

THE SIO STORY OF MALE

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THE TWO versions of the Sio story of the mythic hero Male discussed in this article (see Appendix below) were produced as texts as part of a literacy program.¹ Our concern, however, is not with how this story looks on paper, but rather, in line with Malinowski's analytic goal, with what it does in life or what it did in traditional Sio life (Malinowski 1955:110-111). The function of myth, said Malinowski, "is the statement of an extraordinary event, the occurrence of which once [and] for all had established the social order of a tribe or some of its economic pursuits, its arts and crafts or its religious or magical beliefs and ceremonies" (1931:640). The extraordinary events of moment in the Male story are a culture hero's bestowal of the arts of fine bow and arrow and barkcloth manufacture on the Rai Coast peoples known collectively by the Sio as Labuna,² while the peoples to the east, including the Sio, were left either with inferior versions of the artifacts or utterly without knowledge of their manufacture. The myth explains and justifies the regional distribution of craft skills and Sio's dependence on trade relations with the west for certain imports. Male is thus a mythic charter for a fundamental aspect of the Melanesian cultural order: local specialization and intergroup trade. The issue, more precisely, is the "ownership" of specific craft knowledge. In the Sio view, technologies are not the inventions of human beings; they are the creations of culture heroes or deities, such as

Pacific Studies, Vol. 17, No. 4--December 1994

Male, who granted them to humans. The Male story is a charter for the Labuna peoples' "proprietary specializations" (Ambrose 1978:329).

Our main task, then, is to examine the details of the story's role as a charter myth in the context of Sio intergroup relations and in the context of Sio charter myths for trade. With reference to the latter, the Male story is probably of secondary importance. At the same time, the myth has particular significance for a subgroup of the Sio, the Nambariwans, who are the custodians of the myth and for whom it was associated with a form of love magic whose efficacy depended on relics that figure in the events recounted in the story. How these relics came into the possession of the Nambariwan Sio is not known and is not part of the myth, but the fact of their acquisition and their subsequent loss are recounted in a modern commentary on the story. Male enfranchised the Labuna peoples, leaving the Sio cultural endowment the poorer, but his relics magically empowered the Nambariwans until they too were impoverished when a European missionary put the relics in a crate and sent them away from New Guinea.

For Malinowski, Melanesian life, in which myth played a prominent part, was largely practical and social, not intellectual. For him, as Leach commented, Melanesians had "no time for philosophy. . . . Cultural behavior is concerned only with *doing* things, not with saying or thinking" (1957:133, emphasis in the original). But to ignore dialogue and thought about the content of myths limits Malinowski's concept of myths as social charters. Could it not be that part of the effectiveness or authority of mythic charters owes to the intellectual appeal of the explanations--the etiologies--that they offer?

A second question concerns the unprecedented challenge posed by European colonialism. A part of the challenge was intellectual: it was to understand the bases or sources of European cultural superiority and Melanesians' correlative position of inferiority in the colonial order. In the ensuing cargoist dialogue, certain traditional myths were enlisted in the task of understanding. Unlike the Kilibob-Manup stories of the Madang peoples and Karkar Islanders, however, the modern Sio do not appear to have pressed "Male" into service, even though the story's general form--in explaining aspects of economic inequalities on the basis of traditional assumptions concerning the sources of cultural innovations--would appear to lend itself to this purpose. We merely explore this issue below without being able to offer a definitive answer.

Background

The Sio are an Austronesian-speaking people living on the north coast of the Huon Peninsula (Morobe Province of Papua New Guinea) who number

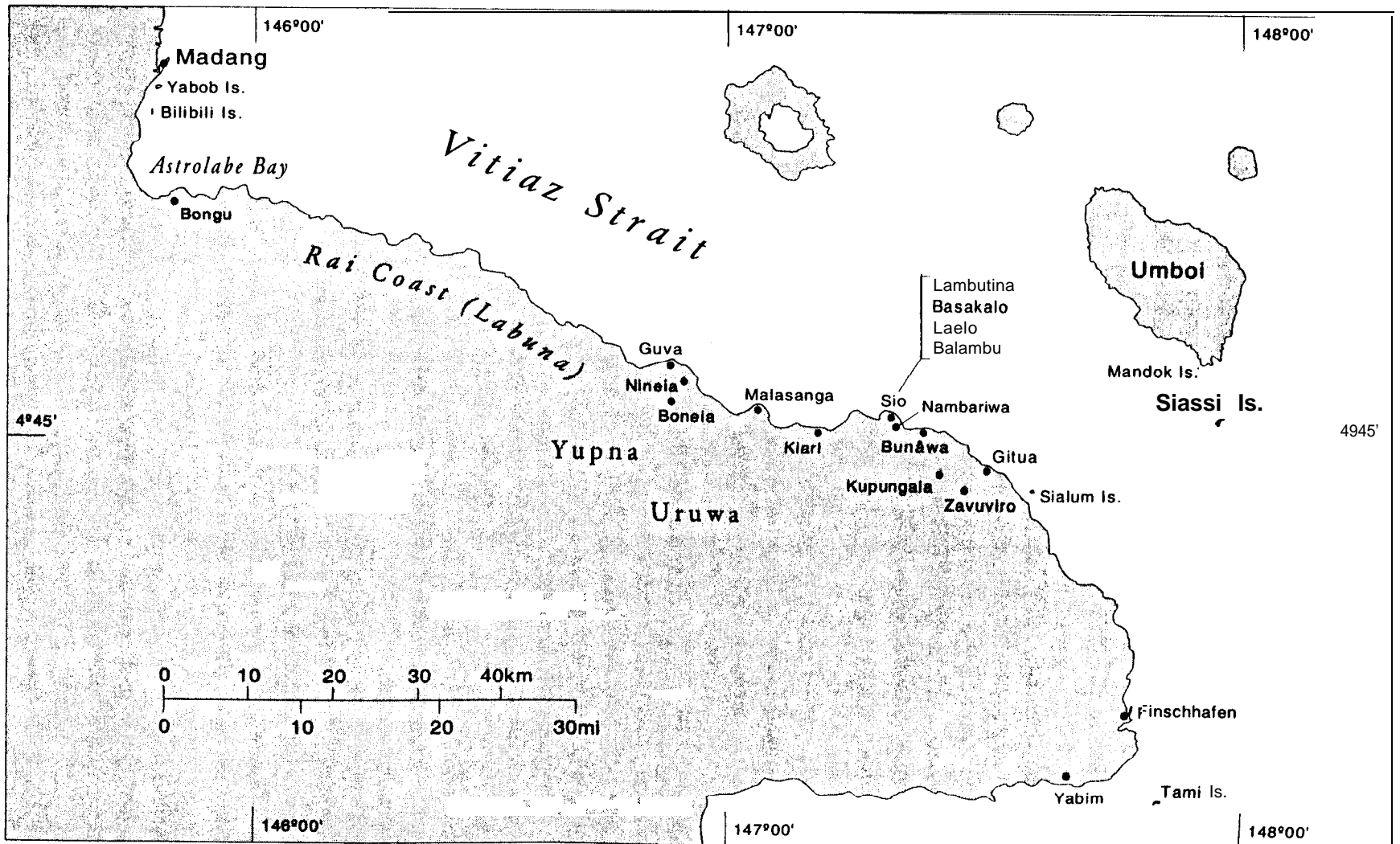
today about three thousand resident villagers. For at least two or three centuries prior to the colonial period and up until World War II, the Sio formed a single village community situated on a tiny offshore island. Following the war, they built four villages on the mainland opposite, near the sites of their prehistoric villages, and here they reside today (Map 1).

Also Sio in language and culture are the people of Nambariwa, a small coastal village a few miles to the east. The Nambariwan Sio, even more so than in the pre-European past, are effectively members of Sio village society. Nambariwa was the first village that Male visited on his epochal voyage to the west. The custodians of "Male" are Nambariwans. The traditional Sio (including Nambariwans) were savannah yam farmers (see Harding 1985), but their historic role in the trading system that linked New Guinea's north coast and the Bismarck Archipelago via the voyages of the Siassi Island traders (Freedman 1967; Harding 1967a, 1970; Lilley 1986; Pomponio 1992) was that of pottery producers and entrepôt middlemen (Harding 1967a, 1994). Clay pots were the main goods that they sent west in exchange for the Labuna specialties.

Missionization at Sio began in 1910 with the arrival of Michael Stolz, a German Lutheran missionary. A mass conversion, led, incidentally, by a Nambariwan who was destined to become the first appointed village headman (in Sio proper), occurred in 1919 (see Harding 1967b). Since then the Sio have produced many Lutheran evangelists, lay mission workers, teachers, and churchmen. Among the most prominent of the latter is Sio Parish President Gwata, who narrated both versions of "Male." Gwata learned the story in Nambariwa when he lived there for a time as a youth. In 1991, as he was preparing illustrations for a printed version of the story, he happened to be visited by Matarina, an elderly woman and gifted storyteller from Nambariwa, who insisted that her version of "Male" was the correct one. Gwata's second narrative (version 2) thus reflects the corrections proposed by Matarina.

"Male" as a Mythic Charter for Trade

The episodes of the two versions of the Male story are summarized below. In the Sio view, the story has a definite point, which comes in the closing passage in version 1: So to this day the people of the Guva area and the people who live in the area west of Sio make excellent loin cloths, barkcloth shields, bows, and arrows. It is because they allowed Male to settle there. But we in Sio have to go to the villages in the west to buy bows and arrows and loin cloths. And in the penultimate passage in version 2: So this is the story about the bows, arrows, spears, and goods we customarily buy from the



Map 1. Northeastern New Guinea mainland, principally showing villages that figure in the Sio story of Male.

people to the west, at Guva, Nineia, and Boneia. Male went and left all of his things for them in those places. But in Sio and other places along the coast to the west, we only got rather inferior things.

These statements are not mere etiological appendages. Though in somewhat different terms, both versions seek to account for the regional differences in cultural endowment on which Sio's historic trade relations with Labuna or the Rai Coast were founded. The emphasis in version 1 is on certain craft objects; Sio is bereft of the knowledge required to make bows, arrows, and barkcloth. In version 2, Sio acquired the ability to produce only inferior versions of these artifacts. In both cases, Sio's inferior endowment has the same cause, namely, the failure to establish direct and intimate relations with Male, the bearer and, presumably, the creator of the crafts in question.

Summary of Episodes--"Male," Version 1

- 1/ *Adultery results from coast inland trade.* Gitua women, unaccompanied, travel to Zavuviro to trade for food; Male and his twelve brothers "flirt" and "make friends" with them on these occasions.
- 2/ *Adultery revealed, Gitua prepares to take revenge.* A small child follows the women traders, and spies on them and Male and his brothers at the food market; the child reports what she sees to Gitua men who make bows and arrows.
- 3/ *Gitua attacks Zavuviro at dawn, but Male escapes death.* Bull-roarers alert Male and his brothers of impending attack, but all but the hero are killed. Male eludes the bowmen by hiding under his brothers' corpses and smearing himself with their blood. Thinking they have a total victory, the Gituans depart for home.
- 4/ *Aftermath.* Male grieves, transports his brothers' corpses to a cave, then builds a house for his mother and a men's house for himself.
- 5/ *Male and the two beautiful young women from Nambariwa.* Male, attired in a skin covered with sores, sits on the beach sunning himself. Two maidens from Nambariwa go fishing, meet Male, splash him with seawater, and send him off screaming in pain. These meetings are repeated with the same result.
- 6/ *Singsing planned at Nambariwa.* People prepare costumes; all are curious to know who will marry the two maidens, Sire and Sangbera.
- 7/ *Male's mother and the papa tree.* Male prepares for the singsing with the help of his mother, who makes his bird costume, removes his body-sore skin, smoothes his skin, and invokes a *papa* tree, which transports him to the singsing.

- 8/ *The singsing at Nambariwa.* Male's drum calls out to Sire and Sangbera; the two women are very attracted to Male. They try to rope him in by having a child tie a string to his hand, but he transfers string to other male dancers, a number of whom are reeled in and then rejected by the maidens. The papa tree transports Male home.
- 9/ *The search for Male, the hero discovered, and his marriage.* The two women search for Male, in vain at first, then encounter him on the beach attired in the body-sore skin; through a rat-chewed hole, they spot red paint on his eye, and he is revealed as the handsome dancer whom they love; they take him as their husband and live at his place.
- 10/ *Male does battle by day and builds a canoe by night.* All the men, angry because Male has married the two most desirable women, go to fight him. Daily Male fights them, his mother making his bows and arrows. At night he builds a canoe.
- 11/ *Prelude to Male's voyage.* The canoe finished, Male is ready to flee, but he tells his mother and pregnant wife Sangbera that they must remain. Both turn into rocks, which can still be seen at Bunâwa.
- 12/ *Male's voyage to the west and his settlement on the Rai Coast.* Male and his other wife Sire set out in their canoe, paddling westward. At each place--Nambariwa, Lambutina, Basakalo, Laelo, Balambu, Kiari, Malasanga, and Gâwa³--he fires an arrow to shore, but, as the villagers do not fire it back, he understands he is not welcome. Finally at Guva his arrow is returned, and he settles there. Male introduces the making of barkcloth and bows and arrows.

Summary of Episodes--"Male," Version 2

- 1/ *Male at Bunâwa.* Male, whose body is covered with sores, lives at Bunâwa with his widowed mother.
- 2/ *Male and the two young women.* In the habit of sunning himself on a rock on the beach, Male repeatedly encounters two mountain women (Sire and Sangbera) who are netting and smoking fish for a singsing. The young women insult him and splash seawater on his sores.
- 3/ *Preparing for the singsing.* Male prepares to attend the singsing--over his mother's objections--by soaking off his sore-covered skin in a large pot, making a headdress, and anointing his skin with a mixture of betel juice and flowers. He then invokes a *papa* tree, which transports him to the singsing.
- 4/ *The singsing at Kapangala.* Male's drum calls out to the two women, Sire and Sangbera, who are very attracted to Male. They try to rope him in by having a man tie a vine to his arm, but he repeatedly trans-

fers the vine to other male dancers. Dawn breaks, the dancing ends, and Male is quickly returned home by the *papa* tree.

- 5/ *The search for Male, the hero discovered, and his marriage.* Male redons his sore-covered skin and sleeps. The two women search for him, finally reach Bunâwa, and wake him. Male angrily denies that he danced at the singsing, but when they spot red paint on his eye through a rat-chewed hole in his skin, he removes his skin and is revealed as the handsome dancer. They take him as their husband.
- 6/ *The fight and Male's decision to flee.* The mountain villagers, searching for the two women, arrive at Bunâwa and, learning of the marriage, declare war on Male. His mother, who did not want him to attend the singsing, declares that he has brought this on himself. With her help, Male makes a large quantity of bows and arrows and, along with other artifacts, piles them up on the beach. The mountain people come to fight; Male dodges their arrows while making his shots count. But the bowstring scraping his wrist day after day leaves him unable to fight. He announces to his mother that he will flee.
- 7/ *Preparation for Male's voyage.* Male loads his canoe with the bows and arrows and other artifacts. He tells his mother that she must remain. He sets fire to his men's house, tells his pregnant wife Sangbera to fetch a young pig before it too is burned, then tosses Sire on the canoe and puts out to sea. His mother and Sangbera call out to Male from the beach, but he says that they must remain.
- 8/ *Male's voyage to the west and his settlement on the Rai Coast.* Male and Sire voyage westward, touching at Nambariwa, Sio, Kiari, Malasanga, and Guva. At each place, as they come ashore, smoke covers the area, Male leaves some poorly made bows and arrows and other artifacts, and then departs. To the west of Guva he is greeted by a group of mountain people who, at his bidding, build a ramp and drag the canoe ashore. Male distributes his stash of skillfully made bows and arrows, other artifacts, and valuables to these people so that each gets some.
- 9/ *Male's death.* Male settles among these people, telling them that when he and Sire die, they must be cremated. Sire dies first, then Male, and both are cremated. Two rocks, with marks resembling faces, can be seen there today.

Commentary

Traditional Melanesian trading systems involved regional divisions of labor for the making and trading of a variety of goods. One might think of these

systems as comprising two levels. On the first level were the local or sub-regional productive specialties, many of which were proprietary specializations. These monopolies on production were guarded in various ways, not excluding violence. Certain kinds of knowledge, magic in particular, entered into trade, but bodies of craft knowledge--the productive knowledge as opposed to the products--were generally not for sale. It comes as no surprise to students of Melanesia that the distributions of proprietary specializations were affirmed in myths, not merely as reflections of cultural activities, but specifically as charter myths explaining the sources of proprietary rights to specific bodies of knowledge. The myths explain how regionally differentiated production came into existence and, as Malinowski would emphasize, justify the differentiations: myth "justifies the existing order and supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values" (Malinowski 1931:640). "Male" is such a myth.

The second level consists of the intergroup relations--usually some form of trade partnership--through which the various specialties were exchanged. Here too one might expect myths explaining and justifying the formation of intergroup relations. In Sio, a set of stories that Harding (1967a: 176-179) has termed the Kulambi myth falls in this category. Kulambi is the name of an "ancient" multivillage population of bush people who inhabited Sio's immediate hinterland. This entity exploded in a social cataclysm that dispersed migrants throughout the larger region. As a result, the peoples of the Vitiaz Strait, in particular the island and coastal peoples, appear in Sio perspective to be a supertribe descended, in part, from common ancestors--the migrants of the Kulambi dispersal.

Sio itself was a recipient of Kulambi migrants who thus formed one component of the reputed mixed ancestry of bush peoples, beach dwellers, and maritime wanderers and visitors (for the local as opposed to the extraterritorial salience of the Kulambi myth, see Harding 1967a:177). The theme of Sio history is unity out of diversity. Culturally and linguistically differentiated groups and settlements joined forces on an offshore island to form a large compact village that became a monolingual and culturally homogeneous society. Moreover, it was a society that in its own view was highly sedentary, internally peaceful, or largely so, and unwarlike. The Sio view of their earlier history, by contrast, emphasizes violence and mobility. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Kulambi stories, of which the following are condensed versions:

Two brothers, Wangelo and Tarekelo of Kulambi, went to their garden one day, and while they were gone, a man from another men's ceremonial house stole a chicken from their house. When the brothers returned, they

discovered the theft and were able to trace the thief by a trail of feathers. They were very angry and so worked magic that made the house group of the thief so crazy that they started killing each other, brother killing brother, husband killing wife, father killing children. A huge fight developed. The community split up, and people scattered in all directions, the two brothers going to Nambariwa. Others went to Sio, Lembangando, Mula, Sambori, Nimbako, Malasanga, Biliau, Bongu, and so forth, on the Rai Coast, and to Madang, Gitua, and Sialum. The descendants of these migrants are Kulambi, and they are all kinsmen.

[In the Kulambi village of Guvang] the mother and father of two brothers, Tanoa and Oa, died, and sorcery was presumed. The two brothers sought to discover the men's house of the sorcerer by means of divination involving two chickens. One day the two brothers went to their garden and on their return found that the chickens had been stolen.

The next day they decided that only one of them should go to the garden while the other feigned illness and tried to learn more of the theft. Later in the day, one brother, Tanoa, found the feathers of the chickens in a pot, where they had been placed by the thief. The brothers determined to seek vengeance on the people of the men's house in which the feathers were found, having decided that the chicken thief must be the sorcerer responsible for their parents' deaths. They worked powerful magic, which summoned their ancestral ghost. They also laid an ambush. One brother called out: "The Siassi canoes are coming. Everyone come look!" When the people came out, the other brother started firing. They killed some people and then ran away, but the fighting continued. The ancestral ghost had made people crazy, and they started killing each other. The survivors ran away to various places.

The Kulambi stories are the master charter for the Vitiaz Strait international system viewed from Sio. Kulambi migrants, together with their descendants, are thought to have settled everywhere; at least it is probable that they penetrated all parts of the region from Madang and the Rai Coast to Siassi and West New Britain, as well as the Finschhafen coast and the mainland interior. Claims of Kulambi kinship might be compared with clan-ship in that, in establishing a trading relationship, descent lines and genealogical connections need not be demonstrated. Common descent is stipulated and brotherhood assumed by knowledge or acceptance of the myth's main event: a permanent outmigration radiating from the Kulambi homeland.

For Malinowski, charter myths serve to regulate behavior; specifically, the beliefs instilled by myth foster continuity in cultural practices. To a significant degree, cultural continuity or tradition depends on belief in the archetypal events or precedents enshrined in myth. The consequences of

such beliefs for action will depend on the particular nature of the beliefs, but also on their significance--what Melford Spiro terms their "cognitive salience"--for the actors. Spiro outlines a hierarchy of beliefs comprising five levels of salience:

(a) The actors *learn about* the doctrines . . . (b) The actors not only learn about the doctrines, but they also *understand* their traditional meanings as they are interpreted in authoritative texts, for example, or by recognized specialists; (c) The actors not only understand the traditional meanings . . . but understanding them, they *believe* that the doctrines so defined are true, correct, or right. That actors hold a doctrine to be true does not in itself, however, indicate that it importantly effects the manner in which they conduct their lives. Hence (d) at the fourth level of cognitive salience, cultural doctrines are not only held to be true, but they inform the behavioral environment of social actors, serving to structure their perceptual worlds and, consequently, to *guide* their actions. When cultural doctrines are acquired at this level we may say that they are genuine beliefs, rather than cultural clichés; (e) As genuine beliefs the doctrines not only guide, but they also serve to instigate action; they possess motivational as well as cognitive properties. (Spiro 1987: 163-164, emphasis in the original)

It cannot be assumed, as anthropologists frequently have done, that particular beliefs have been acquired at the fourth or fifth levels and thus are likely to have behavioral consequences. Are the propositions stated in the Male and Kulambi myths genuine beliefs, beliefs on which the Sio were prepared to act, or were they merely clichés? The Kulambi myth provides a blueprint for action, for the formation of trade partnerships. It served precisely to instigate action, and did so at an increasing rate as colonial pacification allowed the Sio to come into contact with peoples beyond the traditional range of their trading. For example, in pre-European times, the Sio's relations with the Kilenge of northwestern New Britain were mediated exclusively by the Siassi Islanders. But when Samanggoi of Sio met a Kilenge man in Aramot (Siassi), the latter told him that he was a Sio by origin since an ancestor of his had been Kulambi. When Kulambi broke up, his ancestor and others built a crude canoe of *sangginggi* type (see Harding 1967a:22-23), and sailed to Umboi Island. As the Umboi people were unfriendly, the party moved on to New Britain. Thus, as in the past, did trade follow the myth.

Myths dealing with the origins of culture usually celebrate the cultural possessions of one's own group. In Bellona in the Solomons, for example, stories of the culture heroes, or *kakai*, recount the origins of the canoe, fishing techniques, the names of fish, taro, plantains, and coconuts, fire and the fire plow, turtle-shell bonito hooks and earrings, numeration, the cessation of cannibalism, and food taboos. Indeed, in Bellonese belief, "the *kakai* were the originators of all human life" (Monberg 1991:98-106). Myths recounting the origins of the cultural possessions of one's neighbors and trading partners, however, are common enough. In what appears to be a version of the Kilibob and Manup story, the Wogeo Islanders, who imported pottery from the New Guinea mainland, have a myth that bears on the origin of pottery; the mainland potters' clay deposits were formed of the decomposing flesh of the culture hero's dead mother (Hogbin 1970:50-51). The Namor legend (see the article by Pomponio in this volume), in explaining the general impoverishment of the Siassi Islands, charters the islanders' trading way of life. The legend of Tudava, known all over the northern Massim region of Papua, is of a culture hero who instituted agriculture and garden magic, and who bestowed different agricultural systems of varying productivity on the various island groups according to whether he was greeted hospitably or with hostility (cf. version 1 of "Male," in which Male withheld his cultural gifts from the Sio and other eastern communities because they failed to welcome him ashore). The northern Massim stories, Malinowski wrote, "contain a legendary charter of gardening in general and of the differences in local fertility and custom" (1978:75).

Interestingly, the richest gardeners of the northern Massim, the Kiriwinians, seem not to have even heard of the story of Tudava. This anomaly is only apparent in Malinowski's view: the Kiriwinians "take their supremacy in agriculture for granted. . . . The Kiriwinian does not need to tell a story about his past wealth; he can point to the present with pride and assurance. Still less does he need to justify his poverty as do some natives; he does not suffer from it" (Malinowski 1978:74).

Similarly, the Sio, so far as we know, possess no myth accounting for the origins of their pottery craft. Their pride in being the "source of pots" (as Sio is known by some of its neighbors) is expressed as pride in Sio women, who are the potters, and their monopoly was maintained by insisting on an endogamous policy together with a ban on pot making applied to the few women who did marry out. Pots figure in some Sio myths, but mainly as reflections of everyday existence rather than as "mythological affirmations."

It may have been generally the case that origin myths of export-producing crafts chartered the specialties of others. For, as Nadel said in comment-

ing on Malinowski's position on the explanatory element in myth, what counted was "explaining that which exists today, exists by right--by the right that flows from the anchorage in primeval happenings" (Nadel 1957:206).

"Male" is not a lament about Sio poverty; it is the recognition by the Sio of the proprietary rights of their Labuna trading partners. Further, in the context of Sio thinking, it is recognition that such rights are inviolable, not only because infringement would lead to retaliation in the form of suspension of trading and even of violence (for modern instances, see Hannemann 1949:33), but because the differentiated cultural and natural landscape on which trading rests is the way the world was constructed.

Implicit in the myth is a genuine belief in the limited capacity of unassisted or purely human effort to create culture. In Western terms, culture is a miracle, a matter of revelation, essentially a gift of the gods. The depth and pervasiveness of such beliefs--their high cognitive salience--was extensively documented by Lawrence in *Road Belong Cargo*. The Kulambi myth, clearly, provides a program for action. But what sort of behavior could have been guided or instigated by the Male story? We surmise that "Male" served to deter action, to dampen any temptation to engage in import substitution (though Sio's predominantly grassland environment would not favor the local production of either bows or barkcloth). At the same time, it evokes the *raison d'être* of trading to the west. The Sio know that, however limited the human capacity for inventing crafts, they can be taught and learned (hence the ban on out-marrying women making pottery). They know this to their grief in the case of modern Sialum's theft of pottery manufacture, owing partly to illicit Sio tuition. But we wonder whether, in pre-European times, the question of import substitution could have actually or effectively arisen. Beliefs in cultural origins were inculcated early in life. As in Bellona, where the stories of the culture heroes are told to children "so that they may know the origin of everything" (Monberg 1991:99), so too in Sio did children hear the stories and references to them in daily conversation. But supposing the question did arise, say in the form 'Why don't we Sio make barkcloth?' we imagine a response along the following lines: Our Labuna friends would be angry if we tried making barkcloth. It would put our trade with our Rai Coast partners at risk. Labuna people make barkcloth; it is their work. It is not Sio work. Our hands would get tired if we tried that sort of work. Don't you know that long ago Male gave the work of making barkcloth to them and not to us because (according to version 1) our big-men did not shoot his arrow back to bid him to live with us?

Everything, it seems, was stacked against the Sio's duplicating Labuna crafts: the difficulty of obtaining the necessary resources, the likelihood of sanctions, and lack of empowerment by Male.

In modern times, craft knowledge of various sorts has diffused in Papua New Guinea. Netbag (*bilum*) manufacture, for example, has been learned by women from communities with no previous knowledge of such manufacture. But perhaps more striking is how limited these traditional craft borrowings have been, despite the frequent claims of their occurrence and the economic interests favoring diffusion. Even though many traditional trading relationships have declined or lapsed over the past century, many others have persisted or even expanded geographically and in volume, and quasi-legal or moral considerations entailed in the idea of proprietary specialization, affirmed by mythic beliefs, have persisted as well. It is not farfetched to suppose that beliefs in the precedent-setting acts of the culture heroes have continued to offer disincentives to cultural borrowing.

Mythic Charters and Explanation

“Male,” like many charter myths, takes the form of an etiological tale. Its essential character is that of a narrative explaining the origins of Labuna’s craft specialties. Yet in Malinowski’s perspective on myth, explanation figured as a secondary or incidental element at best. As Nadel put it, the “altogether revolutionary” nature of his interpretation of myths lay “in the denial of the explanatory or symbolic function of myth” (1957:206). Myths are validatory, not explanatory. The denial, however, was qualified in important respects. Malinowski’s position on explanation in charter myths can be summarized in three propositions. First we state these, together with pertinent statements from Malinowski’s works, and then we will comment on them.

1/ *Explanation is not the primary purpose of charter myths.* “Myth in general is not an idle speculation about the origins of things or institutions. . . . The function of myth is neither explanatory nor symbolic” (1931:640). “Myth is neither a . . . prototype of . . . science nor a branch of . . . history nor an explanatory pseudo-theory” (1931:640). “A myth does not serve to explain phenomena” (1936:3). “Stories about ‘the origins of rites and customs’ [are not] told in mere explanation of them. They never explain in any sense of the word” (1955:110). Commenting on *Notes and Queries in Anthropology*’s definition of myth as etiological “‘because their purpose is to explain why something exists or happens’”: “Melanesians . . . do not want to ‘explain,’ to make ‘intelligible’ anything which happens in their myths” (1955:109). “This definition would create an imaginary, non-existent class of narrative, the etiological myth, corresponding to a non-existent desire to explain, leading a futile existence as an ‘intellectual effort’ ”(1955:110).

2/ *Charter myths nevertheless contain, and must contain, an explanation.* “The essential nature of myth is that it serves as a precedent, and every

precedent contains an element of explanation, for it is a prototype for subsequent cases" (1936:19). "Elements . . . of explanation . . . must be found in sacred legends. For a precedent accounts for subsequent cases" (1955:144).

3/ *These explanations are fallacious from the point of view of scientific and modern historical explanation.* "Myth . . . is not explanation in satisfaction of a scientific interest, but a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality. . . . It is not an intellectual explanation" (1955:101). "It is only by the ambiguous use of the word 'explanation' that we could defend the aetiological theory of myth. . . . Myth explains in so far as a precedent establishes new procedures; or as a creative act brings forth a new reality; or as a miracle accounts for something which is unaccountable on the basis of scientific knowledge" (1936:20). "A precedent is not an explanation in the scientific sense; it does not account for subsequent events through the relation of cause and effect, or even of motive and consequence. In a way, it is the very opposite of scientific explanation, for it relates a complete change in the order of the universe to a singular dramatic event" (1936:19).

Proposition 1, particularly since Malinowski tended to identify charter myths with myth in general, was taken as a denial that nonliterate peoples possess an intellectual life. Eventually this interpretation inspired a reaction on the part of such students of myth as Lévi-Strauss (e.g., 1955) and G. S. Kirk (1970), and, in the Melanesian field, Burridge (1960, 1969) and Lawrence (1964, 1968, 1987), who succeeded in reestablishing the intellectual functions of myths.

Proposition 3 is obvious enough, but here Malinowski was both criticizing previous theories, such as those of the German nature theorists, and challenging the notion that in nonliterate societies myth substituted for science, for it could be demonstrated that primitive peoples did possess naturalistic knowledge based on experience, logic, and common sense.

Proposition 2 concerning the necessary presence of explanation--at least explanatory "elements"--is something of an orphan (to be rescued only much later by Burridge, Lawrence, Kirk, and others). It is, however, critical, for at the heart of the concept of mythic charter is the idea that people acquire genuine beliefs in explanations that are presented in terms of precedent-setting actions, archetypal events, epochal creative acts, and the like. Although it is difficult to understand precisely why this kind of explanation is so appealing and even compelling, beyond the facts of intergenerational transmission and the association with the pragmatic interests invariably stressed by Malinowski, its power of attraction, even to modern educated minds, can be documented.

For example, Marc Bloch noted the extraordinary popularity of this type of etiology among the "historian tribe" and referred to it as "that embryo-

genic obsession,” which he saw as the “satanic enemy of true history” (1953: 29-31). The fatal flaw is that “there is a frequent cross-contamination of the two meanings [of origin, as starting point and cause], the more formidable in that it is seldom very clearly recognized. In popular usage, an origin is a beginning which explains. Worse still, a beginning which is a complete explanation” (p. 30). (At least, for the historian, the origin or starting point was usually an actual event.)

David Fischer, in *Historians' Fallacies*, terms “conceptualizing change in terms of the re-enactment of primordial archetypes” the “fallacy of archetypes” (1970:150). Classical examples are the archetypically patterned civilizations of Toynbee’s *A Study of History* and Spengler’s *The Decline of the West*. “The fallacy of archetypes,” continues Fischer, “is an erroneous form of historical consciousness, but it is not restricted to the consciousness of erroneous historians” (p. 152). Indeed, its appeal to millenarians and assorted modern fanatics means that it is a “fatal fallacy that cannot be allowed to endure in a complex world” (p. 152). But endure it does among educated (and nonfanatical) Westerners and Melanesian villagers alike.

That people find satisfying and even complete explanations in archetypal etiologies seems beyond dispute. They seem to be readily acquired as genuine beliefs, which then serve to guide and instigate actions in line with the precedents embodied in charter myths. The basis of their appeal, however, is problematic. It may owe partly to narrative itself, to the properties of the narrative form. Telling stories or recounting events is the everyday means by which people render behavior, one’s own and that of others, intelligible. Narratives are implicitly, if not always explicitly, explanatory. As Arthur Danto puts it, in not only reporting but also connecting events, “a narrative describes and *explains* at once” (1985:141, emphasis in the original).

In narrative, events are connected in a particular way, namely, in a time sequence. Myths such as “Male” are special forms of narrative; unlike quotidian and historical accounts, mythic narratives are nonchronological, but as Collingwood points out, they are quasi-temporal in that they use “the language of time-succession as a metaphor” (1956:15). It seems to be this metaphor that makes for plausible explanation. Perry Cohen, in raising the important question of why cosmological myths have a narrative form in the first place, proposes that narrative structure is an essential attribute of myth because it creates “a time-sequence of events”:

The advantage that myth [i.e., “narratives with a time-anchored structure”] has over cosmology is that the latter may merely provide a set of ideas which set limits to conceptual exploration; while myth does provide a time reference, it does presuppose that circum-

stances can be traced to particular, if only imaginary, events. To locate things in time, even if the exact time is unspecified, creates a far more effective device for legitimation, for example, than simply creating a set of abstract ideas which are timeless. (1969:350)

Cohen goes on to speculate that originally myths may have been explanations of the origins and transformation of things. Being valued as explanations--vested with the cognitive salience of Spiro's third level, genuine belief in their truth--they became eligible for service as mythic charters (p. 351).

In a word, explanatory myths evolved into charter myths. What was intellectually satisfying was elevated to the socially legitimating. If one assumed, as did Malinowski, that pre-European Melanesian sociocultural systems were static or relatively unchanging, mythic explanations, for all practical purposes, would have appeared to have the status of cultural clichés.

Hence, in Malinowski's estimation, their secondary or incidental role. But with the upheavals of European colonialism, in which ways of life validated by myth were called into question, the traditional explanatory beliefs acquired new and urgent cognitive significance. With the advent of the Europeans, it was necessary for Melanesians to go back to the cosmic drawing board.

Culture Heroes and Colonialism

Although Malinowski held that "mythology supplies the foundations of all beliefs" (1936:23), the concept of mythic charter provided his successors with an excuse to ignore epistemology and belief (Lawrence 1987:30). That is, until ethnographers took seriously the task of understanding the Melanesian reaction, in thought and behavior, to European colonialism. For the Melanesians themselves, traditional myths were among the most important intellectual means at hand for comprehending the sources of European culture, wealth, and power.

Added to the myths, but treated according to traditional etiologies or modes of explanation, were new narratives of human and cultural origins--primarily from the Book of Genesis, but subsequently and in specific instances, from Darwinian evolution and anthropological speculations on human evolution in Africa.

But as the contributions to this volume make clear, traditional myths were also revised in an effort to account for Europeans and their culture. Amplifications and revisions of mythic thought had varying implications for action directed to achieving parity with Europeans, and in some instances--

as with theories emphasizing the entirely separate origins of Europeans and the indigenous people--could lead to the conclusion that no effective action was possible.

Like the widespread Kilibob-Manup stories, "Male" explains and validates intergroup differences in cultural endowment. In this very general sense, the story would seem to be a logical candidate for the kind of cargoist revisions that we find elsewhere, in Kilibob-Manup stories and other myths as well.

Nevertheless, so far as we know, no revised version of "Male" exists, nor is there any evidence that either of the two versions has been purged of references to Christian stories or Europeans. It should be emphasized that "Male" was contributed by a prominent church leader as part of a community effort to encourage literacy in the vernacular and to preserve the Sio language and cultural heritage. The goal of the effort is to produce a collection of "authentic" traditional narratives.

The references to objects traditionally used in Nambariwan love magic in version 2 of the story is what, apparently, authenticates this version (version 1 has been discarded for the purposes of the literacy program). In the third episode of version 2, "Preparing for the Singsing," Male first soaks off his sore-covered skin in a large clay pot and then prepares a mixture of betel juice and flowers, which he rubs on his skin to make himself attractive to the female dancers. At the end of the story, Male dies and, per his instructions, his body is cremated (the Sio did not practice cremation). Neither the large pot nor Male's death and cremation appears in version 1. Version 2 of "Male" is a charter for Nambariwan love magic, including the proprietary right to the technique in which both the large pot (for mixing a potion) and a bone from Male's arm, mysteriously sent back from the Rai Coast, were used. Version 2 is thus doubly significant as a charter myth. In the Sio account, the love magic is no longer practiced because a European missionary (before 1920) seized and sent away both artifacts.

Apart from its general form--in explaining cultural differences, specifically regional economic inequalities--the features of the Kilibob-Manup stories that readily lend themselves to a consideration of European phenomena are missing in "Male." For example, although Male is the bearer and bestower of superior material culture, the contrast between the "good," light-skinned brother (Kilibob in some of the stories) who bestows superior cultural gifts in his travels and the "bad," dark-skinned brother who bestows inferior culture is lacking.

Lacking also is the indefiniteness of the culture hero's final destination, carrying with it a vague prophecy of return. Male either arrives and settles at a definite and named location, where, it is presumed by the modern Sio, with

reference to version 1, he must have modern descendants, or, as in version 2, he dies and is cremated in the same locale, a bone from his arm making its way back to Nambariwa. In the Anêm story of Titikolo (see Thurston's article in this volume), the hero travels to the extreme northwest of New Britain and then departs for an unknown location. The west, to the Anêm, is associated with imported wealth. Version 2 of "Male" provides a vague impression of superior Labuna wealth, but as Sio trade radiated in all directions, the west or Labuna is not uniquely associated with imported wealth. In addition, Male's role as a culture creator is quite restricted, as compared even with Tudava's diversification of agriculture in the northern Massim region, and very restricted as compared with Kilibob, who was typically identified as Christ and God. A culture hero who created entire ways of life or significant parts of them, the light-good-superior/dark-bad-inferior polarity, a prophecy of return, and associations with imported wealth all seem to have favored the incorporation of European materials. To be sure, from a folkloristic standpoint, "Male" shares numerous similarities with the Kilibob-Manup stories.⁴ Although the story had explanatory potential, it lacked the specific elements that, in other cases, seem to have been especially conducive to extending the narratives in order to account for European phenomena.⁵

Recently, a regional Lutheran Church conclave was held at Nambariwa village. As part of the celebration, carved wooden statuettes of Male and his wife Sire were prominently displayed. As far as we know, there is no precedent for this, apart from the use of raised platforms for the display of food on ceremonial occasions and the twentieth-century traditions of carving Christian statuary. In response to our question of why the Male-Sire statues were carved and displayed on this occasion, people said that since Nambariwa was the site of the conclave, it was appropriate to add a touch of local historical color. Giving up ritual paraphernalia to the European missionaries or destroying them under their watchful eyes was once, in Sio and elsewhere, a decisive symbolic gesture of people's willingness to sacrifice in order to become Christians. Male's armbone and his pot were not only associated with magic, but with magic directed toward arousing sexual passion! Best to get rid of these once and for all. But now, nearly seven decades later, we have a wooden image of Male himself looking down on a formal Christian gathering. The Male-Sire statues are not examples of religious syncretism; rather they appear to signify the extent to which the tensions of the old-time pagan/Christian confrontation have relaxed in modern congregational life.

The larger relevant context of the statues is probably the local cultural revival that can be observed in Sio and in many Papua New Guinea village communities. The literacy program, involving the production of printed and

illustrated versions of traditional narratives, has provided a particular focus to the Sio revival. But a further aspect of efforts at revival, of a renewed emphasis on *kastom*, is the expression of retrospective anticolonialism. As the reasoning goes, Europeans were not only responsible for changing the indigenous cultures in radical ways, they often committed outright cultural thefts, as in the case of Sio's missionary shipping off Male's relics (forgetting that this was part of a symbolic transaction). It is not surprising that such specific acts of cultural deprivation would also give focus to cultural revival. Thus has Male taken on a new life among villagers who, for the most part, now understand the sources of Western culture, which, in significant respects, they have made their own.

APPENDIX

THE STORY OF MALE (Version 1)⁶

NARRATED BY GWATA OF LAMBUTINA, 21 SEPTEMBER 1986; TRANSCRIBED
AND TRANSLATED FROM THE VERNACULAR BY STEPHEN CLARK

I am going to tell you the story of Male, whose ancestors lived in a place called Zavuviro. He had twelve older brothers, and they all lived in Zavuviro. From time to time, women would come from the neighboring area of Gitua to trade food at the local market. Only the women would come; the men stayed in Gitua. One day, while trading their goods, the women saw Male and his older brothers, who lived nearby. Male and his brothers made friends with all of the Gitua women. Then, whenever the women came to the market, Male and his brothers would flirt and carry on with the Gitua women. When they were done, Male and his brothers would give the women food, which they took back to their village. This went on for quite a while.

However, one time as the Gitua women were preparing to leave for the market near Zavuviro, one of the women's small children began to cry, wanting to go with them. But her mother spanked her and chased the little girl back to the village. The child kept crying and trying to follow after them, and the mother kept spanking and chasing her back. This kept going on, and finally the women left. But the little girl hid and followed them. She walked behind them, hiding herself in the growth by the edge of the path.

When they reached the marketplace, the little girl spied on them, and she watched as her mother and the other Gitua women went off and flirted and played with Male and his brothers. Then she saw the men giving the food to the women as they prepared to leave. Seeing all this, the little girl ran home to her father and said, "Daddy! All of you men stayed here, but Mommy and the other women went and made friends with Male and his brothers. They flirted and played around with them, and then the men gave them food to bring back. Now they are coming home!"

When the Gitua men heard this, they began getting their bows and arrows ready for battle. Then one night, they came quietly to Zavuviro and surrounded the house

where Male and his older brothers were sleeping. They waited until daybreak, and then they sounded the battle cry by swinging their bull-roarers through the air. When Male and his brothers heard the cry of the bull-roarers, they jumped up and ran down the steps, where they were ambushed by the arrows of the Gitua men.

However, Male jumped down, lifted up the bodies of his dead brothers, and crawled underneath them, smearing himself with their blood. The Gitua men, thinking that all of the Zavuviro men had died, let out a war whoop and returned to their village.

When they were gone, Male got up, feeling deep sorrow over the death of his brothers and for his grieving mother. He started to carry the bodies of his brothers to the place called Bunāwa. After getting his elderly mother to this place, he returned for his brothers, and one by one he carried their bodies into a large cave, where they were put to rest. They all had died.

Then Male built a house for his mother to live in. When it was finished, he led her into it, and the two of them stayed there. Male slept by himself in his small men's house, and his mother lived in their main house.

Time went on. Then one day two women from Nambariwa named Sire and Sangbera were out fishing with their nets. Now Male had taken off his healthy skin and had put on his other skin, which was ugly and full of large body sores. It was early morning, and he had gone down to the beach and was sitting on a rock, warming up in the sun. As he saw the two women passing close by, he called out, "Pardon me, you two women over there, perhaps you would be kind enough to give me a fish so I can cook it and eat it with the other food I have here." But the women took their fishing nets, dipped them in the ocean, and splashed Male with salt water. The salt water burned Male's sores, and he fled inland screaming. This scene was repeated many times over the next weeks.

Time passed. Then a large dance was scheduled to be held in Nambariwa. All of the people in the surrounding villages were making their dance costumes and preparing to come to the dance, because these two lovely women, Sire and Sangbera, were to be given away in marriage.

As the time approached, Sire and Sangbera went out fishing once again, walking toward the east. As they came close to the place Male was sitting, he asked them, "You two honored women, when is your dance going to be held?" But they ridiculed Male, saying, "What makes you think that you can come dance at our dance with that ugly skin of yours?" They began splashing salt water on Male's sores, but he said, "Hey! All I wanted to know was the date of your dance!" But the women kept splashing salt water on his sores, and Male fled inland screaming. He went and told his mother what had happened, and she began to sew and decorate a bird costume for him.

Time passed, and the day of the dance arrived. Male's mother made beautiful decorations for him. She took them into the men's house, where she helped him remove his old, sore-filled skin. When this was done, she spoke some magic words to his bird costume and to his other, good skin, and she helped him get all dressed up.

That night, as the dancing began in Nambariwa, Male put the finishing touches on

his costume. Then his mother spoke to a *papa* tree, and the tree stretched out one of its branches toward Male. He climbed onto the branch, and it began to grow longer and longer, stretching all the way to Nambariwa, where it put Male down. And the dance went on.

Everyone was dancing, and as Male hit his drum, the names of the two women came out. The drum cried out, saying, "Sire, Sangbera, where do you live? Male, Male, Kanuru, Kanuru!" As this went on, Sire and Sangbera heard the drum calling out their names. Wanting very much to meet the owner of this drum, they found some string and tied a slipknot in it. Then they gave the end of the string to a small child and said, "Go slip this around the arm of that man over there with the tall bird costume." The child went to do this, but Male, knowing what was happening, quickly untied the string and put it on another man's arm.

The women then yanked on the string, pulling the man backward toward themselves. And the man thought to himself, "All right! The two women desire me!" Sire and Sangbera tugged the man toward themselves, but when they saw that it was someone different, they untied the string and said, "We don't want you." And they chased him away.

Then they summoned the child and smacked him, saying, "We want that man over there, the one wearing the tall bird costume!" So the child took the string and wrapped it around Male's arm once again, but he took it off and put it around another man's arm, and Sire and Sangbera again started pulling the "wrong" man toward themselves.

This went on all night long, and then the first light of day was close. Then Male's mother ordered the *papa* tree to stretch out its branch to Nambariwa again. Male climbed on top of the branch, which then carried him back to his own village. Then Male took off his bird costume and hid it in his men's house. And he removed his beautiful decorations and put on his sore-filled skin and returned to his spot on the beach.

Meanwhile, after the sun had come up, Sire and Sangbera had gone looking for Male. They searched for him, saying, "Where could that man have gone?" They searched and searched, but there was no sign of him anywhere. So all of the people returned to their villages.

The next day, Sire and Sangbera took their nets and went out again to catch fish. They went toward Sâanzi. And Male had come down to the beach to sit on a rock and warm up in the sun. The two women came up to him and asked him, "Were you at our dance last night?" Male answered, "With this ugly skin? You can see for yourselves that my skin is covered with broken sores. How could I have gone to any dance?" But as he was talking, the two women looked carefully at him and noticed a small hole in the skin near the corner of his eye, where a rat had chewed the skin during the night. And through this hole, they could see that there was red paint around his eye, the kind used for dance decorations. And they said to him, "You're lying! It was definitely you there at the dance last night. There is red paint around your eye!" So the women took Male and went toward his house.

Male's mother was astonished that they had discovered him, and she brought

them into the house. Then she told Male, "Go to your men's house and take off the sore-covered skin." Male did this, and he became a very handsome man. When the two women saw him coming down the steps, they were stunned and said, "Ah, you tricked us! Now we will take you to be our husband!" So the two women married Male.

They lived there together, and time passed, but then all the men of Nambariwa began preparing for battle, intending to kill this outsider who had taken their two most desirable women. By this time, Sangbera was pregnant; but Sire was not yet pregnant. The men arrived to do battle with Male. Day and night Male's mother was making bows and arrows for him, and every morning the men would attack. The fight was so intense that the skin on Male's hand was rubbed raw from shooting arrows. Then one night Male started to build a canoe after fighting all day. From then on, he would fight during the day and build the canoe at night.

When the canoe was finished, he told his mother and Sangbera, "The two of you must stay here. I am going to escape." And Male's mother and his wife Sangbera turned into rocks, which can still be seen to this day at Bunâwa. But Male and his other wife, Sire, went down to the beach, got into the canoe, and headed west.

They paddled until they reached Nambariwa, where Male took an arrow and shot it toward the shore. The men of Nambariwa did not shoot the arrow back toward him, so he knew that he was not welcome to come ashore. So they went on until they reached Lambutina, where once again Male shot an arrow toward the shore; but the men of Lambutina also refused to show their welcome by returning the arrow. They kept heading west, stopping to shoot an arrow ashore at each village they came to--Basakalo, Laelo, Balambu, Kiari, Malasanga, Gâwa, but nobody shot the arrow back.

Finally they arrived at Guva, and Male took an arrow and shot it toward the shore. The people on the beach took his arrow and shot it back in the air toward him, and Male said, "Oh, the people of this village are willing to let me come ashore and live here." So Male went ashore and settled in Guva.

So to this day the people of Guva and the people who live in the area west of Sio make excellent loin cloths, barkcloth shields, bows, and arrows. It is because they allowed Male to settle there. But we in Sio have to go to the villages in the west to buy bows and arrows and loin cloths.

The story ends here.

NOTES

1. This program to encourage literacy in the Sio language was established by Clark and his wife. Dawn Clark, of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, in collaboration with members of the Sio community. Selected *tapinga*, regarded as true historical accounts, of which the story of Male is an example, as well as *usi*, or folktales, are being produced as illustrated booklets.

2. The Sio term for the west and the peoples of the Rai Coast is *labuna*. The actual producers of the barkcloth and bows and arrows, received by the Sio from their coastal trading partners, were subcoastal communities and those of the interior, the Uruwa and Yupna peoples. In the story, it is a party of bush people who greet Male and among whom the hero settles. In the

Bilibili Islander story of Kilibob and Manumbu published by Dempwolff, Manumbu creates languages as he voyages south and east from Karkar Island to the Rai Coast, where he announces that “it is good that we speak a separate language: it is bad to speak Kilibob’s language. We speak the Labun language.” Of this term, Dempwolff writes, “The name Labun is unknown to me; possibly it is a collective term for the various related dialects” (1911:80n).

3. We are unable to determine the location of Gāwa from either informants or topographic maps.

4. Of 105 attributes related to characters and their roles and thematic elements distinguishable in a half dozen of the Kilibob and Manup stories of the Vitiaz Strait region, “Male” (version 1) possesses 48; the Namor legend of the Mandok Islanders of Siassi (see Pomponio’s article), 67; “Kilibob and Manup” of the Bongu of Astrolabe Bay (McLaren 1972:35-44), 44; “Ndam” of the Tami Islanders (Bamler 1911:530-533), 38; “Kilibob and Manup” of the Yabob Islanders near Madang (Aufinger 1942-1945:313-315), 34; and the tale of Nagogale of the Yabim near Finschhafen (titled ‘Woman’s Infidelity’ by Zahn 1911:389-390), 17. “Male” shares 37 attributes with the Mandok’s story, 23 with the Bongu’s, 17 with the Tami’s, 18 with the Yabob’s, and 10 with the Yabim’s.

5. “Male” is not alone in being preserved in its traditional form. This appears also to be true of Siassi’s Namor legend, the Tami Islanders’ “Ndam,” the Yabim tale of Nagogale, and the Wogeo Islanders’ story of Libwabwe and Mwanubwa (Hogbin 1970:50-51), to mention a few. The Kilibob and Manup stories of the Madang coast and Karkar Island, in particular, were refashioned as cargo myths, and based on Lawrence’s (1964) account, it seems rather unlikely that the various Madang-area peoples who possessed the myth arrived at their revisions independently.

6. To save space we decided to omit version 2, which, though somewhat longer, is repetitive, nowhere as good a story as version 1, and does not do credit to Gwata as a storyteller.