NAMOR'S ODYSSEY: MYTHICAL, METAPHORS AND HISTORY IN SIASSI

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THE STORY OF Manup and Kilibob from the Rai Coast is the first of six episodes of the Legend of Namor as it occurs in the Siassi small islands off the northeast coast of New Guinea (see Introduction, Map 1). Elsewhere I have analyzed how this legend expresses Mandok Islanders' cultural identity as they conceive it, by presenting them with models of and models for behavior (Pomponio 1992; cf. Geertz 1966). Inspired by Peter Lawrence (1964), I emphasized the inherent religiosity of this story for the people who tell it. I examined the manner in which it explains how the Siassi environment was created, why it is barren compared to other areas in the trade system, and why Siassi Islanders (the Aromot and the Mandok in particular) were given the right and knowledge to connect the intricate interethnic network known as the Vitiaz trade system (Harding 1967b). Mandok choices favoring certain development projects over others reflected their identity as mobile, maritime, middleman traders, in contrast to their sedentary, horticulturalist neighbors.

This article departs from that approach and focuses on the story's historical value, in both the Mandok and the Western senses of the term. That history elucidates larger principles of cosmogony, cosmology, and epistemological style that were the focus of Lawrence's work.

Gabriel Aipake, a member of one of Mandok's higher lineages (see Pomponio 1992:96-98), who later became the church deacon on Mandok, introduced me to this legend and to its religious/sacred character by use of an analogy with the Christian Bible. He explained, "Today we have the explana-

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tion of the Bible. Before, our ancestors had these legends of this man who came from the Rai Coast and did these things, just as God did them. It is the same. This is the Bible of our ancestors."[1]

The reasoning intrigued me, as had other examples I had encountered among the Mandok. In one instance, for example, my Mandok fathers brother Bal was sick, and my mother told me to go and see him. I did. From my Western perspective, he had a bad cold and some symptoms of flu--runny nose, sore throat, mild fever, chills, aches. When I asked him what he had, however, he explained that *yaab igamgou,* "fire got me." I had never heard this expression before and asked him to explain. Well, he said, he was recently at Yangla on Umboi Island, where a local big-man had died. Since he was in a hurry to return to Mandok, he had come home instead of going to view the body lying in state. Technically this was an insult to the deceased, whose spirit had attached itself to Bal's back and made him sick. Bal felt the sickness as fever, aches, and pains, but the dead man's spirit was making him ill.

I was permitted to observe and record as a kinswoman performed a spell to cure him. He reviewed the tape with me afterward and explained bits of language, genealogy, and other important information. When he was satisfied that I was finished, he asked me for some aspirin. This surprised me. I joked about it, stating that I thought his kinswoman's spell had just cured him. He agreed that it had, but added that aspirin would also be good. Wouldn't aspirin be redundant? I queried. Once again my Western frame of reference craved an unambiguous answer. Which would *really* cure your cold, I pressed, the spell or the aspirin?

"Yes," came the reply. He went on to explain that both the aspirin and the spell had similar functions in what I shall call, for the purpose of illustration, a Saussurian system of cures (see Saussure 1966). The spell removed the spirit from his back; the aspirin relieved the flu symptoms. With the spirit still on his back, the aspirin would have been ineffectual; and while the spell removed the spirit or distal cause of the disease, the aspirin would bring down his fever and relieve his aches and pains--the proximate consequences of being sick. Thus at the level of "medicine," aspirin and spells are structurally "the same" in the larger system of cures.

This kind of reasoning illustrates what Sahlins calls the "structure of the conjuncture" (1981), in this case between Mandok and Western reasoning. They are not the same in the sense of being isomorphic--indeed, all parties recognize that the traditions from which they come are radically different. But they are "the same" as analogues of each system's larger pattern of meaningful relations. They exist in the same syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations to other elements in their respective cultural contexts,

much as Saussure ([1915] 1966) and later Lévi-Strauss (1966) posited for signs.

It is just this sort of meaning structure, in the conjuncture in Mandok narrators' recounting of "myth" and "history," that allowed Aipake to declare the Siassi Legend of Namor and the Old Testament of the Christian Bible to be "the same." Like the Bible in Judeo-Christian traditions, this story comprises only part of a larger tradition of sacred literature (a system of stories) found in Mandok culture. And like the Bible, the Legend of Namor codifies significant historical episodes in allegorical form. These in turn teach important lessons about the nature of the world and human beings' place in it--what Lawrence called the total conceived cosmic order (Lawrence 1984; see also McPherson, this volume).

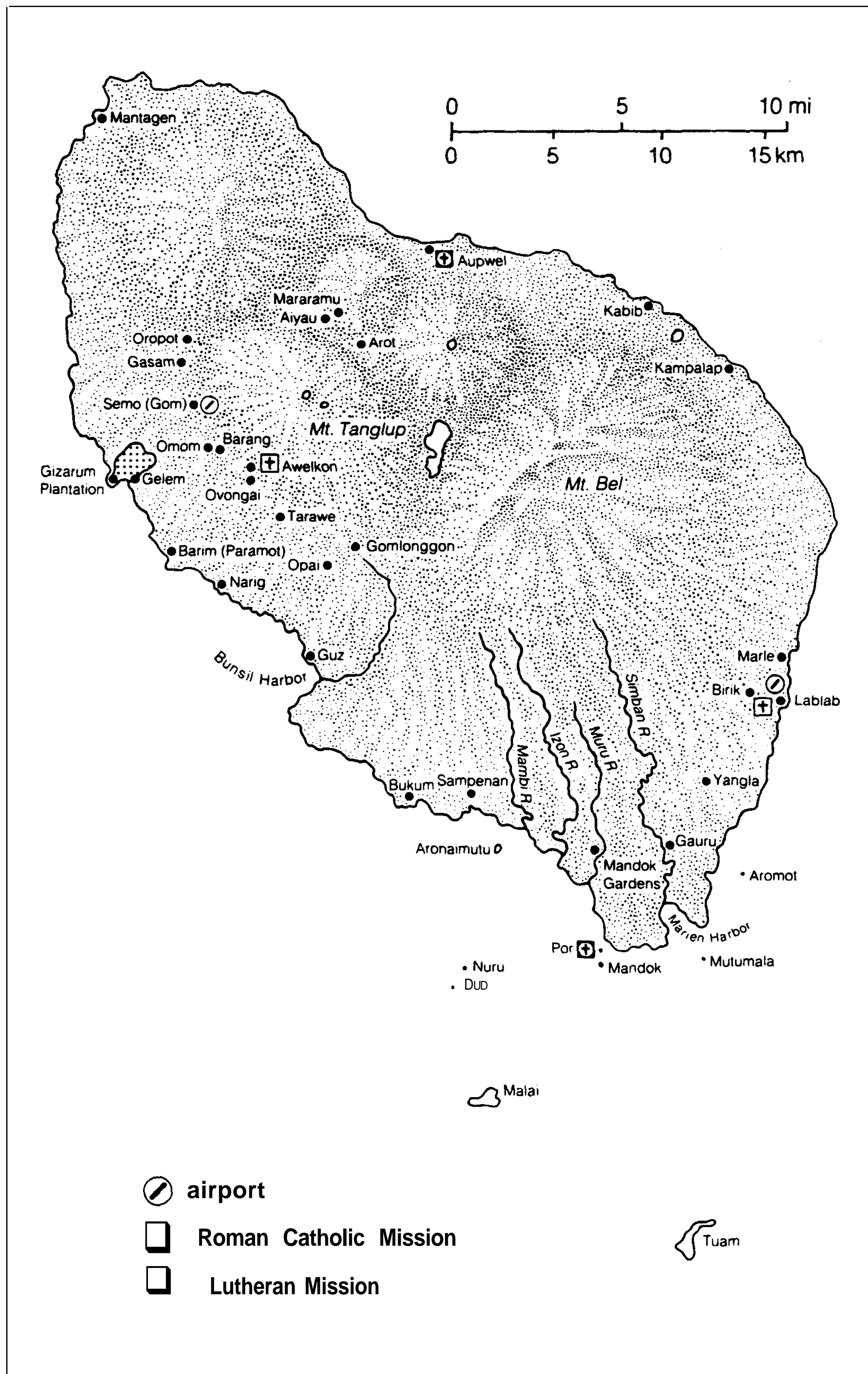
I offer the following as an exercise in thinking about Melanesian epistemology. Here I concentrate on aspects of the Namor story's importance introduced or alluded to in my previous work, but not pursued therein.

If myths are indeed polysemous communications in their own right, as most scholars would maintain, then they can be interpreted in more than one way. Indeed, the power of myth in culture is such that an epic of this sort invites reanalysis. As it happens, few scholars who record and analyze these myths are ever offered the opportunity to reanalyze them from another perspective; that task is usually undertaken by someone else, as some of us are doing in this volume with Peter Lawrence's work. He did not live long enough to revisit the Kilibob-Manup legend (but see Lawrence 1988 for a rethinking of his theory of religion). I therefore count myself fortunate to have the occasion to reconsider an epic of central importance to the people with whom I worked.

Readers who seek "one true" answer, analysis, or version of this story are liable to be disappointed. To the question 'Which is it, A or B?" in Melanesian fashion, I answer, "Yes."

The Legend on Mandok Island

Mandok is a four-hectare raised coral islet in the Siassi region of Papua New Guinea (Map 1; see also Introduction, Map 1). Along with Aromot Island, Mandok formed the hub of the Vitiaz trade system documented by Harding (1967b). The original inhabitants of Mandok came from Aromot as a result of a feud (Pomponio 1992:24-25). Other migrants came to Mandok from various parts of western New Britain, Arop Island (Long Island), Barim on the west coast of Umboi Island, and other links in the trade system, the most important of which is Kilenge, on the northwest coast of New Britain. The history of each of the Siassi islands shows a pattern of migra-



Map 1. **Umboi and skirting islands.**

tions motivated by feuds, environmental cataclysms, and social and political catastrophes.

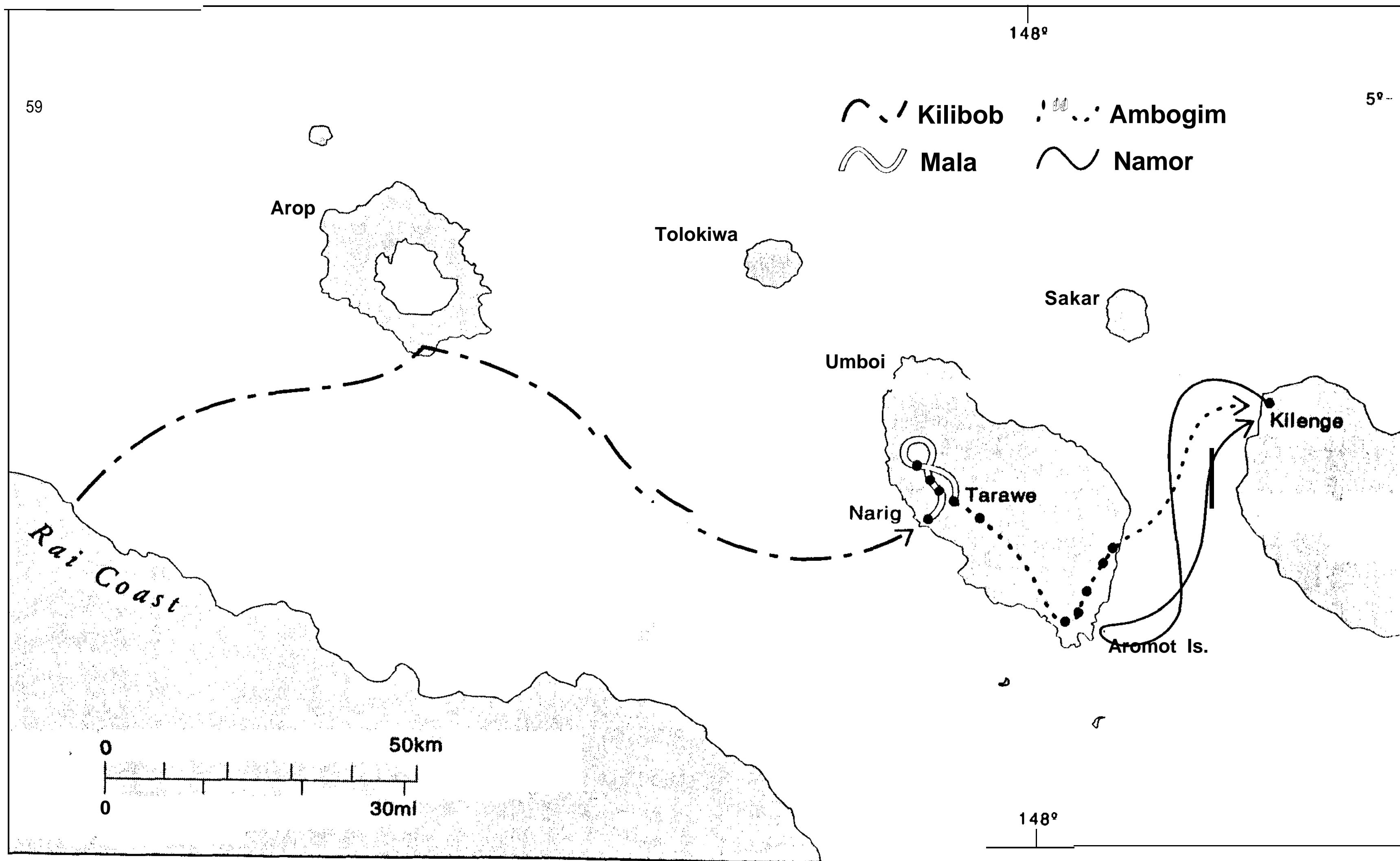
As in many other regions of the Pacific, sacred legends and other important forms of knowledge are not common property. People must own the rights to tell them publicly. The Legend of Namor belongs to Aromot Island, which is the last point mentioned in Aromot (and hence Mandok) versions of the epic and therefore the definitive proprietary point of the tale.

Namor, the Kilenge name of the hero, sells a two-masted canoe to Aromot Islanders. This sale establishes Aromot's identity as a point of seagoing canoe manufacture and middleman trade. Since Mandok was settled originally by Aromot people, the Mandok also own the story.[2] In fact, the Mandok version told to me was the most complete version I collected from all four main islands in the Siassi archipelago.

I first heard this legend on Mandok Island in 1980, in the course of collecting data for a larger fieldwork project that also entailed the collection of oral histories, biographies of important people, and genealogies (Pomponio 1983, 1992). Mandok tellers divided the epic narrative into six episodes, each of which charts discrete geographical areas (Map 2). The version presented here is a combination of a five-episode version of the Legend of Namor, told to me by Gabriel Aipake and Michael Mote (Pomponio 1992:30-34, 35-37, 38-43, 44-46, 47-49), and a one-episode version of the Legend of Las, Nagur and Sup, told by Gabriel Aipake. Aipake told the Legend of Las, Naŋur and Sup, presented here as Episode 2, as a separate story; I have presented it that way in my earlier work (Pomponio 1983: appendix C; 1992:61-62).

I feel justified in combining it here with the Legend of Namor for two reasons. First, Lewis Kusso-Alless (also spelled Allace), himself a Mandok, recorded them on Mandok together (Allace 1976). Second, my informants always stressed the congruity of that episode with the rest of the epic legend, referring to familiar characters, reference points, and so on, insisting it was another part of the same story. Since its inclusion here is instrumental to my demonstration of the role of the legend in patterning contemporary behavior, I include it as Episode 2, inserting it as Allace did.

I was struck by the number of coincidences between particular episodes of the sacred Legend of Namor and living Mandok people's genealogical and family histories. I reasoned that, most likely, it was not that the Mandok were confused about their "history," but that I must be missing something. Other scholars might interpret these conjunctures of historical and autobiographical narrations as examples of what Johansen (1954) called "the kinship I" (Sahlins 1981:13-14). Having read Peter Lawrence's *Road Belong Cargo,* I concluded that something bigger than genealogy or "myth" was



Map 2. **Namor's odyssey.**

being communicated, but at the time I was unsure exactly what it was. I proceeded to examine Mandok's oral literature in greater depth. In 1986-1987 I returned to Siassi and collected versions of this legend on each of the other main islands: Aromot, Malai, and Tuam. Aipake came with me and joined discussions with the elders of these other islands. In the meantime, David Counts gave me a Tok Pisin transcript of a version he collected in Kilenge (Counts n.d.). Since the oral traditions of all of these places is similar and related, I use Mandok as an illustrative case in point.

Mandok oral tradition contains two categories of stories, each recounted with slight differences. The term *vuvuag,* "story," generally referred to tales in both styles. It can be extended in the verb form *-vuvub,* "to [tell a] story." The root can also form a noun, indicating a body of knowledge transmitted orally.

Vuvuag encompasses two kinds of tales. *Vuvuag sorok,* "just a story," could be recounted by anyone. These are told primarily for entertainment. The other kind of tale is called *kamos,* which I translate as "sacred legend." These are the sacred stories that explain important aspects of Mandok knowledge and heritage held as vital to Mandok culture. They are recounted for their instructional and didactic value. It is in sacred legends and their telling that Mandok notions of "ideal culture" are preserved, taught, and continued.

There is no special category for "storyteller," or for one particular "keeper" of *kamos.* The ability to remember and "to know" these stories is, however, attributed to certain big-men. The rights and abilities to tell *kamos* are included in the criteria for demonstrating personal power and social, economic, and political networks (Pomponio 1992:109-112). Women for the most part do not tell them in public and consider themselves not "to know" the details, although I have heard older women tell them while comforting or babysitting for their grandchildren in the privacy of their own house areas. Women can and do tell *vuvuag sorok* freely, however.

The Mandok classify the story of Namor as *kamos.* When interpreting oral histories of the sort we are considering here, there is often a fine theoretical line separating history, legend, and mythology. The story of Namor contains elements of myth, legend, and codified history. The Mandok consider it to be an account of their history and tell it as if true. I will discuss their sense of history in some detail at the end of the article.

In the context of the larger Pacific region, the Legend of Namor is part of a widespread story complex known as "the story of the two brothers" or "the hostile brothers" (Poignant 1967:96-100). Analogues occur across New Guinea (J. Barker, pers. com., 1993; Harding and Clark, this volume; Lawrence 1964; McSwain 1977; McSwain, this volume; Pech 1991; Waiko

1982). They even occur as far west as Timor (E. D. Lewis, pers. com., 1989) and as far northeast as Micronesia, in stories of the trickster Oliphat (Goodenough n.d.; Lessa 1961; Poignant 1967:74-77). Minor details vary among the many legends of two brothers recorded across the Pacific, but there is striking consistency of cultural values and themes expressed with the Legend of Namor.

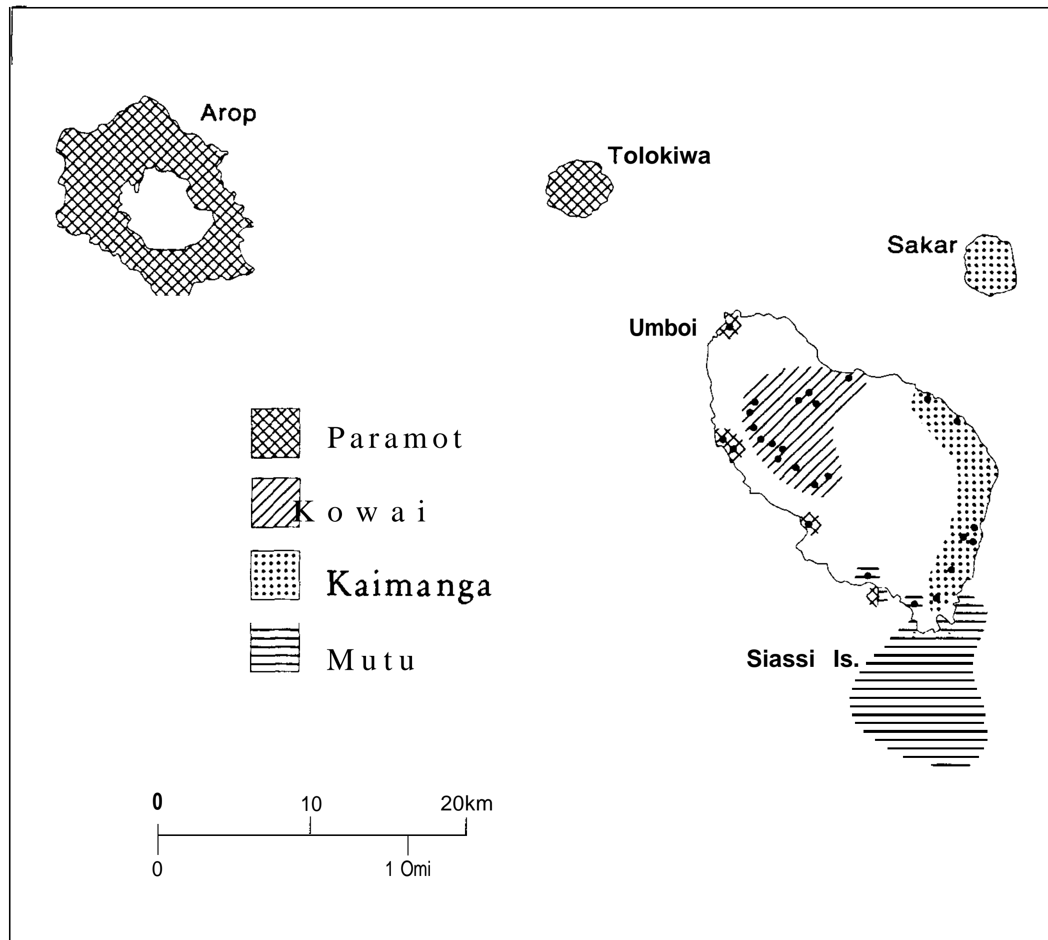
Several features concern us here. First, the text contains Mandok creation history. The Mandok converted to Roman Catholicism in the late 1930s. Indigenous history and reasoning styles thus remain prominent in their world view and philosophy. Second, the legend illustrates how the Mandok synthesize their own cosmogony and cosmology with ideas introduced by European missionaries. Storytellers' comments on points of juncture between the knowledge of Siassi forebears and Christian teachings give pertinent clues to how the Mandok understand their world and embrace, by analogy, those aspects of Christianity they understand to be "the same." In trying to place a time frame on the events in the story and its philosophy, Mandok elders I spoke with referred to "Eden." "Eden," Gabriel Aipake explained to me, was "the time before the Catholics came and preached the Word of God to us. Before they came, Siassi was like the Garden of Eden, and the Siassi people were like Adam and Eve. They did not know any better. Once the missionaries came, then they taught us, and now we know. This is like New Testament Mandok--the time before, the time of Namor, was like the Old Testament."[3]

The third important feature of the Namor legend is that it maps out significant places, peoples, and goods in the Siassi environment, and the culturally acceptable or expected relationships between them. As in Maori mythology, "the narrative sequence and interaction of the categorical beings serves as a model, transposable to many different domains, of the right relations between things" (Sahlins 1981:13). For the Siassi Islanders, the Namor story also cues the patterns of social life as they expect to find them in their contemporary world--as relationships between categories of persons, whether those persons are human or other-than-human (cf. Hallowell [1955] 1967).

The fourth important feature of this legend, one that I think has been avoided (perhaps with good reason), is that it allegorically records historical episodes in the migration and settlement of the region (Vansina 1961, 1985; Kuschel and Monberg 1977). Oral accounts often codify social relations between specific groups. There are mythical elements to beware of in the form of tricksters, supernatural elements, and so on (see Scarr 1990:55-60, among others), but these, too, offer important insights into epistemological style and the structure of broader cultural values (Sahlins 1981).

The narrative takes us from the Rai Coast, through Umboi Island, across the Dampier Strait to Kilenge (western New Britain), and back to the Siassi small islands (see Maps 2 and 3). By noting significant material goods and their indigenous locations, the story outlines the interrelationships among the various communities in this region. The final episode explains how the two-masted sailing canoes came to be built in the Vitiaz Strait and maps out overseas and local trade (see Harding 1967b; Pomponio 1992).

In the analysis that follows, I suggest some of the more documentable episodes of history recorded in this legend and indicate some of the motivations that lead tellers to tell it. In this I echo both Lawrence's concern with "means" and "motivations" (1964), and Sahlins's theory of the structure of history (1981). In contrast to Hawaiian accounts of the reception and demise of Captain Cook, which Sahlins argues represent "historical metaphors of mythical realities," I shall argue that the Siassi Legend of Namor



Map 3. **Siassi language groups.**

represents an inverse of Hawaiian oral tradition by using mythical metaphors to chronicle historical realities in Siassi.

The several protagonists in this story change with the geographic location of each episode. The Mandok referred to the entire epic as "The Legend of Namor," taking the hero's name from the Kilenge episode (Episode 6). In the Madang area and on the Rai Coast, it is known as the Story of Kilibob, or Manup and Kilibob (spellings vary--see Lawrence 1964; Harding and Clark, this volume; McSwain, this volume). The Mandok version I consider here notes the several name and character changes as part of the narrative. I have indicated these changes in episode titles to alleviate confusion, using Mandok names for the characters. Although the episode titles are mine, the episode breaks are those of the Mandok. Aipake and Mote alternated episodes for the most part, or otherwise indicated clear episode breaks in the narrative.

The Legend of Namor

Episode 1: Kilibob Leaves Madang

> *Siliv'uzi ve iza . . .* there were three brothers living in Madang. One day the oldest, Mandip, went fishing with his younger *runai* (patrilineal group) brothers, and left the youngest, Kilibob, at home. Kilibob went bird hunting with his bow and arrow. He shot an arrow high into the sky. It missed its target and fell into the center of the village. Mandip's wife, who had been sweeping the area around her house, saw the arrow fall and retrieved it. She recognized the beautiful design carved into the arrow's shaft, and she hid it.
>
> In his search for the lost arrow, Kilibob came upon his sister-in-law. When he asked her about it, she admitted hiding the arrow, but rather than give it to him, she seduced him into tattooing the arrow's design on her groin.[4] He agreed, and the two had sex together. Afterward, he tattooed her groin with the arrow's design, just as she asked. When he finished, he took a *benben* leaf and wiped away the blood. After he applied soot to the wound, he threw the leaves into the river.
>
> The leaves were swept out to sea, and soon many birds came and circled over them. Mandip saw the circling birds and thought it might be a great school of fish. He ordered his brothers to paddle toward them. When they reached the spot, he saw the bloody leaves and sensed instantly that something was amiss. So as not to arouse suspicion, he feigned illness so that the expedition would return to the village.
>
> The tide was high, so they floated the canoe offshore a bit and called out to those standing on the shore to help beach it. Mandip's wife, assigned to the outrigger, was in waist-deep water. She protested that the waves were cresting too high, but her husband scolded her, so she waded to the out-

rigger. As she did so, a wave came and pulled away her grass skirt, revealing the tattoo. Mandip saw this and thought, "Aha! Now I've got her number!"[5]

After the canoe was ashore and the women had collected their respective shares of the day's catch, he confronted his wife about the new tattoo. She tried to deny it, but he had already seen it. She let him look, fearing that if she disobeyed him, he might beat her. He examined it and recognized instantly his own family's design. With this, he got very angry, and started fighting with Kilibob. They fought viciously for days. Finally, Kilibob suggested to his mother that they leave.

The next day, they gathered their belongings and loaded the canoe with some sand, dark soil, some wood from the beach, many indigenous plants, and other supplies. They launched at nightfall, paddling toward New Britain. New Britain is a long way off. When they reached Arop, Kilibob estimated that they were about halfway there, so he decided to stop. He anchored the canoe offshore and began his work.

He dropped some stones and beach sand. The beach started extending out to sea until it met the canoe. Then he took more stones, sand, and cane, and constructed a hearth. Next, he spread the dark soil and planted the many plants and trees he had brought. The two of them settled there; they worked hard creating many things. One day, he told his mother he was lonely. With this, he got an idea. He started carving a chunk of wood into a drum. As he carved, his mother asked him why he was doing all of this work, since they were alone on the island. He just shrugged and kept on carving. Next, he constructed a dancing frame for the feast dance called Sia. He made several. His mother kept asking him why he was making all of these things for nothing, since there were only the two of them. But he answered confidently that he wanted to get everything ready. Each time his mother questioned, he shrugged her off and kept carving.

When all of the dancing accoutrements were completed to his satisfaction, he started shaping the sand into paired figures--one male, one female, a male, a female, and so on, until there were many couples. He created these things just as today we understand God's work. As soon as he finished molding the sand, he took some lime, just like the lime we use for chewing betelnut (areca palm nut),[6] and blew it into the sand models' noses. They started to breathe, and finally they came to life. Just as God blew his own breath into man, our story says it a bit differently--he blew lime into their noses, and they came to life. Soon they were all alive. He returned to his mother and instructed her to make a stone oven for the taro, sweet potato, and manioc, declaring that the next day there would be a great feast. His mother protested that there was no one beside themselves to eat all the food. He shrugged her off again and told her people were coming from a nearby village. So they prepared for the feast.

When the food was ready, he went into his men's house *(rumai)* and started beating the drum. Instantly a man and woman appeared. He kept on beating it. More and more people came, until the place was crowded. He instructed his mother to take them to their houses. As people arrived

from different directions, he allocated to them houses in the direction from which they came. If they came from the west, for example, their house lay to the west of the village, and so on. He had already made many things in anticipation of their arrival. He built them houses and created the dancing feast called Sia. (The dance called Sia is famous throughout PNG as a characteristically Siassi dance. It was imported originally from Arop.) He created the dancing frame carried by the main dancer, even the headdresses, the drums, grass skirts for clothing, and so on. After they danced the complete Sia and ate all the food, the visitors settled there. Eventually he married one of the women.

Now, women are like this--they are always angry and jealous. So of course one day Kilibob's wife got angry with him. He decided that he would leave and find another home. This was his personality. He saw Umboi Island and decided to go there. As he was leaving Arop, he noticed a group of women who were bathing near the trunk of a fallen tree. The tree's trunk lay on the beach, and the top lay out to sea. The women had spread their grass skirts on the log to dry. One woman in particular caught his fancy. He took her grass skirt and hung it on one of the outer branches. When the women finished bathing, each put on her grass skirt for the return to the village. But Gainor could not find her skirt. Finally she spotted it hanging on the outer branch. She waded out into the deep water and climbed up onto the trunk to retrieve it. As she climbed up, Kilibob hopped onto it, and the log shot out into the sea, heading for Umboi Island and Siassi.

Episode 1: Comments

This legend does not describe the creation of the universe, which is a given in Siassi cosmology. Mandok historians said that the old men believed "the world just came up by itself." Once there, however, humans developed culture. Kilibob did not create humans as a species--there were humans on the Rai Coast who lived in a village, paddled canoes, and so on. What he did was to populate Arop Island and develop a distinctive culture associated with that particular place. These threads run through the entire epic, and they may also indicate the direction and sequence of Austronesian settlement in the Vitiaz and Dampier Straits. For the Mandok, what seems to require explanation is not "how humans got created," but "how and why they came *here.*" [7]

The original impetus to Kilibob's travels was an argument between two brothers over a woman. In Melanesian thinking, brothers are supposed to be allies and help each other; they should not fight. Ownership rights to land, trees, wealth, and other resources, however, sometimes cause competition between supposed allies. According to Siassi mores and notions of

male-female relations, women often cause trouble; adultery was a sure way to break up a family. The protagonist "proves" this repeatedly at each new place he visits as the episodes unfold. But "woman trouble" is also used as a convenient excuse to save face in the midst of other conflicts.[8]

TO solve the problem, one competitor leaves. Since Kilibob is the younger brother and the cause of the trouble, it is he who must leave (see Pomponio 1992:74-75 for an expanded discussion of elder and younger sibling relationships). Siassi genealogies contain many references to similar rivalries and outcomes. As noted above, Mandok Island was settled just this way.

Kilibob's betrayal of his brother is signaled by bloody leaves, which attract birds. Siassi audiences know that circling birds usually indicate the position of a school of fish. When the older brother arrives at the spot and sees the bloody leaves instead, he interprets them as a bad omen, since women's (menstrual) blood (implied and understood by Siassi audiences) is inimical to net fishing. Similarly understood, carving and tattoo designs were controlled by particular family lines and/or *runai* (patrilineal groups). Siassi people kept track of each other's movements by recognizing these designs on any item: a moored canoe, a stray arrow's shaft, a drum, a canoe paddle, and so forth (see also Mulderink 1980). When Mandip saw his family's design tattooed on his wife's groin, he knew it had to be Kilibob who tapped it, because Kilibob was the only man in the village at the time who had the right to use that motif. (For similar logic for western New Britain in relation to design ownership, see Thurston, this volume.)

Once Kilibob lands on Arop, we begin to see the more creative aspects of his personality. Kilibob is a creative man of knowledge--an archetypal artisan. Using his magical powers, he creates the Arop Island environment and names different species of flora and fauna and kinds of indigenous dance. Acquisition and control of important knowledge are hallmarks of big-men. By naming items, the storyteller asserts his own rights of usage and ownership to (and access to power inherent in) the episode, as well as to the species, objects, and events listed in it. The Sia dance, for example, came to the small islands from Arop as a trade item.

Siassi ideas about learning stress observation, personal experience, apprenticeship, and learning by example. We learn that Siassi big-men are creative, knowledgeable, and manipulative, just by observing Kilibob's interactions with his mother and his creations of people, places, and things. These are common personality traits of big-men in this and other parts of Melanesia, and they have the very important function of attracting supporters (Watson 1970). Kilibob entices people to stay with him and build a village by hosting a lavish feast. He accomplishes this by supplying plenty of

food, decorations, and housing for his guests. This establishes a social network of visiting, sharing, exchange, mutual familiarity, and knowledge of geography necessary for safe travel. He even obtains a wife, establishing local customs of intermarriage in the process. Listeners learn by example and experience an allegorical apprenticeship of sorts with the master artisan *(gorgóor)* of the Siassi social sphere.

We also learn that big-men can be moody and fickle. With a vague announcement about "typical" female behavior (a familiar stereotype in Siassi), Kilibob leaves, but not alone: he takes Gainor with him. She becomes his new wife and the wife of Mala in Episode 3.

Episode 2: Las, Naŋur, and Sup

When Namor left for Gauru, he left his two sons with their grandmother on Arop Island. There she took care of them until they grew up. One day, they asked her to carve them bows and arrows, which she did.

When she had finished, the two boys went out to shoot fish along the beach. They did this for some time, until one day, they watched their grandmother roast their taro until it was cooked. She scraped it, put it aside, and gathered up the scrapings to throw them away. She attracted the fish, which were schooling into a whirlpool.

The fish that were swimming around in this whirlpool were *las* (leatherskin), *nagur* (trevally), and *sup* (kingfish). When the grandmother threw away the taro scrapings, she also threw a stone into the water. Its splash attracted the fish; they came and just circled in front of her. While they circled, she took three leatherskins, one for each of them, and put them inside her bamboo container for transport back to the village. She roasted the fish on the fire and called her two grandsons to come and eat. When they finished their meal, the boys went back to the beach to shoot some more fish with their bows and arrows.

But the grandmother stayed, and in the evening she cooked them taro again, scraped it, put the taro to one side, and returned to the whirlpool to throw away the scrapings. She sat down and threw a stone, which splashed into the water. The fish circled, and this time she took a kingfish and some leatherskins, just enough for the three of them.

They lived like this for some time, the grandmother each day roasting the taro on the fire and taking the scrapings up to the fish, luring them with the stone and throwing away her rubbish as food for them. Each day she took enough fish to feed her two grandsons and herself.

This continued until the two boys reached adolescence, Soon their curiosity was piqued, and they wondered where their grandmother got fish every day. They decided to follow her to find out, planning that, once they knew where all the fish were, they could have a field day shooting fish with their bows and arrows.[9]

When the new dawn broke, they stayed close by and watched their grandmother roast the taro, scrape it, and gather the scrapings to discard them. The two boys followed her and hid in the bush while their grandmother went and sat down by the edge of the lake, threw the stone into the water, and attracted the fish to come and circle in front of her. The younger brother said, "Hey! Let's go and shoot the fish!" But the older brother scolded him and recommended instead that they wait until after their grandmother left, which they did.

They stayed hidden until their grandmother put three fish into her bamboo container and left. When she was gone, they came out of hiding and started shooting at the fish, hollering and shooting, and having a wonderful time while the fish were circling.

But soon the fish got very agitated. Trevally went first. He tried to find an escape, because these fish could not stand the arrows being shot at them. They each kept trying to find a way out, to escape the constant barrage of the arrows. Trevally tried to bash his way out, and threw himself against the edge of the lake, but to no avail. He went back into the frenzied circle. Then Kingfish tried to jump out, but he too failed. As the fish kept circling, becoming more and more agitated, the boys kept shooting at them, until finally Leatherskin tried to fly out,[10] and he shot himself into and shattered the white boulder, which formed a "door" to the lake. Suddenly the lake poured out of the aperture, and all of the fish, the kingfish, leatherskins, trevally, and *ai kattina!* all kinds of fish poured out with it all at once and flowed out to the sea. The birds showed them the way, and they swam out to the deep sea through an opening just like a bamboo pipeline.

Back in the village, the grandmother heard a tremendous boom, which sounded just like a huge crack of thunder, and she realized instantly what had happened. She ran to the lake and arrived to see her grandsons shooting at the fish.

She screamed, for she saw that by this time they had shot a whole pile of fish. She was already sorry. The old woman realized what would happen, and she was very sad. She returned to the village alone.

She waited, and when the boys arrived home, she told them, "I don't know if you will ever eat fish again; the fish are all finished."

After she said that, the two boys took their baskets and headed back to the beach to shoot more fish. She went with them, carrying her huge *on* (Siassi wooden bowl) with her. She threw the bowl out onto the sea and hopped on top of it; the bowl followed the fish out to sea.[11] She floated among the throngs of fish, circling and schooling with them as they swept her away. They traveled on and on, arriving finally at Barim. At Barim, they heard the people speaking the same language as that on Arop Island,[12] so they said, "They are the ones who are trying to kill us. They speak the same language." So they left and traveled on to Aronaimutu. As they came into Aronaimutu, they heard that these people, too, spoke the Barim language.

"They are all the same ones who want to kill us," they said, and they swam on.

Finally they came to Malai Island. When they arrived off the shores of Malai, they heard a different language. So they said, "Let's stay here." You see, the old woman heard our language, and decided to stay in Siassi.

They stayed near one reef for quite a while, and night fell. At the break of dawn, really early, around six o'clock, the fish, along with the old woman, went to Malai's beach so that they could eat the little minnows offshore. They all gathered there until the place was filled with them. The Malai came to the beach and said,

"Hey, look at the new fish that have come here!"

They all came down to the beach to look at these new fish. They went and got their nets, surrounded them, and started spearing them. They kept trying but only speared a few; the rest of the fish escaped.

The next day, the men tried to surround the fish with their nets and spear them, but again they didn't catch many, because the fish got agitated and took off. Finally, defeated, the Malai went home.

During the night, when all were asleep, the old woman appeared to one old man in a dream and explained,

"These fish that have come to you--you must stop trying to spear them and shoot at them. If you do that, you won't get many. It is strictly forbidden to spear these fish. When you catch them, surround them, then take another net and weave it like a basket. Then go and line up and close the net in with your hands, and the fish will go inside, and then you can take it up and empty it into the hull of the canoe. This is the way you must catch these fish; never spear them, or the fish will escape and you won't have many."

Then she gave her spell to the old man. When she finished explaining it to him, dawn came, and he awoke, and oh, boy! in the early morning the fish came into shore again. The young men grabbed their nets and got onto their canoes. The old man went with them. As they approached the school of fish, they gathered together, and the old man recounted his dream while the young men listened.

They spread out the net, laid it in the water, and he directed--"Jump into the water." So they jumped in, and *ai kattina!* The fish went right into the net, inside the circle of men, and circled inside the net. All of the men yelled their totems when they saw the fish just go right into the net and circle. As they circled, the old man said,

"Close the net."

The net came down, and then,

"Sew it" (i.e., "sew it, weave it shut").

And they fashioned the mouth of the net just like the opening of a bilum. Then he said,

"Some of you make a line over there, some over here, and you over there hold the net, while others go and chase the fish toward us."

"Won't the fish run away if we go and chase them?" some protested.

"No," he said, "let's follow my dream."

So they went and chased the fish, they grouped, and the fish went into the net. They pulled it through the water, and emptied it into the canoe. As the men saw that this method worked, they decided to follow the old man's dream. They kept on following his directions, doing it over and over, and they got a huge catch. They filled one canoe to capacity, then another, then another, until they all had to go back to the village for help. The entire village was involved. They kept at it, on and on, and the old man said the spell over the stone and threw it. These fish are not very strong. By moving gradually, little by little, they eventually got all of the fish.

Now, if a man tries to spear these fish, they won't come up, they will only swim away and he won't catch many. Because this old woman told that man--that is why today we follow this custom, and we catch these fish.

Episode 2: Comments

According to Allace, after providing spouses for everyone else, Kilibob made a woman for himself and married her (1976:4-5). This was Gainor, and she bore Kilibob two sons *before* he left Arop.[13] At this time, too, Kilibob created the three sacred fish: *las* (leatherskin or queenfish), *nagur* (trevally), and *sup* (kingfish).[14] He put these fish in a lake on top of a hill on Arop (Long) Island, with only a small trap door from which to extract the fish (Allace 1976:4). Kilibob shows this to his mother and demonstrates how to catch these fish.

This episode's most obvious message concerns the instructions for net fishing. At the time of my fieldwork, the Malai, the Mandok, and the Aromot fished with nets using the methods prescribed in this legend.

Siassi listeners also cite this episode, however, as an explanation for why they do not fish with traps. They "do not know how." There are two meanings to this phrase. First, Siassi Islanders do not have a legend that explains fishing with traps or a spell to ensure that the fish would go into the traps, once constructed. Without the legend and the spell, the traps "would have no power to attract fish." Second, without these forms of "knowledge," they have *no right* to use fish traps. Here the legend validates technology in the strict sense (cf. Lawrence 1964).

A less obvious but possible meaning of this episode is a codified historical account of a migration wave of people from Arop. Mandok genealogies record migrations after the big volcanic eruption on Arop that created the crater lake in its center.

Blong classifies the Arop (Long Island) eruption among the biggest in the last thousand years (1982). Using both oral historical and geological data, Blong correlated the dispersal of Tibito tephra with the dispersal of "time of darkness" myths and dated the eruption at or around the mid-seventeenth

century. Though Blong cautions the reader about the reliability of oral data (e.g., 1982:58-59, 76-85), he also suggests that since "the airfall tephra represents only about a third of the total volume of products erupted during [this kind of eruption] . . . the total volume of material erupted at Long Island during the eruption of Tibito Tephra was almost certainly >30 km^3 and it is this figure which should be kept in mind when comparisons are made with [other comparable eruptions]" (1982:59).

However classified geologically, the event was cataclysmic enough to be recorded in the oral histories of at least fifty-six societies located from Wewak to Menyamya and as far inland as Kagua in the Southern Highlands Province in the form of time of darkness stories (Blong 1982:69-87). This is an area that "spans well over a hundred thousand square kilometres, and includes a vast number of cultural groups speaking over one hundred distinct languages" (p. 75). Siassi communities have no time of darkness account that predates the solar eclipse of 5 February 1962. But they do have this episode, which describes a great boom, a flood, and a large-scale migration.

The routes to the volcano crater on Arop are subject to flash floods. During World War II, for example, Allied forces were stationed there for a time in December 1945. During a storm, a bulldozer that had been parked along a riverbank fell into the river when the bank collapsed, and the force of the flood washed it out to sea (Ball 1982:458). When Kilibob leaves Arop in Episode 1, the log on which he and Gainor are perched "shoots out to sea." These vignettes may be recording two different migration routes used to escape Arop and the tidal wave that inevitably resulted from such a violent eruption.

Oral historical accounts on Malai Island record the comparative recency of kingfish in Malai waters, using this legend, also from Arop, to document the change in fish habitats. Malai historians also note that settlement of Malai Island resulted from a feud in Barim and the flight of one man named Malai. One must be careful about literal interpretation of oral literature (Blong 1982:74-76; Scarr 1990:52-79; Vansina 1985; among others). The archaeological record is not conclusive, either. Although the Vitiaz Strait trade system has been dated at 300 to 350 years old, there is evidence of human habitation in the Siassi archipelago as early as 2500 to 2800 B.P. (Lilley 1986:103-104, 448-479; 1988). Still, both of these historical episodes could be conflated in the encoded history of the appearance of these three sacred fish in Siassi. Note the listing of places and dispersal of language groups judged hostile or friendly. Aronaimutu is mentioned as a hostile place of Paramot speakers (see Map 3).

An old woman in the legend trades important knowledge and new fishing

techniques for sanctuary. It does not seem unreasonable that some kind of parallel swap could have occurred with real people seeking sanctuary from a cataclysmic event such as a volcanic eruption or a regional war. The fact that an old woman is the source of this important knowledge is a common theme in Siassi *kamos* and may be read as a reminder of the importance of matrilateral ties in the wider sociopolitical networks in which Siassi trade, nominally viewed as a patrilineal system, operates (Pomponio 1992:95-107).

This episode belongs to one family line (the descendants of the old woman) on Malai. By extension and genealogical connections, however, other Siassi Islanders lay claim to it, just as they lay claim to the other episodes more appropriate to Aromot and Mandok islands (see below).

Episode 3: Mala's Travels on Umboi

> Kilibob and Gainor settled at Narig, on the creek with the same name (south of Barim, on the west coast of Umboi between Barim and the beach downhill from Tarawe). At this point, Kilibob's name changes to Mala (Malo in the Aupwel version). The couple lived at Narig for a long time. Mala went net fishing or spear fishing, and brought his catch home to Gainor. She traded his fish for vegetables with the Umboi Islanders. They also made a small garden and planted taro.
>
> One day, Mala went to cast his fishnet and his wife went to the garden, as usual. She brought his food back and boiled it. Absentmindedly, she put Mala's food into the pig's food basket, and vice versa. When she hung up the food, she hung Mala's food in the pig's place, and the pig's food in Mala's place. Gainor was outside sweeping the area around their house when Mala came home, so she just told him to go and eat. He went into the house and began eating the pig's food, thinking it was his. When Gainor entered the house, she shrieked that he had the wrong food and explained her absentminded mistake. He tried to make light of it but was obviously upset about it. He changed the subject by showing her taro corms he had just brought home. He suggested that she go to the garden and plant them.
>
> The next morning, after she left for the garden, he packed his belongings, shaved, painted himself, put on the beads that she had made for him, and started walking to Tarawe. When he arrived in Tarawe they asked him where he was going. He answered that he was going to Ovongai.
>
> As Mala approached Ovongai, he looked over and noticed the elders sitting in the men's house. They were all old and gray. He slipped behind a house to disguise himself. He took *reg,* the white flower from the tall grass, and dusted its powder into his hair. Then he took cordyline sap and smeared it on his forehead. He bunched some leaves up and tied them around his ankles. His disguise complete, he cut a leaf and started shooing

away flies and mosquitoes with it. Grabbing a stick, he hobbled toward the village like an old man.

When the elders saw this decrepit stranger hobbling feebly toward them, they beckoned for him to come and join them in their meal. One of them asked his destination. In a quavering voice, he responded that he wanted to go to Barang. After he ate their food and chewed betelnut with them, he continued on his way until he reached Barang. He entered Barang in the same disguise he had used for Ovongai. He felt the village elders, who might fear an approaching stranger and kill him, would not fear an old man. Instead they would take pity on him and invite him to the men's house and offer him food and shelter, which they did. Again he set out. Near the end of the road to Gom, he sat down to rest. He chewed a betelnut and wove himself some black vine armlets called *ngas.* Continuing, he finally arrived at Gom.

At each village, Mala usually came upon the women first, since women's chores usually led them to the outskirts. As he entered the village, he then proceeded to the men's house, where he sat and ate with the village elders. At each place, they asked him to stay on. But each time he declined, choosing instead to keep going.

On and on he walked, until he arrived at Gasam. There he saw two beautiful women filling their gourds with water. They were so beautiful, he decided he wanted to marry them. He climbed a nearby tree and started chewing betelnut. When his wad was good and red, he spit it down between them. They looked around, and finally one of them spied him up in the tree. These two women were sisters. They both wanted this man. He climbed down from the tree and announced to them that he wanted to settle down there. The two sisters returned to the village and told all their friends about him. The next day, all the women went back to get water. They stayed to talk with this handsome man, to make love with him, and generally to have fun. This went on for days, until the men of the village started wondering why their wives went every day to fetch water and never got any work done. Finally one man hatched a plan. He told his young son to throw a tantrum the next time his mother went to draw water and to keep it up until she took him along.

The little boy obeyed his father and really created a scene. The other women reassured the irritated mother by pointing out that he was only a child, "What does he know?" They also argued that he was old enough to walk by himself. So they all went.

The women carried on with this man at the riverbank all day. The little boy watched. At sunset they returned to the village. As soon as they reached home, the little boy ran straight to his father and described what he had seen. The father reported what was going on to the other men in the men's house. They were all outraged, and wanted to kill the intruder.

The father suggested that all the men take their weapons, and their pig and wallaby nets to catch him.

During the night, while the women slept, the men went out and surrounded the whole riverbank area. Their nets were set, and all of their weapons were ready. They hid and waited. At dawn, the women came down from their houses. When they arrived at the riverbank, the man emerged.

But when they saw him, the men hesitated. Should they catch him or kill him? The little boy was right: he was really a handsome man who could "steal your heart" *(isad atem).* The older men wanted to invite him into the village. The younger men wanted to kill him because he had violated their wives.

They started shouting and chasing the intruder toward the nets. He turned and ran. He jumped into the water and, changing himself into an eel, dove under the mud. The men scrambled about, groping for him with their hands and feet under the murky water. In the confusion, the man who had sent his son out to spy on the women found and caught the eel (Mala), who was slithering away. The man grabbed Mala and slipped him into his pandanus mat. Then he cried out in feigned agony, pretending to have a cramp in his groin. He excused himself and returned to the village. Once safely inside the men's house, he opened the mat, let Mala out, and laid him down. Later, when the others returned, the man confessed to his deception. He suggested that, rather than kill Mala, they should accept him into the village as an elder. They gave Mala food, and they all lived together. Since the first two women who flirted with him were unmarried, he married them both, and they all lived in Gasam.

Episode 3: Comments

Episode 3 reveals aspects of the personality and cunning of Siassi big-men--models *of* expected behavior (Geertz 1966). Mala is a trickster, a womanizer, and a rogue. His physical beauty is complemented by social and political shrewdness that attracts both women and men to him. Siassi charm and sexual prowess are legendary in surrounding areas. Genealogies of important big-men record adulterous affairs as well as feuds, famine, and other catastrophes as catalysts for migrations. A big-man brings his followers with him when he migrates (for example, Kilibob brought his mother with him to Arop in Episode 1 and Gainor with him on the trip to Umboi in Episode 3). The story of one man's journey may therefore be read as an allegorical expression of a group's migration and alleged behaviors along the way These form the basis for contemporary stereotypes that Siassi peoples (and their trade relations) hold of each other.

These themes recur throughout the story. The hero first creates the trouble, usually by adultery, and then transforms an adverse situation into a winning one by using his wits and magic. That conflicts arise is an assumption of everyday life on Mandok. Mandok audiences thus interpret Mala's instigation of his own problems as a sign of his humanness. His clever manipulations and escapes, however, coupled with his physical beauty, magic, and metamorphic abilities, make him superhuman and separate.

Ultimately, Mala is admired for his cunning and invited to stay on as an elder of the village. Thus, although much of his behavior would not normally be condoned, the fact that he gets away with his antics is to be admired.[15] These are all demonstrations of his personal power. He is renowned and successful because he is clever. Instead of asserting his manhood through acts of physical prowess, Mala is a talented artisan who creates the many wealth objects, dance forms, fish, and even human populations found in Siassi. He is a man of knowledge, a man of action, and a very wily opponent. In place of open confrontation, he outsmarts his opponents (real or potential) and essentially swindles them out of the objects of his desire. He achieves his goals by manipulating the social or physical environment through disguise, with magic, or by changing his physical form.

The careful mention of particular villages on the west side of Umboi Island offers a lesson in intervillage relations and safe travel in strange lands (L. Alless, pers. com., 1984). The villages Mala visits are Kowai communities known to the Mandok to be safe havens among otherwise hostile "bushmen" (see also Allace 1976).[16]

These legendary events mirror real episodes in Siassi genealogical and migration histories. Umboi Island is divided geographically by an extinct volcano, and culturally and linguistically into the Kowai (northwest, non-Austronesian-speaking; also "Kovai") and the Kaimanga (southeast, Austronesian-speaking) sides (Maps 1, 3). Relations with the Kaimanga side historically have been more peaceful, and intermarriage and trade more flowing than on the Kowai side (see Harding 1967b:144-153; Ploeg, this volume; Pomponio 1992:16-22). At the time of my fieldwork, trade with Kowai communities was conducted at Guz, on the beach down from Opai/Gomlong-gon, and at Gizarum, because there was a plantation and a wharf there. Sampenan was also visited by families who had relations there. As in other areas of Melanesia and the Pacific, it was not uncommon for a *maron* (overall leader, peacemaker) to sponsor "drifters" or to woo their rivals' followers away in return for sanctuary and a new social identity (Pomponio 1992; see also Sahlins 1981; Watson 1970; among others). In this respect the legend offers a lesson in political pragmatics: why kill such a powerful person if you can get him to work for you?

Episode 4: Ambogim

Meanwhile, Gainor was searching for Mala. She was pregnant and about to deliver. Each time she arrived at a village, its inhabitants told her that she had just missed him. Still searching, she wound up in Tarawe.

One day she had a yen for some fish. She talked some other women into going with her. Now, if they were island women, they would have said, "Let's go diving for sea clams." But these were bush people, so the Umboi women decided to follow the riverbank and find themselves some shrimp. They prepared their shrimp nets and left for the river.

Along the way, Gainor went into labor. She walked off into the bush and gave birth to a boy. She left the baby at the base of a ficus tree.[17] The snake Ambogim, who lived in this tree, took the baby to raise as his own. When Gainor returned to the other women, they asked her where her baby was. She just shrugged and told them she threw it away. "It's not as if he had a father--his father took off a long time ago." They returned to the village.

A long time passed, and while Gainor remained in Tarawe, the child Ambogim grew up in the bush. You see, the snake gave the child his own name. One day, some of the women returned to the very same place, again looking for shrimp. They came upon a huge branch of a ficus tree from which some vines were hanging. As the wind blew, the leaves rustled against the vines, and the women thought it was about to rain. But when they looked up, they saw that it was just the leaves, so they kept shrimping along the riverbank. Suddenly, one of them cried that she saw a handsome man up in the tree. The women started chattering hopefully about enticing this man to go with them.

The snake Ambogim heard them. He came out and announced that this was the baby they had discarded. He explained how he had taken the child in and given him his own name, Ambogim. He refused to let the child go without compensation of one *ti* basket (a large, tightly woven round basket with sloping sides) and some money shells. The snake wanted to decorate his forehead with the money shells, then curl up to sleep inside the basket. The women gave him these things and took the young man back to Tarawe. There Ambogim settled down and married two women.

One day a message came that there was to be a great feast at Opai and that Ambogim was among those who would receive a pig. Several other Tarawe men were also receiving pigs. They invited Ambogim to accompany them to Gom to trade for some vine armlets.[18] The entire village gathered their wealth objects together--betelnut, tobacco, and other exchange objects--and walked to Gom.

Ambogim did not know that Mala, the father he had never seen, lived in Gom. By this time, Mala was an old man. He had left Gasam and now lived in his men's house in Gom. From there he could see that one by one all of the different people were met by their trade partners. All, that is, except for Ambogim, who did not have a trade partner in Gom. Neither man rec-

ognized the other. The old man just saw a young loner and asked him for some betelnut and betel pepper. Ambogim gave him what he asked for. At once, Mala recognized this betelnut and pepper, because they were very special. He himself had planted them many years ago. These two species grow wild near Narig, where Mala originally lived with Gainor. They are both red. The betelnut is called "Mala's sweat," or "Mala's wad," and the pepper, named after his wife, is called "Gainor's blood." This recognition told Mala that this loner was his son. Mala chewed. As he chewed, he began to sweat. It was a sultry day, and "the betelnut speared him" (*bolai ingali,* i.e., it intoxicated him). Mala wiped the sweat off his brow and flicked it onto Ambogim. As they chatted, he kept wiping his brow and flicking the sweat onto his son. To size him up, Mala kept Ambogim talking. He asked Ambogim why he had come. Ambogim told him of the upcoming feast and explained his need for vine armlets. He took out the wealth object he had brought to trade and showed it to his father.

The Tarawe expedition was gathering in the plaza: it was time to go. As Ambogim rose to leave, the old man took out a tiny parcel and handed it to him. Ambogim slipped the parcel into his pandanus pouch. But when he tried to give the old man his wealth object in return, the old man refused. Instead he predicted, "One day you will see a breadfruit leaf spiral in the air and glide to the ground. This will be my sign to you that I am dying, and you must come."

With this farewell, Ambogim started walking home with his friends. When they reached the riverbank closest to the village, they stopped to rest. They started comparing and admiring each others purchases. When it was Ambogim's turn, however, he was reluctant because his package was so small. They pressed him to open it anyway. When he started unwrapping it, he realized that it contained a really long and exquisite set of vines. The onlookers marveled at their beauty. They had all been fooled by the tiny package, for inside it lay beautiful, long vines. Once they returned to the village, Ambogim realized that they were long enough for three sets of armlets and leglets each: a set for each of his two wives and a special set for himself. Not only did they have armlets, they each had a special set of leglets, too.

At last the appointed day arrived. All the Tarawe participants prepared their dancing paraphernalia for the feast. Early that morning, Ambogim sent his wives out to collect some of his special betelnut and pepper to take along. As they set out, however, a breadfruit leaf spiraled above their heads, sailed down, and stuck in the ground at their feet. Recognizing the sign, he instructed his wives to put away their feasting regalia and prepare to leave for the funeral.

When they arrived at Gom, the old man had already been placed inside the grave. All were awaiting Ambogim's arrival. When the three appeared, Ambogim was invited to pay his last respects. Clutching his pandanus mat,

he removed his cassowary-bone knife and jumped down into the grave. He cut the skin at the forehead, then zipped off the skin and folded it up into his pandanus mat. He gave the order to bury his father as he climbed out of the grave. They left for home right after the burial.

Along the path, he sent one wife off to find him a coconut to drink. When she returned, he drank the whole thing and ate all the meat by himself. When they reached the crossroads, he excused himself to go into the bush to urinate, blaming it on the coconut. But instead, he ran into the bush and took out his father's skin. He fitted it over his own skin and ran ahead of his wives. He came out of the bush and sauntered toward them.

His wives started screaming. They thought his father's ghost had come to kill them.

Ambogim ran back into the bush, removed the skin, and doubled back to come out from behind them. Feigning real concern, he asked why they were screeching like colicky babies. When they told him what had happened, he scolded them and accused them of lying.

They argued about it as they walked. The women had barely calmed down when he complained of stomach cramps and ran back into the bush. He donned his father's skin and again scared his wives. Once again, he doubled back and pretended innocence and skepticism of their hysterical tale. He repeated this over and over until they reached the village.

Most people had already left for the feast by the time they arrived in Tarawe. A few who were waiting for Ambogim and his wives remained. The two wives collected their betelnut in different baskets and started packing their things. As they packed, Ambogim donned his father's skin again, lay down, and curled up around the fire like an old man.

When his wives came into the house and saw him, they wailed in frustration that, after all they had been through on the path, now Ambogim was sick. They were supposed to receive a pig at this feast. Who was going to accept it now? He told them to go with their brothers and have them accept the pig on his behalf. After bickering about it (for they were really fed up with him), they stoked his fire and left.

Ambogim went out onto the veranda and started chewing betelnut. Next door there was a woman who had recently given birth and so was still confined to her house. Since the rest of the village had gone to the feast, the two were alone. They chatted a while. Eventually the woman failed to answer Ambogim's idle chatter. She had fallen asleep. He jumped up and grabbed his huge betelnut basket. He donned his headdress, painted his eyes with red ochre, and took his shrubs, armlets, and grass skirt worn for the Bukumu feast. His costume complete, he took off for Opai. By the time he arrived, the dancing was in full swing. He hid behind a house and sent a small boy to get the main dancer to surrender the dancing frame to him so he could dance.

As Ambogim adjusted the frame, he sent the boy to tell the elders which

song set to sing. As they started singing, he stumbled out into the center of the dancing, lurching and staggering clumsily as if he couldn't dance. Some of the men protested and tried to get Ambogim removed. An old man stopped them with the admonishment that everyone came to dance, good or bad, and everyone had the right to try. He speculated that the clumsy dancer was from a distant village.

The old man finished the set and then began a set of the main songs. As these commenced, Ambogim stopped faking and started dancing seriously. Once he started dancing well, everyone cheered in unison. He really "beat his dancing to death." He was so good that all the women danced closer and closer to him, and one by one, they slipped betelnut into his basket (a sign of flirtation and invitation for a tryst).

He kept dancing, waiting for his own wives to slip him some betelnut. Finally, just as "the face of the place came" (i.e., dawn broke) and the birds began to chirp, his two wives slunk up to him and slipped betelnut into his basket. All night they had danced behind the handsome dancer, singing as they danced. "That's it," he thought to himself. "It's all over now."

Ambogim stopped dancing, replaced the frame, and took off, because it was already getting light enough to see clearly. As he turned to run off, the women all protested. He escaped quickly so as not to be recognized. The elders sent some boys after him to find out who he was, but he had run too swiftly. This confirmed the elders' theory that he was from a distant village and had decided to get an early start on the path.

Back at the house, Ambogim put all his things away, hung up his full basket, and hurriedly wiped off his face paint. His father's skin donned once more, he curled himself around the fire and lay down to sleep. While it was still early morning, the others returned, congregating in front of his house to discuss the night's events. The two wives unpacked their food gifts, and their brothers tied Ambogim's pig under his house. The women put down their baskets and went up into the house, calling Ambogim to wake up. He moaned that he was cold and that his fire had died. He kept moaning pathetically, pretending to be deathly ill. His wives spoke wistfully about the feast and about this handsome stranger who had stolen all the women's hearts. Ambogim feigned ignorance as his wives sang this mysterious dancer's praises to him. They described his seductive charm on all the women in lurid detail. Ambogim let his wives babble on, until he injected slyly, "I bet you two flirted with him, too."

They denied it, giggling. Then he mentioned casually that this stranger had awakened him during the night and, complaining of a long journey ahead, had given Ambogim some of his betelnut. He pointed to his bulging basket that hung from a rafter. With this his wives got suspicious and accused him of lying. He insisted that they take down his basket to look. He made them take out each betelnut, one by one, until their own red betelnut dropped out. They dropped the basket, giggling. Ambogim scolded

them with, "See? What did I tell you? I knew you two would slip him betelnut, and there's the evidence."

The two women glanced at each other, embarrassed, and tittered nervously. Then one of them spotted a tiny speck of red in the comer of Ambogim's eye. You see, when he cleaned his face, he missed a spot, right in the inside comer of his eye. They both pounced on him, smacking and punching him playfully. It was his turn to be ashamed, because they had caught him in his own deception, and what he had done was shabby.

He confessed and told them he was testing their fidelity. They failed the test, so he got up and left.

Episode 4: Comments

Ambogim begins life as a discarded waif, yet emerges as a powerful figure of the legend. Two clues indicate that he has already gained some renown and is an up-and-coming big-man. The first is that he has two wives. Before European contact, polygyny was predominantly the prerogative of big-men. The second clue is that he is receiving a pig in a formal exchange in a village other than his own. Competitive feasting was a vital part of Siassi social, political, and economic life before missionization. Men displayed their power through these feasting competitions, and they also resolved arguments and rivalries without violence.

Mala, Ambogim's biological father, recognizes his son by his possession of Mala's own special hybrid betelnut and pepper. Though initially Ambogim has no trade partner in Gom, he soon gains one in the old man. By having Mala's sweat flicked onto his skin, Ambogim also receives some of his father's "substance." Perhaps this is a clue to his later behavior: he becomes "just like his father"--a rogue, a wanderer, and a creator of wealth, custom, and material culture (in the next episode). Mandok notions about heritable personality traits are further dramatized by Ambogim's taking of his father's skin (more substance) and donning it in disguise to deceive and to test his wives' fidelity.

The ability to change skin at will is a mark of his immortality (A. Mulderink, pers. com., 1989; see also Pomponio 1992:44, 69). To take his father's skin in this case is also to become him, in the sense of assuming his social personality. Here the "two brothers" myth becomes a father-son, intergenerational parable.[19] This transformation provides the thread that holds all the episodes together for Siassi audiences and indicates that, at the level of structural history, there is really only one protagonist to the epic despite the name, location, and personality changes.[20] The disguise thwarts real or potential adversaries in the story and reminds Siassi listeners that things are not always as they seem.

Why Ambogim terrorizes his wives on the trail and later deceives them into adulterous behavior is unclear, except insofar as it is consistent with his rogue's image throughout the narrative. This may be a Siassi view of males and of male-female relations. We surmise from his behavior that he is a trickster who, one way or another, always succeeds in getting what he wants. Even when discovered, as in this episode by a telltale speck of ochre, his objectives are achieved and he moves on.

Episode 5: The Tree of Wealth and Plenty

Ambogim left Tarawe and headed for Gauru, on the Simban River. Along the way, he noticed at Sampenan that the Mandok, on their way to market, kept stepping on stonefish and squashing them. He fashioned poisoned spines for the stonefishes' backs so they wouldn't be squashed in the future. When he came upon the Izon River, the Gauru shared their breadfruit with him. Finally he arrived at Gauru village. He went straight to the men's house, where the elders were pounding taro pudding. As they distributed the food payment to the workers, Ambogim called for some leaves and showed the Gauru people a special way to wrap this pudding. He lived with them for a while, and then he moved on.

Just at the head of the path he met an attractive woman. This woman was menstruating, but this did not bother Ambogim. He made love to her and then took some *bou* leaves and wiped her vagina clean. Today this leaf is red, signifying this woman's menstrual blood.

Ambogim left her and walked on to Birik. When he arrived at the village plaza, he noticed that there were no men around. He saw the woman Atambalau (Atakabala in Allace 1976:11), who was in post-pax-turn seclusion in a nearby house. Approaching the house, he asked her where all the men were. She told him that they had all left to chop down a *malaz* tree.

As Ambogim turned to leave, she suggested he sit down and catch his breath first. He climbed up and sat on the edge of her veranda. She offered him some betelnut, and he began to chew. As he chewed, he whispered a spell for rain. It began to drizzle. The rain fell harder, but he just kept on chewing his betelnut. He pulled out his lime stick to add lime to his wad, and the lime stick grew longer until it poked a hole in the roof. Atambalau noticed that the roof was leaking right over him, so she bid him come inside.

Once inside, he pulled out another betelnut and began to chew some more. Once again, as he pulled out his lime stick, again it poked a hole in the roof, and the roof leaked. Once more she invited him to move inside to avoid getting wet. He kept on doing this until they were inside her house and sitting on her bed. He seduced her. When they finished, he told her to take his sperm and baptize her baby with it.

She did this, and the child grew up instantly and called Ambogim

"Daddy" Ambogim spat [at the] rain (i.e., performed a spell) so it would stop and announced he was leaving. But when he jumped down from the house, the woman packed her things and followed him. The child tagged along behind her.

As Ambogim neared the site where the elders were chopping down the tree, he noticed that a big crowd had gathered, so he donned his father's skin and resumed his disguise as a decrepit old man. Next, he dusted his hair with the white flower powder. He grabbed a stick and hobbled up to the younger men, who were chopping at the base of the tree. He offered to take a turn, but, seeing his old, hunched figure, they refused. He insisted, and added the disclaimer that he did not want to eat their food (the payment to the workers) without working for it.

You see, this was no ordinary *malaz* tree. There was all sorts of wealth in its branches at the top: cockatoo, cassowary, bird of paradise, black ochre, clay pots, pigs, dogs, wooden bowls, black beads, and--oh, boy!--everything you could possibly imagine of any worth. They were chopping down this tree for these valuables.

The young men escorted Ambogim to the old men and resumed their work. Ambogim then "spat [at the] rain," and it began to pour. All of the men ran to a nearby lean-to to escape the downpour. Once they were gone from the site, he spat again, and the rain stopped. As the men came out of the hut to resume their chopping, Atambalau and her son arrived on the scene, asking for her husband. But when the men pointed to where her (actual) husband stood, she protested that he was not the father of her baby and that she was looking for someone else who had come this way before them.

They reasoned that the only man to come this way was the old man by the base of the tree over there. . . . Hey--where did he go? The old man had disappeared. They all looked around, but it was Atambalau who spotted him up high in the tree. She hollered as she looked up, and all eyes followed hers.

The men looked up into the treetop, and there was Ambogim. He had shed his disguise and was all dressed up in his feasting finery. He was a spectacularly handsome man. Realizing that they had been fooled, the village men were very angry. They started hacking away at the tree trunk in an effort to fell it and kill him. They chopped and chopped. Finally the tree started swaying. Ambogim rocked it even more, and it really bowed. It swayed toward Tami and the Huon Peninsula. The open clay pot, cockatoo, and wooden bowls fell out. It swayed back and over toward the Rai Coast. Bows and arrows, black clay pots, wide-mouthed pots, cockatoo, cassowary, bird of paradise, and black ochre fell out. Then it swayed toward New Britain: short-tailed pigs, hairless pigs, spears, tapa cloth, boars' tusks, and obsidian fell into Pililo. It arched once more toward Kilenge, and then it snapped. It rained more cockatoos, cassowary, and black beads. This time, Ambogim fell, too.

> The tree snapped so that the trunk remained at Wanduad Point (near present-day Marle), and the top reached over to Kilenge. This trunk provided a bridge between Umboi and New Britain (over the Dampier Strait). One species of cockatoo tried to fly back to Umboi, but its wings were not very strong, so it fell into the sea and perished. The species that went to the New Guinea coast has strong wings and can fly well, but it was too far from Siassi, so it stayed on the mainland.
>
> When this wondrous tree fell, it dispersed all of the most valued goods. The Umboi mountain was left barren. You see, today in Siassi, we have no cockatoo, no cassowary no bird of paradise. . . . Siassi doesn't have anything--it is empty.
>
> Before, even the wooden bowls were carved only on Tami. But because of the two-masted canoe, the bowls eventually came to Siassi. And that is the next part of the story.

Episode 5: Comments

In Episode 5 Ambogim confirms his rogue's reputation by having sex with both a menstruating and a parturent woman--behavior normally forbidden. More important for Siassi audiences, we learn why the Siassi environment is "empty." Some speculative informants drew an analogy between Ambogim's adulterous affair with Atambalau and Eve's giving the apple to Adam in the Garden of Eden. This "original sin" caused the barrenness of wildlife and wealth objects in Siassi. Instead of a "Tree of Knowledge," in Siassi it is a "Tree of Wealth and Plenty."[21] All of the wealth objects that the Siassi acquire on their trading voyages had their mythical origins in this tree. In anticipation of Episode 6, the arcs of the swaying tree describe the trading points and the objects sought in each place. They might also describe migration waves of various Siassi forebears. A version collected in Yangla (southeast Umboi Island) records language groups dropping from the tree (R. Buggenhagen, pers. com., 1987). This part of the story shows close resemblance to migration and genealogical histories of Aromot, Tuam, and Malai islands. The speculation gains some credence from the linguistic similarities between western New Britain and Siassi languages (Ross 1986).

This episode complements the previous one regarding social relations on either side of Umboi. Relations with the Kowai side were tenuous until well after World War II (A. Ploeg, pers. com., 1989). Relations with the Kaimanga communities of east Umboi show a different tone from the outset. These relations begin with trade and technology: Namor demonstrates a new way to wrap ceremonial pudding that remains unique to this area of Umboi.

Episode 6: Namor's Ark

Once in Kilenge, Ambogim's name changed to Namor. Since this part of the story comes from there, we too call him Namor.

We do not know what Namor did in Kilenge.[22] He was sad because all of the wealth objects were gone from Siassi. He lived up on Mt. Naventame, between Tangis and Talabei mountains. He built a canoe named *Erevel Time* and brought it to Siassi so that the Siassi peoples could sail to various places and retrieve some of their lost wealth. He whispered a spell on a pig-bone knife, stabbed it into the ground, and cut a long groove to the sea. This became a river, and it washed *Erevel Time* down to the sea. Just as Noah's ark landed on Mt. Ararat, Namor built his two-masted trading canoe on Mt. Naventame. This was Namor's Ark.[23]

He was angry with the Kilenge, so he took the canoe away from them.[24] He sailed it out to Aromot and sold it for two pigs, Ankionk and Savagai. He taught the Aromot how to sail to the various points to recover some of their lost wealth. You see, we are really one village. We Mandok have our roots on Aromot, so this is why we Mandok also make canoes. Later, the Tami Islanders came to Aromot/Mandok and learned how to make canoes. Likewise the Mandok went to Tami, sailing in their two-masted canoes, and learned to carve the wooden bowls that we use in brideprice and other important purchases. The two islands exchanged these two carving traditions.

Namor's crew for the Siassi trip were from Kilenge. They became angry with him for selling the canoe (that is, the knowledge and rights to production). Plotting to kill him, they sent him down into the hull of the great vessel to help guide the masts. They wanted to replace the mast and return home to Kilenge. But Namor anticipated their trickery. He took some red sap from the *isis* tree, which looks like blood, and some white sap from the *simbam* tree, to look like smashed brains, and poured them both into a cylinder of bamboo. When the mast came hurtling down, aimed to crush his head and kill him, he slipped the bamboo container under it at the last moment. The mast shattered the bamboo, and splattered the red and white saps all over the hull of the canoe. Convinced he was killed, the Kilenge cheered triumphantly. They retrieved the pigs and the canoe, and sailed back to Kilenge.

Of course, Namor was not dead. He had cleverly faked his murder. Turning himself into a mouse, he scurried the length of the canoe inside the hull. Then he dove off the stem into the sea and swam to Kilenge. (There was a square hole in the wash strakes of all two-masted canoes by which the strakes were lashed to the canoe's platform. It was called "Namor's door" and was believed to have been his escape route.) When his betrayers set sail, Namor cast a wind spell to blow them off course. He preceded them to landfall and was strolling along the beach as they came ashore. By the time they saw him, it was too late to escape. Was he a ghost?

Had they failed to kill him? When they finally saw him, they were petrified with fear. They secured the canoe hastily and ran. The two pigs, Ankionk and Savagai, were left behind. They each rooted a furrow in the sand and stayed there. If you go to western New Britain, you can still see the depressions they made in the sand.

Namor took the canoe and sailed it back to Aromot. This is how the two-masted canoes came to Siassi. And that is the end of the story.

Episode 6: Comments

When the tree falls into New Britain, Namor is "sorry." He creates the two-masted canoe and offers it as compensation to the Siassi. He sells the canoe for two pigs, thus supplying the means by which the Siassi could retrieve some of the lost wealth for themselves.[25]

Mandok and Aromot genealogies tracing to Kilenge reach back about seven generations. Before Namor, Siassi peoples say, people traveled on a flat-bottomed raft with a sail called a *wog samburaŋa* (documented in other *kamos*). Namor from Kilenge brought the technology for two-masted canoes *(wog modig ru)* to Siassi. This revolutionized travel, trade, and economic relations over the entire region. There is systematic agreement among the versions recorded regarding the willful sale of the technology and the resentment it caused among the Kilenge.[26]

Note that all of the land activities described in the legend occur on Arop and Umboi Islands. The smaller islands are central only in Episode 2 and receive brief mention in the beginning of Episode 5. Fishing and trade, respectively, are the only subsistence activities described. Because of Namor, Siassi peoples in general lose wealth, but the Aromot in particular (and hence the Mandok) gain the technology for producing two-masted canoes. This technology gives them economic autonomy and a monopoly on control of trade relations in the Vitiaz Strait. This position could only be achieved, however, through their own initiative and efforts as traders. Thus they began their careers as maritime middlemen. We see how, from the Mandok perspective, they (as Aromot/Mandok Islanders) were the symbolic protagonists throughout the epic.

History and the Structure of Myth

When discussing significant Mandok concepts communicated in the Legend of Namor, people continually stressed the analogues of their oral historical tradition with Western "historical" tradition as documented in the Bible (as taught by the Roman Catholic missionaries). In the absence of a written

record, Mandok elders documented historical episodes by means of physical features of their environment (cf. Kahn 1990). Depressions on the beach at Kilenge marked out (and provided concrete evidence of) the location where the two named pigs rooted in the sand, A fenced-off cordyline plant on Aromot marked the place where Namor closed the deal that brought the first two-masted canoe to the Aromot. More poignant, perhaps, is the legend's explanation for the barrenness of Siassi with regard to indigenous environmental resources compared with other points in the trading circuit, which necessitated adaptation to a mobile maritime existence. In this case, the proof of history lies in the marked absence of significant concrete objects.

What is important to a Siassi listener here is not chronology, except to note sequence (and thus precedent; see below), but the structure of cultural history being recorded. The legend describes how Siassi peoples settled their respective islands and that they did so for a host of reasons. Time and space become conflated in the narrative. Any one episode tied to Western historical chronology may miss the essential points of the legend. The "when" gives way to the "who," "what," and "where." These are the important questions in Siassi oral tradition.

Perhaps the conflation of time and space also offers a key to understanding how the Mandok can consider the Legend and the Bible to be "the same." The two accounts do not present an either/or proposition to the Mandok (cf. McDowell 1985). Their interpretations reflect a consistent syncretic alternation and synthesis of both Western and Melanesian expository genres. Instead of underlining the differences between methods of recording history, however, the points of juncture recognize structural and historical analogues. By locating the legend in "Eden," Mandok philosophers acknowledge European contact and synthesize introduced Christian explanations for the creation of the world. Aipake expressed these connections by labeling this story as "Old Testament" and "Eden." Before missionization, the Mandok reasoned, their elders "did not know any better" than to think that the sea (indeed the world) just "came up by itself." *They owned the rights to a different story.* When they became Roman Catholic, they obtained the rights to biblical accounts of the creation of the world. The Mandok then considered themselves to "know." They reasoned, however, as Mandok. Therefore, what they understood of their knowledge retained a definite Siassi perspective.

The Bible and the Legend of Namor (and other *kamos*) offered them complementary and mutually supportive interpretations of history. Each tradition filled in blanks left by the other. Part of why the Mandok understood history in this way resulted from a twenty-year relationship with

Fr. Anton Mulderink, a popular missionary priest who stressed similarities rather than the differences between Christianity and already extant Mandok beliefs (Mulderink, pers. com., 1988). To invoke Sahlins once again, Mandok beliefs about "history" were not Euro-Christianized so much as Roman Catholicism became "Mandokized" (cf. Sahlins 1981:7, 68). Another reason why they interpreted history in this way reflects, I think, how the Mandok interpreted history to begin with. Thus, although change was recognized to be the result of significant historical episodes (e.g., the volcanic eruption on Arop), these episodes do not rewrite or replace a past viewed as static, but rather become woven into justifications of the present.[27]

Aipake's description of the legend as "Old Testament" illustrates the kind of thought processes Mandok employ to interpret "history," organized by cultural structures of significance (Sahlins 1981:8). Sacred legends justify and explain the world as it is now, how it got to be that way, and why it should stay the way it is.

Namor as protagonist becomes a mythical token of a culturally received type (cf. Sahlins 1981:7). The "type" in question is the prototype for Siassi maritime middleman traders and big-men. Inherent in the behavior and personality characteristics expected is a presumption of precedent.

Siassi Island society is pervaded by a principal of "firstness": in privileges and ceremonies celebrating first accomplishments for firstborns (see also McPherson, this volume), in ordinal status hierarchies of patrilineal groups, and in proprietory precedence for anyone who did or established something "first" (see also Harding and Clark, this volume). The biggest big-men are firstborns by definition. Namor was a "firstborn of firstborns" who creates, establishes, and puts himself ahead of and above others, both metaphorically and actually (as in Episode 5). He charted a path and created material culture, marriage customs, and social relations that provide the models of and for expected culture and behavior in Siassi.

To this day, precedents he set are maintained, even if they seem anecdotal to outsiders. Canoe washboards have a square hole for the lashing called "Namor's door," commemorating his ingenious escape (Episode 6). Initiates were told that Namor built the ladder to their (now defunct) seclusion house the night before they were allowed to descend and reenter village life. Mandok big-men still take in wanderers, drifters, and other waifs to sponsor. Mandok and Aromot are still the only Siassi islands that manufacture (outrigger) canoes. Siassi sailors are still renowned as dancers and womanizers, and so on. Namor "showed them how." I remain convinced that this legend, though not invoked explicitly, contributed to Mandok individuals' evaluations of various development projects through time (see Pomponio 1992).

Even though the Mandok converted to Catholicism, they still reasoned as Mandok. They thus reasoned that whether one calls a creator "Namor" or "God" does not change the basic story line. Names change with geographic and historical progressions in both the Mandok and Christian accounts. Moreover, each account records that the son replaced the father as hero. Mandok church elders recognized many such parallels, and were quite interested in noting and discussing them. Nevertheless, they assumed certain cultural "truths": Siassi small islanders manufacture canoes and catch fish for food, Umboi people grow yams and taro; men are tricksters and rogues, women are unfaithful by nature; the small islanders are sea people who sail the trade system for wealth, the Umboi are bush people who stay put. The trappings may be new, but the plot remains "the same."

On the Rai Coast, Karkar Island, and elsewhere, local reasoning and cosmology combined to create and maintain "cargo cults."[28] In the small islands of Siassi, cargo-cult-type activity as it has been recorded elsewhere was muted. This divergence was probably a consequence of a confluence of factors too numerous to pursue here, but among them I must mention the difference between Lutheran and Roman Catholic missionaries' approaches to evangelism and the particular European contact history of each area, which was radically different (discussed in Pomponio 1992:127-145).

We must also add the place and function of this legend in the local cosmology. The protagonists of Namor, although other-than-human, separate, and possessed of powerful magic, were not worshiped deities as on the Rai Coast, nor was all important knowledge believed to be divinely inspired (cf. Lawrence 1964). There was a similar anthropocentrism to religious belief structure, but it seems to have stressed cunning, cleverness, creativity, and real achievement--some might say "entrepreneurship''--as opposed to strict adherence to ritual spells to appeal to ancestors' intervention for success in human endeavors. Important knowledge could be conveyed in dreams, as Episode 2 describes; it could also, however, be traded, as were the Sia and Bukumu dancing complexes (Episodes 1 and 4, respectively). Mortals could and did influence history. Thus, instead of resorting to ritual activities, most Mandok tried to invest and compete in several types of long-term "development" projects (Pomponio 1992:127-185).

Expectations of increased material wealth and a life-style comparable to that of Europeans were most certainly present, as were the mostly frustrating outcomes. But the colonial experience played itself out differently in Siassi than on the Rai Coast, for a host of reasons.

As Peter Lawrence recognized more than thirty years ago, the episodes in the Legend of Kilibob-Manup-Mala-Ambogim-Namor are not random tales. They employ metaphors that have great cultural importance in laying

forth values important to Mandok history and culture, both in their contents and in their telling.

Unfortunately, the relative importance of such knowledge has diminished in the contemporary world system of economic and political relations--relations that have peripheralized Siassi middleman trade and left the islanders in a marginal ecosystem with little secure means of competing in a market economy. Once, the Siassi Islanders were "kings of the sea" and of a higher status than Umboi, New Guinea coast, and New Britain horticulturalists in their "domain." Now they are virtually landless islanders who languish on tiny, overpopulated islands, striving to create business opportunities (discussed in Pomponio 1992:193-201). As one Mandok man said during a village meeting, "Men who have land are rich. They have money, they have a name [i.e., prestige, status]. But you and I of the island will soon be rubbish. I have never heard of a rich islander."

Siassi peoples have *analogous* stories to those of Europeans, but these stories today are without the same degree of *power* (see Foucault 1972). They have become subordinated to a world of discourse and a system of knowledge and power that is for the most part beyond their grasp. They are struggling to avoid a situation that, in their own words, would turn them into "rubbish."

NOTES

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1. All interviewing, recording, and transcriptions of text were conducted by me in Mutu. Translations are also mine. I have tried to translate comments idiomatically instead of literally in order to render informants' speculations and philosophical musings more cogent in English. Any errors of interpretation are mine.

2. To be precise, it is the Mandok lineages derived from the original Aromot settlers who really own the rights to this story. See the text for a discussion of precedent in Siassi social and political life.

3. This is in striking contrast to other interpretations of the time before missionaries came in other areas of Melanesia. People in the Duke of York Islands, for example, consider the time before the missionaries to have been one of chaos and disorder, with the people behaving like wild animals (Errington 1974:21).

4. There is a cover term in Mutu that describes the entire groin area from the upper part of the thigh, including the genitals. In other versions it is stated clearly that he tattooed her pudenda (Lawrence 1964:22).

5. The phrase is borrowed from Tok Pisin. The Mandok have no word for "number"--numbers are not conceived as abstract concepts but are attached to specific items. The Tok Pisin expression *kisim namba,* "to get/take [one's] number," was very popular in PNG during both my fieldstays. It was translated literally into Mutu as *"nagam namba toni wa"*--the Tok Pisin word was inserted directly into the Mutu phrase.

6. Betelnut is the mainstay of social life in many areas of PNG. The nut of the areca palm is chewed with a mixture of slaked lime, made from coral, and betel pepper (sometimes including the leaves). The combination produces a chemical reaction that results in increased salivation and a wad that is blood red. Chewing betel can have both stimulating and narcotic effects on the chewer. It also appears all over PNG and other parts of Melanesia in ritual life and magical incantations, as we shall see as the story unfolds.

7. This trend is also present in other Austronesian island cultures. See, for example, Hogbin 1970:3. For northeast New Guinea, compare Lawrence 1964:13 for the Rai Coast, and Thurston, this volume, for northwest New Britain, where local cosmogony does explain the creation of humans. The study of comparative Austronesian cosmogony raises interesting questions that unfortunately lie beyond the scope of the present study. My thanks to Richard Scaglion and Thomas Harding for raising the question of human origins in this comparative sense and to Anton Ploeg for keeping me careful in my phrasing.

8. I am indebted to Fr. Anton Mulderink for this observation regarding real and apparent conflicts in Siassi social life.

9. In Allace's version, the younger of the two boys accompanies his grandmother one day and learns where the fish are. He tells the older brother, and the two go up there together (Allace 1976:5). Lacey, who interviewed and read Allace, records that the boys' mother puts them up to it (1985:84). Lacey's account contains other inconsistencies that interested readers should check with Allace's original.

10. Leatherskins have a characteristic leap that make it seem like they are flying. It is this jump to which the narrative refers.

11. In Allace's version, she becomes a shark and swims with them (1976:5). Sharks are commonly found among schools of these fish.

12. Note the local views of linguistic groupings. Refer to Map 3.

13. Although the version I recorded has Gainor coming from Arop, Allace and other Siassi commentators say she came from Tarawe (Kusso-Alless, pers. com., 1984). Episode 3 makes this clear: she returns home to bear her (now fatherless) child.

14. After Grant 1973. In Allace's version he creates only the first two (Allace 1976:4), but my informants refer to this episode as "The Legend of Las, Nagur, and Sup." Since *sup* belong to Malai Island, the versions may reflect the different tellers' genealogical and trade connections and thus their rights to the story.

15. In stark contrast, the Kowai people, who inhabit this area of Umboi Island, do not admire Mala and consider him to be a definite negative role model (Ploeg, this volume).

16. Harding writes, for example, that "On the western side of Umboi, relations with the Kovai were mediated by Sampanan, a Kovai beach village, and the coastal Paramots, who at this time were overseas traders. The interior Kovai were despised and feared by the Siassis, and in turn the 'wild men' avoided contact with the islanders" (1967b:145).

17. Ficus and callophyllum trees figure prominently in Mandok mythology and belief as homes for different kinds of spirits. Some are ancestral and protective spirits, others are malevolent.

18. Decorative and fragrant shrubs were inserted into these armlets, enhancing a dancer's attractiveness as they swished and swayed rhythmically with the dancers movements. Love magic was also performed on the shrubs, to enhance further a dancer's attractiveness to the opposite sex. They were considered such a vital part of the dance costume that a person would not dance without them. Different feasts favored different types: this was the Bukumu singsing, and therefore the desired arm bracelet was *ngas. Ngas* could also be woven into anklets, as we learn in the text.

19. My thanks to Anton Ploeg and David Counts for encouraging me to pursue these points in more depth than I had previously considered them.

20. These points are made explicitly in the Kilenge version (Counts n.d.).

21. This is my title. The Mandok refer to it by its local name, *malaz.* (Tok Pisin *malas; Homalium foetidum*) . These trees appear often in Siassi oral literature as the location of magical occurrences. A similar incident involving a beautiful but unruly character who climbs a tree to taunt his pursuers has been recorded among the Binandere of Oro Province (Waiko cited in Scarr 1990:75).

22. The phrase "we do not know" has several connotations. As a rhetorical device, it may mean that this section of the story is obscure. It might also imply that, since Kilenge is outside of Siassi, the narrators "do not know" because they have no rights to use this particular capsule of knowledge.

23. Siassi elders drew freely and independently upon the analog); between Namor's two-masted canoe and Noah's ark from the Judeo-Christian Bible.

24. My tellers were not sure why he was angry with the Kilenge, but conjectured that they must have done something to offend him. One Aromot version claims that the spectacle caused by the canoe sale preempted other trade, and the Kilenge traders were angry (A. Mulderink, pers. com., 1989). Allace mentions that the Kilenge had sexual intercourse on the fallen *malaz* tree, which caused the bridge to crack and fall into the sea (1976:12). This event presumably prompted Namor to take the two-masted canoe from them. In any case, this is the Siassi explanation for why the Kilenge do not manufacture canoes.

25. He also supplied it at a bargain: the customary price for such a vessel was three pigs, one for each named section of the canoe.

26. The Kilenge version ends in Kilenge, with no mention of a trip to Siassi (Counts n.d.).

27. See Errington 1974, McDowell 1985, and other selections in Gewertz and Schieffelin 1985 for comparative examples of Melanesian concepts of time and recording of history.

28. See, for example, Lawrence 1964 and McSwain 1977 and this volume, respectively, Burridge 1960, Worsley 1957, among others. For a critical review of the term "cargo cult" and a history of its usage in anthropology and elsewhere, see Lindstrom 1993.