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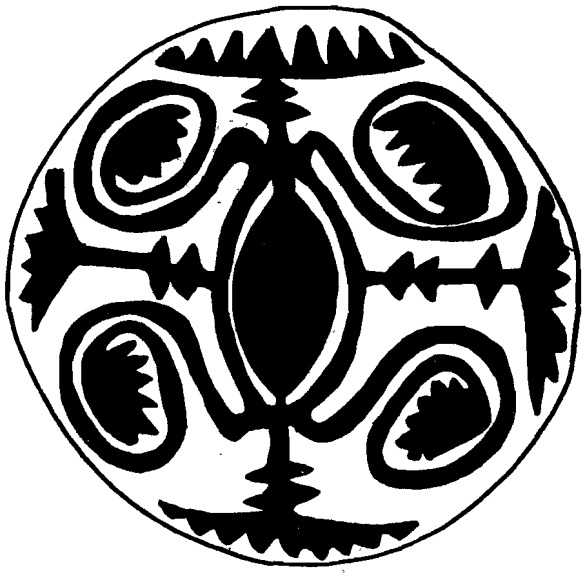

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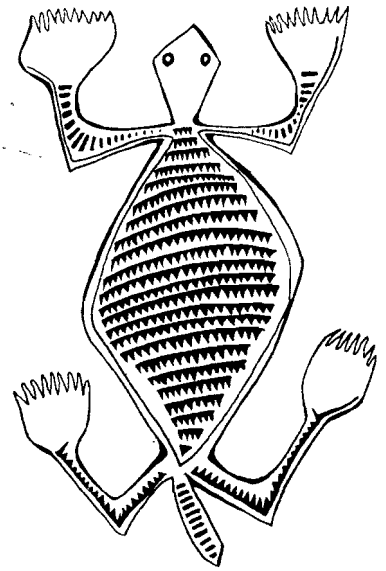


FORGETTING HOME

Hey, my friend!
Have you now become a Motu man?
I have just come from your forgotten home.
The trees stand tall and straight
in the Purari delta
and all have grown to the same height!

You look like a Motu man
your hair dyed red with ashes of fire;
it shines like a mirror in the Koki sun.
But your name is a Purari name.
The Gulf water laughs at you:
can you forget your home?

The nipa palms cracking in the wind;
The tide returning fast;
Canoes arriving from all corners
waves rising higher with the wind
they beat the empty beach like a husband
who beats his wife for losing her child.
She cries: come home, I know you are alive!

—The town has swallowed me
and beer is sweet to me
like a husband is sweet to his wife.
I am a Motu man—but only for a night.
My home lies undisturbed:
One day I might return.

Now the night is deep
and I cannot find my way:
I have become Moresby's red dust.

Benjamin Evara

MUD

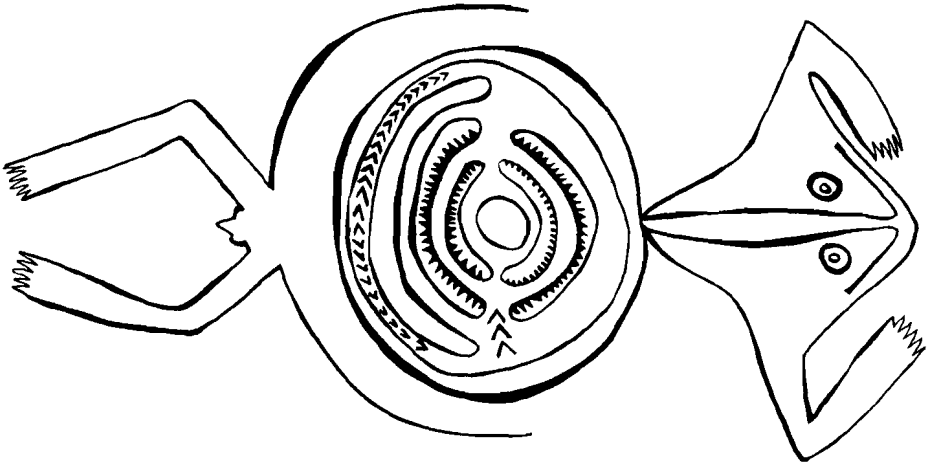
Dirty old mud!
But I love it from the bottom of my heart
Mud, dirty mud, filthy mud
mud which is in our blood.

We are made of mud
as was said in the Holy Scriptures.
Where is that filthy mud
that moulded me into a human being?
O mud—I love you.

The blind man can see you with his hands
dirty, slimy mud.
The sky is painted with mud
with muddy ochre.

Milo water on muddy banks you drank
as a child at home.
Mud you've eaten
when walking on four legs.
Yes! Mud, *your* mud!

Benjamin Evara



A PORTRAIT OF THE ODD MAN OUT

by Russell Soaba

GWADI DUG HIS HAND into his hip pocket and felt the five dollar note. He was thinking of spending the money wisely. He would buy a pair of shorts, or a shirt perhaps. He could save some of it too, for going to pictures at the week-ends. Whatever he did he wanted to get something good out of the money.

"Yes please?" came the voice of a girl behind the counter, in a milk-bar. Gwadi was startled. Partly because he was lost in the thought of spending his five dollars wisely, and partly because of his indulgence in watching the anatomy of the girl in front of him. He panicked a little because the girl had just caught him watching her.

"Oh—ah—a packet of Benson and Hedges, please," he said, shyly. "And a box of matches, please . . ." He was taking a long time to decide what he actually wanted. "And a bottle of orange, please," he concluded. "No," he added quickly. He had changed his mind. "I'll have ah—ah—no—all right, I'll have an orange, please—a bottle of orange." He ultimately finished. The girl behind the counter sighed with relief. Gwadi was feeling uncomfortable now.

Sensing Gwadi's feelings of uncertainty of what he actually wanted, the girl leaned forward over the counter, as if to avoid anyone over-hearing her words, and said, "That's all, ah?"

"Yes," returned Gwadi. He then struggled to smile, which only caused his cheeks to shake a little with guilt.

When the girl moved off to collect the things which he had mentioned, Gwadi sighed with relief. He had never before encountered a girl like this in the nineteen years of his life. He had certainly talked and joked with many, but he only wished they were his lovers instead of his mere school-mates or sisters and cousins. As he gradually lost himself in the reverie of what he had missed in his middle teens, he suddenly sensed a new life flowing through his veins. He was on the eve of adulthood!

Gwadi was not the least happy about the new life that flowed into him. He wished he had remained as he had always been forever. The old youthful life itself was beautiful, he thought, not wanting to admit, even within himself, that it was gradually passing away. But the new life created more worries for him, because it made him think. It made him think more and more of the very depths of his own being . . . So when the girl returned with the things he wanted, he just stood there and stared at her dumfoundedly.

"Money please!" the girl demanded. She startled him again.

"Oh, sorry," he apologized. He then gave her the five-dollar note—his only wealth in the whole world.

Gwadi collected the change and moved over to the far end of the counter. There he smoked and drank the orange.

There was a record playing on a record player. Slim Dusty was singing and he had just finished singing "A Pub with No Beer". Gwadi moved over and looked through the pile of records before the girl could put on another one. He gestured if he himself could put on a record and the girl nodded.

He looked through the lot until he came across Simon and Garfunkel.

"Where you from?" the girl asked and moved in closer.

"Nowhere," Gwadi answered quietly and seriously.

"Nowhere? Mamma oh! You being funny, ah?" the girl exclaimed and could not stop giggling. Gwadi turned and looked at the girl sternly.

"No!" he said harshly. "I being not funny, ah!" He tried to imitate the girl in a sarcastic manner. The girl was hurt and she moved off, disappointed, to serve the customers who had walked into the milk-bar.

Gwadi put "A Most Peculiar Man" on the record-player and listened carefully to the message Simon and Garfunkel were putting forward. A most peculiar man . . .

. . . he lived all alone within a house within a room within himself . . .

"You like that song?" the girl asked in a friendly voice. She was now standing behind the boy.

"Yeah," Gwadi grunted, without looking at her.

He had no friends, the song went on:
he seldom spoke
and no one in turn ever spoke to him
he wasn't friendly and he didn't care
and he wasn't like them—oh no! . . .

"I like it too," the girl said after listening for a while. "My brother he buy that record for me," she went on. "But it's too slow. Not like Slim Dusty. Slim Dusty is good, ah sorry." She spoke fast and she sounded amiable enough for Gwadi's liking.

He died last Saturday . . . the song flowed on forlornly through the hot tropical air.

"You like the tune of this song anyway?" Gwadi asked with near-indifference when he felt it was his turn to do so.

"Yes," she answered. "It is sad."

. . . he went to sleep, the song rolled on:
with the windows closed
so he'd never wake up
to a silent world in his tiny room . . . .

"Why you like this song?" the girl asked suddenly, startling Gwadi for the third time that day. He laughed carelessly.

"Lots of reasons why," he said. He stopped and thought for a while.

. . . and all the people said, sang on Simon and Garfunkel:
What a shame that he is dead.
But . . . wasn't he a most peculiar man?

"I like it," Gwadi tried to explain, "because it has good words in it. It gives you good message . . . I like it because . . . because songs like this make you feel you—er—have a soul . . ." He paused, wondering if what he had said was clearly understood by the girl. He wanted to explain that the song had something more than just the sad tune and the good words. He wanted to explain that the song had something to do with different types of people. People who thought differently. People who lived differently. People who were controlled by something and that something, such as (he shrugged as he thought) social conscience, in turn victimized these people and they ultimately died—weak, stupid, peculiar. And other people who were (he shrugged again as he thought) blind conformists to that social conscience, or scums, just wondered why the poor victims died . . . He wanted to explain all this but he had suspected that the girl could not understand him, or what he would be talking about. Then the unexpected question came:

"What is the message?" the girl asked, resting her chin on the counter with her eyes gazing at his.

"Well, the message is . . ." he tried to explain but stopped. He was still suspicious that the girl could not understand him. So he tried to make his answer superficial enough for the girl to understand.

"Well," Gwadi shrugged, "the message is that this peculiar man, strange man, odd-man-out one might say, died because he was different. He was different from everybody else."

"Aiya!" the girl exclaimed with a tone of grief, as if she was hearing a tragic news from her home. The sober expression on Gwadi's face made the girl ask softly: "You different

too, ah?" He laughed carelessly at her question.

"Everyone is different," he said. "You are different, I am different too."

"That's why you said you was from nowhere, ah?"

"Probably."

The girl looked at the boy in front of her up and down for the first time that day. As she studied him, Gwadi put on "A Most Peculiar Man" once more and listened carefully to the words to his heart's satisfaction.

. . . he wasn't friendly and he didn't care
and he wasn't like them, oh no!
He was a most peculiar man.

"I think I'm from nowhere too," the girl spoke gently and firmly. Gwadi was surprised. He turned and looked at her disbelievingly.

"True!" the girl confirmed, a bit pleadingly.

Then without bothering to ask a question Gwadi tried to move out.

"Don't go," the girl pleaded. "You will come back here again, ah?" she requested. "You know the place," she confirmed.

"You have some customers to serve," Gwadi said, pointing to a group of teenagers standing at the other end of the counter. He noticed that the boys had waited for a long time while he and the girl talked. He noticed too that the boys were putting on every act to please the girl.

Gwadi walked out without looking back. His lips parted in a sneering smile. He had shaken off the dust from his feet for the very people he was leaving behind, in the milk-bar.

Gwadi walked briskly down the street, towards Ela Beach, towards the wide sea, from which cool breeze flowed in, cooling his face, his whole body, his flesh and blood—everything inside him. The cool breeze made him feel that he was a someone already. He thought he could recognize himself lucidly now—the odd-man-out, yet with a soul and all, pride and dignity. He felt suddenly that he had walked out of a world of common humanity—childishness, callowness, simplicity, which he seemed to have enjoyed in nearly all the nineteen years of his life—to a world where only imagination and fantasy existed. A world where reality came face-to-face with his wild, almost impossible, intellectual dreams. A world not of his convalescence from the prison cell of his own sweet way of thinking—romanticism, sentimentalism—but a world that consoled and consolidated his own intellectual being. He could see that world now. He could think about it, live in it, die in it—this was the logic that made up his world. And he felt that he was a somebody already, yet a stranger to the world in which we all have pulses and breaths . . . .

Gwadi went to the University that afternoon, drunk. He cursed himself constantly for spending his five dollars carelessly. He swore comprehensively at a group of University students who were playing billiards. He put his arms around a friend causing him to miss the ball.

"How's that, mate?" Gwadi interrupted his friend's game. "I went down town with five dollars in my pocket and came back with twenty cents! Pretty good, eh?"

"You smell of beer, mate," returned his friend. "How did you manage?"

"Oh, all right," said Gwadi.

One of the tough-looking students overheard Gwadi and came to the billiard table. The tough student nudged Gwadi gently and exclaimed:

"Hey! It's Gwadi again! Looks as if by the end of three or four years you will graduate as a bachelor of billiards. When are you gonna give up billiards, Gwadi?"

"Get off my back, slob," returned Gwadi. "It's time people started minding their own bloody business in this high school—or rather—University—to use your great word."

"I don't wanna mind my own bloody business when I see you spend all your time on this table, mate," snapped the tough-looking student.

"So what?" returned Gwadi. "You don't own me anyway, to tell me to do anything to your liking."

"Just stop arguing, mate," said the tough-looking student.

"Who's arguing?" retaliated Gwadi.

"Now, shut up!" the tough student kept coming back. "Look," he continued, "why don't you piss off right now. You seem to spend all your time here as if you were the bloody billiard table. You play billiards all night and sleep all day, that's all you do."

"And he hopes to pass his exams that way, aha! ha! ha!" a student nearby added, causing a wild roar of laughter.

"O.K. O.K. You people think I'll fail my exams because I spend all my time here. Well, I'm sorry to say that I spend all my time playing billiards because everything is too bloody easy for me. I don't wanna be told by lecturers what to do as if I hadn't a mind of my own—I aren't like you people to rely on others to help me pass my exams." Gwadi finished his statement and looked calm.

"If you don't want to do what the lecturers say then why don't you get out of the University altogether?" said a student nearby.

"I am not getting out of the University until I tell the whole world who I am and what I am, mate," returned Gwadi.

"Oh come off it, mate," said the irritated tough-looking student. "We know you are bloody useless, so why don't you piss off?"

"There'll be nothing to do if I piss off," returned Gwadi for the last time. "Look," he said once more, "I spend all my time playing billiards because this is all the fun I get in the whole bloody world—because I have no friends to spend my other times with—and I have no desire in having any either—so why don't you get off my back and start minding your own bloody business like proper University students instead of high school hoodlums?"

"Look, mate," came the hoarse voice of the tough-looking student. "Just piss off, will you?"

"I am not pissing off until some uncivilized savage spills my blood." Gwadi had to say this, because he had sensed what was coming already.

Gwadi's statement was right. Before he knew anything he felt a hard thump on his nose. He was blinded and then fell on the concrete floor. From there he saw the ceiling go round in circles many times, and he smiled. He tested his nose with his fingers, and his fingers were wet with blood. Suddenly the whole world began to turn, turn. And Gwadi saw himself as the axis of it. Then he felt another hard blow—a kick at the ribs. He shut his eyes and laughed aloud, inside himself, at the people who were standing around him. He was a stranger, and he deserved death if it came—he did not mind.

Gwadi opened his eyes and saw them all standing around him, looking down at him and laughing loudly. Nice, clean students they were. Clean clothes, white shirts, baggy long pants which they thought were good, and new shiny shoes. And all Gwadi wore were a pair of inferior-looking grey shorts, and a blue T-shirt. And they laughed at him—the odd man out—and he smiled back at them also, and cursed them aloud from his inside—"Yer pack of copyists, yer pack of black and white, brown, coffee-coloured, bourgeois pigs!" Then he felt a hard kick on his chest from the tough-looking student and he closed his eyes with pain.

There, with his eyes closed, Gwadi saw her standing behind the counter in a milk-bar, saying: "I think I'm from nowhere too," then pleading: "You will come back here again, ah? You know the place."

There, as Gwadi writhed with pain on the floor, he heard his own far away voice: "Gwadi, go back to the village. Must see your Mamma before she closes her eyes forever."

There, as Gwadi tightened his lips and teeth, he heard Simon and Garfunkel sing:

. . . he wasn't friendly and he didn't care
and he wasn't like them, oh no!
He was a most peculiar man.

There, trying to get up from the floor, Gwadi heard himself shout: "This is the life, Gwadi—live it! The squalor of it—its poverty—its misery—live it!"

Then, trying to open his eyes, Gwadi heard himself moan: "Get off my back fellas. I wanna live too . . ." Then he felt another nasty blow from the tough-looking student—

on his nose. Down, down he fell. He lay helpless on the floor, and his lips parted in a sneering smile.

There, still lying on the floor, Gwadi could see millions of people, human beings. Some were clad in rough-looking clothes, long haired, bearded Jesus Christs they were. He saw a Homer too, a blind one with a guitar—he must have been a Ray Charles—singing a song about the other side of life. He saw a hairy young man with sun-glasses, and a wild-looking young woman naked from the waist up, taking drugs—their heads turned, the world above them turned round and round and Gwadi felt himself turning too. He saw discontented youngsters marching up a non-inhabited street with illegible inscriptions on the banners which they held high for no one to read. He saw old villagers coming home from their gardens at dusk, like silhouettes against the golden sky. These were people, true human beings, with their own stories of life itself. And he could see them all lucidly, with his eyes closed.

He could see some more still. Dog-collared, white cloaked, bald-headed, moral teaching maniacs. He could see others in clean clothes, black ties, white collars, nice shiny shoes—a line of them—laughing at him. And Gwadi cried out as he felt another kick on his face.: "Lordy, I looked down de line, and damned me, not one life was mine!" And the nice-looking people heard Gwadi's cry and laughed loudly at him; but Gwadi looked back at them and laughed louder still, shouting too: "Yer pack of black bourgeois copyists, blind conformist, slobs! You make up the whole humanity—its greediness, its exploitation—its savageness, its cunning, its persecution—I hate you! Yeah, that's me, Gwadi! All humanity stinks!"

Then spitting the blood out of his mouth, Gwadi moaned: "Ah, Mamma where am I?" And Gwadi did see where he was. Far, far down the green field he saw a line of young black figures, black faces, clad in long black cloaks—the first graduates—approaching him slowly. They were smiling too, and Gwadi heard himself say: "After three or four years, it might be your turn, Gwadi, when you will join the line with a sad face, and you will be photographed and your children will look at your picture and ask: 'Daddy, why was you not smiling when your picture was taken? Why, you are the odd man out!' That's me, children—Gwadi! Look sad all your life—that's all you were born for, Gwadi. Fag, fag some more! Drink, drink some more! Kill yourself slowly! —that's me, Gwadi! Show 'em who you are—that's me, Gwadi! Tell 'em what you are—that's me, Gwadi! Get belted up for nothing—that's me, Gwadi! Don't worry if they don't mind their own bloody business, 'cause they aren't human anyway—yeah, that's me, Gwadi! That's me, me, me! The odd man out!"

Gwadi felt a cold touch on his face and opened his eyes to find a nurse looking down at him. The nurse was holding a thermometer.

"Where am I?" he asked.

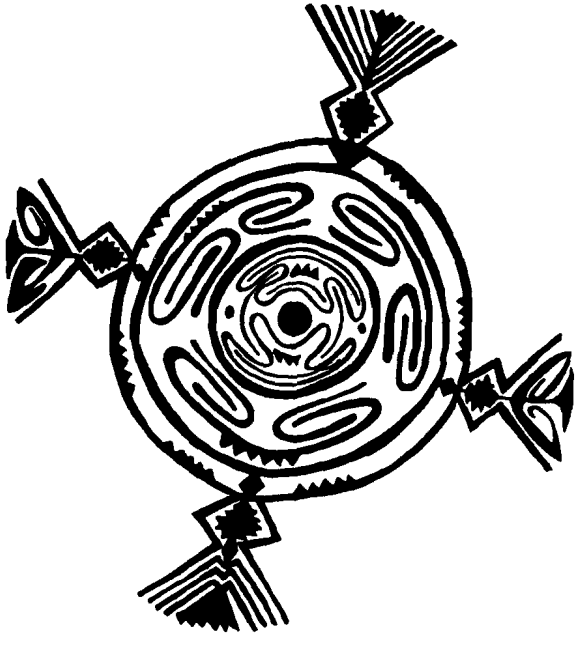
"Ah!" snapped the nurse. "You are in the hospital, where else? Trouble with you men is you drink and fight too much—that's all you are born for."

Gwadi ran his eyes up and down the anatomy of the nurse in front of him and said, "Not the odd man out, mind you, sister. I mean, there are other reasons why men are born." He then smiled. Then before the nurse could insert the thermometer into his mouth, Gwadi pulled the bed-sheet over his face and slept.

SUNSET

She came across the shimmering sea
like a virgin to meet her groom.
The mighty ocean, shrouded in his glory
was shivering like a dying cockatoo
with an arrow in his heart.
As she sank below the horizon
her last golden rays trailed like a train
across the blue sky.
The swaying palms against the white sand
were bending lower with the southern breeze
casting their long hair this way and that
like "Playboy" models
displaying their nude bodies
before the indifferent eye
of the cameraman.

Bede Dus Mapun



RAINMAKER'S CHILD

by Leo Hannet

I WAS BORN IN 1941. My mother told me that she gave birth to me without any assistance, because the labour came on unexpectedly. However, she had no difficulties, because the magic men had prepared her well with herbal drinks that facilitated the birth.

Soon after I was born, my mother's sisters and aunts came to shape my head. For the first two weeks only a few people were allowed to see me—only my father and a few close female relatives. People from other clans, even children, had to be kept well away. My father also had to make sure that nobody climbed a high palm tree near our house. If his shadow were to fall on the new born baby it would die.

For quite a while I had to be protected from what we call *siropos*, which is a certain type of human curiosity which is harmful to a very young child.

My father, mother and maternal uncle agreed to call me Leo. They were among the first Christians in the village and so I never received a Nihan name. But the other people in the village found Leo a strange name and they pronounced it *leo*, which is the name of a certain fish in our language. It was much later, when I went to school, that I took my father's name, Hannet, to serve as a family name. Some of my brothers also received Nihan names. For example my elder brother was called Tabontubun, which means "he whose grandfather has died".

For a month my mother was not allowed to leave the house. She was not allowed to eat any hard food, only special fruit juice from the *kalok* tree and a special type of banana which is very soft. During this time my father made a ceremony for me, to make me grow faster, and he forbade anybody to cut my hair.

When my mother started to go out she had to carry special leaves to protect her from ghosts and she was instructed to avoid the early evening hour when ghosts are about. Special lime was used to mark my forehead, the corners of my eyes, hands and legs—all the places through which sickness might enter the body. The lime had been spoken over by the magic men.

I grew up in Nihan, leading a typical village life. We boys organized numerous games of bravery: on dark nights we would be sent to the grave yard to pick up some skull or bone and bring it back, to show that we were not frightened of spirits. Usually there were some skulls and bones lying around on the graveyard that belonged to unknown people, people who had died so long ago that no one was looking after their tombs any longer.

The most popular game, though, was hide and seek, which we played with the girls. This would invariably lead to children's sex games and even intercourse, which was tolerated by the adults. There was complete freedom among children, and only at puberty were the girls kept separate and were instructed in the things pertaining to women, while the boys gathered together to learn about fishing. Even after puberty, some of the girls might continue to play around with the younger boys, but they were strictly forbidden to have intercourse with older boys or men. Contraceptives were well known, however—leaves or tree juices

that "shut the womb"—and abortion was also practised occasionally. Virginity was merely prized theoretically: that is, a husband would readily accept a wife who had had intercourse during adolescence provided this had not been made public.

On moonless nights my father and my uncles would often tell us stories. (It was believed that you went bald if you told stories during the day!) On these nights I would learn about Timbehes the creator goddess and how she impregnated herself with a banana and gave birth to two boys and a girl who were the first human beings, and who in turn fathered all the clans. I learned about the origin of the coconut and the first killing and the beginnings of cannibalism.

My favourite story, however, was the story of Lelegurulik, the little orphan.

Lelegurulik

There was an old woman called Napelmasar, who lived in a village on Pinepir Island. She had a house all to herself.

One day she was sweeping the house and she went out to throw away the dirt outside the village. She was surprised to find a baby there, lying on the ground. It was a baby boy. She took him home. She called him Lelegurulik, the little orphan. She became his grandmother and looked after him very well.

As Lelegurulik grew up, Napelmasar taught him many things. One of the things she taught him was how to shoot with bow and arrow.

When Lelegurulik was about a year old, the old woman made him a little bow suitable for his size, and beautiful arrows to shoot with.

Then she taught him how to shoot small insects and tiny fish. Lelegurulik became very skilful. He shot many little fish and insects and brought them home. Napelmasar was very proud of her grandson's achievement and every time he brought something home, she made a notch on the stone pillar that stood near their house.

As many moons went by, Lelegurulik became more skilful and he shot bigger fish and birds and animals. All these Napelmasar notched down on the stone pillar near their house. When Lelegurulik was a full grown man he was so skilful that he beat all other men in shooting competitions.

Lelegurulik was admired by many young women on the island and this made many of the other men jealous. Lelegurulik also excelled in the art of spinning tops. His top would spin on and on for a long time. It would spin on and on through the whole length of the village and back again. Many young women, and even many married women, were madly in love with him. They would fall over one another to show him their affection. Some were so crazy with love that they tried to sit on Lelegurulik's spinning top to bring it to a standstill.

But the young men and the old men became more and more angry with him and they were talking secretly about ways to get rid of him.

This was their first plan. They decided to challenge him to a shooting competition and then they would shoot him treacherously there and then. But Lelegurulik already knew what they were trying to do. For he had in his home a magic pig's bone. Every time something was plotted against Lelegurulik, the bone would move about restlessly, warning him of the coming danger.

His enemies called out: "Lelegurulik, we will have a shooting competition: come and stand near your post over there!" He did as he was told and those wicked men all started shooting at him, aiming to pin him to his post. But Lelegurulik dodged all the arrows skilfully.

One of the arrows that was aimed at his head split the top of the post instead. That split post can still be seen today. But Lelegurulik came away unscathed, much to the bitter anger of his enemies. They went away saying: "We will get him yet; we will kill him yet, that helpless victim of ours."

The enemies of Lelegurulik then made another plan. They said to one another: "Let us pretend to dig holes for the foundations of a house. We will get Lelegurulik to go down and see if the hole is deep enough. Then we will plant the big post right on top of him."

But Lelegurulik's magic bone had warned him again, and he was well prepared. They said to him: "Lelegurulik, go down the hole and tell us whether it is deep enough and whether it is straight." He obeyed and jumped inside the hole. Immediately they pushed down the heaviest post. Thinking that they had now succeeded in killing him, they shouted down to him: "Lelegurulik, now tell us: is the post straight?"

"Yes, it is straight," replied Lelegurulik, sitting on top of the post.

His enemies were shocked with wonder and fear. They went home with their heads bent in shame. However, their bellies were boiling over with greater anger and jealousy. A few days later they determined that this time they would really kill him. So they asked him to climb a big breadfruit tree. The trunk of this tree was so big that one could not climb it except with a very big pole. One needed a very long pole to reach the lowest of the branches. The magic bone had already warned Lelegurulik of the impending danger so he climbed without fear. But when he reached the top branches the wicked people took away the pole. And mocking him they shouted: "Now come down, you boaster. You are finished. You will die up there. We will go home and kill your grandmother."

So they rushed to his house. Each one wanted to have the honour of killing the grandmother. But Lelegurulik had flown home on a breadfruit leaf, with the help of his magic bone, and he was resting quietly, when the people came rushing in. They were deeply shocked to see him waiting there already. A great shame fell over them and they went home with their heads hanging down, not knowing what to do.

After some time had passed these wicked people had another plan to kill Lelegurulik. They went to him and said: "Lelegurulik, we want you to go with us on a long expedition to Waneran Island, 'the land above'. Do not worry about bringing any food for the long journey, for we have provided everything." Lelegurulik agreed to go with them.

So early next morning, while it was still dark, they set out for Waneran. They paddled on and on. At about noon they decided to rest and to have something to eat. By this time they were in the middle of the ocean and far away from home. The land was hidden from their sight. Now the man who was sitting near the food baskets kept passing the food over to the rest of the people. They gave nothing to Lelegurulik, but when they had finished drinking their coconuts, they passed a tiny piece of coconut to him. The man sitting nearest to Lelegurulik passed over the piece of coconut on the back of a paddle. But just as Lelegurulik was stretching out his hand for it, the paddle was tilted and the coconut sank into the water. "Dive after it!" they shouted. Lelegurulik jumped into the sea and dived for his piece of coconut as it sank deeper to the bed of the ocean.

His enemies shouted with joy: "Hai, now he is finished. Now he is finished, the foolish one." Then in unison they all paddled away fast, leaving Lelegurulik behind. By the time Lelegurulik surfaced, the canoe was nowhere to be seen.

But Lelegurulik knew what to do. He knew how to get home. He had two small parcels with him, one was a parcel of sand and the other was a parcel of ashes.

Lelegurulik threw some white sand in front of him and immediately that part of the ocean dried up, forming a path for him to walk on. But as he walked on this dry piece of land, he was throwing some ashes behind him, and immediately the path was turned into deep black ocean once again. In this way he reached the shore. Even today, you can still see the path of deep blue water reaching right to the shore. That was Lelegurulik's path.

Lelegurulik reached home before his enemies did. However, as soon as these men had paddled ashore they all rushed to Lelegurulik's house in order to kill his grandmother and loot his possessions. But when they got there, they were deeply shocked to find Lelegurulik at home, safe and sound. What could they do? They swallowed their pride and went back to their

houses. And they kept on thinking of how they could finally trap him and kill him.

But by this time Lelegurulik was getting tired. He had not done any harm to the people, but they hated him all the same. What good was it, to avoid all their plots and escape all their ruses? Whatever he did, they would remain jealous of him and hate him.

Finally one day these people plotted against Lelegurulik again. They decided to surprise him in his sleep and spear him to death. Lelegurulik's *kewar*, or magic bone, knew of this plot. So it started dancing frantically around Lelegurulik to make him aware of the danger. Lelegurulik awoke, but was soon fast asleep again. The *kewar* was dancing more and more restlessly as the enemies were coming nearer and nearer. But Lelegurulik paid no attention at all and slept on. By then the men were at the door of his house and soon, as they saw their victim sound asleep, they launched their spears into him, killing him instantly. Then they killed the grandmother also and plundered all their belongings.

The *kewar* leapt from house to house and fled down the coast and off to Waneran, where it still remains today. The people of Nihan have become much poorer, because they lost the *kewar* and because they killed Lelegurulik.

However, to this day the post of Lelegurulik is still standing on a sacred place at Uruh on Pinepir Island. On that post one can still see the marks carved by Lelegurulik's grandmother to commemorate the various birds, animals and fishes that the young orphan had killed with his bow and arrows.

The story of Lelegurulik occupied my imagination a great deal as a child and it was always kept fresh in my mind, because there was a famous song, a *tsigul*, that was danced to the music of the slit gongs:

Had it been me, my spirit
would not have found me in the house—
I would have been lost.

Had it been me, my spirit
would not have found me in the house—
I would have been lost.

They would have done the same to me
they would have done the same to me
as they had done to Lelegurulik.

They passed his piece of coconut from one to another,
they passed his bit of food from one to another
placed upon a paddle.

They passed his bit of coconut from one to another
they passed his bit of food from one to another
placed upon a paddle.

They tilted it
it went floating in the sea
they tilted it
it went floating in the sea.

Then take a handful of sand
then take a handful of ashes
and throw that behind you.

Then take a handful of sand
then take a handful of ashes
and throw it behind you.
Then you will be safe again.

My father also taught me about the spirit world and how to deal with it. The spirits of the clan were not feared at all. My father usually performed a special ceremony to entertain them, particularly those who were killed in big fights. Special types of yam were scraped and thrown on the roof. And when the ancestors landed on the roof to receive their yam, my father would come out of the house and talk to them. These were friendly spirits and children were often named after them.

Only the ghosts of those who died an unnatural death were somewhat feared: suicides or women who died of miscarriage. The latter were supposed to run after living children and

throw blood on them to kill them. Such spirits did not go to *Hoho*, the place of rest and sleep.

There were, however, naturally bitter spirits whom we called *Nowanaroke*. These were spirits that had existed from the beginning. The only way to protect yourself from them was to go and sacrifice to Timbehes, our mother goddess. She was a benign goddess and more powerful than all spirits. Our people approached her on all important occasions: before long journeys, in war time, during epidemics; and we made special ceremonies for her, asking the coconuts to bear fruit again.

Timbehes was often invoked in oath taking, and formulas like "by the belly of Timbehes" or "by the genitals of Timbehes" were in common use.

It was only recently, coming home on leave from the University that I was able to enter the cave of Timbehes myself. Usually, only members of the royal clan were allowed to enter. They presided over all ceremonies for Timbehes. The royal clan is called *Antarlo*, which translates as "the people who can eat dog". However, it really means the exact opposite, for they are the people who revere the dog, the red yam and eagle.

Our kings or ceremonial leaders were chosen from this clan. We had two kinds of leadership: the *Tamatauled*, the big man who acquired his position through fighting; and the *Toya*, who inherited his title. The *Toya's* function was to settle quarrels among the people and to officiate at important ceremonies. Complicated rituals surrounded the king, and even the pregnant mother of a future king was feasted. She had to go in procession from village to village and she was greeted everywhere with dancing and singing and huge pig feasts were held in her honour. The *Toya* title could sometimes be worn by a woman. Often the *Toya* had to go on procession through the whole island, and whenever he was present no curses or insults must be uttered, nothing must ever be thrown over his head and even birds must not fly over his head.

My father was a rainmaker. He was often called upon to bring the sun out to shine or to make the rain come. He had many professional taboos and a day before making the rain magic he had to fast. I have watched him making the rain magic in a secret place in the bush when I was a child. He had several herbs and a special kind of lime. He would dance around the leaves singing his incantation:

May my goddess Timbehes bring this rain again.
May my ancestors who have asked for this in the past
and who have asked successfully
may they listen to me
now that I am asking Timbehes through them.
Goddess, I have done what is expected of me
I have kept my taboos, I have fasted.
May you bring us this rain again.

When I was about thirteen years old, my father began to teach me many of his charms and incantations.

There was, for example, the incantation that was recited to find out the cause of a sudden sickness. The magician must recite this before going to bed, so that his soul will go out in his sleep and search for the place to where the sick person's soul has wandered. In the incantation he is asking the gods and well-known diviners of old to help him:

Seek o seek the dearest one
seek o seek the spirit of N . .
on the sacred cliff of Sumun

Hai!
Revered diviner, lead me fast
to the sacred cliff at Natowang
I want to find the spirit of N . .

Seek o seek the dearest one
seek o seek the spirit of N . .
in the burial place at Bus

Hai!
O revered diviner, lead me fast
to the burial place at Turgo

I want to find the spirit of N . .

Ais!
O revered diviner, bring me
to the resting place of Tiriman
I want to find the spirit of N . .

He must come back
and comfort his mother and father
they are ceaselessly crying for him!
They cannot drink
they cannot eat
they are sorry for their little son.

Another incantation I learned was for fighting. Before reciting this formula the fighter had to rub his body with magic herbs. There were very many formulas for fighting. In this particular one the most evil spirits like Santaun, Torobut and Lolian are being asked to devour the enemy alive.

Shout out
no one will fall
shout, shout out
no one is frightened.
Shout out, shout out
no one is frightened.

Hai!
Suntaun and Torobut and Lolian
Come all and eat alive the people of this place N . .
They have dared to fight your grandchildren.
Truly, they will be eaten alive!
None will return with living flesh.
Kindly heed your worthless little grandchildren!

Finally here is an example of white magic. This one is for curing a certain kind of headache, which is said to be caused by the little hermit crabs entering into the ears of the patient. The word for hermit crab in Nihan is *kalol:*

Hai!
Ka siakar kalol
ka siakar kalol
ka siakar toro tulau i Nanseal.
Ka siakar kalol
ka siakar kalol
ka siakar toro lebang i Nansambeng.

Ka siakar kalol
ka siakar kalol
ka siakar toro tulau i Bekil.

Hai!
Tang kalol!
kesar talingana tubum!
Ke loto ra roto pa
ro bung tuna Tingkalole
O kalaua bise tasisino
Tar talingana N . . e uia tapokis
doh e unia dedetun.

The hermit crabs have fallen
the hermit crabs have fallen
they have fallen from the cliff
of Nanseal.

The hermit crabs have fallen
the hermit crabs have fallen
they have fallen from the cliff
of Nansambeng.

The hermit crabs have fallen
the hermit crabs have fallen
they have fallen from the cliff
of Bekil.

Hai!
O curer of this hermit crab disease!
The ears of your grandchild are sore
as the sons of mother hermit crab
are boring in.
O brush them aside with contempt
from the ears of N . .
so that he will get better
and will always be well.

One of the greatest pleasures of my childhood were canoe trips to Pinepir Island. Our people had large canoes without outriggers, with a curved prow, that made them look a little bit like viking ships. The bigger ones could carry

sixty or seventy people. We, who lived in the central part of the island, had family connections with Buka and we always traded in that direction. The people living on the two tips of the U-shaped island and the people of Pinepir had family connections with New Ireland, and they traded in that direction, mainly with Tanga and Anir islands.

My father told me that we used to have regular expeditions to Buka. We took pigs, yams and other food stuff in return for pots, clay pipes and ochre. We kept some of this material, the rest we traded on to Pinepir. The Pinepir people would trade their surplus in pots and ochre to Tanga Island via Anir. The Tangans were famous for their production of shell money. From the Pinepir people we used to receive Tanga shell money in payment for pots, pipes and ochre.

Before going on such expeditions our people always sacrificed to Timbehes, the great mother goddess, and they made rain magic to prevent rain and storm. The expeditions always started from Bekil point. The people would paddle over there in the afternoon, then wait there until one o'clock or two o'clock in the morning, until they saw certain stars. Then they would follow those stars until daybreak and they would be guided by the morning star, until it was bright day and they could see the tip of Solos mountain on Buka. Then they would follow that direction and they would usually get to Buka by about 6 o'clock in the afternoon.

On these so-called *Laer* trips many taboos had to be observed and special language had to be used. For example: whenever a fish jumped into the canoe, someone had to eat it raw—otherwise the incident was believed to bring bad luck. Certain objects were called by special names during the *Laer*. Our word for "sun" is *pisar*, but on the expedition people had to refer to it as *totoyalik*, meaning "the royal one". Again "food" is normally called *an*, but during the *Laer* expedition we call it *paluk*, which is the name of a wild fruit that is supposed to be the food of the gods.

The men also had special songs for these expeditions, that would enable them to paddle in a rhythmic fashion.

We also have a legend that explains how our people first found out about the existence of Buka. The Buka people, it says, used to keep tame doves, and they tied bits of red rattan cane round their legs to identify them. Now during a certain season the doves would fly to Nissan Island, because we had many *galip* trees. One day an old woman saw one of the doves sitting on the roof of her house and she observed the red rattan cane on its leg. Then the people caught the dove and they took off the rattan and they tied some leaves on in exchange. This was to let the unknown people in the strange land know of our existence. Then people started to build their long canoes for the first time, and they set out on the sea and followed the doves.

Now, of course, the *Laer* has long been abandoned. It was in 1945 that some people were caught in a storm during the *Laer* and they drifted all the way off to New Ireland. Then our people said that the younger generation had not observed all the old customs well, and that their ignorance in traditional lore had caused the disaster. At the same time also, steamships began to provide a new way of travelling and by the time I was old enough to have gone on an expedition and thus become part of the traditional trade cycle, the trips had been abandoned like so many of our old customs.

IT'S ME THAT'S CERTAIN

This is my bed of countless dreams.
I sought my bed when I could see,
I longed for it when I understood myself.
The hazards of my life drive me to my only refuge;
I am scarcely aware it will someday enfold me forever.
I rise intoxicated to counter another round.
Here I am, ready to plunge again into my solace.

The past spent night folded me from this concrete world
And unfolded to me a life-long dream—
"Your bed is your passing shadow.
It is the swimming pool where you
no longer plunge and cool your head.
It is the maggots that swim in thousands to the feast."

I sat on the edge of the bed and blinked at the mirror.
My chest heaved as I fought for breath.
In my eyes was the horror of death.
It is hardly time now to turn the pages of my past memories.
In the deepening gloom, will my hooded eyes open
any second now to judge myself again in the same mirror?

The evil beast in its naked ugliness
turned my warm body into a frozen paleness.
When it was spoken of, I closed my ears with both hands.
My parched lips no longer moved.
My swollen, lifeless tongue no longer spoke
and I closed my eyes to allow the brute to pass.

No creature has avoided me, I am certain.
Whether you think of me or not, I come, as sure as my name.
I come stealthily and silently as a night thief.
Entitle me with thousands if you like, I am masked in all.
You find me at the foot of the cliff
you have ridden me of rope and rack
you have invented an electric chair for my comfort.
You find me on high, down below, in your bed.
I tug at you every moment lest you lose me.
By degrees I erode you to nothingness.
My every stride is every life I take.
Passionately, I long to hug you in my chilly arms.

Here vanished into the earth a lifeless body
that battled the war of its own life.
My fragments below six feet will not frame my identity.
Blindfolded I passed the clear fountain and drank muddy water.
Come, dig me out and give me back life!
And I will say to you: "Viva in pace!"

Why do you bother me, black intruder?
I am not born to die.
Unknowingly I have been caught by the snare.
I have swallowed the fruit unaware, have gobbled the hook.
If I could have nibbled at the bait and passed on
If I had known you were at the end of the line
I would have avoided the trap.

With soundless music lilting in my heart I have danced
over golden plains and mountain tops
little knowing I was a prisoner of my desires.
I am utterly helpless when I feel the tug.
My reign over the glories and kingdoms of the sea is in vain.
I am despised in a loveless howling storm.
Here is my life then, a price for the fruit,
Oh rid me of the hook that has buried itself in my bosom.
Then I will tell you I have swallowed a deadly bait.

No one has avoided you, nor ever will I.
Fearlessly I face you and no one else.
This monotonous world is a land of exile.
It is the land of the dead, where no-one
Remembers me but you.
I pray, remember at my last hour.
Let me go away from this weary world.
Come brother, my own flesh and blood!
This weeping world moans and groans at me.
An old woman, drained of the energy of her own life
Complains against me, as if I am not meant to live.
I am ready, fearless of your thousand names.
At the moment of my last breath, necklace me with your motto:
"Rest in Peace."

by Brother Alain Jaria

CONCH SHELL NEVER BLOWS

by Arthur Jawodimbari

IN THOSE ROARING and colourful days I was just a small boy of six. At that time the conch shell was blown harmoniously and the spirit of our tribe was inspired to participate in feasts and other ceremonial tasks. Even small boys of my age received the message of the conch shell with eager excitement. However, I am merely an intermediary between the good old days and the new age.

One morning my father returned from the dancing ground carrying a conch shell. I ran up and took the conch shell from him and tried to blow it. However, my grandfather, who was sitting near the fire place on the verandah, urged my father to take the conch shell from me. He said: "See the blood of the victim stained on the back. It has accompanied many warriors of different generations to the fighting grounds. You know very well it is haunted by the spirits of the dead. Take it before your son drops it." My father took the conch shell from me saying that it was too heavy for me to carry.

The time for the feast was getting near and everyone was excited. I didn't like to go to school at all. My father and a few other men commanded the preparation of the feast with conch shells. Conch shells accompanied drums and people to the gardens to bring food crops. A few men accompanied by a conch shell went to the neighbouring villages and brought pigs given for the feast by the affines. We used to peep through the walls to see the excited faces of our people while we were in school. They used to go through the school chanting, beating drums and blowing one or two conch shells. They did this while returning from either the gardens or the neighbouring villages. Before long our teacher came round with a three foot ruler and threatened us.

On the eve of the feast the village was full of excitement. The dancing started very early in the afternoon. I returned home from school and watched the most spectacular scene. I decided to stay there till the dance finished but my father came looking for me and took me home against my will. The dancing rolled on and the conch shell sent its thrilling note to the far-off villages. Quite a number of people whose relatives died either recently or a long time ago wept till their eyes were swollen. After the meal I asked my father if he was going to the dance. He bluntly said: "No!" and told me to go into the house and sleep. I went in and came out shortly to find out if my father was around. He took me inside and sat beside me. Before long I was asleep while the thrilling note of the conch shell was ringing faintly in my ear. I imagined that it was someone else besides my father blowing the conch shell.

I woke up just as the dawn was appearing. I heard the beating of the drums accompanied by chants and the note of the conch shell. I turned round to see if my father was around but he was not there. I heard the conch shell blowing and I immediately knew that it was my father. I sneaked out of the house and ran as fast as I could to the place where the feast was going to be held. I tried to go to my father's side but someone caught me by the wrist and led me to some women who were cooking. I was given something to eat but I refused to eat anything at all. Some men told my father that I was there. He walked out and asked me why

I came to that place. Just then my mother came looking for me. After a while my mother left us on the dancing ground.

When we went home I asked my father if we were not going to school that morning. He told me I had to go to school. He said: "It is only Friday so you will finish school when the sun is in the middle of the sky." While I was sitting in the classroom my mind was going back to the village which was less than a mile away. I could hear the conch shell being blown clearly and I was very impatient to go home quickly. At 12 noon we stood up for a brief prayer. In the Mission Station everything was quiet but I heard the conch shell blowing during that short quiet period.

After the prayer our teacher told us to go home. We shouted at the top of our voices and rushed out. When we went home everyone was wearing tapa cloth, necklaces, head dresses and other things. I decided to wear tapa cloth and other things too. My grandfather painted my face and dressed me skilfully. I then helped to carry the food crops to the central place.

In the evening the big man of our clan told everyone that the feast would be completed by Sunday morning. That night I went to bed early because I was very tired. But every now and then I woke up listening to the drums and the conch shells' mingled sound breaking the silence of the night.

On the next day, feasting and dancing rolled on till night time. In the night the church councillors asked my father and others not to blow the conch shell as the next day was Sunday. However, the people insisted that dancing wouldn't be interesting without the conch shells so the church councillors gave in. Later in the night the Mission teachers interrupted the dance and asked the people to stop blowing the conch shells. After a brief discussion the villagers gave in and stopped the dance.

After a week the village councillor for the Administration came down from Popondetta and blew the conch shell and everyone gathered. This time no one was excited. Everyone waited anxiously to hear what the village councillor had to say. I was sitting with my parents in the hot, scorching sun. My grandfather started complaining when the councillor said that we had to wait for the other people. Just then somebody took the conch shell and was about to blow it and my grandfather stopped him. Thus he said: "Blow that conch shell once more and you'll give me two fat pigs otherwise I'll break it on your head." The young man sat down and there was a murmuring noise of discontent among the crowd.

At last the rest of the people turned up and the village councillor started to give instructions. Firstly he told us that the *Tauba* (Patrol Officer) was coming to our village in a week's time. Secondly he told us that the roads had to be cleared and the bridges across the creeks had to be maintained. "This time you must get all the things ready for the *Tauba* because he is a very strict man," said the village councillor. He continued: "In case he comes without a word of warning get all the things ready. I'll blow the conch shell when he arrives." When he finished he asked the people if anyone had anything in mind. My grandfather got up and everyone started giggling. He paused for a while and spoke firmly and slowly. "The conch shell can only be used for celebration and great excitement, therefore I don't like your idea of blowing the conch shell to warn the people and make them panic," he said. He continued: "It is no use blowing the conch shell to confront humbly with fear the stranger who we are all frightened of." My uncle got up and asked the people to ignore what my grandfather said since he was an old man.

One morning we were all working in the garden and the *Tauba* arrived. The conch shell was blown and we hurried home. We gathered for the census but I was not excited. I was trembling with fear. When my father's name was called we assembled in front of the *Tauba's* table. He called out our names and we answered "yes". I could not stand those clear, ice-like eyes of the *Tauba*. In fact, both of my knees were shaking. When he called out my name I looked up at my father and he told me to say "yes-sa" so I said: "Yes-sa".

In the morning, the conch shell was blown to

let the people know that the *Tauba* was going to another village. Some villagers carried his things to the other village, which was five miles away. My father was one of those carriers. They were given one stick of black tobacco each.

After the *Tauba* was gone everyone was busy trying to make copra and grow other cash crops. They had to do it merely because the *Tauba* told them to do so. One afternoon I did not like to go to the garden so I came home. I found a conch shell and I was just about to blow it when my grandfather walked in and snatched it from me. He looked at me strongly and then smiled, saying: "It is mine." I got angry and ran down to the beach and joined the other small boys.

One afternoon we were sitting in the classroom singing some songs and then we saw someone rushing to the hospital. At that moment we heard the slow, sad and unemotional note of the conch shell. We knew that someone was dead.

That evening I went to my grandfather's funeral service. As they were lowering the old man's body I noticed that the conch shell was placed near his head. The tears filled my eyes so I walked away from the grave. As I was going off I heard someone saying: "So the conch shell goes off with an old man. Anyway, they both belong to the good old days. The thrilling tone that inspires and unites us has abandoned us."

A NOTE ON THE BENA BENA MASKS

by Ulli Beier

The Bena Bena people of the Eastern Highlands in New Guinea have no tradition of masks. The masks in these photographs were specially carved for the 1968 Goroka Show. The men had seen masks from other tribes at previous shows and hoped that this device might help them to win a prize at the sing-sing. All the masks were said to represent a one-legged forest spirit. The masks were painted most effectively, in red, white and blue trade colours. The dancers were told by the judges that they missed out on the prize because they used trade colours instead of "traditional" colours: an absurd judgment, since the whole idea of masks was untraditional as far as the Bena people are concerned.

The masks represent an example of spontaneity, and they clearly show what resources of untapped creativity can be found in New Guinea. The so-called sing-sings at the Goroka Show and at the Hagen Show could prove unique outlets for creative imagination, provided that prizes were given for originality, rather than traditional orthodoxy.

VOLCANO

Our throats are dry and tasteless
our hands weak and feeble
our bodies are boneless

Wake up sleepers!
They use us like play grounds
enjoy us like nightclubs
handle us like machines
they step on us like dirt
regard us like flowers of the devil.

The master is like a mountain:
the higher it gets, the colder.
But master, we are the rocks beneath
on which you stand. Without us
You are no longer a mountain.
How long shall we carry your weight?

It is hot in your cell
we want to be free
if you don't give way
we'll force our way through you
like a volcano.

Lynda Thomas

RIOTOUS SOCCER

by John Saunana

AS WE WERE COMING out of Sunday morning mass from the school chapel, the dining hall bell summoned us to breakfast. Some of the boys always hurried to the dining hall, as soon as the servers put out the candles on the altar. They rushed out of the chapel even before the servers had disappeared into the side vestry at the end of the service. Sometimes, when the priest had to make an announcement, these boys had to be called back from the hall entrance, where they were wrestling, trying to prevent each other from being the first to enter. Some boys were intent on switching plates of rice, tinned meat and an inch-thick slice of bread, if the one they found on their place seemed insufficient to satisfy their hunger. Others were not so much lured by the food—they were anxious to get ready for the soccer match that was played every Sunday immediately after breakfast.

It was a bright and sunny day, the sun having risen well before half past six when the school sirens had sounded the beginning of the new day. We always looked forward to weekends, when we stayed up longer at night and when we were allowed an extra hour's sleep in the morning. On Sundays we woke up without having to worry about classwork and lessons and we were indeed conscious of the Divine Being above who had made the world and had created the most curious of all animals—man—to live in it. It was only on Sundays that we experienced the real joys of life at school: the joy of living, of playing games, of learning, cheating, stealing from one's fellows, the joys also of confession and Christ's absolution of sins, and above all the joys of leisure: the freedom from manual work, from weeding the school garden and tidying up the school compound. Sunday was a day of long, uninterrupted sleep, until we stampeded down to the beach along the prickly coral paths that cut the soles of our feet.

"Today will be a beautiful day to play soccer, fellows," said Naphalie to his friends, a little worried in the face.

"Yes," they agreed unanimously.

"But . . ." George cut in suddenly, "I am worried that it will be too hot to play." He was the new boy at school and had not yet got acclimatized to the weather on Ugi Island. Tall, slim and a little skinny in the legs and arms, he was the kind of person any bully would take advantage of.

"Onetalk, so you're scared playing in the sun! What a shame. Onetalk, you might as well admit that you're as weak as those light-skinned Taina students," Samuel retorted, abusing him.

"Boys, those sharkheaded, potbellied Polynesians are utterly hopeless, real useless when it comes to working in the gardens and, what's more, they're not any good at playing soccer either," put in Michael, a big burly man for a schoolboy, with a look of scorn on his face.

"Oh, really, onetalks? I wonder how they can find food to keep themselves alive, especially on weekends, when we eat in our bush garden houses, if they won't do any work . . . ?"

"There goes George again, always talking nonsensical . . ." shouted someone angrily.

This quietened George down. He did not want to confront the older boys again.

"Look, onetalk. These Polynesians are only good in fishing and eating. Nothing more. You watch them go fishing after breakfast, onetalk—you'd think they're sharks. They love the sea, and they can fish from morning to nightfall without feeling any exhaustion whatsoever. And just you listen, they don't need any *kumara* to eat with their fish, because they consume their entire catch in the sea—raw!" That was George's best friend, Charles, coming to his rescue. All this conversation had been carried out in small whispers, because the prefect up in front was reading out the names of the players chosen for the various soccer matches that were to be played after breakfast.

Naphalie had become absorbed in his friends' dialogue. He paid little attention to the figure with the white loincloth and the blue sash, who was reading out an endless string of names, team after team. Then suddenly his own name caught his ear: he had been chosen captain of the team that was to play the topmost eleven in the school. This aroused in him a feeling of pride and personal satisfaction, deep and passionate. Immediately he tried to guess the positioning of the opposing players. "That bully Benjamin—where will he play? Oh yes—right full back." He stole a side glance at the fellow, who was munching a crust of bread, forcing more and more into his already bulging mouth. Naphalie shot a wink of disgust at him, that would have electrocuted him, had his looks been charged with electric current. "Bastard . . . bloody bastard . . . just take your fill now, mister bully. Last time you mocked me I took it lightly. You called me and my friends from the Eastern Outer Islands 'nabos' and our neighbours from San Christobal 'bananas'. We've been too soft with you. We let you insult our teacher from the Reef Islands, when you bluntly refused to be punished for stealing coconuts from the school plantation. We stood by as you called him a 'dictator'. We allowed you to pick a quarrel with one of the students, who was the teacher's onetalk. We should have pounced on you then and torn your body up into millions of minute particles. But you wait, you will be rewarded for that, glutton!" Thus Naphalie was murmuring to himself, as he gulped down his tea from an aluminium cup whose handle had broken off, leaving two crevices where the rivets had been. An involuntary movement of his belly muscles began to travel downwards in waves and he gave a loud fart. "Ummm . . . eat that too!" Everybody burst out laughing. "He was caught unawares, ha ha ha!" someone shouted. "And what a huge anus he must have that wouldn't feel it coming out," joined in another. Naphalie, unable to stand the laughter any longer, quickly stuffed the last tit bits in his mouth and ran out of the dining hall, amid the thundering roar of the boys. One hand with the plate was raised above his head, the other shielded the wide grin of triumphant jubilation on his face.

When all had finished breakfast, the boys dispersed in small groups, some to the bush gardens along the beach, but most made their way first to the dormitories to get changed before going to watch the soccer matches. Poor Naphalie had also been given the nickname "Captain Fart", a name that was insulting, but which took root and sprouted like pernicious grass in the mouths of his enemies. And every mention of the name would provoke a roar of laughter from the spectators, a long, excited derogatory boom, that verberated and reverberated in his ears.

On the signal from the referee, the two opposing teams began to trot slowly from opposite ends of the field to the centre, where he was standing. After a few words from him, the players went to take up their various positions. A single loud blast from his whistle and the game was on. It was a kick-off for the second team, and the kicker was Naphalie, who passed the ball to his nearest team mate, Arthur the trickster, and so on, up and out to the wings, then back again to the centre forwards, who were rushing madly to find some vacuum in the opposition where they could take them by surprise and score. This they nearly succeeded in doing, but they were just

too late. The defenders had already formed a formidable barrier against them, which left them no room at all to manoeuvre or dribble the ball through to the goal. It was a near miss, but one that cost the second team one of their players. Arthur, the trickster dribbler, had been kicked, punched and was carried off the field with a bruised leg. The referee could not decide whether it had been accidental or intentional, because he was unable to identify the culprit, and he resumed play after several minutes without allowing a substitute.

"This is unfair! They fought our player, so why can't we have a substitute?" protested Naphalie, advancing menacingly on the stubborn referee.

"Boy, I am the boss in this match. My decision is final and it has been made. No amount of grunting from you or your team is going to influence what I do or how I do it," said the referee angrily.

"Sir, can't you understand how important it is for my team to get this substitute player? Look, they have a full team and we are one short . . . it is only fair . . ." "Ae!" shouted the referee, his voice firm and serious, his arms legs, lips, eyes and whole body tensed with hatred for the boy who had dared to question his decision. "Ae, ae!" he shouted louder than before. And bracing himself, he made rude gestures at him with his hands and mouth, now walking past him one way and then the other. "You know what you are? You are a bloody little kid. What do you know about soccer? Nothing! Absolutely nothing at all. And here you are sticking your nose into my business. Who are you to instruct your teacher to do this or that? I warn you kid, keep your dirty nose for smelling your rotten farts!" And he pointed his clenched fist at his face.

"Get back to your positions, boys, come on, quickly, quickly . . . and no talking from there, or else I'll send the whole team out."

But these words only fell on deaf ears. Already in a cluster of players, half way down the field, some activity had developed. The talking had risen in intensity to shouting and yelling. Abuses were freely exchanged. "How dare you answer a teacher like that? Do I have to tell you where he comes from? Haven't you heard of the name of Malaita and the exploits of its men? We Malaita people have the fiercest fighters in the Solomons: our people killed the District Commissioner, Mr Bell, at Sinarangu, which you must have heard of. Watch your steps, 'nambo', or else you'll be the next victim . . ."

"And you watch yours too, Benjamin, glutton . . . I don't care who you are or where you come from. I have flesh and bones like you and we are all males here . . . If you want to do anything, do it now, I say now, not after the match tonight, when you have collected together all your onetalks. You Malaitans are cowards: you fight with axes, knives and *alafolos* and never with your own bare hands, which you were born with . . . or were you born with those fighting weapons? Eastern people fight with their hands, their bare hands; think of that: aren't we strong and real warriors?" snarled Naphalie, gnawing his teeth in exasperation, and moving closer to his rival. Bracing their muscles, their hands wavering in expectation of each other's every slight movement, they came nearer and nearer to within striking distance, and traded a couple of blows furiously but aimlessly, before they were broken apart by their team mates. But the match then had to be abandoned for another time. As they were leaving the field, the unrelenting players kept abusing each other: "You wait, next time it will be worse."

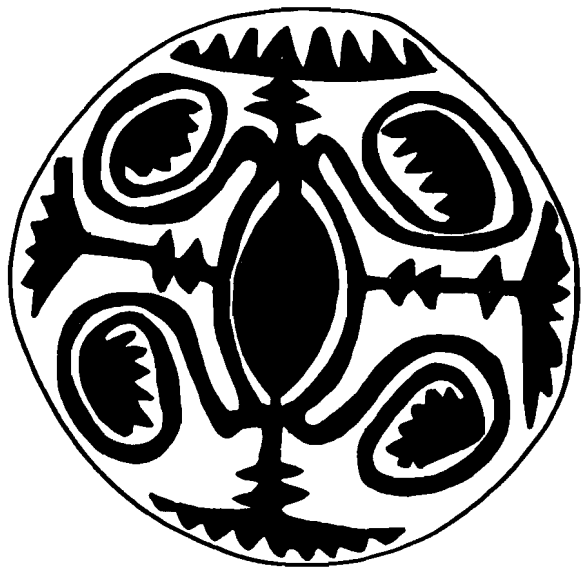
URAU

The sun sets and rises every day.
Urau the name of the fish.
Urau controller of the sun.
Urau the fish in the sea.

Urau swallows the sun as it sets.
Urau vomits the sun as it rises.
Darkness falls when Urau swallows.
Glory appears when he vomits.

How do we tell?
Urau has a red throat.
His mouth is burnt.
Urau, coat of the sun.

Samuel Goiseba



THE WIFE WHO CAME BACK

by Wauru Degoba

THE PIGS ARE SQUEAKING. The children are running up and down with naked bodies, imitating the sound. The newly married women are crying, as their first pigs are being clubbed to death. They are to them their first offspring.

The older women are greeting the visitors. The bright-eyed young woman stands by the doorway, as her first pig is being taken to the slaughter. Her husband, Sopane, the philosopher, the cornerstone, shares her tears too, but he must lift up the pig. He does not want to be disgraced.

The first fire is burning. The smoke rises amongst the trees and disappears in the hills. The women ask their daughters to fetch water for the *mumu*. The cracking of stones and the chopping of wood echo from the hillside.

This was the final day of the big mother dance. The tribe of the Kaigunua were exhausted after long hard labour and a long sing-sing. The men had just completed building the big long houses. The women were busy gathering food for the visitors. Sopane was very busy helping and supervising the men. His wife Sukure was collecting stones with the rest of the women for the *mumu*. Then came the decorating of the tapa cloth and placing of the ornaments. The children had already been decorated and the whole village was noisy with beating of drums. The bamboo flutes were blowing in the background, sounding the ancestral tunes of the different family groups.

All the neighbouring tribes were preparing their decorations. They did not need a time to come. They could come at any time—before cock's crow or after. Even before the cicadas came out of their hiding places or after. The women were preparing the dry bamboos and the *pitpit* for the lights. The women must kindle the lights, when a group is dancing. The men must shout and welcome the dancers.

The feast had gone on for months. The food was running out. The time had come to announce the end of the sing-sing and of the final pig killing. The god Akekapa had to be honoured. The moon was moving towards the sun and soon the rains would come. The pigs had grown very fat. Now they were delicious to kill.

But there was one tribe that was not preparing their decorations. The Gomia were planning their revenge. This tribe was two handed, two minded and two eyed. The Kaigunua had recently raided them and the sores were still festering.

The dancing had been going on for days and nights and all the people of the central Vaghi valley were sharing their happiness together. The women and the girls had gone to the dancers they most admired. Now it was time for the wise men to make decisions.

"When you fetch your water, you must bring it to me to be blessed," said Sopane.

The water was their ancestral magic. Each family had a secret place where they fetched water when they wanted to kill pigs. If they did not do so, their ancestors would turn away from them, so that there would not be enough meat for all.

During the night, Sopane, Gene and Maima called a meeting. They advised the people how to share their pigs among the visitors. One

full string bag of *kaukau* to the visitors meant one whole pig to the visitors. The pigs were brought to the village with the ritual bamboo water containers. The pigs were tied to poles and the bamboos were hidden for the night. The sweet music of the bamboo flutes was blowing through the dust-mist night. The newly married couples were weeping for their pigs. They were crying and singing their chants about the days before their marriage. In the men's house they were arguing and discussing about the pigs. In the girls' house the girls and boys were having a "carry-leg" feast. The girls' legs lay on top of the boys' legs and they held each other and sang their love songs.

In the eastern horizon the orange-yellow tinge appeared. The men were praying to the father. Then the women prayed for the blessing they needed to raise new pigs. Then Sopane made the announcement to bring all pigs to the clearing.

The pigs were squealing as the clubs landed on their foreheads. The early dogs were licking the red fluid. The fowls flew into the bush, as the pigs squealed louder. The children were imitating the noise, to tease the suffering creatures.

Now there were rows and rows of silent, sleeping pigs. The men and women stood at the head of the long lines. The visitors were standing far off, waiting to be mentioned. Sopane took his place in the centre, as the sun heated the earth. He called to his creator:

Arekapa! emina ne yo'.
Ake Kiape kinoyo!

Father come close to our day.
Help us and bless our gifts!

The visitors received their pigs. Blood was everywhere. The women were singing in the creeks and rivers as they cleaned the intestines. Smoke was covering all Kaigunua land. The blood dried up and the smell was peaking. The golden-blue friend, the fly, flew about seeking his share and more.

Sopane's wife was having a *mumu* right in the midst of the women's houses.

Meanwhile the Gomia tribe was waiting. At the village perimeter they waited for the sun to hide himself and for the cicadas to sound their warnings, before they would enter the village.

The western sun had melted and dried up the blood. An atmosphere of rotting flesh hung over the village. The meat was stored away in long shelters and the people were having their evening worship. The dogs lay quiet, digesting the blood they'd drunk. The nightfall was sudden, but still the yellow-purple clay-like sky lingered in the west. At this time of day the men must step out of their huts, for Kiau Kumo Kakai Land—the place of the dead—lay just behind the next green. Night fell when the sun had reached Nedik Nediken—the "head of the lake".

Sopane, the corner stone of the tribe, called out to Sukure, his beloved wife, to bring him his food. He had not eaten all day for he had been organizing the activities. Sukure stepped out of her hut with a bag of *kaukau* and approached the men's line of huts. She didn't notice the dark figures in the background as she handed over her string bag of *kaukau* at the men's house. The older men praised her. Smiling gently, she hummed the melody of her husband's whistle.

Suddenly she was amongst the people of Gomia. She couldn't shout, because her mouth was closed by hands. Her covering was gone and she was carried away, while the Gomia people rushed into the house.

And the houses are on fire. The lights are shining brightly so the enemies can see the places of concealment. It is too late for the men of the village to look for their fighting weapons. Screaming, the women run into the darkness with their children. The houses and the cooked meat are on fire. Some are eaten, some fed to the dogs, some fed to fire and mud. The Gomias run through the village raiding and murdering.

It was finished. The village people were scattered. Sopane had a spear sticking in his hip, but it was just like a scratch to him. He wanted his wife, Sukure. He could not see her.

He called her name. He shouted her name, running from house to house. He picked up a big stick and pushed it into the burning fire. He could not see her. On the opposite peak he could hear the Gomia people celebrating their victory with their war cries and their hymnal praises of their war gods. Then they moved on, back to their home land with the captured women and girls.

Sopane's people were red of face. The meat was blooded from the wounds of the dying. Their gods would not allow them to eat the defiled food now. Tears ran down every face. Only the little children moved about. Their fingers were on the meat. They ate a piece here and there, unaware of what they were doing. The fires burnt out and the Kaigunua people were left with the darkness of the black silent night.

The murdered ones, the dead ones, the speared ones: all were sent away to the noman's land. The visitors were sadly sent away to their villages. The tribe was in the mood for revenge, thinking of their payback. But Sopane sat thinking of his beloved wife. He could see her face. He could see her hands on top of his, in the dark. He could feel her body, smooth and warm approaching to touch him. He said to himself: I am a man of magic and a fighter. I will prove to my people that I have power over all.

At the first dawn, he set out into the scrub. He caught a little bird. He collected some bush leaves. He made himself a hook. He collected some black ashes to paint on his chest. The sun climbed up to his forehead slowly. He set out with a bamboo of sacred water, some bananas and some *kaukau*. He reached Mani. It was the place of the dead of the tribe. Sopane stopped. He laid everything down on the peak. He got a piece of magic bamboo and rubbed it against dry wood. The bamboo started burning. He put all the dry wood and the leaves he had collected on the fire. He speared the little bird onto the hook that he had made. He stuck the hook in the ground and tilted it until the small victim was right over the fire. He put more leaves on the fire and a cloud of very thick black smoke began to rise. He started singing his magic song, the song of sadness and sorrow. Tears dropped down his face.

Na gee we hei hei
Na kumo we hei hei
Na gee we hei hei
N'kumo we hei hei

Apo Sukure ina yo
Apo Sukure ina yo
Apo Sukure ina yo
Apo Sukure ina yo

Mana kaa-kai yo yo-o
Mana kaa-kai yo yo-o
Na moi to ewe yo-o
Na moi to ewe yo-o

I am a true man of magic, oh oh
I am a true father of witches, oh oh
I am a true man of magic, oh oh
I am a true father of witches oh oh

Father sun, bring my wife back to me
Father sun, bring my wife back to me
Father sun, bring my wife back to me
Father sun, bring my wife back to me

Mother spirit bring my wife back to me
Mother spirit bring my wife back to me
I am waiting here for her
I am waiting here for her

Sopane knew that if the little bird over the fire would burn and drop into the fire, his wife would never return to him. But if it did not burn, then his songs would be blown to her ears and she would notice the black smoke that was rising on the blue mountain. Sopane put more leaves on the fire. He was patient and stayed to finish his work.

Back in the village, the people could see the smoke rising into the air. They could hear the faded melody echoing in the dead man's valley. They knew it was Sopane and they waited.

Sukure had been waiting for a sign in the distant village. She saw the dark thick cloud rising up on the summit, then dying out in the darkness of the mountains behind. She knew it was Sopane. She could hear her husband's voice, singing and calling her to go home.

Ambai barel mongo nono dupere do-o
Nono dupere do-o
Ambai barel mongo nono dupere do-o
Ende unbe mamuno koro dupere do-o
Nono dum pere do-o

Kai meve o-o
Nivi tawa ige-o
Wan marelga o
Kai marelga o was moigo o

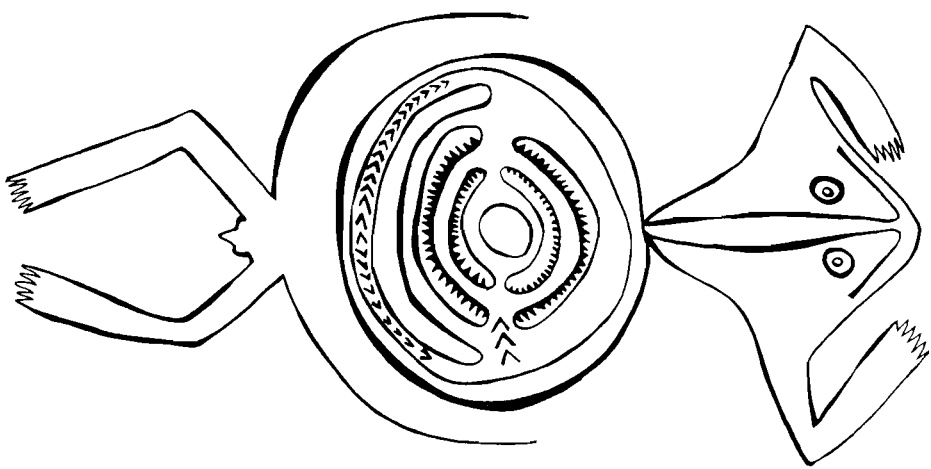
Su su sa o-o
Su sa sa o-o

She could imagine him smiling at her. She wiped the tears from her eyes and looked up again. . . .

She found herself amongst the rocks and the bush. She kept turning back, to see if anybody would follow her. She stopped at a couple of places and watered her face. She knew now that she was near the boundary. Soon she would be safe in her own territory and she walked very cautiously with her mouth wide open. Then she headed for Mani, where she could see the smoke rising into the air.

On the summit, Sopane was still waiting with his weapons nearby. He was eating the wasted bananas and *kaukau*. Suddenly, he saw his beloved wife close to him. Without a word, he graped her in his arms, as the sun gave them the blessing. His magic had worked and gave him pride in his fatherhood of the tribe. He turned back to the village, and together they returned.

As the day withdrew, the biggest pig was blooded and cooked. It was his celebration for the return of the beloved woman. Truly he was a great man of magic. Truly he was the corner stone of the tribe. He was the centre post and the oldest sugar cane. He was the Man.



THREE MODERN MYTHS FROM NEW GUINEA

by Norma Dean

IN THE FIELD OF FOLKLORE, students of mythology tend to place emphasis on the origin of traditional myths of creation, without much regard to the development of what may be termed modern myths which seek to explain happenings of recent times. Yet as the American anthropologist, Franz Boas, says: "We have no reason to believe that the myth-making processes of the last 10,000 years differed materially from modern myth-making processes."

By considering three modern myths of Papua-New Guinea, it is possible to discern not only the interweaving of foreign and indigenous material into one homogeneous fabric, but also the interpretation and moulding of modern events to fit into the existing cultural patterns of a village society.

The first legend is from East Sepik district, and the second is from the Western District.

THE MEN FROM THE CAVE

Long long ago, there were no people on this earth. Then from a cave near the village called Kinare came three men. One was white, one was black, and one was yellow. Being first, the white man led the other two into the world. After they had come from the cave, each went in different directions. The white man went to the west, the yellow man went to the east, and the black man settled around the cave.

The black man did not know where the other two had gone. He turned about and went back along the road leading to the cave but he found the road had been closed in and a swamp covered the area. He tried to break into the swamp but he could not get through to find his way back to the cave. So he had to settle there and live in the land where the black man has made his home.

PEOPLE FORMED FROM MAGGOTS

A long time ago, there were no people on earth, and the only life was the life of the plants and animals. One day the male and the female wallaby had a fight. It was a terrible fight, and the female wallaby was killed. When the others saw that, they moved away, and the dead one was left lying in the sun.

After three days, the dead wallaby rotted and maggots formed in the carcass. There were hundreds and hundreds of maggots feeding on the body of the dead wallaby. In the afternoon some of the maggots hatched out into human beings and they were white people. At first they used sign language, but before long they developed a common language. They didn't stay there long because the place was too hot for them and wasn't suitable for them to live, so they made their way up to the north.

Later on that night, many people hatched out but this time they were black. They could not see each other because of the darkness, so they formed into little groups and spread

throughout the country. The white people weren't seen any more but the climate suited the black people so they managed to live in the country. They formed tribal groups, with their own cultures and languages. The black people do not kill the wallaby for their meat because it was their mother.

In the first legend, *The Men from the Cave*, the emergence of man from a cave is a motif of the creation myths of the past. There appear three figures, with the white man seen as the leader. He comes first, he leads the others out into the world, he has already assumed a position of power and authority. The white man and the yellow man go off to distant lands (presumably lands of greater promise and wealth) while the black man is left to settle in that inhospitable area.

The ending of the tale reflects the bewilderment and ignorance that the black man feels has overwhelmed him. He does not know the road, he cannot find the other figures, the way is lost, he cannot succeed in regaining the secret place. He has had to accept a life of hardship, excluded from the benefits which the white man and the yellow man have no doubt gained for themselves.

The second myth, *People Formed from Maggots*, begins similarly with a motif common to many areas of Papua-New Guinea—the development of life from maggots—but again the myth is interwoven with cultural changes. The white man is evolved first, after three days (three being a mystical number occurring frequently in folklore of many lands), with the implied sense of primary importance and power. There is the development of a common language which is a strengthening force among the white people. Then the white man goes out to seek a more congenial place, one not so hot, where life will be easier, for this land is not suitable for his needs.

In the darkness and confusion of the night hatch out the black people, this time with an implied sense of inferiority and ignorance; no common language evolves, and the people break up into isolated groups, thus weakening their power and influence.

The ending of the myth links up with the pattern of the past, in that the wallaby is a respected animal among the people to whom this story belongs. So into the framework of a creation myth of old, has been fitted the creation of the white man, and the separation of black brother from white brother.

The third myth is from Rigo subdistrict.

GURAFORE

One day the people of the village of Gofigoro went to the garden. Only an old grandmother remained at home in the village with a group of small boys. These boys were playing and decided to make toy guns. They took the stalk of the pawpaw and made guns. While they played with them, one boy saw a lizard resting on a log.

He took his gun and shot it. The lizard fell to the ground. It was dead. The boy called to his friends: "My friends, came quickly and see the lizard I have shot dead with my gun." The other boys laughed and shouted with joy. They left the dead lizard and came to the grandmother's house. One of the boys shot her with his gun and she fell down dead. Then the boys were frightened and ran away and hid.

Later in the afternoon all the villagers returned. They discovered the dead grandmother. The men looked for the children and found them hiding near the hole of the dead, named Gurafore. As the men chased the children they ran rowards the hole and jumped into it.

While the children were still in the hole they were making so much noise that the men took a big stone and placed it over the mouth of the hole.

The children waited in the hole for two days but the stone was not taken away. On the third day they decided to make their way underground to a distant land to the north.

They went on and came out at a group of islands named Japan.

The people say that the Japanese, who are small and are chattering all the time, are the descendants of the children who disappeared in the deep hole. The Japanese had guns because the children had taken their guns with them when they went away to the north.

A common setting for legends is the village deserted during the day while the men and women are working in the gardens, and only an old grandmother remains behind with the small children. Often the disobedience or naughtiness of these children brings disaster upon the village. This time the evil action was the shooting of the grandmother. The guns of death (imaginatively seen in the shape of a pawpaw leaf!) are evolved by the children of Gofigoro village, who are thus seen as the rightful owners. The Japanese, however, have obtained control of these weapons, and are withholding them from the village people.

Gurafore, the hole of the dead, calls to mind the journey of the spirit after death to the underworld. Many legends tell of the journey to the land of the dead, and the return from that place of the dead to a new life. Here the children journey from the place of the dead (after three days) through the underground, to emerge, as from the dead, to a new life in the islands of Japan. The smallness of the stature of the Japanese and the shrill chattering of their voices are seen as the embodiment of the features of the lost children.

Worthy of note is the consequence that comes from anti-social behaviour—the killing of the grandmother leads to punishment, and death, and loss of knowledge, and loss of material possessions. This tale attempts to explain the superior material culture of the Japanese, and shows the relationship between the Japanese and the village people, and thus stresses the justifications of the village people in claiming a share of this material wealth which is rightfully theirs.

Now let us see what a consideration of these three myths has yielded. Firstly, we have the framework of two traditional myths of creation of man, adapted to fit the creation of the white man, and showing the link of a common origin between black and white. Secondly, there is the implied superiority of the white man by his primary appearance, his knowledge which seems denied the black man, and his leaving his place of origin to search for a land of greater promise and wealth. Thirdly, there is the loss of power of the black man, the loss of knowledge of the way, a sense of inferiority, and a sense of knowledge withheld. These things reflect the cultural changes which have affected the village people and their attempt to interpret them in the light of the culture of the past.

Finally, the third myth shows the adaptation of traditional stories of journeys to the place of the dead, and the return to life, to explain the coming of the Japanese with their weapons of war. There is also the punishment which follows the breaking of social taboos or laws, and the withholding of material goods to which the villager feels he has some rights.

These three myths are of interest because they demonstrate the how and why of mythology, "the way in which elements are realigned, re-interpreted and invented" (Roslyn Poinjant). Mythological systems are not static—they are a "living reality" (Malinowski), and the study of modern material may enable us to understand better the processes of imagination, adaptation, and assimilation which undoubtedly have been of importance in the growth and preservation of the mythology of any people.

ROOSTER IN THE CONFESSIONAL

A Play by John Kasaipwalova

A QUICK GLIMPSE

Gone are the white missionary Sundays. Today we are blessed with our own Mesinari (pastors), Toguguya (preachers), Toligalega (special disciples) and the fine upstanding core of Tobalesia (devoted Christians).

Week by week, month by month the village focus on Sundays is usually found around the village church and the Mesinari. One cannot escape the feeling that there is a new way of life in the air—there is the smell of civilization at long last.

Women dress themselves in full modesty and practising Christians mark themselves out by wearing long-sleeved white shirts, with white lap laps and dazzling black belts girded solemnly around the waists.

The village meets around the church and it is here that the roughness of the week's conflicts is smoothed and settled. Sometimes too, the roughness for the next week is generated here. Saturday and Sunday are The Days.

CHARACTERS

MOSES TOBUDI	Apprentice preacher
MWAKENA and TOPOLU	Sons of Moses (12 and 10 years respectively)
SALOME NAMWANA	Wife of Moses
PAULO	Mesinari (pastor of the village)
NOAH KIMAPU	Third Cousin of Moses

CHURCH WARDEN, VILLAGERS, TOBALESIA, TOLIGALEGA, TOGUGHUYA AND CHILDREN.

SCENE 1

Saturday late afternoon. MOSES *and his family sit on the verandah of their house.* MOSES *is brooding angrily; as he draws the limestick from the pot he bangs it loudly to make sure that the occupants of the next house know his anger.* SALOME *is timidly throwing the scraps of food to their dogs and chickens below.*

MWAKENA *(to Moses):* I want some betel nut!

TOPOLU: I want some too! I asked first. You are always beating the lime pot and never give us some quickly. You give your betel nuts easily to other men, but when we ask you, you turn your head.

MWAKENA: Yes, some of these men are useless about the village. My small mother told me and . . . *(stops quickly and moves backward slightly as the father glares suddenly at the two boys.)*

MOSES *(explodes):* What! How many times must I tell you! Your ears are filled with rocks. *(He points to the broom lying near the mother.)* You see that? Next time, THAT. *(looks away from the children and stares into the distance. He tries to give an air of composure again.)* You are school children now—NOT just village children, yet you still have your mother's bad manners. When will the teacher make you educated?

SALOME: Ahh! You are their father. There is nothing wrong with children pestering their fathers for betel nuts. If you don't give it to them, who will? It shames me to see you keeping the betel nuts from the children. Their uncles are still alive and have plenty of betel nut trees. *(She moves for the big basket next to the father.)*

MOSES: You stay away from that basket. So eh, you are going to encourage these children to break the school rules. The teacher has already warned the children at school and on Sundays before the village elders that betel nuts are bad for children's brains. If they chew betel nuts their brains will be drunk and they will not be able to learn anything.

SALOME: How can betel nut chewing spoil the children's brains? I have never gone to school but I know that whenever I chew betel nuts I feel good and my brain works very well. Betel nuts don't spoil the brain. Anyway, I think the teacher is a liar. The children say that he smokes and chews betel nuts in the school house. Only two days ago he sent Topolu to come and ask for betel nuts from me as part of his homework. *(pronounced as* "kom wok")

TOPOLU: Mother is right, the teacher is a liar. He beats me when I go to sleep in school. Yesterday he hit me over the head with the big Bible because I was laughing at his stories about Moses and his talk with God.

MOSES: Serves you right. Nobody laughs about the Bible, it is a holy book. How can you learn if the teacher does not beat you up? Look, I passed Standard one, Standard two and nearly topped the class once, only because the teacher used to beat me every second day. The teacher must beat you up for your own good. I failed Standard three, because I was getting too big and the teacher stopped beating me up, and also my brain was getting drunk because I started chewing betel nuts before school. When I chewed betel nuts frequently, *(he points to his skull)* this thing here started thinking more about women than my tables and the Bible stories.

SALOME: Oh Moses, stop this nonsense and treat your children kindly! Why should your anger about other things fall on your innocent children? Look at yourself. All day you have been sitting there brooding over Jeremiah's Horse. How do you know that he has been stolen?

MOSES: Yes, I know he has been stolen. Stupid woman, don't you think I have two eyes? For two days I haven't seen Horse come and eat the scraps with the other chickens in front of our house. *(points to his fingers)* One, two days now!

SALOME: Maybe he has found some attractive hens on the other end of the village. It is natural for roosters to do these things, especially if Jeremiah's Horse is tired of our own hens.

MOSES *(in disgust):* Never, never, never! Jeremiah's Horse is a good rooster. For two years we have treated him like our child. Everybody in the village knows that

he's the best rooster on earth. How do you think I feel when I know he has been waylaid by some *(Raises his voice to a shout.)* bloody basket! *(turning and addressing the centre of the village in a frenzied call)* It is like losing your own child!

SALOME: Stop shouting, Moses. The neighbours are all looking at us. Keep your voice down, because we are not sure whether he has been stolen or not.

MOSES *(excitedly pointing to various parts of his body):* I tell you he has been stolen. My eyes, my brains, my nose and even my arms and legs tell me that Jeremiah's Horse has been robbed and eaten. Yesterday I saw Noah Kimapu's children wearing long rooster feathers in their hair. I swear they are the same beautiful ones from his tail.

SALOME *(raising her voice now in impatience):* Now you are accusing your third cousin. You should be ashamed of yourself.

MOSES *(shouting angrily):* Shut up woman! How dare you say that to me when I am sorrowing the loss of Jeremiah's Horse. Get out of this house! *(Moves and picks up the broom and chases his wife and children from the house.)* Get out! Get out! Jeremiah's Horse, where are you?

(Stands shaking in anger for a few minutes then suddenly realizes the fact that tomorrow is Sunday and that he is also an apprentice preacher of the village. Groaning he slowly falls to his knees.) Oh! Oh! Oh! What have I done? Please God, forgive me. I did not mean to lose my temper. It was just the wicked spirit of my ancestors who carried me away for a while. Please God, forgive me and don't send your bad angels to visit my gardens.

(Lights fade with the sounds of agonizing groans as if a soul is burning in oil.)

SCENE II

Sunday morning inside the village church. The CHURCH WARDEN *is parading up and down the aisle which separates the women on the right from the men on the left. He stops in front where the children are and occasionally smacks the knuckles of a child to wake him up. Since the congregation sit on the floor with legs stretched forth and arms propped behind to support, it is not uncommon for children to continually fall backward when sermons are too long, sometimes old folk too.*

PAULO, *the Mesinari, is vigorously conducting the singing from the little pulpit in the front and the congregation are singing with passionate devotion. You can see written in their faces that the stimuli for such passion are thoughts of God, of their lovers, of the games after the service, tomorrow's fishing exchange at the coast and even their gardens. If you put your finger against the walls or the tin roof, you can feel the whole building rocking with the fury of a military brass band. The congregation are singing the popular hymn "Jesu Keriso Kalitanya Sogu Kulega". (translated means—"Friend come hear the Horn of Jesus Christ")*

PAULO *(waves the congregation to a stop, opens the Bible, places it on the lectern and motions his flock to bow their heads):* Let us bow our humble heads to get our breath back and to reflect on these words of God. *(flicking the pages obviously and gracefully)* It is written in Matthew V: verses 27 to 30. The Word of God says: *(pause, then in priestly tone)* "You have heard that it was said, do not commit adultery. But now I tell you, anyone who looks at a woman and wants to possess her is guilty of committing adultery with her in his heart. *(A single laugh cracked from the back. The flock all turn their heads to the old man who made the noise. The Mesinari lets the rumble settle and continues, not knowing whether to laugh or to get angry.)* So if your right eye causes you to sin, take it out and throw

it away! It is much better for you to lose a part of your body than to have your whole body thrown into hell. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is much better for you to lose one of your limbs than to have your whole body go off to hell." *(slight pause)*

CONGREGATION *(in obedient and frightened voices):* A-m-e-n.

PAULO: You can lift your heads now. *(Clears his throat and pauses for a while.)* My Dear Brethren, the flock of our Lord Jesus Christ, today we celebrate this holy day specially because one of our faithful with the grace of God is about to become a bearer of God's words. Our brother Moses Tobudi will give us his first preaching today. He has struggled for five years as a Tobalesia and God has approved his worthiness. That is why today Moses will bear the honourable rank as a preacher in our midst.

(The Mesinari takes his chair. The congregation murmur in anticipation, the children laugh quite loudly as the boys sitting next to Topolu and Mwakena begin jabbing the two brothers on the side with their elbows.)

CHURCH WARDEN: Stop that! I saw you do it, you ungrateful little brat! *(Then herding with his stick, he removes the main culprit to the very front row.)* There! Sit still. At least the holy words may sink into your skull if you sit close enough to the Bible and the preacher! *(The other children murmur in laughter.)*

(Moses walks seriously up to the pulpit. The congregation is electrified with expectations of both success and disaster.)

MOSES *(grasping the lectern firmly as if the stand might just run away from him):* Brothers and sisters in Christ, and children: I feel I am not good enough to stand before you, but somehow I know God wants me to be proud of this great task. We know what our Lord Jesus Christ said about pride—'the first will be last and the last will be first'—so I think we should not be the first to pass judgment on our fellow men. *(Wants to continue but his sudden glance at the children reminds him that he is supposed to give a sermon.)*

Last night as I lay sleeping in my bed, I dreamt a face of a boy, who appeared before me. The face was talking but I could not hear one word from his mouth. Suddenly this common verse that we know so well came into my mind *(gesturing with his hands)* and I began to hear words coming out of the lips of the boy. The sounds of the words were as sweet as the cool evening breeze. What could I do? I knew then that it is God's plan that I should use this verse as the food for my first sermon. Brethren, let us turn to this verse in the holy book.

(He flips the marked page open and in a learned voice he reads.) Luke VI: verses 27 to 31 "But I tell you who hear me. Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone hits you on the cheek, let him hit the other one, *(Pauses in order to emphasize this sentence.)* and when someone takes what is yours, do not ask for it back. Do for others just what you want them to do for you." *(Pauses, closes the book with a bang and looks across the faces of his listeners.)*

I think the message is as clear as our chief's tallest coconut tree that blocks the entrance to the village. Forgiveness, forgiveness is the soil on which love for our neighbours can grow. God's word is that we should forgive one another. *(Pauses and looks upward to the ceiling.)*

You know, I think forgiveness can be the hardest work a man has to go through. Forgiveness must involve two things. First of all the wrong doer must repent for

the bad actions he has committed and secondly the person who is wronged must be willing to forget the losses which were brought upon him. The man who is wronged shows greater love for God if he can prove his worth by forgiving his brother. *(pause)*

That is why we pray together on Sundays and openly confess our wrongs before our brothers. In this way we learn to forgive our brothers and sisters but also more importantly we know our sins to be cleansed from confessions. *(Pauses and faces the brethren in concluding advice.)*

You see, life is something like a wild boar. It has long tusks and makes such horrible noises that hunters are already scared of it before they even see its back. We are the frightened hunters in the jungle of temptations. Forgiveness is the spark of courage which the hunter needs in order to face up to the deadly attacks of the boar. If we cultivate the habit of forgiving, we can be sure that we are on our way to heaven, where our master is preparing the feast for us.

(The congregation is momentarily hypnotized by such brilliant oratory. Then realizing the fact that it is the end of the apprentice-preacher's sermon, they respond with a loud A-m-e-n.)

PAULO *(rising):* I cannot add any more to the words of God as explained by our brother Moses. It is very clear to all of us who are gathered here. I now call on the rest of you faithful to respond to the spirit of the Lord. Let the Lord work through you that you may reveal the messages to the rest. Anyone is now welcome to reveal what is burning in his or her mind. Any confessions to be made, please do not be afraid to confess your sins. We are *all* brothers and sisters in the eyes of our Creator. *(A pause, then an old woman who is a Nakalesia slowly rises to her feet.)*

NAKALESIA *(drawling her words):* I have something biting me inside my chest. Three nights ago I dreamt that a mad dog was chasing me as I was coming back from the gardens. It wanted to bite my mouth and my nose. I was very frightened and dropped the basket of yams that I was carrying. I think this is a way that God is using to show me my sins. Oh God forgive me for using my mouth to gossip about the good name of my daughter-in-law. What I said was all lies. Please God forgive me.

CONGREGATION *(in unison):* A-m-e-n.

NOAH *(rising to his feet and looking in the direction of Moses, who in return glares at the penitent):* Our brother Moses has spoken the truth about the virtue of forgiveness. Sometimes it is very hard for the wrong-doer to take the first step of admitting his faults, because we are all human beings, we fear what our neighbours will do and think of us. Sometimes we see our neighbours' goods and our desires dance like flames. Who do we blame? The thief or the owner who proudly displays these goods to show what a person that man is? Justice has many sides and I think that if we are going to forgive we should all look at the many sides of any act which is considered a crime. I commend our brother Moses for his honesty and straightforwardness. I think we all have a lesson to learn from him, not only from what he says but from what he does as examples of forgiveness.

(Pauses, then continues in a different tone.)

Three days ago my throat had a wild desire to eat chicken meat. It nearly drove me mad, then suddenly the devil sent a temptation before my eyes. It was on Brother Moses' prized rooster, the Jeremiah's Horse, and . . . *(He is stopped by a sudden thunderous roar from the pulpit.)*

MOSES: So it was you, you bloody basket! I knew it all along and my stupid wife thought I was wrong.

(Leaps down the aisle and fights Noah, all the time yelling out "bloody basket". The whole congregation begin shouting as they attempt to break up the fight. The fight now spreads to the women.)

(Light fades with shouts and screams from the flock who are by now heatedly battling each other. Voices yelling: "Have mercy, God! God have mercy! Stop this bloody fight!")

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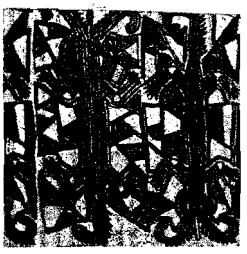

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