to be strong. When he regained consciousness, he started to move and walk. Hunger forced him to descend from where he had been. He dragged his feet in the muddy earth. He looked for something to eat, but as far as his eyes could see, everything around him got damp and rotten. He pulled out a brown *birah* yam, but the root had got rotten. He checked the fallen trees and he found the fruits of *tero*, but it was also decaying because it was immersed in water. The *melinjo* fruits were no different. Nothing could be eaten because they got soaked for too long in water. All became rotten right from the tips to the roots. His stomach ached, but he kept on walking. He still had a hope that he would find any of his people alive. Along the way, he picked up everything he could pick up, but nothing could be eaten. The land was dead. Finally, he reached the coast. He did not have sufficient tools to catch fish. He had been very weak, but he would not give up. He came to the sea chasm. He knew that in the rock hollows lived fish and other sea creatures which he could eat. That was the only option left, but how could he catch them?

In his fatigue and hopelessness, he picked *ahoa* wood and made it into a stick. He used the stick to stick through the rock gaps, hoping he could get something to eat exiting from the rocks, maybe crabs, maybe shrimps. He did it repeatedly, moving from this rock gap to that one, yet he got nothing. The only thing he got

was shell. He hit the shell with the *ahoa* stick. After three hits, the shell was broken, but it was empty. He was disappointed, but he did not give up. He left the *ahoa* stick. He took another wood, *ittora* to do the same with other holes. Perhaps with smaller but strong stick the fish would come out. He did with the *ittora* what he did with *ahoa*. He never ceased to hope that fish would come out. He found another shell, which he hit with the *ittora* stick until the shell broke, but again, he found nothing. His hope remained a hope. Had all the animals in the island been carried away by the currents?

He got very tired and felt a great loss. All his efforts had been in vain. He lay down on the sand, with a dry mouth, short breaths, tiredness, and hunger. The scorching sunlight burnt his skin. He closed his eyes and soon lost his consciousness, but barely audible, he heard a female voice.

“*Kamanippah!*”

The voice came from behind him, but he hesitated, ‘Could he have hallucinated?’

“*Kamanippah!*”

The voice called again. He turned his head. He caught the sight of a woman breaking a rock. Strangely, something came out of the broken rock. The woman fed him with the content of the rock which looked like a shell.

“*Kamanippah*,” she said.

The boy was confused. In his language, it sounded ‘*kah kamanippa*’ which meant ‘break it’. He knew all people of Teluk Kinen, but this woman was not among them.

“Who are you? Why are you here? And what did you break?” asked he.

“*Kamanippah*, I come from the shell that you had broken with the *ahoa* stick,” replied the woman.

“It doesn’t make sense that a human comes out from a shell. Do you belong to the people on the other raft?” asked him incredulously.

“No. I really came from the shell that you had broken with the *ahoa* stick, *Kamanippah*.”

He did not see any sign of lie in the eyes of the woman.

“Why do you call me *Kamanippah*?” asked he.

“You have broken the shell to take us out. You are the breaker, the *Kamanippah*,” replied the woman. Now he understood why she called her *Kamanippah*. “Well, you may call me *Kamanippah*. What is your name?” The woman shook her head. She had no name.

“*Kamanippah* has the right to give me a name,” said she.

The boy was silent. The woman treated him and talked to him respectfully.

“Well! Since you came out of a shell which I broke with an *ahoa* stick, your name shall be *Kaahoa*,” said the boy.

“Thank you, *Kamanippah*” said Kaahoa happily.

“If you come from the shell which I broke, what about the other shells?” he asked as if asking himself.

“I have no idea, *Kamanippah*,” replied Kaahoa.

Then *Kamanippah* asked Kaahoa to walk back on the coast that he had passed before. He hoped they would meet other people on the island. And indeed, before walking too far, they met another woman.

Kamanippah asked her, “Who are you? Where are you from?”

The woman turned her head and replied, “I come from the shell that you broke, *Kamanippah*.”

Like Kaahoa, this woman also had no name, and she came from a shell which he broke with a stick. Because he broke the shell with an *ittora* stick, he named her *Kaitora*. *Kamanippah* was very happy that now he was not alone. He had got friends on the

island. He invited Kaahoa and Kaitora to stick in the gaps of the rocks. Because there were only *arubi* wood, they used it to stick in the holes. They got more shells from the holes. They broke the shells one by one.

Miraculously, from a big shell which Kamanippah broke, another woman appeared, and he named her Kaarubi because she came from a shell which was broken with an *arubi* wood. Meanwhile, from the shells that Kaahoa and Kaitora broke, fish came out as their provisions, so they ate the fish heartily to their fill. Now the four of them were busy sticking in the gaps of the rocks and they found a lot of shells. They broke the shells and they found many kinds of foods. They repeated doing the same until night, but no more human came up. That night, Kamanippah slept soundly with full stomach while the three women slept on the sands protected by rocks. That was the best sleep that he had ever had after having such a hard and long suffering for the last few days.

Epilogue

The next day, Kamanippah took the three women to Teluk Kinen. The journey to Teluk Kinen was not easy. Along the way, there were so many trees scattering around. It was not easy to find the original Teluk Kinen, either. Some areas had changed much due to the flooding waves. But they eventually managed to find Teluk Kinen.

Kamanippah had been very familiar with every nook and cranny of Teluk Kinen. Although the village had totally been swept by the floods, he could still recognize it from the giant rock emerging from the sea. He knew it from the big *melinjo* tree which had been uprooted and from the surviving mangrove bush on one side of the bay. The only difference was there were no more houses. He did not find a single body of his people. He did not find any remaining member of his tribe, neither their *yumps*. Then Kamanippah prayed. He was not a sorcerer. He had never been taught how to communicate with the Great Spirit and the spirits of the ancestors. But he believed that the Great Spirit would hear him. After praying, Kamanippah took a big shell. He blew *kemiu* as a sign of condolence while Kaahoa, Kaitora, and Kaarubi danced following him. They danced for the members of the tribes who had passed away.

Kamanippah decided to settle there. He and the three shell princesses built a *yump kakadie* for himself. Then they built *yump kadiops* for Kaahoa, Kaitora, and Kaarubi. So they started a new community in Teluk Kinen. Because there were only four of them on the island, Kamanippah married all the three women. They lived happily and prosperously in Teluk Kinen with their big families. The children after them were named according to their mothers' names.

The children of Kaahoa were given family name of Kaahoa, and so were the children of Kaitora and Kaarubi respectively. Their descendants of today are known as Enggano people. They keep developing. Until today, they have been five original tribes: Kaahoa, Kaitora, Kaarubi, Kauno, and Kaaruba. That is the story of the ancestors of Enggano people.