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Ponapean Omens

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"red, white, and blue" lines. Or, if such a broadside never was, the chronology of the song followed a pattern of group A to group B (American) to group B (Scottish). In any case, the fused songs of the United States seem to derive from interchange between group A survivals and their descendants, the American "red, white, and blue" texts.

Beyond this tentative conclusion and my earlier remarks, I am prepared to say little. How old the "origin blue" chorus is, whether it is early broadside or more traditional matter, where the American broadside was created, and what relation the song has to Irish tradition,⁴⁵ are at present beyond my ken.

However, I do know that "Green Grows the Laurels" is a typical folk lyric offering typical, and at times insurmountable, difficulties to the scholar. Its study is fascinating, if inconclusive. But, let me stress again, the uncertainty of the results should not worry the student. From such inconclusiveness clarification may result, and, as many lyrics are reviewed to similar indecisive ends, perhaps some of the mysteries of this pretty well-ignored area of folklore will be solved.

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⁴⁵ See Boni, 1947, p. 174. Line 2 in Evans' broadside begins "In fair Dublin city. . . ." Also note Leach's Newfoundland text mentioned above. Although Leach's informant was of Irish stock, as are the others who sing his "green bushes" version, the use of "I hope" and of "red, white, and blue" colors makes it fairly certain that this text has been influenced by the American mainland tradition of the song.

PONAPEAN OMENS:—The following are some examples of omens (*keseu*) collected from several informants on Ponape, Eastern Carolines, during field work in 1947-48 (under auspices of the Pacific Science Board of the National Research Council and the Office of Naval Research). Almost any informant is capable of calling to mind a dozen or two of these beliefs without trouble, but women and old people are especially addicted to them. They vary somewhat from place to place on Ponape.

1. When a cat washes its face it will rain.
2. When a cat licks its paw you will catch many fish, or someone will give you fish.
3. When a *ketor* (a bird) sings repeatedly it will rain.
4. When a cow lows all day someone will die. (Also deer).
5. When a hunter dreams of blood, either his own or others, he will have a successful hunt. A fisherman who dreams this will catch many fish.
6. When steam or smoke escapes from around the edges of the earth oven (covered with leaves whose edges are weighted with stones), someone is going to come with meat, fish, or shellfish.
7. In building the earth oven, if two stones strike together, *sali* (meat or fish with yam or breadfruit) will be brought.
8. If wood is burning in the earth oven and makes a noise like a strong jet of steam, *sali* will come.
9. When an old breadfruit leaf falls from a tree, blows in front of the house, and lies on its lower side, *sali* will come.
10. If the forward end of the earth oven (the end facing the feast house) falls in, a fisherman will come bringing fish before the oven is opened.

11. If the burning wood in the earth oven is wet and it steams and hisses like a child crying, no *sali* will come.
12. In making a coconut-leaf basket for food baked in the earth oven, if one leaf is left over without a second member of a pair to cross it, *sali* will come.
13. If a titled man has made a good earth oven but nevertheless the food does not cook well, his wife will become pregnant.
14. In manufacturing cord of hibiscus bast for a seine, if the untwisted fibers continually become tangled, many fish will be caught in the seine.
15. In the making of the seine, if the shuttle or mesh-measure breaks, many turtles will be caught in the seine.
16. If the netmaker, while making a seine, goes out on the reef and steps on a certain seashell called *likit*, he knows that the seine will catch no fish.
17. If a fishing canoe leaves the shore and a man soon afterwards comes on foot to the spot the canoe departed from (this act is known as *tiemurr*) no fish will be caught on this trip.
18. If one eats mangrove crabs before going fishing, no catch will result.
19. When people go fishing and see a white heron flying ahead of the canoe in the same direction, there will be a big catch.
20. If a *kupurr* (a large bird which dwells on Oroluk and other uninhabited islands) comes to Ponape, a typhoon will follow.
21. If *aak* (large sea birds) fly up suddenly in a large flock, a storm or typhoon will come.
22. If a *parat* (a tern) flies over a house at night in a direction at right angles to the ridge pole, and in doing so croaks, someone in the house is longing for his lover, who is away. (The *parat* has another name by night, *nalikantenlang*.)
23. If a *liparok* (a sea bird with a beak twisted to one side) calls at night more than usual, someone has died.
24. If a *wairr* (a small, black, insectivorous bird) sings a lot at night, a ghost is near the house.
25. If a dog digs a hole and leaves it without sleeping in it, someone will die.
26. When a large *ayau* (*Ficus carolinensis*) tree or other large tree is uprooted and falls, a high chief will die.
27. When a large mangrove tree breaks or falls, someone with a high title who happens to be in the direction in which the top of the tree is pointing will die.
28. When a cock crows in the evening or before midnight, a time of wars is near.
29. When several cocks crow in the evening, one after another, it is a sign that a ship is coming.
30. If one eats sugar cane before going to war he will be wounded in the jaw. If he eats chicken, his leg will be broken in combat.
31. When thunder comes from the direction of Salapuk, where the god Nansapwe lives, it ceases to rain within five minutes. (This was pointed out to me when I stayed at Kinakap, and precisely this happened!)
32. When a healer is pounding plants to make a medicinal infusion, if a millipede crawls around near the patient it is a sign that he has had intercourse lately (which he is not supposed to have during treatment).
33. If a man or woman who has had intercourse in the last ten days picks up a baby under three months of age the baby will get sick.

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