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LANDSCAPE, MYTH AND TIME

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Abstract

This article demonstrates the inherent relations between landscape, myth and time. Here I follow the lead of anthropologists such as Lévi-Strauss and Wagner and historians like Simon Schama. In particular, I highlight that what goes on 'inside' of myths is systematically connected to what occurs 'outside': how the intimate features of landscape form a kind of prism through which wider influences might be understood. The article considers two *tidibe* narratives from the Fuyuge people of highland Papua. These mythic narratives emerged at different moments in the colonial and post-colonial state project. Each narrative portrays features of landscape that simultaneously disclose a unique presence of time. This 'time' is different from the progress-orientated 'time' of government or missionaries. And yet, as I show, both are connected: through the ways government and missionaries transformed the Fuyuge people and their landscape, and how the Fuyuge landscape and *tidibe* came to reveal these 'outside' influences.

Key Words ◆ history ◆ landscape ◆ myth ◆ Papua New Guinea ◆ time

People's sense of place and landscape . . . extends out from the locale and from the present encounter and is contingent upon a larger temporal and spatial field of relationships.

(Bender, 2001: 6)

Landscapes as lived entail myths whether these myths are explicitly known or implicitly understood. The historian Simon Schama argues as much in *Landscape and Memory* (1995): his wide-ranging examination of the way implicit and known myths are inherently linked to distinctive landscape forms in the western¹ present and past. In anthropology, Lévi-Strauss's four volume *Mythologiques* inquires into a similar phenomenon:

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the transformation of myths and the varied landscape and social forms of North and South American Indians, through which these myths prevail. As Wagner (2001: 73) has noted, it was Lévi-Strauss's distinctive insight to show that what goes on outside myths is intrinsically related to what goes on inside them; '[i]t is almost as if the intimate features of locality formed a kind of prism through which the global facts of existence might be described'.

In this article I examine a myth I have considered previously (Hirsch, 1990) and do so in the light of Wagner's comment about the relations between the 'inside' and 'outside' of myths. I also more briefly probe a second myth previously considered, in order to further clarify issues raised by analysis of the first myth. The myths I consider here were told to me by people from the Fuyuge-speaking area of the Papuan highlands. Among the Fuyuge such narratives are known as *tidibe*. *Tidibe* are known and recited in order to account for how present arrangements and conventions came to be formed. The notion of *tidibe* refers to two connected forms: to a singular creator force or power from which everything derives and a multiplicity of human-like characters whose movements and actions are narrated in specific stories – both the characters and narratives are also known as *tidibe*.

In my previous analysis of the first *tidibe*, I considered it in relation to the Fuyuge concern with the ancestral loss and contemporary recovery of *solon* betelnut and how this was connected to Fuyuge circumstances in the colonial past and post-colonial present. I refer to this *tidibe* as the 'betelnut *tidibe*'. Here I complement that analysis by considering more explicitly the *tidibe* as the outcome of transformations occurring 'outside' as much as 'inside' the narrative. The *tidibe*, I suggest, is either an old myth that has changed or an old convention – 'way' (*mad*), as the Fuyuge refer to it – that came to be articulated into a 'new' *tidibe*. The reason I suggest this is because the *tidibe* I describe in this article, contains conventions present in the pre-colonial past *and* conventions that came to be incorporated during the colonial period. I was able to ascertain these matters from archival materials and early 20th-century publications on the Fuyuge I consulted, as well as what the Fuyuge told me about their past.

In explicating what is occurring 'inside' this myth (and the second myth) I do so in terms of the local Fuyuge landscape depicted. I show that what is portrayed is connected to the transformed conditions of Fuyuge existence brought about by colonial encounters and the wider regional transformations of which these encounters were a part. This latter aspect is what is occurring 'outside' the myth. As I describe in more detail later, the colonial situation that is particularly relevant here is the period following the Second World War when the 'development' project in Papua was explicitly instituted. This era lasted until the

mid-1980s when a new 'western epoch', often referred to as 'structural adjustment' came to be promoted internationally, with particular consequences for Papua New Guinea.

Lévi-Strauss famously advised that myths 'are instruments for the obliteration of time' (Lévi-Strauss, 1970: 16, cited in Gow, 2001: 11). Gow (2001) has more recently elaborated Lévi-Strauss's insight with respect to a series of Piro (Amazonian) myths. He writes: 'If we accept that myths are operating to obliterate time, we can look to the very myths themselves to tell us what historical events and processes they might be seeking to obliterate' (Gow, 2001: 19). However, I want to suggest that it is not so much time that myths obliterate, but particular effects of time or events (cf. Gell, 1992: 23–29). It would seem that myths uniquely 'assimilate' events and processes into local performances and understandings of the world, and in the Fuyuge case, as ones that derive from *tidibe*. In a sense myths, such as *tidibe*, render obvious such matters – in very distinctive ways. This is why Wagner (1986) elaborates the notion of obviation and argues that myths (among other forms) not so much obliterate time but disclose the *presence of time*. Unlike the passage of time that is explicitly conspicuous, 'the "presence" of time [is] somewhat less so' (Wagner, 1986: 84).

The presence of time is what Wagner refers to as 'epoch'. It is the manner in which social-event processes achieve a resolution in their meaning within the contours of the 'now' disclosed – that is, the image (and illusion) of simultaneity. This is the 'time' disclosed in dreams, myths, rituals, exchanges and other stylized forms that render 'the present' apparent or obvious. The conventional use of the concept of epoch in history (see earlier) can be understood in a similar sense. It is an 'organic' time,

for the events occurring within it have a definitive and nonarbitrary – in fact, an organic or constitutive – relationship to the sequence as a whole, as in the plot of a myth . . . [I]ts events are in themselves relations, each one subsuming and radically transforming what has gone before. (Wagner, 1986: 81)

Whereas people cannot avoid their orientation towards the future and in this sense the past is always future orientated, epoch, by contrast, is past and future that exists in a simultaneous manner (see Hirsch and Stewart, 2005).

What I seek to highlight in this article is how the epochs that westerners create and write for themselves (in relation to 'policy' and that of 'history') have come to be inextricably connected to the epochs that peoples such as the Fuyuge engender for themselves. Westerners and others – such as the Fuyuge – seek to reveal time's presence in the unique ways each constitutes the mutual arrangements of landscapes and myths. However in a world influenced by colonial and post-colonial

relations such landscapes are inherently contested, where diverse views of power contend. What emerges, then, in the case like that of the Fuyuge is not so much distinct landscapes of power as a landscape of contending powers.

* * *

The Fuyuge-speakers I consider in this article live in the upper Udabe Valley of the Central Province, Papua New Guinea (PNG). The Fuyuge as a whole number ca. 14,000 and reside in five river valleys located in the Wharton Ranges; the Udabe Valley itself has ca. 6000 inhabitants. Each valley is divided into named territorial and dialect entities known as *em* (home). The 'home' I resided in is called Visi, with a population of about 450. At the very end of my first fieldwork with the people of Visi, PNG was celebrating its 10th anniversary of National Independence. This was on 16 September 1985. In the Independence issue of *The Times of Papua New Guinea* (15 September 1985: 11) there was a letter published by the then Prime Minister Michael Somare. His letter addressed an IMF report and journalistic commentary, both of which focused on his government's management of the PNG economy. In retrospect, what his letter can be read as signalling was that the pre-Independence project of national development – emphasizing social and political relations over economic relations – was about to radically transform. Central to this shift is his forecast that revenues from major oil and mineral projects will be substantial in the long term. It is the emphasis on these projects that highlight the new priority of economic over social and political relations. In fact, PNG's constitution contains a commitment to sustainable development. One of its five goals is for Papua New Guinea's natural resources and environment to be conserved and used for the collective benefit of all, and to be replenished for the benefit of future generations. However, at this moment the national goal seemed to no longer apply.

What this shift indicated, then, was that to transform PNG into a nation-state based on policies of internal development no longer appeared appropriate, timely or viable as they had in previous decades – certainly since National Independence in 1975. A new epoch was beckoning, an epoch centred on structural adjustment or the project of globalization in contrast to that of development. The development project itself was a post Second World War innovation that attempted to institute the market into national economies as a way of stabilizing capitalism. By contrast, the priority at this historical juncture (mid 1980s) was the management of *global* economic relations, with the 'instituted market' in its new form as a *transnational* entity. Whereas under the development project the nation acted as 'figure' to the 'ground' of the global – completing what Polanyi described as 'the great transformation' – the global now acts as figure to the ground of nation (cf. McMichael,

1998: 101, citing Polanyi, 1957). The development project no longer appeared a credible or obvious project and 'structural adjustment' or 'globalization' emerged as an innovation of these previous conventions. The new priority was a project that allied multilateral institutions (such as the IMF) with state administrators (such as Somare) and PNG financial classes, to redefine the meaning of development and the role of the state.²

The shift from 'developmentalism' to 'structural adjustment' was now the prevailing 'policy' and it made sense in terms of understandings of 'historical progression'. Progress is one of the key tropes of modern history: the notion that time is irreversible and that change is cumulative. As Burke (2002: 17–18) notes, progress is related to the idea that 'you can't put back the clock'; a view of the past as effectively linear.

The shift from 'developmentalism' to 'structural adjustment' presupposes both for the analyst and the key agents affecting the transformation (e.g. transnational organizations, state officials) a consciousness of modern historical time. It is a consciousness based on the temporal distinction between the past as 'dead and gone' (as the domain of 'history' and historians) and the present as 'here and alive'. But this is simultaneously an act of self-determination that westerners take as a conventional temporal distinction.³ In highlighting the limits of historical consciousness I am not denying the need to recognize coevalness as argued by Fabian (1983). Although different peoples, through encounters, interactions and more indirect effects, inhabit the same passage of time their *perception* of time – epoch or time become consciousness – will not necessarily be the same. The trope of 'development' is still deployed by politicians as much as by ordinary citizens, but its epoch, so to speak, has been surpassed by the new trope of 'structural adjustment'; this is the present or 'now' inhabited by powerful agents like the IMF or World Bank. However, as I indicated earlier, the shift from one trope to the other was akin to a figure/ground reversal – to the kind of transformations effected in myth (cf. Wagner, 1986: 124).

* * *

Several months before Somare's letter was published a *gab* in Visi concluded. *Gab* is the name that Fuyuge-speakers give to both the village in which the events of the ritual are performed and unfold, and to the whole performance of events: dances, pig-killings and ceremonial exchanges, all accomplished in the name of the young, old and dead. *Gab* is performed to 'wash away' the shame of life-crisis transitions. It is staged by relatives and with the co-ordinating influence of one or more *amede*. *Amede* are men that sustain the 'ways' of the linguistic and territorial collectivities (*em*) and enable *gab* to be arranged and performed. These men make it possible, then, for the name of a collectivity (and the

names of persons it contains) to acquire a translocal presence. In order for the organizers of a *gab* to magnify their presence and name, and thus become powerful, different kinds of people are 'pulled' into the ritual: one or more collectivities of dancers from near and/or far, exchange partners from distant locations, and men and women who support the organizers in killing pigs that are exchanged with the others.

This was only one of several *gab* being staged in the Fuyuge valleys at the time. And this particular *gab* derived from previous *gab* relations established in the past (as between one of the collectivity of dancers and numerous of the exchange partners) and foreshadowed *gab* relations to be reciprocated or emerge afresh in the future. The coercive relations established between the *gab* organizers and those pulled in from far and wide to the *gab* village, conjured up an image of names and persons magnified and thus recognized over a extensive regional range. This is how power and success in *gab* is perceived by the Fuyuge to be achieved. The concentration of many people and places in one place, and then their release and dispersal, is the core of this performance. But how this is enacted in any specific *gab* is a contested issue, an issue of what constitutes *timely* action (see Hirsch, 2004). The issue the makers of *gab* continually grapple with is to know what is conventional, but also what is innovatory and appropriate, now.

One matter that centrally occupied my hosts at this moment was the recovery of the cultivated large-fruited *solon* betelnut, especially as it had been 'lost' in the ancestral past to lowland peoples, such as the Mekeo. This interest, I suggest, was an outgrowth of an earlier phase of the development project that was now on the verge of radical transformation. In the past, Fuyuge in the upper Udabe Valley did not value or chew this or any kind of betelnut as indicated in early colonial government patrol reports. For instance, at the beginning of last century the ethnologist Williamson conducted research among the Mafulu (Mabulu), Fuyuge-speakers at the extreme south west of the Auga Valley. Geographically, they are Fuyuge closest to the Mekeo. As Williamson (1912: 66, emphasis added) wrote:

Betel-chewing is apparently not indulged in by these people as extensively as it is done in Mekeo and on the coast; but they like it well enough, and for a month or so before a big feast, during which period they are under strict taboo restrictions as to food, they indulge in it largely. *The betel used by them is not the cultivated form used in Mekeo and on the coast, but a wild-species, only about half the size of the other.*

The value these Fuyuge-speakers came to attribute to *solon* betelnut emerged when the country began to be 'developed' after the Second World War. Central to this emergence was the main city and capital of the country, Port Moresby, that was transformed during the 1950s and

onwards. At this time, coastal and inland peoples, most notably the Mekeo, began to market *solon* betelnut in various open-air markets. Unlike more conventional cash crops, betelnut requires little labour, is easy to transport and sell, and substantial monetary wealth was acquired by the Mekeo (see Hau'ofa, 1981). Fuyuge men were contracted to go as unskilled labourers during the 1950s to assist in the development of the capital. This is when they began to learn of the special value of this betelnut entity. Over the next decades Fuyuge in the upper Udabe Valley (and in other Fuyuge valleys) started to concentrate and align *solon* betelnut with the mountain *inae* betelnut – alluded to by Williamson – in the *gab* plaza.⁴ The upper Udabe Fuyuge, in particular, came to recognize over the years that they were poignantly excluded from this lucrative trade.

In the past, as in the present, *gab* takes 'public' form when *hoyan* trees (laurels, *Cryptocarya lauraceaefin*) found in the forest are cut, hidden and then displayed around the *gab* plaza. It is the display of the *hoyan* that visibly draws attention to the *gab*; the *hoyan* is what allows the place of the *gab* to be seen by others from around the valley. Fuyuge told me that this was necessary before making the 'word' of the *gab* known; that is, before challenging others to come to the plaza to perform. The reason *hoyan* needs to be cut and placed the way it is done was recounted to me in a *tidibe*. I was originally told this *tidibe* not to understand *hoyan* but to understand how *solon* betelnut had been lost to the Fuyuge in the upper Udabe Valley. It was only later, when I was discussing the status of the *hoyan* tree that I realized I already knew its *tidibe*. How, in short, has *hoyan* become connected to *solon*? In order to discern these connections it is necessary to consider Fuyuge epochal ideas as discussed earlier: What is the presence of time revealed by the *tidibe*? There is every indication that the part of the *tidibe* concerning betelnut is an innovation precipitated by the consequences of the development project influencing the Fuyuge. The *tidibe* is as follows (the *tidibe*, as I suggested earlier, is either a transformation of an established *tidibe*, or an old convention that was engendered into a 'new' narrative. The portion I have highlighted by italic indicates something of this 'old' and 'new' difference, as this part connects with the 'loss' of *solon*):

Once those of Lolof [a village name in the Udabe Valley near the current mission station at Ononge] made a fence of trees (*hoyan*) around their village and killed pigs inside. One day a woman was sweeping the plaza to remove the branches that had fallen down. While she was sweeping, one of the branches broke off and fell onto her head and she died. As a result, they chased the tree into the big forest. They told him to stay in the bush and if they wanted to make a *gab* and kill pigs, they would come, cut him, plant him around the plaza and then kill the pigs: 'You stood here but a branch broke off from you and killed someone (i.e. his mother), so go to the bush'.

They broke one branch and brought it down to the Kuni people [who live to the south west], to a village plaza there. One was also planted at Deva-Deva [another village among the Kuni]. In this latter village, the chief was talking one day in the men's house. At the same time a woman in the village was having labour pains and making a lot of noise. She was disturbing him and he told her to go away to another place and give birth there; he chased her away. He then kept talking and talking until his jaw fell apart. He then died. When they buried him the betelnuts called ivo and baumau came out of his mouth and grew there. The woman gave birth to solon betelnut and coconut and put them in the water. The water carried it right down to Mekeo, to a pool there. Here it was turning around in a whirlpool. A Mekeo man took a stick and with it brought these things out of the water. This is why the Mekeo have plenty of betelnuts and coconuts.

In the first part of the *tidibe* the woman and *hoyan* are unified as mother and son. But the actions of the tree lead to their differentiation whereby the tree is chased into the forest because he caused his mother's death. The tree must then be recurrently recovered in order to form the basis of vital, social life – *gab* – where sons (and daughters) are differentiated from mothers through rites enacted in the *gab* plaza. This also leads to a further differentiation where all the betelnuts that were implicitly united in the upper Udabe Valley are then 'lost' to lowland and coastal peoples; the current distribution of these types of betelnut. This occurs when chief and pregnant woman are united in the village plaza and then later separated – the woman being chased away like *hoyan*. The chief then dies, but in his death he becomes analogous to the woman: both give birth to versions of betelnut (and coconut). The woman puts hers in the water, they flow away and are stopped in a whirlpool and taken out with a stick by a Mekeo; a stick analogous to that broken off from *hoyan*. What had ultimately originated in the mountains was now lost to the Mekeo. In order to perform *gab*, at this time, *solon* needs to be recovered from the lowlands and coast in a similar way that *hoyan* needs to be recovered from in the forest. The recovery of each from opposite ends of the current Fuyuge landscape – real and imagined – renders the other 'obvious' (Wagner, 1978: 31).

I have not found any published or archival material to suggest that this *tidibe* existed in the past and it does seem unlikely that an upper Udabe Valley *tidibe* of *solon* existed previously. However, it does seem likely that a *tidibe* for *hoyan* – whether in this form or otherwise (as an implicit 'way' [*mad*]) – would have existed given that the convention for placing this tree pre-dates that of *solon* use. The current manner in which this *tidibe* connects *hoyan* and *solon* reminds us of Wagner's observation given earlier: 'it is almost as if the intimate features of locality formed a kind of prism through which the global facts of existence might be described'; what is happening *inside* the myth is intrinsically related to what goes on *outside* of the myth. The intimate features of landscape

expose the primordial unity of *hoyan* and *solon* – their original placement at the village of Lolof gives this concrete visible form. The global facts of existence are the potential exclusion of the upper Udabe Fuyuge from *solon* – under the conditions promoted by the PNG development project. Central here was the development and expansion of Port Moresby, the Fuyuge lack of a road to the urban centre, the Mekeo dominance of *solon* betelnut marketing in Port Moresby, and a vehicular road from Mekeo directly into the urban centre. The situation of *solon* being displaced is rendered similar to that of *hoyan* chased away into the forest: under current conventions both need to be reunited in the enactment of *gab*.

The Fuyuge concern with *solon* was occurring at the same 'clock time' or passage of time, so to speak, as Somare's grappling with the final stages of PNG's national development project. Each, in their unique ways, was contending with the outcomes and consequences of this project. My Fuyuge hosts and Somare were both conducting themselves at the same time as one might measure this but each of them was located in a different epoch, a different 'now', as regards their perceptions of time.

* * *

The year 1985 was also, incidentally, the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the French mission in Papua, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (Mission de Sacré Coeur). These are the missionaries that entered the Fuyuge area during the late 19th century and subsequently missionized all five Fuyuge valleys. Their projects of conversion were conducted at the same time that they transformed the Fuyuge landscape through road building, the construction of mission stations and parish chapels, among other place-making enterprises. The road-building projects, in particular, were often done in conjunction with, or the support of, government agents and their patrolling activities. These were initially horse-trails, some of which were much later upgraded into local vehicular roads, though never extended to the coast. In general, over the decades among the Fuyuge, government and missionary came to be closely linked in local perceptions. This is because of their allied place-making projects and the way each introduced 'law' in a combined but particular manner (see Hirsch, 1999).

Like the 'betelnut *tidibe*' discussed earlier, I was also told a *tidibe* that accounts for how the missionaries (and government) came into Fuyuge lands, and especially the upper Udabe Valley. I refer to this *tidibe* as the 'missionary *tidibe*'. Unlike the 'betelnut *tidibe*', though, I *did* find reference to this narrative in archival sources. During the 1960s, while the policy of development was being implemented, Australia – as colonial power – began to prepare the country for self-government (1972) and subsequent National Independence (1975). Local government councils were set in motion and replaced the village-based appointments of

colonial patrol officers. At this time a patrol officer visiting the upper Udabe Valley (to the north of Visi, in the home of Woitape) is explicitly told a *tidibe*. He refers to it as a 'legend' and records it in his patrol report under the title of 'Solusia'. I have discussed elsewhere this version and the one I was later told (Hirsch, 1999). A key agent in both versions is the *tidibe* figure known as Solusia.⁵ Both versions also begin in roughly the same manner. I quote from the version in the patrol report: 'Solusia caught a "cuscus" [Tok Pisin for a marsupial] but he found that no matter how he tried to cook it, the "[c]uscus" remained uncooked;⁶ finally, in despair, Solusia threw the [c]uscus in a river. The animal floated in the river until it came to the coast'. In both versions the 'cuscus' is found by another *tidibe* figure (but with different names in the two versions) and this figure comes into the mountains in search of Solusia. After asking repeatedly for Solusia (portrayed in different ways in the two versions) he is finally found. The two versions then differ quite substantially from this point onwards.

In the patrol report version Solusia and the figure named Gevari travel to the coast and tell Europeans about the place they had visited and many patrols follow that of Gevari: 'The story continued to tell of the various patrols that came through the area and how they treated the local people'. Here, then, we find how government patrols came into the Fuyuge and transformed the people.

In the 'missionary *tidibe*' I was told Solusia⁷ and the figure named Ulgio come to Ononge and then Visi in the upper Udabe Valley. At Visi they found the 'base' man of Visi, the man from whom others imagine they derive, and his two sons. Solusia and Ulgio then go to the coast and tell Father Clauser⁸ to go to Visi and meet the men they saw there. Clauser travels to Visi and subsequently 'puts the law into the heads' of these men by breaking a spear over the head of one of them. 'Later with other Fathers he built houses of reeds all down the valley. Today, they live in permanent buildings'.

Both versions, in their distinctive ways, commence with the non-presence of either government or missionary. The 'cuscus' that would be conventionally cooked and shared with others (and not eaten by the hunter) is unable to be transformed in this manner. What it does enable is the subsequent incorporation of government and missionary into the social lives of the Fuyuge and the bringing of 'law'. This is achieved through a series of substitutions or displacements and in the process the limits of current social conventions – the modes of conduct brought by these outside agents – is revealed. In both these versions of the *tidibe* the figure of Solusia is pivotal. His significance in these narratives may be further elucidated by how a version of this figure is represented in the accounts produced by westerners 'outside' this myth. As it turns out it is Clauser himself who produced these accounts.

As is well documented in mission-produced histories of the Mission of the Sacred Heart, especially that written for the centenary in 1985, the first missionaries to enter the Fuyuge area came on the native trails alongside the Auga River, the river the 'cuscus' was thrown into. Eventually, during 1905, Father Fastré established a base at the south-western end of the river, at Popole.⁹ This was after over a decade of missionary efforts among the lowland Mekeo and neighbouring peoples. 'The Mustard Seed' is the title of the English translation¹⁰ of the book written to document this history of 'progress' from 1885–1985 (Delbos, 1985). The title is a trope from the Book of Matthew,¹¹ the image of a small seed that grows into a life-giving tree. It is used to structure this story of progress and struggle, and how the various Papuan peoples and landscapes were transformed and 'conquered'. This historical narrative is 'outside' the Fuyuge *tidibe*, in a similar way the Fuyuge narratives are 'outside' this missionary 'myth'. And yet, the performances of the missionaries in their progressive quest among the Fuyuge is transformed into a potent event 'inside' *tidibe*.

Some of the documentary evidence for the 'Mustard Seed' history derives from the mission-produced journal, 'Annales de Notre Dame du Sacré Coeur' (ANDSC), published in Issoudun, France, since 1866. The journal appears monthly and contains articles, letters and other items by the missionaries from their various overseas or French locations. When the missionaries were 'progressing' into the valleys of the Fuyuge during the early 20th century they sent back lengthy articles to ANDSC that formed major parts of the publication. This was the case, for example, when Father Clauser, Fastré's curate, ventured into the upper Udabe Valley for the first time.

During 1909 Father Clauser was making his way to the end of the Auga Valley in preparation to traverse into the Udabe Valley. He had come to know the denizens of the Auga Valley well over the previous months and year. His visits had been from the mission base at Popole. As Clauser recounts in the pages of the ANDSC his party made their way to Juv'ul'Aje where he had been 15 months previously: 'I remember the friendly welcome I received here . . . from Gopa Murife, the young chief [*amede*]'.

Clauser washes and changes his clothing when he recalls the lack of a significant character:

I at last noticed the absence of SoluSi,¹² Gopa Murife's young son, about 8–10 years old [and] the nicest little Kanak face I had ever seen. I met him at the time of my first visit . . . and I had seen him since at a festival among the Ove tribe. I learn that he has gone off up the mountain, with bow and arrows, hunting birds. They call him and soon he arrives, panting and beaming with joy. He never left my side all evening.¹³ (ANDSC, 1910: 157–8)

Clauser was clearly very taken with SoluSi. This is expressed unquestionably in the account penned for his missionary colleagues. It is also

very likely to be a sentiment known in the Auga Valley and one that accompanied Clauser in his travels into the Udabe Valley, when he visited Visi and Ononge. We can imagine that Clauser asked after SoluSi in a manner analogous to that phrased in the *tidibe* I was told as well as that told to the patrol officer two decades earlier. What I draw attention to here is how SoluSi became implicated into the way the missionaries constituted the Fuyuge landscape and people according to their visions, and how this came to be written and represented to others. Clauser's brief relations with SoluSi were transformed into a different kind of narrative, to account for how SoluSi pulled Clauser into the upper Udabe Valley (or where the government is drawn in, in a comparable manner).

There is nothing about Clauser's meeting with SoluSi (Solusia) in the 'Mustard Seed' and only a passing reference to Clauser's movements into the Udabe Valley (Delbos, 1985: 150–2). Rather, this journey is mentioned to continue the story of progress and more to prepare the ground for a discussion of the 'legendary' Father Dubuy who formally opened the mission in the valley (during 1913) and served there for nearly 40 years until his tragic death: 'leaving behind an example of faithfulness to duty and of tireless labour in works both apostolic and material' (Delbos, 1985: 152). My Fuyuge hosts in the upper Udabe Valley would speak with much admiration for Dubuy and, as with his missionary chronicler, referred to him as a *soso u bab* (father of work). However, Clauser is known by the upper Udabe Fuyuge as the first missionary to come to the Udabe and this is steadfastly recounted in what I call the 'missionary *tidibe*'.

The missionaries render obvious to themselves, through the trope of the mustard seed, their works of progress and apostolic 'conquest', and why they were compelled to transform lands and peoples like the Fuyuge. In a similar manner, my Fuyuge hosts in Visi perform through their *tidibe*, why it is apparent that the missionaries (and government) came and transformed their land and conduct, and gave them 'law' – or why they 'lost' *solon* betelnut. Although all of these people inhabit in one way or another the landscape of Fuyuge speakers, their perceptions of time are significantly different, and the 'mythic' narratives I have examined here indicate something of the form of these differences.

* * *

The coming of the government and missionaries into Fuyuge lands – as part of their wider projects – had the unintended consequence of upper Udabe Fuyuge exclusion from the potent *solon* betelnut. This is not how Fuyuge perceive matters – their *tidibe* gives a different account – and it was not the intention of government or missionary, or how they understand Fuyuge preoccupations with *solon*. Rather, it is my representation, based on the various narratives and performances I have considered

here. What I have not suggested in this article is that Fuyuge, government or missionary all hold different concepts of time. If anything, the *passage* of time is the same for all these agents, although how they reckon time – by way of calendars, clocks or ‘history’ – is quite different. As Gell notes for people like the Fuyuge and for the westerners that encountered and influenced them:

[I]t is equally essential, both to the belief that ‘the world goes on and on being the same’, and to the contrary belief that ‘the world goes on and on becoming different’, *that one believes that the world goes on and on*. (Gell, 1992: 36, emphasis added)

The trope of *tidibe* – from which in the Fuyuge view all derives – discloses time’s presence in contrast to that declared by the trope of ‘historical progress’. Each set of narratives takes form in a terrain defined by the presence of the other. Landscape, myth and time are, I hoped to have shown, ineluctably connected. But how so and in what ways is always a question of ethnographic elucidation, all the more so in a world of contested techniques and visions of power, as I have examined here.

Notes

1. The use of ‘western’ or ‘European’ in this article refers to two facets: to people associated with areas conventionally understood as distinctly ‘western’ or ‘European’, that is, North America, western Europe, Australia, among other historically connected areas. ‘Western’ or ‘European’ also refers to knowledge conventions that were historically formed in these places but whose use is not restricted to these contexts.
2. As McMichael (1998: 109) notes: ‘Export production, and attracting foreign investment, became the new priority, alongside an extraordinary decrease in public investment in the South, as privatization increased tenfold during the 1980s . . . enriching both national elites and foreign investors as beneficiaries in the globalization project.’
3. It is not a coincidence that the continual proliferation of histories – in books, movies, television and so on – is a valued activity. It attests to the potent belief that knowledge of the past is essential to our sense of ourselves as modern persons. Consuming these accounts is like ‘a sacred ritual, a form of religious worship designed to keep the modern faith alive’ (Fasolt, 2004: 230). History thus presupposes a temporal perspective that ‘shelters us from the experience of time; it comforts us with the illusion that subjects can be defined by their historical conditions and that change over time can be explained by historical development’ (Fasolt, 2004: 231).
4. It was not fortuitous that when the colonial government created a unitary local authority for the Fuyuge, they chose to represent this process with an object through which the Fuyuge had come to constitute their own local forms of unity.
5. When I was told this *tidibe* during the mid 1980s the narrators referred to this figure sometimes as Sol Si and other times as Solusia or Solusi, reflecting differences in the way the name was pronounced and, perhaps, differences in the way I heard (and recorded) the pronunciations of the name.

6. In the later version I was told that the animal cried out as if it were still alive, although it had had its intestines cut out and fur removed.
7. In Hirsch 1999 (p. 815, n. 19) I refer to Solusia as Sol Si, based on a version I was given.
8. Known as Cross, Colos or Colossi in the local Fuyuge dialects.
9. It is here that Williamson stayed while conducting his ethnological studies several years later (see earlier in the article).
10. The French version was published in 1984 under the title *Cent ans chez les Papous. Mission accomplie?* The parable of the mustard seed forms the first of the book's three epigraphs (see later in the article and note 11).
11. Matthew (13: 31) reads as follows:

Another parable he put before them, saying 'The Kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches'.
12. See note 5.
13. This passage has been translated by Mrs Valerie Phillips.

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