

ORAL TRADITION IN MELANESIA

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AND
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EDITORS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | Page |
|---|--|------|
| INTRODUCTION | Donald Denoon | 1 |
| PART I WHOSE TRADITIONS? POINTS OF DEPARTURE | | |
| CHAPTER I | Binandere Oral Tradition: Sources and Problems John D. Waiko | 11 |
| CHAPTER II | Preserving Traditions or Embalming them? Oral Traditions, Wisdom and Commitment Antony Ruhan | 31 |
| CHAPTER III | Traditions of Origin and Migration: Some Enga Evidence Roderic Lacey | 45 |
| CHAPTER IV | The Migration Traditions of the Sebage Andere, Binandere and Jaua Tribes of the Orokaiva: The Need for Attention to Religion and Ideology Willington Jojoga Opeba | 57 |
| PART II DIALOGUE BETWEEN ORAL AND WRITTEN SOURCES | | |
| CHAPTER V | Knowledge and its Preservation in Oral Cultures Lyndsay Farrall | 71 |
| CHAPTER VI | Oral Sources and Old Testament Texts Carl Loeliger | 88 |
| CHAPTER VII | Sung and Written Epics — the Case of <i>The Song of Roland</i> Stephanie Farrall | 101 |
| CHAPTER VIII | Oral and Written Sources Bill Gammage | 115 |
| PART III ORAL SOURCES AND HISTORY IN MELANESIA | | |
| CHAPTER IX | The 'Time of Darkness' or <i>Yuu Kuia</i> Paul Mai | 125 |
| CHAPTER X | Time of Darkness Legends and Volcanic Eruptions in Papua New Guinea Russell J. Blong | 141 |

| | Page |
|--|------|
| CHAPTER XI Oral Sources and the Study of Religious History in Papua New Guinea Garry Trompf | 151 |
| CHAPTER XII Oral History and Pacific Islands Missionaries: The Case of the Methodist Mission in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands Sione Latukefu | 175 |
| CHAPTER XIII Milne Bay Women Anne Nealibo Kaniku | 188 |

PART IV TOWARDS THE STUDY OF A REGION

| | |
|--|-----|
| CHAPTER XIV The History of the Motu-speaking and the Koita- speaking Peoples according to their own Traditions Nigel Oram | 207 |
| CHAPTER XV The Lala and Balawaia in Central Province John Kolia | 231 |
| CHAPTER XVI The Settlement History of the Motu and Koita speaking People of the Central Province, Papua New Guinea Pamela Swadling | 240 |
| EPILOGUE Oral Sources and the Unwritten History of Papua New Guinea Roderic Lacey | 252 |

FIGURES

| | | |
|---|---|-----|
| 1 | Location Map A | vi |
| 2 | Location Map B | 56 |
| 3 | Pacific Islands | 77 |
| 4 | Woleai Atoll Pebble Diagram | 79 |
| 5 | Diagram illustrating Method of Hatag | 82 |
| 6 | Distribution of Tibito Tephra | 142 |
| 7 | Distribution of time of darkness legends in Western Papua New Guinea | 143 |

| | Page |
|---|----------|
| 8 Koita and Western Motu Migrations | 208, 209 |
| 9 Marehau and Apau Migrations | 214 |
| 10 Migrations of the Eastern Motu Tribe | 217 |
| 11 Location Map C | 230 |
| 12 Present-day distribution of Motu and Koita villages | 239 |
| 13 Archaeological and Traditional Sites mentioned in Text | 241 |
| CONTRIBUTORS | 269 |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | 270 |

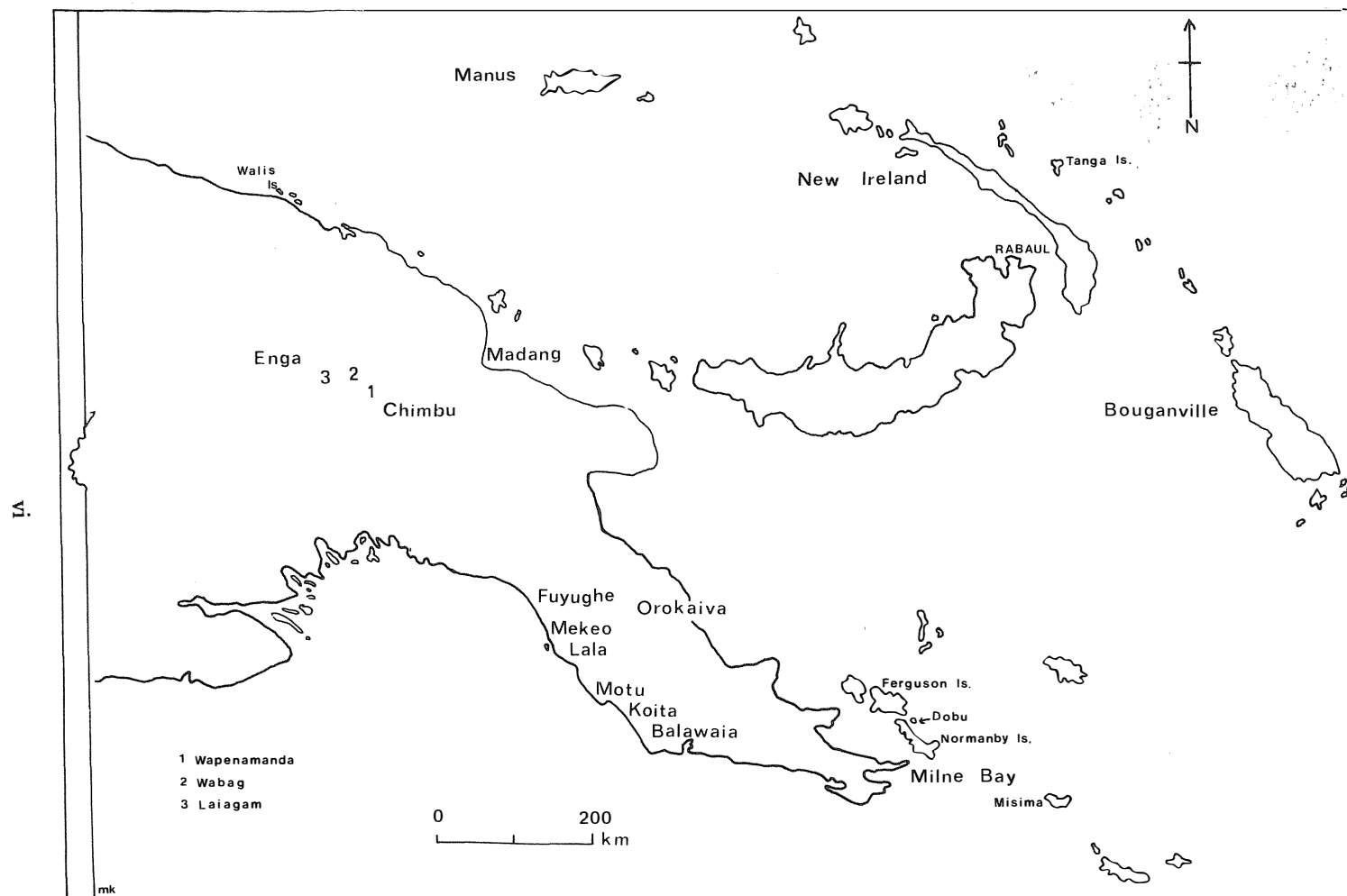


Figure 1: Location map A

INTRODUCTION

Donald Denoon

Historians used to be interested mainly in the actions and ideas of a few powerful men. Until the Pacific War ended, and many former colonial territories became independent, those few powerful men were European political and military leaders, who wrote books, kept diaries, and corresponded with other people like themselves. Historians, often literate Europeans themselves, were content to reconstruct the past using the written remains of their heroes. Three related events have changed this situation. Socialist parties came to power in many countries since 1917, and gave greater importance to ordinary workers and peasants, than they had enjoyed before. The independence of many colonies after 1947 also placed power in the hands of non-Europeans, and gave greater status to ex-colonial people. Finally, the growth of Sociology and Anthropology in the twentieth century made it clear that ordinary people were just as interesting as political leaders, as subjects for scholarship.

If we are interested in ordinary people, we cannot rely entirely on what they write, because they usually write very little or even nothing at all. During the 1960's therefore more and more historians turned their attention to the spoken words on which common people rely. It is now thoroughly respectable to study 'oral sources', and many historians do so. In this way we begin to escape from the study of elite groups, and come closer to the whole of humanity.

There is a serious danger in this process. The more people study oral sources, the more they want oral history to grow into a separate discipline, with its own mysteries, special language and scholarly debates. This desire could destroy the democratic enthusiasm of those who study oral sources, by diverting their attention from ordinary people, to arguments understood only by professionals. Although this book offers a great deal of technical advice, we have tried to avoid the danger of creating a new discipline, and have given much attention to communication with informants rather than communication among scholars alone.

In this introduction I wish to establish two points: that oral history involves *the same* problems as other kinds of social research, and that it takes place in a political, social, economic context, which we need to remember at all times. To support these arguments, I shall refer mainly to chapters of this book. The chapters are written mostly by people who gave lectures in a course called Oral History in the University of Papua New Guinea. They usually know each other and have read each other's work. Therefore they share a common enthusiasm,

even if they often disagree with each other. One way of looking at this book, is as a series of arguments; and here I should provide the background to those debates.

I

In the first chapter, John Waiko argues very strongly that oral sources of evidence among the Binandere people of the Oro Province in Papua New Guinea are not merely sources of information. He describes the many different kinds of oral material, and insists that this is the way in which the people understand *all* their experience. We may use such evidence for reconstructing a sequence of events in the past; but the sources are also in use from day to day, for every social purpose from child rearing to feasting to dealing with international timber firms. If ever these traditions are weakened, the whole community's control over its life and environment is diminished. Once we realise how valuable the form and substance of the material is, it is easier to understand the responsibilities of those who carry out research.

The conduct of research can be quite destructive, as Tony Ruhan explains in the second chapter. The fixing of oral texts, and the preservation of the texts, and the dissemination of private or secret material, can easily weaken their power. Further, social relationships can be wrecked, if students approach their informants without commitment to their interests. Both of these chapters imply that oral history research poses unique moral problems, because of the very personal relationship which ties the informant to the scholar. It is this implication which we should examine.

There are moral problems in oral history. A scholar will often find that s/he is requested to 'prove' that one clan settled an area before another, and that theories about the order of settlement make a real difference to claims on land. The Papua New Guinea Land Titles Commission judged issues on this basis for many years, and collected more oral source material than most other groups of people. Equally, national or provincial governments and timber firms may wish to use oral tradition to justify moving or upsetting a small society. These problems often force a researcher into taking sides in important and emotional issues.

But the same problems confront historians and others using documents or artefacts as their main source of evidence. A great deal of documentary historical research has been conducted — by lawyers — into the precise meaning of the protectorate in British New Guinea in 1884, or the later annexation. They carried out the research because they wanted to know whether the original owners of the land, or the government, had the strongest claim to the land on which Port Moresby now stands. They did not realise that they were treading on dangerous ground, because they did not know the early naval officers, nor

did they know the indigenous claimants to the land. However, they were really using historical material for immediate political purposes, even if they failed to realise it.

There is no such thing as totally objective research. We all live — and our ancestors all lived — in a world of conflict, and we all have some ideas which cannot finally be proved. The writers of documents, the tellers of stories, and the historians who use all this material, have points of view which are important to realise. The virtue of oral sources is that they force us to recognise social obligations, whereas the use of documents sometimes lets us forget that real human beings were involved in the action, and that real people now suffer the consequences. Oral material does not pose special problems: it poses universal problems with unusual clarity.

If the researcher has to take sides, the decision is an important one. Commitment to the needs of the informants is not easy. As many researchers have found, even in their own societies, commitment cannot be terminated. Demands can be made, which are inconvenient, at any time during fieldwork or thereafter. However, perhaps the most valuable form of commitment is to treat information seriously. If we treat it only as evidence for reconstructing the past, but not as relevant to tomorrow's problems, we may destroy people's faith in the only tools they possess for dealing with problems. More positively, by sharing knowledge when requested, the researcher can make it possible for ordinary people to improve their ability to cope with new situations.

II

In chapter three, Rod Lacey describes some of the kinds of oral evidence which exist among the Enga; and in chapter four Willington Jojoga Opeba describes the difficulties of interpreting such evidence among people in Oro Province. These two chapters make it clear that it is essential — and possible — to see how people regard their own traditions. If we can find out what the information means to those who possess it, we have a chance to let it mean something to us. Information on its own is meaningless: only when we know where the evidence came from, and why people took the trouble to remember it, can we begin to understand what it means. Each community will have a different way of organising knowledge; but these chapters suggest some of the ways in which this can be done. In this respect, again, oral evidence resembles written evidence. If we want to make use of a book written by a missionary, for example, we need to know why he wrote it, what his interests were, who the publisher expected to read it, and how the author understood the world he lived in. With oral sources, however, we can ask informants these important questions, and we may receive useful replies: but we cannot easily get replies from a book.

Chapters five, six, seven and eight expand the argument, by showing how strong and effective oral traditions sometimes are. Lyndsay Farrall shows how reliable and accurate were the oral instructions passed on formally among Pacific island sailors. The information took years to learn, and proved time after time to be reliable. Carl Loeliger in chapter six outlines some of the methods by which biblical scholars have investigated relationships between oral and written sources in the Old Testament. He shows that the refining of this scholarship has revealed a long history of interaction between these sources, a point of great relevance to Papua New Guinea. Stephanie Farrall then shows how long the oral tradition about the adventures of Emperor Charlemagne survived, how the stories were remembered, and how they eventually came to be recorded. Bill Gammage's account of the Rabaul Strike, a decisive incident in the colonial history of Papua New Guinea, reveals the strength and importance of the informal oral evidence of strike leaders, even a generation after the events were recorded in writing by those who suppressed the strike. These four chapters should give some impression of the ability of sacred traditions, stories and concrete information to survive, if the keepers of the sources are careful.

Chapters nine and ten should be read in sequence. Paul Mai's use of mainly oral evidence, and Russell Blong's use of mainly scientific data, show how each needs the other for a full reconstruction of the time and effects of the 'Time of Darkness'. Their task is important, because a successful dating of this event would liberate a large part of the country from dependence on European visitors for dating events. In the Highlands, it might give us a date at least a century earlier than the European patrols of the 1930's which are still the oldest firm dates. It is tempting to ask which method of dating is the most reliable, but in fact this is a false question. Geological dating is often very precise, but Dr. Blong's chapter should make it clear that different scientific techniques lead to rather different results. It is very hard for ordinary people to judge between different scientists, so although we must use whatever information they give us, they do not answer such questions on their own. Paul Mai's methods are open to the same objection: different clans offer rather different evidence, although we may hope that a large number of traditions would lead us to a firmer estimate. Each method has possibilities, and it is clear that they reinforce each other. Neither Mai nor Blong could have reached their conclusions so confidently, without the other's assistance.

Garry Trompf, Sione Lātūkefu and Anne Kaniku all deal with the problems of assessing oral evidence in conjunction with written sources, and they are all concerned with aspects of the religious history of Papua New Guinea. As Garry Trompf points out, the literate missionaries have created the impression that religion means Christianity, so that religious ideas before missionaries arrived, and non-Christian ideas in the past hundred years, are usually dismissed as

pagan, static and false. It is quite easy to see that this dismissal is unfair: but to put forward a more accurate view is exceedingly difficult. Trompf and some others published *Prophets in Melanesia* in 1976, to provide evidence of valuable spiritual insights outside the Christian tradition: in this chapter he explains how such insights can be recovered, provided that the scholar is sympathetic and cautious.

Sione Lātūkefu demonstrates this argument by looking at Polynesian missionaries in Papua New Guinea. Oral evidence helps him to restore a balance between very literate European missionaries, who kept records and wrote books, and the Pacific Islanders who lived and worked more directly among village people. Anne Kaniku, in chapter 13, then reconstructs the lives and ideas of women converts to Christianity, in a way which documents do not permit. She deals with the further problem, that most history—indeed most scholarship—is about the male half of humanity. The use of oral evidence helps us to enter the lives of a doubly—excluded society, of which there is hardly any other evidence in literature.

III

Chapters fourteen, fifteen and sixteen should be read in sequence: three highly skilled scholars approach very similar problems in rather different ways, and their 'rivalry' has been enormously valuable in deepening our understanding of the history of the coastal people of Central Province. In chapter 14, Nigel Oram for the first time presents his general conclusions regarding the settlement history of the Motu and Koita-speaking peoples. He reviews all the available evidence from all disciplines, but relies mainly on the many oral traditions which he recorded during a decade around Port Moresby. John Kolia extends the scope of this work, by looking at Balawaia (further East) and Lala (further West). He, too, has recorded a great volume of oral evidence: but in this chapter he is concerned to show how much use can be made of cultural patterns such as architecture, art and language. This approach is particularly valuable when there are reasons to suppose that communities have been linked: and these sources are not consciously distorted to suit contemporary arguments. Then Pamela Swadling also reviews the literature, and brings her archaeological field-work to bear on the problem of establishing dates for settlement and migration.

On many details, these scholars are in disagreement; and this is an excellent state of affairs. Whenever they disagree, they take another, even more careful, look at each other's evidence and ideas, and new ideas are born. The result is a more solid, more fascinating history than any single scholar could write alone. Out of these debates emerge a new, and more satisfying history. Let us briefly look at some examples, and notice their strength.

The most thorough scholar of oral traditions in Papua New Guinea during the past fifteen years is Nigel Oram, whose conclusions about Motu and Koita history are now presented here, and in chapter one of his book about Port Moresby: *Colonial Town to Melanesian City*, A.N.U. Press, 1976. His methods of work are exemplary; he reads all the available written evidence, and consults as many different clans in as many related villages as possible; and he treats all his sources of evidence very critically. It is true of every piece of evidence, that it is created by individuals or groups, who had some strong reason for recording a piece of evidence in the first place, some reason for preserving or passing it on, and some reason for telling the historian who looked for it. Early foreign visitors or settlers who wrote books, and eye-witnesses who told stories to their children, are equally in need of our understanding: to assess the value of their work, we must know why it seemed worth recording. The writer's publisher, and the eye-witness's descendants, had reasons — which we must understand — for putting the information in a particular form. If oral evidence is passed down through several generations, it is harder to evaluate it now: but it is really the same problem in a more serious condition.

Where a real difference crops up, is that the writer does not know who will read the book a hundred years later: the oral informant does know his or her questioner, and will probably change the form (or the substance) of a story to meet the requirements of that questioner. Now, this is not always a disadvantage. An oral historian can, with great efforts, see how the informant is moulding the story, and can ask more questions: but you can't ask questions of a book's author, who has set the evidence out once and for all time. In other words, it is possible to understand some oral evidence better than some written evidence.

A reader of Oram's work must also be impressed by his pursuit of strict accuracy, and the difficulty of reaching *absolute* dates by means of generational dating. This is a serious problem, which can never be completely solved. From documents we can be sure that Papua New Guinea became formally independent on 16 September 1975: oral evidence cannot be so precise. But not all documentary history looks for that kind of precision. When did Papuans and New Guineans first begin to struggle against colonialism? When did Papua New Guineans begin to separate into different social classes — peasants, workers, middle class, capitalists? When did Australians begin to accept the idea of Papua New Guinea as an independent state? These are very urgent questions, but no documents will ever let us say 'October 13th in a particular year' whereas oral evidence may be just as useful in helping us to answer the question at all.

The obvious difference between oral sources and most other evidence, is that we know the people who give oral evidence to us, but we probably do not know the people who wrote books, reports, diaries or letters. This means that we become involved with people, and should not betray their confidence by using

that evidence against them. But if we think about the question for a moment, we will see that exactly the same problem can present itself with every kind of evidence. An archaeologist may reach the conclusion that society A lived in a place before society B arrived. Can that evidence be published, when A and B both need the land to make a living? Documents may tell us that Mr. C. committed a crime 20 years ago. Are we free to say this, when Mr. C is a candidate for election? Because of the nature of oral evidence, we know very well how dangerous it can be: and we are forced to think seriously about our duty to the people, to the state, and to honest scholarship. Using other evidence we may overlook this problem; but the problem exists whether we realise it or not. Almost all knowledge can be used maliciously or kindly, and it is very important for those who get knowledge to realise its capacity for good or ill.

John Kolia's book, *The History of the Balawaia*, Institute of P.N.G. Studies, 1977, explores the history of the Balawaia-speaking people of the Central Province of Papua New Guinea. He conducted intensive oral research before he looked at the few scraps of written evidence about the Balawaia people. His thorough knowledge of all evidence enables him to conclude that much of the written material is inaccurate, as it was written by people who did not understand what was going on. In such a community, with little written evidence until very recent times, oral evidence is the only way of understanding the internal developments of those people. Without their evidence, we would know next to nothing, and what we knew would be misleading. A reasonably full account of social, economic, spiritual or political change in such a society, absolutely requires the careful use of oral sources.

Michele Stephen's thesis on 'Continuity and Change in the Mekeo Society—1890 to 1971' traces the recent history of another Central Province community. The mission and government sources of written evidence are much more substantial for Mekeo than for Balawaia, and Dr. Stephen began with them, before settling down to systematic oral fieldwork. Nonetheless her understanding of the changes in the society depends mainly on the evidence from her interviews. Rod Lacey's thesis—'Oral Traditions as History: an Exploration of Oral Sources among the Enga of the New Guinea Highlands'—also relies mainly on oral evidence. The three major works enable us to make some general statements about the scope of oral sources in very recently—literate communities. First, the evidence makes it possible to discuss pre-literate social change with some precision, rather than offer vague guesses or complete silence. It is therefore possible to insist that change is not a recent phenomenon, but characteristic of all societies at all times. This is the first and greatest step in liberating people's minds from colonialism and colonial social theory, into a valid sense of their own abilities. Second, the evidence reveals the reality of colonial situations, often wildly different from the myths written to justify colonial administration. Third, the evidence helps everyone to escape from

the European framework in which Papua New Guineans are still viewed. Dr. Kolia correctly sneers at our habit of dividing Melanesian history into phases: 1884-1914, German period in New Guinea; 1884-1906, British period in Papua; 1942-1946, Pacific War; and such phrases as 'the Murray era' or 'the Hasluck years'. But only the development of oral sources can help us to see how irrelevant these phases are in particular villages. Having seen that, we can begin to look for the phases of the people's experience, in the terms which they use to understand it.

These major works deal with societies subordinated by alien, literate people, who used literacy as an instrument of control. More surprising, perhaps, is the relevance of oral evidence in 'literate' societies. The important point is that there is no such thing as a fully literate society. Even very literate people speak to each other, often about the most private information which they do not want to be recorded. President Nixon and his colleagues were literate—but their conversations revealed their crimes, when documents failed to do so. Again, within literate societies everyone does not write equally well, or equally often. The poor, the victims, the ordinary people, write much less than their rulers. We must either concentrate mainly on the powerful in society—or look at everyone equally, letting the weak express themselves as much as the strong.

The epilogue to this book, by Rod Lacey, reviews our existing knowledge about Papua New Guinea history and looks towards the future history, when Papua New Guineans, using all kinds of evidence, begin to make sense of their own historical experience. If the new scholars are truly committed to the people, and avoid the 'professionalisation' of the discipline, we may at last see democratic scholarship in the service of the people. This book is dedicated to that hope.

PART I

WHOSE TRADITIONS?
POINTS OF DEPARTURE

CHAPTER I

Binandere Oral Tradition: Sources and Problems

John D. Waiko

I. The Present Situation

There is great eagerness among many elders to pass on various forms of oral traditions although there are some elders whose tendency is to withhold them, claiming that the discourse is of little use for those who are not growing up under their armpit. The elders agree that the discourse is the basis of self awareness and autonomy in dealing with their environment, and they feel strongly that self-consciousness inherent in oral traditions must play a significant part in the new environment and the emerging identity. This view is shared by some young people, though a great majority consider the autonomous basis and the old means of discourse to be a barrier to progress towards a modern way of life. Traditional modes of discourse are in conflict with recently introduced forms of communication. This presents a critical situation in which discussion between the elders and the youngsters is under considerable strain: and this situation demands a dialogue between the two age levels so that people can go on using their oral traditions to deal with their environment.

To me, oral tradition and discourse are interchangeable terms: they refer to any form of communication, verbal or nonverbal, that the people of a culture regard as important to remember, and the forms of which they teach their children. Discourse is a body of oral tradition accumulated from verbal and non-verbal communication over several generations, and may be termed history. History resulting from the various types of discourse can only be remembered up to a point; non-verbal discourse has the capacity to last longer, as symbolic metaphor, in dance and drama. The discourse has two integral parts both of which express themes of history. Before history we find an arena of philosophy so that the period beyond *opipi* and *sinenembari* (or what we might call history and philosophy) are inextricably interwoven with verbal and non-verbal forms of discourse. It would require much research to bring out the distinctions between the two areas of knowledge. Meanwhile let us ignore the boundaries so as to combine these disciplines into a mirror that reflects who and what we want to know about the past.

II Types of Discourse

To consider verbal forms, there are many types of discourse, which can be divided into two groups. One is a set of traditions that are *learned* and they must be *repeated correctly*; while in the other category one is required to learn forms. The first category includes historical experiences, legends, stories, songs, cries, chants, migration history, recitation of genealogies, magical formulae, proverbs, botanical knowledge,¹ and so on.

The contents of tradition that are learned and repeated for transmission.

a) *Kiki opipi* or legends. *Kiki* is a story and *opipi* literally means great-great-great-grand-father (or five generations from ego). This means that Binandere measure time in terms of particular generations, and legends are historical accounts which happened during the lives of the *opipi*, but it is very difficult to identify names of people and places and time. They therefore become *kiki opipi* or stories related to the people who lived about five generation ago. It seems that whatever happened prior to that generation falls into oblivion and mystery. No specific term is given to a generation immediately before *opipi*. Many clans of the Binandere view *opipi* as their ancestors and trace descent back to one *opipi*. Binandere refer to the parents of the *opipi* as a couple who came into being of their own accord—their coming into existence is called *sinenembari*. This term does not connote the concept of creation of the beings before *opipi*: it merely states the independent origin of a clan. *Sinenembari* was the basis for totems related to many clan populations. This may suggest that the period beyond *opipi* could well be that of *sinenembari* to which almost every clan relates its origins.

Immediately after *opipi* there is the period of *etutu*; and from the subsequent generations down to ego, most events are remembered and passed from father to son and the living people remember them. After *opipi*, therefore, a set of traditions such as recitation of genealogy is a source of information related to, *inter alia*, customary right over land for gardening and forest for hunting, water for fishing and swamps for sago. Acquisition of these rights is related to specific persons along the genealogical line so that this piece of evidence can carry considerable weight on customary claims. Secondly, reciting a genealogy is also important with regard to the ideology of a tribe in general and the clan in particular: for it deals with the system of *payback* or avenging of deaths either through actual physical killing in battles or by the making of sorcery. Genealogy indicates times in relation to the individual member along the line, and an elder can therefore state sequences of events. Thirdly, it yields

¹I have left out the oral tradition related to ethnobotany, especially the medicinal plants, because of limitations on space and time.

information relating to marriage between one group of people with another. Inter-marriage is an important piece of evidence in the context of migrant clans. Thus it is quite feasible to establish a fairly reliable sequence of time and events in the analysis of genealogical data in particular and the evaluation of oral tradition.

The sequence of the discourse is therefore as follows: *Sinenembari-opipi-etutu-ewowo-apie-mamo-mai* (ego).

b) *Oiyang' dumbari kiki*: migration. A history related to migration does stretch beyond the limit of *opipi* so that it can explain how a group of people felt about migration and the direction of their movements as well as the series of settlements. It might indicate causes of warfare and alliances and the various ways in which a community used to arrive at decisions and found solutions to many problems, some of which in fact resulted in migration.

A detailed study of an *oro be*, or clan, indicates that the genealogy of a migrant clan does not go very deep into the past. Most clans of the Binandere do not seem to remember the members of their *opipi* other than those who actually arrived in the present territory from elsewhere.² Close analysis of each *oro be* would reveal that every *oro be* has its *opipi* and they migrated from the mouth of Kumusi River. In some cases the *opipi* and *etutu* would be referred to the previous settlement at Kumusi before moving into the present one. In any case each *oro be* knows and remembers all those descendants after the migration from Kumusi River and some even remember their ancestors prior to the Kumusi settlements. The analysis also shows that there seems to be a limit where the names of the female line stop and those of the male line go one or two generations beyond the limit of *opipi*, so that almost every ancestor is a man whose wife's name is not remembered. Perhaps this is typical of a male dominated society in which the history of women is pushed into the background due to reasons of prestige and possible fear of the power of female domination. However, in the next type of discourse both female and male are remembered.

c) *Ji tari*. Most events between the period of *opipi* and the present are within the memory of the living people, and the sequence of events or an individual event can be transmitted through several means of communication. One such discourse is *ji tari* or *ji gatari* in which chants and cries of individuals are learnt and passed from one generation to another. Information is very specifically located both in time and place, and the individual is identified. There are several aspects of the information: it states the time of the creation of the song, the occasion and the place; and the creator must be remembered. Secondly, any genealogical data in the song must be in the correct order, and the names must appear in the order of the eldest to the youngest. Thirdly, nobody must

²For details of the Binandere migration movements, see Waiko, J.D. *Oro! Oro! Oro! Dara: A Binandere Response to Imperialism*. B. A. (Hons) Thesis, U.P.N.G. September, 1972.

sing songs that do not properly belong to that person, and which that person does not know well. All this means that the body of chants and songs are carefully kept as records of the histories of the *oro be*.

Indeed in the *ji tari* there are different kinds of songs and each type gives a 'context' of information leading into an event. Most songs do stem from one contextual source, that of *ji tari*: and they have rules with strong and binding social sanctions. Thus, for example, when a person dies, a person of either sex cries over the dead body during the mourning period especially before the burial. Another person listens very attentively to the chant and mentally records every detail. The singer actually traces the life history of the dead person describing the character of the person in terms of bravery or hunting, or of quarrelsomeness, as appropriate. The singer also tries to describe that place where s/he believes the spirit of the dead will go.

Chants are not always sung over the dead body because there are other occasions when they are sung. *Ji tari* also takes place over a person or domestic animal that suffers from certain pains, such as spear wounds or sorcery spells; it might be over a snake bite, centipede bite, or over a person being struck by lightning or anything that causes severe pain. In this case the singer does not necessarily describe the personality of the sufferer for s/he is alive and sensitive: but instead the singer emphasizes the pain and attempts to describe the degree of it. S/he calls upon other members of the clan to apply some medicine to ease the pain. Whether over deaths or pain, the rules for the listener are the same: s/he records mentally the minute details of place names, forests, swamps, rivers and members of *oro be* so that later on when the emotional atmosphere disappears the listener can sing the song in public or in private. The listener makes the *ji tari* into the tune of *yovero*.

Yovero is a song composed from the *ji tari*: it is usually sung when a person is using energy in physical labour, especially in the gardens cutting a huge tree, or it may be simply walking through the forest. The listener must not only remember the details of the chant but also sing it in the same order as the original person. S/he is also expected to imitate the voice of the original singer. Forgetting a name of a place and reversing the order of seniority in a given generation of a clan is avoided at all times, for a forgetful mind automatically invites public abuse either from the original singer or from relatives. Sometimes a quarrel may ensue leading to physical fights over the rights to sing in what is regarded as the proper manner. However, more often than not the original singer uses *atembari*, a shame sanction as a means to reprimand the person who does not bother to remember the chant well. This enforces the exact transmission of the traditional chants so that the songs are really learnt and correctly repeated.

The most important method by which *ji tari* keep reliable records of the

histories of *oro be* is by changing the *ji tari* into the tune of what is variously termed *guru*, *ya be*, *embo da ya*, or *petari ya*. *Guru* refers to the sound of the huge drums, to sing 'real songs', men's songs or 'standing songs' respectively. The standing songs are sung in concert. Men stand when they sing them.³ The rules and sanctions observed in the *yovero* are strictly adhered to in the *guru*, perhaps much more so than the *yovero* itself because the latter is an attempt of an individual whereas the *guru* is of a concert nature in which famous men singers gather on a social occasion. *Guru* is usually sung all through the night and no one dares to forget an element of *ji tari* because of immediate abuse in the public social gathering. Indeed it is this gathering which provides opportunity for individual singers to sing together in order to inform each other of the body of songs whose source of information is tested for its originality, reliability and accuracy. The songs are sung and the elders evaluate them in terms of original singing, place and time as well as the correctness of seniority of clan members. At such gatherings, elders sing and the young men learn the past chants.

d) *Kae*, *done wode*, *gore* — all magical formulae. These include both good and bad magic, but *kae* is regarded as the most dangerous and is treated with utmost secrecy because it involves killing of persons through sorcery. It needs careful plotting and tact of the first order in its execution. The practice involves rituals of fasting and avoidance of certain food. *Kae* is related to the payback ideology and its network system is inextricably bound up with the philosophy of avenging deaths. While *done wode* and *gore* are in many cases common knowledge so that some members of each clan knew and practised them, *kae* remains a prerogative of a few people among the many clans. The transmission of the *kae* knowledge within and outside the clan has been extremely difficult in view of the fact that *kae* knowledge had to be bought. Even a *kae* man does not necessarily pass his practice to all his children; nor to his eldest son through customary inheritance. The father only passes *kae* knowledge and practice to one selected son. *Kae* formulae are very subtle and complex because of their confidential nature and the level of the communication. Indeed all magical formulae and their application has to be learnt and repeated in order to achieve results. Thus the knowledge and transmission of *kae* is by necessity learnt and repeated not because the tradition requires it, but simply because its practical effectiveness depends upon accuracy.

³*Guru* were passed down from *opipi* whereas 'sitting songs' seem to have been introduced during the contact period with *Kiawa*, as opposed to the 'standing songs' of the men. The distinction is not a marked one between the sexes because women dance around the men in the *guru*, but they do not sing songs whereas men sit and sing with the women as they sing songs in the *Kasamba*.

The forms and styles of discourse that need to be learnt.

A. *Verbal discourse*

We now turn to the other category of discourse in which one is required to learn form and style in the delivery of public messages. These include speeches at the arrival and departure of important people; presentation and withdrawal of status during ceremonial occasions; announcement of sickness, death and feasts.

a) *Tugata*. The term *tugata* refers to speeches and rhetoric in which individuals deliver messages in public situations and the contents of the *tugata* vary to suit the occasions. To illustrate the rhetorical styles we will take several contexts in which they are given with their contents.

(i) *Karu*, sickness. There are persons in the village who can 'read' signs of sicknesses and refer the symptoms to certain individuals who are believed to have caused the victim to be sick. When the 'readers' identify them, certain individuals are sent for to 'remove' their sickness. In this case many people gather in front of the patient and a man makes his speech. It includes all the people he knows and who are believed to cause the sickness. He will mention individuals and describe what kind of medicines each person has got and mention previous case histories to support his accusation. Sometimes, he may be successful in identifying the right person for the correct sickness but at other times he may fail. In the latter case other people get up and make speeches related to the sick person and eventually a person is identified and accused in public.

For example in about 1960, a young man of the Bosida clan committed adultery with a married woman of the Buie clan, both of Tabara village. The woman was sick after they had sexual intercourse in the bush. She was seriously ill and many 'readers' of symptoms came together but they were unable to identify anyone. But one man, Embogo, stood up and made his *tugata*. His 'reading' indicated that the woman had sexual intercourse in the bush: her real 'essence' was taken away by spirits and she returned to her village only with her 'form'. The 'essence' or *be* was not in the form or *woru/tamo*, so the woman became sick.

Embogo's *tugata* was denied. The woman said that she did not have intercourse with anyone in the bush. However, she was about to die and Embogo repeated his *tugata*. Eventually, the woman confessed. The village people got a water gourd and weaved its lid with leaves. The husband of the woman killed a pig and cooked it. The pig and the gourd were taken to the exact spot where the woman said she had sexual relations with the man. The people placed this clay pot of food and the gourd in a cleared place and they hid in the bush nearby and waited. After a while, a firefly came and sat in the mouth of the

gourd. They rushed out and shut the gourd with its lid and Embogo made his *tugata*: now the spirits had brought back her 'essence' and put it inside the gourd. The people echoed his *tugata* with a chorus; and with singing, shouting and dancing the people returned to the village. Embogo made his *tugata* and put the 'essence' into the 'form' of the woman. The woman recovered and still lives in the village.

(ii) In about 1966 Dumbu of Binandere clan made a speech related to the pregnancy of his daughter. Damana was four months pregnant by Kaitabae of Girida descent. One evening Dumbu got up chewing betel nut. He beat his lime gourd and cleared his throat. Standing on one side of the village, he called across to Bunduwa who was sitting in front of his house on the opposite side. Dumbu started his *tugata* with *inia ge* or a riddle saying he had four dry coconuts placed at the back of his house. He had put them there so that they could sprout for planting. One of the coconuts had a new shoot: this was removed and it fell on the ground. Whoever removed it must take it away from his house on the morrow. Dumbu made his *tugata* to the uncle of the man who had sexual intercourse. He concluded his *tugata*, saying he had done no wrong to anyone and he wanted to know who was angry enough to remove his coconut.

Bunduwa had to think for some time before he replied. At first Bunduwa misunderstood the point and Dumbu repeated his *tugata* with elaboration, and asked Bunduwa whether he wanted the coconut or not. Bunduwa realised that Dumbu was talking about his daughter being pregnant and asking whether Kaitabae would marry her. Bunduwa made a very little speech in reply noting that he would discuss the matter with Kaitabae. In the night Dumbu's daughter went to the house of Bunduwa and Kaitabae married her.

(iii) *Betari*: There is a *tugata* over death. This takes three forms. First a man makes a speech over the death of his close relative especially on the evening after the body is buried. The *tugata* depends upon the age of the dead person. If it is a young or middle aged person, then s/he died because someone made sorcery. The *tugata* includes some personal history in an attempt to identify the killer. It traces the victim's life, describing certain causes that led to death, especially accusation of sorcery. On the other hand, if an old person dies, the *tugata* includes the life history of the person. The main theme is that the dead person has lived a full life. The dead person's real being has been 'emptied' to the sons and daughters, and it was only an 'empty skin' that has been buried in the ground.

Secondly, a *tugata* is made to the dead person or persons for help. This *tugata* takes the form of an appeal to the dead for protection in times of danger, and provision of material on occasions of shortage of food. It also takes the form of a curse in that a person places a taboo over his trees, coconut,

betel-nut and mustard so that his spirit must kill those persons who try to steal them.

Thirdly, there is a *tugata* in the battlefields. War leaders sometimes fall captive to their enemies. When one is caught he asks the enemy not to crush his head until he deliver his *tugata*. It describes how a particular warrior came to fame especially through warfare. The victim explains that he was involved in the previous invasions in the enemy territory, and gives names of individuals killed during those invasions. The victim concludes by saying that he is the revenge for those of the enemy people he and his clan killed and invites the enemy now to kill him. This *tugata* in fact is the basis for later reprisal.⁴

b) *Bondo* or feasting: The most common situation in which speeches are made is during feast making. There are two components of festivities. One is the number of pigs and the other is the amount of vegetables — taro, bananas, sugar-cane etc — in the gardens. A man distributes piglets to some people to tend them. He also holds some of the piglets. When they are grown into pigs, the man (or *bondo kopuru*, head of the feast) asks his *bondo gapo* or supporters to make big gardens. When this is done, the *bondo kopuru* asks the *bondo gapo* whether they would be ready to provide his pigs and vegetables if he held a feast. Assured of the pigs and the vegetables, *bondo kopuru* decides to hold a feast. Usually in the evening he gets up in front of his house, beats his lime gourd to attract attention and clears his throat. He chews betel nut and gives his message. He does not rush, nor does he falter in his speech. It flows smoothly with *inia ge*, the double language in which he announces his intention of holding a feast.

Betaia piari: On the next day, vegetables are brought from gardens and a small pig is killed and cooked with the vegetables. This food is divided out into big wooden bowls and pieces of pig meat are placed on the food. The wooden bowls are placed in rows and the *bona kopuru* delivers his *tugata*. Touching each wooden basin with his big toe he announces the names of leaders to whom the food will be given as a form of invitation to come to his feast. For those guests to whom he intends to give a whole pig, he places a branch of a croton. For those to whom he wants to give parts of a cut pig he puts an individual croton leaf on the bowls.

Ya dari urugari: The guests eat the food and come to the village of the *bona kopuru* to dance *guru* for the feast. The arrival of the guests may be marked by killing a pig and this act is called *buria*. During the *buria* the *bondo kopuru* also delivers his *tugata* and announces the reasons for the killing of the pig. The *guru* continues every night until the end of the feast. The *bondo* may take from one to three months during which dance drama is rehearsed on the outskirts of the village. During the course of the feast a *beuri* is built. This is a

⁴See Waiko, *ibid.*

platform on which taro, bananas and other vegetables are brought and stored for the feast as well as the place on which the pigs are cut up for distribution. As soon as the *beuri* is built the *bona kopuru* climbs onto it and makes the final *tugata*. Now he calls for the spirit of the dead person on whose behalf the feast is held. It goes something like this: 'O! O! O! Embao*, you have died and I have lived without you. I call upon you to come and enter the *beuri* and take part in the feasting.' Thus the dead person is invited to the feast. This may be before the climax of the feast. The climax is reached when on a final day the pigs are tied with strings, skewered, and carried to the centre of the village. A *dapamo* is made on which the pigs are placed in a row. One end of the stick is raised onto the *dapamo* while the other end rests on the ground so that the heads of the pigs are slightly raised from the ground. The *bondo kopuru* climbs onto the *dapamo* to make his *tugata*. His speech includes activities of the feasts and advice to the widow or widower of the dead person. He is followed by *bondo gapo* and other close relatives. Speeches are made about avoidance of food, i.e. when the person died, relatives had given up eating specific food. The *bondo* removes the taboo of food avoidance and they start to eat the food again. In between the *tugata* there is an *atembari* in which individuals climb onto the *dapamo* and make speeches to shame those who stole food. A person holds up a piece of whatever was stolen — taro leaves, banana hand, coconut husks, pig's bone etc — in the air and speaks. The intention is to bring shame upon those who stole those things. If they are among the crowd they feel shame and stop stealing.

After all this the *bondo kopuru* climbs onto the *dapamo* again and delivers his *tugata*. This time he points to the pig which he wants to give to marked guests. The *tugata* includes the reasons why he is giving a whole pig. This is related to what the guest contributed to the host at the time of mourning for the dead person. The *pu jiari* or giving of a whole pig is followed by the drowning of the rest of the pigs. These are carried onto the *beuri* for cutting and distribution. The final *tugata* of the feast takes place when the *bondo kopuru* calls individual names and gives them pieces of pig with some bundles of taro. The *tugata* is opened by calling upon an important person to receive the best and biggest part of a pig. The *tugata* includes speeches similar to that of *pu jiari*, and the *bondo* is over.

B. *Forms of non-verbal discourse: 'symbolic metaphor'.*

This form of discourse requires symbolic representation with minimal or no verbal communication and the performance requires physical and emotional energy to attain an abstract standard of art set by the elders or choreographers, to convey meanings and ideas through physical movements and sounds of

*The name of the deceased.

drums. As described above, the *bondo kopuru* sends a branch of croton to those guests who were given a whole pig. The branch of croton symbolises a whole pig, but it also signifies that it is the responsibility of the clan getting the branch to organise a dance-drama. In other words the sending of the branch is a form of invitation as well as a power of delegation. The *bondo kopuru* realises that the organisation of the feast and catering for the guests involves too much work. As a result he delegates the responsibility of performing dances to another clan.

After arriving in the host's village the guests clear a *ya gara*. This is a small area cleared under trees, to practice the art of symbolic metaphor representation. There are two phases in the discourse of symbolic metaphor. One is the learning stage taught by elders in the *gara*. The other is the performance of the art by dancers in the village for an audience. The first stage involves *ya patari* which literally means *dance treading*: dancers are to follow the path trodden by elders. The treading dance takes place in the *gara* away from the women and children. There the choreographers spend day and night teaching the dancers. There is a lot of verbal communication during the rehearsal stage and even the elders get up and show the dancers how to dance. For the choreographers there are two important elements to consider in rehearsals, that of *tai edopa* and *tai bouga* meaning light feet and heavy feet, respectively. The choreographers watch the participants who are capable of treading their feet on the path of art and those who are not. Those who are not able to follow the choreographers spend most of their time with them until all the participants' legs become light. It is obvious that there is an abstract choreography involved during the rehearsal stage.

Ya vetu: While the rehearsal is going on, a theme of the symbolic representation is being thought out. This involves two things: one is a story that includes a plot of the drama, and the motif for the dancers to represent. The latter is called *ya vetu* or the bone of the dance. An artist is asked to carve out of wood the motif that is going to symbolise the drama. *Ya vetu* is a symbolic metaphor itself because it represents an object motif of the drama. The audience knows, without being told, that the object represents a snake, a crocodile, a bird, and so on.⁵

The second aspect is that of the dance itself in the village. The presentation of the symbolic metaphor to the audience is the climax of the *bondo*. There is no song accompanying the symbolic metaphor but there is a brief song at the end of it. This is to declare to the public the source of the story from which the plot was developed.

The anthropologist F. E. Williams discussed the functions and significance of the dance and drama. He concluded that dance and drama relate to

⁵See Williams, F. E. *Orokaiva Society*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969 (reprint) chapter XIV.

'mortuary' and 'initiatory' rites while the dancers represent spirits of the dead (Williams 1930:257). The other set of functions were 'aesthetic' and 'recreative' or 'more real', 'live'.

Thus from *opipi* to the present there is accumulated knowledge of various traditions that are learned and incorporated into the cultural learning processes. Paulo Freire has described the continuity and contextuality of this learning process in this way. 'Inheriting acquired experience, creating and recreating, integrating themselves into their contexts, responding to its challenges, objectifying themselves, discerning, transcending, men enter into the domain which is theirs exclusively — that of History and Culture.'⁶ I believe that verbal discourse reflects an underlying system which forms an epoch between *opipi* and the present generation. This epoch is characterised by information whose source may be traced to individual personalities and places. This distinguishes an epoch that has a point of reference, from events which fall into the category of myths. For example there are about seven stages of migration and counter-migration movements and each stage seems to have been preceded by warfare. The last three of the stages can be traced back to an *opipi* and the first four stages fall into myths and legends. This could mean that the non-verbal types of discourse are sophisticated mechanisms to create and recreate what were in fact verbal types of discourse of the people who lived before the period of *opipi*. Over the years the verbal forms may have changed into non-verbal forms and have been incorporated into the corpus of oral tradition. In order to illustrate this point let us refer to a legend relating to the origin of a clan.

Oral tradition has it that there was a clan whose three leaders were Wai, Waragi and Beomi, who lived at the foot of Mt. Keroro near Wanigera.⁷ The

⁶Freire, P., *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Sheed and Ward, London, 1973, p. 4.

⁷Rev. P.J. Money was stationed at Wanigera about 1904. In April 1909 he wrote to the Curator of the Australian Museum regarding the spelling of the name Wanigera, explaining why he preferred Wanigera as the authentic one to Wanigela. '... That WANIGERA is the correct spelling for the name of this locality. Before my arrival in this district other missionaries called it WANIGELA. Upon studying the language and sound the letter L was not used in any of their words and I also learned that the natives themselves always said "WANIGERA". I, therefore, altered the spelling to the present form.' (Money Collection, File no. e. 12950-59, Australian Museum, Sydney). I would prefer to accept Money's spelling.

Rev. C. King was the first Anglican missionary who started reducing WEDAUAN Language (AN) into writing. He used Wedau as the language of the mission in either area. He may be accused of carrying the letter L into other non-Austronesian languages such as Binandere. He could not refrain from committing the same error in the Binandere orthography as is obvious in the spelling of 'Binandele'. Recent studies have shown the various factors that contributed to these errors. See Healey, A. and Taylor, A. J. 'Writing New Guinea Languages: Alphabets and Orthographies' in Wurm S.A. *Current Trends in the study of N.G. Area Languages* in press. I am grateful to L. Carrington, Linguistics Dept., A.N.U. who has drawn my attention to this study.

clansmen cleared a big area of land while the clanswomen cut taro seedlings for planting the next morning. In the night a spirit called Bego came out from a hollow in a tree near the garden. He came out to pour magic on the garden and sprinkle the seedlings so that they could grow well. His son named Sirimi came out from the same tree to follow his father, but he lost the track. He wandered about and fell asleep on the cleared plot.

It was usual to plant taro in the morning before everyone woke up. Therefore the clan leaders left the village to go to the garden. They started together, but Waragi outran the others and arrived in the garden. He saw Sirimi whose body was decorated with shells, dogs teeth and other ornaments. Waragi did not disturb him, but cut a lawyer cane and tied Sirimi onto a trunk. Then he woke him up. Sirimi struggled to break the string to run away but the cane held him back. He fell into a trance and froth covered his face and body. Waragi cut a branch of a *dunga* tree and hit him to break his trance.

The two leaders came behind and Beomi asked Waragi if he could adopt Sirimi. So Waragi gave Sirimi to Beomi. Sirimi worked in the night and rested during the day. Sirimi married a woman and a son was born to them. He named the son Bego after his father. Bego is regarded as an ancestor whose descendants are members of the Bosida clan which resides at Tabara village on the Gira River.

It is claimed that this clan came from the region around Wanigera and yet its history lacks details between there and Kumusi River; that is, between the first and the fourth stages of migration movements. However, this legend was enacted in the form of traditional dance at Tabara village during the second decade of this century. This suggests that non-verbal forms were used to represent the origin of the clan to its descendants. It seems that when a group of people moved from one place to the other it forgot the origins of its clan in detail. But in each place it presented its origins in terms of non-verbal discourse, especially through symbolic metaphor. Although the details of each movement were lost, at least its legends relating to its origin were presented in drama form at each settlement so as to enable the descendants to remember their origin and thus explain the hiatus between one place and another. This learning was then incorporated into the corpus of traditions. It appears that non-verbal discourse is a characteristic of a migrant clan and it provides the missing link between what is claimed to be an original ancestor and recent generations.

III. *Some problems of collecting and analysing oral tradition*

a) *How to get chronology out of discourse.*⁸

In order to measure the period between now and *opipi* we must discuss it in relation to the western chronological system.⁹ First let us take the chart of the Ugousopo clan. The author represents ego. Danato represents *opipi* on our time scale: and we shall attempt to determine the period in between the two of us. Let us take 1977 as a starting point and go backwards towards *opipi*. I am about 33 years old and the third of a family of five. The eldest is a sister who may have been born around 1939: and assuming that my father Dademo was about 30 years of age when he married my mother, he must have been born around 1910.¹⁰ Dademo's father, Tariambari, was the third of a family of six and Tariambari was probably born around 1880. This may mean that Tariambari's eldest brother may have been born around 1876. Assuming that Tariambari's father Gonjiji was 30 years old when he married, Gonjiji's father Waroda was probably born around 1816. Using 30 years as a criterion for the birth of the first child, Waroda's father Danato was probably born around 1786 so that we are dealing with a history of roughly 190 years.

It seems that the genealogy of any migrant clan does not go further than 200-300 years. Ugousopo was among the multitude of clans which migrated from the mouth of Kumusi River. According to this history Kumusi was the fourth settlement in the series of seven migration stages. More research is required to determine whether it was Danato who was involved in the fifth stage of migration or not. What we can say with some confidence is that Danato was probably alive about 160 years ago, and he may have resided at Kumusi and died there, or moved to Eraga during the fifth stage of migration. Oral tradition of the clan has it that Ugousopo was in fact part of Bosida clan, but there was a *yevi*, or 'big sickness' that killed a lot of the people at Kumusi; and among the victims were Danato's father who was a Bosida man. After his father's death a man of Ugousopo adopted Danato and subsequently Danato's descendants adopted the name Ugousopo as a clan name. The Ugousopo chart indicates that its *etutu* Waroda probably settled at Eraga in the early nineteenth century.

⁸See Panoff, M. 'The Notion of Time Among the Maenge of New Britain,' in Second Waigani Seminar: *The History of Melanesia*, Port Moresby, 1969.

⁹My father does not know western chronology at all, he only indicates time sequences in terms of generations of my clan and that is how I learn clan history and the notion of sequences. This generational sequence of time has been related to western time for the benefit of outsiders who do not know my language.

¹⁰In fact my father says he married my mother at an early age because his father died early leaving my grandmother with four children. My father became responsible for the entire family and looked after them all. Interview with him 3.2.76.

He may have married his wife, Dango, at the fifth settlement there. Waroda's sons and daughters grew up there. We know this because one of his sons, named Bunduwa, married Kouwa who was a Yema woman. We also know for certain that Yema people occupied the upper Gira River even before the Binandere had moved to Eraga. This suggests strongly that Binandere and Yema started marrying each other during the first half of the last century. During the time of *etutu*, Geitebae of Bibia clan of the Yema people married Womi who was a member of Yopare clan. This clan was related to Ugousopo clan through my father's line. According to the Bibia clan it is evident that Geitebae's father (also called Geitebae) migrated from Yema village in the middle Waria River in pursuit of his clansmen. Geitebae joined his relatives at Gira with Yema and his son married Womi.¹¹ This indicates that the *ewowo* were already settled at Gira, thus completing the sixth stage in the migration movement of the Binandere people.

The genealogical evidence in the intermarriage between Binandere and Yema conflicts with the tentative dates of Beaver and Chinnery who claimed that the fifth migration of the Binandere 'probably took place about 50 to 100 years ago'. (*Papuan Annual Report 1914/15:161*). According to them the Binandere people started moving from Kumusi to Eraga during the first two decades of the last century. But we know that from Eraga settlement the Binandere had routed Girida settlements not far from the mouth of the Mamba River. Dowaia and Giriri clans had already settled at the estuary well before the middle of the nineteenth century. This is evident from the fact that Captain Moresby was greeted with strong resistance and a threat of violence when he anchored at Totoadari Bay in 1874 in his ship *Basilisk*.¹²

Linguistic evidence supports the genealogical information. Wilson analysed the Suena language in the Morobe Province and he suggests that this people have migrated from the mouth of Kumusi River. The time of their departure was about 1800.¹³ There is no doubt about the split from the Binandere people at Kumusi because the Binandere confirm it in the various alliances to fight the common enemies during the course of the last century.

Thus various types of discourse have been handed down from *opipi* to this day, perhaps less than three centuries ago. Certainly they are distorted but the distortions were necessary to accommodate certain changes that were taking

¹¹Interview with H. J. Tabara who is a descendant of GEITEBAE, BIBIA clan, Yema Tribe, Ioma, Oro Province, March 1977.

¹²Moresby J. *New Guinea and Polynesia: Discoveries and Surveys in New Guinea* . . . John Murray, London, 1876, pp. 274-7.

¹³Wilson, D. "The Binandere Language Family," *Papers in New Guinea Linguistics*, No. 9 A.N.U. Canberra, 1969, p. 81.

place and some changes were incorporated by different generations into the ongoing corpus of traditions. Some types of discourse (such as *ji tari*) give us greater confidence in the degree of reliability and accuracy of accumulated traditions in the last two centuries. This period may be regarded as very shallow by contrast with the depth of generations in other cultures. In an attempt to reduce oral tradition into writing, there is a danger of sounding like an apologist who is sad that the history of the people whose ancestors lived about 200 years ago is not worthwhile remembering. The point is we must analyse the history of the last 100 years marked by the arrival of *Kiawa* (Europeans) in 1900. The analysis of this period will indicate some methodological approaches to understanding and writing not only the streams of history in the last 50 years since contact but also the previous 100 years. For the Binandere the contact with *Kiawa* is a landmark that divides the historical memory into two epochs. One is between *apie* and the *opipi* which is characterised by warfare and migration and the other is from *apie* to the present day, a period which is characterised by struggle against imperialism.

b) *How to distinguish genuine stories from exotica.*

Devoid of contextuality any story teller has difficulties in imparting knowledge and s/he becomes like a person crossing a creek on a slippery log under flood, gripping the log, testing the log ahead, and advancing only where the feet grip the log and the logs prove it to be firm. S/he tells a story piece by piece realising the complexity of the information, testing whether the hearer follows it, and advancing to unweave the intricacies of the story only when the teller gains confidence in the listener. The tellers of stories do not use this method as a deliberate technique. It is rather a human skill which is inherent in oral tradition, universal in any society in which oral discourse is the predominant form. The teller expects some kind of response from the listener, and requires appreciation of the intrinsic values of the story and the subtleties of an impressive performance in expounding the oral traditions.¹⁴ Failing to receive appreciation and unable to gain confidence from the listener, the teller loses interest, in telling of the story.

What happens during the time of telling is something like this. Imagine a land snail inside its shell on damp ground. The creature sends two of its feelers ahead of its body from the shell. Feeling reassurance they invite the body to come out slowly. However, if they sense any negative element the feelers with-

¹⁴The Binandere say that words and valuable information are wasted in the hollow of woods, i.e. it enters one ear and comes out the other ear, and it does not enter the skull and into the brain.

draw and tell the body to remain in the shell for a while. This is exactly what the story teller does. Sensing a negative response in the fact that the listener has lost the thread, s/he withholds most of the information and in some cases tells some exotic stories.

This *exotica* is evident in the following manner. S/he delivers the *kiki opipi, oiyang' dumbari* history and genealogy in short and vague terms; half way and full of mumbling; and long and dull. For those in whom the teller perceives a positive response, various types of discourse come out like the body of the snail. The teller tends to elaborate on the various types of discourse: an indicator for this method of unfolding the tradition is that the teller makes it short and sharp; half-told but informative; and in many cases tells the stories in great detail, full of interest. *Ji tari* does not come out in this manner (certain inhibitions prevent individuals from repeating it without singing it). About the best situation to record it is during the *guru* dance to learn the past chants or when someone dies. This emphasizes the contextuality of *ji tari*, because these discourses cannot easily be told as part of migration history, genealogy and so on. The best way to know oral discourse is living among the people so that one can see, hear, understand and appreciate the various types of discourse in their contexts. Certain inhibitions prevent individuals from giving away information until a dramatic scene provokes a person to argue in a most intricate manner and the subtleties of oral tradition come out.

The person may attach a practical value to certain information. S/he feels that s/he can't afford to give away information that is too valuable in itself. The teller may attempt to say something as a preliminary insight, but cannot, for it demands emotional energy, personal attitude, understanding of its ideology and the belief system embedded in the mechanics of how it operates. This is particularly true of areas of knowledge such as *kae, done wode, gore*, and all sorcery and magic practice. To my mind magic and sorcery are the most demanding and difficult areas of knowledge and understanding in Binandere society. Many people profess to know them, but few understand and use them, and a very few notorious ones have the know-how to kill other people. They will tell you that there exists an inner world of knowledge and experience in a vast and complex territory about which hardly any members of the present generation know: they tell you this when they are arrested for practising sorcery. The fact is that young people have different ambitions and aspirations and they will have little or no contact with the intrinsic values in this world of knowledge.

The reluctance to unfold information relating to sorcery and magic does not lie in their complex nature, nor is it because of the inability of the teller in unfolding such information. It lies in the realisation that the recipient may use the information for practical purposes, on the one hand, and the teller knows full well that the act of telling provokes others to react with violence.

This means that a teller does not give information on sorcery and magic at all easily.¹⁵

c) *Moral dilemma*

The definition of oral tradition raises the question: what kind of oral traditions are people not teaching their children? This is, of course, a very urgent question. Are oral traditions to be used as pieces of relics to be preserved in museums? or notes and manuscripts for folklorists and scholars to be kept in libraries? or are we bowing down to cry over the dying tradition, in sorrow for a lost cause? Certainly they are no longer part of a live oral tradition and we must always be careful to bear in mind that the dead body does not tell us all about the living nature of it, nor is a broken shield useful to a warrior. What is of equal importance is that various discourses as outlined above do not occur in a vacuum; they have intricate relationships with, and historical meaning for, the society. Indeed oral traditions are like tools used in various real life situations. They have direct meaning and relate to realities of life, so that wealth of traditions come out under different circumstances and contexts as well as conflicts in varying degrees of dramatic forms. If a *kiap* asks a 'big man' about the ownership of a piece of land, '*Tubuna bilong husat i planim dispela tanget long mak bilong graun?*' in a straight question, the big man may answer, '*Tubuna bilong mi.*' But if the same 'big man' is claiming the land against another person, he will argue his case in the most intricate way with vigour and force in order to refute his opponents' claim. This shows that there is direct meaning and purpose in the transmission of the intricate knowledge related to the land in question. From *opipi* to the 'big man' care was taken to hand down a particular tradition in view of the fact that at some stage the land would be disputed for customary rights. This suggests that the transmission of oral tradition can be *manipulated* so that *opipi* of a particular clan manipulate its descendants to learn the rights of acquisition and it may be possible that this manipulation diverts the clan to overlook other areas of knowledge. Over a period of time, certain arts or techniques may have been forgotten. The transmission of oral tradition depends to a great extent upon its practical value and relevance to the recipient generation. In this important sense we know that a particular oral tradition contains the accumulated tools for dealing with and living in the environment. The underlying question is whether to see the drama, hear the stories and understand the types of discourse in their live contexts in relation to the people who *habitually* used them in dealing with the environment, or to live away from them and use their discourse in a way that

¹⁵This shows that oral tradition regarding killings are very alive and not forgotten as is evident from the fact that the telling of killing — stories provokes the relatives of the victim to engage in fighting.

does not contribute anything towards cultivating their awareness.

Nevertheless, we are aware that the environment changed prior to contact with *Kiawa* because we know that volcanoes erupted, famine and migration occurred in history. The corpus of oral tradition with which the people dealt with these changes in the environment, and the mechanisms of coping with the changes were within their ability and competence. Thus, change did not appear to have a serious impact on the mode of communication and the true view of the people's world so that changes brought about by their environment were incorporated into realities of life.

The arrival of *Kiawa* introduced forms of communication which exert a considerable strain on the mode of transmission and communication in oral tradition. In the new situation 'development' and multi-national corporations create an environment much of which is outside the corpus of complex mechanisms of accumulated tools and in-built experience of the old situation. This means the advocates of 'development' create a situation in which a false consciousness emerges. It is false partly because the people are not aware of the degree of exploitation of the environment to which they attach strong relationships. It is not real awareness mainly because the corpus of oral tradition does not become the basic weapon to deal with the new environment so that new happenings and the introduced myth of 'development' lead to an emergence of new forms of false consciousness among the people. What the people lack is a sense of awareness that will enable them to recognise that the myth of 'development' is designed to bamboozle their consciousness and pave the way for the breakdown of oral tradition. Oral tradition, as a means of understanding and relating to the real environment and the mechanism to incorporate any change from it, as an instrument to deal with real life situations, loses its capacity to convey meaning and arouse awareness when confronted with the mystification of 'development'. In the struggles that follow, a new pattern of communication emerges which hampers an understanding of oral tradition as a weapon in relation to the new environment.

The various discourses provide bases on which a community asserts its identity. They not only use it to create awareness among themselves, but also they relate themselves to others within the same environs. Environment has always changed and in order to suit the changing circumstances, those tools changed. Paulo Freire has put this fact clearly. He says, 'Human relationships with the world are plural in nature. Whether facing widely different challenges, . . . men are not limited to a single reaction pattern. They organise themselves, choose the best response, test themselves, act, and change in the very act of responding. They do all this consciously as one uses a tool to deal with a problem.'¹⁶

¹⁶Freire, P., *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 3.

However, those mechanisms with which changes are incorporated into the rhythm of life are under severe strain because colonialism enslaves oral tradition and enhances multi-national corporations which create a new environment. The various forms of discourse cannot assert themselves within the new environment; neither would people find identity nor relate themselves to others in the new view of the world. As a result many cult leaders seek cult activities as a means to an end — the end being to incorporate their ideology and assert their identity in the new environment. They see the changing world and demand to hold the mechanisms of change in order to incorporate those changes into their environment as their predecessors did. This is a fundamental responsibility in view of the fact that they are among the many agents of change itself to the people. Are not these leaders engaging people in activities of raising consciousness among themselves? Karl Marx has this to say: 'The reform of consciousness consists *entirely* in making the world aware of its consciousness, in arousing it from its dreams of itself, in *explaining* its own actions to it . . . our whole aim can only be to translate religious and political problems into their self-conscious human form.'¹⁷

An alien view of the world develops with a false sense of awareness that does not graft on to the traditional mode of communication. Thus, the cult leader represents the old generation in engaging himself for a cause, refusing to allow colonialism to displace and distort the peoples' basis of identity, self awareness, strength and inspiration. The cause is simply that at least oral tradition must play a part in the emerging awareness. To engage in recording, analysing and writing oral discourse for the present and future generations is to engage in a dialogue between the old and young generations in a struggle against the false awareness that paves the way for 'progress' in the name of 'development'. To refuse to take part in such a task is not only widening the gap between the two age levels, but also driving in an impervious barrier that stops the passing on of valuable knowledge.

IV Conclusion

The critical area between the old generation and the new environment on the one hand, and the lack of awareness that is growing among the new generation regarding the various forms of discourse on the other, is in the raising of consciousness among the people of both age levels because I believe that that awareness alone could enable the people to redefine 'development' itself and reject the mystification of it. And that awareness must necessarily stem from the ideology of the people.

¹⁷*Karl Marx Early Writings*, L. Colletti (introduction) R. Livingstone & G. Benton (Translators), Penguin, 1974, p. 209. Marx to Ruge, 1843.

In the words of Karl Marx again, 'Our programme must be: the reform of consciousness not through dogmas but by analysing mystical consciousness obscure to itself, whether it appear in religious or political form. It will then become plain that the world has long since dreamed of something of which it needs only to become conscious for it to possess it in reality. It will then become plain that our task is not to draw a sharp mental line between past and future but *complete* the thought of the past. Lastly, it will become plain that mankind will not begin any *new* work, but will consciously bring about the completion of its old work.'

If cult ideology does not fit into this area of responsible activity then my task is to involve people of both generations to become aware of the increasing mystification of real and major issues so that the oral tradition can grow to give people in general and the Binandere in particular a sense of self awareness and control in their new environment.

CHAPTER II

*Preserving Traditions or Embalming them?
Oral Traditions, Wisdom and Commitment*

Antony Ruhan

In this chapter I suggest the relevance of kinds of fact not usually considered by oral historians, state the problem of oral history in different terms, invoke other principles by which to solve it and change its context. My provisional judgement about oral history has resulted from teaching history and from working with historians only in this country.

*Teaching and Learning about
traditional Melanesian Technology*

In the prematriculation year all students of the University of Papua New Guinea do a subject called the History of Science and Technology. During the course students try to understand the differences in production and in the attitudes towards production between people living by subsistence agriculture and those in an industrialised country. The students felt that a foreign culture was replacing their own. In particular they thought that techniques of production, like fishing, hunting and gardening, might be lost. The experts among their own people were growing old and often did not teach their techniques to the younger people who were receiving their education in foreign schools. In 1972 I began to offer a short optional course called the History of Traditional Science and Technology in Papua New Guinea. The course encountered obstacles for teacher and for students to overcome.

Firstly, I knew almost nothing about techniques of production traditional in Papua New Guinea. Further, no scholar had attempted a comprehensive treatment of the subject. Few even knew what fragments of work had been described in the journals. Hence, the students had to help themselves. They presented short papers on aspects of production in some part of the country with which they were familiar. Apart from drawing on their own memories and accounts given by their clansmen, they were able to learn from their fellow students. They prompted one another by putting questions about details of the papers which interested them.

I was able to explain some principles common to techniques in Papua New Guinea and industrialised countries, for example in building houses, bridges or boats. I was able to present the rudiments of research methods: formulating a problem for investigation, gathering and assessing evidence, making hypotheses, arguing to a conclusion and evaluating the result. The students accepted this as a worthwhile contribution from an academic, but they wanted to know the reason for my interest in Papua New Guinean techniques. When I said that I valued the knowledge for its own sake or to enable me to help them, they seemed to think that I had another, hidden motive. I found that many students regarded research as another form of exploitation. Academics made use of students and their people to further themselves, but did not benefit either people or students.¹

A further question arose: Who guaranteed the correctness of the student's work, especially when no one had published about the subjects of which he wrote? This difficulty was less serious than it seemed. Firstly, putting aside the subject matter and considering only the methods of inquiry and exposition, the student had to learn a great deal that the teacher could assess. Secondly, the educational situation was never – in the long run – a two sided transaction between a student expounding his own culture and a teacher ignorant of it. In one way or another, the student's people influenced what he wrote. There were students from his own area on the campus or soon to come; there were his people at home. This community, whether clan or tribe, the student regarded as his judge. Sooner or later, the teacher explained, his people would come to know of the student's work on their behalf. So he was, in a sense representing these people. In gathering material for the essay, the student often consulted his fellow clansmen at the university or around the city, so they knew of his work. On rare occasions, when we had money, we brought 'big men' from the student's areas to the university. They assessed the students' written work with the teacher and inspected the full-scale artefacts or models which students sometimes made as an alternative to written exercises. The best essays were deposited, with the artefacts and models, in a small working museum. Here the written tradition joined the spoken one. Both students and teacher understood that the material belonged to the students and their people. The university held it in trust.

These exercises led to work in the field. At the end of each year I took a group of students to their own area. They arranged the itinerary, chose the

¹ I later found that students regarded the two-tiered system of wages, to the upper tier of which most expatriate academics belonged, as a barely concealed way for Australia to regain a substantial part of its so-called foreign aid to Papua New Guinea.

informants, conducted the interviews and made all practical arrangements. We first chose to investigate techniques of house and bridge building, tool making and counting and measuring. Cassettes containing the records were duplicated at the university. One copy was deposited in the museum and one given to the students' own group at the university. During the following year this ethnic group cooperated in translating and writing records. Later, a substantial amount of this material was published. In order to give students academic credit for this kind of work, the university introduced field projects as a regular part of the vacation's activities.

However, when I proposed an undergraduate course in the History of Traditional Science and Technology in Papua New Guinea, some anthropologists and historians opposed its introduction. They said that I lacked the competence to conduct the course. Further, some said that the students were not able to perform research work in their own areas, because they had been alienated from their own people by their foreign style of education. I believed that the students had a deep knowledge of their cultures by reason of their sympathy with and commitment to them, even if they found difficulty in expressing that knowledge in words, written or spoken. However, the objections of the two professional groups prevailed.

*Situating this Problem
of Teaching and Learning*

Some elements of a general problem appear in these fragmentary reminiscences. They are teaching and learning, mutual comprehension between cultures and age-groups, general skills and particular experience, publicity and privacy, knowledge and its value. We must also be clear what persons or groups interact and in what circumstances.

Other experiences in conducting the course led me to believe that these events were played out on a broader stage than the university campus. To see why this is so, we must recall that different ideals have determined university education at different times. For instance, in medieval Europe, the universities taught the disciplines in the light of a common, intellectual vision. But societies grew in complexity and, with them, the demands they made on the universities. As a result the university became more an association of different professional groups sharing a limited number of ideals about knowledge and its use than a community united by a vision of life itself.

The anthropologists and historians, who objected to my conducting the undergraduate course described above, were professionals. They regarded themselves as having some mastery of particular skills in a definite area of experience. They rightly doubted my competence and the value of my proposed course. However, the relation of the professions to the university is a complex

changing one. At present, the professions can be regarded, for practical purposes, as bodies which lay claim to a special kind of knowledge and which commit themselves to serve the public in some way by means of that knowledge.² When Europe had fewer professions, its citizens found it easy enough to see how the professions served them. Later, other groups with specialised knowledge claimed professional status in addition to the lawyers, physicians, soldiers and clergy. Associations of engineers, architects, chemists and other specialists formed. Some, like the Institute of Engineers, worked directly for public utility. Others, like anthropologists and historians, claimed to serve society either indirectly by educating other professions or by knowledge for its own sake. They assumed that knowledge was some kind of commodity or that it enriched life in some unspecified way. Professional values remain ambiguous. At any one time they are identified in varying degrees with the intrinsic worth of knowledge and service, public esteem and material reward for service.

The professions have always been largely autonomous bodies. Yet they have relied upon the universities to give at least basic training to their members. They are present in the universities in the various faculties like medicine or law and in the different departments like mathematics, geography or literature. They are controlled by the professional associations and publish their own specialised journals. They tend to sustain themselves by training students in their specialties, and to propagate themselves both within academic and public life when opportunity offers. With increased specialisation each profession has tended to draw apart both from the public and from other professions. The growth of technical language has made it hard for members of one profession to explain themselves to those of another or to the public.

The rise in the importance of the professions has corresponded to a change in the university itself. As a practical rule the university has renounced any unity of the separate sciences in an ideology or a religious or metaphysical system. Instead it allows them to be expounded and discussed freely within any department and adopts an attitude of non-commitment to all of them, except in socialist countries. Part of this attitude is detachment towards experience. The European intellectual usually claims to distinguish between the realm of feelings and the sphere of facts. Where faith, affection, loyalty, admiration or familiarity attach the ordinary person to particular persons, places and events in his life, the professional scientist sees it as his duty to save the facts despite sentiment. Values such as objectivity in the pursuit of knowledge and tolerance are claimed to characterise the university now. Beyond sharing these values the professions have no close unity.

²See A. Ruhan, "Education for the Professions", *The Australian Journal for Higher Education* (1), (1970), pp. 49-56.

In this context we can now situate the particular problem that began to emerge from my own teaching experiences. We can also define the problem of oral historians in Papua New Guinea. The first problem does not arise within the context of the university. It merely appeared to do so, because academic staff like myself first put it in terms familiar to ourselves. Many facts, like the belief of Papua New Guinea students and their clansmen that the transfer of knowledge formed part of the exchanges traditional in their societies, convinced me that the problem was situated in society itself. The full range of questions posed by exchanges like the *kula* or *hiri* or *moka* or *tee* was relevant to a discussion of education and oral history in particular.

Neither were the participants in the exchange of knowledge individual students, foreign research workers and clansmen-informants. They were communities embodying a particular kind of knowledge, which they were committed to pursue and propagate. These communities were in some sense sufficient to themselves insofar as their specific knowledge was concerned: they generated their own members by passing on their professed skills. In this way they also secured the continuance of the knowledge. They also constituted the authority by which their science was judged.

The participants were the historians' profession in Papua New Guinea and the particular clans whose traditions the historians wished to investigate. Even after achieving political independence the country has two societies: one largely European, the other Melanesian. In the urban community there is a dual wage-scale. For instance, an expatriate lecturer will draw almost three times the salary of a Papua New Guinean holding the same position with equivalent qualifications. Curious conflicts of value occur. For example, both the expatriate and the indigenous historian will describe the imbalance in the economy and often work to eliminate it by their teaching, while continuing to draw very different salaries. Between the urban and the rural societies the gap in attitude and in the economy is wider still. Yet senior anthropologists and historians have insisted that informants in the traditional society not be paid for their information. This, they said, was a matter of professional ethics! But the two kinds of society differ not only in the possession of and in their attitude to money, but in their view of life itself. The bearing of these differences on education has never been formally considered. Yet it causes problems for the students, who really belong to neither community, though they are involved in the exchange of knowledge taking place between the two. We shall see how the practice of oral history can lead the student to choose a style of life that he cannot easily reconcile with the traditions of his people.

*Comparison of the literate and non-literate
professing communities*

Oral history is the name given by foreign historians to a particular kind of transaction between themselves and Papua New Guinea clansmen. It concerns all that the past means for both kinds of community. It demands a mutual adjustment in basic theory and practice and has implications beyond the limits of the university. To solve the real problems they pose and not merely to satisfy one group which has put them in terms acceptable to itself alone, we must try to see the transaction in the eyes of the clansmen involved and put it in their terms. To do this we must look for contrasts and similarities in the ways these two types of community believe that knowledge of the past contributes to the growth of man.

A Papua New Guinean clan thinks of itself as linked with the surrounding land, water, forests and animals. In these dwell the ancestral spirits. The clan thinks of its life as an effort to preserve harmony between men and spirits.³ Languages are local. Systems of counting and measuring are proper to the locality.⁴ In countless other ways each community is local and particular. In this way it marks itself off from other communities. The academic community is international at least by training, if not by birth. Staff arrange and attend international, professional conferences. Appointments to academic posts are sought throughout the world. Research workers seek general laws to explain particular languages, processes and techniques. The results of research are completed by publication.

The Melanesian approach to experience differs from the academic's. For example, in one part of Manus people link the place and time for finding turtles' eggs on the beach with the appearance of certain clouds and 'stars'

³See R. Lacey, "A Glimpse of the Enga World View", a paper presented to the New Guinea Lutheran Missionary Conference on 13 November 1972. For the relation between tradition, land and house, see N. Koleala, J. Kutal, L. Kembol, P. Kutapae, T. Pyakalya, F. Yakopya Pakane and A. Ruhan, "Enga Housing and Enga Tradition" (in press).

⁴A number of studies of Melanesian counting systems have been done or are in progress. For example, see E. Wolfers' article, "Counting and Numbers" in the *Encyclopaedia of Papua New Guinea*, pp. 216 ff; H. Manda Pumuye, "The Counting System of the Pekai-Alua Tribe of the Topopul Village in the Ialibu Sub-district of the Southern Highlands District, Papua New Guinea", *Science in New Guinea* 3 (1), (1975), pp. 19-25; and P. Sembaga Aki's article on counting in his area of the Sepik soon to be published. The physicist, Albert Einstein, however, sees the language of science as international. See "The Common Language of Science" in *Ideas and Opinions*, Crown, New York, pp. 335-337.

sighted by means of particular landmarks.⁵ Again, in one part of the North Solomons the people connect the arrival of big shoals of certain kinds of fish at a particular place on the reef with high tides and the abundant flowering of certain kinds of bush.⁶ Neither the inhabitants of Manus nor the North Solomon Islands draw neat lines in nature. They see it as a whole, as familiar and particular. Scientists like to differentiate phenomena, where possible, and to establish separate causal chains for separate effects. Even after the universities felt that they should teach students to care for natural resources and so began to present nature as a whole, they had separate departments like biology, geography, meteorology and astronomy.

However, the difference in the ways academics and clansmen see the world is still more profound. In commenting upon the North Solomons student's account of fishing in her area, one highland student doubted that she had stated what went on. He refused to accept that, when a North Solomon islander fishes, he merely watches tides, observes the flowering and fruiting of bushes and sights 'stars'. In order to know what was happening, he said, one would have to know what rites the people performed. Only then would he know what forces were at work. The highlander expected that Melanesians, whether living by the sea or in the remote mountains, had to reckon with powers underlying or lying beyond the phenomena. Thus, the environment consisted not only of the familiar earth, bodies of water, forests and animals, but also of spirits and, in particular, the spirits of ancestors. Phenomena were linked with the past in a way the foreign academic would find it difficult to understand. I took a number of studies of marine life in different regions to a biologist, asking him how best to use them. He suggested that they be put together, so that a study of factors like distribution could assist the government in planning the fishing industry. He did not think of including local rites among the data in the report. He was interested in places, times, details of current, climate and other universal properties of marine life.

The scientist regards such data as public by the nature of the investigation and because of its public utility. A Melanesian student, however, normally

⁵M. Chapau, "Knowledge, Skills, Beliefs and Customs associated with the Catching of two Common Types of Fish known to the Manus People" and other manuscripts in the archives of the History of Science and Technology Museum, University of Papua New Guinea, 1972.

⁶R. Kovoho, "Introduction to the Knowledge of Marine Life in my Area, the Teoparea region of the north eastern North Solomon Islands," manuscript similarly filed, 1973.

feels reluctant to state all the facts, because some of them are secret.⁷ The atmosphere of the university inhibits discussion among the students and staff for this reason. The students' sense of the local, familial and spiritual nature of events does not harmonise with the probing, dispassionate attitude of the academics. In order to encourage the students to think about the whole process they were describing, I introduced the study of stories of clan origins into the course. These stories of the primeval powers provided the appropriate setting for the discussion of traditional techniques of production. When discussing the Orokolo stories of origins, one Baimuru student remarked that "these stories are told in symbolic form, because the symbols are secret and have power for our people. They are used so that outsiders will not know, i.e. so that they will not have power." This Melanesian attitude differs from the foreign academic's view of production. The academic regards the scientific principles used in industry as universal. Technology is the art of applying those principles to production. If they work in his country, they can work in Papua New Guinea. He does not conceive of purely local powers of production. Obstacles to production in former colonies he will identify with lack of trained personnel, capital investment or motives to succeed. He invokes no other terms to explain the failure of foreign technology to transform Papua New Guinea.

How accurately can the foreign academic analyse Papua New Guinean experience, when he approaches it so differently? Frequently, he asserts that Melanesian faith in spirits is unjustifiable. If he does reject such belief, he can only do so on scientific grounds. But the methodical separation of departments hinders him from scientific criticism. Historians, anthropologists and psychologists ought to have a common interest in this problem, but the three professions lack common terms for discussion, mutually acceptable techniques, and sympathy needed to undertake a common enterprise. The psychologists them-

⁷ The difference in the attitude toward privacy of the clansman from that of the social scientist stands revealed in a recent controversy in Australia. The Pitjantjara tribe of aboriginals has exerted legal pressure to have a book, *Nomads of the Australian Desert*, by the South Australian anthropologist, C. P. Mountford, withdrawn from publication. The tribe complained that the book contained pictures of sacred objects used in secret rituals, sacred sites and dead people. South Australian scholars and anthropologists have been dismayed by the book's withdrawal and the implications it has for scholarship and public information. Mr. Graham Pretty, anthropologist with the South Australian Museum, said: "Nothing is sacred in this way in western civilisation, but here we are being quite unnecessarily sensitive. How is the general public to appreciate Aboriginal culture when this kind of thing happens?"

"The public, academics and Aborigines must get together to sort this thing out. What was once sacred to one tribe, and perhaps to its neighbour, is now presented as sacred to the world. What we need is a proper examination of standards in this area and a breath of fresh air." *The Australian*, Saturday, 12 February, 1977.

selves form schools with mutually irreconcilable methods. Historians and anthropologists generally avoid committing themselves to a particular school of psychology or uncritically opt for one or the other. Any member of these other professions would admit that he lacks the competence to decide the issue. The events in question belong to the deeper levels of human existence. On these levels man appears as the hero capable of deeds beyond the ordinary, able to transcend himself. If a historian wishes to record the deeper levels of Papua New Guinean experience, then he has only two options. He can accept the witness to these levels of experience as valid and try to assess it, or he must examine the other disciplines like psychology critically in order to bring them to bear on the evidence himself. There is little sign that historians undertake this task seriously. As a result, their evaluation of Papua New Guinean experience must be defective.

Memory, Record and Tradition

Oral history concerns the relation of written record to spoken tradition. The historian teaches his students to make such a record in order to preserve their cultures from extinction. To form a judgement about this intention, we must try to discriminate between the literary man's attitude to the past and that of the man whose traditions are purely spoken. Some see literature distorting man's growth; others regard it as the indispensable means of his development. The issue is deep and complex, so we indicate only one basic way in which writing affects our grasp of the past.

At the beginning of the European intellectual tradition, writing was linked with history and opposed to man's inner development. In Plato's dialogue, the *Phaedrus*, Socrates tells a story about a god of the Egyptians called Theuth. This ancestor invented numbers, arithmetic, geometry and astronomy, but his main invention was writing. Theuth brought his inventions to the king of Egypt, named Thamus. The king praised some of Theuth's discoveries, but blamed others. He saw both good and evil coming from them.

Theuth claimed that literature would make the Egyptians wiser than other peoples and would improve their memories. In reply, Thamus distinguished between the ability to invent an art and the skill to judge its usefulness. To him Theuth had claimed for writing a power the opposite of what it had. He saw that writing would cause those who learned it to forget, because they would not practise their memories. Writing consisted of external characters, which were not part of the person himself. Trust in the characters would cause distrust in memory. Theuth had not invented an (internal) aid to memory, but an (external) means of reminding a person. He did not show the way to wisdom, but to the appearance of it, for his pupils would "read many things without instruction

and therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and lacking in comprehension . . .'⁸

Memory does not consist in recalling information like a computer. Such information would still not form part of man, whereas memory is part of man and forms him. For Plato memory is the inner power by which man grasps his origins. When a man reflects on what he has achieved in work, war, love or learning, he ponders what he has become. Knowing himself as the producer of culture, man begins to learn his identity. This is why tribal elders tell stories of heroes and wise men. Such stories contain the vision of what man is. They are not devices for storing information and passing it on. They are the means for rendering each of its members aware of himself and of his place among his fellows and in the world. Only in societies which claim to be sources of such knowledge can there exist tradition in the true sense. Tradition is, therefore, not the record of what was thought, said and done by the men of the past. Tradition consists of the living society of men, both present and past, sharing a common life which forms man and gives him a grasp of truth. It is formally established by the rites of initiation, which truly make a man or woman a member of the community.

Plato also warns the literate man that he runs a greater risk of acquiring a merely apparent wisdom than the non-literate man. He may remain ignorant and uncomprehending, especially of his identity. The question is how science is related to all other knowledge, including personal and deeper experience. The knowledge by which man relates all kinds of knowledge to one another and to himself is wisdom. In all the great traditions, wisdom is comprehensive and ultimate. It is either a gift of the gods or is acquired only by a supreme effort on the part of man in mastering all branches of knowledge. The university rejects the first path to wisdom, because it requires a commitment (in religion or ideology) that is said to take away objectivity. The other path leads to philosophy or polymathy or methodology. None of these meets favour with the academic, as a rule. He dismisses philosophy as irrelevant in an age which demands specialisation. The polymath he regards as a dilettante or a charlatan. Methodology he sees as arid and unrewarding speculation, none of which assists him in practising his profession. He keeps to his speciality and has little to do with others. Such deliberate limitation of perspective can lead to the lack of comprehension of which Plato warned, for real problems can almost never be stated or solved by the exclusive use of only one of the academic disciplines. Life is larger than letters. Specialisation within the university often leads to mutual incomprehension between departments about educational objectives.

⁸Plato, *Phaedrus* 275 B.

But the clansman will differ most from the historian in his attitude to the past. The clansman's memory gives him a grasp of the ancestral time, when all things had their origin. His memory is communal. It is the passing on of most sacred possessions from father to son. The historian makes a record of the past. He draws facts from living memory and dead documents. From these he seeks to give a written account for all who care to read it. So he calls his history 'universal' and regards it as valuable for the clansman whose culture he feels is passing away. However, the elder regards his own history as universal, because his memory and the rites he practises tell him of his living continuity with his children and his ancestors who also live. He would grant — if one were to put to him what he would regard as a matter of words — that the history of another clan was universal in the same sense. Further, he would take the historians at the university to be members of a clan, once he had observed sufficiently their behaviour. So he would accept that their history was universal like his, but he would never admit that his own history should become public and he would look askance at another clan who consented to make theirs public.

The historian runs another risk. He may grow insensibly estranged from his own science, unless he remains aware of the duality which writing introduces into his knowledge of the past. For him history includes both his knowledge of the past and the written record of it. Beside the intellectual skills and the store of information he commands, he adopts a relation to historical literature. Only by writing does he communicate his ideas to the historical profession.

His published work gives the historian authority among his peers. Yet the total amount of written history increases too rapidly for the individual historian to master it. Hence he cultivates a specialty within a specialty. Because his teaching seldom draws on his own research, he uses the publication of others (the secondary sources). *Reading history* commonly expresses the student's main activity. The course consists principally of an introduction to historical literature. Insensibly both students and teachers of history tend to speak of this literature as history. Like the clansman the historian begins to locate his gods, i.e. the sources of and authority for his knowledge, outside of himself. The library becomes his shrine. When he ushers a Papua New Guinean elder into the archives and through the book-shelves and tells him that here are the sources of 'universal' history, the elder — impressed by the wealth invested in the building and its appointments, as well as by the silence and reverential behaviour of the librarians — may well think that he stands on holy ground. With the passage of time, however, he may be at a loss to see the power of these gods.

Oral historians aim to accumulate records and written accounts of traditions they say are dying out. I have myself urged students at least to do field-work and deposit the records in the archives, even if they must leave the interpretative work to others. With the passage of time I see that such records are dead

relics of something that has already died. The true tradition, the living society, changes constantly. It does not need such disembodied marks or voices from the past to continue itself. Its daily life and, in particular, its rites do this. Nor do the elders see such records binding their (foreign) educated youth to themselves. To bring about this unity they know that the young must make an act of a different order. In reality, embalming his people's traditions in print is a foreign conventional substitute made by the Papua New Guinean youth for the commitment to them which they require.⁹

Knowledge, Wisdom and Commitment

The core of the conflict between the historian and the clansman about tradition lies in the relation of knowledge to commitment. Knowledge is particular. Wisdom comprehends all knowledge. Men only commit themselves integrally. The undertaking of oral historians fails by its incompleteness, by its lack of internal relations to other science and by its remoteness from action.

The historian professes his particular science. By investigating the origins of men, institutions and societies, he claims to serve other men. As a sharer in the European culture, he cultivates an objective approach to the past. He seeks to distinguish facts from preference, familiarity and conviction in order to save the data. He wishes to draw general conclusions from the particular processes studied. He aims to liberate his student by giving him knowledge with universal value. But *universality* is ambiguous. Generally, the historian wants to give the student from Papua New Guinea 'a background of facts' about the past of other nations. Sometimes he wants to teach a course surveying world history or at the least European history, so that his students can take their place with those of other nations who know 'what went on'. As a professional, he renounces the other kind of universality, which seeks to establish internal relations between history and the other sciences like anthropology, psychology and economics.

⁹In a letter to the Director of the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies a Tolai graduate, Jacob Simet, commissioned by the Institute to do research among his people into the *tubuan*, a secret society, remarks that the publications on the *tubuan* of New Britain no longer represented the society as it is today. This criticism holds for all ethnographic and historical research. Simet expresses his distress at the dissection of the *tubuan*: "... the *Tubuan* ... is made up of five parts, none of which can function by itself. For the *Tubuan* to have any meaning, they have to be together ... These elements are: the masks, the society, the rules, the songs and the setting. I have deliberately left out the sixth element, which is magic." Simet also observes that "... the *Tubuan* is an art form (amongst other things)", but "that very little or no Tolai art was ever intended to be preserved materially or removed from its setting. After every artistic performance most of the material is burnt and the rest is stored away, never to be used again." Again the art form changes: "I think that Tolai art is a living thing, responding to each new situation. I fear that preservation by whatever means if not very carefully thought out, may produce a Tolai art that will have lost its profundity." Simet opposes the recording and preservation of the songs, dances and rites, because he sees that they advance the destruction of Tolai society. See the extract of Simet's letter published in *Gigibori*, III (1), (1976), p. 1.

Nor does he help the student, as a rule, to make choices of life-style that harmonise with those of his clan, except by telling him to 'study his traditions'.

In reality, the academic weans the student from his culture. The historian urges the student to record his traditions before they are lost. Like all academics he believes that Papua New Guinea societies are passing away. That is why he is satisfied to preserve their relics in museum and archives. He only sees Papua New Guinea in the context of the world economy and polity. He assumes implicitly that the present traditional communities will be transformed so that they resemble his own urban, European ones in the economic and technological spheres.

The academic cannot justify the assumption that an international economic and political system will incorporate Papua New Guinea into itself any more than he can prove that such a system will survive. He has not yet understood sufficiently the social, economic, political and medical problems of the late 1970s in all industrialised nations. Yet he would probably regard as naive any argument that Papua New Guinean societies can live more happily by refusing to allow themselves to be absorbed into the industrialised world. That is why the academic joins the politician in using a superficial rhetoric about national development. The discussions of development remain abstract and impersonal. They concern material resources, their monetary worth and their importance to trade. They never deal with the personal growth of the human being. It is at this point that the fragmentation of university education leads to a forgetfulness of the concrete choices which men of traditional societies must make. Does there not exist a basic conflict between the demands of academic objectivity and specialisation on the one hand, and the natural continuation of inquiry into compassion for and service of the people being investigated, on the other? Wisdom is the integration of all knowledge into the person's life. It does not mean mastery of every branch of knowledge by the individual. The wise man adjusts his existence to all spheres of science insofar as they concern action. So the student must learn to relate his knowledge and that of his fellow students and the profession of the academic specialists to the choices which he must make in order to meet the demands of his people. It is true that the clans send their young people to acquire foreign knowledge, but they do so without knowing adequately the complex relations between skills sought and the society in which these skills were fashioned.

At the university, no staff accept this responsibility sufficiently. The result is that students fail to make what they learn their own. The clan leaders therefore continue to express their uneasiness about the alienating effect of university education on their young.

Foreign education brings to the Papua New Guinean student a degree of power within the urban, administrative superstructure. It does not invest him with similar influence among his people. Probably ninety percent of the people

still live in local clans in communion with one another and their ancestral spirits, inheriting and administering land, water, forest and beasts. Their identity comes from these origins. The individual becomes a mature member of the clan by passing through the initiation ceremonies. After surmounting trials he learns the wisdom of the clan, but it is only by committing himself to his people that they accept him as one who lives, works and dies for them (sometimes in fighting between the clans). Most Papua New Guinean students feel this conflict either instinctively or state it explicitly. One has recently asked whether a new kind of initiation should accompany graduation from the university.¹⁰ However, no ceremony at a distance can substitute for the reception of the communal wisdom in the clan initiation. This was made clear by one of two highland 'big men', who stayed for some weeks as guests of the university in 1974. A highland student from the Enga district, who had felt intensely his estrangement from his people, asked the Tembuka leader, Ugl, under what circumstances the people would communicate their wisdom to university students like himself. Ugl replied: "When you choose to become part of your people." However a man achieves wisdom, as distinct from science, he only does so at the cost of giving himself wholly to a local community which embodies that wisdom.

Only when the student has committed himself to his people can he see his new (foreign) skills in the light of the clan values. The knowledge he seeks is not theoretical, but practical. It is an adjustment of personal perspective that follows on the choice of a direction for one's life. Such a choice makes great demands on the individual. That is why one Enga student at the university questioned whether his people should continue to allow foreign research workers to have access to their territory and an academic native to the Pacific Islands that only people of the region do research work in it.¹¹ Papua New Guineans must realise the corrosive effects of research and the reluctance of their people to be subjected to it.¹² Only someone who has reckoned the costs he and his people must pay can take responsibility and make a judgement about the rightness or wrongness of oral history in Papua New Guinea.

¹⁰K. Talyaga, "Should we revive Initiation Rites in Enga Society?" *Gigibori*, II(2), (1975), p. 37-41.

¹¹K. Talyaga, "Should we allow research Workers and Tourists into the Enga District?", Discussion Paper Number 1, Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, Port Moresby 1974. E. Hau'ofa, "Anthropology and Pacific Islanders", Discussion Paper Number 8, Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, Port Moresby, 1975.

¹²In personal communications two post-graduate students, one a Roro woman, the other a Manus man, told me that they themselves had felt embarrassment and experienced reluctance on the part of their interviewees while doing research in oral history among their own people during the vacations of 1976/1977. Until the present little has been made of the reluctance of people to have their privacy invaded. It has been regarded as almost self-evident by foreign academics that research by them needed no justification.

CHAPTER III

Traditions of Origin and Migration: Some Enga Evidence

Roderic Lacey

I can tell you how our community began and the names of fathers and sons from our founder down to me and my sons. But I know that this knowledge is incomplete. When my grandfather and father taught me in our men's house they did not tell me that a curious European would come and put me to the test by asking questions about the times before...

These words were spoken by a man in his fifties one night in August 1972 to his son in their men's house which was located in a high valley in the western part of the Enga Province. They were discussing the origins of their group, the Mulapini people, a short time after I had come with his son to ask this man about these and other aspects of his people's history.

He could recall what had been taught and handed down through the generations about how their group began and how his own generation was linked through fathers and sons back to the founders. He could well have been taught these traditions before foreign influences came into his life to challenge this knowledge and its relevance.

Later on he hinted at some of the ways in which knowledge about origins was handed on:

The possum Komaipa begot Kombeke, Kombeke began the Mulapini people in Yoko. These two, Komaipa and Kombeke, are right at the base of the centre post in our men's house. Like the centre post these two founders of Mulapini (Komaipa and Kombeke) hold together our whole group.

He is not only claiming that the founder of his people was an animal (a claim made by a number of Enga groups and in a wide range of origin traditions in Papua New Guinea), but that this knowledge was so special and secret that it was normally communicated only in the depths of the men's house. His last words, that the founders held the whole Mulapini group together, suggest that knowledge about origins was of great social and political significance.

The claim is given added significance by two other facts. The dispersed

nature of clans claiming a common origin in Mulapini and his progenitors is one fact. The second is this man's assertion that he could be certain about only a few of the clans which claimed Mulapini as their true founder. His words were:

The Mulapini people began at Yoko. That is the place I know. But Mulapini men have gone and settled in other places too. Yoko is the place where Mulapini clans began. Our people are like the root and trunk of a tree which has many branches. They stretch out in many different directions, but they all grow from the one root and trunk in Yoko . . .

So this man is making a number of claims concerning knowledge about the origins of his group: that he has been taught about the origins of the Mulapini people in such founders as Komaipa, Kombeke and Mulapini; that he acquired that knowledge from his father and grandfather in the men's house; that this knowledge is of great significance because it links him and his generation back to the founders and to Yoko; that it also links men in space, like the root, trunk and branches of a tree, or like a centre post which holds a house together, because descendants of Mulapini have migrated away from Yoko to found new clans and lineages elsewhere.

It seems that he harboured doubts or confusion about this highly significant knowledge. He was speaking with his son after my visit to him some weeks earlier, and my role was quite ambiguous and confusing to him. As he told his son, and as other men also told me, I did not fit into any of the recognisable categories in which they had placed most foreigners. I was not a missionary; nor a *kiap*; nor did I buy coffee or vegetables; nor did I run a trade store. I claimed to be a teacher in a big school on the coast, to be interested in their traditions about the times before Europeans came and to wish to write down what they had been taught so that their children or grandchildren could read about these things. For a foreigner to see value in their traditions which they felt had been ignored or condemned by other foreigners, was a stumbling block to communication between these old men and me.

He is expressing confusion by his words about the incomplete nature of his knowledge, and his lack of preparation for this encounter with me. He sensed some difference, some possible clash between his knowledge and my inquiries. In doing so he underlines significant differences between oral traditions and historical writings which use such oral sources as their raw material.

What he said has raised a number of questions in my mind. These questions open up such traditions to understanding, and convince me that they are worth asking as a way of exploring such traditions. There are five questions:

- What claims are being made in these traditions about founders, their beginnings and about links between founders and the present generation?
- What do these traditions tell about a place of origin and about movements from that place to others?
- Who are defined as the rightful owners of these traditions?

- What is the significance and function of this knowledge about origins to the people who own and hand on these traditions?
- How has this knowledge about origins been transmitted?

Founders, beginnings and links

The tradition with which we began named three important protagonists, Komaipa the possum, Kombeke and Mulapini. Mulapini is believed to be both a founder and a man. How he came into being or whose son he might have been is not clear in these fragments. Komaipa, Kombeke and Mulapini may represent three generations of which Komaipa was the grandfather and Mulapini the grandson, but the evidence is not clear enough to be definite about that. It does tie the three together and name them so that each and all are claimed as the founders of the Mulapini clans. Of these three named founders, two have clear enough identities; the first is the possum Komaipa and the last is the man Mulapini, but we have nothing other than the name by which to identify Kombeke.

What links are claimed between the group founders and the testifying generation? The man of the Mulapini expressed them as follows:

I can tell you how our community began and the names of fathers and sons from our founder down to me and my sons . . . The Mulapini people began at Yoko . . . Our people are like the root and trunk of a tree which has many branches . . . The possum Komaipa begot Kombeke. Kombeke began the Mulapini people in Yoko . . . Like the centre post these two founders of Mulapini . . . hold together our whole group.

His statements contain three images. The first is expressed in terms of a line of fathers and sons and could be likened to a chain, or a rope stretching through time from the founders to the present. His second picture gives a wider view. Here he links a range of clans in time to the main root and trunk. The third image is closely tied to the second; the tree trunk and the house centre post. But by shifting the image from the trunk to the house post he is moving from social ties based on claims of biological descent to political ties which bind descendants in a corporate unit.

One more example will help to illustrate ways in which links between founders and their descendants can be expressed in origin traditions.

This tradition belongs to the Yanaitini people, a large cluster of clans which inhabit the densely populated region to the west and north of Wabag in the valleys of the Lai and Ambum rivers. The tradition claims a human founder who migrated from further east near Wapenamanda. He cut a tree down and made a garden at this site and later came and settled there. The tradition continues:

. . . Then Yanaitini returned to Yaumanda and married two women. From one wife Yanaitini had only one child and called him Kapa. The other wife also had

one child and they called him Pauwale. Then Pauwale had a son and he called him Kalinatai. Furthermore, he (Pauwale) had a son called Piau. Then he had Kokope and Neneo (another two sons). Those were the sons Pauwale had. After having all those children, Yanaitini called them to come and get their *Yamba Yaki* (inheritance). He gave the *Yamba Yaki* out at Yambikutisa. Kalinatai the first born took the *mena kende* (the rope for tying pigs) and Lanekepa took the *mena kindone* (the club for killing pigs). Neneo took a *kema lakapae* (a bamboo knife) and Piau took with him the *lipano tanu* (a digging stick for taro). At the end Kokope took the *yandate lakapae* (a broken spear) and because he took that, the Kokope clan are the best warriors.

The Piau clan is a bad, merciless one. The members of the clan can even kill their own brothers-in-law or nieces or nephews with a (blow from a) *lipano tanu*. Piau kill people in their homesteads. Lanekepa is the killer of pigs (a very wealthy clan) because he took with him the *mena kindone*. Neneo is the judge of the Yanaitini because he took away with him the *kema lakapae*.

Now, Piau had the following sons, Kumini and Yakikali who are situated down the valley and we are the Kumbini and Kaimanguni here in the upper valley. Kumbini had the following sons: Ikini, Ipakane, Yaingi and Lapai. Kaimanguni had Maipilyai and Kamakali, so their sons were our grandfathers and our fathers who have died away recently and we, the sons, are here present. . .

Here the links between Yanaitini the founder, his son Pauwale, the clan founder Piau and the speaker are traced by a direct line of descent, as in the case of the Mulapini speaker. But in this case, there are other ties as well in a wider sphere. The founder distributes his inheritance to his heirs (grandsons) and as each clan founder receives his specific heritage, his clan's role in the total Yanaitini economy and polity is stated.

In these traditions, all true contemporary members claim links which bind them to their founder. In each case the founder brings a people to birth and by his actions he defines who will be his descendants and who have rights to be part of his group.

One writer who pondered the traditions and genealogies of the Maenge people of southern East New Britain, also found they used the image of a tree and branches. He wrote:

All the clans existing in the Maenge country are said to have evolved from one another through a process of repeated scission, the first clan having emerged from a tree stump. Not only is a vegetal origin thereby ascribed to mankind, but the current conceptualisation of the differentiation process itself is also based on a vegetal metaphor. Indeed, all the descent groups are seen in their relations to one another as arranged like limbs, branches, and twigs along the bole of a tree.

The representation . . . gives the Maenge a means of ordering the advents of their different clans and subclans in a fixed series which is agreed upon.¹

The tree image is employed by the Maenge people as a way of recalling not so much ties between original founders and the present generation, but to

¹M. Panoff 'The Notion of Times among the Maenge People of New Britain' *Ethnology* 8/2 (1969) 153-66.

mark the order in which their clans and sub-clans emerged in time. If the genealogies given by Enga groups are studied carefully they also, in broad terms, show an ordered sequence of founders, founders of phratries (or groups of brother clans), of clans, sub-clans, and more recently, lineages. And perhaps the image of root, trunk and branches applies to each case, since, as with the Maenge, there is a sequence of these in time. The Maenge tree of descent seems more clearly ordered and exact than any Enga case with which I am familiar. But when men recite genealogies which go back ten steps from now to their phratry founders, a sense of time-depth is given, a sense in which the tree and its main trunk is a great tree which has grown and spread out its branches over a long period of time.

Can any use be made of such claims as historical evidence; and if so, what paths would the historian need to follow in making use of this evidence? Let us imagine that each speaker, when his words were recorded in 1972 was aged about fifty and so was born around 1920 and that each claimed to be telling about events of, say, ten generations before. Then it would seem that these men were speaking about events which may have taken place somewhere between the years 1670 and 1695. We would have to search for other kinds of evidence to help fix these events in an absolute chronology. The most useful would be archaeological evidence, but archaeological investigations within Enga province have not yet yielded evidence which would help us. The only indications available for most Enga origin traditions come from internal evidence in the traditions themselves, comparisons between versions of the same tradition and with those from neighbouring groups, and relative chronological frameworks based on what genealogies may tell us.

We are immediately confronted with non-human or, perhaps, partly-human protagonists. Claims made about the founders need to be assessed in terms of the cultures to which they belong. This may help us to discover more about their identity and meaning for the people who hold them to be their founders. This would be done by gathering as many versions as possible. Once this kind of evidence is gathered, the historian must test it and interpret it. To isolate the founders from the whole tradition would be dangerous: so this work of interpreting would apply to what is revealed by all the main lines of questioning being explored here. There is, therefore, a real tension between what the traditions tell members of the owning groups and the wider Enga culture, and what they may mean to historians seeking evidence. That old Enga man highlighted this tension between his knowledge of origins and the testing to which that knowledge would be put by the 'curious European'.

Places and movements

First something about the places where founders brought their groups into existence. The old man with whose words we began had this to say about the

growth of fertility rites at Yoko:

Komaipa and Kombeke slept in a men's house. Mulapini killed a pig at the site of this house and threw the grease of the pig into the fire. When this was done he called out: "Komaipa came, Kombeke came." This custom was repeated down the generations and the Mulapini people called the place where this was done the *kepele anda*.

In three different cultural zones within the Enga, the eastern, the central, and west (Mulapini) there were three different religious traditions (shown by the use of the names, *yainanda*, *aeatee anda* and *kepele anda*), but each occurred at places which are claimed to be associated with founders in a significant way. An origin tradition from the neighbours of the Mulapini, the Tekepaini people, makes a clear link between the place where this group was founded and the site of their *kepele anda* fertility rites.

The place names are all preserved in these origin traditions as homelands in which a people came into being. These places could not be forgotten since it was at the sacred houses in them that representatives from all member clans assembled at least once every generation for their great fertility and continuity festivals. This gives more meaning to those words:

The Mulapini people began at Yoko. That is the place I know . . .

Yoko, the place associated so closely with the founders and the place where the *kepele anda* rites were conducted was, like the founders, a centre post by which all Mulapini were held together.

That there was continual movement, competition for resources, (especially suitably fertile land) and attempts to build up complex networks of exchange, friendship and alliance, is proven by the sampling of a variety of traditions among Enga which I gathered in fieldwork. This sense of dynamic change is reinforced by remembered events in the times just before the coming of colonial government and the three decades since. Perhaps the vigorous proclaiming of effective ties to founders through a stable hold on these central places and its renewal in the fertility feasts is a way of standing firm against the pressures and erosions of change through which successive generations survive.

The fragmentary evidence about Mulapini origins presented here leaves no clues about movements in the time of the founders because of the assertions about the importance of that one place, Yoko. The Yanaitini tradition tells of the journey of a founder from the east in the mid-Lai valley, through the place which became his new homeland, up into the western plateau country where he made salt. It also tells of how the founder of a Lagaip valley people took some of Yanaitini's sweet potato plants and then was pushed by Yanaitini out into the Lagaip valley in punishment for his deed; there are here indications of migrations, trade in salt and the opening up of new territory both in Yambikutisa and (by the founder pushed out by Yanaitini) in the Lagaip valley.

It is possible to go inside these claims and get a clearer sense of historical

movement and change. I did this in the case of the Yakani phratry which straddles the Lai and the lower Ambum valleys a few kilometers east of Wabag. By walking through clan territories and some sub-clan and lineage garden lands, visiting dancing grounds and noting the number and possible age of trees planted on these grounds as markers, and by gathering evidence about genealogies and some aspects of clan history it was possible to piece together sequences by which these clans spread out from their central homeland around Lenge into other central locations and then along valley floors and up the ridges. Visible evidence of current settlement and land-use patterns, and of the names, ownership and location of clan and sub-clan dancing grounds, was included together with details of oral traditions about exchange, trade, warfare and a number of key institutions, and of genealogies. The result is a broad picture of a sequence of cross-cutting movements in time. If the knowledge of those places and movements could be tested with evidence from archaeological surveys, then it may be possible to build a sense of chronology into the pattern. This approach has been tried by two Enga investigators who gathered traditions about the location of men's houses and other important buildings in their phratries, one in the Yanaitini phratry and one in a phratry close to the sub-provincial headquarters of Laiagam in the Lagaip valley.² In each case a broad sequence was built up, and they too would value archaeological evidence to clarify these sequences.

If we are to discover what historical evidence lies in these traditions we need to move away from the comforts of the city out into the lands where clansmen and their ancestors have lived, built and died. To work with oral traditions which are part of living cultures we need to move in and see the places in which those traditions live.

The owners of the tradition: Who are the people?

Each of the origin traditions which we have so far discussed names people who are true descendants of the founders and true heirs to lands and resources which the founders first settled and held.

Evidence from two other Enga origin traditions, the Tekepaini and the Depe will help here. Let us begin with the Depe tradition. The earlier part of this tradition has four important elements: a dance in the Lai valley at which a man from Kandep steals a highly valued drum; the search and journey by mother and child for the drum which takes them into the man's territory in Kandep; the return of the drum and her child to the mother by the man from Kandep; their return to their homeland through the power of this man and the

²They are Luke Kembol and Ronald Paiyo Kutapae, both graduates of the University of Papua New Guinea, who gathered this evidence as part of a series of investigations about Enga housing. Their reports, along with others in the project are being published by the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies.

change of the child into a snake. All four elements can be seen to name and define links between the Depe people of the Lai valley and groups in the Kandep. This tradition does not name specific groups with whom the Depe have ties, but the man from Kandep attends a dance and so is a potential ally or perhaps an immigrant. His theft of the drum and the journey to the south to recover it suggests the opening of possible trade or migration links. Since a woman went on the journey there also may be a suggestion of marriage ties. The tradition also suggests that this man gave some powers with the drum when he returned it. These elements seem to be ways in which this tradition defines ties with friends and allies to the south. That such ties have been part of Depe history can be shown to be the case.

What of the Tekepaini? The part of the story which proclaims ties begins with a dance in the Lagaip valley. The elements are: a marriage between the Lagaip woman and the Bipi man from Kandep who meet at this dance; the journey by mother, daughter, and son-in-law to Kandep during which the Bipi man becomes a python; the incestuous marriage between the sons and daughters of this marriage and the split between the two couples; the return of one husband-wife to their homeland in the Lagaip valley and their founding of the *kepele anda* followed by the birth of their child Tekepaini. As in the Depe case the founder emerges from a series of relationships, transactions and journeys between the homeland in the north and the territory of protagonists from the Kandep region in the south. In this tradition the details about these ties with the Kandep are fuller. But in both we have a defining of the true people brought into being by the founders, and their inheritance, and a defining of wider ties of alliance, expressed in terms of feasting and dancing, journeys, marriage, trade and exchange. In this they are consistent with a range of evidence from oral sources and contemporary Enga history: phratries like Mulapini, Yanaitini, Depe and Tekepaini consist of clusters of brother clans claiming ties of descent from a common founder; and such clusters have both these internal ties which bind them together, and networks of alliances and territorial rights with groups outside their immediate territory.

It has been said in a number of places, that oral traditions are political and legal charters. These traditions of origin and migration do define group ties, membership and rights for their owners and allies. They are quite clearly political myths or charters or constitutions for their people. If we return to the commentary by the Mulapini man, we may see some of the significance of these traditions in defining the immediate heirs and descendants, the true people of the founders.

His words were:

. . . Mulapini men have gone and settled in other places . . . Yoko is the place where Mulapini clans began. Our people are like the root and trunk of a tree which has many branches. They stretch out in many different directions, but

they all grow from one root and trunk in Yoko . . .

By these statements it can be seen that origin traditions are indeed 'political myths' and charters in which group membership is defined and legitimated.

To evaluate these traditions as historical sources we would need to become aware of current political alliances. But the traditions also proclaim that what is evident now and what holds people together is the growth and persistence of historic links through time. If these claims are not simply statements of some kind of current political ideology about group membership, but are in fact reflections of historical realities, then they are worth investigating as history.

Significance, meanings and functions

A historian of a Tanzanian kingdom has written recently:

. . . The usefulness of an oral tradition . . . must be reaffirmed in every generation. Therefore, the oral traditions which survive are collections of facts or ideas considered important by some social group which persists in time . . .³

If this statement is a true reflection of the character and functions of oral traditions, then we need to fix as far as possible, what were the specific functions of particular traditions for their owners. We are exploring traditions of central importance to communities of people in living cultures and not just clusters of words and formulae spoken and heard in a vacuum.

These traditions have some sacred significance in addition to the functions noted. When the Mulapini informant stated that Komaipa and Kombeke 'are right at the base of the centre post in our men's house' he was emphasising the religious significance of this knowledge. He was also suggesting that this knowledge was both powerful and secret. Of course all members of the clans which constituted the Mulapini phratry at any time would have shared in general traditions about their origins and founders. But this comment about the centre post suggests that there were some aspects of this knowledge and some of its inner meanings that would have been held in secret, perhaps shared by only an inner circle of clansmen. Certainly for the fertility rites there was a small group of ritual specialists who were the only people with the knowledge and power necessary to perform the tasks.

There is another aspect in which these origin traditions served to define local groups. A modern system of roads, laid down in the Enga province over the last three decades, has promoted physical mobility. This has allowed for the borrowing and sharing of traditions between groups. Oral and cultural evidence points to the existence of networks in the precolonial era along which selected traditions and cultural forms spread through the region. Despite the operation of these precolonial networks and the current mobility, the evidence is strong

³S. Feierman, *The Shambaa Kingdom: a History* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press), 1974, p. 9.

that traditions of origin and migration, because of their essential function as characters of political, territorial and ownership rights, were localized bodies of knowledge held onto and not shared freely with outsiders.

It is apparent that we are working with very complex bodies of knowledge which will yield meaning only when much work has been done to understand the contexts (contemporary and historical) within which they belong. In that sense they are no different from other oral sources, or, indeed, other *historical* sources. But, by moving through these questions step by step, we have established that these particular traditions, perhaps more than any others, are central to the existence and the identity of their owners. For this reason they must be used with skill, caution and sensitivity. This view is reinforced by a consideration of the final question.

The transmission of this knowledge

The Mulapini commentary explains that this knowledge of origins was usually handed on from fathers to sons in their men's houses: but no details are given about the mechanisms or circumstances in which this knowledge was handed on. The evidence noted about the Mulapini and Tekepaina *kepele* ceremonies suggests that founders were recognised and called upon as part of what occurred. This is supported by some more detailed testimony about the recent conduct of these ceremonies. This is an elaborate cycle of ceremonies but part of them consists of selected elders teaching young initiates about important beliefs and truths and the indications are that traditions about origin and founders were included in the bodies of knowledge taught in the sacred house during ceremonies.

The evidence about these *kepele* ceremonies and the other *yainanda* and *aateee anda* rites is only fragmentary. Very few informants wished to speak about these aspects of religious life with a foreigner. If there were similarities between these different religious traditions, then perhaps we could generalise and say that elders and specialists taught these traditions in a formal way to groups of young men. If so, then this knowledge was transmitted from time to time in dramatic and memorable circumstances. Otherwise the evidence of the Mulapini commentary does show that it was largely the responsibility of elders within the lineage and sub-clan men's houses to ensure that this vital knowledge with all its ramifications was passed on effectively in the select company of those houses. What the boys and youths heard in the drama of the large-scale ceremonies would have reinforced what they received as part of their heritage from the lips of fathers and grandfathers. This normal means of transmission would result in variations in the tradition according to the variety of chains of transmission within lineage, sub-clan and clan.

That in itself points to the need to collect variants from as many of these groups as possible if we are to arrive at a comprehensive and valuable text of

such traditions. Since the Enga do not live in clustered village groups but are scattered in lineage homesteads, then this understanding of the means of transmission shows us that individual phratries are composed of a variety of groups. It would therefore be essential to collect a wide range of origin and migration traditions within any one phratry. This would provide a better chance of sensing the tensions and changes through which these owning groups have passed. The questions put here are themselves historians' questions, directed towards discovering historical answers. Where, then, are the historical conclusions from these explorations? The answer is that they still lie dormant because more evidence is needed by which the claims of origin traditions can be tested and interpreted. Now it is necessary for Enga, with guides and maps like these, to gather the evidence together so that the history of their people can be written. That history will incorporate evidence like that discussed here but it will be fused into something new which may provide a bridge between tradition and the new world of learning and thinking in which they move.

A note on sources.

The body of oral sources on which this study is based was collected in fieldwork in the Enga province between 1971 and 1973. All the fragments of testimony and tradition which appear here can be found in my dissertation *Oral Traditions as History: An Exploration of Oral Sources among the Enga of the New Guinea Highlands* (University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1975). The chapters from which most of this comes are chapters 2 and 3. An earlier essay on origin traditions which uses some of this evidence is 'A Question of Origins: An Exploration of Some Oral Traditions of the Enga of New Guinea' *Journal of Pacific History* 9 (1974) 39-54.

Two other bodies of evidence from Papua New Guinea also gave a foundation for this study. There is a large collection of published material containing oral sources. I began working with that when preparing for the section on indigenous history called 'Understanding Ancestors' which appears in the joint work by Whittaker and others called *Documents and Readings in New Guinea History* (Jacaranda Press, Brisbane 1975). Some of these sources are found in Part 1 and Part 3 especially of that section. The materials for that book were assembled in the late 1960's. Since then there have been a growing number of oral sources published inside and outside Papua New Guinea. After leaving the field and coming to the University of Papua New Guinea to teach oral history and Papua New Guinea history more sources have been brought to light by students working with their own peoples' traditions. Those sources and the insights which have come from discussions with students about them are the other main body of evidence I have drawn upon besides the Enga sources.

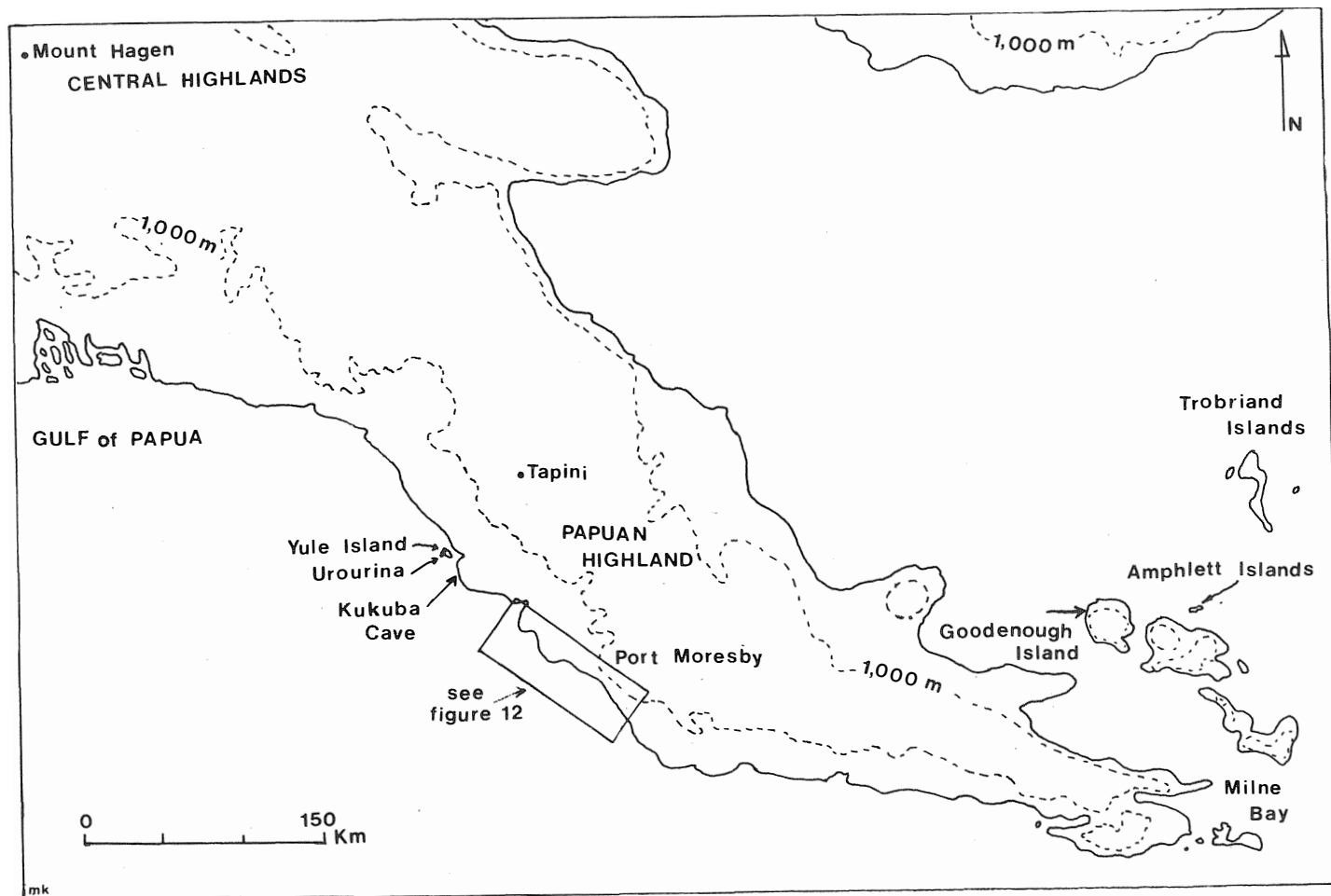


Figure 2: Location map B

CHAPTER IV

The Migration Traditions of the Sebaga Andere, Binandere and Jaua Tribes of the Orokaiva: The Need for Attention to Religion and Ideology

Willington Jojoga Opeba

I am concerned here with the migration history of three Orokaiva tribes: the Binandere, the Sebaga Andere and the Jaua. This subject has been chosen to show how much information could be over-looked by contemporary scholars because of the nature of their approach to oral accounts. It is also to show that one must bear in mind the social, philosophical, religious and ideological values of a particular informant or the society. The nature of any response to a given situation is determined by these values. There is a tremendous chance of distortion if one does not consider these values. Among the Orokaiva, describing things in hidden meanings or in parables is universal. It is part of the style of the society. It is purposely used to protect the interests of the society or an individual.

Most of the movements of these three tribes were influenced by these religious and ideological values, and not directly by a physical situation. When one talks about migration or any historical event from oral accounts, there is always some very good reason given as the cause of a particular action. For instance in most migration histories among these tribes various reasons were obvious: warfare and conquest, a natural disaster (e.g. epidemic, flood or famine) or even population increase.

These reasons are genuine and convincing, therefore it is quite natural for the majority of people to adopt a particular explanation and transmit this tradition from one generation to the next. The result is that the particular tradition tends to acquire a new form, viz: superficial and physical,* while removing the traditional religious, philosophical and ideological values and explanations further into the sub-conscious minds of the people.

There are three important reasons why many oral accounts tend to give only physical reasoning and do not attempt to go deeper into the religious and philosophical context.

*By physical reasoning I mean an attempt to explain things in the light of everyday knowledge and experience.

There are three important reasons why many oral accounts tend to give only physical reasoning and do not attempt to go deeper into the religious and philosophical context.

- a. It is just a waste of time. The Orokaiva depend heavily on past experiences and knowledge. A story-teller may therefore assume that certain things do not require mention.
- b. It is quite possible that the tendency to rely heavily on physical reasoning and not endeavouring to proceed to new reasoning patterns, is controlled by some conventional social and religious sanctions.
- c. Individuals, like the society, are equally controlled by these religious sanctions. Therefore, these values close all avenues of possible transmission. It therefore becomes impossible for any outsider to explain and analyse a particular oral tradition; and it is difficult for a member of a particular society to explain and interpret a particular oral tradition as effectively as he would like.

The migration traditions of the three tribes will be used to attempt to justify this assertion, and will show how much is often overlooked when trying to interpret traditions.

I want now to look at the migration histories under three different headings:

- a. Traditional orthodox accounts of particular migration histories.
- b. Possible written interpretations and reasons for these migration histories from a contemporary researcher.
- c. My interpretations of why these tribes could have migrated to other areas: a social religious ideological and philosophical approach.

Case 1: Sebaga Andere migration history.

The migration history of the Sebaga Andere has been discussed in detail elsewhere,¹ but a summary will illustrate the point. Most clan histories among the Sebaga Andere tend to conclude: — 'One day in the territory of Yega Bapa, a neighbouring tribe, a feast was planned to which the Sebaga Andere were officially invited as guests.' The Orokaiva invite their guests far in advance so that both parties have sufficient time to prepare for the feast. The invitation is also determined by the nature of reciprocity in the traditional institutions. The invitation by the Yega Bapa could have been a debt they owed the Sebaga Andere. This custom is not rigid, but the emotional effects are important. One would tend to feel uneasy and despised if one were unable to repay the particular host. However this tradition was broken by the Yega Bapa because the original invitation to the Sebaga Andere was not confirmed. When the day of the feast approached, the traditional confirmation was not given. The Yega

¹Jojoga W. 1975: 102-154.

Bapa held their feast alone while the Sebaga Andere only heard the noise of the distant drums. This not only infuriated the Sebaga Andere but also emotionally disturbed them, particularly the leaders. One of those leaders most affected was Opeba Jeburu. Next morning Opeba Jeburu decided to go to his neighbour's village to see if the sounds of the drum beats were from the feast. On his way he met the children from Yega Bapa trying desperately to catch *Wo Komba* (a school of small fish). Because the Yega Bapa were far from home, Opeba asked the Sebaga Andere to bring down their *bemo* (fish net). This fish was given to the Yega Bapa because they had seen the fish first. But having caught the fish, the Yega Bapa decided to take the whole lot away without sharing them with the Sebaga Andere. The Sebaga Andere naturally disputed this claim and a fight broke out. First it was only exchange of abuse and the use of sticks and the blunt end of their spears to avoid anything serious,² but Giponga, son of Derariba in the Junga clan was so emotionally disturbed that he accidentally speared the son of Bijoba of the Yega Bapa. The Yega Bapa then retreated with their dead kinsman while the Sebaga Andere were left in confusion. Friendship and co-operation were now a matter of uncertainty. The Sebaga Andere were confused and also looked for ways and means to compensate for the dead. Things were not settled when Derariba Gagaramoigo of the Sebaga Andere went to his taro garden one day. On his return he discovered that his road was no longer safe. The Yega Bapa had laid an ambush for any Sebaga Andere. Gagaramoigo became Yega Bapa's first victim as a direct revenge. Gagaramoigo's body was brought ashore and left to be picked up and buried by the Sebaga Andere search party the next day. The Sebaga Andere as a result of Gagaramoigo's death took direct revenge by killing a woman. Instead of leaving her to be picked up by the Yega Bapa, the corpse of the woman was cooked and eaten. The tasting of human flesh was thus inaugurated.³

The era of peace ended with *embogo* and thus a new and permanent era of *isoro* and cannibalism began. As a result, the Sebaga Andere moved from their traditional villages — Gandari, Mainoyabari, Gombira and Buburiga — further south settling at Sanananda, Buna and even among the Jaua tribes.⁴ Some Sebaga Andere went as far as Tufi, Ako and Mapuia. In all these areas the Sebaga

²Among the Orokaiva, quarrels and disputes among clan members and their neighbours are restricted to abuse, and often only blows are exchanged, with restrictions on offensive weapons in order to avoid anything serious. There is a clear distinction between interclan conflicts (*embogo*) and intertribal warfare (*isoro*). cf Williams, F.E. 1930: 163, Waiko J. 1972: 13-30, Schwimmer E. 1973: 52ff.

³The song composed at this inauguration ceremony is translated:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| "Gambudo — bo — Gamane | That is: Bite, Pass, I bite |
| Pororo — Iwo, Gamode tamo, | Sweet is it |
| Gambudo — bo — Gamane | Bite, Pass, I bite |

⁴For the meeting with the Jaua see Jojoga 1975: 117.

Andere settled until the arrival of white men. With the demand for building of big villages, the scattered Sebage Andere clans were brought together at Buna.

Case II: Binandere migration history:

As early as 1914 and 1915 E.W.P. Chinnery and W.N. Beaver attempted to study the migration history of the Binandere. Their account suggested that the Binandere migrated from the region around the mouth of the Kumusi river. This migration left Yewa-Buje (a remnant of Binandere) in that area.⁵ Most oral traditions of the Binandere clans refer to their origin as far east as Musa River. Others even go beyond Musa as far as Uiaku and Maisina in the Wanigela region.⁶ Most of these sources claim that the area around the mouth of Kumusi River was the last settlement before the Binandere moved to occupy their present territory. This suggests that the Binandere originally lived in the south and moved north. The account given by Chinnery and Beaver only describes the later migration and the movement of the Binandere. From the oral accounts, a squabble broke out between the Aiga and the Binandere in which the Binandere were defeated and thus forced to migrate and build their villages at Eraga, on the Mamba, between Oia creek and Kurereda village. However, the oral accounts of those clans say that the original movement was for conquest. The Binandere moved north, fighting and conquering other tribes as they moved.⁷

Case III: The Jaua migration history.

Jaua oral tradition claims that they migrated from around the foothills of Mt. Lamington to Gona on the coast. From Gona they moved south along the coast and settled around Oro Bay among the Notu tribe.⁸ The Jaua lived with the Notu for some time but one day a dispute over a pig name 'Rarapu' caused the Jaua to move inland and settle in their present territory—Dobuduru. 'Rarapu' was said to have been owned by the Jaua tribe. The Notu tribe was promised by the Jaua that they would both eat this pig in a feast. However when the time

⁵For the accounts of this migration history see—Chinnery E.W.P., Beaver W.N. *Papua Annual Report 1914-15*, 158-61 and also Williams F.E. 1930: 6.

⁶Waiko J.D. 1972, 5 and 6.

⁷*Ibid*—Appendix A.

⁸Informant: Oungapa, an elderly man from Dobuduru village (13.1.76). Oungapa claimed that their ancestors used to live on the foothills of Mt. Lamington with the Hurundi. The Hurundi constantly killed and attacked the Jaua so they moved to Gona on the coast. At Gona they were looked after by the Kowariba clan, who helped them to provide canoes and all the necessary things such as taro suckers, banana suckers and all the different varieties of seeds for them to cultivate in their new home. Kowariba took them as far as the Notu country and left them there. The Jaua were with the Notu until the dispute over the pig 'Rarapu' caused them to move inland and settle in their present territory—Dobuduru.

came the Jaua ate the pig alone. This upset the Notu, particularly the leaders because, as the Sebaga Andere case indicated, the leaders naturally felt that they were scorned and of course this meant a challenge. It was after this fight that the Jaua are said to have moved inland.

These three cases are well supported by conventional and traditional explanations. Intertribal conflicts were unanimously mentioned as the main reason for migrations. The Binandere testimony, though somewhat unlike the other cases, was similar — they all seem to stress the importance of warfare.

Possible written interpretations

Unlike the Orokaiva who was content with his traditional accounts of a particular migration history, the researchers seek beyond the traditional explanations to find alternative reasons. For instance, in the oral accounts, the main reason given for migration was a common condition, intertribal conflict or desire for expansion and conquest. These accounts are validated by tradition and are indispensable parts of life. Those are the only reasons given. Are these explanations true? One way of finding a solution is to develop some assumptions. A fundamental tool for studying migration was to use a 'common factor' approach. Among the Orokaiva the real reasons for many of these historical movements are not really known, but there is presumptive evidence which suggests that traditional hostility was one major cause. A researcher, therefore, would continue to seek these 'common factors' he was familiar with. To use the 'common factors' he had to search for them, so as to validate his hypothesis.

For instance, the early white men who contacted many of these tribes indicated that natural disasters were very common.

In one of his visits of inspection to the north east coast of Papua in 1893 Sir William McGregor reported a tidal wave around Gona and Konje villages.⁹ On 24th September 1895, McGregor and his party experienced an earthquake on the Mambare River: "At 9 o'clock at night we experienced here two severe shocks of earthquake, travelling from the east towards the west. The shocks were separated by an interval of about two minutes, and were so well marked that my hammock swayed to and fro like a boat labouring at sea."¹⁰ In 1903 a warden for the Gira and Yodda valley goldfields reported dry weather — "unlike miners on the Gira, those working out Yodda Valley were hindered by drought, and those who could not afford to wait the change of season were obliged to go elsewhere."¹¹

Similarly the acting Administrator in 1902 reported severe epidemics among the Bareji and Baruga tribes. In 1899 there were reports of whooping cough in

⁹BNG Annual Report 1893-94, 45.

¹⁰BNG Annual Report 1894-95, 13.

¹¹BNG Annual Report 1902-03, 15.

the area and in the period between May 1902 and January 1903 there was a report of drought and an epidemic of measles, the first of its kind. The overall population of this area was fairly small when first contacted, perhaps as a result of continuous epidemics and drought. One officer was even convinced that the people would gradually die out as a result.¹²

Papaki in the Kumusi at the same period was reported to have been severely attacked by beri-beri.¹³ In the early and late 1900s the Dobuduru or Jaua tribe faced a drought which badly affected their country. The Resident Magistrate pointed out: "Many of that people's gardens had perished, while a sago swamp upon which they relied in times of scarcity, had got as dry as tinder and been swept by fire".¹⁴

The Orokaiva have a long tradition of migration. The reasons for their movements are not adequately explained in oral accounts of various clan and tribal histories or their legends and myths, but guesses could be made from what little is available from these oral sources and various written reports now available. From such reports, other reasons for migrations could be suggested. The earlier accounts of droughts, epidemics, floods etc. suggest that many of the Orokaiva migrations were also due to natural causes or disasters.

Most Binandere traditions indicate that their place of origin was around Musa. We see from early *Annual Reports* that droughts and epidemics were prevalent. This may have caused a lot of Binandere migrations to the north. Similarly traditions suggest that Jaua movements from the foothills of Mt. Lamington to the coast were inspired by intertribal conflicts particularly with their neighbours the Hurundi. However there is presumptive evidence that the initial cause of this conflict and the consequent movement may have been population pressure¹⁵ on the rich, fertile areas around the foothills of Mt. Lamington. These are the 'common factors' a contemporary researcher would search for.

Certain questions still remain unanswered. Recognising this omission, I decided to seek other reasons that may have been hidden from everyday experience and understanding of the situation.

The Orokaiva does not give in quickly. For instance, in tribal warfare a man either fights to the last and dies as a hero, or his future is precarious in the society. Feasts and feast-giving are equally important. In other words, there is a degree of competition in the community. In warfare a man has to fight in order to retain his status and all its privileges. The mere giving of a feast to one

¹²BNG *Annual Report 1902-03*, 16.

¹³BNG *Annual Report 1902-03*, 14-16, 26-27.

¹⁴Monckton, C.A.W. 1921: 283.

¹⁵Schwimmer E., 1973: 52. Schwimmer suggested population explosion as the major cause of the Jaua initial migration.

tribe or being invited to a feast for the first time also generates a non-stop obligatory chain of reciprocal economic activities. In both cases, the central purpose is to maintain one's status against the others. Therefore the general situation is that every member of the society is challenged by a competitive ideal. Therefore, every time one does something — e.g. gives a feast — others try to do better by perhaps producing more food or killing more pigs than they were given in the previous feast. The cycle, once begun, goes on and on. This was the situation between the Yega Bapa and Sebaga Andere, before the conflict.

If one does not repay, one would be confronted with a variety of problems. One may no longer be regarded as 'man' because of inability to maintain an obligation. There are several significant reasons why a society may hold a person responsible and expect him to fulfill a particular obligation. In transactions between clans or between families the society's response is not so strict. The clans or families involved are obliged to resolve their particular debts in the way that is agreed upon by the parties involved.

The society concerned is indirectly involved because of its desire to maintain stability and well-being among the various clans. The role of the society is to create more peaceful relations between the clan and family members, as well as protecting the religious attachments each member has towards ancestors or spirits. If an individual does not meet his obligation, he is also aware of his relationship with spirits and ancestors. If he is sick or if one of his family members dies, he would immediately conclude that the death was caused by one of two things. a) His own ancestral spirits (or *Binei-Betari*). This would be taken as a result of one's own physical failure and laziness: the spirit-being, as a part of the living family is also disgraced, and perhaps suffers more than the living family member. Therefore his bringing evil to his living clan member is justifiable. (b) It could also be regarded as the evil intent of other clans or society members. Here the common understanding would be that the effect was caused by a hired sorcerer and that the effectiveness of particular ritual performances by a sorcerer was the responsibility of the ancestral spirits of the sorcerer concerned.

In transactions between tribes, the situation is treated more seriously. The situation is not so flexible as in the previous case. Although a tribe has to determine its own time for repaying the debt, it feels committed to respond at its earliest convenience. There are perhaps three important reasons — (a) Co-operation in matters of warfare and alliance was essential in tribes which depended for continuity largely on warfare. A harmonious relationship was essential, and to maintain this, each debt owed must be repaid at the earliest convenient time. (b) The desire to maintain one's own status. To pay back a feast or any transaction between tribes, not only confirms one's ability to repay a debt, but the tribe's status is also affected. (The tribe may attempt to repay by giving more than it actually owes, for several reasons: — (i) to show his

partner that he is capable, trusted and resourceful, (ii) to impress other tribes in case future alliances and cooperation were needed, (iii) to boost his own morale and status and finally, (iv) to continue the transaction because the receiving tribe would feel obliged immediately to repay because of the excess payment of the debt.) (c) The belief in supernatural intervention is also very important. The Orokaiva believe that all things are controlled by a supreme being known as 'Asisi'. Unlike the Binei-Betari whose relationship with the affairs of the clans and the families is close, intimate and personal, 'Asisi' is seen as controlling the affairs of the whole society. 'Asisi' could bring malevolent effects in the form of natural disasters such as epidemics, droughts or floods. The Asisi at work would either be that of the receiver of the transaction, or from the host tribe who initially gave the feast. The latter would act to the advantage of the host of the feast in response to a ritual performance either by the hired sorcerer from the host tribe or without payment because the professional sorcerers would naturally feel obliged to respond to the situation.

The Yega Bapa's not inviting the members of the Sebage Andere meant several things: First, the Sebage Andere were no longer important and respected allies. Second, it degraded the Sebage Andere and their ancestors; and third the Sebage Andere recognised the Yega Bapa's action as a mere show of strength. The act of the Yega Bapa was a challenge to the Sebage Andere. Such challenges in Orokaiva tradition were usually resolved or controlled by various social measures. If anything serious arose, it had to be dealt with in other ways: for instance either direct physical clashes restricted to less-offensive weapons, and abuse which is later compensated for; or the parties involved may seek the services of magicians and sorcerers. The clash between Sebage Andere and Yega Bapa was understood by both sides as *embogo* but it resulted in a tragedy not experienced previously. It was beyond their own expectations.

The Sebage Andere and Yega Bapa were well aware of their tribal alliance, their rights and obligations to one another, but their own tribal identity has always been given first priority. Neither party could give up and be assimilated. The usual thing to do in such circumstances was to compensate. However the incident itself was far beyond intertribal diplomacy. Killing only occurred between enemy tribes. The killing of Yega Bapa by the Sebage Andere did not warrant any traditional form of compensation. The killing meant that the traditional diplomacy was reversed. As the situation reached the point which they could not both comprehend, two opposing tribes naturally took up *isoro* (tribal fight). The Sebage Andere withdrew and migrated *not* because they were physically defeated. There is no evidence in the oral accounts which suggests defeat. Oral sources tended to say that they were victorious in most of their campaigns and even proved more powerful than the combined group of Yega Bapa.¹⁶ They were only beginning to lose through a severe psychological

¹⁶For elaboration, see Jojoga 1975: 115.

defeat—that is the employment of magic power in the manipulation of tribal warfare. It was a Jengowoba of the Sebage Andere tribe and a close relative of the Yega Bapa who (seeing the severe defeat of the Yega Bapa) sent a magic charm to the Yega Bapa with a detailed explanation of how to use it when they confronted the Sebage Andere. It was this magic that really defeated the Sebage Andere.¹⁷ When magic was understood to be employed, the Sebage Andere naturally fell victims because of their strong belief in it. There was at the time no immediate remedy such as a counter-magic, for at that time the magic used was theirs, and therefore they did not expect to need counter-magic.

The other important reason for Sebage Andere's migration southward could have been *me* (*meh*) or shame, humiliation or contrition. F.E. Williams identified this particular cultural trait among the Orokaiva—

An Orokaiva is often deeply affected by his own wrong doings. He can on occasion be very sorry for himself and it would seem that he wants others to be sorry for him. His attitude is not so much 'I'll make you sorry for what you have done', as 'I'll make you sorry for me', and so he takes 'the revenge of being injured'.¹⁸

As far as the Sebage Andere were concerned, their action in killing the Yega Bapa tribesman was wrong, but it was also legitimate. However, the Sebage Andere also had to compensate in one way or another and the best alternative left was to forfeit their traditional land to their neighbours and move south so as to avoid further and more drastic hostilities. The Sebage Andere were 'ashamed' of their own deeds, accepted Yega Bapa retaliation, and the act of forfeiting their land was an indication to the Yega Bapa that they were indeed sorry for what they had done. The Yega Bapa should also have shown similar feelings. It is this understanding and the sharing of sorrow that one needed for solving that particular problem. Through this approach no party violated their social or ideological values.

Binandere:

Oral accounts of Binandere migration tradition, from the Musa northwards towards Kumusi and the Mambare river, do not indicate any specific reasons for their initial movement. Suggestions such as population explosion could be considered, or even a defeat by enemy tribes. However there is no oral account (that I know of) raising these two possibilities. In fact population explosion could hardly be responsible because the area was unhealthy.

Two questions are unanswered: Why is there no oral account relating some specific reasons for the initial migration? Why is it that most oral accounts of the Binandere migration deal mainly with their different conquests, and do not refer to losses.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ For elaboration of this concept see — Williams F.E. 1930: 332-33.

The Binandere were from a warrior tradition. Their history was largely dominated by myths and legends pertaining to warfare. By reciting and remembering these accounts, the Binandere identified themselves in relation to other tribes. It was an indispensable part of their total life. Therefore it is quite possible that to talk about physical or natural defeat among the Binandere would also mean destroying their identity and well being in front of other tribes. It would undoubtedly affect their status.

To talk about a movement as a result of an epidemic would also mean an attitude of fear, loss, and giving in to an invader. In this case the invader would be a natural phenomenon. The oral accounts never mention any signs of physical or natural defeat in any circumstances. Until sufficient evidence is found to indicate a reasonable alternative, I maintain that an epidemic among the Musa was largely responsible for Binandere migration.

Jaua:

In the Jaua tradition we have earlier consulted, three phases of their movements were given. Firstly their ancestors used to live in the foothills of Mt. Lamingotn, but due to constant attacks from the Hurundi, they moved down to the coast and lived with the Kowariundi at Gona. From Gona they moved south along the coast to Oro Bay and there they lived among the Notu. The third movement was from Oro Bay to Dobuduru. This was caused by a fight between the Notu and the Jaua.

The Jaua movements from Gona to Oro Bay are not well documented, and I do not pretend to explain them. However, the reasons for their movement from Oro Bay to Dobuduru are well documented in the clan traditions.

The main reason given was 'Rarapu' — a pig owned by the Jaua. The Notu were invited to share 'Rarapu' at the feast to be given by the Jaua. However the Jaua had the feast alone and 'Rarapu' was shared among the Jaua clansmen. The Notu naturally reacted. The leaders naturally felt that they were scorned and of course this meant a challenge. An *isoro* led by leaders such as Orereba of Notu eventually caused the Jaua to move inland.

This account indicates that the Jaua were defeated and sought refuge inland. However other reasons are possible. First of all the oral accounts do not indicate any sign of defeat. Perhaps the desire for retaining self-esteem resulted in ethnocentric accounts. Nevertheless it is possible that the Jaua were not physically defeated — they were morally and ideologically affected and their movement was the consequent result.

The selfish actions of the Jaua deserved the treatment from the Notus. The Jaua realised this and they accepted it. However to submit without direct physical resistance also affected the Jaua's self-respect. Like the Sebagi Andere, they were determined to maintain their position because to submit would not only affect the immediate human relationship but would also affect their

relationship with their ancestors.

The Notu's action was in itself a hard decision to make. In Orokaiva tradition, it is important to maintain good relationships particularly between immigrants and their hosts. This is important for the formation of alliances. Secondly, the Orokaiva are very emotional about others who may feel lost or defeated. But the Jaua action warranted no such reservations because it affected the basic ideas of the Notu. If the Notu had not retaliated in the way they did, certain consequences would follow. The roles and status of leading figures would be affected; the internal balance of power could shift; and therefore external threats would have been greater. Their identity with the spirit world would also have been affected. Therefore each party was determined to protect its own rights. Their obligations to one another were at least temporarily shelved.

The only alternative available to the Jaua was to move off and find a new home in which to rebuild their society. It seems possible that one major factor was the traditional Orokaiva cultural trait which affected the Sebaga Andere migration — the sense of shame and humiliation or *meh*. The Jaua were ashamed and their decision to move inland was justified. It was 'shame' or *meh*, not fear of physical defeat, that motivated the Jaua migration inland.

Conclusion:

The problems associated with oral traditions are obvious. Most contemporary researchers are prepared with preconceived ideas on how to approach certain 'issues' — the methodology applied, or the interpretations given to particular oral accounts are coloured by a variety of external experiences. This approach could lead to misinterpretation because of unavoidable bias and ethnocentrism. The result therefore may be superficial history, in many instances insulting to the society or individuals concerned.

To an outsider dealing with the three tribes, there seem to be two basic reasons for their movement — warfare or conquest, or epidemic. The assertion is quite logical. However, to leave the argument at this point is unsatisfactory. I have indicated that there are other significant reasons to be found by observing the religious, ideological symbolic and philosophical values of the people. These values are very important because they have so much influence in determining the decision making processes of the people and communities. I cannot define this concept any better than to borrow what Mbiti described of the African situations because they are strikingly valuable here.

These people (Africans) are notoriously religious and each people has its own religious systems with a set of beliefs and practices and it permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it.¹⁹

I have therefore tried to point out with the Orokaiva examples, how much

¹⁹Mbiti, J.S. 1969: 1. Also cf. Salville, W.J.V. Papuan Annual Report (P.A.R.) 1930-31, pp. 24-25.

one could overlook if not aware of such things.

To produce a study that would benefit both the contemporary researcher and the society concerned, certain points should be observed: A background study and understanding of a particular culture, its religious life, behaviour and behavioural patterns, customs and values, is essential.

A research assistant from the society concerned should be encouraged to work in collaboration with an outside researcher; or, alternatively, this assistant should specify certain areas of research, such as those to do with religion, philosophy and values in the society being studied by the outsider.

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PART II

DIALOGUE BETWEEN
WRITTEN
AND
ORAL SOURCES

CHAPTER V

Knowledge and its Preservation in Oral Cultures

Lyndsay Farrall

Introduction

In many ways it is difficult for literate people to study knowledge systems in oral cultures. We have become used to relying on writing for learning, manipulating and recalling knowledge. Reliance on writing has helped to keep us ignorant about the knowledge systems of past and present oral cultures and about the methods used in those cultures for teaching and preserving their knowledge. In addition the arrogant behaviour associated with racist or imperialist beliefs has led to the castigation of oral cultures as “child like” or they have in other ways been assumed inferior to the “maturity” of literate thought.

Recent events have combined to inspire a new interest in the study of oral cultures. Newly independent countries desire to recover a heritage originally created and transmitted in the oral mode. Minority groups such as the Australian Aborigines and American Indians also desire to recover and preserve their oral heritage. Oral tradition has come to be regarded as an important source for the history of various groups within literate societies who leave few written records. Radio, television and the computer have made literate societies more aware of the methods by which information can be stored and transmitted, and more aware of the existence of oral cultures.

Writing does enable more information to be stored and preserved than oral techniques do. But this should not distract our attention from the remarkable achievements of oral cultures in this respect. This chapter outlines various techniques used in oral cultures in order to preserve knowledge. It then describes two examples of systems of knowledge developed in oral cultures in order to illustrate that complex bodies of knowledge can be created and transmitted without the advantage of writing.

Techniques Used to Preserve Knowledge in Oral Cultures.

It is likely that all human societies have possessed knowledge that they have regarded as important enough to pass on to the next generation. Such knowledge may be so well-known and so important that it is taught to all infants informally. That fire is dangerous, that excreta is offensive, how to prepare foods, and

the importance of cleanliness are examples of different sorts of knowledge that may be so important that they are taught to the next generation almost without thinking about it. Other knowledge of practical importance may be so complex as to need formal instruction. The navigational knowledge of the Caroline Islands described below is necessary for the continued contact between small island communities and the outside world. Yet it is so complex that it can only be mastered by means of long periods of study and only then by a small proportion of the population. Part of the heritage passed to the next generation will usually involve attempts to answer questions about who we are and why we exist. Such knowledge may be simple and available to all, or it may be the preserve of specialists and esoteric in nature. Some of the means of preserving these various kinds of knowledge are outlined below.

The techniques discussed are basically means of helping people to remember things. As such they are not mysterious or magical and many continue to be used as memory aids even in literate cultures. The accuracy with which knowledge is preserved will depend on many things. But it is important to note that fixed texts are very uncommon in oral literature. It is more likely that individuals will remember various versions of what they have learnt.¹ Indeed, in oral cultures, the words themselves may not be as important as they are in a literate culture, because they are always transmitted in a face-to-face situation which allows for other forms of communication to take place.² Nevertheless, if oral knowledge is to be handed on undistorted it "must of necessity be conservative in content and mode of presentation."³

In oral cultures the accurate preservation of knowledge may be identical with accurate transmission.⁴ Accurate transmission is dependent on accurate memory. Various techniques have been used to aid the human memory and these have been given the technical name, "mnemonic device." Mnemonic devices can be techniques for manipulating words themselves. The poetic devices of rhyme, metre and stanza are such techniques. Or the devices can involve the use of something else which symbolises what has to be remembered. Paintings, dances, or natural phenomena can be used as mnemonic devices in this way. These techniques will be considered in greater detail later. But

¹See Ruth Finnegan, "Literacy versus Non-Literacy: The Great Divide?" in *Modes of Thought* (eds. Robin Horton and Ruth Finnegan, Faber, London, 1973) pp. 125, 140; David Lewis, *We, The Navigators: The Ancient Art of Landfinding in the Pacific* (A.N.U. Press, Canberra, 1972), pp. 89, 206, 210.

²For this point see Rhys Isaac, "Dramatizing the Ideology of Revolution: Popular Mobilization in Virginia, 1774 to 1776", *William and Mary Quarterly* (1976) 33: 359; also Finnegan, *op. cit.* 138-9.

³Lewis, *op. cit.*, 10.

⁴Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (Yale Uni. P., New Haven, 1967).

memory can also be influenced by the conditions under which things are learned or under which they are recalled.

Much learning is informal. Most people have learnt their own language this way and this shows that informal learning does not necessarily lead to inaccuracy. Formalising the learning situation enables greater control of what is learnt. It also presumably makes it possible for more complex knowledge to be learnt. A number of systems of formal education have been used in oral cultures.⁵ As we shall see, the training of Pacific Islands master mariners is conducted formally over many years. Formal systems of education are frequently the source of specialists. In some oral cultures certain specialists are trained to be memorisers and their task is to preserve important information accurately.⁶

Learning in groups helps members of the group to check each other's memory. Learning which is examined or, perhaps more importantly, has to be remembered accurately in order to carry out vital tasks, is likely to be remembered better than other learning. If accurate memorising is associated with rewards and inaccurate memorising with sanctions then there is obvious pressure for memory to be accurate.

The conditions under which recall of material takes place may also influence the accuracy of recall. In the oral culture of Homeric Greece, Havelock considered that the effective transmission of essential knowledge required "only regular occasions for (group) performance." At such times, "the youth would be required to repeat or to match their memories against each other and against their elders."⁷ Recall of material as a group activity is in the form of a sacred ritual. If accurate recall is crucial for survival as, for example, in the case of a navigator out of sight of land, then there is strong pressure on the memory to be accurate. Fear of offending ancestors or the gods may also ensure more accurate recall.

Verbal Devices to Aid the Memory

One set of devices to aid the memory uses the patterns of words themselves in order to ease the task of memorising a sequence of words. The techniques used in poetry provide many of these devices. For example, poetry is used today in literate societies to help children memorise certain facts. One such poem carries information about the lengths of different months:

Thir/ty / days / hath / Sep/tem/ber,
 Ap/ril/June / and Nov/em/ber,
 All / the / rest / have thir/ty one,
 Ex/cep/ting/ Feb/ruary / a/lone

⁵See Finnegan, *op. cit.*, 123; Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1965), pp. 31-33.

⁶Ong, *op. cit.*, 27; Vansina, *op. cit.*, 32-33.

⁷E.A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Harvard Uni. P., Cambridge, Mass., 1973) p. 124.

Each line has seven syllables and each pair of lines ends in the same sound. These poetic devices help us to recall the lines correctly. Havelock has suggested that "the only possible verbal technology available to guarantee the preservation and fixity of transmission was that of the rhythmic word organised cunningly in verbal and metrical patterns which were unique enough to retain their shape."⁸ Though poetry is not the only way of manipulating words, poetic devices form an important set of mnemonic devices. Complex poetic techniques were developed in oral cultures and specialists in poetry have existed in a number of different cultures.⁹ Navigators on Puluwat use poetic devices to help remember information about star courses between islands and seamarks on the course.¹⁰

Other mnemonic devices depend on matching the key words to be remembered with a story or legend or other set of words known off by heart by the learner. This technique was used by Gilbertese navigators to help remember star directions for voyages. Stories about the various stars or constellations needed for finding direction are used to assist the navigator's memory of the order of the different directions to be followed.¹¹ Information can be arranged in similar sets or patterns which will aid the memory in recall. Some of us learnt our arithmetical multiplication table in this way and can easily recall what four twos or five fives are. In a similar way the primary star compass points are taught to Woleai navigators in sets of eight.¹²

*Non-Verbal Mnemonic Devices*¹³

Man-made objects such as paintings, buildings, tombs, and models can be used to visualise things which it is desired to remember. Knots, marks or notches on sticks, stones, and other commonly available materials have been used to keep numerical tallies or store other information. Human performance in dance, music, or ritual can also serve as a means of storing and recalling knowledge. Natural phenomena such as the movements of the sun, moon, and stars; land and sea marks; prevailing wind or wave patterns; or the appearance

⁸*Ibid.*, 42-43.

⁹For poetic techniques see Finnegan, *op. cit.*, 127-128; on specialist poets, *ibid.*, 120.

¹⁰Saul H. Rosenberg "The Organization of Navigational Knowledge on Puluwat", *J. Polynesian Soc.* (1972) 81: 20, 53-4.

¹¹Arthur Grimble, *Migrations, Myth and Magic from the Gilbert Islands* (arranged by Rosemary Grimble, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1972) p. 128.

¹²W.H. Alkire, "Systems of Measurement on Woleai Atoll, Caroline Islands," *Anthropos* (1970) 65: 44.

¹³Vansina, *op. cit.*, 36-39 has a discussion of mnemonic devices and Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966) gives a detailed history of a particularly powerful mnemonic device probably developed in ancient Greece and taught in Europe from ancient times until the 17th century.

of certain plants and animals have all been used as means of assisting the recall of knowledge.

Pebbles or stones are used in the Caroline Islands to teach the comparative positions of the main points of the Caroline star compass. They are also used to illustrate the way in which navigators can keep track of where they are on ocean voyages.¹⁴ These pebbles do not form permanent mnemonic devices but the models which they represent are clearly central to the organisation of Carolinian navigational knowledge and these models based on pebble diagrams can be said to act as permanent mnemonic devices. A complex pattern of sticks and pebbles was used by the Gilbertese to represent an annual calendar.¹⁵ A permanent structure of stones in the Gilberts is used to illustrate the way in which ocean swells move and interact round an island.¹⁶ Stick "charts" made of palm ribs, coconut fibres and shells are used in a similar way in the Marshall Islands to represent the pattern of swell interactions around and between islands.¹⁷ In the Gilberts the pattern of rafters in a Gilbertese house is used as a device by which the night sky is divided into segments. The paths of stars and their changed positions in the sky at the same time in different seasons are remembered with respect to this framework.¹⁸

Many other examples could be added. It should be clear from these examples that oral cultures have available to them a wide variety of methods which could be used for transmitting knowledge with some accuracy. The extent of that accuracy is not, however, guaranteed by the use of mnemonic devices and needs to be investigated in each case.

Knowledge Systems in Oral Cultures

The existence of complex systems of knowledge is well-known today to all who have had experience of formal literate education. Perhaps the best known examples of such systems would be some of those of contemporary science and technology. It is less well-known that systems of knowledge of considerable complexity have also been developed in oral cultures.

Recent publications have made available much information about two examples of such systems developed in oral cultures. They are very much concerned with the study of celestial bodies. They are still in existence today in the South Pacific; and it is still possible to get information from practising navigators.

¹⁴Alkire, *op. cit.*, 41; See also Figure 4 below and accompanying text. Thomas Gladwin, *East is a Big Bird; Navigation and Logic on Puluwat Atoll*. (Harvard, 1970), p. 129.

¹⁵Grimble, *op. cit.*, 229.

¹⁶Lewis, *op. cit.*, 185-6.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 193-204.

¹⁸Grimble, *op. cit.*, 216-8.

*Pacific Navigation*¹⁹

It is now acknowledged that the islands of the South Pacific were probably settled with the aid of deliberately planned voyages.²⁰ The knowledge necessary to carry out such voyages successfully was developed by people who did not use writing. Today, in various parts of the South Pacific, there are men who are recognised as expert navigators by their own communities and who have learnt and passed on their knowledge in an oral mode. Their accomplishments show how it is possible for a complex system of knowledge to be developed and preserved in oral cultures. They also demonstrate how Pacific Islanders can undertake long ocean voyages out of sight of land. It seems a reasonable inference that the techniques used today are based on similar techniques developed long ago by the original settlers of the islands of Oceania.

It has recently been argued that it is reasonable to speak of a Pacific system of navigation rather than separate Polynesian and Micronesian systems.²¹ However, the most complete descriptions available both in terms of how it is taught and remembered are for the Caroline Islands.²² Hence the Carolinian system of navigational knowledge will be described in detail with briefer references to other Pacific navigational knowledge following.

The Caroline Islands are a 2,000-mile long chain of islands about 500 miles north of the equator and spread out parallel to the equator (see fig. 3). The Carolines stretch out over roughly the same longitude as the island of New Guinea and the Solomon Islands taken together. The main sources of navigational knowledge used in this chapter are from Puluwat and Woleai atolls situated about 350 miles apart. Although there are differences between the navigational knowledge systems of the two atolls, the area of overlap is far greater. Both atolls participated to some extent in a common system of inter-island contact and politics in the past.²³

Master navigators have a very high status in Carolinian society. Despite universal male participation in voyaging, only a small proportion of men become master navigators. In 1967 only half a dozen of the eighty one Puluwat men aged more than 35 had become master navigators.²⁴ To become a master navigator requires years of learning and practice. Gladwin reports that Rapwi, a man in his early 30's was undertaking his final trial having started his studies at the age of twelve.²⁵ The education of navigators includes the study of several bodies of

¹⁹For Pacific Navigation the best accounts are Gladwin, *op. cit.*, and Lewis, *op. cit.*

²⁰P. Bellwood, "The Prehistory of Oceania", *Current Anthropology* (1975) 16: 10; Lewis, *op. cit.*, 24-5.

²¹Lewis, *op. cit.*, 11.

²²The account given here draws heavily on the works of Gladwin, Alkire and Riesenberg.

²³Alkire, *op. cit.*, 5.

²⁴Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 70, 126.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 126-7.

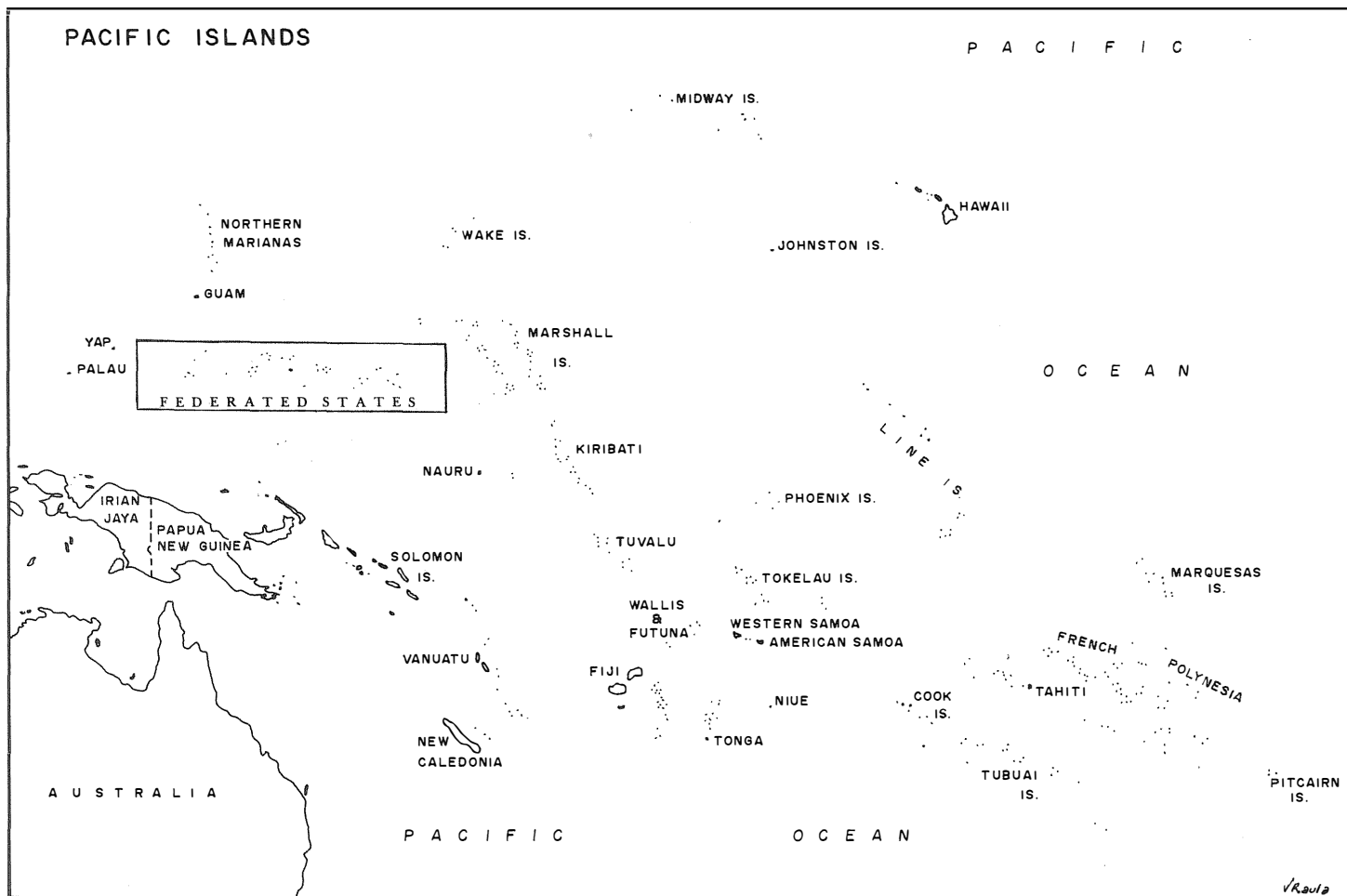


Figure 3: Pacific Islands. The Caroline Islands are enclosed in the rectangular box. Kiribati was formerly known as the Gilbert Islands.

knowledge taught on land and further learning through practical experience at sea. In the course of his training a navigator has to memorise large amounts of information about the positions and movements of stars; the relative positions of islands, reefs and other geographical features; the patterns of winds, waves, and ocean currents; and the kinds and habits of sea birds. He has to learn the theories associated with understanding all this information. He has also to learn the theory of *hatag* (or *etak*) used to keep track of where a canoe is during a journey and then to put the theory into practice. The navigator must be familiar from personal experience with the handling of sea-going canoes and how to keep on course at all times of the day and night.

The Star Compass

Carolinian navigators first learn the concept used to systematise and relate the various directions which can be travelled across the sea.²⁶ The primary directions of the Carolinian compass are based on the rising and setting positions of certain stars. 32 such points around the horizon are learnt. These positions are taught with the aid of pebble diagrams on the ground with the pebbles set out to represent the rising and setting points of stars. On Woleai the star compass is set out in rectangular form. On Puluwat the pebbles representing the stars are in a circle, though earlier accounts from Puluwat report that a square was used.²⁷ The rectangle (see Figure 4) acts as a mnemonic device on Woleai and the main positions of the star compass are learnt in sets of eight – the four positions on either side of one of the corners. The cardinal point in the compass is marked by the rising of the star Altair (the “big bird”) and is roughly equivalent to the direction of east on the magnetic compass. The star compass points are learnt in four sets of eight as shown in Figure 4. It should be noted that the last star in each becomes the first star in the next set, thus aiding the memory still more. This means that there are really only 28 primary points of the compass learnt.²⁸ On Puluwat certain aspects of navigational knowledge are taught with only 28 points on the compass.²⁹ In both cases the four extra positions to make up 32 are added by using the rising and setting positions of Beta and Gamma Aquilae. The four additional points cause their area of the compass to be more crowded with star directions than other parts of the compass. Alkire reports that the corners of the diagram are used as further positions of direction and directions are sometimes given as

²⁶This sequence is taken from Alkire, *op. cit.*, 41-55. Gladwin's account implies a similar sequence but does not spell it out clearly.

²⁷Alkire, *op. cit.*, 41; Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 129-30.

²⁸Alkire, *op. cit.*, 44.

²⁹Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 204.

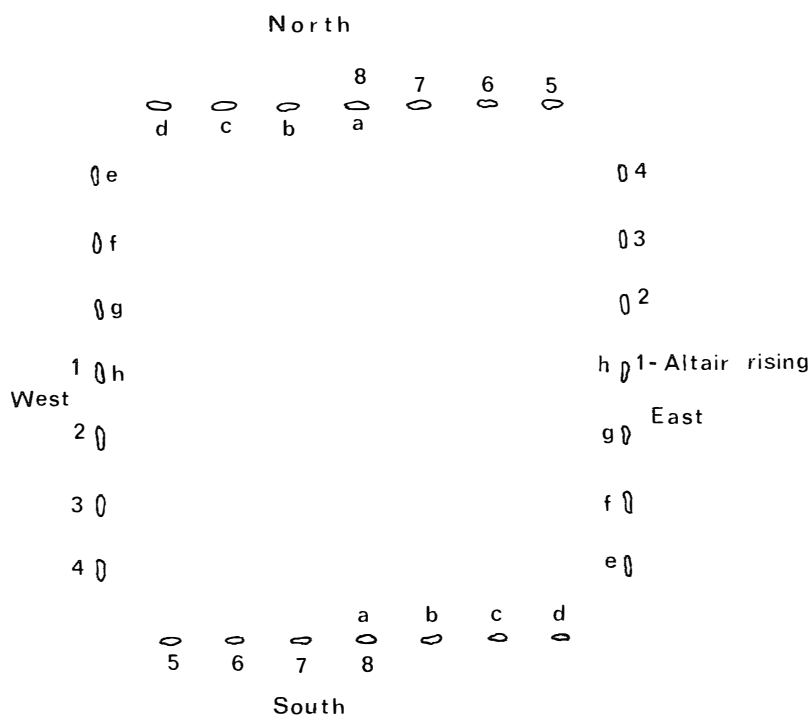


Figure 4: Woleai atoll pebble diagram representing star compass. The four sets of stars as they are first learned are indicated on the diagram: two sets having the numbers 1-8 and the other two sets the letters A-H.

between the positions of the compass altogether.³⁰ Both rising and setting positions of the same star are used to mark different directions on the star compass. Thus the star marked 2 on the right (East) of figure 4 is the rising position of the same star marked G on the left (West) which is its setting position. On Woleai the positions on the compass are taught in groups of rising and setting pairs and groups of directly opposite pairs (e.g. the 2 sets 1-1, 2-2, . . . 8-8 and A-A, B-B, . . . H-H in fig. 4). The Carolinian star compass does not give equally spaced points round the compass, nor does it make use of the brightest stars.³¹ But it does give a very flexible conceptual system which can be used for organising all the knowledge needed for Carolinian navigators to make their landfalls.

Star Courses

Students are next taught the star compass directions (star courses) which will take them from one place to another. In their basic form these courses are learnt for all possible destinations from one particular starting point. They are learnt systematically by starting with one point on the star compass (often the rising of Altair) and by proceeding around the compass. In this way a navigator builds up sets of courses in 28 possible directions from each possible starting point.³² Gladwin reports that star courses were known to 26 places from Puluwat³³ and for most of the possible journeys between any pair of the 26. This is a total of 650 different journeys and allowing for the fact that the journey from A to B is the opposite direction of B to A, there are 325 completely unrelated star courses involved. Alkire reports that Woleai navigators knew star course sets for 18 islands, a total of $18 \times 28 = 504$ star courses, although some of these courses would not be associated with any destination.³⁴ In the case of courses actually used as much information as possible about geographic and oceanographic features on or near the route is taught so that the total amount of information taught was much greater than just the star courses.

Other Astronomical Knowledge

The 32-point compass is based on the positions of only 15 stars or constellations. Polaris is the only star not to be used at least twice — it marked the equivalent of magnetic north. Most stars have both their rising and setting positions used as compass points and in the case of the Southern Cross three other posi-

³⁰Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 43, 47.

³¹Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 156; Lewis, *op. cit.*, 63-4.

³²Alkire, *op. cit.*, 45; Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 157, 204; Riesenberg *op. cit.*, 27, 35-6.

³³Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 130.

³⁴Alkire, *op. cit.*, 46.

tions of the constellation as well.³⁵ Stars do not rise and set at the same time each day. Thus even on the clearest of nights only some of the compass stars are visible near their rising or setting positions at a particular time. For this reason other stars which rise and set in virtually the same positions as one of the compass stars, but at different times, are also taught to navigators.³⁶ On Woleai they are taught "in the conceptual order of their seasonal rising."³⁷ Such knowledge of the sequence of changes of star rising times can be used to mark the change of seasons accurately. The sun is also used for navigational purposes. However its position of rising and setting in relation to the star compass is observed at the time of a voyage rather than being learnt off by heart.³⁸

Wave Patterns and Swells

Puluwat navigators use the patterns of waves to help maintain a course at sea. On a cloudy night it may be the only way to keep the course. Waves take up systematic patterns according to the direction of generating winds. These patterns become known as swells as they move beyond their point of origin. Swells used by Puluwat navigators come from the east, the north, and the south. Their exact direction frequently changes and they do not necessarily run all through the year. Nevertheless on a particular voyage they will be comparatively constant and once a canoe has been placed on course a particular swell will be felt and seen from the behaviour of the canoe. An experienced navigator will notice any change in the impact of the swell on the canoe and take appropriate action to come back on course.³⁹

*Hatag or Etak*⁴⁰

This is the way in which navigators keep track of where they are during a voyage. It is a system of dead-reckoning which enables a Carolinian navigator to place his canoe in relation to the islands he is travelling between by means of a third or reference island and the star compass. If a canoe is moving from A to D (see Figure 5) and E is an island situated to the side of the course then the star course of E from A is 4 whereas the star course of E from D is 1. Now in the course of the voyage, the star course of E from the canoe will change from 4 to 3 to 2 to 1. At point B the island E comes under star course 3. At point C it will come under star course 2. These points (B and C) can be used to concep-

³⁵Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 149, 158; Lewis, *op. cit.*, 62; Keith Oatley, "Mental Maps for Navigation", *New Scientist* (19 Dec. 1974), p. 865.

³⁶Alkire, *op. cit.*, 47; Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 148, 154.

³⁷Alkire, *op. cit.*, 47.

³⁸Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 179-80; Lewis, *op. cit.*, 79.

³⁹Alkire, *op. cit.*, 49; Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 170-4; Lewis, *op. cit.*, 90-3.

⁴⁰Accounts of *Hatag* (Woleai) or *Etak* (Puluwat) are given by Alkire, *op. cit.*, 51-4; Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 181-195; Lewis, *op. cit.*, 133-142; Oatley, *op. cit.*, 865-6.

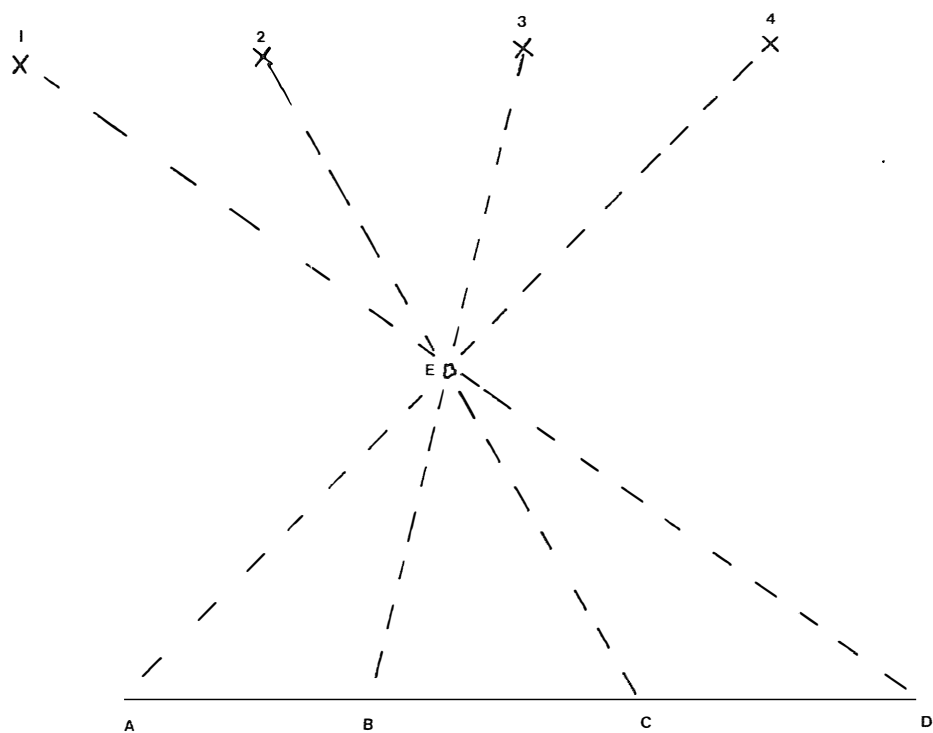


Figure 5: Diagram illustrating method of Hatag.

tually divide the total voyage into segments or *hatag*. In the voyage envisaged in Fig. 5 the journey involves three *hatag*. In practice, *hatag* is more complicated than this illustration. First, the method of dead-reckoning depends on the navigator being able to estimate how fast he is going and what proportion of the voyage has been completed. Secondly, in *hatag*, the canoe is visualised in relation to two different conceptual systems. The first is the star compass. The second is the "map" of islands. In order to place the canoe in relation to both these systems the Carolinian navigators think of the canoe as remaining stationary in relation to the stars while the sea and the islands "move" past the canoe. This "movement" of the islands is entirely conceptual and not meant to be taken literally. It is a device which enables navigators to carry out their dead-reckoning. Thirdly, the first and last *hatag* of any journey are arbitrarily defined as the distance at which an island comes into view or drops out of view and the second and second last *hatag* are defined by the limits of flight from the islands of birds belonging to the islands. These first and last *hatag* will always be roughly 10 miles each, but the distance of the other *hatag* depends on the position of the reference island and also on the section of the star compass under which the reference island will pass. *Hatag* is a technique used by Carolinian navigators to keep track of where they are during a voyage. It can be carried out whether in sight of land or other seamarks or not. It is a method for processing data about the voyage and the relative positions of the islands involved.

A form of *hatag* is also used when the navigator has to tack to approach his destination because the wind does not allow him to approach landfall directly. In this case the island of destination becomes the reference island. As the canoe tacks back and forth approaching the island, its position is kept in mind by keeping track of its changing series of star courses as viewed from the canoe. Tracking is regarded as one of the most difficult of navigational exercises by the Carolinians.⁴¹

Other Knowledge Used by Navigators

A great deal of other knowledge is also used by the navigators. They know the exact marks on land to be lined up as backsights for different courses when they leave their own and other islands.⁴² They learn about ocean currents and the regular winds. Observation of winds and currents is used during the first *hatag* of a voyage to see how far the canoe is being carried off course.⁴³ Navigators learn long lists of reefs and other seamarks, often in ways that act as

⁴¹ Alkire, *op. cit.*, 55; Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 189-95; Lewis, *op. cit.*, 138-40.

⁴² Alkire, *op. cit.*, 55; Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 165.

⁴³ Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 161-2.

mnemonic devices.⁴⁴ They learn how to use the habits of birds in order to locate land. They learn the locations of passes through reefs. They are taught the art of storm navigation. Navigators also learn methods of weather forecasting and long lists of sea life to be found on various courses.⁴⁵ In the past navigational knowledge was closely associated with divination, taboos, and magic.⁴⁶

Navigation Elsewhere in the Pacific

Star courses were used by many other Pacific Island navigators and continue to be used.⁴⁷ Gilbertese are reported to have learnt 178 stars and used the rafters of their houses as a conceptual grid for keeping track of the stars.⁴⁸ Lewis and Grimble report the use of stars at their zenith (standing directly overhead) as a means of finding islands known to lie directly underneath a given star.⁴⁹ There are also reports of a wind compass with the points of the compass being marked by winds known to blow from given directions.⁵⁰ Marshall and Gilbert Islanders both used the refraction and reflection patterns of waves as they were interfered with by islands in order to guide them to land.⁵¹ In both cases these are associated with artefacts constructed as teaching devices. In the Marshalls, "stick charts" are constructed. The "sticks" which join the islands together in these devices represent ocean swells and their interference patterns round islands. Thus they can be used both as teaching and memory devices. Lewis reports from the Gilberts about a "stone canoe" permanently set up near the house of a master navigator which is constructed so that its central stone is astronomically aligned and can be used to represent the navigator's seat in the canoe. It is used at night for astronomical instruction. It can also represent an island with the stones around it in the pattern of ocean swells and their interference patterns.⁵² There are also other methods used to find the direction of land. Cloud patterns are used by some navigators.⁵³ The Gilbertese use a phenomenon known as loom which is caused by the reflection

⁴⁴ Alkire, *op. cit.*, 49, 51; Riesenbergh, *op. cit.*, 28-32, 38-54.

⁴⁵ Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 204-13; Gladwin is sceptical about the usefulness of these last two kinds of knowledge.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 17-19.

⁴⁷ Lewis, *op. cit.*, 46-60.

⁴⁸ Grimble, *op. cit.*, 218.

⁴⁹ Lewis, *op. cit.*, 233-44; Grimble, *op. cit.*, 219.

⁵⁰ Lewis, *op. cit.*, 74-8.

⁵¹ Lewis, *op. cit.*, 182-201.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 185-6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 179-80.

of sunglare or moonlight from island lagoons and sand.⁵⁴ Underwater phosphorescence is also used in the Gilberts, Santa Cruz and Tonga as a sign of land.⁵⁵

Pacific Navigation as a Knowledge System

The knowledge necessary for a master navigator in the Caroline or Gilbert Islands consists of a vast amount of information organised into separate but related bodies of knowledge. Navigators in other parts of Oceania probably also mastered similarly complex systems of knowledge. In the case of the Caroline system outlined above it is clear that certain theoretical concepts played a major part in the organisation of the whole body of knowledge. The star compass stands at the centre of this body of knowledge. It is a means of organising the spatial relationships of the island world in terms of recognisable patterns of star movements. The star compass itself can be seen as an abstract concept which summarises and generalises numerous observations about the relationships between star movements and the geography of the islanders. The method of *hatag* depends on a clear grasp of the concepts involved in the star compass and star courses. In itself it depends on an analysis of what must take place on all voyages not simply on one or some. Oral cultures have achieved in this complex system of knowledge a level of abstraction and analysis of high order.

If navigation is to be successfully carried out it is important that the system of knowledge remain fairly stable over long periods. There is some evidence that this is the case. The Puluwat navigator, Hipour, was able to use knowledge previously not used for over 60 years in his successful voyage across 450 miles of open sea to Saipan in the Mariannas.⁵⁶ The stars used for weather forecasting on Puluwat were, with one exception, the same in 1967 as those reported in Sarfert's work published in 1911.⁵⁷ Grimble's observations of the use of the phenomenon of "loom" in the Gilberts were probably made in the 1920's before he published his paper on Gilbertese astronomy. They were confirmed by Lewis in the late 1960's. The many points of identity between the Woleai system of navigational knowledge and the Puluwat system, despite 350 miles of separation and infrequent contact, also indicate that this system of knowledge was quite stable.

The complexity of the system of navigational knowledge together with its abstract and theoretical core make it easier to remember and transmit than if it were simply long lists of loosely connected information. Nevertheless it re-

⁵⁴Grimble, *op. cit.*, 222; Lewis, *op. cit.*, 179-80.

⁵⁵Lewis, *op. cit.*, 208-11.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 32.

⁵⁷Gladwin, *op. cit.*, 209.

quires substantial commitment of time and formal educational method to ensure that the knowledge is understood and used properly. To master Carolinian navigation "requires half a lifetime of laborious study".⁵⁸ Given such an achievement by small scattered settlements of 4-500 people, we should be wary of overlooking other substantial knowledge systems in oral cultures.

Concluding Remarks

Oral cultures have used many techniques in order to preserve and transmit knowledge. In some cases the knowledge transmitted is simple but examples have been given above of very complex systems of knowledge which were developed and preserved in oral cultures. Oral cultures have not been dependent on words alone for the preservation and transmission of knowledge. Many things have been used by oral cultures as symbols or as devices to assist the memory. Words themselves can be so structured that the pattern of their composition becomes an aid to memorising. Or words can be closely associated with other well-known places or patterns to assist the memorisation of the words. The limitations of the human memory have been overcome by many different techniques in different oral cultures. Oral cultures could and did devise systems of knowledge of great complexity which were handed on through the generations.

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CHAPTER VI

Oral Sources and Old Testament Texts

Carl Loeliger

Since critical literary and historical studies of the Bible began on a large scale more than a century ago there has been much investigation and discussion of 'sources'. Biblical scholars have been concerned mainly with written sources but have also tried to understand the role of oral sources and oral tradition in the formation of biblical literature. In this paper methods developed by Old Testament scholars to detect and describe sources, written and oral, within the Old Testament literature will be discussed. The major concern will be oral sources but it is necessary to include discussion of written sources.

Through Christian missions and churches the Old Testament has become widely known in Papua New Guinea. There is reason to believe that Papua New Guineans are able to relate more easily to the Old Testament than to the New Testament, but generally the missions and churches have translated the Old Testament into the local languages only much later than the New Testament. There are good reasons for Papua New Guineans feeling some sympathy with the history of the people of the Old Testament. The introduction of writing in Israel coincided with the transition from a village society to nationhood. The introduction of writing also coincided with the transition from a predominantly rural society to an increasingly urbanized society, from a very loose form of political organization in which local communities had maximum autonomy to a centralized form of government (a monarchy—established about 1020 BC) with an urban bureaucracy eager to control the rural communities. This period of transition was further complicated (or enriched) by the impact of the highly sophisticated Canaanite culture on the comparatively simple Hebrew or Israelite culture.

The oral traditions did survive in ancient Israel and for hundreds of years. Questions were asked, it seems, about the value and role of the ancient local oral traditions in Israel's national life and ideology particularly from the tenth century B.C. onwards, but many of these did find a place in Israel's national life and ideology.¹ It is generally accepted that oral tradition continued to be

¹See B. W. Anderson, *The Living World of the Old Testament*, p. 160-167.

an effective bearer of knowledge and wisdom throughout the history of ancient Israel and of the Jews until at least the New Testament period.² Therefore it is feasible that before the Old Testament literature was given its status as scripture, holy and unalterable, there was interaction between the oral and written traditions.³ Much of the Old Testament literature began as oral material.

In the case of some Old Testament literature it is possible to demonstrate that whole collections have been transmitted and shaped by oral tradition. This is particularly clear in the case of the prophets of the period before the Babylonian exile. In the prophetic oracles of Isaiah of Jerusalem (late eighth century B.C.) there is this statement:

I bind up this testimony,
I seal this revelation,
In the heart of my disciples. (Isaiah 8: 16 JB)

Isaiah clearly expected that his oracles would be remembered and transmitted orally by his disciples. The prophetic oracles of Hosea and Amos of the eighth century B.C. were also remembered and transmitted orally by their disciples. A similar process took place with the sayings and activities of Jesus. For as long as 100 years accounts of the words and works of Jesus were transmitted orally.

When details such as the circumstances and the social setting of either the creation or the transmission of particular stories, songs, poems or collections of such compositions are discussed, scholars disagree widely. Nevertheless it is generally agreed that oral sources and oral tradition were important factors in the formation of Old Testament literature. This chapter is concerned with the detection of these sources and their study. Since it is not intended for Old Testament specialists it will deal with particular methods used for the study of Old Testament literature in a general way.

Before these methods are discussed a few general comments on Old Testament literature are in place. It is important to note that as literature the Old Testament material is diverse and complex; it contains many different kinds of prose and poetry;⁴ it comes from a long period of time, — at least a thousand years.

The latest Old Testament book (Daniel) dates from the second century B.C., the earliest written material probably comes from the tenth century B.C. Some of the material had been transmitted orally for centuries before it became written material.

² *Ibid.* See further A. Bentzen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, p. 102-108.

³ K. Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition*, p. 84-86. For the view that in the pre-exilic (pre-sixth century BC) period writing played a minor role only in ancient Israel See E. Nielsen, *Oral Tradition*, ch. III.

⁴ For an account of the various kinds of poetry and prose see O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, p. 9-127.

Three different methods of dealing with Old Testament literature will be taken in historical order. This is a convenient way of considering not only each particular method but also their interdependence. Each of these methods is described as a kind of 'criticism'.⁵ These methods are Literary or Source Criticism,⁶ Form Criticism,⁷ and Tradition or Redaction Criticism.⁸ For the discussion of these methods mainly the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch,⁹ will be used for illustrative material but they are applicable to any section of Old Testament literature.

J. Wellhausen, in publications in the period 1876 to 1884, gave wide publicity to the theory that, at different stages in the formation of the Pentateuch, editors brought together sources at their disposal.¹⁰ The Graf—Wellhausen theory,¹¹ as it is sometimes called, has with modifications, been widely accepted and the existence of different sources within the Pentateuch is assumed by most Old Testament commentators.

According to this theory there are four main sources still detectable within the Pentateuch. These sources are labelled J, E, D and P. J is so labelled because in this source *Jehovah* (or *Yahweh*, the specific name of Israel's God) is regularly used for Israel's deity. In the E source, on the other hand, the general Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, is used for Israel's God, hence the label E. The D source is basically the book of Deuteronomy. The letter P refers to the Priestly source, so-called because this source reflects the thought and interests of priests. In a simple form the theory about these sources may be stated in the following way. The J document which came into existence about 850 B.C. was combined with the E document, dating from about 750 B.C., by an editor around 650 B.C. This resulted in a document which can be labelled JE. Another editor in about 550 B.C. added D dating from about

⁵'Criticism' as used here refers to a method, a way of working. It does not imply a negative process or conclusion.

⁶Old Testament scholars generally prefer the term 'Literary Criticism' for this method. This term, however, according to its general usage, could cover all three methods discussed here. The present writer prefers to use the term 'Source Criticism' for this method. For an introduction to this method see N. Habel, *Literary Criticism of the Old Testament*.

⁷For an introduction to this method see G.M. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*.

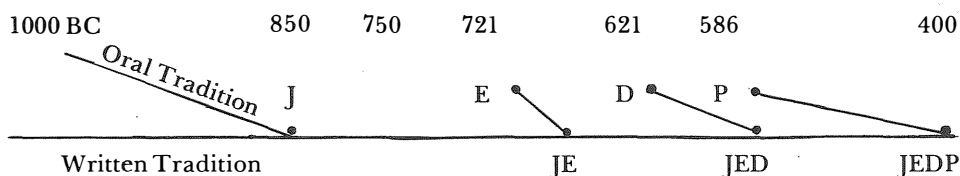
⁸Old Testament scholars prefer the term 'Tradition Criticism' but New Testament scholars use the term 'Redaction Criticism'. The method and its assumptions are similar in both instances. Old Testament scholars also use the term 'traditio-historical method'. For an introduction to this method see W.E. Rast, *Tradition History and the Old Testament* and N. Perrin; *What is Redaction Criticism?*

⁹Some Old Testament scholars see the first four or the first six books of the Old Testament as a unit and consequently use the terms Tetrateuch or Hexateuch, respectively.

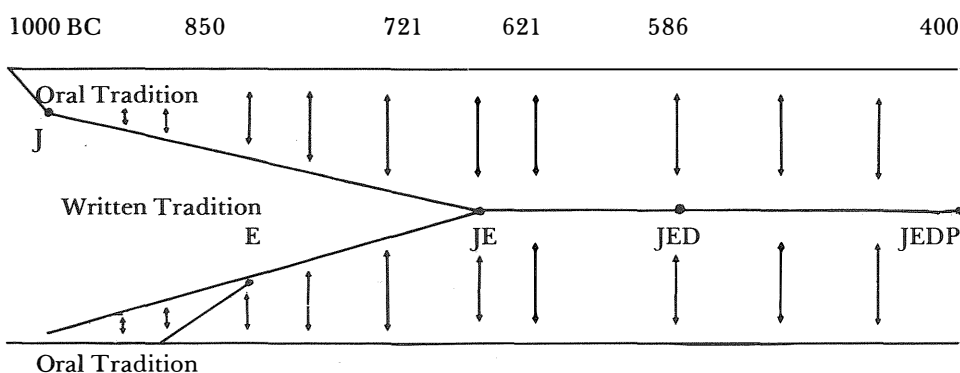
¹⁰R.H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 139.

¹¹Wellhausen relied heavily on the work of K.H. Graf, whose major publication appeared in 1866. See R.H. Pfeiffer, p. 139.

621 B.C. and produced a document which can be labelled JED. Finally P or the Priestly Code, composed in the period around 500 to 450 B.C., was added by an editor about 400 B.C. The result (JEDP) was a document much like the present Pentateuch.¹² The substance of this theory can be presented in a very simple diagram.



It was realized fairly quickly that none of the main sources, J, E, D, P, was a literary unit and that each of them had a complex history. The Graf-Wellhausen theory presented the main sources as being successive, but the history of these sources is as much parallel as it is successive. Even in the latest source, P, there is ancient material. The recognition that oral tradition has played a considerable part in the formation and transmission of these sources has added to the complexity of the problem. In attempts to deal with this problem scholars have proposed theories for different stages in the development of individual sources and for additional sources.¹³ It is almost impossible to present the complexity of the problem as it is now seen in a diagram as each of the sources is complex in its history and composition, but the following diagram which takes account of only two of the sources may help the reader to gain an impression of it.



The twenty fourth chapter of the book of Exodus is a suitable passage for

¹²R.H. Pfeiffer, p. 139, 140.

¹³See O. Eissfeldt, p. 166-170.

the demonstration of the methods of source criticism and of the existence of different sources.¹⁴ This chapter describes the ceremony of the making of the covenant between Yahweh, God of Israel, and Israel, his people, at Mount Sinai. In beginning analysis of this chapter the Old Testament scholar asks a number of questions.¹⁵

- a) What is the structure of this chapter?
- b) Is it a literary whole?
- c) Can smaller units within the chapter be detected?
In seeking the answer to these questions further questions are asked.
- d) On three different occasions Moses is called to ascend the mountain and on each occasion Moses ascends (vs. 1, 12, 16 b). Do these three different summons give any clue to different units within the chapter?
- e) Is each account of the summons similar?
- f) Who accompanies Moses to the top of the mountain?

In verse 1 Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders are summoned with Moses to ascend the mountain, but in verse 12 Moses' companion on the ascent is Joshua only; Aaron, Hur and the elders remain behind. In verse 16 b Moses seems to have made the ascent alone.

These differences suggest the existence of different sources. Still further questions must be asked. Are there differences within the chapter which go deeper than the details of Moses' companions on the ascent of the mountain? This leads to a consideration of the major theme of each unit which is headed by an account of the summons to Moses and his ascent. In verses 1 to 11 the covenant relationship between Israel and God is depicted in the context of a ceremony which has as its climax a meal and a vision of the God of Israel. The second unit, verses 12 to 15a, is much briefer and concentrates on the personal role of Yahweh in the writing of his law on the stone tablets and their presentation to Moses. The last unit, verses 15b to 18, is taken up mainly with Yahweh's mysterious presence and appearance on Mount Sinai. It is possible to conclude, then, that each of these units sees the relationship of the God of Israel and his people in a different way.

The critical scholar, before concluding that three literary sources exist in Exodus 24, will probably want to ask further questions about vocabulary, style, and view-points. A careful reading of the chapter reveals that in the first unit (v. 1-11) the leaders see God (*Elohim*). There is no way of telling whether the person or persons responsible for the second unit (v. 12-15a) thought that Yahweh could be seen or not, but there Yahweh is depicted as having written

¹⁴This is one of the texts used by N. Habel to demonstrate the methods of literary criticism, see Habel, p. 2-7. In the discussion of source criticism and Exodus 24 the present writer has made use of Habel's treatment.

¹⁵See N. Habel, p. 2-5.

his law on stone tablets. In the third unit, in contrast to the first, any suggestion that anyone saw God is deliberately avoided. The people saw the glory of Yahweh, (*kabod Yahweh*), not Yahweh himself. Similar questions could be asked of other details in the chapter.

There is a further question, however, which is important. If there are three detectable sources within Exodus 24, is it possible to identify them as part of three larger works within the Pentateuch? The first section (v. 1-11) has connections with Exodus 18 (see especially 18:12) and this chapter is generally considered to belong to the E source. The use of the term *Elohim*, the mention of the covenant meal and the vision of God in Exodus 24:1-11 support this identification. The second unit of Exodus 24 (v. 12-15a) can easily be linked with Exodus 32 where Moses and Joshua are depicted descending the mountain together and carrying two stone tables on which the law of God was inscribed. Exodus 24:12-15a and the major part of Exodus 32:1-20 are widely accepted as belonging to the J source. The third unit of Exodus 24 (v. 15b-18) is usually identified with the P source. The deliberate avoidance of any suggestion of seeing God, the expression, the glory of Yahweh, (*kabod Yahweh*) and the reference to the seventh day (vs. 16b) are regarded as typical of the so-called Priestly Writer.¹⁶

If we accept the steps in the argument presented so far we can also accept the argument that Exodus 24 seems to be made up of materials that have come from three larger sources still identifiable within the Pentateuch. This argument is widely accepted by scholars. But is the identification of three sources all that can be done with this chapter? While 'source criticism' had a revolutionary impact on Old Testament studies it also had its limitations. This particular method reckoned with written sources and did not consider seriously the existence and role of oral sources. It also failed to give a satisfactory account of the life situations in which the sources and the final work might have arisen and been transmitted. These deficiencies were noticed quite early in the history of source criticism.

The man who decisively pointed out the weaknesses of the Graf-Wellhausen theory and the limitations of source criticism was Herman Gunkel (1862-1932).¹⁷ He is the pioneer of form criticism, a method which supplements source criticism. Gunkel drew attention to the importance and role of oral sources and oral tradition and demonstrated that the Old Testament material has to be seen in a broad historical context; it could not be considered in isolation from its wider world. He brought a new, fresh appreciation of the human, social background of the Old Testament material to Old Testament studies.

To use form criticism is to ask a further series of questions. The first set of

¹⁶Other P passages in Exodus related to the Sinai revelation are 25:1-31:17; 34:29-35; 35-40.

¹⁷G.M. Tucker, p. 4-6.

questions is related to a basic assumption of form criticism that most of the Old Testament literature had a long and complex oral history before it became written material.¹⁸

- a) Did the unit under study, or parts of it, once exist in oral form?
- b) What general type (*genre*)¹⁹ of literature does the unit represent?
- c) Does the unit belong to a particular recognizable type of literature?²⁰
- d) What are the characteristic features and structure of this type of literature?²¹

In form criticism heavy emphasis is placed on determining the type of literature which a unit represents and its relationship with other examples of the same or similar types of literature. Therefore further questions are asked:

- e) Can the literary type represented by a particular unit be compared with other examples from within Old Testament literature?
- f) Can the particular literary type be compared with examples from other ancient Middle Eastern material (e.g. Akkadian or Egyptian)?

Another assumption is that while literary types persist usually for a long time, they are also flexible and do change. Literary types arise, flourish and eventually decay, but may also give rise to, or influence the development of, other types of literature.²²

Closely related to this assumption of form criticism is another assumption about the human situation. Every type of literature has its origin in a particular social situation.²³ It is assumed that that situation can be recovered through a study of the literary type itself.²⁴ The second set of questions, then, is based on this assumption:

- a) What was the precise, original social and cultural context of this type of literature?

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 6f.

¹⁹Old Testament scholars regularly use the French word *genre* which can mean kind, sort, style, type, category, etc. They use the word for oral or written material and for broad or very specific categories. To take a modern example, within the broad *genre*, radio programmes, it is possible to identify many different *genres*, — news broadcasts, interviews, plays, documentaries, musical programmes and many others. Within each of these different *genres* it is possible to identify even more specific *genres*. See G.M. Tucker, p. 2, 3, 13-15.

²⁰The present writer has chosen not to use the word *genre* widely in this chapter. He has assumed that since the term oral literature is now used, the expressions, type of literature and literary type, need not be restricted to written material.

²¹'Structure' is another technical term of form criticism. Structure refers to the outline or pattern of a literary unit or type. See G.M. Tucker, p. 8, 9.

²²G.M. Tucker, p. 8.

²³Old Testament scholars often use the German expression, *Sitz in Leben*, (situation in life) for this. See G.M. Tucker, p. 15, 16.

²⁴G.M. Tucker, p. 9.

- b) Has the particular unit and type of literature been alive in other situations besides the original context?

Form criticism takes particular account of oral sources and oral tradition, but its questions are equally applicable to literature which began as written material.

There are further questions which are important for form criticism. These have to do with the 'function' or 'intention' of the unit.²⁵

- a) What purpose or function did the literary unit or type fulfil in its original social situation?
- b) What purpose or function was the literary unit or type intended to fulfil in later social situations and stages of its history?

These questions are particularly important for distinguishing between the intention of the original oral material and the intention of later interpreters, collectors and editors of that material.

If Exodus 24 is approached again from the perspectives of form criticism further questions will be asked and observations made. Immediately the possibility is raised that oral tradition had a part in the history of this chapter and that one or other of the sections originated as an oral source rather than as a written one. Of particular interest in Exodus 24 are the responsive statements in vs. 3 and 7: 'We will observe all the commands that Yahweh has decreed.' These may well be standard responses from the later worship life of ancient Israel; they may be described as from the literary type of liturgical responses.

These responses have led to the suggestion that they are parts of a covenant renewal ceremony or service included in the unit, Exodus 24:1-11.²⁶ A similar response is found in Exodus 18:8. An excellent example of a covenant renewal ceremony or service with statements by the leader inviting response, and responses by the assembled people, is found in Joshua 24. This further consideration can lead to the suggestion that the unit, Exodus 24:1-11, developed, although it may not have originated, in the social situation of the covenant renewal ceremony and was transmitted orally in that context for some considerable time.

There is material in the book of Genesis which is excellent for the demonstration of the methods of source and form criticism. K. Koch has illustrated these methods in connection with a particular story which he has labelled: 'The Ancestress of Israel in Danger.'²⁷ There are three accounts of this story in Genesis 12 to 50, Genesis 12:10-13:1; 20:1-18; 26:1-13. Koch favours the general term *saga* for the broad literary type this story represents, and ethnolo-

²⁵For a brief discussion of the terms 'function' and 'intention' see G.M. Tucker, p. 16, 17.

²⁶Habel, p. 5.

²⁷K. Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition*, p. 111-132.

gical *saga* for its specific literary type.²⁸ This story is one which must have originated as an oral creation and been transmitted orally for a very long time. It can be argued that many of the differences between the three accounts of the story are attributable to the complexities of oral tradition.²⁹ Koch finds the more original social situation of the story among the small nomadic tribes of pre-Israelite times who moved about in the desert of southern Palestine with their herds of cattle.³⁰ The story celebrates their heroine, their ancestress, who is rescued from dangerous situations by their own God.³¹ Although from another point of view these rural people might seem inferior, the story celebrates their superiority over the urban people. Koch sees this as a story which was told by the men as they sat outside their tents in the evening after the cattle and children had been settled down for the night.

Since this originally oral material continued to be important for the Israelites and found its way into the written tradition, later social situations in which this material was used can be rediscovered. Koch finds such situations in the period when the nomads became settled farmers, in the period of the prophetic circles to which Elijah and Elisha belonged (ninth century B.C.) and finally in the period when this story becomes part of a larger written unit,³² which is the period of particular interest for our third kind of criticism. The intention of the story changes in the later situations; Abraham is no longer just a heroic ancestor, he has become a prophet, an intermediary between God and his people.³³

Like source criticism, form criticism has its limitations and weaknesses. The weaknesses of Old Testament form criticism arise not so much from the method itself as from inflexible and insensitive application of the method. The Old Testament scholar is at a disadvantage because he does not know and cannot discover many of the important features of oral cultures and oral traditions among the ancient peoples whom he is studying. Recently several scholars who are familiar with both Old Testament studies and the studies of oral literature from living oral cultures have begun to comment on Old Testament form

²⁸*Saga* is the Old Norwegian word for a story of the adventures and achievements of a hero or heroes.

²⁹K. Koch, p. 119, 120.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 118.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 127.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 128.

³³For demonstration of the methods of form criticism in connection with a difficult Genesis passage (Genesis 30:22-32, Jacob's Struggle at the Jabbok) see G.M. Tucker, p. 41-54. Another interesting form critical study of Genesis material is that by G.W. Coats: 'Abraham's Sacrifice of Faith: A Form — Critical Study of Genesis 22', *Interpretation* Vol. XXVII, October; 1973, p. 389-400.

criticism.³⁴ They have questioned many of the assumptions underlying form criticism and demonstrated that the whole business of oral tradition and oral literature is more complex and less predictable than Old Testament scholars have allowed. They are highly critical of Old Testament scholars who have tended to apply form criticism too rigidly, who have not appreciated the complexity of oral cultures and oral tradition and who have not taken sufficient notice of relevant anthropological and sociological studies.

Old Testament scholars seem to have underestimated the capacity of people of oral cultures to reflect on and interpret their own traditions.³⁵ It may be more difficult to tell whether a particular unit began as oral or written literature than is often supposed.

One of the limitations of form criticism is that, taken by itself, it does not allow for the examination of the total history of a particular unit and particularly its later history. Scholars have, however, developed yet another kind of 'criticism', tradition criticism, which is used to deal with aspects of the history of the unit which are either not, or inadequately, treated in form criticism.

Tradition criticism or redaction criticism developed after 1945. Tradition criticism is applied particularly to the history of the text in its written period but the oral period is not irrelevant nor ignored. It involves the attempt to understand all the stages in the history of the growth of the text from its original composition to its final form and particularly to later stages where the work of redactors or editors can be detected. To illustrate initially something of the concerns and assumptions of tradition or redaction criticism³⁶ we turn briefly to New Testament Studies and particularly to the Gospels. An important initial observation for redaction criticism is that any saying or story in the Gospels has been shaped by three different basic situations:

1. The life and teaching of Jesus.
2. The life and teaching of the early church.
3. The thought and editorial work of the gospel writers.

The first two situations are dealt with by form criticism, but are also important for tradition criticism. It is the third situation, however, which is the particular area of application of redaction criticism. The investigator attempts

³⁴See e.g. R.C. Culley, 'An Approach to the Problem of Oral Tradition', *Vetus Testamentum* XIII, 1963, p. 113-125, R. Knierim, 'Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered', *Interpretation* XXVII, 1973, p. 435-468, B.O. Long, 'Recent Field Studies in Oral Literature and their Bearing on O.T. Criticism', *Vetus Testamentum* XXVI, 1976, p. 187-198.

³⁵For an informative portrayal of this capacity of people of oral cultures see R. Finnegan 'Literacy versus Non-literacy: The Great Divide?' in R. Finnegan and R. Horton ed., *Modes of Thought*, p. 112-144.

³⁶See n. 8. 'Redactors' are seen not only as collectors and editors but as creative people who have shaped the material and given it its final form, Their work is the easiest to detect. See W.E. Rast, p. 16-18.

to understand the creative work of the gospel writers as they brought their material together.

It is generally not so easy to identify the basic situations which have shaped Old Testament material, but attempts must be made. In the case of the prophetic material, as in the case of the New Testament gospels, there are at least three basic situations:

1. The life and teaching of the prophet.
2. The lives and teachings of his disciples.
3. The creative editorial work and thought of Old Testament writers.³⁷

It is convenient at this point to return to Exodus 24 about which a further series of questions can now be asked. Three sections or units were identified within Exodus 24. Following the methods of tradition criticism these questions arise:

- a) Do any of the units within Exodus 24 bear signs of the activity of later interpreters and collectors?
- b) How did these three units come to be arranged and associated as they are?
- c) If the P source to which the third unit (vs. 15b-18) is related, is the latest, was the Priestly writer responsible for the final stage of *not only* Exodus 24, but of the whole block of material (Exodus 19-34 or 19-40) connected with experiences at Mount Sinai.
- d) Did the Priestly writer, if he was responsible for the final stage of Exodus 24, see no contradiction between the two accounts of the vision of God? Did he intend the more indirect vision of the glory of Yahweh behind the cloud (vs. 16, 17) as an interpretation of the more direct vision referred to in vs. 11?
- e) Did the Priestly writer consider the three different accounts of Moses' ascent as complementary rather than contradictory?

This last question could be asked of all the material in Exodus 24 which to our way of thinking can be shown to be repetitive and contradictory.

These questions taken together cover the whole of the history of the formation of this chapter and all its components. The aim of tradition criticism is to trace the history of each unit and theme of biblical literature, no matter how large or small, through the various stages of its development, and, to trace and attempt to understand the creative work of the interpreters and redactors or editors of the material. While tradition criticism may seem to be more applicable to the later, written stages of the development of the literature or a particular unit, the method is equally applicable to the oral stages.³⁸

³⁷This represents a simplification of a complex matter. See W.E. Rast, p. 57f.

³⁸W.E. Rast in his demonstration of the methods of tradition criticism has also used the patriarchal narratives, Genesis 12-50. See W.E. Rast, p. 33-56.

These three methods of studying Old Testament literature — source criticism, form criticism and tradition criticism — are closely related and ideally, the student of the Old Testament will make careful use of all three. The methods supplement and complement one another.

Earlier some general reasons were given for discussing Old Testament literature and oral sources in the context of Papua New Guinea, but some specific reasons should be advanced for the discussion of methods of studying Old Testament literature in that context. These methods, in spite of their weaknesses, have become indispensable tools for the consideration of Old Testament literature and it is difficult to imagine serious Old Testament study without them. These methods could be adapted for use in the study of traditional Papua New Guinean literature. By the time that the student begins to analyze a portion of this kind of literature he usually has a written script as well as tapes to work on. The questions which are asked in the application of our three methods to Old Testament literature may well, with some adaptation, be applicable to traditional Papua New Guinean material. The student of this material is also interested in its composition, in the human, social situation of its origin and transmission. In this chapter it is possible only to suggest that methods developed by Old Testament scholars may be useful for the analysis and understanding of traditional Papua New Guinean literature. The examination and trial of the suggestion have to be left for another occasion.

The student of traditional Papua New Guinean literature has advantages over the student of Old Testament literature in several respects. In Papua New Guinea, oral tradition continues to be an effective bearer of traditional knowledge and wisdom in spite of the impact of western culture and the written tradition. In Papua New Guinea the student can still study at first hand living oral cultures and the ways and situations in which traditional knowledge and wisdom are handed on from generation to generation by word of mouth and by example. He has the added advantage of still being able, in many instances, to discover the social situation of the origin and the transmission of a particular traditional story or song. These things the Old Testament scholar cannot so easily do.

Some knowledge of the role that oral tradition and oral sources have played in the formation of Old Testament literature may help Papua New Guineans to appreciate more fully their own traditional knowledge and wisdom. It may assist in counteracting the impact of the modern western bias against oral tradition and for written tradition. From the Old Testament and its background it can be demonstrated that oral tradition can continue to thrive after the introduction of writing.

Old Testament students may also pick up valuable insights from the study of Papua New Guinean oral cultures. Studies of African oral traditions, for example, are being used to inform Old Testament studies so it is conceivable that studies of Papua New Guinean oral traditions might be similarly used. If

Old Testament students come to appreciate better the importance, the richness, and complexity of oral tradition much will have been gained. There is also the interesting possibility that students who come from living oral cultures will make significant contributions to the study of the role of oral sources and tradition in the formation of Old Testament literature.

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*These books are especially recommended for students wanting a general introduction to the three methods discussed in this paper.

CHAPTER VII

*Sung and Written Epics—the Case of **The Song of Roland***

Stephanie Farrall

We do not usually think of Europe as an oral culture. It is often treated as the source of the printing press, the home of literacy and technology. But in the Middle Ages¹ Europe was still primarily an oral culture. Only a few people could read or write. Kings and noblemen had specially trained clerks to read and write for them. Literacy was confined to a limited number of churchmen, and even in this restricted class it was not uncommon to find bishops and abbots who could not read.² Since the language of literacy for most of the Middle Ages was Latin and not the vernacular (i.e., the language spoken by the people in any one area), there was a very wide gap between literacy and the popular, oral culture. It is from the oral culture of this period that many of the great works of literature have come—notably the epics and Arthurian romances. And it is due to the eventual interaction between literacy and oral culture that these compositions were written down and have survived and reached a wider audience.

Oral literature played a very important part in the lives of people in the Middle Ages. There was a rich body of tales, legends, epics and romances which were passed on orally, from generation to generation, by parents telling them to their children, and by professional minstrels and story-tellers, called *jongleurs*, who went from town to town earning their living by singing and telling stories, in market places, inns, castles and in monasteries along the pilgrim routes. The reciting of these songs and stories provided one of the main forms of entertainment before literacy was widespread and before the printing press made books available so people could entertain themselves by reading. It was also a way of passing on information about recent or historical events, and of handing down traditional knowledge.

¹The Middle Ages, or “medieval” period in Europe lasted roughly a thousand years, from 500 to 1500 AD, from the fall of ancient civilisation, the sacking of Rome, until the period when “modern Europe” emerged. The Middle Ages are sometimes referred to as the “Dark Ages”, as though all culture were dead until the Renaissance in the sixteenth century. In fact, a rich oral culture was very much alive during this period, as well as a growing body of written literature.

²C.M. Cipolla, *Literacy and Development in the West*, Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1969, p. 40.

Many of these songs and epics were eventually written down by clerks or scribes. This probably occurred between the end of the eleventh century and the end of the fourteenth century, during a period of renewed interest in literature and culture, especially in the area now called France.

The two most popular forms of oral literature in the twelfth century were epics and verse romances. The romances were often based on legends: the tales about King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table, which were spread beyond England, perhaps by bilingual Breton minstrels. We will concentrate on the epics, since these were usually based on some historical event. These *chansons de geste*, as they were originally called, were “songs of deeds”, of brave actions in the past. Epics survive from different parts of Europe, mainly from France, also from Spain and Germany. The most famous of the old French epics, *The Song of Roland*, tells of an ambush in the eighth century. The best known surviving manuscript, the Oxford manuscript, was probably written down between 1125 and 1150,³ roughly four hundred years after the event. *The Song of Roland* thus provides an interesting case study in the relations between oral and written sources.

We will look at *The Song of Roland* from two points of view. First, as an oral composition. We will look at the text itself, to see what features could indicate that *The Song of Roland* was an oral composition. This will involve looking at the possible conditions under which the epics were created and formed, the art of the singers and *jongleurs*. Secondly, we will look at *The Song of Roland* as an account of an historical event, passed on in oral form for four centuries before it was written down in the twelfth century. How reliable is it as history? What other accounts are there of the event, and how reliable are they? Can we find any interaction between oral and written sources, any examples of changes made to the written histories which could be due to the influence of *The Song of Roland*? Could we say that oral literature affected the written historical accounts?

Relevant to both sections is the controversial question of the origins of the medieval epics. Some scholars claim the epics are the product of a continuous oral tradition from the ninth century, composed and handed on by series of anonymous poets and minstrels, and finally written down in about the twelfth century in the form we now have. This is often referred to as the “traditionalist”

³For generally accepted dates of the Oxford manuscript, see *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. F. Whitehead Oxford, Blackwell, 1957, p. v, and *The Song of Roland*, translated by D.D.R. Owen, London, Allen and Unwin, 1972, pp. 13-14. Joseph Bédier *La Chanson de Roland commentée* Paris, Piazza, 1972 and Albert Pauphilet “*Sur La Chanson de Roland*”, in *Romania*, LIX, 1933, 165 give 1100 as the most likely date.

theory.⁴ Other critics claim the epics were the creations of individual poets (the "individualist" theory).⁵ Some supporters of this theory have jumped eagerly on the last line of *The Song of Roland* where the name Tuoldus is mentioned and have declared Tuoldus must be the poet who composed the epic:⁶

"Ci falt la geste que Tuoldus declinet."

("Here ends the story that Tuoldus tells.")

But unfortunately the words *geste* and *declinet* have no exact meaning. *Geste* could mean epic, poem, source or chronicle. The verb *declinet* could mean compose, translate, copy, rewrite, complete, recite. So according to the last line Tuoldus could be the author of the poem or of its source; the translator, the scribe, reciter or *jongleur*. Nothing is proved.⁷

There is also a compromise position between the two theories: to see *The Song of Roland* as a collective work of art, composed and transmitted orally by *jongleurs* and finally written down in the form as we now have it by a poet of great talent who united this traditional and legendary material into a work of art.

This chapter is firmly established in the "traditionalist" position and looks at *The Song of Roland* mainly as the product of an oral tradition. Menéndez Pidal, Jean Rychner, Stephen Nichols and Albert Lord have written convincing studies setting *The Song of Roland* in the stream of oral tradition.⁸ Much of the following is based on their work.

I The Song of Roland as an oral composition

First, a brief, look at the written version of *The Song of Roland* to see what evidence there is in the text that it was composed orally. We will use the Oxford text, generally accepted as the best surviving manuscript, among a variety of

⁴e.g. Gaston Paris, Ferdinand Lot, Ramón Menéndez Pidal. For a clear outline of the main theories about the origins of the epics, see *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. William Calin New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968, pp. 5-6.

⁵e.g. Joseph Bédier and his disciples.

⁶P. Boissonnade made an even more precise identification. He claims *The Song of Roland* was composed by a cleric called Guillaume Tuold, in 1128 (*Du nouveau sur La Chanson de Roland*, Paris, Champion, 1923, pp. 484-6). This theory is quoted and discounted by Ferdinand Lot in "Etudes sur les légendes épiques françaises: V *La Chanson de Roland*", in *Romania*, LIV, 1928, pp. 361-2.

⁷For comments on the last line of *The Song of Roland*, see *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. William Calin, *op. cit.*, p. 3; and *The Song of Roland*, translated by D.D.R. Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 126

⁸Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *La Chanson de Roland et la tradition épique des Francs*, Paris, Picard, 1960; Jean Rychner, *La Chanson de geste. Essai sur l'art épique des jongleurs*, Geneva, Librairie Droz, 1955; Stephen Nichols, *Formulaic Diction and Thematic Composition in the Chanson de Roland*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1961; Albert Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, New York, Atheneum, 1968.

manuscript versions of *The Song of Roland*. There are considerable differences between the existing versions of *The Song of Roland*, and these variations alone point to oral origins. If there were more exact line by line correspondences between the manuscripts this would indicate a written tradition, with manuscripts copied from each other, and less chance of variations.⁹

Today we can only know the epics in written form. Oral versions may still exist in isolated pockets of Europe — some Songs of Roland, for example, are still sung in southern Italy and Sicily.¹⁰ But generally this oral literature has only survived in written texts. This means we cannot know the epics in their original forms. We miss out on hearing the sounds of the words and the music. The epics were apparently recited or sung to the accompaniment of a simple recurring melody, on a stringed instrument something like a fiddle. We can only read the text: people in the Middle Ages knew the epics through a live performance. The *jongleur* would bring the events alive for them through the sound of his voice and the accompanying music, and by his expression and gestures.¹¹

People have tried to work out how epics were composed by studying the nearest living equivalent they could find. Scholars like Milman Parry and Albert Lord found there were still epic singers in Yugoslavia in the 1920's and 1930's who were singing and composing epics in ways that could illustrate how the ancient epics were composed and performed. Parry and Lord were studying the Homeric epics and their work throws light on the art of the *jongleurs* of the Middle Ages and the conditions under which the old French epics could have been composed.

Like their medieval counterparts, the epic singers in Yugoslavia generally could not read or write. They had to learn and practise their art without reading and writing, and they developed special techniques. Parry and Lord found that the epic singers in Yugoslavia did not memorize an epic: instead, they learned the sequence of events and themes, and then they used certain expressions or formulas to build the metrical lines in the song.¹² These formulas were not memorized, either. The epic singer learned them by hearing them in

⁹On the importance of variations in oral literature, and particularly in the case of the epics, see R. Menéndez Pidal, *La Chanson de Roland et la tradition épique des Francs*, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-82. A. Lord illustrates the ways in which relationships between different manuscripts of *The Song of Roland* show that we are dealing with oral compositions, by comparing short sections from the Oxford manuscript, Venice IV, Chateauroux and Cambridge manuscripts (*The Singer of Tales*, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-206.)

¹⁰According to a statement made by Mme. Gegov-Allard at the Congress of the Société Rencesvals, Venice, 1961, quoted by A. de Mandach in *Naissance et développement de la chanson de geste en Europe*, Vol. I (Geneva-Paris: Droz-Minard), 1961, p. 414.

¹¹See Rychner's work on the art of the *jongleurs*. *La Chanson de geste. Essai sur l'art épique des jongleurs*, also the introduction to Owen's translation of *The Song of Roland*, *op. cit.*

other singers' songs and used them frequently so that they became part of his own singing, in something like the way a child learns to speak. The central structure of the epic would remain the same from performance to performance but individual lines, words and details would change. This reinforces the point made earlier that variation is an integral part of oral composition — i.e., variation in details, for the singer would attempt to remain faithful to the essence of the epic he was singing.¹³

Lord's and Parry's studies of the processes of composition help us to see the text of an epic like *The Song of Roland* in a new light. Readers have noticed that certain words and phrases are often repeated. For example, the phrase *France dulce* ("fair France") appears many times, even spoken by enemies of France. Charlemagne¹⁴ often strokes his white beard. His men keep spurring their horses to the attack, and shattering the enemy's shields. In the past, repetitions like these have tended to be dismissed as clichés and stereotypes, as a sign that the work was crude or "primitive". But if we think of the epics as being composed during an oral performance, we can see how these repetitions play a very important role in the epic.

Formulas are the basis of the epic singer's art. Parry defines the formula as "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea."¹⁵ For example, the expression *co dist li reis* or *co dist Rollant* is often used at the beginning of a line to introduce a speech made by one of the main characters, such as the king or Roland. Other statements which are repeated at the beginning of the line (i.e., "under the same metrical conditions") and can be called formulas are *Halt sunt li pui* ("High are the hills", lines 814, 1755, 1830, 2271) and *La bataille est* followed by the adjective *merveilluse* and another adjective to describe how fierce and terrible the fighting is (e.g., *La bataille est merveilluse e pesante*, line 1412; *La bataille est merveilluse e hastive*, line 1661). There are formulas to describe

¹²Albert Lord gives this definition of oral epic song: "narrative poetry composed in a manner evolved over many generations by singers of tales who did not know how to write; it consists of the building of metrical lines and half lines by means of formulas and formulaic expressions and of the building of songs by the use of themes." *The Singer of Tales*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹³For comments on the role of the epic singer as conservator of tradition, see Rychner, *op. cit.*, p. 30, and Lord, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

¹⁴Charlemagne (approximately AD 742-814) was king of the Franks (who lived in the area corresponding roughly to present-day France) and emperor of the western part of Europe. Two other names we will be mentioning in connection with the *The Song of Roland* may need explanation: *Saracens*: the customary name given by Christians of the Middle Ages to their Muslim enemies, to Arabs, and to the Moors in Spain. The *Basques* are a group of people living in the Pyrenees Mountains (between France and Spain) who have fought continuously for their independence.

¹⁵"Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making. I: Homer and Homeric Style", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, XLI (1930), 80.

handsome warriors (*Cors ad mult gent*, lines 895, 1159) and to describe single combats, particularly the actions of shattering the opponent's shield, and spurring one's horse to attack. For example, the statement *L'escut li freint* is repeated five times in sixty lines, always at the beginning of the line, and *Le cheval brochet* or *Son cheval brochet* occurs as frequently, also at the beginning of the line.

The epic singer had a store of these formulas at his disposal. He would use them to build each line, varying them to fit what he was describing at that moment, and to fit into the rhythm of the epic line, which had ten syllables, usually with a pause after the fourth syllable (called the caesura). The formula was admirably suited to composition at a high speed during a performance. The epic singer had to hold the interest of his audience and could not stop all the time to search for an original expression. What is remarkable is the skill with which the formulas could be varied to convey deep feelings and to describe scenes vividly.

The lines were grouped together in stanzas of different lengths called *laissez*. The lines in each *laisse* of the early French epics were linked by assonance, meaning that the last words in each line had the same vowel sound (for example, *fraindre* and *muntaigne* at the end of the fourth and fifth lines of *The Song of Roland*). In later epics the lines usually rhymed. The *laisse* was useful for improvisation, having a unity of its own, and being flexible in length to fit whatever idea or event the *jongleur* was dealing with. Thus the *jongleur* would build his epic, using formulas and expressions to build each line, then grouping the lines into *laissez* focusing on a particular idea, scene or event, and finally uniting the *laissez* around themes and events of the story, into a whole work.

Albert Lord and Stephen Nichols claim that the formula is such an important part of oral composition that one can tell whether a text is literary or oral in origin by examining the number of formulas in the text. If there is a predominance of formulas, the text is very likely to be an oral composition. Lord took a passage from *The Song of Roland* and examined each phrase to see if it could be called a formula. We will copy below some of the lines to illustrate how he set out his findings. The formulas are underlined with a solid line. In detailed notes Lord takes each formula and lists all the lines of *The Song of Roland* in which the same formula appears in the same position in the line (in the first four syllables before the caesura, or else in the second part of the line) to express the same idea. He found, for example, that *Li quens Rollant* appeared thirty-one times in the first part of the line in other sections of *The Song of Roland*. The broken line under some of the phrases indicates a formulaic expression, which is a line or half line constructed on the pattern of the formula.¹⁶ Where a number appears but no line it seems to mean that Lord found some similarity with another phrase or two in *The Song of Roland*, but not sufficient to mark it as a formula or a formulaic expression.

- 1338 *Li quens Rollant*₁ *par mile champ chevalchet*₂
*Tient Durendal**₃ *ki ben trenchet e taillet*₄
1340 *Des Sarrazins*₅ *lur fait mult grant damage*₆
*Ki lui veist*₇ *l'un geter mort au(r) l'altre*₈
1342 *Li sanc tuz clers*₉ *gesir par cele place!*
*Sanglant en ad e*₁₁ *l'osberc e (la) brace*₁₂
1344 *Sun bon cheval*₁₃ *le col e l (es) espalles*₁₄

*Durendal is the name given to Roland's sword. It was customary in the old French epics for swords and horses of the main characters to have names.

- 1338 Count Roland rides about the battlefield
 With Durendal cutting and cleaving well:
1340 He wreaks great slaughter on the Saracens.
 Would you had seen him piling corpse on corpse,
1342 And all the bright blood flowing in that place!
 His hauberk and both arms are red with gore,
1344 Bloody his good steed's withers and its neck).¹⁷

This short passage illustrates that the use of formulas can be refined to have an effect that is artistic and not merely mechanical.¹⁸ Often, for example, the usual order of words is changed in a formula, and the effect of this inversion can be to place the two most important elements of the idea expressed at the points of heaviest stress, the fourth and tenth syllables. Thus in line 1340 quoted above the two main stresses fall on *Sarrazins* (Saracens) and *damage* (slaughter, bloodshed), reinforcing the meaning of the line.

Lord concludes from his analysis that *The Song of Roland* is "formulaic beyond any question" and that "such analyses seem to indicate that *The Song of Roland* as we have it in the Oxford manuscript is an oral composition."¹⁹ Stephen Nichols did a similar study, and listed formula types and their prevalence in the first two thousand lines of *The Song of Roland*. He found that over half the lines begin with a formula, and he concluded categorically that *The Song of Roland* is "certainly . . . the result of oral rather than literary diction."²⁰

¹⁶See A. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁷The translation is by D.D.R. Owen, *The Song of Roland*, *op. cit.* The underlinings and numbers indicating formulas and formulaic expressions are taken from *The Singer of Tales*, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

¹⁸Parry talks about "the refining action of tradition which gradually makes each formula the most poetic way of expressing an idea". Quoted by S. Nichols, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁹*The Singer of Tales*, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-3.

²⁰*Formulaic Diction and Thematic Composition in The Chanson de Roland*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

The short passage quoted from *The Song of Roland* illustrates another feature of oral composition: it consists of a series of self-contained statements, fitted to the line, without the meaning running over from one line to the next. Another way of expressing this is that oral poetry is characterised by non-enjambment and by a high incidence of end-stopped lines which contain in themselves a complete thought. In literate poetry on the other hand, there is less need for the thought to be completed in a single line, and the meaning tends to run over into one or more lines, so that there is a higher incidence of "necessary" enjambment in literate poetry.²¹

Finally, there are features such as repetition of themes and parallelism of events and situations, which do not belong exclusively to oral works but which seem to be more marked there than in literary works. For example, Charlemagne is carefully balanced or paralleled by Marsilion, the Christian king versus the Saracen, pagan king. In the opening *laissez*, each is shown in council, each sitting in an orchard, surrounded by many thousands of men. Each has a brave nephew, and the nephew of Marsilion even asks for twelve men to support him, to match Roland's twelve peers. The drawing in stereotypes, balancing clear-cut good against bad (as emphasized in the line *Paien unt tort e chrestiens unt dreit* — "Pagans are wrong and Christians are right", line 1015) is itself a feature of oral composition, an extension of the principle of the formula, repeating concepts rather than phrases.²²

Repetition and parallelism on the more technical level of the *laisse* are also very marked in *The Song of Roland*. Often a *laisse* will virtually repeat the preceding *laisse* (this is called a *laisse similaire*). This would help a listener who arrived in the middle of a recitation to pick up the threads of the story. It has the artistic effect of heightening the tension at crucial moments, as when Roland blows the horn.²³ Repetition of details from *laisse* to *laisse*, and repetition with variation, also heighten the drama at key points, for example in the individual fights during the battle at Roncevaux. Roland is matched against the nephew of Marsilion, Oliver and Turpin are each matched against two of the best Saracen fighters. Each *laisse* follows the same pattern of Saracen taunting the Frank, the Frank replying, attacking the Saracen, killing him, and addressing the body of the dead pagan.²⁴

²¹See Nichols' reference to Parry's and Lord's studies on the importance of enjambment in distinguishing between oral and written styles, *Formulaic Diction and Thematic Composition in the Chanson de Roland*, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-1.

²²For a discussion of the generic and typological characteristics of *The Song of Roland* and of the relation between the thematic conception of ideas and their formulaic expression, see Nichols, *op. cit.*, pp. 25 ff.

²³See *laissez* 133, 134 and 135 of *The Song of Roland*.

²⁴See *laissez* 93, 94 and 95.

The work done by Parry and Lord, Nichols and Rychner on the art of the epic singers shows how highly skilled the singers were, manipulating formulas and phrases into rhythmic lines and *laisse* units, and recreating the events in a very vivid way. Rychner would prefer oral literature to be called "oral and professional literature" rather than just "popular" literature as it is often called. "Professional" stresses the skills involved, the positive circumstances which give oral literature its particular characteristics.²⁵ Another aspect to emphasize is its vitality. The term "living epics" has been used to describe the old epics which were formerly "living" and those which are still living today in a few isolated places.²⁶ "Living" suggests the active way in which the epics were created and passed on, with each performance being an original, a re-creation. The singer is not merely a performer, reproducing what he or someone else has composed. He is singer, performer, composer and poet all at the same time. He is "not a mere carrier of tradition but a creative artist making the tradition". Albert Lord stresses that literacy is a threat to oral tradition: once literacy becomes widespread and the idea of a fixed text is born, this means the death of the oral traditional process.²⁷

II *The Song of Roland as history*

The Song of Roland is based on events which are reported in some early chronicles or histories: the expedition of Charlemagne into Spain in the eighth century to fight the Saracens, and the ambush of the rearguard of his army in the Pyrenees Mountains as he returned to France. The ambush took place in 778 AD.

There are significant differences between the oral popular version in *The Song of Roland* and the written accounts in official chronicles and contemporary histories.

To begin with, the ambush is the central event in *The Song of Roland*. The opening scenes lead up to it, with a quarrel between Roland and his step-father Ganelon causing Ganelon to make a treacherous pact with the Saracens and plot the ambush and Roland's death. The climax is the ambush itself, with the deaths of Roland and his friend Oliver, archbishop Turpin, and all the men in the rear-guard. The rest of *The Song of Roland* follows on from the ambush. The two big battles in which Charlemagne defeats the Saracen king, Marsilion, and Marsilion's overlord, Baligant, are Charlemagne's revenge on the Saracens for the death of Roland and his men, a massive "payback".

The Song of Roland thus revolves around the disaster of 778. But written histories either ignore the ambush or treat it as a minor episode of guerilla

²⁵ La Chanson de geste. *Essai sur l'art épique des jongleurs*, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

²⁶ See Nichols, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

²⁷ See *The Singer of Tales*, pp. 13, 100-1, 137.

warfare, with a small group of Basques as the attackers instead of a great horde of Saracens. While Charlemagne was still alive official chronicles reported only that he returned victorious from Spain, bringing hostages from the Saracens — an “official lie” according to Menéndez Pidal.²⁸ It was only after the death of Charlemagne that there was any mention of the ambush in the Pyrenees. This change may be due partly to the removal of restraint on news detrimental to the glory of Charlemagne. Menéndez Pidal claims that the fact that chronicles started to report the ambush shows the influence of the popular oral version of the defeat in *The Song of Roland*.²⁹

The official chronicle *Royal Annals to 829* and Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*, written in about 830 (fifty years after the event in 778) both give an account of the ambush. Einhard follows closely the *Royal Annals* and adds extra details. Here is Einhard's version:

(Charlemagne) marched over the Pyrenees into Spain at the head of all the forces that he could muster. All the towns and castles that he attacked surrendered, and up to the time he returned home he sustained no loss whatever. But on his way back home through the Pyrenees he suffered from the treachery of the Basques. That region is well adapted for ambushes because of the thick forests that cover it; and as the army was advancing in the long line of march necessitated by the narrow road, the Basques, who lay in ambush on the top of a very high mountain, attacked the rear of the baggage train and the rear guard in charge of it, and hurled them down to the very bottom of the valley. In the struggle that followed, they killed everyone. They then looted the baggage, and dispersed quickly in every direction under cover of approaching night. The Basques had the advantage of light armour and the nature of the battle ground on this occasion, whereas the Franks fought at a disadvantage in every respect, because of the weight of their armour and the unevenness of the ground. Egghard, the King's steward; Anselm, Count Palatine; and Roland, Governor of the March of Brittany, with very many others, were killed in this fight. This aggression could not be avenged immediately because the enemy scattered so widely after their attack that no one had any idea where they had gone.³⁰

In Einhard's account, Roland is just listed as one of three important men who died. In *The Song of Roland* he is the title figure, the nephew of the emperor and one of the greatest warriors in the world. Even though Roland dies half way through *The Song of Roland* he plays a central role. The most dramatic part of

²⁸ *La Chanson de Roland et la tradition épique des Francs*, op. cit., pp. 204, 277-8. Pidal lists the official texts which ignore or hide the disaster as the *Royal Annals to 801* (Mettenses and Reginon) as well as the group of Annals of Lorsch and Moissac.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 277-8.

³⁰ *The Life of Charlemagne*, translated by S.E. Turner, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1960, pp. 33-4. Where necessary, parts of this translation are simplified with reference to J. Bédier's translation in *La Chanson de Roland commentée*, Paris, Piazza, 1927, pp. 3, 4.

the whole poem is Roland's death at Roncevaux and his final act of blowing his horn to warn Charlemagne to return.

This drawing of Roland on a grand scale fits in with a general exaggeration of figures and events throughout *The Song of Roland*. Charlemagne according to contemporary histories would only have been thirty-six when he took his army into Spain.³¹ But in *The Song of Roland* he is two hundred years old, with white hair and a long white beard. He has become an archetype of the Christian emperor, God's elect. In Einhard, the attackers are a small group of Basques, who were Christians. In *The Song of Roland* the attackers are an enormous army of many thousands of Saracens. The fight expands into a battle between Christians and Pagans, between the forces of Good and Evil. There is a total bias against non-Christians: "Pagans are wrong and Christians are right" (line 1015).

This lack of objectivity is picked up and criticised by recent African and Arab historians, who see *The Song of Roland* as yet another racist, Euro-centred interpretation of history. An Algerian writer, Amar Ouzegane, claims:

In fact the sordid truth is that Charlemagne's nephew was no martyr of the christian faith, but a professional soldier defeated by christians in the defence of their own country. The battle of Roncevaux was only one episode in a cruel, merciless war of plunder waged by the barbaric north against the christian people of Euzkadie, the Basques.³²

In these ways *The Song of Roland* seems closer to legend and hagiography than to an objective report of an historical event. There is no written proof that Roland was ever present at the battle in 778. Eighty years after the event none of the official written histories had mentioned Roland. André de Mandach claims that the only document referring to Roland is Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*, and then only in a few of the manuscripts. The versions of Einhard's work which do mention Roland are not necessarily the most reliable from the point of view of historical accuracy.³³

On at least one point, however, *The Song of Roland* may have conserved a kernel of truth not mentioned by some of the official historians. Einhard says that Charlemagne's army was attacked in the rear by Basques who were Christians. In *The Song of Roland* it is Moslems who were the attackers. According to an Arab history and also the *Annals to 829*, Charlemagne was attacked both by Basques and by Moslems.³⁴ In this case *The Song of Roland* could have preserved one part of the truth, and Einhard another.

³¹ Joseph Bédier, *La Chanson de Roland commentée*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

³² Quoted by Claude Wauthier in *The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa*, London, Pall Mall Press, 1966, p. 78.

³³ *Naissance et développement de la chanson de geste en Europe*, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23, 30-32.

³⁴ Menéndez Pidal, *La Chanson de Roland et la tradition épique des Francs*, *op. cit.*, pp. 205 and 208.

Exactly how reliable *The Song of Roland* is as history is hard to determine, when we cannot be sure exactly how reliable the written histories are, in Latin or in Arabic. The epics may once have been accepted as “truth”: Auerbach claims that for the people of the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, the epic *was* history — people believed that things happened the way the epics said they did.³⁵ Today we tend to be more aware of the exaggerations, the cultural and racial bias. If a fundamental condition for any historical report is that the narrator must know exactly the path the material has taken between him and the original eye witness,³⁶ then we cannot say that *The Song of Roland* has great value for us today as a factual historical document.

The Song of Roland may not be accurate history, but it provides interesting examples of the ways in which oral literature can affect written accounts. We have already mentioned the fact that the ambush came to be reported in official chronicles after a period of silence, and that this can be interpreted as the result of the influence of the popular oral account in *The Song of Roland*. The importance of oral sources is underlined by an editor’s comment in an eleventh century manuscript of Einhard’s *Life of Charlemagne*. The editor said that Einhard’s history, written in Latin, “leaves a gap in relation to these facts about the Emperor which the vulgar tongue (i.e., the vernacular, the language spoken by the people) celebrates in songs.”³⁷

The inclusion of Roland’s name in some manuscripts of Einhard’s *Life of Charlemagne* can also be traced to the influence of oral sources.³⁸ There is some evidence that oral versions of the story of Roland were popular already in the eleventh century and particularly in the twelfth century. A song of Roland was apparently sung before the battle of Hastings in 1066 to inspire the Norman soldiers to fight bravely.³⁹ By the end of the eleventh century Roland was a popular name to choose for a son.⁴⁰ And by the twelfth century Roland figured in a number of surviving texts, including the writings of Raoul le Tourtier and William of Malmesbury. Roland plays the main role in the *Nota Emilianense*, an outline of a song of Roland in the third quarter of the eleventh century, and in the *Historia Silense*, at the beginning of the twelfth century.⁴¹

³⁶Klaus Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition*, London, Adam & Charles Black, 1969, p. 119.

³⁷Quoted by Menéndez Pidal, *op. cit.*, pp. 382-3.

³⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 281-2; see also de Mandach, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-1.

³⁹See Menéndez Pidal, *op. cit.*, pp. 271-2; also F. Lot, in “Etudes sur les légendes épiques françaises”, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

⁴⁰See Lot, *op. cit.*, p. 372; also de Mandach, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁴¹Menéndez Pidal, *op. cit.*, pp. 81, 147-154.

Menéndez Pidal believes this "loquacity" about Roland in texts of this period is evidence of a cultural evolution in which the clergy and literate people finally recognized that the popular idiom had some value.⁴²

It seems reasonable to assume from these examples that by the eleventh and twelfth centuries the story of Roland was well enough known for a scribe writing out manuscripts of works like Einhard's *Life of Charlegmagne* to include the name of Roland among those killed.

At least in some of the written accounts of the ambush in the Pyrenees Mountains, there was interaction between oral and written sources. The official histories were written in Latin and could reach only a very limited audience. It was the oral versions, in the language spoken by the people as a whole, which had the widest impact. *The Song of Roland* is an example of songs which existed in France and Spain between the tenth and sixteenth centuries to commemorate famous events and give information on current events. These have come to be part of an oral tradition, and eventually, in the case of *The Song of Roland*, have influenced written accounts.

It is striking that oral traditions proved so vigorous and durable, over several centuries, and in competition with written evidence. It would be very rash to suppose that literacy weakens oral tradition in every case: or that written evidence drives out oral accounts. It is not enough to look out for literary influences in oral accounts: we must also be on guard to pick up evidence of oral documents surviving for centuries, and ultimately finding their way into written accounts. Melanesian oral traditions have been interacting with literary sources now for over a century. It will be interesting to see how they influence each other.

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CHAPTER VIII

Oral and Written Sources

Bill Gammage

People who use writing to describe the past are sometimes suspicious of oral history. They point out that two eyewitness accounts of the same event, such as an accident, will always differ, because each account is affected by the emotions, inclination to remember, selection of detail, and prejudice of the eyewitness. If spoken accounts of the same small event disagree, critics argue, then oral history as a whole must be very inaccurate.

A second objection to oral history is that its version of any past event constantly changes. Time affects people's memories, stories change as they pass from mouth to mouth, and people consciously or unconsciously alter the details of a story, or even the main story itself, according to their present interests or needs. Because of this an oral account is not only partly inaccurate to begin with, it also becomes less and less reliable as time goes on. Critics of oral history claim that recording the past in writing avoids these problems, because researchers can base what they write on records unaffected by generations of oral storytelling.

An oral historian might reply that much early European history existed for centuries only as oral history before being written down, or that written accounts even of very recent events necessarily begin as spoken accounts, or that communities without writing learn to remember traditions and past events more accurately than communities accustomed to substitute writing for memory, or that the advantages of writing are irrelevant to communities which do not write. But in Papua New Guinea, where both writing and speech are being used to study history, criticisms of oral history might be worth considering.

Of course oral traditions can contain inaccuracies. For example, a story told in many parts of the Highlands between Goroka and Porgera is that the first *kia*p there, Jim Taylor, shot local villagers. Highlanders who were actually there tell these stories: they can name the villagers shot, and point out kinsmen of the dead. They are not seeking compensation or claiming that the shooting was unreasonable—indeed usually they say the shooting was justified. So usually historians can accept that someone was shot. But equally only a little thought and research can show that, except where he himself gives evidence to the contrary,

Jim Taylor was not the shooter. Apart from times when unknown to Taylor his police may have clashed with villagers,¹ stories that Taylor shot people come from villages up to sixty miles from the route of his early patrols, or are about people shot when Taylor was not in the Highlands, or have Taylor shooting villagers at different places at the same time!

How can such mistakes have occurred? We must first realise that during early clashes no villager could have known the name of a white man shooting at them. Indeed, since we are discussing people who had never or rarely seen white men, no villager could have known whether or not the white man they saw was a *kiap*—or even what a *kiap* was! Even when patrol posts were first set up it was hard for villagers to find out a *kiap*'s name, and many early *kiaps* were described by their appearance or behaviour—master red face, for example, or the tall master, or the angry master, and so on. So when villagers name a *kiap* who shot kinsmen, they must have learnt this name *after* the shooting, perhaps even twenty or thirty years after, and they learnt it directly or indirectly from another European. Now most Europeans know very little about the history of early contact in the Highlands, but most know that Taylor was the first *kiap* west of Goroka. So we might guess that when a villager told a European that the first white man in *his area* shot kinsmen, the European assumed that the villager was referring to the first white man in *the Highlands*. He would then wrongly name Taylor, and the villager would accept this as correct and thereafter say that Taylor shot his kinsmen.

Of course the mistake might have begun in other ways. For example, some villagers might credit Taylor with shootings simply in deference to his status as a big man in the Highlands, without checking whether or not he was responsible. In many societies the status of heroes is increased in this way, by crediting them with acts they may not have committed. But the point of this example is that the error seems entrenched in oral accounts, yet could easily be proved wrong by Taylor's written patrol reports, or by other patrol reports, from the Ialibu and Wabag areas for example, which name the European who actually did the shooting for which villagers credit or blame Taylor.

Oral traditions can be inaccurate in other ways. They may be deliberately distorted, to promote land claims for example: the so-called Kukukuku people are still losing border land because neighbours with better access to the government use oral tradition to claim land held by the Kukukuku as hunting ground, and

¹Kamuna Hura from Garaina, a former police constable with Taylor, stated that Taylor's police shot Highlanders and told Taylor afterwards (interview with Arenao Sesiguo, Port Moresby, August 1976), but Tapo from Manus, a former sergeant, stated that Taylor did not know of these shootings, and would have imprisoned the police responsible had he found out (interview, Lorengau, September 1976). Jim Taylor believes that his police could not have fired rifles without his hearing them (interview, Goroka, November 1976).

Highlanders have used oral traditions to take possession of valley ground too dangerous to occupy until Europeans came. Oral traditions may also omit details which no longer seem relevant, and may even omit entire traditions, for example about disease, fear, hunger, or sorcery, because they no longer seem important.

These examples support those critics who object that, consciously or unconsciously, oral traditions change the past to suit the present. What seems relevant is edited and distorted as it is passed on, anything else is not passed on at all, or at best survives as reminiscence or entertainment. We might note immediately that the critics assume that *accuracy* is the chief virtue of history, whereas village leaders might argue that above all history must be *useful* — it should justify land boundaries, for example, or strengthen group solidarity. But even if we accept that accuracy is important, it is doubtful whether the relative accuracy of written and oral history can be shown to differ significantly. Not only can both oral and written evidence be inaccurate from the moment it is recorded, as eyewitness and newspaper accounts show, but also each repetition of either can add to its probable inaccuracies. What matters is not whether a piece of evidence is written or oral, but how many repetitions — how many opportunities for adding to its original inaccuracies — it has undergone. By the critics' own standards, recent oral evidence should on the face of it be more reliable than written evidence often repeated from ancient sources. Of course in theory reference back to the original written source, if it still exists, can limit inaccuracies brought about by repetition, but in practice that is only sporadically done, whereas Papua New Guineans constantly took care to pass on accurately oral traditions that mattered, by training young men to recite them, by formalising their transmission with ceremony and ritual, and by giving status to historians.

More importantly, with any history the interpretation of evidence is *in practice* far more significant than its collection. Any good historian will try to eliminate errors, either by checking written records or by checking the memories or learnt traditions of others in the community. But also any good historian interprets his evidence according to the needs or interests of his audience. Very little is written or spoken which contradicts the prejudices of the writer or speaker, and very little is read or heard which does not interest an audience. We can show this in written history by noting how different are two popular versions of the same event written at different times. That such a thing offends theoretical notions of accuracy has never prevented it happening.

In other words the faults which critics use to condemn oral history can also condemn written history. Inaccuracies persist and multiply in written accounts despite theories that they need not, and in written history as in oral history evidence is in practice subordinate to interpretation. In fact the advantage of written history is not accuracy, but convenience. Writing avoids the need to

memorise, and so increases how much information can be passed on. Indeed perhaps it is because writing preserves more detail about more events that writers assume written evidence to be more accurate, whereas really a relative lack of detail does not bear at all on the accuracy of what *is* preserved orally, although it may make the interpretation of oral traditions more difficult for historians seeking accuracy.

Examples of error and prejudice are easily found in Papua New Guinea's written records. Written sources can simply be wrong: some patrol reports, for example, wrongly claim never to have shot people,² or claim to have conducted thorough censuses when (as the writers will tell you orally) only estimates of population were made, or claim to have spent money in one way when in fact it was spent in another. Written sources can also be edited and distorted to suit the present interests or prejudices of a historian or a community. Despite contrary evidence, for example, some historians will state or imply that Papua New Guineans never traditionally alienated land, or that all *kiaps* were bad (or good), or that missionaries never (or always) destroyed artefacts. Writing is a valuable skill, but written sources are more often the servants than the masters of contemporary prejudices.

Perhaps the best working rule for Papua New Guinea historians might be to ignore comparison between oral and written sources, and accept that good history should prize *any* evidence which tells about the past.

In Papua New Guinea an obvious fact is that written sources mainly reflect European concerns, while oral sources mainly reflect Papua New Guinea concerns. To neglect either would entrench errors or omissions or bias which a true historian should strive to eradicate. Oral and written sources are allies: each strengthens the other. The remainder of this chapter is meant to illustrate the partnership of oral and written history. It tells how historians investigated the Rabaul strike of 1929. Such an account might be interesting in itself, as it is not often given, but it is meant mainly to show how inaccuracies can exist even in accepted and seemingly reliable sources, both written and oral; how much might be learnt by seeking out any evidence and by checking and re-checking one detail against another; how despite determined searches much valuable evidence can remain undiscovered; and how in the end evidence is subordinated to the prejudices of the historian. The article about the Strike and an outline of most of the evidence used to write it is in *Oral History*, Vol. 3, no. 2 (1975) pp. 2-43 and, amended, in the *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 10, no. 3, (1975) pp. 3-29.

²See D. Mendano, 'Early Contact with White Men', UPNG History Essay, August 1976. Other examples are not cited in deference to patrol officers still living. With a few exceptions I do not think these officers should be condemned, for their actions are difficult to assess without experience in a like situation, but I do fear that publicity would subject them to ill-considered criticism. Perhaps this footnote might illustrate how readily a historian's prejudices can override his evidence.

In 1972 Hank Nelson and I agreed that someone should learn more about the Rabaul Strike. It seemed an early use of a European custom for Papua New Guinean purposes, we believed it (wrongly) to be the first strike of any kind in Papua New Guinea, and we thought that its organisation might help counter doubts about Papua New Guinean ability which some Europeans and Papua New Guineans had in 1972. Obviously some prejudices evident in the final article existed even before serious research into it had begun. This is often so in history.

In 1972 little was known about the Strike. What was known came from written European sources: Griffith's Royal Commission findings of March 1929, *Rabaul Times* reports between January and March 1929, articles by Ian Willis and J.K. McCarthy, and a handful of brief references in other books. Nothing was certain about why and how Papua New Guineans had planned the Strike, nor what they felt about it, nor what happened to them afterwards. Only two leaders could be named—Sumasuma from either New Ireland or Madang, and Rami from somewhere on Manus. We knew nothing about any other Papua New Guinean involved—it seemed urgent to learn their story of the Strike.

Written sources might help, but obviously the best information would come from asking people who were there—from oral sources. Hank made two important discoveries—in 1972 he learnt that Sumasuma's son, Blaise Mem, would soon come to the University, and late in 1973 he found in Canberra a detailed transcript of evidence given by the Strike leaders at their trial. Hank left Papua New Guinea at the end of 1972, but his place was taken in 1973 by Rabbie Namaliu, after his return from studying in Canada.

Rabbie and I planned to visit the New Guinea islands in September 1973, to interview people who remembered the Strike. I prepared for this in Port Moresby by reading anything which might tell us about the Strike or about conditions in Rabaul in 1929—the better prepared researchers are in this way, the more detailed will be the questions they can ask in interviews, and the more detailed the information gathered. The annual volumes of the *Laws of the Territory of New Guinea* in the Supreme Court Library laid down the minimum pay, contract terms, and living conditions of police, seamen and labourers in Rabaul, and also gave hints about the organisation of the police force. New Guinea *Annual Reports* indicated living conditions and crime rates in Rabaul, and replies to letters from Europeans who knew about the Strike, especially from Keith McCarthy, explained various incidents and details.

By September Rabbie and I had learnt that New Guineans who remembered the Strike were living in Rabaul, on New Ireland, and on Manus. We began in Rabaul, asking why so few Tolais had taken part in the Strike, then went to Namatanai on New Ireland, then to Sumasuma's *ples* on Boang Island, Tanga, then up the New Ireland coast to Kavieng, and finally to Manus. We tape

recorded eleven interviews mainly involving nineteen people, and afterwards took three months to translate these recordings from Kuanua or *tok pisin* and have an English transcript typed.

In all interviews our method was similar. We had two portable cassette recorders (two in case one broke down), and after writing details about the interview in a notebook (names, place, date, language used, tape number), everything said was recorded on a cassette. We had to be careful that background noises such as the surf or people talking did not drown out an interview.

We began each talk by explaining who we were, and that we hoped to write an article about the Strike so that Papua New Guinean students could learn about it. Next we outlined what we knew already, to avoid repetition. Sometimes to test a speaker's memory we asked a few questions to which we knew the answer, and we asked some questions we thought essential—for example, why did you strike? How early did planning for the Strike begin (or, when did you first hear about the Strike)? Were you happy with your pay?, and so on. Otherwise we tried to let each speaker tell his own story, partly to show respect to older and more knowledgeable men, and partly because people may talk more freely and with more detail once they warm to their story. Always we concluded by asking whether the speaker could tell us of others who might help. We did not pay informants, who after all were helping preserve the history of their country, but during interviews we made small gifts of cigarettes, tinned meat, sugar, and the like.

Usually we could not warn anyone that we were coming, but everyone we met freely gave time to help us, and patiently answered our questions. Their courtesy and consideration were exceptional. When we stopped at Mangai village on New Ireland to talk to Baa Sabau, for example, he was not at home, so we went on to Kavieng, thirty miles away. Mr. Sabau had been in Kavieng, but when he returned home that night and learnt that two strangers had called, he caught a PMV back to Kavieng, found us, and told us his story until late into the night. Then, refusing to stay, he went out into pouring rain to find his way home to Mangai.

Some speakers exaggerated details of the Strike, or invented what they had forgotten, but most wanted to tell their story accurately, to benefit future generations of Papua New Guineans. If they could not remember a detail they said so and apologised. If they were unsure of their information, they asked for time to think or to seek a second opinion. Several times, especially on Tanga, a question was debated at length among all the men present, and only after they agreed did they answer. Once or twice they answered that no villager present could help us and that we should ask another man nearby—and we would all go off and find him. This might illustrate how village history—oral history—on the one hand adapts to contemporary opinion, but on the other tries to remove inaccuracies from accounts of the past. In general the men we

spoke to were at least as concerned to get the story right as are historians trained in the written traditions of truth and accuracy — indeed their care and concern set standards which some both in Papua New Guinea and Australia might well imitate.

The oral interviews provided information unobtainable anywhere else, and at last what happened before, during, and after the Strike began to come to life. We discovered that Sumasuma and Rami were only names in *tok pisin* — the leaders were Sumsuma and N'Dramei, and about Sumsuma especially we were told a great deal. Former strikers also described when, how and why the Strike was planned, what New Guineans at the time thought about living in a European town, what relations were between different groups of New Guineans in Rabaul in 1929, and what happened to the strikers afterwards. As they spoke a clearer picture of the Strike took shape, confirming some early impressions, changing others, and adding completely new and unexpected elements. For example, while as we had hoped we learnt the names of such Strike leaders as Bohun, Gok and Ralau, we also learned that a second police sergeant-major had been involved in the Strike. This was a thing which no written record then available had hinted at. Who was this man? Where did he come from? What did he do during the Strike? Why did written records not mention him?

The search for the other sergeant-major was only one of the tasks we had when we returned to Port Moresby. The oral interviews gave us many answers, but also raised many questions. We were led to write letters or talk to more Europeans who remembered the Strike: Jim Taylor helped us particularly. We were also led to read Australian Parliamentary Papers on labour conditions in New Guinea, to ask about strikes in Papua before 1929 and in German New Guinea before 1914, to read of the early days at Salamaua and the Wau-Bulolo goldfields where many strikers were sent. After much searching the other sergeant-major proved to be Kateo, who still lived on Wallis Island off Wewak. On Tanga William Taki had told us this, but others had disagreed, so Kateo's identity was uncertain until police pension records were checked.

So the oral interviews of September 1973 not only outlined what Papua New Guineans did during the Strike, they also uncovered more written and oral sources, and improved our understanding of the written sources we had. Although students and others constantly added new details, the Rabaul Strike article was based on the 1973 interviews and on the written trial transcript Hank Nelson had found.

Yet many puzzles remain. We know little about N'Dramei — not even his grave has been located certainly. Perhaps one day a student from Pitylu will tell us more about him. We are not sure why Tolais kept out of the Strike (if they did), or whether most workers were happy with their pay, or where leaders like Bohun came from and what happened to them, or who led the strikers at the Catholic Mission, or what Kateo's role in the Strike was, and so on.

As well I now doubt some fundamental assumptions in the Rabaul Strike article. In 1976 I read an extract from an article about Tanga by the anthropologist F.L.S. Bell,³ who lived on Tanga in 1933, the year after Sumsuma returned from prison. The article was partly about Sumsuma, and described him using traditional conventions in new ways to gain status. It showed that he was resourceful, willing to innovate, and determined to lead. Most importantly, it suggested that it might be wrong to treat the Strike simply as an example of skilful New Guinean use of a European custom. Striking for higher pay was certainly European, but were the Strike leaders seeking more than higher pay? On the face of it they stood to lose much by striking — perhaps they risked what they had to improve their traditional standing? That might explain why Sumsuma wanted to take full responsibility for the Strike at his trial, and perhaps why Kateo opposed the Strike — was he N'Dramei's rival for traditional reasons?

These suggestions imply that traditional attitudes towards leadership were applied to a non-traditional situation. They imply that those who were willing followers during the Strike could regard leaders who were not *wantoks* as traditional big men. Could this have been so? Did New Guineans consider a sergeant-major or a boss boy a big man, or was he shown respect only because Europeans had given him power? Did men like Sumsuma and N'Dramei gain permanent traditional status because temporarily they were important in the European world? If they did, which mattered more before the Strike, their rank among Europeans, or their traditional status?

In these and other ways traditional values and attitudes clearly deserved closer consideration than the article had given them. The meetings the police held before the Strike, for example, were more like village councils than European meetings — the leaders did not give orders as did police N.C.O.s, they spoke last and most decisively as did village leaders. Again, if we imagine New Guineans working in Rabaul to be a single community, accepting those most prominent among them as big men in place of their traditional leaders at home, then the exclusion of the Tolai becomes more easily understood (they alone in Rabaul had a traditional structure relatively intact), and the readiness of men to be led by 'foreigners' becomes more reasonable.

The role of tradition in the Strike remains to be properly researched, but research may force not only a drastic reconsideration of what really was going on during the Strike, but also a review of the entire subject of relations between Papua New Guineans and Europeans. If that happens, when that happens, then a 1975 article on the Rabaul Strike might well be seen as typifying what it had hoped to advance beyond — European colonial history.

³F.L.S. Bell, 'The Place of Food in the Social Life of the Tanga', *Oceania*, Vol. 18, no. 1, (1947) pp. 36-59. Pages 50-8 of this article are reprinted in Whittaker, J.L. et al., *Documents and Readings in New Guinea History*, Brisbane 1975, pp. 65-8.

PART III
ORAL SOURCES
AND
HISTORY
IN
MELANESIA

CHAPTER IX

The 'Time of Darkness' or Yuu Kuia

Paul Mai

The intention of this chapter is to outline the Enga oral tradition known as the 'Time of Darkness' and mention some related issues. It is also my intention to raise some fundamental questions. However such questions cannot be answered in this paper, mainly because of the lack of evidence available.

This version of the 'Time of Darkness' is a very general, integrated one. It is pieced together from different oral traditions of the 'Time of Darkness' and related information gathered from Wapenamanda, Wabag and Lagaip districts of the Enga Province. The fieldwork was done over a period of about six weeks, from the last week of November, 1974, to the first week of January, 1975. However I have used certain materials collected earlier by Dr. Rod Lacey, in addition to my own. While I was doing my fieldwork among the Laiapo Enga of the Wapenamanda area, Nita Pupu (UPNG student) did his fieldwork study among the Mae Enga of the Wabag area, and Jack Kutal and Sa Amene (both UPNG students) did their fieldwork, collecting different versions of the tradition among the Yandapo Enga of the Lagaip area. The materials were collected by means of personal interviews conducted with different informants, under the supervision of Dr. R. Lacey. All these different sources of materials, put together with my own, have enabled me to produce this paper; however I have given special attention to my own versions of the tradition—the 'Time of Darkness' (or *Yuu Kuia* in the Enga language). This is mainly to analyse the differences and similarities of the tradition from different sectors of Enga society.

The informants were carefully selected. All the informants had to have some knowledge of the *Yuu Kuia*. They also had to be over thirty. Finally, attempts were made to have different informants on a representative basis. (See Appendix III).

The main purpose of the fieldwork was to make a broad exploratory survey of the story. What is it all about? How and when did it happen? Does it have any value or historical implication? It was a survey of one type of oral tradition as a narrative Enga oral history in relation to the broad context of oral tradition and the people's culture. It may throw some light on the history of the Enga people when one looks at such integrated versions of such oral traditions.

Oral Traditions and Issues

In Papua New Guinea, oral traditions are yet to be explored by historians. The more we delay, the more we will lose. There are men still alive who were moulded by the traditions of our precolonial society. Oral traditions are very important as historical sources. Very little has been done to develop a genuine precolonial oral history of Papua New Guinea and its people. Through the development of such oral history and traditions, we may create the historical and cultural consciousness of our people: the realization of oneness of national identity, sharing a common historical background, among the fragmented social and cultural units in the country. This can be done by teaching the developed oral history in schools. Therefore my Enga people impose on me the task to explore and to develop such oral traditions. The *Yuu Kuia* is only one of many oral traditions of the Enga people, who are the largest ethno-linguistic group in Papua New Guinea, and consist of well over 160,000 speakers. They are among the densest agricultural populations. They came under European and colonial administration influence only in the early 1940's. The 'Time of Darkness' tradition is possessed and valued by Enga as part of their oral tradition.

The oral tradition is well known throughout the Enga Province. Sometimes it is described as *Yuu Kuio Katr Longao Epea* (the Darkness and the Fall of the Ash). It is believed that the event took place a long time ago, therefore the full account of the story is limited and not too many people know it in full detail. Nevertheless there is substantial material available. The story is also known in many other parts of the Western and Southern Highlands. Similar ash remains have also been found in these regions. The Enga believe that the darkness was caused by some sort of supernatural power, beyond their control. However, the geomorphologists and Western educated people believe that it was a result of a volcanic eruption that occurred somewhere outside Enga country. I shall elaborate this notion later in the discussion.

What is this oral tradition called the *Yuu Kura*, to the Enga? The oral tradition is regarded as an *Atome Pii* (historical event). It is not a *Tindi Pii* (legend).¹ All the informants interviewed asserted that *Yuu Kuia* is an *Atome Pii*. The proofs they have are the ash deposits which can still be seen in many parts of Enga country. The name given to the particular type of ash deposit is *Uki* or *Oki*. However, there are minor differences in defining the ash under different terms in regional Enga dialects.

The event *Yuu Kuia* is well remembered for its contributions to the advancement of Enga society. Some informants from Lagaip, Wabag and Wapenamanda clearly stated that there was economic prosperity particularly in crop production, where food crops had higher yields and different kinds of food were more

¹R. Lacey, 'A Question of Origins: An Exploration of some oral traditions of the Enga of New Guinea.' Department of History, UPNG, 1973 pp. 39.

abundant than ever before.² The other contribution was the advancement in culture. The people believe that cultural developments such as language expressions and expansion, composing of complex songs, the complexity of tribal or group dances and technological developments such as building fences and housing styles, all improved after the event had occurred. These aspects of development in culture were stressed by many informants particularly from Wabag and Wapenamanda. Also after the 'Time of Darkness' the *Mena Tee* (pig exchange ceremony) is believed to have spread out to many parts of the Enga area. However, the people think it originated in the Saka (Tsak), located twelve miles from Wapenamanda within the sub-district. But after the darkness the accumulation of wealth was on a larger scale than ever before.³ The other belief of the people is increase in population. Tribes were expanding while in the long run there was shortage of land. As a result, tribal and group conflicts, tribal wars and land disputes came into existence.

For illustration, here is an extract with some empirical evidence that gives some clear indication of the tribal movements and an increase in population. It is taken from the testimony of Saiakali Parao at Saka Raiakama.

At that time there weren't as many people living as there are at this time (in great numbers). The tribes were made up of only few families. When the darkness hit the people and their land, it was a great shock to them. Also the people did not develop the art of music. The songs were very limited in terms of the number of verses and words . . . It was only after the *Yuu Kuia*, the people had learned and developed the ways of composing complex expression, to express themselves as they do now.⁴

This extract implies that the advancement in traditional Enga society might have been only after the *Yuu Kuia*. It is also possible that due to economic prosperity, peace and social and political stability, there was an increase in population. One could also argue that the cause could have been the spread of the sweet potato into the area but this would only be a guess. It is quite clear that the event might have taken place long ago in history for such changes and cultural progress to take place in Enga traditional society. However these cultural developments might be at a much earlier time than the 'Time of Darkness'. Since we do not have the correct evidence to prove these notions, we can only assume that there was progress in the culture of the people.

Now it is important to ask what caused the 'Time of Darkness'. The Enga people have always thought it was caused by a supernatural power. People continued to live in fear, expecting another event like the *Yuu Kuia* that would

²N. Pupu, J. Kutal, Interview papers No. 2 and 3. The notion of economic prosperity and cultural advancement was commonly expressed by many informants.

³P. Mai, Interview paper No. 10. An interview conducted at Augutamanda, Tsak Wapenamanda, with Mr. Abe, 10/2/75.

⁴Interview paper No. 2 — conducted with Saiakali Parao of Tsak Raiakama, Wapenamanda, 27/11/74.

bring greater changes with a worse disaster to the people. What then was the cause of the *Yuu Kuia*? Now we know that the darkness was caused by a volcanic eruption, which must have been very powerful, for the ashy volcanic materials to reach Enga country. The blanket of ash in the sky blocked the sun for a few days which caused the darkness. Some informants of the Yandapo Enga of the Lagaip sub-district and Mae Enga of Wabag say that an explosion was heard by the people. In fact they were not sure of what it was but just before it became dark and black clouds were seen in the sky, there was some kind of explosion heard. For example, an informant from Wabag said, 'The sun talked and moved across the sky', and he went on to say, 'Suddenly the darkness hit the people and the people rushed into their houses, closed the doors and stayed inside. While they were inside, they heard the substances falling from the sky.'⁵

Where did the volcano erupt? It is possible that there are volcanoes with recorded eruptions such as the Doma Peaks (Southwest of Enga, in the Southern Highlands), or on the off-shore islands of New Guinea: for example Manam Island, Karkar Island and Long Island (all located east of Enga). The huge eruption of Krakatoa in Indonesia in 1883,⁶ seems to be too far away for its explosions to be heard. One may also argue about the eruption of Mt. Hagen which is believed to be erupted 30,000 years ago. It is useless arguing without any correct evidence. It can only be said that a volcanic eruption took place outside Enga country but its results reached Enga country and affected its people.

Furthermore, the geomorphologists agree that there is a close correlation between population density and soil type. By far the densest agricultural populations in the tropics are where ashy volcanic materials are added to the soil. In many areas the most fertile lands owe their richness to volcanic ash.⁷ Therefore Enga society without any doubt owes its economic prosperity especially in agricultural production and population density to the volcanic ash that is said to have fallen to the ground during the time of *Yuu Kuia* and much earlier ash falls as well, particularly the Mt. Hagen eruption. For this reason, the *Yuu Kuia* must be especially important in shaping Enga society in our times. This could be the reason why the 'Time of Darkness' has been valued by the Enga people as one of their oral traditions, an *Atome Pii* (historical event).

The 'Time of Darkness'—The Account

The actual story cannot be pieced together fully from one version because of the limited nature of the details recalled by the informants. Therefore the aim

⁵N. Pupu, Interview paper No. 1, a testimony with Mr. Kanapatoakali, Kalia clan, Wakumale, Wabag, 1974.

⁶R.J. Blong, 'The Krakatoa Myth and the New Guinea Highlands' *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 84 (2).

⁷G.A. MacDonald, *Volcanoes*, Prentice Hall Inc., Uni. of Hawaii, USA. 1973 Ch. 16, pp. 409-415.

here is to produce a composite version of the whole oral tradition with the general detail on hand, collected from Wapenamanda, Wabag and Lagaip.

The sky became very dark. Black smokey clouds moved across the sky. The people thought the moon and the sun were going to fight each other. The people were wondering with fear: what on earth was going to happen so suddenly? Some people thought something unusual was going to happen. The darkness was drawing near. Some people cut the bushes and covered their vegetables and sweet-potato gardens, while others collected food and firewood, and stored them in their houses. They did not know how long the darkness would last. However, there were others, who did not care about it. All these things occurred in a very short time and the people did not have enough time to get themselves prepared for it. They had much fear as well as excitement.

Suddenly the darkness hit the people and it covered the face of the earth. The people closed their house doors and locked themselves in their houses. Nobody was allowed to stay outside. In the midst of the absolute darkness the people heard something falling from the sky. They thought it was raining but there was no rain.⁸ Instead, some sort of ashy materials were falling in the form of *tandake kapa* (hail). Others argued that it was in the form of *pete* (ashy material). When it fell it made a lot of noise outside. The ashy materials fell down even in front of the houses. The people with their torches saw it and said that it was a *kati yuu* (soil from the sky). It was somewhat like whitish grey and brownish black in colour. (Note: the colour of the ashy material was only observed after the darkness). The darkness continued and the animals, birds, and snakes got scared and were affected. They flocked into the houses where people were staying. The people killed them and threw away the nonedibles such as snakes; others were cooked and eaten by the people.

Still the darkness continued and nobody was allowed to go outside. However they ran out of food supplies. The people were afraid. They felt that there was going to be starvation and they were going to die. But more important they were afraid of their dead ancestors who would come back and eat them all. In order to overcome the food shortage they thought that *wane mendai mandenge* (the single child of a family)⁹ could be allowed to go outside and collect food from the gardens. (The people believed that the *wane mendai mandenge* was more innocent, with fewer links with the death world). They said that others were not fit and if they were to be allowed to do the job, then they would be killed or end up being eaten by the evil spirits. The single child of a family did go outside with a native umbrella and a torch for his aid and protection. If he

⁸P. Mai, Interview paper No. 1 conducted with Tipiname of Yakumau clan, Wapenamanda, 25/11/74.

⁹The notion of *wane mendai mandenge* means a single born son of a family. He would have not brother or sister. He would be the only child.

was caught or became the victim of the cause then he would also save the ones who would be alive. The ashy materials continued to fall and the darkness continued. During this period the 'single child of the family' collected food from the gardens and fed the hungry ones inside the houses. He had a very hard time digging and collecting the right kind of food, for it was very dark. Also the ashes covered up the gardens and they were made very dirty which made the work harder still.

The darkness continued and the ashy material continued to fall too. The people kept themselves locked in their houses. The people thought it was a long time before there was going to be light again. It is believed that the darkness remained for at least *three* to *four* days. The ash gradually stopped falling and then at last the light began to appear. Then the sun was up in the sky as usual. The darkness had gone. The people were happy and came out of their houses, freed from all the prison of darkness.

However, as a result of the darkness there was a complete change in the physical environment. The immediate environment, the gardens, trees, and the natural vegetation were destroyed and buried by the ash. The ash was then given the name *Oki*.¹⁰ The *Oki* was deposited in large quantities all over the ground. The people worked very hard to clear the mess made by the ash. The food corps that were not destroyed or damaged by the ash were the ones that were covered with cut grasses. However the ones that were touched and affected by the *Oki* (ash or peat) died out and took a very long time to recover.

The people performed a ceremony known as the *bu-bu* among the Laiapo Enga and the Mae Enga. It was a ceremonial dance in honour of the 'Time of Darkness'. It was just after the sun began to rise in the east. It was performed in the morning of the first day. The *bu-bu* was performed only by males (both men and boys) of each tribal group. The nature of the dance was that they danced with only one leg stamping on the ground, folding the other one from the knee. Sometimes they were stamping both legs on the ground. The *bu-bu* means to chase away evil spirits that bring disasters, misfortunes and death to a certain group or clan for some reason.

They chanted a special song or poem. Here is a kind of song that was chanted by the people of the Mae Enga and Laiapo Enga:

English version:

'It is the Oki,
For nothing you can do,
For nothing we can do,
To whom the blame should be — that side,

¹⁰*Oki* the specific name given to the particular ash that fell during the Time of Darkness. It can be called *Oki Yuu*, but *kati yuu* is a general term to identify any kind of soil from the sky.

To whom the blame should be — this side,
It is the *Oki*'

Enga version:

'Pai akaipu — oki upu,
Puli tuki pyao ee,
Ale tuki pao ee,
O motena kalyene ogome ae likao pee,
Aetena kalyene ogome omo likao pee,
Pai akaipu — oki upu.'

This poem chanted by the people simply means that the people know nothing of the cause of the darkness, therefore they should not blame each other for all the damage caused by the ash. It was caused by a supernatural power bringing destruction to their lives and property. They blamed the *Oki* for all the damage and the ceremonial dance was performed to recover new life and to chase away all the evil spirits working against them.

It is said that the ceremonial dance was first performed in the Tsaka Valley near Wapenamanda. Then in turn tribal groups performed it and passed it on to neighbouring clans and tribes. It was like a chain ceremonial dance and it was performed by tribes living in all directions, eastward and westward and north eastward from Tsaka valley. It was the only time the people experienced such an event as *Yuu Kuia* and the informants clearly indicated that there was no other time of darkness in Enga history.

Now it is important to make clear what this *Oki* is all about. The term *Oki* describes the ash material and *Oki* is accepted as a general name for the particular ash. The *Oki* was ash but as it weathered, it solidified itself as a hard type of soil, which often distinguishes it from ordinary soil types. It is often found in dry areas and some of these deposits can still be seen in many parts of Enga Province. The colour of the *Oki* remains, and sometimes appeared to be in two: they are reddish brown and greenish brown, but sometimes it can be in mixed form. The *Oki* deposits can be found on the surface or inside the top soil, both in large and in small quantities.

Many people regard this *Oki* as a useless material which destroyed their gardens and affected the wild life. Some evidence shows that animals and birds were killed by the ash. There is no evidence to prove whether the gardens were buried by the ash but the general assumption is that the animals and gardens were affected by the fall of the ash. On the other hand some people said that the ash is useful. Before the arrival of Western medicine, the ash was used for curing sores. This was quite often practised by Mae Enga and Yandapo Enga.

There is some evidence which also indicates that a new plant and a bird have some connections with the event. Some informants from Wabag indicated that a plant called *waina* accompanied the *Yuu Kuia* immediately after there was light. The wind blew the seeds of this plant *waina* to the area. Since then it has

been one of the dominant plants. It is not a tree but a flower.¹¹ Also some evidence from Lagaip shows that a new bird was seen immediately after the darkness. It was called an *opone yaka* (a visiting bird). There is no story of any other kind than these two events.

When did the *Yuu Kuia* happen? The problem of chronology is very critical. Here I shall adopt the genealogical method because there is no evidence of the exact time or period when the event took place. What I suggest is only based on assumptions based on the informant's personal genealogy. It is important to bear in mind the ambiguities due to changes undergone through time and people. The most appropriate alternative methodology to arrive at the approximate time would be the scientific — carbon dating of the samples of the ash remains. However due to the lack of evidence by geomorphologists or geochemists, at the time of writing this chapter, I shall only use the genealogical method for some kind of estimate.

According to the genealogical evidence obtained from the informants, the event occurred about 4-5 genealogical steps back. Most informants claimed themselves as the 4th or 5th generation since the event occurred. To them the method was a very important instrument. It is still being used by most surviving older people to mark important events in local history. The man who was very influential in local history is often recalled by name to mark the related events which happened in his lifetime. It was the only normal way before the arrival of Taylor who patrolled through the Enga country in 1938 to 1939.

Here is a comment which was very common in the views of different informants, concerning the questions: When and in whose lifetime did the *Yuu Kuia* occur? Who actually saw the event? This extract is taken from an interview held at Saka Raiakama (near Wapenamanda) with Saiakali Parao. He stated:¹²

... the *Yuu Kuia* happened a long time ago so what I know is a very little and brief account of what I was told by my grandfathers and fathers. I am not sure that my grandfathers' father saw the "Time of Darkness". But I am certain that it happened in that period... What I was told was that he saw the 'Time of Darkness'.

Then he went on to place himself and his grandfathers' father who was named Taipu (son of Tendepane). This is the genealogy:

| | | | |
|------|-----|----------------|--------------------------|
| 1974 | 9th | Saiakali Parao | Informant |
| | | / | |
| | 8th | Yake | Father of the Informant. |
| | | / | |
| | 7th | Warengen | |

¹¹*Ibid.* The *waina* plant.

¹²P. Mai, Interview paper no. 2 conducted at Tsaka Raiakama with Mr. Parao Saiakali of Waregen clan, 25/11/74.

| | | |
|-----|------------|---|
| 6th | Taipu | Informants' grandfather's father: The <i>Darkness</i> is believed to be occurred in Taipu's lifetime. |
| | / | |
| 5th | Tendepane | |
| | / | |
| 4th | Ulinau | |
| | / | |
| 3rd | Kitau | |
| | / | |
| 2nd | Mama | |
| | / | |
| 1st | Yambatani | |
| | / | |
| | Saka Pembe | Founder of three huge tribes of TSAK. 1) Waimini 2) Yakamandani 3) Yambatani |

From the illustration above, certainly the event did not take place in the lifetime of the informant or his father or his grandfather. It is possible that the *Yuu Kuia* occurred in Taipu's lifetime. But how can we be sure of it, for it might have taken place earlier? However, most importantly, it seems to indicate that the event did not occur a very long time ago in history, beyond the range of 4th or 5th generation of their genealogy. On the other hand the events did not occur as late as the lifetime of their grandfathers. The *Yuu Kuia* probably occurred sometime in the lifetime of the 4th or 5th generations, down from the present situation of the informants. That is to say that the event must have occurred sometime in the lifetime of grandfathers' father or great grandfathers' father. That is about *four to five or six* steps back from the generation of the informant. Precolonial Enga chronology is on the basis of genealogical time, averaging thirty years to each generation. The thirty year period signifies the average number of years between the birth of a father (*takange*) and that of his eldest surviving son (*wane mupa*).¹³

Based on this notion of genealogical time, with the average of 30 years, it is possible to arrive at a general estimate: The 'Time of Darkness' occurred about 120 to 150 years before the present. That is to say that the *Yuu Kuia* occurred

¹³The idea of a 30 year period was suggested to me by R. Lacey.

roughly in the years between 1824 to 1854. There is no point in arguing with the figures given here because they are my own assumptions. The event might have taken place a little earlier, or after 1854.

We can even go on and calculate the average estimated age of each of the informants, then work backward 3 or 4 or 5 steps from the informant's date of birth to estimate the time when the 'Time of Darkness' took place. For illustration I will use Mr. Saiakali Parao's genealogy (informant no. 2, see Appendix III) to find the range of time. If we say Saiakali Parao was 20 years of age when Taylor came in 1938, his date of birth would be approximately 1918, so by the genealogical method of dating the 'Time of Darkness' occurred between the range of 1828-1858. That is:

| | | | |
|---------------|--------|------|--|
| S. Parao / | d.o.b. | 1918 | J. Taylor came when he was 20. That is 1938, now he is about 56, 1974. |
| Yake / | d.o.b. | 1888 | |
| Warengo / | d.o.b. | 1858 | |
| Taipu / | d.o.b. | 1828 | The darkness occurred in range of 1828-1858: |
| Tendepane | d.o.b. | 1798 | |

If I do the same to calculate the date of birth for each informant using the average of a 30 year period back to 3 or 4 or 5 steps from the informant's age in 1974, then I come up with ranges of periods. However if I take the average of all the different times I arrive at the average of 1820-1860. This assumption also fits in well with our old 120 to 150 year assumption. This is as far as we can proceed, with genealogical timing.

For further elaboration, we can classify the different opinions and beliefs on the question of time. (See table I). The major categories from twenty-four (24) different testimonies concerning the 'Time of Darkness':

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Category I | The great number of people (about 35 %) stated that the event had taken place sometime in the life of their grandfathers' father. That is about 4 or 5 genealogical steps back from the present. |
| Category II | This group of informants (about 20 %) stated that the event occurred sometime in the lifetime of their grandfather. This is about 3-4 genealogical steps back from the present. But there is overlapping evidence with Category I. |
| Category III | This group of informants (about 5 %) stated that the event occurred in the lifetime of their great grandfather's father. |

This is about 5 to 6 genealogical steps back from present. But it overlaps more with Category I.

Category IV This group of informants (about 5%) stated that the event took place in their father's lifetime. It does not fit into the general assumption about when the event really occurred.

Category V This group of informants (about 35%) were not sure of the exact period. But the general tendency of the vague and confused answers gives some indication of the overlaps in opinion with Category III more than any other categories.

Table I. The genealogical time, in which the time of darkness occurred.

| INFORMANT'S NUMBER | CATEGORY IV FATHER'S TIME | CATEGORY II GRAND- FATHER | CATEGORY I GRAND- FATHER'S FATHER | CATEGORY III GRAND- FATHER'S FATHER | CATEGORY V UNCERTAIN |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|-------------------------|
| 1 | YES | | | | |
| 2 | | YES → | | | |
| 3 | | YES → | | | |
| 4 | | | YES | | |
| 5 | | | YES | | |
| 6 | | YES | | | |
| 7 | | | | ← YES | |
| 8 | | | | ← YES | |
| 9 | | YES | | | |
| 10 | | | YES | | |
| 11 | YES | | | | |
| 12 | | | YES | | |
| 13 | | | | YES | |
| 14 | | YES → | | | |
| 15 | YES | | | | |
| 16 | YES ↔ | YES | | | |
| 17 | | | YES | | |
| 18 | | | YES | YES → | |
| 19 | | | YES | | |
| 20 | | | | ← YES | |
| 21 | | YES → | | | |
| 22 | | | | | ← YES |
| 23 | | | | YES | |
| 24 | | | YES | | |

N.B. The arrows show the overlapping evidence. These arrows show the overlapping evidence in relation with the different categories indicated. Doubled 'YES' are to indicate that informants were not sure but sure of the categories indicated.

The Role of the 'Time of Darkness' as a Tradition and its Future

The *Yuu Kuia* has its own values and meaning to the Enga people. It represents Enga traditional society. I would not like to exaggerate here but I think the story has some significance in shaping the kind of society that existed right up to the Western contacts and influences in the 1940's. The informants clearly stated that there was economic prosperity and cultural advancement only after the time of darkness.

There are ambiguities but nevertheless it provides the modern Enga with some general ideas of their traditional society and the oral traditions of the people. It helps them to see themselves as Enga with their own values and own oral tradition and culture. It provides at least some information to go back 100 to 200 years in history, to see the kind of life, beliefs and interpretations of certain changes by the ancestors. Some of these ideas and values have been passed down to the present Enga community.

The people have interpreted the story to fit into the kind of traditional cultural environment and in relation to the modern impacts and changes. For example, the new ideas of Christianity and the Western cultural civilisation of the white men have some influences on oral tradition of the people. The following are some of the expressions and interpretations made by the informants in relation to the 'Time of Darkness':

I think the *Yuu Kuia* was caused by the power of God (Christianity). He shook the sky so hard that it caused the *kati yuu* (ash — the soil from the sky) to fall off. It can also be related to the Biblical time when Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross. At that time there was darkness and this was the time when the darkness hit the place; the whole earth was shaken by the power of God and this is why the *Oki* fell down from the sky.

My interpretation is that after the Time of Darkness, the people's expectations were great. They expected another great change such as the *Yuu Kuia* events. The effects would be much worse and greater. As a result of these expectations, the white man came. I think the darkness was caused by the white man as a sign of his arrival. The white man has the power and they are responsible for the changes at this stage.¹⁵

These kinds of beliefs and interpretations reflect certain realities in life. They may oversimplify many things but the realities are obvious: for instance, cultural and social changes of the Enga people. Due to Christian ideology and teaching, the converted Enga may interpret oral tradition and ideas already existing in relation to new kinds of ideas with Christian ideas. Sometimes they may formulate their new ideas in their minds which can sometimes become a force with psychological effects. The people had no idea what had caused the *Yuu Kuia* and they had always thought it was caused by sky people or some

¹⁵N. Pupu, Interview paper 6, with K. Kalao of Amala, Wabag, 1974, (Note Mr. Kalao's interpretations are similar to other informants' views.)

supernatural powers. But when the white man came with his powerful western culture, some people have been convinced that the *Yuu Kuia* event was caused by the white man.

Finally, this Enga oral tradition provides some general ideas of the country and its people. It is the hope that I have, that this oral tradition will directly or indirectly create our tribal historical awareness to preserve our own integrity and tribal nationalism in the country.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A number of people have assisted me to produce this paper. Special thanks must go to Nita Pupu, Jack Kutal, Sa Amene and Dr. Rod Lacey for allowing me to use their interview papers and recorded tapes about the 'Time of Darkness.'

Special and many thanks must go to Dr. Rod Lacey of the Department of History, UPNG for his personal involvement in helping me with valuable suggestions and stimulating this analysis throughout and during the writing of this paper.

The material for analysis has been collected from thirty different informants. However, I have used only twenty-four to analyse some of the aspects of discussion. Responsibility for any faults in this paper is, of course, entirely mine.

APPENDIX I

TABLE 2 GENEALOGICAL DIAGRAM

This table shows or illustrates a genealogy where an informant traced himself and listed all the generations of his clan. Then he fits the *Yuu Kuia* according to the genealogical time.

1974

| 9th GENERA- TION THE INFORMANT | 8th GENERA- TION | 7th GENERA- TION | 6th GENERA- TION | 5th GENERA- TION | 4th GENERA- TION | 3rd GENERA- TION | 2nd GENERA- TION | 1st GENERA- TION | CLAN FOUNDA- TION |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| SAIAKALI* | YAKE | WARENGE | TAIPU + | TENDE- PANE | ULINAU | KITAU | MAMA | YAMBA TANI | SAKA PEMBE ϕ |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| * SAIKALI PARAO THE INFORMANT AGE ABOUT 56 YEARS OLD, 1974 | + TAIPU WAS SAIKALI'S GREAT GRANDFATHER. TAIPU SAW THE TIME OF DARKNESS | ϕ THE CLAN FOUNDER. FATHER OF TSAK CENSUS DIVISION, WAPENAMANDA SUB-DISTRICT. |
|---|--|---|

THE THREE TRIBES ARE:

- 1. WAIMINI
- 2. YAKAEMANDANI
- 3. YAMBATANI

APPENDIX II

TRIBAL GENEALOGY: SHOWS HOW FAR THE INFORMANTS TRACED BACK IN PAST GENERATIONS.

| INFORMANT'S NO. | NAME OF THE INFORMANT'S | 8TH | 7TH | 6TH | 5TH | 4TH | 3RD | 2ND | 1ST | CLAN FOUNDER |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------|
| 1 | TIPINAME | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | ✓ |
| 2 | P. SAIKALI | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3 | PUTAI | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ? | | | | | ✓ |
| 4 | I. OLEA | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ? | ? | ✓ |
| 5 | W. TABAI | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| 6 | KATEGE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ? | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7 | WINI | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| 8 | B. KALIAME | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ |
| 9 | T. PANAQ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ |
| 10 | ABE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 11 | KANOPATOA KALI | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ |
| 12 | KUNDA | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ |
| 13 | KIULYA | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ |
| 14 | PYASO | ? | ? | | | | | | | |
| 15 | TAKAO | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ |
| 16 | K. KALAO | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ |
| 17 | ASIKI | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ |
| 18 | P. KAPO | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ |
| 19 | KISAKALI | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ |
| 20 | TOGEYAPA | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ |
| 21 | LATI | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ |
| 22 | LONDAINE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | |
| 23 | IPINI | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ |
| 24 | TANGULA | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ |

N.B. Most people claimed that they were either the 9th or the 10th generation in their tribal genealogy. Here I have put them all in the 9th generation, i.e. they are the 9th generation, and then work backward. A tick (✓) indicated that the generation was recalled correctly while a question mark indicated confusion. Blank spaces to indicate no more recalling.

APPENDIX III

SHOWS THE INFORMANTS' NAMES, SEX, AGE, SMALL CLAN, BIG CLAN, HOME PLACES AND DISTRICTS.

| INFORMANT'S NUMBER | NAME | SEX | AGE | PLACE | SMALL CLAN | BIG CLAN | SUB- DISTRICT |
|-----------------------|---------------|-----|-----|-------------|---------------|--------------|------------------|
| 1 | TIPINAME | F | 60± | WAPENAMANDA | YALIS | YAKUMANI | WAPENAMANDA |
| 2 | P. SAIKALI | M | 56± | RAIAKAM | WARENGE | YAMBATANI | WAPENAMANDA |
| 3 | PUTAI | F | 55± | PUMAKOS | MATAU | WINAO | WAPENAMANDA |
| 4 | I. OLEA | M | 42± | WAPENAMANDA | KUMBASAKAMA | YAKUMANI | WAPENAMANDA |
| 5 | W. TABAI | M | 59± | TSAK R. | WARENGE | YAMBATANI | WAPENAMANDA |
| 6 | KATEGE | M | 50± | WAPENAMANDA | KUMBASAKAMA | YAKUMANI | WAPENAMANDA |
| 7 | WINI | F | 57± | PAWAS | MILI | KAHEYALU | WABAG |
| 8 | B. KALIAME | F | 35± | IUBETES | PAIMAKUNI | YAKAEMANDANI | WABAG |
| 9 | T. PANAQ | M | 57± | IUBETES | PAUAKAKA | YAKAEMANDANI | WABAG |
| 10 | ABE | M | | AUGUTAMANDA | YANGA | WAIMINI | WABAG |
| 11 | KANOPATOAKALI | M | 60± | WAKUMALE | SIKINAWAN | KALIA | WABAG |
| 12 | KUNDA | M | 44± | WAKUMALE | SIKINAWAN | KALIA | WABAG |
| 13 | KIULYA | M | 49± | WAKUMALE | SAMBAYOK | KALIA | WABAG |
| 14 | PYASO | M | 40± | WAKUMALE | SIKINAWAN | KALIA | WABAG |
| 15 | TAKAO | M | 54± | YALULAMA | MAKUMINA | LAITA | WABAG |
| 16 | K. KALAO | M | 55± | AMALA | MABO | KALIA | WABAG |
| 17 | ASIPI | M | 56± | WAKUMALE | ARULIN | KALA | WABAG |
| 18 | P. KAPO | M | 52± | TOBAPYA | KOLALE | YANAPAPE | LAGAIP |
| 19 | KISAKALI | M | 52± | MULITAKA | LYAENE | TEKEPANI | LAGAIP |
| 20 | TOGEYAPA | M | 58± | TULIPATO | TAGAIPO | KIPULA | LAGAIP |
| 21 | LATI | M | 60± | TOMALAU | KUIMAN | AIYAKANE | LAGAIP |
| 22 | LONDAINE | M | 38± | YOJONDA | YONAP | PYALINI | LAGAIP |
| 23 | IPINI | M | 66± | MAMALE | TUBIPYAINI | AYAINI | LAGAIP |
| 24 | TANGUIA | M | 50± | YAPINDISA | TATO | LAIA | LAGAIP |

N.B. Informants are given a certain number and the same number used for all other tables. The plus/minus signs after the ages shows that it is the approx. age. It is based on the arrival of Taylor in 1938. Total informants 24: 10 Wapenamanda, 7 Wabag and 7 Lagaip.

CHAPTER X

Time of Darkness Legends and Volcanic Eruptions in Papua New Guinea

Russell J. Blong

The present paper represents a progress report on an investigation into (1) the characteristics of the 'time of darkness' legend, its variants, and its distribution across that portion of Papua New Guinea westward of Lae; (2) the distribution, correlation of deposits, the age, the sources, and the effects of young volcanic ash deposits; and (3) the relationship between these two phenomena.

The former study stems from publication in the early 1960's of papers by Brookfield (1961), Watson (1962) and Glasse (1962) of widespread 'time of darkness' stories interpreted as resulting from airfall ash (tephra) from volcanic eruptions. Perusal of the literature, my own field investigations together with those of R.J. Lacey and his students, requests for information published in *Research in Melanesia* (by R.J. Lacey) and in *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, and the sending of a detailed questionnaire to over 100 anthropologists, missionaries, Summer Institute of Linguistics field personnel and other interested people, has so far produced the information on the distribution of the legend summarised on Figure 7. Brookfield's (1961) claim that the legend was widespread is clearly correct.

The study of thin volcanic ash beds in the Papua New Guinea Highlands stems from the detailed archaeological investigations centred on Kuk Tea Research Station, 15 km east of Mt. Hagen. Here the examination of many kilometres of exposures through swamp stratigraphy allowed the construction of a detailed chronology of thin (less than 10 cm thick) tephra beds, ranging in age from more than 30,000 years to about 260 radiocarbon years before the present. Examination of exposures around Mts. Hagen and Giluwe indicated that these volcanoes had not produced widespread airfall ash deposits during the last 50,000 years (Pain & Blong, 1976). Reconnaissance observations and sample collection across a wide area of the highlands and the adjacent lowlands, together with chemical 'fingerprinting' of the ash samples indicates that the uppermost ash (tephra) at Kuk (herein called Tibito Tephra) is also the uppermost (i.e. youngest) ash across much of the highlands. Unpublished work indicates that Tibito Tephra extends across an area of more than 50,000 km²

Figure 6: Distribution of tibito tephra

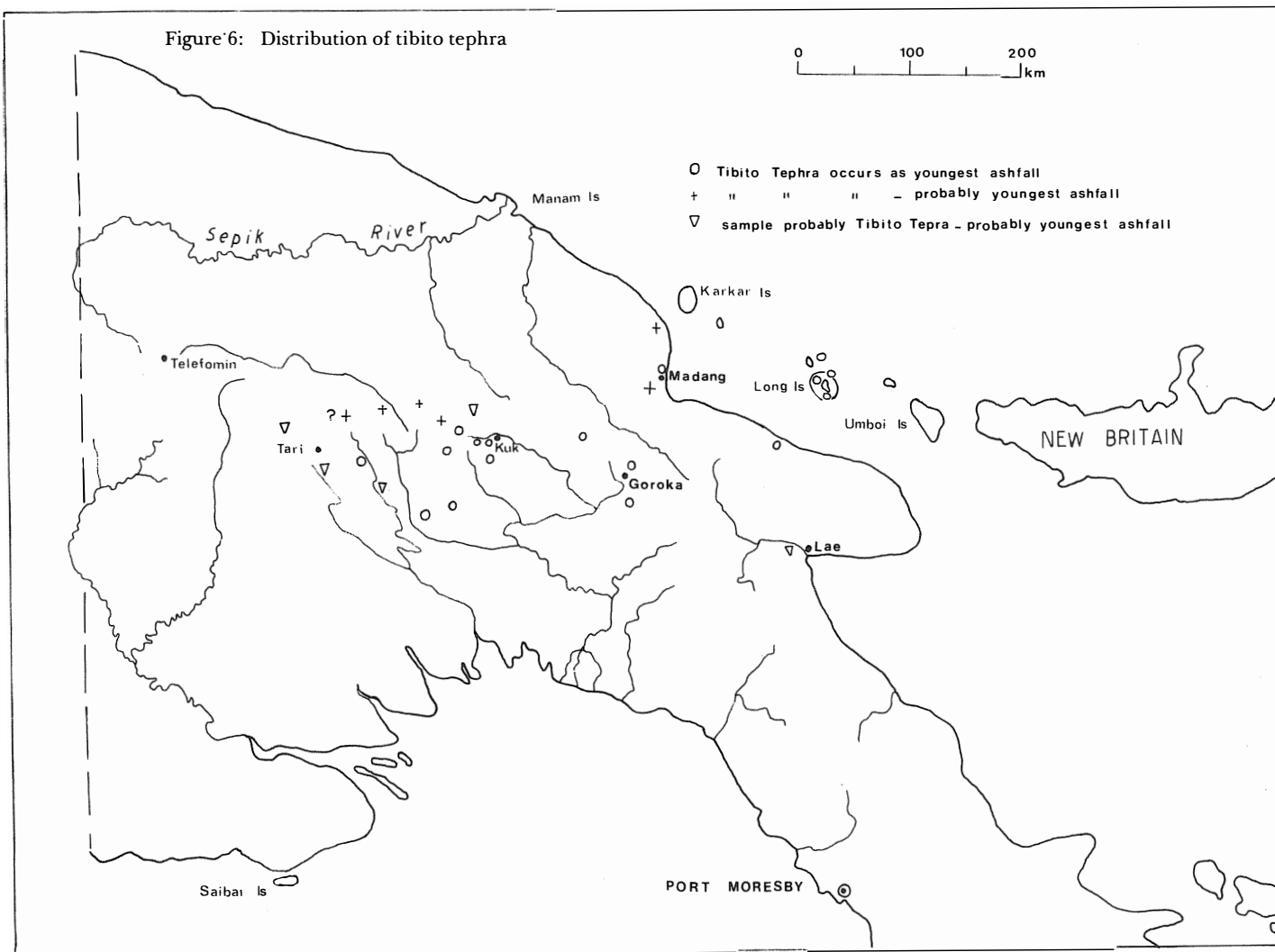
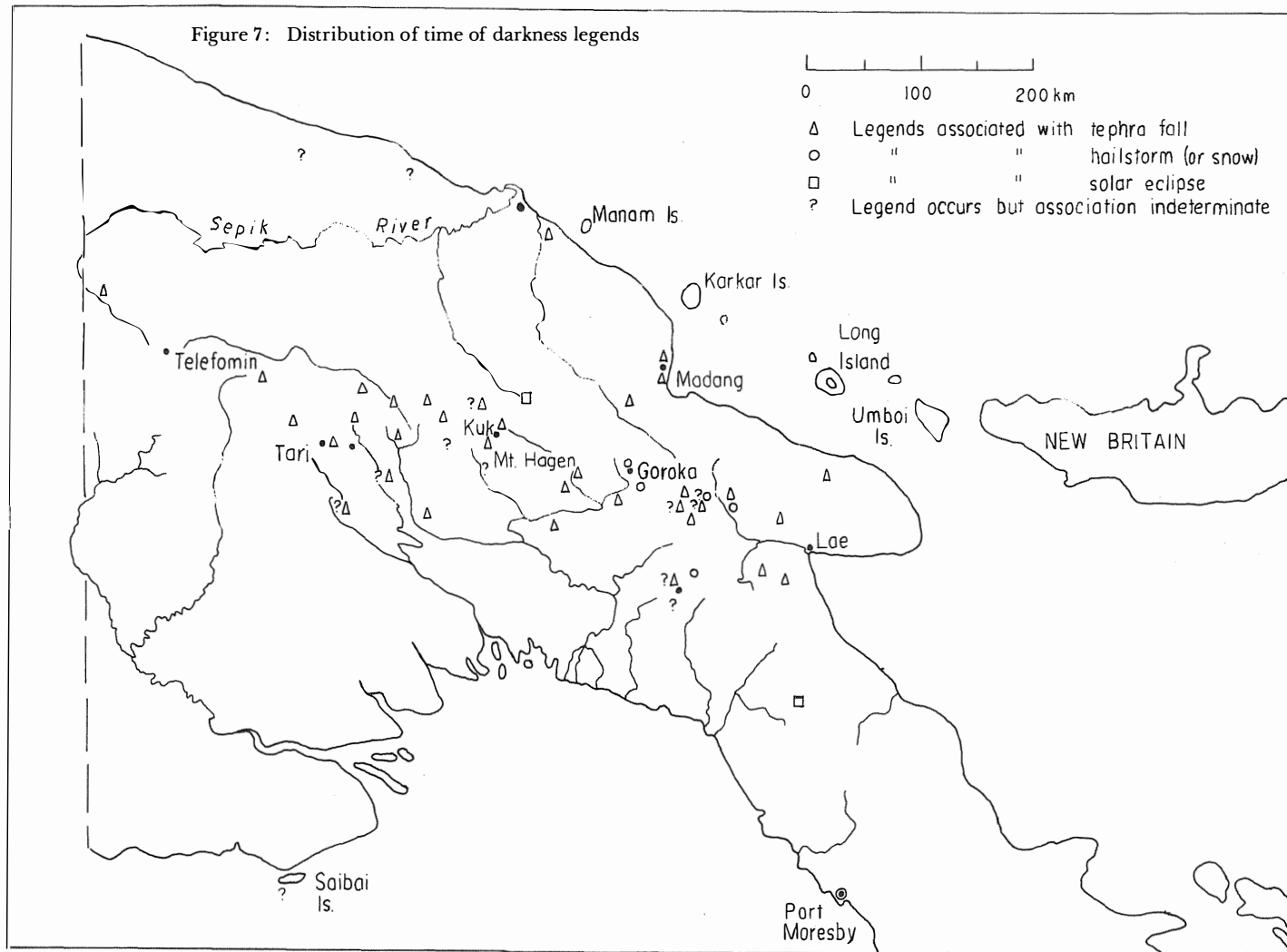


Figure 7: Distribution of time of darkness legends



(Figure 6) and that it originated during a cataclysmic eruption of Long Island, 150 km east of Madang. Data presented below indicates that Tibito Tephra fell between 1640 and 1800 A.D.

A comparison of Figures 6 and 7 indicates a fair degree of overlap between the distribution of the time of darkness legend and the distribution of Tibito Tephra, although it must be emphasised that both maps include only preliminary data. If the legend refers to the effects of an airfall ash deposit and a volcanic eruption occurring in the recent past, and if Tibito Tephra is the uppermost (youngest) airfall tephra found in the area, then the legend must be a product of Tibito Tephra, at least in part. (Almost all versions of the legend emphasise that the time of darkness has occurred only once.)

This paper first describes the general character of the legend and its variants, and asks if the characteristics of the legend are consistent with an origin resulting from a volcanic eruption. Second, the notion that the legend originates from the cataclysmic eruption of Long Island is investigated. Finally, the question of the age of the legend and the eruption is considered and a number of implications are drawn.

Characteristics of the legend

Although detailed analysis of variations in the legends recorded so far is not complete, it is clear that the original outline presented by Watson (1962) is typical of many of those accounts collected from the highlands.

The essential characteristics of the legend include several (frequently 3 or 4) days of darkness, often referred to as extreme darkness, and a fall of sand, dust, or stones from the sky, the colour of the material frequently being described as green, white, or like the ashes of a fire. People usually stayed in their houses although sometimes one or more men went outside to gather food. Some people killed a pig (and in one case a dog) to end the time of darkness. Houses often collapsed under the weight of ash or debris, animals and birds were blinded or killed, crops were ruined by burial under the ash, and many people were killed (in some areas) either under collapsed houses or by subsequent starvation. The ashfall was sometimes accompanied by rain, or followed by rain, in which case many crops were saved. Some local legends refer to preparation for the time of darkness, implying foreknowledge of the event, some record loud explosions, and/or earthquakes before the darkness arrived, and some refer to terrible smells accompanying the fall of ash.

It is not yet possible to say how often each of these characteristics occurred, or to relate particular characteristics to specific areas of the distribution shown on Figure 7. However, a general, preliminary, and perhaps erroneous, conclusion would be that the effects of the time of darkness as recorded in the legend, became less serious in both westward and southward directions.

Even if there is some validity in this conclusion, the general pattern is super-

imposed on a base map which indicates a very uneven distribution of data. In some areas (e.g. Enga Province) the legend seems to be remembered with details intact, but this may result from the intense investigations supervised by R.J. Lacey and collated by Paul Mai. On the other hand, the paucity of detail in some other areas may reflect only the lack of intensive investigation. Alternatively, variations in the quality of data may reflect cultural differences; individual cultural groups may attach different significance to the one event. A fourth possibility is that differences in detail reflect variations in the character of the event (or events) which gave rise to the legend at specific localities.

Indeed, some of the questionnaire replies received by the author during early 1977 would seem to refer only to an eclipse of the sun; probably the eclipse that occurred on February 5th, 1962. These legends do not refer to an intense darkness, and there is no material falling from the sky. Total darkness lasted only $2\frac{1}{2}$ minutes or so during this eclipse.

Other accounts evidently refer to a hailstorm, a proposition recently advanced by Skeldon (in press) for the Goroka area, and perhaps confirmed by several additional accounts sent to me from other areas (Fig. 7). These legends usually refer to intense cold, the fall of material like ice, and destruction of crops. These accounts sometimes refer to the darkness lasting several days, though the longest known duration of a hailstorm recorded in the literature is about 90 minutes (Gokhale, 1975).

Whether or not such inconsistencies are relevant to the present discussion is not clear. Nevertheless Figure 7 shows 4 groups of time of darkness legends: those evidently referring to eclipses of the sun; those possibly stemming from hailstorms; those that appear to have been the product of volcanic eruptions; and finally, those of unknown origin.

With the provisos and the exceptions given above, there still remains the question of whether the legends about volcanic activity are in fact the result of volcanic activity. Let us compare the characteristics of the legend with those aspects of volcanic ash eruptions recorded in the literature.

Perhaps the most common characteristics of airfall ash deposition recorded in the literature are the descriptions of all-pervading darkness, 'blackier than the blackest night' or 'so dark a hand held in front of the face couldn't be seen'. In big eruptions, darkness can last for several days, although usually interrupted. Collapse of house roofs and other structures is also a common result of tephra falls, particularly in houses that are old, weak or poorly constructed. Surprisingly small thicknesses of tephra can sometimes cause such damage; for example, during the 1906 eruption of Vesuvius, the roof of the market of Monté Oliveto and several houses collapsed under the weight of about 2.5 cm of tephra (Perrett, 1924; Hobbs, 1906). Similarly, deposits of as little as 2.5 cm caused complete destruction of crops such as sugar cane, yams and sweet potatoes during the 1902 eruption of Soufrière on the island of St. Vincent

(HMSO, 1903). During the 1894 eruption of Ambrym in the New Hebrides trees dropped under the weight of less than 2.5 cm of ash, and undergrowth was largely broken down (Purey-Cust, 1895). At Macassar 380 km north of Tambora (on Sumbawa, Indonesia) which erupted in 1815, plants were beaten down, and fish and small birds were killed by an ash fall of 3.2 cm. Total darkness lasted 19 hours (Anon, 1816).

These few examples indicate that even a few cm of ash can cause widespread damage to houses, crops, animals and humans. Volcanic eruptions are also often preceded or accompanied by earthquakes, air shock waves or explosions and terrible smells. During very big eruptions such effects can extend hundreds and sometimes thousands of kilometres from the source. Rain frequently accompanies or follows the deposition of tephra, probably because of the very numerous dust nuclei in the atmosphere. Rainfall frequently saves vegetation (including crops) from damage. Erosion of the ash from steep slopes shortly after deposition frequently saves the vegetation from complete destruction: regeneration from root stocks often occurs in a matter of days. Thus, the physical and environmental effects recorded in the legends are all consistent with effects resulting from a volcanic eruption and associated tephra fall. As noted above, some of the described effects are also consistent with either severe hailstorms or an eclipse of the sun.

A final test of the volcanic origin of the time of darkness legend lies in the identification of the material that reputedly fell from the sky during the darkness. Requests for samples of the material have been unsuccessful in all cases except four; three of these in Enga Province. Chemical analysis of the three samples from Enga Province indicate that two are samples of Tibito Tephra and the third is a sample of Olgaboli Tephra, which looks very similar to Tibito Tephra but is chemically distinctive. Radiocarbon dating at the Kuk archaeological site indicates that Olgaboli Tephra is some 1200 years old. The fourth sample of material that reputedly fell from the sky during the time of darkness was collected by informants in the Wabi area west of Kagua, Southern Highlands. This sample is certainly an airfall volcanic ash but is more than 30,000 years old. The sample is very different from Tibito Tephra or any of the other tephra found in the highlands that are less than 10,000 years old.

Characteristics of Tibito Tephra

At the Kuk prehistoric site Tibito Tephra occurs as a discontinuous layer 2.5 cm thick, some 30 cm below the surface. It has a deep olive green colour and a medium sand particle size. When not lightly cemented with reddish veins of iron oxide, it crushes easily to form a soft greenish powder.

Examination of some 40 km² of exposure at Kuk demonstrates that Tibito Tephra is the youngest volcanic ash at the site. A few microns of dust could

have fallen from later eruptions but in amounts too small to form any identifiable deposit or to have produced any darkness or other effects normally associated with ashfalls.

Chemical fingerprinting of tephra samples using X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy of the elements Zr, Sr, Rb and Y indicates that Tibito Tephra is chemically distinctive from all other tephtras found in the Upper Wahgi area and particularly from Olgaboli Tephra, the only ash with which Tibito Tephra can be confused using field criteria.

Field observations and chemical fingerprinting of samples collected across the highlands and along sections of the north coast reveal that Tibito Tephra is very widespread (Figure 6). Those collection sites, mainly high mountains, where Tibito Tephra is definitely the youngest tephra, are marked with a separate symbol. Only one site, in the Yumbisa-Wage (Western Enga) has been found with a tephra layer young than Tibito.

Although an early suggestion from Watson (1962) was that the ash producing the time of darkness legend could have been from the 1883 eruption of Krakatoa, this possibility can be ruled out on the following grounds (Blong, 1975). (1) The uppermost tephra in the area is Tibito Tephra which has radiocarbon ages significantly older than A.D. 1883; (2) There was very little ashfall more than several hundred kilometres eastward of Krakatoa, yet that volcano is some 4000 km west of the Papua New Guinea Highlands; (3) The SiO_2 content of Tibito Tephra is about 52% while that of the Krakatoa Tephra is about 69% near the source, and should increase with distance from the source.

In the 1975 publication I suggested that the most probable source of Tibito Tephra was one of the following 6 volcanoes: Manam, Karkar, Long Island, Crater Mountain, Mount Yelia, or Doma Peaks. Since 1975, more widespread field observations, particle size analyses, and chemical analyses using SiO_2 , TiO_2 , K_2O and P_2O_5 contents in combination with the analyses of Bismarck Archipelago volcanic rocks by R.W. Johnson (unpublished) and the tephrostratigraphy of Long Island (Blong, Pain & McKee, in press) have made it certain that Long Island was the source of Tibito Tephra. The eruption of Long Island was cataclysmic: Tibito Tephra from the eruption spread at least as far westward as Koroba, some 500 km from its source. Undoubtedly, continuing field observations will demonstrate an even wider distribution of Tibito Tephra than that shown in Figure 6.

Given this evidence and the fair degree of overlap between the distribution of Tibito Tephra and that of the legend, even though neither distribution can be regarded as complete, it seems undeniable that the gigantic eruption of Long Island gave rise to the 'time of darkness' legend among many communities.

Dating of the eruption and the legend

The apparently simple problem of working out just when the eruption of

Long Island occurred has turned out to be very complex indeed, largely because of the variety of dating techniques employed. The evidence is summarised below.

- (1) The pooled mean of the best available carbon dates on charcoal from Long Island and on wood and charcoal associated with Tibito Tephra at the Kuk Site provide an age estimate of 230 ± 40 years B.P. This means, statistically speaking, that there is a 66% probability that the true age of the eruption lies between 1680 and 1760 A.D. and a 95% probability that it lies between 1640 and 1800 A.D.
- (2) Dampier sailed past Long Island (and named it) in 1700. The profile he drew in his log is essentially the same as the present day profile of the island. A major eruption may or may not have altered the island's profile (Ball & Johnson, 1976). Dampier's report that the island was cloaked in vegetation indicates that the eruption probably did not occur in the period A.D. 1695-1700. No other navigators commented on the island's appearance until D'Urville's visit in 1827. After that date navigators passed the island sufficiently frequently that a major eruption could not have been ignored. (Ball and Johnson, 1976).
- (3) Genealogical evidence, based on the legend, suggests that the time of the ashfall is in the second half of the 19th century. The most detailed analysis undertaken by Paul Mai (for Enga Province) suggests the most probable date lies between 1840 and 1860.
- (4) A relatively untried technique, using the short-lived radioactive isotope ^{210}Pb on Tibito Tephra deposited in highland lakes, provides a mean age of about 1810 A.D. (Oldfield *et. al.*, in press).

Thus most of the evidence suggests that a major eruption could not have occurred after say 1820 A.D. Ball and Johnson (1976) conclude that the eruption occurred shortly after 1700 A.D. but all of the evidence they present is also completely consistent with an eruption between 1640 and 1695 A.D.

The true age of the Long Island eruption that produced Tibito Tephra and many of the 'time of darkness' legends remains indeterminate, I believe, within the range circa 1640-1820 A.D.

Implications

The connection between a cataclysmic eruption and a widespread legend as presented here raises a number of interesting implications.

First, the legend and its variations seem to be a substantially true historical account of the effects, observed at a distance, of a volcanic eruption. Elements of the legend relating to physical events and their effects are in accord with observations made by trained observers of volcanoes and a vast body of literature. My one strong reservation that the legend is an accurate factual account lies in the length the time darkness remained. More detailed work on particle

size, fall velocities and ash thicknesses at each site is necessary before claims of 3 or 4 days of darkness can be substantiated or refuted. Such work is in progress.

Second, if we accept the truth of much of the legend then it is worth recording in great detail even if only as a basis for planning in the event of a future eruption and associated airfall ash deposition. An accurate knowledge of the past effects of an event on village communities allows more accurate assessment of disaster relief requirements in the future.

Third, a number of accounts of the legend refer to other events happening at the same time as the time of darkness. Watson (1967) associates the arrival of *Casuarina oligodon* in the Kainantu area with the time of darkness, Nelson (1971) believed sweet-potato arrived in the Nebilyer at the same time, and Paul Mai recorded the arrival of a plant and a bird in Enga around about the time of darkness. Thus it may be possible to establish a time plane in the Highlands for the dating of certain events (I confess this is a very optimistic viewpoint). If this is the case, it would be the only time plane available prior to the arrival of European man.

Finally, although many anthropologists, and no doubt others, argue, memory of events recorded in traditions in the Highlands does not extend back more than about one hundred years, evidence presented here clearly shows a record, very detailed in some cases, of an event that certainly occurred more than 180 years ago and perhaps as long as 340 years before the present.

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I would like to record my sincere appreciation of the many individuals, particularly S.I.L. workers, and anthropologists who have sent me information about time of darkness legends, of Jack Golson, Rod Lacey and students of U.P.N.G. who stimulated my interest in this project, of Colin Pain who provided jovial companionship and clear insights on many geomorphological forays in Papua New Guinea, of Wally Johnson who provided unpublished data on Bismarck Sea volcanoes, and of Ian Hughes who first persuaded me to take a serious interest in Long Island. Peter Matwijiw made pertinent comments on a draft of the manuscript. All of these people I absolve from agreement with various items contained herein.

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CHAPTER XI

Oral Sources and the Study of Religious History in Papua New Guinea

Garry Trompf

In this introductory statement, I have two aims. First, to outline the dimensions of the religious history in Papua New Guinea, suggesting how oral historical investigation may enhance our knowledge of it; and second, to discuss the sorts of problems which can arise for those engaging in oral historical field studies of Melanesian religion. Before trying to fulfil my intentions, however, I must comment briefly on those important terms 'religion' and 'history'. Not only is there a good deal of misunderstanding surrounding the use of these words in this country, but also my subsequent discussion depends on a clear basic vocabulary.

For many Papua New Guineans, religion did not appear in Melanesia until the missionaries arrived. According to this assumption, Christianity merits the status of a religion, but pre-Christian beliefs and practices do not; they are to be deemed superstitions, or at the most, unformed religious insights which pale into insignificance beneath the light of the Gospel. Now the first task of a student of Melanesian religion is to unlearn this mischievous idea, bequeathed to us by an older school of missionaries (and anthropologists).¹ The fact remains, and it is a blatant fact with which modern missionaries and churchmen must now work, there are over five hundred living religions currently practised in Papua New Guinea over and above Christianity (with its various denominations). We may call the indigenous, pre-Christian phenomena 'primal religions' if we choose,² so indicating that they have grown up in highly atomized cultures

¹See, for instance, P. Hempenstall, 'Reception of European Missions in the German Pacific empire: the New Guinea Experience', *Journal of Pacific History*, X (1975) pp. 1 f., R.E. Reid, 'The Impact of Anthropology on Missionary Thinking at the turn of the twentieth century, with special reference to the work of J.H. Holmes among the Elema and Namau peoples of the Papuan Gulf, 1893-1917.' (B. Litt. Thesis, University of New England) Armidale, 1975, ch. 2; E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion*, Oxford, 1965, esp. ch. 2; G.W. Trompf 'The Origins of the Comparative Study of Religion (M.A. Thesis, Monash University) Melbourne, 1965, ch. 4.

²On the concept of primal religion, see J.V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision*, London, 1963, *passim*; H.W. Turner, 'A Further Dimension for Missions; new religious movements in the primal societies', *International Review of Missions*, LXII (1973) pp. 231 ff.

which possessed elementary technologists, but they are religions nevertheless, and they are surviving, however modified or damaged, under the emergent nationhood of a modernizing Papua New Guinea. Religion, scholars have said time and again, is multifaceted; whenever people encounter the numinous, or that which is beyond their conception of mundane reality, or whenever they concede that they have an 'ultimate concern', as Paul Tillich nicely puts it,³ they may be said to have a religion. That religion might be enriched through any one of a number of experiences; in keeping sacred law or custom, in ritual, in mystical or ecstatic experience, in continually reasoning about the nature of the cosmos, in belonging to a supportive community, and so forth. There are few religions in Melanesia which do not have their counterpart features or points of fruitful comparison in the so-called major world faiths. As we learn more about the great diversity of experiences, ceremonies, arts, skills, convictions and obligations, the old view that Melanesia was once without religion becomes absurd.

We also require some discussion of the term 'history' for similar reasons: Melanesians have often been denied their history as well as their religion. Even in recent years historians of Papua New Guinea (and of other Pacific countries) have attended very well to the white man's affairs yet shortchanged the indigenous people.⁴ Anthropologists, moreover, have tended to stop short at 'frozen anthropology'; they have too often described given cultures after experiencing them for but a short period and have usually left no picture of major cultural events which preceded their own fieldwork. Perhaps unwittingly, they have left the impression that Melanesian societies were static and lacking in the dynamics of social or intellectual change.⁵

What, then, are the dimensions of religious history in Papua New Guinea? One might answer this question by insisting that no sphere of life in Melanesia has escaped from the influences of religion. Has not economics in this part of the world also been a ritualistic or religious activity? Have not political leaders also been acclaimed as men of *paua* or of superior ethical qualities? And if all this seems to be the case we might even conclude that a religious history of Melanesia is no less than a general Melanesian history itself. For the present introductory discussion, however, I cannot engage in a detailed discussion of such theoretical questions, for the sake of clarity and neatness. Thus I shall outline the dimensions of Melanesian religious history in a more down-to-earth fashion. Let me expand on this with some preliminary comments on the different portions of this history.

³*Systematic Theology*, London, 1953, vol. 1, pp. 14 ff.

⁴Note how even A. Klein's *Histori bilong Papua Niugini*, Goroka, 1974 is virtually nothing else but a history of colonial administrations.

⁵Certain anthropologists such as Raymond Firth, Peter Lawrence (see *infra*) R. A. Rappaport and Richard Saliabury (see fn 18) have made effective use of oral recollection of group history.

The most inviting way of dividing up the rich material at hand is to talk, first, about the prehistory, history and persistence of traditional Papua New Guinean religions; secondly, about the history of the Christian missions and the development of national churches in Papua New Guinea; and thirdly, about the emergence of indigenous cults and independent religious movements which have arisen in response to dramatic or rapid social change (especially to the changes brought about during colonialism). However, I am not here propounding some kind of stage theory of Melanesian history. There is a widespread scholarly view that in Third World societies ancient tradition inevitably gives way to the forces of modernity, and that between the so-called 'traditional' and 'modern' stages of development, between tribalism and urbanization, 'transitional' adjustment movements make their appearance.⁶ While this picture of the transformation scene is helpful in understanding the Melanesian situation, my division of the material into three areas is meant rather for the sake of convenience. It may well be that students will benefit by keeping the model of a three-staged development in mind, but I do not want to prejudge this whole issue here. In almost every Papua New Guinean society one discovers a complex amalgam in which new and old forces are in constant interplay. In most places it may appear that Christianity has accomplished a victory over tradition, and only in a few instances — such as along the Rai coast or on Tanna Island, New Hebrides — does one find passionate, anti-Christian revivals of the old ways. Almost invariably, though, careful investigation will reveal that the traditional and the Christian live together in a rich complexity, sometimes nicely blended in a way fruitful to both claimants, sometimes held side by side without fear or care of contradiction, sometimes jumbled into an apparent confusion yet one still capable of answering deeply felt needs. The pressures of modernization, nationalism and secularization all impinge on this complexity as well. But it is not within the scope of this chapter to theorize about the direction and probable future of Papua New Guinea's religious history, nor to pass value judgements as to what kind of religious policy or situation is best for the country.⁷ I simply wish to delineate manageable areas for research and to justify oral historical studies as an essential part of that research.

1. *The Prehistory, History and Persistence of Traditional Papua New Guinean Religion*

Very little has been written about the prehistory of Melanesian religion.⁸

⁶For this categorization in the Marxist tradition, see R.C. Tucker, *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea*, New York, 1969, pp. 92 ff.. See P. Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, London 1970 ed., pp. 262 ff. Elsewhere, note H. Cox, *The Secular City*, New York, ch. 1.

⁷For some of the issues, see G.W. Trompf, 'Secularisation for Melanesia?' in *Point* (special issue, 1977: Christ in Melanesia).

⁸Yet see A. Riesenfeld, *The Megalithic Culture of Melanesia*, Leiden, 1950.

Over the last hundred years or more, however, many European scholars have used data from the Pacific region in attempting to answer imponderable questions about the origins of man's religion. Significantly, because they have so often concluded that contemporary 'primitive religions' reflect the kinds of beliefs and practices one expects to find in the earliest stages of human history, they have appealed to Papua New Guinea as a place where the most ancient religious notions and forms have survived.⁹ This approach dies hard even today, although it met with opposition from the first, and more recent research disclosing the intricacies and varieties of Melanesian religion has thrown it into the balance.¹⁰ Certainly we would be the wiser to avoid sweeping generalizations as to where Melanesia sits in the general evolution of religion, and especially to deny the old argument that Melanesian religion has remained stationary, like a living fossil, for millennia.

Where does the oral historian fit into this debate? Is it not the oral historian's task publicly to divulge history as it has been preserved orally and in memory? Why then discuss prehistory? Oral traditions may contain reference to objects or beliefs which are of great interest to the historian. For example, if peoples from two or three distinct cultural areas had like names for deities, and also traced their origins to a common sacred place where the deities were said to reside, then one could fairly suggest (but not necessarily conclude) that these people had the same 'origins'.¹¹ Among the Huli near Tari, to take another case, people have been accustomed to sacrifice pigs before rounded stones (*lirukui*) which are periodically taken from their resting places in caves. These caves, accessible only to select elders, are also sources of ochre and their walls are decorated with paintings; it is also held by some that the first man was generated in these caves by the spirit or *lidu'anta* of a *lirukui*.¹² Historians are bound to be interested in such facts, just as they will be when they hear of myths alluding to the former settlement of a whole clan in a painted cave or rock-shelter, as in the Kala clan origin story among the Enga.¹³ It is the task of the historian to search back beyond memory and documents, and the collecting

⁹See M. Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*, New York 1968, esp. chs. 5-7; 22 is a classic example. Note H. Spenser, *The Data of Anthropology*, London, 1874, esp. tables VII-VIII, and pp. 2 ff.

¹⁰For background to the alternative view, see G.W. Trompf, *Friedrich Max Müller as a Theorist of Comparative Religion*, Bombay, 1978, ch. 3. See W.M. Capps (ed.), *Ways of Understanding Religion*, New York, 1972, pt. 2.

¹¹Take for example, the Roro and the Mekeo. They both share the tradition that Isoisobapu (or Ioibapu) was their point of origin. Even if this oversimplifies matters (see last section and n. 72 *infra*), we are justified in viewing these peoples in close historical relationship, (also see n. 35).

¹²Oral Testimony (Hereafter OT.): Benjamin Gayalu, 16 March, 1977.

¹³OT: Christopher Kopyoto, 25 February, 1976.

of oral traditions may provide clues to the prehistory of culture in general. As one who reflects on the transmission of the evidence, however, the oral historian is in a sound position to gauge just how far the archaeologist may go in speculating about beliefs and practices of the more distant past. To illustrate the various research problems in this connection, I will discuss a Middle Wahgi example. Five or six generations ago, according to some clan traditions, carved smooth stones were found under the ground and under tree roots by people clearing land for gardens. In this case it was the people themselves who were the excavators; yet they were archaeologists with ideas quite unlike those of the modern archaeologists. They concluded that a being more powerful than the stones themselves had put them there, and when they subsequently housed and performed rituals on such stones before going into battle, they presumed that it was this unnamed, unknown being which provided such a useful, protective source of power for their use.¹⁴ Here we have an indication that carved stones were being used by Melanesians long ago, but current oral tradition may only mislead us in our quest for their most ancient religious significance.¹⁵

Turning now to the recent history of Melanesian religions, one has to admit that comparatively little has been written about this subject either. Hundreds of ethnographic comments have provided snippets of relevant information about specific times and places from around 1850 onwards, and yet scholars have only rarely attempted to piece together oral, written and pictorial sources to describe processes of change in a given Melanesian religion (or culture) over long periods of time, or over the last 100-150 years. The more useful research which has been carried out, however, certainly forces us to question simplistic models of the Melanesian past which many have been tempted to frame. Most interestingly, various investigations into 'pre-contact' religious life reveal that significant shifts in world-views, and in cultic and social organisation, were taking place among peoples we might have supposed to be static. R. Bulmer has shown how the impressive female cult of *Enda Semangko* was being adopted from the Metlpa by the Kyaka Enga just before European intrusion; other studies demonstrate how the sun-worshipping 'shaker' movement spread like wildfire through western Enga country not long before the first regular patrols.¹⁶ Although it may be argued that rumours or signs of a new order may have given impetus to these changes — the appearance of a cow among the Enga, for

¹⁴OT: Kondom Tapi, Kai Kuma, 12-15 December, 1976.

¹⁵See also A. Strathern, 'Kor-Nga Poklambo or Ui Ubo? Hagen Magic Stones', *Archaeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania*, IV (1969), pp. 91 ff.

¹⁶R.N.H. Bulmer, 'The Kyaka Enga of the Western Highlands', in P. Lawrence and M.J. Meggit (eds.) *Gods, Ghosts and Men in Melanesia*, Melbourne, 1965, pp. 148 ff; M.J. Meggit, *Studies in Enga History (The Oceania Monographs XX)*, Sydney, 1974, ch. 1. Peter Sack has recently informed me that oral sources indicate the famous Dukduk of Tubuan societies among the Tolai of New Britain to be little more than a century old (OT: 25 July, 1977).

example, was an important event in the early history of the shaker movement — we may suggest that special occurrences completely unrelated to European colonization have brought about serious modifications in religious life over the centuries. Willington Jojoga has recently suggested, (after concluding that the Orokaiva taro cults in the 1910s were instances of traditional religious adaptation rather than syncretistic cargo cults), that the emergence of intense and *experimental* cultic activity has been recurrent in Melanesian ancient history, and that such spurts have been engendered by altered circumstances, by war, migration, natural catastrophe and the like.¹⁷

I had these issues in mind when I undertook the historical study of religion among the Middle Wahgi from 1972 onwards. I was particularly concerned to learn whether some of the more spectacular manifestations of Middle Wahgi traditional religion — the great *Kongar* or Pig-Killing Festival — had a history in the minds of the people.¹⁸ Students and I discovered something rather fascinating; that in most of the 38 tribal groups in the central Middle Wahgi-speaking area¹⁹ elders could actually provide information as to which beliefs and practices they considered more ancient, which more recent, and why. On the northern and southwestern sides of the Wahgi informants were unanimous that the *Kongar* was introduced 'from the Chimbu side' (to the east), and groups in the northwest were specific about when it was adopted and under what circumstances. In the 1860s, if we can accept a chronology based on numbers of generations, a fugitive Chimbu band pushed its way deep into Middle Wahgi country and eventually settled down between suspicious tribes near present-day Banz. The *Komblo*, as they were called, managed to survive in a hostile environment for about fifty years until pressures of land and adverse alliances forced them into an epic retreat down the ridges of the Jimi range. As they were fortunate enough to regain their foothold during the new regime of Jim Taylor (ca. 1936), their older representatives have been able to tell their story, and the explanations they gave of their uncanny survival have been corroborated by traditions in other tribes. They were able to hold their own because they were the custodians of the *Bugla Yungga*, the great Chimbu pig-kill fertility

¹⁷W. Jojoga Opeba, 'Taro or Cargo? a study of Taro Cult among the Orokaiva of the Northern Province' (BA Hons. Dissertation, University of Papua New Guinea), Port Moresby, 1976, ch. 4.

¹⁸As background, R.A. Rappaport, (in *Pigs for the Ancestors*, New Haven, 1967, p. 84) had already estimated that the Maring pig festivals in Simbai Valley of the central highlands only appeared 'within the last 200 years'; See R.F. Salisbury, 'Non-Equilibrium Models of New Guinea Ecology. Possibilities of Cultural Extrapolation. *Anthropologica* N.S. XVII (1975) p. 129.

¹⁹The Middle Wahgi tribal groups run from the Opa to the Waka on the north side of the Wahgi river and from the Mamilka to the Kumai on the south side. The central Middle Wahgi area is to be distinguished from the 10 Jimi Valley tribes to the north who speak Middle Wahgi and the scattered tribes across the Kubor range to the south who speak both Middle Wahgi and Metlpa. Students working with me include Michael Wandel, Godfrey Yerua, James Kai, Kaunge Aipe and also Timothy Mambeu (who died tragically in a car accident, 1976).

ritual, which they proceeded to sell off segment by segment to Middle Wahgi tribes in exchange for women, land-rights and peace. Although their hands were eventually bitten by those whom they had fed, the insecure Komblo had provided the tribes of the northern side with a rare treasure, for the *Kongar*, the Middle Wahgi equivalent of the *Bugla Yungga*, remains the most colourful, enduring and prized possession of their traditional religion.²⁰

More intriguing information about the history of the *Kongar* ritual may be obtained from the linguistically-related tribes in the Jimi Valley area and on the southside of the Wahgi (east and west of Minj). Yet I do not cite this whole case for its own sake; I intend rather to highlight general areas of religious life worth careful historical investigation. We focused on an impressive ceremony and became interested in the *intricacies* of its history, for the ceremony has component parts and has been modified among different tribes. To document variations, or slight alterations, one cannot rely on hearsay; the job ought to be done thoroughly by seeking out authorities from each tribe (or better still, clan) with specific questions in mind. Only after recording particular histories can one venture to conceptualize the long-term impact of a key ceremony on a whole culture. In processing all the information, one can make relatively safe inferences about geographical lines of religious change. We were just as interested in the *origins* and '*migration*' of a ceremony as we were in its intricacies. Once we had established where the influences were supposed to be coming from, we looked for relative beginnings. Groups in the western Wahgi assumed that the *Kongar* came from the Chimbu side; Chimbu peoples around Kundiawa, by contrast, claimed the source of the *Bugla Yungga* to be in the Middle Wahgi!²¹ If both these general appraisals were correct, the ceremony may have had its foundations at a point somewhere in between, and indeed, most tribal traditions near Kup (close to the linguistic boundary between the two relevant culture areas) stated that the clan ancestors had always had the great pig-kill, even though these same traditions do not take genealogical lines back beyond five or six generations. Thus we isolated a field in which careful work may reveal the sources of inspiration behind the great festival.

Along with an interest in both the origins and particular features of the ceremony, we developed a fascination for the *inter-relationships* between this pig-killing ceremony and the other aspects of Middle Wahgi religious life. If the

²⁰See G.W. Trompf 'The Religious History of a Melanesian People from the Last Century to the Present; the Middle Wahgi, New Guinea Highlands' in Trompf (ed.), *Melanesian and Judaeo-Christian Religious Traditions*, (hereafter *MJCRT*) (University of Papua New Guinea External Studies Programme) Port Moresby, 1976, bk. 3, pt. C. opt. I pp. 7 ff.: 'The Epic of the Komblo', in *Oral History* (recent submission).

²¹F. Tomasetti, 'Research into Chimbu Religion', Seminar to Select Topics in Religious Studies, UPNG., 27 October, 1976. On a comparable problem faced by researchers into Enga history, Bulmer, *loc. cit.*, p. 148.

Kongar was a fairly recent introduction among various tribes, what effect did its coming have on prior religious beliefs and structures, and what were the previous patterns of religion? Asking questions like these yielded answers which help explain how Melanesians could change their vision of the world or graft a newer picture onto an older one. In most places, for example, it was believed that the dead live in the heights of the great mountains, and cemeteries were in fact laid out on high ridges. According to the mainstream belief and practice which accompanied the *Kongar*, however, the dead were to be buried close to the *singsing* grounds where the pig-kill would occur, and they were to be granted small houses in which to maintain their presence among the living.²² Throughout the Middle Wahgi, as a result, earlier fashions reacted with the new, yet in no uniform way: some danced lower down the mountain slopes yet still buried high up, some built new cemeteries below and relieved themselves of the painful task of bearing corpses into the mists; some made a working distinction between the old ancestral spirits in the heights and the recent dead nearby and so arrived at a syncretistic solution. Many other details could be given, but it is sufficient to present guidelines which disclose the manifold dynamics of religious life and which force us to question once more the common assumption that Melanesian cultures were ever static.

I wish to conclude this section by noting the relevant forms of oral tradition one is likely to encounter in the field. It is possible to obtain a substantial amount of historically interesting material simply by asking specific questions (even by framing carefully phrased questionnaires), but perhaps the most valuable oral sources are those which are conveyed in a more structured, formal way, usually as *stori*. Each Melanesian people has a different way of classifying their traditions, and one should identify the system of classification as soon as possible. In spite of subtle variations, however, I will present a classification in English based on cross cultural studies by anthropologists, or by historians of ideas and culture, yet which may not be in every respect applicable to specific Melanesian cultures. I comment on the classification briefly as most of the categories have been discussed in other chapters. The accompanying footnotes give Papua New Guinean examples of each type.

Myths: stories about the doings of 'God', the gods, spirits or of the ancestors (either as divinized or as spirits), and more especially those stories explaining the origins and nature of the cosmos or its most significant components. (An account of the origin and nature of the universe which is not in narrative form

²²Trompf, 'Man Facing Death and Rebirth in Melanesia,' in *MJCRT.*, bk. 3, pt. C. I, pp. 64 f.

amounts to a *cosmology*).²³

Legends: stories about the ancestors, who, when still living, encountered and interacted with supernatural powers, and engaged in memorable exploits.²⁴

Saga or epic: long stories about the ancestors which describe the adventures and ordeals of a group and/or its leaders, and which account for the group's survival in the face of great odds.²⁵

Genealogies: lineages which, whether following paternal or maternal lines, or being based on the succession of chiefs or clan leaders, indicate the number of former generations considered significant for a particular group.²⁶

Migration stories: a step by step account of where and how a group subsisted in former places of settlement, sometimes given together with reasons for movements and with comments on important happenings, such as wars and quarrels, along the way.²⁷

Aetiological tales: stories which are told to explain the existence of a particular object, place or person. We can assume that a given phenomenon preceded the telling of a story about it.²⁸

Anecdotes: tales told about people, animals or objects which are humorous or of fascination in their own right, even though they may be used to explain or moralize about the world.²⁹

²³For these categories I am indebted to O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament, an Introduction*, (trans P. Ackroyd), Oxford, 1965 chs. 3-21, and to J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, Harmondsworth, 1973, ch. 6 On myths eg. the story of Manup and Kilibob from the coastal Madang area (see P. Lawrence, *Road belong Cargo*, Melbourne, 1964, pp. 21 ff; on Sido and his wanderings in south-west Papua, G. Landtman, *The Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea*, London 1927, pp. 284 ff.). For a cosmology, eg. the Huli picture of the four corners of their Universe with the sun reigning above, see B. Gayalu, 'Traditional Religion among the Huli of the Southern Highlands' (*Ms*, Religion and the Third World UPNG., 1976), pp. 2f (with kind permission).

²⁴Eg. M. Mead, in *The Mountain Arapesh*, New York, 1970 edn., vol. 2., pp. 324 ff., presents a series of *stori* from the Sepik which shade out of myth and into legend (as I have defined them).

²⁵Eg. Trompf, 'The Epic of the Komblo *loc. cit.* (on Chimbu and Middle Wahgi).

²⁶Eg. R. Lacey, 'Oral Traditions as History: an exploration of oral sources among the Enga of New Guinea' (Doctoral Thesis, University of Wisconsin), Wisconsin, 1975, ch. 2.

²⁷Eg. N. Oram, 'Taurama — Oral Sources for a study of Recent Motuan Prehistory', *Journal of the Papua and New Guinea Society*, II (1969) pp. 79 ff; P. Chatterton, 'The Story of a Migration, in *ibid* pp. 92 ff. (on the Roro of Coastal Papua).

²⁸Eg. Contributions by A. Funckarung, A. Kiniung, A. Piale, N. Karim and R. Nebita, *Creation Legends from Papua New Guinea*, Madang, 1972, pp. 5-11, 29-46.

²⁹The name *folk tale* less adequately covers this and the previous category. Eg. *Tiang Kuspini* (trans. W.P.T. Taufi, ed. J. Ainsworth) (Niugini Folklore series 2), Port Moresby, 1973, *passim*.

Short traditions concerning significant events: a) *in the life of a group*: usually such traditions concern pre-contact occurrences which stand out and which enable Melanesians to relate the coming of the whites or outsiders (especially missionaries or government officers) to their own people's previous exploits. Some great victory or disaster is usually singled out, or some event of preparatory significance which facilitates the reception of the whites or the Gospel.³⁰ b) *in the life of an impressive individual*: such traditions concern the specific deeds of traditional leaders, most commonly those prominent at the time of early interaction between a given group and the white newcomers.³¹

Sayings or formalized instructions: memorable statements by individuals which have come to be considered important advice for the survival or decision-making of the group.³²

Proverbs, or didactic formulae: pithy sayings passed down in tradition for understanding the world, for the training of children or the regulation of behaviour.³³

Oracles: striking utterances by prophets, shamans or other spiritual leaders which are remembered and contemplated by the close associates of such figures (and which may come to have importance for the religious life of the whole community).³⁴

Poetry and/or song: verse, fixed in structure or otherwise, which is recited by a specialist or sung by a group. Such verse can range from songs of triumph commemorating past victories (sometimes sung in an archaic tongue which the hearers find unintelligible) to cult songs at a crucial point in a ceremony.³⁵

³⁰See n. 51 *infra* for examples.

³¹Eg. Trompf, 'Ikaroa Ralpa; Western Mekeo conqueror and peacemaker', in *Oral History*, V (1977) (on the Mekeo).

³²Eg. a few such sayings, ascribed to a man called Amanei, are appealed to in decision-making among the Fuyughe, Papuan Highlands (OT: Era Ava; Camillo Esef, 19 September, 1973).

³³The richest stock of proverbs I have so far found in Papua New Guinea come from the Aroma — Velerupu-speaking area of coastal Papua, (Trompf and S. Varaghi, fieldnotes, 1972-3; OT: Terry Magalu, 17 May 1973; Pala Vaghi, 19 April, 1977).

³⁴See Trompf (ed.), *Prophets of Melanesia*, Port Moresby, 1977 pp. 28-38, 66-9, 164f., 204-9, 227f., 236f., 240-2.

³⁵Eg. the song 'Pekori' was sung by the Roro chiefs of Rapa and recorded by an excursion group of Religious Studies students in 1974. It was a song of triumph in words unintelligible to the singers, but probably goes back to the common proto-language once shared by both the Roro and Mekeo (OT: Prof. S.A. Wurm of the Australian National University, 21 September, 1976), and, as background, E. Hau'ofa and Trompf, 'Mekeo Chiefs and Disputing Villagers', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, LXXXIII (1974) pp. 234f. I refer to a cult song of the Kongar ceremony among the Middle Wahgi in 'Man facing Death, etc.'. *loc. cit.*, p. 65; and on funeral laments, note the recording *Papua New Guinea, Manus, Bougainville*, (Institute of Papua New Guinea studies), ed. U. Beier, prod. C. Durelle, esp. side B, track 5.

Together with these we may add specific *laws* or *tabu*; *ritual formulae* used in public ceremonies or the performance of magic; *titles* applied to leaders and *slogans* employed to describe one's own or another's group; *names* of places and people (these are usually given for reasons which are of religious significance); as well as *simple explanations* as to why given customs and rites are upheld.³⁶ Even *dreams* and *dream interpretations* should be added to this list,³⁷ along with *glossalalia* and the *interpretation of the languages or messages of the dead*.³⁸

I referred to *classifications* beforehand. A specific group may not classify their more structured oral expressions in either the order or manner here presented. They may not have a comparable method of classification at all. On the other hand, they could have other carefully worked out categories which are significant for religious studies. They may classify their spirits, for instance, or parts of the animal and vegetable order which are of totemic or cultic importance, or else different diseases, or (most commonly) the reasons why people die, or fall sick, or find themselves in trouble.³⁹

All these forms of oral tradition, together with the visible manifestations of traditional culture themselves, and any written records available, are important for the writing and accurate representation of a people's spiritual past. A traditional culture's history, moreover, is not just a phenomenon of *taim bipo*; it is worthwhile documenting how the new forces of change which came with colonialism and missionization have affected traditional beliefs and practices, to describe how they have been modified or transformed more recently, or how they persist or have been revived.

Young students disturbed by the passing away of aspects of their own culture, may have assumed that outsiders have, in some uniform way, brought wholesale destruction in a dictatorial manner. Certainly, various specific activities were very often put down quite forcefully, such as the exposure of corpses to the air on platforms, or other funeral practices which seemed unhealthy or

³⁶For further comments on titles, slogans and formulae, see Vansina, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-7.

³⁷Eg. the relating and specialist interpretation of dreams in hilltop gatherings is practised among the Kewa people. Southern Highlands (OT: Colman Marune, 8 April, 1977).

³⁸Eg. speaking and interpreting spirit language by select females and within nocturnal open-air gatherings is common among the Halia speakers on the east coast of Buka (OT: Sahun Dash, 5 June, 1977).

³⁹On the classifications of spirits eg. Bulmer, *loc. cit.*, pp. 138 ff; of the natural order, eg. Bulmer, 'Why is the Cassowary not a Bird?' in *Man*, N.S., II (1976) pp. 5 ff.; and of explanations, eg. Trompf, 'Retributive Logic in Melanesian Belief', in *MJCRT.*, bk. 3, pt. C. opt. 1, pp. 77 ff., esp. p. 86.

inhumane to the powerful newcomers.⁴⁰ Missionaries, especially before the war, were rarely in a position to impose a whole new culture by sweeping away the old. By sheer weight of numbers and physical strength, they and their first converts were usually in a vulnerable position. Besides, whatever their ideas about 'savages', it is not true that all (or even most) of the early missionaries to Papua New Guinea took everything native to be the works of the Devil, or as products of profound ignorance and darkness.⁴¹ In fact, most of the early missionaries proved more sensitive to human needs than the racist intellectuals who speculated about 'primitive culture' in the clubs and universities of Europe.⁴² Therefore many of the more central and spectacular features of Papua New Guinean culture endured for much longer than the angry young student might suspect. Take the significant Motuan village of Boera, close to Port Moresby. The colourful Kaivakuku dance with tall masks among the fruit trees did not cease until 1925, when it was put down by the Government, not the missions, over fifty years after the arrival of the first pastor. Most traditional rites were practised openly in spite of steady Christianization up until the War, when they faded as group activities yet not as the result of missionary repression.⁴³ Through oral history, then, we are reminded that religious changes hardly take place overnight. There are other examples. The Mailu of Amazon Bay, for example, enacted the great *Gove* festival until the 1950's when the people did not see the point of carrying it on, while most Orokelo villages stopped the *Hevehe* partly because of a strong indigenous reaction against tradition as early as 1919.⁴⁴ The Fuyughe, who received the Sacred Heart missionaries from 1904 on, still perform their traditional *Gab*, and will not respond to the call to Mass if the divine service coincides with their special festivities.⁴⁵ Among most central highland societies contacted more recently, the great ceremonies are still held

⁴⁰Eg., on government officers prohibiting funeral platforms in the Northern Province, see Ioma Patrol Reports, 11 October, 1912 pp. 4, 7, (National Archives, Papua New Guinea, G 91 file 228); and on the opposition of Raratongan pastor, Piri, to the Motuan funeral custom of smearing one's body with decaying flesh, see his letters translated from originals by M. Crocombe, 1969, (New Guinea Collection UPNG).

⁴¹For the complex nature of missionary attitudes, see B.W. Harrison 'Christ and Culture in Northeast New Guinea', (M.A. Thesis, UPNG) Port Moresby, 1975, chs. 3-5.

⁴²Here I foreshadow a projected article on early missionaries and racist anthropology. See as background, Reid, *op. cit.*, Ch. 21 Harris, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 82 f., 97 ff., 130 ff.

⁴³E. Thomas, 'The Biography of a Motu Pastor', (unpublished typescript, Select topics in Religious studies, UPNG., 1976, pp. 7-8 (with kind permission). The Government banned the dances in honour of Kaivakuku in 1925.

⁴⁴On the *Gove*, OT: R. Silovo, 17 March, 1977; and on the *Hevehe* see F.E. Williams, *The Vailala Madness and the Destruction of Native Ceremonies in the Gulf Division*, (Anthropology Report No. 4) Port Moresby, 1923, pp. 38 ff.

⁴⁵Trompf, 'Bilalaf' in *Prophets*, *op. cit.*, pp. 23 ff. (together with personal observations, 1974-6).

with pomp and splendour, even though many informants may tell you that the time will come when the people will spend their money on more useful projects, or when the young, educated ones will no longer have the inclination to dance or kill pigs.⁴⁶ The effect of smaller, rigid sectarian missions (whose members are instructed to renounce all connection with traditional religion) has not yet been so pronounced or lasting. Historical investigation, it will now be obvious, is crucial for a better understanding of what is continuing in this country among the villages, where the majority of people still live.

Furthermore, different peoples have resisted the influences of Christianity and 'progress' in Melanesia by attempting to revitalize their own traditions. *Kaikai bilong lotu i stap we?* is not an uncommon question in Papua New Guinea, and various groups, such as in the Chambri Lakes area of the Sepik, find their old rituals ensure them a better catch in hunting and fishing than the new Christian prayers.⁴⁷ I have already mentioned 'pagan' revivalism; on Tanna in the New Hebrides, for example, the return to time-honoured practice was a conscious revolt against heavy-handed Presbyterianism.⁴⁸ In other places such revivals may be the limp reassertions of the old people, who resent the presumptions and freedoms of the young, or the intrusions of national as against local institutions.⁴⁹ I would suggest that, since the history of enduring traditional culture generally goes undocumented, oral historians must be on the alert to note how their informants are reacting to the transformations around them, and thus to present a more accurate picture of *both* continuity and change in a given society. On such matters, informants may be more ready to speak openly, than on lore which only elders have previously guarded.

2. *The History of Christian Missions and Churches in Papua New Guinea.*

Although there have been foreign non-Christian faiths striving to gain adherents in Papua New Guinea,⁵⁰ Christianity, as a body of beliefs and knowledge which originated far away, has had by far the largest intellectual and spiritual influence on the modern history of the country. Much of this history has been documented. Most of it, however, remains to be written, and can only be represented satisfactorily by the tapping of oral sources. As Christian activities

⁴⁶On the *Kongar*, OT: Mugang Biten (Lutheran Evangelist), 16 December, 1976.

⁴⁷OT: Ralph Wari, 18 August, 1976.

⁴⁸See J. Guiart, *Un siècle et demi de contacts culturels à Tanna Nouvelles Hébrides* (*Société des Océanistes*, Publications V,) Paris, 1956.

⁴⁹Eg. at Pinu and surrounding villages in the Gabadi-speaking area, coastal Papua, 1972 and on (OT: Aihi Apa, 28 April, 1973).

⁵⁰Eg. Bahai (from the early 1960s—they now have a 'cargo cult' following in the Managalas area of the Northern Province, see R. Gallick 'Getting to the People' in *Family* No. 3, 1977, pp. 8 f), and also Ananda Marga, 1973 and 1977. For an attempt to prove that the Japanese persecuted (and to that extent proselytized) during the Second World War, see E. Kedek, 'The Religious War, 1942-45' (*ms.* Lahara Fieldwork Project, UPNG, 1976-7), (with kind permission).

in this country continue to expand, and as they both diversify and intensify, one becomes more and more aware that nationals are playing dominant roles in church life. This should lead us to enquire into the origins and earlier history of indigenous Christian leadership (and indigenous involvement generally), and also to reckon on the fact, that much of this history has been treated only roughly in books about white missionaries, by white missionaries, and for European audiences. Admittedly, the history of Christianity in Melanesia could also be served well by historical work done among expatriate mission workers who have returned to their own countries. New, more relevant questions might be asked of such persons. Yet it is the underdone history of Papua New Guinean Christians which deserves priority, and mines of information may be found with those nationals who have worked long and hard for their Christ, but whose intriguing stories have never reached a wider public. It is only through oral work, moreover, that one could possibly test the extent and depth of Papua New Guinean Christianity. How else could one try to identify confusions and clear thinking, *maus wara* and deep reflection, *giaman* and integrity, except by many conversations?

What are the areas of mission history which oral historians can most fruitfully explore? First, stories about the earliest encounters with missionaries will prove of great interest. One may find that people have kept traditions about events or even prophetic statements which anticipated the coming of the Christians; they may also have impressive *stori* telling how the early missionaries avoided or met with death, or how Christianity was first accepted.⁵¹ In piecing together episodes in mission history, oral history may either support or correct impressions handed down to us in missionary diaries or published works.⁵² Then the labours of nationals may be better documented by interviews. Many of the unknown heroes of Papua New Guinea have been church helpers and catechists, or village leaders who abetted the mission cause. Many had muddled ideas about the faith, and most were more narrow-minded on key doctrinal and ethical issues than the foreign missionaries themselves. Yet helpers and catechists were vital in making new and ever-widening contacts for the mis-

⁵¹Kundapen Talyaga's informants took the water purification ceremonies of the Enga Shaker movement to anticipate Christian baptism; see 'Sun and Shakers among the Enga in the 1940s.' (MS. Millenarian Movements, UPNG), pp. 4 ff. (with kind permission, this work is being revised for publication). A man called Sido (to be distinguished from the Sito of Kiwai mythology, n. 23), taught that peoples should inter-marry and worship one deity among the Bine and other south-west Papuan coastal cultures (personal communication: Kogea Katam). On traditions concerning missionaries in danger or meeting death, see, eg. H.A. Brown, 'Social and Political change among the Eastern Elema', (Post — Graduate Diploma in Anthropology Thesis, University of London), 1956, pp. 156 ff. (Chalmers among the Moveave); D. Langmore, *Tamate — a King*, Melbourne, 1974 pp. 122 ff. (on Chalmers's death at Goaribari, Western Province).

⁵²Eg. Trompf "Bilalaf" *loc. cit.*, pp. 74 f., 78 ff., 99 f. (on the Fuyughe).

sions, and they often faced the gravest dangers. Peace and stability in the villages since contact has very commonly been the task of Christian leaders.⁵³ Various catechists, too, particularly the Lutherans, went willingly to settle and preach in cultures which were quite foreign to them. They had to learn new languages and to earn acceptance from potentially hostile peoples. More work needs to be done on the personal histories of Morobe men who braved such new horizons as Lutheran evangelists; the little that has been done lays bare an important slice of history.⁵⁴ More effort is also required to paint the picture of developing relationships between the people and specific missions or mission personnel; there have been personality clashes and problems in Melanesian Christian history, and there have been divided opinions among the people as to which mission was to be followed.⁵⁵ Friedegaard Tomasetti has recently shown that one effective approach to anthropology in Papua New Guinea is to begin research with a Christian congregation and to learn about Melanesian ways by tracing the history of church members' attitudes to Christianity and its exponents, as far back as the pre-mission tradition itself.⁵⁶ Then there remains the rich field of modern ecclesiastical life and politics.

With the localization of church leadership, more and more nationals are making their mark as well known public figures and as impressive thinkers. They may be ready to recall or to air their points of view before the oral historian. Even stories about the childhood of these leaders could be valuable information. Zuruwe, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea, for instance, has from time to time preached on his miraculous, Moses-like rescue from the jaws of a rushing stream. Born an illegitimate child, his desperate mother hurled him over the river bank. Later in the day his mother's sister noticed that the child had been delivered but was nowhere to be seen. Rushing from the village, the sister recovered the body, with ants teeming all over it, right on the river's edge, yet not in the water. Taking the infant, she brought him up as her own son. This is an important story, of historical as well as didactic value. There are others like it worth collecting.

As with traditional culture, church life witnesses structured oral expressions which should be noticed. I mean here *hymns*, *set prayers*, *liturgies*, *texts* and *theological expressions* in *tok pisin*, Hiri Motu, Kôta or *ples tok* which have not

⁵³Eg. T. Kamalap, 'The Biography of Kukurai Pennie, (MS. Lahara Fieldwork Project, UPNG., 1976-77), pp. 31 ff. (on a New Ireland case).

⁵⁴Eg. see W. Kigasung, 'Missionary Pioneering in Siassi island 1847-1947' (BA. Hons. Dissertation, UPNG, 1976), pp. 51 ff. See also W. Flierl, *Miti Fua Yeing Ewec*, Madang, 1962, *passim* (eg. pp. 288 from the Kôta evangelists in the Wahgi Valley). On South Sea Island pastors, too, see S. Lâtûkefu's chapter in this volume.

⁵⁵The turbulent situation on Karkar Island during the 1930's for example, has been recorded in Fr. J. Tschauder's diaries (currently being edited by A. Clark).

⁵⁶F. Tomasetti; *Traditionen und Christentum in Chimbu-Gebiet Neuguineas; Beobachtungen in der lutherischen Gemeinde Parc*. Wiesbaden, 1976, esp. pts. C-D.

been written down.⁵⁷ Many *sermons* are preached and many *theologies* formulated which have not been put on paper, yet which, having been heard and noted by the astute observer, can become valuable historical information for future generations of Melanesians. The church service may be for most a place or time of worship and not of scientific investigation, yet in it church history is being made, and it is advisable for some of us to remember what is said and done, and to jot something down on paper.

3. *Transitional Movements in the Religious History of Papua New Guinea.*

Melanesia is famous for its so-called 'cargo cults', or for outbursts of religious activity generated by group expectations of *kago*. It is not my business here to elicit different examples of cargo cultism, nor to explain this kind of cultural phenomenon. Much has already been written about it.⁵⁸ On the other hand, it should be made clear that historical investigation may enable us to review past commentaries and to present fairer and more accurate accounts of such cults. Many of these cults were inadequately reported by foreigners who did not understand local thought forms nor see anything but foolishness in the excited anticipation of material bliss. The tone of commentaries has become more sympathetic over the years, perhaps, yet the phrase 'cargo cult' is still used pejoratively in this country, even in the rhetoric of national politics.⁵⁹ What is more, the phrase has been applied to movements which do not seem to merit it, so that all Melanesian cults are generalized as cargoist. Helpful if fine distinctions — between fertility cults, prophet movements, independent churches, special Christian revivals, development and welfare associations, rebellions and separatist organisations — have too often been thrown to the wind. By a careful re-evaluation of given movements, oral historians may well be able to suggest more appropriate descriptions than the catch phrase so glibly used. Oral history research, indeed, may greatly broaden our knowledge of recent Melanesian religion not only by eliciting the diverse types of response to colonialism and rapid social change, but also by uncovering information about cultic activities which have never been documented at all, or by exploring

⁵⁷Eg. R. Pech has documented some Kôta and Graged hymns, 'Early Christian hymns in Melanesia' in *Point* (special issue, 1977), *op. cit.* J. Olmi recorded a local Christian's prayer for safety offered up before a tribal fight ('My own Culture Area, the Chimbu', *MS.*, Religious Anthropology, Holy Spirit Seminary, 1977), pp. 13 ff (with kind permission); See also J.L. Whittaker, N.G. Gash, J.F. Hookey, R.J. Lacey *Documents and Readings in New Guinea History* Brisbane 1975 pt.1.

⁵⁸For general introductions in English, see Worsley, *op. cit.*, P. Christiansen, *The Melanesian Cargo Cult*, Copenhagen, 1969.

⁵⁹Eg. the term used against the Bougainvillean secessionists by their opponents during the 1975-6 disturbances.

possible connections between movements hitherto thought to have been isolated from each other.⁶⁰

As Peter Lawrence has successfully demonstrated in his *Road belong Cargo*, cargo cults cannot be understood without prior knowledge of the traditional religion and the impact of the colonial order. Lawrence's book is seminal because it is not 'frozen anthropology'; he traces the development of cargo beliefs in the Madang area from the 1870's until our time. In almost all other districts such historically-oriented scholarship has not been undertaken. There is now much room for the historian to fill in gaps left by the shallow scholarship of 'social scientists', or superficial, often derogatory reports by patrol officers and missionaries. The special connections between cargo cult activities and tradition could be established very much more readily by national scholars than by expatriates; nationals, too, have easier access to a whole host of minor cargoist figures unknown to the outside world. It is not uncommon to find student historians related by birth to such figures and so able to understand them more deeply.

Let me illustrate the issues I consider important by reflecting on some of my own fieldwork. This time we will take a case from Papua. In attempting to write the biography of a Fuyughe prophet, who lived between 1891 and 1963 in the Sauwo Valley of the Papuan highlands, I found myself writing the history of a fertility cult which turned into something of a cargo cult. The prophet, Ona Asi, who was concerned to protect his own people from future dangers brought by the 'white phenomenon', initiated rituals which were to ensure the better propagation of pigs and crops. He also taught a myth which was directly linked with his possession by a powerful snake spirit, and the contents of the myth associated this spirit with a time of great natural upheaval, when landslides took whole mountainsides into the rivers. This prophet figure, who uttered oracles of warning, brought religious innovations to his people — poles inserted in the *singsing* ground to bring pig fertility still testify to his influence today. More interesting still is the way Ona Asi borrowed ideas. His myth actually derived from the Seragi not the Fuyughe; he appropriated the Biblical prohibitions against killing, stealing and adultery from the Sacred Heart Missionaries (based at Ononghe from 1913), coupling them with his own legal formulations to produce a list of commandments suitable for his supporters. His borrowings did not represent an acceptance of outside cultures; they were meant to strengthen the Fuyughe in the face of approaching perils. In the late forties Ona believed he perceived the implications of the snake myth more clearly; he insisted that if the Fuyughe looked upon (let alone cooperated with) the white man there would be a great landslide and the earth would be ripped from under their

⁶⁰Note, for example, Trompf, 'The Diffusion of "Cargo Cultism" along the Papuan Coast' in *MJCRT.*, bk. 3., pt. C, opt. III, pp. 54 ff, ' "Bilalaf" ', *loc. cit.*, pp. 86-93.

feet. Such teaching was bound to lead to trouble, and for two basic reasons — the complaints of the missionaries, and then the betrayal by Ona's own brother — he found himself in exile on Yule Island in 1941. There he was brought into contact with cargo cultism, and especially with expectations surrounding the young Mekeo prophetess Filo of Inawai'a. On his return to the Sauwo after the War, Ona revived his cause. Among other things, he propounded a doctrine that the ancestors would return, something which was previously foreign to the Fuyughe belief-system. By that time, however, Christianity had become too influential among his own people, so that by 1952 the local catechists went in consort to the missionaries at Ononghe so as to secure the destruction of the cultists' new village and the end of Ona's public activities.⁶¹

Ona Asi's career draws our attention to a number of issues. It is impossible to consider traditional religion, Christianity, or any religious innovations of a transitional character, apart from each other. In the prophet's mind, for a start, they all live as a complex amalgam, since he borrowed at will anything which would help ensure the survival of his fellows. Looking at his people as a whole, moreover, one detects different historical themes among the eastern Fuyughe from the 1890's to the 1960's; the Administration's attempts at pacification yet the sporadic recurrence of *payback* killings into the fifties; the persistence of parochial attitudes yet the opening up of new horizons by mission horsetracks and the facts of the War; the concern of the chiefs to accept the mission (and so send their children to school) but also to protect Ona, who, though not a chief himself, was deemed essential for survival; the existence of a following around the prophet (and which was geographically dispersed through the whole Sauwo after the War) in conflict with the growing number of catechists trained at Ononghe, who were bound to inhibit the growth and influence of Ona's cult. The historian must try to assess what is going on in a cult leader's mind over a given period, to interpret the intellectual background to the leader's mythology, theology or teaching, to understand where the cult leadership fits in relation to pre-existing patterns of leadership, and to appreciate the variety of pressures being felt by the members of the society concerned. Above all, oral historians should maintain interest in changes which take place over fairly large slices of time; they should be ready to note tendencies, especially those which make for the consolidation or institutionalization of a cult, or those which have precisely the opposite effect.⁶² Why and how cult ideas diffuse

⁶¹*Ibid.*, pp. 44-104. See also 'The Early Development of the Church in Papua New Guinea', in *MJCRT*, Bk. 1., pt. A, pp. 143-8.

⁶²Eg., on the Yali Cult of the coastal Madang area, esp. P. Lawrence, *Road belong Cargo*, *op. cit.*, chs. 3-8; F&P. Lawrence, 'The Southern Madang Regional Electorate', in *Prelude to Self-Government; electoral politics in Papua New Guinea, 1972* (ed. D. Stone), Canberra, pp. 67 ff; Trompf, 'The Theology of Beig Wen, the would-be successor to Yali', *Catalyst*, VI, 1976, pp. 166 ff.

or do not diffuse outside a given culture area are also central questions.

The study of cargo (or related) movements is far from easy because they can never be adequately appreciated without prior acquaintance with traditional thinking, the varying effects of mission on the people's minds,⁶³ or even a knowledge of trade routes along which religious innovations might pass.⁶⁴ The fieldworker also has to decide whether the cult is best described as a cargo cult or by some other name. In deliberating on all these matters, the more structured oral traditions may aid as guide-posts. I refer here to *short traditions* concerning a cult leader's life and special power, the *myth(s)*, *dream(s)* or *myth-dream(s)* passed down by the leader (together with any interpretations), as well as *sayings*, *songs*, *specific instructions*, *commandments*, *doctrines* or *theology* given by the leader(s). In some instances, a leader may be prepared to allow his *autobiography* to be recorded; in other circumstances, a leader may dissociate himself from a cult and, afraid of trouble with the police, will present its *short 'history'*, without betraying his own personal involvement. We need to be on the look-out for exaggerations, undue stress on the miraculous, rationalizations or attempts to 'cook the evidence' long after the events have taken place.⁶⁵ Cross checking with reliable informants or with written records is usually necessary. Even people who have once been in the cult, or have always been outside or opposed to it, are likely to react either for or against *long bel* rather than present an accurate or balanced picture.

'Traps for Young Players'.

With regard to the study of *traditional religion*, I will first consider *problems of acquiring information* and then move on to issues concerning interpretation. People often do not want to give answers to questions, or at least straight answers. The potential informant may think the questioner is seeking knowledge which traditionally belongs to the initiated, the prestigious or the elders, or else knowledge for which a special payment might be expected. For such reasons the fieldworker may find it difficult to learn anything pertinent from people outside his own clan, and information from his own kinsfolk may depend on whether he is related to a current or one-time practitioner of traditional religion. If a fieldworker adopts the formal approach, moreover, with questionnaires, a tape-recorder or even set questions, he may receive superficial or evasive responses. Questions previously framed in English might not be appropriate if directly translated back into *ples tok*; questions might be framed on the basis of a general knowledge of Melanesian belief systems yet not be geared

⁶³For brief comments, see Trompf, 'Religious change and its effects on societies in the Southern Madang District, 1870-1976', in *MJCRT*, bk. 2, pt. B, p. 22.

⁶⁴See Jojoga, *op. cit.*, esp. ch. 4.

⁶⁵Eg. Trompf, ' "Bilalaf" ', *loc. cit.*, pp. 73 f., 90, 99-102.

to the specific culture at hand.⁶⁶ There are no easy solutions. One has to be a diplomat, to be patient, to avoid ruffling informants at all costs, and to be both clear and honest as to what one intends for oneself, one's people and the country. It is preferable to 'experience' rather than 'study' religion or religious people. Live with a group, learning daily what is happening (and why) by entering into deeper conversation from time to time. That is the unique privilege open to nationals but which is usually denied to outsiders, however well equipped or learned they may be.

There are also *problems of interpreting information* about traditional religion. Some of the basic difficulties here are to do with translation into English. Terms for religious functionaries, for example, may lack suitable English equivalents, words like sorcerer, witchdoctor, diviner, prophet, etc. being too imprecise or too European. Informants may have conflicting opinions and it will take an effort to explain why—whether there are divergent lines of tradition within the whole culture, or whether one informant is reliable and the other not. Special local circumstances can also affect the quality of the information. I once visited one Aroma village (Keapara) and received a fairly detailed account of the previous movements of the ancestors, yet proceeding to a related, neighbouring community (Karawa), I was told by the elders that Karawa had been in existence in the same place from the very foundation of the world.⁶⁷ Why the difference? Because of land disputes between villages in that particular area. The publication of past migrations might threaten a group's claims to own a particular parcel of territory.

Many special problems will arise when attempting to interpret the data of traditional religion. I will give only four examples. In the 1970's, to take the first case, a fieldworker may find that a given group, let us say the Motu, have apparently traditional beliefs in place spirits and ancestors, with special powers and actions being attributed to these beings. However, most of his informants believe in God (*Dilava*) and speak of him in Christian terms. An examination of historically interesting literature on the Motu will reveal that this people once worshipped a number of deities, Kaivakuku and Semese (gods the Motu shared in common with the Elema) being prominent among them. Now the question arises, did the Christian God simply replace the old gods, or were some traditional powers and actions formerly belonging to these deities transferred to the place spirits or ancestors? An analysis of traditional Motuan religion is obviously incomplete if one makes no attempt to explain what

⁶⁶As background, note P. Lawrence, 'Statements about Religion: the problems of reliability', in L.R. Hiatt and C. Jayawardena (eds.) *Anthropology in Oceania*, Sydney, 1971, pp. 139 ff.

⁶⁷Fieldnotes (with S. Varaghi), 1973.

appears to have happened or to account for the complex processes of change.⁶⁸

A comparable problem presents itself with the study of sorcery. A field-worker seeking to describe eastern Toaripi religion, might think that the present situation, in which all deaths are ascribed to sorcerers in or near a given village, is one which has applied for the last hundred years or more. A careful tapping of oral materials, however, will reveal that, prior to the pacification brought by the Government and Mission, most sorcery was outer-directed, that is, wielded against the group's enemies, whereas now it has become inner-directed and disturbs the internal affairs of villages very much indeed. Once it was a source of security in the face of any outside threat; it has now become a domestic irritant.⁶⁹ The historian's task is to search beyond the present. The same applies with my third illustration. In many traditional central highlands societies there was a fairly sharp distinction between the friendly ancestors who had long since passed away, and the angry recent dead, whose support was not automatically forthcoming.⁷⁰ During the colonial period, however, the ancestral spirits tended to become conceived as one bundle of supportive powers, while the white newcomers tended to replace the recent dead as the potentially dangerous ones. The coming of a new order, then, partly obscured an important differentiation in traditional belief.⁷¹

A fourth problem entails a point of contention between students of religion and would-be oral historians. Young fieldworkers may eagerly collect accounts of their people's migrations from apparently trustworthy sources, and they may then feel satisfied that the step-by-step routes of their forefathers should be mapped in the pages of *Oral History*. But they may never ask *why* the migration stories are passed down in the way they have been; that they exist as 'oral history' often seems sufficient. The more I delve into the study of these stories in particular culture areas, however, the more I become convinced that the accounts are preserved for religious purposes. They are like ropes linking the living with the dead. The concern for such linkages may be more important than preserving an accurate record of movements. Take the Roro of coastal Papua, for example. Most of Roro tradition is concerned to establish the inland

⁶⁸The work undertaken by S. Kopi ('Motuan Attitudes to Disease') (BA Hons. Dissertation, UPNG., 1978), gives us a better chance of perceiving the nature of these processes. For comparable issues faced by K. Burridge in understanding the Tangu see K.O.L. Burridge, 'Tangu, Northern Madang District', in Lawrence and Meggitt (eds.) *op. cit.*, p. 243.

⁶⁹See however Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 92, 231 ff. I rely on my own fieldwork (1974) and V. Koroti, 'Explanations for Trouble, Sickness and Death among the Toaripi' (MS., Select Topics in Religious Studies, UPNG 1974), pp. 33 ff., and C. Siaoa, 'Gods, Spirits and Religion among the Eastern Toaripi' (MS., Select Topics in Religious Studies, UPNG., 1976), pp. 5 ff. (both with kind permission).

⁷⁰See esp. Lawrence and Meggitt, 'Introduction', to *Gods, Ghosts . . . op. cit.*, pp. 18 ff.

⁷¹For the Middle Wahgi, OT: esp. Kai Kuma, 14 December, 1976.

site of Isoisobapu as the crucial jump-off point for Roro-Mekeo dispersal. Isoisobapu is a very sacred place; one dare not visit it without first fasting or without company on the way; and at the site one is then permitted to ask a special gift from the dead. We have sound archaeological reasons for concluding, on the other hand, (and a minor strand of oral tradition corroborates this), that the Roro settled coastal Papua by sea and not by descending from the highlands as mainstream evidence suggests.⁷² It is likely that the enhanced sacredness of an inland site has distorted history in its transmission by word of mouth.

With *mission and Christian history* there are fewer difficulties and they are usually rather different ones. Although Christians may be more willing to talk about their activities, they may tend to colour events in a way favourable to a Christian understanding or to the Mission, or they may try to cover up any destructive aspects of mission work when talking to a representative from the University. Unnecessary tensions could arise, too, when questioner and informant belong to different denominations or sects.

By far the most awkward problems emerge, however, in historical investigations of so-called *cargo cults and independent religious movements*. Very often it is *very difficult to acquire information* simply because the informant is afraid the questioner represents the Mission, Government or Police Force. If the cult is very much alive, he may be under oath not to betray its secrets; if it is 'dead', he may feel a sense of shame for having participated in activities most people consider foolish, or he may believe that his past is about to catch up with him so that he is destined for gaol. It is no good pushing. It is better to make acquaintances first, to become friendly over a long period, and then get talking more deeply in an informal way. A cultist's reticence may be overcome, moreover, by the suggestion that he dissociate himself from the movement, to describe it as if he were not personally involved. Often cult followers defer any discussion until the researcher has consulted the leader; or they insist that the leader alone should be the source of information. This is rather frustrating when one seeks to gauge the effects of a cult on a whole group, but the solution may be to interview the leader and then ask him (or her) to organize a meeting in which followers may participate. In a more personal interview with the leader you may be forced to let him talk it out in his own way, so that a variety of specific questions will be precluded (or will have to wait for a later date). The leader may endeavour to frighten you by claiming special powers, or he may get very worked up because he is talking about something so crucial for him. He may talk in riddles or perorate in *tok pisin* while playing on its nuances and ambi-

⁷²P. Swadling, L. Aitsi, G. Trompf and M. Kari, 'Beyond the Early Oral Traditions of the Austronesian Speaking People of the Gulf and Western Central Provinces', *Oral History* V (1977) pp. 50 ff.

guities; he may evade some questions yet provide satisfactory answers to others, or perhaps he will propagandise instead of providing historical information. But if you have the leader talking at all, it will be very valuable educationally, for whether he reminisces, theologizes or attacks the establishment he thinks you represent, he will be throwing light on the cult and what it stands for. There are times, unfortunately, when one is not quite sure who did or does lead a cult. In the movement surrounding Filo the Mekeo prophetess (1940), for instance, there were different male coteries trying to manipulate the young maiden's Catholic revivalism for traditional ends, and it remains difficult to sort out the various layers of leadership and belief in a movement which appears increasingly complex the deeper one probes.⁷³ In most cases, however, the cult leadership is more readily identifiable, the factionalism less pronounced, and the beliefs more homogeneous.

The illustration from the Mekeo suggests how problems of acquiring information can be related to *problems of interpretation* in the study of Melanesian cultism. One should be forewarned against one-tracked explanations which derive either from informants or books on the whole subject. These cults can be looked at from a variety of angles. Psychologists might be interested in manifestations of apparently pathological behaviour; political scientists may be concerned to document so-called 'pre-political activity'; sociologists will show interest in the organisation of such movements and relative appeal to groups of differing status; students of religion may concentrate on doctrines, background intellectual influences, even the spirituality, and so on. Approaching the given phenomena with an eye for complexity will prove most fruitful, and it will be useful for students to equip themselves to study social movements in a cross-disciplinary way, or to see movements as totalities possessing many facets, of economic, political, structural, religious, or geographical significance. One might be tempted to treat cargo cults as religions of the oppressed, generated by deprivation and colonial overlordship; closer inspection might reveal, however, that while many cults confirm this line of approach, others present themselves as movements of psychological and intellectual adjustment, whereby people come to terms with the rapid changes occurring around them.⁷⁴

⁷³D. Fergie, 'Prophecy and Leadership: Philo and the Inawai'a Movement', in Trompf (ed) *Prophets, op. cit.*, pp. 147 ff., See Trompf 'Mircea Eliade and the Interpretation of Cargo Cults', in K.W. Bolle and R.D. Mecht (eds.) *Encounters with Mircea Eliade*, (Mircea Eliade *Festschrift*) Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1977 pt. II, c, see n. 42 with the text.

⁷⁴Christiansen, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 214 ff., see J. Strelan, *Searching for Salvation; studies in the history and theology of cargo cults*, Adelaide, 1977, esp. ch. 3.

Let me conclude by emphasizing just how demanding the thorough investigation of religious beliefs and activities can be. After we have listened patiently, observed long and hard, continued our questioning into the small hours of the night, and sifted through the bits and pieces of evidence we have accumulated, we may still feel rather dissatisfied. Quite naturally so. Indeed, even if our job has been well done, we would have knocked off but a few chips from a giant rock. In the study of religion, no one can safely assume that what has been observed or recorded is sufficient, or has been interpreted satisfactorily. In writing about religion we are faced with the problem of describing and empathizing with a consciousness or species of awareness whose depths are only rarely glimpsed — when symbols are grasped, for example, or when occasional articulations of religious feeling are made known and understood. Sometimes we will feel impious in attempting to plumb the depths; other times we will be jolted into recognizing that a person's consciousness is living, malleable, on the move, and that the study of one single individual's deepest reflections and spiritual life could exhaust many volumes. Beware again; avoid the glibness and arrogance of those who generalize about religious behaviour or put tabs on religion for their own psycho-intellectual convenience.

CHAPTER XII

Oral History and Pacific Islands Missionaries: The Case of the Methodist Mission in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands¹

Sione Lātūkefu

The Methodist Movement in England began its missionary work in the Pacific by establishing a mission among Maoris in New Zealand, and one in Tonga in 1822. The mission in Tonga was abandoned the following year because of health reasons, but it was re-established in 1826, and from there missionaries were sent to establish new missions in Fiji and Samoa in 1835. The latter was abandoned in 1839 on account of an agreement reached in London between the London Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to leave Samoa to the L.M.S. and Fiji to the W.M.M.S. In 1855 the responsibility for the Methodist missionary work in the Pacific was transferred to the Methodist General Conference of Australasia, and because the followers of the former Methodist mission in Samoa stubbornly refused to join the L.M.S. mission the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society decided to re-open the mission in Samoa in 1857. One of the missionaries sent to Samoa after the re-establishment of the mission was the Rev. Dr. George Brown who later pioneered the Methodist Missions in New Britain, and after he became General Secretary of the Methodist Overseas Mission, he was responsible for beginning the mission's work in Papua (then British New Guinea) and in the British Solomons.²

Right from the start of the new mission venture into Melanesia, converts from the older mission fields of Tonga, Fiji and Samoa played a central role. The long delay of forty years between the establishment of the missions in Fiji and Samoa in 1835 and the one in the Duke of York Islands, New Britain and New Ireland in 1875 was mainly due to the meagre resources of the new Methodist General Conference of Australasia, now responsible for the missions

¹A great deal of the material used in this chapter is drawn from a paper entitled 'The impact of South Sea Islands missionaries in Melanesia' read by the present writer at the 1975 ASAO symposium held in Florida, USA, now in the volume edited by Boutilier J., Hughes D. and Tiffany S., University of Michigan Press, 1978.

²Brown, G., *George Brown, D.D., Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer: An Autobiography*, pp. 29-178; 465-531.

in the Pacific, for both money and men. However, Brown, a man of great drive and enthusiasm, managed to convince the Methodist Board of Missions in Sydney that a mission in New Guinea could be established and maintained quite cheaply by employing missionaries from the South Sea Islands with or without European supervision.³ It was envisaged that with the help of the local people, the South Sea Islands missionaries should be able to build their own houses from bush materials, make their own gardens and live simply like the local people. Consequently Brown recruited men and women from Fiji and Samoa to help him establish the mission in New Guinea in 1875. Later, others from Fiji and Samoa and also from Tonga were recruited to help in founding the mission in Papua under the supervision of Dr. W.E. Bromilow in 1891,⁴ and one in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate under the Rev. J.F. Goldie in 1902.⁵

The work of these European pioneering missionaries is well known through their published accounts and through surviving letters, diaries and mission records. However, few of the South Sea Islands missionaries kept any written records apart from a few letters written by Fijian missionaries and published in *Ai Tukutuku Vakalotu*, a Methodist monthly magazine published in Fiji from the 1890s. There are also very few written accounts by the Papuans, New Guineans and Solomon islanders who were being converted. In order to gain a balanced and more complete picture of the encounter between the South Sea islands missionaries and the Melanesians they tried to convert, one has to try to view the situation not only from the perspective of the European missionaries, but also from the perspective of the groups directly involved. To do this, requires the collection of oral information. This may either take the form of oral traditions, that is stories handed down by mouth from generation to generation until the present, or oral testimonies, that is, testimonies provided by eye-witnesses to some of these events. The present writer, in the course of his research, was privileged to be able to interview quite a number of present and ex-South Sea Islands missionaries, leading Papua New Guineans in towns and villages where the Methodist mission had been active as well as former and present-day European missionaries. Their oral accounts have proved a valuable supplement to the existing records and they have tended to support one another.

In carrying out my research, local people in many of the villages visited readily gave their assistance and in some places were enthusiastic in their welcome. For instance, on Matupit island in the Gazelle, where most of the present elders had been students of the early Tongan and Fijian missionaries, I was welcomed as though I was a long lost son. The techniques used in collect-

³*Ibid.*, 70.

⁴Bromilow, W.E., "New Guinea", Colwell J. (ed), *A Century in the Pacific*, 535-58.

⁵Goldie, J.F. "The Solomon Islands", Colwell, *op. cit.*, 559-586.

ing the oral traditions included both individual interviews and group discussions. The latter proved very fruitful as members helped each other to sharpen their memories of past events. These sessions were tape recorded and written notes were kept as well. Informal interviews rather than structured questions were used, interviewees being requested to tell the story about a certain aspect of the topic researched, and questions were only occasionally interspersed to help them along or to clarify certain points. This method proved very satisfactory because it fostered spontaneity as well as enthusiasm in story telling.

The only significant problem was due to the need to rely upon interpreters. There were a few able and reliable interpreters who offered their services willingly, but some of them were missionaries and unfortunately it was not easy for the villagers to talk openly and freely, especially about the negative aspects of the mission activities in their presence. Other, more inexperienced interpreters tended to supply the answers to some of the questions asked, themselves, instead of passing them on to the villagers. This highlights the need to learn at least the *lingua franca* of the area being studied and especially, the need to train and encourage local students to carry out research in their own language group.

Despite these problems of communication, many interesting and valuable pieces of information were gathered from these informants who expressed the hope that their recollections would help to tell the story of the South Sea islands missionaries as fully as possible. In the remaining sections of this paper certain issues are raised and discussed and oral evidence is used to substantiate arguments. As to the nature of the pieces of information collected, I shall let them speak for themselves.

Problems encountered

In the course of their work the South Sea island missionaries faced many problems and oral information has thrown interesting light on the causes and the consequences of these problems. Problems were created by their relationship with one another, with the Melanesians among whom they were working and also with their superiors, the European missionaries.

Relationship among themselves

There is very little in the written records regarding the sort of relationship that the South Sea Islands missionaries had among themselves, and interviews with former European missionaries failed to throw much light on this question. This might have been due to the European missionaries' aloofness from their Pacific island colleagues. There was very little social intercourse between the two groups. Their relationship resembled that of an employer and his employee — official, formal, distant and very much lacking in warmth. The South Sea

islands missionaries were reluctant, perhaps naturally, to commit themselves on this sensitive topic. Local people were in a better position to talk about this. According to my informants, relations were often strained among the South Sea islands missionaries, particularly between the Tongans and the Samoans. The Samoans, they said, were always hot tempered and were quick to challenge others to a fist fight, usually when they came together in Synod meetings.⁶ It seems that they carried over the traditional rivalry between Samoa and Tonga.

These two groups, being Polynesians, shared certain values in common, one of which was a low opinion of Melanesians. Even the Fijians, their fellow missionary workers, were looked down upon. The struggles then for unofficial leadership among the South Sea islands missionaries were almost always between the Tongans and Samoans. The Tongans had ruled Samoa for a century and a half, before the Samoans drove them out during the 13th century. They had also dominated eastern Fiji for centuries. Methodism was first established in Tonga, and British missionaries had taken Tongans with them to establish missions in both Samoa and Fiji in the first half of the nineteenth century. Tupou College in Tonga, established by Dr. J.E. Moulton in 1866, became the centre of higher learning in the South Pacific, attracting promising students from both Fiji and Samoa. Tonga alone became an independent kingdom and remained so into the twentieth century, and before the 1960s had the only independent church conference in the Pacific. All this encouraged a sense of superiority among the Tongans which was often resented by others, particularly the Samoans. They, on the other hand, always believed themselves to be the hub of Polynesia and the cream of the Pacific. For this reason, many Samoans tended to look down on others, making harmonious relationships with their other colleagues rather difficult at times. The few occasions on which these minor antagonisms came to a head did not in fact detract from the effectiveness of their influence among the local population.

Relationships with European missionaries

Oral testimonies also threw some very interesting side lights on the relationship between the South Sea island missionaries and their European superiors. According to a European ex-missionary, one of the things which caused minor irritation among the European missionaries was the Tongans' insistence upon wearing black suits to preach on Sundays, despite the intense heat.⁷ This had become a tradition of the Tongan church. For years, the Tongans had vigorously resisted the attempts by later missionaries to change this custom and

⁶Informants: Rev. Robert Duigu, United Church, Salamo, Fergusson Island, and Rev. Wilson Yareki, United Church, Bunama, Normanby island.

⁷Informant: the late Rev. J.R. Metcalfe, ex-Chairman, Solomon Islands Methodist Mission District.

allow the preachers to dress more simply and comfortably, arguing that this was the way Christianity had been introduced and that it must be continued at all costs. (Things have changed a lot now in Tonga in this respect, but at least one church in my area still does not permit anyone to preach from their pulpit unless he wears long trousers, a coat and tie.)

As recently as the 1950s and early 1960s many European missionaries failed to treat their South Sea islands fellow workers as equals. The latter accepted this as a matter of course, although it was very much resented later on. What the Pacific islands missionaries could not understand was the refusal by the European missionaries to recognise any distinction between them and the local people. The Pacific islands missionaries were not officially called missionaries; they were designated 'native teachers'. They and the local people were all 'natives' as far as the European missionaries were concerned. In 1935 the Chairman of the Solomon Islands District rejected a Maori candidate for mission work there because the New Zealand Church had stipulated that the Maori should be treated no differently from European missionaries. The Chairman insisted that he could only employ him under the same employment conditions as other Polynesians⁸ who, like the local people, were excluded from meetings discussing mission finances. During World War II all the European missionaries were evacuated. In one area of Papua a Tongan missionary assumed leadership of the mission and kept it going remarkably well during those difficult years. On the return of the European missionaries after the war, they could not believe the healthy state of the mission they found. Perhaps on account of this achievement one of the new missionaries invited this senior Tongan missionary to one of the meetings from which the Pacific islands missionaries had been excluded, only to be severely reprimanded and told by the chairman that he should leave the meeting at once, for he was not entitled to attend and knew it.⁹ Even ordained Pacific islands missionaries were not permitted to perform certain ministerial functions. According to one informant, as recently as 1952 the Solomon Islands District Synod was able to pass a resolution saying that Tongan and Fijian ministers, fully ordained, should not be allowed to administer the sacraments except under the guidance and instructions of a European superintendent.¹⁰

Although European missionaries deplored the tendency among the South Sea islands missionaries to regard themselves as superior in every way to the local people, many took for granted their own position of superiority, maintain-

⁸Informant: Rev. G. Carter, ex-Chairman of the Solomon islands Methodist Mission District. Also ex-General Secretary of the New Zealand Methodist Overseas Mission.

⁹Informant: Rev. 'Isikeli Hau'ofa, Tongan ex-missionary to the eastern Papuan Islands.

¹⁰Informant: The Rev. G. Carter.

ing social aloofness and treating the South Sea islanders as their employees rather than co-workers. These attitudes led in some cases to the display of some unfortunate racist behaviour. In extreme cases it was quite overt, as when a Tongan missionary, who on the rare occasions when he and his wife were invited to the mission house for afternoon tea, was told to bring his own cups and saucers. In other instances it was displayed in a more general attitude on the part of some European missionaries who could not accept the fact that their South Sea island colleagues might in some respects be more knowledgeable than themselves. A New Guinean informant related how an Australian missionary visiting a training institution's garden instructed students supervised by a Fijian missionary to build their sweet potato mounds closer together so that they could plant more in the area cleared. The Fijian missionary informed him that sweet potato grew differently from Irish potato. Being a creeper, sweet potato needed more space, and if what he suggested were done the plants would yield plenty of leaves but only a few small sweet potatoes. The Australian kicked the mounds, levelling them with his shoes, and then ordered the men to do as they were told.¹¹ Apart from the humiliation of such a scene in front of the students, it must have been galling indeed for a man who had been growing sweet potatoes for most of his adult life to be contradicted by someone so obviously ignorant of tropical farming.

However, it would be grossly misleading to leave the impression that relations were always bad. Most of the South Sea islands missionaries interviewed held tremendous and genuine respect for their superiors. Cases that caused irritation and led to serious resentment were isolated and sporadic. Many instances of warm relationships were cited by Pacific Islanders. A young couple from Tonga who had come to the mission field in the late 1930s could not get over the way in which they were treated by the Australian district superintendent while they were waiting for a boat to take them to their post. They said that there was only one mosquito net in the house, so the wives and the European couple's young child shared this while the husbands braved the mosquitoes.¹²

Relationships with local people

According to local informants, on the whole the social relationships between the South Sea islands missionaries and the local people were close and happy. However, there were at times sources of friction, due partly to certain attitudes peculiar to the South Sea islands missionaries as a group and partly to individual idiosyncracies. The latter, as previously stated, had no doubt of their physical, mental and cultural superiority to the Papuans, New Guineans and Solomon islanders, an attitude which was reinforced by their current role of

¹¹Informant: a retired Tolai pastor who was a student at the time in the training institution.

¹²Informants: 'Isikeli and Mele Hau'ofa.

'bringing light to the darkness of Melanesia'. Of the three groups, according to local informants, the Fijians were the closest to the local people. There were comparatively few barriers between them and the local people, either racially or culturally. Consequently they were more tolerant of the local cultures. In New Ireland, for example, the Fijian teacher, Ratu Emos Verabasaga, according to local informants, instead of forbidding the traditional ceremony of *malanggan* as his Tolai successor did later on, joined in it and gradually extended his influence through it. The local people loved him for that, and eventually he was invited to offer prayers as part of the ceremony.¹³ It is also notable that intermarriage between Fijian missionaries and local women was quite common, especially among missionaries who had become widowers during their term of service, whereas intermarriage between Tongans, Samoans and local people was extremely rare, and when it occurred, it was usually with a person of mixed race. There were occasional affairs, but I have not come across any instance of legal marriage between a full-blooded Melanesian and a Polynesian missionary. Had such unions occurred they would have been severely censured at home.

According to the oral testimonies of the local people, it appears that of the three groups, the Samoans experienced most difficulty in adjusting to their new situation. The Samoan sense of personal superiority did not help to establish good rapport with local people. In addition, the special place of the Samoan pastor in Samoan communities, which is unique in the Pacific, appears to have been another contributing factor. Pastors in Samoa had (and still have) their material needs almost completely taken care of by the villagers. A pastor's house, built and maintained for him by the villagers, was usually the best in the village, and practically all food and other necessities were provided by the community. Frequently the Samoans, according to local informants, expected and demanded the same kind of treatment in the mission field, and when these were not forthcoming they became very angry. In one area members of the congregation were denounced from the pulpit on Sunday mornings for neglecting their duty to the mission and to God. The same Samoan pastor had the habit of visiting people's gardens and taking whatever he wanted without asking. Others refused to accept food unless it had been cooked by the local people in the Samoan manner, which usually meant preparing it with lavish amounts of coconut cream. The people found these demands irritating.¹⁴

Almost every informant commented that the Samoans were hot-tempered and were quick to resort to violence when the people failed to follow their instructions. Interestingly enough, after hearing these comments regarding Samoan missionaries employed by the Methodist mission, a retired L.M.S.

¹³Informants: Mr. Timot Kaipeng and Mr. Mesulam Pasingus, Laun village, New Ireland.

¹⁴Informants: Rev. Robert Duigu and Rev. Wilson Yareki.

missionary in Papua remarked that it was exactly their experience with the Samoans in the L.M.S. mission in Papua. The only missionary in recent years to be seriously wounded by local people in the Papuan islands was a Samoan who was stationed at Bwaruada on Normanby island during World War II. A young man speared the Samoan missionary in retaliation for the Samoan's having broken his older brother's arm during an argument.¹⁵ The tendency to resort to strong arm tactics was by no means peculiar to the Samoans. Stories of certain Tongan and European missionaries beating up local people are not uncommon. However, it appears from the local testimonies that the Samoans as a group have resorted to it more than the others.

Health

The most serious problem that the South Sea islands missionaries had to face was that concerning their health. Before World War II more than one hundred and fifty mission men, women and children died of disease in New Guinea alone. Malaria was the most common killer. Because all the missionaries came from a malaria free area, none had any first-hand experience of the seriousness of the disease; nor, more importantly, did they have any immunity to it. The European organisers of the mission expected these missionaries to live like the local people in houses made of bush materials, unprotected from mosquitoes. The Polynesian home islands of these missionaries were mosquito ridden, and they were accustomed to being bitten by mosquitoes. This made them less appreciative of the fact that the bite of one particular variety of mosquito could be so deadly. Furthermore, the idea of preventive medicine was absolutely foreign to them. Sorcerers in Fiji or medicine men and women in Tonga and Samoa did apply magic or medicine to already sick parts of the body and to prevent spirits from entering the body and aggravating the sickness; but the idea of taking medicine in advance to prevent sickness was not known. For this reason many South Sea island missionaries, according to the testimony of one of them, ignored their supervisors' instructions to take their prophylactic dose of quinine regularly. They usually waited until they fell ill, then generally felt too sick to take their medicine, and so often succumbed.¹⁶

Psychological factors were also involved. Illness quickly brought homesickness and despair, particularly when a couple were placed in remote areas among hostile environments and none too friendly people. This was usually aggravated when the healthy spouse became despondent in the absence of moral support from relatives and loved ones. Often, too, the South Sea island missionaries had absolute trust in the will of God. They believed that if it was the will of

¹⁵Informant: Mr. Lebega Yarudile, Bwasitolobwa village, Normanby island. He was the one who speared the Samoan missionary.

¹⁶Informant: Mrs. 'Ana Finau, widow of a Tongan Missionary to the Solomon islands.

God for them to die, nothing and no one on earth could prevent it. A European ex-missionary remarked that the South Sea islands missionaries had "a fatalism which is characteristic of Pacific peoples . . . a tendency when they become ill . . . 'to throw in the sponge', to give up, and in some cases this resulted in death"¹⁷ Some of the South Sea islands missionaries complained about what they regarded as cynical attitudes of their European colleagues towards their sickness. Most missionaries had no medical training and few had any experience with tropical diseases. Most believed that the only reliable indicator of sickness was the presence of fever. Otherwise it was regarded as purely psychological or malingering — a cover up for laziness and irresponsibility. Yet there are tropical diseases such as filaria, for example, which were common, and which could cause chill, severe pains of the muscles, joints and almost unbearable headaches without any sign of fever.

Impact on Local Culture

While the South Sea island missionaries encountered many problems, they nonetheless had a significant impact on the local culture. The gap between their own cultures and those of the people among whom they lived and worked was not as wide as that between Europeans and villagers. This made mutual understanding very much easier, enabling them to communicate much more on the same level. While European missionaries in general settled in headquarters which were often mission stations situated away from the local populations, the South Sea islands missionaries lived among the people, and were close to them, quickly becoming familiar with their cultures and conversant with their languages. Every aspect of local culture was affected by these men and women, not only religiously, but socially, technically, economically and educationally, and although some of this impact has been recorded in the written histories, a wealth of information has remained only in the memories of those who were involved in these contacts, as the following instances reveal.

Social Impact

Reference has already been made to the inter-marriage which took place between some of the missionaries or their children, particularly the Fijians, who were either single or widowed, and local people. Scores of offspring of these unions are to be found, and many have become influential in their respective societies. One was a member of the national Parliament.¹⁸ In other instances, South Sea islands missionaries, particularly Samoans, were adopted by one of the clans and become involved in its social activities, thereby gradually extending influence over the community. The people of Taibeu village on

¹⁷Informant: Rev. G. Carter.

¹⁸This is Mr. Sione Fifita of Misima island. East Papua, son of a Fijian missionary who worked in the area.

Fergusson Island in the Milne Bay Province of Papua still talk with tremendous feeling about the Samoan missionary Joel, who belonged to their clan. Philmon Faiteli, another Samoan, was also adopted into one of the clans in the hamlet of Nemunemu on Dubu island.¹⁹ Fijian and Polynesian words, plant names, place names and personal names have also been adopted. A tract of land on the island of Panaeati in Papua, has a Tongan name, and a graduate of the University of Papua New Guinea, David Mohenoa Duigu, who had been in charge of the University Teaching Methods and Materials Centre (T.M.M.C.) was named by a Tongan missionary after an outstanding Tongan minister.

Feasting was also used by the South Sea island missionaries to bring together people who had been hostile in the past. Informants said that while the European missionaries only visited the villagers occasionally and in a rather formal manner, the South Sea islanders would sit down with them, share betel nuts and discuss their problems. Local people who happened to be in a South Sea islander's house at mealtime were invariably invited to share the meal with the family. Gradually, the South Sea islands missionaries introduced the Polynesian style of feasting to mark important occasions. When I visited Munda in the Solomons in 1968, a feast was held, and during one of the speeches, the speaker pointed to me and said that it was the Tongans who had introduced this type of feasting. He imitated the traditional way of eating; people hiding themselves and eating furtively, looking around nervously, to see whether anyone was watching them, waiting to attack or produce food remnants for making sorcery against them. After the Tongan had introduced the new way of feasting, everyone sat together, he said, even those who had been traditional enemies, and enjoyed a well-prepared meal without fear of being attacked.²⁰ At Tonu, a village in southern Bougainville, the people told of Taani Palavi, a Tongan missionary, who had prepared a feast soon after his arrival and had invited all the people to participate. According to their account, it was the first time in the history of Tonu that men and women had eaten a meal together in public. The following Christmas the people of Tonu prepared a big feast under Palavi's direction, and he invited the leaders of the Roman Catholic faction in the area, with whom the Methodists had not been on speaking terms, to participate.²¹ Feasting Polynesian style has now become an enjoyable part of the cultures throughout these areas of Melanesia. Polynesian dances were taught by the wives of the missionaries and these as well as sport, such as cricket and football, were readily adopted by the Melanesians.

Technical innovations

Having to build their own houses and to live on local resources, the South

¹⁹Informant: Mr. Vabati Gariauna, Dobu Island.

²⁰Author's field notes, 1968.

²¹Informants: a group of elders at Tonu village, Bougainville, now North Solomons Province.

Sea islands missionaries used materials familiar to the local people, such as pandanus leaves, coconut fibre, timber and so on, but introduced them to a more advanced island technology which could be readily adopted and absorbed into local culture.

Throughout these parts of Melanesia the traditional dwellings were fairly crudely constructed. Local informants recalled that they were usually temporary structures, shelters that could be abandoned easily during times of war or other trouble.²² Often they lacked floors and there was no way of keeping out pigs and other animals. In some areas, such as on Misima Island, the Tongan style of house, oblong shaped, was adopted, but more commonly, it was the Fijian style. On Teop island, Bougainville, my wife and I were shown a house in the traditional style which had been specially built in 1972 to celebrate 50 years of the mission presence there. The contrast between that house and the Fijian-type house adopted by the people of the island today was quite marked. We were told that the first Fijian missionary, stationed there in 1922, had taught them how to build this type of house.²³ The wives of the missionaries had shown the village women how to weave mats for flooring and bedding, thereby improving the cleanliness and appearance of their houses. In many areas they are still called 'Samoan mats'. Recently the people proudly displayed them to me on a visit to the East Papuan islands region.

Everywhere they went the South Sea islands missionaries encouraged the construction of sturdy permanent churches, and organized fund raising to buy the European materials needed for them. The Samoans came from a land of huge and beautiful churches and no doubt they were keen to build on the same scale in their new land of adoption. The people of the island of Matupit in the Gazelle, East New Britain, told me how Taniela Fiñau, a Tongan minister, made them buy nets from another part of the Gazelle Peninsula, where people specialized in making fishing nets from strong local materials. Under his direction they put the nets across a narrow passage of deep water running close to the village. They caught hundreds of fish and sold them for *tambu* (shell money) which was stored up in a great pile in his house. Later as others needed *tambu* for ceremonies it was sold for cash at a good profit. With this they bought materials for building the first permanent church on the island.²⁴ The churches became a focal point for the social and religious activities of the various communities and most village activities are still centred on the local church.

Economic Development

Informants told me that their people had learned better methods of cultiva-

²²Informants: a group of elders at Munda, New Georgia, Solomon Islands.

²³Informants: a group of elders on Teop island, Bougainville.

²⁴Informants: a group of elders on Matupit Island, East New Britain.

tion from these missionaries. In many places following the successful pacification of their societies through the work of the missions, they began to make bigger gardens and plant a greater variety of crops; many of them introduced from Polynesia during the days before plant quarantine regulations. In the Solomons the Tongans had the reputation of being particularly good gardeners. Informants said that the Tongans had taught them to plant sweet potatoes, new varieties of yams and bananas, and that one large and delicious variety of yam was still called 'Tongan yam', and as a result of these activities more food was produced and crops were better than before.²⁵ These stories are well supported in the writings of some of the early missionaries. Dr. George Brown, for example, tells in his autobiography the story of a Fijian, Misieli, who was stationed in a village called Waira on the Duke of Yorks where the people refused to cultivate their land, claiming it to be barren, and lived mainly from thieving. Misieli started to plant sweet potatoes with great success, and in the yam season he took one of the wild little yams and planted it carefully in good soil and cared for it properly: "then when he dug up in due season some yams of which they said 'one man could not carry two of them', the fame thereof went far and wide, and then men of Waira began again to plant, and in a short time were able to sell large quantities of their surplus produce."²⁶ The people were also able to learn several new techniques of fishing that are still practised today. In most areas they also adopted the Polynesian style of outrigger canoes, which proved highly popular for fishing and travelling short distances.

By encouraging local people to contribute to the work of the mission as a sign of their acceptance of Christ and the responsibilities accompanying true conversion, the South Sea Islands missionaries helped indirectly to improve the material well-being of the people. The people of Teop island told of how a Fijian, the first Methodist missionary in the island, forced his converts, under threat of physical punishment, to plant coconut trees on their land. Today they are reaping the benefits and remember his work with deep gratitude and affection. Some, such as Sione Tāufa of Tonga, saw it as an integral part of their work to help the people improve their living standards. He encouraged the mountain people near Kieta on Bougainville to plant coffee, and during his pastoral rounds he visited their coffee plantations, offering them advice and encouragement. After successfully breeding chickens from a pair given him by a planter friend, Sione gave a pair to each village church leader to breed. Later he helped promising young farmers, using loans from their own local mission funds to purchase land around the mission station and start farms. My wife and I and our children were entertained on one of these coconut and cocoa

²⁵Informants: the group of elders at Munda.

²⁶Brown, *op. cit.*, 199-200.

farms²⁷ and the people warmly praised this man's work and his love for them.

Education

From oral sources it appears that many of the South Sea island missionaries were able teachers. Having no way of communicating with the people among whom they were stationed, they had to learn the local language. As most of these languages were Austronesian, like the Polynesian languages, they mastered them quickly and were able to teach the people literacy in them. They also taught arithmetic and music, including, in one case, the playing of band instruments.²⁸ One European missionary told me rather sarcastically how Tongan teachers used to spend half the school day teaching arithmetic. Perhaps the standard of mathematics in schools would have been higher, had not the European missionaries drastically cut down the time allocated to teaching arithmetic in these schools! One gifted Fijian translated hymns and Bible stories into the language of the area he was working in.²⁹ The Rev. 'Isikeli Hau'ofa of Tonga did the same in the Misima language. The Misima people claim that his translation was far superior to the one made earlier by European missionaries.³⁰ The Tongans were skilful in teaching music and introduced local choirs to well-known choruses from the Messiah and other classical works, which are still sung today, some in Tongan!³¹ The educational impact of the South Sea islanders was considerable and has left its imprint on all the cultures among which they worked.

In this chapter I have raised some of the problems which South Sea islands Methodist missionaries had to face in their work in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands and discussed their impact on the local cultures using some of the evidence gathered from oral sources to supplement the meagre information that is available from written sources. It is only by this means that full justice can be done to the story of the encounter between these missionaries and the Melanesians among whom they lived, worked and, in many cases, died.

²⁷This farmer, Mr. Jonah Davika, one of eleven successful farmers in the project, had 32 acres planted with 2,000 coconut trees and 4,000 cocoa trees in 1971. He was also breeding ducks and chickens from stocks given him by Sione Tāufa.

²⁸The Rev. Paula Havea of Tonga (an elder brother of the Rev. Dr. Sione 'Amanaki Havea, who is now Principal of the Pacific Theological College in Suva) taught English, Geography, Arithmetic, Scripture and music at the main school in the head station of Kokengolo in the Solomons. In the thirteen years prior to World War II, he was bandmaster at the school, and one of his pupils was Balshazza Gina, the first Solomon Islander to become bandmaster of the Solomon Islands Police Band.

²⁹Informant: the late Rev. J.R. Metcalfe.

³⁰Informant: a group of Misima people in Port Moresby.

³¹During a visit to Munda in 1968, the present writer heard Balshazza Gina's choir sing the Hallelujah Chorus in Tongan.

CHAPTER XIII

Milne Bay Women

Anne Nealibo Kaniku

Very little history refers to women, and equally little of the anthropological records. I had very little to guide me, when I began to interview women from my own part of Milne Bay Province. Yet I was anxious to discover why women in this area have been more prominent in public affairs than appears to be true elsewhere in Papua New Guinea. The evidence for this chapter is drawn largely from people who have become influenced by the teachings of the Kwato Mission. The term Milne Bay is restricted to the geographical area called Milne Bay and not Milne Bay Province as a whole.

The status of women in the Massim cultural area¹ is higher than in most areas of Papua New Guinea; but Milne Bay women have also been fortunate in getting sympathetic missionaries at first contact, who were determined to insist on the status of women.² Traditional sexual roles were defined and a division of labour existed. Women (as in many cultures) have the same role of bringing up children, cooking and preparing food and generally looking after the welfare of the family: but men are not forbidden to perform these roles. Milne Bay men do not consider it below their dignity to perform these tasks. Perhaps the New Guinea Highlands 'Big Men' would consider it beneath their dignity. It is unfair to say that women are beasts of burden in reference to gardening and the rearing of children, because this depends very much on the personality of the men. Other aspects of traditional society have to be considered to ascertain the status of sexes.

There are examples in the Milne Bay cultural traditions of discrimination against women, but there are also examples of respect shown to women: so the situation evens itself out. For example men are always served first at meal times,

¹This is the term for this region used by anthropologists.

²The oldest and most influential mission was the L.M.S. at Kwato, led by Rev. and Mrs. Charles Abel. The mission separated from the L.M.S. and became almost a family concern.

if there are visitors to a house; but normally women eat at the same time with their husbands and children. In the use of creeks for bathing and washing, men use the section of the river nearer to the source of the creek while the women use the part nearer to the mouth of the creek. In the Tawala cultural area land is passed through the female members of the family. The children of the family always follow their mother's side. They inherit land through their mother, not their father. The eldest sister in a family is in charge of allocating land. She has the power to say who may use the land, for example when squatters request the use of land. Another example is that, when two brothers or any two male members of a family are engaged in a conflict in which physical violence is inflicted, and if none of the male spectators can stop the fight, then the only person who can put a stop to this conflict is the sister. She does this by removing her inner grass skirt and throwing it on the ground next to the two contestants. The inner grass skirt is important because it is never removed from a girl's body, even when bathing. It becomes very old and is almost in threads. This is done in the last resort, when no male members present during this conflict are able to stop the fight. The two brothers or cousins have to pay for this act, by killing a pig for her. Another important traditional weapon that women had over men is their prowess in witchcraft. Again this only applies to the Tawala area. In other parts of Milne Bay (e.g. Suau and Logea), men have superior power over women. In the Tawala area however, women have superior supernatural power. Men do possess supernatural power but it is not as powerful as the women's. The men fear the women. Whether this has any bearing on the eminence of women in Milne Bay is hard to tell.

There are a number of reasons why women have participated equally with men in Milne Bay. The first reason is that those women who have become outstanding do have strong personalities. Many of the first generation of women who came to Kwato had strong personalities. I think Mrs. Abel recognised the potential and developed their leadership qualities. Although it appears that there was no leadership training undertaken by Mrs. Abel or Miss Parkin they were trained indirectly to become leaders. Women led church services on Kwato. This role was not restricted to men alone as appears to be the case in other denominations. Christianity seemed to play a major role in giving these women confidence which does not seem to have happened to women in other missions in Papua New Guinea. After a few years of basic education the Abels made sure that the women were spiritually strong before they were sent out to teach in the outstations around Milne Bay. This in itself gave them a lot of confidence. In each outstation there was usually a school and most of these schools were staffed by female teachers. The female teachers played a leading role in these communities although the Abels usually sent an elderly couple to look after the station as well. For example the elderly man could be away on Sundays preaching in another village within his circuit, then the female teacher would be required to lead the Sunday service

at the mission station itself.

I think another reason was that Mrs. Abel was determined to train the women and to better their status. Mrs. Abel was meticulous in training her girls. Whether it was sewing, baking, cooking or cleaning around the house or whatever, she made sure that the women did their jobs perfectly. Mrs. Abel was devoted to the training of girls. Perhaps the women got more attention from Mrs. Abel, Miss P. D. Abel and Miss Parkin than the men from Charles Abel. Charles Abel was concerned with spiritual training, and with management of the whole place, Kwato and the outstations. Although Charles Abel gave the men technical training in boat building, furniture making etc., he was a very busy man. After Charles Abel's death, the women were even more dominant in mission affairs. Again, children were brought to Kwato while very young and they all got off to an equal start. They had equal opportunities. Because the women grew up on Kwato they did not know that they were supposed to be inferior to men. Kwato had few changes of staff. There were sympathetic staff who worked there for at least ten years before returning to Australia or England. Other missions had changes of staff and therefore there was no continuity in their work. The staff and the Papuans lived together as a family. They shared their joys and sorrows.

Kwato women grew up in a semi-European way. They are trained in all aspects of chores that a western housewife needs to know. They also have very high standards which they refuse to lower simply by marrying a man who has not reached their level. I think this is the reason why many of the women did not marry. People who have come under the influence of Kwato have an attitude which I call 'Kwato elitism.' They have this notion that they are exceptionally well trained and are much better than anybody who has not gone to school at Kwato. Somehow Kwato elitism comes out more strikingly in women than in men. Women are more concerned about their status than are men. It is the women who worry about which men their daughter should marry. (Perhaps women everywhere are concerned about marrying into the next social strata: this also happens in Milne Bay). Kwato women have the confidence that they have been equipped to live a western life. I think this confidence goes a long way in making them independent and prepared to meet the new life that has been brought about through westernisation. Milne Bay women are more proud than men. In the urban areas they are motivated to compete against each other for status particularly. Men are content with simplicity. This competition for status seems to originate from Kwato elitism.

The following transcripts of interviews with women from Kwato, form the basis for these observations:

NEDI TARIOWAI

I was about five years when I came to Kwato. I do not know my birthdate but they guessed at the time that I was five.

The jobs I did were small jobs like sweeping, tidying up and washing up, etc. because Kwato at the time was just starting.

I was brought to Kwato by the Samoans.³ The Samoans wanted to take me to Samoa. They wanted to take three children with them to Samoa. The two other children were adopted by the Samoan missionaries. My mother gave me to the Samoans. When their term expired, the Samoans took us to Kwato. We went over to Samarai but the government officials refused to let me go with them because my father was still alive; but the other two children were taken to Samoa because they didn't have fathers. So I stayed on at Kwato. My parents were willing to let me stay on at Kwato. When I first arrived I lived with the boarders. I stayed with my aunty Cataleni. Later on I was sent to live with Hani Peter. I lived with her until she got married. I had to move out then. Young people at the time were not allowed to enter the houses of married couples.

I started school when I was about eight or ten years old. There were no teachers, the only person was Miss Parkin. Miss Parkin arrived about a year after I came to Kwato. We learnt English, Writing and Arithmetic. We were all in the same class, there was no upper class and no lower class. Miss Parkin took us for about six to eight years. Mrs. Abel only took us for reading sessions. She used to read us an old book called 'Peep of Day' an old Suau book of Genesis.* Father Abel⁴ looked after the whole work on Kwato but didn't teach. His main teaching work was Bible study. This was also done by Mrs. Abel. Neither of them taught. We attended school as well as working on things such as sewing, housework, cooking, pantry and tablesetting. The boys went out to collect firewood. Most of the time the boys followed us working in the kitchen too. This was only the beginning and there weren't many jobs for men. There were only about seven of us (she named eight people including two older girls) of about eight or ten. Miss Parkin was a happy and jovial person and very strong-willed. She liked people and cared for people and always wanted to help us. The strict rules brought us up.

When I left school my first job was cooking and mainly cleaning jobs, kitchen, pantry, bedrooms and sewing, gardening and sweeping the yard. There were only three married couples then. There were lots of young girls who lived down near the beach with Manaima. They were being trained by Manaima and when they were capable and had grown used to the new life, were brought up to the

³Samoan pastors and evangelists were often employed in the L.M.S. mission. See Sione Latukefu's chapter in this collection on the Pacific Island Missionaries.

⁴'Father' in reference to Charles Abel is not a clerical title, but a fatherly figure. The Papuans who came under Charles Abel's teachings regarded him as a father. In Milne Bay society an elderly person is referred to as father or mother as a term of respect. This term was meant with sincerity.

*A series of Old Testament stories for children which was popular in the early decades of this century.

Big House. Manaima was a Samoan pastor who was Mr. Abel's helper. Manaima also had boys who came from Tawala, Suau and Logea.

I then got married and lived for three years after which I had Violetta (her first child). After I had had Violetta we were sent to manage Modewa Isu plantation. I had Hawea there. We stayed there for about two years before we were shifted to Dago for a year and a half. I was teaching the children while my husband did pastoral work.

Interviewer: Can we go back to Modewa Isu? Did you have boys to help you collect nut?

Answer: No, we were planting the coconuts. Kwato boys had already planted some nuts and we recruited people from Daiamoni to help us plant more coconuts and to keep the grass around the coconuts low.

I took the Daiamoni children for simple school work. This was when Naruge joined Kwato. Then we went to Dago. The school I started there was bigger than the one at Modewa Isu. I taught reading, writing and arithmetic. My school was only a simple school and what I had learnt at Kwato I taught these children. I tried to help them with Bible study. In Maiwala I started a school of about 50 children. But Mr. Abel called us back into Kwato because the village people didn't build us a good house or school buildings. On return I brought two small children who had been living with me. They were Wesina and Misepa. Wesina's parents had died and I adopted him.

We stayed at Kwato for about 2 years before we were sent to Bisimaka and Manawala, to manage the plantation. Throughout my work on these stations I found that the greatest difficulty was with mothers during childbirth when they had complications. I always prayed and trusted in the Lord and things turned out well for these mothers.

We were sent to Manawala plantation because Manawala's bank account was very low. Mr. Abel wanted us to go there to try and bring it up. We lived there from 1924-1927 before we were brought back into Kwato. Soon after we were given recreation leave and so we went down to my husband's village and he died in his own village, Sawaia. When we came back to Kwato, that is me and my children. I had no job to do because I had become single again. My children had grown up then and were attending school on Kwato. PD (Abel) and Eva asked me to go and help them sew (S & S) shorts and shirts. This is how I earned some money to pay for my children's school, blankets and clothing. I was paid about \$2-\$3 a month. In those days we were never paid much money. There was money around but we never received over \$5-\$6. These shirts and shorts were orders from the shops at Samarai. I worked here for a while and then Sister Margaret from New Zealand arrived to work at the Isuhina hospital. There weren't many nurses. In fact, there were only three, Lise, Maioegaru and Norah. It was here that I began to make up my mind to train

as a nurse because of the difficulties mothers were having. I faced these difficulties while serving on the outstations. I wanted to train to become a nurse so that when a younger girl was posted to a school on one of the outstations as a teacher, I would go with her as a mother and a helper to her helping out with nursing.

I started to train with Sister Margaret. It was all practical nursing. I started off as Sister Margaret's cook and laundry girl. Sister Margaret went back to New Zealand in 1933. I began my real training with PD and Raleigh (a local medical orderly) in things like giving injections etc. My earlier work with mothers on the outstations when there were complications in childbearing and my use of prayer gave me strength to carry on with this work. Because of my faith and through my prayers the cases I handled turned out alright. I found that God helped through prayers. When Doctor Vaughan arrived on Kwato, I worked with him right through even when my friends were sent out to look after aid posts in the outstations. Some new nurses came to train like Bomageta, Luposi, Sineailo, Saika, Panailoia.

I think Kwato women are strong willed because of their love for the work that they are doing. The women chose which jobs to do; they weren't pushed into jobs. We found that these jobs were to help our people in Alotau and Papua New Guinea. I think also I had matured, married and had children before I took up nursing. It wasn't because of money, my pay was very small. But as I have said earlier what I saw when I was living in the outstations was the problems mothers were having with childbirth. I made up my mind to go into nursing. After my training at Kwato I didn't think of anything to do and I married and went out with my husband to the outstations. I saw this need for trained midwives and wanted to be trained as a nurse. Things didn't turn out for me because my husband died, but I still wanted to become a nurse. When Sister Margaret was still at Kwato, Keleiani and Aidina were nurses. Both of them worked while I observed them. I felt that I was experienced as a mother. The others were young women and hadn't gone through childbirth. I tried to pass on this experience to the new mothers and the young nurses. The young nurses were strong willed even though they hadn't experienced what I had gone through. They found nursing very rewarding and loved people and cared for people. These days young girls want to become nurses and like the job. They work for a while, get married, have children and then leave their children and go back to work. They haven't found God; if they love God, they would care for people. When we started training PD and Dr. Vaughan taught us to love and care for the patients, to look after them. The other thing is that we had already become Christians and so when we worked, we worked with fear; it was God's work.

Interviewer: Why is it that younger girls (like D. and P.) are not devoted

Christians, but are outstanding?

Answer: Perhaps God has given them a love for their jobs and they are by nature independent women. People have recognised this characteristic in them and have given them bigger responsibilities. Its like you. They trust you because you stay with your jobs.

Yes, quite a lot of women didn't get married. We will have to ask them why they chose to remain single. It was their decision. When they were still young they didn't look at men. They never found men they wanted to marry. They made up their minds not to marry at all.

Interviewer: Why were women used to do extremely hard work like collecting coconuts and making copra?

Answer: The men did work but the men were busy at Kwato with B & C (Building and Carpentry) and the sawmill. When the plantations had been established the men at K.B. and Manawala helped with copra making together with the school children, from different stations. When we went to Manawala we started a school; they were the ones who worked on those plantations. They were only a few labourers, only two men, Bate and Penua, and they had three labourers. When we arrived at Manawala, we started a school so that the school children worked on the plantations. They worked extremely hard. At K.B. there were more young girls and so they worked on the plantations. The men who worked on the plantation at K.B. were from K.B., Mutuuwa and Rabe. The Kwato men were busy with the sawmill and B & C and engineering. Some men were taken from the villages to work. But the women worked very hard, women like Ligogome, Ada, Lise and Maieogaru.

Work stopped on Kwato because of the big debt that Kwato accrued over the years. There are not many labourers on K.B. to work on the plantation. But the young men here are determined to keep the work going on Kwato. If they do work hard then maybe work on Kwato will begin again.

OLEVA LEBASI

I was three when I went into Kwato. I went into Kwato with my parents. My father was a good cricketer and this is why we were brought into Kwato. I don't know what my parents were doing, because I was too small and I couldn't remember. I do not remember how old I was when I started school, because in those days the children were put into school when they were very young. We were put into boarding school when we were very young. Children in those days never stayed with their parents. They were all put into boarding school. Our first teachers were Mary Sioni and Solatai (a Samoan). When we grew older we had Evanelia and Dalai. Our school work included reading, writing,

arithmetic; nothing like what you do today. We also did copy writing. Our school consisted of what Mrs. Abel prepared. This was what the Papuans taught us. Mrs. Abel sometimes taught us whenever she found time. She took us for craft work, vowel sounds etc. Miss Parkin taught me at about standard three or four. She started off with Bible study, arithmetic and other subjects. She tried to advance our knowledge.

My mother was a very good Christian, a faithful Christian, all through her life until she died. She was a gentle woman who cared for people. Because we were taken away to boarding school at Manawala and K.B. I don't know exactly what my mother's work on Kwato was. I know when I was at school at Duabo and then went down to join Alice, Martha and the others, I remember then my mother was a cook, a general cook. They were rostered every month. Next month she would do laundry work. At this time everybody at Kwato had their meals at the 'Big House' on the hill top. My father was for a while a captain on the *Labini*. This is the first *Labini*, a sailing boat.

Miss Parkin was a hardworking woman. She was ahead of her contemporaries. She always looked to the future; she had a mind like a man. She wasn't a weak woman but a strong woman. I think if she was still alive today, she would be one of our parliamentarians. She was willing to carry on the big responsibilities when the Abels were away. When PD (Abel) and the others had grown up, they went away with their parents to England for five years in about 1920.

Miss Parkin looked after the whole work on Kwato and all the outstations. There were no debts, everything ran well. I think she had a broad mind. I think she was more outstanding than Mrs. Abel. Mrs. Abel was also outstanding in her own way, but I think Miss Parkin's character was easily recognised because she was never married and was very faithful with all her work and the responsibilities she had to carry. Mrs. Abel is a bit like Miss Parkin, but because she was a mother she was a loving woman and cared for children and people. Their spiritual beliefs were the same. They were very strong Christians and when we were children they would lead us in the Lord's way. When homes were broken, Mrs. Abel would give an answer to these homes. There were no divorces during this time because Mrs. Abel would help mend broken homes.

Father Abel had a great trust in God. I have seen his faith in God at work because I had grown up then. I saw his whole life. We would fear him when we were children. He had real faith in God and one could feel a sense of holiness about him. Because of this we feared him: also whenever he prophesied things happened. We feared him more than Mrs. Abel. For example sometimes there would be no rain during the long dry spells. He would come out and look at the sky for sometime and then call out for Uncle Merari who was the roof boy at the time. This was his morning duty, to clean and sweep the roof so that the gutters did not get blocked. He would tell uncle Merari to go up again and clean the roof. Uncle Merari would say 'I have already cleaned the roof'.

Father would then say, 'Go up and clean the roof again because during the time lapse some more leaves may have fallen into the gutter. Clean it because when you come down there will be rain'. We would say mockingly amongst ourselves: 'There won't be any rain.' But believe it or not, it did rain. We found that he had great faith in God, both he and his wife. What he believed in always happened. He had a great belief in God, Anne.

Interviewer: Are there any examples of Father's supernatural powers that you know of?

Answer: I am going to tell you what I have experienced. Other people have their own experiences of his power. I had already heard of his supernatural power when this happened.

When I was a prefect one of my duties was to ring the bell in the morning for quiet time⁵ sessions. One morning I rang the bell at the wrong time. That morning I had my quiet time in the pantry because my duty for that month was pantry work with Elsie. I didn't see the time correctly. I said my prayers, had my time of listening and was reading my Bible when I thought it was past the time for the bell to be rung. I went outside, had a quick look at the clock and went out and rang the bell. After I had rung the bell I returned to my seat in the pantry. I heard footsteps and knew that I must have done something wrong because I was the prefect. I had the feeling that I must have rung the bell at the wrong time. He came straight to the pantry. I stood up and he said to me, 'Who rang that bell? Was it you?' I said, 'Yes, Father, I rang it.' Then he said, 'Look at the clock, what time is it?' He expected me to apologise, but I didn't. He had a very stern look on his face. I could feel something come over me and felt like fainting. My body felt warm. He was very angry because I had cut off everyone's quiet time. I felt like fainting, so I leaned against the table. He kept looking at me, he didn't go away. Then he said to me, 'What should you say?' I said, 'I'm sorry Father.' As soon as I had apologised I felt better. He walked away to his room. That was how I experienced his occult power. But he revealed his power to a lot of people.

This was one, another was with Lei's mother and father. Lei was put at Kwato because she had a big ulcer. Her parents told Father that when Lei's ulcer had healed up, she could stay at Kwato, as one of Father's children. Lei stayed until she was better, then one day she tried to run away back to Logea. Her parents had changed their minds and wanted her to get married. There was a search for her. They came to ask me because I was a good friend of hers. Lei followed me up to the graveyard where I had gone to cut some flowers. She left me there, saying she was going further up and would come back. Apparently she had received a message telling her there would be someone waiting for her

⁵Quiet time is known at Kwato as an individual prayer and listening session for about half an hour each morning.

on the beach. Bubui Semi went down to the beach, found her and gave her a beating. Bubui Semi grappled with Lei's mother and finally pulled Lei away from her. Lei was brought back to Kwato, while Bubui Semi chased Lei's mother back to Logea. On Sunday which was a few days later, Lei's father and mother came across to Kwato to have an argument with Father. My job then was cleaning Aiealu Paana. I was sweeping the floor when Lei's parents arrived. I asked what they wanted. They requested to see Father. So I went in and told Father that a couple wished to see him. Father Abel was preparing his sermon then, for he was going to lead the service that Sunday. Father looked up from his study and said, 'Esela, what is it you wish to say?' At that very moment Esela fainted. He didn't even have time to reply to father's question. He fainted because Father had heard that they wanted to take their daughter back and was upset. This was the way he taught people. When Esela fainted, I stood there and watched. I wanted to go and help Esela but I was frightened of Father. So I just went on dusting the window sill in the corner. Father took his Bible and went into the dining room to complete his preparation because the first bell for the service had already been rung and it was nearly time for the second bell. Froth began to come out of Esela's mouth. His wife began wailing and crying. She begged me to go and tell Father to come. But I refused to do what she asked me to do. Suddenly Father came back for he had felt that something was wrong. He came around to where Esela was lying and spoke out loudly at him saying, 'Esela why are you sleeping?' At that very instant Esela woke up, stood upright and began apologising to Father, saying 'Lei is yours, I will never take her back. She will remain here until she dies.'

They have said many things about Father's occult power. These are two things that I have experienced and witnessed. I believe in them because I have seen him work. When Father went on pastoral visits I would go with him, your father also and aunty Vera. I would look after his personal clothing, while your father was the cook and aunty Vera would look after his bedroom. When we were on these visits, I always observed his behaviour. In his tent you would never find any other books, newspapers or history books, he always read his Bible. We have seen him and we know he has a great faith in God and the power he has is a blessing that God has given him. But he never separated himself from us, he didn't think he was higher than us. He wasn't arrogant. He sometimes lowered himself to play with us. He sometimes tickled us.

When I left school my first job was teaching. Father Abel took me to teach at Logea. The *lingua franca* used was Suau. I helped teach with Father. He was in charge of the school. There were others there to help. The students were Bagilalaia and others. There wasn't any teacher training. What was taught at Kwato consisted of Mrs. Abel's and Miss Parkin's knowledge. It is nothing like the government schools today.

I only taught for a few months. From here I went to Duabo to look after

boys including your father and uncle Joe. Duabo was started by PD (Abel) as a boy's school. It was called D.P.S. (Duabo Preparation School). Very young boys of about four or five years of age were taken to Duabo. They remained there for about six years until they came down to join the main school at Kwato. There were a lot of us taken to Duabo to look after the boys e.g. Norah, Martha, Labini etc. did the laundry, cooking, cultivation of food gardens because there was no food at the time. We had to work hard to feed the boarders. Some did matron's work while others taught at the school.

This was my second teaching post. I taught prep.: Bondai and others. They were very small. Children were taken away from their parents while they were very small, about five years old. I taught them the alphabet, vowel sounds, singing and dancing. At the same time I was PD's house girl. Because of this I didn't have enough time with them. PD realised this and removed me from teaching. I was PD's house girl full time.

Interviewer: Where were the girls of the same age group?

Answer: The girls were at Kwato. Kwato was a girl's school.

Interviewer: What sort of a woman was PD?

Answer: She is like I seem to say very nice things about them and praise them (the Abels) but it is true. She was like her father, broad-minded, had a great faith in God and strongminded. She was also like Miss Parkin. She could see into the future, she was ahead of her contemporaries. She was like a man. If PD was still alive, she could be one of our parliamentarians. She was ahead of both Cecil and Russel. She inherited her father's looks and his character.

From Duabo we went back to Kwato. The boys had grown up and were being sent down to Kwato and there was no one left at Duabo. I lived on Duabo for a number of years. I can't remember how long, may be about six years.

Interviewer: What did you do when you went back into Kwato?

Answer: The coconut plantations were worked by both men and women. I was sent to Kanakope to collect coconuts. I was here when Father died, in 1930. I worked here for a while. In those days we were only moved to another job if there was a good report or reports from the supervisors to Mrs. Abel or PD. I think I went back into Kwato in 1931. I was put in charge of the laundry girls. I was teaching the girls how to do laundry properly. Lily, your mother and I were the instructors. This was before we got married. After this I was shifted to the bakery. Gasumole trained Molea and I in this skill. Molea and I alternated each week. But just think the whole of Kwato was being fed from this bakery. Bread was not for sale.

Interviewer: Isuhina and all the homes too?

Answer: Isuhina was not settled yet. But all the married couples, young boys and girls and school children.

Interviewer: You were still having communal meals?

Answer: We were still eating all our meals together at this time. Gasumole was our instructor. She was a very smart woman. All the older women were very smart. You could not leave a job half done. We were always supervised closely. They watched us do every step. They watched us while we set the bread, when we kneaded the bread, they would test the dough to see whether it was dry enough. They let us feel the dough ourselves to see when it was ready. We baked both rolls and loaves. PD would count each person on Kwato and we would bake accordingly. They made sure we cleaned our tins, the basins were dry and put away neatly in their right places. Outside also. They made sure that the lawn outside the bakery house was swept. The oven must also be left clean, ready for the next day. That was how the first generation of women worked. They never let you go with a job undone.

After baking I went back to laundry. This was when I met uncle. We then got married. After we got married our first posting was to manage Manawala station. We lived there for two years. After that we were shifted back into Kwato for uncle to help build the Kwato wharf. He helped Willie and some younger men to build the wharf. PD said I was not to sit and do nothing. So I was sent to teach at Sariba with Mataela and Alice. I lived at Sariba while Uncle lived on Kwato. I was also doing some teaching at Manawala. I only taught for a year because there weren't many children. I didn't go back to Sariba after coming to Kwato for Christmas. We stayed on at Kwato. I was put back to the old job of supervising laundry. Lily had died then.

(Time Lapse)

After uncle died Badi put me in charge of the Isuhina children: Robin and the others. They were studying through correspondence. I looked after this group of children. Then Sineheumo's age group was brought to Isuhina and I looked after them also. PD then decided I should go and look after a larger crowd of students, so I was sent to help Olive look after the students at Bisimaka. We moved between Gwavili, K.B. and Manawala. We were here until Olive went up to Kwato to look after her old mother. I was here doing matron's work on my own until about 1956. I came back into Kwato while Gloria and Joseph went down to Bisimaka. On Kwato I was looking after the Saevaru boys, especially supervising their food. I worked here for only a few weeks when a call came requesting a Kwato woman to go down and replace Elsie who was a matron at Taurama looking after the first batch of nurses to be trained there. Public Health Department wanted Elsie to go to Rabaul, to Nonga, where a second nursing school was due to begin. Dr. Wright wanted a Kwato woman to replace

Elsie. When Russel asked me to go I refused. I didn't want to go because Viola and Moses (the youngest of her six children) were still too small and you also came to live with me while attending school on Kwato. A few days later I changed my mind and accepted the job.

I then went to Taurama and looked after Bessie and the others. I liked my new job very much. I worked for a year and then I quit. The reason for this was this. A Samoan sister, Sister Initia was a jealous woman. She became jealous over the amount of pay I was receiving. Elsie had already warned me about her, but I didn't think Sister Initia would act in the same way towards me. When I first started work she was very nice to me. But later she created some stories and told Dr. Wright. Dr. Wright wanted to send me back to Kwato. But I refused to go back. I felt Russel would become upset, so I left this job and looked for another job. I asked your Dad to look for a job for me. While your father was looking for a job the education department rang Kwato and wanted a woman to go to Dregerhafen and look after some girls who were being trained as teachers. Geoffrey had heard I had quit my job so he told them to contact your father. So this was how I got the second matron's job outside of Milne Bay. I didn't want to fly to Dregerhafen alone after I had been given the job, for I had never travelled alone before. So Miss McLachlan agreed to fly up with me. Dregerhafen was a teachers' college. I looked after the teacher trainees for a year, after which another teachers' college was built at Mt. Hagen. Miss Quartermaine wanted me to go with them to Mt. Hagen, but I refused because I didn't like the cooler climate. I went down to the girl's school at Dregerhafen for two years because aunty Tani (another Kwato matron) had not returned. In 1963, I came down to Busu. The girls shifted to Busu; it was a secondary school. The standard five and six girls went to Madang. I worked at Busu for a year after which I came home for leave. My mother was brought to the Kwato hospital. I saw how sick she was and decided to stay and look after her. When she was well enough I was sent to look after the boys at Kwato. This was in 1966. After 1966 I saw that my mother was too weak, so I left Kwato and went to the village to look after her.

Interviewer: Why do you think that quite a number of the Kwato women never got married?

Answer: These women had their own reasons but they have told me that now they regret not having married at all. They now see how our children have grown up and now look after us in old age. They wish they had done the same but it is too late. There were men who wanted to take them as wives but they refused. They wanted to live out their youth and didn't want to be tied down.

Interviewer: Why is it that women appear to be more outstanding than men?

Answer: That is a difficult question to answer. I think that with us women,

women seem to be better Christians than men. This keeps the women going. We see that very clearly on Kwato today. Women are still going strong with the spiritual work on Kwato. But the men seem to have fallen by the wayside. We can see the other evidence of this now and that is broken homes.

Interviewer: But other women like D. and P. are not Christians? Why have they come this far?

Answer: It's their background. All you Kwato children have a good background. A background from your parents, the Abels and the Beavises. This makes you stronger. It is that background that is lurking behind you, although you don't live it out. Do you understand what I am saying?

Interviewer: No I don't think I understand you. Oh I think you mean we have a Christian background but we do not live it.

Answer: Yes that's right. You have seen that from your parents, how your parents lived and acted. You do not live like a good Christian but it is concealed at the back of your minds, you live it secretly. It is this that you and D. and the others have found from your parents and the Abels. You have caught on to their way of life. Now you have come to the big wide world, working for the government, but that background hides within you.

ALICE WEDEGA

The only thing that I can remember which made us strongminded and independent was discipline. We were brought up under very strong discipline. We did not always agree with the punishment that was given to us. But now when we think back we can say that it was for our own good and we are pleased that we were brought up that way. I think strong discipline made us law abiding citizens. Christianity also played a part too. We were not sent out from Kwato until they were sure that we were strong enough spiritually before we were sent out to teach in the outstations.

Yes there were a few of us that were trained by Kederuma to be leaders. Some of these women were aunty Vera, Aidina, Labini, Martha, Mabelele and some others whose names I cannot remember.

Miss Parkin and Mrs. Abel were very strong Christians. The older women (first generation) were taught by Mrs. Abel; we were taught by PD and Miss Parkin. PD inherited many of her father's qualities and looks and I think it was she who trained a lot of the young girls. Miss Parkin was a very strong woman, she used to look after the plantations as well as the whole mission station whenever the Abels were away. I didn't know PD intimately, I only came to know her just before she died in Australia, when I was sent down to look after her.

It was at this time that we put a lot of things right between us. We put right a lot of things before this time but we didn't get deep down into things that

were dividing us. It was during this time that we poured our hearts out to each other.

I shall tell you why I didn't get married. Other women had their own reasons. I shall not attempt to give theirs because I could be lying to you. I used to be one of those women who put their own wishes first before God's work but one day I had a very clear guidance that I should put God's work first and not my own wishes. It was then that I decided I could not get married, because I could not serve God well if I had married. I am not saying that the women who got married did not carry on their Christian lives; they remained good Christians. But I felt that I had to devote my whole time to God's work. Had I married I would be tied down and could not serve God in the way I have done up to now. And I shall go on serving God until I am too weak to move.

I don't think that because PD and Miss Parkin did not get married had anything to do with the women's conviction to remain single. It was their own decision to stay unmarried.

Traditionally in Milne Bay women did all the work. I found that Milne Bay men are very lazy. The women brought up the children, they looked after the house, planted the crops and tended the garden and did the cooking. Men only helped in burning down the bush before the garden was made and sometimes helped to plant the crops. But the women did all the work. Women are the agriculturists. This was why I was taken to help the Department of Agriculture. The Department of Agriculture in Milne Bay realised that if agriculture was to be improved, we had to work through the women because they were the agriculturists. All the men do is sit around making sure that their mouths are red with betel nut. If they liked they could go fishing or hunting. When they get back from these expeditions they just throw the meat down and walk off. They could go from village to village begging for betel nut and smokes.

Women are as powerful as the men with the use of magic. Women fear men and the men fear the women. I do not believe in witchcraft and I am going to tell you why I don't believe in it. When I had become a Christian I went with a group from Kwato down to Milne Bay to try to win new converts. It was during one of these trips that I met this woman, who told me that she practised witchcraft. She told me this and I became frightened and told her to get back to the station. The next day I told the rest of my friends who laughed at me. I decided that I should face this problem.

I also met another woman who also told me that she possessed these powers. I asked her how was it that she travelled. Because she had told me that she travelled to see her son who was living away from the village. She replied saying that she tied her toes with a string when she left her body, only her soul travelled. When she returned she would untie her toes and back into her body. I could not understand the fact that her body remained while her soul travelled to all parts of the country. She also told me that she had the power to bring fish up

stream and in fact had often done this in the past. I then asked her to take me to the very river she had talked about so that I could see her perform the miracle she had talked about. She declined and said she had been lying. What she did in the past was to visit the creek and if she saw the fish travelling upstream she would tell the village men that fish was in the river. I then asked her to tie her toes and go out of her body. She told me then that she couldn't do this now because she had already confessed everything. I began to see from this incident that witches were in fact lying. Another experience I had was with Osiri's father. He had heard me say that magic and sorcery did not exist. He said to me that I will soon see that sorcery was in fact real. After a few weeks Osiri's father came to me and said he had tried everything for the last month but nothing had worked. He had been trying to scare me or make me sick but he had failed. Now I totally believe that there is nothing to fear. People have often said that Martha practised witchcraft. I asked her one day and she said, 'Yes people have said that, but I don't know what it is. How do they go about it?' I am now convinced that they are lying.

Younger women have become very independent because of their education. D. and the others were educated in Australia and this I think has given them a certain amount of confidence.

PART IV

TOWARDS
THE STUDY
OF A
REGION

CHAPTER XIV

The History of the Motu-speaking and Koita-speaking Peoples according to their own Traditions

Nigel Oram

Today, Motu-speaking and Koita-speaking peoples live in the coastal area from Gaba Gaba (or Kapa Kapa) some 60 km. to the east of Port Moresby, to Manumanu, 50 km. to the northwest. This account comes from the traditions of the people themselves, just as they have recounted them. I have obtained these traditions from the books and papers of early Europeans; the work of local people and others who have written them down; and more than 100 tapes and other records in which I have recorded a large number of stories. Because they are handed down from generation to generation, the same traditions remembered by different groups vary and, where the differences are important, I mention the different versions. Although I have arranged these traditions in some kind of order, I have not attempted to analyse them.

Locations of sites are not always known accurately. Sometimes they are only known to be in a certain area, for example in the Sogeri area 'or 'near Rouna'. The accompanying maps may not, therefore, be entirely accurate.

It will take a long time to study fully all my material and this is a short and preliminary version. My aim in producing it is to provide a guide for students and all who are interested in their own history, so that they can fit the traditions which they collect into the framework which I am presenting here. The study of oral tradition of the Port Moresby area is only beginning and time may be short as knowledgeable people die.

I do not expect everyone to agree with the traditions summarised here. History can only record a small fraction of all the activities and thoughts of the countless people who lived in the past and the writing of it is never finished.

I only give references to the work of people who have collected traditions and I have not included the names of informants. As I only provide summaries of accounts which have not been fully studied and checked, I do not want to embarrass them or cause trouble for them in their villages. Later I hope to produce, or help others to produce, village histories which include full traditions. In the meantime, I have placed copies of nearly all my material, including tapes, in the New Guinea collection of the University of Papua New Guinea.

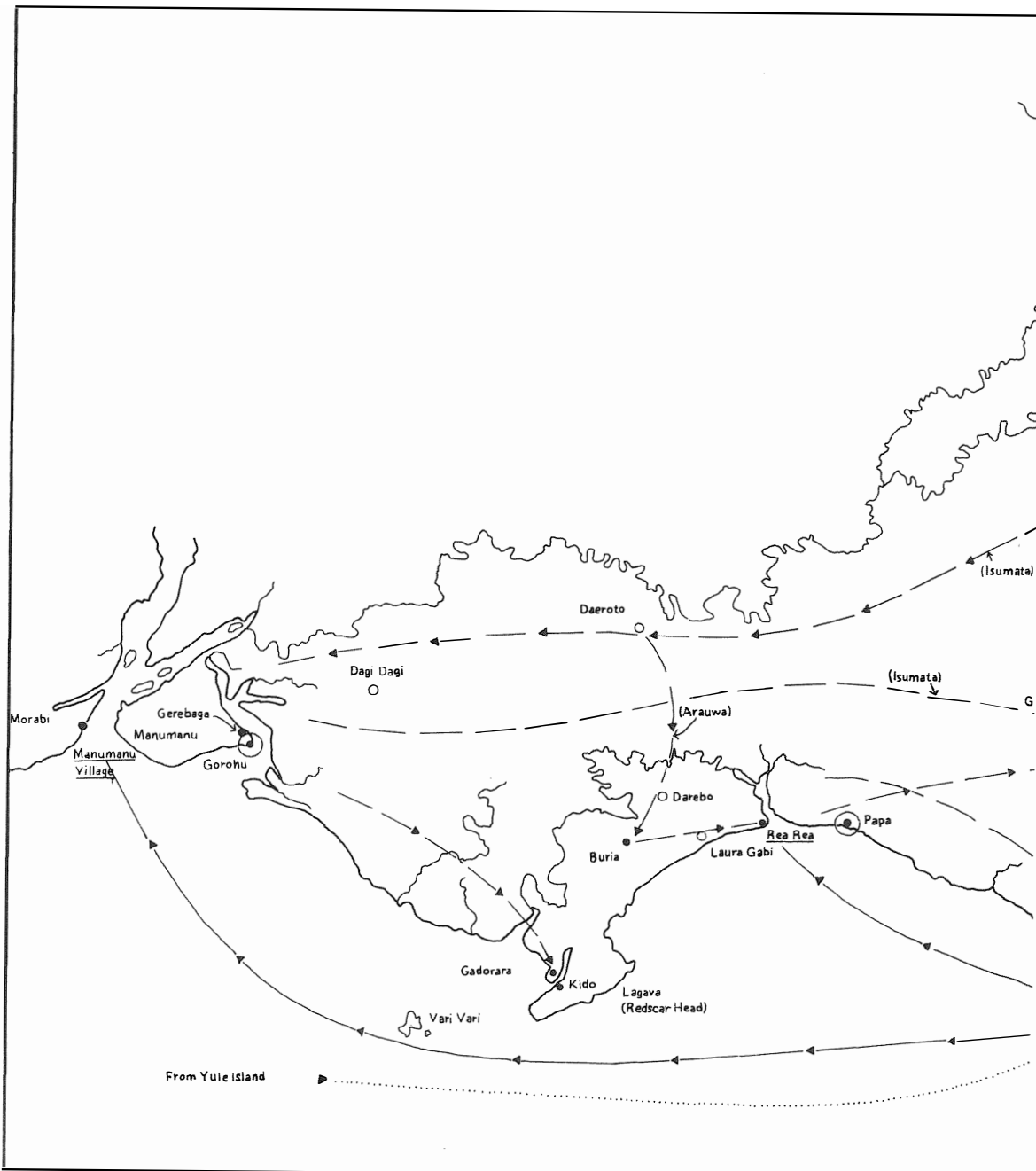
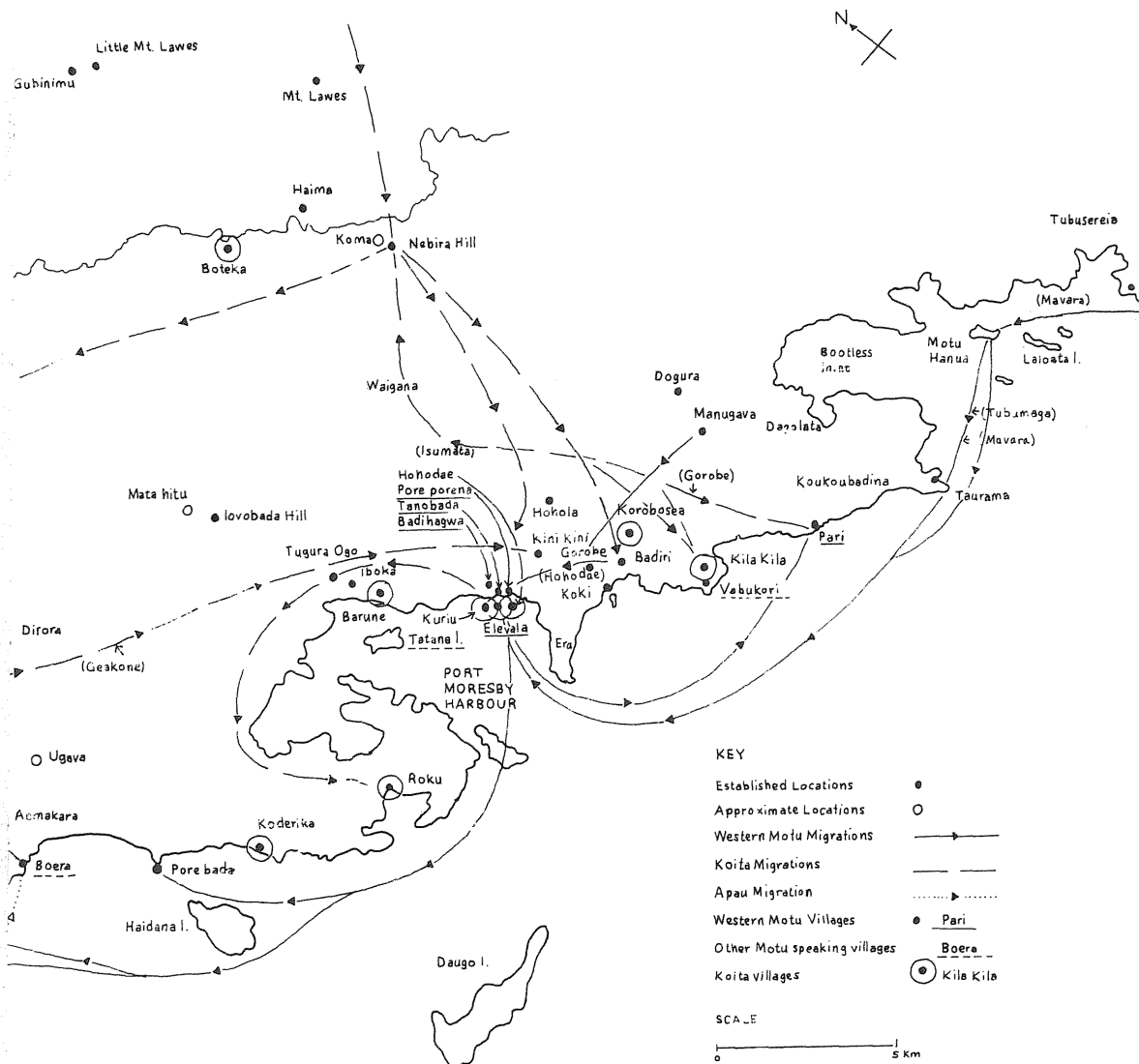


Figure 8: Koita and Western Motu Migrations according to their traditions



Most of them are in the Motu and Hula languages and they may be seen by those interested if they obtain permission.

Today, both Motu-speakers and Koita-speakers live in nucleated villages in which the houses are close together. Many traditions say that in the past both Motu-speakers and Koita-speakers lived in separate *iduhu* settlements which were sometimes close enough to be called a village. *Iduhu* are the corporate descent groups or clans of which villages are composed. *Iduhu* are patrilineal, that is membership descends to children through their father, but there are exceptions. Some people are descended from those who were accepted as members of an *iduhu* because they had married a woman of the *iduhu* or who had joined their mother's *iduhu* or for similar reasons: examples are provided by a number of traditions.

The Motu-speakers

The Motu-speakers recognise two major groupings among themselves which we can call tribes: the Eastern and Western Motu; and in the Western Motu area, Vabukori, Boera and Tatana villagers claim that their origins differ from those of the two tribes and from each other. Many informants say that, in the past, the coastal area was empty between Keapara and the Papuan Gulf except four ancient villages, Taurama, Boera, Vabukori and Lakwaharu (now called Tubusereia). Some informants also say that Badihagwa, near the present Hanuabada and Buria, a Koita village situated on a hill close to Rea Rea, were also ancient villages.

The Western Motu

The Western Motu live in seven villages situated between Bootless Inlet and Galley Reach: Pari; Poreporena, Tanobada and Elevala, which form part of the village cluster known as Hanuabada; Porebada; Rea Rea; and Manumanu. Western Motu *iduhu* are also found in Boera.

The most distant origins of the Western Motu are found in accounts recorded by early Europeans which now appear to be forgotten. They relate to two villages, Motu Hanua and Taurama which were once situated in Bootless Inlet. Motu Hanua, now usually known as Motupore, means 'island village' or possibly 'Motu village'. According to R. Lister Turner, an L.M.S. missionary:

Many of them assert that before their ancestors made their way to Port Moresby, they lived at a place called Bonanamo, which is situated a few miles east of Round Head . . . From that place they made their way west-ward to Taurama . . .

His informants, in telling a legend, Mairi Lagana, said: 'That was when our ancestors lived at Vailala, between Kaile (Gaire) and Tubusereia.' Other informants said the ancestors of the Western Motu stayed near Vailala at a beach or hill called Guamo. They, including Tubumaga *iduhu*, then moved to Motu Hanua. Several accounts say that ancestors of Mavara *iduhu* came down from Gavera Makana and stayed at Guamo before going to Motu Hanua. According

to one version, Eastern Motu living at Loloata made war on Motu Hanua and the inhabitants moved to Taurama where they built a village, or rather a series of hamlets. Tubumaga Idibana (right) *iduhu* settled at the foot of Taurama hill at Hanua Lalona while half Tubumaga Laurina (left) *iduhu* were located in the next bay at Avakeikei and half Laurina were at Tutu. Kahanamona Idibana and Kahanamona Rea Rea *iduhu* were at Dagolata while Kahanamona Idaro *iduhu* were staying at Idarobada.

As a result of constant warfare with Lakwaharu (Tubusereia), the people living in the hamlets facing Bootless Inlet left the area. Kahanamona people settled on Manugava hill, near the present Taurama barracks, while others retreated to Badihagwa, a quarter of a mile inland of the present Hanuabada. One account says that Taurama village was founded by Taurama Buasi, a *dirava* or spirit, some fourteen generations ago ascending from people of Idibana Idibana *iduhu* of Pari. He is now said to live at the top of Taurama hill and people in canoes lower their voices as they pass below.

Warfare continued and the following account, with variations, of the destruction of Taurama by the Lakwaharu and the refounding of the village at Pari is well known throughout the Motu-speaking area. Some youths laughed at an old woman, who became angry. She told some visitors from the Koita village of Baruni that the youths were going to attack them and the Baruni people stealthily crept away. To revenge themselves, the Baruni planted magic poisons in the village and the Taurama people became too weak to resist the Lakwaharu who surrounded and burned the village. Only one woman, Konio Daroa, who was the wife of a Taurama leader, escaped through the floor of her house and made her way to her brother, Puka Daroa, of Laurina *iduhu*, who was living at Badihagwa. Konio was pregnant when she escaped from Taurama and she bore a son, Kevau Dagora. When he grew up he assembled a fleet of Western Motu war canoes and attacked the Lakwaharu in several battles until their chief, Magani Baru, sued for peace. With the help of a Vabukori leader, Mase Gaudi, peace was made and Magani Baru helped Kevau build a new village at Tauata. The village is known by its nickname, Pari, because fish were so plentiful that they slipped down people's throat (Pari means 'wet' in Motu.) Kevau Dagora lived six generations ascending from a man born in 1923.

When the village was refounded, sections of Tubumaga, Mavara and other *iduhu* were established. They were also joined by three Koita groups called Gorobe.

Hanuabada

The Western Motu live in three village in the complex now known as Hanuabada: Tanobada, Poreporena and Elevala. There are eight main *iduhu* names in these villages. A number of descent groups are found with the same *iduhu* names: there are, for example, four Gunina *iduhu* and there are some seventeen Motu *iduhu* altogether. The relationships between *iduhu* and

lineages within *iduhu* are complex as a result of segmentation, membership through women and adoptions. The following accounts relate only to major *iduhu* and lineages.

The first Motu-speaking settlement was at Badihagwa, near the present cemetery. Of the *iduhu* settled there, according to one account, Botai, Tubumaga, Kwaradubuna and Kahanamona came from Taurama. Some say that Botai came from Motu Hanua. Tubumaga, Kwaradubuna and Kahanamona used to speak the Motu language without an 'h', as do the people of Pari and Manumanu. This supports the Taurama connection. Mavara, descending from Gavera Makana, went to Motu Hanua and then to Badihagwa. From there Vagi Douna went to Ranuguri where the *iduhu* split. Kwaradubuna Laurina are said to be descended from Kohu Lau and Vagi Lau, sons of Lau Lau, who came from Manumanu twelve generations ago.

Some time before the first European arrived in the 1870s a move was made from Badihagwa to the shore. Gana Tolu of Botai may have been the first man to make the move, and he was followed by his friend, Gari Lohia, of Vahoi *iduhu*. Elevala, one informant says, was founded by a Botai man called Raga Tolo who married a Koita woman from Gaibodubu *iduhu*. She wanted to keep pigs on Elevala island, so gradually Botai and other *iduhu* people settled there. One account says that Tubumaga moved down to the mangroves when Konio Daroa joined her brother, Oala Daroa, after fleeing from Taurama.

Some *iduhu* went from elsewhere straight to the shore, without staying at Badihagwa. Vagi Lahui, who was grandfather of Boe Vagi, the chief appointed by Commodore Erskine, went from Motu Hanua in a time of famine, and settled in a gap in the mangrove, which is the meaning of Gunina, the *iduhu* name. One lineage within Gunina Laurina came from Vabukori as a result of a quarrel between two brothers. Another, Gunina Hagwaiipi, is said to be connected with Isumata. Apau *iduhu* is an offshoot of Vahoi, said to have split off when Apau people won a victory in war (Groves 1954: 79). Another account says that they came from the Apau people at Boera. Gevana *iduhu* are said to have split off from Mavara Laurina.

All these *iduhu* are represented in Poreporena and sections of Botai and Gunina are found in both Tanobada and Elevala.

Three villages to the west, Rea Rea, Manumanu and Porebada were founded by people from Badihagwa.

Three brothers, Gini Guba, Gana Guba, Noho Guba of Kwaradubuna lived at Badihagwa. Noho Guba's son was very fierce and beat his uncle's children. As a result, Noho Guba left and after seeking a satisfactory place to live on Daugo, Haidana and Idiha islands, settled at Veripaudobi. On fishing expeditions he had left the remains of his food there which, on his return, he found had grown into new plants; so he concluded that the soil was good. Thus the village now called Rea Rea was founded. This happened eight generations ago

from a man aged fifty. The name of his *iduhu* is Autubua. Tubukabua *iduhu* is descended from a grandchild of Noho Guba and spouse, Vagi Leana.

Members of Hanuabada descent groups, Botai, Kahanamona and Gunina later formed sections in the village. When Noho Guba arrived, a Koita man was living at Laura. He welcomed Noho and left Laura to live with him. Two Arauwa *iduhu* are now established in the village.

The first man from Hanuabada to settle in the Manumanu area was Lohia Kevau who, with his brothers, were the ancestors of Laurina *iduhu*. Another account says that Inai Raho and Guba Raho were the first to arrive. They were followed by Vahoi, Botai, led by Komaia Daera, Idibana led by Vagi Guba of Gunina *iduhu* of Poreporena, and Apau led by Vagi Busina. They moved because of quarrels and fights at home. The first arrivals settled at Manupore near Mapu river. Apau settled to the west near Morabi. After the missionaries came in 1872, they persuaded the whole village to move to its present site at Morabi.

The last Western Motuan colony to be founded was Porebada. Attracted by the nearness of rich fishing grounds, Morea Igo and Arere Igo camped in the Porebada area. Their *iduhu* was Gunina Poreporena. The sons of Arere Morea and Velegai made a more permanent camp, which was destroyed by the people of the nearby village of Boera who resented their intrusion. A war followed, and afterwards people from Gunina and other Hanuabada *iduhu* settled at Porebada (See Hicks 1973: 3-8). According to one account, Morea Arere and Heni Arere with their wives went to Boera and made an agreement with Veri Homosi. There are a number of accounts of the war between Boera and Hanuabada.

Among the *iduhu* established at Porebada is Kwaradubuna. A Hanuabada Kwaradubuna leader called Keni Heni married Rama Igo, sister of Morea and Arere, and joined them at the new village. It was established about the time the first Europeans arrived in 1874. Koita *iduhu*, Abisiri and Adare with some Isumata families, joined them shortly afterwards.

Vabukori and Tatana

Vabukori is an ancient village and there are few accounts of its origins. One account says that two brothers, Vagi and Lohia who were sons of Kure Vara, lived at Darahasi Kila Kila on the hill above Kila R.P.C. and Tabama respectively. As a result of a quarrel about Vagi's wife, Lohia Kure left to found Gunina Laurina *iduhu* at Poreporena. Vagi Kure rebuilt his village at Diharoha. It was a big village and at that time included the little island of Taunagena which was joined to the mainland. When Borei Vagi was head of the village, it was moved to its present site called Imanakone. It was he who had helped to make peace between Kevau Dagora and Magani Baru of Lakwaharu. At that time women had to draw water at Gimaune on the other side of the hill and a man called Sere Lohia found water at the new site.

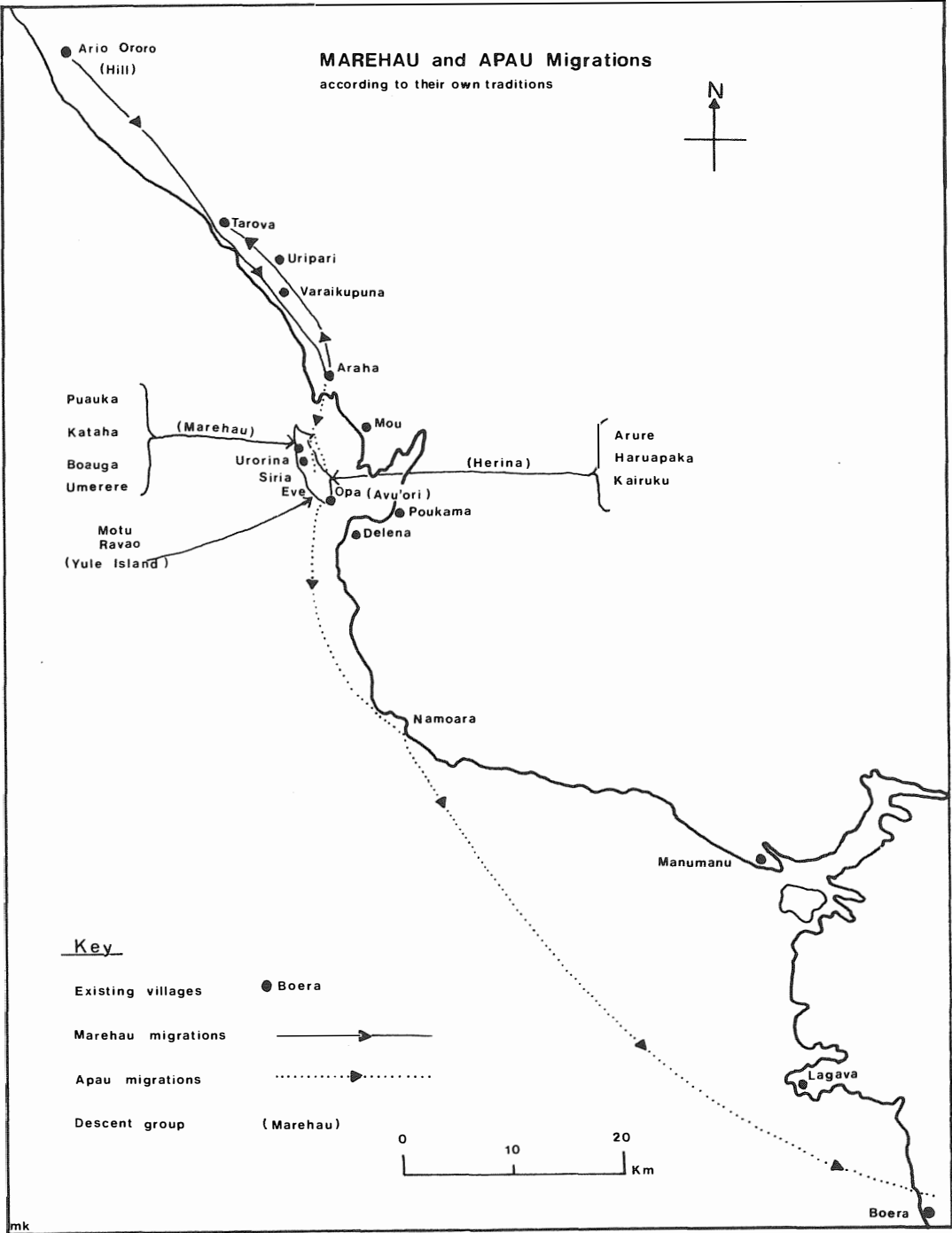


Figure 9: Marehau and Apau Migrations according to their own traditions

Darahasi Pore appears to be the senior *iduhu* and can be traced back nine generations ascending from a man aged fifty-three. One *iduhu*, Lagi, was founded by a man called Borei Borei from Abai *iduhu*, Tubusereia. Gorobe *iduhu* is of Koita origin.

Tatana people used to speak a similar dialect to that of the Vabukori people, pronouncing 'n' where other Motu speakers say 'l'. One account says that a section of Tubumaga *iduhu*, being adventurous people, settled in Nara country at a place called Tatana Doka and many people in other Motu speaking villages refer to the Nara origins of the Tatana. When the first Europeans arrived, they described a small village called Pore on Tatana island, with some sixty inhabitants. Before 1942, part of Nenehi Idibana and Mavara *iduhu* lived at Araitha while part of Nenehi Idibana, Tubumaga and Nenehi Laurina were at Tatana with a gap between them. Lineages within Nenehi Laurina are of Koita origin.

Marehau and Apau

The ancestors of some of the people living in three existing settlements were once involved in a single migration from the north-west. In two of them, Marehau *iduhu* of Tarova village, Waima, and that of three *iduhu* of Delena village, the people have lost their Motu language and now speak Roro. They call themselves Marehau. Motu was still being spoken at Delena into the present century. The third settlement is the ancient village of Boera and they call themselves Apau.

Some accounts, but not all, say that first settlement was on Ario Ororo which is ten miles to the north of Cape Possession near Oiapu village (see also Chatterton 1969:92). According to Delena sources, which differ in detail, they moved down to a stream called Raurate near Kivori to assist their pot-making, the secret of which they jealously guarded. They then moved to Marehau Poena, stayed briefly at Urouina and then moved to Varai Kupuna and finally to Araha. As a result of Mekeo attacks, they moved to Yule Island. There are three former Motu-speaking *iduhu*: Marehau, Avu'ori and Herina. The origin of Marehau is not known but their *dubu* (ceremonial house) name is Taurama. Avu'ori are said to be descended from the crew of a Vabukori *lagatoi* or trading canoe who joined Marehau. Part of Herina are said to have come from Rea Rea. The Marehau at Tarova say that all three descent groups were at Marehau Poena and went together to Araha. Herina moved to Uripari while the others stayed at Araha. Part of Marehau, led by their chief Raure Oa, returned to Tarova while the remainder of Marehau and Avu'ori went to Irukau. Because a woman died, Marehau were angry and went to Namora; but sad for Ravao (Yule Island), went to Delena opposite it on the mainland. Some Herina went to Delena while others, remembering fertile areas at Araha, returned to that area and are now found in the village of Mou.

Delena sources say that on Yule Island, Marehau lived at Puauka, Kataha, Boauga and Umurere to the northwest; Avu'ori were at Opa near Eve Point to the south; and Herina were at Arure, Haruapaka and Kairuku. As a result of illness the Roro dispersed from Araha in 1875 (Dupeyrat 1935: 118) and some went to Yule Island. There they plotted to kill the Marehau leader Kone Avia. Their leader wanted to marry Kone's wife, Kaia Mea, and learn the secrets of pot-making. After wandering along the coast, Kone Avia and his followers settled at Delena. Early Europeans did not see Delena village (see Vanderwal 1973: 13) but the first L.M.S. missionary, Lawes, included 'Derena' in a list of villages in 1875. Kone Avia was killed by a Roro called Laoma in 1881.

At some stage, a group of people left the west and settled at Eve to the south of Yule Island. Attacked by Roro, some escaped by swimming to the mainland. (This is the meaning of Apau which means 'we dive' in Motu). They moved down the coast to the southeast and stopped at various places including Lagava (Redscar Head) where there was no water. They then established a village at Davage close to Boera.

The original Apau *iduhu* was Guba Rei, and Vagi Kaira and Boni Kaira were the ancestors. Laurina split off under Sere Vagi and Nenehi split off under Kwaira Sere. Tubumaga people settled in the village. There are also Koita *iduhus*, Abasiri, Arauwa and Rurua established in Boera. Some time in the past, one account saying six generation ago, Davage was abandoned and the village established in its present site at Boera.

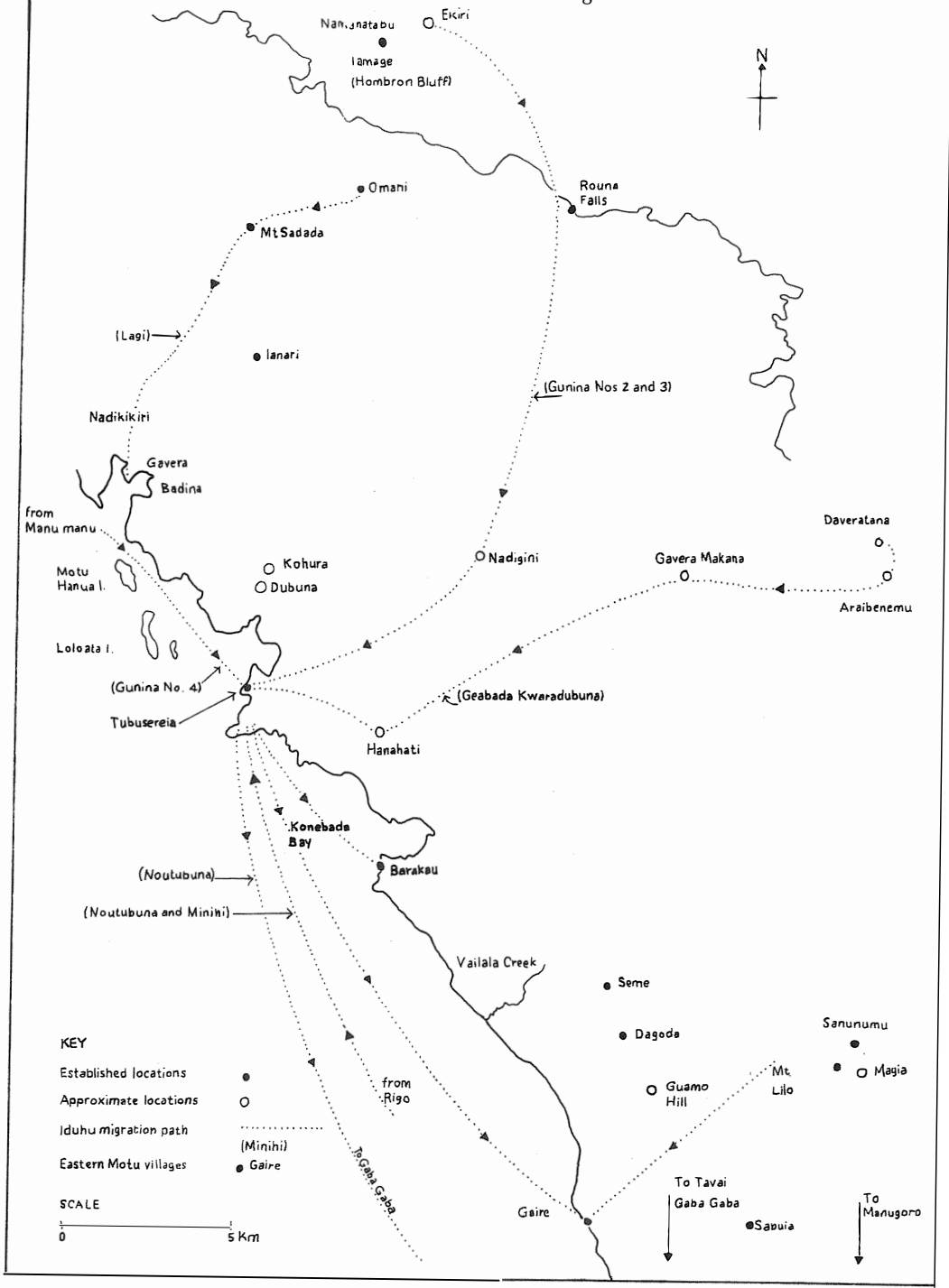
Ahuia Ova, a Koita man from Kila Kila and Hohodae, said in the *Papuan Villager* (1941: 48) that the Apau people made the first pots, first big fishing nets (*matagara*) and began the *hiri* trading expeditions to the Gulf of Papua. There are many accounts, some of which have been published, of how Edai Siabo was taken under the sea by a spirit (*Dirava*) and taught how to make a *lagatoi*. One tradition says Siabo Kaira, son of Kaira chief of Davage, married a woman from Baimuru on the Gulf. Some other villagers say that Edai Siabo or his forebears themselves came from the Gulf. Boio, the sister of Edai Siabo, married a Koita man called Bokina Bokina and the descent of both of them can be traced from some ten generations ago.

The Eastern Motu

The Eastern Motu tribe live in four villages between Bootless Bay and Round Head. The ancestral village is Tubusereia and the other villages are Barakau, Gaire and Gabagaba (or Kapa Kapa). The Eastern Motu do not refer to themselves as Motu. They call the Western Motu 'Motu' and the Western Motu call them Daeatai.

Some of the ancestors of the people of Tubusereia came from the Sogeri plateau and were originally Koiari speakers. All now speak Motu. The majority of the remainder came along the coast from the southeast. The Tubusereia

Figure 10: Migrations of the Eastern Motu Tribe according to their traditions



people were known in the past as Lakwaharu, which some informants say was originally a Koiari word, Iagaharu, but others say it is derived from Lakwahani. Much of the following account of Tubusereia is derived from the work of Mr. Egi Raka, who is studying the history of his own village, although he bears no responsibility for it.

There are four Gunina *iduhu*. The ancestors of Gunina No. 2 were members of Iabagaha lineage and lived at Ekiri in the Sogeri area, which may have been on Iamagi (Hombrom Bluff). A man called Laeba Gara, son of Gara Iori, accompanied by his brothers passed by Rouna and founded a village at Samonumu. They moved to Isekini hill and later to Nadigini hill. Laeba Gara, who had seen the sea from Isekini, and his sister moved to a village called Tubusene, ancestral to Tubusereia, and were persuaded to settle there. Laeba changed his name to Davara Davara (*Davara* means 'sea' in Motu) and called his *iduhu* Gunina, because they came from inland (*guni*). Davara Davara lived eight generations from a man aged forty. Others say that the father of Laeba Gara was Gara Mala. Gunina No. 3 also came from the same area. Gunina No. 4 came from Manumanu some four generations ascending from a man aged sixty. Two men, Vabu Talai and Konena Talai went 70-80 years ago to settle at Pari. A son, Vagi, had a son called Nou Biga, who married at Tubusereia and went there to live. The name of a further *iduhu*, Gunina Lea Lea, suggests a connection with Rea Rea village, but no story of their origin is known.

There are six Geabada *iduhu*, divided into Geabada Kwaradubuna and Garea Geabada. The ancestor of Kwaradubuna was BuneBune, son of Bune Vagi, who lived at Daveratana in the Sirinumu area. He moved to his wife's village, Araibenemu, which annoyed the people of his own clan. He then gave a feast and, as in those days people moved their villages after feasts for fear of sorcery which might be planted by visitors, he left Araibenemu. Passing Gavera Makana, also called Urikivita and Gohamuni, he camped at various places. His companions were afraid, and he and his wife were accompanied by only two men, Hanaha Murai and Enaha Murai. After giving a feast at Talai, also called Hanahati, they moved to Tubusereia where their descendants still live. BuneBune lived some five generations ago.

There is a story about the origin of the name Kwaradubuna. Tubusereia made war on Gaire, and a Koiari man visiting Gaire was captured. As Tubusereia warriors were returning to their village, a man paddling at the back of the war canoe was taunted with not having killed anyone. He speared the prisoner, whose body was eaten and his head hung on the ceremonial platform called *dubu*. Hence the name Kwaradubuna because *kwara* means 'head' in Motu.

According to one account, BuneBune met, at the coast, a group of people from Geresi village whose descendants are members of Minihi *iduhu*.

Garea Geabada say that they have always lived at Tubusereia. Two men were living there. One was Egi Lou, whose story is not known. The other was

Rei Sere, who was ancestor of Garea Geabada *iduhu*. He lived seven generations ascending from an old man now alive.

Garea Geabada No. 3 had a different origin. A man named Egi Vagi Tau, son of Tau Egi was a member of Minihi *iduhu*. He left his own *iduhu* and joined Garea Geabada. His son, Hegogo Egi, became the first L.M.S. deacon after South Sea Island teachers settled at Tubusereia in the 1870s. There are two Abai *iduhu*. According to one account, Doana Tuguia, son of Tuguia Kohu, married a Tubusereia woman called Abi Resena. They lived at a place called Kaua. An epidemic struck Tubusereia and when Doana and Abi went there, only Vagi Guba and his wife Resena Baru were living there. Prompted by his wife, Doana set off to find a Koita sorcerer, and reaching Gorobe village near Pari, he was directed to a man called Mara Haraka of Baruni village. Mara Haraka promised to work some sorcery and when Doana returned to Tubusereia, he found people reassembling in the village. He and his wife were ancestors of Abai *iduhu*.

There is another version of this story. The Lakwaharu or Tubusereia people were involved in a number of wars, especially with the western Motu. A fleet of Lakwaharu war canoes, returning from Manumanu, was attacked by Hanuabada and Baruni people but the Lakwaharu beat them off. A Baruni man, Maraga Gadiki, went to Tubusereia and planted a magic poison there. One account says that because Manugoro and Geresi languages were the same, the Manugoro were claiming land in the village because Geresi people were settled there. When the Manugoro prepared to attack Tubusereia, the Lakwaharu war leader, Ravu Alo, found the omens unfavourable and said that they would be defeated. Vagi Rage led them against the Manugoro but he was killed and his men defeated. Many people were killed and the village was abandoned, except for one man, Vagi Guba, of Garea Geabada *iduhu*. His sister's husband, an inland man called Doana (in another version his name is Kava Tauna) went to Maraga Gadiki and persuaded him to undo his sorcery. All the people then went back to Tubusereia. Vagi Guba lived five generations ascending from a man aged about 60.

According to a Baruni account, the name of the Baruni man was Gomara Hari, who also lived five generations ascending from a man aged sixty. Some Tubusereia say that Magani Baru, who appears in the Taurama-Tubusereia war story, was the first man to return to the abandoned village.

The war leader, Vagi Rage, of Abai *iduhu*, returned to Tubusereia after living on Loloata island because the village had dispersed as a result of warfare. He was joined by two men, Garo Vegaba and Namona Vegaba, who came from Bonanamo in search of food because there was famine in the land. When a battle was fought with the Manugoro, the two brothers supported Vagi Rage. Afterwards, the younger brother went home to look after his own land; but the elder brother, Garo Vegaba, who had married a Tubusereia woman, stayed

and founded a lineage within Abai *iduhu*.

One of three Lagi *iduhu* were originally members of the Gorohaga clan and lived at Omani. Three brothers decided to move down to the coast and made their first village at Sadada and second village at Nadikikiri, a little way inland. One brother disappeared but Iagu Sere who lived at Nadikikiri exchanged fish for vegetables with his brother, Borenigani, who lived inland. Iagusere moved down to the sea to Gavera Badina. His sons, Tau Egi and Egivagi, married Tubusereia girls but their village at Gavera Badina was destroyed owing to the jealousy of other inland groups. They fled to Tubusereia, but not being welcome, they established a settlement in the sea at Mauru. The eldest son of Tau Egi was Dagu Sere who was a young man when European government was established in the 1880s.

The four Minihi *iduhu* claim a common origin and say that they came along the coast from the Rigo area. As noted above, others suggest that they originally came from Geresi. The four Noutubuna *iduhu* also claim a common descent and say that they came from the southeast. Others in the village suggest that, as they share a ceremonial platform named Babaga Dubu with the Ikoru people, they may be related.

Three *iduhu*, Garea Geabada, Geabada Kwaradubuna and Noutubuna claim that their ancestors founded the village, but no one knows who were the first people to settle there.

Tubusereia village, according to tradition, was first built on land but photos taken soon after the first Europeans came show that by the 1880s it was situated on the reef several hundred yards from the shore.

Few traditions have as yet been recorded relating to the origins of Gaba Gaba (or Kapa Kapa) and Gaire (or Kaile), but both villages contain a mixture of people from Tubusereia and from inland villages. There are six *iduhu* at Gaba Gaba: Gunina, Nou Tubuna, Geabada, Gaire, Diko and Tuguia. Launch (1973: 3-6) says three brothers, Iori, Danege and Vebrui left Iruagoro, a long way inland, and went to Gomori, four miles from Gaba Gaba. Across the Sirovai river they found two men from Tubusereia and their wives and children who had come on a fishing expedition. Eventually they made friends with each other and exchanged pots and fish for vegetables from inland. By agreement, after returning to their villages, they met again on the beach. An inland boy married a Tubusereia girl and members of Gunina *iduhu* are their descendants. Nou Tubuna are descendants of the Tubusereia people who first settled there.

Gaba Gaba was the scene of perhaps the last traditional war along the Port Moresby coast. A Hula man returning from Hanuabada with two women in a canoe laden with pots was enticed on shore by some Gaba Gaba people who speared him. According to one account, an inland man speared him. In those days there were two Gaba Gaba villages and in retaliation the Hula in their war

canoes burned the Eastern village, killing three people and wounding eleven (Bridges, 1884). This was in 1884 and peace was then made.

According to a tradition recorded by an early European (Seligman 1910: 17-18, 192), Gaire was founded by 'two bushmen whose names De Bori and Gai Bori have been preserved'. There is argument in the village about who founded Gaire but traditions suggest that it involved, as at Gaba Gaba, a meeting of Tubusereia and inland people. The first village was at Tavai between Gaire and Gaba Gaba and a move to the present site was made some five generations ago. There were some twenty-four *iduhu* at Gaire, but there has been much splitting up of *iduhu* and the majority are offshoots of Geabada Idibana and Laurina, Nou Tubuna, Nokoro and Kouagolo. The first three names suggest a Tubusereia origin.

There was much warfare when the first Europeans came to Papua, and Gaire, in common with other Eastern Motu villages was built in the sea some distance from the shore. Gaire people were forced to send armed warriors to protect women gardening and fetching water against Garia raids.

There are various accounts of the founding of Barakau. Some say that people from Tubusereia settled first at Mirikone, then at Vedi and then at Konebada. A pastor called Henao did not like Konebada because there were too many crocodiles and moved to Barakau. There is agreement that the village is recent: one old woman said a year or two ago that it was founded when she was four years old. The majority of *iduhu*, Geabada, Noutubuna, Nokoro and Lagi came from Tubusereia. One, Gamada, is of Koiari origin and there is discussion whether one, Seme, came from the Koiari or from Tubusereia.

The Koita-speakers

The Movement to the Coast

The Koita, called by Motu-speakers Koitabu, live in ten villages, Gorohu, Kido, Papa, Kouderika, Roku, Baruni, Kila Kila, Korobosea, Mahuru and Boteka, all situated on or near the coast, and Koita sections are also found in all villages in the Western Motu area except Manumanu.

The Koita say that a long time ago the Koiari and Koita were one people who lived in the foothills of the Owen Stanley ranges. There are a number of stories of how they split into two groups. One says that they were living at Koita Gorina and Koiari Gorina. Vahu Geita of Koita Gorina became involved with the wife of Horio Manu of Koiari Gorina and, as a result of the quarrel, Vahu Geita moved away. Others say the men were Hora and Nou Mavara. According to another version of the split recorded by Dutton (1969: 102), Koiari and Koita-speakers lived together at Goubavaga. The Koita lived at Togosala and then moved to Idabemu, where they were not happy because of fighting among themselves. So they decided to split up. The Koita are divided into two sets of

villages which resemble the two tribes of the Motu-speakers: they are Papa and villages to the west, Kuriu and villages to the east, with Baruni in the middle (see Seligman 1910: 42).

The story of the Koita which goes furthest into the past is that of the Isumata which means the 'grass people'. They are called Idu by the Motu. They say that as a result of a land upheaval and flood in the Rouna area of the Laloki River, everyone was killed except a man called Muni Muni and his sister. They lived nineteen generations ago. Their descendants moved down the Laloki River and settled at Gubinimu and then at Nebira-Dauma. The descent groups at Nebira were Isu, Gubini, Gata, Namura and Geara. They then went to the coast at Badiri (or Badili) where a split among the Koita occurred. Some say it occurred while they were at Dogura, near the Rigo Road between the Airport and Taurama Road junctions; and others while they were at Iovabada or Matabitu. While Gana Tauka, chief of the *dubu* on the northwest wind side, went hunting, Geita Vahu, chief of the *dubu* on the southeast wind side, took Gana's wife. Gana Tauka, with the descent groups listed above, left the Badiri group and went to Waigana. Gana Tauka lived some sixteen generations ago. They left Waigana because of lack of water and returned to Nebira-Dauma. They then moved to Daeroto, inland of Rea Rea. Then they went to Kou Kou Gaika (Kou Kou Badina), Dagi Dagi and then to Gerebaga, although some informants say Gana Tauka went to Ikohi on Galley Reach. They went on to Mapu. Isumata then moved to the twin villages of Gobina and Dirora. As a result of illness caused by sorcery, they left these villages and scattered. Gana Tauka, who according to Boera sources, lived ten generations ago ascending from a man aged 75, settled at Taurama. Others settled at Ugava and Aemakara. They moved from Aemakara to Koke within the present Boera village as a result of persuasion by L.M.S. missionaries about the end of the nineteenth century. Some say they lived at Bogirohodobi and Erakurukuru before they moved to Koke.

When Isumata people were staying at Daeroto while migrating towards Galley Reach, Namura and Arauwa left them as a result of a quarrel before they reached Dagi Dagi.

Arauwa went to Darebo and then established themselves on Buria Hill near Rea Rea. There are various accounts of the destruction of Buria village. In one version, the Buria chief married a woman from Badihagwa, but he ill-treated her and robbed her father and brothers when they passed by in their *lagatoi* (trading canoe). The wife and her kinsmen plotted a night attack when the people of Buria were dancing and therefore unarmed. The Motuans closed all ways of escape and only one man, who fell over a rock face, survived. In another version (Jill Sere 1975: 81) a Pari woman was betrothed to a Buria *iduhu* head but he did not want her and she was married to another man. In revenge for the insult, the Pari destroyed the village during a dance and only

one woman, Guroa, survived. The destruction of the village occurred some ten generations ago. Later, the Koita settled at Laura Gabi where they were joined by the Motu some five generations ago.

Two brothers from Buria, Iramo Hada and Guamo Hada, quarrelled over Kobuga Rei, the wife of the former. Iramo Hada walked across to the hills above Hanuabada and established a village at Kini Kini (Burns Peak) and then at Eabata (Ranuguri). His descendants form part of Geakone *iduhu* at Hohodae. Old Hohodae people trace five generations to Iramo Hada.

Namura people lived at Daeroto before they settled at Keiva. Some people say that they were destroyed by war and others say they were destroyed by disease caused by the sorcery of the Kuriu people. One pregnant woman, Namu Vagahu, escaped and was taken in by a Varimana man, Garau Vaina, who was living at Gerebaga about three generations ago. Descendants of Namura women now live at Papa (Vead) and elsewhere. Another account says that when the Koita, who were living at Idabemu split up, the Gatamata clan went to Gata and now live at Papa.

The Rokurokuna section of the Koita live in Gorohu and Kido villages. There are five *iduhu* at Gorohu: Arauwa, Mavara, Gaibodubu, Moigaha and Vabukori.

The Arauwa split up at Darebo. Some settled at Kou Kou Gaika and then moved to Dagi Dagi. Disturbed by enemy attacks, they moved to Gerebaga under the leadership of Gadiki Variva. This happened three generations ago from a man aged sixty and the other *iduhu* settled at Dagi Dagi joined them.

Mavara share a common genealogy with the Isumata people for several generations and they followed the same migration path. According to their version, Tauka Muni left the Koiari at Koitaguri and moved to Koita Kini and others joined him. Tauka died and Gana Tauka led them to Rouna. They settled at Bisogo while Seri Derena became leader and took them down to Nebira-Dauma. They then went to Irua at Seven mile and afterwards to Koke. Passing through several places in the present Port Moresby, they went to Konedobu, where they found water, and then settled at Mavaraioio near Roku. Years later, Haoda Duhi, great grandson of Seri Derena, and his people went to Dagi Dagi. After a long time they moved to Gerebaga. According to one account, during their stay at Gerebaga, Mavara followed other Isumata and made a village near Roku called Mavaraioio. Finding little water and after breaking 150 pots they returned to the Gorohu area. The *iduhu* at Gerebaga were Arauwa, Mavara and Vabukori. The origins of the latter have not yet been recorded.

Sorcery and attacks by Gabadi and Doura caused many people to die at Gerebaga and the *iduhu* separated: Arauwa went to Gerebaga, Mavara to Roauna, Moigaha to Autubua and Gaibodubu to Iriga. When Europeans brought peace all joined together at Gorohu.

Some Gaibodubu people left Idubada, near Port Moresby, because they were short of water and went under the leadership of Vabu Mavara to Gorohu some two generations ascending from a man now aged sixty. Moigaha also came from the east.

Kido village was founded from Gerebaga, and Arauwa, Mavara and Vabukori *iduhu* are found there. A man called Nou Goasa and his sister Hegoi quarrelled because a pig belonging to Nou destroyed a garden belonging to Hegoi. Hegoi left Gerebaga and was allowed by Buria people to settle at Bana near Buria. The Arauwa people at Buria there suggested that, to avoid quarrels with young Buria people, they should move to Gadorara. Christianity reached them there. Hegoi lived some four generations ago. Because the site was flooded by the sea, they moved across the river to Magadaru and the village is known as Kido.

Other descent groups include Korina, whose ancestors came from Waima, and Rea Rea. The Rea Rea people left their village because of famine.

Some Koita groups living in the Laloki-Brown River area moved down towards Port Moresby harbour. The ancestors of the Kuriu were fighting the Koiari and segmented into three *iduhu* groups.

Varimana, Gaibudubu and Maha lived together at Ihanimu and Ogonimu, and then moved successively to Tarikopore (Ken Baker's sawmill), Haima, Besogo, and then to Gaibo dubu. Then they split; half went to Hogomakana (Catholic mission), and then to Oroheaga; and half went to Nebira. Varimana went to live on Varimana Hill above Badihagwa, then to Kuriu Hanua at the foot of the hill and then to Varubilalo behind the Shell company. Gaibudubu may also have lived at Varimana and Maha lived to the north of Kuriu Hanua.

Uhadi and Iarogaha were two big descent groups. They moved to Vaigana where they split. Some went to Kila Kila and Korobosea and the rest moved to the shore, led by Rohi Gomara, five generations ascending from a man aged fifty. Rohi Gomara met Raga Tolu of Botai, who allowed them to settle at Kuriu. They are settled at Tanobada where they are known as Adare Uhadi Kone.

The *iduhu* in Kouderika and Roku share a common origin. Kuriu and Gaibodubu went from Nebira to Gobutanimu and then to Tatagira. They were forced by Koiari attacks to settle at Hurohurona. Again attacked by Koiari, they went to Kuriu. Three men, Gaudi Kone, Kone Kone and Geita Kone left the rest of the *iduhu* and went to Mapa and then to Bogedaube where, the land being good, they built a village.

Venehako and Tanomotu went from Birihumana to Kapapoini, then to Tanomotu, then to Gohigonimu and then to Ugava. From there they could see smoke from the fires of Gaudi Kone and his brothers at Napa Napa. Irama Doani, Hani Doani and Heni took presents to the brothers. As a result of a quarrel at a feast, other members of these and other *iduhu* left Kuriu and settled at Mateva. Soon after the Europeans came, their villages were at Eholasi and Dobi. According to a Baruni account, Tanomotu went to Motubada,

then to Mavaraioio and then to Roku. They are now at Dobi, still called Roku by the Motu.

Koita *iduhu* form two separate sections at each end of the village complex of Hanuabada: Kuriu lies to the west and Hohodae to the east. There are also Koita *iduhu* in the village of Tanobada near the mission at Metoreia.

According to an account recorded by Seligman (1910: 43), the Hohodae left their village at Borimana and established two villages by Ela beach and one on Koke Island. They went to 'Tau Erina' (Tauerema) and then to Koke at the foot of the hill. As the place was unsuitable, they went to Nara country beyond Galley Reach but returned after two years. According to a Motu account recorded by the late Loa Reva, the Hohodae left Koke because they were afraid of the Hula who had destroyed Kila Kila. They went to Gorobe and nearby Talai. Vagi Douna and Gamu Douna of Mavaru *iduhu* rescued Ganiga Soso and Egahu Soso of Geakone *iduhu* from Gorobe and brought them to live with them. Later Goka Igo of Kwaradubuna *iduhu* brought Goro Arua, also of Geakone *iduhu*, and Tubumaga rescued Hedu Gamika. They were followed by other Hohodae people and later settled by Poreporena people at the end of their village. Dubara, Geakone and Taurama *iduhu* are represented there.

The history of Baruni village is one of small Koita groups retreating towards the coast in face of Koiari attacks. James Chalmers, the L.M.S. missionary, said that there were five Baruni settlements in the 1870s. The people were then settled at Iboko Makara and Buigarara. Isukaevaga, Uraranu and Baruni *iduhu* were at Iboko, but as a result of a quarrel, Baruni moved to Buigarara. Then, some say as a result of Mission influence, they joined together in one village. They settled at the present site after the Second World War.

According to an account recorded by Mr. Sale Homoka, Baruni *iduhu* lived for a long time at Atemaka Makara. They then moved to Tugura Ogo, at the junction of the Porebada and Waigani roads. They were at Boroko Taruka, which is part of the present village, when they were joined by two men, Sogoa Gomara and Reroa Gomara. These men are said to have gone to Kila Kila and returned to found Badiri Kaevaga *iduhu*. According to another account, Rei Gomara, a Kaevaga man from Kila Kila, went to Dobonia Siguaia after spearing his brother Sogo in the leg. He then married Reika Ganiga, a Baruni *iduhu* woman. Goasa Rohi and Gorogo Goasa of Baruni *iduhu* went to Arara Makana and then inland to Ogo or Geaka village. The Motu arrived at this time and the Koita arranged to give the Motu their vegetables and game in exchange for fish. Koae Ganiga moved then to Sikere hill. A family split led one section to live at Dono, also known as Abahua, and the rest at Inadoieke. They joined together again at Iboko Makara across the road from the present village. Then they moved to Buigarara. According to this account, a man called Goasa Rohi, seven generations ascending from a man aged fifty, lived at Sikere.

Two *iduhu* are said to have originated from Boera. Isu Kaevaga are descended

from an Isumata man called Muro Goro, whose mother was a Kaevaga woman and who married a Baruni *iduhu* woman called Arua Goasa. Uraranu *iduhu* are descended from Taitu Kakia who left Boera to live with a Baruni man called Maraga Vai. The first known member of Dabunari *iduhu* was Hari Deina, who lived at Uraramakara. His son, Gomara Hari, married Mabata Goro, sister of Muro Goro.

Accounts of Arutu *iduhu*, also recorded by Sale Homoka, say that they were living with Tanomotu *iduhu* but they quarrelled over division of a garden. Koae Maraga of Arutu settled at Abahua and then at Sikere.

The story of the split between eastern and western Koita told by the Isumata is known at Kila Kila. They say that Geita Vahu was a Ioragaha leader who lived at Vadorata village on Taurama hill. Some twelve generations ago, Badiri *iduhu* of Kila Kila left Manuaga and went to Boroko. They then settled at Sabama. A man called Geita Goasa went to Kila Kila hill. Later Badihagwa people burned the village. Vani Goasa built a village on the ridge above Gimaune and then moved higher up the hill to Varimakana. When the Hula burned Varimakana village, they returned to Keumakana. The *iduhu* split into right and left sections while they were at Boroko. Badu split off from Badiri Laurina *iduhu* after a quarrel over a feast — Badu means angry.

Koge *iduhu* was founded by a man called Keto Vali from the Babaka area in the Hood Peninsula. His Koita name is Geita Hari and he lived some four generations ago. He built a *koge*, the houses with steeples formerly built in the Hood Peninsula, at Kogeva near Kaugere. Dubara *iduhu*, now associated with Koge, originated from Koma ten generations ago and went to Koke and then to Era.

The *iduhu* at Korobosea village are Iarogaha and Uhadi. Iarogaha were at Koma and then at Nebira, with Iarogaha on one side and Uhadi on the other. They made a village at Gaubo and then moved to Gobutanimu, where some stayed while others went to Koki. They were reunited but, as they had no food, they split up. As noted above, some went to the Hanuabada area. Others went to Hohola where the S.D.A. mission now is and then went down to Akarogo on the old golf course by Kaugere. After the Japanese war they moved to their present site at Korobosea.

There are four Gorobe *iduhu*. One is at Vabukori, but nothing of their history appears to be remembered. Of the three *iduhu* at Pari, Gorobe Kae and Gorobe Badili share a common ancestry. These are descended from a man named Muni Magi who lived some ten generations ago. Five generations ago, the *iduhu* divided into two. Ganiga Garia founded Gorobe Badili and his brother, Kobuga Garia, founded Gorobe Kae *iduhu*. Muni Magi lived at Ogoni, a hill above Taurama barracks, and then moved to Sero. Both Ganiga and Kobuga went to Pari when Kevau Dagora founded the village.

Gorobe Dubu are descended from Ira Goda who lived some eleven genera-

tions ago. He lived in the Nebira area. According to Kori Taboro, as recorded by Mr. Sinaka Goava in 1949, these people were living at Gorobe above Badili and the Dubara people at Hohodae, who were living at Naurehara, stole their food and spoiled their water. Under the leadership of Daure Bemu, who lived nine generations ago, Gorobe Dubu slipped away early in the morning and settled on an island in the mangroves called Masetoi. The son of Daure's brother, called Bemu Hari, joined Kevau Dagora at Pari.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I repeat that the greatly condensed account which I provide above is not complete and can never be complete. Many valuable traditions have been lost forever but many remain to be recorded. My account may cause disagreement when people find that their own version differs from the one given here. Certainly the account greatly oversimplifies a complex picture. I hope that it may encourage, or even provoke, people to record new versions. A general pattern does, however, emerge.

Motu-speakers can be seen as moving along the coast from the south-east. If their language was not originally Motu, they adopted it. They settled either on islands in Bootless Inlet, or on the mainland surrounding it. They then divided into two halves.

The Western Motu lived in two original settlements, Motu Hanua and Taurama. Motu Hanua appears to have been abandoned first, followed by small settlements along the northern shores of Bootless Inlet. Finally, some seven generations ago, Taurama was destroyed by the Lakwaharu. A new village was founded at Badihagwa. Later the inhabitants of Badihagwa moved to the shore and, joined by others already settled in the mangroves, formed the villages of Tanobada, Poreporena and Elevala. From these villages Pari was founded to the east and Rea Rea, Manumanu and Porebada to the northwest.

Vabukori is an ancient village which has some dialect features in common with the more recent Tatana.

The Lakwaharu, joined by Koiari speakers from the Sogeri area, settled at Tubusereia. Migrants from that village then joined inland people to form Gaba Gaba and Gaire. Barakau was largely derived from Tubusereia. These four villages constituted the Eastern Motu tribe.

A separate migration of Motu-speakers settled near the boundary of the present Gulf and Central provinces. They moved to the south-east, leaving settlements at Tarova and Delena where they now speak Roro. One section moved to Boera where they are said to have begun *hiri* expeditions.

The Koita and Koiari, whose languages belong to the same family, separated somewhere in the Sogeri area. The Koita came down the Laloki and settled in the Nebira-Gubiniu area. From there, they dispersed. Isumata, including Namura and Arauwa, went west. Arauwa made a village at Buria and Namura

at Darebo. The others reached Galley Reach where some elements stayed behind at Gorohu and Kido. The remainder returned to the east and settled at Taurama, Gobina and Aemakara.

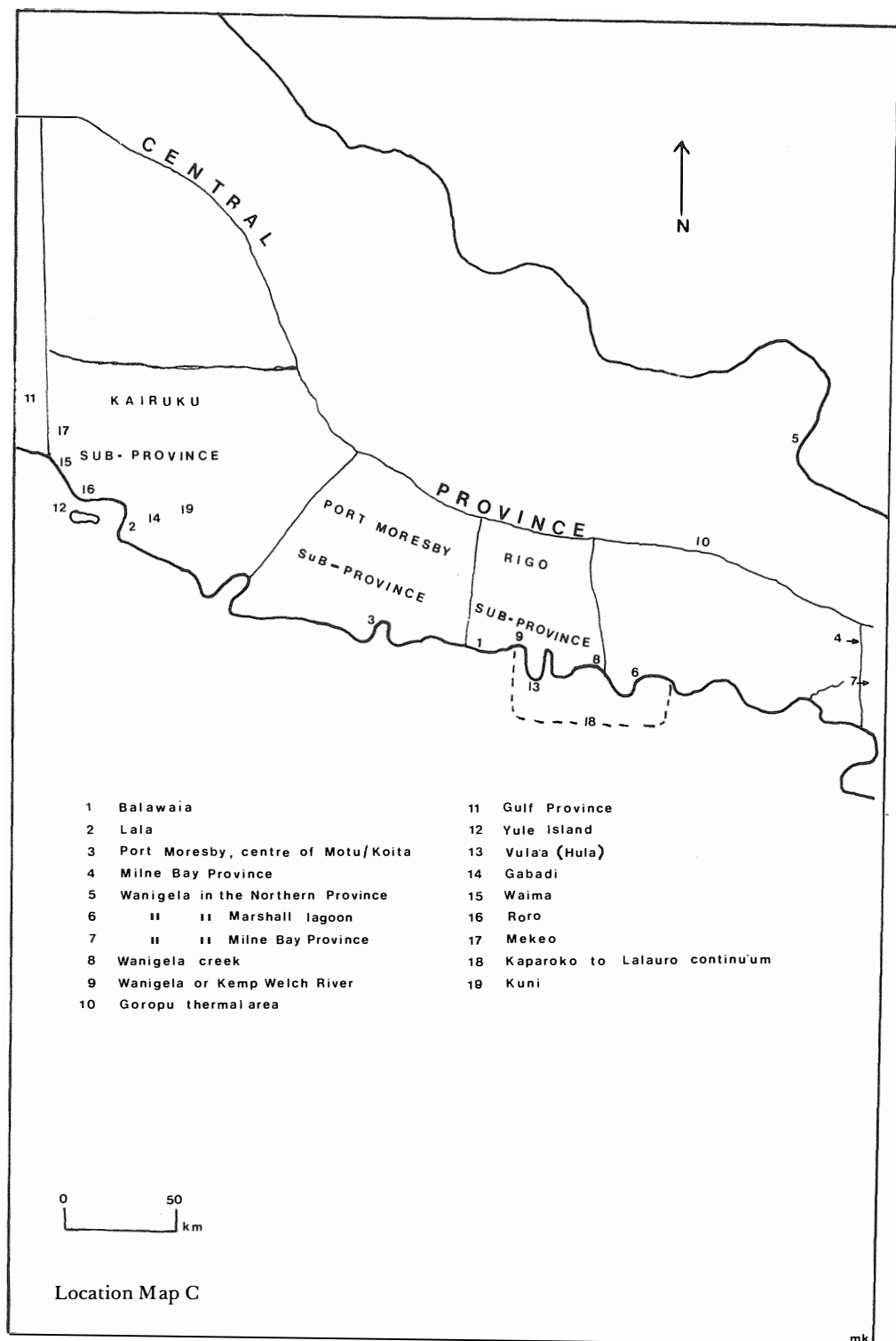
The eastern Koita moved towards the sea and became the ancestors of the people of Kila Kila and Korobosea villages and of Gorobe *iduhu* at Pari. A number of *iduhu* moving from the Nebira area recently combined to form Baruni village.

As a result of Koiari attacks and disease some time before the first Europeans came in the 1870's, the Koita were forced either to settle in their own villages on the coast or to join Motu villages. Hohodae and Kuriu form distinct Koita sections in Hanuabada and Koita *iduhu* are found in all villages in the Western Motu area except Manumanu.

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CHAPTER XV

The Lala and Balawaia in Central Province

John Kolia

The Balawaia occupy the four villages of Tauruba, Gamoga-invanakeina, Kemabolo and Bunevele-legikulo in the Rigo Sub-province in the east of the Central Province of what, before independence, was called Papua.¹ The village names given here are as spoken by the Balawaia. The people speak the Balawaia dialect of the Austronesian language Sinaugolo.² A feature of the language is that where the Motu have the letter "h" the Balawaia use a swallowed "g", as in the word *gologa* (bachelor). This is relevant to a comparison with Lala as will be shown. There are communalectic differences between the villages and even sub-communalectic differences within each village between the patrilineal descent groups (*dogolo*).³ There are about 1,500 Balawaia as defined by language.⁴ (For locations see Figure 2 page 56).

The Lala occupy the six villages of Oloi, Vanuamai, Ala'ala, Diumana, Tubu and Kaiau in the Kairuku Sub-province in the west of the Central Province.⁵ The village names given here are as pronounced by the Oloi people. They speak the Austronesian language Lala.⁶ There are communalectic differences between the Lala villages but they are small communities amongst whom sub-communalectic differences between the patrilineal descent groups (*Iduvu*) are probably lost. There are about 800 Lala.⁷ A feature of the language

¹Dutton T.E. *A Checklist of Languages and Present-Day villages of Central and South-east Mainland Papua*, Pacific Linguistic Series, B-24, A.N.U., Canberra, 1975.

²Dutton T.E., "Languages of the Rigo Area" in Wurm S.A. and Laycock D.C., (Eds.), *Pacific Linguistic Studies in Honour of Arthur Capell*, P.L.S. C-13, A.N.U., Canberra, 1970.

³Kolia J., "A Balawaia Grammar Sketch and Vocabulary" in Dutton T.E. (Ed.), *Studies in Languages of Central and South East Papua*, P.L.S.C. 29, A.N.U., Canberra, 1975.

⁴Dutton T.E. *op. cit.* (2)

⁵Dutton T.E. *op. cit.* (1)

⁶Called Na'ara by the Motu and Pokau by the Roro, e.g. see Lanyon-Orgill P.A., "Grammar of the Pokau Language, Central Division of Papua New Guinea" in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. XI, Part 3, 1945. (But this document is of little use in understanding Lala).

⁷Department of Chief Minister, *Village Directory*, Government of P.N.G., Port Moresby, 1973 (but administrative divisions often bisect language boundaries).

is the frequency of the glottal stop, as in the word *o'ole* (bachelor), and this often occurs where Balawaia has "g" and Motu has "h".⁸ Like Sinaugolo, Lala traces its descent from Proto-Central Austronesian but whereas Sinaugolo is descended from the Proto-Eastern branch of Proto-Central, Lala is descended from the Proto Western Branch.⁹

Although research has been of considerable depth in the four Balawaia villages,¹⁰ research has only begun in two of the Lala villages. In each case research began with a reduction of the dialect (Balawaia)¹¹ and the language (Lala)¹² to writing so that investigations could be made with the least communication difficulties. In addition, vocabularly lists so obtained are being made available to linguists so that some time-scale of linguistic changes will be obtained eventually.

Calculations from Austronesian lists made so far suggest that Proto-New Guinea-Oceanic broke away from Proto-Oceanic-Austronesian at least 5,000 years ago; that Proto-Milne Bay broke away from Proto-New Guinea-Oceanic about 5,000 years ago; that Proto-Central broke away from Proto-Milne Bay about 4,000 years ago; that Proto-Western Central and Proto-Eastern-Central diverged about 3,000 years ago; that Lala and Sinaugolo broke away from Proto-Western and Proto-Eastern respectively about 1,500 years ago; and that Balawaia emerged from its Sinaugolo parent less than 1,500 years ago.¹³ Recent linguistic changes, particularly since contact under the influence of English and of simplified Motu, and the re-mixing of the Central languages originally derived from a common parent, are of obvious interest to the historian. Balawaia and Lala informants who have met are fascinated by the similarity of their vocabularies. It is at least possible that Motu (under the influence of Koita)¹⁴ is atypical and that East and West Central Austronesian languages might hold elements of common history.

Between the dates of 1,500 years ago and contact, there is a huge gap to be filled. Myths, in the case of the Balawaia, suggest that the ancestors broke away from Proto-Milne Bay by crossing the Milne Bay Peninsula, perhaps from Wanigela (i.e. *Wai Nagula*, tidal fever river) on the north coast to one of the other tidal fever rivers such as Wanigela inside Marshall Lagoon on the south coast. Since there are at least five *Wai Nagula* however, four of them on

⁸Pawley A., "The Relationship of the Austronesian Languages of Central Papua: A Preliminary Study" in Dutton T.E. *op. cit.*, 3.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Kolia J., *History of the Balawaia*, I.P.N.G.S., 1977.

¹¹Kolia J., *op. cit.*, 3.

¹²Clunn S.P. & Kolia J.A., *A Lala Grammar Sketch and Vocabulary*, I.P.N.G.S., 1977.

¹³Pawley A., *op. cit.* (8).

¹⁴Personal comment Dutton T.E., 1975.

the south coast, the Balawaia could have gone up one such river to its source then come down another in the west, thus appearing in the myth to have crossed the Peninsula. However, since the possible north-east to south-west route would have to pass the Goropu solfataric area,¹⁵ there may be some support for the north-south tradition in the surprising existence of a word for volcano (*paevagi*) in an area where no volcanoes exist.

Lala myths suggest that the ancestors moved westwards from East Central and Milne Bay and therefore may have travelled around Milne Bay Peninsula in a widely accepted pattern,¹⁶ before entering the mountains and then migrating along the coast to the west. A common myth to many Austronesian communities is that of the mountain monster and the coastal hero/heroes.¹⁷ In Balawaia this is *Dauma Veganivegani*¹⁸ and in Lala it is *Kau Aniani*.¹⁹ The interpretation could be that the non-Austronesians fought the Austronesians, or (since a similar story has been found amongst the non-Austronesian Koaru²⁰ of the Gulf Province) it could simply reflect conflict between the mountain dwellers and the coastal dwellers. Both Balawaia and Lala have mythical versions of conflict with other groups in which their allies are not necessarily Austronesian. The myths of course may have their origins before 1,500 years ago, that is, earlier than the split between Proto-Western and Proto-Eastern.

Presenting apparently less-distorted evidence of probably more recent date are legends from the two groups. Balawaia legends tell how the ancestors crossed the nearest Wanigela River (shown as Kemp Welch on most maps) from the east and north, then migrated west and south towards the coast. The important legend of *Oloi*²¹ from the Lala describes the departure of groups after a quarrel and finds duplication in the legends of the groups it describes. An interesting example of this is found among at least one descent group of the Tate²² people of the Gulf Province who may be either non-Austronesians with a substantial Austronesian vocabulary or an entrapped Austronesian minority²³

¹⁵Baker G., "Preliminary Note on Volcanic Eruptions in the Goropu Mountains, South-eastern Papua, during the period, December, 1943 to August 1944" *Journal of Geology*, Vol. 54, 1946.

¹⁶Oram N.D. article intended for *Oral History*, 1977.

¹⁷Chakravarti P., "The Ogre-Killing Child" in *Gigibori*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1975; and Beier U. *Folklore in Melanesia*, Six N.B.C. Broadcasts, I.P.N.G.S., Port Moresby, 1976.

¹⁸See also, Navuru M., "The Saroa People and their Legends" in *Oral History*, Vol. I, No. 1, December 1972.

¹⁹Varimo S., "Na'ara Legends" in *Oral History*, Vol. I, No. 8, November, 1973.

²⁰Koaru H., "Fishing at Koaru", in *Oral History*, Vol. II, No. 10, October, 1974.

²¹e.g. see Swadling P. et al, "Beyond the Early Oral Traditions of the Austronesian-Speaking People of the Gulf and Western Central Provinces" in *Oral History*, Vol. V, No. 1, February, 1977.

²²Personal communication (a) Tate Agricultural Officer, 1974; and (b) Kari M., 1976.

²³Brown H.A., "The Eleman Language Family" in Franklin K. (Ed.), *The Linguistic Situation in the Gulf District and Adjacent Areas, Papua New Guinea*, P.L.S., C-26, A.N.U., Canberra, 1973.

(as the Lala see them). The visit of the Roro and Apau Motu from Yule Island to the Lala area is remembered but no real archaeological debris was found at the site.²⁴

More recent stories from the Balawaia describe how they won control of their present sites shortly before contact. Lala stories describe how the scattered *Iduvu* lived on hill tops (from which archaeological debris is now being collected) before being welded into villages at about the time of contact under the direction of the father of the powerful chieftainess Koloka.²⁵ From both groups came evidence of fighting, movement, bartering and co-existence with neighbours: in short, they show how the two groups coped with recent pre-contact and post-contact events.

The Balawaia pattern was co-operation with the foreigners in the cases of the two easily accessible villages and exclusiveness in the case of the two more remote villages (which were not visited for periods of up to nine years at a time). The Lala pattern appears to reflect Koloka's plan to cope with the traditional and foreign interference with the Lala lands and life. However, later the Lala were massively contacted by adventurers, sandalwood traders, plantation-owners and oil-searchers. Hence the apparent necessity for the elevation of Koloka to a somewhat dictatorial position, although this also reflects what appears to have been a stronger chieftainship institution and an acceptance of female chiefs in the west (Ala'ala and Vanunamai have chieftainesses today). The fact that Koloka was carried on a platform throughout her entire life is explained by the Lala as a protection against sorcery. Koloka was not always seen as powerful by foreigners.²⁶

These bodies of oral evidence are supported by songs (e.g. Balawaia, *Kidolo*,²⁷ Lala, *Navulo*²⁸), descriptions of architectural devices (Balawaia, *Rubunaka*; Lala *Lo'e*) and by the patterns of tattoos, carving, weaving and grass-skirts.

Patterns in carving, weaving, grass-skirts and tattoos, and styles in songs and dances can be partly explained by both Balawaia and Lala. Thus some idea of which are indigenous, which are borrowed and which are post-contact can be obtained and often there are linguistic clues to help such classification.

It has not been proved that contact, defined as the arrival of white foreigners,

²⁴Swadling P. & Kari M., fieldwork, 1976.

²⁵See Neme S., in Vol. IV, No. 9, October, 1976; Alu'a K. in Vol. IV, No. 10, November, 1976; and Ume E., Vol. V, No. 1, February, 1977; all with John Kolia and all in *Oral History*.

²⁶e.g. MacLaren A.A., "Diary for 1890" in the *Anglican Papers*, Box 40, Item 15, New Guinea Collection, Library, University of Papua New Guinea; or Williamson R.W., *The Ways of the South Seas Savages*, Seeley Service, London, 1914.

²⁷Kolia J., "Kidolo/Kidoro" in *Cave*, No. 8 (old series), 1975.

²⁸Recordings of Balawaia, Vaimuru and Lala songs have been deposited in the Folklore Archive of the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies.

was the first of the two great events in Papua New Guinea's history, (the other candidate put forward being the Second World War). Given a time span of 5,000 years for Austronesians and many times that for non-Austronesians, the earlier contact (e.g. of Austronesians) or the earlier conflicts (e.g. as in the mountain monster story) may prove to have much greater significance.

Reverting to the usually-accepted definition, we can investigate pre-contact events not only by linguistic measurement but by comparing the titles of the *Dogolo* patrilineal descent groups of the Balawaia with the *Iduhu* of the Motu; the *Iduvu* of the Lala and the Gabadi; the *Itsupu* of the Waima and Roro; the *Ikupu* of the Mekeo; the *Kwalu* of the people of the Kaparoko to Lalaura continuum of languages; and the *Dogoro* of the other Sinaugolo. The leadership positions of *Lohia* (Motu); *Ovia* (Gabadi, Waima and Roro); *Lovia* (Lala); *Yobia* (Kuni); *Lopia* (Mekeo); *Vele* (Kaparoko to Lalaura); and *Vere* (Sinaugolo) can be examined for the differences and similarities. A search for common origins can be made in migration stories such as *Oloi* (Lala); *Kupu Ibakaikai* (Roro); *Isoisofapu* (Mekeo); *Buria* (Koita-Motu); *Sere Douna* and *Taurama E Keauri* (Motu); *Uaeto E Nauaeto* and *Riwana* (Kaparoko to Lalaura); *Gurufore Ema Gamadafore* (Sinaugolo), and *Nagamadobu Ema Momodobu* (Balawaia).

The carving patterns which can be compared include those in the *Iari* of the Waima and Roro; the *Keaie' efanía* of the Mekeo; the *Laulau Vauro* of the Motu; and the *Paipai* of the Kaparoko to Lalaura; the *Garaia* and *Unubobolo* of the Sinaugolo. It is not these general names which have to be compared, of course, but the patterns which they include. Similarly, one can compare the *Vegatu* tattoo patterns of the Balawaia with the *Hevareva* of the Motu; the *Ikara Moreveda* of the Gabadi; the *Marere* of the Waima and Roro; the *Poapoe* of the Mekeo; the *Ava*, *Alo*, *Aloa* and *Gatugatu* of the Kaparoko to Lalaura; the *Vebera*, *Venari*, *Berabera* and *Vaname* of the other Sinaugolo; and the *Lele* of Lala.

Dancing attire can be compared. Bearing in mind that dress patterns were once exclusive, and to show what a vast field this is, I give a few examples such as the *Siage* and *Tubuka* head-dress of the Motu; the *Ibara* head-dress of the Gabadi; the *Bada* and *Bela* costumes of the Kuni; the *Ihaburi* and *Ihribihibi* pubic coverings of the Waima; the *Kiba* grass-skirts of the Roro; the *Ao'ao* woven armbands of the Mekeo; the *Poni*, *Lopo* and *Manulau* head-dress of the Kaparoko to Lalaura, the *Kafa* and *Robo* armbands of the other Sinaugolo; the *Gana* armbands of the Balawaia; and such grass-skirt patterns as the *Ivalavao*, the *Ikipu'uitoi*, the *Laobatoi*, the *Iva'aivaomaoma*, the *Iva'aukua* and *Boualo* of the Lala.

Once again, it is not the general names we have to investigate but the acquisition of designs. Both linguistic and pattern clues are found by examining the Lala string-bag designs of *Idauoloa*, *Idauilope*, *Ivaboalo*, *Ivamekeo*, *Ikuakua* and *Idauobala*. The use of once exclusive musical instruments (and their

music) can be compared, for example the *Gaba* drums of the Motu; the *Abada* drums (and their decoration and husk-rattle appendages) of the Gabadi; the *Bioni* rattles of the Kuni; the *Remoremo* flutes of the Waima; the *Pitsi* conch-shells of the Roro; the *Luku* stringed-instruments of the Mekeo; the *Nikoro* conch-shells and *Ere* rattles of the Kaparoko to Lalaura; the *Aba* drums and *Tareko* rattles of the other Sinaugolo; the *Ana'ile* drums of the Lala; and the *Ivili* and *Turai* flutes of the Balawaia.

A rich field awaiting exploration is the spread of dances such as the *Gerukome* of the Motu; the *Ravu* of the Gabadi; the *Kuluda* of the Kuni; the *Eowai* of the Waima; the *Aroba* of the Roro; the *Pio* of the Mekeo; the *Ute* and *Kelekele* of the Kaparoko to Lalaura; the *Leku* and *Vaura* of the other Sinaugolo; the *Kidolo* variations of the Balawaia; and the *Lavu* of the Lala. Similarly, one can investigate the words and origins of songs such as the Motu *Maisi*; the *Avoa Keveada* of the Gabadi; the *Vilevile* of the Kuni; the *Nape* of the Waima; the *Tsitsi Ifugu* of the Mekeo; the *Iwan* and *Rogo* of the Kaparoko to Lalaura; the *Maru*, *Lebo* and *Boea* of the other Sinaugolo; and the *Davodau* and *Kani* of the Lala.

Of obvious historical interest are the *Hiri* trading voyages of the Motu; the *Wapu Kawa* exchanges of the Roro; the *Kaowa Kaowa* exchange of the Maiva; the *Afa'afa* exchange of the Mekeo; the *Voi* and *Woiwoi* exchanges of the Kaparoko to Lalaura; the *Lio* trading voyages of the Lala; and the *Goigoi* and *Ganigani* exchanges of the Balawaia and other Sinaugolo. The spread of plant products used in these exchanges can also be traced. Examples of these are the *Naowaika* (foreign mango), the *Koitaki* (a banana from a non-Austronesian area) and the *Koiari* (a mountain yam) all found in Balawaia gardens today.

Comparison of explanations of illness might also yield evidence, for example by examining malevolent and benevolent sorcerers such as the *Vada Taudia* (Motu), the *Agaieda* (Gabadi); the *Bamauri Haukia* (Waima); the *Nepu Ai* (Roro); the *Ita Ai* (Mekeo); the *Kalareri* and *Meamea Aura* of the Kaparoko to Lalaura; the *Gora Tarimana*, the *Darodaro* and *Godiotauria* of the Balawaia and other Sinaugolo; and the *Oadakauta* of the Lala. Or one might investigate belief in supernatural influence such as the *Seguka* of the Sinaugolo; the *Gare Latalata* and *Avu'avu* of the Kaparoko to Lalaura; the *A'aisa* of the Mekeo; the *Oa Rove* of the Roro; the *Auba Birua* of the Waima; the *Idume* of the Kuni; the *Sene Diararadia* of the Motu; and the *Mulava* of the Balawaia.

The patterns found under the general names for string-figures, that is the *Harikau* of the Motu; the *Bao* and *Mako* of the Kuni; the *Itaratai* of the Waima; the *Ika* of the Mekeo; the *Walowalo* of the Kaparoko to Lalaura; the *Iakeni* and *Kotukotu* of the other Sinaugolo; the *Idala* of the Lala; and the *Akini* of the Balawaia should also reveal borrowing of patterns. These investigations could be continued into war weapons (and enemies); into architectural devices;

into assistant leadership and leadership elevation; and into hunting methods. A tentative start in fact has been made.²⁹ On a small scale it is necessary to follow the investigations briefly touched on above in order to discover the history of the Lala and Balawaia. (Then cultural comparisons can be made where historical links have been discovered with another group).³⁰

Most of the evidence from the architectural devices among the Lala and Balawaia relates to events since contact. In Kemabolo and Bunevele-legikulo the Balawaia *Rubunaka* collapsed within four years of the arrival of pastors at the beginning of this century. At Gamoga-invanakeina it collapsed within four years of a pastor arriving after the last World War. In large, isolated, mountain-top, lively Tauruba, the *Rubunaka* did not collapse until forty years after the arrival of the first pastor and then only when World War Two had begun, the Goropu vents had started issuing a "mysterious white dust" and the pastor had preached an apocalyptic sermon.³¹

In Oloi, the Lala *Lo'e* still stands and is used for feasts and in times of possible attacks by traditional marauders, *Oadakauta*. (The fear of the Balawaia equivalent, *Waratauria*, persists equally strongly). The design of the Oloi *Lo'e* has changed from sloping roof³² to level roof because of a recent dispute between the owners and the builders.³³ Other aspects of culture which can be investigated for evidence (and this yields only partial results) is the role of the seer (today a woman) among the Lala, the use of incantations among the Balawaia, and the modes of malevolent and benevolent sorcery among both. All these things are very much alive today but their intense involvement with recent events makes it hard to unravel their relation to pre-contact events. Bride-wealth distribution (*Veginitago*) is traditional among the Balawaia but is a recent phenomenon introduced by Gulf Province migrants among the Lala. That is, Lala receive it from outsiders but do not pay it and have difficulties in case of divorce. The Balawaia of limited contact have a stable marriage institution. The much contacted Lala have amazingly unstable marriage relationships both within and beyond the language group.

Neither group practices regular recall of genealogies but these can occasionally be collected in depth, the longest so far going back twelve generations. Not until a number have been collected can one begin to be able to chart them;

²⁹By students of U.P.N.G. in "Lahara Village Survey, 1974-6" in *Oral History*, Vol. V, Nos. 4 & 5, May-June, 1976.

³⁰e.g. see Kolias J., "Song of Au'a" in *Cave*, Vol. I, No. 2 (New Series) where a migration of Gulf people eastwards to the Central Province is described.

³¹Personal communication, Pastor Higo M., retired of Boera, 1974.

³²See photograph of *Lo'e* in Seligman C.G., *The Melanesians of British New Guinea*, Cambridge, 1910.

³³Kolias J., "The *Lo'e* of Oloi" in *Gigibori*, Vol. IV, No. 1, 1978.

not at first a single-line genealogy (for there are too many gaps and insufficient cross-checks) but composite descent group genealogies (*Dogolo/Iduvu*) and this opens up communication with the villagers who take a flexible view of non-genetic ancestors. Once having drawn descent group genealogical charts, however, one can begin to link up the stories of who was where with whom, doing what, about when. So far this has given a time depth of about 300 years to Balawaia history. Lala investigations have not yet reached this point.

Both are more interested in post-contact genealogies and in cognate relationships. This is particularly so in the case of the Lala in regard to the foreigners who have married into the language group and founded large mixed-race families, some living near the village, but most living in Moresby yet maintaining links with the village.

Recent genealogical interest has recently become acute with the Lala who are involved in disputes over land between themselves and another Austronesian group; between themselves and a foreign plantation owner; and between mixed-race cognates and another Austronesian group. The Balawaia and their neighbours also quarrel over land, using claims based on earliest occupation and this may yet stimulate interest in genealogies in depth. In this case, however, they would be immediately suspect.

Because of the possible time depth which linguistics offers us, a history of a few centuries for the Balawaia (and hopefully for the Lala) might seem shallow indeed. However, to discover history even at this depth requires an immense amount of investigation and for the Balawaia and Lala is far from complete. This might then be linked up with linguistic, archaeological and mythical evidence which refers to more remote times. The more we study inter-cultural connections the greater chance we have of fitting our studies of specific societies such as the Lala and Balawaia into the broader framework provided by other evidence.

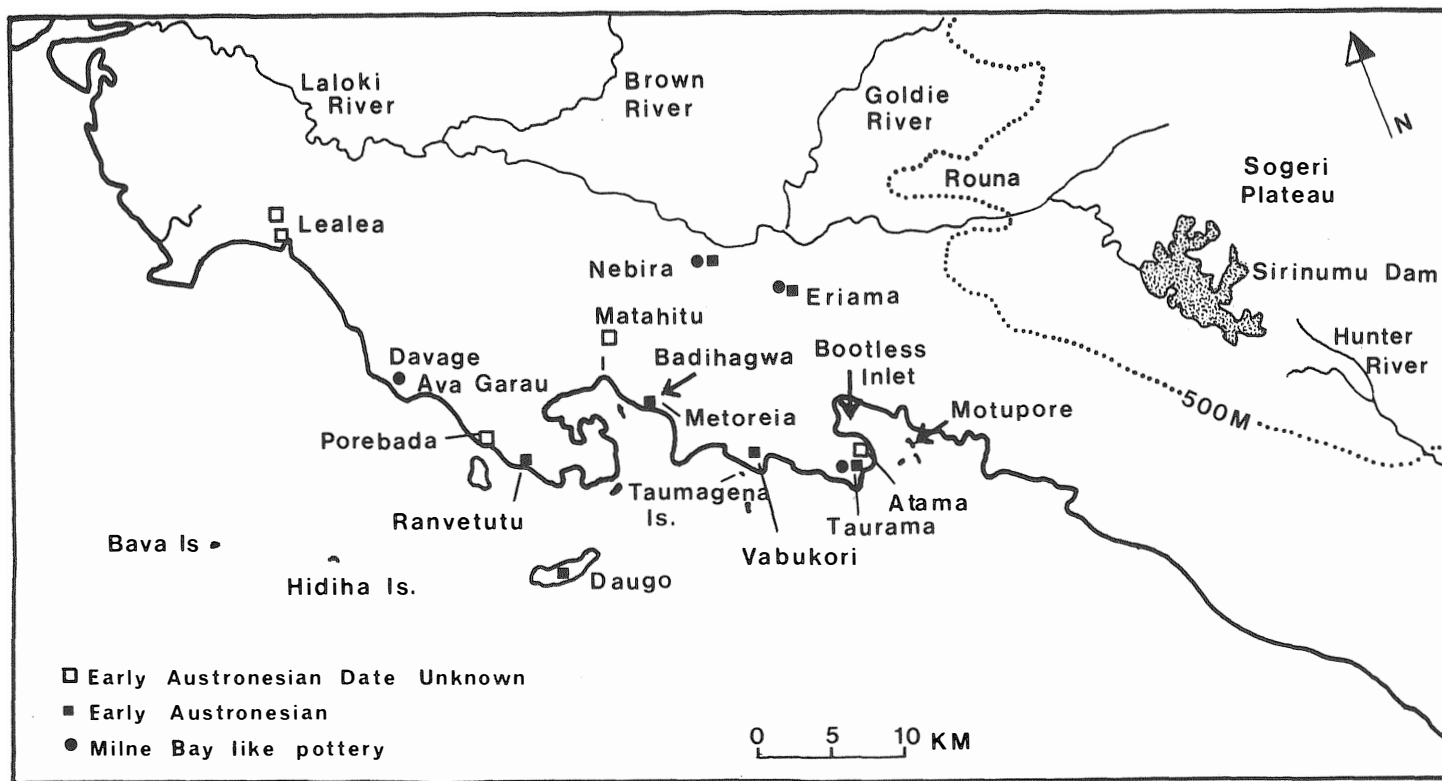


Figure 12: Present-day distribution of Motu and Koita villages

CHAPTER XVI

The Settlement History of the Motu & Koita Speaking People of the Central Province, Papua New Guinea

Pamela Swadling

Introduction

The Koita and Motu were the Papua New Guineans occupying the Port Moresby coastline (see Figures 11, 12, & 13) when first contact was made there with Europeans. The former spoke a Non-Austronesian¹ language and claimed that their ancestors had migrated from the Sogeri Plateau. Unlike the Koita, the Austronesian² speaking Motuans could not give a clear account of their homeland. The settlement traditions they related were all concerned with sites along the central south Papuan coast. Some they claimed were villages of considerable antiquity, whereas others had been recently settled.

The Austronesian language of the Motuans however, has long prompted scholars to seek their origin outside the Central Province. Pawley has recently suggested that the South Papuan Austronesian languages may be derived from a single ancestral language from outside Central Papua, but within Melanesia. He postulates that the south Papuan Austronesian languages began to diverge from this ancestral language 2,500 to 3,400 years ago.

The people who settled the south Papuan coast apparently diverged into three dialect groups. The central one was ancestral to Motu. Glotto-chronology suggests that Motu diverged from its immediate neighbours between 1,500 and 2,000 years ago. This indicates that regional diversification probably began soon after the settlement of the Central Province (Pawley 1969, 1976: 92-3).

Although it is not possible to correlate artefacts and languages precisely in prehistory, there is good evidence³ that the large number of ceramic bearing archaeological sites found along the south Papuan coast dating from 2,000 years ago were established by Austronesian speakers. Some of these early settlers

¹Those languages found in the island of New Guinea, Indonesia and the Solomons which do not belong to the Austronesian family.

²Austronesian languages are spoken in Polynesia, Micronesia, most of Indonesia, parts of Melanesia and as far afield as Madagascar and Taiwan. In island New Guinea they are scattered along the coast and most of the smaller offshore islands are totally Austronesian.

³For a recent summary of the evidence see Bellwood 1975:12.

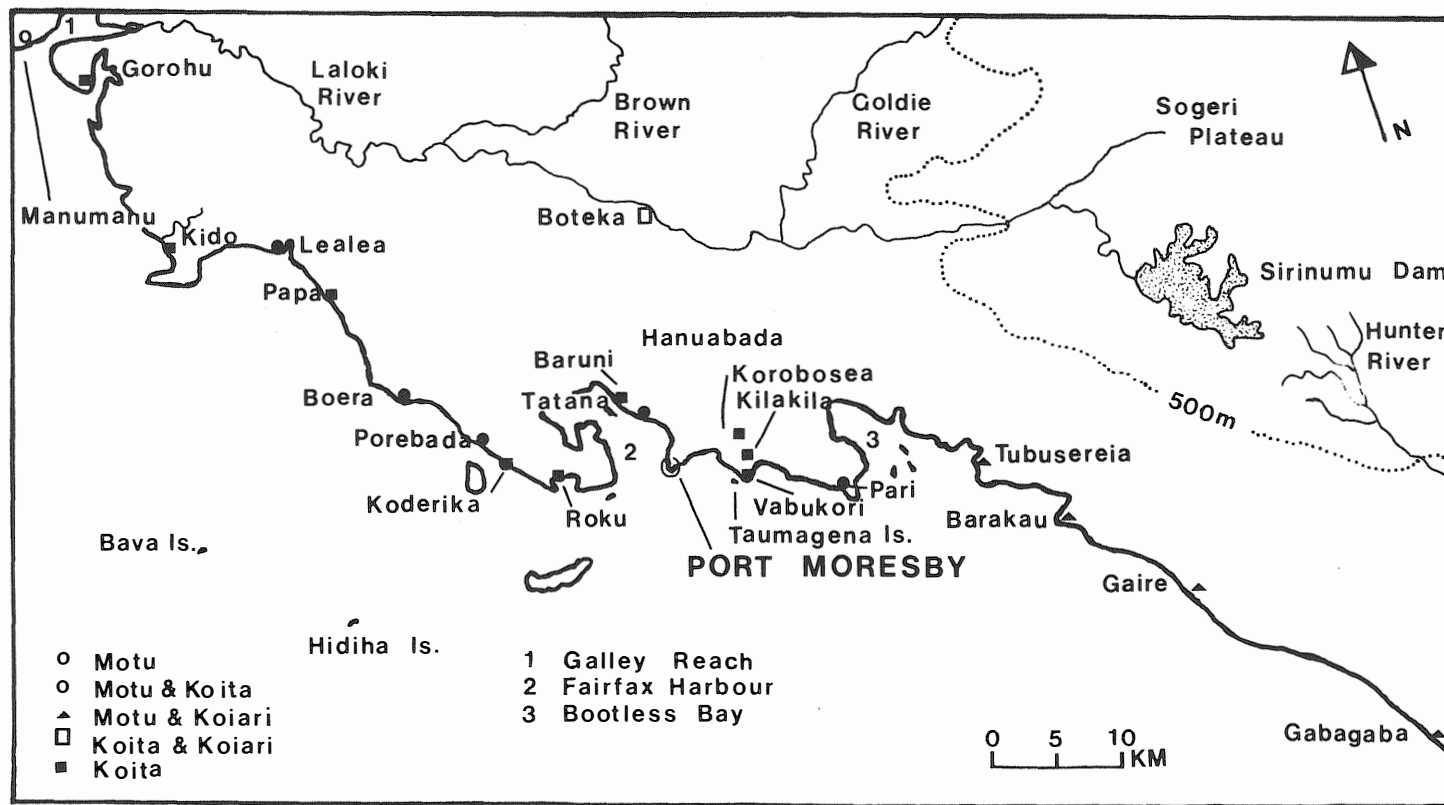


Figure 13: Archaeological and Traditional sites mentioned in text

also moved inland; the most inland sites are in the Laloki river valley some 16 kilometres from the Port Moresby coast.

Ceramic sequence of the central south Papuan coast

Bulmer in 1971 outlines four ceramic traditions within the prehistoric sequence of the Port Moresby region. These are as follows: Red Slipped, Massim, Boera/Taurama and Motu ware (Bulmer 1971: 53).

The earliest ceramics Bulmer calls red slipped burnished ware. However, some of the pottery found lacks the distinctive red wash or slip (Allen 1972: 95). Vanderwal working in the Yule Island area avoided this problem in terminology by devising time phases within which characteristic local sites were used to name the changing nature of the ceramics over time (Vanderwal 1973:196). An early, middle and late chronological group of early Austronesian settlements is used in this paper.

The pottery made by the subsequent migration from the east, recently dated to about 1,200 years ago,⁴ was termed Massim because of its similarity to Goodenough, Amphlett and Trobriand Islands ceramics (Bulmer 1971: 57). Yet substantial deposits of Massim ware were lacking in the Port Moresby area and until recently had only been excavated in any quantity at Nebira 2 (ACJ)⁵ (Bulmer 1969, 1975). Hence Massim pottery was thought to reflect transient fishermen, traders or limited settlement by other colonists (Bulmer 1971: 82). Nor was its relationship clear, with the subsequent Boera/Taurama and related Motupore tradition. However, a recent excavation at Ava Garau (AMH) near Boera by the author has produced ceramic evidence that the Boera/Taurama/Motupore tradition is a local development of former and new manufacturing ideas. These ideas were probably introduced about 1,200 years ago from the Goodenough, Amphlett and Trobriand Islands area of the Milne Bay Province (Swadling n.d.a.)⁶

The Boera/Taurama/Motupore ware has been suggested as being ancestral to modern Motu, or alternatively as reflecting another wave of settlement by maritime traders (Bulmer 1971: 67, 77). Recent findings now support the first proposal (Jim Allen personal communication 1975).

Arguments about discontinuity and continuity within the ceramic record

Despite evidence suggesting that Austronesians were living along the Central Province coastline from about the time of Christ the Motuans were still considered more recent settlers. Such a view was based on the belief that there was

⁴Charcoal from layer 16 of the midden dump excavated by Swadling at Ava Garau near Boera.

⁵National, traditional and archaeological site file code number.

⁶A certain degree of confusion, however, still exists as sites with such pottery have yet to be excavated with comparable dates in the Milne Bay area.

a gap in the occupation sequence of the Port Moresby and Yule Island areas. Bulmer, Allen and Vanderwal all propose that the Austronesians who had occupied the Central South Papuan coast for about 800 years abandoned their claim to the area. They believe the same land was later settled by people whose pottery has close affinities with certain Milne Bay ceramics. These new settlements were all sited close to the coast.⁷

Now however, it is no longer necessary to propose a break in the occupation sequence for the Port Moresby area. A lower layer of Ava Garau (AMH) near Boera which contains Milne Bay influenced ceramics has been dated to 1220 ± 95 years before the present (SUA 515). From this time, the ceramic ideas from the Trobriand, Amphlett and Goodenough Islands begin to dominate the styles in the Port Moresby area. The number of people who were responsible for these ceramic innovations is not known. Some scholars suggest that there was a further large-scale migration of people, (Allen 1977 (a): 39) while others suggest that a few traders or fishermen may have been responsible (Susan Bulmer personal communication 1975). Most sites from this time are coastal, but some settlements were also located in the Laloki river valley.

Although ideas derived from Milne Bay dominate the decorative patterns of pottery from Ava Garau and bowl rim shapes, other procedures, such as the painting of globular pots, remain as before the arrival of the Milne Bay migrants. On this basis it can be suggested that the subsequent migrants did not displace the initial Austronesian settlers but merged with them. Possibly they specialised in pottery production as a means of livelihood, until marriage ties gave them claim to gardening, hunting and fishing areas. If this was the case, the ancestry of the present-day Motuans can not only be traced back to the appearance of Milne Bay people and their ceramic ideas about 1,200 years ago, but also to the first Austronesian settlers of the Port Moresby area.

This chapter attempts to integrate all the known traditional and archaeological evidence into a settlement history for the Port Moresby area. As many gaps exist in the available data, this scheme is highly speculative, but credible in terms of our present knowledge. Attention will first be given to the nature of settlement in the central south Papuan coastal lowlands before the coming of the Austronesians, then to their occupation of the area from the time of their first settlements till the founding of the present-day Motuan villages. The Koita migration will then be considered, followed by a discussion of the coastal merger.

Non-ceramic sites in the Central Province

The oldest site so far found is Kosipe (AER), near Tapini in the Central Province highlands. The people who lived there 26,000 years ago were gatherers and hunters. No early agricultural sites are known in the Central Province;

⁷See for example Allen 1977 (a).

but near Mount Hagen in the Wahgi valley people were cutting down trees and making gardens by 9,000 years ago. Local yams and bananas were probably the main crops grown. By 5,000 years ago taro had been introduced and was widely grown in the central highlands. It is not known when taro reached the Central Province highlands, but it is possible that this favoured Sogeri plateau crop reached the ancestors of the Koita and the Koiari people many thousands of years ago.

The only site with a non-ceramic phase found in the Central Province coastal lowlands is Kukuba Cave (ADL), about 11 kilometres east of Yule Island, excavated by Vanderwal. This site yielded stone material dated to some 4,000 years ago. (Vanderwal 1973: 167). Comparable material appears to be absent in the Port Moresby region despite fairly wide ranging surveys and excavations. For instance, nothing similar was found at any of the 150+ sites now recorded for the area shown in Figure 13; not even in the surface or excavated material from the Eriama rock shelters; nor have shell middens been found without ceramics. This all suggests that human settlement was sparse or absent in the Port Moresby region at the time of first Austronesian settlement. The apparent ease with which these potters established themselves in a number of localities along the coast also suggests that the earlier occupation of the area might have been sparse and shifting.

Apart from the coastal sea resources, there would have been little attraction in the Port Moresby lowlands for anyone inhabiting the Sogeri plateau until grasslands were established where large wallaby populations could feed and suitable lowland food crops had been introduced. Extensive stands of sago or pandanus are absent and the rainfall and soils of the lowlands are not suitable for large-scale taro cultivation. The wild plants which are present (for example *Cycas media*) are not easily edible and are only eaten after considerable preparation. The Motu (who were the established Austronesians at the time of contact), were largely dependent on introduced Asian yams and bananas and (since the initiation of the *hiri*) on sago obtained from the Gulf. More recently sweet potato and tapioca have been introduced ((Nigel Oram personal communication 1975).

The settlement history of the Austronesian speakers in the Port Moresby coastal lowlands

Two early Austronesian sites have been excavated in the Port Moresby area. These are Taurama (AJA) on the coast and Nebira 4 (ACL) inland near the Laloki river, (see Figure 13). Both sites have the full range of ceramics made from the time of initial Austronesian settlement until prior to the incursion of Milne Bay ceramic ideas about 1,200 years ago. Other sites occupied during the early and middle periods of settlement by the first Austronesians were

Eriama, Metoreia and Vabukori. The ceramic material available to the author from the sites shown in Figure 13 with open squares does not allow clear dating within either the middle or late phases.

During the late period of first Austronesian settlement two new coastal sites were founded. These were Ranvetutu (AFD) and Daugo (AAQ). They were not the only coastal sites occupied at this time; Taurama, Vabukori (ABD) and possibly Lealea (AHV & AHW) were also settled. Since there is no comparable increase in the number of inland sites, it is probable that a re-orientation to the coast was occurring at this date.

The arrival of Milne Bay potters about 1,200 years ago apparently was followed by the establishment of a vast village complex in the Boera area. This complex is the largest area of prehistoric ceramics reported in the Port Moresby region. To attain such a population concentration, the site was probably settled not only by the Milne Bay potters but also by the people who abandoned Ranvetutu, Daugo, Vabukori and Taurama. The lack of other sites with such ceramics along the central south Papuan coast makes this a likely proposition.

Boera was probably favoured for two reasons. In the first place the land was virgin; no evidence of prior occupation has been found during wide ranging ground surveys. The same land is still under cultivation today, though people have avoided the areas thickly covered with midden debris. Secondly, Boera is the closest land to the rich fishing grounds around Bava and Idiha Islands. This area is reputed to be the richest fishing ground along the central south Papuan coast.

One of the sites within the extensive ceramic complex at Boera is Davage, the traditional home of Edai Siabo the founder of the *hiri* or trading expedition to the Gulf. The earlier re-orientation to the coast noted above; the presence of a *Tridacna* club at Samoa (OAC), near Kikori in the Gulf Province, similar to those found at Ranvetutu (see Swadling n.d.:a); and the discovery of a painted globular pot very similar to the large number of broken sherds present on the hill slopes of Davage in the bank of the Lakekamu River across from Eopoe in the Gulf Province (see photo in Bulmer 1971: 28), all suggest that Davage was one of the sites from where central south Papuan coast people voyaged to the Gulf of Papua.

Preliminary analysis indicates that middle and late Motupore-like ware is rare at Boera. This suggests that people began to disperse from the Boera settlement complex some 400 years after it was founded (Swadling n.d.:b.). Unfortunately the required ceramic comparison which would afford a clear statement cannot yet be made, as the separate analyses of the Motupore and Boera material are not finished. The people moving away from Boera probably founded Motupore, the basal layers of which date to 800 years ago. Possibly they also founded Taurama, Vabukori (which might then have been sited on the sandspit between the mainland and Taumagena Island now washed away),

Tatana, Urourina on Yule Island, and the Eastern Motu division.⁸

As Boera declined Bootless Inlet apparently took over as the main population centre. It is possible that the Motu derived their name from living on Motupore or Motuhanau (Oram preceding chapter). If Boera people did not do so, people from Motupore and its associated sites in Bootless Bay probably established Vabukori, Urourina on Yule Island and the Eastern Motu division.

The most recent archaeological deposits at Motupore date from two to three hundred years ago. Tradition relates that fighting with the Tubusereia people led to the abandonment of Motupore in favour of Taurama. There each descent group established their hamlets along the shore from Taurama Head to the western bays of Bootless Inlet. The continued fighting with the Tubusereians encouraged many to move away and found a new village at Badihagwa. Some time later the people remaining at Taurama were attacked and their village was destroyed. This destruction of Taurama occurred seven generations ago ascending from a man born in 1923 (Ibid).

The traditional site of Badihagwa is situated about half a kilometre behind the present village of Hanuabada. On Gurei hill (APO) which is shorewards from the present Badihagwa High School, both Motu and late Motupore style pottery was found in keeping with the traditional account. The late Motupore ware is a ceramic style and was not necessarily made at Motupore; it could equally have been made at Taurama and perhaps even at Badihagwa.

Between 6 and 4 generations ago, there was a gradual movement from Badihagwa to the coast to establish the settlement cluster now known as Hanuabada. Tanobada was established below the present mission at Metoreia; Elevala around the island of the same name; and Poreporena on the mainland further to the east (Oram 1974: 5).

Four Motu villages were founded from either Badihagwa or Hanuabada, and a section settled at Boera. Lealea was the first to be established, 6 or 7 generations ago ascending from a man who is now in his fifties. Pari was settled not long after; Manumanu was later still. The most recent village was Porebada, which was founded a few years before the first Europeans landed in the early 1870's (Oram preceding chapter).

The Eastern Motu and the Western Motu must once have had an ancestral village complex in common. In terms of the present archaeological field evidence this could be either the Boera complex or Motupore. If they migrated from Motupore, it would probably have been soon after Motupore was founded, as Tubusereian onslaughts are traditionally said to have encouraged people to leave Motupore for Taurama.

⁸Today the people resident at Tubusereia, Barakau, Gaire and Gabagaba.

Today there are 25 *iduhu* names in Tubusereia; tradition relates that 16 of these have Koiari origins and 9 can be called Motu. The Koiari *iduhu* originated in the Sirinumu Dam — Rouna area of the Sogeri Plateau, while the Motu *iduhu* came from village sites not too far to the east. The Koiari move from the mountains occurred 7 generations ago ascending from a man now aged 40. Both Gaire and Gabagaba were founded by people moving from Tubusereia and inland areas shortly before the first Europeans landed. Barakau village was founded in post-contact time possibly as late as the present century (Oram 1977: 78).

This settlement history of the Motuans, though still highly speculative in parts, provides an account of how the differences now recognised between different Motu villages (Groves et al 1958: 224) could have arisen. The two major divisions of Eastern Motu (comprising villages of Tubusereia, Barakau, Gaire and Gabagaba) and Western Motu (comprising Hanuabada, Lealea, Pari, Manumanu and Porebada) tradition suggests a date from before the abandonment of Motupore about two or three hundred years ago. The other three Motu speaking villages, Boera, Tatana and Vabukori while geographically within the Western Motu area are today considered to be different from either major group and to some degree dissimilar from each other.

The Boera people have been shown above to have a long settlement history in the Boera area, though for a while they did leave the Boera area and later return (see Chatterton 1969). Like the Eastern Motu, Tatana and Vabukori villages were probably founded by migrants from either Boera or Motupore. It is unfortunate that the sandspit which once extended from the mainland to Taumagena Island has been washed away at Vabukori as any ceramic confirmation for this hypothesis would most likely have been found there. However there is no doubt that the Motuans now living at Vabukori have been in the immediate area for a long time. Oram (preceding chapter) has recorded one pedigree extending for 16 generations ascending from a man born in 1910 and another 10 generations ascending from a man aged 60.

The settlement history of the Koita speakers in the Port Moresby coastal lowlands

The Non-Austronesian speakers in the Port Moresby area are the Koita and the Koiari. Linguistically the Koita have their closest ties with the Koiari. They have similar grammars and phonologies, though Koita only shares 65% of its vocabulary with the neighbouring Eastern Koiari dialect. This would suggest that the Koita were once the southern extremity of the Koiari people (Dutton 1969: 32).

Traditional accounts suggest that the Koita occupied the Sogeri Plateau before they migrated to Rouna and then to the coastal lowlands. The Koita living west of Fairfax Harbour trace the origins of all Koita back to two brothers

who lived in a cave called Goubavaga or Gururumava located just east of Sirinumu Dam near the headwaters of the Hunter River (Dutton 1969:30). Oram has recorded several versions of a pedigree which extends 19 generations to the time when the Koita moved away from the Koiari (Oram preceding chapter).

Traditional accounts indicate that the Koita have moved to the coastal lowlands in relatively recent times. The linguistic evidence supports such a view. Koita is a close-knit language with little variation from east to west. To a linguist this suggests either that the Koita have maintained close contact with each other, or that the language was not established long enough to diversify (Dutton 1969: 32). The many recent migrations related in traditional accounts make the second interpretation most likely.

As Dutton suggests, an important though unexpressed reason for the coastal movement of the Koita would probably have been the expansionist pressures of the Koiari and Mountain Koiari (Dutton 1969: 33, 43-5, 59). The Koita themselves believe that their ancestors moved towards the coast because they feared death at the hands of the Koiari, either by sorcery, or by water poisoning (*ibid*). Such acts by the Koiari were undoubtedly enhanced by the simultaneous appearance and spread of European introduced diseases. Contagious diseases were still taking their toll after European settlement in the Port Moresby area (For example Stone 1880, Chalmers 1895: 187). The ceramic material found at traditional Koita sites supports the recent Koita movement from the Sogeri area. Traditional sites usually with Motu ware, though sometimes with late Motupore ware, are located in the Laloki, Brown and Goldie River valleys and on hills towards and overlooking the coast. This indicates that the Koita as a group moved towards the coast within the last 200-300 years.

Discussion

When the first Europeans arrived all Motu villages west of Pari had an area where Koita resided. This was usually at one end of the village. Other Koita lived in all Koita hamlets a little way inland, or on hills overlooking the sea (Lawes 1879: 371). In the majority of cases it would seem that it was the Koita who merged with existing Motu villages and not the reverse, (See e.g. Seligman 1910: 47, Dutton 1969: 34), though the coastal Motu villages themselves may have been established near the hilltop Koita sites, the latter moving down to the coast with the arrival of Motu settlers. For example, Koita settlements were already established on nearby hills when the villages of Pari, Porebada and Lealea were founded (Oram preceding chapter).

Belshaw (1957: 11) reports a legend recalling a day when Koita first saw Motu canoes in Fairfax harbour. In this account the Motu were in the process of migrating from the south-east to the north-west along the coast when they noticed smoke arising from Ranuguri, a Koita village. The Motu party went ashore and following a favourable reception founded a village at Badihagwa.

The Koita resident in Port Moresby relate a similar account about the arrival of the Motu. The latter are said to have put ashore with their fish when they saw smoke rising from a Koita village. The Koita who were hungry for fish suggested that the new arrivals should stay and trade their fish for Koita yams and bananas (Groves et al 1955: 222). Such an encounter is undoubtedly the origin of this oftquoted statement by Chalmers (1887: 14).

By no conquest do the Motuans live here, but simply because the Koita-puans allow them, saying—‘Yours is the sea, the canoes, and the nets; ours the land and the wallaby. Give us fish for our flesh and pottery for our yams and bananas.

If we synchronise the accounts given by both the Motu and the Koita, it is evident that the migration of the Motuans from the south-east into Fairfax Harbour refers to their movement from Taurama to Badihagwa. So whilst the Western Motu were under attack from the Eastern Motu in the Bootless Inlet area, the Koita were being forced by Koiari to move towards the coast.

Conclusion

The Motuans can no longer be seen as recent arrivals to the shores of the Port Moresby area, as archaeological evidence suggests that their ancestors reached the area 2,000 years ago with a further incursion 1,200 years ago. These people settled the Port Moresby shoreline and the alluvial Laloki River valley. From the latter area they no doubt made contact with the Koita who were then living on the Sogeri Plateau, as is evidenced by the presence of their stone clubs and adzes in lowlands sites.

Two thousand years of contact through trading and probably intermarriage has undoubtedly moved the Koita ‘culturally’ closer to the Motu than the Koiari from whom they broke away. Today they do not differ in appearance and a study of their blood groups revealed no genetic differences (Groves et al 1958: 222-37). The Motu and the Koita also have a similar social structure (Williams 1932: 53).

Two factors probably influenced the withdrawal of the Austronesians to the coast from the Laloki river valley. The tension associated with the population build-up on the Sogeri Plateau and beyond, which finally led to the Koita migration, and later to the Koiari movement out from the same area, probably encouraged the move from the Laloki area to the coast. On the other hand, the establishment of settlements or trading contacts in the Gulf of Papua would have provided an alternative means of supplementing the annual harvest produced by central south Papuan coastal villages, thus reducing the economic repercussions of such a withdrawal.

The long shared history of the Western Motu with the Koita undoubtedly made their merger a realistic means of coping with both further Koiari advancement and Eastern Motu attacks. The merger itself may have led to a greater

specialisation by the Motu towards fishing at the expense of gardening and hunting, the latter becoming more the prerogative of the Koita and fishing and pottery that of the Motu.

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EPILOGUE

Oral Sources and the Unwritten History of Papua New Guinea.

Roderic Lacey

A Challenge and Crisis

There is a crisis in the writing and teaching of Papua New Guinea history. It is created by the real gap between what is being made available through publication and the needs and demands for a truly autonomous and indigenous history. Put in the simplest terms, writers of history continue largely to publish histories dealing with foreigners, or at best, with relations between foreigners and Papua New Guineans or with the actions and achievements of Papua New Guineans within a framework of foreign endeavours. But the educated and literate minority demands a history which makes known to them their own historical roots in the precolonial past, a history which is about their own people. With growing frequency, young people are making sharp statements about decolonizing history. Some historians writing Papua New Guinea history have addressed themselves to these issues in a number of ways over the last few years; but the crisis still remains.¹

Meantime, except for a very few, many Papua New Guineans have come to maturity with a distorted view of their history: either that they have no real history, only old peoples' fanciful tales, or that history only began when one particular group of literate foreigners stepped off their vessels to encounter villagers.

This is the crisis and there are very few signs in the published materials available for reading and teaching, to show that this crisis has been met in a creative and productive way. One major reason for this minimal response lies in the sources. Some recent works bear this out very clearly.

Most of these have taken an important step towards healing the crisis. They have made new, often subtle uses of available written documents to alter the focus from foreigners to Papua New Guineans. Some have tapped new bodies

¹K.S. Inglis 'Island without history? The New Guinean — not in the books', *New Guinea* 2/4 (1969), 8-26. H. Nelson 'New Guinea Nationalism and the Writing of History' *Journal of the Papua and New Guinea Society* 4/2 (1970), 7-26; D.J.N. Denoon, *People's History* (U.P.N.G., 1973).

of written sources to enrich aspects of colonial history untouched or untouchable before. So they are adding new details about the colonial period, which satisfy some of the needs of the young literate nationals.²

But how far have they been able to move from casting Papua New Guineans as 'homogeneous natives who are acted on but never act'³ to making them full and vital participants on the stage of their country's own history? They have come part of the way to achieving this, but their results are hampered by the written sources.

A few have gone beyond the written sources and asked local participants about their remembrance of past events. By finding the local protagonists, recording and analysing their spoken words, these historians have already brought the people of the place into their history.⁴ Used with skill, imagination and wisdom, these oral testimonies about recent events in colonial history are beginning to open our minds to the possibilities of rewriting the history of this country. In each of these cases, the writers have balanced oral and written sources together and allowed the evidence from each to interact with the other.

This work points the way clearly to solving this present crisis in historical writing: the way is to work with oral as well as written sources, and to allow

²A. Inglis, *Not a White Woman Safe: Sexual Anxiety and Politics in Port Moresby 1920-1934* (ANU., 1974) is a case in which existing sources are viewed with a fresh perspective to reveal internal tensions and race relations in colonial society; H. Nelson 'Miners and Men of the Fighting Variety: Relations between foreigners and villagers on the Yodda and Gira Goldfields of Papua New Guinea, 1895-1910', *Oral History* 3/3 (March, 1975) 93-106, is a sample of the work in which the subtle use of government, mining and mission records can be made to study the patterns of relationships between miners and local people and the impact of mining on these communities. This earlier work has now reached fruition in Nelson's *Black, White and Gold: Goldmining in Papua New Guinea 1878-1930* (ANU, 1976). The character of German colonialism in New Guinea and the nature of indigenous responses to its impact as recorded in German documents is now becoming known through the work of S.G. Firth, P.J. Hempenstall and P. Sack. A large body of widely scattered and previously inaccessible documents have also been gathered together in the collection by J.L. Whittaker et. al. *Documents and Readings in New Guinea History: Prehistory to 1889* (Jacaranda, 1975).

³This proposition was made by H. Nelson in his 'Living with a Blind Giant: Villagers and Foreigners' *Meanjin Quarterly* 3, (1975), 355.

⁴B. Gammage 'The Rabaul Strike, 1929' *Journal of Pacific History* 10/3-4 (1975) 3-29 (See also his chapter in this collection); I.M. Willis, *An Epic Journey: The 1930 Expedition of Michael Dwyer across New Guinea via the Purari* (unpublished M.A. preliminary thesis, U.P.N.G. 1969); P.M. Munster, *Three Men from Morobe: A Neglected Aspect of Highlands Early Contact History* (A paper read to the Morobe District Historical Society 4th June, 1975); J.D. Waiko 'A Payback Murder: The Green Bloodbath', *Journal of the Papua and New Guinea Society* 4/2 (1970) 27-35; in addition there have been a growing number of contributions to *Oral History* which record the experience of men during World War II, for instance: B. To Karai 'My War Experience' 2/5 (May, 1974), L. Hulo, 'Gunan's Account of World War II' 2/10 (October, 1974), 16-20; S. Ume, 'My father, Ume, as a carrier' 3/2 (February, 1975), 77-79; S. Zial 'Lihir Experiences under the Japanese' 3/4 (April, 1975), 66-76.

these two kinds of sources to shed contrasting light on events. Another means open to historians is to use ethnographic and scientific reports as historical records.⁵ They are of great importance, as Professor Blainey has demonstrated in the case of the Australian aboriginals.⁶ There is a third alternative, essential in a nation which has for many centuries had exclusively oral cultures and one which today has only a minority of citizens who are literate. This is to use, and develop, the means for recording, collating and interpreting oral testimonies and sources.

Four basic propositions

So this challenge can best be met by a co-ordinated, systematic and integrated exploration, collection and use of the widest possible range of oral sources. The work of using oral sources is under way, but only recently. One place in which it has begun is within the History Department of the University of Papua New Guinea. There, in programmes of teaching, fieldwork and publication, we have begun to experiment with and adapt approaches and methods used elsewhere. Before exploring these and discussing some of what we have learnt, I shall put forward four basic propositions about oral history, oral sources and the study and writing of history within the changing context of modern Papua New Guinea.

These propositions are:

- i A useful history of Papua New Guinea which focuses on Papua New Guineans as participants, must rely largely upon oral sources. There are few surviving writings by Papua New Guineans about themselves.⁷
- ii Since oral sources often need to be employed without support from written records, we need to devise methods and skills which will allow for their most effective use as historical sources.

⁵I have already written about the use of these kinds of sources in J. Whittaker et. al. *Documents and Readings*, Section A 'Understanding Ancestors' 3-170.

⁶G. Blainey, *Triumph of the Nomads: A History of Ancient Australia* (Macmillan, 1975).

⁷Both H. Linge *The Erstwhile Savage* (Cheshire, 1932) and F.E. Williams 'The Reminiscences of Ahuia Ova' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 69 (1939) 11-44 are edited versions of written memoirs by a New Ireland pastor and by a Port Moresby government official. *The Papuan Villager*, an English language newspaper edited by F.E. Williams and published monthly by the government from 1929 to 1941, contains a wide range of writings by Papuans (see H. Nelson, 'The Papuan Villager: A National Newspaper' *Journal of the Papua and New Guinea Society* 2/1 (1968) 79-85). Some collections of letters by mission workers exist, e.g. C. Keysser *Die Seele der Papua Christen* Pt IV contains many letters written to Keysser by New Guineans — the Ms. is held at Neuendettelsau in Germany (personal communication S.G. Firth, 1975); R. Fortune, 'Dobuans abroad; letters from the Dobuan Islands' *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 70 (1961) 314-20 is another example of this kind of letter. There are also indications that a number of journals, diaries and notebooks may have also survived.

iii Literacy is recent in Papua New Guinea and the character and significance of these oral sources is that they belong to oral rather than literate cultures. To use these sources effectively it is necessary to understand the nature of the historical cultures from which they came and their functions within these cultures.

iv In contemporary Papua New Guinea society the writing and teaching of history is a pragmatic task which takes place within a particular context. It is not an independent academic enterprise, so writers and teachers of history must understand this context if they are to have the co-operation of the informants who give them oral testimonies.

This contemporary context also determines the priorities in historical teaching, research and writing.

i Oral sources and autonomous history

The importance of this proposition can best be underlined by an illustration. In 1930 the prospectors Michael Leahy and Michael Dwyer went on their 'epic journey' from the Upper Markham and Ramu rivers through some of the major rivers in the central highlands and down the Purari river to the Papuan Gulf. Leahy kept a diary which still survives and which provides an important record of their encounters with various local groups.⁸ Recently Ewunga Goiba, a man from the Waria valley in Morobe Province, recorded his reminiscences. With his small armed band he protected the explorers, organised the carriers they hired, and was the explorers' chief guide, interpreter and go-between in most of their encounters with new groups of people.⁹ His testimony adds a perspective on this journey different from that in Leahy's diary. Ewunga moves to the centre of the stage as a significant, almost heroic protagonist, whose bravery and decisions brought the party through some very difficult situations. Now that the spoken testimonies of men of the stature of Ewunga, of early evangelists and of policemen are gradually being made part of national collections, it is becoming apparent that, if exploration and meetings between villagers and outsiders are important themes in Papua New Guinea history, then these managers (or *bosbois* to use their title in *tok pisin*), evangelists and policemen are historically significant figures in their own right beside the explorers, mis-

⁸M.J. Leahy, *Diary, 1930* National Library of Australia. (See I.M. Willis, *Epic Journey*, 31). Diaries and notebooks from other explorers of the Highlands also exist, for instance, E. Shepherd 'Akmana: A New name in the Continuing story of New Guinea Exploration' *Pacific Islands Monthly* 42 (1971), 40-49 notes that papers survive which were written by Shepherd and other members of this party which travelled from the Sepik into the edge of the Highlands in 1929; H. Nelson, *New Guinea Nationalism*, 7-9, discusses the diaries of J. and T. Fox who prospected in country to the West of Hagen in 1934/35; and the diaries of J.L. Taylor (who led a number of significant Highlands exploration parties including the Hagen-Sepik patrol of 1938-39) which are now being prepared for publication by Melbourne University Press.

⁹P.M. Munster, *Three Men from Morobe*, 1-10.

sionaries and government officers who already crowd the pages of the history books. Now that we know more about Ewunga, for instance, it is hard to imagine that this 'epic journey' would have been successful or that a substantial body of knowledge about local communities would have been recorded in the written diary without his active participation.

There is another important perspective on these events of 1930 that has come to light through Ewunga's spoken testimony. The Leahy diary contains a record of different groups of highlands people and their response to meeting these strangers. If we took only what was written we would have a quite varied record, but one which would be only partial in its account of these meetings. Take the case of the Daribi clansmen who dwell in the foothills of Mount Karimui in the southern fringes of Chimbu Province. Leahy found them unlike other highlands people he had met on the journey. They were not curious or aggressive or enthusiastic when met by the strangers, nor were they willing to exchange food for trade goods carried by the party. On the contrary these people seemed cowed with fear, sullen, unapproachable and most unwilling to have anything to do with the strangers. So the meeting with them was a source of annoyance (because new food supplies were needed) and mystery, according to the diary. That incomplete account of the event would have remained if an investigation had not brought to the surface the people's own special reasons for their seemingly strange behaviour.¹⁰ This inquiry revealed a set of traditions and beliefs which had shaped Daribi history for some generations and, for them, made the arrival of these strangers a cataclysm which marked the end of their world. They had a great and powerful culture hero by the name of Souw. One of their founding fathers had brought shame upon Souw by catching him in the act of intercourse. As a result Souw had vowed to return bringing with him terrible revenge and destruction. Leahy and Dwyer came, and quite unknown to themselves, they began fulfilling this frightening prophecy. They were big men and fair skinned; so to the Daribi they were pale coloured giants. The dogs they had with them were larger than any ever seen by the Daribi; Souw also had giant hunting dogs. They changed their clothes at their camp-site; sloughing off one skin for another after the fashion of Souw. To try to persuade the people to trade with them, they demonstrated the use of steel axes by cutting down some large trees around their camp. That was the begin-

¹⁰I.M. Willis, *Epic Journey* 126-131. I use the name Daribi for these people rather than Mikaru as Willis has done; the former is the name which the people use of themselves. See also R. Wagner, *The Curse of Souw: Principles of Daribi Clan Definition and Alliance in New Guinea*. (Chicago, 1967). See also R. Wagner, *Habu: The Innovation of Meaning in Daribi Religion* (Chicago, 1972) p. 26. In addition a student from the Sepik has recently brought new light to bear on a clash between his ancestors and a party of German explorers in 1913, by gathering testimonies about these events. See J. Sukwianomb, 'The German Raid on the Kwoma' *Oral History* 5/1 (Feb. 1977), 11-33.

ning of the end for the terror-stricken Daribi, because Souw had surely begun to cut down the columns which separated sky from earth and this would open the way for the people's final destruction. While encounters with outsiders in the 1920's and 1930's mark, for a large number of highlands communities, a new and vital phase in their modern history, for the Daribi people it was a terrible disaster from which it took them some years to emerge.

By having two streams of oral testimony to supplement and enrich the written records of the events of this journey in 1930, we have, as it were, a three-dimensional view.

ii *Effective use of oral sources*

There are many times when the only, or at least, the major sources will be oral. So this second proposition puts forward the point of view that there is a need to develop methods and skills which allow the most effective use of a wide range of oral sources as historical documents.

While quite substantial bodies of oral traditions, often called by their collectors myths and legends, and some collections of songs and chants, have been published over the last 80 years, many of these oral texts do not contain the necessary information for them to be adequately assessed as historical records.¹¹ In more recent years this work of collecting and assessing oral testimonies as *historical sources* has begun in a more systematic way.¹²

This work of collecting and assessing historically useful oral sources is the central challenge facing historians in Papua New Guinea now. The task is first of all the quite practical one of finding the right informants who are those best versed in the traditions of their people or are prime witnesses to particular events. It is also necessary to prepare interviewers so that they can work in a sensitive and effective way with informants and can record and interpret oral testimonies in an accurate and meaningful way.

¹¹See J.L. Whittaker et. al. *Documents and Readings* 6-26, 99-122 for a discussion of some of these published oral texts. The Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies has begun publishing translations of some of the most significant early collections published originally in German and French. G. Hoeltker, *Myths and Legends of the Monumbo and the Ngatmbom Papuans of North-east New Guinea* (trans. G. Duigu) French and German Collections of Papua New Guinea Folklore Vol. 1 (Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, 1974).

Other recent collections of oral texts include: M. Pekoro & E. Brash *Orokolo Genesis* (Niugini Press, 1973), H. Janssen, M. Mennis, B. Skinner (eds) *Tolai Myths of Origin* (Jacaranda Press, 1973), W.P.T. Taufi and J. Ainsworth (eds) *Tiang Kuspini* (Niugini Press, 1973), and K.A. McElhanon (ed.) *Legends from Papua New Guinea* (Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1974).

¹²N. Oram has worked for several years on the history of Motu clans in the Port Moresby region (see footnote 20 below and his chapter in this collection); M.J. Stephen, *Continuity and Change in Mekeo Society 1890-1971*, (Australian National University, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1974.); R.J. Lacey, *Oral Traditions as History: An Exploration of Oral Sources among the Enga of the New Guinea Highlands*, (University of Wisconsin, unpublished Ph. D. thesis, 1975). J. Kolia, *History of Balawana* (University of Papua New Guinea, unpublished Ph. D. thesis, 1976).

These two tasks are basic essentials for a viable programme. But other, more complex skills are also needed when working in a situation where oral cultures predominate: for instance, to devise ways to classify oral sources according to the most appropriate category and to understand them as clearly as possible within their particular contexts. This means (whether the investigator is a foreigner or a national) working carefully and closely within the culture in which the oral sources exist. The historian needs to work like an anthropologist and a linguist. It is not simply a matter of having the ears and patience necessary to record stories told by old men and women; it is also a question of trying to understand what they are saying and how their testimony can give us meaningful evidence about past events.

In a handbook for undergraduates and teachers who wish to carry out field-work, John Kolia, the editor of the *Oral History* journal, and I suggested that there were two broad groups of oral sources:

. . . First, traditions of importance to a group as a people, which link them with important ancestors and events in their past and which are owned by the people as a whole or by groups of experts among them; and secondly, sources about more recent events and experiences which are shared with other villages and which come from the spread of colonial life through this country.¹³

The first we called 'group or community traditions' — they are often very local in their scope and character; the second we called 'oral sources about wider events'. These are often shared by a number of people from different backgrounds.

The Daribi traditions about the return of their culture hero Souw are an example of the first group. Ewunga's testimony about his experiences as a labour manager, scout, explorer and interpreter belongs to the second group of oral sources. These are the reminiscences of a New Guinean who has moved out from his village into a wider colonial world. Perhaps one way to appreciate these kinds of testimonies is to group them not so much according to the villages or language groups from which the informants have come, but according to their occupation or the work places and situations in which they find themselves. Much needs to be done in interviewing various groups of workers, an essential and pressing task if we are to assess with any accuracy the socio-economic impact of colonialism in the crucial decades before 1942. One thing is apparent from the study of the Rabaul strike of 1929 published recently by Bill Gammage:

¹³R. Lacey & J. Kolia 'Papua New Guinea's Past; a Guide for Writing Local History'. *Oral History* 3/6 (June 1975) 9.

old men are very happy to speak their minds to sympathetic hearers and to give their testimonies in great detail.¹⁴

iii Oral Sources and Oral Cultures

The task of collecting the rich sources available is a delicate and pressing one. But the task of interpretation and evaluation is even more complex. It is compounded by the facts already noted. Any one working with oral sources in Papua New Guinea is working within predominantly oral cultures. Recent work, related to oral literature, is shedding some light on the implications of this.¹⁵ But so far little has been done in Papua New Guinea. This work of interpretation and analysis applies principally to unravelling bodies of local community traditions, but the skills learnt with these also need to be applied to the narratives, life stories and reminiscences which tell about the broader shared experiences of colonial life. The main reason why the skills must be applied to both kinds of oral sources is because most informants no matter what length of time they have spent away from their own village culture, belong to an age group

¹⁴B. Gammage *Rabaul Strike* and H. Nelson, *Miners and Men of the Fighting Variety and Living with a Blind Giant*, all indicate the kind of work which needs to be done using these occupational categories. The first number of *Oral History* in December 1972 contained testimonies from urban migrants, recounting their experiences of city life; that is another area which needs tapping. It may be possible in the future to emulate the fine work of the Ruskin College History Workshop Series on workers and village life e.g. R. Samuel '“Quarry roughs”: Life and Labour in Headington Quarry, 1860-1920. An essay in oral history' in R. Samuel (ed.) *Village Life and Labour* (London, 1975) or the portrait of the Japanese fishing community in D. Marlatt (ed.) *Steveston Recollected: A Japanese—Canadian History* (Aural History, Victoria, British Columbia, 1975).

¹⁵Some of the principal works in oral literature include the following: B. Colby and M. Cole 'Culture, Memory and Narrative' in R. Finnegan and R. Horton (eds) *Modes of Thought: Essays in Thinking in Western and Non-Western Societies* (London, 1973), 63-91; M.B. Emeneau, 'Oral Poets of South India—the Todas' in D. Hymes (ed.) *Language in Culture and Society*, (New York, 1964), 330-43; R. Finnegan *Oral Literature in Africa* (Oxford, 1970); A.B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (New York, 1968); W.J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History*, (New York, 1967), H. Scheub, 'The Technique of the Expansive Image in Xhosa Ntsomi Performances', *Research in African Literatures*, 1/2 (1970) 119-45. Some of those in oral history include the following: E.J. Alagoa 'The Use of Oral Literary Date for History: Examples from Niger Delta Proverbs' *Journal of American Folklore* 81 (1968) 235-42; J. S. Boston 'Oral Tradition and the History of the Igala' *Journal of African History* 10/1 (1969) 29-43; P. Pender-Cudlip, 'Oral Traditions and Anthropological Analysis' *Azania* 7 (1972) 3-24; T. T. Spear 'Traditional Myths and Historians Myths: Variations on the Singwaya theme of Mijikenda Origins' *History in Africa*, (1974) 67-84; J. Vansina, 'Once Upon a Time: Oral Traditions as History in Africa', *Daedalus* 100 (1971), 442-468; and J. Vansina, 'Comment: Traditions of Genesis' *Journal of African History* 15/2 (1974) 317-22.

whose worldview and modes of thinking and speaking belong to an oral rather than a literate culture.¹⁶

The predominance of oral cultures in the recent history of this country can be demonstrated very briefly. In the population census of July 1971, 17.71% of the population were literate in English, 18.94% in *tokpisin*, 4.39% in *hiri motu* (these two are the national *lingue franche*) and 13.36 in a number of unspecified vernaculars—in all, since some of these groups overlap, this is a small proportion of the total population of 2½ million.¹⁷ This means that most of the significant informants, who are generally men and women belonging to a generation born before the Japanese invasion in 1942, are members of oral rather than literate cultures. Let me sketch some of the consequences of this situation and discuss some of the approaches being made towards the interpretation of oral sources coming from this context.

First the question of detail. Whether informants are reciting ancient traditions about the origins or migrations of their clans, or accounts of trade or warfare in the more recent precolonial past, or recalling aspects of their own life stories, most often, when they feel free to communicate, they will give testimonies which are full of very particular and local details of people, places and events. Many students who have been away from their home village for schooling, when they return home and sit at the feet of the village elders asking them about their lives and the ways of the ancestors, become almost overwhelmed by the very detailed knowledge the old people wish to pour out to them. One reason for this is clear. In a situation of change which no longer permits old people, charged with the responsibility of handing on important knowledge to younger generations to do so, these elders seize the opportunity of discharging this duty when it comes. But there is another reason. One writer has recently suggested that in societies where there are no means of storing written records, some wise people act as 'books of reference' and 'encyclopaedias' (to use not

¹⁶The debate as to whether oral and literate cultures are markedly distinct is a vexed one. Two writers who have discussed some of the issues, from very different points of view, are Finnegan and Ong. See R. Finnegan, 'Literacy versus Non-literacy: The Great Divide?: Some Comments on the Significance of 'Literature' in Non-Literate Cultures' in R. Finnegan and R. Horton (eds), *Modes of Thought*, 112-144; and W.J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word*. Some of these issues have been explored in a recently published symposium. See R.J. Grele (ed) *Envelopes of Sound: Six Practitioners Discuss the Method, Theory and Practice of Oral History and Oral Testimony*. (Chicago, 1975).

¹⁷*Papua New Guinea Population Census 1971*: Bulletin No. 1, (Bureau of Statistics, Port Moresby) Table 11, p. 10. These at present are the only useful figures available. A new approach to the measuring of literacy in this country has been taken in a recent study. See J. Friday and J.R. Lutton *Knowledge Distribution in Papua New Guinea as an Indicator of Development* (U.P.N.G. 1976, Technology Transfer Unit. Paper Number One).

very apt analogies) for their societies.¹⁸ For some Pacific and Melanesian seaboard societies this has already been well demonstrated in the sphere of technical knowledge—about navigation, astronomy and fishing.¹⁹ What is true for this kind of knowledge must be true of other evidence which is relevant to social history.

Another issue about detail in oral evidence is that of relevance. The starting point is that a number of variants of a particular tradition need to be collected. Then it is a question of weighing up the details given in these versions to decide which might have the most relevance and validity for the inquiry being carried out. An example of the ways in which details can be weighed up and assessed is the work of Nigel Oram on the history of Taurama.²⁰

A second consequence of oral sources being essentially part of oral cultures is the question of the informant as a hero. This is particularly relevant to assessing testimonies about the informants' life history and it concerns the effects of oral narrative forms on these testimonies. This issue can best be discussed by also looking at a particular example.

One of the earliest oral history students went home to Manus Island one Christmas to record the reminiscences of a famous war veteran. This man had been caught by Japanese troops in Rabaul in 1942 and taken with a contingent of New Guineans to Buna to work as a carrier for their forces in campaigns on the north coast of Papua. Soon he managed to escape with some companions and to find a small Australian unit which he joined. From then until the end of the war he became a prominent member of the Papua Infantry Battalion and

¹⁸W. J. Ong, *Presence of the Word*, 28-30. Note the conclusion drawn by F. L. S. Bell in his 'The Narrative in Tanga' *Mankind* 4/1 (September, 1948) 30: 'This creation myth takes hours to tell properly since no detail of the life of *dafal* (a secluded young woman being prepared for marriage) prior to her escape from her bamboo cage, no detail of the emergence of the various totemic species and no detail of the ceremonies connected with *dafal's* marriage to Longget is ever left out of the narrative. The strict adherence to a complete and detailed account of certain ritual procedures by succeeding generations of myth tellers means that the natives of today are in no doubt as to the correct method of carrying out their rites. They only have to refer any doubtful points of procedure to the older men and women who are versed in the mythology of the people. The warrant of to-day's rites is carefully preserved in the myths of by-gone years'.

¹⁹T. Gladwin, *East is a Big Bird: Navigation and Logic on Puluwat Atoll* (Cambridge, 1970); R. Grimble, *Migrations, Myth and Magic from the Gilbert Islands* (London, 1972) Chapter 9; G. Kohnke, *The Shark Callers: An Ancient Fishing Tradition of New Ireland, Papua New Guinea*, (Boroko P.N.G. 1974); D. Lewis, *We, the Navigators: The Ancient Art of Land finding in the Pacific* (Canberra, 1972). W. H. Alkire, 'Systems of Measurement on Woleai Atoll, Caroline Islands' *Anthropos* 65 (1970) 1-73.

²⁰N. D. Oram, 'Taurama—Oral Sources for a study of Recent Motuan Prehistory' *Journal of the Papua and New Guinea Society* 2/2 (1969), 79-91; see also a recent study of some important migration traditions from southern Bougainville by two archaeologists: J. E. Terrell & G. J. Irwin, 'History and Tradition in the Northern Solomons: an Analytical study of the Torau migration to southern Bougainville in the 1860's' *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 81/3 (1972), 317-349.

New Guinean Infantry Battalion, he fought beside fellow Papua New Guineans and Australians, and finally returned to Manus where he became a significant postwar figure. His fame was known to the student who also knew that this old man was renowned for his telling of those exploits.

He taped two interviews: One at a house near the market place in Lorengau, attended by a number of people who formed an appreciative audience. The follow-up recording was a private affair in the informant's house with a few members of his family.²¹

The more I hear these tapes and discuss first impressions of them with students, the more I become convinced that we are not only hearing the detailed and interesting reminiscences of an important historical figure, but, more significantly, we are taking part in a dramatic oral performance in which the protagonist is both a superb story teller and a hero engaged in epic exploits.

What is occurring and being recorded is not simply an old person recalling the past but a performer and an audience taking part in an oral performance. The whole shape of the narrative may grow from that situation rather than from a controlled or guided interview. In these cases the oral historian needs not only documents and written records to test out the details given by the informants—a thing which is possible in the case of Mr. William Metpi's remembrance of some of the events of World War II.²² A more challenging requirement is that the oral historian needs to be familiar with the conventions and forms of oral narrative performance in the culture from which the informant comes. These are the principles which guide the informant in communicating his testimony to his audience and these would help the historian assess these narrative testimonies as historical sources. Vansina has suggested the need for familiarity with the culture and with oral 'literary' forms as a background for the interpretation of oral sources. Here in Papua New Guinea, with old people's tales, is a particular application of these principles.²³

There is a third consequence of gathering oral sources in oral cultures. This could be called the issue of language, form, translation and interpretation; or it might be seen as an issue about the transmission and communication of

²¹K. Kais 'Interview with William Metpi', *Oral History* 2/4 (April 1974), This report occupies the whole of this issue. It is transcribed from tape in the original *tok pisin*.

²²K. Kais 'Discontent among Indigenous Soldiers', *Oral History* 2/6 (June 1974), 24-31. Some important theoretical issues about the analysis of what he calls 'conversational narratives'—or the oral testimonies which emerge from encounters between oral historians and their informants—have been sketched by R.J. Grele in his 'Movement Without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History', which appears in *Envelopes of Sound*, 126-154.

²³J. Vansina, *Once upon a Time*, 452-8; R. Finnegan 'A Note on Oral Tradition and Historical Evidence', *History and Theory* 9 (1970), 195-201. Of course this is true also of written evidence: the style and content of official memoirs and private letters written by public figures can differ significantly. In each case the writer is addressing himself to a different audience.

significant knowledge in oral cultures. I shall recount an experience from fieldwork to highlight this issue.

In January 1972, during fieldwork among the Enga people who are the largest language group in Papua New Guinea and who inhabit a number of high, narrow river valleys to the west of Mount Hagen, I was invited by a student to visit his father's house. One evening the young man's father came into the house where we were staying. He asked me to turn on my tape recorder because he was going to say something important. He then chanted a long poem for his family to hear. I later found out that he had special reasons for breaking the customs of secrecy and for sharing this fine tradition with his son. Soon the son was to leave the mountains and travel away to the coast for further study. This man was afraid that his son would go away and never know of these sacred traditions, so he asked me to record his performance for his son to hear and then for me to play it to other Enga clansmen to stimulate them to recall what was a great but, he feared, a dying tradition.

Once he had succeeded in recalling this chant, which he had learnt last in seclusion with other young bachelors of his clan probably almost twenty-five to thirty years before, he gained confidence in his powers of recall. Two months later he travelled twenty or more miles through several valleys, came to my house and sat by the fire one night. This time he was relaxed and in command and told me that now he could chant this and other poems in a way that was closer to the way in which he and his peers had done it in their time of seclusion and purification many years before. This second version, which his son and I discussed with him in detail again in 1974, is one of the gems of the Enga heritage, about which the younger generation is justly proud. Its historical significance is that it recalls the journeys and transactions by which this man's grandfather and his chosen companion went and acquired a powerful and sacred plant from clansmen in a valley some distance away to the north east. They then brought the plant into a secret place inside their clan territory and through its power the people prospered and the young men were made into brave, knowledgeable, wise and wealthy protectors of their people.

These two performances introduced me to a large body of Enga traditions that were of great importance for understanding and charting the internal history of these people over about 150 years of precolonial history. This man also showed me that significant, and often secret knowledge about the past was handed on from generation to generation in the form of chants and poems. Only selected groups of people were permitted to hear and acquire this knowledge, generally under special conditions of seclusion and discipline. These chants and poems cover a wide range of knowledge, but always because of the special conditions and forms in which they are handed on, this knowledge is embodied in elaborate, stylized, picture language. Now, because a new generation is growing up away from the conditions which favoured this elaborate kind of

education, these texts are becoming very difficult to translate.²⁴

What is true for Enga society and oral traditions is true also for other cultures, in different forms, in Papua New Guinea. If we wish to write local or comparative regional histories which tell about internal changes in villages and clans during the last 90 years of colonial history and as well, about earlier precolonial times, then we must use oral sources such as chants, songs, poems and narratives which are full of symbols, expressed in picture language and transmitted under special circumstances. These conditions make the work of translation a daunting task. It is a pleasure to work in a situation where evidence and knowledge considered important are communicated in forms which are pleasing and beautiful. We could certainly learn something about education from this situation. But there is also a consequence of some importance for historians. If it is a common practice in the oral cultures of Papua New Guinea to transmit knowledge in so pleasing a way, and if these oral texts can be translated adequately, should then the character of the sources influence the style of the written history of this country? This does seem an issue worth debating.

iv The context of history

Since creative and constructive oral history depends very much on the co-operation of informants, and since informants in this country are beginning to express quite definite views and a sense of pride about their history and their past, then historians work here within a specific context. These views and this sense of pride are a great stimulus to the production of autonomous Papua New Guinean history, though the goodwill may conceivably be exhausted for foreign workers in the near future if the materials collected are not disseminated in a readable form to the donor communities and the public at large.²⁵ It seems that, in this current atmosphere of enthusiasm for the past, challenges face those responsible for designing programmes of research and writing in Papua New Guinea history.

Let me sketch some of these. First a specific practical issue. If you glance through the contents of the first four volumes of *Oral History* you will find that a large proportion of the contributions by undergraduates and graduates are about the origins and migrations of their own people.²⁶ I think the reasons why

²⁴K. Talyaga *Enga Eda Nemago: Meri Singing Poetry of the Yandapo Engas* (Papuan Pocket Poets, Volume 40, 1973); and K. Talyaga, *Modern Enga Songs* (Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, 1975).

²⁵For instance K. Talyaga, *Should we Allow Research Workers and Tourists into the Enga District*. Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, Discussion Paper Number 1, 1974.

²⁶M. Asor, 'An Oral Tradition from Wanigela in the Northern District' *Oral History* 2/3 (March, 1974), 2-11; W.J. Opeba 'The Sebaga/Andere Prior to Contact', *Oral History*, 3/7 (August 1975) 102-55; W. Kamit, 'Wanigela Village, Tufi Sub-District, Northern District,' *Oral History* 3/7 (August 1975), 69-92; I. Lasaro 'History of Bonarua Island', *Oral History* 3/7 (August, 1975), 162-197; O. Neckitelly, 'The History of Wamsis', *Oral History* 3/3 (March 1975) 2-32. Further examples are to be found in Volume 4 and more recent Volumes.

students choose this kind of fieldwork topic lie in a combination of pressure from their people at home to record these important traditions which are charters of their identity and history as a people, and a strong need by the students to discover their own roots in a changing world. Once they go beyond a simple transcription of testimonies to the more difficult work of translation and interpretation, they enter the deep waters just described. It is a puzzling thing to try to piece together what are sometimes fragmentary, often contradictory, and always highly symbolic statements about the origins of a people in such a way that a clear narrative history may be possible. Work in Africa²⁷, as well as some work here in Papua New Guinea²⁸, indicates that there are large issues about interpretation, functions, time depth and dating to be faced before traditions of origin and migration will yield satisfactory historical evidence. The demand for writing down these traditions is a legitimate one at this time and should be met.

But perhaps attempts at interpretation need to be considered provisional, rather than having the weight of the written word. If a moratorium were declared on interpretation until more comparative evidence were available, this may also make it possible for students and staff to work out together some useful ways for interpreting these traditions. Certainly, while this enthusiasm continues, the number and variety of these traditions being collected also increases.

Secondly there is a question of priorities. History as a discipline and subject is no longer taught in the secondary school syllabus. In its place there is now social science. Within that curriculum there are local area studies, however, and often a historical approach to local groups and institutions is used by teachers. Within the University of Papua New Guinea, Arts students are only a proportion of the total student body, and within Arts only a small proportion study history, of whom only a portion study Papua New Guinea history. Among this fraction of the total student population there is a growing interest in defining priorities of research and writing and in making the results of work by students and others available to school students and a wider public.

²⁷E.J. Alagoa 'Oral Tradition among the Ijo of the Niger Delta' *Journal of African History*, 7/3 (1966), 405-19; J.S. Boston, *The History of the Igala*; D.W. Cohen, *The Historical Tradition of Busoga: Mukama and Kintu*, (Oxford, 1972); I.N. Kimambo, *A Political History of the Pare of Tanzania, c. 1500-1900*, (Nairobi, 1969); B.A. Ogot, *History of the Southern Luo: I Migration and Settlement*, (Nairobi, 1967); S. Feierman, *The Shambaa Kingdom: A History* (Madison, 1973); J. Vansina, *Once upon a Time* — are some fine examples of this kind of work.

²⁸See the reference in footnote 26 above, and in addition N.D. Oram *Taurama*, and R. Lacey 'A Question of Origins: an Exploration of some Oral Traditions of the Enga of New Guinea' *Journal of Pacific History* 9 (1974) 39-54. See also the more recent P. Swadling, L. Aitsi, G. Trompf and M. Ka'ri, 'Beyond the Early Oral Traditions of the Austronesian speaking People of the Gulf and Western Central Provinces: A Speculative Appraisal of Early Settlement in the Kairuku District' *Oral History* 5/1 (Feb., 1977) 50-80. This points the way for cooperative efforts which combine evidence and analysis from a number of sources.

The final issue is the role of history in a post-colonial society. Another name for this could be history as a bridge between the generations. Some of this has already been hinted at. It is becoming a common experience among teachers of Papua New Guinea history and oral history at the University to witness a process by which students discover as an important new reality that their own people do have an important history and that Papua New Guineans played the major part in the making of their country's history. How they acquired the contrary and earlier views is not my task to discuss here.²⁹ What is important is that this realization, sometimes quite startling and often very strong, does occur and does provide a strong motivation towards going back to their people and finding out about their history. By doing this they build up ties between older men of knowledge among their people, and themselves. This can be a heady experience for them.

Each new group of undergraduates goes through this experience of self discovery afresh. And, generally, they 'enrich and modify' the content of what we know about Papua New Guinea's history by adding new local evidence.³⁰ This enrichment has been going on for a number of years now and we are also developing some skills for handling oral evidence. This process of discovery can be used as a quite effective means for teaching students about basic principles of historical explanation and about the ways in which oral sources can be questioned and assessed.

Because of the contemporary situation, history can certainly be a bridge between the generations, but it can also become a means for developing a measure of historical understanding along with such enthusiasm. In this way it is possible to increase the indigenous content and sources of national history, but also, perhaps, provide some data by which this evidence can be assessed.

Some new directions and conclusions

It is a well publicized fact now that archaeologists have shown that human history in what is now Papua New Guinea goes back at least to hunting and gathering communities of 28,000 years ago and beyond; that trading links between the inland and coast on the main island have existed for around 9,000

²⁹See D.J.N. Denoon, *Peoples' History*.

³⁰See H. Nelson, *Presenting the Goodly Heritage: Teaching History in Papua New Guinea* — A paper read at the 44th ANZAAS Congress, 1972. p. 8, for a case in which oral evidence gathered by a student from the Northern Province enriched and modified the evidence about an incident between miners and people there in 1901.

years, while some forms of agriculture may be as old as that, but probably have been going on for more than 5,000 or 6,000 years. It is also clear, from a number of oral and written sources, that if we mark the beginning of colonialism as the response of communities to demands made upon them by foreigners who appeared more powerful or wealthy, then the spread of colonialism from along the coast and in the islands into the interior of the mainland of New Guinea has been a piecemeal, spasmodic and slow process. For instance, the Tolai people around what is now the town of Rabaul may have entered the colonial era around 1900, some Enga clans in the central Highlands close to the government station at Wabag, maybe in 1945, and their neighbours further to the west around the 1950's. On one hand, the colonial era has been brief and uneven in its length in different areas of Papua New Guinea, while by contrast the precolonial histories of most communities now making up the new nation have been far longer. To do justice to that lengthy and varied history we need to be able to go as far back in time, beyond the written documents, as we can. Obviously living human memory has a shorter span than the dates given us by the archaeologists indicate about past history. We still do not know how brief that span is in this country, not only because we have not tested the implications of memory in oral cultures in this matter, but also because there are some indications that gaps and telescoping occur in the remembrances of named ancestors in genealogies, so man may be carrying into the present, details of a past long forgotten.

In my work on oral traditions among the Enga mountain dwellers I found no neat historical narrative could be built up from a wide sampling of a variety of these traditions. Nevertheless some patterns about the growth of and relationships between Enga clans and some sense of adaptations and changes going back at least over several hundred years, were indicated in these sources. These kinds of clues show that it is necessary and worthwhile to engage in some serious and long term investigations into oral sources to see what light they throw upon the many centuries of precolonial history. In the end, as indicated by the nature of the Enga traditions, it may not be possible to build up anything more than broad patterns of adaptation, change and interaction between various groups of people. But that will be a significant achievement if it allows us to sense some of the human history in those earlier times.

One final issue. Of their nature oral traditions belong to particular local groups. But we are learning from the work of ethnographers and archaeologists that many of these local communities were knit together in series of interlocking networks of trade and exchange. We need to be true to this dimension too. We need to begin building wider comparative patterns, putting forward hypotheses about the shape of the ancient and modern history of this country and its people. The insights for these patterns and hypotheses may well come more clearly and easily from the oral sources rather than from the documents. Then it may be

possible to see whether there were regional sequences of change, rather than chronologies built on a succession of colonial administrations.³¹ That is a hope, but not a vain one. Already from what we are glimpsing from these sources it seems a possibility. Then we may achieve not only a history which puts Papua New Guineans onto their own stage as protagonists, but an autonomous history of the peoples of this country.

³¹For an example of such a chronology based on administrators and explorers see G. Souter, *New Guinea: The Last Unknown* (Sydney, 1974) 263-7. However, two current studies show the possibilities open for historians to construct regional chronologies. One example appears in this collection where a scientist and a national historian have combined in a study which attempts to date widespread 'time of darkness' traditions on the basis of finding and identifying remains of the ash fall from that event. (See the reports by Russell Blong and Paul Mai in this collection.) Another historian on Manus Island, Wesley Rooney, has begun a study of 'calamity and migration' in that region. He has tried to construct a Manus chronology based on the evidence he has sifted out (and tested with scientific evidence) about a sequence of physical calamities.

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