

1. Mythohistories of Ibelele and Tiegun: The Power of the *Leres*

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This chapter investigates the cultural meaning of social power for the early modern Tule. To elucidate this issue I examine three different groups of sources: the indigenous oral tradition, the writings of pamphleteers who defended the Scottish incursion of 1698—1700, and the published narrative of a young buccaneer named Lionel Wafer, who visited the isthmus in 1681. European intruders, colonizers, and commentators theorized about the institution of indigenous chieftainship in the Darién region of eastern Panamá from the sixteenth century onward, and their prejudices and misapprehensions colored how they described the institution of indigenous rulership. It is my goal to provide a more balanced explanation of early modern Tule perceptions, distributions, and implementations of political power in their communities.

Several scholars of the Darién have assumed that the complex system of political authority under which the San Blas Kuna live has been under development, or in place, for thousands of years. ¹ This assumption was based on the well-documented interactions between certain Tule leaders and British and French buccaneers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These European interactions with Indian leaders, whom the intruders termed "chiefs," were believed to provide ample evidence of the political structure's durability and longevity. ² Because the San Blas Kuna's political ideologies enshrine chiefly authority as the sole foundation for the group's survival into the twenty-first century as an autonomous people, these ideologies have strongly influenced scholarly studies of the group. In addition, the San Blas Kuna preserve oral mythohistories ³ that interweave an ancient chiefly lineage with a tradition of resistance to outside authority. The histories seamlessly connect early modern opposition to the Spanish, directed by these presumed chiefs; long-lasting alliances that the chiefs formed with anti-Spanish buccaneers; and contemporary leaders who manage and oversee the Kuna's autonomous relationship with the Panamanian state.

However, it is my contention that the seventeenth-century Tule were not ruled by the men whom the Spanish called *caciques* or *capitanes*, and whom other Europeans termed "kings" or "chiefs." The available Spanish- and English-language sources and the oral traditions of the Kuna people lead me to conclude that the Tule were under the government of ritual specialists. These figures wielded a form of social power based on their understanding of the connections between what Europeans viewed as the natural and supernatural worlds. My assertion is based on a study of the story of the advent of Ibelele, a being whom the Kuna revere as a

mythohistorical ancestor, and the story of Tiegun, the greatest of the first generation of mortal ritual specialists, or *leres*. My interpretation is also buttressed by the fact that the first chiefly leader of the San Blas Kuna's autonomous "state within the state," the man who governed them following their successful struggle to achieve and retain their autonomy from the Panamanian government, was a ritual specialist named Nele [Lere] Kantule. 4

Through a study of the story of Ibelele's parentage, the nature of his birth, and the description of his acquisition of an awesome ritualistic power, we can understand Tule beliefs regarding the world in which they lived, the power required to understand its workings, and the manner in which this power was distributed, manipulated, and maintained. The story of the second mythohistorical figure, Lere Tiegun, provides further evidence of the manner in which social power was mapped and distributed within Tule society in the early modern period. European observers enshrined the so-called chieftains who managed relationships with outsiders in the documentary record as the sole rulers of the Tule. As some of the intruders would later learn to their misfortunes, the less-mentioned and usually vilified religious ritual specialists, the men and women whom the Tule called *leres*, actually organized Tule society at its core and provided the political and spiritual center for the community.

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Spanish documentary sources can be combined with mythological and oral evidence, for colonial officials in Indian country mentioned the names of *leres* who were the leaders of Indian communities. Europeans operating in the region failed to realize that the Tule *leres* wielded both social and political power. In the rare instances in which the Spanish did recognize a *lere* as the supreme power in a town or village, they often confused the term, translating it as an honorific substitute to be used in place of the more familiar *cacique* or *capitán*. Though Europeans were generally blind to its existence, the institution of the ruling ritual specialists was resilient and persistent. In fact, the *leres* retained their legitimacy among the Indians to such an extent that in the eighteenth century several of them would successfully frustrate the evangelizing efforts of the most determined Jesuit missionary the region had seen. 5

The nature of the Tule *leres'* power is complex, and clues to its foundation and operation can be discerned in two Tule mythohistories that I term "Ibelele's Story" and "Tiegun's Rise and Fall." The social and natural power of the *lere* is entwined with the fundamental powers of the universe. The Kuna believe that *purba* is the primary essence of all life, and that it resides within all animate and inanimate things. The *lere*, who possesses a *purba* that is extraordinarily strong, has the ability to eradicate what "normal" people commonly perceive as a fissure between the natural and the supernatural worlds. The *lere's* capability to ignore and cross over the

boundaries that obstruct the actions of "ordinary" people is considered a vital necessity to the well-being of the community. The "ordinary" Kuna are as aware as the Ieres are that the spirit realm and its inhabitants are not actually walled off and separated from human beings, but the people are powerless to act on their knowledge. When powerful spirit-beings called *ponigan* steal, damage, or infect the *purba* of human beings, causing sickness and madness, only the Ieres can communicate properly with them and convince them to leave. 6

"Ibelele's Story" provided the Tule with a hero whose life graphically depicted the activities of an exemplary Iere. As a mythohistoric narrative, the story is one that both Iere and commoner can enjoy. The second story, "Tiegun's Rise and Fall," in contrast, holds an admonition, illustrating the miseries that attend the misuse of sacred power. Even so, it is not an entirely bleak admonition. For though it provides a dire warning, Tiegun's story describes the manner in which the Tule might deliver themselves from powerful and malevolent Ieres bent on honing their powers in order to oppress the people.

Ibelele's Story

The creator gods Nan Tummat and Pab Tummat made everything in the world. Pab Tummat began creation by mixing his semen with Nan Tummat's menstrual fluid. Each time they wanted to create something, the two did this, and the thing emerged from Nan Tummat as she sat upon a table. The plant, animal, or medicine issued from Nan Tummat amid much blood, and Pab Tummat collected it in a golden container that he positioned on the ground. The Great Mother also gave birth to the medicinal plants and most of the animals in the world. In this way the Great Mother and the Great Father united their vital fluids in order to generate the vital force needed by all things that exist on the Earth. This force, the *purba*, resides in all things, including stones, mountains, and trees.

After the plants and beasts were created and named, Nan Tummat became the Earth itself, clothing herself in rich, green vegetation. After engendering the plants, animals, and medicines, Nan Tummat gave birth to a spirit woman named Muu, and the creators built her a home in a place called the River of the Mists. Nearby, in a place named the Region of the Trees, Pab and Nan Tummat placed two generative spirits, Olopenkikkiler and his wife Olokkekepyai, and assigned the stewardship of natural, earthly creation to these three spirit-beings.

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Afterward Pab and Nan Tummat created the first man and his wife, whom they named Olonaikaliler and Olonadilisop. When the two touched the earth their names were changed to Olobilipiler and Olopursobi, and the first man is known as Piler. After traveling several days the man and the woman

arrived at an extensive plain crossed by a single river called Oloubikun Tiwar, and there Pab Tummat built for them a house of gold. Piler and Olopursobi gave birth to five children, all sons, and named them Kana, Inoe, Topeka, Kuchuka, and Olokunaliler. Because no other beings like themselves inhabited the earth, the children of Piler mated with spirits and beasts and produced new types of creatures. The children of Piler were fertile, and the earth became populated with these new animal-people. Kana fathered the clawed, climbing animals, such as Wiop, the bear, Achu Tummat, the jaguar, and Sulu, the monkey. Inoe engendered the large-bellied beasts, such as the tapir, the manatee, and the peccary. Topeka was the father of snakes, spiders, bees, centipedes and sea-rays and other venomous animals. Kuchuka engendered the sickness that animals and men suffer, and Olokunaliler was the father of cold.

Piler's children were very active and fertile, and the population of the earth increased dramatically. As the numbers of animal-beings grew, however, so too did corruption and improper behavior. Piler could not control his sons, a fact that became painfully evident at family celebrations and feasts. Olokalibler, the bear-man, would consume enormous amounts of *chicha* and challenge his brothers to better him in tests of strength. The subsequent wrestling matches caused great destruction and were disordered scenes of embarrassing bad behavior. Olokunaliler would bring down violent winds and storms, while Olokalibler would destroy furniture and weaken the foundations of the house as he hurled his brothers against the walls and foundation. After observing this shameful and dangerous behavior, Pab Tummat sent messengers to the earth, four men whom he had enlisted to exhort Piler's family to reform their way of life. The great animal-men, however, refused to listen to them, and they went so far as to mock the messengers, calling them weaklings, liars, and worse. The animal-people proudly declared that their behavior was their own business, most especially because their grandfather was the very son of Pab Tummat himself.

After this rebuff Pab Tummat sent more men to reform Piler and his descendants. Their names were Sue, Ikwabamanwe, Tuna, Kubna, Nusgesusa, Dekendeba, and Mago, and of these the most effective were the last pair, Dekendeba and Mago. Though he began the work well Dekendeba was ultimately corrupted due to his relations with two women, Olokikirtili and Olowisopdili, who were the daughters of ponigan. After this Dekendeba fell under the influence of the ponigan and became a tyrant, stealing the lands of those whom he governed. Mago, on the other hand, remained a true man, and held the respect and trust of those whom he governed. Angered by this, Dekendeba attempted to blacken Mago's name, spreading the lie that Mago had had relations with the daughters of the ponigan. This ruse was ineffective, and Mago's reputation remained unsullied. He formed an alliance with Uakwa, one of Pab Tummat's first generation of messengers who, like him, had not deviated from the path of truth.

Pab Tummat soon was sure that his second wave of reformers had failed, and he resolved to send the great leres to the earth in order to perform good deeds, teach men how to live, and unlock and amass the great knowledge residing in the medicines that Pab Tummat had placed in and on the earth. With patience, sagacity, and good will the leres would acquire the knowledge of Pab and Nan Tummat, thereby making themselves the masters of all that existed. Pab Tummat sent Mago and his wife, Olokwadiryai, three children: Ilamagun and the twins Olonitalipililer and Kabiyai. At puberty, the twins were renamed Olotwaligipiler and Magiryai, and Uakwa cared for them after the death of their parents.

The young twins did their best to teach their neighbors the proper way to live in houses and to sleep indoors, but the animal-people paid them little attention and continued living outdoors like savages. The savage wildness of the men and the women created an additional problem for the twins, for Olotwaligipiler felt sexual desire but was revolted by the thought of mixing his blood with that of the inferior race that surrounded him. One night he crept into Magiryai's hammock while she slept and had sexual relations with her, leaving before she could discover what had occurred. The next morning the girl awoke with the knowledge that she had been violated, but she said nothing to her brother, having resolved to find out who the culprit had been on her own. Before going to sleep the next night Magiryai enlisted Ologugiliyai, the louse, as her ally, asking the bug to bite her foot when she felt the stranger come into the girl's hammock. This stratagem failed, however, because the louse was not watchful enough, and Magiryai had to try this ploy with several small beasts over successive nights. These attempts, unfortunately, failed as well.

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Success came on the seventh night when Oloardilisop, the grain bug, bit Magiryai's foot when Olotwaligipiler entered the hammock. Feeling the pain in her foot, Magiryai leapt awake and struck her brother in the head with a jug filled with dye that she had hidden under the hammock. As her brother ran from the room holding his head, Magiryai dried all of the rivers so that the culprit, whose face she had not seen, would be unable to wash the mark of guilt from his face.

While seeking the culprit one morning, Magiryai came suddenly upon her brother in the forest and could not miss the markings upon his face. Olotwaligipiler quickly turned from his sister, fleeing in shame. His escape prevented him from learning that Magiryai was not angry with him. She was in fact very pleased that it was her brother, and not one of the animal-people, who had secretly had relations with her. Intending to let him know of her happiness, she followed her brother into the dense forest, where she soon became lost.

It was a fruitless pursuit in any regard, for after leaving her Olotwaligipiler had ascended to the heavens to become the moon. (Magiryai's dye gave the moon the distinctive face that we see when it is full.) Magiryai, pregnant with her brother's child, wandered in the dense forest for many days. At the close of the ninth month, she had made her way back to the lands near to Mago's home at Oloksun Tiwar. Approaching the precincts of that familiar homestead, she found her path suddenly blocked by Mu Kwelopunayai, the old frog woman. Noting that Magiryai was with child and tired, Mu invited the girl to stay at her home. This invitation was extended with a warning, however. Mu informed Magiryai that she shared the house with her grandchildren, a troop of fierce animal-men who would surely eat her if they got the chance. The exhausted young woman could do nothing more than accept her offer, and Mu Kwelopunayai hid her behind a pile of leaves and tree bark at the back of the house.

When the grandchildren returned to the house in the evening, it became clear that they were as fierce, if not fiercer, than the old woman had said. They entered the house rudely, and they immediately began growling and howling because they sensed the unfamiliar scent of pineapple in the house. They searched like mad to find the source of the aroma, intending to eat the person or thing from which it emanated, but failed to find it. The next evening Mu hid Magiryai in the roof thatch of the house. Again the grandchildren sensed the smell of pineapple, and again they failed to find the well-hidden young woman.

The next day Magiryai was not to be so lucky. Mu had hidden her within the hammock-rest in the corner of the house, but the animal-men found her, and with great guttural cries they devoured her. Mu, observing this act of barbarity from the crest of a hill near the house, could do nothing, but she guilefully asked her grandchildren to leave the bowels for her. They did this, and, taking the innards, Mu placed them in a bark pot on the fire. When the pot burst, Mu placed the innards in another one made of leaf, but this one also burst. This happened several more times, and only when Mu provided a golden pot did the intestines stay over the fire without destroying their container. After Magiryai's intestines had been in the golden pot for some time, a rooster poked its head over the edge and sang,

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Ibelele, Ibelele.

Following it, a *paaru* bird darted its head over the edge, singing,

Olelele, Olelele.

Eight birds in all came out of the pot, and their names were Ibelele, Olelele, Pu Tule, Kwatkwat Tule, Olowigapililer, Olosuignibeleder, Pugasui, and a woman named Olowai-ili. Mu informed the siblings that she was their

mother, and she treated them as such. They in turn respected and treated the old frog woman as if she were their mother, for they knew no better. This state of affairs was not to last forever, for one day the brothers met a bird by the river, and this bird said to them, "A big fish swallowed the bones of your mother."

Though they thought that they were certain that they knew who their mother was, over the next few days the brothers began to have their doubts. For example, when they looked at their reflections in the river, they saw that their visages were better formed than that of the old frog woman. (She didn't even have a nose!) Mu, fearing the possible impact of her lie if the truth were ever brought to light, ordered the boys to find and kill the talkative bird. The boys trapped the beast and brought it back to the house, and Mu informed the children that the bird's dreadful words clearly meant that she, their mother, was soon to die. She then told the boys to release the wounded bird, which they did.

Shortly thereafter the boys, while at the river's edge, felt themselves overcome by the old doubts. They resolved to call into the water to see if they received an answer.

"Mama, are you there?" they shouted, one after the other. After some moments they heard from deep beneath the surface a humming, ghostly reply,

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"Ummm, ummm ..." was the only sound Magiryai could make from her place deep within the bowels of a fish.

The brothers resolved to leave the frog-woman's house and travel to Sapibe Nega in order to seek and attain the knowledge and medicines with which they could revive their true mother, who was trapped within the entrails of a great fish. Traveling the many levels of the world, the boys acquired much knowledge and mastered many arts, learning effective chants, beautiful music, and powerful dances. Upon their return they made space to cultivate the useful plants and herbs that they harvested at Sapibe Nega. Ibelele became the most powerful ritual specialist, and the scope and effectiveness of his knowledge awed his brothers. Having prepared themselves in this way, Pugusui was sent to capture the fish that contained the bones of their mother.

The brothers hacked Magiryai's whitened skeleton from out of the fish and placed it in a hammock inside the house. Ibelele then began to sing. He sang for eight full days, and through his skillful knowledge of powerful ceremonies he restored the skin to his mother's bones. In a testament to

his skill, Ibelele's singing brought Magiryai back to life, and the siblings were then able to see for themselves just how beautiful a woman their mother had been. Magiryai immediately informed her children that she was quite hungry, and she asked that a white dove be brought to her to eat. The siblings immediately set out for the mountains to seek one for her, leaving their mother alone in the house. To their great consternation and sadness, they found a pile of pure, white bones in their mother's hammock when they returned with the dove. One of the animal-people had hidden near the house and spied on Ibelele while he had been singing, and had clumsily repeated some of the master's words, an act that undid the beneficial results of the ceremony.

Not to be undone by this setback, however, Ibelele began the work anew, and, in a testament to his great ritualistic power, he succeeded in reviving his dead mother once again. This time, however, the children noted that Magiryai's features were slightly animalistic, and that she was not so beautiful as she had been the first time she had been revived. She was, however, still hungry, and again she requested a white dove. Another had to be sought, and when the children returned home they again found their mother deconstituted into a pile of bleached bones. The persistent Ibelele was forced to repeat the ceremony on three further occasions because of the repeated interference of the ignorant animal-people. The rituals were clearly taking their toll on his mother's *purba*, for the last time Ibelele reincarnated Magiryai her body took on the form of a jaguar. While the family was searching for the jaguar-woman's food, an animal-man entered her room. Magiryai's jaguar flesh immediately disappeared, and she was transformed into a pile of bleached bones, which the brothers now buried in the earth.

Having honed this awesome power of re-creation and regeneration, Ibelele opened a strategic offensive against Piler and his animalistic sons, a struggle that was to require all the mastery and guile the young Iere could muster. Ibelele at this point came up with a diplomatic masterstroke with which to entirely outsmart his enemies. Exploiting the beauty of his sister, Olowai-ili, Ibelele enticed Olourkunaliler, the lord of the winds, into an alliance with him. With this ally he would be able to chip away at the sources of Piler's power. Piler, however, had not been idle, and as a countermeasure he sent to Ibelele Kuchuka's daughter, Olobagindili. Kuchuka was the lord of sickness, and Piler thought that if Ibelele compromised himself with the woman he would become sick, or corrupted. This was not to be the case, for Ibelele often cleverly placed himself in compromising positions with the daughters of powerful *ponigan* in order to acquire the secret knowledge of their fathers so that he could better oppose them. He intended to do the same with Olobagindili.

Ibelele's brothers, however, were set against the match and wanted their eldest brother to avoid any contact with such a woman. Ibelele overruled

them, and in the meantime he organized an enormous feast to celebrate his acceptance of Kuchuka's daughter. He invited Piler and all of his sons, and they all came to the celebration and were very merry, all the while believing that Ibelele had signed his own death warrant when he had accepted Kuchuka's daughter as his wife. At the feast Ibelele acted as the *kantule* at the chicha; he provided all of the songs that the guests enjoyed that day. Ibelele performed so well, and treated his treacherous guests with such honor and respect, that the sons of Piler became drunk and complacent. But Ibelele had outthought them all and set a series of traps for the powerful men at the doorway to his house, and as the sons of Piler staggered out of the house they toppled into them one by one. Ibelele then lured Piler, bereft of all of his sons and allies, into a golden prison, a structure that Ibelele had built with his own hands. After Ibelele's many labors, Pab Tummat placed him in the heavens, fixing him in the sky as the sun. 7

Tule Power

"Ibelele's Story" is an important one to the Tule; the first Iere's myth is structurally joined with the creation cycle, and these stories provide the cultural basis for the Kuna ethnocentrism of which anthropologists have frequently remarked. 8 Existing ethnic boundaries must remain strictly enforced because the Kuna believe that throughout prehistoric times the creator had been engaged in refining living beings into the highest form possible, the golden people (*olo-tulegan*). This refinement took two forms. The first was a type of celestial animal husbandry, through which Pab Tummat diluted the animalistic traits of his first generation of beings by encouraging them to breed with spirit-beings and more refined human beings. The second level of refinement practiced by Pab Tummat occurred in the realm of rulership and ideas. The creator sent good men to the earth to teach the animal-men to live in ways that were appropriate for the children of Piler, and for the grandchildren of Pab Tummat himself.

Ibelele led a family of heroes who had been sent by the creator to reform the children and grandchildren of the first human beings. The members of Ibelele's family were not described as great chiefs, nor were they heroes of immense physical strength. Such descriptions, in fact, were reserved for the animalistic sons of Piler. The feats that the sons of Magiryai performed, though they at times involved brute strength, were achieved by the use of innate skills that enabled them to transcend artificial human boundaries. The first Tule heroes were not the great animal-people; they were, instead, the *Ieres* who were sent to put these larger-than-life figures in their place. The Tule mythohistorical cycles do not revere warriors, and they do not sing the praises of a militarized warrior caste organized around a dominant chief. They revere and memorialize heroes who perfected their rituals, and bestowed their lasting power upon the Tule through effective ceremonial songs.

"Ibelele's Story" provides the Tule exemplar of effectively wielded social power, which is ritualistic power. Introduced by the creator into a world dominated by Piler's progeny, Ibelele's mission was to break Piler's domination and bring order and reason to the earth. From Ibelele's arrival onward, the days of Piler's sons and the animal-men were numbered. The sources of Ibelele's power and dominance were his mastery of all of the forms of medicine and his understanding of the manner in which purba worked in the created realm. His power was thus not what we would term chiefly power in the traditional sense. Rather than a society organized by rulers who have proven or must continuously re-prove their effectiveness as warriors, the Tule revere as the founders of their people men who were able to rule and organize their society through their ability to master the natural world. 9

As a companion to Ibelele's story, the tale of "Tiegun's Rise and Fall" provides additional cultural information regarding Tule concepts of social power. In this case the story illustrates that the power of the leres, though awesome, had limits. Although what they could do was truly magnificent, often beneficial, and entirely inexplicable to those without an affinity for it, the mythohistory of Tiegun taught that they ought not to use this power to manipulate and oppress the people whom they ruled.

Tiegun's Rise and Fall

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After placing Ibelele in the heavens, Pab Tummat sent Ibeorgun to the earth to civilize the animal-men, to teach them the manner of living correctly, and to prepare the way for the arrival of the olo-tulegan, or golden people. Ibeorgun traveled far and wide among the rough people, teaching them the proper names for all things, especially the parts of the body, one's natural relations, the birds and animals, and the plants of the earth. It was Ibeorgun who taught men to bury their dead and to clean themselves in the river after defecating. He taught them the great puberty ceremonies and to live inside of houses and sleep indoors, instead of outside on the ground. Ibeorgun lived for a very long time, and near the end of his time on the earth he informed the people that he would be leaving them soon, but that powerful men who would continue his work would follow him. These men, called leres, would come down from the heavens soon after he had gone. They would provide leadership for the people based on the foundation of wisdom and goodness that he himself had built.

One year following Ibeorgun's departure, the great leres came down from the skies, arriving on enormous golden platters. They were nine in number, and their names were Tiegun, Kupiler, Palipiler, Paliber, Organ, Sibū, Wagibler, Masartumi, and Olonagediryai. The leres bred with the women of the animal-people, and, after several generations it was their offspring who became the Kuna Indians, the golden people. Each lere sired a separate

grouping of the Kuna, creating the ethnic divisions of the Kuna people. The different groups are the Comes Tulegan, the Sawi Sawi Tulegan, the Kwakwa Tulegan, the Pugi Pugi Tulegan, the Akibir Tulegan, the Tilagun Tulegan, the Samu Tulegan, the Ya Tulegan, and the Naku Tulegan.

The leres ranged across the earth, dividing their time between ordering their lands, fathering children, and acquiring the knowledge that it was their special talent to seek and receive. They became very powerful, learned many things, and ruled over other men. Some leres concentrated on amassing the knowledge of plants and cultivated extensive groves of food and medicinal plants; others were more expert in the knowledge of animals and could bring them to their homes at their will and speak with them. The most powerful lere of the group of nine was Tiegun, and people were in great awe of his knowledge and power. It would not be long before the golden people had reason to fear him as well.

Tiegun had gone far and wide in his quest for ritualistic power, and of the nine he alone, like Ibelele before him, had studied the ways of the malevolent spirit beings, the ponigan. Tiegun lived morally for a time, and ruled well, but eventually he was corrupted and became widely feared, for he ruled his people tyrannically. He took as his wives the daughters and wives of his weaker subjects, and at the puberty rites he demanded from the father possession of the girl whose hair was to be cut. ¹⁰ Those who spoke out against these injustices died violently, and those unfortunate men whom Tiegun intended to kill would first see a great snake while they walked on the mountain. Later they would fall sick and die. No one made the connection between Tiegun, the dead men, and the snake. People simply assumed that there was a good reason why such strange things were occurring.

One day, however, a man planning the rites for his daughter decided to ask lere Kupiler about these matters. Kupiler decided to confer with the man down by the river's edge, judging correctly that the river's roar would carry away their conversation with it, and prevent Tiegun from hearing them. Kupiler told the man that Tiegun, and not malevolent snakes, was responsible for the mysterious deaths. Lere Kupiler then told the man that in order to put an end to Tiegun's tyranny it would be necessary to enlist the help of the Tiwar Tole, the Men of the River. The man returned to his village and continued the preparations for his daughter's chicha ceremony, and when Tiegun arrived and demanded his daughter, he pretended to consent. In the meantime, Kupiler had arranged for the river-men to appear at the ceremony, and, using their phenomenal strength, they overcame Lere Tiegun and destroyed him.

European Sources: The King of Darién

The stories connected to the mythohistorical figures Ibelele (or Tad Ipe, as

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he is now called) and Lere Tiegun illuminate the deep cultural and historical importance of the leres to the Tule people. The role of the leres has been obscured and distorted by the European sources that have been regularly consulted in writing the history of the Darién; for the most part, Europeans were unaware of the power wielded by the Tule ritual specialists. Observers were too willing to filter what they saw through the lenses of their own biases, or to force it to fit their political or ideological needs. For example, a version of the tale of "Tiegun's Rise and Fall" actually entered several English-language texts of the late seventeenth century, but it did so in a greatly altered form and has been consistently misread. The story of the tyrannical Tule ruler appeared in several pamphlets related to the Scottish attempt to colonize the isthmus in 1698–99. The authors of these pamphlets noted the Tules' apparent lack of an emperor, king, or overlord, and they recognized this fact as something that required an explanation.

This was an important problem, for the Scots had planned to find such an overlord in order to negotiate a treaty that would cede to them lands in the heart of the Darién. This need was so vital that many authors writing in defense of the Scottish colony used literary means to invent such princes where none had actually been found. ¹¹ The anonymous author of *The History of Caledonia: or the Scots Colony in Darien in the West Indies*, for example, described the gold-bedecked king of the Darién "seated under a tree of an extraordinary bigness, upon a kind of throne made of several logs of wood ... and covered with a sort of party-colored cloth, which he had purchased of the Spanish for a great sum of gold" (pp. 30–31), while the writer of *A Letter Giving a Description of the Isthmus of Darian* stated vaguely but authoritatively that "[the Indians] are governed by a king and several princes" (p. 10).

Other presumed eyewitnesses, however, contradicted these monarchical reports and stated that when the Indians were asked whether there existed a single captain, ruler, or king over them, their response was simply that "fifty years previously one chief did set himself up as the commander in chief above the rest but he was a tyrant and was eventually murdered." ¹² That bad king had taken the wives and daughters of other men, collecting for himself whatever women he pleased. Unhappy with this situation, the other Tule captains were said to have banded together and destroyed the oppressor. Since that time the village leaders had not allowed a single overlord to exercise dominance over them. ¹³

This description of the Indian tyrant provided an instance in which Tule thinking about their cultural and political practices rose to the surface of European documents that had been crafted for a purpose other than to provide a cogent description of Tule political theory. It is probable that the Indian informants, when queried about the nature of their political leadership, responded with the mythohistory of "Tiegun's Rise and Fall," and that the pamphlet writers fixed its time of occurrence to the very

recent past in order to prove that even though there was now no king in the Darién, one had ruled until recently. [14](#)

Equally important to the interactions of the period, "Tiegun's Rise and Fall" and "Ibelele's Story" both provide lessons for Indian leaders in the formation of diplomatic alliances with outsiders and enemies. Both mythohistoric figures entered into dangerous pacts with the ponigan. Ibelele succeeded in garnering their knowledge and power while avoiding their temptations; Tiegun, who sought their alliance for purely selfish reasons, fell entirely under their sway. The right kind of alliance and arrangements could often be vital to the future of a village, and "Ibelele's Story" provided a fundamental lesson of the manner in which a Tule leader could arrange a marriage alliance in order to convert an enemy into a friend and relative. Ibelele not only had great prowess as a lere, but he also practiced the arts of the indigenous diplomat. Tule leaders of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries could draw valuable lessons from oral tradition as they acted to deal with the various outsiders in their midst. Although they could gain instruction and comfort from Ibelele's triumphs, they would also be chastened by the story of Tiegun's corruption, downfall, and death.

A Pirate's Literary Evidence

45

The writings of Lionel Wafer, a seventeenth-century buccaneer active in Panamá in the summer of 1681, allow further consideration of Tule conceptualizations of social power. The texts generated by the buccaneers frequently have been used to derive firsthand information about seventeenth century Tule life, and it was assumed that those outlaws operating outside of European norms had a special affinity for Indian cultures. The pirates' texts, in addition to being easily accessible, are among the few English-language sources containing detailed material related to the Tule, and they have become indispensable to anthropologists and historians lacking the capability to consult Spanish archival material. However, pirate-narratives such as Wafer's must be handled with caution, in that they were written in the hopes of generating profit and crafted to fit the stylistic conventions of the travel narrative, one of the literary genres that would influence the creation of the English novel. [15](#) Wafer's account, titled *A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America*, [16](#) is often taken to contain a factual description of the workings of Tule chiefly power. In fact, Wafer's book does something quite different: it provides a case study that illustrates the Tule cultural trait of intertwining ritual and political power.

Wafer covered the expenses of his passage to the Indies by serving as the surgeon on the ship that carried him. He hoped to use his medical skills to attain employment in Jamaica, where his brother managed a plantation. However, while there, Wafer was recruited to join a group of buccaneers

planning to prey upon Spanish shipping along the isthmus of Darién. In the midst of his piratical activity, an injury prevented Wafer from traveling and forced him to convalesce in a Tule village for several months. 17 The young buccaneer learned the indigenous language, dressed as the natives did, and, he claimed, learned to look and think as they did. So great was his skill at playing the Indian that when his shipmates returned to the Tule village to pick him up, they failed to recognize him because of his long hair, his darkened skin, his Indian mode of dress, and the gold nose plate that rested on his upper lip. So, at least, he led his readers to believe. 18

Most accounts of Indian religious, political, or marital practices in the pirate texts were couched in pejorative, ethnocentric language, and Wafer's was no exception. Rather than assisting the reader seeking information on Tule practices, the pirate texts instead reveal facets of the writer's own attitudes and prejudices. Often, the pirate narratives lack new information, and instead ploddingly confirm accepted prejudices regarding the Indians. Many of these writers believed, before even having met a single Indian, that they fully understood the manner in which the American "savages" organized their societies. Because of this supposition, the Tule chieftains with whom the buccaneers interacted were for the most part schematically described, and alliances transacted with them were taken as the natural and understandable outcome of the arrival of Europeans on the scene.

Descriptions of religious practices, when provided, appeared as obvious and often dismissive caricatures. Wafer, for example, penned a stereotypical description of Indian "conjuring" in his book, stating that

we presently inquired ... when they expected any ships.... They sent for one of their conjurers, who immediately went to work to raise the devil, to inquire of him at what time a ship would arrive here.... We could hear them making the most hideous shrieks; imitating the voices of all their kind of birds and beasts. With their own noise, they joined that of several stones stuck together, and of conch shells, and of a sorry sort of drums made of hollow bamboos, which they beat upon; making a jarring noise also with strings fastened to the larger bones of beasts. And every now and then they would make a dreadful exclamation, and clattering all of a sudden, would suddenly make a pause and a profound silence. 19

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Other buccaneers who discussed Indian practices simply provided redactions of long-standing European fantasies and prejudices; some who wrote after the publication of Wafer's text simply cribbed from his vivid descriptions. 20

Circumstances, rather than choice, had forced Wafer to spend four months as a guest in a Tule village. Whatever the reason for his sojourn, he was subsequently considered by his contemporaries to be the most knowledgeable living authority on Indian customs in the Darién. ²¹ Although some historians and anthropologists take him to be the preeminent interpreter of early modern Tule culture due his claim that he had become a fully accepted member of the Indian society, Wafer's account requires the same rigorous treatment as do the other pirate narratives. For example, Wafer confidently described an Indian society dominated by chieftains who held supreme power over the lives of the villagers they ruled. According to the buccaneer, a chief named Lacenta ²² had adopted him when Wafer succeeded in healing his wife after several Tule *leres* had failed. Wafer first saw the woman seated on a rock in a river in the process of being shot in the arm with small, sharp arrows to draw her blood. Wafer, with Lacenta's leave, intervened and bled the woman in the European fashion, his incision leading to the issuance of an impressive spurt of blood from the woman's arm, which, he alleged, resulted in her complete recovery several days later. ²³



Wafer's action and good fortune had several results that were beneficial to him. Lacenta placed more and more trust and affection in their relationship, and when Wafer began to hint about returning to his fellow pirates or making the trip to England, Lacenta even offered his daughter in wedlock as an inducement for him to remain. Wafer's curative act had become known throughout the village and the surrounding area, and Lacenta's power and standing among the Tule villagers was clearly enhanced through his association with the outsider who controlled effective curing power. ²⁴ By his own account, Wafer traveled from village to village in the outlying area, and everywhere he went crowds of Indians came to meet him. Not only did the Indians wish to be healed by him, the pirate claimed, but the Indians also wished to adore him. ²⁵ In an invocation of biblical

imagery, Wafer described the Indians' importuning him to heal their sick, who were brought to him on litters as he traveled. Certain Tule villagers, those whom Wafer pointedly described as having had some form of contact with the Spanish, even asked that he perform the ceremony of baptism for themselves or for their children, and the buccaneer, suppressing his qualms, performed the rites. The English pirate became a vessel of European sacred and healing power, occupying the place Spanish missionary priests had once held among some of the Tule villagers. [26](#)



Lionel Wafer placed supreme importance on his relationship with the chieftain whom he named Lacenta in his book, and the heart of his narrative involved the manner in which he gained this man's confidence and trust. Wafer also wrote with purpose, and he let his readers know that his book had pragmatic lessons to impart. He clearly intended his narrative to provide a guidebook for men engaged in colonial ventures in the kinds of American border regions where English settlers might need to acquire and maintain Indian allies. He stated in the preface to his second edition that his aim was to present to his readers evidence that it "would be the interest of England to make an establishment upon that continent." [27](#) His detailed description of his integration into Tule society was written in order to announce to the relevant powers in Great Britain that he possessed an expertise that it would be folly for an imperial power to ignore.

Wafer's text was written as a self-advertisement directed to the colonial planners acting for commercial and state interests in Great Britain. [28](#) Of prime importance for historians of Scotland is the fact that writers following the activities of what has come to be called the "Darién scheme" have made extensive use of Wafer's text. Ethnohistorians have also attempted to use the text as a reliable source for eyewitness descriptions of Tule practices in the period. [29](#) Yet Wafer's experiences are not independently verifiable, and his writings were complicated by personal motives that colored his descriptions. He constructed Lacenta, at least in part, for the consumption of his readers and imperial planners, and the figure of this Indian prince would serve as one of the models for later writers' depictions of Indian chiefly authority.

In the form of the native lord he named Lacenta in his text, Wafer constructed the kind of pragmatic Indian leader through whom English imperialism might gain a foothold in the Darién. Yet, in addition to being a tract about the nature of chiefly power in the Darién, Wafer's text illustrated the deep power retained by the Ileres in the mid- to late

seventeenth century. The pirate's forceful descriptions of Lacenta's regal stature and the reverence in which the chieftain was held were not the result of ethnological fieldwork. Nonetheless, Wafer's account provides the reader with valuable information that it was not the author's primary intention to disseminate; the *New Description* inadvertently revealed vital information about the operation of Tule culture in the early modern period. In describing the Indian reaction to his healing power, Wafer's narrative highlights the Tule relationship to sacred power. The young pirate's proven skills as a healer were the key to the Tules' adoration of him; and Lacenta's desire to keep him in his company also derived from this source.

Given his experiences, Wafer might have concluded that it was the Indians' ritual specialists, rather than their chieftains, who were the important men of the indigenous communities. However, his preconceptions regarding the organization of "savage" societies, coupled to his explicit political goals, led him to describe his experience in a predictable fashion. Wafer accordingly accentuated parts of the narrative and slighted others. For example, Wafer was naturally reluctant to linger for too long on the baptisms that he performed while he was in residence in the isthmus. Perhaps in response to criticism, the second edition of the work provided an extensive justification for what he had done. Because the rites were one of the ceremonies that the Indians expected a person of his skills, stature, and importance to perform, he had carried them out in order to retain the Indians' respect and reverence. That reverence was the key to Wafer's relationship with Lacenta. [30](#)

As "Ibelele's Story" and "The Tale of Tiegun's Rise and Fall" have illustrated, the "ordinary" Tule believed the leres to possess unique purbas that empowered them to do things they themselves could not do. Wafer's treatment by the Tule villagers demonstrated the reverence afforded to the men and women believed to possess these enhanced purbas. The pirate's book, therefore, does much more than provide an adventure narrative depicting a sojourn among the Indians or lay out a blueprint for colonial activity. The *New Description* depicts the nature of social power and its distribution within Tule society. Wafer, through his curative skills, proved to the "ordinary" Tule that he had access to forms of sacred power that they did not, and he was consequently afforded a modicum of social and political power. Lacenta, who had found and recognized the pirate's power, endeavored to keep himself associated with it. The reverential treatment afforded to Wafer ultimately serves as evidence of the high status the leres enjoyed in Tule culture.

Contrary to the author's intention, the text does not provide conclusive evidence of an indigenous hierarchical society ruled over by powerful chiefs. Lacenta's authority, when it was exercised in the narrative, was of a consultative form and was not at all coercive. Rather than rule by fiat,

Lacenta offered suggestions with which the community agreed; if his suggestions were proven erroneous, the text implied, another course could be agreed upon and taken. This was made most clear when the Indians decided to kill Wafer because they believed that his companions had murdered their Indian guides. Lacenta talked the villagers out of this course of action by suggesting that they first ought to verify that their neighbors had in fact been killed. Lacenta's suggestion saved Wafer's life, for it bought him the time it took the Indians to return home. Lacenta could not issue categorical orders to halt Wafer's execution, but he could exercise persuasion. [31](#)

The buccaneer's account also made clear that the Tule were interpreting their relationships with Europeans through the lenses of their own systems of thought, belief, and experience. Some Indians had obviously dealt with Spaniards attempting to convert them, and they would have assumed that those religious men enjoyed some form of special relationship to the creator of whom they spoke. The missionaries required the Indians to undergo the rite of baptism before allowing them to gain greater knowledge of the European deity, and in interacting with the buccaneer-ritualist whose power they wished to enjoy, the Tule appear to have asked that he carry out the opening European ritual with which they were familiar. The Indians believed that Wafer's performance of the sacrament might afford them access to the power that he had dramatically (if somewhat unwittingly) proven himself to possess, for their contacts with the missionaries had taught them that baptism was one assured way of accessing the sacred power. Ironically, the uncertain bearer of European medical science was valued by the Indians as a bearer of wider spiritual energies, an eventuality that allowed Wafer's *New Description* to describe the underlying power dynamic of Tule society, albeit in coded fashion. [32](#)

The experiences of a Jesuit priest named Jacobo Walburger, which are examined in the final chapter, provide additional evidence of the continuance of the Ieres' cultural power throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Walburger, who was forced by fate to contend closely with the Ieres rather than be treated like one, found that his residence in the Darién was not nearly as gratifying or profitable as Wafer's had been. I have argued that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Tule villages contained nodes of important social power that have been ignored. It is not my intention to deny that indigenous chieftains existed. Indeed, I study their emergence and transformations in and through relations with a variety of European intruders and administrators. I also wish to bring to light the neglected importance of the Ieres in Tule life. By studying the oral tradition in some detail, I illustrated that the indigenous communities had a means of organizing themselves and of understanding rulership, alliances, and diplomacy that did not make exclusive use of the social category of a paramount chieftain.

As I explain in the following chapters, the chiefs and captains with whom the Europeans interacted were men who selected themselves as leaders, and who would stand or fall based on their skill in managing the Tules' interactions with outsiders. Because the leres and the chiefs served distinct functions, the new leaders did not supplant the ritual specialists, who continued to wield social power in the villages themselves. Although I have argued that the Tule villagers appear to have recognized and accepted the validity of Wafer's healing power, this is not meant to imply that Tule culture was easily permeable or primed to absorb influences from the Christian faith passively. Instead, leres whose power was challenged by Spanish missionaries would take action to retain the villagers' religious allegiances.

Notes:

Note 1: See especially the influential compendium by E. Nordenskiöld, *An Historical and Ethnological Survey of the Cuna Indians* (Göteborg: Göteborgs Museum, 1938); and H. Wassén, ed., "An Anonymous Spanish Manuscript from 1739 on the Province of Darién: A Contribution to the Colonial History and Ethnography of Panamá and Colombia," *Etnologiska Studier* 10 (1940): 80-146. Wassén joins several other authors and editors who rely heavily on a single source from the later eighteenth century in order to explain the early modern indigenous situation in the Darién. Following the description by Andrés Ariza, the governor of the Province of the Darién in the 1770s, they weave together indigenous chieftaincy, resistance to the Spanish, and foreign competition for empire as the three pillars central to the description of the history of the Indians of the Darién. See V. Restrepo, ed., *Viajes de Lionel Wafer al istmo del Darién (cuatro meses entre los indios)*, traducidos y anotados por Vicente Restrepo (Bogotá: n.p., 1888), "Apéndice: La vida en el istmo de Panamá y las invasiones de los bucaneros en el siglo XVII," pp. 89-128; Wafer's *New Description*, appendix III, "The Cuna Folk of Darién," esp. pp. 168-170; M. Luengo Muñoz, "Genesis de las expediciones militares al Darién en 1785-6," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 18 (1961): 333-416; and J. M. Zapatero López-Anaya, "Expediciones españolas al Darién: La del ingeniero militar don Antonio de Arevalo en 1761," *Revista de Historia Militar* 9, no. 19 (1965): 49-79. In *Conquista, evangelización y resistencia: ¿Triunfo o fracaso de la política indigenista?* (Panamá: Instituto Nacional de Cultura [Editorial Mariano Arosemena], 1995), A. Castellero Calvo comes to similar conclusions in his discussion of eastern Panamá, though he bases his results on a selection of primary and secondary material that is much more varied and deep. For an analysis of the modern San Blas Kuna chiefs, see J. Howe, *The Kuna Gathering: Contemporary Village Politics in Panamá* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986). The chiefs played a central, catalyzing role in the "Kuna Revolution" of the 1920s, in which the San Blas Kuna, with American assistance, attained autonomy from the Panamanian state. The evolution of this situation is

examined by J. Howe, *A People Who Would Not Kneel: Panamá, the United States, and the San Blas Kuna* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998).[Back.](#)

Note 2: For an early statement of this point of view, see D. B. Stout, *San Blas Cuna Acculturation: An Introduction* (New York: Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, 1947), pp. 51-53. Similar conclusions are made by R. Torres de Araúz, *Etnohistoria Cuna: Tesis para la investidura formal como Académica de la historia* (Panamá: n.p., 1974), and in her "Etnohistoria Cuna," *Lotería 221* (1974): 53-79. K. Tice, *Kuna Crafts, Gender, and the Global Economy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), makes similar connections on pp. 34-35. Howe, *People Who Would Not Kneel*, p. 10, takes great care to differentiate the situation of the sixteenth century from that of the later periods.[Back.](#)

Note 3: For a discussion of the intersections that make the term mythohistorical apt here, see G. Urton, *The History of a Myth: Pacariqtambo and the Origin of the Inkas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), esp. pp. 1-17.[Back.](#)

Note 4: Nele Kantule was a major informant for Nordenskiöld's Historical and Ethnological Survey, and his life and political career are discussed in Howe, *People Who Would Not Kneel*, esp. pp. 66-70 and 295-300.[Back.](#)

Note 5: The struggle for the religious allegiances of the villagers in this community is discussed in chapter 8.[Back.](#)

Note 6: For an explanation of the Kuna cosmology and how it relates to healing specifically, see N. M. Chapin, "Curing Among the San Blas Kuna of Panamá" (Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 1983). [Back.](#)

Note 7: The fullest transcription of the Tule creation cycle and myths can be found in N. M. Chapin, *Pab Igala: Histórias de la tradición Kuna* (Quito: Ediciones ABYA-YALA, 1989). The translation of the two myths here is my own. Nordenskiöld's Historical Survey includes "A History of the Cuna Indians from the Great Flood up to our Time," pp. 125-332, but this version is less reliable than that provided through Chapin's transcripts. For a critique of Nordenskiöld's collection, see Chapin, "Curing Among Kuna," pp. 28-32. For additional transcriptions of Tule myths, see J. Howe, J. Sherzer, and N. M. Chapin, eds., *Cantos y oraciones del congreso Cuna* (Panamá: Editorial Universitaria de Panamá, 1980).[Back.](#)

Note 8: On Kuna ethnocentrism in the twentieth century, see J. Howe, "An Ideological Triangle: The Struggle Over San Blas Kuna Culture," in G. Urban and J. Sherzer, eds., *Nation States and Indians in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), pp. 19-52, esp. pp. 21-26; and J. Howe and J. Sherzer, "Friend Hairyfish and Friend Rattlesnake, or Keeping Anthropologists in their Place," *Man* 21 (1986): 680-696.[Back.](#)

Note 9: This particular type of social power has been previously ignored in the anthropological and historical studies of Darién. For a comparative exploration of how such power operated in practice, see T. Earle, *How Chiefs Come to Power:*

The Political Economy in Prehistory (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), chap. 5.[Back.](#)

Note 10: The female puberty rites are central public ceremonies practiced by the matrilocal Kuna. See the discussion in J. Sherzer, *Kuna Ways of Speaking: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), pp. 139-154; A. Prestan Simón, *El uso de la chicha y la sociedad Kuna* (México: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1971), esp. pp. 88-91 and 135-187; and J. Howe, "Puberty Ceremonies," in Salvador, *Art of Being Kuna*, pp. 286-291.[Back.](#)

Note 11: The desperate Scottish need to locate Tule leaders who could cede indigenous lands to them is discussed at length in chapter 4.[Back.](#)

Note 12: The Journal of the Most Remarkable Things ... kept by Hugh Rose (National Library of Scotland, Darien Papers 83.7.4), entry for 6 November 1699.[Back.](#)

Note 13: This story is told in the MS Journal Kept from Scotland by one of the Company Who Sailed on Board the Endeavor Pink; with a short account of Darien, which is reproduced in G. P. Insh, ed., *Papers Relating to the Ships and Voyages of the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, 1696-1707* (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1924), pp. 69-75. Hereafter, this is cited as DSP. The entry for 4 November 1699 records that there "is no such thing as a king or emperor in Darien.... The old remember such a man, they say he was a tyrant ... and they cut him off."[Back.](#)

Note 14: It is possible that there had been a Tule captain who wished to exert power over his regional fellows, leading them to band together to oppose and destroy him. Even if this had been the case, the influence of the lessons contained in the old tale of "Tiegun's Rise and Fall" would still have applied in the same way.[Back.](#)

Note 15: For a discussion of travel literature and its importance as a genre in the book trade, see David Cordingly, ed., *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, by Charles Johnson (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1998), pp. x-xiv; P. G. Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1983); and P. Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage: Sea Narratives in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).[Back.](#)

Note 16: The original edition was published in London by John Knapton in 1699. A useful modern edition is L. E. Elliott Joyce, ed., *A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America by Lionel Wafer* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1933). Hereafter, this text is cited as Wafer's New Description.[Back.](#)

Note 17: For Wafer's wound and convalescence, see Dampier's *New Voyage*, p. 20; and Wafer's *New Description*, pp. 5-8.[Back.](#)

Note 18: Wafer's *New Description*, pp. 41-42.[Back.](#)

Note 19: Wafer's *New Description*, pp. 37-38.[Back.](#)

Note 20: For a discussion of such conventions and how they become established and perpetuated, see Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), esp. pp. 171-219.[Back.](#)

Note 21: William Dampier, in his otherwise meticulous *New Voyage Around the World* (1697), saw no problem in excluding a description of Tule practices from his text altogether because the publication of Wafer's book was imminent. See the entry for 24 May 1681; p. 26 of A. Gray, ed., *A New Voyage Around the World by William Dampier* (London: Argonaut Press, 1927). For the relations between Dampier and Wafer, see chapter 4.[Back.](#)

Note 22: Lacenta remains a rather shadowy character. No other contemporary Spanish or English source that I consulted mentions him again by name. For an attempt to establish an accurate map of Wafer's travels, see Nordenskiöld, *Historical and Ethnological Survey*, pp. 121-124. [Back.](#)

Note 23: Wafer's New Description, pp. 28-29.[Back.](#)

Note 24: Wafer's New Description, pp. 28-30. For a discussion of local leaders' working to control access to new sources of power, see M. W. Helms, "Long Distance Contacts, Elite Aspirations, and the Age of Discovery in Cosmological Context," in E. M. Schortman and P. A. Urban, eds., *Resources, Power, and Interregional Interaction* (New York: Plenum, 1992), pp. 157-174.[Back.](#)

Note 25: Cabeza de Vaca, the shipwrecked Spanish explorer of the sixteenth century, also found acceptance among the Amerindian peoples of northern Mexico due to his supposed power to heal the sick. For a new edition of his various texts, see R. Adorno et al., *Cabeza de Vaca* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).[Back.](#)

Note 26: Wafer's New Description, pp. 28-30.[Back.](#)

Note 27: Joyce, Wafer's New Description, p. lxi.[Back.](#)

Note 28: Lionel Wafer succeeded in this goal, and the Board of Trade called on him to testify about the Darién, as did the planners of the Scottish Company Trading to Africa and the Indies. I discuss the episode at greater length in chapter 4.[Back.](#)

Note 29: See R. Torres de Araúz, *Etnohistoria Cuna: Tesis para la investidura formal como Académica de la historia* (Panamá: n.p., 1974), which makes extensive use of Wafer's account.[Back.](#)

Note 30: Wafer's New Description, pp. 29-30.[Back.](#)

Note 31: Wafer's New Description, pp. 15-16.[Back.](#)

Note 32: Wafer's descriptions of Tule ritual practices, perfunctory and derisive though they might have been, formed a template used by authors hoping to

capitalize on its success as a bankable travel-adventure story. The New Description was followed by a flurry of pamphlets defending the Scots in the Darién. Almost all of them included a description of the customs of the Indians and their rule by powerful, benevolent chiefs, kings, or emperors. It was also de rigueur for authors to provide an often detailed description of Tule conjuring. See, for example, I. Blackwell, *A Description of the Province and Bay of Darian: Giving a Full Account of all it's Situation, Inhabitants, Way and Manner of Living and Religion, Solemnities, and Product; Being Vastly Rich in Gold and Silver...* (Edinburgh: n.p., 1699), pp. 9-10; *A Letter Giving a Description of the Isthmus*, pp. 13-14; and *History of Caledonia*, pp. 24-25. Some authors found portions of Wafer's eyewitness account so useful that they simply reprinted large sections of it in their own works; the most glaring example of this being *A Short Account From, and Description of the Isthmus of Darién, Where the Scots Colony are Settled* (Edinburgh: n.p., 1699). [Back](#).

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