Karo
the life and fate of a Papuan
Amirah Inglis
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Karo
the life and fate of a Papuan

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also by Amirah Inglis

‘Not a White Woman Safe’ : Sexual Anxiety and Politics in Port Moresby 1920-1934. Canberra, 1974
From the Europeans' point of view he was bad but from the Toaripi point of view he deserved a song. So they made a song.

_Ara Relai, Daugo Island, 13 August 1974_
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This is a biography of Karo Araua, a man from the Gulf of Papua who in 1938 was hanged for murder.

There are many stories about Karo Araua, so many that had I spent ten times as long in Port Moresby and the village where he lived, I could perhaps have collected ten times more.

I first heard of Karo Araua in 1970 when I was collecting material about the life of Europeans in Port Moresby during the 1920s and '30s. He was a man, I was told, who at the foot of the gallows, addressed the watching crowd in four languages. The hangman’s noose could not kill him and it was only after the attending priest and the Gaoler had stabbed him many times in the side, that he gave up his life. He returned, I was told, after his death to the prison to haunt the Gaoler.

I next came across Karo in November 1971 when I read in Kovave, the Port Moresby journal edited by Ulli Beier, a memoir by Sergeant Bagita, then the best known and most highly placed policeman in the Royal Papuan Constabulary. Bagita quoted a fragment of a song which he said Kerema people had made up about Karo. In the song, Karo was hailed as a ‘savage and courageous man’ because he had shot a fellow policeman, and Bagita praised him as a ‘true policeman’. I showed this fragment to Dr Bert Brown who, for more than thirty years had been a missionary among the Kerema — or Elema — people of the Gulf of Papua, who had compiled a dictionary of their language and transcribed, translated and published legends and stories of the people. In the settlements of Gulf people which have become attached to the Motu villages around Port Moresby where Bert Brown preached, he found Ikui Avosa and his wife from Vabukori village, two members of his congregation who knew a complete version of Sergeant Bagita’s fragment. It was the ‘Song About Karo’; 14 stanzas of a song in traditional form sung to the tune and the drum beat of the songs about clan heroes. The reader will
find Bert Brown's translation of the 'Song About Karo' on page 121 of this book.

From then on Karo stories turned up everywhere. I collected the recollections of people who were involved in the events I describe, or were bystanders, or who heard the stories later from older relatives; I used the printed records of the pre-war colonial administration; I used the weekly newspaper published in Port Moresby, the Papuan Courier; I used official files, sadly few, which held letters, reports and despatches from the central administration in Port Moresby to the outstations, from the outstations to the central administration and from there to its Australian superiors. But many files of that central administration no longer exist; they disappeared during World War II and the files of the Central Court went up in smoke in two fires after that war. Papuans smiled in a delighted way as they told me about this very wicked man; 'Oh yes, I know that story!', though their delight was often shame-faced. The only Europeans who had heard of him were those men who had lived in Port Moresby at the time of Karo's iniquities and one who had heard about him from a Papuan carrier during the war when he was a soldier on the Bulldog track.

Other Europeans (as we whites were called) were interested when I told them what I was doing.

'A Papuan hanged by the colonial government? What did he do?'.

'He murdered a prison warder', I said. 'And the prison warder's wife. And the prison warder's twelve year old daughter'.

'Was the prison warder white?'.

'No, the prison warder and wife and child were all three Papuans'.

Then what, some wondered, could be interesting in the life of such a murderer? If he was not murdering whites in retaliation for the colonial condition, then why bother with him?

There are several reasons. First, his is an amazing story. His murders were notorious and the trial of the two Papuan accused was reported day after day and at length. The fact that Papuans were headline news in the Papuan Courier was itself remarkable in pre-war Papua where the small white community of Port Moresby for whom the Papuan Courier was published had so little interest in their doings — except as servants — that very little was reported about Papuans.

Secondly, Papua New Guinean written history was until recently the history of the whites and what they did there. Papua New Guineans, when they were mentioned at all, were a category and rarely became living people;
even when they appeared in photographs they were almost never identified. Even now this is sometimes hard to avoid, since Papua New Guineans left few traces of their lives and unless they lived in a village where the missionary kept a register or later where the constable kept the village book in which visiting magistrates recorded details of birth and death for the government records, their very existence on the earth together with their names could be lost forever except in their village, in the memory of old men who are dying.

But of course they are not alone in this. They left no records of their lives for they could not write. But neither could the lowly of Europe for most of its history and historians are beginning to realise that orthodox history, by concentrating on the world of those who did leave written records, has left out most of the population: ordinary people who did nothing publicly remarkable and who either could not write at all or if they did, wrote nothing that anyone thought worth keeping. In pre-war Papua where almost no one could write anything at all, the only accounts of the life of Papuans, apart from ethnography, were written by colonial administrators and missionaries. Often men of good will, they were divided from their subjects by the great gulf between ruler and ruled, colonizer and colonized; which made a formidable barrier to writing any history with Papuans in it. The colonial records are few and in them most Papuans appear as statistics or observations. Rarely do they appear by name and then because they performed useful services for white people either by saving their lives or working diligently for them. In such cases they were known by name: Sir Hubert Murray, the Lieutenant-Governor during the whole of Karo Araua's life, immortalised some in his Annual Reports and the Papuan Courier gave the names of two Motuan sailors who had saved a white woman from drowning in the stormy waters of the Gulf of Papua and even started a fund to raise money for their reward.

Karo Araua, for the opposite reason, was one of those few Papuans who existed as individuals for the whites in colonial times before the World War II and for whom therefore there are some written records. Because he committed such spectacular crimes he was known to the whites and he was also among the very few actual as distinct from mythical Papuans to be immortalized by his own people. People remember everything he did; all the deeds that the criminal records describe — and very many more — have been remembered and passed on, embellished and enlarged. He was to the colonizers a bad, black man; a man who was strong, pushy, cunning, able and reckless enough to get himself into the headlines. In Eric Hobsbawn's terms a tough guy, a potential bandit; in Papua New Guinea talk he was a rascal. Hobsbawm's
village toughs advertise their toughness by their swagger, their costume, by carrying arms when peasants are not allowed to carry arms. Karo demonstrated his toughness by wearing clothes on the upper part of his body when Papuans were forbidden to wear clothes. Karo's shirt was the signal which read: 'This man is not tame'.

While such a man is not an ordinary Papuan villager who did nothing publicly remarkable and simply lived out his life, the difference is only one of degree, for the world that he inhabited, the world to which his crimes led him, the world of prison, was inhabited at one time or another in their lives by very many Papuan men, and prison was as important a place of education as the school, the mission and the mine. Government officers moving into a new area would round up two or three men for manslaughter and send them off to gaol. But it was not only the fighters who found themselves in gaol. In a colonized society where police, gaols and courts were an instrument of colonial education as well as punishment, all Papuans who came into close contact with the government and who went to the government station or town, soon found themselves caught by the new laws and landed in gaol for a stretch. Even those who never ventured out of the village experienced the new law in its shape of visiting patrol officer or resident Village Constable. But its force was strongest in government station and town where those most attached to the new ways went. The earliest contacted part of colonial Papua — the Central Division — had the most gaols and the people who inhabited them, because they broke their labour contracts, played cards, resisted lawful orders, stole, raped or killed, were among the earliest people to learn the lessons of the new way. The first policemen were often former prisoners who were sometimes fierce in seeking out the new sort of wrongdoing and dishing out the new sort of punishment but who often were hard to distinguish from the prisoners with whom they felt great affinity.

There were other agents of the new way: deacons, pastors and the first interpreters, but these were men who did more or less what the colonizers told them to do. Some even had their life stories written in magazines as improving guides to other Papuans or an example to young Christians in Australia and Britain of what their pennies were helping to produce.

From those who break the law in any society one can often learn more about the life of the lowly than from the law-abiding, as Richard Cobb has shown. Papuans in gaol, whether as policemen, warders or prisoners (and the roles were interchangeable) were men attracted to the white man's world and his ways, as were the pastors or deacons, but men who made the wrong
decisions, behaved in the traditional ways no longer approved, took false steps or were sometimes smart but not smart enough to fool the white men or to fit in with their ways and so travel along the road to success. Karo Araua was such a man.

Another reason for being interested in him is that although to Europeans he was simply a monster — ‘Karo the Killer’ was one of the Papuan Courier’s headlines — to Papuans he was something else. They agreed he was a killer and did not condone the killings, but the killings did not make him a monster; the fact that he had committed such murders made his name high to them. Even in the 1970s his name would have been high for the killings; in pre-colonial times and men would have regarded him with a mixture of fear and admiration; it added to its height that Karo was notorious among Europeans and had made them sit up and take notice of him. His deeds are remembered in song and story among people through his own area and in the east down to Hula, though times have changed, the government men are no longer the ‘white foreigners’ of Kaipu Ito’s song and the values of 1928 or 1938 seem to sit strangely on the men who tell the stories of Karo today.

One day someone may write another life of Karo Araua and it will include more information more thoroughly collected over a wider area than I have managed because the person who writes it will speak Toaripi and Roro and Motu while I relied on interpreters. But this may not happen for many years and by then Susuve Ako, Makeu Araua, Ikui Avosa, Ivan Champion, Tom Gough, Morauta Hasu, Sisia Henao, Avosa Ikui, Pukari Lakoko, vakai Koaba, Naime Kwahu, Ivara Meroveka and the others who gave me their stories about Karo will, alas, be dead. Which is my excuse for presenting however imperfectly my story of the life of Karo Araua, colonized man, money-maker and murderer. I thank them all and absolve them from my mistakes and for imperfect understanding.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people helped me with this book in ways large and small. My first debt is to those who so freely gave me their stories of Karo Araua and I have mentioned most of them in the Introduction. Here I would like to thank those who helped me greatly in other ways, in particular H. A. Brown, Ulli Beier, Gavan Daws, Ken Inglis, Ian Maddocks, Michael Monsell-Davis, Louise Morauta, Hank Nelson, Dawn Ryan.

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THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

IN THE VILLAGE

AT URITAI

Araua Epe — father of Karo Araua, Toaripi villager, interpreter.
Avosa Ikui — villager, member of kekeai tao. owner of the pig which Karo and his group stole.
Karo Araua — villager, member of pepa tao; later policeman, prisoner, safebreaker, murderer.
Makeu Araua — villager, young kinsman of Karo Araua, from the same clan and the same family, member of Loka tao, member of his group.
Opa Kei — kinsman of Karo Araua, member of siuke tao, member of Karo’s group.
Pukari Lakoko — villager, member of siuke tao, later working in Port Moresby.
Tete Sevese — kinsman of Karo Araua, member of pepa tao and of Karo’s group.
Vavine Kamu — village woman from Hula village, mother of Karo Araua.

AT RIGO

Armed Constable Babaineme — a policeman attached to the Rigo station.
Ivan Champion — Assistant Resident Magistrate, explorer, son of the Government Secretary, H.W. Champion, in charge of Rigo station.
A. C. English — storekeeper.
Native Clerk Lohia — on the station staff.
Ori Susuve — from Iokea, came with Karo from Port Moresby.
Armed Constable Ororogo — a policeman attached to the Rigo station.
R. W. Wyborn — storekeeper.
**AT HULA**

Pola Relai — kinsman of Karo Araua’s mother.
Itama Relai — brother of Pola.
R. N. Smith — storekeeper.

**AT PARI**

Sisia Henao — cousin of Igua Ume, manager of Ume Hau’s trade store.

**AT PORT MORESBY**

**IN THE POLICE FORCE**

Bagita Aromau — sergeant, detective.
 Armed Constable Bili — member of the Headquarters detachment, on overland mail escort with Karo Araua.
 T.P. Gough — European Constable, known as ‘Tom Gough’ or ‘Big Gough’.
 Leonard Logan — Headquarters officer.

**IN THE CENTRAL COURT**

R. D. Bertie — a Port Moresby lawyer in private practice.
E. B. Bignold — Crown Law Officer.
R. T. Gore — Judge.
Kora Gaigo — Interpreter.
J. H. P. Murray — Judge and Lieutenant-Governor.

**IN BADILI GAOL**

Boio Vagi — from Pari village, wife of Head Warder.
Goava Oa — from Delena village, interpreter, convicted of murder, life prisoner.
Iava Vaku — from Vabukori village, Head Sanitary Warder.
Igua Ume — from Pari village, adopted daughter of the Head Warder and his wife.
Magewa — from Abau, convicted of murder, prisoner.
Naime Kwahu — from Vabukori, wife of Head Sanitary Warder Iava.
D. J. Mahon — Gaoler.
Ume Hau — from Nabuapaka, Head Warder.
Vakai Koaba — brother of Goava Oa, convicted murderer, prisoner.
The morning of Karo Araua's hanging dawned cool over Badili gaol. A still, dry season day. The south-east trade wind would blow in strongly from the sea in the afternoon, bringing relief from the scorching sun, but by then Karo would be dead. Now the sun was not yet up behind the brown hills beyond the promontory which held the gaol, and the sea was a lake. Inside the gaol Karo awoke in his cell.

By a quarter past six it was daylight and the sun was rising above the hills. They were covered with a great crowd of Papuans waiting for Karo to appear. Some said 3000 people were there: Motuans and Koita from Elevala, Poreporena and Hohodae in Hanuabada a short walk west and from Pari and Kila very close by, and from Tubesereia farther east along the coast; Koiari from inland; Vula'a people from the east; and from the far west, more than 100 miles away, Maiva people and Elema people from the Gulf of Papua which was Karo's home. People who were related to Karo Araua's family and people who were not; people who were from his place and many more who were strangers.

The government had ordered the village constables to bring the nearby villagers in to see for themselves what could happen to a Papuan who killed people. Everyone who worked or lived near the town knew what was going to happen. They knew it was because Karo had slit the throats of the Head Warder at the gaol, the warder's wife and their daughter. Even the children from the London Missionary Society school at Metoreia begged permission from the Reverend Eric Ure to go to the hanging; and when he refused, slipped off anyway, walking along the Ela beach road in the morning cool to the gaol.

All came to see Karo Araua hanged within sight of his crime, as Sir William McGregor, 50 years before, had said it should be; 'within sight of the crime to produce the greatest effect on the natives and be witnessed by the greatest number of people'. The year was 1938 and the terrifying spectacle of the scaffold, the ritual of public hanging, had been abolished in Britain's
Australian colonies for eighty years. But in Australia's only colony it remained, though the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Hubert Murray, 'hated the whole business; revolted in the extreme by the marked curiosity of both Europeans and natives'. The hanging place had been set up at the foot of the plateau on which the gaol was built, on the Taigere not the Koke side, and it was sheltered by a wall of hessian which was again sheltered by a ring of Armed Constables each with bayonet fixed and facing out towards the crowd which waited, eyes fixed on the little cluster of buildings fenced in on top of the plateau which jutted out into the sea.

At a quarter to eight, the people saw a little group march out of the native gaol, cross the compound, pass through the gate and come up along the ridge towards the execution place. In the middle was Karo, dark like all Gulf men, taller than most of the policemen who surrounded him, only a head shorter than the white gaoler who accompanied him. In white prison lap lap and a long sleeved white shirt, his arms strapped to his sides, Karo walked calmly along, escorted by George Gough, the Gaoler, and six policemen who were there to carry him to the gallows in case he should fall on the way. As the party came down the track to the hanging place, the police escort stayed in a circle around the gallows while Karo slowly walked up to the platform to join a group of important-looking Europeans. 'The Europeans were very large. They had black coats on; all dressed up because it was a death ceremony', remembers Morauta Hasu, a Toaripi witness to the hanging. A photo shows that they all wore the usual white drill tropical colonial uniform.

The police, about 160 of them — every available man — stood absolutely to attention with fixed bayonets and everybody was absolutely still and absolutely silent. Everybody was very frightened and stood gazing at the hessian circle with the gallows and rope poking up. Karo looked wonderfully free of fear as he stepped on to the trap-door. Inside the enclosure waited the white hangman, S. H. Chance, Acting Resident Magistrate of the Central Division and Acting Sheriff for this occasion. He was holding the hanging hood and, before he put it on Karo, asked if he had anything to say. Some heard Karo say these words in Toaripi, his native tongue, addressing the sun, his clan's totem and using the name of Epe Savora, his clan's ancestor:

Epe Savora ve iai sova sare iso eae patai
which meant
Sun, my friend, we'll not be seeing each other today.
Others heard him make this speech in four languages: English, Hula, Motu and Toaripi. Ikui Avosa, a man from Karo's village living in a Toaripi settlement near Port Moresby, believed in 1978 that he said this:

My brothers, my fathers and mothers and sisters, do not grieve for me! I am about to live where life is good. I behave like this because I have the assurance. That is my final word. Now let us bow our heads and send a prayer to Jesus and to his father about this journey of mine. Oh Father, all the evil I have done in the world I place on this cross, and there I leave it. I am today on my way to your kingdom. Amen.

George Gough, the Gaoler, heard him speak only in English and say:

I killed these people and I am not cross. At 8 o'clock I will die and I am going to heaven.

S. H. Chance, the white hangman, heard him say in English that he forgave the white men for what they were about to do to him and that he was going to heaven at 8 o'clock. The weekly newspaper *Papuan Courier* reported that it had heard him say:

I have done wrong and I am paying for it. I am not cross.

Father John Flynn, one of the two Roman Catholic priests in Port Moresby, made a prayer; and at his Amen, George Gough, whose eyes had been fixed on his watch, signalled eight o'clock to Chance, who sprung the trap and Karo dropped from sight behind the hessian enclosure. The sun, hot now, slanted in on the watching crowd crying and chanting, and on the twitching rope.

* * * * *

The hanging man, already so well known to Papuans and to Europeans, was a 'Gulf native'. Men from the Gulf had a very bad name among Europeans in Port Moresby as aggressive trouble-makers who were largely responsible for the sexual attacks on white women in the town, and since Karo was, as the European newspaper put it, 'a cross between what some people would consider the two worst elements within reach of Port Moresby', it was no surprise to that paper that he should come to this end.

For Karo Araua was of mixed origin and had started his life far from
the Gulf home of his father, Araua Epe, the twin village of Uritai-Mirihea which the Motu, and the Europeans after them, called Motu Motu. The inhabitants called themselves Toaripi and formed the eastern group of a people known to anthropologists as the Elema. Their villages were built on a narrow strip of land in the delta of the Tauri and Lakekamu rivers on swampy, malarial coastal flats through which innumerable streams cut watery tracks. The streams were always changing their course. The sea, especially the heavy surf beat up by the south-east trade winds, was constantly eroding the village land, for the coast is devoid of shelter west of Cape Possession, and villages on the 120 miles of black shore to the Purari Delta were sometimes washed away altogether. The good garden land was up river on the banks of the sluggish Tauri and where the Lakekamu is broad, flat and sweet. Up river also were the Moveave people, traditional enemies, with whom there was constant fighting over garden land. Araua Epe and his fellow villagers planted sago and coconuts and traded up and down the coast and inland for goods they did not produce; exchanging their sago and canoe hulls for pottery, bows and arrows, string bags and armshells. From each of these regular expeditions down the coast or up the river they brought back something new; new goods, new names, new ways, which they incorporated into their own traditions, and cemented trading partnerships that lasted for generations.

Uritai-Mirihea was a very large village, of perhaps 2000 people altogether and they divided around their clan houses — the elavo — into 10 sub-clans, each with its own clan name and its own mythical ancestor. Araua Epe’s clan name was Savoripi, a name that came from Epe Savora, the iguana who had originated the clan. Each clan had its law-giving line and its fighting line — its strong men, or sevase katu — and Araua Epe was born into the fighting line with strong powers of sorcery as well. Fearless, adventurous and fierce, he was a man typical of the Toaripi as they liked to see themselves and as others saw them. They were used to sudden natural disasters which overwhelmed their gardens or their villages. They were used to enemies among their neighbours and were wary of strangers; all men kept a tally of those they had killed in their continuous war with strangers. But in 1881, when Araua Epe was a young child, a new people appeared on the coast in the person of the Reverend James Chalmers of the London Missionary Society, a huge, white, hairy man who talked and behaved in a manner quite as strong as their own. Three years later, in 1884, his talk had persuaded the Uritai people to let him set up in their village his own house of God — his own elavo — which some of them had joined. Also in 1884 appeared Her Majesty’s ship Nelson,
which anchored in Freshwater Bay, west of Uritai and to which the village leaders were invited for a night of feasting on ship's biscuit and rice before witnessing next day an absorbing ceremony. Brightly dressed officers and men from the ship landed, stuck up a pole, hoisted a large emblem while many words were said and translated telling the Gulf people that these men, representatives of Queen Victoria, would protect them and ensure that evil-disposed men would not occupy their country or take them away from their homes. The ship and its men sailed away, but James Chalmers with the brown men he had brought from other lands settled in Uritai among the Toaripi, about whom he would write a few years later:

I have not met a people so free and independent, so fearless, whether at home or abroad; caring for none and for no tribe, and glorying only in bloodshed, murder, rapine and robbery.

He was echoing the Motuan view. The Toaripi themselves would have said that to have the reputation of a fierce warrior was every boy's goal; to learn to be a warrior was an important part of every boy's education. They would have describe themselves as ora fæ keve karu: hard ear-drum men; men who won't listen and won't take advice; men whose world was based on physical strength, on the male warrior's virtues. But when one of Chalmers' foreign teachers was murdered, and police came to Uritai to punish the murderers, the new white peoples' way began to make itself felt.

Araua Epe's path crossed that of the new white people in an accidental but not unusual way when he killed a boy from outside the village, gaining not only the prestige among his own people which was traditional, but a prison sentence which was something new, and an experience from which he gained some profit. He was sent to gaol at Samarai, an island settlement far east of any place a Toaripi man had travelled to before and there he learned new things. He learnt a new language, police Motu, the pidgin language that the Europeans had picked up from their earliest and most hospitable subjects and that all the police and prisoners then spread throughout Papua as the captured and the captors moved to and from government stations and their home villages.

Araua Epe now married for the first time. His wife was not a woman from the Savoripi clan in his own or a nearby village, nor from any other clan of his own people, but a Vula'a (or Hula) woman who came from the east. Her name was Vavine Kamu and though her home was well known to the Gulf
Karo

1. Kalo Village. This is the village, near the mouth of the Kemp Welch river, which gave Karo his name. The photograph was taken by A. C. English, formerly a government agent in the area and at the time of Karo’s birth, a store-keeper and pig-breeder.

Photograph: New Guinea Collection, University of Papua New Guinea.

people through trade, she was not from a people among whom they normally found wives. It was here, in one of the Hula houses which stood on stilts in the sea about 50 miles east of Port Moresby, that Araua Epe’s only child was born. He was a boy to whom they gave the name Karo or Kalo, the name of a village at the mouth of the nearby Kemp Welch river. At this time, a child of such mixed parentage was very rare indeed.

In about 1905, at least when Karo was still at his mother’s breast, Araua Epe, his gaol sentence over a couple of years before, left his wife’s
village and set off with her and Karo for the twin village at the mouth of the Lakekamu. They settled in a hamlet of Uritai called Mirivase, a bit out of the way of the main population, which is where the villagers preferred sorcerers to live. Vavine's relatives visited her there but she never returned to Hula and died in the Gulf of Papua far from her home.

Back in his village Araua Epe became part of the new world that was being formed in his place when the Crown’s representatives joined the scattered villages around the Gulf into a new entity called the Gulf Division with its head-station at Kerema, about 50 miles west along the coast. He was employed as an interpreter and general rouseabout for the Resident Magistrate of the new Division, G. H. Massey Baker, who later reported in his station journal in December 1914: 'Interpreter Araua... is my handy man and worth double of any of the others'.
At about the time when Araua returned with Vavine and Karo, more white men came into the area. A plantation was established near Moveave. In 1909 gold prospectors began to arrive with their hired labourers at the mouth of the Tauri, ready to journey up the river to the goldfields near its head. The Governor himself, Judge Murray, paid a visit and, he wrote, 'made friends with everyone'. Some villagers acted as boatmen for the miners and their labourers, paddling them up the rivers when the launch Bulldog broke down; but although Uritai-Mirihea was the port for the goldfields, and miners waiting there to go up or back to Moresby found the Motu Motu villagers willing to help, inquisitive and well built, very few of them signed on to labour. Only 186 men from the Gulf Division signed on while 5000 men from other parts of the colony left their villages to work there. Gulf men did not take kindly to labouring or carrying.

The world in which Karo Araua and his generation grew up was a world of more sudden change, more shocks, than any other generation of Toaripi had ever known and the shocks, hard enough for an averagely tough Toaripi man, must have been ever harder for a sevese karu as Karo was by birth and a 'wild pig' as he seemed to become by temperament.

Karo was unusual in his village both because he was the only child of his parents and because his mother was a foreigner, and perhaps the origin of his extra aggressiveness lies here. But he received, together with all the village boys, the traditional education. From his mother he learnt the stories of her people and he learnt her tongue. He learnt from his father's clan its own special rituals: from them too he learnt how to creep up on enemies while they were at work, kill one and get away quickly before the revenge group could get together. He learnt the clan cry of triumph — the maea isuta — which he would shout if his was the club that dealt the fatal blow. He learnt about the fighting line of the clan to which he belonged and the position of leader of the fighting — the sevese karu — held by his father, which he would inherit. He learnt about the disdain and even hatred which his people felt for children without known fathers. He learnt about his clan's heroes celebrated in clan songs which told of their adventures: of Tito, who could not keep still, even after he died; of Molala Harai, the Morning Star, who travelled from Mount Yule, which was his home, by gliding on a vine. He knew the traditional song — the evore — which told these stories. He learnt from his father the magic incantations which would make the coconuts of an enemy wilt and die and those that would send the pigs rooting into enemy gardens and he learnt from him also the secret of making people
sick. With his mother’s milk and from the air around him, he took in the facts of Papuan village life: the two winds which brought the two seasons; the cycle of planting and harvesting of sago; the proper roles of men and women; the deference due to senior men; who were friends, who enemies, within the clan and without; and the formal, complex system of exchange — whether of gifts or injuries — on which all activities, rituals and ceremonies were based, all contracts made, all disputes settled and social life regulated.

But he spent most of his days with his age mates — his *heatao* — that group of boys and girls born roughly at the same time to whom a feast and a special name were given; a name to celebrate some important event that had occurred when they were born. From Karo Araua’s age mates, those who were born around 1900 and named *pepa tao* — perhaps in honour of the first paper to appear in the village — and from the older *heatao, kekeai tao* (1898) and *sipi tao* (1896) Karo learnt all the everyday things a boy needs to know and how a boy has to behave.

Karo’s generation had an altogether new source of learning. Since 1911 their village had housed Samuela, a Samoan pastor and teacher who with his wife ran a school which was compulsory on at least three days a week. Every morning with his bell Samuela rounded up Karo Araua, Sesuve Hiavake, Avosa Ikui and the other members of *pepa, kekeaki* and *sipi tao* and clanged them from the bush or the river into the church building where they sat cross-legged in their bark cloth school aprons on the floor, scratching slate pencils on slates, or making out the letters of the alphabet from the Reverend Edwin Pryce-Jones’ Toaripi primer. Those who played up, those who were disobedient, were caned, those who disappeared into the bush when the bell rang were hunted out by their mates and brought back; some escaped. All the children were put to work as well as to learning and repaired the fences of the church or cleared the weeds from the mission garden; all were encouraged by Samuela. ‘You must learn to read and write’, he told them, ‘then if you go away you can write home’. Some learnt to read and write and some went away; but Karo, though he went away, did not learn to read and write, nor did his special group of friends. None of them were good scholars. Karo pleased himself whether he went to school or not.

While his *heatao* was busy at school, Karo would take off on his own or followed by one or two closely related members of his clan — Tete Semesi was one. He would not repair the mission fence, he was always in trouble. He was, people remember, a ‘leading boy, strong and well-built, and everybody listened to him’. Now and again he and his mates would take food from the
gardens or even steal a pig, for Karo was *torea ve papuvita kofa* — a master at stealing things — and although the leading men of his clan’s *elavo* laid down the law to the boy, Karo would often take no account of their decisions, and was often in trouble.

His biggest troubles, as a boy, followed pig-stealing. ‘People in the village still remember the great pig which was being fattened for the marriage of Karo’s auntie’s son,’ recalled Iru Misula, a neighbour. Karo and his boys stole it, killed it near the pen and carried it off at night, paddling across the river to Karova. As pigs meant wealth and position to the villagers, the owners were very angry indeed. When Karo, Tete, Opa and Arisa stole the very large and valuable pig belonging to Avosa Ikui, there was much trouble. The pig disappeared and could not be found, though Avosa and his wife searched and called all afternoon, his wife crying with sorrow and anger. Avosa’s family had bought the pig on a trading voyage to the east and had given four bundles of sago and a bag of betel nut for her.

When news of the missing pig spread around the village, Kiovake, guessing what had happened, took a piece of pig the boys had given him to the village constable and Karo was called up. ‘But we’ve been sleeping in the village’, lied the gang. Later, when confronted with the piece of pig they had nothing to say, and the village constable ordered the four boys to pay immediate compensation. Karo was to pay four armshells, Tete four, Opa three armshells and a necklace, and Arisa Pukari a dogs’ tooth necklace. Karo was so angry at the amount he was ordered to pay that he set fire to Avosa’s house. That night, when the family was lying asleep by an empty hearth, they were awakened by the smell of smoke to see that flames were eating the walls and they just managed to save themselves by jumping down from the verandah as everything was consumed. Avosa had no kerosene in his house, as others did who came back from Port Moresby with supplies which they sold from their houses, nor was there any fire in his hearth, so it was certain that someone had deliberately burnt his house. And he was sure it was Karo. It was the season of the south-east wind and all the nearby houses and the *elavo* soon caught fire, and, though everyone agreed that Karo must have done it, Avosa felt responsible for the damage as the fire had started in his house. He made a large feast for which he killed five pigs and invited all the people of Keavara, Mirihea, Uritai and Kukipi to have a piece, Karo among them.

Though he disobeyed the old men and caused trouble, people were wary of crossing Karo and he managed to escape harm. He did what he wanted and spent his days swimming, fishing, canoeing, fighting and occasionally
stealing, until the time came for *pepa tao* to undertake the long period of seclusion and initiation into the state of manhood; the final transformation in a process of initiation which had already been begun with earlier rituals and feasts. Close to puberty, the boys of the *heatao* would leave the *heatao* girls who had been their playmates until now, leave their mothers and sisters with whom they had lived, for the seclusion of their clans' *elavo*, there to eat special food in a special way, to grow big and fat and *never*, during a year, see or be seen by a woman; leaving the *elavo* only at night and then encased in bark.

They would learn the secret of the clan bull-roarer and the *semese* masks: large oval bark cloth objects, much decorated with designs based on clan legends, used in spectacular masculine ceremonies and then burnt. At the end of the year of seclusion, the boys, now men, emerged to become the centre of great feasts of pigs and other food which their families had been collecting during the whole year; celebrations which lasted for weeks. Then the young men began to marry. It was normal to marry a *heatao* girl and the arrangements, which had usually been informally made before seclusion, now began in earnest; exchanges of food and goods between the two families formalised the betrothal.

Karo Araua and the other boys entered their clans' *elavo* for the long year of learning during a period when fighting again broke out with their neighbours and traditional enemies, the Moveave people. The patrol officer came out from the government station at Kerema to arrest the fighters and arrange a peace conference at which Karo's father, Araua Epe, was chief spokesman for the Uritai-Mirihea people. They were still in seclusion when the patrol officer again came out from Kerema to investigate reports of very strange behaviour among the villagers of Uritai-Mirihea. As he walked into Uritai, he noticed a little, square house, quite unlike the round village houses, and he heard people call it 'offis'. He saw men twitching with convulsive movements. They said they were communing with the dead and using a special language for it: a language the people called *djaman* which had suddenly come to the twitching ones. In the centre of the village was a table, covered with a cloth and decorated with a jar. Around it were benches on which sat village men, dressed in shirts and shorts, their backs to the table, waiting. Shirts were forbidden to village men.

'It was sufficient to raise anybody's ire', reported the patrol officer, 'to see them acting in such an idiotic manner, a number of strong able-bodied natives in mid-afternoon dressed in clean new togging sitting silently as if they
were sticks and stones instead of being at work or doing something else like rational beings'. And another government official wrote: 'there is white influence behind it somewhere... it is quite certain that somebody is stirring up trouble'.

But there were no white stirrers. The men who had received the visions, who talked in strange tongues, were all Gulf men. The men of Uritai, Mirihea and Moveave, who had been so close to the white government, miners and missionaries were the most profoundly affected by the strange behaviour which Europeans dubbed the 'Vailala madness'. These villages were the strongest centre and one of its earliest leaders had been for more than twenty years a member of the Armed Native Constabulary. In Uritai, a man named Karava Heavaka was said to be leader of the cult, which had swept from the villages further west, and he preached the same message: that the ancestors were about to return in a ship, loaded with European goods and after they arrived, all the Europeans would leave Papua. Some said the ancestors would be white skinned. 'The people were told to give up their old customs which were dirty', say modern villagers. 'Pepa tao was in seclusion for only two weeks', recalls Avosa Ikui of kekeai tao, the group born two or three years before. 'When the madness came, everybody came out. They said we had to leave the bad things'.

F.E. Williams, the government anthropologist who had seen the traditional emergence of the boys-transformed-into-men, described them in Drama of Orokolo:

after a purifying bath they are decorated within the eravo; and thereupon descend in their full glory to tour the village in single-file procession and to receive at the hands of their aukau (mothers' brothers) the... ceremonial bark-cloth bands edged with 'dogs' teeth. The women, young and old, are delighted to see them again after so long an absence and (whether real or make-believe) are astounded at their size. Mothers, it is often averred, can hardly recognise their sons. For some weeks thereafter the youths parade or lounge about the village as Hoahu (bachelors) and anyone who had ever seen these splendid specimens of young manhood can understand the pride which the village takes in them and they in themselves.

But Karo's heatao would never experience either the ordeal of seclus-
ion or the glory of being made into a man. Untimely ripped from their *elavo* with the other *pepa tao* boys of each clan, they burst out into the light of day and the eyes of women and girls. In 'pious orgies of destruction' the villagers burnt the bull-roarers and sacred masks, repudiating the ancient initiation ceremonies and allowing women into the *elavo* to see the masks. This desecration, which had never before happened in the history of the Toaripi, caused the women to wail and slash their cheeks in shock. Husbands and wives began eating and sleeping together in the one house, as Europeans did. Traders reported a great sale of European goods and in the middle of the village a flag pole was erected, round which the villagers stamped calling out: ‘Come on boy! What’s a matter?’ and called on other villagers to ‘fall in’. A 9 o'clock curfew was imposed by the villagers of Uritai-Mirihea; part of the European pattern of order which would replace the old disorder as Christianity would replace the ‘dirty, ancestral customs’.

The first period of excitement during 1919-1920 lasted for four months but seizures broke out for two or three years after, to the anger of government officers; for the acts, at once so irrational and so rebellious, which they had diagnosed as a madness, meant a suspension of all village work as men prepared for the ship and the ancestors. They were angry, too, at powerful native forces ordering Uritai men about, angry at the awful mockery of their own activities which the ‘madness’ produced. Some cult leaders were arrested but the cult persisted as the Gulf people, once so dominant along the coast, seeing their own ways useless in the face of the white foreigner with his learning and power imagined that this power lay in his offices, his knives and forks, his clothes and flag-poles and his rituals.

Karo, Tete Semesi and their age mates were of an important age for the movement: unfinished men by the ancestral custom, they were the first men of the new way. They would be the first new men to greet the ancestors, perhaps to be their right hand men. But, after the excitement of those few months, nothing much changed. No ancestral ship appeared and the members of *pepa tao* had gained nothing tangible. The Europeans still had everything while the Toaripi had nothing. But the Toaripi never stopped trying to find the European secrets. Unlike other Gulf people, they never returned to the old ones: the *elavo* were allowed to rot, never to the re-built and from *pepa tao* on no *heatao* was ever initiated in Uritai.

Karo had been betrothed to Farapo Pou, a girl from his age set who came from Popo, a village up the river. The time for the formal gift exchanges of marriage was normally after he had spent his year in seclusion and emerged
a man. The time was out of joint, and the marriage was now to be concluded; but when it came to the point, Karo did not want Farapo nor did he want to live with her, so he sent her to live with his young kinsman Makeu's father while he remained a bachelor. Farapo stayed suspended with Karo's kinsman until her family took up the matter and after a traditional court, compensation was paid to Farapo's parents and she went home to Popo. The whole business had taken a year or more, and during this time Karo, living as a bachelor with his father, became friendly with another woman, Arivu Tati, a widow, slightly older than he was. He married her in the traditional way and lived with her in the Savoripi clan's part of the village.

For a time he lived a village life. His father, Araua Epe, spokesman for Uritai-Mirihea in the government peace conference and interpreter at the Kerema station, was appointed village constable in Uritai by the magistrate: he could speak a sort of English as well as police Motu, Hula and his own language. He knew the ways of the white man and he was intelligent and tough. He had exactly the qualifications that government officers looked for in these men through whom they hoped to carry out many administrative tasks; though had Judge Murray known that Araua Epe was also a sorcerer, he would have considered him unsuitable for police work. Sorcery was outlawed under the Native Regulations and could earn a sorcerer a gaol sentence.

The village constable, selected by the European magistrate, was the white government in the village, but though Araua Epe had power to order, to coerce and to arrest he could arrest only with a pair of handcuffs that he could not lock. Village constables were not issued with the key. That was kept by the European magistrate at the government station. All communication between government and villagers passed through the constable and after the white government officer with his black police and their 303s had left the village, his word was law. He saw to it that all men spent each Friday on compulsory village work and reported the malingerers; he lined up the village for the patrol officer's tour of inspection, he saw that the Native Regulations were enforced. Or he did not. It depended very much on him. When Araua Epe became too old Karo himself, now settled with Arivu Tati and a daughter, was appointed.

This job gave him more opportunities to exercise his power. Sometimes he would again kill a pig, as he had done in his youth, but instead of trying to hide it as he had done then — and as others did now — he said he was head of the village and could therefore kill anyone's pig and bring it right up in
front of his house and cut it up with no one to prevent him. And no one did. He pleased himself. 'That's his way', people would say.

Between them, he and his father could work very strong sorcery, and as belief in the human cause of sickness, death or disaster survived the destruction of traditional secrets and ceremonies, those who were known to have this power were dangerous and were avoided. Araua Epe and his wild, half-Toaripi son Karo Araua, living together on the outskirts of the village, were such men. They had a string tied around their house, hung about with special ginger which also frightened people off.

People were frightened of Karo, especially when he was cross. He told everyone that he, as Village Constable, was allowed to walk around after the curfew which had been imposed as part of the 'madness'; though he insisted that they obeyed it. Then he used his other powers. 'One day he was cross with me', remembers Isarua, who was a small boy at the time, 'and took some of my shit. My whole right leg swelled up. He took my shit without any reason, so that when my father went to talk to him, he threw it away and I got well. Now I am alive while many of my heatao are dead'.

Once, when blanket tao and rice ipi tao were at school — both groups were war-time babies born in 1914 and 1916 and named for the first blankets in the village and the dregs out of the rice bags they were reduced to eating — a child, Kavora Sari, was among them. His mother was Sari, a village woman and no one knew who the father was. A sarufa, he was a sort of servant in the village. Karo, coming along the path, saw the illegitimate boy up a coconut tree cutting a green coconut to drink and became enraged at the sight of him. He took up his axe and knife and a club of wood and waited until Kavora began to climb down, then hurled the axe at him, with a shout of Sevese Miai — the clan cry. It missed and luckily Kavora, shinning down the tree, dashed through the bush to safety, his precarious life extended a bit. Karo was, the villagers all knew, ivora rovaea — very savage. 'He lashes out. If someone says anything to him, he hits them'.

Since the end of 1920 the whole coastline of the Gulf Division and six miles inland had been declared taxable and for the first time the Gulf villagers had to be counted and each man between the age of 16 and 36 was obliged to pay a tax of 10s or £1 to the government. Judge Murray designed the system to raise money for his pathetically meagre budget, all of which money was to be spent on native welfare, but also he did it to urge the Papuan villagers to plant crops, make a surplus and sell it for cash rather than continue to live from hand to mouth; to get a taste for money. He ordered villagers to set up
coconut plantations on which they could work instead of paying tax and Uritai villagers formed ‘companies’ to grow and produce copra. Some men were exempt from tax. Among these were Armed Native Constables and Village Constables (so Karo had no need to raise money) but Murray did not use taxation to force villagers to sign-on as plantation labourers by exempting signed-on labourers from tax. It had this effect in some places when village plantations failed and there were few other ways a young man could raise money. The Toaripi thought the tax money was a fine for wrong-doing. Some believed it was punishment for their part in the Vailala madness, and a visit from Murray, who appeared along the beach from Kerema at about the same time as the census taking began, could well have encouraged this belief. Whatever they thought about the tax, they had to pay it, or try to. Now they tried to sign-on, but that was not easy.

The Resident Magistrate of the Gulf Division wrote in his Annual Report for 1925 that Gulf men were having difficulty in signing-on because ‘their peculiar temperament and disposition makes them difficult to handle’. In fact, he wrote, ‘several large villages in the Division have been banned altogether by certain employers’. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company, drilling at nearby Popo, would have none of the people of Uritai-Mirihea to work for them. They had to go further afield to earn money. One way was to get a job in the town. Some did that and soon became known to the white men. They were ‘an aggressive people’ a colonial administrator said later, ‘who came to Port Moresby a lot.’ Another way was to use the old trading partnership with the Motuans; to sell now rather than exchange. Uritai double canoes, laden with bundles of sago, set off eastward this time in search of money.

Some time in the early 1920s Karo’s personal life took a new turn. His wife died and when he had buried her and taken part in two of the three mortuary feasts which set her to rest, he was mournful and at a loose end. Just at this time, a neighbouring clan had organised a trading expedition to the east to raise money and their double canoe Avavu Iri Mori — Girl of the Anchoring Place — lay in the river loading its crew and passengers and its cargo of sago. Karo decided to go along. Leaving his small daughter in his father Araua Epe’s care, and resigning his job of Village Constable, Karo boarded Avavu Iri Mori and in April, just before the end of the north-west monsoon, set off on the old trading path to seek his fortune.
As the Girl of the Anchoring Place was blown her precarious way eastwards along the 200 miles of coast between Uritai and Port Moresby the crew kept close to the shore in case they had to shelter from unexpected storms. Karo saw many villages and sights new to him. As they left the Gulf behind them, they came alongside Mekeo and Roro country where lived Maiva people who came regularly to Uritai-Mirihea buying sago. They passed the Waima villages of Nabuapaka and Vailala; Yule Island with Mt Yule standing high, far in the distance on the mainland; the government station at Kairuku and then on to Galley Reach and the first of the villages of their traditional Motu trading partners. But they were not trading this time, so they put ashore only for the night or for shelter until they finally navigated the canoe through the reef outside the mouth of Fairfax harbour and beached on the sand at the bay of Koke, just outside the town boundary.

Port Moresby town — Ela to Papuans — was ‘the white man’s place’ to the Toaripi; the place where the white man’s law ran strongest and covered everything, like their home rivers when they broke their banks. The strongest laws were contained in the Queensland Criminal Code as it had been adapted by the Australian rulers of Papua, but the everyday ones that Papuans mostly ran up against were to be found in the Native Regulations. A Papuan who infringed the Native Regulations, whether he was picked up by a policeman or reported by a white man, was taken before a magistrate who had the power to judge, convict and sentence, or to dismiss the charge. Should he break one of the strongest laws — if he killed another man, for example — he was first taken before a magistrate but then before ‘the big Judge’.

There were so many of these laws and regulations that a Papuan had to keep his wits about him, especially in Port Moresby where there were more policemen and more white men than in any other part of Papua. A Papuan was not allowed to sleep in the town but only in special compounds outside the town limits; he was not allowed to be in the town at all after the 9 p.m.
curfew had sounded, neither on the streets nor on any premises other than those of his employer. If he were caught without a note or a reasonable excuse, he could be fined up to £1 or go to gaol for up to two months and not even his employer's note was an excuse for him to be absent from his quarters after 11 p.m. If he had no employer, he had to be out of the town by 7 p.m. A Papuan had to wear a loin cloth in town and behave in a decorous manner; he was forbidden to loiter on any footpath 'to the inconvenience of passers by' and if he were found near a house, he was in danger of being charged with entering 'upon the curtilage with intent'. He was not allowed into the swimming baths at all nor into the big stores without a note from an employer. If he worked, it was under an indenture system and he was obliged, by the regulations that bound him, to be diligent. He was forbidden to gamble under penalty of a £2 fine or four months in gaol and he was forbidden to drink alcohol. After 1926, when the Criminal Code was amended by the White Women's Protection Ordinance, any rape or attempted rape of a white woman or girl was punishable by death; any indecent assault by life imprisonment. A Papuan who was not a Motuan from the villages near the town, was known as a 'foreign native' and he had to be especially careful after 1926 when such men, unless they were indentured, could be ordered out of Port Moresby unless they could give a good account of themselves. The penalty for these men was gaol for six months.

With so many regulations and so many penalties of one or two months' wages, and more, there is no wonder that so many Papuans who came near the town had landed in gaol at some time or another. 'The slightest mistake would land you in gaol' remembers Sisia Hena of Pari village, east of Port Moresby, who had himself been gaoled for a very small mistake: going fishing on a council work day.

But Port Moresby town was an exciting place for a young man from the Gulf. A motor road on which one might see a motor hugged the beach from the anchoring place to the town where there was much to look at, much to learn. First the harbour, a fine sheltered expanse of water where ships far larger than the *Bulldog* called regularly and the busy wharf where men could get jobs on the cargo and earn money to play cards or buy tobacco. Loudon's store was there, and Burns Philp, large and solid and stocked with exotic goods to catch a glimpse of while carrying a parcel or a note from an employer. There was a cinema to which Papuans could go, for three days' pay, to see Wild West films. There were plenty of people to talk to and visit: men from Karo's own or neighbouring villages who worked in town and lived at Badili,
just past the launching place at Koke, where Papuans and mixed-race people lived and where a village visitor was always sure of a mat for the night; policemen from all over Papua and prisoners who worked about the town. All were sources of news, gossip and card games.

Hanuabada village was just on the other side of town and there might live a trading partner to visit and chat with. And Hanuabada, like the town, was illuminated at night with marvellous electric lights. Also there were white people to watch: cricket matches between white teams every Saturday, games of golf where white men played and Papuans carried the clubs, games of tennis. These were everyday sights but now and again you could see something special. In 1924 a very special white man visited Port Moresby, the Governor General, Lord Forster, and then there were Motuan canoe races on the harbour and dances which made a great show. The next year Papuans wandering about the harbour's edge saw the unusual sight of the large Papuan Chief in from southern ports, accompanying George Stewart, the local ship builder and steaming back and forth alongside his little launch from Stewart's Napa slip, across the harbour to the horizon where they tried without success to salvage the wreck of the Pruth, a ship bringing cargo from England which had been stuck on Nateara reef since December 31 when it had hit coral while negotiating Basilisk passage steaming into Port Moresby.

There were also white women to watch in town, and though the penalties for watching white women too closely were grave and the penalties for touching them were drastic, they were a fascinating part of town life.

The dangers for a Papuan in town only made it all the more exciting for adventurous young men. Those who were frightened of the white man's rules, his police and his gaols could stay in the village and tend sago and coconuts to raise their tax money. Or they could go and 'make paper' to work on a plantation where they were organised, lived in a compound, went to work daily in the bush and returned after work to the compound until, three years later, repatriated by the plantation owner to their district, the villagers collected at the nearest government station half of the wages they had earned in the last three years. It was a government way of ensuring that the labourers were not cheated or that they could not squander all those monthly ten shillings and go home empty handed (and without tax money) and it was a safer way to earn money and see a bit of the world. Wilder spirits were attracted to the town where jobs could be picked up which combined wages with the danger of proximity to white men — and women — as every European house employed at least two or three servants and sometimes more.
Karo Araua had a kinsman, Armed Constable Larahou, working as orderly to the Lieutenant-Governor, and it may have been on a visit to him that Karo heard of the advantages of the police force. It seems that A.C. Larahou took his young kinsman to police headquarters at Konedobu, introduced him to the Headquarters Officer, Leonard Logan, and said Karo wanted to be — as Papuan English had it — a ‘rifle policeman’. This was another sign of Karo’s singularity, for Gulf men were few in the Armed Native Constabulary. Of the forty-six men who attested during the typical year of 1925-26, only one was from the Gulf, probably because, as a whole, white men did not like them.

There were no qualifications for entering except physical ones, though the government officials who recruited police liked them to have had some experience of white men if possible (which was why so many former prisoners joined when their time was up) and commonly believed that Orokaiva men made good constables and Kiwais, men from further west than Karo, made the best NCOs. But Karo had A.C. Larahou to speak for him. He also had police Motu and some English, thanks to Araua Epe, and as he was quite tall with a fine physique, he was accepted and became one of the 316 Papuans known as ‘Judge Murray’s Police’.

Sir William McGregor’s police they were in origin, founded in 1890, and used by him as his only army since the annexation of the land by the British government. McGregor described his police after nearly ten years’ activity with pride: ‘The constabulary have had to fight their own country-men on many occasions sometimes when to each of them were opposed twenty or thirty of the best bow-men in the world. They never met with a reverse. As a matter of simple fact the administration has practically had to subdue by force almost every district now under their control. This has chiefly been done through the constabulary’. They were, he wrote after he left, one of the two ‘best and finest institutions’ he had left behind him. When Hubert Murray took them over in 1907, he came equally to rely on them. They were his only armed force too and he took them very seriously. As Lieutenant-Governor, he was also Commandant of Police; and though he passed many other administrative jobs to his Government Secretary, H. W. Champion, he himself decided on all recommendations for promotion in the Armed Constabulary which came to him from the Headquarters office, even the smallest step up from Constable to Lance-Corporal.

All members of the magisterial staff were also officers of the Armed Constabulary, and a Resident Magistrate was the principal police officer in
his area; but the only full-time white policemen in Port Moresby were the Headquarters Officer, Leonard Logan and the European Constable, Tom Gough, a former member of the Queensland police force who had come to Papua in 1929. Though Gough was only a constable, he had Papuan Sergeant-Majors under his command.

With recruits from many other parts of Papua, Karo Araua began to train in Leonard Logan's charge and to enjoy the privileges of office. He was exempted from taxation, a benefit members of the Armed Native Constabulary shared with village constables, mission teachers, the infirm and fathers of four children by one wife. More important, he was issued with an outfit of 'Judge Murray's clothes': Armed Native Constables received a blue serge jumper edged in bright red braid with a matching rami (also edged in red braid), a turkey red sash, a leather belt and a pouch. A badge that marked them out as specially powerful people, these clothes showed that they were select in another way for Papuan men and women had been forbidden since 1920 from wearing European clothes on the upper part of their bodies. Since 1924 policemen with other government servants were allowed to wear them, if they had written permission. They were not, however, allowed to wear European clothes on the lower part of their bodies; there, Judge Murray's police had to wear the length of cloth - the rami - around their waist like a woman's skirt. But they were armed. Each policeman was issued with a Martini-Enfield carbine, taking .302 cartridges, and a bayonet; powerful and prestigious white men's weapons.

Karo engaged for three years and received during the first year 10s. a month — the standard wage for all Papuan workers — which would rise to 20s. a month in his third year as an ordinary constable. If he was recommended for promotion to Lance-Corporal his pay would rise to 25s. a month; a Corporal received 30s. and a Sergeant 40s. a month. It was not the money that made the Armed Native Constabulary so prestigious, at least for most of its members who earned no more than plantation labourers; it was the power to carry out the white man's laws, the access to his ways and his goods and the adventure. To get away, to travel to see new places was part of the attraction.

The first six weeks in the force Karo spent in Port Moresby at Headquarters where his daily programme of marching, drill, physical jerks and rifle practice helped to give him that military air for which the police were noted. Living in the single barracks with other young men from all over coastal Papua, Karo inhabited a sort of white man's elavo.
Murray had written of the Native Constabulary early in his career, in the Annual Report 1906-07, that ‘it is where the duties of policemen approximate most closely to those of the soldier that they are seen at their best’. Murray believed that the force was ‘absolutely useless as regards detection of crime’ and they had not as a rule been used in that way. Nor were they in the 1920s. They relied on their uniforms, their handcuffs and their guns. The only member of the force ever used as a detective was Sergeant Major Simoi, Hubert Murray’s most trusted policeman; and he was considered so remarkable that he was mentioned by name in the Lieutenant-Governor’s despatches to Australia and immortalised — and named — on a Papuan postage stamp in 1932. A recruit named Bagita Aromau from Fergusson Island off the east coast of Papua would prove to be another very notable exception to the general run of Armed Constables. Joining the Armed Native Constabulary at about the same time, he was also related to Karo Araua through Vavine Kamu, Karo’s Hula mother. Both Bagita’s parents were from Hula and his father, Pale Vavine, was her great grand-father. Bagita’s tracks would cross Karo’s closely.

Karo’s tracks would also be crossed by another game, adventurous and resourceful recruit of this time, Ivan Champion, who automatically became part of the police force by joining the government service. Karo, Bagita and Ivan Champion, all three were policemen, though only Bagita and Karo wore Judge Murray’s clothes and received any training.

The programme of training in the hands of non-commissioned officers would turn Karo into what Bagita Aromau later described as a ‘true policeman’; a Papuan warrior made over into a cross between a tough well-disciplined soldier and a batman for government officers. The daily life of a policeman in training could hardly have been more alien to the day of a villager. It began at 6.30 in the morning with three quarters of an hour of physical exercises, swimming and squad drill after which came breakfast. At 8 o’clock the recruits were inspected and the orderlies marched off to Port Moresby leaving the rest to three quarters of an hour of rowing, tent pitching and more squad drill. From then until dinner at 1 p.m., the police received rifle instruction, learnt swimming, rowing, sailing or did fatigue duty, and after dinner more of the same until 4 o’clock when they were free until 4.30. Then the whole company drilled on the barrack square for one and a half hours. The members of the Town Guard marched off to Port Moresby at 6.15 and the rest, after a meal, were free until 9 p.m. roll call and 9.15 lights out. This became Karo’s daily routine. In between times he per-
fected his police Motu by talking to policemen from all over Papua, smoked, gossiped and learnt his way about the town. He also learnt to play cards. Despite the penalties of the Native Regulations, gambling continued to flourish in the barracks, under the wharves, in store houses and in the sleeping places around Port Moresby. Most of the men charged in the town with breaches of the Regulations were charged with gambling, and the policemen who caught them at it were themselves addicted.

After six weeks, Karo and his companions were detailed to different tasks. Karo was assigned to the Headquarters detachment which supplied police for special patrols: the town guard, twelve of which regularly patrolled through the town, four men during the day and eight at night; permanent orderlies to Government officials in Port Moresby; and escort for the overland mail. The rest of the recruits went to make up the strength on the outstations, a strength of about ten armed constables to a station. As men were not sent into their own area, Karo would never have been posted to Kerema, nor would the Headquarters Officer send a group of men from the same area to the same station. He always saw to it that each station received a mixed bag, so the few Toaripi recruits were posted to the northern or eastern stations, or, like Karo, stayed in Port Moresby.

As a member of the Headquarters detachment, Karo found himself one day in 1928 with the job of escorting the overland mail, in the company of and Armed Constable from the east coast of Papua; a man he knew as Bili. The task of the two policemen was to carry the letter mail, wrapped in a waterproof packet, and go armed through the unfamiliar countryside of the Central Division and into the Northern Division, up from the coast into the mountains and along the track to the government sub-station at Kokoda. Each month, after the ‘southern’ boat arrived from Australia, Leonard Logan gave the Northern Division mail to two of his Armed Constables, while the Resident Magistrate in charge of the head station of the Northern Division, at Buna, and the Assistant Resident magistrate at the sub-station of Ioma sent their constables into Kokoda with mail for Port Moresby and the southern boat. The men from Port Moresby set off two days after the arrival of the boat and about ten days later they arrived back, having delivered their packet of letters and picked up another. The departure date was advertised in the Government Gazette, and was movable, as the boat from the south was often late; but in September 1929 Armed Constable Karo and Bili set off according to the published schedule on the 5th of the month.

The track they travelled was the most important in Papua for it linked
the government at Port Moresby with the Northern Division, populated by unruly white goldminers and formidable native inhabitants. It covered one hundred miles, but its distances were measured in days' walk not in miles and it would take the policemen four or five days, barring accidents and given average weather, to do the walk. It was flat going to Sapphire creek on the first day, but from then on, up and up to 7000 feet by Mount Victoria (Mount Queen Victoria, Papuans called it) and then down on the other side to about 1400 feet and the plateau of the Kokoda station. The cold was cruel, the track steep, rough and muddy. It passed through country inhabited by people known as Mountain Koiari, a people with a ferocious reputation among Papuans and Europeans. They had resisted the early whites fiercely and later colonisers had found them not a tractable tribe, describing their custom of killing strangers and of wearing a hornbill's head as an insignia of a life taken to be both exotic and horrible. Among coastal people the Mountain Koiari had a reputation as powerful sorcerers, which was another reason to keep away from them. But Karo and Bili were armed and had the power of the government in their clothes.

W.R. Humphries, a government magistrate who had himself walked this long, hard track — carrying nothing but a revolver — described the outgoing mailman in his book published in 1923. In those days, not long before Karo and Bili, one policeman took the packet of mail up and another brought it down. 'I note his load: rifle, ammunition, bayonet, pouch, sling-bag, swag-bag, swollen with spare uniform and blanket, a parcel of biscuits, a parcel of rice, two tins of meat, a coconut, a finally the mailbag. A pretty good load for a man to carry on such a road? Yes, a pretty good load'. Thus Karo and Bili together set off carrying a little rice and biscuit and enough sticks of tobacco to buy food from the villagers they would meet every ten to fifteen miles along a track which had been formed first by the feet of Koiari people as they went from village to village, then widened and made easier to pass by villagers working with pick and shovel at the direction of government officers who had had steps cut in some of its steepest inclines so that it could be used by patrols. The track later turned into a highway carrying ammunition, food and equipment for Australian and Japanese soldiers, on the backs of Papuans pressed into service as carriers during the Second World War, but in 1929 it was a lonely road. Karo and Bili spent the night in village resthouses, built for government workers by the villagers.

Though it was still dry season on the coast, in the hills it was never dry. The mailmen met heavy rain each afternoon; rain that produced the thick,
green, dark and overpowering growth, the rocky streams swollen every evening, and the slippery mountain paths that made it hard going for coastal men even though they were fit and strong. It was cold too up near Mt Queen Victoria. Karo was cold, tired and quick-tempered and on the way up the mountain the two men began to quarrel. 'Bloody fool' grumbled Karo, using white men's talk; 'bloody worthless fellow!' Karo was used to having his way: he told Uritai people what to do and they did it; they did not argue with him. But Bili was not a Uritai man.

'Hey, my friend, time for a change with the mailbag!' called Karo to Bili. But Bili was also cold and tired and Bili was older than Karo. He didn’t think it was time. Karo abused him, the quarrel grew heated. Perhaps Bili Miai hit Karo. Karo asked him again to carry the bag and Bili again refused, tramping on up the hill. 'Bloody fool! Bloody rubbish man!' growled Karo, his savage mood rising, and throwing down the mailbag he lifted his rifle, took aim and fired at Bili who fell and rolled down towards the river. Karo shouted *sevese miai* the clan cry of triumph. Bili was dead. Karo's anger subsided and he looked about him. He dragged the body to the river and thought of escaping trouble by pushing it in, but as he stood there his ear 'caught the sound of the rain' and he became filled with fear at the thought of the Koiari people whose country he was in. Night was coming down, he was alone and he dreaded being there, alone in a strange and fearful land, so he left Bili, picked up the mailbag and set off for the government station at Kokoda.

When he walked in alone with the mail, the Assistant Resident was puzzled and asked about the number two policeman. Karo said that they’d had a fight and that Bili was shot. The Armed Constables from the Kokoda station went out to bring in the body. Karo was declared under arrest and kept with the station police while the magistrate collected the mail for the return journey. Then he questioned Karo about the shooting. He conducted a coroner's inquest, combining as he did the powers of policeman, coroner, counsel and judge. Karo explained that he and Bili had had a fight, that Bili had struck him down, and that in the heat of the moment he had shot him. The Assistant Resident Magistrate committed him for trial on a charge of murder, by the strongest of the white man's laws and to the highest court, the Central Court in Port Moresby where his fate would be decided by a judge.

The news of Karo's deed spread fast. The police were great carriers of news, and stations were clearing grounds for stories from all over Papua.
2. Armed Constabulary, Kokoda Government Station. Fully equipped, wearing 'Judge Murray's clothes' and carrying their rifles, these policemen are ready for a patrol. Some months after this photograph was taken in November 1928, the police at the Kokoda station saw their fellow constable Karo walk into the station with the overland mail. It was among these men that he spent his time in the barracks while under arrest and it was from among them that the patrol was selected which took him back down to Port Moresby to stand trial for the murder of his fellow armed constable Bili.

*Photograph: C. T. Healy, New Guinea Collection, University of Papua New Guinea.*

The news came down to Bili's people and to Karo's village of Uritai and to his people living in Port Moresby, or Ela town. Karo himself returned over the path from the Kokoda station down to Ioribaiwa, then all day from the mission station eight miles from Hombrom Bluff and down the 200 feet to Sapphire creek and on the flat one day's walk to town. On this trip, he carried neither mail nor gun; he was escorted by the armed constables from Kokoda, and they carried the mail which included the depositions and warrants in Karo's case.
In Port Moresby Karo and his papers were handed over to the European Constable, Tom Gough, who would get to know Karo very well indeed. On this first meeting Tom Gough merely accepted the prisoner, handed his papers over to Crown Law Officer Bignold and had him delivered — by his former fellows of the Headquarters detachment — to Badili gaol to wait trial in the Central Court, for though the law provided for bail, these provisions were never applied to natives. Karo had a kinsman at Badili gaol in whom he confided; his age mate Kaipu Ito, a member of *pepa tao*, who was a warder and a song writer. When Kaipu heard of the killing, he wove the events into the *evore, Song about Karo*, a song of admiration and praise sung to a traditional drum beat and traditional tune:

'The Elema policeman's shot brought Molala's white egret tumbling down:  
The Elema soldier's bullet brought Harai's white heron to the ground.  
It was the Elema armed policeman who did the shooting down'

sang Kaipu.
'It was by Epe’s hand that Molala Harai was killed; That was how Molala Harai was killed'.

Karo became Epe Savora, the clan hero, and the murdered Bili, Molala Harai another mythical character. For Karo had killed a man in a fight; to a Toaripi it was a matter of pride, whatever the Queensland Criminal Code might say on the matter.

What the Queensland Code said about killing was that it came in three degrees: ‘wilful murder’, ‘murder’ and ‘unlawful killing’ or manslaughter, and for these there were three penalties: death, life imprisonment or imprisonment for a shorter term. In 1929 two judges administered the Code, presiding in turn over the Central Court. They were Judge J.H.P. Murray, the Lieutenant-Governor, and Judge R.T. Gore. By an extraordinary coincidence, both judges were huge men who towered above all the accused Papuans who appeared before them: Murray, 6 feet 3 inches tall and a former champion boxer, and Gore also 6 feet 3 inches and a heavy-weight. Both were also, by another coincidence, merciful and astute judges. Colonial life meant that each had risen to a higher position than he would have expected at home and that this position commanded considerably more authority in Papua than it would have done in Sydney or Brisbane.

While Judge Gore believed that the Criminal Code was essential to the process of civilising Papuans, he nevertheless believed — following in this, he said, the ‘great man’ Hubert Murray — that the Code ‘had to be applied with a respect for Papuan customs and institutions and with proper regard to the tribal creed so that its application would be just’. Papuans who killed people in response to a traditional law were treated leniently and so were rarely charged with ‘wilful murder’. Judge Gore, again following Judge Murray, employed the notion of ‘racial integrity’ to explain the difference in punishment for the same crime awarded to a Papuan and a white man, or to Papuans from different parts of the country. In European societies, he wrote, ‘rape offends the racial integrity . . . to such a degree that a heavy penalty is awarded to the guilty. In a native society, the racial integrity of the society is offended to a far lesser degree and the penalty is correspondingly lower’. Likewise, when a coastal Papuan policeman murdered another, he would not be punished as severely as a white policeman who had killed another white policeman; but he would be punished more severely than a villager from the head waters of the Fly river who killed another villager. Underlying the criminal system of Judge Murray was the conviction that
those Papuans who had been longest exposed to mission and government, who knew what was expected of them under colonial law — and who, perhaps, had absorbed some of the European ‘racial integrity’ — deserved harsher punishment than those villagers who had only recently been contacted by field officers. These field officers, when they acted as magistrates, read the Criminal Code more literally and so they often found that their charges of ‘wilful murder’ were changed in the Central Court to the lesser charges by the judges.

Judge Murray did most of the travelling for he loved it: visiting out-stations, hearing cases, inspecting the magistrate’s records of each trial held since his last visit and inspecting the prisoners at each station. Gore tried most of the Port Moresby cases. He had been Chief Legal Officer since his arrival at Port Moresby in 1924 and was appointed Judge of the Central Court in 1928 after Judge Herbert became Administrator of Norfolk Island. He would spend the next fourteen years on the bench of the Central Court of Papua, until in February 1942, civil authority ended and the Australian Army’s law ran in the colony. He would return after the war to ‘the most alluring judicial authority’ in the combined Territory of Papua and New Guinea, but in 1929, when Karo Araua was brought before him for the first time, he was new on the bench. Though Judge Gore had the power to act himself as prosecutor and defence counsel, using as his brief the papers which had come from the magistrate’s enquiry, he could also hand the papers over to E.B. Bignold, the Crown Law Officer, who would then act as prosecutor. This is what he did.

Ten days after his committal at Kokoda and almost two months to the day after he had set out with Bili and the mail, Karo was taken from Badili gaol to the police station in Port Moresby and from there brought up the hill from the police station in town to the Central Court on the ridge between Paga and Tuaguba hills, a small, extremely hot colonial building with a verandah around it. Like the gaol at Koke, the court, in a beautiful spot, looked out over the brilliant blue water of the harbour. Karo would get to know both spots intimately. He came into the court room with the European Constable and two policemen to face Judge Gore, who sat in the white man’s uniform of white drill at the end of the room with Kora Gaigo the Hanuabadan interpreter standing in front on his right hand. The Crown Prosecutor was not in the court room. Through Kora, Judge Gore asked the questions and heard the replies, which said that there had been a fight over the mailbag, that blows had been struck and that in the heat of the fight Bili had been
shot. He changed the Prosecutor's charge from wilful murder to manslaughter and, through Kora, found Karo guilty and sentenced him to five years' imprisonment with hard labour.

The case of the policeman-murderer and the news of his deed spread far and wide. The *Papuan Courier*, weekly journal of the white community in the colony, told the town's Europeans about the policeman's conviction. Ever against the government, its editor, E.A. James, was triumphant when the Lieutenant-Governor's soft native policy was discredited by the fall from grace of one of his natives and in particular by the fall of a policeman. James was conducting a campaign to show the government how unsafe the residents of Port Moresby were in the hands of these native policemen, and how much the town needed another European Constable. So it was with a certain glee that the *Papuan Courier* reported the case of the Overland Mail Murder. Under the headline 'Five Years for Policeman', the paper reported Judge Gore's sentence and told its readers that the coroner's finding of wilful murder had been weakened to manslaughter. As Karo was one of 290 Papuans committed for trial in the Central Court in that year, more than 200 for crimes of violence and 167 of these for murder, the manslaughter charge suggested yet another example of Murray's 'soft' policy. Murder was murder to the *Papuan Courier* and deserved to be punished as murder.

Ivan Champion, newly posted to Ioma as Assistant Resident Magistrate, stopped off at Kokoda for a rest and a chat on the walk to his station. He had already vindicated the Governor's decision to take him into the Papuan service. As a young patrol officer he had been singled out by Murray in the Annual Report for 1926-27 because in his patrol reports he praised the courage and discipline of the police who were with him. This, wrote Murray, was most unusual. And in 1927, Ivan Champion had accompanied another government officer, Charles Karius, on a mighty journey across the whole island of New Guinea at its widest point, by way of the head waters of the Fly and Sepik rivers. Together with the policemen and prisoners who had guarded and carried, he had crossed, climbed through and filled in many dangerous, blank places on the Australian map of Papua. At Kokoda, the Assistant Resident Magistrate Frank Cawley told Champion of the murder case which he had just heard and of the policeman who had shot his fellow 'simply because he would not help him with the mailbag'. It seemed to them a pretty common sort of native crime, made interesting only because the murderer was a policeman who had just called in at the station and not a man from the bush. When Champion left Kokoda for Ioma he thought no
more about it. He quite forgot the name of the murderer, if indeed he had ever been told, for a Papuan criminal would have had to do something far more than kill another Papuan to become known to Europeans as anything but a ‘Gulf native’ or a ‘police boy’. Among Papuans, however, the news was spread through the gossip of the mountains.

Five years meant less with remission for good conduct of two days in each month. Gaol would have meant Badili — known to Papuans as Koke — or the island of Samarai off the far east coast, or the island of Daru far west in Torres Strait. Karo was sent to the closest, Badili, where he had been kept before and during his trial. He was taken there by police escort and handed over to the Gaoler, J. H. Sutton. As Kaipu Ito sang it:

Friend Epe bore the punishment for the death of Molala Harai by being shut in gaol.

Badili gaol, deemed a prison under the 1919 Act, was one of eighteen, five of which were in the Central Division, and Port Moresby held two of the five. The other three in the Central Division were at Rigo, Kairuku and Nepa, head station for the Lakekamu gold fields. Karo Araua’s Papua was full of prisons.

Badili gaol was situated on the small headland at Koke which jutted out into the bay east of Ela beach. Originally all those convicted of crimes were housed there, with Europeans in a separate cell block within the gaol compound; but in late 1919, in order to have a more complete segregation, it had been decided to put up cells for white prisoners on the small island which stood just off the headland and to connect this island to the mainland with a stone causeway. The native gaol, which stood on the flat-topped hilly promontory, was a timber building of ten large cells, each holding about ten prisoners. Outside the wire fence which enclosed the gaol, and on higher land, stood the Gaoler’s residence and office, a two-storied building high off the ground from which he could look down at the gaol buildings and beyond them to a panoramic view of ocean and islands facing both the rising and the setting sun.

The Government Secretary, H. W. Champion — Ivan Champion’s father — was in control of all prisons; but the Gaoler, the only European officer, was in charge of Badili gaol, administering the regulations with Subordinate Prison Officers — warders in common talk — all of whom were Papuans. Just as every member of the magisterial service was a policeman, any member of
the Armed Native Constabulary could be appointed a warden and all warders were deemed constables, though warders carried no firearms.

All prisoners, unless they were sick, were on some labour duty either in Port Moresby or out at the gaol gardens at Laloki or around the gaol; for though the Prisons Ordinance distinguished four grades of prisoner, and though only two of these four could be compelled to work, in practice every Papuan prisoner's sentence included labour, in or out of gaol. They did all the manual labour of the town. Each day, sixty or so prisoners went into town with only a corporal, a sergeant and two ordinary warders to guard them. They were on their honour. In fact very few prisoners tried to escape. Prisoners and free men worked side by side, all living similar lives except that the prisoners were locked in at night and received no pay.

Two might work for Mrs So and So and six might work in one street at a time, cleaning the gutters and cutting grass. There was a line at the wharves, a line building the sea wall along Ela beach road, a line working for the Public Works Department painting the town trees with creosote, a line building the road up to Judge Gore’s house on Paga Hill and a line that buried the dead. The white prison lap lap — or rami in Motu — with sixteen broad arrows that looked to Papuans like cassowary footprints was an everyday sight in the town from morning to evening when they were marched back to Koke or driven back in the prison truck. Papuans who were breaking curfew could have seen from about 2 a.m. the prison Ford flat-top with its cargo of thirty or so long-term prisoners emerging from the prison gate. The only Papuans legally allowed out so late, this was the sanitary line and they worked Konedobu, Moresby town, Hospital Hill and Lawes road, dropping off groups of men at various points to exchange empty buckets for full ones from poles which they balanced on their shoulders. One had to hurry if one heard the sanitary boys coming, not to be caught in the middle of the exchange or bump into a prisoner balancing his noisome load. Collection finished just on daylight and the truck made for the sanitary depot on Paga Point where, below on the beach, a double hulled canoe was moored, waiting for its load of full buckets. These were rowed out to sea and dumped. Then, the sanitary line cleaned out the buckets at the depot and after a good swim, cleaned itself well with soap and piled with the buckets on to the back of the truck; for the gaol and breakfast.

Long-term prisoners were the carriers who accompanied Ivan Champion and other government officers on their long exploring patrols. Prisoners were a part of everyday life in the town, as they were on the government stations,
working under the eye of a Papuan warder who might often have his eye elsewhere.

In the first year of his gaol term, Karo came twice under Tom Gough’s notice in the helpful role of informer. In 1930 he and another prisoner were brought into the Central Court to give evidence against Semese, a fellow Uritai man, who had been charged with the attempted rape of Mrs Jessie Fitch, wife of the head of Steamships Trading Company (though her name was never mentioned in the Papuan Courier). Karo’s evidence in court helped to convict Semese who had been charged under the White Women’s Protection Ordinance and sentenced to death; though he had the luck to escape it because the Australian government which had to approve the sentence happened to be a Labor government and was opposed to hanging. In June of the same year Karo was again brought out of gaol by Tom Gough as a witness in another case against a man from Uritai, Marere Pou, who was alleged to have woken Mrs Gore, wife of the Judge, by lifting the mosquito net under which she was sleeping on the verandah of her house on Paga Hill. The Town Guard had cordoned off the house, after Mrs Gore phoned Tom Gough, and had caught the hapless Marere Pou running through the bush. Imprisoned in Koke awaiting trial and locked in the same cell as Karo, he told Karo that he ‘went along the verandah, that Sinabada got a fright, cried out and he then ran away’. Karo told Judge Murray this in court, and added that when he asked Marere Pou why he had gone to Judge Gore’s house at night, he replied that ‘his head was no good’. Marere denied this part of the story and cried out in court that Karo was a liar.

It may be that Karo was inventing the story to help along Tom Gough’s case, to ingratiate himself with the white authorities and to demonstrate to Papuans his power to destroy other men. But it may have been the truth. Papuans freely gave evidence against their fellows in the white man’s court and though they were offered inducements, there was never any suggestion that they were forced into it. Nor were reprisals reported against those who gave such evidence. In this, Papuans behaved as they would have, before the white man’s law, when a village man was faced with an offence. Then it would all depend on the circumstances: on the relations between the men and on the nature of the offence. If Karo had been an enemy of Marere, he would have told the truth to harm him, or a lie if that would do him more harm. But if Karo had been shocked by Marere’s crime, he would have told the truth against him, even though they were friends. Judge Murray, who had listened for more than twenty years to such witnesses, evidently felt some doubt
about Karo's evidence for he found Marere Pou guilty only of entering a dwelling house with intent (a far less serious charge under the Criminal Code than under the White Women's Protection Ordinance) and gave him twelve months.

So Karo bore helpfully his punishment for the death of the policeman in the mountains and went through the first part of his initiation into prison life by learning an important rule: You tell us what you know and no trouble to you — as Bagita later explained it. He had already learnt many new ways while a policeman and trodden on many new paths. There was no shame in being a prisoner; prison was a school from which one often graduated into the police force. Karo, a policeman first and now a prisoner, was to go in other directions.
When Karo stepped again on the dark sticky mud of the Tauri river bank after an absence of more than five years, many things had changed in Uritai-Mirihea. He heard many tales of woe. The river had altered its course while he had been in gaol and washed away altogether the Mirihea section of the twin village so that what remained was now Mirivase hamlet on the river side of the narrow spit of land and Uritai on the sea side. The Mirihea people had moved. People talked of a new sickness which had struck the whole village, a sickness which the mura mura karu — the medical assistant — had told them was called influenza. Samuela’s school now taught 280 children, still scratching at their slates and chanting a-e-i-o-u and still mending the mission fences. The church was flourishing. But with all this, the new way had brought them neither the new life nor the new goods they hankered after, and which had been part of Murray’s scheme for them when he introduced native taxation and native plantations.

While Karo had been in the police force and then in gaol, the Toaripi people had enthusiastically taken up the government’s order to grow copra, but though they planted about five acres of coconuts in plantations, they had not succeeded in raising enough money to pay their taxes let alone to improve their way of living. When the world price of copra fell in 1931, so that whatever they managed to produce gave them less money than before, they were puzzled and, not understanding ‘world price’, felt that once again the white men were robbing them.

The Toaripi, spread throughout their hamlets and villages, numbered about 2600 people in 1931, of whom 540 were taxable. When the Assistant Resident Magistrate made his taxation patrol that year, he found that 371 men had defaulted, and he could collect only £130 instead of the £540 which he had been allocated. Mirihea and Uritai were particularly delinquent: out of a population of 1342 in the twin villages, 321 defaulted and only £43
Karo was collected from them. They could not sell the copra and sago they did produce. They had sent four large double canoes away east into the Central Division trying to raise cash but these had not returned by the time the patrol officer came tax-collecting. What, they grumbled, was the point of all this tax anyway? Nothing but two visits a year from a medical assistant and a family bonus of 5s. for mothers who could produce four living children, with 1s. extra for each extra child. What sort of incentives were these to plant coconuts and tend them and prepare copra? You never knew how much you were going to get for it, nor if the same amount of copra would bring the same amount of money each time, and besides that, the government took too long to send the money. And in 1932, as if all this were not enough, the water at Lalapipi had burst through the sago stands and ruined the trees with its salt water. It was too much. They needed sago not only for food but for money. Everyone needed money.

The need and the desire for money had seeped into the villages like the sea water. Even men living peacefully on the swamps of the Lakekamu and Tauri rivers were smitten by the desire for it and ways of making and increasing money quickly were fascinating. Card playing was irresistible. The court of Native Matters held in Uritai-Mirihea on June 27, 1931 heard forty-three cases. Two concerned disputes between husband and wife, one was a case of stealing and the other forty were charges of gambling, although it was still outlawed and the penalty, either of fine or prison, was steep. No amount of fining or imprisoning had stamped out the passion for card playing which offered a quick and exciting way of suddenly holding money, and Papuan villagers were addicted to gambling and magical means of making money. Karo came home to Uritai from Koke gaol with a marvellous new power to add to his strength, his anger and his powers of sorcery, a power which he soon put into practice. Ikui Avosa, son of Avosa, whose fine large sow had caused all the trouble when it was stolen years before, was playing in the river one day when he saw Karo throw sixpence into the water. He and his heatao stopped playing to watch.

‘Hey’, called Karo, ‘you got that money!’
‘No!’, shouted Ikui, scared.
‘Yes’, said Karo, coming up to him. And there in his hand Ikui found the sixpence.

Later Karo performed the same trick before another group. Makeu
Araua saw him throw 1s. in the sea, while standing in the water up to his waist. He held out his palm, whistled over it, waved his palm over the water and while a crowd of villagers watched from the shore, Makeu saw the shilling jump out of the water and back on to his palm. Again and again Karo did the sea trick before the enthralled villagers. Harou, the Village Constable, was most interested of all. Karo said he could pull money from the bank; sometimes he put 1s. in Harou’s pocket and it came out 10s. He said he had learned the tricks from two spirit women; sometimes he said he learnt them from James Chalmers’ grave in Daru. People were frightened and delighted with Karo’s new powers. They never tired of watching his tricks. ‘Tricking’ was part of the old life which had disappeared when the deception of the bull-roarer rituals and of the hevehe masks had been abolished. People had been starved of it and they loved it.

Karo had learnt other tricks while he was away in gaol and Makeu, a young kinsman from loka tao – the group born around 1912 – saw many of them. Karo would invite people to tie his hands together and after it was done, free himself; he took handkerchiefs out of his mouth and, most amazing of all, ‘he took bits of sticks, like matches, blew on them, and they turned into matches. You could light them’. These were the tricks that Makeu saw with his own eyes. The village people loved to see these tricks and Karo liked to oblige. ‘He didn’t do it for pay’, remembers Tumo Epe of Savoripi clan, ‘he did it because he wanted people to know he could do it’.

Karo lived now with Makeu, his kinsman, in Mirivase, where his father Araua Epe also had a house; and his friends were that same group of Savoripi family and kin who had stolen Avosa’s pig: Opa Kai, the wall-eyed Tete Semese and Makeu Araua. Opa, Karo and Makeu were from the same line: Opa and Karo called each other brother, Makeu they called nephew. All four were at a loose end and did not fit comfortably into the village scene: Tete’s wife had died, Opa and Makeu were unmarried, and Karo, also a widower, was just out of gaol. When the government came along again for tax money something had to be done.

As Karo – no longer exempt as a policeman – had no coconuts, no sago and no wages, he explained to the patrol officer that he could not pay his tax; but said that his mother was from Hula and that he proposed to go there and raise the money. The patrol officer believed him and gave him time to pay, though Karo told his gang that his idea was not to pay at all, but to go to Port Moresby and explain to the government that he did not have to pay. How he proposed to do it they did not know; but as he was wild and
game and powerful and had experience of the town, it seemed plausible and when he suggested that they go too, they agreed. There was nothing to hold them in Uritai, they needed the money, he was sevase karu and they were persuaded by his power; they were scared of him.

There was no Girl of the Anchoring Place this time, or any family canoe ready to make the journey east. They set off to walk. Some say that this was the first time that anyone had walked from Uritai to Moresby, though others doubt it. Some say too that Karo outfitted his gang before the journey with shirts and shorts, European clothes forbidden to them. Not even Village Councillors were allowed to wear shirts, though they were supposed to help the Papuans to understand the government laws, and help the magistrate to understand Papuan ways and customs and like a good father, know what was good for their people. The Gulf councillors yearned for shirts and shorts. When the government had recently called them together to hear a long talk about some new plan for getting them to do something, they had listened patiently to the talk and when they were then told to ask questions they had asked only two: ‘When is the government going to pay councillors?’ and ‘Why doesn’t the government give councillors clothes?’ Neither question was the sort the official had had in mind. ‘I explained that the reasons were that in practically all countries the position of Councillor was an honourary one and that for Papuans, clothes were unnecessary and a menace to their health’, he wrote crossly in his report. Karo’s group could perhaps have bought their clothes from the Motu people of Boera village whose two lakatoi were in the river buying sago for trade goods. Perhaps they had stolen them from a European clothes line.

But whether or not they wore shirts, the men from Uritai slept the first night of their long walk at Iokea, an Elema village fourteen miles east; thereafter at Kivori; at Inawe, a Mekeo village, then Oroi, arriving at Manu Manu on the shores of Galley Reach. They were on the outskirts of the Motu area, the farthest western Motu village, and among the traditional trading partners of their people. A boatman ferried them across the water. From there they walked to Papa where they spent the fifth night, and then on to Port Moresby, which they reached on the sixth day. Early in their journey they had passed the gardens of the village of Lala from which they took food. They came across an old man and an old woman working there. Uritai people say that after eating the food and drinking, Karo and his gang, perhaps settling an old score, killed the old couple and left them in their garden. No one from Lala knew who had done this, because no one except their victims saw
the men from Uritai on their journey. Only Uritai people knew of the bloody journey and they were from then on too frightened to walk past Lala for fear of reprisals.

In Port Moresby, the travellers made for Badili where, on the flat ground beyond the gaol hill, were the compounds which housed the Papuan employees of town firms. They stayed at Burns Philp’s compound and rested, gossiped and chewed betel. Karo looked up old friends for several men from Uritai now worked in town. Besides A.C. Larahou and the Toaripi warder, Pukari Lakoko, member of blanket tao and school mate of Kavora, the boy who narrowly missed being axed by Karo, was working as a medical orderly at the native hospital on Ela beach, or Ela kone as Papuans called it. There was quite a community; and though forbidden to be about in Port Moresby from 7 o’clock at night until 6 o’clock in the morning, they could, as long as they were careful, easily evade the Town Guard and slip through the curfew. Karo and his group, and many other Papuans without jobs in the town, illicitly used the compounds of the trading companies and government buildings as lodging houses, coming in from Badili to play cards illegally all night under houses, wharves or other shelters.

The town was even busier than it had been on Karo’s first arrival and for Makeu, Opa and Tete, who had never seen it before, there was much to amaze them. The constant traffic on the wharves was a source of wonder. Four big ships lay in the harbour: the Macdhui from Cairns, the Papuan Chief from Sydney, the Montoro in from Samarai and the Van Rees from Batavia, all on regular runs. They saw also the familiar little coastal ships: the H and S from Yule Island, the Veiya from Kanosia, the Maiva from Vailala and the Siruwai from Gaba Gaba, down the east coast not far from Hula, Karo’s mother’s place. They all saw for the first time the Guinea Airways Junkers which plied between Wau and Port Moresby and which regularly landed a load of white cricketers who had come to play the Moresby side. That season, Papuans in Port Moresby had something even more amazing to look at in the harbour, the huge Cunard White Star liner Franconia, which arrived at 8 o’clock in the morning of March 11, 1935 carrying, the white residents knew from the Papuan Courier, 250 tourists on a 37,000 mile cruise of the Southern Hemisphere. The tourists included ‘members of several Royal families’, among them Princess de Braganza, widow of the ex-Crown Prince of Portugal, and Baroness Carola von Ompteda, daughter of the late Baron von Ompteda of Germany. The Franconia carried also Cole Porter, the composer, and Moss Hart, the playwright, who, together with bankers and a
Carl Wentz (who had been touring the world with his wife for three years) boarded the *Franconia*'s launches and were brought ashore to see the usual programme for tourists; a programme which included native dances at Hanuabada and canoe races in the harbour and motoring to Pari and other spots. Those who preferred it strolled around the town inspecting Papuans as curiously as the Papuans inspected them.

After a few days of rest, Karo and Makeu set off to walk the three miles from Badili into the government office leaving Opa and Tete at Badili. Karo, so he told Makeu, was going to discuss his taxes with the government official there. They were told to come back again in two days' time, Makeu remembers, and wandered off to look at the wharves. Two days later they were back. The story Karo had to tell was that as his mother was from Hula and his father from Motu Motu (he used the government name when talking to the government) he was a half-caste and therefore exempt from taxes. The government official listened to Karo's story and not only agreed that he was exempt from tax but added that he would receive a refund of all the tax that he had ever paid. It may be that the whole story of the taxes was an invention; it may be that Karo was putting it over the young and inexperienced Makeu. What is certain is that the government official could not have responded in the way that Makeu later said he did. Though it was true that 'half-castes' were not treated as natives, and therefore not taxed, these 'half-castes' were people who had one *white* parent, not Papuans of mixed Papuan parentage.

If Karo told this story to Makeu, then he was putting it over Makeu as he would have loved to put it over the government. In his fantasy, as reported by Makeu in 1976, Karo thanked the government official, explained that he was on his way to Hula and would collect the tax refund on his way back. In reality, he had to use other means to get some of the white men's money, for though he knew how to fool Makeu he did not know enough to successfully put it over them.

When Karo finally did set off east for Hula, it was without Makeu for Makeu stayed in Port Moresby and got himself a job on the wharf with the British New Guinea Company, and his place in Karo's group was taken by Ori Susuve, an Iokea man who had been staying in Moresby. It seems likely that the group discussed their plans and decided to go to Hula where Karo hoped to make a large sum of money by robbing stores and gambling and using his tricks among his mother's people, but that Makeu was frightened and opted out when Karo, Opa, Tete and the new man Ori set off to walk
the sixty miles east. It was a day and a half to two days' walk with a stop over for a night's sleep at Bonaname.

Hula — Vula'a to its own people — was one of those beautiful coastal Melanesian villages built on stilts out in the sea which so took the fancy of early European visitors to Papua, who were reminded of Venice when they saw the villagers paddling from house to house by canoe. The Hula villagers, so at home on the sea, were noted fishermen. Each year, when the Motu men set off westwards on the Hiri expedition, in their great claw-sailed canoes, to exchange their clay pots for the Gulf people's sago, Hula fishermen arrived on Ela beach to supply Motu wives, children and old people with fish. Hula houses were cool and free of mosquitoes and the people were especially hospitable, for here Karo had many relations. He stayed with Lapuka Pari while the others bedded down with Verau, with Pola Relai and Itama Relai, all kinsmen of Vavine Kamu, Karo's mother. Karo's group wandered about the district; Hula was a day's canoe trip to Gaba Gaba, a Motu village on stilts to the west, and from there two and a half miles walk inland was Rigo, the government station, and another eight miles on was the Kemp Welch river.

If Port Moresby was the capital of colonial Papua, the station at Rigo was a sort of provincial capital of the Central Division; for Papuans and for the few Europeans in the district, all of whom knew each other it was a miniature Moresby. The station was a resting place on the road from the Kemp Welch river, with its villages and government plantation and the London Missionary Society mission; sixty miles west was Port Moresby, three days walk and two days' canoe journey away. At the government station anything could happen. There were stores, police, warders, comings and goings, news, card playing, people with jobs and therefore with money, information to be gained, station food, many possibilities. The Rigo station was in the charge of an Assistant Resident Magistrate; this was his official title, his daily name was 'Taubada' 'big man or master'. In 1935, Taubada was Ivan Champion, the young government officer who had called in on the Kokoda station on his way through to Ioma in 1928. Now he was Assistant Resident Magistrate Rigo and again recently back from leave.

The station buildings were built on a rise a few miles from Gomora village. It was a pretty station. The residence was on top of the rise and the office and store were downhill at the bottom; about thirty yards below that, down towards the Siruwai creek which wound round the bottom of the hill and was usually dry, were the gaol, the police barracks, the married quarters for police, clerk, gaoler, witnesses' houses and other outhouses.
3. The Government Station at Rigo. The buildings on the eastern and western extremities of the station are the gaol and the residence. In between are the office and store, the police barracks and married quarters. A motor road was built in 1941. The Siruwai creek, which wound round on the flat ground below the western boundary of the station, was crossed by a bridge and two and a half miles along this road was Wyborn's store. Here the small road from the Station met the road leading north to the Kemp Welch river and south to Gaba Gaba. This is another of A. C. English's photographs.

Photograph: New Guinea Collection, University of Papua New Guinea.

Over the creek near the quarters was a bridge from which a path led down to the road to Gaba Gaba. Besides Taubada, the station personnel at this time were Native Clerk Lohia, Interpreter Gaiboni, Warder Bogambo and six police: one Lance-Corporal, a Mekeo named Paieke Maino, and five constables: Ororogo, Bona, Babaineme, Biamu and Koihina. Also on the station were the Assistant Resident Magistrate's staff: Tuana, a girl from Hula, and two houseboys from Gaba Gaba. These were the legitimate occupiers of the station, but there were also visitors, relations and callers to whom Taubada often turned a blind eye.

Gaba Gaba was the station's port for mail, supplies and all communications up and down the coast; the government had a store there in which cargo was held after being unloaded from coastal ships and the Village Constable was paid to look after it. The station had no transport and cargo was carried
up from Gaba Gaba on the lorry belonging to the government plantation at Gobaragere on the Kemp Welch. The Steamships boat called once a month and the station had a canoe for which the Assistant Resident Magistrate hired a local crew. Apart from that the normal way to get about was to walk. Between Gaba Gaba and the station were two stores; English’s, and Wyborn’s. The larger and the first in the area was established by A.C. English, one of the first government agents in the days of the Protectorate half a century earlier, who later took up property, bred pigs and ran a store near his house on the hill down the creek from the station. The rival store was better placed, right on the junction where the track to the Rigo station left the Gaba Gaba-Kemp Welch road. Wyborn had left English’s employ to set up his own store. English hated him.

During September 1935, just before Ivan Champion got back from leave, three attempts had been made to break into a store belonging to R.A. Smith at Wainapuna, a village on the coast about two miles north of Hula. Wainapuna was a good anchorage for small ships in the south-easterly season and a handy place for a store for Hula people. As suspicion always fell on strangers, R.A. Smith suspected a ‘gang of natives from the Gulf’ who were said to be ‘hanging about and robbing in the area’. He wrote to Champion about his suspicions and Champion sent out his police to round up anybody who was foreign in the place, to see who they were and what they were up to. The police scouted through the surrounding villages and in Babaga, very close by, found the four Gulf men, Karo, Ori, Opa and Tete, and brought them into the Rigo station.

Magistrates were empowered to summon anyone whether or not a complaint had been laid against them, and to bring in any native as a witness by force. And they were also policemen and, ‘like all police the world over’ said Ivan Champion, ‘sometimes they suspect a man of murder and they get him on some other charge to hold him; ... and that was the same procedure. To find out who these people were, what they were doing, were they being welcomed by the people or not.’ It was easily accomplished. When no complaint had been laid, magistrates often had their native clerks lay one. As there was nothing except Smith’s suspicion against the Gulf men, Champion decided on this method. Karo, Ori, Opa and Tete were kept illegally in the police barracks while Champion prepared the papers he needed before he could hold them legally — a short task — and they were brought into court for the hearing on Monday, October 28, 1935. Magistrates could hold a court of Native Matters anywhere: out on patrol, they would use a resthouse, or sit
at a table under a tree; on the station, courts were held in the Magistrate’s office and it was to Taubada’s office that the men from the Gulf were brought to stand before his desk. On a table in the corner of the office was an iron safe named Chubb which held all the station revenue. Papuans knew what it was and what it held. They called it a Bank. Champion explained that they were in a court and must ‘talk true’ and held out his pencil saying, ‘Now you talk true’, and each man touched the pencil affirming that he would tell the truth. It was a new experience for all but Karo whose mind was in any case on the safe. All four were charged — on the complaint of Native Clerk Lohia — with being ‘foreign natives not able to give a good account of their means of support’, which meant that they were ‘absent from their tribal village’, and this was, since 1926, an offence under a regulation passed to back up the White Women’s Protection Ordinance.

Karo demurred at this, pleading in his defence that he was in his mother’s village of Hula. ‘I told the magistrate at Kerema that I wanted to visit my mother’, Karo explained, ‘and he said it was all right. I am trawling at Hula’, he added. ‘I am getting shell’. Opa and Tete followed his lead. ‘I came with Karo . . . I came with my brother Karo’, and Ori too said, ‘I came to visit my brother at Hula’. Champion granted Karo the right to stay, since his mother was a Hula woman; but as he did not recognise cousins as brothers, Opa and Tete did not have the same right. These two, and Ori, were ordered to leave the Rigo district within a week.

Karo, however, was charged with another offence — also on the complaint of Native Clerk Lohia — that ‘on the 28th day of October he wore clothes on the upper part of his body without a permit contrary to Regulation No. 94 of the Native Regulations Ordinance’. He pleaded guilty to this offence and again defended himself. ‘Mr Murray gave me a permit when he was in Kerema’, he said, knowing that it was possible for special permits to be issued, but when Ivan Champion enquired when it was that the Governor had been to Kerema, he found that it was fifteen years before! So he found Karo guilty, fined him 2s. 6d. in default seven days’ hard labour and filled in a warrant for the imprisonment. But Karo paid the fine and the gang left the station, though not the district, for they made their way back to Hula, a long day’s walk up and down several hills, and were still there two weeks after they had been convicted.

The safe in Ivan Champion’s office had fired Karo’s imagination. Though all except him had been ordered to return to Motu Motu by November 3, they stayed in Hula until the 10th when Karo, bidding farewell to all
his friends and relations and shaking hands with everyone at Polo’s house, set off, announcing to all that he was going home. Opa and Tete accompanied him and Ori stayed in Hula. But they had no intention of going to Uritai. At about 7 o’clock on the night of Tuesday, November 12 they arrived at Gaba Gaba, passing a woman near the bridge as they made their way to the government resthouse. Later that night, they left the resthouse to walk back towards Gaba Gaba bridge and the Rigo road. They were headed for the Rigo station.

Leaving Tete at the bridge, Opa and Karo walked the two miles to the sleeping station and to the office where stood the Chubb safe. They knew that the door and windows would be locked, but the walls of the office reached not quite to the roof, and a water tank stood close to one wall. Karo shinned up the tank and through the gap between wall and roof, jumped lightly down and was in the office. Opa, in the shade of the tank, kept watch. If anyone appeared he was to whistle. But no one on the station heard a sound: not Taubada who was asleep in his house on the hill, or the servants who had been all three out visiting but were back by curfew, or the warder in his house thirty yards from the office, or the three station police of the six who normally would have spent that night on the station. Lance-Corporal Paieke had left during the day for Gidobada village five miles away where he intended to spend his leave; Armed Constables Babaineme and Ororogo had slipped off to English’s store where at 10 o’clock they were met by Apa and Kaumeke, two labourers in a gang of men from the Public Works Department who had lately arrived to do a job in the area. The two Armed Constables had sent word to the Public Works Department compound during the day suggesting a game of cards for the evening. They knew they risked a fine or even dismissal; they knew that Taubada was a bit strict about gambling because it caused so many fights, but there was nothing much to do at night. Making money by magic means of gambling was too great a temptation and the arrival at the station of the Public Works Department camp, a temporary establishment of men with money to gamble with, was too good a chance to miss.

Opa, waiting by the water tank, was already in danger of arrest by being in the district at all, but he evidently loved money or feared Karo more than he feared arrest; for there he was, waiting while Karo dragged the iron safe to the now open window and pushed it through. He had it. The two lumped the heavy safe with many pauses down to the witnesses’ house and there tied it to a pole to carry it more easily down to the cover of the creek bed where Karo tried to bash it open with a tomahawk he carried in his belt.
Fearing the noise would disturb the station, they carried it further up
the creek and there Karo bashed at it again. He was lucky. The sides of the
Chubb safe turned out to have been made of two thin walls of sheet metal
packed with sawdust in between, which succumbed to Karo’s tomahawk.
Since such robberies were unheard of in Papua, station safes were of this
fairly light construction. Inside were two small locked cash boxes. Putting
one under each arm he took off, Opa at his heels down the creek and on to
the main road to Gaba Gaba. He left, unopened in the ruins of the safe, a
drawer containing keys, loose money and papers. He could not read, and so
did not know that the writing on one of the papers he had left included the
numbers of thirteen of the notes in the boxes.

When they arrived at the bridge near English’s store, Karo broke open
the cash boxes. Inside was a fortune. Government notes in green and brown,
even two blue notes and a little silver money. There were more than 100
notes, more money than either Karo or Opa had ever seen before; more
than they could have earned in twenty years; more than they could easily
have spent in ten. What could he do with so many notes? No Papuan could
have spent more than £1 or £2 at any store without raising suspicion. The
only way a native could have a lump sum was either from the sale of copra
or at the end of his three-year contract when he went to the government sta­tion
to collect it. In either case, he would have to be close to home. It was
this money, the Wages for Labourers’ Account, which made up the greater
part of the money that was in the cash boxes in the Rigo safe for Ivan
Champion to pay out to returned labourers of the district as they came in.
It had been sent from Samarai by the plantation owners and was waiting to
be collected. Even one of these paid-off labourers spending £20 would have
been remarked since his total annual wage amounted to £6. A foreigner, who
could collect money only at his home station, would be immediately suspect.
In any case, it would have been impossible to spend very much unless one
bought the whole store, for the stock consisted of blankets, rami, hanks of
twine, of hard biscuit (1s. for 8), rice (1s. for 4 lb) or tinned fish (1s.6d.each),
of round meat or square meat, kerosene, matches and tobacco.

Even in Port Moresby where at least it would have been possible for a
Papuan to spend money anonymously, he could not have spent a large sum
easily nor could he have got much pleasure out of it. He could have bought
nothing big, nothing lasting, nothing splashy or exciting with his haul. Natives
were not allowed to shop in the stores which sold expensive European pro­
ducts except at hatches where they presented notes from their employers and
were given the goods. For their own shopping there were trade stores with the same stock that they could have bought at Wyborn’s or English’s or Smith’s: the same tinned meat, the same rice, the same hard biscuit, the same blankets, the same axes. Karo could not have bought shirts or alcohol or cards. He could not have used the money to pay for a new wife, had he wanted one, for bride price was not in those days reckoned in money. He could have set up a trade store with a capital of £10 to £15. He could have paid his taxes for forty-three years. He might have buried his haul and used it as a bank, bringing it out to spend bit by bit, year by year. That was what a prudent man would do but prudent men do not steal safes. For Karo the temptation to splash it around was great.

Karo and Opa arrived back at the government barracks where Tete was waiting. Karo gave the other two some money, told them to go back to Uritai and they separated, Karo with the cash boxes under his arm, along the road down the beach where, at daylight, he passed Vanna Rei as he tramped along towards Hula; the other two with £5 between them, along the Tavai road towards Port Moresby. When they reached Moresby, they made again for Burns Philp’s compound at Badili to spend the night, but first they put their money in a cocoa tin and buried it in the ground near the beach. They told no one about the money, not even Eumu from Uritai, who said they could spend the night with him at the British New Guinea Company’s compound, but they accepted his offer and stayed alternate nights at Burns Philp’s and British New Guinea’s waiting for a boat to take them home. While they hung about Moresby, word came that Karo’s father, Araua Epe, had died at Uritai. Tete wanted to go there immediately but Opa, who decided that he should go to Hula to collect Karo and was too frightened to go alone, persuaded Tete to go with him and the two turned back on their tracks.

To the great surprise of his Hula relatives who thought he was on the way to Uritai, Karo walked into Lapuka Pari’s house at about 8 o’clock on Wednesday night, the night after he had robbed the station of its safe. On Thursday the 14th Karo started spending his money. He gave 10s. at R.A. Smith’s store and £2 to Polo Relai for a new canoe, explaining that he had won the money playing cards and that it was a present, for Polo wanted a new canoe. Karo also hoped that Polo might take him back to Uritai in the new canoe. Early next morning, Itama set out in his own canoe for Wanigela to inspect likely trees, choose one and pay Karo’s £2 for a canoe for Polo to be made from it. While Itama was away, Opa and Tete arrived at Hula. ‘What have you done with your money?’ Karo asked them when they were out of the
way of the family. Tete admitted that they had buried it, too scared to spend it because it was government money. 'If we spent it, they would find out and there would be trouble.' Karo jeered at them. They were like women! he laughed; he wasn’t scared to spend it!

At 6 o’clock in the morning of Wednesday, November 13 the day had begun at the Rigo station and near Gaba Gaba, where Mrs Wyborn at the store was already up and about her morning’s tasks. She noticed two Public Works Department men coming down the road past her house unusually early and wondered what they were about, while up at the station Interpreter Gaiboni padded down to the office to sweep out the rooms on Native Clerk Lohia’s instructions. As soon as he unlocked the door he saw the open window and no safe, and dropping the broom rushed down to tell Lohia who woke Ivan Champion at 6.15 with the astounding news. The three made for the office and together inspected the open window, footprints on the tank and the marks on the ground under the window. A.C. Ororogo, after his sleepless night of cards, joined the Interpreter and together they followed the footsteps until they led to the battered and empty safe abandoned in the creek bed.

It was a great shock to the Assistant Resident Magistrate as it soon would be to all officials, for never before had a government safe been stolen. This was no everyday petty pilfering. As Judge Gore would write, thirty years later, ‘this was a first class burglary worthy of a more civilised community’. As soon as the safe was found, Champion sent sleepy A. C. Ororogo and Babaineme to Gaba Gaba to stop all canoes and enquire after four Maiva natives from Mekeo who had been seen hanging around Wyborn’s store with Paieke. The Lance-Corporal was hated by the rest of the station force, and A.C. Ororogo was convinced that the footprints in the creek bed were his so they eagerly set off. Champion and the police searched the neighbouring villages, interviewed the Maiva natives and the Lance-Corporal and were told at Gaba Gaba of a Gulf native who had been passed on the beach at daylight carrying a camphorwood box. It was Karo, who at that moment was walking along the beach to Hula with the money.

Ivan Champion went through the remains of the safe and from the papers calculated the scale of the robbery: £ 129.17s.8d; £ 114.9s.8d of which was in the Wages and Native Labour Account and £ 15.17s. in the Revenue Account; the first waiting for indentured labourers whose time had expired to call in and collect it, the second, money from licences and fines waiting to be sent to Port Moresby at the end of the month.
While two constables went east in search of foreign natives, Babaineme was despatched to Port Moresby with reports of the robbery for the Resident Magistrate of the Central Division and the Treasurer to which Champion added a request for help in his investigation. 'I have not one intelligent Armed Constable on the station', he wrote. A.C. Babaineme carried also the list of thirteen note numbers.

Ivan Champion enquired again around Gaba Gaba, then went back to his office and wrote letters to all the store-keepers and missionaries in the district. 'On the night of the 12th instant the Rigo safe was burgled and a considerable amount of money was stolen', he wrote. 'Amongst the notes were a number whose numbers I have and which are given below. Will you please be good enough to check the numbers of all notes received from natives by you. If any show the same numbers please get in touch with the nearest village constable and tell him to arrest the person with the note and bring him to Rigo'. Only to the Treasurer in Port Moresby did he reveal the size of the robbery. He sent one Armed Constable to deliver the letters and another to spend the night at Siruwai creek. It had been a long day. At about the time the Armed Constable set off from Rigo with the mail for the storekeepers, Karo Araua walked into Lapuka Pari's house in Hula.

On Thursday 14th, while Champion wrote further letters — to the Treasurer, and to plantation owners — Karo walked into R.A. Smith's store near Hula and did some shopping with a 10s. note. Smith, having received Champion's letter, wrote down the number of the 10s. note and Karo's name. The next day he wrote to Champion a letter which arrived on Saturday the 16th. It gave him this advice:

A boy worth watching would be the one whose name appeared first on my list — an ex-policeman, convicted homicide and I think the one that made 3 determined attempts on my store at Wainapune. I was unable to prove anything but on the nights of the attempts (some 3 months ago) I found out that he was not in the house he usually slept in and that he was ashore (Hula is a marine village) till the early hours. You will remember he was among the batch of Western boys recently taken by your clerk to Rigo. Mother Hula and father Motu Motu.

As Ivan Champion finished reading this letter, in walked Sergeant Bagita who
4, Sergeant Bagita. Bagita Aromau remained in the police force until he retired in 1966 after fifty years of service. During the war he spent three years in charge of carriers on the Kokoda trail, received his final promotion to Sergeant First Class and was awarded the Defence Medal, the Australian General Service Medal, the Pacific Star and the 1939-45 star. He is seen wearing all of these in this photograph, taken in 1965, when he accompanied the band of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary — as the Armed Native Constabulary had then become — to the Royal Easter Show in Sydney. It was his first time outside Papua. In the year of his retirement, he was awarded the British Empire Medal. He lived in the Kila Kila police barracks near Port Moresby until his death in 1972.

*Photograph: Papua New Guinea Post Courier*
had been despatched by the Resident Magistrate of the Central Division in Port Moresby in response to Champion's request.

Before Bagita left Moresby he had been talking to a prisoner at Koke, one Goava Oa, the Mekeo life prisoner, and had mentioned to Goava that he was on his way to Rigo on an investigation. 'What a shame you didn't tell me before', said the prisoner, 'because I would have given you a letter for my friend Lance-Corporal Paieke who is on the station there'. It was a small world, the world of those Papuans who had connections with the white men, the new sources of power in Papua, and it included both prisoners and police. Bagita knew everyone and could speak many languages. He was also, like Karo, among his relatives in this area. With the arrival of Sergeant Bagita at Rigo, Karo's chances of keeping his haul greatly diminished. On that day too, Opa and Tete left Port Moresby, returning to Hula.

Bagita Aromau had now been in the force for almost twenty years and gained a reputation among Papuans and Europeans alike as an able detective. Among Papuans he had also a reputation for toughness; people remember him tearing an illegal singlet from the back of a hapless man with tastes above his station or ignorant of the law, and a missionary, Reverend Bert Brown, remembers how he made men talk by handcuffing them to a pole in the middle of Iokea village and leaving them all day in the sun, ordering the villagers to give them no food and no water. Bagita himself in later years readily recalled such methods of getting results. He was given a free hand in his investigations; although the magistrates did not often themselves use illegal methods of coercion in investigations, they could and did send out Papuan policemen who were not about to take much notice of liberal European standards of police behaviour. But above all, Bagita was a real detective with a passion for bringing people to book; a relentless and quiet questioner who would sit down, give people smokes, be friendly with them, keep talking, all night if necessary, until he found out what he wanted to know. When he was sent out to the Rigo station, neither Ivan Champion nor his superiors in Port Moresby gave instructions about how he was to go about it and asked no questions about it afterwards. All that Ivan Champion wrote in his reports to the Resident Magistrate Central Division was: 'Sergeant Bagita is making investigations'. Bagita, Champion and the European Constable in Port Moresby, Tom Gough, all had their eyes on various suspects who were kept under surveillance and the four Gulf men headed their list.

Karo was daring and strong; his whole life had shown that. He was also clever; no Papuan had ever got away with such a daring, skilful robbery,
nor with such a large haul; the Rigo robbery showed that. But he seemed always to care little about the consequences of his deeds and heedlessly he began to lay trails for himself; trails that Bagita was just the man to pick up.

At Hula, Itama had returned with his mission completed. He had given Karo’s £2 for a canoe which would take the group to Uritai, and Karo had paid him another £1 for the service. The family at Hula decided to buy a fly for a sail as they would have to move quickly to catch the last of the south-east trade winds. They gave more of Karo’s money for the sail at R.A. Smith’s store, and on Monday, November 25, Itama pushed off with Karo, Opa and Tete westward down the coast. Ori must have left earlier and for some reason he was the only one who ever reached home. On Tuesday, November 26, he left Port Moresby for Iokea by canoe. Karo, Opa and Tete remained in the Rigo area.

Two days after the gang left Hula, Bagita was already on to the men from Motu Motu, saying he had important clues. Though Bagita was certain that the Gulf men were guilty, he was not quite sure which of them were the culprits and the first warrants that were issued, on November 28, were for the arrest of three Gulf men including Ori Susuve of Iokea but not Karo, Opa or Tete. Bagita believed wrongly that the other suspects had gone to Abau but he was on their trail. He needed someone who would talk, for none of the notes that Karo, Polo or Itama had changed proved to have been among those listed. Bagita was sure that Karo and company were mixed up in it.

Why were these three still in the Central Division? Perhaps Karo had another scheme. Perhaps the wind dropped depriving the canoe of wind for its new sail and making Itama decide to put them ashore at Kaporoko. For whatever reason, the three men were walking along the road to Port Moresby when on December 3 Bagita finally picked them up, having decided to hold them. Karo did not want to go along with Bagita and dragged his hand.

‘Why you put handcuffs on me?’
‘Taubada told me to come and put handcuffs on you’.

‘I lied to them’, Bagita admitted years later, but they went along to the station. When Champion met again the man he had recently tried, the man he now realised was the Overland Mail murderer, he took more notice of him. He was, he thought, rather a fine looking man, sure of himself and very quietly spoken; a man who didn’t bluster. He got excited though, when Bagita accused him of the robbery.
Champion was worried about arresting the three men without evidence. His actions, his courts, would be scrutinized by Sir Hubert Murray on his regular journeys around Papua when he went through every court of Native Matters on every station. He would see something and say: ‘This man shouldn’t be in gaol. Discharge him immediately!’ He would hold a review of all cases and next time he came around, Ivan Champion would have to show him the new lot of cases which had been tried.

Bagita dramatised the arrest later, with himself as the only star:

‘Karo said: “Bagita is telling lies. We did not steal the bank. He handcuff us for no reason”.

‘I said: “No, you steal it”.

But Mr Champion supported their argument.

We said: “Did you find the money?”

‘I said: “No . . . No money”.

‘Then Ivan Champion said: “There you are. You are in trouble. You found no money, you handcuffed them for nothing”.

‘I said: “No, they steal the money. You looked for them and could not find them. But I found them, these three men”.

‘Champion said: “Bagita, how you know they steal the bank?”

‘I said: I know. I will find it out later. No, you won’t get any trouble, you will not be jailed, you will not be sacked or fined. I am sure they removed the bank. Keep the handcuffs on them and put leg irons! Do not give them *kaikai* (food) and water. Do not give them work until I come back from Hula’.

Ivan Champion does not remember receiving or taking this advice and his official reports said only: ‘Sergeant Bagita is making investigations’.

The names of the three men first appeared in official correspondence on Tuesday December 3, 1935, the day of their arrest, when Champion tried to get evidence from Moresby. On December 20 Champion wrote to the Resident Magistrate saying that everyone would be arrested in ten days. He did not tell C.T. Wurth, a man of great experience in the colonial administration since 1909, who dotted every i and crossed every t according to the strictest letter of the law, that the three were already being held without charge.

Meanwhile the police at Kairuku station had been looking for Ori Susuve with a warrant for his arrest but he had not been in his village of
Iokea when they called. They expected him back any day and he was finally arrested and brought to Rigo charged with breaking, entering and stealing. The case was adjourned until January 9. It was a holding charge intended to get Ori to talk. And he did. Karo, he said, had invited him to steal the safe, but he didn’t go and as soon as he heard it had been stolen he knew it was Karo. From Boxing Day, when Ori came to the Rigo station, until January 9, when his case was due, there was a great deal of talking. Ori led Bagita and Champion to Itama and the canoe money, to Polo and to Verau, to the family at Hula, and on January 7, with the help of Interpreter Gaiboni, Itama and Polo Relai made statements which Ivan Champion transcribed. ‘Polo told me that Karo gave him £2 and Polo asked me to go to Wanigela and buy a canoe’, said Itama. ‘When I came back from Wanigela, Karo gave me a £1. I did not see Karo with any other money’. Polo confirmed this.

‘I asked him where he got the money. He said he won it playing cards’.

Polo remembered Karo coming into the house on the day after the robbery.

‘He was carrying a small hand bag. He said he had found some money playing cards. The hand bag was a tin one’.

The two witnesses to these statements, Sergeant Bagita and Village Constable Tira of Hula both signed with a cross, as did Polo and Itama. Ori Susuve was discharged and the case against him withdrawn.

But there was still no evidence that Karo had stolen the safe, except for Ori’s word, and there was no money. At this stage Champion and Bagita offered one of the accused freedom in exchange for evidence and timid Tete, who had been left behind on the night of the robbery, decided to talk. He told Bagita the whole story of the robbery, and with Bagita and Armed Constables Katu and Moaripi (sent from Headquarters earlier) he went to Koke and led them to a spot near Burns Philp’s compound where they dug up a cocoa tin. In Opa’s bundle was one of the numbered notes. Opa now confessed his part of the robbery.

When they returned from Port Moresby, Tete and Opa were once again brought to court before Ivan Champion; this time not in his office where the Chubb safe had sat, but in the Gaba Gaba barracks where Tete had slept on the night of the robbery and Armed Constable Maoripi, a Toaripi like themselves, acted as interpreter.
'I am going up to Rigo to get money', Karo told Tete, according to Tete’s statement, and next morning Opa had showed Tete £3, saying: “I got that from Karo last night when we went to the Rigo office .... Karo and I went to the Rigo office and got the safe and broke it and got that money”.

Opa repeated Tete’s story and added more:

‘ ‘We will go up to Rigo and get the safe”, he said Karo had told him. “Leave Tete here, he is too frightened”. We went up to the Rigo station. We got to the office. Karo told me to wait outside and whistle if anyone came’.

After they had the safe and Karo bashed it open, ‘He took two small money boxes out and put one under each arm. We left the safe and walked down the creek and onto the big road. When we got near the bridge near Mr English’s place, Karo opened the money boxes with his tomahawk and gave me £2 in silver and £1 in paper money... Tete and I went to Port Moresby. We put the money in a tin and buried it at Koke near B.P.’s boys house’. The case was over.

By January 13, Wurth was wondering what had been happening all this time. Karo was still under arrest, though not charged, and Bagita was out at Wanigela looking for the bulk of the money. By January 17 he had the £2 which Itama had paid for his canoe but there was still £120 which Karo had hidden somewhere. Tete didn’t know, or he would have told; Opa either didn’t know or didn’t tell, for when on January 21 he and Karo were finally brought before Ivan Champion and on the complaint of Lance-Corporal Paieke charged with breaking, entering and stealing the safe, most of its contents had still not been found.

Sergeant Bagita, however, whose detective work had been so impressive, improved it enormously over the years and in his account of Karo’s crimes which was published in 1971, the money was all found before the trial. He had found it at Wanigela, he said:

‘I woke the village constable and told him to wake his people up. I lined them up and asked them whether some Hula people had bought logs for their canoes... I asked them if they still had the money. I told them I wanted to see the notes. I tricked them. I
56 Karo

don't know how to read and write. They brought the money. I counted it and told them that those numbers on the money were those of the Rigo bank. They brought some more money. I counted it until the money reached two hundred dollars'.

Remanded in custody to appear in Port Moresby, the prisoners Karo and Opa stayed where they had been since Bagita had arrested them, living with the police in the police barracks on the Rigo station until prisoners and witnesses were collected ready to go to Moresby on the monthly trading boat: Karo and Opa; Tete, who had been party to the robbery; Itama, Verau, Polo Relai from Hula, who had received money from Karo; Ori Susuve, who had refused to have anything to do with the robbery and had left Hula before it had been done; R. A. Smith, whose store had been robbed; Ivan Champion, whose safe had been robbed; Interpreter Gaiboni, who had discovered the theft; A. C. Ororogo, who with Gaiboni had found the broken safe; Armed Constables Katu and Moaripi, who with Sergeant Bagita had dug up the cocoa tin of money; and Sergeant Bagita, who had recovered the Wanigela money. Above all Sergeant Bagita, who by his quiet and cunning questions, his persistent friendliness and his bluff, had succeeded both in rounding up the bandits and in extricating the evidence that would convict them. And the Chubb safe. All were loaded on the boat for Moresby.

Once more Karo found himself in the hands of the European Constable Tom Gough, once more at Koke gaol, this time under Gaoler Mahon. The man so quietly spoken, even sad, to his powerful Taubadas, so wild and so quick to fight, so strong to Papuans, found himself in gaol on remand and working as all prisoners did. Five days after C. T. Wurth had committed them from the Court of Petty Sessions, Karo and Opa were brought before Judge Gore, who was beginning to form a high opinion of Karo as a criminal. This was the most serious case of breaking, entering and stealing he had ever known in Papua. Not only that, £122 was still not accounted for.

The big Judge entered the hot little room and took his place at the table. The broken safe had been brought into court, as it had been carried along the Siruwai creek, on a pole carried by two men, and now it sat on the floor of the court. The witnesses gave their evidence, which with the numbered notes was enough to convict both men. In statements at the end of the trial both Karo and Opa admitted that they had broken into the office at Rigo and taken the money, but added that Tete and Ori, witnesses against them, had been accessories. But the two witnesses were not charged. Karo
and Opa were found guilty and the Judge asked Karo if he had anything to say. Karo thought of something. The safe was too heavy for a man to lift. How could he have taken it from the office and carried it to the window? The 6 foot 3 inch and heavy Judge Gore left his bench, walked to the safe and alone lifted it. Though, he remembered later, he shook with the effort for hours after, he had made his point.

Announcing that he proposed adopting strong means to prevent this class of crime, Judge Gore sentenced the two men to ten years' hard labour, a sentence twice as long as Karo had received for killing the Papuan policeman, and they were returned to Badili from where they would be despatched to one of the more remote gaols. They went out to work next day in the normal way but in charge of a trusty among the prisoners, for warders were few and trusted short-term prisoners were often given charge of small labour lines. The trusty who was in charge of the group which included Karo and Opa on the line that left the gaol to work on the sea wall two days after their conviction was not a short-term prisoner but the most able and notorious long-term inmate of all, Goava Oa, whose ability and smooth talk—or his connections with the Head Warder—had bent the rules to make him a trusty, though he was in gaol for life.

Few prisoners escaped, though it was easy to do so, not because the consequences were dire but because it was also easy to be recaptured. Prisoners were either a long way from home and would be noticed at once when they stopped for food and drink, or from a nearby village where they had no chance of hiding from the Village Constable or someone who would soon talk. But Karo and Opa had an unusual temptation to escape: the money hidden in the bush. Taking their lunch issue of food to keep them going, the two men slipped away from the gang working on the sea wall and disappeared. When he discovered they were gone Goava Oa ran to the nearest store and rang Mr Mahon, the Gaoler.

Just as Ivan Champion arrived back at the Rigo station from the trial, the news came of the escape. As it had been a great blow to Bagita's pride that he had not recovered the stolen money—thirty years later he would salve his pride by claiming that he had—it was a blow to the government's dignity, and a scandal among the anti-government commercial interests, when a prisoner escaped. Champion with a young government officer who was visiting the station and all his police, spent the whole night combing the district. For five days, police from Headquarters and from Rigo covered the bush tracks and villages between Rigo, Hula, Gaba Gaba, Tavai and Moresby
waiting for Karo and Opa to appear and dig up the money.

A policeman saw them at Tavai, but they evaded him. They made for a river near Tuplesereia where Karo had buried the money and together dug it up, wrapped it in a *rami* and set off along the road to Gaba Gaba hoping that they would there take a canoe west. They could never have succeeded: Karo was too well known, and he had too much money. But he was a gambler and a money man as well as a *sevese karu*, so it was worth a try. As they neared Tuplesereia, a group of police saw them and though they took off into the bush, they were caught, but not before Karo had thrown the bundle away into the bush.

Back in gaol they were given shot drill as punishment, made to carry a heavy lead weight above their heads and Mahon was so angry with Karo that he caned him. ‘Why did you run away?’ a former prisoner remembers Mahon asking as he thrashed Karo. ‘You made a mistake and you were imprisoned, why did you run away? You are spoiling the government law by running off in working hours.’ Mahon was not the only angry white man. The *Papuan Courier*, reminding readers of ‘the most daring crime ever committed by natives in the Territory no doubt’, demanded a European constable on duty day and night. And still the money had not been recovered! Not until March 13, seventeen days after Karo and Opa had been picked up, could the *Papuan Courier* report that £108.16s. of the stolen money had been found by a policeman.

And so at last the treasure was recovered. Karo had spent or given away to his relatives only £13 of the £129 he had in his hands for the three weeks between the robbery and the arrest. Opa and Tete had received but not spent £5, Polo was given £2 for his canoe, and lost it again to Bagita. Small rewards for such daring.

After Mahon’s angry punishment Karo was sent to Daru and later to Samarai, both island gaols and both far away from the white man’s town of Port Moresby. Tete and Ori Susuve left Port Moresby, after the trial, for the peace of the Gulf and were not heard of again outside their own circle. Opa was sent with Karo to Samarai, then to Misima, where on a little island close by he became very sick. His body swelled up so much that he was sent to Samarai hospital. His sickness, he said, was caused by the people he had killed with his own hands on the walk from Uritai to Port Moresby. He talked, too, of money which had been buried at Rigo and which he would go and collect when he was released. But whether this was true or just a dream, he never knew for he died in prison at Samarai.
Neither of the two island gaols at either end of Papua could hold Karo long, not Daru, far west in Torres Strait, nor Samarai in the eastern waters off the south-east tip of Papua. Like Epe Savora, his clan hero, he travelled far and met many people; but instead of hurling out paiva, the miraculous tight-rope liana, he employed his wits to cover the many miles between Samarai and Port Moresby. The government had gaoléd him for ten years and exiled him to isolated islands; he tried trickery against his gaolers. He became blind. So convincingly did he become blind that P.H. Cahill, the Samarai gaoler, decided to sent him to Badili gaol for treatment at the native hospital at Ela kone. Every Papuan knew that he had rubbed his eyes with a plant whose juices cause temporary blindness, but Mr Mahon the gaoler knew nothing of these plants nor did Dr Williams, second in command at Ela kone hospital. They saw inflamed eyes on a man who fell over when he walked, who bumped into obstacles, who clearly could not see. So he was sent and accepted for treatment to the hospital where his fellow Toaripi from Mirivase, Pukari Lakoko, was working.

Pukari knew that Karo was not blind, for Karo had told him that he had rubbed the juice of the Lala tree on his eyes. Sisia Henao who saw him often at this time, said in 1976:

'I don’t think he was really blind. I think he was tricking a bit. When he was on his own he would walk about but if I was near he would ask me to help him. I think he wanted a good rest and did this cleverly'.

Pukari revealed nothing at the hospital to Dr Williams, and after six or seven weeks of treatment with Argyrol drops, the black drops commonly used for eye disorders, Karo was sent back to Badili gaol, issued with a pair of dark glasses to protect his eyes. He wore these from then on.

Gaoler Mahon began to suspect that Karo was putting it over him, but
as his blindness was convincing as he walked with a stick and stumbled Mahon decided to let him off work and to provide a fellow prisoner to lead him around the gaol. Karo was glad to do no work, so Pukari said, because he was resentful of the ten year sentence he had been given for the robbery. Papuan men had always expected restitution for their crimes and from the new European power they had also come to expect punishment. But if five years' imprisonment was just for killing the policeman, ten years gaol for robbing the station safe seemed unjust especially as they had got the money back. After all, for stealing, killing and eating Avosa's prize pig he had been made to pay four armshells.

The system of justice which Judge Gore had explained so lucidly for the Australian parliament in the Papuan Annual Report for 1929-30, the same system whose leniency puzzled those commercial people who saw Papuans mainly as a source of wealth for themselves, was often incomprehensible to Papuans. After the murder of Bili, a Papuan would expect revenge from the relatives of the dead man: perhaps an attempt on Karo's life or on the life of a relative, by sorcery; but, after an exchange of deaths and the payment of substantial compensation, the murder would be paid back. For the robbery, some equivalent in payment satisfactory to those who had been robbed, and agreed to, after long discussion by the robbers' connexions, would settle the matter. From this system, Papuan villagers had more and more to confront an entirely different scheme.

Karo, with dark glasses to shade his eyes and a fellow prisoner to lead him around, confronted the government's justice by avoiding all work. He spent his days in the comparative ease of Badili gaol and was locked up after dinner at night in a cell by himself; the better, perhaps, to keep an eye on him. A fellow Toaripi prisoner remembered in 1978 it was 'because he was a bad man. The other people were all mixed up together'.

In the middle of 1937 Gaoler Mahon took ill and his place was taken by an Acting-Gaoler, G.P. Gough, a tall twenty-nine year old Queenslander and brother of Tom Gough, the European Constable. Though he was a tall man, he was known to prisoners and warders as 'little Gough' to distinguish him from his elder brother 'big Gough'. George Gough was neither a gaoler nor a policeman, but a gardener, who had come up to Port Moresby after an attack of diphtheria for a few months' rest with his brother. While there he had been appointed an agricultural worker on the Higaturu coffee project, which was an attempt to introduce another cash crop to Papuans, and his job was to visit all the villages in the Northern Division encouraging the people to
grow coffee. When he found himself appointed Acting-Gaoler he went off to remonstrate with the Government Secretary.

‘But I am no gaoler!’
‘Neither is any one’, replied Champion, ‘but someone has to do it’.

In October 1937 when Tom Gough became due for his three months’ leave, Mahon the Gaoler became Acting European Constable and again George Gough was Acting-Gaoler. He was about to be married and had applied for a gardening job in Port Moresby so that he would not have always to be on patrol, when in 1938, just as he had been appointed to the new job, he was told that again he would have to relieve Mahon now that his three months’ leave was due.

Gaoler Mahon resigned from the service while on leave and George Gough had to stay on as Acting-Gaoler until a new one was appointed. Altogether, the gardener at heart was a gaoler from May 1937 to August 1938, which included the most horrifying months in the gaol’s history.

The Gaoler’s life he had taken on was a varied one. The life, in theory, was ruled by the 1919 Ordinance Relating to Prisons and its Regulations; but these Regulations, like the Criminal Code, had been adapted for Papuan conditions. He was down from his residence every morning by 6 o’clock for the daily parade when the prisoners, released from the cell block, were lined up for the roll call. Every day he was required to organise, inspect and despatch the work parties: the men armed with blades of hoop iron for cutting grass around the town; men to be driven out to his own gaol gardens at Laloki; men for the rice mill, the Medical Department, the Public Works Department and the Government Stores. He had to order the food and see that it was cooked and distributed; to read every letter received by a prisoner and initial it, a light task compensated for by the number of records about each prisoner which he was required to keep. Each night he had to muster and line up the prisoners and call their names before they were marched off to the cell block and locked up, and he was expected to direct a thorough search of each prisoner. A daily average of one hundred prisoners lined up before him. He had to check that no keys were left lying about, that a regular night inspection was carried out, and that nobody entered the cells at night unless on duty. All these and many other duties were laid down in the Regulations in great detail.

No one man could have managed them all. What happened was that
some of the Regulations were not carried out at all and others were carried out not by the Gaoler but by one of the Subordinate Prison Officers (all Papuans) who was known to Papuans as the Head Warder. His name was Ume Hau.

When George Gough took over from Mahon and asked what he was supposed to do, Mahon replied ‘Be guided by Ume’, and the Acting-Gaoler found the Head Warder both knowledgeable and helpful. ‘Ume was a likable chap; nothing was too much trouble. He was also obedient’, Gough remembered in 1976. He was also, as far as Gough was concerned, a good warder. But there was a great deal that went on in Koke gaol with which the Gaoler was not concerned; and much of it concerned his Subordinate Prison Officers, or warders. Ume Hau came from the village of Nabuapaka, which the Motu and the government called Geabada. In the Roro-speaking area on the mainland just north of Yule Island, these people were the eastern next-door-neighbours of the Toaripi men of the Gulf and each had long been involved with the other. One of the best known Gulf myths told the story of Oa-Laee, who left his village and settled with his daughters on Yule Island. Ume Hau was descended from the three brothers who, it was claimed, had moved east from Bereina, a related village on the Angabanga river, to found Nabuapaka. The grandson of the eldest of these three brothers, another Ume Hau, was the obia, or chief of the village and as this post passed by succession through the sons, it would come in time to Gaoler Gough’s Head Warder Ume.

Though the Regulations did not sanction it, the Head Warder at Badili had a second set of keys. It was gaol practice, and the Government Secretary winked at it, because without this second set of keys a second European Gaoler would have been necessary. D. J. Mahon on the maximum of his scale cost £ 474 a year; Ume Hau on the maximum of his scale cost £24 a year. So George Gough did what he could. From the Gaoler’s residence he came down to the gaol buildings after Ume had already unlocked the gate in the fence and unlocked the cells.

The cell block was a large rectangular timber building which ran parallel to the headland. Like most other buildings in the town it had a wide verandah running along two sides and was built up off the ground, in the Queensland fashion. There were ten large cells, each about thirty feet square, and each cell held perhaps ten prisoners, except for Cell 5 which was divided into four separate rooms, each room separately locked. Into one of the rooms of this cell they put Karo when he arrived back in the gaol after his interlude at Samarai. Cell 5 at the sea end of the long rectangular building was kept for
5. Badili gaol. On a cloudy day at the end of the dry season, the gaol island sits peacefully in the sea; in front of it, Taigere bay and beyond it, Koke bay. On the lower slope, near the water, can be seen the building where Boio Vagi and Igua Ume were murdered and at the top of the island, where the path ends, is the European gaol where Ume was murdered. On the mainland, across the causeway, is the main gaol building. The gaoler’s house is the white building to the right.

Photograph: New Guinea Collection, University of Papua New Guinea.

any women prisoners, and for any prisoner in solitary confinement either as a punishment or awaiting execution. Solitary confinement was a manner of speaking — like hard labour — because the occupants of one cell could see and hear what those in the others were doing through cracks in the walls which were several inches wide. Beyond the cell block, nearer the sea, were the kitchen and store. Out over the sea on a wharf was the toilet block, and opposite the cell block, across the parade ground and close to the fence on the Koke bay side of the headland were the married quarters, the warders’ kitchen and other buildings. About 350 yards away, across the stone causeway four feet wide was the European gaol; three small buildings on the island. Right at the top, the gaol for European men; below, the observation ward or European women’s gaol; and about six feet away from that, the kitchen. At
6, Ume and Iava’s house. This little concrete building is still standing, the only relic of the gaol which once covered the whole of the peninsula that juts out from Koke bay. It stood outside the gaol fence and was divided in two; one side housed Ume Hau and his family, the other Iava Vakau and his family. Relations often stayed here as well. Karo spent much of his time in this house and here, the woman prisoner Magewa washed, swept and helped keep house like one of the family until lock up time each evening.

Photograph: Amira Inglis

this time, in 1937, there were no prisoners in the European gaol. There very rarely were.

Outside the gaol fence stood a small cement building divided into two rooms. On one side lived the man Gough knew as Sanitary Warder Iava with his family; on the other, Sergeant Warder Ume and his family. These two, with the Gaoler, were the only prison officers who lived outside the prison. The three other married warders and their families lived inside the fence, and the single warders lived inside at the gaol gardens on the Laloki river. Iava Vako was from Vabukori, a Motu village east of Badili, and his wife Naima Kwahe, a tall, fine featured smooth copper-skinned Motuan woman, was from the same village. He spoke good English, better than the other warders, had taught at Pari school and could read and write in English, well enough to
send a note to the Gaoler. He was known to Papuans as Head Sanitary Warder Iava.

Ume Hau wore the three stripes of a sergeant on his blue serge uniform and, as he lived outside the gaol fence, he was visited by friends and relations at any time of the day or night and by friends and relations of prisoners seeking permission to visit. To Gough he was a Sergeant Warder, to Papuans inside and out of gaol he was the Head Warder. His duties and those of other Subordinate Prison Officers, as set out in the Regulations, were to prevent escape; to carry out the Regulations; to conduct prisoners to work and keep them at it; to supervise prisoners in their cells and wards and to see to the safety, cleanliness and decency of the prisoners. No Subordinate Officer was permitted to inflict punishment on a prisoner, nor was he to converse unnecessarily with a prisoner, ‘nor allow any familiarity towards himself or any other officer nor ... on any account speak of his duties, matters of discipline, nor of his own private affairs in the hearing of prisoners’.

These Regulations, made in Australia, were a joke in colonial Papua, where warders and prisoners belonged to a culture in which prisons had never existed and where the line between warders, prisoners and police was always blurred. Warders wore the same blue serge uniform as police, braided with white instead of red, and were often former policemen. Baure Kabama, one of the married warders, a Tufi man, had been a policeman stationed first at Rigo then at Kokoda; after two years on another post he had been brought back to Moresby and made a warder.

Sometimes warders were former prisoners. Iava’s wife, Naime, recalled in 1978, how Sanitary Warder Iava came to his job:

When he was a boy he killed a bulamakau (cow) near the old golf-course with a stone. They put him in gaol and his name was on the gaol book. He was a school-boy then. When he came home from gaol he married another woman but left her and married me. Then the government called him to be a warder.

Mr Sutton the Gaoler (Mahon’s predecessor) who needed a warder had evidently spotted Iava as a likely lad. By 1938 Iava had reached the rank of Sergeant. He and Ume were the only two Sergeants on the gaol strength.

It was an offence under the Regulations for a warder to malinger, to deliver any article to a prisoner or to communicate with prisoners. But the Regulations, like the Gaoler, spoke only in English, while prisoners, warders
and police spoke their own languages and the *lingua franca* of police Motu, and had the warders been punished for these offences, the Gaoler would have had to run his gaol alone. Had the last Regulation been observed, the deaths of three people might have been prevented. Any Subordinate Officer guilty of leaving a cell door unlocked or of entering a cell at night could be fined, or reduced in rank, or himself confined for up to fourteen days. Ume Hau was guilty of all these misdemeanors; his punishment would be far worse. 

A large, strong man, Ume was the senior Sergeant, and had already many years' experience at Koke when George Gough and Karo Araua arrived at the gaol. For most of the day Ume was in charge. Once the labour lines had gone for the day at 7 o'clock, once George Gough was off in the 1928 prison Ford on his tour of inspection and out to the gaol gardens at Laloki, Koke gaol was in the hands of Urne Hau. He was in charge of the sick prisoners and of the sanitary line when they arrived back at Koke between 8 and 9 o'clock every morning, ready for breakfast after the night's work then to spend the rest of the day inside the gaol compound. He was also in charge of Karo, who spent his days in the gaol, mainly outside the fence in Ume's house. Ume received incoming prisoners from the Magistrate's Court, signed admission papers, organised the medical inspection and issued two unbleached calico *rami* with sixteen broad arrows to males, two *rami* and one skirt to females. His wife was the wardress, the woman whom the Regulations directed must be employed when there were female prisoners in the gaol. At this time there was only one: Magewa, an Abau woman who with her lover had been convicted of killing her husband and was serving a five-year sentence for the crime. She inhabited one of the separate rooms in Cell 5, the one diagonally opposite Karo's, while her partner was held at Daru. She also spent her days in the Head Warder's house, sewing, George Gough believed, under the direction of Ume's wife; in fact she washed clothes, cooked food, swept the floor of the house and the yard around it, chopped wood for both Iava's fire and Ume's; worked like a member of Ume's family and called him and his wife Father and Mother.

Though he was a member of the senior clan, in line of succession to the position of chief in Nabuapaka village, Ume had stayed away for many years and had married Boio Vagi, a Motu woman from Pari, a marine village two or three hours east by canoe from Port Moresby. He had a house there, hard up against Taovata hill at the north-west end of the village, on land owned by his wife's clan and was not involved in his own village politics. Nabuapaka was very close to Poukama village, home of Goava Oa, the life prisoner, and
the people spoke the same Roro language; close also to Kairuku, the government station from which the police had gone in search of Ori Susuve, and at which Goava Oa had been employed as interpreter. The life prisoner and the Head Warder came from the same area, spoke the same language and were also related through their grandfathers. Ume and his Motu wife, Boio, being childless, had adopted the daughter of Abigu and Vagi of Pari and as she was also named Boio had changed her name to Igua Ume. In 1938, Igua was about twelve years old.

Head Warder Ume had a secure and responsible job and as well owned a trade store which was run from his house on the beach at Pari. Had Section 17 of the Prisons Ordinance been enforced, had the Gaoler known what was afoot in his gaol, Ume could have lost half a month’s pay, been confined to the gaol precincts for fourteen days or demoted, for the trade store was unlawful under that section which read:

No prison officer shall carry on any business directly or indirectly or hold any interest active or otherwise in any business without the consent of the Lieutenant Governor.

Ume’s store was managed by Sisia Henao, a cousin of Igua, Ume’s adopted daughter. Sisia paddled westward weekly to the gaol, to hand over the takings and collect his wages and the money to replenish the stock of hard biscuit, rice and tinned fish from which Ume made a regular weekly profit of 10s. This, together with his Sergeant’s pay, might have kept him well; but Ume, a great gambler, was always in debt and always looking for ways to make still more money.

Between them, he and the Gaoler ran what Papuans thought was not a bad place to be. In particular, they thought the food was good. Both prisoners and warders’ cooks picked up their food at the gaol store, though the warders’ kitchen and the prisoners’ kitchen were separate. Warders received rice, wheatmeal, tinned meat and fish, sugar, tea, tobacco, soap, matches and salt; and they supplemented this with pumpkin, sugar cane and yams from the prison gardens at Laloki and with food brought in by relatives or friends. The married warders’ wives cooked their own food and when they ran out of rations, bought more on credit from Steamships store in town. The prisoners, who drew up a roster of two a day to cook, received rice, wheatmeal and peas, tinned meat or fish, sugar, soap, salt, soda and the same food from the prison gardens. Their relatives and friends also supplied dishes of food.
The Married warders at Badili gaol with their families. This photograph was taken by George Gough shortly before the murder of three of those posing here. Sitting with the warders and their families was Magewa, the only woman prisoner at that time in Badili gaol. Everyone was dressed up and decorated with bunches of bougainvillea. Forty years later, Naime and Seseka, two of the warders' wives, studied the photograph while sitting on a mat in Vabukori village, near Port Moresby. Talking together, they identified all the people in the photograph. They remembered most of their names, and the place of origin of every one. Standing (left to right) Puro, from Kairuku, wife of Kone; holding her daughter. Kone Vaukau, from Kairuku. In front of Kone, wife of Maimai, from Daru. Maimai, from Daru. To the right, in front of Maimai, Boio Vagi, from Pari, wife of Ume;

Photograph: George Gough
The Gaoler’s food was cooked for him by prisoners who took it in turn to do it and also to clean his house and wash his clothes. Pukari Lakoko of Uritai visiting the gaol from the hospital as part of the regular medical inspection of prisoners, was impressed by it: the building was solid, the food plentiful and the prisoners had nothing to complain of. Fave Hiovake, also from Uritai, who spent three months there, agreed that it was good food. Three meals a day, with meat and fish every day, tea with sugar to drink! Though he did not qualify for the tobacco ration, those who were in for six months or more and did, gave him some of theirs.

Karo Araua knew his way about the gaol; knew many of the inmates, knew the warders; some prisoners he knew because they had been there before — like himself — others because they came from the same village, and many people knew him by reputation. Arua Kekhe of Poreporena, in for three years for robbing Luk Poi Wai’s Konedobu tailoring shop, knew of him; Sisia Henao, in for two weeks for refusing to do government work, knew him better than most, because Sisia was so often in the Head Warder’s house on trade store business. No one in the gaol could fail to notice this prisoner who wore dark glasses and never worked, and even if one had not heard of Karo Araua before, one very soon did.

Karo, the wild man, the sevese karu, who would have led the fighting line of his clan into battle in his grandfather’s time; who was thrust out of the elavo to greet the ancestors who never arrived and a millennium which never appeared; who had left the village to take on the white man’s world; who had become famous for a killing and succeeded for some mad weeks in holding enormous wealth, now came to the end of his luck when he found himself next to Cell 4 which held Goava Oa. For here was a man as strong and powerful as himself, as much a man of the new way, but cleverer; a man of coolness and passion. A sorcerer rather than a fighter. He had also more luck.

Goava Oa, son of Oa Aitsi, was born in about 1902, like Karo Araua and, also like him, attended a London Missionary Society mission school; in his case at Delena. Unlike Karo, Goava finished Standard III. His father, Oa Aitsi, was a powerful man. He was a sorcerer and one of the best known in an area noted along the coast for sorcery. Unusual among Papuan societies, inherited chiefs, each with his private sorcerer, were rulers of the small communities and sorcerers acted as the chiefs’ policemen as well as performing secretly, as they did in other Papuan villages, to kill people or make them sick. Like Araua Epe, Karo’s father, Oa Aitsi attached himself to the people
of the new power, the Europeans, and was appointed Village Councillor of Delena. Just as Goava had finished Standard III, the government set up its station at Kairuku across the water of Hall Sound from Delena. The government sent word to the mission that they wanted a boy, and as Goava had already been noticed as 'a nice good boy' he was taken on first as a rouseabout, then graduated to interpreter in the Kairuku district and travelled the whole area with the magistrate. He had been to Port Moresby, had met men who had come from German New Guinea, members of a patrol who had lost their way and were captured in the Gulf Division; was softly spoken, intelligent and able. He was considered clever by Europeans.

Goava married in 1920 the first of his six wives — permanent and temporary — and lived in the village of Vailala, working across the water at Kairuku on Yule Island, until 1930 when he was in trouble. One weekend in December, he was spending the day with his sister Puro Oa and her husband Urebo, a former policeman from the Mambare river in the Northern Division. With them was his younger brother Vakai Koaba and his sister Abia Koaba and her husband Kokorogu; with them also a visitor Mange Keangaimo (a houseboy known as Philippo), and his own wife Mea Dai from Hanuabada near Port Moresby. A mixed and interesting group of people: the Papuan elite of the time.

Three mountain villagers, Kuni people, had come down to the coast with plumes and shells in their string bags for sale. They had also stones of power, magic stones, which Goava coveted. The mountain men, treated roughly by the group in the hut at Vailala where they were displaying their goods for sale, made off, threatening to take a boat across to Kairuku and report the government interpreter. A dispute broke out between the two groups and all three mountain men were killed near the creek at Vailala as they were walking away from the village. The bodies were buried nearby.

Goava went back to work at his desk at Kairuku, while the others went about their business. The Catholic missionaries in the mountains, becoming anxious about the three men, started to search down at the coast where finally the three were found, buried roughly with their legs sticking up in the bush near Vailala. Goava, Vakai, Urebo, Kokorogu and Philippo were rounded up by the Assistant Resident Magistrate, J. H. H. Thompson, and gaol'd at Kairuku while investigations were going on. Goava Oa had frightened everybody so much that at the preliminary hearing on March 11, 1931 every one of the group told a different and conflicting story; except Goava Oa, who said nothing at all and who continued to say nothing when the case came before
Judge Murray on circuit in Kairuku. The Assistant Resident Magistrate was sure it was a matter of sorcery, for one of the murdered men was a well known sorcerer. Goava Oa, when the case came to the Central Court in Port Moresby on April 17, 1931, swore that during an argument, one of the Kuni men had threatened his young brother Vakai with an axe: 'I am afraid he might be hit with an axe one of my boy. I went to stop it and he missed me and I pull the arm or the axe from his hand and it chopped his head off at once'. But Judge Murray did not believe either Thompson or Goava. He believed Kokorogu, 'doubless as guilty as all the rest', he said, who had been chosen to be government witness. According to him, when the Kuni people refused to sell their plumes, Goava had become angry, had cleared them out of the village and then, when they set off to complain at Kairuku, had followed them with his group, ambushed them and killed them.

Had Murray believed Thompson or Goava Oa he could have convicted the four men of murder or unlawful killing, a practice which, as we have seen, was widely followed, for killing was part of Papuan culture; and the basis of judicial decision in Papua was that it did not in many cases involve the same degree of criminal responsibility in this primitive context as it would have in Queensland. They would then have been liable to life imprisonment or some shorter term. But Judge Murray saw the crime as a particularly cold-blooded and atrocious one; 'I think the worst I have known in Papua'. He convicted Urebo, Vakai, Philippo and Goava Oa — all except Kokorogu, who had turned King's evidence — of wilful murder, for which there was only one sentence: death. As Lieutenant Governor, Murray was unusually depressed and angered by the lamentable case: Goava Oa and Vakai were both mission educated, and Murray, himself a Roman Catholic, set great store by all mission education. Goava had been for nearly twenty years an employee of the government, and Murray set equal store by government service as a civilising agent for natives. If such a man, despite all the training of mission and the influence of government could go back in this way to the savagery of the time before European civilisation, then what hope was there for his policies and how could he justify them to those white residents who believed that mission training and government employment ruined the natives? It was, he wrote soon after in his Annual Report, one of the rebuffs that one must expect in trying to raise a Stone Age people to a higher level.

The event was also an example of the clash of two opposing notions of justice. A few months later, the Kuni kinsmen of the murdered men met
with frightened Delena people in a government-organised peace mission and there expressed both the Papuan notion of justice and the new way of government and mission. Paul, 'big man of the Kuni tribe' began:

I could make all my people rise up and fight you Delenas if I so wished [he declaimed], but I work for the Mission and I will not. For myself, I only wish to kill Koaba [Goava] and Urebo . . .

Laumano, another Kuni delegate, continued:

The fashion in the days of our grandfathers was if one of us was killed by another tribe we killed one of that tribe. Then the two tribes interchanged one pig each and the matter was settled. On this occasion three of our men have been killed, but we have not killed three of yours. So you give us pigs, but we give you nothing in return. Now the peace is made . . .

Murray, informed of all this by the Assistant Resident Magistrate at Kairuku, was told that he would be ‘very pleased to hear that friendly relations exist again between the coastal and mountain people in the Kairuku district’ and he must have been pleased. But at the time he was very angry indeed, for the death sentence was very rarely pronounced by him in cases where Papuans killed village people in a fight.

When Murray got down from the bench and sat in the Executive Council three days after his judgement he may have felt calmer, or other counsels may have prevailed, for though the death sentence on Goava and Urebo was confirmed, that on seventeen year old Vakai and Philippo was commuted — because of their youth — to ten years' imprisonment with hard labour. Five weeks later, the Australian government again insisted that the death sentences be commuted to life imprisonment and saved Goava and Urebo from hanging. Many Europeans believe that, as he closed the Goava Oa file, Judge Murray wrote on it: 'NEVER TO BE RELEASED'.

Of the four who were convicted of murder only Goava Oa and young Vakai Koaba found themselves, by a remarkable stroke of luck, imprisoned at Koke where they were in the daily charge of Ume Hau.

Ume Hau and Goava each traced himself back to a distant relative, a grandfather who came from Bereina, a Mekeo village further west; and though it was not clear what the relationship between these grandfathers was,
each family acknowledged the relationship. Goava expected that his stay in gaol would be a privileged one, because of his relation to the Head Warder, and that it would last for many years but not that it would be ‘life’. As a government interpreter he knew that ‘life’ did not mean a sentence to die in gaol but ‘with good behaviour you be released from prison’ and he expected this for himself as his behaviour was good. He was very gentlemanly to all government officials, quiet, well spoken and helpful to the Gaoler; a trusty though a lifer.

As Goava expected to be released after some years, so he expected that his relative would make life easy for him; that his family from Delena would be able to visit and bring food quite often and that he would be allowed privileges not available to other prisoners. He was disappointed in Ume. In the ordinary daily life of a prisoner at work Goava Oa was able to talk to any of his family who were in Moresby, send messages to others and even see Mea Dai his Motu wife, who had been living in Hanuabada with their son since his arrest. But evidently he expected something more from Ume Hau which he did not get. The two had been friends in their youth and Goava insisted always that they remained friends until the end but many people believed otherwise. Jack Aila, a kinsman, believed this in 1976: ‘Goava was upset by his treatment in gaol. He expected to be treated well by Ume. There was bad feeling between Ume and Goava . . . . Also I have heard that Goava in gaol was trying his luck with Ume’s wife’. Many prisoners noticed that Goava was angry with Ume, that while relations between them were on the surface amiable, underneath trouble was brewing. On one occasion, Ume, who used sometimes to leave the gaol at night (with permission from George Gough) to go fishing with his Pari relations, took a prison rami to make a sail for the fishing canoe. Goava and Vakai, the good prisoners, reported the theft to the Gaoler. Goava’s reputation as a sorcerer was as strong in Koke as it was in his place, among his people. Prisoners and others believed that he got out of gaol at night by magic means to work his mura mura (sorcery) and to visit his wife. In February 1938, when Karo Araua returned to Koke gaol, Goava Oa had already inhabited Badili gaol for about seven years. It was he who had been in charge when Karo and Opa had escaped from the labour line after the Rigo robbery, who had impressed the Acting Gaoler with his capability and suaveness. Karo and Goava were soon seen together. Magewa, the Abau woman, saw and heard from her little room opposite Karo’s, that he and Goava were often talking through the wall though she was not close enough to hear what it was that they were talking about. Gavera Oala, who
slept in Cell 4 with Goava, often heard them too. Although it was forbidden by the Regulations, Goava and Karo were to be seen in the little concrete house outside the gaol fence in Ume’s room or Iava’s. Karo seemed to spend most of his days there and received food from their wives.

When Sisia Henao came paddling round from Pari to bring in the money he met him there humbugging, he thought, pretending to be blind, every time he came to Ume’s house. One Monday morning, Sisia tied up his canoe next to Ume’s at the bottom of the gaol hill and walked up the track to Ume’s place.

‘Auntie, I’m hungry’, he said to Boio. She gave him a shilling and Karo said: ‘You have a shilling? Give it here!’

He took it and looked at it.

‘Alright’, he said, ‘you write your name on it’, and Sisia wrote his name on it and the date. Karo told Sisia that he could go and buy with that money but that it would come back to him.

‘That’s rubbish! I don’t believe you!’ laughed Sisia and took the shilling to the store nearby and bought a B loaf. (At that time a loaf was B shaped, and cost one shilling.) He went back to Ume’s house.

‘Sisia’, called Karo.

‘Yes’.

‘Come here, here is your money’.

Sisia went. He was amazed. There in Karo’s hand was the marked shilling.

Here was a power that everyone wanted. To spend a shilling and have it too. To throw away a shilling and have it come back. But he had a still greater power. Gavera Oala, a prisoner from Elevela, told his friend Keni Heni, who worked for the Public Works Department in Port Moresby, that if he gave Karo 10s., next morning it would be turned into £10. And Sisia too saw for himself that Karo could do that. One day Karo asked him for 1s. and this time he put it in his left palm, blew on it and put it on his head, listened for something and spoke: ‘Yes, that’s right . . . yes’. Then he said to Sisia: ‘Look under the mat’. And Sisia saw there a great number of shillings, several pounds in shillings. ‘Take it’, said Karo, ‘it’s yours’.

Prisoners normally had no money, but warders did; and as soon as Karo arrived he told Iava and the other warders that he knew a trick which would turn a 10s. note into a £10 or even a £20 one. He had done this trick for the warders at Samarai and could do it now for them. Did Iava have any money? Iava didn’t at the time, but Warder Maimai from Daru did, so
Java brought Maimai's £1 note and Karo put it in an empty tin, tore up some pieces of paper, lit a fire under the tin and with an incantation told the hopeful watchers: 'I burn him, make £5 come'. The trick did not work that day. Karo said it was because Maroasa knocked over the tin by accident as he walked along the cell block verandah, and he would do it all again the next day. When Java turned up, however, Karo gave him back his note and kept him dangling, saying he should come back another time.

Goava Oa saw these tricks as valuable assets for his own plans and he promoted Karo's powers. He was finding Ume a very unsatisfactory relation. Some time before Karo Araua had come back to Badili gaol, Gara, a prisoner from Aroma, had been digging a grave at the cemetery, when Goava came up to him.

'Get the bones', Goava reminded Gara; these were the large thigh bones of a Papuan man who had died at the hospital and for whom the grave was being dug. He wanted those bones, he had said, 'to kill the Governor'. Gara did what he wanted and gave the bones to Goava who broke off a small piece and made a parcel of the material he extracted from the bones. But Gara took fright and decided to tell Ume, who reported to Mahon. There was a magisterial enquiry, but nothing happened as a result. Perhaps because neither the Gaoler nor the Magistrate believed that material from a dead man's bones could seriously harm the Lieutenant-Governor, they regarded the whole story as a quarrel between natives. But the story got around among the white population of Port Moresby and it grew into something more like a planned uprising. Two parties of prisoners, it was said, were to advance from the gaol, one heading for Government House, to kill Sir Hubert Murray, the other for the Amalgamated Wireless of Australasia office to destroy the wireless station. Many Europeans, including Judge Gore, believed this, and it made them very suspicious of Goava Oa. And no one would have heard of it at all, if Ume had not reported Goava to Gaoler Mahon.

Goava told Peakau Oa, a Mekeo prisoner and he told Ume Hau, the gambler chronically short of money, that Karo had the power of making money so strong that if you cut his leg with a knife, not blood ran out but coins. Goava and Karo convinced Ume that Karo could double money: make £5 out of 10s. and, even more enticing, convinced him that the spirit, called Jack, who had taught Karo the trick would allow him to teach Ume.

No one knew, though many wanted to learn, the secret of the trick and Karo became the leader of a money cult in Badili gaol as prisoners and warders
alike tried for the powerful money. 'Take this cash box', said Karo to Maroasa, 'keep it and bye and bye, plenty of money will come and fill it up.' So Maroasa buried the tin in the ground under the steps leading to the prisoners' small house and waited. He dug it up after a week but it was not full. He buried it again. Perhaps it needed longer.

Goava Oa and Karo became confederates in the money cult as Goava saw that Karo could be a useful ally in his growing hostility to Ume. Goava, said Beata Evoro, a Nabuapaka man who lived in Ume's house, bound Karo closely to him by giving his sister Puro Oa to Karo to sleep with; a circumstance which put Karo under an everlasting obligation to Goava as his wife's brother. Ume was most anxious to learn the trick which 'Jack' had taught Karo and Karo agreed to teach him, but it needed practice, several sessions of practice, before Ume would be able to call money from the spirit Jack. Karo went to Ume's house on several occasions and each time Beata Evora and his wife were shooed out. Beata heard money dropping on the floor and knew, for he must have been peeping, that the practice involved Ume lying on the floor and closing his eyes. Goava told his cell-mate Gavera Oala that Karo's money trick with Ume was tying Ume's arms and legs and later, money would come.

Towards the last weeks of May, Ume became very angry with Karo. He called Wanga Neva, a prisoner from Rossel Island, and told him a strange story. Wanga Neva was an old inhabitant of Koke, having already served four years of the ten-year sentence he had received for stroking the arm of a white lady in the early hours of the morning at Port Moresby. Ume asked Wanga to come with him and together the Head Warder and the prisoner crossed the causeway to the gaol island where, said Ume, Karo had told him to bury his box with 10s. in it. In front of Wanga Neva, Ume tore away the dead grass, cleared the ground away and revealed a piece of iron, the side of an old stove; but, when he lifted the iron away there was revealed nothing but a hole in the ground. Ume was furious. 'My money box is gone', he cried, 'Karo is humbugging me!' and he ran back to the gaol to find Karo. 'My box is gone! I've lost my 10s.', he accused. 'The box is in your room', said Karo, 'you ask your little girl'. And indeed it was so. Ume was very cross and though he asked Karo how the box had come to be in his room, Karo only laughed. Karo promised again that he would give Ume the power and there were several meetings in the next week, several conversations between Karo, Ume and Goava and between Karo, Ume and Iava. 'No subordinate officer shall unnecessarily converse with a prisoner nor allow any familiarity towards
himself or any other officer, nor shall he on any account speak of his duties, matters of discipline or of his own private affairs within the hearing of prisoners' whispered No. 74 of the Prison Regulations.

Someone, probably Ume, reported to the Gaoler that Iava was entertaining prisoners in his house and George Gough came down to the cement house to confront the Sanitary Warder with the allegation. Iava denied that he had known anything about it and blamed his wife. He had not even been at home at the time, he said. 'You tell your wife', Gough said sternly, 'not to bring any more prisoners to the house. Tell her next time she calls prisoners to the house there will be trouble'. But Karo continued to spend his days in the cement house despite George Gough's warning, and Head Sanitary Warder Iava, who chafed under Ume's rule and hankered after the job of Head Warder, was often seen with Karo towards the end of May.

In the first week of June, Ume told his kinsman Beata Evora that as he was about to work at night, it would not be convenient for him to have Beata and his wife sleeping at his house. So Beata and his wife were sent away. Karo told Sisia, when he arrived with Ume's trade store money, not to come in next week on the usual day, but to come several days later. On Friday, June 3, two prisoners on duty in the prisoners' kitchen, saw Ume leading Karo out of his house and along the gaol fence up towards the cell block. Karo was wearing his dark glasses and feeling his way with a stick while Ume held him by the other arm. Ume led Karo past the kitchen door and on to the cell verandah.

On the afternoon of Saturday June 4, Karo, Goava and Iava had a meeting in Iava's side of the concrete house. Saturday afternoons were free of work and prisoners were always wandering about the gaol compound. Many people saw this meeting and though no one heard the words, it seemed clear that they were exchanging weighty matters. Next day, the first Sunday of the month, was officially visitors' day, when the Regulations provided that every prisoner who had been in gaol for three months was allowed one visit of half an hour.

In fact every Sunday was visiting day, and after the visitors got permission from the Head Warder, the prisoners were allowed to come out of the gate on to the space between the gaol compound and the Gaoler's house to meet their visitors and talk and eat the food they had brought, under the eye of a warder. On this Sunday, prisoners sitting about or washing their rami saw Karo, Goava and Iava outside the warders' kitchen in deep conversation. Ume was very angry that Sunday morning because he had lost £1.2s.0d and
thought Karo had taken it. 'Karo is humbugging me', he told his household that day.

Monday morning, June 6, began like any other dry season day in Port Moresby, cool, clear and beautiful. At Koke, where the gaol was waking up, it was particularly beautiful for the water all around was so glassy and pale in the early light, the moist air so soft and still, the islands with their white sand so clear, the sunlight not yet the searing dazzle it would become later. The cells were opened by Ume with his keys. For Cell 5 he had two keys on one ring, one big key to open the padlock on the big outside door like the key for the padlock on each of the ten cells and one small key to open the spring lock on each of the four doors inside Cell 5. The prisoners lined up and were called by George Gough, then went to their breakfast of wheatmeal damper and tea and to work. Goava Oa did not go to work that day, pleading a fever, but stayed in the gaol compound all day, sitting under the coconut trees and making a small canoe for a government official's son. Karo, who never went to work, made his way to the Head Warder's house as soon as it was clear where, as usual, Magewa was spending her day. On this Monday, Magewa heard talk between Ume and Karo which frightened her.

That afternoon Goava called lava over to him. 'When the sanitary boys go, I want you to come back and I'll tell you something', he said quietly. At 6 o'clock on Monday evening, George Gough carried out his evening roll call, marked all the prisoners present and inspected all the cell locks after the doors were closed; but he did not count the keys on the two bunches, Ume's and his own. Then he walked up the hill to his own quarters, his work over for the day.

At about 8 o'clock that night Ume Hau made a visit to the cell block and committed almost every offence specified in the Regulations. He walked along the verandah and with his keys unlocked the padlock on the door of Cell 5 and then the door to Karo's room and went in. Karo got up from his woven mat on the floor where he had been resting and the two talked together; then Karo and Goava talked through the wall of their adjoining cells. Tonight, Ume thought he would grasp the money knowledge. Tonight Karo, after all the practices and all the humbugging, was to teach him the trick he had learnt from Jack and give him the power to make money.

After their talk Ume left Karo's cell, pulling the door behind him but not pulling it right to, and locking the padlock on the big door of Cell 5. Some hours later Karo pushed open his door, opened the padlock with the key, putting his hand through the hole in the door, and padded softly along
the verandah and out of sight of the cell block into the warm night.

Very early in the morning, when the moon was pointing to the west and before the sanitary boys had been woken, Karo came back along the verandah, unlocked the cell door, locked it again behind him, pushed the key through the hole so that it rang on the wooden verandah, let himself into his room and shut the spring lock behind him. He made water in his bucket, talked to Goava through the wall of the cell, lay down on the floor and, drawing his blanket around him, went to sleep on his mat.

Magewa, the Abau woman, already frightened by what she had heard during the day, sat sleepless and even more frightened. She had heard and seen all that had gone on in the cell opposite. The occupants of Cell 4 were wakeful too. Keni Heni heard a sound as of money dropping and woke his Motu cell-mate Gavera Oala. Goava, already awake, told him of a dream he had had that night, a dream of a fight in which three of his people died. At half past two in the morning the Head Sanitary Warder arrived at the cell block to light the lamp and waken the sanitary line for their morning's round. Goava waited until the sanitary boys in Cell 3 had gone, then hissed quietly to Iava, who moved to Cell 4 and put his ear against the wall listening for Goava's message, as Goava had asked him to do that afternoon.

The day began officially at 6 o'clock — except for the sanitary line — but for many others in Badili gaol it had long begun. The Acting-Gaoler came down from his house up the hill, took in the beauty of the day and took in also the fact that the gates of the compound were still shut. He saw Warder Maimai on the gaol verandah and called to him: 'Where's the sergeant major?' But Maimai couldn't tell him so Gough went down to Ume's house. There was no one at all on Ume's side of the house. Gough gave his own keys to Warder Maimai, who walked to the cell block to let the prisoners out. He opened Cells 1, 2, 3 and 4. Goava, Keni Heni, Oala and Vakai went out, then he came to Cell 5. He tried one key after another from the unfamiliar bunch but none would work and he was about to go back to Taubada when he saw a key lying on the verandah. When he picked it up it fitted the padlock and he opened Cell 5. Warder Maimai did not mention this find to Mr Gough; a cell key on the verandah was perhaps not so unusual or perhaps Warder Maimai did not want to cause any trouble to the Head Warder, or perhaps he did not want to get mixed up in any trouble himself. No one knows. But, for whatever reason, he did not report it to the Gaoler when he took the keys back.

The sleepless Magewa left her little room in Cell 5 and went, worried, to the morning's washing. Karo, before he left his room, called to a prisoner:
'Peakau, you take this knife and give it to the kitchen boys'. Peakau didn't want to. 'What for you bring this knife here?' he whispered. But all Karo did was to repeat more strongly his demand: 'You take it and give it to the kitchen boys'. Goava, coming by, took Karo by the arm and led him along to the bathroom.

When the prisoners had finished breakfast, Gough ordered them locked back into their cells while all the warders searched for Ume; for Gough, who had already rung his brother Tom, thought Ume may have taken his family to Pari while he spent the night fishing with Pari men and been wrecked. He sent the prison car with the half-caste driver to enquire at the village.

Tom Gough and Sergeant Bagita arrived at the gaol and Tom Gough took charge of the investigations, sending the Armed Constables to Pari, up to the Laloki gardens and ten miles by road around to Bootless Bay in case anyone had heard of them or caught sight of a wrecked canoe. But though the search continued all day Tuesday, though policemen were back and forward from the gaol to Pari the whole day, there was neither sight nor word of the Ume family either there or at the gaol gardens or at Konebada, places where Ume might have gone for a night's gambling. People in Pari assumed that they were in their gaol quarters and no one had seen anything of them at the other places. The warders and police returned without news.

Magewa was put in charge of Warder Aipini's wife since her 'mother and father' were missing and next day the warder's wife came to Gough with the news that Magewa was refusing food and crying all the time. George Gough, a kind man, went to see her in the Head Warder's house and found the poor woman in great distress. 'Oh, they die, they die', she moaned. 'Ume's wife?' asked Gough. 'Yes, they die, they die?' 'Ume?' asked Gough. And the *pikanini*? 'Yes!' cried Magewa, 'they die, they die!'. But she would say no more, only kept repeating: 'They die, they die!'.

On Wednesday June 8 the search continued. The disappearance of a warder was a very serious matter and Lieutenant-Governor Murray was beginning to ask difficult questions. George Gough was worried as he sat down for his evening meal just before dark. Vakai Koaba, who was on kitchen duty in the Gaoler's house, saw him start and call out. Over at the island, Vakai could see, there was a light shining! A torch, and Vakai saw it flash three times. Gough remembers only that as he sat down to his tea he suddenly thought: 'The island! Why didn't I think of the island?'. Vakai said later that he thought the light was maybe Ume's spirit shining the torch because his body had not been found. Maybe, he thought, it was Ume's
spirit who led Mr Gough to the island.

Gough called Vakai to get the warders and himself strode across the stone causeway, the two warders followed behind. As he approached the lower buildings there was a dreadful stench, and horror tightened his belly as he reached the men's gaol at the top of the hill and saw Ume. It was a dreadful sight; Ume was lying on his back, his face and hair covered with blood and his throat cut from ear to ear. George Gough, his hair standing on end for the first time in his life, turned and ran. Ran down the hill to the warders and Vakai who were following him, and they all ran back to the gaol, the warders to tell the prisoners that Ume had been found dead by small Gough, and Gough to his office from where he rang his brother with the grisly news. It was about 8 o'clock that Wednesday evening when Tom Gough drove up to the gaol with S.H. Chance, the Assistant Resident Magistrate of the Central Division. Following in his own car was Dr Williams and about half an hour and a whisky or two later all three crossed to the island with a police detachment from Headquarters.

Immediately assaulted and revolted by the smell of dead flesh, they made first for the lower buildings. As the door of the women's prison was open, they flashed a torch inside and saw, lying on her back, little Igua Ume in her print dress and bloomers, her head back and a large gash across her throat; she was lying in a pool of her own blood. While Dr Williams examined the body, Chance walked on and in the eight-foot square kitchen found her mother Boio Vagi. She was lying face down and there was blood everywhere. When they turned her over, they found that she too had a gash right across her throat. It appeared that Ume and Igua had died without a struggle, lying quietly on their backs; only Boio, her left arm clinging to a cement post and blood splashed everywhere, had struggled while being murdered. Tom Gough set a guard of police on the three buildings and the three Europeans left the island for the Gaoler's residence and some more stiff whiskies.

The next day, Thursday, after the three dead had been photographed, prisoners put the rapidly decomposing bodies on to stretchers and brought them over the causeway to the spot where Ume's canoe was moored. Boio and Igua were loaded on it and taken by their own people to Pari where they were buried. Ume was buried by prisoners at the cemetery close by the gaol at Posigana, where town Papuans were laid. Europeans were buried together in a special cemetery at Konedobu together with a few South Seas missionaries, in a separate fenced-off plot.
Tom Gough and Bagita took over the investigations and George Gough helped. Tom Gough began by searching Ume's quarters and there found three knives, one a home-made sheath knife. George Gough with twenty police combed the island and found a string bag containing a serviette, a piece of rope and a warder's sash; Sergeant Bagita started by questioning the prisoners. All were lined up and Gavera Oala and Arua Kekehe, whose rami bore suspicious red stains, were locked away in the small cells, handcuffed and leg-chained. As well as the prisoners who later gave evidence, everyone who was likely to know anything was questioned hard. Beata Evore, because he had been living in Ume's house, was asked many questions and revealed that Ume's principal visitor had been Karo and that he, Beata, had been sent away from the house not long before the murder. Sisia Henao from Pari said in 1977 that, when questioned, he revealed that before the murder, Karo had spoken to him thus, in Ume's house:

Tomorrow . . . I will give Ume the power . . . Tomorrow night at half past 11. I will give Ume the power. This handkerchief I will use to blindfold him. I will use this rope to bind him from top to bottom. This bottle will contain some water for him to drink; this handbag will be filled with money. After blindfolding him and telling him, I will pray to the trick man. Money will fall from the top and will cover the whole floor, the handbag will be filled and Ume will receive the power.

Sisia said nothing during the search for Ume and his family but now that the bodies had been found he and others started to talk. He was offered a reward, he recollected, but in fact had received nothing. Gavera Oala and Arua Kekehe were released from their chains when their story — that the red stains were from the tree which they had cut to make a small canoe for Mr O'Malley's son — was checked and found to be true.

Bagita spent these days talking to the prisoners, asking his questions, talking, talking. Tom Gough set off by sea to Yule Island to ask around among Goava's people; for Goava and Vakai, already in gaol for the murder of the Kuni people, were suspect. While there, he heard that Oa Aitsi and Puro Oa — Goava's father and sister — had gone up to Koke for a feast, at which Goava had been present, and Gough suspected that the feast may have had something to do with the murder. On his return he confronted Goava with it, and though Goava denied it, he had him taken out of Cell 4 and put
into one of the separate rooms in Cell 5. At the same time he had a close
watch kept on Goava’s father and sister. Between Friday and Sunday, those
in the gaol who knew what had been going on between Karo, Goava and Ume
began to get uneasy. They were all very frightened of the power of the
government, frightened also of Goava Oa and his sorcery. Constant question­
ing produced little bits of information. Prisoners were offered a reduction
of their sentences in return for evidence. Sergeant Bagita would say: ‘If you
listen to me, government will look your way, if you tell me lies, you will get
into big trouble’. ‘Lau gare, lau gare momo’, the prisoners said to Tom
Gough, meaning they were very frightened. One prisoner named another:
‘He can tell you, ask him!’. Someone would say a bit to Bagita and when
asked by Gough: ‘Why didn’t you tell us this before?’ would reply: ‘No! Lau
gare’ and the police tried to convince the prisoners that there would be ‘no
trouble to you, just make true talk in court. That’s all we want you to do’.

The prisoners buzzed among themselves with talk of the murder. Magewa talked to Embogi and to Goava; Iava talked to other prisoners. Iava and Goava were clearly mixed up with Karo and Ume. So many people
had seen Karo and Goava in the little cement house that it could not long
be a secret from Bagita and Tom Gough. Karo’s tricks and Ume’s greed
were known too; the only question was how much everyone was implicated
in the tricking and whether the tricking was connected with the murder. But
neither police nor Gaoler yet knew anything of the tricks.

On Sunday, Bagita’s persistent questioning produced an important lead
which sent Tom Gough out to the gaol gardens there to interview Wanga
Neva. Later the prisoners sitting on the verandah or in the grounds of the
Badili gaol compound saw Tom Gough, with Wanga Neva by his side, drive
in through the gate, and Iava, who must have been shaking in his warder’s
uniform, brought the news to Karo. Tom Gough collected his brother and
the three men with their police made for the island. Wanga led the two
Goughs to the European gaol, to the verandah steps under which Ume had
been killed, and under the same steps he dug away weeds and ground to
reveal again the iron slab, the end of an old stove. He lifted the slab and
there was a box about twelve inches square. So the police and the Gaoler
learnt about Karo and Ume and the money tricks.

While Wanga was digging up the box, Tom Gough, happening to look
down towards the gaol, noticed that half a dozen prisoners were watching
him from behind the kitchen. He hid himself from sight behind the European
gaol and saw a prisoner climbing down the stone wall to the rocks below on
the sea shore and saw him throw something white into the sea, then climb back from the rocks and walk to the group behind the kitchen. The three men left the island, Wanga carrying the box, and went back to the gaol office. Then Tom Gough decided to see what it was that the prisoner had thrown away and as they were walking back towards the gaol a prisoner dashed at great speed from the back of the cell block towards the kitchen. Calling to his brother to head him off, Tom Gough ran past the kitchen and the prisoner, Kaipai, ran into his arms. Kaiapi led Gough to the rocks, for it was he who had been seen, and retrieved what he had thrown; five strips of white calico stained with partly washed out blood.

Now several prisoners came forward with pieces of information. Magewa looked for a warder because she wanted to talk to him, Peakau, Embogi, Maroasa and Warder Maimai gave information. So too did Sanitary Warder Iava. During this week of investigations it had become clear to the Gaoler that Ume and Iava, the Sergeant and the second senior warder, had been mixed up in many illegal activities inside the gaol. Two days after the bodies of Ume and his family had been found, the Government Secretary ordered George Gough to dismiss Iava. Gough would have had him charged had it been in his power, but it was the Crown Law Officer who had to decide whom to charge and what the charge would be, and he had a different role for Iava.

On that Sunday afternoon, with a story constructed from all the prisoners they had questioned, Tom Gough, George Gough and Sergeant Bagita went down to see Karo Araua on the gaol verandah where he was sitting in the setting sun. Confronted with statements from Wanga, from Magewa and from other prisoners, he listened. Shown the strips of *rami* and asked if they were his, he denied it. Tom Gough told him that Iava had said that he had very often seen Karo and Goava chatting together during May and early June and that he had heard them talk of killing Ume. Tom Gough charged Karo with the murder of Ume and explained that he need say nothing now about it until his trial. Sergeant Bagita recollected thirty-four years later that it was to him that Karo had first confessed like this:

‘Good day Karo, how are you?’.
‘I am all right’, he replied. I went and sat near him.
‘Karo, can you hear me? If you listen to me, government will look your way, if you tell lies you will get into big trouble’.

He thought for a while then at last he said in a quiet apologetic voice,
Yes *nakimi* (brother-in-law) I killed Ume and his family because Goava told me.

‘All right! Leave it there’, I said to him. I went right out and called to the brothers Corphy (Gough), ‘Taubada George Corphy and Tom Corphy, come inside!’

Both of them came inside. George Corphy sat on Karo’s right hand while Tom Corphy sat on his left.

‘Taubada, the Karo he speak Ingilis, he understand Ingilis very well. I found out from him. I found out the trouble. Now you write down what he says, I am not a reporter’.

Unwilling to wait for the trial, Karo told his story:

‘Koava pushed me, pushed me, pushed me and make me do all this trouble. Koava talk me all the time about he want to kill Ume. He talk to me and my head he go round...’

Four days later, again on the gaol verandah, the same three interviewed Goava Oa and Tom Gough charged him also with the murder of Ume, repeating his advice about the trial. Goava Oa said nothing.
Karo’s last trial in the white men’s court was to be his most spectacular; and by the time it ended his name was as well known among white men as it was among his own people. His doings were reported over three weeks on the front page of the *Papuan Courier* under the rivetting headlines: Badili Murder: Magic and Money.

The trial was remarkable in many ways. The crime was grisly; the defendants were the most notorious Papuans to come before the court; and it was the first time that a defence counsel had appeared for a Papuan in a criminal case. Even more remarkable, both defendants conducted their own cross-examination of Papuan witnesses and of the powerful white men; a feat which even forty years on was almost unheard of. There were actually two trials: one in the Magistrate’s court, the other in the Central Court.

The preliminary hearing of evidence against Karo Araua and Goava Oa before the Resident Magistrate of the Central Division, R. A. Woodward, was set down for June 20, 1938. It was exactly one week after Bagita and the two Goughs had listened to Karo’s confession on the gaol verandah. The charge against both defendants was the wilful murder of Ume Hau, who was described as an Armed Constable. Boio Vagi and Igua Ume were not mentioned since the Queensland Criminal Code allowed that a person charged with wilful murder could be charged with only one offence at a time; and it was the practice of the Crown Law Officer to begin with the charge for which evidence against the defendant seemed strongest. Judge R. T. Gore would hear the second trial in the Central Court. Sir Hubert Murray, then seventy years old, who was due to sail away on circuit before the Central Court trial, wrote to his children a day or so before the preliminary hearing. It was, he wrote to his daughter Mary, ‘the worst murder I have known since I have been here... It is a fantastic yarn, and I do not think it can be altogether true’. And to his son, Patrick he added: ‘I shall not have to try the case, Thank God!’

On the morning of the first trial the two prisoners, handcuffed to two
warders, motored in the prison’s 1928 Ford, driven by George Gough, to the
city. Tom Gough met them there, the handcuffs were
removed for the hearing and a group photograph was taken which shows the
policeman and gaoler in the usual white drill suits, the warders in their blue
serge uniforms and the prisoners wearing *rami*: one small, the other taller; fit
muscular young Papuans wearing also that resentful expression that tempts
us to think — especially if we have never been so photographed — that there
must, after all, be something in the belief that you can tell a person is guilty
by looking at his face. Karo’s dark glasses are gone, never to be worn again.
After the photographs, they waited to be called into the room which served
as the Court of Petty Sessions.

Already assembled was an imposing group of white-suited white men,
more men and more imposing than in any of Karo’s previous ‘courtings.’ The
Resident Magistrate of the Central Division, R. A. Woodward; the Crown Law
Officer, E. B. Bignold, another large man; and R. D. Bertie who had been
briefed by the Crown as defence counsel for Goava Oa, for whom a plea of
Not Guilty had been entered. Described by Judge Gore in his memoirs as ‘a
tall, spare man with a big head’, Bertie, ‘a good lawyer with rather ponderous
skill’ who, Gore remarked was ‘dilatory and forever behindhand’ in preparing
his documents for filing, was defending his first Papuan. ‘There were two
lawyers’, Vakai Koaba recalled in 1974. ‘Koava’s lawyer was Mr Bertie. Mr
Bertie was the lawyer of us Motu people. Government lawyer was Mr Bignold.
Karo and Koava’s lawyer was Mr Bertie who looked after Papuan people’.
Karo, who had pleaded Guilty, would have no defence counsel.

Tom Gough, the European Constable, was called first. Tall, stern and
steel-rimmed, he gave a chronicle of the events of the morning of June 7 from
the time he had been rung by his brother to report that Head Warder Ume
and his family were not in the gaol. He described the search that day, the
drives to Pari, to Laloki, down to Bootless bay, the enquiries round the town
and then in the gruesome flatness of police prose, he came to the discovery
of the bodies on the gaol island: ‘The head of the girl was slightly back,
causing the wound to remain open. The right hand was resting on her breast,
and the left arm slightly bent, lying away from the body, legs wide apart, the
left slightly doubled . . .’ The little girl had been found lying on a towel
saturated with her own blood; the towel, produced and tendered as Exhibit A,
was removed again after the Crown Law Officer asked permission for it to be
taken out of the Court. Boio Vagi had been lying on her face on an old
native mat in pools of dried blood, her black dress and red petticoat forming
8. Before the first murder trial. *(From left to right)* George Gough, Goava Oa, Tom Gough and Karo Araua pose with two armed constables and two warders. George Gough could not remember the name of the warders and police, nor the name of the person who took the photo.

After the trials, Goava Oa was sent to the gaol on Samarai island where he stayed until World War II, when the prisoners were let out and left to their own devices. Goava stayed with the Australians and worked throughout the war with Australian soldiers. After the war, he was again imprisoned and sent to Daru island where, as James Goava, he was a well known figure, working as a plumber and keeping the Europeans on the island supplied with vegetables which he grew. He and his son, Sinake Goava, carried out a campaign of letters and pleas to administration officials, to the Australian government and to the Queen for his release; a campaign which was supported by several members of the post-war administration but opposed by those who had been in pre-war Papua. Finally, in 1963, the Australian government ordered his release. He had been in gaol for thirty-three years; the longest prison sentence in Papua New Guinea. Goava Oa died in Port Moresby, soon after giving a long interview on the National Broadcasting station in 1976.
a hellish scene and her left arm around a cement post with the blood splashes of her fruitless struggle all around her. No one had bothered to discover whether Boio Vagi or Igua Ume had been sexually assaulted. It would certainly have been a subject of investigation had they been white females, especially as there were signs of struggle around Boio. Many Papuans believed that both mother and daughter had been so assaulted. Lastly, Gough told of finding the Warder Ume lying cross-wise under the steps leading to the European gaol verandah; his left leg resting on one of the steps, his face and hair covered with blood. About two feet away, on a cement post, were a number of blood stains, as if of a person wiping his hands on the post. When Tom Gough saw Ume, he said, his arms and legs were free; later he found, close by, a rope five feet long and stained with blood.

After the awful account, he listed the people from whom he had taken statements and who would be his witnesses: eight prisoners and two warders, of whom one would be Head Sanitary Warder Iava. Tom Gough described the events on the gaol verandah and the talk between Karo and the three who had interviewed him. Then, standing tall in the court, he began to read in his Queensland policeman’s voice, the Papuan pidgin of Karo’s confession:

‘Koava pushed me, pushed me, pushed me and make me do all this trouble. Koava talk me all the time about he want to kill Ume. He talk to me and my head he go round’ he began.

Then Karo explained when and why Goava had pushed him:

‘He start make all this talk in March, Koava said ‘me wild at Ume, he make trouble with me. I want to kill him’. I said ‘Alright, I’m not wild at Ume, you kill him yourself’.

But Goava kept at him, flattered him and used him by telling Ume all about his powers until he agreed to be part of it on Goava’s behalf. He had, himself, no argument with Ume.

All that time Koava talk to me in the cell at night about this. Koava make humbug along me. He tell Ume I am very strong man. I got mura mura to get plenty money. Koava tell suppose Ume come and ask you about this you say yes. Koava tell Ume ‘Suppose you stick knife along Karo’s leg no blood come out, but plenty of money’. Ume come
ask me this and I said ‘Yes, true talk! Ume pat me on the back and said, ‘My word, Karo, you very strong man’.

Goava thought first of a sorcerer’s way, of poison:

Koava and Iava and me we have meetings in Iava’s room. Koava said ‘My sister, my father bring medicine from my village and we try him first on the Governor’. On Saturday we had meeting in Iava’s room. Koava say ‘I’m tired waiting, more better we get knife’. ‘I call my father, my sister, all my friends come to Port Moresby. More better we do this’. Sunday another meeting we hold in Iava’s room and afternoon time Koava and Iava take Ume’s knife and sharpen it with a file near the warders’ bathroom. Koava then put the knife under storeroom and on Monday put it into his blanket and took it into the cell. Monday night he gave me the knife by pushing it through the wall. Eight o’clock Ume came to my room and had talk to me. When he went out he gave me the key and left the doors open. Twelve o’clock Koava talk to me and say ‘Your kill ’em all one time. No good you kill Ume when you leave Boyo and Igua’. Spose you do this they will tell Government. Spose you kill ’em all Government think outside boy do this’. I said to Koava ‘Alright, I kill Ume, but I not like kill Boyo and Igua’.

He faltered. But Goava taunted him with lack of strength:

Koava say, ‘Spose you no kill ’em, I laugh at you, I say you not strong’. I went out then to Ume’s room. Ume, Boyo, Igua and me we walk along to the island. Boyo and Igua he wait along room at bottom. Ume and me we go on top. Ume was carrying a small handbag with rope in it. I took the rope from the handbag, cut it. I tied Ume’s legs to the steps, then I tie his hands to the steps. Then I walk away a little and I think. Then I think Koava say ‘Cut him neck quick time and he no call out’. I cut his neck with the knife’.

And he demonstrated to the court how he did it by drawing an imaginary knife across his own throat.

The blood came all over my hands and legs. His wind soon stopped and he died. I washed my hands at the tank tap. I took the rope off
his hands and threw it into the grass, off his legs and put it into the handbag. Then I went down to the house where Boyo and Igua stop. They were sitting on the floor. I called ‘Boyo you come here’. I took her to the small room and said ‘You sit down here’ she sat down, I catch her by the hair, pull her head back with my knife and I cut her neck. I pushed her to the ground and held her till the wind stopped. Then I went into the room where little girl stop. When I see her I feel very sorry. I no want to kill her. She say to me ‘Where is my Mummy? and I said ‘Behind she come’. I think and I think and then I think a little more before I kill her, no good to leave her behind she will tell Government. I catch him by the hair pull the head back and I cut her neck. She have a towel on I put her on the floor on towel. Plenty blood come long my arms and body and legs all same rain. I hold her a little bit, her wind stopped and she died. Then I go back along stone wall and I have a wash in saltwater. Then I go back along my cell. Koava he wait for me, he is not asleep. He said to me ‘You do him’ and I said ‘Yes he all finished’ and he said ‘Namo herea’ Thank you. He put his fingers through the wall and shake hands with me. I wait a little bit I see sanitary warder Iava open cell and behind I hear Koava make a noise ss-ss-ss. Sanitary warder Iava come and talk to Koava. Next morning half past six Koava take me along warders’ bathroom, get hot water, and wash my body. I did not want to do this only Koava all the time he pushed me.

So there was his story. Yes, he had killed the three; reluctantly in the case of the woman and child, but it had been Goava who urged him, and it was in Goava’s interest. So Goava was guilty too, though he had not wielded the knife.

The Shakespearean scene of Goava, like Lady Macbeth, pushing Macbeth-Karo to the murder became even more dramatic in the years after the deed as Papuan poets supplied their own words to describe what had happened between the woman, her small daughter and Karo who came down the hill towards them with his hidden knife. ‘Come’, one Papuan’s version of the story had Karo say to Boio, ‘your husband has learnt the trick, he’s receiving a lot of money so you must come and have some’. Another, more elaborate, included Goava in the scene:

Then Goava brought along Ume’s wife and handed her over to Karo.
‘Where’s my husband’ she asked? ‘I have given your husband magic power’ replied Karo. ‘He’s gone to Australia to bring back money for you. He’ll be coming shortly. Sit down and bend your head. Your husband is on the way here, so be happy. If I may say so, how about making us happy as our rewards? ‘Yes’ replied the woman, ‘I’ll give you your reward. It will be best if one of you goes to my daughter while the other has me’.

But none of this appeared in court, only the words as Tom Gough read them.

The devastatingly frank confession caused some comment; the Crown Law Officer wanted to know how it had been extracted. Had it been by force or fraud? No, said Tom Gough, who insisted that he warned Karo, after he had admitted to killing Ume, that he need say no more but could keep everything else for the trial.

Why did Karo confess? Judge Murray had noticed much earlier than this the tendency of Papuans to confess even eagerly to their crimes; and in 1952, Murray Groves, writing in the *Australian Law Journal* after working as an Associate to Judge Gore, noticed a similar thing. Both attributed it to naivety, an imperfect understanding of the workings of the government’s law. Once Karo had seen from Tom Gough’s information that he was caught, then he confessed, making sure that Goava got his share of the blame. After the confession and Tom Gough’s explanation, the case in the lower court was adjourned. The witnesses and defendants were marched together back into the police station and from there, under escort, Karo and Goava returned to Koke, both now in single rooms in Cell 5.

Next day, Tom Gough again took the witness stand. He described how he had searched Ume’s room and found three knives, one of which he had shown to Karo who recognised it and admitted that it was the one he had asked Peakau to dispose of on the morning of Ume’s disappearance. Tom Gough summarised the Crown case: Karo had killed all three with Ume’s knife, which had been taken and sharpened by Goava, a killing which was planned and plotted by the two of them together. When Gough had finished, the Resident Magistrate asked Karo whether he wanted to ask questions:

‘No I don’t want to ask anything, Mr Gough he talk alright’, replied Karo.

Goava Oa, less naive and advised by defence counsel, did have questions
to ask of Tom Gough. Their aim was to show that he had nothing to do with the murders; that Karo was simply trying to drag him into it in the hope of a lighter sentence, or from sheer malice. He tried to establish that he and Karo could not have been accomplices since they were not friends.

Then Goava questioned Gough about when it was that he had begun to suspect him; had he thought him involved from the beginning of his enquiries, or when? If the purpose of this question is not clear from the newspaper report (which is the source of the cross-examination), its significance is sparkling: Goava was the first Papuan ever to stand up in a white man's court to ask such questions of a white man.

What was the day that you first heard about Karo and me killing Ume? I completed the enquiries on Wednesday and Thursday which led me to believe that you and Karo murdered Ume, Boyo and Igua.

The Crown Prosecutor did not think this was sufficient answer, and asked.

What was the first moment in your enquiries when your attention was drawn towards Goava as being possibly implicated in the crime?

And Tom Gough was forced to be more specific:

So far as I can remember, Monday 13th.

If Goava's questioning, albeit with a lawyer at his elbow, seems a small achievement, it is because we have forgotten what was available to Papuans in 1938. One or two captained coastal vessels, two or three collected taxes, distributed the family bonus and sent in reports to the government; mission pastors, priests and teachers and thirty odd Native Medical Assistants, Sydney trained, these were the most intellectually demanding occupations which they had so far reached until, in December 1937, Louis Vangeke, a Mekeo man, neighbour of Goava Oa's people, landed in Port Moresby from Madagascar where he had trained for the priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church. He spoke French, English and Latin, and his arrival caused Sir Hubert Murray in the 1937-38 Annual Report to consider the question of higher education for Papuans. 'If a Papuan can qualify for the priesthood', he wrote, 'there is no reason to suppose that another Papuan could not qualify for medicine or law'. Karo and Goava, convicted criminals, were the first to show that it could indeed be done.
Since Karo had convicted himself with his confession, the two trials were in effect trials of Goava Oa, but they are important in Karo's life because they revealed the difference in sophistication between Karo and Goava Oa; because of the cross-examination of witnesses by the two accused and because of the torch that they shone on Papuan prison life. The only questions to be decided by the Resident Magistrate in the first trial were whether there was a case of wilful murder against both men; whether the Crown Prosecutor's case against them would stand up. Goava's defence was to destroy that part of Karo's confession which involved him: to show that as Karo's blindness was a pretence, so his word was not to be trusted; to show that Karo had a motive for the murder while he did not, and to discredit the Crown witnesses.

When his brother had given his evidence, Acting Gaoler George Gough, the unfortunate gardener, took the stand, tendered a plan of the gaol which showed where everyone was kept and gave evidence about the events since the night of the murder. However important his part in bringing Karo to book may have been, Sergeant Bagita was given a very small role in the trial: he said that he had been with Tom and George Gough to interview Karo and gave corroborative evidence for Tom Gough, 'although told in his own pidgin', and that was that. Dr Williams gave his medical evidence and then Iava took the stand.

Tall, pale-skinned and sad looking, Iava, stripped of his Sergeant's stripes, still called himself the Head Sanitary Warder of Badili gaol, though he was so no longer. He had been thoroughly implicated by Karo in his confession as one of the three who met and plotted Ume’s death, but he had turned from a plotter to an informer and was now, as his wife put it in 1978, 'Mr Gough's witness'. Though he supported Karo's account of the plot against Ume (which was also the Crown's account) he tried to write himself out of the plot.

He gave evidence of Goava's sorcery. He said that Goava had come up to him at the sanitary depot one morning asking for a bottle and later, when he got back to gaol, he had accosted Goava: 'Goava, you and Karo do something?' he had asked. Karo had told him that they were waiting for Goava's sister to bring another mura mura for the bottle and with this, they would kill first a prisoner, then Ume and finally the Governor. This plan had been abandoned later, and Goava had decided on the knife. Then, Iava went on, addressing Goava: 'Sunday afternoon you sharpen knife', so anxious to put
Goava into the position of organiser and to keep himself out of it that his account was most confused. Who sharpened the knife?

I saw Goava take the knife and give it to Karo. They take a file from the gaol store and sharpen it near the warders' bathroom. This is Sunday.

Iava was trying his incompetent best to make his story fit the one that Karo and Tom Gough had told. He gave evidence that on Monday June 6 Goava spoke to him in the gaol compound where he was off work and said: 'When sanitary boys go I want you to come back and I tell you something'. So he knew, before it happened, that something was afoot that night. He told the court what it was that Goava had whispered to him when he called him 'ss-ss-ss-' in the early morning:

You go down to the salt water tell my father and sister to go quicktime before daylight . . . Tell him Ume is dead, Boyo is dead, Igua is dead.

Karo did not cross-examine Iava. He had no interest in contesting this evidence and, without counsel, no way of using cross-examination to help his case. Goava had both, and his cross-examination was aimed as showing that Iava knew exactly what was going on in the gaol; knew that Karo was not blind and, as a friend of Karo, would lie about anything to help him. Goava never suggested that Iava or the later witnesses whose stories he disputed might be telling lies because Tom Gough had bought their evidence by offers of remission or other inducements. Evidently to Goava or his lawyer, Tom Gough was above suspicion.

Iava, under cross-examination, denied that he and Karo were great friends and insisted that Karo was blind.

Goava then asked the former Head Sanitary Warder these probing questions:

'From the time I said I was going to kill Ume did you tell anybody?'
'No'.
'Did you tell Mr Gough?'
'No'.
'Why didn't you tell Ume? Were you wild with him? Was that why?'

And Iava answered,
'I was too frightened because you made mura mura'.

Several prisoners were later to say the same thing and they sounded convincing. Iava may have been frightened of Goava’s medicine but he was a warder and his duty was to report what the prisoners were up to. Iava was the first to reveal Goava’s power over Papuans.

But Goava kept at him on this, his weakest point. When he had been called over and told that Ume was dead, why had he not reported it?

‘Why didn’t you tell anybody Ume was missing when Mr Gough he look all Tuesday and Wednesday where Ume was?’
‘Because you not tell me where you kill him’, replied the hapless Iava.

He denied everything. He was an unconvincing witness.

In cross-examination all the information about the magic and the money came out and the Crown Law Officer asked for details which revealed much more about the money tricks and about life in the gaol than had ever been made public to Europeans. It was big news for the Papuan Courier.

Wanga Neva, the Rossel Island prisoner who had gone to the island with Ume when he dug up his box, told his story about the missing box which mysteriously appeared in Ume’s room and of Ume’s anger with Karo. He told how he had been at Ume’s house where Karo had tied up Ume’s arms and legs saying: ‘I show you the money puri puri (magic)’. Fraternisation between warders and prisoners had reached such an advanced state that it finished Iava and the other warders who had been involved; there was a general spill after the case.

Both Karo and Goava cross-examined Wanga Neva, whose evidence pointed so clearly to their plotting. It was Karo’s first reported intervention in the case and it was not very successful for all that emerged was even more damning information about Ume’s anger when he went, with Wanga, to the island to collect the money which should have filled his magic box. When Goava cross-examined Wanga he elicited the fact that he and his brother Vakai Koaba had several times eaten food with Ume at his house, which suggested that the dead warder had been on good terms with his relatives Goava and Vakai, though he had been breaking the Prison Regulations. Wanga Neva also said that Ume had been ‘wild’ with Karo on two occasions that he knew of.

Then came Magewa, the stocky dark-skinned young woman with broad
features and large bones who had called Boio and Ume 'mother' and 'father' and was one of the family. When the married warders and their families were posed by George Gough for a group photograph, dressed in their best clothes with sprigs of bougainvillea blossom in their hands, Magewa in her white prison *rami* and skirt was sitting in the front row next to Igua Ume. In the witness box she gave her evidence straight and without hesitation or confusion. She had heard Karo, on the day before the murder, say to Ume and Boio:

'You let me out one time and I show you money trick',

and it was this that had frightened her so much that she could not sleep and therefore was awake to see Ume come into Karo's cell. She saw him give Karo a prison *rami* and then leave Cell 5 without closing the door and later she saw Karo come back, talk to Goava through the cell wall and lie down. She told of Warder Maimai who came to open the door and found the key to Cell 5 on the verandah floor. Her evidence was simple, straightforward hanging evidence. And she was unshakeable.

Again Karo cross-examined, and here, I think, he was trying to show that he and Ume were not enemies, that *he* had no motive himself for killing Ume. Only Goava had the motive. Magewa, in answer to his questions, agreed that she had seen Karo in Ume's house 'sometimes' and she did not know if Karo was wild with Ume. She did know that Ume treated Karo very well and gave him good food.

'Then what for Ume wild long me?' Karo asked her.

'Ume he wild for money', she answered.

Goava tried to undermine that part of Magewa's evidence which implicated him.

'How could you see me' he asked, 'it was dark?'

'I saw you because the moon was shining on that side of the gaol', she answered firmly.

'Could you see the other boys' faces in the cell too?'

'No, they were lying down asleep with their faces turned towards the wall'.
She stuck to her stories and she evidently did not fear Goava’s *puri puri*. Neither Karo nor Goava asked her why she did not report what she had heard. Perhaps it was understood that a prisoner would never report anything until something had happened, and then only when it was clear that no harm would come to him by it. Magewa’s evidence had been very harmful to both accused; she had no motive to lie; she had nothing against either Karo or Goava and came from a place on the east coast far from both. She was by far the best government witness.

Peakau, to whom Karo had handed the murder knife the next morning, was one of several prisoners who had seen and heard all the activity on the night of the murders. He, like others, had heard ‘very often’ meetings between Goava and Karo, he had seen Goava’s sister, Pau Oa and Karo go to Ume’s house on the Saturday before the murder. What they were up to, he could not say, because Goava had told him to ‘Get out!’ It was damaging evidence, but in cross-examination, Peakau revealed himself a prejudiced witness:

‘Did you say I was making sorcery *mura mura*?’
‘Yes I said it. I saw the *mura mura*. You had a row with me because of it’.
‘And you not friend since?’
‘No, I am still wild’.
‘Is this why you want to get me into trouble telling lies?’
‘I say what I know’, replied Peakau, ‘I am not telling lies’.

Peakau had not added anything to connect Goava with the murders, but Maroasa, who next took the stand, did. Maroasa, a prisoner from Kerema in the Gulf, was cleaning out buckets at the sanitary depot one morning when Goava came in and suggested that on one of his night’s rounds he collect a little of the contents of the Governor’s bucket: ‘You should bring me a little bit to kill the Governor’, he urged, ‘and we all finished and go home’. Karo, in his cross-examination produced more: Maroasa had heard Goava say to Karo ‘You kill ‘im quick’; had heard Goava say, ‘First time you kill Ume then I kill ‘im Governor’. He testified that Goava and Ume were not friends, that they were always quarrelling and that he had heard Iava ask Goava: ‘When you going to kill Ume? and Goava’s reply: ‘you wait till Monday or Tuesday, he will finish’. This was by far the hardest evidence that the police had produced against Goava but Maroasa was a man from Kerema who spoke the
same language as Karo. Goava’s cross-examination showed that he was Karo’s man:

‘Was you not the boy to look after him because he was blind?’
he asked. And it was the case:
‘Yes, I was the boy to take him to the small house’.

Goava also extracted in cross-examination the fact that Maroasa was not a friend of his; therefore, Goava suggested, he was lying to incriminate him when he talked of poison. Maroasa, not rattled, repeated in even more stark simplicity, the revelations he had made in his evidence;

‘You are not a friend of mine?’
‘No I am not a friend of yours’.
‘Why I ask you who are not friends of mine to get me this something?’
‘Because you want to kill Governor. You say if no kill Governor we no go home. If kill Governor, we go home’.

The case against Goava built up with every new witness, but the police witnesses, all prisoners, were suspect.

Kaipai, the prisoner to whom Karo had given the blood stained strips of *rami* to throw away, said under cross-examination to Karo that Iava, Goava and Karo had meetings.

‘You want Iava to take Ume’s place that’s why they kill Ume’.
‘Did you hear Iava and Goava tell me to kill Ume?’
‘Yes I hear that’.
‘Do you know how long Goava and Iava been pushing me to kill Ume?’
‘Three months’.

Things were looking worse and worse for Goava, as one police witness after another said his piece.

Kaipai stuck to his story, although both Goava and the Crown Law Officer cross-examined him. When Goava asked him why, if he was always following them around and listening to their talk, he told nobody, he explained:

‘I heard all this talk and nothing happen, when it happen, I talk’.
Day after day, during all this talk, Karo showed the impassiveness which amazed all who had anything to do with him after the murders. But listening to Goava cross-examine Kaipai, he heard him ask:

‘What was Karo’s money trick?’
‘Karo’s money trick’, Kaipai replied, ‘was to put 1s. in a box, when he open box, it was gone, lost’.

At this simple man’s accurate description, Karo Araua bust into convulsions of laughter.

A prisoner, Gara, gave evidence that the knife he had found out of place on the kitchen table on the morning of the murders was the knife he had seen earlier in Karo’s hand when Ume led him to his cell. Three Motu prisoners sharing Cell 4 with Goava gave evidence of a strange premonitory dream which Goava told them of; several other prisoners gave evidence, and gave it readily, having been offered remission of sentence and been assured by the Goughs that there would be ‘no trouble to you’ if they talked.

After all the evidence had been taken, Karo stood up before the bench to make the statement of confession and repeated his story:

‘Goava pushed me, pushed me, pushed me and make me do all this trouble . . . I did not want to do this only Goava all the time he pushed me.

Goava reserved his defence. The case in the lower court had lasted from June 20 to July 6, 1938; never had a case against Papuans lasted so long or involved so many witnesses. Though the evidence of many of the witnesses was contradictory, though Goava had shown that many people believed Karo was not blind, so his word could not be trusted, it was nevertheless also clear that clandestine activities in the gaol had involved four men: Karo, Goava, Ume and Iava. Whether this meant Goava was the instigator of a plot to kill Ume was another matter. Some witnesses agreed with Karo that it had been Goava’s idea to murder Ume. But could they be believed? The Resident Magistrate believed that there was a case against both men and committed them for trial at the Central Court on the charge of wilful murder of Ume Hau. The two men remained in the single rooms of Cell 5 during the eleven days until Monday July 18, when their trial in the Central Court began.

This was Karo’s fifth — and last — appearance in the Central Court, the
bungalow high on Mary Street which looked out both to the harbour and across Ela *kone*. Except for the Judge, the chief characters in this trial were the same: the Crown Prosecutor, E. B. Bignold (later a Judge in that Court); R. D. Bertie, appearing for Goava Oa; the interpreter Kora Gaigo and his son Kabua Kora, the Central Court messenger who, on his father’s death, would inherit his position as interpreter. The hot little court room held perhaps twenty to twenty-five people and interested friends and relations crowded in; sitting on the floor and spilling out on to the verandah.

On the bench sat Judge Gore who had tried Karo Araua in exactly the same place not three years before, after the Rigo robbery. He presided now over Karo’s last trial. The grand, imposing figure in his robe and wig, was no stranger to the small but also imposing Papuan accused standing before him. The prisoners had been brought to the Central Court by policemen, not warders, and the handcuffs which had chained them on their way to the court were removed for the trial; though Sergeant Bagita in his recollections of the trial said that Karo had been brought handcuffed into the court room, with his legs in irons and another recollection has him in court handcuffed and naked.

The Central Court, though the most formal in Papua, was very informal by the standards of its Australian model. The conventional British warning against perjury was conveyed to witnesses in words it was hoped they would understand, often through an interpreter:

‘You tell him Kora’. Judge Gore said, ‘you must talk true. No good something true, something no true, everything true. Suppose you don’t talk true, you go to gaol’.

The thick-set Hanuabadan would repeat this message in police Motu. Very little was written down in this court because the cases would not be appealed against. In this case, where a defence lawyer was present, Judge Gore would take more care to make notes. There was no jury for Papuans in the Central Court, which was unusual in the British Empire, but the Papuan government had decided that no Papuan on a criminal charge would get a fair hearing from a ‘European’ jury and no ‘European’ on a criminal charge would tolerate being at the mercy of a Papuan. Only Europeans charged with a capital offence were entitled to be tried by jury, and that a four man jury of Europeans.

So it was the Judge who had to decide whether both accused were guilty of wilful murder; whether to sentence one man or two to be hanged.
And hang they surely would, since the Labor government which had saved Papuans convicted of capital crimes had been defeated five years before. All the evidence already presented in the lower court was brought again and Judge Gore listened to Karo’s confession and to the Crown’s witnesses in hearings which lasted from July 18 to July 28.

‘I cut the necks but Goava made me do it’

he heard Karo say, in his triple role of Judge, Jury and Counsel for the defence.

Here was another example of the incomprehensibility of the government law and it was pointed out in a letter to the *Papuan Courier*: Why should one of the accused have a government lawyer and not the other? ‘Papuans think both men guilty’ wrote JUROR. ‘They see one native standing his trial alone in the court, apparently without friend or advisor; they see accused number two, an intelligent man, represented in Court by learned counsel who advises him in every way, both before and during the trial . . .

The natives might believe that the government always intended number one to be punished but took every precaution to see that number two was not’. JUROR believed that any person ‘white, brown or any other colour’ on trial for his life, should have a lawyer. Not at all! retorted NON JUROR in the next issue. ‘Had the court provided Karo with a defending counsel, there certainly would have been grounds for confusion, in view of his confession and the evidence against him’.

It certainly was puzzling and the puzzle about the trial is reflected in the various recollections of Papuans who were present; most of whom agree with Sisia Henao of Pari that Karo was ‘pushed on the fire’ (*edoria lahi latana*) by Goava. In 1977 Sisia recalled that he told the court what he knew of the bad blood between Goava and Ume and as the trial drew to a close he found himself telling the same version of the events as Karo: that Goava had urged Karo to do the killing and that Goava’s family had ‘bought’ Karo by giving him Goava’s sister which tightly bound him to their service.

Karo, said Sisia, questioned Goava:

You told me something?
No, I told you nothing.
You gave me your sister.

To which Goava made no reply. Sisia recalled that he had given evidence
that Iava also had offered Karo his wife; so the three men were connected. Beata Evore, Goava's kinsman and a witness at the trial, said in 1976 that he put a question to Goava with Judge Gore's permission:

My brother, you know that in our custom we cannot simply ask someone to kill another man for us. We have to 'buy' him first by giving him a woman or riches. I think you 'bought' Karo like this?

And Goava replied 'Yes, my brother' and launched into a complaint about Ume being too strict and not letting him see his wife and children in Hanuabada. 'So I gave my sister to Karo', he told Beata. Perhaps this conversation was not reported to Judge Gore; perhaps Beata, a kinsman of Ume, believing this is what happened, wished that he had said it to the Judge. The Judge, he said, clinched the case with it. But no one else recalls that this happened.

Vakai Koaba, Goava's cousin-brother and confederate in the Kuni murders, was the only person apart from Goava himself who denied any bad feeling between the Head Warder and his relation; denied also that Goava had any part in the murders. Goava was not even at Koke at all on the night of the murder. He had been sent to the gaol gardens to cut two small canoes and bring them back to Konedobu, recalled Vakai in 1974. Goava in 1976 also told this story during a radio interview:

that day I was absent from gaol . . . Koke. I was staying at Bomana. I stayed there for that week but when they found that dead body, they blamed me too.

This confusion of recollection in part mirrors the confusion about the conduct of the trial of the two men; a white man's ritual which was not only alien to those Papuans involved but whose meaning was not easily comprehended by them.

After each day's sitting the prisoners were marched down to the gaol or driven, if George Gough was giving evidence. They had been isolated from the other prisoners after their arrest for murder and George Gough brought them their meals while at the same time 'doing a Bagita'. He sat down with them and talked, trying to extract more information from Goava. They talked a lot and Gough believed, in 1974, that it had not been for an untimely phone call which interrupted him one Saturday afternoon, he would have won a confession from Goava.
The Central Court trial concluded on Thursday July 28. After Judge Gore took the last of the evidence, each defendant was asked if he had anything to say. Goava made a statement to the court to clear himself of the charge: he and Ume were close relations and good friends, he said, therefore he had no reason to kill Ume, who had always been kind to him. In fact he had 'cried hard when he heard of his death'. But Karo was a different matter. He had known Karo for seven years and he was 'always a wild man with a lot of wild talk of killing different people'. Karo often laughed and made fun of him. Goava denied all knowledge of the crimes. On the night of the murders, he said, he had been very ill with fever and knew nothing. Forty years later, he said more:

Well, I told the Judge, I said: 'I'm not guilty, but you reckon, sir, that I helped this fellow. You reckon I'm guilty. But I'm not guilty because I was absent from this gaol here where the killing was done. I was absent at eleven mile from this gaol so how can I come here? I got a witness for that and after they find out that I was talking very true.

If Goava had cried when he heard of Ume's death, it was the first anyone had heard of it; if Karo had laughed and made fun of him, no one gave any evidence of it nor had Goava mentioned it until his statement at the end of the trial. On the other hand Karo was a wild man with a lot of wild talk about killing people and he did like tricking people. Goava, though a powerful and clever man, was not a wild man. It was a very good point. Karo made no statement and again his lack of learned counsel did not help.

R.D. Bertie summed up the case for the defence of Goava Oa and argued that in the face of so many conflicting stories, so many doubts and so many difficulties, it would be unsafe to convict Goava. E.B. Bignold, the Crown Prosecutor, agreed that the Crown case, without the confession, was mainly a number of small details, but nevertheless insisted that all the circumstantial evidence pointed to Goava being an accessory. It was perhaps lucky for Goava Oa that there was no trial by jury for Papuans. Most European jurymen and any Papuan jurymen other than his own relations would most probably have found him guilty. Three Papuans deny absolutely that Goava was the 'instigator and planner' of the murders: these three were Goava Oa, his brother Vakai and his son, Sinaka.

Judge Gore was not sure that the evidence was sufficient to sustain the Crown's case that Goava had been the instigator of these amazing murders.
Without Karo's confession, which was inadmissible as evidence against Goava, he was left with the testimony of the witnesses and some of these had not impressed him. Gore therefore found Karo Araua guilty of wilful murder and acquitted Goava. He had said only that there was not sufficient evidence to convict Goava, not that there was no evidence; he believed at the time that Goava was an accessory and his belief hardened into certainty as the years went on. In 1945 he wrote:

Goava was not present at the murders and beyond his knowledge of and presence at some of the exercises, he was not connected with the murders but I felt that he was probably the instigator...

In 1956, he wrote:

I have always believed that he was the instigator of this very dreadful murder.

But in 1938 he pronounced his sentence of death only on the man who had wielded the bloody knife. As Goava was already serving a life sentence, there was nothing further to be done with him except to send him back to gaol. The memory of the Kuni murders, the story of his attempt to kill the Governor with a sorcery bundle and the easy access to the white man's world made it unwise to leave him at Badili gaol. He was destined for Daru.

It seems clear that Goava was an accessory; his lying evidence convicts him in retrospect. He owed his life to the puzzling white men and their laws. Seven years before, just as he was about to be hanged, white men in Australia had intervened to save him. Now, the white man who believed that he had been Karo's accessory in the murders, refused to convict him. By these vagaries of colonial life he was saved from the gallows.

The day after Judge Gore's sentence, the Papuan Courier published a story of Karo's life of crime. It ended with these words:

Four deaths, one safe robbery and an unknown number of other robberies can be placed to the record of one who is probably the most remarkable criminal in the history of the Territory. It will be a long time before Papua forgets the gruesome figure of the pretended blind man planning the destruction of a whole family behind his dark glasses.
Karo was even more remarkable than the *Papuan Courier* allowed. He had killed more than four people; he had also escaped from gaol; had fooled a white doctor and gaoler into believing that he was blind and into providing him with dark glasses; he had delighted Pauans with his tricks and convinced a head warder that he could make money; he had led a group of kinsmen from the village into Moresby, wearing forbidden clothes. And he had defended himself in white men’s courts. In the fantastic drama of his life can be seen the marks of a mixed inheritance, the traumas of his fractured and incompletely initiated and the grinding of the new white man’s government on an aggressive and unstable personality. The tricks, the robbery, the dark glasses, the murders and, in the end, the spectacle of the scaffold, would raise him high above everyone in the white man’s town, an object of awe to the whole populace and though removing him from life, would give him a longer and more vivid life in legend.
After Judge Gore delivered his sentence, the principal characters in the Koke drama left the Central Court and went their several ways: Karo Araua back to his single room in Cell 5, for there was no Death Cell in Badili gaol; Goava also to Badili, waiting to be shipped to Daru to serve out the rest of his life sentence. Although Judge Gore would not have him hanged, neither would he ever agree to have him released. Judge Murray had also believed him guilty. While it may be a myth that he had marked his file on Goava’s 1931 murders ‘NEVER TO BE RELEASED’, it is a fact that most of the government officials who returned to their jobs after the Second World War behaved as though he had and Goava Oa remained in gaol, with a six year break for war service, until 1963. Iava followed his family, who had already left the warders’ cement house outside the gaol fence for their village house at Vabukori, and lived there until the war came and the villagers were removed from the Port Moresby area. He died after the war.

On Wednesday, August 3, the Executive Council, with Sir Hubert Murray at its head, confirmed Judge Gore’s death sentence. In the archaic words of the official pronouncement, it ordered the following Monday, August 8 1938 as the date and ‘8 of the clock in the forenoon . . . and Koki, near Port Moresby, as the time when and the place where the execution of the sentence of death passed upon Karo . . . shall be carried out’.

Even before this meeting, about a fortnight before the hanging date, George Gough received instruction from Leonard Murray – Official Secretary and nephew of the Governor – to go to the building next to the power station and pick up the gallows. Since 1916, they had been used only once, for Stephen Mamadeni, hanged in 1934.

George Gough was thirty years old, had never wanted to be a Gaoler, and so dreadful was the task he had to carry out that forty years later, the memory of it was still vivid:
I had to pick up the gallows, take it to Koke, assemble it with a book of instructions and test it. The instructions were very full. I had to build a dummy of Karo’s weight and height and test the trap door with the dummy.

These full instructions showed George Gough how to calculate the length of the drop and the rope according to a table which related height to weight. If the drop were of sufficient length, death by dislocation would be instantaneous; if the drop were too long, the condemned man could be mutilated; if too short, he would reach his death more slowly, by strangulation. After reading the instructions in the mill near the power station, Gough called on the Secretary and tried to talk himself out of the job. He was too busy, he had so many other duties, how could he find time to work all this out? But Murray understood what he really meant and took no excuses. It had to be done and the Gaoler had to do it. That is, he would have to organise and supervise; the doing was by Papuans.

Beata Evore, driver of the prison truck, was one of those who carried out the grim rehearsals. The gallows, two upright posts holding a heavy cross beam, fitted with bolts and hooks, was first erected on the scaffold proper. This was the platform which would open when the executioner pulled the lever. Platform, trap-door and steps to lead up to them had all been well and strongly made by Jim Williams the mixed race carpenter in the town. Every morning for four days before the hanging, and on the afternoon of the day before it, the gallows were tested. The mock Karo was dropped; and after each drop, prisoners worked ten pounds of soft soap into the rope to make it more pliable. It was left for two hours after which, having stretched, it was again cut to size: the right length for the weight of Karo.

George Gough really did have plenty to do in the days after Karo’s return to Cell 5 under sentence of execution. He personally carried Karo his every meal and stayed with him while he ate it. Karo had particularly good food in those weeks. The meals were cooked in the Gaoler’s kitchen, by his own staff, because George Gough feared that the Motu prisoners might retaliate for the murder of Boio and Igua Ume. For more than two weeks, George Gough sat on the floor and talked to Karo three times a day. It was an unusual thing for any white man and any Papuan to do together. It was far beyond the call of duty, for the regulations provided only that the European officer examine the condemned man’s cell daily; but this was an unusual prisoner and an unusual Gaoler.
One evening, as George Gough let himself into the cell with the dinner, Karo spoke: ‘All that banging I can hear. It’s for me, isn’t it?’ and he apologised for all the trouble he was causing. He apologised every day, and Gough perceived on these visits a man different from ‘Karo the Killer’ of the *Papuan Courier* or the *sevese karu* of the Song About Karo: a man quiet, apologetic and thoughtful; a man about to die and, at last, considering his actions and his fate. About to die in Uritai, surrounded by his kin, a man would have been disposing of his possessions, arranging for his departure for Hororu Harihu, the land beyond the sunset where all the dead went, good and bad. In Cell 5, there was only George Gough, kindly representative of the all-powerful white men and their laws which had defeated him. Perhaps their God might prove to be all-powerful too.

Some ten days before the execution, Gough asked Karo if there was anything he would like to be done for him. ‘Tell me’, Karo answered, ‘What mission are you?’ Gough told him that he was a Catholic, and the two discussed religion. Why was George Gough a Catholic? Karo wanted to know. Because his parents taught him, Gough answered. ‘I want to be one too’, said Karo. Gough was hesitant. Protestants in Port Moresby might say that he was taking an unfair advantage of a condemned man to capture him for the Roman faith. He rang the Reverend Henry Mathews, the Anglican minister in Port Moresby, and discussed it with him. Mathews, who believed that a man about to be hanged should have what he wanted by way of religion, saw no objection. Gough then rang Father John Flynn, one of the two Catholic priests in the town. Flynn came out to the gaol every day to instruct Karo in Roman Catholic doctrine. After a week of instruction Karo was convinced that, though he had done wrong, he would go to heaven when he died. ‘I’m sorry for it now and God will let me go to heaven’. He told his relatives and friends when they visited him: ‘Don’t worry about me. I’ve done wrong I know God will help me’. Stephen Mamadeni, the only other man hanged in Port Moresby since 1916, the policeman who had been convicted under the White Women’s Protection Ordinance of the rape of his Headquarters Officer’s small daughter, also turned Catholic before his hanging. It may have been that condemned Papuans in Port Moresby, knowing that the Governor was a Catholic and a church goer, hoped he might intercede for them. The Governor himself noticed the fact but gave no explanation. ‘He had become a Catholic — most of them do’, he wrote to his daughter about Karo. ‘They are not Catholics when they commit the crimes, but become converted afterwards’. 
One day, after a meal, Karo touched George Gough on the arm and said shyly: 'You same as me. When you die, if you good you go to heaven, if bad to hell'. *Semese Miai*, the clan call of triumph, was not much use to Karo here; now at last he would offer not defiance but acceptance of a stronger power which had triumphed over him. If Ume's people had come upon him and clubbed him down, if his whole body had become swollen with sores which declared that their sorcery was attacking him, he would have recognised these signs of retaliation for his killing of Ume and his family. The hanging was the white foreigners' retaliation, but it was also their punishment, and though he accepted it he was puzzled and tried to understand it. All the religious talk which Karo had with George Gough in his last days concerned punishment, heaven and hell.

Goava Oa was still close by and before he was moved to Daru, Karo complained that at night he would call out triumphantly to the next cell: 'You die because you kill these people and because I'm strong they don't punish me!' This is what Karo told George Gough, and it reflects his preoccupations. Yet Karo remained calm through all his days in the condemned cell. Gough thought it was because he now believed he was going to heaven; perhaps he was helped by the fatalism of a strong man brought down by stronger ones.

In the afternoon of the day before the hanging, Karo was given the condemned man's last choice. 'The dinner tonight is your last dinner', Gough said, 'what would you like to eat?' Karo replied to his Gaoler's question not as *sevese karu* but as colonised man: 'You like steak, could I have a meal of steak?' And he could.

He accepted the power which was hanging him. Had he been a later prisoner he might have railed against it, crying: 'Had it not been for you, I would never have been here'. But not at that time. He accepted it calmly.

Talk of the approaching hanging was all over the town and its environs. It was a big topic in the Papua Club, the comfortable bungalow set in pleasant gardens which ran down to Port Road, overlooking the harbour, where the commercial people and the more acceptable government officials met in the afternoons. There, as George Gough, Leonard Logan, the Headquarters Officer and S. H. Chance, the Acting Resident Magistrate of the Central Division, gathered after work one afternoon for their whiskies, the talk turned to the execution. George Gough, rehearsing on a warder, had already timed the strapping of Karo's arms to his sides, so there would be no hitches on the day; the black calico hood he had ordered from Steamships Trading
Company's tailor had been made. It was close. Leonard Logan confessed that he had no stomach for the executioner's job which, as Sheriff, he had to perform, and wished he could find the substitute he was empowered to appoint. Chance, cheerful with whisky, bragged that he wouldn't mind doing it a bit!

'Right!' said Logan immediately, 'you've got yourself the job!' and though in the more sober atmosphere of the office, Logan later said he wouldn't hold him to his offer, Chance insisted that he would be pleased to be hangman. In the next Government Gazette, where the Warrant for Execution of Death was published, 'Sydney Howard Chance, Esquire, Assistant Resident Magistrate' was appointed 'to be Acting Sheriff of the . . . Honourable Court and to be present and to do such things as may be necessary at the said execution'.

Syd Chance — 'Hangman Syd' as he later boasted — was forty-three years old and had been in the Papuan government service for sixteen years. Appointed first as a patrol officer he had served at Rigo, in the Western Division, the Delta, the North, and had filled almost every post it was possible to fill in the service: from Inspector under the Stallions Licensing Ordinance to Mining Registrar for the Lakekamu gold fields and JP under the Marriage Ordinance. He had taken the three months' course in anthropology for government officers at Sydney University in 1929, and was promoted steadily. Acting Resident Magistrate of the Central Division since July 1 1938, it was he who had sat in the Court of Petty Sessions on August 5 of that year when Karo and Goava were again brought there and charged with the murders of 'female native Boio and child Igua'; a formality which he dismissed, as sentence had already been passed on both men for the murder of Ume. Chance had done many jobs, but he had never been a hangman. Tough, and a big drinker, it was Chance earlier who had seen the murdered bodies as they festered in the tropical heat on the gaol island. He was pleased to pull the lever on their killer.

On the morning of August 8, Father Flynn arrived very early at Badili gaol. He intended to celebrate Mass for Karo, and as the single cell was so small, George Gough had asked permission to clear out one of the nearby communal cells; perhaps Cell 4 which had housed Goava and Vakai Koaba, or Cell 3 where the sanitary line slept, and it was there that Father Flynn celebrated Mass. When he had begun to instruct Karo, Father Flynn gave him his own silver cross, which Karo wore now as he received communion; tied round his neck on the piece of string which Gough had substituted for Father
Flynn’s silver chain. Symbol of the new faith Karo had embraced, the cross was also a gift: the gift of a white man.

Karo ate breakfast after the Mass and while he was finishing it, hangman Syd arrived at Badili carrying a large bottle of whisky. He had already drunk some and offered George Gough a tot, to fortify him for the morning’s work, but Gough would have none of it. When Chance was out of the room, Gough ordered his prisoner-orderly to hide the bottle and produce some strong coffee. Though Chance raged a bit, he submitted; he was looking forward to his task. ‘I had pleasure in springing the trap on Karo’, he told a reporter in 1950. After the strong coffee, the morning’s work began. George Gough, bearing the leather straps, took off across the prison yard and opened Karo’s cell. ‘I’m ready’, Karo told him. According to Gough he was the only calm man there.

Outside the gaol a huge crowd had gathered and from the gaol headland, the beach of Taigere bay and the land all around the hanging place people gazed up at the hessian enclosure. Koke bay, on the other side of the gaol promontory, was full of canoes which had brought village people in; there were no canoes in the bay on the side, where the hessian enclosure, thirty feet high at its highest side, concealed the hanging place. The lightly woven hessian did not entirely block the sight of some who watched, while those police and people who found themselves in front of the entrance to the enclosure could see inside. A circle of Armed Constables, each with his rifle and bayonet fixed, faced towards the huge crowd, in case of trouble. As they watched, the crowd of Papuans saw a small procession emerge from the cell block. At its head was Karo Araua, his arms strapped firmly by a belt to the long white prison rami, and for the first and last time of his life, legally wearing a long sleeved shirt. His head was bare; his chest was not. He no longer wore his dark glasses. Nor did anyone lead him along. Behind him marched the guard of six thick set policemen sent, according to the book of rules for hangings, in case the prospect of his coming death should cause Karo to stumble, or faint or attempt to break away. If that happened, the policemen would carry him to the gallows. But they were not needed. The procession walked along the flat place outside the gaol fence where prisoners had sat with their friends and relatives on visiting Sundays, passed in front of the water tank and the Gaoler’s residence, then wound down the little track to the hanging place which was at the bottom of the hill. Karo was not at all afraid. Morauta Hasu, a man who came from Kukipi, near Uritai, but had been working in town for some time, left his sleeping place at Burns Philp’s
compound to go not to Burns Philp's bulk store in town where he worked but, with hundreds of other Papuan workers, down towards the gaol to see Karo hanged. They had been told to go. Morauta saw Karo walk calmly along, though he had expected him to struggle. He noticed that Karo was not afraid.

When the procession reached the enclosure, Karo went inside alone, leaving the two Europeans who had escorted him outside the hessian enclosure with the group of about twelve European men who were already waiting there. Four of these now escorted Karo to the platform at the top of the steps: Father Michael McEncroe, the Catholic priest who was to pray for him; George Gough, the Acting Gaoler who was to say when it was exactly 8 o'clock; Syd Chance, Acting Sheriff, who was to hang him; and Dr F. J. Williams, Acting Chief Medical Officer, who was to pronounce him dead. The group below included Father Flynn and Tom Gough. Syd Chance asked Karo if he had anything to say before he put the noose around his neck and the hood over his head, and Karo from the gallows made a statement. Many people saw Karo standing on the drop; some heard him speak, and there are many versions of the words he said.

The statement which was published in the *Papuan Courier* four days later read:

I have done wrong and I am paying for it. I am not angry with anybody, government, administration all Europeans and Papuans. I am going to heaven at 8 o'clock.

'Hangman Syd' recalled in 1950 that:

'He didn't show any emotion on the scaffold, though he was trembling at the knees. He said he forgave the white men for what they had done and what they were about to do to him. He forgot, of course, to apologise to the Ume family in the other world to which he was journeying. He said he was "going to heaven at 8 o'clock". He arrived at 8.5 am'.

George Gough, in 1977, remembered similar words:

I killed these people and I am not cross. At 8 o'clock I will die and I am going to heaven.
9. Karo, triple-murderer and thief. (In: People, June 21, 1950 page 33). But captions sometimes lie! This photograph, used to illustrate the article which S. H. Chance wrote for the Sydney magazine People cannot show Karo on the way to execution because Goava Oa, who was not executed, is walking along behind Karo dressed in prison rami. George Gough was the only white man to accompany Karo from the gaol to the hanging place nearby. This photo shows the two accused men being taken to one of their trials in Port Moresby.

Photograph: People, 21 June 1950.

These men were the closest to him as he stood on the drop.

Papuans, who were further away, heard other things. Sisia Henao, too frightened, he says, to paddle around to the hanging, stayed in Pari village. But his wife went and she recalled that Karo was asked if he had done the murder:

He said 'Yes' he had done it and his message to the young generation was not to misbehave, for it was wrong.

Iru Misula, an Uritai man whose family lived next to Karo's, heard him give a speech in four languages — English, Motu, Hula and Toaripi — in which he invoked Epe Savora his clan ancestor:
Epe savora ve iai save sore save iso iae patai  
(Today my sun I see you for the last time)

These words Iru Misula heard and told to his nephew who wrote them down twenty years later.

Ikui Avosa, of Vabukori, who considers himself the keeper of the song about Karo, also heard him give a speech in four languages, and he heard him say:

My brothers, my father and mother and my sisters, do not grieve for me. I am about to live where life is good. I behave like this because I am sure. That is my last word. Now let us bow our heads and send a prayer to Jesus and His Father about this journey of mine. Oh Father all the evil I have done in the world I place on this cross and there I leave it. I am today on my way to your kingdom. Amen.

That is what Ikui remembered almost forty years later that Karo Araua said from the scaffold. Those who most admire Karo heard the most rousing speech; the farewell speech of a hero; the farewell each would himself have written for Karo. This is what Sergeant Bagita remembered in 1971 that he had heard Karo say:

All my friends from Kerema, Koiari, Hanuabada and all other places. Today you are watching me. I am going today alone. Do not do like I did. Because of my troubles, today I am going to die alone. That is the end of my talk.

Bagita remembered himself into a marvellous leading role, remembered a great dramatic gesture:

We put a piece of cloth on his face. All the Europeans who were standing on the platform took their hats off and called to Karo: 'Goodbye Karo!'

After Karo had said his last words he stepped on the trapdoor again and George Gough heard him say, 'I'm ready!' Then the noose was put around his neck and the black calico hood over his eyes and the only sign of nerves Gough remarked was the twitching of the calves of his legs. As Gough backed
down the twenty-two steps from the platform to join Father Flynn, it was
three minutes to 8 by his watch.

'Remember the little cross I gave Karo, that he has round his neck? Could you get it for me when it’s over?' asked Father Flynn as Father
McEncroe made his prayer. After the Amen George Gough, his eyes on his
watch, saw that it was 8 o’clock and signalled to Chance who firmly pulled
the lever. The doors opened and those watching saw the rope twitch a few
times. Twelve minutes had to pass before the doctor would feel the heart and
proclaim him dead.

Bagita again put himself into the drama as he recalled this waiting time —
Karo hung like a wild boar. They sent me to see. They told me to
watch for any blood. ‘If blood comes out of his mouth, nose and ears,
you call out’. I went and saw the blood coming out. I felt the pulse
on his leg. I thought he was dead. I called the doctor. The doctor
went and felt his pulse and called out that he was dead.

After a while, shaking George Gough, who was in charge, realising that the
Doctor was too short to reach the body, remembers that he called for a box
for him to stand on; Dr Williams found there were still signs of life. Just
then, Gough remembered Father Flynn’s cross and when, after another two
minutes, the doctor pronounced Karo dead, he made to retrieve it. Putt-
ing his hand under the hood, he felt the cross on its string but though he
tugged and tugged, it would not come loose and he brought out his hand,
asking a policeman for his jack knife. He saw his hand stained with blood
from Karo’s neck. He cut the string and regained the cross. It was a
gruesome and unworthy task which the priest had demanded of him: to
deprive the body of Karo of the Christian symbol and gift with which it
should have been buried. The task rebounded later on George Gough.

After the cross was cut off, Karo was cut down and his body wrapped
for burial, as it would also have been wrapped in Uritai-Mirihea, though there
in his sleeping mat and here in his blanket, and he was driven off by Beata
Evore in the Ford flat-top to be buried at Posigana, where Ume also lay, in
a hole dug by his fellow prisoners. Gough, with the other European witnesses
to Karo’s death climbed the track up to the Gaoler’s residence and to two
stiff whiskies, each of which went down like water; then he had straight away
to take the death certificate, signed by the doctor and witnessed by the
Sheriff, the Gaoler and the European Constable, to the Government Printing Office in Konedobu.

The crowd of Papuans on the hillsides and around the gaol cried, and chanted death songs. Karo's mother's people tore their faces until the blood ran; Toaripi cried too because they felt sorry for Karo. Bagita was very sorry that day and everybody was frightened. There was something very frightening about a hanging. No more work was done that day. The police, after Karo had been cut down, told the crying people to go home, wash and have a sleep. But no one could sleep. The confused horror of the spectacle remained with them. Morauta Hasu with the other inhabitants of Burns Philp's compound and their friends sat and talked, and the only thing they talked about all day was the hanging; for Papuans had seen many strange and wonderful things.

They put a rope around his neck and opened the trap-door, but the rope didn’t tighten, [Ikui Avosa recalled in 1976.] It slipped off so he wasn’t hanged. Later he was killed by the Bishop and Tom Gough. He had knife wounds in his sides and ankles.

Arua Kekehe said in 1978 that 'Karo went down and, at the same time, was bashed and crushed by heavy steel plates'. ‘Next day we went back to work’, recalled Morauta Hasu, ‘but on that day we talked of nothing else’.

When George Gough arrived in town with his death certificate, the Government Printer greeted him warily:

‘Eh, George, what’s this, did you kill him?’
Poor George Gough, still shaking from the experience, snapped,
‘What d’you mean?’
And the Government Printer called one of his men:
‘You tell Taubada what you just told me!’

George Gough heard the story from the Hanuabadan employee who had just walked back from the hanging where he had seen, with his own eyes, Taubada George Gough cutting Karo’s throat with a jack knife! Once the story got about, George Gough found, there was nothing he could do about it and no matter how many times he later explained what had happened, Hanuabada, Tatana and Pari people in particular never believed him and often would say: ‘You did cut Karo’s throat, eh?’
As we have seen many Papuans remember that amazing things happened to Karo Araua in the minutes after the trapdoor opened and he dropped. Ivara Meraveka from Kukipi in the Gulf saw that Karo went up and down twice, that the Father said: ‘He’s not dead!’ and took a knife, cut him on the backs of the ankles and that killed him. Ikui Avosa recalled a similar fate:

When we entered to take away the body, there was a knife wound in his side and both his Achilles tendons had been cut. The men inside the enclosure perhaps killed him!

Ikui, a devout member of the United Church, saw a crucifixion. A woman prisoner heard him singing as he climbed the steps to the gallows. The hanging itself was a sort of glory as Karo Araua, like his ancestor Epe Savora — and like many another hero of common people — died an uncommon death.

Strange things were also reported after the hanging. Two days later, following a particularly dry week, Port Moresby was struck by an unusually strong south-easterly gale that Papuans called ore. It blew up with a fierce intensity which drenched the town with seventy-one points of rain on one day and piled waves up along the coast right down to the exposed beaches of the Papuan Gulf. Such huge seas had not been seen since 1930 when a Steamships Trading Company’s coastal vessel, Vatiriri, struggling past Yule Island, finally sank near its destination of Kerema in the Gulf. Those gales had brought death to all on board except two Papuan seamen from Hanuabada and the wife of a government officer, whom they had saved from drowning. The two men were honoured with the Lloyds’ Medal for Saving Life at Sea and with a gift of money from ‘all the white people in Papua’. At the presentation the chairman of the Hanuabadan village council spoke to the assembled villagers:

Any of you must not seek each own life but give away your life to the white people, and save them from the tempestuous sea, so this will make you a very good name like those two brave men.

Now, people remarked, another such violent gale had blown up after the death of Karo, the murderer, who was a different sort of hero.

Vakai Koaba remembered in 1974 that after he was hanged, Karo visited George Gough at the gaol, with an axe in his hand. The Gaoler, he
said, was so frightened by this, that he rode into town on a horse. George Gough does not remember any visit; nor does he remember any fear of Karo's people for they were 'on the government's side'.

Karo was dead but he had, as Ikui Avosa said, 'gained a victory'. For though he had failed to beat the white men and their powerful justice he was after all raised up for everyone to see and his life commemorated in the Evore which many would sing. Certainly many Toaripi agreed with the sentiments that Karo expressed on the gallows after two weeks' religious instruction: that he had suffered just punishment for a dreadful crime and was going, purged of thoughts of revenge, to a Christian heaven where he would be forgiven. Certainly most Toaripi would now say that the ways of the Government are better than the old ways of constant warfare and revenge; but this does not prevent those same Toaripi seeing in Karo Araua's death, as in his life, something admirable, super human and worth remembering.

And many other Papuans evidently feel the same. For traditional tough virtues are still admired and even though Papuans are now Papua New Guineans and the government is no longer a colonial one, they still sing and enjoy to hear the story of 'white foreigners' brought down or at least made to sit up and take notice of a Papuan man with traditional strengths. Sergeant Bagita, as transcribed by Sir Albert Maori Kiki, has the last word; Bagita, the most trusted policeman of the colonial government and awarded by it the British Empire Medal.

Oh Karo Araua! Half Kerema and half Hula. Very strong and handsome. A typical Kerema. Feared by many people because of his strong temperament. Envied by many whites. He died in the eyes of his tribesmen and his mother's people were all there. Papuans saw one of their kind dying at the hands of the white men. This was their law. Papuans must obey it or they would follow the same track.
THE SONG ABOUT KARO

Kalo Araua and Bili

The white foreigner sent friend Epe with Molala Harai,
The Crown representative sent friend Savora with Irui Tati,
Sent Molala Harai with the Inland Man.

Friend Epe's mouth used white man's talk, said "Bloody fool!" quarrelling as he went inland;
Friend Savora's lips used his mother's Motu speech, said "Worthless fellow!" contending as he went inland;
"Bloody worthless fool!" quarrelling as he went inland.

Under the Moa tree went the form of Molala Harai as he walked the track to death;
Beneath the Aisa tree went the person of Irui Tati as he tramped his way out of life;
Under his own Moa Aisa tree walking his way to death.

Time for a change with the mail bag

From friend Epe's mouth came words asking Molala Harai to take his turn with the mail bag;
From friend Savora's lips came talk telling Irui Tati he should do his part with the mail swag,
A word calling for change with the mail bag.

Molala Harai's mind was unwilling as he climbed ahead through the mountain cold,
Irui Tati's thoughts were of refusal as he went in front up the mountain range,
Climbing ahead through the mountain cold.

This was the time of shooting

Friend Epe's hand took the rifle of the Sire of the horizon, put it to his shoulder at the ready;
Friend Savora's hand grasped the rifle of the Sire of the ends of the earth, placed it to his shoulder ready to shoot;
He brought his rifle to the ready.

At the cold mountain place, with rifle at the ready, he took some
backward steps, then shot Molala Harai;
Amid the mountain chills, with rifle to the shoulder, he took some rearward steps, then shot Irui Tati;
Stepping backwards, he took his aim and fired.

Friend Epe’s hand took the rifle of the Sire of the horizon, with his clan cry and invoking a magic spell, he got Molala Harai right through the head;
Friend Savora’s hand grasped the rifle of the Sire of the ends of the earth, with his clan call and invoking magic, he shot Irui Tati clean through the head.
He called his clan cry and invoked a magic spell.

How the famous tight-rope liana was sent forth

1 The man of Savoripi sent forth through the lower regions of the sky the well-known tight-rope liana of Molala Harai;
The man of Savoripi let loose, through the underpart of the heavens the famous tight-rope of the Morning Star;
He sent it forth through the lower regions of the sky.

2 It carried away through the lower regions of the sky Molala, Sire Mumura’s son, from beneath the Moa tree;
It took away through the lower heavens Harai, Sire Kave’s son, from under the Aisa tree;
It carried him away from beneath the Moa-Aisa tree.

3 It carried away the Miaru man, and placed him on the bank of his Miaru River;
It took away the Canoe man, and set him beside his Canoe River;
It carried him away and set him beside his Miaru River.

How he climbed and stood on the mountain where cry the spirits of the dead

1 Friend Epe’s legs took him up until he stood on the mountain where wail the spirits of the dead;
Friend Savora’s feet took him up until he stood on the height where cry the ghosts of the dead;
Climbing up he stood on the mountain where wail the ghostly dead.

2 Friend Epe’s eyes took a backward look towards his own sea coast,
he saw the calm sea and invoked a spell;
Friend Savora’s eyes took a forward look towards Irui Tati’s mountain range, he saw Mount Yule and invoked a charm;
Looking on Irui Tati’s Mount Yule range, he invoked a magic spell.

**How the Isulava and Piake villagers heard the news**

1. The White Egret came bringing the news to the ears of the men of Molala Harai’s clan;
The White Heron’s story reached the ears of the girls of Molala Harai’s clan; The ears of Molala Harai’s clansmen and girls heard the story.

2. Their ears heard the call of the Butcher Bird; the heavens also rumbled a response to the magic spell;
The ears caught the sound of the Wood Pigeon’s coo, and the sky thundered an answer to the muttered charm;
The sky rumbled in answer to the magic spell.

**Was that the shooting of a bird among the trees?**

1. The Elema policeman’s shot brought Molala’s White Egret tumbling down;
The Elema soldier’s bullet brought Harai’s White Heron to the ground;
It was the Elema armed policeman who did the shooting down.

2. Such was the story in Kokoda of the shooting there by the Moa tree,
Such was the rumour in Kokoda of the firing there by the Aisa tree;
The shooting down by the Moa-Aisa tree.

**How he let down into the water the body of the man he had slain**

1. It was by Epe’s hand that Molala Harai was killed;
It was by Savora’s hand that Irui Tati was slain;
That was how Molala Harai was killed.

2. Having killed Molala Harai he let down his corpse into the Miaru water;
Having slain Irui Tati he let go his body into the Canoe Stream;
Into the water named Miaru he let his body down.

3. Epe’s mind thought to escape by letting down the corpse into the Miaru water;
Savora’s idea was to escape by letting go the body into the Canoe Stream; Epe Savora’s mind thought up that way to escape.

**How he became afraid**

1 Epe stood himself close to the base of the Moa tree; Savora took his stand just by the base of the Aisa tree; There he took his stand by the base of the Moa-Aisa tree.

2 Epe’s ear caught the sound of a thump on the bell of the rain, the flanged buttress of the Muria tree; the bell of the dew, Savora’s ear heard the thud of a blow on the bell of the dew, the ridged support of the Tapere tree; He heard a thud from the buttress of the Muria-Tapere tree.

3 Epe became filled with fear; the thought of the Koiari frightened him; Savora became filled with dread; the thought of the Koitapu alarmed him; He was frightened by the Koiari-Koitapu.

**How the court was held at Kokoda**

1 The Ioma-Buna magistrate held a court about the killing of Molala Harai by the hand of friend Epe; The Government officer held a preliminary hearing into the murder of Irui Tati by the hand of friend Savora; The Ioma-Buna Government officer held a preliminary hearing.

2 The Ioma-Buna magistrate committed friend Epe back to Port Moresby for trial; The Government officer ordered friend Savora back to Ela Town court; The trial thus came to Ela-Port Moresby town.

**How Kaipu Ito came to hear the news of Kalo Araua**

1 The news of the killing by friend Epe then reached the Mount Yule upland; The story of the slaying by friend Savora then spread to the Kovio hills; It reached as far as the Uari-Kovio range.

2 The news of friend Epe’s mistake then came down from the Mount Yule upland to friend Luvu’s ears;
The story of friend Savora’s error then came from the Kobio Hills to friend Ioe’s hearing;
Word of the error then came down from the Mount Yule-Kovio range.

How the court sentenced Kalo to death by hanging

1 The white foreigner sentenced to death by hanging friend Epe;
The Crown representative passed the sentence of death by hanging upon friend Savora;
Death by hanging was the sentence.

2 Under the Aufa-Tave tree friend Epe’s ears heard the sentence, tears rolled down from his eyes;
Under the Iili-Makapi tree friend Savora’s ears heard the judgement, tears flowed down from his nose;
From his eyes and nose there flowed down tears.

3 Friend Epe’s mouth voiced the name of his land and clan Sire Epe;
Friend Savora’s lips uttered the name of his place and his ancestress Maura,
The names of his clan Sire Epe and his ancestress Maura.

How the fame of Kalo’s daring deed spread abroad

1 The fame of his daring deed spread to his Auavavu land,
The story of his reckless exploit reached his Mukosore place;
It spread to his Auavavu-Mukosore land.

2 His Savoripi clansmen’s ears heard the fame of his daring deed;
His Savoripi clanswomen’s ears learned the story of his reckless exploit,
The fame of his daring deed.

How Kalo Araua was given a prison sentence;
the concluding stanza

1 Friend Epe bore the punishment for the death of Molala Harai by being shut in gaol;
Friend Savora paid the penalty for the wrong he did Irui Tati by being kept in prison;
He bore the punishment for Molala Harai’s death by being shut in gaol.
His poor wife in the west protested when word came how friend Epe's mouth had uttered the name of his land and clansmen; His poor woman in the south remonstrated when word came that friend Savora's lips had voiced the name of his place and clanswomen, The name of his land, his clan Sire Epe Savora and his ancestress Maura-Pupui.
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A graduate of the University of Melbourne and the Australian National University, Amirah Inglis, spent seven years in Papua New Guinea between 1967 and 1975. She has travelled extensively around Papua New Guinea and the experience of a way of life completely different from her own and the shock of the colonial condition provided the stimuli which led her to investigate something of the history of Port Moresby. This resulted in the book about the White Women's Protection Ordinance, 'Not a White Woman Safe'. Since leaving Papua New Guinea she has returned for three field trips on which she collected the interviews which form an important part of this book.

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This is a book about a murder. A book about prison, about the clash of cultures and about wild men. Karo was a wild man and a clever one and this book is an attempt to trace his life. It is the history of a Papuan man born in the early part of the twentieth century and follows the path that led him to the most horrible murders and finally to the gallows. An attempt also to understand why he had another, legendary life beyond the gallows.

The author became interested in Karo Araua when she heard for the first time the 'Song about Karo', the poem in traditional form in which he was the hero. It was part of her interest in the colonial condition, which was stimulated when she read of the way the lives of those in gaol can throw a great deal of light on the lowly who are also illiterate. Particularly was this the case in colonial Papua where those who landed in gaol were likely to be a cross section of those villagers who came in contact with the white man's law, most of which they did not understand.

Most writings about Papua New Guinea deal with the successful people who managed the colonial encounter. Karo, hanged in Port Moresby in 1938, was not successful, but his name lives on among his own people.