

RESEARCH NOTE

## Topics of New Guinea Legends

By

JOHN Z'GRAGGEN  
*Divine Word Institute, Madang, PNG*

### INTRODUCTION

Publications on New Guinea legends are numerous, found in many books and even more periodicals, and translated into many languages around the globe. Legends are frequently added to linguistic or anthropological studies, and no comprehensive bibliography is at hand. Books on legends generally deal with some small population or else cover a limited number of topics. No overall study of the main topics is available. Every year a number of new publications shows up with new materials, a fact which shows that some number of New Guinea legends has either not been documented or exists only in fragments. To obtain source material can be time consuming or impossible because of the language barrier. It is no wonder that one finds so little on the topic in general works on "myths of the world."

During my fieldwork for a linguistic survey of the Madang District (now Province) in Papua New Guinea, I collected legends wherever I had the opportunity. Years later, when I worked through the taped materials, I was surprised at the wide range of topics I had collected. The topics were first given by the storyteller. The material urged me to bring some organization into the heap. For this purpose I started to group the tales into topics, such as heavenly bodies, cultural objects, plants, etc. Plants were sub-grouped into plants in general or garden plants, and individual plants. Animal legends, which are not very common and which I collected only later, were added as another subgroup. New topics were first marked with an "X," then given a number when they appeared up again. Attempts to put the main topics into a chronological sequence were not satisfactory. The chronological sequence differs definitely from area to area. Further research

is necessary to clarify this problem.

Then from May 1980 to May 1982 I made a systematic survey of the oral literature<sup>1</sup> in the area from Madang Town<sup>2</sup> to the Lower Ramu River area in the west, taking in the Karkar Island and reaching into the hinterland east and west of the Adalbert Range. After being introduced to a potential storyteller, I would have him choose a topic himself. From that point I used my previous grouping of topics as a questionnaire to ask for additional topics. In my notes I marked the legends as being either volunteered by the informant or asked for by name or content. I took great care to obtain a number of variants of the same legend, by the same or different informant, and in the same or other villages, so as to get a more complete account of the content, to observe the variations and especially to learn the distribution of individual legends. I preferred older people, but also took younger ones for the sake of comparison.

The secrecy of myth is still alive in many areas, and in research some myths were told to me only on a mission station or plantation, and in a confidential way. I learned also that the myth itself is not so secret as the names of the characters. A myth with no names of the main actors is meaningless to the people.

The legends could be collected only through the use of New Guinea Pidgin, because of the existence of such a large number of languages and four phyla in the area (see Z'graggen 1975).

While working on the materials I discovered the usefulness of a tagmemic analysis of legends. After this discovery no repetition bored me, because I could always wait for and expect some new fillers or combination of fillers. Omissions of fillers, of course, were disappointing. In a tagmemic analysis a legend can be divided into phase, episode and elements, such as male, female, young, old actors, time, location, etc. This enables us to compare separate variants on the same level, and also leads us to the discovery of those fillers which are typical for any given area, and this again leads us to an understanding of a story's mythological area (*Mythenkreis*) with its characteristic fillers. Anthropological and other studies can follow on this basis. At present I have no knowledge of any research done in this direction.

The aim of this paper is to give the reader an insight into a wide range of topics. This paper is based mainly on published and unpublished materials from the Madang Province. Other sources were considered only in part. An overview of the whole range of topics brings to light the following division of main topics, each with its own characteristics:

- I. *Myths*: Something new comes into existence.
- II. *Animal and plant stories*: Previously existing animals or plants are the actors, or plants are the actors, and the stories relate how they received their present-day appearance and behavior.
- III. *Social Märchen*: Nothing new comes into existence. Since these stories are not pure imagination, but deal with specific social situations, I call them "social Märchen."

During my fieldwork I also learned that older informants distinguish between true stories—myths—and untrue<sup>3</sup> stories, such as animal and plant stories and social Märchen. Myths are believed to be true, because of their religious content and their magical power. They can also be regarded as untrue, however, if compared with the Bible.

There were also some problems in assigning individual myths to topic groups. In some myths more than one thing comes into existence. In such cases I distinguished between main product, by-products and accidentally added products. The myth was assigned according to the main product. In some cases the main products were not distinguishable from the by-products, e.g., fish or dance or origin of humans. For this reason the assignment became partly arbitrary in my files.

## TOPICS

### I. *Myths*

I. 1. *Becoming of the world*. This group of myths is divided up into the topics of "becoming" or "making" of the world and the division of the various worlds, which includes human beings in a secondary way. A passive "becoming," with no apparent aim and purpose, appears to be more common than an active "making." The active making is frequently influenced by the Bible and possibly also by Austronesian myth. The term "creating" or "creation" is avoided, because some prime elements always existed prior to the becoming or making. Two types of such tales are outlined below.

1. A primeval element such as water, ground, stones or mountains,<sup>4</sup> exists already. A prime actor is just there. One day he laughs and the sea starts to move and land appears. Or, the prime actor comes down on a thread. He sees nothing but water. Then things appear, just as he needs them. A coconut tree is there, then a rock. So he has a place to sit down. He eats a pandanus fruit and spits out the kernels. Ants come, eat the kernels and heap up ground. The heap of ground gets too big and touches the sky. Rain comes down and makes mountain-ridges and valleys. The surface of the earth is now divided

into land and sea. Under Christian influence, God is thought to be the prime cause, the one who has sent the prime actor and makes him do things.

2. There was originally a division of various worlds, i.e., the world in which our generation lives, and the other world, which is in the sky, under the ground, or in water, etc. A three-tiered structure appears to be uncommon. There was a link between the two world via a rope, thread, cane, ladder, or fog, which was severed because of misconduct by the inhabitants of our world.

It was difficult to get these topics. I collected a number of texts because of my continued interest in the topic. The texts are, however, fragmentary and difficult to understand, because the storyteller had to strive to remember the content, and that hindered him in his fluency. They appear to be more of a philosophical nature with little direct impact on everyday life. For this reason, they are not cared for and forgotten.

I. 2. *Becoming of man.* Myths about the origin of man are very common and many of them have been published. This shows, I think, the origin of man is of primary interest to the people. Few of the myths take in all of mankind. Some include the Europeans, but this is an addition of a later date. Some consider a large population movement across language boundaries, postulating the existence of an earlier population. In such cases an immigration might be the historical event treated in the myth.

For organizational purposes I have divided up the topics into the following eleven groups.

1. *Origin from plant.* The flowers of a gorgor-plant or ginger-plant break up. The flowers turn into a brother, sister and cassowary. The cassowary goes into the jungle and stays there. The brother marries a girl from somewhere else. The sister is not allowed to marry because of a skin disease. This is how the ginger-plant family originated.

2. *Origin from man.* Most frequently the male exists first and the female comes next. These myths provide the background for topic III. 3./3. 1,<sup>2</sup> finding a marriage partner.

3. *The sexes find each other.* Both sexes exist in these stories, but live separated from each other. In some of them, the women are married to an animal husband, and the human sexes find each other and begin the human marriage institution.

4. *Both sexes are made together.* They come out of a hole or from the blood of a man at the same time. A man cuts in his finger. He

cannot stop the bleeding and puts the blood in a leaf in the ground. Men and women come up and tell the surprised father: "We are your children."

5. *Through exchange.* One mother fools another, and takes that woman's child to replace her own.

6. *Through separation.* A group is separated from its original site by a river or mountain, because of an offensive act against an old woman. She closes the road and only a brother and a sister can return to populate the old site.

7. *Perfection of the human body.* Human beings exist, but their bodies are not yet perfect. They have no mouth, no genitals, long fingers and toes, a tail, or they are joined at the back. A prime actor or culture maker corrects this by adding or cutting. In this case, it is a making with an aim.

8. *Resurrection.*

9. *Descent.* A lineage is given from the first parents to the present generation.

10. *Through the death of the father and mother.* In the Tangu area at the western end of the Adalbert Range, a hawk father steals a male baby, then rears and educates it in solitude. At the end the hawk father deceives his son and has him killed as a pig in a trap. A whole village originates overnight out of his dismembered body. At the eastern end of the Adalbert Range, parents abandon their son because of his disorderly behavior. An old mother on a steep mountain rescues him and takes care of him. As the boy is considered grown up, the mother tricks him and has him kill her as a cassowary. A whole village originates from the body of the cassowary mother.

11. *By a maker or creator.* A prime actor makes human beings, since they do not exist yet, and he could be thus called a creator. Biblical and New Guinea thoughts are mingled in these myths. Biblical thought is the forming of the male body first and out of ground, the breathing in of life, and the making of the woman from man. The biblical creator succeeds at once, with no additional or repair work necessary. This is not so in New Guinea thought. The creator looks around and sees no human beings. He calls out and they answer, from everywhere. Or, the creator feels lonely by himself and decides to make a human being. What he makes first is a frog, which jumps away from him. Now he has a look at himself and succeeds. Or, a woman all by herself wants to give birth to a human being. To her surprise she gives birth first to a cassowary and then a kangaroo, both of which leave her alone. But finally she succeeds with a male and then with a female human baby. These do not run away from her. Or, the

creator makes the outside of the body, but an eel or snake has to go inside to make the interior, or else a ritual is necessary to make him move. Or, a creator is tired of making human beings, so he gives them genitals to continue his work. Or, the wife commits a sin, which is biblical. Her husband knows that God will send his wife away for punishment. To be with his wife he also commits the sin. This may be the product of a fabulous imagination, but the thought itself calls for respect.

I. 3. *Destruction and the new beginning.* The destruction of the first generation and the becoming of a new one is a universal topic. The myth sometimes takes in all of mankind but more often only part of it. If only a smaller area or a village is destroyed, then the original myth is applied to a historical event. Europeans are not mentioned in the destruction, but they are sometimes present in the new generation. There are two main types of stories in this category.

1. *Destruction by a killer.* The killer is a man, a hawk or in one case a wild pig. The killer goes or flies around, killing and eating human beings as well as animals. The human survivors take refuge on an island or hide under stones and trees. A young or an old woman is left behind in the area of danger. She hides in a hole or an old house and gives birth to two boys or, in one story, to three. The brothers go out and around. Mother warns them and is afraid that her beloved sons also will be killed and eaten. The youngest one, however, is determined to find the killer and to know the secret of how to kill him. The mother helps them to get the right materials to make a bow and arrow, or a spear and shield. The younger, who is the more daring, gives the final blow in the fight or the mother helps them by giving the killer boiling water with stones to drink instead of cold water. After the death of the killer, they give a signal to those in hiding. The refugees return, live without fear and multiply. In Monumbo the two brothers kill the returnees before they reach the shore. But now these two are alone. Their mother tells them to kill her, which the youngest does. The different peoples of the Bogia area, the Monumbo or Manbuans being last, come out of the bamboo with the blood of the mother.

2. *Flood.* The myth of the destruction of the first generation through a flood is very common. In most cases the flood myth is applied to a specific area or to one village, with the rest going unharmed. This means that the myth is applied to a local disaster such as landslide or the flooding of a river. A brother and a sister, with no parents, survive on a coconut tree and become the founders of the new generation, or they continue their own lineage. On Karkar the survivors are

two men. One of them later gets a wife from the volcano woman Masigen and the other one disappears on the mainland.

People find a wild pig, eel or snake. Due to the extraordinary circumstances under which they have found and caught the animal they should know it is a spirit, but they do not, and thus take the animal to the village. They tie the animal to a post in the center of the village. All the villagers go to the garden to get vegetables for the feast and only a brother and a sister stay and guard the animal in the village. The animal turns into a man. To prove he is a man, he chews betelnuts. He asks the brother and sister to warn the people not to kill and eat him, and tells them that if this does happen, the two of them should go to a coconut tree nearby. Before the people return the man goes back into the rope and becomes an animal again. The villagers do not believe and so the brother and sister take their belongings and go into the leaves of the coconut tree. The villagers cook and eat the animal and disaster strikes.

The flood comes as a heavy rain from above with lightning and thunder or from the ground, rising higher and higher and destroying everything. If the myth is localized then only the village committing the crime is destroyed, with the rest going unharmed. Brother and sister return to the ground, marry and begin a new lineage. In some variants another village takes them into its community.

A second part is added to this flood myth in the Ataitan languages of the Goam Stock and the Misegian languages of the Ruboni Stock, both members of the Ramu Sub-Phylum. This part is not present in the neighboring Austronesian, Torricelly and Pihom stock languages. No documentation is available yet for the Josephstal language stock area.

In this second part, the brother and sister leave the place of destruction and look for a hole in the ground to hide from which no smoke will escape. After several attempts they find the right one. A possum lives in the same hole. He allows them to stay and becomes their instructor. When brother and sister are grown up, the possum turns into a bird and tells them to marry even though they are siblings. They do so. The mother gives birth to many children and leaves them in the hole. The hole is filled with children and the parents come outside.

The parents decide to build a house for their children. A man from the hills of Tangu (Beiamp village) comes down on a hunting trip with his dogs. He is surprised to find human beings in this area. He offers them his help in building their house. They accept his offer and tell him to come back on a particular day. In skillful narrations the numerous stages in building the house are mentioned. The man from

Tangu always comes in time, but this particular work is already done. The children always come out of the hole to do the work for their parents and go hide in the hole again. But the parents assure the man from Tangu that they did the work themselves. The Tangu man comes and goes back for the different stages in house building. At the end the parents give a singsing for their completed house. Now the Tangu man brings his men along and intends to kill the man and take his wife. They dance all night and have plenty of food to eat. The parents know about their plan to kill them and are ready. Early in the morning just before the Tangu men strike, the parents open the hole with a stick. Their children rush out and kill the men from the hills of Tangu. Only one escapes to report back to the village. Some variants say that children with white skins came out later through another hole.

This second part of the myth reflects the immigration of a new population towards the western end of the Adalbert Range.

I.4. *Culture makers*. Culture makers do not actually make, but rather shape the environment and the human body and bring new cultural objects and customs. Their life cycle is divided into two phases. Phase A begins with an unnatural birth. The future culture maker lives in conflict with other human beings. They attempt to kill him, but they do not succeed or else they kill a relative of his. When he departs from his place of origin, phase B begins. The culture maker becomes active, moves around and improves the living conditions of human beings. At the end he disappears from the area of his activities, his destination unknown, or else he is said to live in a distant place or to have gone to the land of the white man. There are three main tales in this group.

1. *The two brother culture makers*. The myth of the two brothers, Manup and Kulbob (Kilibob) is very common but not as widespread as some scholars assume. Based on my materials, I can distinguish three areas where the two brothers performed. These are (1) Madang Town area from Bilbil, Karkar Island, to Korak in the west; (2) the Schouten Islands and the opposite mainland of the East Sepik Province, and (3) the Saidor area in the eastern Madang Province. In the area between Korak and the Murik Lakes this myth is unknown or known only as a fragment and said to belong to the Madang Town area, or it is found added to other legends. The published material does not give a full account of this myth, because no variants have been collected in some of the most important areas. The myth itself is of a very complex nature. The first problem is the names of the brothers, and this problem contributes to another, the naming of the myth itself. The



names change from area to area. In the Schouten Islands area the brothers themselves change their names as they move toward the east. In the Madang Town area the names are interchanged with no reason given. Most likely the name of the older brother should be Manup, and that of the younger brother Kulbob. It is also said that the people interchanged the names of the two brothers to deceive the Europeans. Two brothers are also the main actors in other legends. At present it seems to me best to call the myth "The two brother culture makers."

Names are easily replaced and knowing them adds little to our understanding of the legend, unless we understand their meanings. But for the old people the names are the essence of the myth, and are loaded with supernatural power. Some of the names were entrusted to me out of friendship, whispered in a safe place. Some did not want to recite the myth because they could not remember the names. Many of the old people die with the secret names in their heart. Some of them want their children to follow Christian names and thought and for this reason they do not hand over their old, traditional names.

The names of the two culture makers are different and uncertain but the life cycle, function and characteristics of each of them are basically the same in the variants.

Their life cycle is divided into two phases. Phase A begins with their births. The older brother is born in the village and the younger in the bush in an unnatural way, either by the same mother or a second wife. The older brother is married, the younger one is single. Then trouble starts because of the wife of the older brother. On a hunting trip the younger brother's arrow misses a bird and flies to the wife of the older brother in the garden. She likes the design of the arrow and wants it tattooed on her body, either her upper legs or private parts. Reluctantly the younger brother does this, and sometimes it is mentioned that he has intercourse with her. The older brother discovers the tattoo and gets angry at his younger brother. He makes three attempts to kill the trouble maker: the first attempt takes place in the hole of the main post of the house, the second in war and the third by cutting down the tree in which the younger brother lives. Before falling, the younger brother swings the tree in all directions and then plunges with all the branches, leaves and roots of the tree into water, so that no trace is left.

After the younger brother's disappearance phase B begins. The younger brother is no longer a refugee, but a self-assured, powerful "maker." In the water he makes a canoe or ship from his tree, but after this the variants disagree considerably as to what he makes. He contacts his older brother in a dream and tells him to go to a certain place. The older brother goes there and the younger appears in his

canoe, complete with outrigger and mast, or in a ship. The older brother, seeing his mighty younger brother, wants to shake hands with him, but the younger one condemns him to gardening, to raising pigs, to be sick, to hard work, etc. Or, the younger brother gives the elder a chance to select between New Guinean and European goods. In his stupidity the elder brother takes the New Guinean objects, i.e., a bow and arrow instead of a shotgun, a canoe instead of a dinghy, taro and yam instead of rice and canned food. Some variants say that the younger brother was keeping both domesticated animals and people with white skin in some bamboo, and that at a certain time, he broke the bamboo open and they came out. The younger brother leaves the older one. He makes a passage to reach the open sea. As he moves on, he breaks islands from the mainland with his arrow or rudder of the canoe. Then he has an accident. His canoe turns over and the capsized canoe becomes Karkar Island and the outrigger the nearby Bagbag Island. In other variants he makes a ship and goes to the land of the white man, taking all the good things with him, leaving only the bad things with much work in New Guinea. The older brother is regarded as the founder of New Guinea culture and the younger of the European.

The older brother is more a preserver of an existing culture than a maker or innovator. He is not born in an unnatural way and for this reason not endowed with supernatural power, as his activities in both phases show. He is warned in a supernatural way that something happened in his village but he has to find out what happened and who did it. He is helped by ordinary human beings and not, like his younger brother, by animals, symbols of the supernatural. Still, he is regarded as the founding father of New Guinea culture.

The younger brother is a refugee in phase A, but one with supernatural power. He knows of his older brother's intentions in advance, and animals come to his help. In phase B he becomes a culture maker. The variants disagree as to what he made, but it is always something superior to the existing culture and living conditions. This myth is greatly affected by contact with Europeans, with items of European culture replacing older ones. The question is what these items have replaced. Pre-European items are the making of a canoe, making access to the sea and the islands, creating a new population or giving the existing one a new language. The making of human beings and animals in the bamboo is probably an accidental addition, because no variant tells exactly how he went about making them. His activities always represent a cultural advancement. If the existing culture had no canoe, he makes a canoe for the river. If it had a canoe, he makes a sea-going canoe with outrigger and mast, which is replaced by a ship with engine.

The ship is usually made later at another location. What is replaced by the shotgun is unknown to me.

2. *A single male culture maker.* A male culture maker who acts alone with no brother, is Nadkadamang of Bam Island, Schouten Islands.

The boy Nadkadamang is born in the grave of his mother. His grandmother discovers the child in the grave, brings it up and dresses him in female clothes. The boy in female dress plays with the other girls, but is always stronger. The younger women complain and the men get suspicious. Finally they discover that it is a boy in female clothes. The boy knows that they want to kill him. He makes a statue of himself and puts it on display. With his grandmother he departs secretly in a very small canoe westwards to the Wogeo and Wei Islands. Meanwhile the men at Bam shoot at the boy and discover that it is only a statue.

With his departure the boy becomes a culture maker and phase B begins. He goes to the Murik Lakes on the mainland where he teaches the people to prepare food, make a feast and prepare sago. They make a mistake, so they have now plenty of work in preparing sago. On Wogeo Island he shows people how to make wooden plates. On Koil Island he teaches the idea of holidays. On Wei Island he gives language. On Blupblup Island he finds a man who is scraping off the island. Since this is stupid, he kills the man (compare with Klein-titschen 1924). He returns to his own island Bam and finds a killer dog threatening his people. With the help of his mother he kills the dog. The people praise him and return to normal life.

The few published sources of this tale are only fragmentary. In 1974 I collected only one variant. It is very unusual for a culture maker to return to his homeland. This shows how unsatisfactory one variant alone can be.

3. *Female culture maker.* Phase A of the Dzari myth is performed in the Murik Lakes area in the East Sepik Province. A snake mother gives birth to the female child Dzari. The girl lives with her mother in a hole, but comes out to play with the other children in the moonlight. They do not know who her parents are or where she lives. One day they capture her and give her a husband. She gives birth to a child.

While the mother is away, her own snake mother visits her grandchild in the netbag. The father sees the snake, and kills and cooks it. Dzari, his wife, is very disturbed about it and takes revenge. While her husband is away, she pulls her own child apart and cooks it with vegetables in a saucepan. This she prepares for her returning husband. Her husband discovers the body of his child in the soup. She flees,

and he is unable to follow her because she has punched holes in all the canoes except her own.

Dzari departs from her place of origin and becomes creative in phase B. She moves eastwards. In Kaup she teaches the women how to deliver babies so they will no longer have to cut the baby out of the mother and thus cause her death. In Kaian she cuts passages to allow the inland water to flow into the sea and tells the water to make high and low tides. In Awar she finds the man Kamadong. She gives him the proper food, fire, house and also puts male genitals on him. Two fish women seduce him to Manam Island. Finally he escapes the two women and returns safely to Awar. But Dzari leaves him now, goes to Monumbo and finally disappears somewhere in the east.

#### I. 5. *Heavenly bodies, time, and the sea*

1. *Sun.* In the Mabuso language area the sun or day exists already, but night does not yet exist. Therefore the people have to work and eat all the time, and are unable to sleep. A man coming down from the hills discovers the situation and brings down the night in a bamboo or basket with insects and birds. In Mugil and farther west people first lived in darkness, with no sun or day. In Mugil the sun is called in a ceremony to appear, and she does. Farther west of Mugil, a male child is born unexpectedly from the menstruation blood of a married woman. The mother takes the child to the village. Her husband does not accept it as his child. The child goes away and becomes the sun. As punishment, the sun child kills his supposed father with his heat. The mother cools off the heat of the sun and tells the sun how to give light to everybody on earth. In Mikarew the cassowary and a small black bird argue with each other about day and night. The cassowary wants only day, so he can roam through the bush at any time. The small bird wants both day and night, to both go around and to rest. The small bird wins the argument, so we now have day and night.

2. *Moon.* The moon originated from a woman killed in some water. A man finds this shining something, the moon. He takes it, puts it in a bamboo or basket and uses it like a torch while hunting at night. This secret he shares only with his wife. While the owner is far away at a singing, a relative or friend finds the hidden moon and takes it. He does not handle the moon properly, and it goes up to the clouds. Now the moon gives light to everybody on earth. Or, the moon is kept in an old saucepan in one house of the village. At dusk they uncover the saucepan to have light in the village, and when it is time to sleep they cover it up again. One day in the absence of their parents

the children find this something, caress it and play with it. The moon does not like this treatment and goes up to the clouds.

3. *Stars.* Stars originated from human beings: The men discovered a secret of the women, who out of shame and grief climbed up a cane or rope and became the stars.

4. *Time.* The division of time into day and night comes with the origin of the sun or the darkness. I occasionally also collected myths of the origin of dry and wet season or the months with their specific work, but only as fragments.

5. *Sea.* In some areas the sea is a prime element of no origin. The water is pushed away and land appears. In the Hanseman language area the sea is originally in a hole up in the hills. To keep it from flowing out, the people need a special leaf. A child brings the wrong one and the sea flows out to its present site. In the hills only rivers and rivulets with small fish are then left. Or the sea originates in the grave of a child. A child is buried and sea water with fish develops. A younger brother shoots a big fish instead of a small one. Because of this, the sea pours out with a clap of thunder. Color, waves and surf have yet to be added.

I. 6. *Plants and animals.* Plants cultivated in the garden originate from the same source in the same myth. Useful plants which grow outside the garden have a different origin for each plant. If, for example, coconut, betelnut and tobacco come from a human head, then they originate from different parts, e.g. coconut from the skull, betelnut from eyes, tobacco from hair.

#### I. 6. 1. *Garden plants.*

1. *Out of a woman's body.* People had to eat stone soup, ashes, wild plants, fruit and leaves and roots of trees. The general complaint is that their children cannot sleep at night.

An ugly woman appears with the garden plants in her body. Many villages do not accept her because of her abominable appearance. Finally an unmarried man in a village marries her. Now she starts planting, taking or dropping the seedlings from her body. Some she uses for cooking. People first vomit up the old food and then eat the new. Now they have good food and the children sleep well. The woman gives birth to a child. Her husband wants intercourse with her. Because her child is too young, she refuses. Her husband kills their baby. The mother leaves the place, carrying her dead child in a netbag, and distributes plants in other areas. Now there are plants for gardening, but also hard work in planting.

2. *From a woman's death.* An old mother tells her children to clear the bush for a garden. Then she tells them to kill her, cut her body in pieces and distribute the parts in the cleared garden. The brothers quarrel with each other as to which one should do it. The youngest has the courage and kills their mother. They distribute the pieces of meat and sprinkle her blood in the garden site, as their mother told them to do. In the morning they see a garden full of vegetables, some growing, some ripe and others already decaying.

3. *From a male spirit.* A male spirit with no mouth produces plenty of garden fruits. Since there is no use for the plants, many of them are decaying. People do not know what they are, and hence cook stones in water in order to drink the soup. Women find the fruit by chance. One of them is courageous enough to have a try, though she might die. But the woman sleeps well, and does not die. If it is an old woman, she gets young and very fat again. Afterwards the people improve the body of the spirit by making him a mouth and cutting his penis to human size.

In another myth, a dead man makes a garden at a distant place and tells his grandchild in a dream where to find the garden. In another case, the father vomits the plants in the garden and his children have now good food.

4. *From a tree.* The garden plants are hanging on the branches of a tree. People do not know about it and eat only bad food. A pig finds the food and eats it. Children in the village discover a tiny piece between the teeth of the pig. Small as this piece is, they take, cook and eat it. It smells and tastes very good. People follow the pig and discover the new food. The felling of this tree causes much trouble. But finally the right man arrives with the right axe and magic and fells the tree. In falling, the tree throws the plants everywhere, or the villagers come to get their share, or in a few cases they have to buy it.

I. 6. 2. *Individual plants.* In this group of myths plants such as coconut, betelnut, tobacco, sago, etc. are produced outside the garden. There are also myths which produce single garden plants such as bananas, yams or taros. Though I often asked for the betelnut myth, I was able to collect only small fragments of it. The published material does not report much more. But the betelnut girls play an important part in the stories about finding a marriage partner (see III. 3./3. 1).

The Nimokodo myth in the Hanseman language area describes the origin of the coconut, betelnut and tobacco. The daughter Nimokodo eats her father's only betelnut. Upon his return the father thrashes her soundly. While her father is gone, she takes dried bark and a

wooden plate into her house. She puts the wooden plate with water under her head and the bark around her body. She sets fire to the leg side and singing she burns herself to death. Her head plunges into the water of the plate. The returning father inquires about his daughter and finds her head in the wooden plate. The parents bury the head near the house. From her skull grows a coconut tree, from her eyes a betelnut tree and from her ears a tobacco plant. In a dream she tells them how to plant and use the fruits or leaves.

The variants differ considerably as to from which part of the head the individual plants originate. The betelnut existed already, but they have plenty now, or, as one informant said, they have now a new species of better quality.

I. 6. 3. *Animals.* These are myths of the origins of many animals. The more common ones are the pig, fish, turtle, crocodile. Animals frequently exist already or they originate with something else, e.g., fish with the sea, insects with day or night.

1. *Fish.* Fish originate from the corpse of a child or woman. Or, a mother keeps the fish in a secret place. Food spiced with fish meat tastes good to her husband and children. They cannot control their curiosity and discover the secret. The angry mother sends the fish away. Now the fish live in many waters and it is hard work to get them.

2. *Pig.* The pig frequently originates from a quarrel between two brothers or other relatives. Because the older brother has refused to give food to the younger one, the younger brother makes himself a pig by joining a bow and arrow to his body, and eats his older brother's excrement. So as not to eat his own brother, the owner of a pig must give his pig to somebody else to eat. This is still practiced and the myth performed in a dance.

3. *Turtle.* Because of a dispute between husband and wife, the wife jumps into the sea and becomes a turtle. The dispute is sometimes between other relatives.

I. 7 *Cultural objects.* Common cultural objects in myths are fire, the bamboo flute, betel lime, and cultural activities such as dances, the tambaran cult, etc.

1. *Fire.* People on the mainland have no fire and cook meat with the sun or in their armpits. They see the smoke of a fire arise from Karkar or Manam Islands, both of which still have active volcanoes. They send a dog, rooster or pig across the sea to get the fire. Since these creatures have found good food in the village, they forget to come

back. (Note they are all domesticated animals.) Finally the mainlanders send a lizard with a very long tail. The lizard is clever and determined to get the fire from the watchful islanders. The lizard succeeds in outwitting the islanders, avoiding all the threatening dangers and carries back a small piece of fire in his long tail just above the waves. Now the people can cook their food with fire.

People located east of the Korak language area got their fire from the Karkar Island and those located in the west from Manam Island. The variants disagree as to which animals go to the island. Some variants have the animals going on their own initiative and other variants say that people sent them.

In other myths the fire is first in a woman. It is brought into the open by the misbehaviour of her husband or by theft. First it aimlessly burns down everything. Finally it is brought under control and hides in a tree. Now people have firewood. As a culture maker, the woman Dzari gives the fire freely.

2. *The bamboo flute.* Women find the flutes for the tambaran cult at a water and play them in hiding. The women give them freely to the men, because they feel it is better so; or the men take them away by force. Now women and children under the penalty of death are not allowed to see those flutes or other musical instruments connected with the tambaran cult.

I. 8. *Spirits.* A good example of a spirit myth is the Moumbera myth in the lower Ramu River area.

In phase A Moumbera or Zendam is born to a mother pig west of the lower Sepik area. He moves east. On his way he kills men to obtain their livers but also helps them in killing the hawk killer, who lives in a tall tree on the Sepik River. In Awar he has bad luck and loses his magic stone. To get the stone back he enters a woman and is reborn. Nothing unusual is reported in his youth. At the end of his initiation, however, instead of only licking at the stone like the other young men, he swallows it and is once again in possession of it.

He now goes far inland to the Goam River area and phase B begins. He lives by himself in a tree, dancing and yelling day and night. Finally people discover him there and cut down the tree. Fish cut him a passage (the present day Goam River) so he can float down the Ramu River on the tree. He breaks branches of the tree and throws them at certain places. They are now the spirits of those places. One variant mentions that he threw away useful plants, but this might be an accidental addition. In Botbot, west of Kaian, he goes ashore and inland. He makes the people there cut off the heads of slain enemies and put the skulls



in his house. Then, in a very special way that indicates the importance of the act, he brings in the colors for painting his house. He then moves in ceremoniously and has a permanent home. He still lives there and people protect him carefully from curious tourists. His house survived World War II. At present it is decaying, and rumours circulate that it will be rebuilt sometime.

It is worthwhile to compare the life cycle of the spirit Moumbera with that of culture maker Kulbob (see I. 4./1.) In phase A, both are born in an unnatural way and live in conflict with the human beings. But Kulbob is passive in Phase A and a refugee, while Moumbera is active and a warrior. Phase B begins in both myths with the departure from the area in which Phase A occurred. The culture maker Kulbob improves the living conditions of human beings. The spirit Moumbera has things done by others for himself in order to have a stay among his people, i.e., to become their spirit. The only exception is that he also gives them other spirits.

I. 9. *Death.* Once the topic of death was brought up by an informant, I would ask for other stories concerning it, but I was able to obtain only short stories.

First people did not die. Aged people changed their skins in water, an act which had to be done in secrecy. One day a child observed his grandparent doing this and was afraid and ran away. The secret being out, all human beings now have to die. Animals such as snakes and lizards have taken over the habit of changing their skins.

Other reasons given for the initiation of death are the innovation of black magic or jealousy.

I. 10. *The future.* All the many myths describe how the present world came about. It is astonishing to see how on occasion even small details are accounted for. Old people refer in biblical terms to the mythological times as the "Old Testament" and the post-mythical world as the "New Testament."

The vast range of topics shows an extensive wondering, thinking and philosophizing. There appears to have been little thought given to the future of the world.

In Ulingan in 1972, I collected a small fragment in this regard, however. A tree grows too tall and breaks down, which means the end of the world. Unfortunately I made no further inquiries and ten years later the informant died. His survivors claimed to know nothing about the matter. Some informants expect the culture maker Kulbob to come back. This means that a period of prosperity in the European

style is expected. In October 1982 an old man was worried that the sea would come back and cover up everything again. This means that the present day world will return to the primeval element of water.

## II. *Animal and plant stories*

### II. 1. *Animal stories*

1. There are two groups of animals, the winners and the losers. First they live together in harmony, but through cheating, stealing, lying, and betrayals, they become separated or enemies. The tales also explain specific differences between animals.

The cassowary and a small bird first walked together on the ground. One day they decide to walk in the trees as well. The small bird tells the cassowary to go up first. But the cassowary is too heavy and with his weight breaks off the branches. In falling down, the cassowary breaks his wings, and now he can no longer fly. The small bird then tries. Because of his light weight, the small bird jumps happily from branch to branch, and also throws fruit down to the cassowary.

One day the dog in play rolls up the lobes of his ears. The wallaby finds this smart and handsome, and asks the dog how he did it. The dog tells the wallaby to cut his ear lobes, which the wallaby does. The dog rolls the lobes of his ears out again. In shame the wallaby leaves the village and now has only small ear lobes.

2. Another group of tales pits humans against animals, with animals the losers and human beings the winners. The dog was a close companion of the human being and in former times he could also speak human language. Then he began to gossip about what a husband and wife did in privacy. For this reason they cut his tongue, and now he can only bark.

Fish used to come to the village to dance when the people were gone. Before the people returned from their daily work, the fish would rush back into the water, leaving behind all their rubbish on the ground in the village. One day the people take them by surprise. In their flight, the fish receive their present day form and color. One fish steps in the excrement of a pig and is now black. Another fish jumps in a tree and hits his nose, so his nose is now flattened. The fish no longer come into the village, and human beings perform their dance.

II. 2. *Plant stories.* Formerly, all banana plants stood erect. One day one of them said: "Let us try and bow down our heads!" The others thought it worth a try and bent down their heads. Half way down one of them looked curiously back and saw the swindler standing

upright smiling. Now only one banana species stands upright, one bows down its head halfway and all the other bend their heads.

### III. *Human beings and the supernatural*

III. 1. Two men, living in separate villages, are friends. One day they decide to go on a hunting trip the following day. A male spirit overhears this arrangement. The spirit makes one of them sick and taking the appearance of the sick man, goes with the real man on the hunting trip. They kill a pig and carry it. The spirit carries the rear section and eats the tail and testicles of the pig. The man scolds and beats his dogs for doing this. Then he discovers that his companion is a spirit and not his real friend. He sends the spirit far away to wash the intestines of the pig. In the meantime the real man takes the rest of the pork and climbs a tree to safety. The spirit man returns and finally finds him in the tree. The spirit man wants to climb the tree and asks the man how to go up. The man throws down a rope. Just before the spirit reaches him, the man cuts the rope. The spirit falls down and the dogs kill and eat him.

While in the tree, the man feels safe and superior to the supernatural. The spirit is very stupid. In some variants the stupidity of the spirit and the superiority of the human being are described in detail. The bad spirit always does something stupid. The man tells him to go up buttocks first, or take the bark off the tree or to cut the tree with his teeth, and so forth. Then the spirit realizes that this is not the way to succeed. Finally the spirit succeeds in felling the tree. Now the birds come to the rescue of the man. He has the birds wait and take him to safety at the exact moment the tree begins to fall. The spirit sees himself cheated again and returns to his abode.

A man is sleeping in the bush all by himself. The spirits discover him and carry him away to cook and eat him. On the way fog comes down and wakens him. When he passes under a tree he grabs a branch and lifts himself up to safety. At home the spirits discover that they have only human excrement on their stretcher.

Parents are working in the garden. The children in the village are playing with a wooden signal drum their father has just made. The spirit of the signal drum does not like this treatment. He puts the children in a wooden drum and rolls them down into deep water. The people pull the signal drum out of the water, but there are no remains of their children in it. The water is now red.

The supernatural in human form is harmful, but in the form of an animal or plant it is helpful to humans. Humans go into the realm

of bad spirits either individually, in pairs of the same sex, or in groups such as children. In some cases the supernatural penetrates into the human sphere, either village or house. There is, however, no encounter between human beings and the supernatural if father, mother and child (family) are united in one spot, be this village, garden or bush. If one family member is not present, such interaction might take place. The supernatural may be male or female, and appear individually or in a group.

### III. 2. *Human beings and souls or inhabitants of the other world.*

In this group of Märchen we find humans in encounter with the souls between the deceased and the inhabitants of the other world. New Guinea Pidgin lacks a term for the other world. The residents of the other world may be birds, fish, snakes, eels, etc. Inquiries about life after death were in most cases not very revealing. Souls and inhabitants of the other world are usually not harmful to the living. As long as people had access to the other world, they benefited from these spirits. The road to their world is now closed because of human failure.

1. *Human beings and souls.* Living and dead alike once lived in the same village, but their way of life differed. Humans wanted to sleep at night, but the souls were up then and made noise. Since this disturbed the humans' sleep, they sent the souls to another place. Now the souls are ashamed to come again.

A mother dies. By magic they call the mother back to feed her baby. She comes, but her body feels cold and light shines from her armpits. So they advise her to leave. She departs, taking her baby along, and never returns again.

Two girls are intimate friends. One day they say to each other: "If one of us dies, she will come and take the living to the deceased." Both get married, with one living on an island, the other on the mainland. One day, the one on the island dies. The one on the mainland lives happily and gives birth to a baby. Sometime later her deceased friend comes for a visit and reminds her of their promise. The living friend tries to escape death, but in vain. One day she dies in an accident with her child.

2. *Human beings and inhabitants of the other world.* A child peeps through a small hole in a stone and sees into the other world of the fish. His uncle makes the hole wide enough to hook fish. One of them turns into a woman. Since both are unmarried, the man takes her to his village. The parents are happy about the fine woman. One day the fish woman wants to visit her relatives. She goes and never returns.

### III. 3. *Relationships among human beings*

1. *Brothers or sisters.* An older brother neglects his younger one, who is thus captured by evil spirit women. They cut him to pieces and go to get vegetables to serve with the meal. The older brother finds him. Since no piece is missing, he is able to join them and thus bring him to life again. The older brother sends him to climb up a coconut tree. Inexperienced as he is, the younger brother ends up in the clouds with no way to return. His older brother has to send up the birds to get him down.

In social Märchen the younger brother is the inexperienced one, who needs the help of his older brother. In myths, the younger one is a courageous, daring powerful brother who knows what to do and does it.

2. *Parents and children.* Children molest an old man while he is resting. For this he lures the children with a banana into a wooden drum. He closes and rolls the wooden drum with the children down into the sea. Evil spirits find and eat them. One usually escapes and returns to the village. In other variants another village finds them and takes them into their community.

If parents or adults neglect or harm children, they turn into birds or other animals—in other words, they commit suicide.

#### 3. *Marriage partners.*

3. 1. *Getting a marriage partner.* A young man leaves his village on a hunting or fishing trip. On his way he comes to an old woman, or in some variants to an old man. First he waits till the old woman has put on her skirt, then he helps her in bringing water and firewood. At night he sleeps where the old woman wants him to sleep. In reward, the old woman tells him to take young coconuts and to handle them very carefully. She tells the young man to go with his canoe into the sea and drop the coconuts at a certain spot. The young man follows the advice. While he is asleep, two women appear and wake him up. The young man is taken by surprise at the sight of two young, beautiful women and does not know what to do with them. So he puts them in the garden, one in a banana plant, the other in a sugarcane. The young man goes to his village. He is now sick and tells his mother to get sugarcane and banana for him in the garden. His mother does so. The moment she wants to cut the sugarcane with her knife, a young woman jumps out. The same happens when she wants to cut the banana. The mother brings the wives of her son into the village.

Everybody in the village respects the two beautiful women. Another lad also wants two beautiful women. He does not listen to the advice on how to behave. He rushes to the old woman, he does not

wait till she is dressed up, and does not bring water and firewood. For his disobedience the old mother tells him to take ripe fruit, throw them down and to put them on the wrong spot in the sea.

Two ugly looking women appear, with loose teeth, gray hair and one eye missing, because he dropped the coconut.

The man with the ugly women now takes revenge on the man with good women. By telling him a lie, he imprisons him in a tree. The good wives do not know where their husband is and they do not marry the man with the ugly women. The man in the tree eats the leaves and the bark of the tree, then his fingernails and loinclothes, and grows into the trunk of the tree. Finally the right birds arrive. He asks the birds for two feathers. In some variants the birds give the feathers willingly; in others he gets them only by a trick. He throws the feathers down. The feathers fly to his two wives in the village. They put the feathers under an old saucepan. The feathers turn into two eggs. Out of the eggs hatch two birds. They grow up very fast and their mothers send them to find their father. They find their father in the tree. First they peck him from the bark of the tree. But now the man refuses to be carried home by the two birds, because he believes they are not strong enough. They prove their strength by bringing up a large tree trunk and then a heavy stone, but the man still does not trust them. So the two birds grab him, fly up and down with him and deliver him safely to his two wives. His wives bathe and feed him so he can gain strength again. He then kills the man who imprisoned him in the tree. No further revenge is taken by this man's relatives, since the hero is regarded to have had a just cause for the killing.

I collected this tale frequently, and a good narration may last over an hour. The woman may be first a coconut, betelnut, cucumber, fish, etc. The young man is not consciously seeking a wife. He finds the old woman by chance, or he gets his wife, and is surprised and does not know what to do with a woman. The woman has to tell him: "I am your wife. You took me, the cucumber." Since he cannot find the cucumber, he believes and takes her as his wife. Marriage in the Märchen is usually polygamous, the husband having two wives. In myths marriages are monogamous.

3.2. *Marital relationships.* These stories deal with problems between husband and wife. Frequently a marriage partner becomes angry and tells people that the other one is not of human origin. This is an offense or curse which definitely breaks down a happy marriage. The offended partner leaves the human community, taking their child along, and becomes a fish, turtle, bird, etc. The departure may be carried out in such a way as to be painful for the offender.

4. *The husband and the other woman.* The husband has one or two wives, but has also another woman in the bush, in a hole or in a tree. He spends much time with this woman, neglects his wife in the village and brings only bad game to her, which has been torn to pieces by his dogs. His wife gets suspicious and sends her child along. Unwillingly the father takes his son with him. The son sees this other woman and reports to his mother. Mother and son go and kill this other woman. The husband may take revenge on his wife and kill her or the wife may depart from him.

5. *Women with another man.* Married and unmarried women have in secrecy a lover at a body of water. The women always return late in the evening, bringing home only a few and small fish. In some variants they bring too many fish, because their lover pays for their services. In both cases, the men decide to send a male child along, small but able to understand. His mother does not want to take him along, but has to take him because of his stubborn insistence. To play it safe, the mother puts the child to sleep in as many as ten netbags. Then the child cuts through all the netbags, except the last one, with his small knife, and peeps through and watches. Upon his return, he reports to his father. The men decide to kill their wives' lover. One day the men pretend to go on a hunting trip, but instead go secretly to the water and wait for the arrival of the women. The men take them by surprise and kill their lover. The women may take revenge and turn into birds or flying foxes or go up to the clouds to become stars. Or, the men may get back their wives in a way similar to the young man who gets his betelnut girl (see topic III. 3./3. 1).

6. *Relationships among human beings.* The actors are human beings. Two are friends and trust each other. One cheats the other one, who then will return the cheating just for fun, and if this goes on and on, both destroy themselves in the end.

#### CONCLUSION

The wide range of topics considered in this paper can be found in a surprisingly small geographical area, i.e. roughly 220 km. in length and 100 km. wide at the central northeast coast of New Guinea. Unfortunately, time did not allow for systematic work to establish mythological areas (*Mythenkreise*). Because of this, part of the knowledge gained through the presentation of the materials has to be regarded as tentative. There are agreements between myths and linguistic classifications, a few of which were mentioned, but there are also disagreements. For instance, the population of Karkar Island is said to have descended from three brothers and not from two as one would expect from the fact that

the area has two languages, Takia and Waskia.

Stories in topic I. 1., the becoming of the world, are more of a philosophical nature with no apparent influence on present ways of life, but they illustrate the human desire to transcend into metaphysics also in primitive societies.

The tales of topic I. 2., the becoming of men, are more of a theoretical value if all of mankind is included. But they have a practical aspect, if from the myth a small group with specific activities originates in a village.

Topic I. 3., destruction and new beginnings, contains stories which play an important part in the initiation and renewal rituals which last for several months and are performed every ten years or so. In the last twenty years they were performed again in the hinterland area of Bogia.

The stories in topics I. 4.-I. 8 explain the origins of objects, customs, culture makers and spirits. In their secret names they contain the religious and magical powers to control or correct events from day to day, to make garden plants bear fruit in abundance, to make hunting or fishing trips successful, etc.

In the tales in topic I. 9., death at first did not exist, and had to come into existence. For this reason, the legend is a myth. Death is a single act which cannot be repeated by the same actor as is the case with other acts. Humans lose something good to some animal, which is in contrast with the animal stories that have animals pitted against human beings. Thus, the topic of death is an exceptional case.

Animal and plant stories have an ethical content, but they are more used for amusement than education. There is a great lack of interest in them and for this reason they are more and more forgotten. It was very difficult for me to get them.

The social Märchen are of educational value.

In most myths we find at first glance human beings in conflict with each other. The conflict causes things to originate. But a closer look at variants of the same myth reveals that one part is the carrier of the supernatural or divine. The divine nature disguised in human form is seldom expressed in words, though New Guinea Pidgin has a word for it. The divine nature of an actor in human form is revealed through his unnatural birth, and even more so through his behavior, which is unusual and in opposition to normal human behavior. Unfortunately, the unnatural birth of the supernatural actor is often omitted in otherwise well narrated myths.

The unusual behavior of the divine actor is regarded by the young as something to be laughed about. Myths given in shortened or fragmentary form might omit just these characteristics. We can make the



following conclusions based on myths which were fully narrated. The supernatural enters a community of human beings and causes conflicts, which result either in the sought-after death of the divine actor or in the forced death of one of his relatives, such as a child, or in departure of the divine actor from this specific human community. In tagmemic terminology we can call this episode the functional point or slot of death, with its changeable fillers: sought-after death of the supernatural, forced death of a relative, or departure. The death of the supernatural caused by human beings makes the world become as it is now.

In topic I. 1. the primeval actor cannot enter the human community, because the human being does not yet exist. The primeval actor is not born of a human mother, he is there or he comes. A primeval element exists already. The primeval actor starts to make things or things start to become as he needs them for his subsistence. Another primeval actor comes and interferes with his creative activities, so that the world does not become as he had planned. What and how much he does depends on the variant, but the stories are certainly not complete as they are now.

Thus we can distinguish two phases in the becoming of world and man. In phase 1, the world becomes or is made by a primeval actor or creator; in phase 2, the world and man become complete or as it is now through the death of the supernatural caused by human beings.

This listing of topics also permits some tentative observations on the relationships between the supernatural and human beings. It is important to distinguish between the supernatural appearing in human form and the supernatural appearing in form of animals, plants or elements. The supernatural is good, but may become bad through human fault, or bad and even penetrating into the sphere of the human being.

In the myths, the supernatural in human form is good and is helped by the supernatural in animal, plant or element form. Thus the culture maker Kulbob is helped by an ant, who makes the tunnel for him, or by insects and thorns, who protect him in his tree. Exceptional are the myths in I. 3., destruction and new beginnings. The supernatural in the form of an animal becomes harmful because it is eaten despite a warning. Those who do not eat the animal are helped to survive. The killer is a man, who flies around as a hawk, i.e., the supernatural in form of an animal. The hawk killer gets killed by the supernatural in human form, i.e., the youngest son, conceived unnaturally, for the benefit of the human beings.

In the Märchen the supernatural in human form is harmful to man. The human being knows how to escape, feels superior to, and ridicules the supernatural. The supernatural in animal or plant form comes

to his rescue.

In topic III. 1., human beings and the supernatural, the supernatural in human form even deceitfully penetrates into the sphere of man. In topic III. 3., relationships among human beings, man is brought by a social conflict into the sphere of the bad supernatural in human form.

#### NOTES

1. My fieldwork was made possible only through a generous research grant from the Swiss National Fund, Berne, Switzerland. With gratitude I acknowledge this help. I would also like to thank the staff of *Asian Folklore Studies* for their encouragement and assistance in the production of this article.

2. For names of towns, villages, rivers, ranges, islands and languages see Z'graggen 1975: 1-45, and Wurm and Hattori 1981: Map 7 of Madang Province and map 6 of Estern Sepik Province.

3. "Untrue" is expressed in New Guinea Pidgin as "stori nating," "stori nabaut," "pipia stori," or "giaman stori."

4. The word "or" is used to indicate some of the possible fillers of a functional point or in a tagmemic slot.

5. The topics are divided by a slash into topic areas and single topics, e.g., I. 7/1 would indicate "Cultural objects and customs" (topic area) and "fire" (single topic).

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