



The Story of this year's artwork: the Turtle and the Shark

On the Island of Tuiuila (American Samoa), near the small Village of Vaitogi, there is a U-shaped lava rock cove with a beautiful small beach on its north side and a high cliff on the south.

The cove frequently sees powerful waves with the water thrown high into the air. It was put on the National Register of Historic Places in 2014.

This place is believed to be the site of the island's best known and popular tale: The Shark and the Turtle.

The legend's first documentation of this tale was by a missionary in 1884. Over the years, the legend was told and retold and now has several versions, as happens with long-told tales. All have the same ending: two sea creatures not usually found to appear together are often seen swimming in the same cove.

The story most recognized:

Two young people fell in love but their fathers refused to let them marry. They escaped to Vaitogi, where they were welcomed and married. The couple were beyond grateful, and as such they contributed to the village in every way they could. Her father found out where they were and prepared to wage war to retrieve her and kill her husband. They could not bear being the cause of a war, so they jumped off the cliff in self-sacrifice.

Instead of meeting death when they hit the water below, the young lovers were transformed into a turtle and a shark. It is believed that they were rewarded for their good deeds and transformed so that they could swim together in peace in the waters of Vaitogi.

Even today, when people gather at the edge of the cove, they often can see the sharks and turtles swimming there together.

No matter the way the story is told, two people jump into the sea as a last resort. They are transformed because of their good deeds for others and selfless sacrifices...and were made immortal.