

Merging Men and Nature: Myths of Melanesia

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**Oral Traditions and Myths,
collected and annotated in the 1970s by:**

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These myths are from Madang, Manus Island, the Sepik area, the Highlands, New Britain and the Port Moresby area of Papua New Guinea as well as two from Irian Jaya. They are grouped under categories like Origin of Pottery, Two Brother Myths; Myths about mountains and Origin Myths for ease of comparison.

The late Professor Colin De'Ath and I were both doing research in the Madang area in the 1970s. He was working on the Gogol area researching the effects of the Trans-Gogol Timber Project on the local villagers, whereas I was doing research into the culture of the coastal Madang people and changes that had occurred over the years. At that time, we collaborated on this publication, *Merging Men and Nature: Myths of Melanesia*.

The original version, published in *Oral History* in 1981, is no longer available and it was decided to republish these myths to make them available to a wider readership. This entailed re-typing the original text into digital form to make it available on the internet. In this latest edition, a few modifications have been made to make the stories clearer.

My thanks to Pamela Swadling, the former editor of *Oral History*, for her encouragement in this venture.

In the years since this collection was made there has been a growing awareness that some of the myths incorporate many historical facts into the stories. For example, in the story of the *marita* fruit and the snake there is mention of a large "flood" which was possibly a tsunami that inundated the north coast of Madang breaking off a piece of land at Nagada Point where the Lilung people once lived. This tsunami has now been dated by scientists as happening about 500 years ago. The people recorded this event with a myth of a magic snake who punished the people who ate him by sending the tsunami. In this way the story was transmitted from one generation to the next. The story genre was easily learnt and remembered and retold around the fires at night for centuries. Not all stories were transmitted this way. Certain ones were specially owned by a few members of the clan.

Following initial publication of this collection of these myths, more material was collected by Professor De'Ath and myself as well as by Keith Downer from the Madang Teachers' College. It was hoped to collate all of these as a further book of myths. Mrs Rosalie Christensen collaborated with the editors and agreed to illustrate them and she subsequently produced a series of wonderful illustrations. Sadly, with her passing, publication has not been possible and I present the smaller original collection without illustrations. I understand that a draft of the unpublished, updated illustrated manuscript is available at the Museum of Man in San Diego and at the Madang Teachers' College.

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Introduction

Papua New Guinea has always had many wonderful myths about things that villagers encountered in their everyday lives. These myths and legends did a number of different things: they breathed life into common-place things like pots, rocks and trees so that the people extended their humanity to the things which were important to them; they also provided an ethic or set of rules for people to live by; they also recorded many events that happened in history like earthquakes, floods and storms. Through these myths, this knowledge was passed down through the generations. For purposes of land ownership and inheritance, it was very important to know who one's ancestors were and how far they could be traced back. The origin stories of language groups and clans provided this information.

When certain myths and stories were being passed on through different generations, PNG people were very strict about who could do this. Usually old men were given the task because it was believed that the fewer people and the more knowledgeable they were, the better and more accurately the stories would be kept. Some clans did not like to let outsiders have these stories. They were valued in the same way that antiques and family jewels are now valued in western society. Young people were generally not trusted with the accuracy of these stories and neither were women.

In all of our various worlds there are many imponderables and information gaps. We fill these gaps and answer questions in ways that make sense to ourselves at any given point in history. In the stories that we bring to you we hope that you will begin to understand what the world meant to Papua and New Guinea people when they had to contend with natural disasters, crop failures, sickness, unruly human emotions and nature which could be either bountiful or extremely fickle. The collective authors or trustees of these stories lived very close to nature. They did not, or could not, fight it with their simple technologies but they did try to explain how it worked and what the forces which affected their everyday lives were.

In earlier times the dimensions of men were much larger (and sometimes smaller) than they are now. The rascals and bad men were super bad. And they had super-human powers. For this reason they could fall from great heights because of discovered wrongs. They could also be super good guys and be remembered as revered founding fathers of their clans which, incidentally, could number in their living community great numbers of spirits of the dead and other meta-humans.

Some of these myths and legends must have made the world a fearsome place to live in, especially where there was much sickness and resource shortage to be explained away through myths. In other areas, the world must have seemed very bawdy especially where the myths were connected with erotic carvings and the like. In yet others, the world may have been benign and, on balance, the deities generous. For whatever reasons, however, myths and legends are now being abandoned at an alarming rate as is the culture of which they are a part. A small introduction to each of the sections tells something about how the stories fit into local cosmological systems and about the context in which the editors would like them to be read.

The stories have been recorded as closely as possible the words of the story tellers themselves. However, the quality of the story-telling suffers when stories are translated from the original language, *tok ples*, to *Tok Pisin* and then to English. Some arrived in their English form from *Hiri Motu*.

We have not been able to get the names of all of the informants because our sources, both written and oral, have been diverse. For this we apologize. We also realise that we are making some of these stories public for the first time. For this too we apologize. However, we realise that unless some salvage work is done on the myths and legends they will be lost forever. As older men die they often fail to pass them on to their descendants. Whether this is because they no longer believe them, do not trust the younger people who have eagerly grasped newer western myths or because they feel that the propagation of such myths will not now add to their own authority, we do not know. What we do know is that oral cultures, such as those found in Papua New Guinea, are very susceptible to change and to knowledge loss. We therefore hope that in the coming years books such as this will be a permanent record of stories which would have otherwise been lost. We hope too that people from other cultures will read them and appreciate the moral power and the wisdom that some of the stories contain.

Colin De'Ath
Mary Mennis

1980.

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Chapter 1

Origin Legends

In all societies, people have stories about where they came from. Sometimes these stories go back very far in time. In others the distance between the living and the original ancestors is no more than a few generations. People trace their origin to places and to things or animals.

The names of ancestors are recycled every few generations so that each clan has names, which it uses over and over again. In Papua New Guinea, many groups of people believe that they came from animals.

Sometimes it is forbidden to eat or kill these animals. Sometimes origin stories tell about things ancestors did wrong and why descendants are cursed or blessed with certain ways of doing things. Some stories tell about great hardships and suffering and about the recognition of good deeds and the punishment of bad ones. They also tell about migrations from far away especially for sea people.

Where the People of West Manus came from

Busubadei was Nihon Village's ancestor. His wife's name was the same. They lived in a place also called Busubadei. Their main food was taro and they ate Bu-on, a mangrove black fish which they caught in bamboo fences and in small coconut leaf baskets. They could get many fish this way and smoked them to preserve them. They cooked in clay pots from M'Buke. They wore no clothes and they felt no sex differences. They had no children and lived there alone. There was a *masalai* from Wari River on the south coast of Manus whose name was Bidibada. He found a woman who was breaking firewood. Her child was fat. He told the woman to wash and to go under the water so he couldn't see her then he ate her child. When she came up she no longer had a child and accused Bidabada of eating him. She cried and then returned home and told her husband.

Her husband called all the adjoining villages to come. All the bush people came and decided to fight Bidibada, the *masalai*. The husband asked the *masalai* again where the child was but he denied knowing anything about it. But the child was stinking in the *masalai*'s belly and they knew he was lying. The *masalai* ran away. He had a basket of some sago shoots. He stopped at Savamu Mountain and looked back but was afraid to return. He looked west to Hahai and decided to settle there where it was safe. He planted his sago which grew plentifully. He married two women who were sisters: Lahundra-oh and Sandra-ch. Their father was Andr-ch. They continued to live at Hahai and ate pigeons caught by traps in the trees.

One day, the *masalai*, Bidibada, saw some smoke and told his wives. He wondered where it came from as he knew there were no people nearby. The smoke was from Busubadei. Bidibada told his wives to prepare sago and fish which he put in a basket and went to investigate the source of the fire. After a time, he climbed a tree and could see the smoke close-by. Soon he arrived at the fire and saw that only a woman was there. Her husband was at the fish traps. The woman asked Bidibada where he came from and if he were a *masalai* wanting to eat both of them. He denied being a *masalai* and told her his name, Bidibada. He said he was from Wari River and had eaten a child and ran away and now lived at Hahai.

He told her he saw the smoke at Hahai and had come to investigate. The woman told him about her husband, Busubadei, and where he was. Then the husband arrived and said he knew a *masalai* was visiting because the fish wouldn't go into his trap. They didn't know about sago so the women cooked the fish with taro and put it on a wooden bowl. Bidibada took it and ate it and asked them if they ate sago. They replied that they did not grow it, but ate only fish and taro. He said his food was sago and that fish should be eaten with it. They ate some of his sago and were sick. He told them to vomit close to their house. Soon their vomit grew into sago trees and that is how we came to have sago trees.

The three of them remained there and Bidibada, the *masalai*, asked the other two why they didn't have children. They said they didn't know about children, they wore no clothes and felt no sex differences. So he went with the woman and showed her how to make children. Later she was a proper woman and returned his accusations about being a man. They were ashamed because they were naked so Bidibada showed them how to wear coverings for their bodies. They cut some breadfruit sticks and beat them into fibre cloth for clothing. The man made a loin cloth and the woman an apron.

After this Busubadei was sorry because it was so hard to find food. When Bidibada came he made it hard for them: he took away the fish fence and carried the fish trap home; he got some medicinal bark and some ginger and chewed it and then he blew it on a basket; although the basket wasn't strong he said fish would go into it.

After that time only strong men could fish. Lazy and tired men couldn't find fish and the easy time for easy fishing was over. Busubadei and his wife stayed together and the woman gave birth to a child, a boy. It was a painful birth, but Bidibada has shown her medicine for pain. It was ginger and *moro* and a leaf called *eiya*. It was wrapped and put on her stomach. The birth was easier then and the boy child was called Rei. Later a girl child called Waso was born. They had ten male and ten female children and their village wasn't large enough to feed them so they went to a new place called Drabai. At this time the two oldest were not married but just cleared the bush. They wanted to make houses but the spines of the bush vines killed many children. The two first born were later the only ones left. Rei got married to two women from Niyada. The

first woman's name was Lahundrabuk and Sandrabuk was the second. These are the ancestors of the people from Nihon, Johan, Nivada, Salien, Malai Bay, Kali, Sapondralis, Koroki, Bundrahei and Lessau.

Kundrakei Buah, Manus Province.

My Ancestor, the Snake Man

My name is Siyuwei Moijam. The original Siyuwei Moijam was from Lessau. His *tubuna* or grandchild was Alol from the mainland. He had one male child, Lokoiam the first born who was half man and half snake from the waist down. The two female children were Bihi-Panowei and Saplo-Kai. Lokoiam was not married because he was only half man and only ate bet-nut. When his mother was too old to fish she asked him to get married so that his wife could fish. So he married a Salien woman who came to his house, but they did not sleep together.

The woman decided to turn him into a normal man and she burned the *haus boi* (men's house) where he was sleeping and it was turned into ashes. She took the ashes to a small stream in the bush. The stream washed the basket and next morning a man existed. The woman took him to the village. There they had a male child, Jam, who was my ancestor.

Siyuwei Moijam, Manus Province.

Why we cannot eat Pig Meat.

One of my ancestors came from a pig named Lusir who had many small pigs. One was a female human called Helusir. One day a man called Birilik went to the bush hunting and saw footprints of the female pig.

He returned to his village and told his wife to cook sago and put it in a basket. Then he set off to the bush with his two dogs looking for Helusir. He saw the mother pig first and then saw Helusir in a stream under a stone bank holding some fish. He went and grabbed her and gave the mother pig some sago. Then he took Helusir back to the village to be his second wife when she grew up. The mother pig followed Birilik's footprints to find her child. She went to his house and cried for her child. Birilik told her not to cry because he had the child and was keeping her warm. The pig stopped crying. Birilik told his wife to make sago and meat for her to take it back to the other pigs. Helusir stayed in the village and when she grew up she was ready for marriage. Birilik made a feast for her. He told his relative, Moi, to bring coconut oil and told Kewan to help him carry it. Then they went to eat the food prepared by Helusir and Birilik's daughter. Kewan met Helusir and liked her very much and wanted to marry her.

Kewan asked for her. Moi told Birilik and he agreed and so Kewan and Helusir were married. A male child was born called Kewan Kabun. The second born was Madaindrakei, also a male. They are our ancestors. Because of our ancestry our first-born children cannot eat pigs.

Baba Sane, Manus Province.

Mandarmaker

On the island of Fundi, near Biak, there once lived an old man called Mandarmaker. He lived on the edge of the village in a little house and was very lonely and unhappy. The people shunned him because he had a skin disease.

To pass the hours, he used to make a drink from the flowers of a coconut that grew near his house. Each morning he would climb the tree and cut off the end of any new flowers and insert a piece of bamboo so the nectar would drip into it. Each day he collected the nectar from the flowers. After a while he had many pieces of bamboo collecting nectar and he was quite busy going from one flower to another. Then one day he noticed that someone had been stealing the nectar. He watched and waited until dark and no one came so he sat on until midnight before going home to bed.

Next morning he found all the pieces of bamboo were again empty. Thinking to himself that someone had stolen the nectar in the early morning he decided he would have to wait longer the next time. That night he climbed the tree and waited and waited until about four o'clock. Then he saw something coming down from the sky straight towards the coconuts. It was a spirit woman. As soon as she landed on the tree, Mandarmaker grabbed her. She struggled to free herself but he held on.

"You have to pay first," he said to her. "I know you have been stealing the nectar."

"Oh it will get light soon, please let me go" pleaded the spirit woman.

"No! No! Not until you give me something," cried Mandarmaker.

"Well tell me what you want."

"Many people don't like me because I am old and diseased."

"All right," the spirit agreed. "I'll give you something to cure you."

The spirit woman thought for a while, "Wait under the tree over there. Five girls will walk past in a minute you must choose which one you want and then throw some of the fruit of the tree at her".

So the old man released the spirit woman and went over to the tree. All happened as she said. Five girls went past and he threw a fruit at one of them. The girl was surprised, "I wonder why this fruit fell on me" she said. After any months, the girl who had been hit had a baby. The village people wanted to know who the father was. When the little boy grew up a little the people invited everyone to come to a big party. The little boy ran around to see if he could recognise his father.

The men all danced around, but the little boy did not recognise any of them. Then old Mandarmaker got up and shuffled around. When the little boy saw him, he shouted excitedly, "That is my father." The people were very cross about this. They didn't want this old man to be the father. They all took to their canoes and paddled away.

Mandarmaker was left with the girl and the little boy. The young woman was not happy at being married to such an old, ugly man and Mandarmaker worried about having a diseased body. He remembered the spirit telling him about the Mon tree. She had advised him that, if he wanted to be young again, he should burn some of the branches of the tree and then jump into the fire. This would turn him into a young man again.

So he did this and it changed his body. When his wife saw this young handsome man she did not recognise him.

"I have changed my skin," he explained.

At this she was happy and so was the little boy. One day when they visited the beach where he had jumped into the fire, he drew a picture of a big boat in the sand and they stepped into it.

Mandarmaker shouted, "Boat, come up out of the sea."

The boat came up then and they put it in the water. They sailed away to Biak to find their families and found them there. But the people did not recognise them and refused to welcome them. So they sailed off to the west and were never seen again. People on Biak Island still believe that Mandarmaker will return one day. On the island of Fundi itself, they point to the coconut where he used to collect the nectar.

Moses Weror, Funi Island, Irian Jaya.

How a Tribe was begun

This is the story of how a tribe began in the Mid-Whagi area.

There once lived a man called Ningapil who lived a wild life and had no relatives at all. Every day he went hunting and lived only on the meat of the cuscus or tree kangaroo and nothing else. He used to eat the meat raw. His life went on like this for a long time. One day a man gave him a string bag and said to him, "When you kill a cuscus you must not eat it. Put it in this bag and bring it to the house".

So next morning the wild man said to the string bag, "Bag, get up! We will journey together." But the string bag lay still and did not move. So the wild man jumped to his feet and shouted, "How many times must I talk to you? I will get a stick and teach you how to move." He got a stick and beat the string bag until it was cut into hundreds of pieces. He went hunting and in the evening he went home without the *bilum*.

The man who had given it to him asked, "Where is the bag I gave you?" The wild man told him that the bag was *bigheaded* and disobeyed him. The man thought for a while and later gave his daughter to the wild man as a wife.

One morning, the wild man and his new wife went to the bush. On their way, when the wife was trying to climb a fence, the wild man saw she had a big cut on her bottom. Was she the *bilum*? This made him scared of the woman's father and so he took her deep into the bush where the father would not find them. After some time they had many sons and daughters who intermarried. Now if you go to the Mid-Whagi you will find the relations of the wild man are still there. They are named after him - *Ningapil*.

Wak Pok, Western Highlands Province.

The Marita Fruit and the Snake

For many years the people on Bagabag Island near Madang were good friends of the people of Lilung on the mainland of New Guinea. Once when the Bagabag people crossed the sea in their large canoes, the Lilungs gave them large *marita* fruit to eat, this fruit did not grow on Bagabag and the people there had never tasted it before.

The Lilung people cooked the *marita* in a special way and the Bagabags liked it so much they asked if they could take some seeds home to plant. The seeds grew on the island and after many months the fruit was ripe. Now the Bagabags had forgotten to ask the Lilungs how to cook the fruit.

"Perhaps we should shoot it with a spear," someone suggested.

They did this and the top became soft and broke off. They became really angry and said to each other. "Those Lilungs are fooling us. This is not the fruit they gave us to eat." So they waited for the Lilungs to visit them on the island. When they saw the sails of the canoes approaching they decided to punish them.

The Lilungs stayed on Bagabag Island for about three days and there was much feasting and dancing as usual. On the last evening, they held a big feast, as was the custom. There was a lot of food left over so the Bagabag people made a big parcel for the Lilung people to take with them. However, before they put the parcel into the canoe, they went to the place where the *masalai* spirits lived and caught a *masalai* snake. They did not kill it, but wrapped it still alive in the food parcel which they put in the canoe.

As the Lilungs were leaving, the Bagabags said to them, "If you get hungry on your way across the water, don't break the parcel open. Wait until you get near Lilung Point".

The Lilungs followed this advice and did not open the parcel until they were nearly home. One of them, said, "We are getting close to home. Let's open the food parcel."

So they untied the rope which was tied around and around the parcel. Suddenly the snake put its head out and looked around this way and that. When the men saw it they were so frightened they jumped onto one side of the canoe and it turned over. The men all swam ashore and so did the snake. The men did not see it disappear into the long grass and climb a coconut tree.

Sometime later the Lilung men went to the bush to catch pigs for a feast. They waited and watched for wild pigs. Later they rested under the very coconut where the snake was living. One of the men climbed to get coconuts and found the snake curled around them. "There's a big snake here," he called down to his friends.

"Well, don't worry," his friends advised him, "You won't die. The snake is like rubber."

So the man grabbed the snake by the head and it wrapped itself around and around his body. When he fell down the man did not die as he was lying safely inside the coils of the snake. The men then unwound the snake and freed the man. They put the snake inside a *garamut* drum and closed the mouth of it.

That afternoon, they drummed on another *garamut* to summon the women, and told them to prepare for a big feast for the following day. That night, one of the women had a dream. The snake appeared to her and said, "If they kill me, you must not eat me or sit with those who do. Take two of your *tabuna* (grandchildren) one male and one female who also must not eat me."

The next day the woman remembered her dream. She took two of her grandchildren and ran away to the bush. The rest of the village people sat around on their mats waiting for the snake to cook. Suddenly there was an enormous tsunami. A great wall of water broke over the place where they were sitting. All those who had cooked the snake and were getting ready to eat it, died.

To this day there is a small lake where those people were sitting.

A descendant of Gubili, the old woman, went to live on Siar Island. He was the first man to settle there.

Siar Island, Madang Province.

The Tribe That Came From a Breadfruit

Once a man and a woman lived in a small hut near a river. While they were young, they both wanted to have children but it didn't happen. As the years went by they grew older and older and were unhappy because they didn't have any children of their own to take over their land when they died.

Every afternoon the old man walked down to the river, with his bamboo pole to fetch water. He always sat in the same spot singing, crying and looking up at the valley from the bank of the river. It was a great valley of land and trees and he wondered who was going to take it all over when he died.

One afternoon he went down to the river with his bamboo pole to fetch water. As he was walking down he mumbled to himself. "Fetching water, breaking firewood and cutting banana leaves are childrens' work. I am too old do these things myself," and then he cried out, "Who is going to use my land when I die." When he reached the river he stepped into it and put his bamboo pole into it to get water. While he was watching the water something caught his eyes: he put his hand towards it and caught it. It was a big breadfruit. He said to himself. "Tonight my wife and I will have a big meal."

When he arrived home he quickly grabbed his stone axe and cut open the breadfruit. Out tumbled two children. He jumped out in excitement, screaming, shouting and crying with tears coming down from his eyes. He knew at last that there would be some-one to look after them and to dig a hole to bury them when they died. The old woman said, "This is the time for us to sit and rest and smoke until we die."

The two children did all the work. One was a girl and the other was a boy. They got married when they were 16 years of age. Two months after their marriage, the woman was pregnant and after some months she gave birth to twin boys. They named them Gaima and Anzpa. The old man and woman died and they were buried at a place called Murumel. If you go there nowadays you will still see the big breadfruit trees, which were planted around their burial hole.

When Gaima and Anzpa grew up they got married and had children who had more children and this is how my tribe came to be. Today my tribe is called Gaima Anzpa.

Dolkaine Mange, Western Highlands Province.

Where Kambarumba Village came from.

Kambarumba is a beautiful village in a lagoon on the Sepik River. The houses stand on stilts in the water and are reflected along with the clouds in the still dark of the lagoon.

The village has not always been there. The people once lived at Sombibum on the banks of another lagoon. In those days there were two brothers, Gum and Samung who were both big men in the clan. They kept snakes as pets and called each by name. The boss of the snakes was called Lemi. He was a large snake, but not poisonous like the others.

One day Samung, the youngest brother, wanted to make a fire but there was a poisonous snake coiled up in the fireplace. Samung chased it away and went off to get firewood. While he was away, the snake slithered back. Samung was furious when he saw it again and he seized the fire tongs and hit it. The snake got angry and bit Samung who fell down and died.

Gum was very sad to lose his brother. He went to see Lemi, the leader of the snakes, to ask him how it had happened. Lemi coiled himself around and propped his head up and said, "We snakes have killed one of our fathers. We can no longer be friends of man. We must fight one another from this time on." Then he called all the snakes and they slithered off together through the tall grass.

For some time after this Gum lived at Sombibum, but he could not bear to live there without his brother. He thumped the *garamut* with a thick stick and summoned all the villagers. "It is time for us to shift from this place," he said.

Then he led them through the swamps and down the Sepik River to Kambarumba where he taught them how to make sago from the *saksak* palm and many other things. The people liked this new place so much they refused to shift when the kiaps (Government Officers) came and tried to re-settle them at Angoram. They wanted to stay where their ancestors had come with Gum.

Pandua, East Sepik Province.

Chapter 2

Mountains

Mountains are common in Papua New Guinea and have isolated people from each other for thousands of years leading to great differences in cultures and in myths. Often these mountains are regarded as masalai who behave like people in some ways.

Rocky features often have a story. Some caves were used to store the bones of ancestors and have great taboos associated with them. Woe betide the unwary outsider who goes to these sacred areas. Sometimes people are turned into mountains as a punishment. Sometimes the mountains shake because they have masalai.

Occasionally they may even move. Mountains that are also volcanoes have special myths about them especially if they are active and destructive to humans and their settlements.

A Legend of Two Mountains

Once there were two friends called Yier and Babel who lived together at Kavailo. They were not really living people but mountains. When the Kavailo people had a feast, they would send a basket of food to their friends, Yier and Babel. Babel was always the first to receive the basket. He was very greedy and would eat everything in the basket, then send the basket which held only the bones to Yier. When Yier received the basket he would become very angry. Each time a basket was sent, the same thing happened.

One day Yier became so angry, he decided to leave his friend. That night while Babel slept Yier started his journey. He walked and walked until he came to Marup. He wanted to make his home there but when he looked back he could still see Babel.

He thought, "If I stay here, Babel will see me and laugh at me," so he decided to go on. He cut across and came to Malagu. When he turned around he could no longer see his friend so he decided to stay there. So now we have a mountain at Kavailo near the ocean. If you go to Kavailo, you will see a deep hole full of shells and bones which is the place where Yier used to live.

York Kupeng, Madang Province.

How the Hills were formed in Madang

Many, many years ago there were no hills in Madang. People walked about without having to bother climbing hills. Life was easy: people could cover many miles in a day. The people were happy but one thing endangered their wandering and hunting. There was a huge python that roamed around the place killing and eating people.

One day this python raided a small village. It killed a man but left his wife and son. The woman was very sad, and would often mourn for her dead husband. In fear of the huge python, the woman took her only son and fled to live in the caves. The seasons changed and the son was no longer a baby. He became a strong young man and his mother taught him many skills - fighting, dancing, using a bow and arrow, making gardens, setting traps, hunting and building houses. He learned very quickly.

One evening when he was sitting beside his mother, he asked her, "Mother why is it that some people have fathers but I have no father?" Then the mother began to tell him the whole story about the huge python and how he had killed his father. Hearing this, the young man at first was sad about the dreadful thing that had happened to his father. But then in his heart anger and hatred began to work on him.

In a rage he seized his bow and arrows and went searching for his enemy. At last he found him asleep in his den. Quickly the young man attacked the huge python and they both fought and fought. The young man aimed one of his poisonous arrows right at the eye of the huge python and when he released it, it went right into his eye.

The python was defeated and was in such pain that it struggled to escape. In his enormous struggles the hills were formed.

Norman Seia, Madang Province.

How Men Changed into Rock

Long ago there lived a man by the name of Koo who had a son called Siune. His name was suggested by the Siune Tribe. When the boy was only 10 months old his mother died. Koo was faced with many problems and had many obligations now that his wife had died. Two things really bothered him such as feeding his pigs and feeding his ten-month old son.

Koo fed his son, Siune milk and soft food while he was young. In time Siune grew into a tall handsome fellow by the time he was fourteen. During this time Koo was forced to marry a divorced woman, Sandage, from the nearest tribe.

One day Siune got tired of his stepmother and her strange ways and hit her on the head. The blood poured out. At this time Koo was out in the bush hunting for tree kangaroos and *cuscus*.

The stepmother, however, was a magic woman and in the night she killed Siune and ran away to her village. Koo was still out in the bush and did not know what had happened. Next day he saw a large beast coming straight for him. He fired an arrow at it but missed. The spirit of the beast said, "Father, I am your son, Siune and I have been killed by Sandage, your new wife. Go home and you will see my body lying on your bed."

But his father would hear no more and shot an arrow into his own neck and died. When the people found them he and his son had changed into human shaped rocks. Beside them in rock form, were also the famous tribesman's bow and arrows.

Langa Kaliuwa, Western Highlands Province.

How Mounts Singul and Mungal came to be formed.

Once there lived two beautiful young girls in a village to the south east of Hagen. Their names were Singul and Mungal and they were so beautiful that many men wanted to marry them. But they refused to marry. Their parents had died when they were very small and they had had to look after themselves in an old hut in the village.

One very fine morning they decided to go to the mountains to cut some bush ropes to make *bilums* (string bags). They both took food with them and set off. After a long walk, they reached the top and sat down, had a rest and ate some food. After resting they left the rest of their food and their *bilums* and went into the thick forest to cut their bush vine. It did not take long for them to cut the vines and by afternoon they had enough to make two *bilums* each.

They tied the vines together and carried them back to the place where they had left their food. They were very hungry after the day's work so they sat down to eat the rest of the food. When they finished they tried to stand up to go home but a strange thing happened to both of them. Their bottoms stuck fast against the earth and they could hardly move at all. It got dark and both of them stayed there in the night.

When morning came many people searched for them. At last some men found them on the mountain. They tried their hardest to free the two girls but failed so returned home. Meantime the two young girls could feel themselves changing completely. Their bodies changed into two huge rocks. Now these rocks are well known by the people of Mount Hagen and their names are Singul and Mungal and they are still there in the shape of two human beings. Singul was sad and wanted to return to the village and now faces that way. Mungal didn't want to return so she faces the forest.

John Kopil, Western Highlands Province.

The Stone on Mount Haundulga

Once a great giant lived on the top of the mountain we call Haundulga. He lived there for many years and was a very cruel giant walking around the forest and killing anyone he met. He was also a thief and stole all the pigs from the nearby villages. He was therefore a murderer and a thief.

One day a hunter went to hunt possums. Late in the afternoon it rained heavily and the poor hunter looked for shelter. At last he found a cave and crawled in. It was very dry so he sat down, but a few minutes later, the earth shook and there was a flash of lightning and a clap of thunder. Seeing a giant approaching nearer and nearer to the cave, the hunter became really frightened. The giant was surprised to see the hunter sitting in the cave and questioned him. The hunter told all his stories.

The giant was not as cruel as he had been before and so he became friendly with the hunter. They sat in the cave together. The hunter still thought the giant was going to kill him when he stood up, but the giant just asked him to follow him. The hunter did so and was surprised to see a beautiful big house in good surroundings. There were two out-houses one for storing food and the other was the kitchen. The giant and the hunter cooked a pig in the kitchen, but the giant was tired after his long journey and asked the hunter to finish the cooking. He went to bed and was soon fast asleep. Then the hunter decided to kill the giant. He heated a big stone over the fire, and, when it was red hot, he carried it with a stone holder to where the giant was sleeping. He quickly put the hot stone on the heart of the giant who died with a flash of lightning and a clap of thunder. As he died, many things disappeared – the giant's house and out-houses were changed into three huge rocks and they are there still.

Onum Karr, Western Highlands Province.

Chapter 3

Earthquakes

Every society seeks explanations for natural events over which they have no control. The people of Papua New Guinea are no exception. In areas like Madang earthquakes are very common and are feared by the people because they can break houses and in the mountains they cause large landslides. These events are seen as warnings or omens of future events whether good or bad.

Long before the appearance of the white man, Papua New Guineans were great believers in magic. Earthquakes were thought to be caused by powerful sorcerers. Young people were told all sorts of tales about magic and these were passed from one generation to the next.

Why the Earth Shakes

Once there lived an old sorcerer called Biim who often cast spells on earth to bring destruction with earthquakes and storms. He did this whenever his people had feasts and forgot to share the meat portions with him.

One day his people had a big feast. They began killing pigs early in the morning and the preparations lasted until the afternoon. When the feast was ready everybody ate greedily but neglected the little old sorcerer. He cooked his *taro* on the fire and put it aside, waiting patiently for someone to bring his piece of meat to eat it with. He waited and waited but no one came or gave him anything.

As the evening drew near, he took his cold *taro* and threw it away. Its falling sound changed into thunder, roaring like a fierce animal across the sky. Very soon the rain came tumbling down, the earth shook and everything was in chaos. Nobody knew what to do. It rained all night causing the rivers to flood. Then an earthquake destroyed gardens and villages with landslides.

As the dawn came, the older people rushed to the sorcerer's house and had talks with him in order to calm him. He could not give up his anger easily so they told him that they would make bigger feasts for him if he would agree to remove the spells. Finally he agreed. The next day, the village sent a message around to all nearby villages to bring pigs, *taro*, *kaukau*, leaves for a *mumu* and firewood and other things for the feast. All the villagers joined together to make that big feast for the sorcerer.

When the feast was ready, they called out and placed everything before him. He ate and ate until his stomach was so full, he couldn't do anything. He told the people to build a small hut of pendant-nut leaves and put him in it and then he went into a deep sleep. Before he slept the people asked him to promise them never to send large earthquakes or storms again. He promised them that he would never do anything unless someone disturbed his sleep.

Earthquakes can be a sign that the season of the pendant-nut harvest would be a good one. The angrier the sorcerer is, the bigger the earthquake. The people of the whole Telefomin now believe that, whenever there is an earthquake, someone must have disturbed that little man from his deep sleep and made him angry. Today the sorcerer's area is well known throughout Telefomin.

A. Futengim, West Sepik Province.

Earthquakes and the End of the World

Some people believe that in some unknown place there is a giant who bears the great earth on his mighty shoulders. From time to time this giant transfers his burden from one shoulder to the other and this causes earthquakes.

At the beginning of the world, earthquakes were very rare. Nowadays they are more frequent because the bearer of the world has become impatient and transfers the burden from shoulder to shoulder more often. One day he'll burst into a great rage and shake the earth with all his might for a whole day so that there will be cracks in it. Nearly everything will fall to the ground and at the end of that terrible day; darkness will fall to shut out the light. Then everything will fall through the cracks. Life on earth will then cease.

Anonymous, North Solomons.

The Motuans and Earthquakes

The Motuans of the east coast of Papua regarded earthquakes as an omen for very good yields. During the earthquake season the villagers put on their best headdresses and grass skirts and ran out of their houses to dance. Of course, it was good for the villagers if their yields were very high after an earthquake. These villagers believed that earthquakes were caused by an invisible lady with the harvest on her back walking through their village after the harvest had been completed. The earth shook because of the great weight she was carrying.

However, one day while all the villagers were busy harvesting, an earthquake came. The villagers were confused as the invisible lady had come at the wrong time. They thought there was no need to replant the gardens as the crops they were then harvesting would last for a long time. None of the villagers replanted their gardens until they grew hungry and decided to plant new gardens. However they weren't successful because their decision was made too late. Devastating winds came and the whole village vanished because there wasn't enough food.

Not all the villagers disappeared. Some people regarded the second quake as not being important. They said that it was only the invisible lady on her way home. These remaining villagers are very careful and are very smart with their gardens. That is why they are still alive.

Tau Manega, Central Province.

Chapter 4

Villages

In traditional times, people in the highlands of Papua New Guinea lived in small hamlets so in these areas villages are a relatively new kind of settlement. In choosing sites for villages, it was very important to think about defence, and proximity to forest or reef products and water supplies, distances from gardens and building supplies. People generally liked to live on the land of their ancestors. Sometimes villages were eliminated during fights and women were taken as captives.

Villages were often deserted during the day as people travelled far to find forest products, collect garden products or go fishing in nearby water whether that be in the sea or rivers. Inland villages were sometimes split because of quarrels over land, pigs or women. More often, however, they split because of a shortage of land or women. There was often movement between villages and a fear of spirits in the forest particularly at night.

In the Madang area whole villages could be destroyed if the secrets of the men's houses were disclosed or even if a woman strayed into the men's house, Haus Tambaran. This shows how strong was the people's belief in sorcery and keeping secrets from the women.

Story of Sibor: The Village That is no More

There was once a village called Sibor near the village of Yabob. Long before the white men came, the Yabob people used to gather their clay from a site near this village. This used to annoy the Sibor people and they often made trouble with the Yabobs. So although the two villages were near together, they were not friendly.

One day something terrible happened in the village of Sibor, something that caused the whole village to be wiped out by their enemies. It happened this way.

A woman was preparing the evening meal. She went to get water from the spring, but forgot to build her fire up before she left. As the spring was quite a long way off, the fire was quite dead when she returned. She wondered where she could get a fire-stick to re-kindle her fire. The closest fire was in the men's house, the *darem*. Even now, she could hear mournful sound, the sound of the *tambarans*, spirits, talking in the *darem*. This bold woman knew all women were forbidden to enter the *haus tambaran* especially now that the *meziab* were there, but this did not deter her.

She decided she would dress in her husband's *mal*, bark loincloth, and his decorations and go into the *darem* get the firestick and be out before anyone noticed. So she wrapped her husband's *mal* around her waist. She tied her breasts flat with bush vine and hung the boar tusks from her neck.

Then she crept through the darkness to the *darem*. She glided through the small doorway and going up to the fire she picked up a fire-stick. As she stood up again she noticed several men sitting on the platform blowing the long flutes. "So", she thought to herself, "it is not the *tambarans*, but only the men. They have been *gammoning* us". She strode out of the *haus tambaran* with the fire-stick and went home blowing on it, thinking that no one had noticed her.

Back in the *darem*, the men continued playing on the flutes unaware that a woman had discovered their secret. Only one man suspected anything. He followed the woman home and watched as she re-kindled her fire with the fire-stick. Then peeping through a crack in the house, he saw her undo the bush vines, which tied her breasts down, and he saw she was a woman.

"Oh", he whispered to himself. "This woman went into our *darem* and knows our secret now. Our sacred house is sacred no longer."

Full of shame, he went back and told the other men what had happened. They knew what they must do now for there was a law that once such a thing had happened, the village must be destroyed by other villages.

"This *darem* must be destroyed now", one man said sadly.

"And our people of Sibor must die", added another.

"Yes", agreed another shaking his head, "Our sacred flutes have been seen by a woman".

So they sent word to every village around, to Yabob, Bilbil and the bush people that the secrets of the *meziab* had been disclosed. A big force of warriors came then and destroyed that village, wiping it out forever so that now there are no descendants of those people. Their bones were all buried together on the hill near Yabob Village and to this day no one will eat the bananas that grow in this place.

Ber Nanci, Yabob Village, Madang Province.

The Coils of the Tabu – the origin of villages on Matupit Island

Ia Kadera lay hidden in the coils of the *tabu* shell money stored high on a shelf in her grandfather's house. Trembling with fear she heard the voices of the enemy coming closer and closer. She crouched down further thinking of what had happened already that day.

It had begun early that morning with a shouted warning that the Keravia men were on the warpath. Quickly the men in her village had gathered their weapons and rushed whooping and shouting to the fighting ground. They looked fierce with streaks of black paint on their bodies and feathers in their hair.

Shaking their spears in the direction of the enemy they had insulted them.

"Who are your mothers?"

"Can you use spears?" yelled another.

"Come on out. Don't hide there in the bushes like women."

And the women had stood nearby urging their men to fight harder.

The Keravia men suddenly appeared at their end of the fighting ground and shouted insults too.

"Where are you from?" taunted one.

"We'll show you what fighting is" scoffed another.

With that the battle was on. Lined up on each end of the ground, they threw their spears and twirled their slings hurling out small rocks with great accuracy. Ia Kadera and the other women stood nearby urging their men to fight harder. There was a brave warrior amongst the enemy. His name was Diararat. Even though he was an enemy, Ia Kadera could not help admiring his strong muscles as he twirled his sling or threw his spears. The battle had gone on a long until at last the Keravia men had proved themselves to be the strongest.

Although most of the women had fled to the bush, Ia Kadera had decided to hide in her grandfather's house in the coils of the *tabu*. Then she realised how stupid her hiding place was. Right in the middle of the *tabu*!

Peeping through the coils she saw the face of the warrior, Diararat, peering around the door and then saw his shadow fall across the floor. Her heart beat faster as he strode across and grabbed the very coil of *tabu* she was hiding in. Down she tumbled with the *tabu*.

"What's this?" cried Diararat.

"Let me go. Let me go!" screamed Ia Kadera.

"Oh no," laughed Diararat, You are too beautiful. I want you for my wife. And I'll pay for you with some of this *tabu* I'm stealing!"

Ia Kadera squirmed and pulled, but Diararat grabbed her firmly with one hand and with the other he seized the *tabu*. As they started out from the house, a big earthquake shook the ground. Thinking the spirits were cross with them, the other Keravia men rushed to their canoes and paddled out to sea.

Quickly, Diararat put the *tabu* and Ia Kadera in his canoe and told her to lie quietly while he paddled to the far side of the bay. As they approached the reef at Matupit, they were astonished to see that it had risen and now formed an island. Not knowing that the earthquake had caused it, they were very puzzled as to how it could have happened. Diararat stepped onto the new land and walked around it. "Why we could live here", he said to Ia Kadera.

And that is just what happened. Diararat paid for his new bride with some of the shell money he had stolen and they went to live on the new island, which they now called Matupit. Together they worked hard to build themselves a new life there. They built a little house and planted coconuts and other trees. To prevent the sea from washing the land away, they decided they needed a wall. So while Diararat gathered logs from the mainland, Ia Kadera plaited many mats from coconut leaves. The logs were then set upright with the mats in between. As they did not have enough vegetables they caught lots of fish, which they exchanged for food.

They lived happily there for the rest of their lives. So happily in fact they many people felt Ia Kadera had hidden in the *tabu* on purpose on the far-off day, hoping that Diararat would come to find her and set up their own village.

Daniel Kaputin, a descendant of Ia Kadera and Diararat, Matupit Island, New Britain.

Chapter 5

The Sea and Its Inhabitants

Papua New Guinea has a very long coastline and many islands. In the past some coastal areas became overpopulated and people moved around a lot. Today many people live on the coast and their stories are full of fish and other sea-life. There are also stories about trade, natural disasters, tsunami, high winds, floods and the like. People in small canoes are often lost at sea when these extreme conditions occur. In navigation stories the sun, stars and currents are also important.

The story of the fish at Riwo may describe the aftermath of a tsunami when fish are thrown into the village by the high waves.

There are many stories about this happening in the past.

The Fish at Riwo

A long time ago, the fish went dancing on the Island of Riwo while the men and women in the village went to work in the gardens. The fish leader, Langor, used to go and search the village to see if there were any people there. Then he would go back to the beach and call out to his friends to come. All types of fish – *langor*, *bacel* and others would come and meet and have a *singsing*. They would stay there all day until mid afternoon and then they would go back to the sea.

When the men and women returned from the gardens, they would see bits of *pulpul*, leaves or body decorations, on the ground and say, “Who has been here? What people have been dancing while we were away”? This continued to happen each day until they decided that, one man would stay behind in the village while the rest of them went to the gardens.

The next day, the man hid while Langor came to search the village. He looked and looked but did not find anyone so he went back to the salt water and called out to the fish. They all came out to *singsing* and dance. The man who was hiding saw them dancing. Then at three o'clock in the afternoon, the fish returned to the sea and a little while later the men and women returned from the gardens.

They asked the man, “Who came while we were out”?

“It was not people who danced”, he answered, “it was the *langor* fish, and others”.

When the people heard this, they said to one another, “Let’s pretend to go to the bush and then come back and hide near the village”.

So they fooled the fish. They took their canoes and went and hid in the bushes further around the point. The fish came out as usual to sing and dance. Suddenly the men jumped from their hiding places and rounded up the fish. Some got caught in the trees. Some were tangled up in the vines and others got bogged in the muddy ground. A few escaped to the sea. From that time on the fish never again danced in the village of Riwo.

Anonymous.

Where Dugongs Come From

There were once two sisters, Alu and Sa’a who fished along the coast and sang as they went. One day a *masalai* heard them. He sat on top of a rock in the form of a child. The sisters picked him up and carried him home. The *masalai* wanted some meat so the sisters asked him what kind he wanted. He didn’t want fish, possum, rat or pigeon. He wanted pig. They called out to their pigs. There were many of them and they all came to the house.

The sisters asked the *masalai* if he wanted a particular pig. He answered he wanted a very big pig. So they caught one and killed it and chopped it up and put the stomach aside for him. Then they cooked it in a very large clay pot.

The people told the *masalai* that he was not big enough to carry it. He said he could but fell down with it. He got some bamboo for cutting the stomach. When he reached the water, he changed himself from a child into a big man with long hair. He ate all the pig’s stomach and thought he would like to eat the two women as well. When he returned as a child again, the women asked him what had happened to the stomach. He told them the tide had taken it out to sea. They were cross with him.

The two sisters then took the cooked pig out of the pot and prepared the sago. They put it into a long wooden eating platter and he sat down and began to eat it. He ate only a little, but when the women weren’t looking, he ate large quantities and finished the big pig in one day. Next day, he wanted another and so they killed another. The same thing happened.

The two women were beginning to distrust him. They hid and watched him wash the pig’s belly and change into a big man and eat it quickly. Then they saw him change back into a child. The woman told their brother that they had been tricked by a *masalai*.

The small *masalai* came back to the women and cried. He lied to them about the pig's stomach. They served the rest of the pig to him with sago and again he quickly finished it all. Next day he wanted another pig. The women killed it and gave him the stomach to wash. They told him not to hurry but to take his time.

While he was absent they prepared to leave. They brought the heirlooms of their ancestors and locked them in the house. They instructed a banana cutting to lie to the *masalai* about where they had gone and locked it in their house also.

Then they ran away. They got some *lah* leaves and ginger and ate them. Then they called out to the *galip* tree to reach out its branches for them. They then climbed the tree, which straightened its branches back for them. The tree became their home and they waited in it.

The *masalai* returned to their village in the form of a child but the two women had already gone. He changed back into a big man and asked the women to let him into their house. The banana tree imitated one of the sisters' voices and told him to open the door. He tried to go in but couldn't. The voice of the banana told him to go to the other door. This was also locked. The *masalai* was angry and got a ladder to climb onto the roof. He cut the main beam and went inside the house but there was no one there. Then he saw the banana cutting and was angry with it for tricking him and cut it with his axe. He went outside and burned the house. He still couldn't find the sisters. The *masalai* got the same medicine as the sisters had eaten and ate some himself. He spat it in four directions and that was how he found the *galip* tree where the sisters were hiding.

The *masalai* went to their tree but he could not climb it. He then got his allies from many villages to come and kill the sisters. They brought their weapons but they could not climb the tree. The sisters, Alu and Sa'a told him they would talk to them, "Build bamboo scaffolding and climb up".

The *masalai* and his friends did this. When they climbed near to the top, the women pushed the scaffolding away from the *galip*. The *masalai* and his friends were all killed when the scaffolding fell. The fight was over.

The *masalai*, however, did not really die, but changed.

The women stayed in the tree and sewed some *pandanus* leaves for sleeping mats. However the needle of the older sister, Alu, fell down. She asked her sister, Sa'a, what to do. Sa'a tried to give her another needle but Alu wouldn't take it, and climbed down the tree. Sa'a waited and waited and finally called Alu's name. The voice of a pig replied. The *masalai* had changed Alu into a pig. The needle had become her tail.

Sa'a, the younger sister called out to the birds and bats. She asked a large bat to carry her but he said he wasn't strong enough. She also asked the *chouka* bird without luck and many other birds. Finally, she asked the green parrot who carried her to Lapajamkabak's place. The parrot then flew to a fruit tree and changed Sa'a into a parrot like himself.

Lapajamkabak was not in the village and, when he returned, the villagers told him that parrots were eating his fruit. He cut a short stick and threw it at Sa'a. When she fell down she was a woman again. He took her and put her inside a fence in his garden. He told his mother to get some food for him. When his mother went to the garden to get the food, she saw Sa'a and took her home where there was a table and bed and gave her fish and sago. Sa'a then married Lapajamkabak and they had a son. Her son went to the beach with some women. He didn't wash with them but waited ashore. When they had washed and come ashore he went to wash himself. He swam a long way to deeper water and then returned to his father.

When his mother Sa'a went to wash she was changed by the *masalai* into a dugong with dog's teeth on her neck. Dugongs now have only one baby at a time. When they are cut, the dog's teeth can be seen on their necks.

Kumbou, Manus Province.

A Fisherman and His Wives

Once there lived a fisherman named Bena who had two wives living on separate islands, neither of whom knew about the other. Bena had a son, Tautunu, from his first wife. Every day Bena went out fishing by himself. One day, however, he decided to take his son, Tautunu with him. They took a lot of food and plenty of water to drink and set off in their canoe.

Bena taught his son all the skills needed to catch fish and they caught a lot of fish. That evening Bena decided to tell his son about his second wife. He told his son that they had caught enough fish and should paddle to the other island where his other wife lived. Tautunu was happy about this.

As they were approaching the island, Tautunu could see a woman hurrying around. It was his father's second wife busy cooking and cleaning. When the canoe pulled up on the beach, the second wife ran to it and carried Tautunu on her shoulder; she called out merrily, "Now I have a son to keep me company while my husband goes out fishing. Where did you find him?" Bena told her he had found the boy, Tautunu, on a drifting log.

The wife cooked the fish with some taro from the garden. While they were eating Tautunu started to cry and insisted that his father take him back to his real mother. The second wife heard him. Bena then tried again to tell his second wife how he had come to find the boy.

Soon it was time to go to bed. When the woman had fallen asleep Bena went to his son Tautunu and talked to him in the dark. He told the boy not to tell the woman that he had a mother and that if he did he would throw him in a big fire. He also told Tautunu when they returned to his island he must not tell his mother that they had been to the island of his second wife. He must say that bad weather had prevented them from returning sooner.

Next morning the woman asked Bena to go fishing without Tautunu, as she wanted his company. Bena however, argued that he must teach their son how to catch fish and show him the fishing grounds.

The father and son pulled the canoe down to the sea and loaded it with a lot of food and plenty of water to drink. When they were ready to set off, the woman handed Tautunu a basket of taro. The father and son were now on their way to the island where Tautunu's mother lived. Again they caught a lot of fish. When they were approaching the island, Bena made sure that there was no food and water left in the canoe as he was frightened his first wife might ask him the obvious. So he threw everything overboard, but forgot the taro that had been given his son the other woman.

When the canoe came ashore, Bena's first wife, ran to the beach and carried Tautunu up to their house. Bena pulled the canoe up to the beach and took the fish to the house. While they were in the house his mother saw the baked taro in Tautunu's hand and asked her son who had given him the taro. He was afraid and did not say anything. The wife set the food on the mat and they all started eating. Bena told the story about the long trip, the strong winds and the rough sea.

Soon it was time to go to sleep. As soon as the father and son appeared to be sleeping, the wife went out, as she wanted to find out what Bena would say to their son. She stood against the wall and heard Bena telling Tautunu that he must not tell his mother about the other woman on the other island. After a time, the mother came back into the house, lay beside Bena and fell asleep

Early next morning she prepared some food and water for Bena and Tautunu to take on their fishing trip. This time before they left the woman told her son that if he saw a butterfly land on his head he must take it in his hand and place it in front of the canoe. As before, the father and son caught a lot of fish and Tautunu willingly learned how to fish well. While he was fishing, a butterfly landed on his head, so he took it and put it in front of the canoe, knowing that it was his mother.

After they had caught a lot of fish, Bena said it was time to see the other wife. While they were paddling, Bena said that he could smell his first wife. When they neared the island the butterfly flew ashore and changed into a woman. She went to Bena's second wife and killed her and then buried her.

She took the broom and cleaned the house of the dead woman and then cooked taro and yam. When the food was cooked she went down to the beach and waited. When Bena and Tautunu approached the island they could see the woman standing on the beach. Soon they recognised Tautunu's real mother and Bena wondered how she got there. When they landed, the woman danced before them with a big bloodied stick and Bena knew then that his second wife was dead.

Tautunu's mother stopped dancing and ran towards them. She carried her son to the house and left Bena crying in the canoe. Bena later came slowly and sorrowfully to the house. Then his wife told him how she became a butterfly and how he had smelt her. Bena understood everything. Later she told him about the killing. Bena could say nothing because he was afraid she would kill him also. After eating, they all got in the canoe and went back home to the other island.

Faiva Sione, Central Province.

The Moor People

A long time ago there were huge floods in Irian Jaya. The water covered the land far and wide and many people drowned. In one village, two children, Mora and Moti, clung to a canoe and were swept away from the parents by the raging tide. Mora, the boy, tried to comfort Moti who was crying bitterly for her parents. On and on they floated and the rain fell until there was no land in sight as everything was covered by water. There were no islands or mountains anywhere – only the open sea.

Through the long dark night the two children huddled in the canoe feeling wet and miserable. At last the sun rose and they felt a little better because now at least they could look for a new place to land. However, there was only the wide, endless ocean. Moti began to cry for her mother again, but her tears were in vain because there was no one to hear her on that empty ocean.

Days passed and they had finished the food in the canoe. They had nearly given up hope when Mora caught sight of a black shape through the lifting mists. He decided to go over and investigate. The two of them set to work paddling the canoe until the black shape became bigger and they could see it was an island But there was still a great deal of cloudy sky to paddle under before they got there.

"Perhaps there are people on the island," Mora said.

"Good" sobbed Moti, "Perhaps they will help us find our parents."

They landed on the island and Mora collected some bush materials to build a shelter for the night while Moti began to sob again. She grieved for her family who must have all died in the floods.

“Don’t cry,” Mora soothed her, “I’ll go and walk around the island and search for food and see if anyone lives here.”

Mora searched all around and although he found some food there was no sign of other people on the island. After many days, the winds blew the clouds away, the skies cleared and the floods began to recede. Gradually some islands began to appear and the island where Mora and Moti had landed began to get larger and larger until their canoe sat high and dry on top of a mountain.

As there was no one else on the island, the two children realised they would have to work hard if they were going to survive and not die. Together they built a small house on top of the mountain. Mora spent the days fishing or hunting for food and Moti began a garden with vegetables. When they were older, they married and had two children – Jaffi and Motiurua. Jaffi helped his father with the fishing and hunting and he learned many customs that Mora had brought with him from the old place. Motiurua helped her mother with the gardening and the cooking.

When Jaffi and Motiurua grew older they were married and had many children. At this stage they lived on the mountain, an hour’s walk from the beach. Later they built a village on the flat area, near the sea, and more and more children were born.

At last Mora was an old, old man and he said to his grandchildren. “If I die bury me with my head to the east where the sun rises and my feet to the west where the sun sinks.” So when he died that is how they buried him and they called the island Mora or Moor in his memory. He is the ancestor of the Moor people.

Moses Weror, Biak Island. Moor People live on a small island near Biak, Irian Jaya.

Chapter 6

Two Brother Legends

In many countries it is very important to understand birth order as older children have different obligations to their parents and other people than do younger children. There is also the question of who will inherit or control land when the father dies especially if he is a headman with much "wealth".

Because of these factors, there was often competition among brothers to secure favours and perhaps steal inheritances. Often in the two brother legends, it is the younger brother who is more courteous and obedient and is rewarded for his goodness. There are also stories about how some brothers loved each other and made great sacrifices. In Rabaul, the two brothers were called To Kabinana and To Purgo. To Kabinana, the elder always did the right things whereas To Purgo always spoilt things and was quite stupid and was criticised by his brother.

Sometimes brothers had equal access to the same things and even the same women as it was not unusual for a brother to inherit his dead brother's wife. People in families often have great difficulty in handling human relations and in Papua New Guinea there are many rules, which helped to lessen tensions between close relations such as brothers.

Two Brothers and an Old Lady

Once there lived two young brothers in a village in the jungle. One day the older brother decided to go hunting animals in the mountains. He took his bow and arrows and his dogs. During the day he killed many animals such as *cuscus* and tree kangaroos, wild pigs and birds.

When it became dark and started to rain, he didn't know where to go or what to do. Then he saw a cave right next to him. In he went with his bag full of animals and his dog. He didn't have a firestick or firewood or sleeping things and he wished he had these things. Suddenly, right in front of him, appeared the things he wanted. He cooked some of the food and ate it with his dog. While he did this, an old woman stood on top of the cave but he could not see her.

Next morning he got up and started walking home. From nowhere appeared an ugly old woman with milky white specks in her eyes. She really looked like a witch. She asked him to get some water and a piece of cloth and clean her eyes. He was very lazy but he had to do what she asked. He dampened the cloth and cleaned the old woman's eyes so hard he hurt her and she told him to stop. Then she gave him an old piece of cassowary bone and told him to hit a *marita* tree on his way home. When he did this, a woman quickly appeared saying that he had woken her from her sleeping bed. This made the young man happy and he took her home to his village.

When he got home, he did not tell his younger brother what had happened even though he asked and asked. One morning, when the older brother went off hunting, the younger brother followed him. At last he came to the old woman who asked him to clean her eyes. So he cleaned them very slowly and didn't press hard and hurt her. On his way home, he hit the *marita* tree as he had been told with a piece of old cassowary bone which had been given to him.

At once a most beautiful girl appeared and gripped his hand. When he returned to the village his brother could see that this girl was far more beautiful than his own wife who was really quite ugly. He was very jealous. One day he asked his brother to come with him into the bush. There they found an old log lying on the ground with a hole in it. The older brother told his young brother to put his hand into the hole and when he obeyed, he found he couldn't get his hand out again. The older boy told him that he could stay there for the rest of his life and that he would go home and marry his wife who was much more beautiful than his own wife.

Days passed and the boy didn't eat and became very thin. He was so weak he had to lie down beside the log. A small bird came flying by and hopped down to the boy. When he was told what had happened the bird flew away and came back with some rats, which bit and gnawed the log until they made the hole big enough to get his hand out. When the young man was strong enough, he walked home.

There he saw his wife sitting near his home and told her to get his bow and arrow. He then followed his older brother into the garden and hid behind a banana clump. When his brother lent over to plant some taro, he killed him. That act ended his brother's life. He went home to his wife and they had many children.

A. Grab, Western Highlands Province.

Why Taurama's Waters Churn

Long before the birth of our great, great grandfathers, there lived two brothers Taurama and Kumea. It was a time when all animals, birds, stones, rivers and could talk. Taurama and Kumea were hills and Taurama was the older brother. The area around these two hills was so fertile that people from all over the area used to come to trade with them. In return for their plentiful food supply, both mountains were given armshells, spears, pots and other forms of wealth. Taurama, being the elder, kept the money and Kumea did the selling.

Soon Taurama got married and his wife came to live with him. Life was very pleasant for the newly-weds for the first few years and everyone rejoiced in Taurama's marriage. However a misfortune occurred which was to change things completely.

One day, while sweeping around the bamboo hut, Taurama's wife looked up to see a handsome young man looking down at her.

She asked, "Who are you and what are you doing here?"

"I am your brother-in-law Kumea. I am in charge of trading in the whole area. I trade with people and that is why my brother was rich enough to marry you. Now please go away or my brother will be cross with me."

At these words, the woman was so cross she didn't finish her sweeping before leaving. She was attracted to Kumea. The feeling was mutual because Kumea was attracted to her also. Although this was their first meeting it turned into a big romance. Everyday she would come to Kumea's hut and they would make great love while Taurama was away hunting. One day Taurama noticed that his wife was pregnant. He knew he was not responsible for this but kept very quiet to find out what was happening. Next day after he had left his village, he returned by another route. As usual, his wife ran off to Kumea's hut. Taurama followed her secretly and found out what was happening when he saw the two lovers in each other's arms.

As soon as he was sure, he said in a clear, calm voice, "So this is what you do every day. Kumea, you should know very well that you shouldn't take another man's wife especially that of your own brother. You belong to our clan. According to our customs you must leave this place immediately. You will travel to the west where the dead live and you must never set foot in this land again."

That night Kumea left, taking everything in his care, leaving only the sick and the old with Taurama. The next morning Taurama woke up to find he had lost everything, even his wife had gone with Kumea. In his anger Taurama, broke all the shell money and the riches he had. Facing towards the west, he said in a tone that shook the earth: "Kumea! You and your people have done me much wrong. From now on you will live only in your area. Should you return by sea, my waters will rise up to challenge you. My snakes will devour you if you travel by foot. Fly over and my wings will break you into pieces!"

That is why canoes dare not pass the mountain at night. Only in the daytime do they travel. Often you will hear waves crashing on the shores and you wonder who the unlucky person is who has been smashed and thrown up on Taurama's shores.

When Kumea fled from Taurama, he left one of each kind of food plant wherever he stopped. We are not told where Kumea finally stopped but only that he moved westwards. To this day, canoes and people travelling westward past Taurama are not troubled as those who travel in the opposite direction. Because of Kumea's flight to the west and because he left nothing good for the Motuan people they started the Hiri. This is trading expedition of the Motuans to the Gulf for sago and betelnuts in exchange for pots.

T. Vagi, Central Province.

Two Brothers and Breadfruit

One day, when two brothers were playing and swimming in the sea, the older brother found a piece of breadfruit, which he took home to eat. When the younger brother smelt the breadfruit cooking, he went to his brother and pleaded with him for some, but the older brother refused.

The younger brother then said, "Could I have the skin?"

"No!" the brother replied, "Not even the skin."

"What about the inner part?"

"No! not even that."

"What about the seed? Could I have the seed?"

Again the answer was "No!"

"Well the skin of the seed then. Could I have that?"

"No! Not even the skin of the seed. You must go and find your own breadfruit!"

So the younger brother went off. He built himself a *mona* canoe and paddled it until he came to an old woman sitting on a beach. She was so old her eyes were dripping mucus from her nose. She really was not beautiful to look at.

"Where are you going?" she asked the boy.

"I'm looking for a breadfruit tree."

“Oh I see,” she replied. “Well, sit down and I’ll cook you some food.”

.So the boy sat down and the old woman began to peel some *kaukau* (sweet potato). But mucus kept dripping into the food. He did not like that very much but he was polite and accepted the food. Then the old woman told him how to find a breadfruit tree. She warned him that the tree belonged to a giant who would try to kill him. The younger brother was quite worried about the giant, but the old woman told him what to do.

“See this bird?” she said pointing to a small sparrow-like bird, “He will guide you to the breadfruit tree. Take some *kula* rope with you from the banana tree and tie your canoe up with it when you get there. When you climb the tree drop the breadfruit that are not ripe, but keep the ripe ones to throw at the giant if he comes along”.

So the younger brother went off in his canoe with the sparrow and after a time they came to the breadfruit tree. The boy tied the canoe to a nearby tree with the banana rope as he had been told and went off to climb the breadfruit tree.

Each time he found a ripe fruit, he kept it, but he dropped all the unripe ones. Just as he was about to finish, he accidentally broke a small branch, which flew to the giant’s house. The giant was very surprised and questioned the branch. “Are people trying to cut my breadfruit tree down?” he asked. The branch did not move. Then the giant asked, “Is someone stealing the fruit off my tree?” The branch then lay down to show he meant, “yes”.

At this the giant was very angry and began to collect his spears and bow and arrows. When he came to the breadfruit tree and saw the boy in the branches of his tree, he was even angrier and began to throw his spears and shoot arrows at him. Then the giant decided to climb the tree. As soon as he got close the boy threw the ripe breadfruit at his eyes.

Meanwhile, the bird was busy loading the canoe with all the breadfruit that were at the base of the tree. While the giant was removing the ripe breadfruit from his eyes, the boy took the chance to slide down the tree and jump into the canoe. Then the bird quickly broke the banana vine to free the canoe. By the time the giant reached the shore, they had escaped.

When the younger brother arrived home his older brother admired all the breadfruit.

“Can you give me some breadfruit?” he asked.

“No! I won’t” The younger brother replied

The older brother then said, “Could you give me the skin?”

“No! I won’t,” his young brother replied, “Not even the skin.”

“What about the inner part?”

“No! not even that.”

“What about the seed? Could I have the seed?”

Again the answer was “No!”

“Well the skin of the seed then. Could I have that?”

“No! Not even the skin of the seed. You must go and find your own breadfruit just as I did.”

So the older brother started building himself a *mona* canoe. When all was ready he set off in search of breadfruit tree. He too came across the old woman just as his brother had done. But he was not as polite. When he saw she was ugly he hardly bothered to answer her question about where he was going. When he saw her mucus dripping into the food, he refused to eat it.

The old woman gave him the same advice as she had his young brother but he hardly listened. He decided that the banana rope was too thin to hold his canoe and took a much stronger rope with him. The old woman warned him about the giant who owned the breadfruit tree and told him to keep the ripe fruit to throw in the giant’s eyes. She also told him about the little bird that would guide him on his way.

So the older brother set off under the guidance of the little bird in search of the breadfruit tree. When they arrived, the older brother used the stronger rope to fasten his canoe, before climbing the breadfruit tree. Each time he found a ripe fruit, he kept it, as he had been told but he dropped all the unripe ones. Just as he was about to finish he accidentally broke a small branch, just as his brother had done. The branch flew into the giant’s house. The giant was very surprised and again questioned the branch. “Are people trying to cut my breadfruit tree down?” The branch remained straight and tall and did not move. Then the giant asked, “Is someone stealing the fruit off my tree?” The branch then lay down to show he meant “yes”.

Again the giant was very angry. Collecting his spears and bow and arrows, he made his way to the breadfruit tree. When he saw the boy in the branches, he was even angrier than before and began to throw his spears and shoot arrows at him. Then the giant decided to climb the tree. As soon as he got close, the boy threw the ripe breadfruit at his eyes.

Meanwhile the bird was busy loading the breadfruit at the bottom of the tree into the canoe. While the giant was busy scraping the ripe breadfruit out of his eyes, the older brother slid down the tree and rushed to the canoe. But when the bird tried to break the rope so they could take off, the rope was too strong for it.

By this time the giant had managed to remove the ripe breadfruit from his eyes. He rushed to the canoe and seized the older brother and killed him instantly. The older brother's canoe drifted to where his younger brother was. When the younger brother saw this he knew that his older brother was dead. The bird flew back to the old woman and told her what had happened.

Anonymous, North Solomons Province.

Two Brothers and the Eagle

One day two brothers decided to go to the bush to get some *galip* nuts that grew wild there. They got their axes, firesticks and baskets and went to their area of bush. They came to a *galip* tree with plenty of nuts on the ground. They decided that the younger brother's job was to collect the nuts. While he did this, the older brother broke them open and ate them.

Then the younger brother asked, "Where are the ones that you broke?"

"I didn't break any of them at all."

"But I can see the shells that you broke."

The older brother continued to deny that he had broken any.

The younger brother was angry but he eventually gave up and went on collecting the nuts. Finally when all the nuts on the ground were finished, the elder brother said to his brother, "It's time for us to climb up and get some more nuts from the tree".

So the younger one said, "All right, I'll go." He climbed the tree and when he reached the top he broke open the nuts and ate the inside throwing the shells down to his older brother who was expecting both nuts and shells.

He called up to his brother, "Are you collecting nuts or eating them?"

His brother called down to him, "I am collecting nuts and you can break them". The older brother got wild at his brother. He said some magic words on his axe and beat the tree with it. The tree grew very tall and the trunk was so high his brother could not climb down. The elder brother went home and left his brother up in the tree eating *galip* nuts. When he had finished all the nuts he had to eat his own excreta to survive for a month. One day an eagle came to the *galip* tree. The brother said to the bird. "I can't get down can you help me?"

"Very well", said the eagle. "You sit on my wings and I'll take you home."

Before the eagle left, it flew down, lifted a big stone onto its wings and flew back with it to prove it had the strength to carry heavy things. The younger brother sat on the flat stone and the eagle carried it all the way home. He landed on the roof. The boy stepped down and paid the bird with a large shell armlet, which he put over its head and onto its neck. That is why some eagles now have white feathers around their necks.

Anonymous, Madang Province.

Kilibob and Manup

There once lived two brothers, Kilibob and Manup on the North coast of Papua New Guinea. They were always quarrelling. Each of them thought he was the best fighter, the best fisherman or the strongest runner in the village and so they were very jealous of each other.

One day Manu decided to go fishing while Kilibob went off hunting. Kilibob wandered up near the village gardens and shot an arrow at a bird. The arrow missed the bird and fell into a garden where Manup's wife found it.

"What a beautiful marking it has on it," she thought to herself. She decided to hide it.

Shortly afterwards Kilibob came into the garden. "Did you see my arrow here?" He asked her.

"No," she lied, "there's no arrow here."

Kilibob kept searching and then said "Are you sure you didn't see it?"

"Well, yes I did see it," admitted Manup's wife, "but it had such a beautiful design on it that I decided to keep it."

"You must return it at once," Kilibob insisted.

"Not until you agree to tattoo the design on my skin," Manup's wife insisted.

So Kilibob tattooed her skin and went off hunting again. Manup's wife stemmed the blood from the tattoo with a leaf which she threw into the water. The leaf floated down to where Manup was fishing and circled around him until he picked it up. As soon as he saw the blood he knew there was something wrong with his wife so he paddled his canoe home to the village. He called his wife and, when she came down to help him with the canoe, he noticed the tattoo on her skin. He recognised it as Kilibob's mark and became very angry with him.

This began another big fight between the two brothers. At last, their father grew tired of their fighting and told them both to leave. Kilibob went into the bush at Budup and began to build a boat. Manup, however, built a trading canoe like the ones the Yabobs built to trade pots in and he took his men on board and sailed off towards the Sepik. Kilibob sailed in the other direction towards Madang and as he went he pared off parts of the mainland and created the islands off the coast. In this way Sek, Malamal, Riwo, Siar and Kranket Island were created. He then carved out Dallman Passage and other islands to the southeast.

Anonymous, Madang Province

Two Brothers and a Snake

Once there lived three orphans. The two oldest were boys called Soa and Kotaka, and Sawana, the youngest, was a girl. One day there was a pig loose in a village a long way from their own village. The two brothers, Soa and Kotaka got ready to go there and they told their sister to look after the pigs and the house. Sawana was left alone.

The next morning she went to the garden to dig some *kaukau* (sweet potato). On her way home in the afternoon she could hear a thundering noise and was so frightened she almost cried. At last she came to her house and there she saw an enormous snake in front of it. She opened the door of the house and lit a fire to cook some food.

Then she said to the snake, "If there is any human being inside you, come inside and eat." Quietly and slowly, the snake's head came and ate what she gave it. Months went by and the snake and the girl got to know each other and became good friends. They lived happily.

After six months the two brothers came home and were very surprised to see the big snake. They chopped some firewood to make a fire, cut the snake into pieces and threw them into the fire without saying a word to the girl. Poor Sawana couldn't stop crying. However, the pieces of the snake rejoined with no burn marks. When this happened Sawana told her brothers that the snake was a good friend and they were not to cut it again. The brothers killed two pigs. They dressed the girl for a wedding and went away.

Sawana left the house with the snake following her. They came to a place where there was only *pitpit* grass, growing. The snake made a sign and told the girl to go into the *pitpit*. There she found two long pieces of sugarcane growing amongst it. She cut them down to take to the snake.

When she returned she got a great surprise because, instead of a snake, there stood before her a handsome boy. He was shining like the sun and she could hardly bear to look at him. He told her not to touch him at that moment. He led her to a beautiful place. They had their wedding day and lived there happily.

Naiya Aokali, Madang Province.

The Two Brothers, To Kabinana and To Purgo

There were once two brothers. To Kabinana, the elder brother was clever, but To Purgo, his brother was stupid and never listened properly. One day they both decided to build canoes in secret. They did this and To Purgo drummed on his. To Kabinana was surprised.

"What's that noise?" he asked. "That's not a canoe. It roars." To Purgo had not made a canoe at all, but a large garamut drum. It was the first of these drums to be made.

To Kabinana was very angry when he saw it. "What have you done?" he cried. "Why did you do this? You foolish fellow! Our children must die now and people will drum on this garamut when they do. Until now we could all live forever."

Then the two brothers went and had a look at the canoe that To Kabinana had made and To Purgo cried out, "This is a fine canoe. Let's try it out". So they pushed it into the sea and loaded it with earth clods. Then they paddled around and made many islands along the coast as far as Nakanai.

First they created Watom Island and then Urara and Palater. At Talele, the canoe capsized and many clods of earth fell out of the canoe together. Thus the Talele islands are grouped together. On they sailed as far as Nakanai creating several islands on the way.

Anonymous, East New Britain Province.

People and Language

To Kabinana said to To Purgo, “Let’s prepare different areas. Let’s go all over the place and make people that are like us.” So To Purgo went off. First he made the Baining people and taught them their language. Then he made the Taulil people and gave them their language. After he had done the same in some other places he rested before going to Vairiki.

To Kabinana had already made the Vairiki people there and To Purgo was jealous. So he hung a waterbag around his neck and sang as he walked past.

To Kabinana met him and asked, “What’s that around your neck?”

To Purgo answered, “I have just gone past one of the places you made.”

To Kabinana was angry, “Why have you disfigured these people. Now they will all have lumps on their necks.”

Anonymous, East New Britain.

Chapter 7

The Origin of Sago

Food is the basic concern of all subsistence farmers in Papua New Guinea, so it is most important that cultivated crops bear well and there are no shortages.

Each crop usually has a guardian masalai and there are lots of taboos on who can plant and harvest which kind of crops. Similarly with fishing there are rules about who can catch which kind of fish. Often myths tell of great hunger or great feasts and what happens when people break food rules. Men, women and children are often subject to different rules and food sanctions to make hunting and gardening successful.

There are many stories about where valuable food crops came from. Sago is a very common food for coastal dwellers and there are various stories of where it originated from. In the following stories about the origin of the sago, some overlap a little although they come from different areas.

The Story of Sago

This story is about a man from Pulei Mountain. He and his wife went to a sago area where they had a garden house. The man had an axe to cut a hole in his sago palm. He made a cut and the sap started to drip and then ran down. He called for his wife to come urgently, “Woo, woo, woo” he called.

He wanted his wife to bring her dish to catch the sap, but she just returned his call ‘woo, woo’.

Her husband held his hand over the cut again calling his wife. “Woo, woo” again and again until he got angry and impatient and cut down the tree. When his wife came they had an argument each accusing the other. She said he had been wrong and he said she had been wrong.

He shouted, “When we were in the house I had my axe and you had the sago containers. You understood that we were going straight to the sago. You should have known and come quickly. Why didn’t you come quickly?”

She said, “Why didn’t you call properly and tell me what you wanted. Why were you just saying, “Woo, woo?”

He shouted angrily, “I have cut the tree down and you must now carve the trunk into a trough for washing the sago. I will take the bark off and also make a bow to smash the sago.”

It was hard work chopping the sago pith and washing it. He said, “Future generations will always have hard work making sago because we both humbugged and now the sago is punishing us.” That is why sago is now so hard to get and why it doesn’t come straight out the trunk of the sago palm.

Moiap Poio, Manus Province.

The Origin of Saksak – Sago

Once there lived an old woman with her two grandchildren beside Tuhu Mountain. One day they all went out to make a garden. After they had finished, the old woman told her grandchildren to go home and cook some food because they were all hungry. When the children went home, they killed the little bird, which their grandmother regarded as her husband. She was still in the garden but knew what had happened because when she wanted to dig the ground to plant taro, she dug stone instead. By this she knew the children had killed her little bird.

The grandmother left the garden and went home and asked the children what they had cooked. They told her they had killed a bird and cooked it with the taro. They said, “We have eaten ours already and yours is in the saucepan. The bird is very strong so chew it”.

The old woman said to herself, “Oh, they have ruined me already.” She called them, “Come outside with me, I’m going to trim your hair.”

First she called the little girl and said to her, “You are my beautiful hardworking girl. You are good at fetching water and sweeping both inside and outside our house.”

She got a piece of obsidian and started trimming the girl’s hair. After a while she took the obsidian and thrust it into the girl’s stomach and killed her. She threw the girl down beside the drain and her body was bleeding very fast. She told herself “When the rains come down in a very big flood, I can throw the girl into it”.

Then she called the boy to come but the boy was frightened. So she said, “You are my good little boy who always builds my house, hunts *cuscus* for me and other things. Come I won’t kill you.”

Then she did the same thing to him as she had done to the girl.

After a while a big rain started to fall. The flood started to flow down the river. She threw the two bodies into the flood. They got swept down the river and got caught in the branch of a mango tree. They got up and rested their bodies.[sic]

When they felt a bit better, they got some bush vines and a needle made from a flying fox bone and started to stitch some clothes. When they had finished they sat down side by side. Then suddenly the boy saw smoke in the forest. They walked towards it to find out who lived there. It was a snake with a human head and snake body.

When they arrived, they found a river inside a clay pot. The snake was looking in the river, which was very clean indeed. There were some water flowers there with a lovely scent. If someone tried to drink his water, the snake could tell easily because he could smell the flowers in the water.

The boy got up, followed a track and arrived at the snake's place. He climbed up the ladder into the snake's house, looked around inside the house but saw no one. Then he tried to steal the snake's fire.

The snake saw this and said "Hey!" The boy did it again and the snake again called "Hey! You leave my fire alone or I'll eat you right now." The boy put the fire down and he looked around for the voice.

Suddenly the snake put his head up and asked him if he had come with someone.

"There's only me," lied the boy trying to trick him

The snake said, "You are telling lies. You came with someone."

"Yes, I came with my sister," the boy admitted.

The snake told him to bring his sister. The snake said "hurry up I've got plenty of wives and they might come home and eat you both."

They both went up to the snake's house and fell asleep. In the afternoon all the snake's wives came home. They were not human but were snakes and frogs.

They said to their husband the snake "Hey! We can smell the body of a human being."

The snake replied, "No! You're just smelling my head which is a human head".

That night he told all his wives to cook three plates of food – one for himself and another two for the boy and his sister. The next morning the snake's wives got their belongings and left for work.

The snake then woke the children and told them to go first to the river and he would follow. The snake's body made the road to the river. (The road is still there). Then he told them to watch the river.

"If you see it raining with a little bit of sun and rough waves forming with thunder and lightning, that's the sign of my coming back changed into a human being. If these things do not happen, then I will not come back."

When they went into the river to swim, they suddenly saw the things he had described to them. Then they knew that he would be coming back changed into a human being. Suddenly they saw him coming up carrying his basket, stone axe and other traditional things. The man walked upright and went straight up to them and said, "Now little boy, you are going to be my in-law. And your sister will be my wife. Come with me and I'll show you how to produce food from the sago palm".

They followed him and went into a small valley where sago palms were growing. The man kicked a palm and the sap of the sago came pouring down. Then he called the girl to get a basket to come and collect the sago, but the girl did not understand what he said. She called "Hu-u! Hu-u!" and did not come.

The man got angry, "if you want to act like that, all right." He kicked the palm tree and cut it down. After clearing around the sides, he put sticks along both sides. Then he got a big strong stick and broke the sides of the palm with it. After that he got a rope, made it into a bow and started beating the sago. When he had finished he washed the sago and showed it to the children. Then he said, "I've shown you how to beat and wash sago. Now we'll go home and I'll show you how to fry it".

Back home he fried the sago. Then they set it down and tasted it. He prepared a *cuscus* to have with it and gave them some words of advice to follow if they should happen to see any sago palms. He told them to be careful and not ruin them. If they wanted to grow sago palms, they must get small shoots and plant them around lakes and in swampy places. If they didn't follow his advice the sago palm would disappear. And that's how the people of Pohowai got their sago. They are still following the snake's rules today.

Sili Tau, Manus Province.

Why Men and Women Do Equal Sago Work

A boastful man named Lapun and a woman called Micheia were married and went to make sago together. One day Lapun decided to play a trick on his wife. He told her he was going ahead to prepare sago for her to wash. On the way he went to the men's house where from a hiding place he picked some extra bamboo cutters for his bow.

When he reached the sago palm he put the round bamboo cutters on his ten fingers. This way he was able to chip the sago pith ten times as fast as he would have with his bow and one cutter. When his wife arrived she couldn't understand why there was so much sago to wash.

One day she heard noises like ten people cutting sago at their sago-making site so she crept up and saw how her husband had tricked her. She now knew her husband was crafty and not as strong as he had maintained. In return for her silence, he agreed to use only one cutter. That is why men and women do equal work on the sago.

Moiap Poio, Manus Province.

Chapter 8

Masalai or Ghosts

In Papua New Guinea there are many different kinds of ghosts or spirits. Some of them are helpful to men but others are very destructive. In these stories the difference between humans and non-humans is very small. Sometimes the masalai take human form and at other times they are animals or have imaginary shapes. Generally speaking “devils” are the spirits of men and can leave human bodies any time especially during sleep. They remain around after death and must be respected. There are also mischievous wizards or witches who treat humans in perverse ways. People who know about these supernatural beings are usually the sorcerers who have ai klia, clear eyes, or special insight or powers denied ordinary people. They may use these powers for good or evil purposes. Generally speaking older men have more access to spirits, ghosts and witches than women and children. This gives them more power.

Peiten the Whale Masalai

At the time of the origin of the Western Islands, there were two men. They were brothers and had children. The older brother, Peiten, told the other that if he growled loudly enough at fish, the fish would be killed. The other brother didn't believe him and said that the only way to fish was to use a hook and line on the end of a sago rib rod. So they made a rod. The first brother said, “When we die, I will come back again.”

The second brother didn't believe him. He believed that when men died, they were finished completely.

The first brother, however, had certain powers. His spirit was able to talk to whales and get them to upset canoes and kill men. This was *sanguma*, bad magic and was like murder.

These whales, Hawalam, and Peiten still exist and can respond angrily to men when they annoy them. Men are protected by smaller whales that keep their larger kin away. In the time before, men used to give food to these friendly whales.

Koronga Selipiu, Manus Province.

Kumoikun

Kumoikun is the *masalai* of the Kokun River. When a man wants to represent the Gogol in a gathering, he dresses with birds of paradise feathers on his head. He has a necklace of dogs' teeth and *tambu* seashells. In his hand he has an axe for chopping trees and a spear for driving into the ground. Both of them represent power. The Kokun River can carry lots of earth and can easily break down large trees with its power.

Anonymous, Madang Province.

The Pig Masalai

Tadu Mountain was once situated on Udaru land where a *masalai*, named Magada, lived in a kwila tree and looked after people's pigs. One day Magada got cross with Tadu Mountain because he was always making rumbling sounds and loud noises, which frightened the pigs so much they broke their tethers and ran away. Tadu Mountain was angry with Magada for his complaint and went across the valley to the head of the Udam River. He is still there and men climb down the steep sides to collect bats and birds' eggs.

Anonymous, Madang Province.

The Blue Snow

Ea'a was a protective *masalai* who lived in a big kwila tree on a small mountain near Sehan in the Gogol Valley. He warned the people that a lot of blue snow or ash was going to fall on them like rain. He told them all to build strong houses. After the ash had fallen for five days, rain fell for five days and washed the ash away. Most of the people died. Those who were left ate each other. Some gardens on the tops of the hills were saved. Ea'a was very ashamed that his advice was not taken so he left the tree and didn't advise people any more.

Anonymous, Madang Province.

Drusi, the Eel Masalai

A long time ago there was an old woman and her male grandchild. They lived in the village but the old woman could not work.

One day, the people wanted to go gardening and hunting. The women cooked food to eat when they returned and put it all in one house. Then they went off to work. That evening, when they returned, they went to get the food but it was all gone. They asked who had stolen it as they were very hungry. The men thought the old woman had stolen it and went to ask her. She denied it and said she and her grandson had eaten nothing all day.

The big men continued to accuse her and punched her. However some people believed her and watched for the real thief. One day a man was left behind to watch when the people went to work in the gardens. He hid in the top of a palm tree, but came down when he saw a fish named Drusi going into the houses stealing food. He watched as the fish returned to the sea.

The guard went to his house and got some ashes from the fire. He followed the marks of the big fish in the sand and sprinkled ashes as he went. He followed the fish before returning to the village and telling the people about the thief. The people got their weapons and went to the lagoon where the fish was living. They went into the water but found only small fish and didn't find Drusi.

A man chopped into a big log in the water with his axe. However, it wasn't a log, it was the big fish and blood came out of it. They pulled it out of the water and cut it in pieces. All the people got some. The head of Drusi went to the old woman. She didn't eat it, but put it above the fire to dry. When the woman slept, the fish talked to her asking for water and saying that he was really a man in the shape of a fish. She gave him water. He told her that in the morning her grandson had to find a road to the mountains. He said that he would make a big flood and destroy the village to get revenge. The woman told the villagers but they refused to listen. After the old woman and her grandson left for the mountains, the flood [tsunami?] came and destroyed everyone. Only the old woman and her son were saved in the mountains. The Drusi was a *masalai* and could destroy people.

Paul Pokapin, Manus Province.

Fipi and the Disobedient Woman

There was a man in the eastern part of the Naru called Fipi who had a garden and slept in a small garden house. Near his house were some bamboos and many times Fipi heard sounds coming from inside the bamboo clump. One day he cut down one of the green bamboo poles. When the bamboo pole fell, Fipi opened his mouth like a frog and put the open end of the pole in it. There was a *masalai* in the bamboo called Karus who went through the bamboo pole into Fipi's stomach.

Later that night while Fipi was sleeping, his stomach swelled up and in the morning when he awoke it was very painful. Fipi vomited and a whole lot of small frogs came out of his mouth. They jumped everywhere and then started to croak. They were really Karus singing. Fipi liked their music very much and wondered for a long time how he could sing like them.

Eventually he took a whole coconut shell and bored two holes in it, one in the top and one in the side. By blowing on the top hole of this new kind of flute he could make one kind of froglike note. By blowing again, only this time covering the second hole with his finger, he could make a different note. The sound was very good but Fipi wanted his music to sound like a lot of frogs so he asked other men to make flutes and play them with him and to dance like a frog with him. Soon he had a famous dance.

Fipi then called on his clan to bring a lot of food together for a *singsing*. The young boys gathered together and were taken to the *haus tambaran* (men's house), where all the decorations and the secrets of the clan were kept. Here the boys were decorated. Then the *garamut* drum was beaten to call the people to come with food to the edge of the village.

The women had to hide themselves and avert their eyes when the men and boys came for the food and went back to the *haus tambaran*, which was not too far from the village, and started to dance. The women and children heard the new frog noises and were truly terrified. Later the men ate lots of good food in silence. Then they started to dance again. The uneaten food was taken to the village for the women and children. Later, during the dancing, which went on all night, the young men were beaten with sticks and their skin was burned. In the morning they were very weak.

The dance became very popular and any village which wanted it, had to pay many pigs and other things. One night in Fipi's village when the dance was being held again, a woman called Buroa, dared to look at the men dancing. She told her relatives and Fipi found out.

Later Fipi arranged for another dance to be held. This time when the people brought the food, Fipi told Buroa, the offending woman to stay with the food. She was hidden under some old string baskets or *bilums*. When the dancing men came for the food they took her back to the *haus tambaran* with them. They scornfully played with her and then cut off her head and put it in the *haus tambaran*. The rest of her body was cut up and cooked with the pig and wild wallaby. They then ate some of her and sent some of the food back to the village. Her parents and relatives ate the body without knowing what they were doing.

After the feast, Fipi called the people to gather and listen to him. He went and got the head of the Buroa and told them what he had done. He then buried the head and planted a *balbal* tree on top of the grave. He tied a sacred *tanget* leaf and told the people that this was the last time they would eat human flesh. Whenever people see the balbal tree they remember Fipi's two laws. This happened before the great fall of blue ash, which killed many people and hid the story. Now only three men know it and know that whenever they wanted to prepare food for a good feast, have a good dance, or build a *haus tambaran*, they should call Fipi's name.

Fipi is the strongest *masalai* and can do many things. For example, he controls the red paint that people put on betel nut trees to warn people not to climb them and steal from them. If they ignore the sign they will become cripples. During the night, Fipi will take the law-breaker's spirit on a wild dance and in the morning his body will be like a crushed pawpaw. For him to be cured he must wash his limbs with a mixture of coconut water and blood. Fipi and the offender should also drink some of this mixture.

If Fipi is to be made really happy, he should also eat some pig. Fipi can help to prevent quarrels and stop children from whining and crying. He is also the *masalai* of work, of hunting and gardening. For example if a man wants to be successful at hunting he must tie a *tanget* leaf high on a tree. Fipi will cause the wind to pass over it and pull lots of game to the hunter. Fipi is also a trickster. He makes men's *mal* or bark loin clothes fall down to reveal painted genitals.

Anonymous, Sehan Village, Gogol area, Madang Province

Chapter 9

Animal Legends

Because animals are very like humans and because humans may be dependant on them for protein, there are many stories about animal activities and origins.

In Papua New Guinea, animals range in size from the mighty ten metre crocodile down to the tiniest honey-eating birds. Some animals like snakes are very dangerous. Some, like the lizards with its thick skin can be used for drum covers as well as to provide food.

Some animals can be a nuisance: pigs are the enemies of gardens and some stories reflect these qualities. In addition they tell where animals originated and how animals and humans are inter-changeable thanks to supernatural forces. In Papua New Guinean society people are close to each other socially and very close to their domestic animals especially the pig and even the dog. Because people value animals highly, there are often very strict rules about when people can kill animals and who can eat them.

Why Pythons stopped Eating Men

A man was hunting in the Usu area with his friends but left them to return home quickly. While on his way, he found a lot of snake eggs in a rotting black palm. However he did not see a large python hanging from a tree above the nest. When he bent over to get the eggs, the snake fell on him and soon crushed his bones to small pieces.

Although he was still alive, he could not move. The snake then left him to get water to wet his throat. When he returned he swallowed the man whole. The snake's stomach was like a big garamut drum with the man inside him. The man was still alive in the snake's belly. The python dragged itself to his friends leaving a deep trench along the ground. However, the snake's friends shunned him because he had eaten a human. So the snake went and hid in a deep pool.

The man's wife and his brothers were upset when he had not returned to his hamlet. They looked everywhere for him. Then they found his bows and arrows and bilum near the snake's nest. They knew then that the snake had eaten him.

Meantime, the man knew the snake was in the water because he felt cold. When the snake went ashore he could feel the gravel grating under the snake's belly. He wanted to get out so he took the curled bamboo earring from his ear, straightened it and slit the snake's stomach and fell out. The snake slithered away to die. Soon his family found him and healed him with hot water. The big man of his clan softened a *tanget* leaf and tied it over a fire and made a spell to stop snakes ever eating humans again.

Anonymous, Madang

The Cassowary and the Hornbill

One day *kokomo*, the hornbill and his cousin, *muruk*, the cassowary were walking in the forest. They came to a *mal* tree. The *kokomo* flew to the top of the tree and told his cousin to follow.

The *muruk* said, "How can I do that? I cannot fly."

"Make some wings out of the *kunai* grass." (Pieces of grass stems can still be seen where his wings should be).

The *kokomo* did this and reached the top of the tree. However the tree was not strong enough and broke under the weight. He fell to the ground heavily and said he would not try again because he was annoyed and afraid. The *kokomo* was also annoyed at the *muruk*'s clumsiness and said that he would never walk with him again. However, he still had some feelings for his cousin and did not desert him calling out and knocking nuts down for him. For this reason the *muruk* always follows the *kokomo*'s raucous call and the *kokomo* turns his head sideways and squints to see whether the *muruk* is waiting to have his food knocked down.

Anonymous, Madang.

The Forbidden Island of Snakes

Just off the shores of Dregerhafen High School in the Finschafen Subdistrict, is an island where a beacon light stands. This story is about that island.

A long time ago a young *masalai* spirit lived on this island. He was the master of all the snakes that lived there and the snakes all obeyed his call. The *masalai*, who was a great snake, lived in a cave in the middle of the island. His wife was a large beautiful clam who lived in the middle of the channel between the island and the shores of Dregerhafen. So the *masalai* man lived in two different worlds. For the first part of the year he glided over his servants, the smaller snakes and over the waves to his wife.

The elders warned the villagers not to fish near the island. If they went there and swore they would be lost until by some lucky chance they escaped from the spell cast on them. Despite these warnings, a young man from the village went to the island. He beached his canoe on a stretch of coral sand and wandered off into the middle of the island looking for green leaves for his mother to cook and eat with the fish he caught during the afternoon.

Unfortunately for the young man, he tripped over a rock and swore. He realised too late that now he must roam the island until the spell was broken. Even though he could hear the surf breaking on the reefs and the waves washing up on the sand, he could not reach his canoe no matter how hard he tried. The next day a search party of ten elderly men from the young man's village arrived on the island and started their hopeless search. They could hear him answer their call but could not find him. They had to leave him behind to live on a diet of green leaves and wild berries which grew in the bushes around him.

After a week the young man he heard a low rumbling sound and felt the whole island was rocking. Thinking it was an earthquake, he climbed up a tall tree. As he sat, holding on to the branches and looking down, he saw the most fantastic sight of his life. Coming out of the hole in the side of a small hill was the largest and longest snake he had ever seen. Right from the mouth of the hole down to the beach were snakes. Snakes of every size, colour, and length were all lying like poles put down by a man to help slide his canoe into the water.

The young man was so surprised by this weird sight that he couldn't move or talk. He just sat there with his eyes open and stared. The great big *masalai* man himself came out of his hole and gently slid over all the snakes that lay stretched on the sand until he reached the seas. They then lifted him up and carried him across the waters to the channel where the beautiful clam lived. Then, while the young man was watching, the big snake sank down under the blue- green water.

Now the young man easily found his way back to his canoe. When he got to the beach he went down on his knees and thanked the great snake for setting him free from the spell, which bound him to the island. Then with a last look around, he pushed his canoe into the water and paddled home to his village and his anxious old mother. The people were glad to see him and, after making a feast for his safe return, they asked him to tell them of his adventures on the Forbidden Island. And that is why, to this day, people from other clans fear to set foot on the island,

Mary Paulisbo, Morobe Province.

The Lizard Guardian spirit from Yupay

A long time ago there were thirty married men who were brothers and lived together with an old man. They had dogs to hunt for wild game. One morning the man who looked after the dogs took them out to find a pig. He went a long way but didn't find one pig. In the afternoon he decided to return to the village but the dogs started to bark. They had found a spirit lizard and chased him into a hole at a place called Yupay. The man cut a pole and started to break the hole with it. The pole broke and he couldn't access the hole so he returned to the village, and told his brothers to come with him the next day.

Next morning they went to the lizard's hole and each cut a pole. They dug into the ground and found 30 small lizards, which they killed, and they also killed the big lizard. They cut them up and cleaned them in the stream. Then they put them in a clay pot to cook. All thirty brothers ate the young lizards and died in their sleep. Because the old man didn't eat any of the lizards, he survived and when he found out what had happened he went to the village and told all the wives to bring cooked taro to eat with the big lizard. When they arrived at the hunting camp they saw that their husbands were all dead. The large lizard had broken the clay pot and had run away to his hole at Yupay. The women buried their husbands and soon afterwards the old man died in the men's house.

If you go to Yupay now you can see the large hole made by the poles and where the trees were cut. Our people can no longer eat lizards as they are a forbidden food.

Gerard Kolou, Manus Province.

The Moran

One young man went into the bush on Dadami land to find snakes. He found a very big python. It was too big for him to carry so he got his friends to help him carry it to the men's house. A young boy and girl both about three years old were told to look after the snake while the villagers went to the gardens. While the people were away, the snake turned into a man. He decorated the two children with male and female painted markings on their faces and told them to tell their parents about him when they returned.

However the parents wouldn't believe their children and said it was only a python. They killed it, cut it up and put it in their clay pot. When it was cooked the water from the pot boiled over in large torrents. It went down into the ground and came up again carrying lots of prawns and crabs. Then there was a big earthquake a fierce wind. The people were afraid. When the noise of water began to grow and the wind began to blow more strongly, the snake told the children he would help them. He reached down and pulled them up into some high coconut trees. The water rose and killed all of the people except the children.

A large kwila tree was turned upside down and its roots still point to the sky. When the flood was over, the children came down, built a house and were later married. They had many children and the people of Dadami land became strong. However they are still very respectful and afraid of snakes.

Anonymous, Madang.

The Snake and the Pig

One day a man from Jimi invited a young man from the Highlands to his house. When he reached the house, the Jimi man was waiting for him. He greeted the Highlands man, "We will sleep now and early tomorrow we will go and hunt pigs."

The next morning they took their dogs and their bows and arrows and off they went. Soon they came to a track where wild pigs walk. The Jimi man said, "You stay here. I will chase the pigs with my dogs and when you see one coming kill it."

The Highlands man waited but no pigs came. After a while he went away. Suddenly he saw a dead pig lying in the thick bush. When he saw it he shouted to the Jimi man to come. He came hurrying up and asked what the matter was. The Highland man told him that he had killed the pig and asked him to help him carry it home. The Jimi man did not believe the Highlander and thought the pig had been killed by a snake.

They took the pig home and roasted it and when they had finished they went to sleep. Soon the Jimi man woke up and put some stones on the fire until they became hot. While he waited, he sharpened a piece of bamboo and slept in the doorway with the sharpened bamboo in his hand and the heated stones nearby.

As he slept, the bush started to shake and the trees fell apart. In a few moments the snake which had killed the pig came and surrounded the house. He put his head into the doorway and swallowed the man's leg up to his hip. The man quickly put the hot stones and a sharp piece of bamboo into the snake's mouth. The snake was killed.

The next morning, the two men got up and the Jimi man told the Highland man that he knew he had not killed the pig but that the snake had killed it. He said the same snake had come in the night and would have killed them both but he had saved their lives. That day they had a feast with the snake that he had killed.

Ol Kei, Western Highland Province.

The Wallaby and the *Cuscus*

Long, long ago, the *cuscus* used to walk, crawl and drink like the other animals on the ground. He enjoyed the cool air of the forests, swamps, valleys and plains together with the other animals. But one day the *cuscus* and the wallaby came out of their hunting ground and met face to face,

The *cuscus* said, "Well my friend, let's have a short conversation".

The wallaby agreed. They went and sat under a big shady tree and discussed what they were going to do that day. Each one told his personal problems to the other.

The wallaby confessed, "I am afraid of the hunter!"

"Yes" agreed the *cuscus*, "I too fear the hunter and his companion, the dog."

Then the wallaby came up with a solution. "We'll hide. That's the only thing we can do to protect ourselves".

The *cuscus* agreed. He climbed up a tree and called down. "If you can see any part of my body showing, tell me to hide properly." First he sat between the trunk and a branch but he could still be seen. Then he followed the branch and sat in the middle of the branch

"Can you see me?" called the *cuscus*.

"Yes! I can see you a little bit. I prefer you to hide in the branch with leaves on it," answered the wallaby.

So the *cuscus* crawled along the branch up to its leafy end where he hid himself very well.

"Can you see me now?" he asked.

The wallaby was pleased for his friend, "You are well-hidden, not only from me but from the hunter and his companion the dog. Not even a claw on that foot of yours can be seen."

Of course this was only true for the *cuscus*. He was well hidden and didn't worry about his poor friend sitting outside without protection. This is why to this day whenever you go hunting, you can't see the *cuscus* easily, but dogs can easily chase the wallaby. This is because he was considerate of his friend but forgot his own welfare.

James Hasoria, Gulf Province.

The Two Pigeons

There were once two pigeons, Busmari, the red pigeon and Huli, the grey pigeon. They were good friends and often walked together in the forest. Huli was a hard worker, but Busmari was lazy and did not want to help. One day they were walking through the forest when Huli found a red *marita* or *pandanus* fruit. It was a long nutty fruit with a rough skin.

Huli said, "I'll stay here so we don't lose sight of this fruit. You go and get a stick to knock it down," But Busmari refused to help, so Huli went off and got a stick and knocked it down.

Then Huli asked Busmari, "Please help me carry the *marita* back to the village?" Again the red pigeon refused to help Huli who carried the *marita* back to the village by himself. Then Huli got busy cooking the *marita*, "Please will you get some water in the water pot?" she asked. Again Busmari refused and so Huli carried the waterpot in her beak down to the stream and brought back some water.

Again she tried to get Busmari to help, "Please will you light the fire so I can cook the fruit?"

"No! I will not," said Busmari.

"Then I will do it myself," said Huli, the pigeon and she collected the firewood and put it on the hot ashes. Soon she had a fine fire going. But she needed some salt to put in the water.

She asked Busmari to go and get some salt water, but Busmari said, "No I will not."

At this Huli was so angry at Busmari's laziness that she threw the *marita* at him. It hit him on the head and the red juice of the *marita* left its mark. In turn Busmari got angry and threw ashes from the fire all over Huli's wings and back. Huli tried and tried to get the rid of the marks, but could not. This is how the two pigeons got their marks and why they are no longer friends

Anonymous, Madang Province.

Why the Wallaby has Short Front Legs.

Once upon a time a wallaby and a dog were friends and lived together in a house in the middle of the bush on Rooks Island. Each day they went to the gardens and looked after the fruit and vegetables growing there. One day during harvest time they picked a large watermelon, took it home and broke it in half. The wallaby took one half and the dog the other. The dog ate all of his at once. However the wallaby was much wiser. He cut his portion into two parts, put one part in the cupboard and ate the rest.

Next day the two friends returned home after a hard day's work and the wallaby went straight to the cupboard and took out the remaining part of the watermelon. The dog having nothing to eat, asked the wallaby to share his piece of melon but he refused, saying that the dog had been too greedy the previous day and needed to be punished for his greed.

At this the dog became angry and chased the wallaby out of the house. The wallaby ran swiftly through the bush, but as he ran he collided with a large rock and broke both his front legs. He continued fleeing on his back legs. Since that day, dogs and wallabies have been bad friends and wallabies can only walk or hop on their back legs,

Anonymous, Morobe Province.

The Eel

Long, long ago near the Biar River, an old man and his wife lived with their son whom they loved very much. One day the mother took the boy fishing in a nearby river. While they were fishing, the boy was surprised to catch a little red eel. His mother told him to cut a piece of bamboo and put the eel inside it. He did this, filled it with water, and carried the eel back to the village.

He put the eel in a small lake near the village and fed it with insects and other food. It began to grow bigger and bigger. As the eel grew, the lake got bigger too. One day the boy's father said, "We must make a feast and invite all the other villagers to come and see the eel." So they did this. They killed ten pigs and prepared food as well. Many villagers came to the feast to meet and eat the food. They admired the big eel and returned home. However one man who came to the feast was very greedy and thought of a plan to kill the big eel for himself.

He prepared his spear and walked to the lake where the great eel lived. He took some green coconuts and his spear. When he reached the lake he chopped them up and threw the pieces into the water. At once the great eel came rushing up to eat the pieces of coconut meat. When the eel put its head up out of the water the man threw his spear at it. At once the great eel jumped up and rushed after the man. Where the eel left the lake the shore parted and became a river, which is now called Miaru, or Biar River.

Laho Lavaki, Gulf Province.

Why the Frog Can Swim.

Once upon a time, Mr Frog and Mr Wasp shared a friendship that went on for a long time. Their relationship was so close they shared their belongings; went on hunting trips and did gardening together. One day they decided to go on a hunting trip. It was Mr Wasp's duty to go ahead of Mr Frog to detect wild pigs. One day Mr Wasp flew on ahead and found a big pig. He flew back and informed Mr Frog who was following. The two had killer weapons. Mr Frog could kill by urinating in animal's eyes or nose. Mr Wasp killed by stinging.

When they came to the pig, Mr Wasp asked the frog to kill the pig. This he tried to do without success as the pig just kicked him away. When the Wasp saw what was being done to his friend, he went to his aid and stung the pig on both eyes until it fell down dead on the ground. They got ropes and pulled the pig home. They had no fire there so Mr Wasp asked the Mr Frog to go to the next village and get some. He warned him not to tell anyone that the fire was for the pig.

Mr Frog went to an old woman's house to get some fire. When she asked why, the frog would not tell her. She insisted so at last Mr Frog gave in. She told him that when evening came and the pig was cooked, she was going to invite the whole village to come to their place. When Mr Frog went back and told this to Mr Wasp, he was furious, but they went on with their cooking.

When evening came they made a plan. Mr Wasp flew all the food up to the top of a tall tree where people could not see it. Then they filled the stone oven with rubbish. Next Mr Wasp flew his friend up to their hiding place. While they were doing this they could hear the sound of the drum from the next village. The old woman was indeed calling the whole village to come for the feast.

The villagers arrived and sat around the oven waiting for the frog and wasp to appear before eating. As the sun was setting and they had to return home, they decided to uncover the oven. When they found it was just filled with rubbish, they could not stand being tricked by a pair of silly little animals so searched the area to punish them. While they were eating, the Wasp and the Frog did not realize that they had done something very stupid. They were dropping the pig bones to the bottom of the tree, showing where they were hiding. When the people looked up, they saw them eating away merrily and decided to cut the tree down. Mr Frog started to get worried because he knew that the Wasp could fly away. When the tree fell down Mr Wasp flew away. Luckily for Mr Frog the tree fell into a pond. He had to find an alternative way of living to save his skin from the people so began to swim under water. When the people were looking for him, he was swimming around in the pond all the time. That's why he enjoys living on dry land and in creeks. In that pond the frog bred his new tribe and multiplied.

Stephen Mokis, Central Province.

Chapter 10

Clay Pots

Clay pots have always been important especially in coastal areas. Certain groups had potmaking skills and guarded their clay supplies very carefully. They traded their pots far and wide on canoes and over long trails. The pots came in many shapes and sizes but were basically made in two ways. One method was to gradually mould the pot from a piece of clay with hands and spatula. The other way was to make long coils of clay, "fish line" and to layer these coils in the shape of a pot. The coils were then pinched together and patted with a wet wooden spatula. Both types of pots were fired over hot wood fires. One had to be very careful not to crack them or spoil them during the firing.

In most pot villages, the women made the pots but in the Gogol area of Madang it was the men who made the coil pots.

Pottery shards, uncovered in archaeological sites, are very useful in dating migrations and trading routes. The origin of pots and clays from which they were made has been told in many stories.

The Creation of Clay Pots

In the village of Mwali Kiki on the island of Ware, there stood a large *siyaya* tree. One year when all the other *siyaya* trees were bearing by the hundreds, this tree, despite its massive size only bore three nuts. When the first of these three were ripe it fell down and was picked up by an old woman. She took it home to her hut and put it away so she could have it next morning.

However during the night, when the old woman was asleep and all was quiet, the *siyaya* nut cracked open and out came a handsome youth. That morning when the woman awoke she was surprised to see the handsome youth sitting beside the newly opened nut.

"Where have you come from?" she asked him.

"I came from the *siyaya* nut," he answered. So she named him Siyaya-gilugilu, which means the youth born of the *siyaya* nut.

Now during the same time on the island of Bwasilaki, about a day's journey by canoe to the north of Ware, lived a very beautiful girl by the name of Labia-pegana, whose love every youth of the island group had sought in vain.

When Siyaya-gilugilu heard about this beautiful girl, he decided to paddle over to her island at once to ask her to marry him. After preparing for his journey, he started out. Just before reaching Salewai Village on Bwasilaki Island, he paddled past an island where Labia-pegana's grandmother, Dalenia lived. The old grandmother had lost all her teeth and couldn't eat unless someone mashed her meals by chewing the food first. So when she saw Siyaya-gilugilu she called him to come and mash her food. Not knowing she was Labia-pegana's grandmother, Siyaya-gilugilu mocked her and continued on his way.

Dalenia, not liking this, cast a spell on him so that when he arrived at Salewai no one turned out to greet him. When he asked for Labia-pegana she would not come. For nearly a whole day he was the laughing stock of Salewai's women and children. Feeling very ashamed of himself, he returned home to Ware Village the next day.

The same day he arrived back on his island, the second of the *siyaya* nuts fell to the ground and was picked up by the same old woman. That night the same thing happened. The nut cracked and out came another handsome youth. He too was called Siyaya-gilugilu like his brother. When he heard about Labia-pegana he immediately decided to seek her hand. Unfortunately he followed the same path as his brother had taken and so wasn't successful and had to return home.

The day he arrived home at his island the last of the *siyaya* nuts fell off and was picked up by the same woman. During the night when all was quiet, the nut cracked open and out came another youth. But he was not as handsome as the other two, he was very ugly and covered with sores from head to foot. Like his two brothers he was called Siyaya-gilugilu because he has come out of the *siyaya* nut.

Like his brothers before him, when he heard about the beautiful Labia-pegana, he decided to travel to her village. His two brothers laughed and mocked him. Early next day, despite the cursing and insults he received from his brothers and the other villagers, he paddled for Salewai.

Before reaching Salewai, he passed the island where old Dalenia lived. Seeing him, she called out for him to stop for a while and mash her food. Siyaya-gilugilu, the youngest brother, called at the island to do his good deed. by mashing all the food that was available. The old woman asked him where he was going. When Siyaya-gilugilu told her his story, she told him to climb a coconut and bring down two green nuts. This he did and after taking the husks off handed them to her. She then told him to bath in the sea and oil himself with coconut oil. After having his bath and oiling himself, Dalenia took the two green coconuts and poured the milk on top of him. All at once Siyaya-gilugilu's skin changed. All the sores were healed

and he became a new man, more handsome and better built than his two brothers or other youths of his village. The grandmother then sent him on his way, telling him the Labia-pegana would be waiting to greet him on his arrival at Salewai.

On his arrival Labia-Pegana was there to greet the third brother, who took her for his wife and took her back to Ware Island. However his brothers of Siyaya-Gilugilu and all the women at Mwalikiki became jealous of Labia-pegana and at once made plans to kill her.

One day the women decided to take her out gardening on the other side of the village. When they were far from the village they clubbed and stoned her to death. Her body was smashed till nothing remained except the stains of her blood and flesh in the soil. Suddenly there arose a thunderstorm with heavy rains beating the whole island. When the rain stopped nothing could be seen of Labia-pegana except for some fine clay. The women seeing the clay made use of it to make pots. Women from other islands, hearing about the clay and what could be made of it, travelled in their canoes to take canoe loads of the clay to their islands, eventually through a long period of time, it was found throughout the whole world.

The reason for treasuring old clay pots and other fragments of earthenware with care and pride is because of their beauty.

M. Alaluku, Milne bay Province.

Honpain, the woman who taught the Yabob women the art of potmaking

A man from Yabob sat on his canoe on the beach and looked at the Pleiades stars.

“Is it possible that one of those stars is a woman?”

A little bird called the kere-kindu, or kingfisher, nesting in the leaves at the top of the canoe answered, “There is a woman there, do you want me to go and talk to her?”

“Yes”, answered the man, “Tell her I desire her”.

The bird did this and the woman offered to come down to earth.

“Tell the man to make a hole in the roof of his house. During the night I will come in the middle of a thunderstorm”.

So the woman, Honpain, spoke and so the bird told the man. That night the man made an opening in his house and Honpain came down in a storm. He hid her in the attic of his brother’s house and when his brother kicked a bladder ball in through the opening he discovered her.

He said to his mother, “You are not as beautiful as the woman in the attic”.

Honpain later married the Yabob man and they had a son. One day when the child was older, Honpain went to the gardens on the mainland, leaving him in the care of his grandfather. Unfortunately some grasshoppers got burnt when they were being cooked and the child threw a tantrum.

The grandfather scolded, “That comes from your mother not being a Yabob woman. That comes from her being a woman from the sky. You have made me “bel hat” (angry).

When the child told his mother what had happened, she said, “Oh my son, I am not a Yabob woman, I am a mountain woman, a sky woman”. So she spoke, but she was angry with the grandfather and decided to return to the stars.

Her father let a rope down from the sky. Honpain began firing a pile of pots and when the smoke surrounded her, she climbed up the rope with her son on her back and returned to her people. Then she cut the rope, which fell back on a pile of pots breaking them into fragments. One developed two holes, which was the first water pot.

(after Dempwolff, 1910/1911 63-102).

The Origin of Clay Pots in the Port Moresby Area

Long ago there were no cooking pots in the Port Moresby area and people baked their food in the fire. Near the source of Vanaba River, lived two brothers and their families who also cooked their food in the fire. One night the younger brother had a dream. In it a pot appeared to him and said, “Tomorrow you will find me near an *irimo* tree. Tell your wife to peel your food and pour in some water as well. If she puts me on the fire the water will boil and your food will be cooked.”

The next day the younger brother found the pot near the *irimo* tree. He brought it home and told his wife what to do: “Peel the food and put it in the pot on top of a banana leaf. Pour some water in and place the pot on the fire so the water will boil and cook the food. After the food has been eaten, clean the pot and leave it upside down.”

The family was very happy eating the clean boiled food. One day the children of the two brothers were playing together. The younger brother’s children said to the others, “You eat your food dry and dirty while we eat our food clean with its liquid.”

The children told their father about the clean boiled food their cousins ate. The older brother said to his brother, “What’s this I hear from my children? You eat clean-boiled food with liquid?”

The younger brother replied, “Tomorrow we shall go hunting together. When we catch an animal, the women will cook together. My wife will show yours how to cook our food”. They went hunting together and came back in the evening.

The younger man’s wife peeled the yams, taro and some banana. She put them together in the pot on a banana leaf. She poured in some water and put the pot on the fire to boil. When the food was cooked, they all ate together. Afterwards the pot was cleaned and left upside down to dry.

The other family was so pleased that they wanted a pot for themselves. They were given one and the instructions. Not long afterwards the rules were forgotten by the older man’s wife. After cooking, she left the pot dirty. In disgust the pot flew back to its place near the *irimo* tree.

The younger brother had another dream. In it the pot said to him, “Your brother has disobeyed my rules. So tomorrow cut some sticks as clubs and go to the place where you found me. See if you can hit me and break off a piece.”

The younger man went the next day but couldn’t hit the pot. The pot flew from one village to the next along the river singing:

*Uro Vanaba aranai omia,
Doura etabuai eavari,
Uro aro many boina erovo,
Auai e bara.*

The song means: “The pot lives at the source of the Vanaba River. It is looking for a place to live away from Doura. It flies like a bird and people try to knock it down”.

The pot flew to the coast and travelled westwards as far as Delena where a piece was broken off by the flying sticks. It returned eastwards. At Manumanua a little piece was broken off. A bigger piece was broken off at Boera. A large piece was knocked off at Porebada, a little piece at Barakau and the last piece at Tubusereia. The villages that hit the pot and made a piece fall down were the villages which were able to make clay pots. The other villages missed so they couldn’t make pots. [The last pots were most probably made in the early 1960’s when the *lagatoi* or canoes returned from the Gulf Province].

Anonymous, Central Province.

Kolimang, the First Woman to Make Clay Pots and Plates

In Aibom Village, there once lived a woman called Kolimang. She was the only one there who knew how to make things from clay. She made pots, plates, headrests and many other things and gave them magic names.

Pots she called *Mendubang*; stoves were called *Kolimang* after herself; and the plates were called *Kongudambui*. She had three houses in the village and underneath each house was a place for making pots.

Before she fired the pots she would add a clay face to the top and paint them bright colours. Then she would dry them under her house and later fire them. When it was market day she did not carry her pots to market but instead she made magic and called out the pots’ names. “*Mendubang, Mendubang* time to go to market.” The pots would sail through the air and land on the market table. She would do the same with the clay plates and other things. There they would be all lined up ready for the women from the nearby village of Maligai to buy them with pieces of sago.

This went on for some time until the people of Maligai began to wonder who made these pots that kept appearing in the market place. One day a brave man called Korblopan decided to go and hide in Aibom to find out how these pots were being made. From his hiding place, he watched Kolimang making many things from clay and heard her whispering magic words to herself. When he had watched enough he came out of his hiding place and said to her. “Kolimang, you hide yourself here and do things secretly so that people are wondering about you. Now you must be my wife.”

While he was saying these things, she became very ashamed and turned herself into a big rock. All her belongings became little rocks lying nearby – all except the clay things which she broke into pieces. If you go to Aibom village you can see this rock and the fragments of pots and plates area all scattered on the ground. Some people say the rock is growing.

Aibom Village.