
BWAIDOGAN MYTHS OF ORIGIN

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"We only talk a lot. But we are not experienced enough. We don't have enough knowledge. Other people from Goodenough know a lot more than we, Bwaidoga people. This is because of the snake Motabikwa, who took all our wealth away to Rossel Island. But one day it will return and bring back the fortune."

Field notes, March 1, 2002; quoted by David Lalaoya

Among my first impressions of Goodenough Island¹ were from the air as my plane descended towards Vivigani airstrip. High rugged and forested mountains wreathed in wispy cloud, green grassy patches dappled here and there with sandy brown, coral shelves alternating with mangrove swamps marking the coastline, clumps of coconuts, indicating human settlement. The southeast coast of Goodenough curls like the tail of a snake forming the tranquil little bay on which the hamlets of Bwaidoga are strung like shells. Names of these hamlets are invariably related to the land (*babi*) where the houses and sitting platforms (*tuwaka*) are constructed. The first ancestors usually built these platforms. Such sites are therefore linked to myths of origin and are one of the main determinants of people's perceptions of themselves² (Young 1968: 335).

Before introducing my analysis of myths of origin of Bibiavona and Aiwavo clans,³ I shall refer to Young's (1983a: 11) classification of Goodenough Island oral literature into

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² The district of Bwaidoga extends for about five kilometres around the indented seashore and ranges up two kilometres inland. It is the most heavily populated area of the island; the district (census unit) is by far the largest, numbering more than 1800 people. The district comprises five villages (*melala*) and the United Church Mission Station. These villages Kabuna, Melala, Ukuna, Auligana and Banada claim common ancestry and share common dialect. In sociological terms each of them comprises a number of named clans (*gabu*) internally divided into sub-clans and patrilineages (*unuma*). In terms of settlement, however, each village is composed of number of hamlets (*melala kabisona*) that are characterised by one or more stone or coral sitting platforms called *tuwaka*. These are individually associated with the ancestors of the *unuma* that claim ownership of the hamlet. Accordingly, an *unuma* (such as Bibiavona into which I was adopted in Nikoko hamlet) tends to be localised, whereas a clan (such as Mikwanabuina of which Bibiavona is a part) tends to be dispersed. Both clans and *unuma* are exogamous. Ideally the rule of residence throughout Goodenough is patrilineal, which means that women join their husbands after marriage, while men remain in their father's hamlet. Hamlets are physical spaces that have mythico-historical significance for their residents. The names of founding ancestors associated with the *tuwaka* are less well remembered today. Their symbolic function has weakened since they have begun to be used as the sites of village courts (Young 1968; 1989).

³ Throughout this paper I refer to Bibiavona and Aiwavo as "clans" because this is how their members talk about them in English. Young refers to them as *unuma* in his census books. Technically speaking, *unuma* are sub-clans or lineages that acknowledge membership of larger, more dispersed named groups that Young calls clans.

four categories or types: *kweli* ("spells, songs and chants"), *laumamala* ("orations, sermons, and other rhetorical public speeches"), *ifufu* ("stories of any kind") and *neineya* ("heritable, owned, magic-bearing myths which tell of the exploits of ancestors, heroes, demigods or dema"). In his monograph on Kalauna mythology, Young focused on *neineya*. These important myths are imbued with ancestral forces and provide "narrative vehicles for systems of magic" (*ibid.*: 12). *Neineya* are secret in their nature, and are witness to people's historical movements and therefore pertain to landscape. Myths are narrated with discretion as to time and place and in theory they are told only to a restricted audience – those who have the right to hear them as genealogical related "owners".

During my relatively short stay in Bwaidoga the meanings and secrets of *neineya* were not wholly revealed to me. When referring to important myths my informants used the more general term *ifufu*. Since there is a distinction between stories that are owned by clans and those that are not, I will use the term myths for the stories of origin that are owned by people.

Bwaidogan myths are not simply linear narratives containing conclusion that are often moral in character. They are lived and embodied in people's thinking and practices and are therefore linked to the ancestral customs (*dewa*), genealogical histories and daily life (as, for example, the myth about the serpent Motabikwa mentioned in the epigraph of this paper).

The story about Motabikwa (alias Matabawe or Motalai), the half-human snake who resentfully leaves the island taking with it all the wealth, is one of the most widespread myths – not only on Goodenough Island but throughout the Massim region. This story can be seen as representing a basic principle of Bwaidogan culture. As David Lalaoya of Waikewala says, the snake is believed to be responsible for all the misery, unhappiness, poverty and loss of knowledge about *kastam*.⁴ The myth of the serpent that leaves the island in *unuwewe* (resentment) comes in many different versions that vary according to the area where they are situated. David told me one such version:

In olden times a woman delivered a boy-snake. Fearing that the people would shudder at him with fear, since he was extremely ugly, he went to live in a cave. He made an agreement with his mother that in exchange for food he will give her his valuable circular tusks. [These were fashioned into neck ornaments and used to circulate in the *kula*.] One day the mother's youngest son insisted on seeing his brother. Despite the mother's advice to stay at home, the child insisted on going with her. Eventually he accompanied his mother to the cave, promising that he would not even look at his brother. But the child's curiosity proved to be too great, and he peeped from behind his mother's back. He saw the hideous creature and was so startled that he

⁴ In the present paper the term *kastam* partly refers to discussions among scholars, such as Keesing and Tonkinson 1982, Lindstrom 1982, Jolly and Thomas 1992, Otto 1992, Foster 1992 and others, who focused on the post-independent Melanesian talk of reinvention of tradition. The term *kastam* derives from the English word "custom". According to Lindstrom and White it "reflects both the intense cultural pluralism characteristic of the region, as well as the immediacy of colonial history and processes of decolonisation ongoing in Oceania" (1993:467).

In Bwaidogan everyday conversation *kastam* is often used interchangeably with *dewa*. According to Young, *dewa* is an "operative word in any discussion of clanship in Kalauna... The most general and oft-used explanatory concept in Goodenough thought" (1971: 60). *Dewa* are regarded as the unique property of descent groups, what Young calls "their cultural dress" (*ibid.*). During my two-months' residence in Bwaidoga I could not hope to master the language although I made every effort to learn it. Most of my conversations with informants were conducted in English, which doubtless influenced a more frequent use of *kastam* as compared to *dewa*.

overturned a bowl and spilled the soup on the snake. The snake was deeply offended. In revenge he took all of his wealth to the remote Rossel Island. One day he will surely return and bring back the fortune.

While Bwaidogans on the one hand assume that their *kastam* is gradually being forgotten, on the other they are still representing, reconceptualising and reinventing it through their myths. Conflicts over land tenure that were besides others influenced by the population growth provide a social environment in which Bwaidogans once again begin to remember myths about clan origins that are directly connected to land. Land disputes are a practical incentive to revive knowledge of the past. The myths that had once been kept secret by individual clans and known only to a selected few, have through changes brought by colonialism and globalisation, as well as by population growth, begun to intertwine, gradually losing their uniqueness. To a great extent, the plots and contents of hitherto secret myths (*neineya*) have become common knowledge. Nevertheless, such myths remain an important factor in clan identity and thus have a role to play in the struggle to claim or retain communal rights to land. In this paper I shall focus on the myths of origin of Aiwavo and Bibiavona clans. Before doing so, however, I shall consider briefly the work of some anthropologists who have theorised about myths.

APPROACHES TO LIVED MYTH

The anthropological study of myth began in the early 19th century in the light of evolutionary theory concerning the development of mankind from savagery to civilisation. Myth was often regarded as a fanciful or misguided kind of history, or worse as “just-so stories” that explained natural phenomena. Sir James Frazer, one of the chief advocates of the evolutionary approach, understood myth to reflect the development of social institutions, but it was only following Malinowski’s fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands that myth came to be viewed from the standpoint of its present-day function. As Malinowski explained in 1926:

Myth as it exists in a savage community...is not merely a story told but a reality lived.... [I]t is a living reality, believed to have once happened in primeval times, and continuing ever since to influence the world and human destinies.” (1948 [1926]: 100).

Malinowski demonstrated how myths had a “charter” function in legitimating the social order and validating rights to customary usages such as magic. He also emphasized the importance of social context in which a narrator recites a particular myth. “The stories live in native life and not on paper, and when a scholar jots them down without being able to evoke the atmosphere in which they flourish he has given us but a mutilated bit of reality” (*ibid.*: 104). According to Young, however, Malinowski did not “demonstrate convincingly the living reality of Trobriand myth by showing how it might be a reality lived” (1983 a: 13).

Like Malinowski, Leenhardt (1979 [1947]) understood myths to be “lived” (*mythe vécu*) in a way that involved the emotional participation of the person (or “personage”). Leenhardt regarded myths as an aspect of Canaque knowledge that engaged with a particular “socio-mythic landscape”.

The significant rocks, creeks, mountains, trees, and animals form a pattern within whose circuits the life of the personage flows. The forms provided by mythic landscape are not mentally formulated; they are not stories, but are merely "here". The personage – perpetually outside an "ego" or "body", as defined by Westerners – knows himself or herself as a participant in juxtaposed mythic occasions, experiencing no narrative or personal itinerary proper to an "individual" identity (cited in Clifford 1992: 174).

Leenhardt's metaphysical approach is unhelpful in comparing the narrative content of myths, which in his view do not classify but juxtapose meanings (*ibid.*: 6-7, 40).

When discussing myths, it is necessary to mention Lévi-Strauss (1976) who dedicated an immense amount of work to the study of mythology. His structural approach sets functionalism aside. Myths do not have an obvious practical function, he argued, because they operate, as systems of conceptual transformation, rather like music. Despite the fact that myths share superficial syntactical and contrapuntal features with language, they stand outside it. Myths lack essential linguistic form and effect, but they have the power to convey messages that ordinary language cannot. Their structure can be traced to the binary, logical oppositions characteristic of human thought. Thus, for Lévi-Strauss:

The myth is certainly related to given facts, but not as a representation of them. The relationship is of a dialectic kind, and the institutions described in the myths can be the very opposite of the real institutions. This conception of the relation of the myth to reality no doubt limits the use of the former as a documentary source. But it opens the way for other possibilities; for in abandoning the search for a constantly accurate picture of ethnographic reality in the myth, we gain, on occasions, a means of reaching unconscious categories (*ibid.*: 172-173).

Roy Wagner studied myths as self-contained and self-generative stories which reveal maps of a culture's cosmology. In his book *Lethal Speech* (1978), Wagner argued for an interpretative approach that he defined in accord with Ricoeur's construction of the meaning of a text "in a way similar to the way we explicate the terms of a metaphorical statement" (*ibid.*: 13). Interpretation of myths reveals analogies that tell us something about the social (and moral) cosmology of a given community. With his key terms "lethal" and "obviation", Wagner showed how speech is "killed" in such a way that it cannot generate discursive understanding at the cognitive level. Myths

aim, in fact, to undetermine ("obviate") such surface understandings, to bring the members of the cultures in which they play a vital part to an encounter with the ontological curvatures of their experience with others and with their own reflexive solitudes – not unknown even in "tribal" societies (Turner, in Wagner 1978: 7).

Myth's "obviation sequence" as Wagner named it, is constantly "sharing the meanings in part, and in part developing these shared meanings into new ones". A myth "does not say things but makes them, and then disappears into its result" (Wagner 1978: 252).

James Weiner (1988) focused on the sociocultural character of myths. Writing about the Foi people of the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, he viewed myths as metaphors that represent idioms through which social distinctions are articulated. Adopting Wagner's idea of myth as an obviation sequence that results in a "large-scale metaphor", he analyses their role in the construction of Foi sociality. The latter is

but one facet of a world-view that posits a *sui generis* moral force to such phenomena as, for example, the motion of water and celestial bodies, the growth and death of human beings, the separation of the living and the dead, and the distinct sexual properties of men and women" (*ibid.*: 15).

His monograph *The Heart of the Pearl Shell* describes myths as metaphors that are

elusive, not baldly and syntagmatically stated as in a magic spell. Whereas a magic spell is hidden because of what it reveals, myths are revealed precisely because of what they hide: the creation of morality and human convention out of the particular actions and dilemmas of archetypal characters" (*ibid.*: 14).

Myths represent a "ceaseless contrast between individual experience and the idioms of collective sociality" and together with other metaphorical literary forms, they lead to the creation of culture as the "relationship between the conventional distinctions of social boundaries and the created analogies of aesthetic innovation" (*ibid.*: 296).

In his monograph *Magicians of Manumanua* (1983a), Michael W. Young mediates Malinowski's and Leenhardt's approaches, though he adopts the former's empirical concern with context. To some extent, he deploys Lévi-Strauss's analytical methods. Young presents key Kalauna myths in their ethnographic and political contexts, and in giving them a biographical dimension he attempts to portray several "unique individuals in terms of their representative culture rather than to present a unique culture in terms of representative individuals" (*ibid.*: 27). Kalauna myths are revitalized and re-created through the lives of the individual leaders and magicians who own them. Myths are forever open to reinterpretation by those who live them, just as actors reinterpret the parts they play in a drama. In spite of individual variations and Western-influenced modifications, Kalauna myths retain the theme basic to Goodenough social dynamics. The temporal oscillation between stasis and mobility or stillness and movement is the essential dialectic of exchange relationships (including those based on gender) which is constitutive of Goodenough society. In a Lévi-Straussian paradox, Young writes: "Myth is reconstructed through lived experience which mediates culture; and culture is reconstructed through lived experience which mediates myth" (*ibid.*: 35).

In *Dancing through Time* (1998), Borut Telban explores the connections between myths and the concept of *kay*. The latter is the main focus of his monograph about Ambonwari village in East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea. *Kay* can be translated by the English terms "way, habit, manner; ritual; custom; law; being; canoe" (*ibid.*: 262). Based on Young's theory of living myths that are reconstructed through the lived experiences of their owners, Telban notes that myths represent what he calls "*Ambonwari-ness*" as lived, thought about and spoken about" (*ibid.*: 142). Through myths the past is lived in the present and the present is conferred on the past. Therefore, myths are essential for the continuous process of individual and group identification. Telban particularly focuses on myths of origin that are important for clan identity.

Myths of origin, like other stories from the past, contain a large number of place and personal names. Sequential order is marked by such names, and people who are unfamiliar with them have difficulty putting different events, especially from different stories, in some sort of chronological order" (*ibid.*: 160).

When an Ambonwari person identifies with his mythical ancestor, this identification is neither unreflective nor without a purpose. Through his understanding of the origin acts of a mythical ancestor (and events from the myth in general), he reconfirms or reconstructs relationships with others, both individual and collective, that were, and still are, made possible by these acts. In such a way one not only constructs the present based on the past but "can hold an attitude towards the future" where one's acts will still be ancestral, regardless of their transformation and the accretion of new meanings (*ibid.*: 154).

Bwaidogan myths are lived and conditioned by the narrator's past and present relationships, his or her descent group membership, and finally his or her relationship to place and time. As a conundrum of culture, myths are constantly oscillating between the social and the individual level. We could say that myths are spatiotemporal narrative forms that can never be grasped completely - let alone jotted down on paper. Myths

are for telling and performing, and participants understand them by experiencing them. They achieve their meaning in action, when lived. We distort them when we describe and organise them on paper and attempt to analyse them and unravel their mysteries in everyday words and categories. The urge is to overorganise, to impose order where it is perhaps inappropriate (Sillitoe 1998: 245).

MYTHS OF ORIGIN IN BWAIDOGA

In this part I shall summarise two myths of clan origin that were narrated to me by their owners. I will not question their "authenticity" (however we may define this), for according to Young, each narrative is authentic insofar as it derives from an inherited past. There is no correct or wrong version of a myth. Each has its own tune and rhythm that contributes to the meaning of the particular context of its telling. Miriam Kahn asserts:

Anthropologists must look not only at oral accounts of origin myths, which are limited to particular literary genres, but also at the way in which these myths are recorded and recalled by other devices, such as physical forms in the landscape (1990: 53).

For this reason, I will also focus on the ways in which the two Bibiavona and Aiwavo clan myths were narrated to me, as well as on their relationship to the "physical forms in the landscape".

One afternoon in March 2002, while my informant David Lalaoya was recounting the story⁵ of the vengeful serpent, he mentioned Diana, the oldest inhabitant of Nikoko, as one of the few people well acquainted with this kind of Bwaidogan story. Accompanied by David, I visited her next day and she responded favourably to my request to record some stories on tape. With David's help, I then translated them into English. Quite a few of them

⁵ I have already pointed out that the distinction between *ififu* and *neineya* is unclear. When Bwaidogans talked about myths they used the word *ififu*, which simply means "story". However, since we communicated mostly in English I cannot be sure that *neineya* is not applicable in this context. I shall continue to make a distinction between stories as general narratives and myths as secret or semi-secret charters directly related to the past.

caused disagreement among my hosts. The myth about the voracious sea eagle, for example, elicited the following comment from Moses. "The myth about Manubutu belongs to Bibiavona, and it is different to Diana's." A couple of days later Moses and his cousins asked me to record their version of the myth of their clan origin.

Bibiavona myth of origin

It was on March 29th that I joined Moses and his father's brother's sons Belami and Andrew in Andrew's hut. The two sons of the late Tomokivona, a friend of Michael Young, asked for complete seclusion while recounting their myth. Even the children who were scampering around outside and interrupting our conversation with their tumult were ordered to leave and play in the neighbouring hamlet of Lautoto. The three men settled down in the living quarters of the house, divided betelnut among them and chatted in Bwaidogan. Several minutes passed before Andrew began his narrative:⁶

(part 1)⁷

Long time ago people lived in a cave called Gauyaba. They never left the cave. Their name was Sinatataya. These people were born there and later when they appeared from the ground they were renamed Babisinagea. They were ginger people and they didn't have any hair. When they appeared, Manubutu (the sea eagle who was also a man) was eating the people. The woman whose name was Natuyaboyabobo (literally, taking care of the children) and her grandchildren were the only ones who stayed. One day the woman told the grandchildren that all the people had fled to Tawakala (close to Tufi⁸), a place where nobody had ever lived before. The children asked their grandmother: "Grandmother, what have you done?" and went fishing.

Suddenly Andrew paused because some children came to tell us that David was approaching. According to Moses, Bibiavona clan owns this myth and wants to keep it a secret.

Next day all three men were sitting in the shade beneath a mango tree, chipping at their canoes and discussing how they were going to tell me their myth. They had been sitting there since early morning, holding a big genealogical chart in their hands. Michael Young made these charts and sent them through me to David and Tomokivona's sons in response to their earlier request. Constant checking of genealogical data and minor arguments accompanied Tomokivona's sons' private discussion about their mythology and the genealogical history that is connected with it. It took them a couple of hours before they agreed on what they were going to tell me. Then they came to my hut, sat upon the floor, took out their betel nuts, chewed them, and then started. This time Moses was the main narrator. He and Belami were not satisfied with Andrew's opening to the story, and they had decided that Moses would replace him. Moses began the myth from the beginning.

⁶ In order to represent the situation in which the Bibiavona and Aiwavo myths were told to me I have presented both myths close to the vernacular way in which they were narrated.

⁷ For convenience of interpretation I have divided each myth into several parts.

⁸ Andrew is probably mistaken. Both Tufi and Tawakala are on mainland. While Tufi is on northeast is Tawakala on southwest of Goodenough.

(part 2)

Once upon a time a woman from Bwaidoga had three sons [later Belami implies that she had four]. The firstborn's name was Tomokulua and he was a human being. The second born, Motalai, and the third born, Motabikwa, were both snakes. One day Tomokulua said to his brothers that it would be better to leave Bwaidoga because it was a place for animals. Therefore Motabikwa went to live in Tutube (close to Ufufu, inland of Faiyava), while Motalai went to live in a cave (above Ukuna). He made an agreement with his mother to bring him food in exchange for his tusks. One day her small daughter wanted to go with her. Because her mother had promised the snake that she would not show her to anybody, she refused to allow her daughter to come with her. The small girl was persistent and finally persuaded her mother to allow her to go with her. She promised that she wouldn't look at her brother. Nevertheless, when they were there, she peeped out from behind her back and saw a horrifying snake. When he noticed the girl the snake was angry. Immediately Motalai left the island together with the tusks that were his wealth. He went first to Utu and then to Lautoto and swam further on to Nuatutu point. Motalai passed the two Barrier Islands, Ilamo and Legiagiya, and went on further to Kiriwina. There he turned around and said to the mountain Madawa: "My people will see me, so I will go a bit further (*O, ida itaitaku jaina maita kabisona ganaunau*)."

He travelled on to Woodlark. There Motalai turned around and repeated the same words. From there he went directly to Rossel Island. Goodenough people say that one day he will return and bring back their fortune.

(part 3)

While Motalai went to Rossel Island and stayed there, the firstborn Tomokulua went up to Luwaita. He was the only human there. He married a female spirit called Nelawata. Her second name was Ineveya. This name is a very important name and nobody is allowed to mention it. Tomokulua and Nelawata had a child whom they named Tomokivona. Thus the name Bibiavona derives from Luwaita. The first ancestor was Tomokulua, the second one Tomokivona. He had two children: Nabelesina and Toboyoyana. They were the ones who killed Manubutu, the sea eagle who was devouring the people. When Nabelesina's and Toboyoyana's grandmother told them that all the people ran away because Manubutu was eating them, the children decided to kill him. They told their grandmother to make spears and clubs. She [magically] cut down many trees and made more than hundred spears and clubs. Even though they also had a canoe there was something missing, something that would make them smart. This was ginger and *wetoweto* [a species of *Cordyline*]. When they obtained them from their grandmother they were ready to fight. They loaded everything onto the canoe and took their dogs Kwalidumodumo and Kakawasi with them. They went to the island of Ilamo where they left Kakawasi, while Kwalidumodumo stayed with them. Nabelesina and Toboyoyana told Kakawasi that they were going to fight, and if they died he would have to swim to their grandmother and tell her. But if they survived he would have to stay there forever. Nabelesina and Toboyoyana then went on to Bolubolu to kill Manubutu. When they came ashore they looked up at the mountain where Manubutu had a house. They saw him sitting in front of his house sewing his fishing net. He was so preoccupied that he didn't notice that the children were observing him. They had already made a plan how to kill him. First

they threw a stick onto the roof and dragged it down. When Manubutu heard the noise he went into his house to check what was happening. Because he didn't find anything he went out again. When he looked down the hill he saw two boys. He laughed and said: "Oh, children, where are you hiding? I'm going to eat you!" They replied: "We are children from Yeyena. Our namesake is Kewala Neganega [*Kewala* - a species of red parakeet; *Neganega* - to take food without paying for it]." Manubutu grew angry and swooped down to kill the boys who were sitting in their canoe. When they saw him approaching, they turned their canoe over and hid beneath it. Manubutu didn't see this and hit the canoe with his beak. With a broken beak he went up to his house. The children turned their canoe over and started teasing him again: "If you were so strong, Manubutu, we would be dead by now. But we are still alive. We are stronger than you!" After that they went ashore where they continued their fight. First they fought with slings. When they ran out of them they took spears and fought with them. But when they had used up almost all the spears they were left only with double-pointed ones. They became worried because they were running out of weapons. Finally they made a plan. The older brother said to the younger one to hide behind him. When Manubutu approached the elder brother the younger moved aside and speared him between the eyes. Instantly Manubutu fell dead. The children called their dog Kwalidumodumo and told him to go into Manubutu's body and take out his heart. The dog did as they told him. When he came out of Manubutu's guts he howled "Ayo!" From this time on the dog was called Afuyoi. Nabelesina and Toboyoyana loaded everything onto their canoe and paddled back to Nuatutu. They told their dog Kakawasi to stay there, while they went back to Yeyena. When they were close to reaching the shore, they waved the *wetoweto* and announced to their grandmother that they were coming. They blew a conch-shell and paddled to the beach. When they reached the shore they pretended to fight. But when their grandmother greeted them calling "*Kaiwa! Kaiwa!*" they calmed down and told her how they had killed Manubutu. They also told her that they had changed the name of Kwalidumodumo to Afuyoi.

A week passed and Nabelesina and Toboyoyana asked their grandmother if there was anybody else who was attacking the people for food. She told them about Manubutu's wife who lived on the mountain close to Mataita. When she showed them the place, they decided to go there and kill her too. They prepared slings, spears and clubs, spears with double points, canoe and ginger. They paddled to Mataita and started to climb the mountain. On the way they marked the path with their spears. When they reached her place they climbed a Kafua tree and saw her sweeping the floor of the house. They picked up a fruit and threw it to attract her attention. At first the woman thought that the wind had torn it down. But when they threw another fruit she saw them sitting in a tree. She grew angry and put on a pandanus leaf skirt to transform herself into a spirit. When this didn't work she put on a banana leaf skirt. At that moment she changed into a spirit. Everything about her became enlarged. She began to fight the children. She took a shell to cut their throats. The children fought back with slings. When they ran out of slings they fought with spears. When they ran out of these they took the last two spears with double points. They killed the woman in the same way they had killed her husband Manubutu. Once she was dead, Afuyoi went inside her body and took out her heart. After that they went back to Yeyena. On approaching the seashore they waved the *wetoweto*. They pretended to fight with their

grandmother. But when she called "*Kaiwa! Kaiwa!*" they calmed down and told her how they had killed Manubutu's wife.

(part 4)

Their grandmother made a small canoe and sent the two hearts to Tawakalea to announce to the people that Manubutu and his wife were dead and that they could now return. When a man at Tawakala went fishing, he noticed a small canoe rocking on the sea. He threw his fishing net and dragged it in. When he saw the two hearts, he realised that his two children who stayed in Yeyena had accomplished this. He went to the village and told the people that his two children had killed Manubutu and his wife. A week later, they were ready to return to Yeyena. While they were in the middle of the sea, Tomokavalina recited a spell. It grew dark and cloudy. Thunder and lightning caused the people to disperse all around Goodenough. Some went to Vivigani, some to Mataita, while some of them sank. Only Tomokavalina and his wife went to Kabuna and continued on towards Nikoko. The grandmother saw them approaching and told Nabelesina and Toboyoyana to go to Nikoko. When Tomokavalina and his wife reached the shore the children were already there. They were so big that their father Tomokavalina almost didn't recognise them. He was afraid and said: "Oh, maybe you are going to kill and eat us?" But the children replied: "No, we are not going to kill you. We have been waiting for you!"

At this point Moses stopped because Andrew reminded him that Tomokavalina was not Toboyoyana's and Nabelesina's father; earlier he had stated it was Tomokivona, son of Tomokulua. Moses asked for more time to think. He returned the next afternoon and continued telling the myth without explaining the previous day's confusion and without saying who fathered Toboyoyana and Nabelesina.

(part 5)

After the big storm people spread all over Goodenough Island and many of them died. A couple from Mikwanabuina clan survived and they approached the Kabuna point from where they paddled to Nikoko. There they met Nabelesina and Toboyoyana. When they saw them they said: "You are probably going to kill us!" The children asked: "Are you the ones from Tawakala to whom we sent two hearts?" When they told them that they were indeed the people from Tawakala who used to live with them in Yeyena they became friends. They stayed at Nikoko, which was called Elaela at the time. During the following years, Mikwanabuina people spread out. They married within the families. That is how the Bwaidoga district was formed. In those times Nabelesina and Toboyoyana fought with Oyaoya people (the ancestors of Kabuna and Wagifa people). In their last fight, Nabelesina and Toboyoyana killed all the Oyaoya people. Only one girl was left who hid herself in the woods. Her name was Weyalubana. Later, when they found the girl, they took her to Bowa where she married a man. Nabelesina and Toboyoyana cooked some food and gave it to her husband's relatives.

At that time Nabelesina already had a grandchild whose name was Tomokivona Iemesa. He decided to ask the Bowa people to pay for the girl whom his grandfather had brought to them. Tomokivona Iemesa sent for a man from Bowa to ask him if there were any young girls in Bowa he could marry.

Moses continued that this was the reason why the land of Oyaoya people now belongs to Mikwanabuina clan (of which Bibiavona is a segment) and from where all the important ancestors originate.

Weyalubava married a Bowa man. They had a son Tausi who married Weyusi. They had two children: Nemiakaka and Lasalo. Nemiakaka married Tomokivona [the parents of Belami and Andrew].

In the first part of the myth, Andrew focused on the origin of humanity that is, as elsewhere in Melanesian mythology, situated in a cave. Gauyaba, which according to Andrew means a big cave, but according to Young it is “a vent in the rock” or a “hole” near the summit of the hill called Yauyaba by Kalauna. Yauyaba is “the Goodenough Islanders’ answer to the problem of their origin, their cultural and linguistic differences and their dispersal and settlement over the island” (1971: 13). The tale about two parrots, Kewala and Wiwia, who courageously kill the sea eagle Manubutu and his wife, was first recorded by Jenness and Ballantyne (1928; see also Young 1991: 384). Jenness and Ballantyne refer to Babisinagea and a spirit named Anininalavu “who preside over the growth of yams” (1920: 152). Young notes that Babisinatata /sic!/ means “Below Ground” while Babisinanegeya /sic!/ means “Above Ground” (1991: 384). Andrew used Sinatataya to refer to the “ginger people” without hair who lived below ground, and who were renamed Babisinageya after they had emerged to the surface. Throughout the Massim ginger root is the basic ingredient of magic and sorcery spells, suggesting that it was the source of Babisinagea people’s magical power derived from spirits. It is interesting that this power was originally subterranean and hidden – in accordance with the Goodenough ideological principle that wealth and power should be concealed, and only displayed on special occasions such as feasting (Young 1983a: 73, 1987a: 249).

When Moses took over the role of narrator, he began somewhat differently to Andrew. His version begins with the birth of three brothers. Tomokulua is human, the other two, Motalai and Motabawe, are snakes. When the brothers grow up they dispersed: Tomokulua settled in Luwaita, a site on the hill that rises behind Waikewala and Banada hamlets (described by Jenness and Ballantyne [1920: 150] as “a pile of rocks on a ridge above Ukuni [i.e. Ukuna]”). Motabawe left for Tutube, a site somewhere near Ufufu, behind Faiava, while Motalai went to dwell in a cave whose location is not mentioned by Moses. According to Jenness and Ballantyne (1920: 157), however, Motalai’s cave “lay on the slope of the ridge” behind Ukuna village. The myth as recounted by Moses appears to differentiate between mountain and coast, thereby defining the parameters of Bwaidoga people’s landscape. Spatiality is not only defined by geographical parameters, however, but also by sociocultural institutions and historical processes. Generally speaking, the monster-slaying myth is motivated by dialectic between order and chaos, unity and dispersal, wealth and poverty.

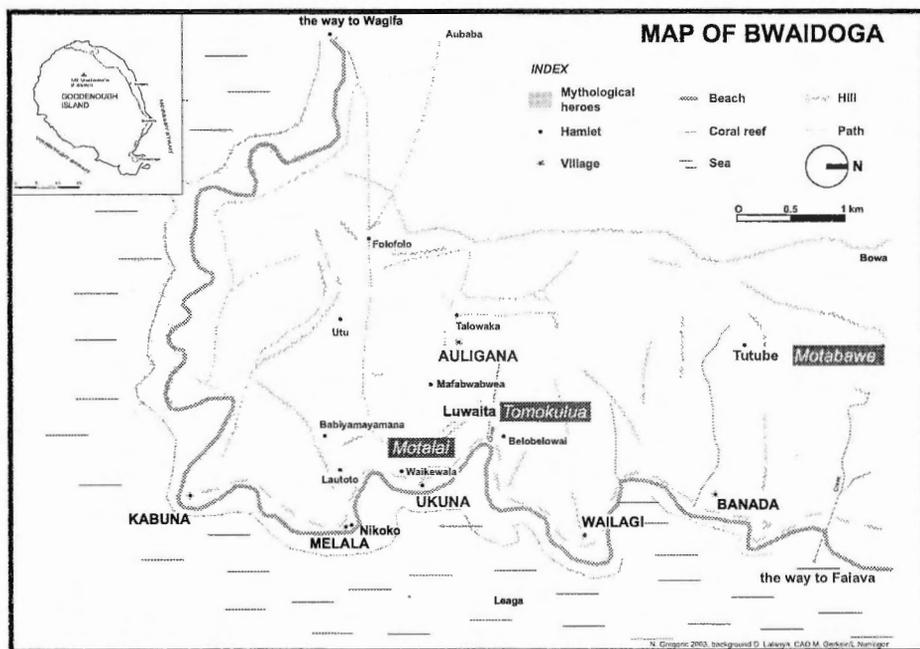


Figure 1. Settlements of mythological heroes Tomokulua, Motabawe and Motalai.

Moses' version of the Bibiavona myth initially focuses on Motalai, who, insulted by his mother's betrayal, resentfully abandons Bwaidoga, taking his wealth with him and thereby impoverishing the people. Motalai embarks on a long journey which takes him through the Barrier Islands, Kiriwina, Woodlark, and finally Rossel, the most remote island in the Massim. At every place he leaves traces of his wealth. It is interesting to note that the people of Sudest (the island closest to Rossel) have a complementary myth which tells of an insulted snake (Bambagho) who departed Goodenough Island for Sudest, having first visited Sanaroa and Misma. A Sudest woman secretly fed it in exchange for its excrement (shell wealth), until her grandsons drove it away and it fled to Rossel Island (Lepowsky 1993: 125-6).

Besides the numerous themes that are minutely recorded in a number of Young's publications (1983 a, b, 1984, 1987a, 1991), Moses' version is significant also for mentioning the places through which the mythological character travels. Motalai's original cave dwelling is the location of some of Bibiavona's ancestral origins. Bibiavona's routes pass through the mountain site Luwaita, the coastal hamlets of Utu and Lautoto, the uninhabited islands of Ilamo and Legigiya, and thence to the Northern Massim (Bwaidogans' Muyuwa) to the Louisiades (Rossel). Motalai's journey describes an arc, or more fancifully, a semicircular boar's tusk, such as Motalai bestowed on his mother in exchange for food.⁹

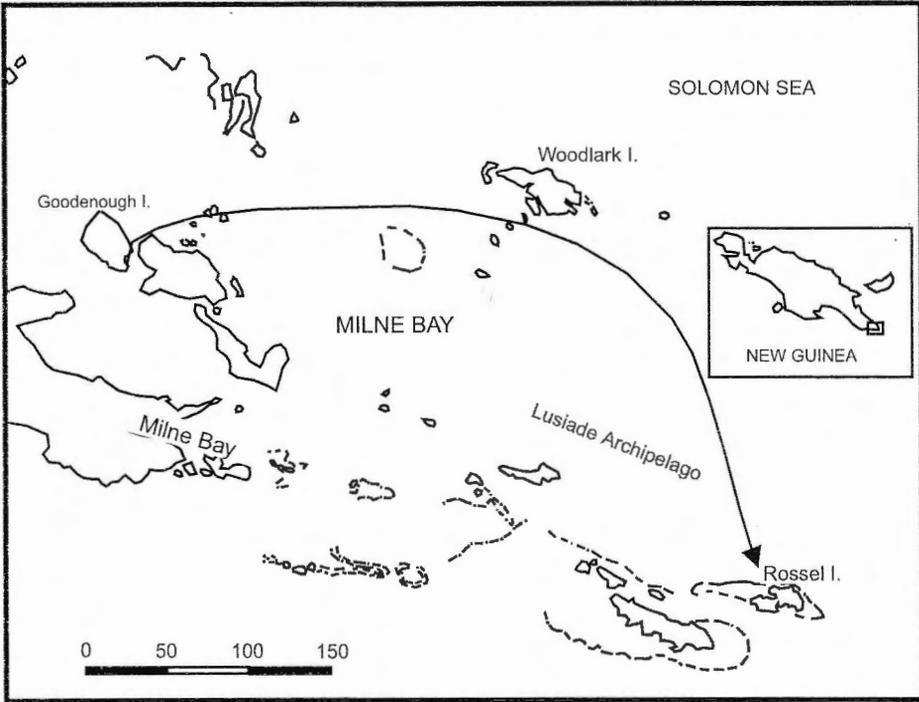


Figure 2. Motalai's vengeful journey through the mountain site Luwaita, the coastal hamlets Ulu and Lautoto, islands Ilamo and Legigiya to Northern Massim and finally to the Luisiades (Rossel Island).

In his article *The tusk, the flute and the serpent*, (1987a), Young recounts a story recorded by Maribelle Young from a Bwaidogan woman concerning a tusk pendant (*matabile*) which appears in the form of a birthmark on a young bride's breast. Dogalivina's mother warns her son-in-law not to remove it, but the greedy husband ignores her and amputates his wife's *matabile*. Dogalivina dies and her brothers kill the husband (Ma. Young 1979: 3-6). This myth suggests that *matabili* had once been a female valuable, inseparable from her person. In Young's view, Goodenough sexual identity is conceived on similar grounds: a woman's value is embodied, whereas a man's value has to be acquired or achieved (1987b: 240-41). In a number of ceremonies, especially weddings and funerals, females are symbolically associated with wealth, which is reproduced in the form of children. Under the rule of

⁹ In his analysis of the myth, Young refers to versions in which the woman who feeds the snake-man is variously represented as a grandmother, mother or wife (1983 a, b; 1987a; 1991). Young speculates on the etymology of Motalai (*mota* = snake; *lat* = coral reef) and Motabikwa (*mota* = snake; *bikwa* = a kind of taro).

patriline, a man and his descent group have to redeem their offspring by gifts of wealth, food and labour to his wife's descent group. Children "naturally" belong to their mothers; fathers have to "purchase" them.

Elsewhere, Young (1984: 132-5) analyses the iconography of the boar's tusk pendant or *matabili*, suggesting how it symbolizes marriage by combining a phallic tusk with a vaginal cowrie shell. Once important items of exchange in the *kula* ring, boar's tusk pendants appear to have been "attracted" to Goodenough, where they served as the most important valuable given in bridewealth. Ironically, the mythical source of these valuables is the wifeless, childless Motalai; he belongs to his mother alone, and when he repudiates her he becomes an entirely self-sufficient hero without kin. He thus transcends the social imperative Goodenough men must obey for countermanding the given maternal identity of their children - though it is his tusks that help them to do so. "Only a mythical serpent is capable of producing tusks of such value that they can, without disrespect, be offered in part exchange for the most precious gift of all, that is a woman's reproductive potential" (*ibid.*: 134).

The snake's continuous travelling and the promise of his return symbolically portray the constant circulation of wealth, which underpins Massim exchange systems - including that of *kula* (Young 1983b). A similar circulation of wealth is alluded to in the Aiwavo sub-clan's myth of origin to be described later. Based on the places through which Motalai's wealth circulates, Bibiavona's spatio-temporal map is formed. This is not only important for exchange but also for setting the spatial dimensions of Bibiavona's mythological landscape. While Utu and Lautoto represent hamlets that border Bibiavona's current home in Nikoko, Ilamo and Legigiya islands represent dwelling of their deceased ancestors. Finally, Kiriwina, Woodlark and Rossel symbolize their most distant Massim neighbours. Between the nearby and distant places abides the world of spirits that connects both spheres, and the myth appears to draw boundaries of the spatiotemporal map in terms of relations between places that are dangerous or safe, wealthy and poor.

The notional map is also conditioned by the mediation between stasis and mobility, according to which, in Young's view, exchange relationships, gender relations and cosmological time are established (1983a, b, 1987a). The mother's breach of promise causes the stasis (*manumanua*¹⁰) of the snake in the cave, representing peace and prosperity, to change into continuous mobility or wandering, which connotes chaos and famine. Mediation of these opposites is achieved through the cargoistic return of original wealth (1987a: 234). The latter is to some extent present in the institution of wage labour, which has for a century been the most significant component of Goodenough youths' initiation into manhood. Bwaidogan youths still leave the village for contract labour on the mainland (usually Alotau) in the hope that they will one day bring back wealth to ensure the prosperous continuity of their clans. Bwaidogans observe that today many young men visit their relatives working in Alotau. "But there they do nothing. They only run around, looking for money. They don't want to work. They expect that it will come from the sky," were the words of David, Belami and Andrew. The anticipation of the return of the wealth is also indicated by the cargoistic understanding of the sudden appearance of newcomers. My arrival, for instance, was by many villagers conceived in cargoistic terms. Some villagers took me for a deceased ancestor who had returned to revive an awareness of *kastam*. Others attributed to me more hostile intentions, identify-

¹⁰ *Manumanua* is the "ceremony of 'staying at home' to anchor food and banish famine" (Young 1983a: 302).

ing me as a spy who would take their *kastam* to Europe and deplete their traditions. There is no end to such interpretations, and their main theme incorporates the dynamic of stasis and mobility and the promise of a restored fortune.

The third section of Bibiavona's myth includes the tale of Manubutu, the voracious sea eagle, which was first published by Jenness and Ballantyne in *The Northern D'Entrecasteaux* (1920: 158-9). They give a short version by a Nikoko man named Yanavolewa. The "Yeyena epic" as they call it, is about Nianialawata (=Nelawata) and her husband Galagalaiwabu, who accuses her of being a spirit or *balauma*. He deserts her and takes his people to Towakala (Moses' Tawakala), beyond East Cape. Abandoned, Nelawata bears two sons, Tomweinagona (elder) and Kwamanea (younger). When these two become grown men they courageously fight and kill Manubutu, bringing peace and prosperity to Yeyena. The myth also mentions the dog Akoiyoi (Afuyoi in Moses' version), who tears out Manubutu's heart, taking it to Towakala. When Galagalaiwabu sees the heart he realizes that his sons had killed the sea eagle, so he and his people can return to their home at Yeyena. Jenness and Ballantyne also give a lengthy version of the myth in *Language, Mythology and Songs of Bwaidoga* (1928: 51-83). This version includes another tale about a wealthy man (Kaiwabo) who abides in a cave and, together with his men, periodically loots the gardens of Belebele villagers. This part of the story is central to the Aiwavo myth that will be presented below.

The fourth part of Moses' myth tells of Tomokavalina's homecoming to Yeyena. When returning with everybody who had once taken refuge in Tawakala, he performs rain magic, which incites a great storm resulting in the dispersal of people over Goodenough Island. Tomokavalina is the only one to return to Yeyena, where Bibiavona people believe their clan originated. They originated also on the mountain at Luwaita and later spread to different places in Bwaidoga. Luwaita is the home of Tomokulua's second son, who married Nelawata. In many Goodenough myths Nelawata (or Inelawata) is portrayed as an "Eve" or first woman, in others as a spirit-woman in the guise of a wife, mother or grandmother. Both Yeyena and Luwaita are today still of importance in Bibiavona's view of its history. Again, in this part of the myth, the difference between primal mountain (Luwaita) and coastal dwelling place (Yeyena) is stressed. According to Young, the indigenous distinction between people of the mountain ("*kwana oyaoya*") and people of the coast ("*kwana imolata*") is associated with different adaptations to habitat (1971: 12). In both Bibiavona and Aiwavo origin myths the "*oyaoya*" and "*imolata*" distinction is implied in the difference between place of origin and place of dwelling. Thus, in the Bibiavona myth Yeyena is the ancient site of their settlement, while Luwaita is the hillside where they now make their gardens. At Luwaita there is a rock of the same name that mysteriously transforms into a snake, cuscus, or a rolling human head. Luwaita protects the garden against thieves and bad magic. It harms strangers who happen to pass by. When Luwaita transforms into a snake, it is marked on its forehead by a red line which proclaims a warrior spirit. This is the mark that Bibiavona men painted on their foreheads whenever they went to fight. The Tomokivona brothers believe that only Bibiavona clan members can see the rolling head. One day, when Moses went up to his garden, he heard from a distance the rustling of an object tumbling down.

At first I thought it was only a coconut, so I did not pay much attention or look back up the slope. I was somewhere between Waikewala and Wailagi. Since the noise was increasing, I looked back up the hill and saw a rolling head. At first I couldn't believe my eyes. But as the head rolled right past me and continued on towards the sea I thought of Luwaita. It was he. Abagadiga, sister of the late Tomokivona, has also

seen the rolling head, which resides in Luwaita. Many people with gardens on the hills of Luwaita have seen a man or a snake catching the early morning sun on a rock (Field notes, 4.4.02).

It is relevant to note that Jenness and Ballantyne recorded a story about a “large bowl” that lived on the ridge above Yeyena and devoured people “under the pretence that it was hunting pigs”. One day the men ambushed it and pursued it with their weapons. The bowl rolled down the hill and into the sea, where it sank with a spear embedded in it (1920: 155).

Unfortunately, Jenness and Ballantyne do not name the “bowl”, but Young suspects it might have been associated with another magical clay pot called Ulekofuyo, which lived in Inafani, a mountain hamlet (now abandoned) on the ridge between Mud Bay and Wagifa. Ulekofuyo was a *manumanua* pot that governed the rain and the sun, and hence controlled human prosperity and famine. The sentient pot had its own shrine and was tended by a magician called Tomiawala who extorted “tribute” from surrounding villages – until the Wesleyan missionary Ballantyne raided the shrine and confiscated the pot to destroy Tomiawala’s power. Unfortunately, the missionary broke the pot on his way down the hill and many Bwaidogans blamed him for the famine of 1911-12 that followed. Significantly, the text that Jenness and Ballantyne recorded about the pot Ulekofuyo concludes with the words “at one time it changed into a snake” (1920: 129-31; 1928: 166-7). Not only mythical persons, birds and animals, then, but also natural objects like rocks and manufactured ones like pots can manifest the dynamic of stasis and mobility.

As we have seen, Bwaidoga people generally represent themselves by the names of their hamlets rather than by the names of their descent groups. Bibiavona is less commonly used than Nikoko, for instance. Their identity is largely founded on the places where they live, make their gardens and reproduce themselves. These places and particular objects in their settlements and broader landscape (*tuwaka* in each hamlet, for example, or the rock Luwaita in Bibiavona’s garden land) are linked to their ancestral past that is anchored in the present and oriented towards the future.

The fifth part of Moses’ myth recounts Tomokavalina’s return to his birthplace Nikoko and his encounter with his sons Nebelesina and Toboyoyana (though Moses stands corrected on the matter of their parentage). He then relates the ongoing fights with the mountain people, Oyaoya, who lived between Mud Bay and Wagifa. Nabelesina and Toboyoyana kill them all, the sole survivor being a little girl, Weyalubava, whom the brothers adopt and marry to a man of Bowa (another mountain community behind Faiava). Weayubava’s marriage establishes a relationship between the inhabitants of Bowa and Nikoko. This relationship is confirmed generations later with the marriage between Tomokivona and Nemiakaka, Andrew’s and Belami’s parents.

Besides the spatial and temporal dimensions of the cycle, the Bibiavona myth includes genealogical past in its timespan, which is continually restored by using many of the same personal names in each generation. Today there are Bibiavona children bearing the names of Tomokivona, Nabelesina, Toboyoyana, Tomokavalina and Lasalo. The significance of names in Melanesia (see for example Telban 1998: 83-93) is much broader than in Western societies, since it incorporates more than the idea of namesake. A name implies a set of attitudes, habits, and relationships of individuals, which link a person not only to a particular ancestor and his deeds, roles and personal characteristics but also to the sociocultural world of his or her community. Although a name is an inherited “*summary of personhood*”, it has also to be achieved within the life of the individual who possesses it (Young 1983a: 21).

Moses' narrative about Bibiavona's origin includes wars, marriages, exchanges, heroic deeds, sacrifices, wealth, poverty and ruin, and concludes in the recent past with the marriage of Tomokivona and Nemiakaka. In time, the myth could conclude with some other important event even closer to the present.

Aiwavo myth of origin

Moses, Belami and Andrew did not want anybody else to be present when they were telling their myth of origin. David Lalaoya was less concerned. Even when Moses asked him if he would prefer to be alone with me, he replied that it was not necessary. In contrast to the myth described by the Tomokivona brothers, David's narrative was better articulated and more lucid. As one of Young's closest informants, he had already earlier opportunities to recall it, and he also knew what level of narrative detail anthropologists want to hear. Like that of Bibiavona, the Aiwavo myth consists of several parts that, without the secret names, could stand as separate tales or *ifufu*. It is important to mention that David often referred to Jenness and Ballantyne's book *Language, Mythology and songs of Bwaidoga*, a photocopy of which he had obtained from Michael Young many years ago. "It is just as Jenness and Ballantyne write," he often said when I asked him to describe a particular custom or story. Although I was familiar with their writings I usually asked David for his own explanation, and it was invariably in some ways different to Jenness and Ballantyne's. In contrast to David, the Tomokivona brothers had not read Jenness and Ballantyne, though they would have heard David talk about them.

David, a leader of Aiwavo clan of Waikewala in Ukuna, narrated as follows

(part 1)

At Luwaiyoyo there was a cave called Gauyaba. From this cave the first human beings originated. Their name was Tabuvagata [*tubu* = grandfather; *vagata* = forever]. Before they emerged, nobody lived on Goodenough. One day one of them, Sakowa, saw a light that was coming from above his head. As he didn't know what it was, he decided to go and check. He pressed his head against the wall and tried to open the cave. When his friends saw what he was doing they came to help. Together they managed to remove the rock. Because they were pressing so hard their heads were full of blood. Sakowa came out with a drum. He smelled bad because he had a sore on his leg. When he tried to cover it with his other leg he accidentally beat the drum. The people who lived in the cave were frightened by this strange sound. They decided to stay there, while Sakowa and his friends went outside. In the meantime, people spread all over the island. Some of them noticed that they had left Sakowa behind. They came back and took him to Galuwata [in the mountains near Mt. Madawa]. These people who stayed in the cave came out at a place called Luwaiyoyo. The first was a man named Galagalaiwavo who came out with a *modawa* drum whose spirit was called Tokelebo. His wife came with him. Her name was Nelawata. Galagalaiwavo and Nelawata were without genitals. The spirit Tokelebo took a leaf from a *kaiyewa* tree. The leaf was very long and it had thorns on its edges. When the spirit made a sound the thorns started to dance. While dancing they cut the bottom part of the woman and created her vagina. They also touched the man's bottom part from which his penis grew.

(part 2)

Galagalaiwavo and Nelawata made a garden close to Luwaiyoyo. They planted a big taro (*ulaga*). They often visited their garden. One day Nelawata decided to cook some taro. She collected some, chopped it and left it to wash in a creek. In the meantime she went to collect firewood. While she was collecting firewood two pieces of taro went up into the sky and transformed themselves into the moon and the sun.¹¹ After she got back she noticed that two pieces of taro were missing. She searched for them everywhere but couldn't find them. She looked for them in a creek. The creek has been muddy ever since. The peel of the taro was transformed into a stone that is still there. That is why the creek is nowadays called Nelawata. When Nelawata couldn't find the taro, she went to her husband for help. She took what was left of the taro, cooked it and ate it together with her husband. After they had eaten, they saw something white rising from the east. It was the moon, shining really bright. Nelawata and Galagalaiwavo were copulating. Because it became very bright and the light from the moon lighted them up, Galagalaiwavo became angry. He took a piece of ginger, chewed it, recited a spell and spit it out on the moon. From then on the moon has black spots on it. He asked angrily "Why are you giving us light while we are copulating? People could see us," and once again he spit out ginger. Nelawata and Galagalaiwavo were wearing what are nowadays called traditional dress called *lulaiwavo*.

(part 3)

While people were coming out of the cave, Tokelebo the spirit was making sounds with his drums. With the first sound all the men came out, with the second one the women came out. With the third sound he created a woman's vagina and with the fourth one he made a man's penis. With the fifth sound all the spirits came out dressed in *luwaiyoyo*. *Modawa* drums started to beat and the spirits began to dance. People stood in two lines with the line of the spirits between them. The men stood in one line and the women in another. While they were dancing, the lines came together and then they separated again. The drum was beating like this:

Keitu-keitu kekenika

and see and see and let them see

gaito ana deba Ganivedaiya

who are baldheaded Ganivedaiya

ana deba

his baldness

vunegi yo

group settled down

kwalele, kwalele

you seek, you seek

Tokelebo was chewing a special kind of a ginger, which made his drumming even better. He told Galagalaiwavo to go and chop down a *modawa* tree, from which he made a drum. Tokelebo introduced him to ginger and the technique of beating a drum. He

¹¹ Jenness and Ballantyne give two versions of this story in which the taro is called *vilaga* (1928: 26-7).

showed Galagalaiwavo different places such as Kalokalo, Yanabele, Ufufu, Faiava. When people heard the drumming they were ready to dance. The next day they danced. Tokelebo, the great drum spirit, taught Galagalaiwavo spells, traditional songs and the way of dancing. All this was called *luwaulo*. Tokelebo had two sons who later changed into rocks. These rocks looked like testicles. From then on the Aiwavo clan's drum name was Tokelebo, its ancestors are Nelawata and Galagalavaivo, its dance is called *luwaulo*, its traditional dress is *luwaiyoyo*, and women's *doki* (skirt made from pandanus leaves) is Matakevakeva. Aiwavo's traditional body decoration is represented by black circles around the eyes that look like glasses. Their type of a house is called *kuloloba*, and the roof is not straight but vaulted in the middle. From the front of the roof hangs a garfish. The clan's totems are the drum Tokelebo and the monitor lizard *umala*. In the front of the yam house of the Aiwavo clan there always hangs a piece of wood that looks like a canoe. The yam house used to be loaded with yams and drums.

During that time, the Aiwavo ancestors settled at Luwaiyoyo. The place where the people had been dancing with the spirits became a pumpkin garden. Today that place is still full of pumpkins. There they left a drum. When the spirits stopped dancing they made a very big feast. They cooked a lot of food which included a lot of pumpkins. They made a mortuary feast for pumpkins. All the people from Bwaidoga and Faiava came up to Luwaiyoyo where Aiwavo distributed pumpkins all over the area. Their ripening season was in January, February and March, during the time of scarcity before the yams are ready to begin harvesting. After the mortuary feast people came down. They settled at Udeyadeya, a place that is close to Waikewala. After a big flood they moved to Waikewala.

(part 4)

The people who descended from Galuwata took out a drum and started to dance. Later they divided into two groups. One settled in the lowlands and the other on the hillside. The mountain people's totem is a spear (*giyo*) and the coastal people's totem is a drum (*modawa*). That is why people on the coast dance with drums and mountain people hunt with spears. They usually hunt in the bush where they collect edible leaves which their wives use for cooking. Their children often came down to the coast and observed the coastal people while they were dancing. They would tease the coastal children: "Look, our parents killed some flying foxes. The bones are here in front of us and we are going to eat them." The littoral children were scared and they went to their parents and told them that the selfish mountain children were teasing them and throwing bones at them. It was because of this that the mountain and coastal people became separated. Aiwavo ancestors came all the way from Galuwata and settled at Talowaka (on the mountain of Auligana), where some other Bwaidogans originated. They were part of the Aiwavo clan. Their real clan was Mikilavivila. The name Aiwavo derived from the burial of a person. Aiwavo, which means, "cooked", is also the word for a three-day-old corpse. This is due to the question people often ask: "How is the body in the grave? Is it cooked already?" This phase of burial is called Aiwavo.

Because David's ancestors descended from the cave they were bald. That is why they were called Ganivegaiya. Because David's ancestors were bald-headed his nickname is Debakoyakoya. If somebody mentions the name Ganivegaiya he will become bald.

It is a very powerful name that belongs to a spirit. David's son's second name is Ganivegaiya. That is why he will become bald.

(part 5)

The Aiwavo clan valuables or ornaments came from Galagalaiwavo. There lived a woman whose name was Inabo. Her brother Mokai lived in Afuya hamlet (close to Lautoto). One day Inabo decided to visit her brother. She took her basket and loaded it with ornaments and different types of *doki* and left her home. She walked down the beach until she reached Wagifa. She came to the Miabalia clan whom she asked if they had seen her brother Mokai. They told her that his home was far from their place. Because it was getting late, they advised her to spend the night in their hamlet. The next morning she gave one of her skirts that she was carrying in her basket to the people of Miabalia and left. When she reached Kabuna she asked the people of the Waikalivana clan about her brother. They told her that his home was still far away and because it was getting late they offered her a place to sleep. In the morning she gave them a *doki* and went further to the Ainagona clan at Vaikoya. Because it was still too far from her brother's place she spent a night at that place and left them a *doki* in the morning. The next day she came to Elaela at Nikoko and asked the Miyewayewa clan about her brother. Because Miyewayewa people saw her wearing a very nice *doki* they invited her to stay for two nights. She gave them *doki kewala* (red parrot skirt). The next day when she went with women to Belobelowai to fetch some water she saw her brother sitting on his *tuwaka* at Afuya. He had white hair. She ran to him and started to cry. Then she went to Eweli and took her basket and gave it to her brother. She gave him all the ornaments and *doki luwaiyoyo* from Galagalaiwavo. Nowadays the Aiwavo clan uses these ornaments. The Afuya people left their hamlet and moved to a place that is nowadays called Waikewala.

(part 6)

At Luwaiyoyo Nelawata transformed herself into a rock. When Galagalaiwavo went to Galayvavo he took all the ornaments with him. Later he transformed himself into a house. That is why the clan's house is called Galagalaiwavo. This house is at the Lalayayo Lake. Nowadays Wagifa people live around that lake. Later the house transformed itself into a stone and finally to a *doki*.

(part 7)

When the first ancestor Galagalaiwavo went to Galayvavo he took all the ornaments. Bwaidoga people came from Galuwata and settled at Talowaka. Later they moved to Mafabwabweya together with Wagifans. From there they went down to Babimayamana and from there to Folofolo. After they ended their war with Wagifa, they took their spears and speared a pig. This was the last fight between Bwaidoga and Wagifa people. The Bwaidogans returned from Folofolo and settled at Talowaka. At Talowaka there lived four /sic!/ brothers and a sister. Two brothers went to live in Folofolo where they speared a pig. One of them went to live at Wagifa. His name was Matagoya. The last brother Anila went to Aubaba. From him originated the population of Aubaba. Kavalana, Uleifi, Nabelesina and Lelesi and their sister, named Bwaidoga, settled at Talowaka. Bwaidogans were good fighters. Kavalana stayed at Talowaka from where Ukuna, Waikewala and Auligana people derive. Nabelesina

settled at Nikoko from where Nikoko people derive. Lelesi settled at Kabuna from where Kabuna people derive, and finally Ujeili went to Diodio. Their only sister Bwaidoga didn't marry. She lived with her elder brother Kewala. While they lived in Bwaidoga the population spread to Waikewala and Ukuna.

There used to live a woman who belonged to the Minefana clan. She was sitting on a *tuwaka* when a snake (*mota*) came and had intercourse with her. She became pregnant and delivered a baby-snake. His name was Motabikwa. She put the snake in a cave called Lua, where he stayed. One day the woman's younger child wanted to see his elder brother. Because his mother promised the snake that nobody would see him, she didn't let the little one come with her. But after the child's persistent begging she finally let him come with her. This myth belongs to the Minefana people.

(part 8)

Many people came out from Gauyaba and went to live at Galuwata. One of the men who was very rich and had a lot of shell ornaments went with his people to live at a place close to Belebele. There they dug a hole and went inside. They covered it so that nobody would find them. They went inside the cave without any food. These men came out and stole Belebele people's food from their gardens. They did this several times. When a man from Belebele noticed that somebody was stealing his crops he decided to hide in the sugar cane and find the thief. The next day he saw men coming out from the ground and stealing from his garden. He thought that these were people from Bwaidoga or Faiava. When the men went back, he followed them and saw them going back into the cave. He returned to the village and announced that people from the ground were ruining their crops. He told them to cut some sticks and get ready to plant them all over the garden. He also told the people to kill anybody that they found beneath the ground and eat them. Next day they took the sticks and started to dig in the garden. They dug holes and killed a lot of those people, carried them to their hamlets, cooked them and ate them. While the Belebele people were digging them out, their chief was searching for the underground chief. When he had found him he dragged him out and killed him. He took his armshell and sent it to the Trobriand Islands. He took his necklaces and sent them to Dobu people. Nowadays they still use them for their *kula* exchange. Finally he took his boar's tusk pendant, called Matabili, and sent it to Ukuna. The tusk stayed there and transformed itself first into a pig, then into a snake and finally into a lizard. It was changing like that all the time. While Matabili was a snake he copulated with that Minefana woman who was sitting on *tuwaka*. That is how Motabikwa was born.

David's narrative was much more coordinated and better articulated than that of the Tomokivona brothers. This, however, does not mean that his myth is more authentic or verifiable than Bibiavona's, since a myth can never be a wholly organized or completed entity. Its content includes and entwines different levels of living concerns of those individuals who identify with it. For this reason it is difficult to articulate it into a narrative, which represents a settled set of names, chronologically divided by years. Chronology, however, is not completely absent from myths. The Bibiavona and Aiwavo myths portray the genealogical past, not only of their ancestors but also of their spirits, and the places remembered through their travels, fights, marriages, separations and settlements.

The Aiwavo myth of origin retells the myth of the origin and dispersal of three groups that settle in different places within Bwaidoga district. The myth begins with the origin of Tabuvagata people in the Gauyaba cave near Luwaiyoyo. When attempting to describe his myth about Bibiavona origins, Andrew mentions the correct name of the cave or hole from which the immortal people originated. The main protagonist of the first section of the Aiwavo myth is Sakowa, who, like Plato's character in the Cave Parable, pursues the sunlight, which peeks through its crevices. Sakowa and his men push their heads against the wall with all their might, eventually breaking it open. This is the reason for Sakowa and his men and their descendants becoming bald. Like the baldness of Bibiavona's Babisinagea (see Andrew's myth part 1), Sakowa's perhaps symbolizes beauty and wealth, the revelation of something normally hidden by hair. Sakowa's stinking sore leg, on the other hand, is reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss' observation that lameness is symbolic of the autochthonous origin of man (1969: 214-216).

After Sakowa's departure for Galuwata (which is associated with the origin of important yam magic), the narrative returns to Luwaiyoyo, from where the second group of people descends. These are the *tubuvagata* who, due to the terrifying noise of Sakowa's drum, stayed behind in the cave. Under the guidance of Galagalaiwavo and his wife Nelawata, the group emerges, accompanied by the *modawa* drum and its spirit Tokelebo. In the rhythm of Tokelebo's drumbeat a thorny leaf shapes Galagalaiwavo's and Nelawata's genitals, differentiating them by sex. Tokelebo appears to symbolize both earth and fertility. The latter is revealed in Galagalaiwavo's and Nelawata's garden where they plant taro. While Nelawata is collecting firewood pieces of peeled taro are transformed into the moon and sun; while the taro peelings are transformed into stones that can still be seen in Nelawata creek. While the transformation of taro into sun and moon symbolizes fertility, the transformation of taro peelings into immobile stones symbolises wealth and power, as connoted by stasis.

The moon illuminates Nelawata and Galagalaiwavo while they are copulating. As in the Biblical story of Adam and Eve, they are shamed by the revelation of their "natural" nakedness, formerly hidden by darkness. Shame is a "social" emotion which signifies culture. The second part of Aiwavo's myth illustrates the circulation of fertility which links the natural (garden and taro), the human (Nelawata and Galagalaiwavo) and the celestial (sun and moon) into a cosmological cycle. This part of the myth concludes with Galagalaiwavo's anger, which provokes him to spit ginger magic to create black spots on the moon that are visible today.

The third part of the myth describes migrations of the people and the contacts with their neighbours. It then takes us back to Luwaiyoyo, the place of origin of Sakowa, Nelawata and Galagalaiwavo. Here Tokelebo, in the rhythm of the drum, creates a man and a woman and their genitals. The final rhythm of his creation evolves into a spirit dance. Ganivedaiya is the name of the bald-headed spirit that belongs to Aiwavo clan. According to David, the name is very powerful and brings baldness to everybody to whom it refers. In the rhythm of his drum Tokelebo shows Galagalaiwavo a special kind of ginger used for magic, teaches him the drum and shows him places that border his home. Later on, Tokelebo's sons transform themselves into a rock in the shape of a pair testicle – another symbol of fertility. In this part of the myth David names elements of Aiwavo clan's traditional *dewa*, such as the vaulted house roof, traditional clothing that is no longer used, and dances and songs that are gradually being forgotten. The third part of the myth concludes with a mortuary distribution of pumpkins by Luwaiyoyo during the hungry period preceding the yam harvest. After establishing relations with nearby places, Aiwavo clan ancestors moved to Udeyadeya in Ukuna.

The fourth part of the myth follows a third group of people who descended from the mountain village of Galuwata, where Sakowa and his men had gone. As in the origin of the

first two groups, their emergence from the cave is also accompanied by the beat of the drum and dancing. This leads to migration to other mountain and coastal areas. Here David disclosed only the name of the mountain site called Talowaka without mentioning the name of the place on the coast. Nevertheless, in accord with present day Aiwavo settlement, this place is probably Waikewala. This hamlet maintains strong marriage connections with Auligana, the mountain hamlet close to Talowaka. Here I might speculate that Aiwavo people who used to be part of Mikilavilavila clan first migrated to Auligana and then moved down to Mud Bay at Waikewala. This section of the Aiwavo myth stresses the difference between coastal and mountain people, especially in terms of their totems or emblems: drums and spears, which are universal emblems on Goodenough, though not invariably associated with the coast/mountain distinction.¹² In his conclusion, David elucidates some names such as Aiwavo, which denotes a rotting corpse.

The text of the fifth part describes Inabo's quest for her brother Mokai who lived in Afuya. Like Motalai, Inabo leaves traces of wealth behind her as she spends nights in different places. In exchange for hospitality she bestows one of her skirts (*doki*). Her basket of valuables, like drums, yams and skirts, signifies wealth and magical power. In many myths (including the one about Manubutu), *doki* confers magical power and fighting ability on its wearer. On her travels, Inabo leaves *doki* to the people of Wagifa, Kabuna, Vaikoya and Nikoko. At Nikoko she spends two nights and offers Miyewayewa people a special *doki* named after the red parrot. When she sights her grey-haired brother sitting on his *tuwaka* in Afuya, she presents him with *doki* Luwaiyoyo, the original heritage of Galagalaiwavo. The sitting and waiting posture of Mokai is reminiscent of *manumanua*, the magical stillness which anchors food and ensures village prosperity. The *manumanua* stasis of the brother is here opposed to the wealth dispersing wandering of the sister. Inabo's journey to Afuya leaves traces of Aiwavo's ancestral itinerary as a memory etched on the landscape. Every clan member brings this kind of collective memory into the present, either consciously (in the form of narrative) or inadvertently (in the form of enactment).

The sixth part of Aiwavo's myth brings us back to Luwaiyoyo, the place of origin of the first sexed couple, Galagalawavo and Nelawata. At this point David mentions again the source of Galagalaiwavo's wealth, which Inabo later distributed among individual clans. Similar disbursement of wealth is described in the first four parts of the myth. Galagalaiwavo later takes it to Galayvavo. There he transforms into a house, which stands alongside Lalayayo Lake, where Wagifa people live today. Later he changes again into a rock and finally into a *doki*. Like Galagalaiwavo's sons, his wife Nelawata also transforms into a rock. Again, these transformations suggest *manumanua*: the enclosed form and weighty substance of rock make it an ideal symbol of wealth that is preserved, contained and anchored. Turning into stone is a recurring motif in Goodenough mythology and folklore (Young 1977; 1983a).

The seventh episode of the myth illustrates the circular voyage of Bwaidoga people which is shown on the map below. The route, which leads through Talowaka, Mafabwabweya, Babiyanama, Fofofolo, before turning back to Galuwata, describes an odyssey, which exemplifies Bwaidogan cosmology. This is to some extent present in their myths of origin, which in the circularity of their various versions always return to the same place, regardless of changes or reinterpretations.

¹² See Young 1971: Chap.11 for a discussion of "ceremonial moiety" in Kalauna.

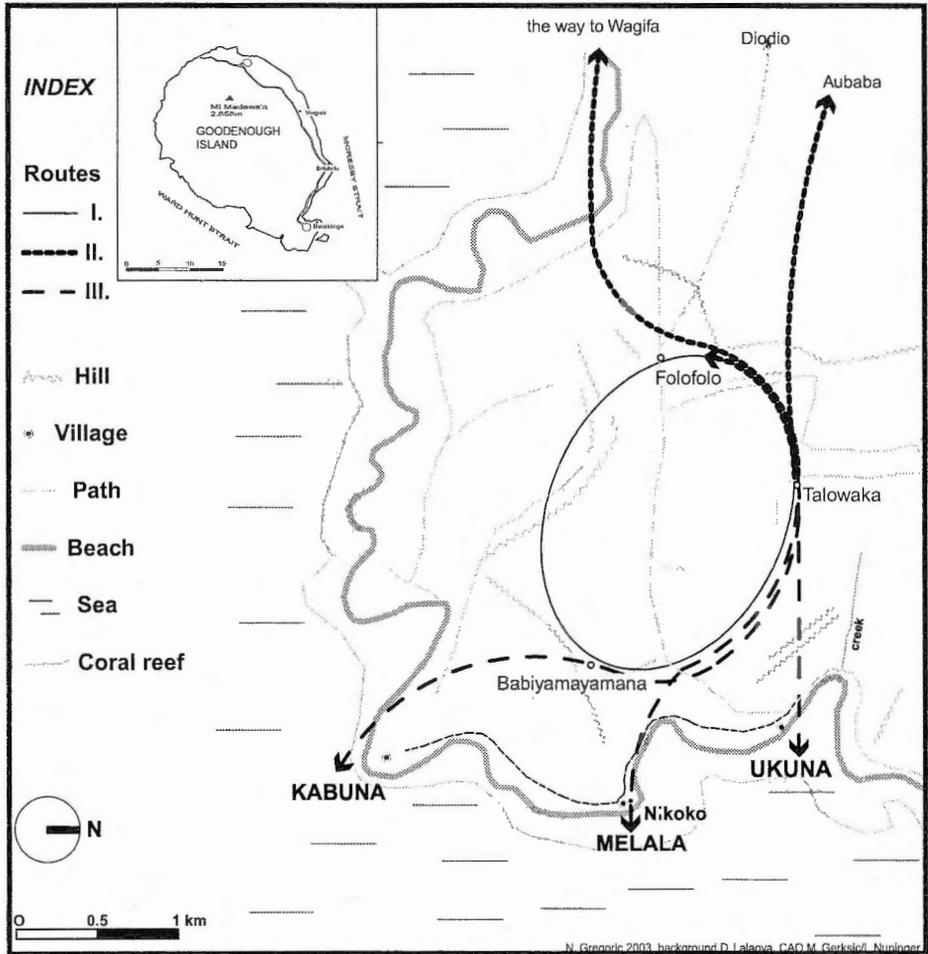


Figure 3. Routes where mythological heroes travelled.

Relocation to places south and north of Talowaka occurs after ending the circular journey (see map, route I). While the first group of brothers settles in the north, the second group leaves for the south along with their sister Bwaidoga, the brave female warrior after whom they named the old village which comprised Lautoto, Wifala, Nikoko and Elaela. (The fact that her name now designates the entire district is an accident of Wesleyan Mission history.) Two of the brothers from the first group moved to Folofolo, the third to Wagifa and the last to Aubaba (see map, route II). The second group of brothers dispersed to Auligana, Ukuna, Nikoko and Kabuna (see map, route III). The villages mentioned, including Banada,

which was founded relatively recently, are still politically and culturally significant.¹³ The founders of these villages were the first ancestors of particular descent groups.

The Aiwavo myth concludes with a somewhat anomalous section about a wealthy man (*kaiwabu*) from Galuwata, who together with his gang steals the Bebebe people's crops. The same story is embedded in a lengthy version of the myth about the killing of Manubutu and his wife as recorded by Jenness and Ballantyne's *Language, Mythology and Songs of Bwaidoga* (1928: 66-68). David's version also describes the distribution of wealth after the killing of the wealthy "chief" who lived underground. His armshells and necklaces initiate *kula* exchange in Kiriwina and Dobu, while his circular tusk neck pendant, *matabili*, goes to Ukuna and becomes personified as the snake Matabili, who impregnates the Minafane woman. Although David tactfully declines to tell the story of Motabikwa (or Motalai), we already know that he is the snake-son who exchanges his valuable tusks for his mother's food before resentfully abandoning Bwaidoga and condemning its people to live in poverty.

CONCLUSION

Both the Bibiavona and the Aiwavo myths describe the circular movement of mythological heroes along different paths and through different places. Their contingent halting at particular locations marks out a landscape that is entwined with mythology. This interlacing of myth and place is typical of Melanesia generally. Myths tell of ancestral ways of life, revealing genealogical pasts, yet allowing the continual recreation and reinvention of people's "histories" and "traditions".

Colonial government, missionization, and the introduction of new crops and subsistence technologies initiated changes that have been occurring on Goodenough and elsewhere for the past century. All have impinged in some way on pre-contact or "traditional" land ownership, which remains a cornerstone of Bwaidogan identity. Recent population growth has exacerbated the problem of land scarcity and resulted in increased conflict over land. As people grapple with this problem, they turn to myths of clan origin. Within the wider, dispersed clans, are localized descent groups (like Bibiavona and Aiwavo) who need to assert their identity vis-à-vis one another by reconstructing mythological histories once owned by their "mother clans". Disagreements concerning the content of a myth are bound to be rife. As we have seen, even brothers cannot fully agree on the "correct" telling of a myth.

Myths of origin are not something that Bwaidogan people talk about in their daily conversations. They are narrated and questioned only on particular occasions, such as when land rights are in dispute. Thus, for example, Moses contested Diana's myth about Manubutu that he claimed belonged to his clan. Nowadays, myths in Bwaidoga not only legitimate land rights but may also be used to create them. Thus, for example, the common Massim myth about the resentful snake can be appropriated, with local names and details, as a particular clan myth. Bibiavona and Aiwavo both lay claim to it.

¹³ The original Bwaidogan villages were Kabuna, Bwaidoga and Ukuna. During the last five decades these villages have expanded, leading to local migration. Bwaidoga village, even before Jenness's time (1910-11), had divided, with a number of clans crossing the bay to Banada where they founded a new village. Today Banada itself has expanded to the extent that it is subdivided into two village wards. Old Bwaidoga has come to be known as Melala (literally, "the village") as the mission and the government appropriated the name Bwaidoga for the district as a whole. In addition to the four above mentioned villages, there is also Auligana which lies on the hill behind Ukuna (Young 1968; 1989).

Many Bwaidogan people want their traditions to be written down in their own "history book", as Bwaidogans refer to anthropological monographs. Jenness and Ballantyne's two books on Bwaidoga and Young's two books on Kalauna are works that Bwaidogan people treat almost as they do the Bible, sacred texts in which the truth about their *kastam* is recorded. But whose truth and whose *kastam*? Bwaidogan people's? Kalauna people's? Or the truth of Goodenough Islanders more generally?

POVZETEK

Vsebina članka govori o naravi živetih mitov v vasi Bwaidoga na otoku Goodenough, v provinci Milne Bay na Papui Novi Gvineji. Prvi del članka osvetli temeljne pristope in poglede o naravi živetih mitov, ki so jih nekateri avtorji (Malinowski 1926, Leenhard 1947, Lévi-Strauss 1976, Wagner 1978, Weiner 1988, Young 1983a in Telban 1998), uveljavili v svojih študijah. V drugem delu članka sta predstavljena dva mita, ki jih je avtorica zabeležila v vasi Bwaidoga. Mita Bibiavona in Aiwavo klana sta tako kot ostali bwaidoški miti, živeta in utelešena v življenje in delovanje njunih lastnikov. Bwaidoški miti torej niso „zgodbe kar tako“, temveč predstavljajo neposredno vez s predniki, njihovimi duhovi in genealoškimi zgodovinami. Kot taki so inkorporirani v posamezne kraje, kjer njihovi lastniki živijo, vrtnarijo in preko katerih se gibljejo. Družbeno-kulturne spremembe in rast prebivalstva sta v zadnjih nekaj desetletjih vplivali na primanjčevanje zemlje, kar je imelo za posledico pojav zemljiških sporov. V reševanju tovrstnih konfliktov se Bwaidočani vračajo k mitološkim koreninam o izvoru njihovih klanov. Prav tu pa se porajajo različna trenja ne le med posameznimi klani, temveč tudi med posamezniki znotraj njih.

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