



25¢

# FANTASTIC

*Novels*

MAGAZINE

Vol. 2

JANUARY, 1949

No. 5

*Book-Length Novel*

**SEVEN FOOTPRINTS TO SATAN** A. Merritt 8

One step and you possess an earthly Paradise . . . another step and you have a living hell. Never was the gamble of life and trackless death played for such incredible stakes. . . .

*Short Story*

**THE WRATH OF AMEN-RA** William Holloway 102

He set out to tear down the last mysteries of a world long dead—only to find it malignantly alive!

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?** 6

**IN THE NEXT ISSUE** 85

**FANTASY BOOK REVIEWS** Sam Moskowitz 113

**PONAPE—THE REAL "MOON POOL"** Ben Nelson 116

**THE NEW FINLAY PORTFOLIO** 119

Cover by Lawrence. Inside Illustrations by Finlay.

Published bi-monthly by New Publications, Inc., at 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, 16, Illinois. Editorial and Executive Offices, 210 East 43rd Street, New York 17, N. Y. Henry Steeger, President and Secretary. Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice President and Treasurer. Entered as second class matter January 14, 1948, at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1948, by New Publications, Inc. This issue is published simultaneously in the Dominion of Canada. Copyright under International Copyright Conventions and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction, in whole or in part, in any form. Single copy, 25c. Annual subscription price for U. S. A., its possessions and Canada, \$1.50; other countries 38c additional. All correspondence relating to this publication should be addressed to 2256 Grove Street, Chicago 16, Illinois, or 210 East 43rd Street, New York 17, N. Y. When submitting manuscripts, enclose stamped self-addressed envelope for their return if found unavailable. Care will be exercised in the handling of unsolicited manuscripts, but no responsibility for their return is assumed. Any resemblance between any character appearing in fictional matter, and any persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and unintentional. Printed in U. S. A.

By BEN NELSON

# PONAPE—THE REAL “MOON POOL”

*A place of weird mystery, peopled by ghosts of primitive imagining, is Ponape—which contains the “Moon Pool” of Abraham Merritt’s strange and famous story.*

**N**O MORE fitting setting could have been chosen for A. Merritt’s great fantasy, “The Moon Pool,” than Ponape, island of mystery with its Cyclopean stone structures left by unknown builders from a forgotten time.

An irregular flat dome of black basaltic rock, roughly circular in shape and occupying some 340 square miles, Ponape rises from the Pacific in the eastern stretch of the Caroline Islands, due east of Truk and in the center of the square formed by Saipan, Wake, Tarawa and Bougainville.

Like some dark mesozoic bird this “land of the Holy Places” sits in the midst of its brood of islets, surrounded by a shallow lagoon circled by a coral barrier reef. Tidal marshes rank with mangroves and coconut-palms ring the central island, giving way to a dense jungle of mighty forest trees interlaced with climbing ferns and vines. Slashed by ravines and swift water-courses, the jungles ascend to the grim black precipices of volcanic peaks that rise to 3,000 feet in the hilly interior.

The entire Caroline archipelago—a series of coral atolls peppered with basalt islands stretching over 1,500 miles from Yap on the west to Kusaie in the east, with Truk in its center—is a region of wonder.

On Yap are gigantic stone platforms, graves, embankments and terraces left by some vanished civilization. Ancient fortifications line a hillside on Babelthoab, in the Pelews to the west, and in the interior lives a peculiar species of horned frog. Natives in the Mortlocks pierce their ear lobes and by loading them with heavy ornaments cause them eventually to hang

downward to enormous size, a custom practiced by the old Incas of Peru. On some islands solid roads paved with stone blocks come up out of the sea, disappear at the far water’s edge, and reappear on others miles away. Pure Polynesian dialects crop up in the polygot racial mélange like oases in a desert, incredibly antique. On Kusaie are remnants of stonework—crude, massive, dead.

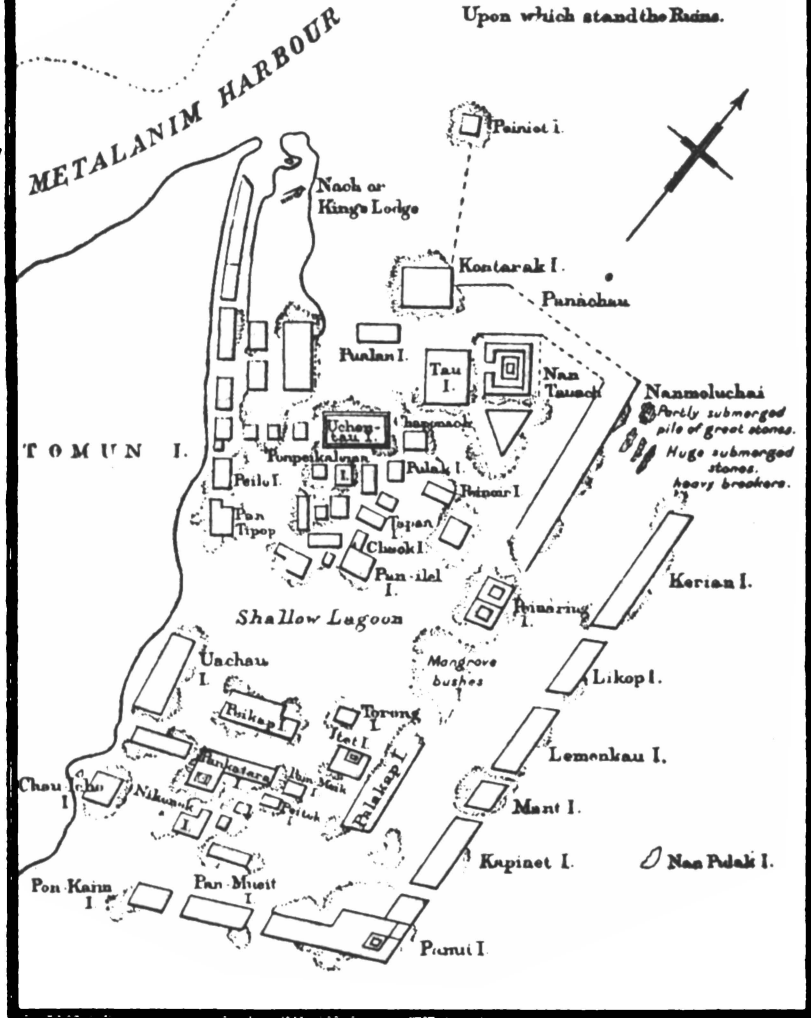
But Ponape’s Nan-Matal, a veritable Venice from a forgotten age, is the wonder of them all.

Along the southeast shore of an islet on Ponape’s east coast, in the tribal district of Metalanim, lies the Nan-Matal, “the place of the Waterways,” nine square miles of lagoon sprinkled with between fifty and sixty rectangular artificial islands intersected by a network of canals. By whom made, by whom used—nobody knows.

Built up from the bottom of the shallow lagoon, their waterfronts faced with solid masonry six feet thick, they rise a tall man’s height above the surface. Most are strewn with rubble overgrown by rank tropical vegetation and give no evidence of the structures they may have once contained.

Nowhere, that is, except on Nan-Tauach, “the place of the Lofty Walls.” Here stands a gigantic stone enclosure whose Cyclopean walls, twenty to forty feet high and fifteen thick, form a parallelogram 185 by 115 feet. These walls are crudely but solidly built of shafts, columns and prisms of basalt laid alternately lengthwise and crosswise, layer upon layer, like great logs of stone.

SKETCH PLAN  
OF  
METALANIM  
Upon which stand the Ruins.



This old map from the Geographical Journal is the one from which Mr. Merritt made his map of the Moon Pool islands appearing in FANTASTIC NOVELS for May of this year. The island really exists and is in the Caroline group. The Nan-Matal is the native name for Metalanim.

Huge rude steps lead up to the great gateway in the middle of the western wall, though entrance could also be gained through a small portal in the northwest corner.

To the right of the great gateway, balanced on projecting shafts of the masonry, exploring scientists found a remarkable crescent-shaped slab of basalt. Remark-

able, for when struck it gave out a clear, ringing, bell-like sound like that of some gigantic religious gong or tocsin.

The rude steps lead on through another gateway into a similar enclosure, 85 by 75 feet, formed by walls of the same construction fifteen to eighteen feet high and eight feet thick.

More steps lead to a terraced vault or

grave, eight feet in depth, roofed over with six enormous basalt slabs and paved with heavy basalt blocks. Three smaller vaults form a rough triangle about it.

These vaults are very like the mysterious stone houses on Easter Island, 7,000 miles away, though without the same expert and close joining of the stones, and are found nowhere else but on Ponape.

Excavation under the floor of the larger brought to light strange axes made from the shell of the giant clam, some as much as a yard long and with edges rubbed to cutting keenness, together with curious pearl-shell beads, ornaments and shanks of fish-hooks.

To the east and seaward, on the barrier reef, are two colossal parallel breakwaters three miles long, built of massive and weighty blocks and prisms of basalt roughly joined together. Parts of them still stand, warding off faithfully the heavy Pacific seas.

No mark of metal tool has been found on any of these massy blocks or shafts or columns, some of which range close to twenty-five tons in weight.

**W**HERE did they come from? How were they made? How were they brought there?

This is known.

They came from natural quarries on the northern shore of Ponape, where great cliffs or scarps of basalt tower a thousand feet in the air. This basalt—a dark, fine grained, almost glassy rock formed from volcanic materials—in cooling separated into prismatic columns and shafts. Here, as at the Giants' Causeway in Ireland, the columnar basalt weathered out in great natural pillars which, loosened by eons of tropical rains, tumbled into the valleys below where the builders of the Nan-Matal found them lying ready to hand.

From these quarries they were floated by raft or canoe twenty and thirty miles to the place of the Waterways. This much is known for the bottom of the lagoon is strewn along the route with all manner of them, though how they were moved into place when they reached their destination no one can say.

Ponape's mysteries do not cease with the Nan-Matal. On a dense jungle hillside in the southwest was found a low stone breastwork two to five feet high enclosing an area 112 by 96 feet. Within it were six tiny vaults—three on stone platforms raised five feet above the ground—from

four to four and a half feet in length inside and roofed with massive slabs of basalt.

The island's 8,000 or so natives, who live in scattered villages along the coast, fear the Nan-Matal and the jungle.

A strange medley of the racial streams that have swept over the Carolines since the beginning of history, they are kin of the wild hill tribes of East Formosa, of the sea-roving Dyaks of Borneo and the sturdy Papuans. There are strong Negrito, Melanesian and Polynesian elements in their background and their blood is laced with that of the Mongol pirates and traders from the north.

They survived the Spanish conquest, two decades of German occupation ending with World War I, and the Japanese mandate under which strong fortifications were constructed and later subjected to severe bombing during air attacks in 1944. By-passed as the American forces swept north toward Tokyo, after the Japanese surrender there it was taken over by an American occupation detail. Few Americans outside its members had an opportunity to see the wonders of the Nan-Matal, unfortunately.

Many natives, though Christianized, underneath still retain their old belief in *Ani*, or deified ancestors, who reside in various places and things.

During the reign of Chau-te-Leur came the Li-ot, a foreign cannibal folk from the barren Lands of the South, who arrived in a great fleet of war canoes and overran the Nan-Matal, slaying the builders or offering them as sacrifices to the gods. Only Chau-te-Leur escaped, to be turned by the *Ani* into a blue river-fish which the natives still refuse to eat.

They also mention iron men, probably Spaniards, who came up out of the sea and were vanquished with sling stones and spears.

Obviously neither god-men nor ancestors of these natives within recorded time, erected the mighty masses of the Nan-Matal.

The people who did? Vanished without trace.

Did their civilization appear during one of the glacial epochs when the seas subsided as the great northern icecap built up, then was drowned as the glaciers melted and the seas rose again? Or did they, perhaps, vanish mysteriously into the bowels of the earth in some forgotten time?

Nobody knows.