Chapter 3

From 'My Story' to 'The Story of Myself'—Colonial Transformations of Personal Narratives among the Motu-Koita of Papua New Guinea

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Since the late colonial period, there have been a significant number of publications which could be roughly classified as Melanesian autobiography.[1] The majority of these have, in fact, been encouraged and commonly written down, edited and substantively organised, by European acquaintances of the subjects. The observation that the phenomenon of Melanesian autobiography is a product of the colonial encounter is a statement of the obvious. Further, as autobiography is an account of the development of a self-conscious individual during a period of historical time, the existence of the individual at its narrative core invites consideration in terms of currently popular critiques of the development of individualism in Melanesia. Problematising the traditional Melanesian person as non-individualist,[2] critical considerations of nascent Melanesian individual-ism contextualise its development particularly in the encounter with Christianity and capitalism, which are commonly seen as the major historical determinants of individualism in the West.[3]

Other aspects of the Melanesian experience of colonialism, however, may have influenced discursive representations of the self in the form of autobiography. In what follows, I use an example of a brief autobiography which itself was produced with no direct encouragement from a European mentor. Rather, its generation can be understood in terms of the development of a historical consciousness through the praxis of its writer, who was a prominent advocate in his village's legal claims to land around Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, in the late colonial period. The advent of unsolicited autobiography in the society to which he belonged, the Motu-Koita, demonstrates a significant shift from the traditional role of a story's narrator, for in the mythopoeic, and therefore non-historical, worldview of the Motu-Koita an autobiographical individual could not exist.

I begin with a brief discussion of the Motu-Koita, their traditional mythopoeic worldview, and two examples of mentored narratives indicating a lack of autobiographical consciousness in the mid-colonial period. I then turn to the case of Bobby Gaigo, who represented Tatana, a Motu-Koita village, in land claims in the late colonial period and wrote a number of historical documents, including an autobiographical account. Finally I offer some comments on the development of a historical consciousness, in relation to autobiography.

Motu-Koita Mythopoeia

The land on which the city of Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, has developed was traditionally the territory of two intermarried peoples now often collectively called the Motu-Koita, or Motu-Koitabu. The Koita spoke a non-Austronesian language, closely related to that of a group further inland, known as the Koiari, of which they may once have been a part.[4] The implication of linguistic evidence, oral tradition, and archaeological investigation is that at some stage in the distant past they moved, or were driven by the Koiari, toward the coast.[5] There they settled, and began to intermarry with the Western Motu. The latter spoke an Austronesian language, and built their houses at the edge of the sea, or sometimes offshore. The Western Motu migrated into the area from places both inland and on the coast[6] and when Europeans arrived they were settled in a number of villages along about 50 kilometres of the coast, separated from their coastal enemies, the Eastern Motu, by an inlet.[7]

A number of Koita groups became allied with the Motu villages known as Hanuabada, Tanobada, Tatana, Vabukori and Pari close to where Port Moresby would develop and friendly relations were maintained between the two peoples, though the Motu regarded the Koita as prone to sorcery. Both the Motu and Koita were fearful of the Koiari, whom they regarded as barbaric and possessed of great sorcery skills. Of the seven Motu villages established when Europeans arrived in the 1870s, two—Vabukori and Tatana—claimed different origins from the rest, despite sharing with them a common language and social organisation. Both the Motu and the Koita villages were divided into residential groups with a patrilineal idiom. These groups were, and are, called *iduhu*, a term popularly translated as 'clan', contrary to the caution of anthropologists.[8]

Traditionally, the Motu-Koita comprehension of their world was mythopoeic. That is, mythic narratives disclosed extra-ordinary potencies beyond what we might regard as commonsense explanations of everyday experience. Here I take Motu-Koita mythopoeia to be an intellectual activity similar to that which dominated ancient Greek thought before myth in that society was largely displaced by philosophy. Hatab suggests that for the Greeks myth was not a 'detached account', but a spoken correlate of an acted rite, or a thing done: 'Myth is therefore non-theoretical in the sense that it is not detached from *praxis*;

it is originally a *lived* reality'.[9]   This phenomenological interpretation is particularly apt in respect of traditional Motu-Koita society, and in talking of mythopoeia in the Melanesian context I follow an exemplary and succinct formulation by Mimica, to mean a 'mode of activity of consciousness instrumental in the structuring of experience of the world in which humans are situated'.[10]

As a brief example of Motu-Koita mythopoeic consciousness, we can consider a figure known as Buasi, the founding ancestor of Tubumaga *iduhu*, who lived eight generations before the Motu culture hero Kevau Dagora. Archaeological investigation and the comparative examination of oral history suggest Kevau Dagora himself was active about 250 years before the present,[11] and core male members of the *iduhu* now known as Idibana Taulamiri in Pari village (near Port Moresby) trace their descent patrilineally to Kevau, and hence to Buasi. Beyond his human lifespan, Buasi continued his existence in serpentine form within a fissure in the rock of the hill called Taurama, overlooking a section of the local coastline. Crews of passing canoes paid obedience to Buasi and fell silent, lest their canoes capsized. The story of Buasi continued to be told through the colonial era, although it is largely forgotten nowadays.[12] We note the conflation of the past and present in the mythopoeic apprehension of Buasi's potency. The ancestor was present and efficacious, transcending the mundane abilities of the canoe paddlers, who depended on his benevolence as they negotiated what a foreigner might observe to be a relatively unhazardous stretch of water.

The immanence of ancestors meant that the past was not conceived historically in relationship to the present, but was experienced as part of a lived-present. Moreover, the relationship between members of a mortal community and ancestors could be enhanced by *siahu*, which can be glossed in English as 'heat'. Heat was an important constitutive concept in traditional Motu cosmology. Ancestors could be ritually approximated through the creation of conditions of heat, dryness and lightness. One way of achieving this was by intensifying a fire at an *irutahuna*, a potent central space in, for example, a house, which facilitated enhanced communication between a living assemblage and the phalanx of their ancestors. Men or women could also increase their *siahu* by chewing ginger in combination with other foods recognised as generating lightness and dryness. Such dietary regimes were instrumental in achieving a state of potency known as *helaga*, in which the participant became partially separated from communal mortality and closer to the existential status of ancestors. Becoming *helaga* enabled people to embrace their ancestors' power to a degree. This last achievement is reflected in the English glosses of *siahu* in translation, which include 'power' and 'authority' as well as 'heat'.

Siahu, in the sense of authority, was also a legitimating force when telling a *sivarai* (story),[13] insofar as genealogical connections to specific ancestors legitimated narratives of the past, which might include, for example, stories of

the movement of ancestors from place to place establishing or abandoning villages or gardens, fighting battles, killing or being killed and buried. It is in this light that we should understand the Motu-Koita relationship to land, for example. For *siahu* is the word used when talking about what English speakers call land-rights. Through narratives about their ancestors, speakers would iterate their *siahu*, or that of their *iduhu*, to inhabit, or use, or pursue various activities at, the places to which they referred. In other words, their *siahu* derived from their ancestors' presence and actions at a given place. As mythopoeia, these narratives were not articulated as truth claims, nor were they subject to proof in any European legal or philosophical sense. They 'belonged' to the people who told them by virtue of their genealogy, and thereby their content was not challenged by other individuals or groups. *Sivarai* of the past, particularly those asserting 'land-rights' exemplify the way the Motu-Koita phenomenologically viewed the environment as constituted by places which were given meaning for the living by the activities of ancestors.

These briefly-sketched aspects of the traditional worldview of the Motu-Koita indicate the significance of relatedness as an aspect of people's being. Not only was genealogical connectedness a source of authority, but a temporary increase in the intensity of a person's relationship with ancestors (the attainment of degrees of *helaga*) was at the same time a lessening of his or her relationship with the community. The importance of relatedness can also be seen in, for example, Motu use of teknonymy and other encompassing terms of address. Familiar people were not normally addressed by name, but in terms of a relationship to someone else—'mother/father of *x*', 'husband/wife of *y*', 'my sibling', 'my father's sister' and so on. Their social being was in fact acknowledged through explicitly relating them to others. This is demonstrated mythopoeically in the partial social negation, during his youth, of the culture hero Kevau Dagora, who was mentioned earlier. Kevau Dagora was yet unborn when his father was killed in the massacre of Taurama village. His pregnant mother Konio was the only survivor of that massacre, fleeing to her brother's village, where Kevau Dagora grew up not knowing who his father was. He was mocked by other children for not belonging to a place, or having a father. When he went hunting, other children took the game he killed (a further negation of Kevau). Kevau Dagora eventually overcame this negation, after learning the story of the Taurama massacre, in an episode during which he killed one of his tormentors and declared himself. His utterance varies according to versions of the story—in some he uses the name of his father, in others his father's *iduhu* name or an invocation of Taurama, his ancestral home.[14] The variation discloses a commonality; in each account Kevau consolidates his social being through the elaboration of his relatedness beyond his own mother.

A further point of note in this narrative is the very name Kevau is given, in relation to his slaughtered father. Children were commonly named in the first

instance by prefixing a name to the 'first' name of their father—thus the son or daughter of a man called 'Kevau *x*—' would be named '*y*— Kevau'. In the case of Kevau Dagora, however, genealogies ascribe to him the whole name of his father (that is, there is a 'Kevau Dagora No. 1' and a 'Kevau Dagora No. 2'). In this narrative, then, Kevau's natal relationship to his already deceased father is articulated through the shared relationship with the woman Konio ('Kevau *adavana*' = 'married of Kevau' and 'Kevau *sinana*' = 'mother of Kevau'), and his emergence as a new *iduhu* head and war leader replacing, rather than simply succeeding, his father through the avenging of the Taurama massacre.

In combination, the foregoing insights into the lack of historical separation of the past and present, and the primacy of relatedness, indicate that the autonomous self, as commonly understood in Western society, was not possible in Motu-Koita society. To elaborate this I draw on the terminology of Maurice Leenhardt, who attempted to represent Melanesian understandings of what Westerners consider to be the person, based on his study of New Caledonia in the early 1900s.[15] Without capitulating to the evolutionist cast of his representation, I find value in Leenhardt's distinctions between three kinds of human beings, which he designated, in French, *personnage*, *personne* and *individu*. The last of these terms can be translated as 'individual', and denoted for Leenhardt the Western notion of the autonomous, ego-oriented entity, imbued with temporal continuity.[16] In the standard English translation of Leenhardt's *Do Kamo*, Gulati renders *personnage* as 'personage',[17] but I prefer to use the term 'persona'. In contrast to the individual, the persona is constituted by and dependent upon relationships, is intrinsic to the mythopoeic experience of the world, and cannot exist outside of these conditions.[18] Between the two is the *personne*, or 'person', neither mythopoeically structured, nor fully individuated. The relationship between the Leenhardtian 'person' and 'individual', understood by him as a modality of a problematic evolution from archaic persona to rational individual, could be recast in terms of more recent anthropological discussion of the relationship between 'self' and 'person'.[19] My preoccupation here, though, is with the persona, the 'participatory' entity, which, among the Canaques of Leenhardt's ethnology, was known as the *kamo*:

> The *kamo* is a living persona who recognises himself less in his human contour than in his form, one might say in his human likeness.

> It is in this form, and not in the exterior contour, that the persona exists. Humanness thus transcends all physical representations of man. It is not perceived objectively, it is felt. It encloses in itself the aesthetic and affective elements which belong to man and which the Canaque experiences as such. It is this living, human, ensemble which he means by *kamo*.[20]

The *kamo*, the Canaque persona, is not defined by his or her body, but is sustained by a set of relationships with similar entities. To a predominant degree, the persona's being is experienced as participation, not as an independent existence. Leenhardt gives a handy example of this in the negative instance, a Canaque cursed and driven out of his society, who feels himself in 'perdition'. Deprived of any relationship through which to find himself, he cannot even assert his being through speech, because he no longer corresponds to any persona. Without a participatory relationship and a corresponding name he has no existence.[21] 'Persona' is, then, a particularly apt term for the mode of being Leenhardt is attempting to portray, being derived from the Latin terms *per* ('through'), and *sonare* ('to sound'), giving the compound *personare*, 'to sound through'.

To return to the Motu-Koita, the culture hero Kevau Dagora is in every sense a persona. In the narratives he is initially in 'perdition', as his social being is denied by others, until he finds himself by establishing the relationship to his father, to his *iduhu*, and to Taurama and declares himself. Consequently in the remainder of the narrative he is, as Leenhardt might put it, a living Motu-Koita ensemble in the qualities he displays and in his achievements. But importantly, the *narrator* of such stories is also a persona, using his or her relationship to Kevau Dagora to establish authority, both to tell the story, and to maintain a practical engagement with the places which the narrative traverses. The narrator declares himself or herself in this mythopoeic fashion. The obverse of this dependence on relationships is a lack of acknowledgement of a self which can exist autonomously outside the mythopoeic context. That is, traditional Motu-Koita did not acknowledge themselves as the autonomous, ego-oriented entities, imbued with temporal continuity, which we might call individuals. Consequently, they could not have an autobiographical consciousness.

An indication of this traditional lack of autobiographical consciousness among the Motu-Koita is found, paradoxically, in the 'autobiographical' reminiscences of Ahuia Ova, written in collaboration with the anthropologist F.E. Williams and published in 1939. Ahuia Ova was prominent in his day, the early colonial period. He was a major informant of C.G. Seligman, who published an ethnology of the Koita,[22] an informant of Malinowski during the latter's short time in Port Moresby,[23] and enjoyed some patronage from the Governor, Sir Hubert Murray. Williams was partly motivated to record Ahuia's biography by Radin's apparent success with a native American.[24] Certainly the finished product contained a significant amount of biographical material and, as Williams observed, was evidence of considerable hubris,[25] but its form was the result of guidance, 'some encouragement', a syllabus and pre-arranged table of contents provided by Williams, significant editing of the manuscript dictated by Ahuia, and substantive rearrangement to achieve the conventional autobiographical structure desired

by Williams.[26] The anthropologist expressed 'some disappointment' at the quality and quantity of the finished product, compared to Radin's achievements, and clearly had expectations of what an autobiography should contain which were unfulfilled by Ahuia, whom Williams said was 'more at home in relating legends than in writing personal history'.[27] Indeed, Williams tells us that 'A few quite irrelevant passages have been dropped, and some long-winded ones summarised in square brackets'.[28]

Less interference was involved in another celebrated document, 'Kori Taboro's story' dictated to a literate Papuan in the 1940s and published both in English and in Motu.[29] Kori Taboro was a prominent Koita woman in Port Moresby, a diviner, mistakenly represented by some as a sorcerer,[30] and witness to early government and missionary activity in the area. Some phraseological liberties were taken in the translation, but the substance of Kori's story was preserved, and she appears to have told her story in her own way. Moreover, G.A.V. Stanley, the European at whose house the story was narrated, forbade any questioning of her during the telling. This document is a marked contrast to Ahuia Ova's reminiscences, in that Kori Taboro gives very little autobiographical information. She gives her birthplace and genealogy[31] and testifies to being a child when the missionary W.G. Lawes began translating the Bible into Motu.[32] This information, though, is used only to legitimate and orient her narrative, about migrations, warfare, missionary and other colonially related activities (which are themselves mythologised in the account). Kori Taboro, in other words, refers to herself only to indicate her relationship to the persons whose actions she describes and thereby her *siahu*, her authority to tell the *sivarai*.

The Motu title of Kori Taboro's story, *Kori Taboro Ena Sivarai*, also indicates its lack of autobiographical consciousness. Two types of possession, alienable and inalienable, are marked in the Motu language. *Kori Taboro Ena Sivarai*, unlike its English translation 'Kori Taboro's Story', is unequivocal in meaning. It is specifically 'the story told by Kori Taboro'. To indicate a story *about* Kori Taboro, a different phrase, *Kori Taboro Sivaraina*, would be required, and the speaker would be someone other than Kori Taboro. *Sivaraina* (*sivarai* with a possessive suffix) is the inalienable case, the story and its subject are inseparable, as with the story above about Kevau Dagora. Such a construction cannot sensibly occur with the speaker as the object, such as *lau sivaraigu*, 'the story of me'. In order to use the inalienable construction in a reflexive manner, Kori Taboro would have to tell a story about her *participation in* an event (e.g., *lau Mosbi nala sivaraina*, 'story about my trip to Moresby'). In conformity with the mythopoeic conception of the persona, Kori Taboro cannot represent herself as an entity with its own life history.

Representing Tatana

An autobiographical account, in the conventional sense, by a Motu-Koita person, would represent a significant transition from the mythopeoic worldview and the non-historical self-perception of the narrator as persona, which I have described here. It is worth noting that when Williams elicited the reminiscences of Ahuia Ova more than 50 years after the arrival of Christianity, the latter had long since converted to the introduced religion, and had explicitly denounced the kinds of activities which the administration labelled 'sorcery' and associated with a pre-Christian worldview.[33] Kori Taboro, who continued her traditional divinations and midwifery until her death in 1950, was schooled in her youth by the London Missionary Society.[34] Long experience of Christianity did not foster the degree of individualism necessary for an autobiographical consciousness in either of these articulate narrators. However, in the 1970s, a series of writings, culminating in an account which could rightly be described as autobiographical, was produced by a Motu-Koita man who had internalised the message of legal documents at least as much as the word of God. His name was Bobby Gaigo, and he was from Tatana, a village which had barely been mentioned in academic literature on the Motu-Koita until he began writing history.

Tatana is on a small island, essentially a hill, in the inner harbour beside the town of Port Moresby. At first contact by Europeans in 1873, a village of up to 200 people occupied the northern edge of the island and had only a little gardening land at the base of the hill. Archaeological research suggests that as a result of a fission when the forerunners of the Motu were in a state of migration centuries earlier, Tatana villagers, and the people of another village on the mainland coast, Vabukori, moved into their present sites via a different route from the rest of the Motu.[35] A few oral traditions reinforce this possibility, giving Tatana people different migration routes than the majority of Motuans, mostly from beyond Galley Reach to the west.[36] Early European observers noted that Tatana villagers appeared not to make pots, which distinguished them from most other Motu villages in the area, but specialised in the manufacture of shell beads (*ageva*), and shell headbands (*gema*).[37] They were of less interest to early anthropologists than the much larger village complex nearby known as Hanuabada, and little was written about them. Turner, a missionary anthropologist, wrote in 1878 that they 'have no plantations and so they live by plunder'.[38]

Missionaries and the administration 'bought' land from the Motu-Koita, especially those of the Hanuabada village complex, initially paying with items of clothing and axes. Whether the Motu-Koita recognised this process as a land sale in the European sense is debatable: traditionally land had either been taken by conquest in warfare, or land-use by outsiders was negotiated in terms of ongoing tokens of reciprocation and goodwill. The administration's land

acquisition procedure later included rental agreements and more substantial payments, but by the mid-20th century local landholders had become alarmed by the growth of permanent infrastructure and buildings. By the end of the colonial era (the 1970s) the *de facto* loss of their land to what had become a city of migrants was developing into a major issue for the Motu-Koita.[39]

In the 1960s Motu-Koita discontent manifested in a number of claims for compensation in respect of land which they regarded as inadequately paid for, or even illegally acquired, during the early colonial period. The land claims created legal conflict among the Motu-Koita, as various groups occasionally claimed to have been the original owners of the same piece of land, alleging that the colonial authorities had paid the wrong people when acquiring the land, or had made inadequate enquiries as to whether land was owned in the first place. An example of the latter was a tortuous case lasting two decades in which a large number of groups claimed ownership of Daugo Island, near Port Moresby, which the administration had acquired as 'waste and vacant' land in 1889. Tatana villagers became involved in several claims to land in and around Port Moresby, including the Daugo Island claim, in the 1960s.

It is conventionally legally held in Papua New Guinea that the process of establishing genealogical linkages to the actions of apical ancestors is customary and therefore legitimate, and indeed warranted, in land claims. But in relation to Motu-Koita claims, the traditional sense of *siahu* was made irrelevant *a priori*, by virtue of the cases being a contestation of 'ownership' demonstrated according to principles of probability, requiring claimants to reasonably prove their habitation of an area of land and use of its resources during a particular period of historical time. This necessarily obliged commissioners and judges to consider the credibility of claimants' testimony, which could only be done by reference to a measure of historical 'fact', provided by documentary evidence and European testimony. *Siahu*, in its original sense of affirming the mythopoeic simultaneity of the past and present, the incontestable expression of the potentiality of occupation or use of a place by virtue of an ancestor's presence, had no legitimacy in these sorts of procedings.

Of all the claimants to Daugo Island, the Tatana villagers recognised the importance of demonstrating to the court a detailed knowledge of historical facts and articulating themselves with those facts. In contrast to the other claimants, who relied on assertions that they had *traditionally* fished and camped at Daugo, the Tatana villagers claimed that they had *actually* lived and gardened on Daugo. They also claimed to have planted coconut trees on the island (against the documentary evidence that the trees were planted by prisoners working on the government plantation in the late 19th century). As the hearings progressed visits were made to Daugo Island, where Tatana witnesses pointed out pottery sherds, and what they claimed were the sites of their village, and gardens and a

waterhole. Tatana witnesses also claimed variously that their grandparents had been active on the island or had lived there in the days of prominent early colonial figures such as Captain Moresby, Governor William MacGregor and the entrepreneur Robert Hunter and had interacted with these people.[40]

Much of what they said contradicts not only the documentary evidence before the court, but the body of knowledge available from a spectrum of academic research (not used in the Daugo claim hearings) touching on Daugo Island.[41] Nevertheless, as the claim continued, their ability to position themselves as actors in the conventional history of the island became focal in convincing the courts of their ownership of the island. A National Court appeal hearing in 1979 was a turning point in the fortunes of the Tatana claimants to Daugo. The Court, reviewing the evidence, was impressed by the extensive historical knowledge of Daugo Island apparent in the witnesses' testimony and in subsequent hearings Tatana village had the ascendancy over other claimants.[42] They were eventually judged to be the traditional owners of Daugo Island, in 1985.

Bobby Gaigo's Story

The Tatana villagers' most prominent representative in the Daugo and other claims was Bobby Gaigo, himself from Tatana village, who died in 1987, shortly after victory in the Daugo claim. Bobby Gaigo had no legal training, but he had developed the ability to read and interpret legal texts, and commonly represented fellow villagers in court cases.[43] During the 1970s while the land claims were in process, Bobby Gaigo started to produce written accounts of the history of Tatana Island and the social practices of its villagers.[44] In all of them, beginning with a short paper on fishing practices, his introductory section included a claim of extensive land holdings. The first of these was as follows:

> According to our traditions the ancestors of the people now living at Tatana Village formed the first community in the Port Moresby area. Their population was large, as were their landholdings. We occupied land around Fairfax Harbour and the offshore islands of Daugo and Gemo. Old village sites may be seen in several places, including a fair sized one on Daugo Island.[45]

In subsequent papers he elaborated by listing specific mainland sites comprising the northern and western sides of the harbour and beyond to Malara. He also listed various islands scattered through fishing grounds around Port Moresby and along the coast to the east and west: for example, 'Tatana owned large traditional fishing areas, including Daugo island, Nadera reef, Gavera islands, Walter Bay, Gemo Island, Hesede reef, Nonorua Island, Konebada and Port Moresby harbour'.

In marked contrast to the oral traditions of migration and movement commonly offered by Motu-Koita, including Tatana islanders in the past, Bobby Gaigo's writings represented Tatana people as the original people of the area. Indeed he stated that other Motu negotiated with Tatana people to be allowed to settle at sites such as Hanuabada. The significant difference between the conventional wisdom informed by the collective oral traditions of other Motu-Koita groups and Gaigo's own claims of territorial priority and extensive landholding by Tatana people was attributed by him to the selectivity of European researchers, whom he claimed never consulted Tatana people. In elaborating this claim he revealed the extent of his own reading, for he listed individuals he considered complicit in the misrepresentation of local prehistory. These included Governor MacGregor, prominent early missionaries, later churchmen and writers, anthropologists, their local informants (specifically, Ahuia Ovia), linguists and colonial officers. He even included publication dates.

While Gaigo's writings contradicted much of the historical evidence about the Port Moresby area, as well as being self-contradictory, and contained a number of anomalies such as attributing some of Owen Stanley's exploratory activities in 1850 to John Moresby in 1873, they are evidence of considerable documentary research on his part. For example, the claim that his forefathers saw ships which may have been Spanish or Portuguese relates to a debate among historians about whether the Spanish expedition of Torres and de Prado sailed close to the area in 1606. Gaigo even includes a reference list in one document, an indication of his acquaintance with academic literary convention.[46] In addition to discursively shifting Tatana islanders from a marginal position in local history to a foundational and central position by claiming that Tatana islanders, and his own genealogical ancestors, were the original inhabitants of the territory, Gaigo provided autobiographical information, particularly in a document entitled 'The Young Bobby Gaigo of Tatana Island', which was clearly produced without editorial assistance.[47]

By his own account, Bobby Gaigo was born at Malara, which is where Tatana villagers were evacuated to during the Second World War, inviting the inference that he was born between 1942 and 1945.[48] His parents were both from Tatana and his father was a village councillor. He attended a London Missionary Society school and then a primary school, but left before completing primary education, due to 'family problems',[49] and obtained work as a tea boy and messenger in the Department of Native Affairs. He worked intermittently in a number of administrative departments as a clerical assistant, and for some private firms as a storeman, frequently leaving his employment—or being sacked for non-attendance—to attend the land-claim hearings in which he was involved for two decades.[50] After dropping out of school he continued to try to educate himself by reading local and overseas newspapers when he could obtain them

and, significantly, by spending time in the public library and (from the late 1960s) the library at the University.[51] He also learned the rudiments of typing.

In the 1970s, he attended the University of Papua New Guinea's academic conferences known as the Waigani Seminar, where he gave short seminar papers.[52] Bobby Gaigo was a supporter of the Pangu Party (the party of Papua New Guinea's first Chief Minister, Michael Somare) and later of Papua Besena, the party led by Josephine Abaijah, switching allegiance, he wrote, because Pangu failed to support Tatana's local land claims.[53] He served as a 'village court' magistrate on Tatana in the 1970s and campaigned unsuccessfully as an independent political candidate in the 1977 elections.[54] He spent two periods in gaol during the time he was active as a representative in court cases—one for 'contempt of court' and the other for 'fraud'—implying in his account that he was a political prisoner.[55] He went on to claim that in his youth he lived at Daugo, made gardens and planted coconut trees. The document re-visited the testimony of Tatana witnesses in the land claim, some of whom Gaigo represented as being centenarians, and included a reference list of documents tendered during the hearings of the Daugo Island claim.[56]

Law, History and Autobiography

Bobby Gaigo's collective writings demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the exigencies of civil legal processes and the value Europeans place on documentary sources and the establishment of historical 'facts'. He was putting a version of history on the record for future scholars in the manner of others he had consulted during his own research for land claims. In pursuing those claims he had come to recognise the importance of demonstrating a detailed knowledge of historical facts and articulating himself with those facts. His accounts, placing Tatana geographically and politically at the centre of the prehistory of the Port Moresby area, were far removed from the mythopoeic narratives which his forebears had told oral historians, but which the Tatana land claimants never told in court, about man-eating giants and migration from somewhere north-west of Galley Reach. Those narratives, he realised, would not satisfy the real criteria by which 'customary' ownership was proved in courts of law, and he probably doubted they would be credited as acceptable history by a western reader.

It was through this praxis, then, that Bobby Gaigo developed a historical consciousness, and thereby the conditions for representing himself as an autobiographical subject.[57] For success in the court cases required stories to be testimony, subject to interrogation requiring proof, or at least probability, whereby the speakers had to represent themselves as witnesses, at first hand or second hand (the latter through recalling what a grandfather or other relative had witnessed). Called upon to describe themselves, their actions, their whereabouts at particular times, their qualifications and authority to make

statements of fact, their memories of specific events at specific times, Bobby Gaigo and his fellow witnesses learned to position themselves in historical time, witnessing events from the point of view of an individual, an autonomous, ego-oriented entity, capable of discursively detaching themselves from what they described.

When Bobby Gaigo finally wrote his autobiography it is notable that although he referred to his father and grandfather, he did not narrate a detailed genealogy, in the way Kori Taboro had at several points in her story. His story was the story of himself, his achievements and occasional failures, as an individual historically shaped through his own praxis, not as a persona constituted by and dependent upon relationships, intrinsic to the mythopoeic experience of the world, and unable to exist outside of these conditions. As I said at the beginning of this paper, critical considerations of nascent Melanesian individual-ism contextualise its development particularly in the encounter with Christianity and capitalism, which are commonly seen as the major historical determinants of individualism in the West. But there is not a great deal of evidence of such determination in the stories of Ahuia Ovia or Kori Taboro. Bobby Gaigo's story, though, indicates a link between the encounter with European criteria of proof and legitimacy, for example in legal contestations, and the development of the historical consciousness which shapes the concept of the individual, and thereby, autobiography.

ENDNOTES

[1] For example, Josephine Abaijah, *A Thousand Coloured Dreams* (Mt Waverley 1991); R.M. Keesing, *'Elota's Story: the life and times of a Solomon Islands big man* (St Lucia, Qld 1978); A.M. Kiki, *Kiki: ten thousand years in a lifetime* (Melbourne 1968); Michael Somare, *Sana: an autobiography of Michael Somare* (Port Moresby 1975); Andrew Strathern, *Ongka: a self-account of a New Guinea big man* (New York 1979); Andrew Strathern, *Ru: biography of a Western Highlander* (Port Moresby 1993); V.D. Watson, *Anyan's Story: a New Guinea woman in two worlds* (Seattle 1997).

[2] There is certainly no consensus on the nature of traditional Melanesian 'individuals' beyond the observation that individual-ism was not a part of their worldview. For a comparative range of perspectives see for example A.L. Epstein, *Gunantuna: aspects of the person, the self and the individual among the Tolai* (Bathurst 1999); C.A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London 1982); Maurice Leenhardt, *Do Kamo: person and myth in the Melanesian world*, trans. B.M. Gulati (Chicago 1979); K.E. Read, 'Morality and the concept of the person', *Oceania*, 55 (1955), 233-82. Michele Stephen, *A'aisa's Gifts: a study of magic and the self* (Berkeley 1995) and Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift* (Berkeley 1990).

[3] Louis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism: modern ideology in anthropological perspective* (Chicago 1992) on the historical shaping of individualism in the West are a handy guide, and Tawney's discussion, in 1922, of the relationship between Christianity and capitalism remains relevant, R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: a historical study* (London 1990). Examples of the contextualisation of individualistic attitudes in the encounter with Christianity and/or capitalism in Melanesia can be found in T.S. Epstein, *Capitalism, Primitive and Modern: some aspects of Tolai economic growth* (Canberra 1968); Ben R. Finney, *Big-Men and Business: entrepreneurship and economic growth in the New Guinea Highlands* (Canberra 1973); Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities*; Edward LiPuma, *Encompassing Others: the magic of modernity in Melanesia* (Ann Arbor 2000); and Joel Robbins, *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and moral torment in a Papua New Guinea society* (Berkeley 2004).

[4] T.E. Dutton, *The Peopling of Central Papua* (Canberra 1969), 32.

[5] Dutton, *The Peopling of Central Papua*; N.D. Oram, 'The history of the Motu-speaking and Koitabu-speaking peoples according to their own traditions', in Donald Denoon and Roderic Lacey (eds),

Oral Tradition in Melanesia (Port Moresby 1981); Pamela Swadling, 'The settlement history of the Motu and Koita apeaking people of the Central Province, Papua New Guinea', in Denoon and Lacey, *Oral Tradition in Melanesia*, 240-251.

[6] Oram, 'Introduction', *Oral History*, 7:3 (1979), 2-7; Oram, 'The history of the Motu-speaking and Koitabu-speaking peoples'.

[7] Oram, 'The history of the Motu-speaking and Koitabu-speaking peoples'.

[8] For example, Cyril Belshaw, *The Great Village* (London 1957), 13; Michael Goddard, 'Rethinking Motu descent groups', *Oceania*, 71:1 (2001), 313-3; Murray Groves, 'Western Motu descent groups', *Ethnology*, 2:1 (1963), 15ff.

[9] Lawrence J. Hatab, *Myth and philosophy: a contest of truths* (La Salle 1990), 20, italics in original.

[10] Jadran Mimica, *Intimations of infinity: the cultural meanings of the Iqwaye counting and number systems* (Providence 1988), 5.

[11] Oram, 'Taurama—oral sources for a study of recent Motuan prehistory', *The Journal of the Papua and New Guinea Society*, 2:2 (1968), 79-91; 'The history of the Motu-speaking and Koitabu-speaking peoples'; R.L. Pulsford and V, Heni, 'The story or Taurama village as told by Aire Aire Rahobada of Pari village', *The Journal of the Papua and New Guinea Society*, 2:2 (1968), 97-100; Susan Bulmer, 'Prehistoric settlement patterns and pottery in the Port Moresby area', *Journal of the Papua and New Guinea Society*, 5:2 (1971), 29-91; Jack Golson, 'Introduction to Taurama archaeological site Kirra Beach', *Journal of the Papua and New Guinea Society*, 2:2 (1968), 67-71.

[12] Partial accounts of the Buasi story are given by N.D. Oram, (used by permission of the Australian National Library), 'The History of the Motu-speaking and Koitabu-speaking peoples', 211; Oram Papers, Nigel Oram Collection, Canberra, Australian National Library, MS9436; and R. L. Pulsford, 'Changing attitudes of the Motu-Koita to illness and misfortune', MA Thesis, University of Sydney (Sydney 1974), 18. I was given a version in Pari village in 1994 in conversation with a group including Lohia Daure (head of Idibana Taulamiri Iduhu), Morea Hekoi and Puka Vagi.

[13] *Sivarai* is a general term for 'story'. Another term, *gori*, is translated in the standard dictionary of Motu (Lister-Turner), as 'legend', but would be better interpreted to mean stories told for amusement, for example to children, or to 'pass the time'. *Gori* are the Motuan equivalent of 'tall tales' and 'fairy tales'. Stories of cosmogony, culture heroes, which might be viewed as 'legends' or 'myths' (i.e. exaggerated or untrue) by Europeans, are not regarded as *gori* by the Motu-Koita.

[14] Cf. I.O. Nou, *Pari Hanua Edia Sense Sivaraidia* (Port Moresby 1975), 4-5; Oram, 'Introduction', 2-7; Pulsford and Heni, 'The story of Taurama village', 98-99. In the latter version, his cry is given as '*Gwadagwada Taurama Biri*' which the authors erroneously say is the name of his *iduhu*. An approximate translation is 'Speared by Taurama!' Kevau Dagora's father's *iduhu* is generally understood to have been *Tubumaga*, which Kevau Dagora subsequently re-established at *Tauata*, a site now known as Pari village. The account given here is condensed from a number of versions, as cited and also orally given to me at Pari village.

[15] Leenhardt, *Do Kamo: La Personne et le Mythe dans le Monde Mélanésien* (Paris 1998 [1947]).

[16] Leenhardt, *Do Kamo: La Personne et le Mythe*, 264, 270-71.

[17] Leenhardt, *Do Kamo: Person and Myth*, trans. Gulati, xxxii and *passim*.

[18] Leenhardt, *Do Kamo: La Personne et le Mythe*, 248-251.

[19] Leenhardt, *Do Kamo: La Personne et le Mythe*, 1998, 261-271; cf. Leenhardt, *Do Kamo: Person and Myth*, 162-169. In respect of Melanesia in particular, see for example Kenelm Burridge, *Someone, No One: an essay on individuality* (Princeton 1979); A.L. Epstein, *Gunantuna*; Deborah Gewertz, 'The Tchambuli view of persons: a critique of individualism in the works of Mead and Chodorow', *American Anthropologist*, 3 (1984), 615-29; LiPuma, *Encompassing Others*, 128-152; and Stephen, *A'aisa's Gifts*.

[20] Leenhardt, *Do Kamo: La Personne et le Mythe*, 73-4, my translation of 'Le *kamo* et un personnage vivant qui se reconnaît moins à son contour d'homme qu'à sa forme, on pourrait dire à son air d'humanité. C'est dans cette forme, et non dans la ligne extérieure, que le personnage existe. L'humain dépasse ainsi toutes les représentations physique de l'homme. Il n'est pas perçu objectivement, il est senti. Il enferme en lui les données esthétiques et affectives qui sont de sont de l'homme et que le Canaque éprouve comme telles. C'est cet ensemble vivant et humain qui'il signifie par *kamo*'. Cf. Leenhardt, *Do Kamo: Person and Myth*, 26.

[21] Leenhardt, *Do Kamo: La Personne et le Mythe*, 251.

[22] C.G. Seligman, *The Melanesians of British New Guinea* (Cambridge 1910).

[23] B. Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (California 1989), 9-22.

[24] Radin cited in F.E. Williams, 'The reminiscences of Ahuia Ova', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 69:1 (1939), 12.

[25] Williams, 'The reminiscences of Ahuia Ova', 13 and *passim*.

[26] Williams, 'The reminiscences of Ahuia Ova'.

[27] Williams, 'The reminiscences of Ahuia Ova', 12-13.

[28] Williams, 'The reminiscences of Ahuia Ova', 13.

[29] Sinaka Goava, 'Kori Taboro's Story', *Oral History*, 7:3 (1979); and Goava, 'Kori Taboro Ena Sivarai', *Oral History*, 7:3 (1979), 95-123.

[30] For example, Caroline Mytinger, *New Guinea Headhunt* (New York 1946) 202ff.

[31] Goava, 'Kori Taboro's Story', 65, 67, 79; Goava, 'Kori Taboro Ena Sivarai', 95, 96, 107.

[32] Goava, 'Kori Taboro's Story', 79-80; Goava, 'Kori Taboro Ena Sivarai', 108.

[33] Williams, 'The reminiscences of Ahuia Ova'.

[34] Oram, 'Introduction'.

[35] Bulmer, 'Prehistoric settlement patterns and pottery in the Port Moresby area'; Swadling, 'The settlement history of the Motu and Koita speaking people', 245-247.

[36] For example, Bulmer, 'Prehistoric settlement patterns and pottery in the Port Moresby area'; Swadling, 'The settlement history of the Motu and Koita speaking people', 45; Oram, 'The Hula in Port Moresby', *Oceania*, 39:1 (1968), 1-35; Oram 'The history of the Motu-speaking and Koitabu-speaking peoples', 215.

[37] Bulmer, 'Prehistoric settlement patterns and pottery in the Port Moresby area', 44; Seligman, *The Melanesians of British New Guinea*, 93, 114; W. Y. Turner, 'The ethnology of the Motu', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 7 (1878), 470-499.

[38] Turner, 'The ethnology of the Motu', 492.

[39] Nigel Oram, *Colonial Town to Melanesian City: Port Moresby 1884-1974* (Canberra 1976), 175ff.

[40] Papua New Guinea Law Reports (hereinafter PNGLR) 1979, National Court of Justice (hereinafter NCJ): Re Fisherman's Island, 225-229.

[41] For example, Bulmer, 'Prehistoric settlement patterns and pottery in the Port Moresby area'; T.E. Dutton, *Police Motu: Iena Sivarai* (Port Moresby 1985); R. J. Lambert, 'Some archaeological sites of the Motu and Koiaria areas', in *The History of Melanesia: proceedings of the 2nd Waigani Seminar* (Port Moresby 1969), 411-9; Oram, 'Taurama'; Swadling, 'The settlement history of the Motu and Koita speaking people'. Briefly, Daugo was uninhabited when first visited by Capt. Moresby in 1873 and archaeological evidence suggests that it had not been inhabited for at least 1000 years. The colonial administration acquired it as 'waste and vacant' in 1889 and attempted to establish a coconut plantation which was abandoned after a few years. Various local groups fished around the island, but it remained uninhabited until people from Hula, 100 kms east of Port Moresby, began a settlement on it in the 1950s.

[42] PNGLR 1979, NCJ: re Fisherman's Island, 225-229; see PNGLR 1986, NCJ: Arthur Ageva v. Bobby Gaigo and Mahada Resena, 160-166; PNGLR 1987, Supreme Court of Justice: Arthur Ageva v. Boby Gaigo, Naime Daure and Madana Resena, 12-15.

[43] PNGLR 1971-72, Supreme Court of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea: Rahonamo v. Enai, 58-67; PNGLR 1977, NCJ: Arthur Ageva, Gadiki Sanai, Madaha Resena, Jack Mase, and Bobby Gaigo v. the State, 99-106; PNGLR 1979, NCJ: re Fisherman's Island, 202-46; PNGLR 1979, Gaigo, Representing Mrs Henao Batari and Mrs Dai Bais v. The Employers Federation of PNG, Representing W. R. Carpenters, 92-98; PNGLR 1986, NCJ: Arthur Ageva v. Bobby Gaigo and Madaha Resena, 160-66; PNGLR 1987, SCJ: Arthur Ageva v. Bobby Gaigo, Naime Daure and Madana Resena, 12-15; also Ralph R. Premdas and Jeffrey S. Steeves, *Electoral Politics in a Third World City: Port Moresby 1977* (Port Moresby 1978), 38.

[44] Bobby Gaigo, 'Present-day fishing practices among the people of Tatana village in Fairfax Harbour, Papua New Guinea', in B.A.C. Enyi and T. Vaghese (eds), *Agriculture in the Tropics: papers delivered at the tenth Waigani Seminar, PNG University of Technology, Lae 28 May 1976* (Port Moresby 1977), 143-9; Gaigo, 'Present day fishing practices in Tatana village', in John H. Winslow (ed.), *The Melanesian Environment* (Canberra 1977), 176-81; Gaigo, 'The history of Tatana village, National Capital District Central Province', *Oral History*, 7:5 (1979), 88-102; Gaigo, 'Social disorder', in Richard Jackson (ed.), *Urbanisation and its problems in Papua New Guinea* (Port Moresby 1980), 209; Gaigo, 'Past and present fishing practices among the people of Tatana village, Port Moresby', in Louise Marauta, John Pernetta and William Heaney (eds), *Traditional Conservation in Papua New Guinea: implications for today* (Boroko

1982), 301-2; Gaigo, 'The young Bobby Gaigo of Tatana Island', mimeo, Attorney General's Department Library, Waigani, no date; Gaigo, 'The history of Tatana', mimeo, Michael Somare Library, University of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, no date.

[45] Gaigo, 'Present-day fishing practices among the people of Tatana village', 143.

[46] Gaigo, 'The history of Tatana'.

[47] Gaigo, 'The young Bobby Gaigo of Tatana Island'.

[48] Gaigo, 'The young Bobby Gaigo of Tatana Island', 1. In contrast, Premdas and Steeves, in a biographical note on 1977 election candidates, suggest he was aged 30 in 1977; *Electoral Politics in a Third World City*, 38.

[49] Gaigo, 'The young Bobby Gaigo of Tatana Island', 2.

[50] Gaigo, 'The young Bobby Gaigo of Tatana Island', 3-4.

[51] Gaigo, 'The young Bobby Gaigo of Tatana Island', 4.

[52] For example, Gaigo, 'Present-day fishing practices among the people of Tatana village'; Gaigo, 'Past and present fishing practices among the people of Tatana village, Port Moresby'.

[53] Gaigo, 'The young Bobby Gaigo of Tatana Island', 9.

[54] Gaigo, 'The young Bobby Gaigo of Tatana Island', 10-11.

[55] Gaigo, 'The young Bobby Gaigo of Tatana Island', 12. I have been told by a witness (whom I will not identify here) to the 'fraud' gaoling that Bobby Gaigo was charged with obtaining money from people ostensibly to arrange for their representation in court by lawyers—arrangements which were not actually pursued.

[56] Gaigo, 'The history of Tatana', 12-23.

[57] I am not suggesting that this was simultaneously the demise of a mythopoeic consciousness.