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Myth and history in Papua New Guinea

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In Papua New Guinea almost every researcher is sooner or later forced to go beyond the accustomed bounds of his discipline. The lawyer is no exception, he is only usually more reluctant than members of other academic tribes. Yet, once he is no longer satisfied with what the statutes tell him, he cannot help but become a squatter in the domain of the anthropologist. And this is only the beginning. Soon he will feel the need to raid other territories as well. That of the historian – vast, so far barely inhabited, but on the verge of assuming supremacy – is likely to become one of his favourite hunting grounds.

This paper was planned as such a short raid into the realm of history. (The aim was to get some idea of the ways in which traditional population movements may have influenced the peoples' attitudes to land and land rights.) It has turned into a protracted – though frequently interrupted – journey of more than four years. At the start, however, it seemed a simple exercise. I knew that substantial population movements had occurred in the Lae area fairly recently and that they would soon figure prominently in an important land case. What better opportunity of killing a few birds with one stone and without venturing far into the bush? All that had to be done was to compare the picture emerging from the written European accounts with the oral traditions presented by New Guinean witnesses in court.

Unfortunately, the present legal system, at least at the Supreme Court level,<sup>1</sup> offers little scope for coping with history of either kind – which is odd in a country where land disputes are traditionally by far the most important occasions for discussing history. Moreover, the excitement of the court hearings whose outcome was crucial for the peoples' future,

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1 The Land Titles Commission (and its predecessors) are in a different position (see p. 97ff.).

made the private recording of oral traditions well nigh impossible.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the 'Lae-Case' had one important positive result: it drastically increased the interest of the people around Lae in their own history, in particular that of the mature men who were about to break the chain of oral tradition. There are signs of a growing awareness that the difficult transition from oral family traditions to a written national history (which involves a great deal more than a change in the method of preserving a picture of the past) may be a key to true independence – and that this transition will not happen by itself but will demand much work, thought and imagination.

It is mainly for this reason that it appeared worthwhile to bring the journey to some kind of an end and to record some of the observations made on the way. But it required a change in emphasis. It now seemed pointless to concentrate on the relationships between traditional population movements and land rights, or to discuss the problems arising out of the 'Lae-Case'. On the other hand, it was impractical (and possibly undesirable) to aim at writing a general history of the Lae area, even if limited to the recent pre-colonial period. What was feasible as well as legitimate, however, was this: to conduct a critical survey of the source material already available for such a history. I hope that the New Guinean who will one day write it will find this survey useful and that he or she will be a person who has not forgotten that a sense of humour is one of the greatest (and at present most neglected) treasures of Melanesian cultural heritage.

With this aim in mind, it was important to let the sources speak as much as possible for themselves, especially because

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1 It thus came only as a mild shock when I discovered that all my notes on the few interviews I managed to conduct in 1971 had disappeared.

many of them are written in German and also not easy to obtain.<sup>1</sup>

This approach created one, I hope, minor difficulty. It made it impossible to gloss over the sometimes considerable problems connected with the use of proper names, which (and whose spelling) have changed frequently and will probably continue to do so. As I am unable to offer a satisfactory solution I usually left it to the reader to cope with them. That is to say: as a rule I neither tampered with the use of proper names in the literature nor did I add my own interpretations, although I corrected a few (to me) obvious printing errors<sup>2</sup> and simplified the alphabet of one of the authors.<sup>3</sup> But there are other exceptions. In short, this paper reflects the ambiguity of the literature instead of trying to correct it.

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1 In the interest of the reader all German quotations have been translated. No claim is made that the translations are as accurate or as elegant as possible.

2 For an example see below, p.26, Fn.2 or p.72, Fn.1.

3 See below, p.78, Fn.2.

## II

Linguists are today more inclined than anyone else to advance theories about Papua New Guinea's history, so that the linguistic literature is probably the best starting point for our journey.<sup>1</sup>

In 1964, B.A. Hooley published a survey of the Morobe District. The first sentence sounds most promising: 'When recent theories concerning the origins of the people of the Pacific are considered, the Morobe District of New Guinea becomes a critical area' (1964, 201). But then all hopes are immediately shattered. After evaluating all available material, Hooley concluded that the people and their cultures were still surprisingly little known. Hooley made no attempt to improve the state of our knowledge at this stage, but suggested which aspects of our knowledge most urgently needed improvement. Predictably he accorded top priority to 'an accurate linguistic map of the whole area, showing the language groups, and their linguistic affinities, — at very least with respect to the Melanesian/non Melanesian dichotomy' (*ibid.*, 210).

Hooley compiled this map in co-operation with K.A. McElhanon (1970). It provides a useful summary of the present distribution of languages, but, naturally, does not say whether, when, where and why changes took place in the past. The explanatory notes do not help much further. There is only one positive reference to pre-colonial population movements: that the forebears of the people speaking languages of the non-Austronesian Huon Micro-phylum migrated to the Huon

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1 During the 'Lae-Case' I learned that the area was in fact already occupied by a legitimate student of history: Ian Willis, of Lae University, who had also covered much of the literature. But he was more concerned with the colonial history of the township of Lae than with the pre-colonial history of the surrounding villages, although, as foundation president of the Morobe District Historical Society, he played a major role in stimulating interest in this field. A revised version of his thesis has just been published (1974).

Peninsula from Umboi Island to the east (1970, 1067). The paper also suggests that the Huon Micro-phylum is not connected with the non-Austronesian languages spoken in New Britain or the central ranges south of the Markham River (*ibid.*).<sup>1</sup>

The results for the approximately forty Austronesian languages are even more tentative.

To compare all these groups . . . has proved to be a major task . . . . The most that can be done now is to give a qualitative impression of the expected outcome of the comparisons. There appear to be four major Families [Siassi, Jabêm, Azera and Buang], with some smaller groups, whose relationships are not yet clear, situated around the fringes of these four (*ibid.*, 1078).<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, Hooley and McElhanon's linguistic map allows a preliminary definition of the language groups whose history we must consider. The immediate Lae area is inhabited by Bukaua speakers (a language belonging to the Austronesian Jabêm Family) who occupy most of the northern shores of the Huon Gulf and also a smaller area, around Busama, in the South. Their coastal neighbours, across the Markham River, are the Labu (also members of the Jabêm Family). Their inland neighbours are the Laewomba (who belong to the Austronesian Azera Family) and members of the non-Austronesian Southern Huon Family in the Rawlinson Ranges.

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1 There are, however, connections in westerly direction which caused Hooley and McElhanon to speak of a Finisterre-Huon Micro-phylum (*ibid.*, 1091).

2 Hooley announced that he was preparing a more detailed paper which has been published in the meantime (1971). It adds little of relevance to this paper. The major modification is that the Siassi and Jabêm Families are now grouped together as one Family and called Siasi (1971, 91).



This may also already be the end of the road. If we accept the conclusion reached by Hooley in 1964, it would be a waste of time to go through the existing literature in the hope of finding a substantial amount of information on the history of these groups. Yet, looking closer at Hooley's paper, one begins to wonder just how familiar he was with the ground he tried to cover.

Discussing several categories of authors, Hooley, for instance, does not hesitate to describe the journalist Zöller as a trader, or the ornithologist and anthropologist Finsch as a notable example of the early explorers and travellers who were 'primarily geographers or adventurers' (1964, 204). With equal generosity he gives Neuhauss, who dreamed of exploring New Guinea from the air, credit for intensive fieldwork on the ground. On the other hand he claims that Neuhauss's only major publication on New Guinea had been edited by his famous colleague R. Virchow (*ibid.*) who had died ten years earlier.<sup>1</sup>

Hooley talks about government officers who wrote 'articles on the country and the people among whom they found themselves' (*ibid.*), but he was apparently unaware of the existence of the *Deutsches Kolonialblatt* or the *Amtsblatt für das Schutzgebiet Deutsch Neuguinea* where such articles were published by the German Government between 1890 and 1914.<sup>2</sup> He did not even bother to check whether the *Nachrichten über Kaiser Wilhelmsland* and the *Nachrichten über Kaiser Wilhelmsland und den Bismarck Archipel* (*ibid.*, 212) – where, as he knew, such articles were published (earlier) – were one and the same publication. Nor does he refer to the hundreds of

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1 What happened in fact was that the Virchow Foundation supported the publication of the work

2 He lists, however, one such article by Berghausen (*ibid.*, 236) – without having seen it.

unpublished patrol reports written during the period of Australian administration.

This would be understandable, if he had limited himself to listing published material, but he includes a mysterious manuscript by the missionary Sturtzenhofecker (or rather Stürzenhofecker) in the possession of Dr Tischner in Hamburg (*ibid.*, 240). On the other hand, although emphasising that the Lutheran missionaries wrote many contributions to scientific journals, he did not check their own mission magazine – which contains thousands of pages of pertinent information. By chance he lists two of these articles, one in the '*Kirk. Mitt. Nord Amerika, Aust., N. Guinea*'<sup>1</sup> – not shown in his abbreviations – the other, almost correctly, in the '*Kirchliche Mitteilungen aus und über Nordamerika, Australien, und Neuguinea*'.<sup>2</sup>

The greatest puzzle, however, is why a linguist should give the military charlatan H. Detzner rather than his renowned colleague O. Dempwolff credit for a linguistic paper published in *Anthropos* in 1931 (*ibid.*, 241) – not to mention that the paper is more than ten times as long as claimed by Hooley and that the title as recorded by him contains two spelling mistakes.

To bring a sad story to a happy ending: there is reason to hope that more about the history of the Lae area can be learnt from the existing sources than Hooley wants to make us believe. But before starting to sift through the literature, it is better to make sure that the history for which we are looking does not already exist.

The only book Hooley discusses in some detail (1964, 208-9) is C. Schmitz's study of historical problems in the

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1 Flierl, J. & Dekker [should be: Decker] (*ibid.*, 224).

2 Vetter, J. [should be: K.] (*ibid.*, 235).

Huon Peninsula (1960). This is not the place (nor am I competent) to discuss Schmitz's cautiously formulated theory at length, but a rough layman's sketch of its outline may provide a useful background.

Schmitz distinguishes three original cultures in the Huon Peninsula: the Cultures A, B, and C. The non-Austronesian Culture A corresponds with much of Hooley and McElhanon's non-Austronesian Huon (or Finisterre-Huon) Micro-phylum, the Austronesian Culture C primarily with their Austronesian Siassi Family. A comparison between Schmitz's Culture B and Hooley and McElhanon's other language families is more difficult, mainly because the groups which Schmitz regards as representing the non-Austronesian Culture B show today strong cultural and linguistic Austronesian influences.<sup>1</sup> For this reason Schmitz can, for instance, identify Hooley and McElhanon's Austronesian Azera Family as well as their non-Austronesian Eastern Huon Family (Kâte) with Culture B.

Schmitz's theory can be summarised as follows. The representatives of the non-Austronesian Culture A settled the northern half of New Guinea from the west, starting at Geelvink Bay and moving east along the plains between the central and coastal ranges. Then followed the representatives of the non-Austronesian Culture B who settled the northern half of New Guinea from the coast, penetrating along the valleys into the interior and pushing the representatives of Culture A into the mountains. Finally came the representatives of the Austronesian Culture C who moved in easterly direction from one suitable off-shore island to the next, influencing the coastal people and even establishing coastal settlements but rarely moving inland in larger numbers (1960, 362-70).

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<sup>1</sup> Schmitz thought at first that Culture B was probably rather an early Austronesian Culture strongly influenced by non-Austronesian elements (1960, 42).

In general terms Schmitz's theory and Hooley and McElhanon's linguistic map can be easily reconciled – if one accepts the plausible, but, from a historian's point of view, disturbing fact that people can change their language and culture almost as quickly as their residence. Viewed more closely, the situation becomes also more interesting.

Looking at a map of New Guinea with Schmitz's theory in mind, one would expect that the representatives of Culture B, after having settled the northern shores of the Huon Gulf (where they were later replaced by members of Culture C), turned into the Markham Valley, following the main river and its tributaries upstream, to develop there into the Azera language family. According to Schmitz the story was different. First of all the Azera proper, in contrast to all other groups representing Culture B in the Morobe District, came from the west, up the Ramu Valley, across the divide. Moreover, the other groups, who came from the east, did not follow the Markham either, but, in two distinct movements, the mountains to the north and south. They only turned to the Markham at a later date, following its tributaries downstream, in particular the Erap (from the north) and the Watut (from the south). This surprising route was, according to Schmitz, the result of two factors. Firstly, the Huon Gulf reached at that time much further inland than today (Erap and Watut forming independent rivers instead of Markham tributaries). Secondly, the Markham Valley, insofar as it existed, was already occupied by the Azera, the relatives of the new arrivals, whom they did not want to dispossess. On the other hand, when the northern and southern sub-branches of the eastern branch of Culture B finally met in the lower Markham Valley, they clashed fiercely, and these fights 'still continued when the Mission started its work among the Wampar [Laewomba] at the beginning of this century' (368-70 (369)).

Theories tend to become the more questionable, the more details they incorporate. Schmitz's theory confirms this rule. Before raising some of these questions, it should be pointed out, however, that this particular part of the theory is not an ideal illustration of the method employed in developing it. Schmitz's views on the migrations of the Azera language family are not so much the result of a comparative analysis of the distribution of linguistic and cultural elements, as based on oral traditions, geological assumptions, and plain unsubstantiated speculations. From another point of view, one could also say that it is a good illustration for the limitations of Schmitz's method. A comparative analysis of the distribution of linguistic and cultural elements can show important connections, but it is hard pressed to explain how they came about. This can only be achieved, if evidence produced by many different (in particular archeological) methods is combined, and if the hypotheses and their implications are checked step by step.

How does Schmitz, for instance, explain that the language of the Laewomba is apparently much more closely related to that of the Azera, the western branch of Culture B, than to that of the Buang, who, together with the Laewomba, belong to the southern sub-branch of the eastern branch of Culture B? What justifies him to say that the fights the Lutheran missionaries observed in the lower Markham Valley at the beginning of this century were clashes between the southern and northern sub-branch of the eastern branch of Culture B? What reasons does he give for the clash between these sub-branches or for the earlier avoidance of a clash between the two branches? And how did the Austronesian representatives of Culture C manage to influence the language of the non-Austronesian Azera proper to such an extent that it is now classified as Austronesian while the eastern sub-branches of Culture B were filling the Markham Valley and the adjoining mountains with battle?

This raises the awkward question of historical dates – or the relativity of time – which probably creates the greatest uneasiness when considering Schmitz's theory. Almost in one breath the lower Markham Valley emerges from the sea, is peopled by fierce headhunters and Christianised. The representatives of Culture B appear to be still on the move long after those of Culture C have settled down. One can even get the impression that the representatives of Culture A, tired of being pushed further and further into the cold and misty mountains, had started a counter-attack and were driving the representatives of Culture B back towards the sea.

All this does not mean that Schmitz's efforts were useless, but it does suggest that it may be safer and probably also more fruitful to try to unravel the history of the Lae area backwards, following the threads of oral tradition for a modest few decades into the past, instead of beginning with the arrival of man in New Guinea 50,000 years ago and jumping about in uneven and unpredictable leaps.

Again we do not have to search far for a guide along this new road. H.I. Hogbin, apparently the only modern anthropologist who worked among the groups with which we are concerned,<sup>1</sup> included a short sketch of the history of the southern branch of the Bukaua, around Busama, in his *Transformation Scene* (1951) – which, a welcome change after Schmitz's study and Hooley's biographical essay, is written with sovereign disregard for the existing literature on the area.

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1 K.E. Read (1946/7 and 1949/50) – Azera – and H. Fischer (1963) – Watut – deal with people outside the area of immediate interest. Fischer also worked briefly among the Laewomba (1968, 11) but the results of his work are still unpublished. The Labu have so far not been the objects of an anthropological study.

The Gawa' group [the Bukaua] do not recall any original home in their songs and stories and are content to go back only to the parent settlement in the Gulf . . . near the centre of the north coast. From here the people gradually spread westwards to the Markham and eastwards to the borders of the Yabim territory. The country had apparently not been occupied before, or, if it was, the earlier inhabitants were so swiftly overcome and absorbed that their existence could be forgotten.

During a bad drought, probably between 1750 and 1775, a handful crossed the sea and made a home at Lutu on the tip of the Salamaua peninsula. This spot was of great economic importance as the site of the only quarry in the whole region where stone could be obtained suitable for the manufacture of adzes and other tools.

The soil near Lutu proved to be so poor that the villagers were soon driven to take up a vacant belt of coast on the mainland nearby. They cultivated their gardens here and attended to their sago palms during the day, but in the first stages, fearing attacks from the Kila who lived on the seaboard immediately to the south, or from the Kai and Kaiwa of the Hill country to the west, they always returned home towards nightfall. Eventually, however, as their numbers increased, two permanent settlements were founded, one at Asini' on a hill directly opposite Lutu and the other a few miles to the north.

The latter site proved difficult to fortify, and some years later, in about 1835-40 as near as I can

judge from genealogies (but see p. 102, footnote), the people moved further north again, this time to Busama. Schneider Point (Ho'tu in the local tongue) above, a second headland below, and a cliff behind rendered the place almost impregnable, and before long a dozen or so friendly Kaiwa householders who had been living on a hill close by at a place called Gaiwaku decided that they also would move in . . . .

Changes had in the meantime taken place at the mouth of the Markham. The warlike Laiwamba from higher up the river, following their usual practices, drove out a collection of Gawa' who had set up a village on the right bank and sent them into the foothills to the south, country claimed by the Labu from the swamps around Labu Lagoon and the Kaidemoe of the Buang Range to the west. Pushed continually southwards, the group reached Awasa Hill, two miles south of Busama, in approximately 1830. Even here there was no respite, and for the next forty years the Awasa, as their neighbours now called them, were subjected to raid after raid from the Kai and the Busama. Finally, round about 1880 or perhaps a little before, the latter were moved to pity and invited the remaining families to make a home with them.

From 1840 onwards the Busama also received additions from such places as Labu, Lae, Bukawa', and various Kila and Kai settlements. These persons came in as single individuals, not as groups like the Gaiwaku and the Awasa. Several, perhaps the majority, were seeking refuge after their villages had been attacked by enemies and their relatives killed (1951, 27-8).



This account by Hogbin differs at least in one important respect from Schmitz's theory.<sup>1</sup> Whereas Schmitz sees the fights in the lower Markham Valley during the 19th and early 20th Century as a result of a clash between two sub-branches of Culture B, Hogbin sees them, in Schmitz's terms, as successful attempts by the representatives of Culture B to prevent the representatives of Culture C from crossing the Markham. Taken by itself, Hogbin's account also raises a number of questions. One of them relates to the way in which he determined the historical dates given by him.<sup>2</sup>

In one case Hogbin refers to genealogies, but at the same time to an obviously qualifying footnote in a subsequent chapter of his book. It reads:

The genealogies, though accepted by the people as authentic, may be a legal fiction giving authenticity to the land tenure system . . . If this is so, the dates for the founding of Lutu and Busama given in Chapter II are incorrect. It must be admitted that the residents of Lutu remember only the same number of generations of forbears as the Busama villagers; on the other hand, they do not regard the earliest of these ancestors as the original settlers from Bukawa; and their landholding groups, as to be expected if the place was established half a century earlier, are often larger than those of Busama (1951, 102).

Instead of clarifying the situation, this footnote makes it more mysterious. It not only shows that Hogbin did not base

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1 Hogbin's linguistic map also differs in significant details from that compiled by Hooley and McElhanon.

2 There are also simple questions of plausibility. It does, for example, seem strange that a handful of half-starved Bukawa should have managed to occupy the only suitable quarry in the whole region.

the age of Lutu on genealogies (since the original settlers were not remembered), it also suggests that he was not sure about the age of Busama either (he describes it here as half a century younger than Lutu, whereas the difference given in Chapter II is between sixty and ninety years).

If we turn to Hogbin's earlier writings for clarification, the confusion becomes complete. According to one paper Busama was founded between 1840 and 1850, the Awasa joining the village some thirty years later (1947/8, 122), according to another Busama was founded in the 1870's and the Awasa joined it some fifteen years later (1946/7, 40).

In a later publication Hogbin provides a possible explanation for his cavalier attitude towards historical dates:

The account that the people give of their past may well be wrong in many of its details . . . . For the purpose of our study, however, the accuracy of the stories matters little: the important fact is that the natives fully accept them as the truth and hence find in them justification for the conditions of the present (1963, 7-8).

On the other hand, a comparison between the accounts given by Hogbin of Busama origins in 1951 and 1963 creates new problems.

According to the 1951 version Asini' and Busama were both friendly daughter settlements of Lutu, established because of an increase in population and a shortage of good soil. Hogbin mentions one occasion when the Busama attacked Asini', but stresses immediately: 'This village has close ties with Busama, but for reasons which are now forgotten the sympathy on this occasion was for Kila' (1951, 148). In 1963 Hogbin was able to give convincing reasons for the attitude of the Asini' which went right back to the founding of this village.

But eventually an incident took place that led to a permanent split [among the Lutu]. One of the youths had become attracted to a betrothed girl from a neighbouring household and persuaded her to marry him. He and his near relatives then fled to the bush at the back of the gardens to avoid the vengeance of the injured parties. This was the origin of Asini'. The ill-feeling continued till the dawn of the European era, and although the descendants of the fugitives preserved their Gawa' language and Bukawa' social structure, they and the Lutu often raided each other. The Kila people, already opposed to the Lutu, looked upon the new community with greater kindness and offered extra land for cultivation (1963, 8).

This is only one of several puzzling discrepancies<sup>1</sup> which suggest that the Busama are not simply unable to date their history or to pass on the correct details, but that they also have an enviable capacity of accepting simultaneously several sets of basic facts as the truth. Or did Hogbin himself adopt the Busama view that history is changeable because it has the function of justifying the changing needs of the present? Or did he take the Anatole France quotation he chose as a motto too seriously?<sup>2</sup> Whatever the explanation, Hogbin's writing are no sufficient excuse for avoiding the task of surveying the existing literature in some detail.

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1 Compare, for instance, the versions of the 'final struggle' between Busama and Kila (1951, 148 and 1963, 8).

2 'History books which contain no lies are extremely tedious', see 1951, 24.

### III

One of the most useful books for students of Papua New Guinea history is the geographer A. Wichmann's monumental work on the exploration of New Guinea (1909/12). Unfortunately it only covers the period up to 1902 and Wichmann is, naturally, more concerned with the exploration of New Guinea than with what happened before and after this, from our point of view, insignificant process took place. On the other hand, the book is written with such a bad tempered aggressiveness that it is far less boring to read than one would expect from such an encyclopaedic account. For our present purposes, the most welcome lesson to be learned from Wichmann's painstaking work (welcome because it limits the scope of our survey), is probably this: when the Neu Guinea Kompagnie was granted an Imperial Charter in 1885 to administer German New Guinea, of which the Huon Gulf formed part, indeed virtually nothing was known about its inhabitants.

For a while it seemed this would change drastically. Admiral von Schleinitz, the first Administrator, surveyed the Gulf, shortly after his arrival, between 7 and 13 October 1886, and Captain Dreger carried out a second survey between 29 November and 13 December of the same year. During these surveys minerals were found which were thought to be gold. Schleinitz sent a triumphant cable to the Company's headquarters in Berlin, but the samples proved worthless and interest in the Huon Gulf vanished. For the next dozen years it was only regarded as a field for labour recruiting, and not a very promising one at that. This applied in particular after 1891, when Finschhafen, the first capital, was abandoned and the Company concentrated its interest on the new plantation centre in the Astrolabe Bay.

In 1886 Schleinitz's main objectives were: to investigate the Markham River (as a possible road into the interior) and to

look for a harbour near its mouth.<sup>1</sup>

According to earlier reports, the Markham held little promise since a bar across its mouth prevented all vessels from entering. Schleinitz found that the bar did not block the entrance completely and that it could be used as a roadstead. His crew only managed to row a little more than a nautical mile upstream against the strong current. Still, Schleinitz thought, a steam launch, and possibly even a small steamer, could penetrate a fair distance.

With his second objective, Schleinitz was more successful. He discovered what he described as a deep and beautiful bay north of Parsee Point, which he called Samoa Harbour, and which, he said, was protected from all winds, offered anchorage for many ships at all depth and drinking water from a mountain stream.

About the native population near the Markham, Schleinitz only reported that the area appeared to be relatively densely inhabited. His map offers more specific information: it shows two villages, one east of the river between its left bank and the Burgberg, the other a short distance southwest of its mouth, at the coast.

The people around Samoa Harbour figure more prominently. Schleinitz's party first sighted three villages on Schneider Point, protected by a high cliff (Busama?). When boats were sent to collect rock samples, the villages were guarded by a single old man, armed with spear and club. Despite apparent fear, he stood his ground and tried to prevent the Europeans from entering. The women and children had

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpts from his report were published by the Neu Guinea Kompagnie (Schleinitz, 1887).

fled into the bush, and the other men swarmed in their canoes around the 'Samoa' – up to fifty canoes with a crew of between three and ten each – but this fleet probably also included canoes from the six villages which were sighted along the west coast of Kela Peninsula.

In addition to excerpts from Schleinitz's report the Neu Guinea Kompagnie also published anthropological notes made by Captain Dreger during this trip.<sup>1</sup> They form, not surprisingly, an odd collection of details and general guesses, but one of the points made by Dreger is of interest.

Most of the villages, we saw, consisted of a substantial number of houses (mostly thirty or more), and, in several places, they were also very close to each other. This, taken together with some additional facts (several villages were skilfully protected by high pallisades, and the young coconut palms showed . . . that they had existed only a short time – whereas other areas, for instance south of Parsee Point, were almost uninhabited . . .) strongly suggests that these measures were only taken for reasons of defence, in order to be in a better position for facing enemy attacks. If one also adds the extreme mistrust and the open hostility which we encountered when we showed our intention of entering some of the villages, as well as the rare fact that, although circling the ship for hours, no native dared to come aboard, one is probably correct in assuming that Europeans abducted labourers in this area not long ago, an assumption which, by the way, is borne out by stories told by the First Officer of the 'Truganini' (1887(a), 25).<sup>2</sup>

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1 Dreger, 1887(a).

2 The 'Truganini' was a steamer the Neu Guinea Kompagnie had chartered in Australia to replace the 'Papua' which had sunk not long before.

Unfortunately Dreger does not report these stories, and there appears to be no other evidence for labour recruiting activities in the Huon Gulf before 1886. Moreover, there is also no evidence from other areas that even frequent clashes with labour recruiters had such a strong influence on traditional settlement patterns as those suggested by Dreger. It is more likely that his suggestion was the result of a (still widespread) European tendency to overestimate the – negative as well as positive – effects of white contacts on traditional black life.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Dreger's task for the second expedition was to continue the examination of the Markham River, whereas a second party, under Dr Schneider, was to make a geological survey of the southern shores of the Huon Gulf.<sup>2</sup>

When the 'Samoa' anchored near the mouth of the Markham, she was soon surrounded by numerous canoes. This time the people behaved in a 'very provocative manner'. Some of them climbed on board, although they had been told not to, and were removed by force.<sup>3</sup> No fight developed, however, and the 'Samoa' took Schneider's party the following day to Samoa Harbour, leaving Dreger with six men, a steam launch and a portable canvas boat.

During the first day Dreger steamed about two nautical miles up the Markham, running aground several times. Then

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1 The picture of a blank blackboard comes to mind which only shows the marks made by white chalk.

2 Excerpts from Dreger's report were published by the Neu Guinea Kompagnie (Dreger, 1887(b)). Details of Dr Schneider's work are not known because the Company treated geological information with great secrecy.

3 This illustrates how difficult it was for New Guineans to please people like Dreger. If they did not come aboard complaints were made about their lack of trust, if they did, their behaviour was regarded as provocative.

the engine failed and the launch drifted downstream through the dark, until it could be fastened to a tree. Dreger and his men spent a wet and uncomfortable night, during which 'natives made themselves heard in the vicinity'. The following day Dreger and two sailors tried their luck in the canvas boat. Soon they had to rush back because shots and the blowing of the steam whistle indicated that natives had 'threatened' the launch. The following day was used for another reconnaissance, and then Dreger started on a three day expedition which reached the foot of the Schlossberg, in Dreger's estimate about twenty nautical miles inland. It took Dreger's party only four hours to return to the launch, but he had some difficulty in manoeuvring it out of the river the next morning.

In the afternoon Dreger made a leisurely trip up a creek and discovered, as a small consolation, the Herzog Lakes at its end. The people who 'otherwise behaved peacefully' had blocked the entrance with ropes, but Dreger did not take the hint and surprised the women of the three marine villages in the lakes before they had time to disappear among the mangroves. The men stayed, offered the Europeans gifts of coconuts, and 'performed solemn dances in their canoes, though shaking all over'.

This first visit to the Labu villages was apparently the closest contact Dreger had with the local inhabitants.

Despite all searching I have been unable to discover any settlements on the banks of the Markham River except those very close to the mouth. Gardens, belonging to the villages at the mouth, are only found as far as point B [the furthest point reached by the launch]. Nor have I seen any natives above point B, but I gathered from footprints and trumpet calls during the night that the expedition was



constantly and closely watched (1887(b), 174).<sup>1</sup>

The next trip to the Huon Gulf which the Neu Guinea Kompagnie regarded worthy of detailed reporting took place nine years later. Administrator Rüdiger visited the southeast of Kaiser Wilhelmsland (as the German part of New Guinea was called) between 11 and 19 August 1895, to examine the chances of recruiting labourers along the coast east of Baden Bay and to investigate reports about the activities of Australian prospectors near the Papuan border. The excerpts from his report published by the Company<sup>2</sup> contain little information relevant for this paper. But two years later Rüdiger read a paper to the Geographical Society in Berlin (1897) which includes a more detailed account of his visit to the Labu villages in 1895.

For almost 2 kilometres one follows . . . a channel whose banks are formed by dense mangroves, accompanied by sometimes as many as thirty to forty canoes full of natives. The shouts with which they warn the women whom they have left behind in the villages are deafening. Finally we reach the lagoons. They are dotted with many small islands. Some of them just rise above the high water mark, others are subject to tidal flooding . . . Most of these islands are inhabited, and since space is very limited the huts stand extremely close together, closer than I have ever seen elsewhere . . . The women and smaller children, warned by the shouts, have, of course, long fled from the islands to the mainland and one can just see how the last canoes with their beautiful

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1 In contrast to this report, Dreger's map shows a village, close to the left bank of the Markham, some distance above point B.

2 Rüdiger, 1895.

passengers hastily disappear along the narrow creeks between the mangroves (1897, 287).

Like Dreger ten years earlier, Rüdiger speculated about the influence of European contacts on native behaviour:

The inhabitants of the Herzog Lakes are . . . in contrast to the other inhabitants of the Huon Gulf not to be fully trusted. I have not been able to ascertain whether previous hostile contacts with Europeans are the reason. This is not impossible and, as can be observed often enough in the Pacific, later visitors have to suffer for the misdeeds of their predecessors (*ibid.*, 288).

Rüdiger gives no details about the 'previous hostile contacts' with Europeans, nor does he say why the Labu were not to be trusted.<sup>1</sup> He also does not suggest that the Labu had withdrawn into their lagoons because of European misdeeds. In fact, he apparently regarded their lake dwelling existence as perfectly natural, although he comments on the effects it had on their lives.

No gardens can be made in the dense mangroves which surround the lake. Also, I have only noticed one coconut palm, otherwise mangroves and nothing but mangroves. The people therefore occupy themselves almost exclusively with fishing and the collecting of edible shellfish (*ibid.*, 287).

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1 Unless he refers to their attitude towards labour recruiters. He writes: 'Only once has it been possible to bring a man from the Lakes as a labourer to the Astrolabe Bay. Unfortunately this man was frequently sick and finally returned home in a rather miserable state so that the people are now very negative in this respect' (1897, 288). Even this was written with hindsight. In 1895 the Labu simply told Rüdiger — or rather the recruiting agent — that none of their young men would sign on, until the one had returned who had left eighteen months before (1895, 31).

This is the kind of observation one expects an exploring administrator to make during a short visit, but how did he obtain the following information?

With their catch they then make long canoe trips across the sea, northward, as far as Cape Arkona, where they exchange the produce of the sea for those of the gardens. The villages along the northern shores of the Huon Gulf, near Cape Arkona, Stubbenkammer etc., are usually situated in the foothills . . . . The inhabitants do not fish, and for this reason the trade with the inhabitants of the Herzog Lakes has developed (*ibid.*, 287-8).

As there are no indications that Rüdiger himself discussed these questions with the local inhabitants, as there were very few Europeans in Kaiser Wilhelmsland at that time who could have provided Rüdiger with this information, and as one of them accompanied Rüdiger on his trip, it is probably safe to regard this person as the source. It was Ludwig Kärnbach, a gardener, botanist, trader and labour recruiter, who first came to German New Guinea in 1886 and died there in 1897, and who knew more about the country and its people than most of the authors who described them in their books and articles. Kärnbach himself published little, however, in one of his papers (1893) he described his first boat trip to the Huon Gulf which probably took place in 1889.<sup>1</sup>

Kärnbach's aims were more modest than those of Schleinitz, Dreger or Rüdiger, he simply wanted to buy food

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1 Wichmann dates it 1891 (1909/12, Vol.2, 537), but this is unlikely as the subsequent first recruiting trip mentioned by Kärnbach probably took place in March 1890 (see: *Nachrichten über Kaiser Wilhelms-Land und den Bismarck-Archipel*, 1890, 81).

for the plantation labourers in Finschhafen and Massoi bark (rich in volatile oils) for export.

Kärnbach first visited the villages Tgedu (whose population had decreased from more than 300 in 1886/7 to about 150 as a result of an epidemic in 1888) and Ologedu in Hänisch Harbour. The inhabitants of the latter regarded themselves still as Jabim, although their language was, according to Kärnbach, a mixture of Jabim, Tami and Bukaua. The strong influence of Tami was due to the fact that a group of Tami islanders, because of over-population, had formed a mainland village, Taminugedu, nearby. The inhabitants of Taminugedu were keen sailors who went in their large two masted canoes as far north as Cape King William and as far south as Nassau Bay.

Taminugedu was the farthest point reached by Kärnbach during previous excursions, and he was anxious to proceed to the rich Bukaua district about which he had heard many stories. After a short rest in Bugengim, the first Bukaua village, near Stubbenkammer, Kärnbach sailed around Cape Arkona and was soon surrounded by almost a hundred canoes. None of them came close until a large canoe with six paddlers appeared.

A man sat on the platform who held a palm-frond in his hand . . . . Still far away, he began to lower the frond against our boat, and we answered this sign by waving our handkerchiefs. When he had reached our boat, he threw the frond across, and then climbed aboard himself, whereupon canoe after canoe came alongside. This was the famous chief Alumbam whose domain stretches from Taminugedu south to the Adler River (1893, 172).

The Bukaua immediately began to barter, and 'on this occasion they gave the impression of being perfectly

harmless'.<sup>1</sup> Kärnbach describes Cape Arkona as the centre of the Bukaua area. About fifteen villages were in its vicinity. They lay so close together that it was difficult to define a boundary between them and were surrounded by large gardens through which one could walk for days.

Alumbam agreed to accompany Kärnbach on his further journey. Their first stop was the mouth of the Adler River, which the local inhabitants called Bussio. Many of them were dancing and shouting at the beach in full war paint, but they came alongside when Alumbam called for them. Kärnbach briefly visited the large village Lugamu, situated, according to Kärnbach, about half an hour upstream, at the foot of the Burgberg.<sup>2</sup>

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1 During another visit, about a year later, when Kärnbach met them returning from a feast celebrating their victory over an inland tribe, he thought 'their savagery was clearly apparent', although he did not believe 'that they had eaten human flesh as they claimed' (ibid.).

2 The German original says 'Bungberg', but this is clearly one of the many printing errors to be found in contemporary publications, usually in connection with proper names. Some of the other 'geographical' printing errors in Kärnbach's paper are: 'Bukana' instead of 'Bukaua', 'Bayen' Bay instead of 'Bayern' Bay, and, probably, 'Hela' instead of 'Kela' (this would remove the basis of Wichmann's rather petty attack on Kärnbach; see: 1909/12, Vol.2, 418, Fn.2).

More importantly, however, Kärnbach's apparently straightforward description of the geographical position of Lugamu shows that even the most 'innocent' statements in the literature must be approached with caution. The Adler River does not flow past the Burgberg, but is separated from it by at least two miles of country and the Bumbu River. It is possible that Kärnbach mistook the Bumbu for the Adler River. This was a common mistake as the Bumbu was not shown on the early maps, whereas the Adler River was shown — in relation to the Burgberg — where the Bumbu should have been. This confusion had long lasting effects, climaxing in Sheet 2 of the British Admiralty's map of the Bismarck Archipelago (published in 1934) which shows the Burgberg and an imaginary duplication of the Markham Mountains (Azera Range) between the Bumbu and the Adler River. Yet, it is unlikely that Kärnbach made this mistake, because he also recorded, for the first time, the local name for the Adler River.

Its inhabitants could hardly understand Jabim, but Alumbam, who spoke Jabim as well as Bukaua acted as interpreter. Many crops are grown here which the natives living opposite the Herzog Sea [sic] take in exchange for fish (ibid.).

Kärnbach visited the Labu later during the day. He counted nine marine villages in the lagoon, but found that their inhabitants looked seriously undernourished and appeared to suffer frequently from fever. The mosquitoes were so bad that Kärnbach left at three o'clock in the morning. He spent the day in Samoa Harbour and Bayern Bay, before sailing back across the Gulf. He describes the people in Samoa Harbour as traders and sailors, who mainly bartered pots, made by the people in Bayern Bay, with the Bukaua and the Tami in Taminugedu, whereas they were the enemies of the people living in the Herzog Lakes and near the Markham and Adler River.

Kärnbach did not publish descriptions of any of his later recruiting trips to the Huon Gulf, but there exists an account by W. Vallentin (1899), who accompanied Kärnbach on one of them, either late in 1894 or early in 1895.<sup>1</sup>

Wichmann (1909/12, Vol.2, 597) rightly criticises Vallentin for his superficiality. It is surprising how little information his account contains, considering that it takes up almost thirty pages. Still, it includes a number of interesting details about the way in which labour recruiting was conducted in Kaiser Wilhelmsland in the 1890's and also gives some idea of the effects of a major smallpox epidemic.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Wichmann (1909/12, Vol.2, 597) is probably correct in assuming that the trip lasted from 23 October to 16 (not 14!) December 1894; it is puzzling, however, that Vallentin's sketches are dated February 1895.

2 It also includes what is probably the oldest surviving portrait of a Lugamu man.

The Europeans first heard about the epidemic in Bugemgim, the most northerly of the Bukaua villages. Like the neighbouring village Malaheë it was almost deserted. Most of those who had survived had fled into the bush, only a few old people and many new graves were left behind. The villages around Cape Arkona were much less effected and twelve labourers were recruited.

Logamu and Labin (Labu) are mentioned as the largest settlements between Adler River and Steinmetz Point, but Vallentin has little to say about their inhabitants. He describes them as suspicious and unusually heavily armed. The women at first started to scream as soon as someone came near, but, after a few hours, they came in their canoes to the steamer to exchange fish, coconuts etc. for tobacco and iron.

Kelah (Busama?) is this time described as the largest settlement in the area, and the central village of a group of three. Vallentin does not suggest that it was effected by the epidemic — in contrast to the villages near Kela Peninsula, which were mostly deserted — but Kärnbach's attempts to recruit labourers were in vain: whoever showed signs of interest was taken back by others into the village.

One father had even tied his son, who was anxious to leave home, to a tree and is said to have only freed him the following day, when the coast was clear and the steamer was out of sight (83).

Vallentin continues:

This openly shown antipathy to Europeans on the part of people who (or whose relatives) had already worked as labourers on the plantations in Stephansort, Erimahafen etc. was remarkable. Bad experiences the people made in the services of the companies are possibly (or probably) the reason (*ibid.*).

Vallentin's sympathies clearly lay with the people rather than the companies. This was not unusual for a former employee of the Neu Guinea Kompagnie. On the contrary, what is unusual, is that Vallentin, unlike most of his colleagues, who were all well versed in the art of blaming *the* Company for everything (including their own, sometimes considerable, shortcomings), still showed some reluctance in accusing the Company openly of all kinds of misdeeds.

Under these circumstances it would be particularly valuable to have an outsider's account of the effects of Company recruiting in the Huon Gulf.

The chances of locating such an account are slim, simply because, as indicated earlier, Company officials concerned with labour recruiting were almost the only European visitors to the area during this period. The Lutheran Mission did not open a station in the Huon Gulf before 1899 (although missionaries occasionally accompanied the Tami traders on their voyages along its shores; see: Pilhofer, 1961/3, Vol.1, 125). The Australian prospectors had not yet crossed the Waria River in their search for gold (although at least one party was forced in 1897 to return from the Mambare River to Australia via the Huon Gulf and the Bismarck Archipelago; see: Vollmer, 1897). But there remains one elusive species among the early European visitors: the so-called naturalists.

Frequently they live on in the literature merely as part of the descriptions by armchair scholars of the birds or butterflies they collected. 'Collected by A near X Village on 27 April 1895' may be the only evidence of their visit to a certain area.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Wichmann carefully utilised these meagre scraps of evidence, tempting his curious readers to embark on excursions into the zoological or botanical literature which end usually in the capture of just another wild goose — which is totally appropriate in the case of ornithologists but still frustrating.



Sometimes a little more is known, and this applies, fortunately, to the four visits by Bruno Geisler (two in the company of his brother Hubert) to the Huon Gulf between 1890 and 1892. In his fifth paper on the birds of Kaiser Wilhelmsland A.B. Meyer (1894) includes a brief sketch by Geisler of his travels.

This sketch shows that Geisler is not exactly the unbiased witness we were looking for. He complains bitterly, for instance, that the Company had opposed his plans to collect in the Gazelle Peninsula 'from the start, in every respect, and, understandably, with success' (Meyer, 1894, 2). And he was particularly indignant that, in Stephansort, he and his brother had to share a room with the poultry (*ibid.*).<sup>1</sup> Still his sketch contains some valuable relevant, though rather vague, information.

Bruno Geisler and his brother left Finschhafen on 29 September 1890 and visited most villages to Oliogedu, returning to Finschhafen on 7 December 1890, because they had run out of supplies. During his second visit (May to July 1891), Geisler, this time on his own, reached Cape Arkona. He tried to go inland in several places, but without success because he could not persuade the coastal people to accompany him into the mountains. Shortly after his return to Finschhafen, Geisler set out again together with his brother. They sailed straight to the mouth of the Adler River where they spent several days roaming the 'completely uninhabited swamp land'. Next they tried to reach the Parsee Peninsula, but

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<sup>1</sup> His Hungarian colleague Biro showed a different spirit. A few years later he spent four days near Stephansort sharing his bed with an egg to hatch (successfully) a cassowary which he could not obtain otherwise (Hoffmann, 1948/9, Vol.1, 358). Biro too spent some time collecting in the Huon Gulf (Wichmann, 1909/12, Vol.2, 641-3), but no details are known.

we would have fared badly, if we had landed as the recruited labourers, whom the Company had maltreated and kept long past the agreed time, had now returned and would have taken their revenge on us (*ibid.*, 2).

As the Geisler brothers obviously did not land, this could be regarded as pure speculation, but during his final visit to the Huon Gulf, in April/May 1892, B. Geisler (again on his own) came undoubtedly close to meeting his end.

. . . on 2 April I sailed with two natives along the northcoast of the Huon Gulf. I left them with the gear in the village behind Cape Arkona to go alone into the mountains in the hope of obtaining carriers in a mountain village. But I did not find a village and fell . . . on my way back into an ambush which almost cost me my life, just as I had already been in danger of being killed in Bogimbim Village . . . , because the labourers who had returned from the services of the Company had a deadly hatred against the whites (*ibid.*, 3).

This is more concrete, but one would still like to have some specific evidence to back up Geisler's assertion that the hostility he met was entirely a result of the way in which the Company treated its labourers.

Many years after his visits to the Huon Gulf, Geisler published a short paper on the fighting shields of the Jabim in German New Guinea, describing the production of these shields by the Bukaua, near Cape Arkona, in May 1892 — that is around the time he was ambushed. The situation as described by Geisler in 1908 (based on his diaries) lets the ambush appear in quite a different light.

There was great excitement in Bukaua, because the people armed themselves for an attack on the Kai people at the Adler River. Not long before the latter had killed six young people from this village during the night in the gardens, where they had slept in a small hut. They had carried away and eaten the bodies and had also stolen the crops. Now spears and clubs were being carved everywhere for the reprisal raid, and fighting shields were also being produced . . . .

I was asked to take part in the raid, because these chaps counted very much on my accurate *talam* (gun). But I did not feel inclined to join the fun, in particular as other plans forced me to leave the area (1908, 127-8).

In this climate it appears hardly necessary to look to the Company in order to explain the ambush for Geisler. Moreover, who were the people who ambushed him? The mountain (Kai) people among whom there was probably not a single former plantation labourer, or the Bukaua who, despite their alleged deadly hatred against the whites, were so keen to gain Geisler as an ally in their fight with the 'Kai' people?

The activity of Australian prospectors near the Papuan border, which Rüdiger investigated in 1895 (see above, p. 22 ), had revived the Neu Guinea Kompagnie's interest in the mining potential of German New Guinea. Although the Ramu area was regarded as more promising, a separate syndicate, formed for the purpose, also secured an exclusive prospecting licence for the entire Huon Gulf, shortly after the Reich had taken over the administration of German New Guinea in 1899.

For almost two years (1901-3) the 'largest and best equipped expedition to visit German New Guinea so far'

(Beck, 1911, 309) explored the area, in particular the Waria River and some of its tributaries. But, as Wichmann put it, its activities were covered with a veil of secrecy and its results, from a scientific point of view, were negligible (1909/12, Vol.2, 785 and Fn.2, *ibid.*). This is most regrettable, as the expedition spent a considerable time in the area which concerns us in this paper, and as its leader during this period, Hans Rodatz, wrote excellent reports when he later became District Officer in Aitape.<sup>1</sup>

As it stands, only a few isolated and tantalising references can be found in the literature. District Commissioner Stuckhardt (1902) mentions in a report of 15 November 1901 that the Huon Gulf Expedition had established its base camp in Finschhafen and had begun to cut a track to the Markham.

So far the natives have taken a friendly attitude towards this enterprise. In some cases they even offered themselves for work near their villages. The natives along the Markham River will possibly be less friendly, but this fear is at present only based on assumptions caused by alleged attacks on Europeans in the past (1902, 72).

There are indications that the Huon Gulf Expedition did get involved in fights in the Markham area. S. Lehner (1925, 6) mentions briefly that two of the four police boys of J. Schlenzig, Rodatz's successor, were killed in 1903. But the evidence is too vague to be of much use. What is clear from the literature, however, is that the rôle played by the new

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1 It appears that the archives of the Neu Guinea Kompagnie (and the Huon Golf Syndikat) in Germany did not survive World War II. The holdings of the Zentralarchiv in Potsdam include three consecutive files of the German Colonial Office on the Syndicate. However, the potentially most interesting middle one, covering the time when the expedition was active in New Guinea, is not included in the microfilms held by the Australian National Library and was not available to me.

Imperial Government in the Huon Gulf during the first years of this century was minimal. The field was still largely left to the Neu Guinea Kompagnie,<sup>1</sup> now a private commercial firm, and especially to its labour recruiters.<sup>2</sup> For a while the Company was apparently satisfied with this state of affairs, but in 1905 it began to complain.

The occasion was provided by the 'mountain people', who had attacked the Labu in their taro gardens, killing and eating six men and five women. The Company claimed that it was in the public interest to punish the 'mountain people', because the native inhabitants of the Huon Gulf so far had no idea that a government existed, and, more to the point, because the recruiting of labourers would become increasingly difficult, if the Europeans did not help the 'coastal people' against the 'mountain people' (quoted in R.K.A., File 2991, Report of 24 June 1905).

District Commissioner Stuckhardt decided to investigate the affair. The published version of the report (1905) on his trip (which first led to the west of Kaiser Wilhelmsland) ends abruptly with the government steamer 'Seestern' dropping anchor at the mouth of the Markham on 24 June 1905. After reading Stuckhardt's unpublished report to the Governor of 24 June 1905 (R.K.A., File 2991), one is not surprised: the Markham leg of the trip was a fiasco.

Stuckhardt set off early on 22 June 1905, accompanied by Captain Möller of the 'Seestern', her Second Officer Hild,

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1 For the expansion of the Neuendettelsau Mission into the Huon Gulf see below, p.36.

2 The Company made a series of substantial land acquisitions around the Gulf at that time. (The largest of them were the 12,500 acres, on which the town of Lae is built, which were occupied as ownerless on 5 April 1900.) But none of this land was taken into use during the German period.

ten native policemen, and forty-four Labu, in eleven canoes. The Labu had told him, the village of the 'mountain people' could be reached in a few hours. At dusk it was still not in sight. Stuckhardt found it advisable to camp for the night on the banks of the Markham. Guards were posted, but around 10.30 p.m. the camp was attacked by fifty to sixty 'mountain people', armed with spears, shields and wooden swords. Stuckhardt's party began to shoot, and two minutes later the 'mountain people' had disappeared into the dark. During this time, however, at least six 'mountain people' had been killed, and six members of Stuckhardt's party wounded, some of them seriously, and some by firearms rather than native weapons. For Stuckhardt himself it must have been a rude awakening: he received cuts by wooden swords across both legs and one arm, was grazed by a spear above the left eye, and other spears had torn his sun-helmet to shreds. Stuckhardt's party also made a hasty retreat, and the 'Seestern' immediately steamed off to Friedrich Wilhelmshafen (Madang).

Stuckhardt believed that the 'mountain people' had been unaware of the presence of Europeans, until firearms were used to repel their attack and therefore suggested repeating the expedition as soon as possible, but, for a number of reasons, the Governor was not too anxious. Only the Labu regarded the trip as a success. Stuckhardt suspected that they had smuggled the corpses of two 'mountain people' down the river as the main course for the victory celebrations.

This dramatic nightly encounter was the first well documented contact between Europeans and the Laewomba, the last of the language groups with which we are concerned. It completes the first phase in the area's colonial history.

#### IV

After Finschhafen had been abandoned by the Neu Guinea Kompagnie in 1891, the missionaries of the Lutheran Neuendettelsau Society were the only permanent European residents in the eastern half of Kaiser Wilhelmsland. For many years the visible progress made by them was slow. The first station had been established in Simbang, near Finschhafen, in 1886. In 1889 a second station had been founded on the Tami Islands, partly for health reasons. Most of the energy during the 1890's went into the developing of the first inland station, on the Sattelberg, health reasons playing an even more important part. In 1899 the first station on the coast of the Huon Gulf (Deinzerhöhe) was established among the mainland Tami near Hänisch Harbour. It took several more years before the expansion of mission activities really gathered momentum. The new campaign began in 1906 with the founding of a station among the Bukaua near Cape Arkona. Only eight years later the Papuan border had been reached.<sup>1</sup>

The progress, however, was not entirely systematic. Instead of expanding further along the coast from Cape Arkona, the Mission by-passed the Markham River and founded its next station (Malalo) in Samoa Harbour in 1907. This was partly because of the close links of the people there with the Bukaua, but primarily the result of reports that an unusual amount of fighting was going on in the Markham area, leaving mission activities only a slim chance of success. The Mission felt, it had to wait until it was possible 'to protect the suppressed and to control the evil' (Lehner, 1925, 6).

It appears that the missionaries had already formed firm views as to who were the 'suppressed' and who the 'evil'. S. Lehner, the missionary in charge of the (then nearest) station

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<sup>1</sup> The expansion of the Mission in other directions does not concern us here; see Pilhofer, 1961/3, Vol.1.

at Cape Arkona, described the situation in the first of a series of letters and reports published in the *Kirchliche Mitteilungen* as follows:

As you have probably already heard seven people were murdered eight to nine hours away from here on Easter Even [1907], one woman was captured alive and several people were wounded. The murderers are the so-called Laiwomba, a bloodthirsty, rapacious Kai tribe, who live in the mountains of the Markham River. The victims are the Lahe or Lae, a Bukaua tribe of about 600 people, desirous and ready for the Gospel . . . . The people have decided not to fight any longer, but they are not prepared to suffer attacks without any resistance. They turned to me and Brother Mailänder and expect us to help them. After *serious* consideration, I have reached the conclusion that there are only two alternatives. Either we advise the people: 'fight back' (but then, instead of helping to bring about peace, we contribute to further feuds and confuse the minds of the people for whom war and *miti* [the gospel] are incompatible) – or we tell them: 'wait the *kiab*-judge will come and punish the Laiwomba'. We cannot take up arms ourselves as Rev. Brown, the Methodist missionary, formerly did, especially since there is now a government in the country.<sup>1</sup> The third possibility, to bring the Laiwomba in a peaceful way to their senses, is impracticable because there are absolutely no connections with these people, whose language probably no-one understands. – I informed

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1 This is a reference to a 'punitive expedition' lead by Brown after the killing of four mission teachers in the Gazelle Peninsula in 1878.



Brother Flierl [the Mission's Senior] of the whole affair, and he sent, I believe, a submission to the District Office . . . . A punitive expedition will thus probably soon be undertaken against them. If it is carried out in the spirit of Governor Dr. Hahl — whose maxim is: 'preserve the life of every black because we need them all' — it should cause no disadvantages for these and all surrounding natives (1907, 88).

In January 1907, Bamler and Mailänder had visited the area on their way to Samoa Harbour to prepare the ground for the station there. On 13 March 1907 K. Mailänder reported:

Whereas Brother Bamler [who had visited the area before] wanted to talk to the people [the Lae] who had gathered . . . before resting . . . after the strains of the stormy night, I went to look at all the new things. [For about an hour] I walked from one small village to another (each had between four and ten houses) . . . . This peculiar settlement pattern has been forced upon these people by their dangerous neighbours, the Laewomba. If they come to rob and murder, they naturally can only attack one of the villages whereas the inhabitants of the adjacent one are quickly on the spot (1908, 2).

Mailänder (and Bamler) also visited the Labo in the Herzog Lakes:

An island with about thirty houses lies in the centre of the lake. I have never seen such a crowded village. This island serves the Labo as the only fort which protects them from the warlike Laewomba who live in the mountains of the interior and who are a constant threat to them and frequently steal and rob from them. Everywhere else in the Gulf peace

reigns as the first visible fruit of the *miti* of which the people have so far only heard dim and distant rumours, only the Laewomba are feared intruders (ibid.).

Mailänder visited the Lae again in June for five days, but no details of his visit were published. Heavy seas prevented him from landing on his return from a second trip to Samoa Harbour on 19 August 1907. He was particularly sad, because the Lae had, in the meantime, 'suffered terribly from the hands of their wild neighbours' (ibid., 4-5).

During the second half of 1907, the Laewomba's 'rule of terror' reached its peak, and as this period was also one of comparatively intensive European activity, we are fairly well informed about it.

The new phase began with an expedition in mid-July by the District Commissioner of Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. It was intended to punish the Laewomba for their Easter raid but failed to make contact.<sup>1</sup> According to Lehner, this attempt to oppose the Laewomba even provoked their next and largest raid on the Lae two weeks later, during which (according to Lehner) 68 to 72 Lae, men, women and children, were killed.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of this raid, J. Flierl prepared on 13 August 1907 a new submission to the Government. He wrote:

The Lae . . . are said to be industrious and honest people, good friends of the white man, the Government as well as the Mission. It would be a great pity if this peaceful and noble tribe were to be

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1 I have not been able to locate any published or unpublished official reports on this expedition.

2 Unpublished report to Hahl of 14 December 1907 which the latter enclosed in his report of 4 April 1908 to the German Colonial Office (R.K.A., File 2993).

exterminated by the murderers and robbers from the Markham. And not only this tribe but also the inhabitants of the Herzog Lakes are constantly threatened . . . . Immediate help is urgently required. However, it cannot be provided by means of an occasional punitive expedition but only by establishing a permanent police post at or near the Burgberg . . . .<sup>1</sup>

Flierl presented his submission to the District Commissioner who happened to visit Finschhafen a few days later. The District Commissioner was not in favour of a police post, because the costs involved were, in his view, out of proportion with the good it could possibly do. Instead he decided to carry out another punitive expedition, and his lengthy report was published with minor but interesting alterations (1908).<sup>2</sup>

On 17 August we stopped . . . at Cape Arkona. Missionary Lehner confirmed the substance of Missionary Flierl's letter. He added that the Logamu people had given him the names of all those who had been killed; the impudence of the Lahé-Womba had grown so strong that they had settled close to the coast in the upper villages of the coastal people they had harrassed. The Logamu people no longer slept in their village, but, for fear of attacks, at the beach. He, Lehner, had suggested to the Logamu people that they should come to Bukaua, where he would give them land. They, however, did not want to leave their accustomed settlements.

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1 This report was also enclosed by Hahl in his report of 4 April 1908 (R.K.A., File 2993).

2 A copy of the original report of 20 September 1907, showing these alterations, is included in R.K.A., File 2992. I follow here the original.

In the evening the 'Seestern' arrived in Logamu. The Logamu people too told me about their defeat. The Lahé-Womba had attacked them on a Sunday in Church and had killed everyone they could reach. They put the number of dead at more than twenty five. It was, of course, impossible to ascertain details, and there was also no proof that the number of dead was really as large as stated and not exaggerated. Several people had still fresh spear wounds. I arranged with the Logamu people to undertake an expedition into the interior, but this time over land and not, as on earlier occasions, by canoe up the Markham.

The next day the District Commissioner, two other Europeans, forty police boys and about fifty Logamu began to march inland. The party first passed through the gardens of the Logamu and then followed the Adler River. Later it left the river and marched in north-westerly direction through swampy country. In the afternoon it reached a second, now deserted, gardening area and began to follow a small tributary of the Adler River. It tried to catch up with a band of Laewomba scouts, but failed to do so and camped for the night, close enough to their village to hear them singing. The following morning the party had almost reached the village when drums were sounded. According to the Logamu, this was a signal for the Laewomba to begin work in the gardens, but when the party entered the village, (which consisted of twenty to twenty five 'miserable grass huts such as natives build them in a few moments') it was deserted. The inhabitants, apparently still unaware of the party's presence, were pursued. When they noticed their pursuers, the District Commissioner ordered the police boys to fire, but without evident success — and the Laewomba disappeared. A short march brought the party to

the top of the Markham Mountains (Atzera Range).<sup>1</sup> After a steep descent the Markham was reached around midday, near another Laewomba village which, warned by a shot, was also deserted. A strenuous march of a day and a half along the swampy left bank of the Markham brought the expedition back to the coast.

The District Commissioner concluded:

Summing up, I would like to say that the expedition unfortunately did not achieve a complete success. Only time can tell if it at least achieved that the Lahé-Womba will from now on limit themselves to the slopes of the Rawlinson Ranges and the Schlossberg . . . . If the present feuds continue, one can only advise the coastal people to move their settlements and, if possible, attempt to obtain a few hostages from the Lahé-Womba as soon as they have taken residence close enough to the coast.

Less than a month later, on 15 September 1907, the Neu Guinea Kompagnie landed a party which was to survey the large area the Company had occupied as ownerless in 1900. The surveyors had been joined by W. Dammköhler who planned an expedition from the Huon Gulf to the Astrolabe Bay. Their leader, O. Fröhlich, reports:

It was 8 a.m. when we landed our gear close to the Burgberg. We had counted on the help of the natives, but in vain — not a soul was to be seen . . . . Where were the natives? We were soon to find out.

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1 From there, the District Commissioner claims to have been able to follow the Adler River with his eyes up to where it branches off from the Markham! (He probably misinterpreted the Markham/Erap junction in this way.)

Not long ago rapacious tribes from the interior had attacked the coastal people, and many of the inhabitants of the Logamu villages had been killed. The survivors had left the villages and were scattered in all directions. We gradually persuaded several of them to return. They built their huts next to our camp. They were so afraid of the robbers that they did not dare to visit their villages, about an hour inland, unless accompanied by our shoot boys armed with guns. When I later visited the villages I saw the devastation which had been caused there. Young people who had signed on as labourers for several years had acquired a certain wealth. Well sorted and safely packed into boxes it stood in their houses looked after by their parents whereas they themselves had left on a new contract. All boxes had been forced open and what could not be carried away had been scattered and broken. Sixty to seventy villagers had been killed during this attack. The bed of the Bumbu was still strewn with bleaching bones, broken spears and shields with holes, witnesses of the bitter fighting.

The same robbers attacked during October of the same year another village, some three or four hours from our camp, and killed about thirty people. The messenger who brought the news to our camp had a gaping wound in his temple, caused by a wooden sword. He was probably left lying unconscious after the blow, and woke up and ran away when the robbers had left. During the night, he said, before dawn, when the people were still asleep, the attack had taken place. Nobody had been spared,

women and children had been killed without mercy.

About a month after this attack the same natives roamed the vicinity of our camp. We could thwart their plan to attack it in time by taking up the chase ourselves and extending it to their own village sites, supported by the Logamu and Labu people. Afterwards it was fairly quiet around the camp. The labourers were again prepared to go into the bush by themselves, which had not been the case before (1908, 200-1).

In a report to Governor Hahl of 14 December 1907,<sup>1</sup> Lehner also mentions an attack during which thirty people were killed. According to him it was directed against a village called Musom, whose inhabitants belonged to the Lolo people. But Lehner dates the attack about a month later (end of November instead of during October). Lehner's version of another incident too creates some confusion. To emphasise the Laewomba's boldness, Lehner mentions that they killed a Lae woman (who wanted to get taro from a nearby garden) about thirty paces from Dammköhler's camp.

In Dammköhler's own account the corpse of the lady in question suddenly turns up in a Laewomba village across the Markham Mountains:

On the other side of the river [the Keräri, a Markham tributary] had once been a village of the savages from the Markham. I had driven its inhabitants away not long before, because they had murdered the wife of one of my black carriers in broad daylight not thirty metres away from my tent. I had the victim

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<sup>1</sup> Included in Hahl's report of 4 April 1908 to the German Colonial Office (R.K.A., File 2993).

buried at the time. Now as I came back and investigated, I found that the savages had returned, unearthed the corpse and put it on the spot where I had camped. They had driven a long spear through the body and removed part of the intestines. The burning sun had almost mummified the corpse (1907/8, 6).

Fröhlich had decided to accompany Dammköhler on his planned expedition. They set out on 20 December 1907, after the survey had been completed, and reached the Astrolabe Bay eighteen days later. The trip involved no encounters with the Laewomba, and neither Fröhlich's nor Dammköhler's reports include much additional information relevant for this paper. Fröhlich merely mentions in passing that, before turning against the Logamu people, the Laewomba had destroyed the villages of the Jalu, who had lived in the Jalu Hills. However, Fröhlich's general conclusion is again of interest.

The [Laewomba] natives, especially those who live along the Kärari River, are, as mentioned before, much feared by the inhabitants of the Huon Gulf. They have carried out frequent and successful raids on the coastal villages and have killed many people in the process. Promising recruiting districts were destroyed by them, and they have even forced the coastal people to take up residence in unhealthy and almost inaccessible mangrove swamps, where many perish because of contagious diseases. The natives in the mangrove swamps around the Herzog Lakes, for instance, are so frightened, that they do not dare to make substantial gardens on firm land. Regularly recurring periods of famine are the result, and it is not surprising that cannibalism is still rife among them, although the missionaries are active on all sides.



All evidence suggests that the recent attacks were mainly carried out to obtain iron goods, and I believe, if the authorities . . . bring a number of these people as labourers to the coast, the killing will soon be brought to an end, and the way for friendly relations between them and the coastal people will be prepared. This can be observed in the case of several other tribes, where the young men of both parties frequently work peacefully together on the same plantation (1908, 213).

Lehner was in a way less optimistic:

In my view, . . . [the Laewomba] will begin to attack the area of the Lolo and Abo if the authorities do not strike a *decisive* blow against them.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Lehner had learned that at least the communication problem was not as desperate as he had earlier assumed:

It would, of course, be best of all, if one could get at these people in a peaceful way; there are interpreters among the Lokomu people, I have spoken to three of them.<sup>1</sup>

Governor Hahl tended to share Lehner's fears rather than his hopes. On 4 April 1908 he reported to the Colonial Office:

In the meantime the Lae-Womba have completely destroyed the settlements of the Lukamo at the coast. It must be feared that they will advance

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<sup>1</sup> Report to Hahl of 14 December 1907, enclosed in Hahl's report of 4 April 1908 to the German Colonial Office (R.K.A., File 2993).

further towards Cape Arkona . . . , thus directly threatening the station of the Mission. Two expeditions were carried out without results. The Lae [Lae-Womba] withdraw before every advance into the pathless mountain wilderness. Safety can only be guaranteed by stationing a force of about two Europeans and thirty men. But the means to take this step are not at my disposal . . . . During my visit to Finschhafen at the end of March of this year, I arranged with the Senior of the Mission not to station a force in the Huon Gulf at present. The Mission will carefully watch and report on the movements of the Lae-Womba. Upon their first new advance I will send a permanent force.<sup>1</sup>

There was no need to do this. Throughout 1908 the Laewomba kept surprisingly quiet. Only one, or possibly two, minor raids on the Labu are reported.<sup>2</sup> As far as the Lae were concerned, however, it was like the peace of a graveyard. Missionary Böttger describes a visit to the Burgberg in March 1908 as follows:

During a visit of Brother Mailänder in 1907 ironwood posts for the new station Malalo had already been cut, and we now came to collect them. At the Burgberg we met a few Lae families, beautiful, tall people. Some Labo men . . . had . . . accompanied us to look for the posts . . . . But how did they come: around the superstructure of their canoes they had fixed spears and on it lay wooden swords, all made from the black hard skin of the spear palm! They

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1 R.K.A., File 2993.

2 *Kirchliche Mitteilungen*, 1909, 35; *Amtsblatt*, 1909, 99. Although the dates differ the two reports probably refer to the same raid.

were prepared to follow us along the beach, but nothing could move them to walk the half an hour inland to where the Lae had once lived and where the posts were lying. We therefore had to leave the posts where they were and to turn back.

During our way along the beach we came to places where posts could still be seen here and there. These were the remains of former villages. The inhabitants had been driven away or killed, the huts had fallen to pieces. In the meantime luscious creepers had climbed up the posts. A person who does not know them can no longer find the village sites . . . . We passed the gardens: there were taros, cucumbers, bananas and also nuts, but overgrown by high grass and covered by a mess of vines; a picture of complete neglect. Later we reached a fence, four to six metres high, made from little trees. The people had built it to protect themselves from the Laewomba, but, of course, the Laewomba could walk around the fence along the beach as easily as we could, and thus the palisade had been of little use. It will be appreciated that the sight of the whole coast with its deserted and decaying villages and gardens filled us with sadness and even anger . . . (1912(a), 3-4).

In such a gloomy picture, there was, of course, no room for the rays of hope which Lehner had noticed. The Laewomba had to be depicted as the archvillains, larger and darker than life, isolated from the rest of the world.

We asked the people whether someone knew the language of the Laewomba. 'No, no-one can speak it!' 'But, do you not talk with them at all? You must have had a quarrel with them, as the result of

which they attacked you.' 'No, the Laewomba are not like other people. We sit together and chew betel. They do not sit on a resting-place: they come, attack, and withdraw.' 'And if they kill someone, what happens to him?' 'They take him with them and eat him' (ibid.).

During a recreation period on the Sattelberg, near Finschhafen, Lehner met Professor R. Neuhauss from Berlin. Neuhauss was keen to visit the Markham and asked for Lehner's help. After some hesitation Lehner decided that such a visit would offer a good opportunity for trying to make friendly contacts with the Laewomba. C. Keysser, the missionary on the Sattelberg, who had extensive experience in dealing with warlike inland tribes, was invited to join the party. Missionary Mailänder, from Samoa Harbour, who happened to pass through Cape Arkona when the party was about to leave, wanted to come along too.

It proved to be more difficult to persuade the Labu to provide the necessary canoes and crew for a trip up the Markham. Finally they were satisfied that the Europeans carried a sufficient quantity of guns and ammunition and that their pay was worth the risk. Still, they moved as slowly as possible, were always on the ready to rush down the river at the first sign of danger and were pleased that no Laewomba were sighted for three days (23 to 25 April 1909).

Lehner was probably not too disappointed either after he realised that he had forgotten to bring an interpreter. But he had brought a collection of traditional valuables, which he handed to David Kwason, a Christian Bukaua, after it had been decided to return to the coast. Mailänder and Neuhauss must have been puzzled when Kwason began to decorate a tree with dogs' teeth and a boar tusk, as only Keysser had been in the secret. But Neuhauss soon recovered and contributed a few handfuls of beads. A fire was lit to draw the Laewomba's attention to their giving-tree, and it took the eager Labu just two hours to return the Europeans to the coast.

A fortnight later, at the end of the afternoon service on Sunday, 9 May 1909, Lehner was called to an excited group

of people. A Lae messenger had arrived, bearing a wooden sword as a sign that the Laewomba had accepted Lehner's gifts and were willing to end the fighting. A big peace ceremony had been arranged for 14 May 1909 in which the Laewomba, Lae and Labu, as well as the Abo and Bukaua (but no Europeans) were to participate.

The agreed date drew near, representatives from all villages set out for the Markham, and the peace ceremony did indeed take place. People embraced each other, exchanged gifts and chewed betel together. Afterwards two Labo and one Lae accompanied the Laewomba, whereas three of them stayed with the Labo, as a seal . . . that the peace was seriously meant (1909, 90).<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, the Laewomba sent presents to Lehner and invited him to visit them. Lehner was anxious to go, and was pressed from all sides to do so as quickly as possible,<sup>2</sup> but felt that he could not leave his station just then. This gave his former apprentice, Mailänder, the chance to steal a march upon him by visiting the Laewomba from Samoa Harbour on 18 May 1909.

If Lehner was irritated — and it appears that a certain rivalry had developed between Cape Arkona and Samoa Harbour — he tried not to show it too openly. He merely described the reaction of 'his natives' when they heard of this visit.

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1 The preceding account is also based on this report by Lehner.

2 The most urgent requests came from the Lae, because Dammköhler had returned to the area and they were afraid that he would spoil the peace by getting involved in fights with the Laewomba.

'What are Mailänder and Bete [Böttger] doing there', the 'old Wogang', from Lae, had exclaimed.<sup>1</sup> 'It is you whom they have invited, because you left the presents for them' (ibid., 91). 'The annoyance of the blacks and their talk surprised me', Lehner continued, 'but it explains the reserve which the Laewomba had shown towards Brother Mailänder and Böttger' (ibid.). In any case, Lehner promptly disregarded a 'friendly warning' by Mailänder, as a result of the latter's experience, and, on 3 June 1909, he started on his second visit, again accompanied by Professor Neuhauss and, this time, also by 'old Wogang' as interpreter. But before following Lehner, we will briefly view the situation from the Samoa Harbour point of view. Böttger reports.

[O]n 15 May a Labo appeared in a peculiar outfit . . . . This man, called Kulip, was one of the Labo's spokesmen but otherwise apparently a pretty useless fellow. He came, a spear and sword in his hand, and a round hat on his head . . . , making a face as if the globe would have stopped rotating if he had not been there.

'Hello, what news do you bring?'

'Can't you see, a spear and a sword from the Laewomba.'

'From the Laewomba? Tell us more.'

'They came —'

'— and attacked you again?'

'No, no, there is no more war now.'

'This is impossible. The Laewomba have come and there is no more war?'

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1 'Old Wogang' (and his mysterious namesake) will figure prominently on the following pages; see especially p.89-92.

'Yes, O Mailenda [Mailänder]. This is what they did (he stretched out his hand and quickly pulled it back) – and how they trembled!'

'How did this happen?'

'You went upstream and left things.'

'Yes,'

'And now they are afraid of the whitemen's guns and have come to ask what the meaning of these things is.'

'But I thought you could not speak their language?'

'This is true. But as you know the Lae are living with us. Now, a long time ago the Laewomba captured a Lae woman and she had a child among them, and this child understands Lae as well as Laewomba, because the woman talked to her child Jagwui in her language and now Jagwui knows both languages.'

'But the Company [Neu Guinea Kompagnie] has left knives for them in the past and the Laewomba did not want them, and now they have taken the things?'

'They are afraid of the 'pu' [the firing of guns] O Mailenda; tehee, they thought the whites would otherwise make 'pu', the whites would make 'pu', and this frightened them. A whiteman passed through their area, and he made 'pu' and this made the arm of one of them bad. This is why they are now afraid of the 'pu'.

'How did they come? Were you not afraid?'

'Truly, we were afraid. Listen to me. Suddenly a toot [from the shell trumpets] and we said: the Laewomba have come. And there they were, standing at the beach and as they saw us, they put their spears down and shouted to us, we should put our spears down too, and some of us should come



to them, but only a few. A few walked to them and wanted to shake their hands, but the Laewomba ran away and withdrew their hands again and again. But then one of them took a hand, watch (he imitated the movements of the Laewomba), but he immediately withdrew his hand, and then again, but a little longer, and then longer still. Then they touched their forearms, then the arms above the elbow, and then they embraced each other. Afterwards the Laewomba ran back and then the others came and we took them back to the village. But first of all, we gave them each a loin-cloth. Mailenda, they do not have them, they are stark naked, you can believe me' (1912(a), 6-8).

Mailänder and Böttger quickly agreed that they had to do all they could to make the peace permanent. It is interesting that they were apparently more worried about the Labo and Lae than the Laewomba:

Who could guarantee that none of the Labo or Lae would kill one of their former enemies in revenge, thus destroying the new peace? For this reason, we decided to set out ourselves during the following week, to hear and see for ourselves how far the facts fitted the description we had been given (ibid., 10).

As Lehner indicated the atmosphere during the brief meeting between Mailänder, Böttger and the Laewomba at the bank of the Markham was rather strained. It took three Labo, two pulling and one pushing from behind, to get the first Laewomba to shake hands with the Europeans. The Laewomba were apparently keen to acquire knives and axes in exchange for their traditional weapons. But the more the

Laewomba overcame their shyness, the more frightened the Labo got, and after about two hours everyone felt that it was time to bring the meeting to an end (1912(b), 8-9).

The much greater success of Lehner and Neuhauss' trip (4 to 10 June 1909) was at least partly due to the presence of their interpreter Wogang, 'a man of about 48 years, who spoke Laewomba as a child, but who, like many others, had been displaced after his father's death and who now spoke Bukaua as a second mother tongue' (1909, 91).

[E]arly on 4 June we started up the river and at 10.30 a.m. we had already sighted the Laewomba. When we had landed, they came to us, without fear or shyness. We shook hands with all of them, brought various articles, including bananas and several pots, and continued our trip as soon as the Professor had taken some photos. At first the Laewomba did not understand why we wanted to go further, but when we explained to them that we wanted to see and meet all the Laewomba, they themselves pulled our boat and assisted us in every possible way. Around 3 p.m. we reached their camp, almost at the same spot which we had reached after two full days on our first trip. About 200-300 Laewomba, men, women and children, received us with shouts of exultation. We were lifted out of our boat and led into their midst – we must have looked very funny walking around arm in arm with stark naked savages! They had spread sheets of bark in the centre of an open space on which we had to sit. Soon we were like old friends; the Professor was a master in handling these people (ibid.).

During the next two days Lehner and Neuhauss pushed further upstream until they reached the mouth of the Watut.

On the way they made friends with a Laewinwin who was on a trip from higher up the Markham, and during the return journey, they spent a day with the Laetimbu, who lived in the plain between the mountains Warinu and Uwangamung (ibid.).

As an introduction to this report Lehner provides a general historical summary.

About fifty to sixty years ago the Lae or Lahe, Laewomba, Laetimbu, Laewinwin, Jalu and Musom formed one single tribe with one uniform language — minor differences in dialect excepted — which occupied an enormous area in the great Markham plain . . . . Even today the Jalu and Musom and several old Lae still speak the Laewomba language, whereas the younger generation of the said people only speak Bukaua with slight differences in dialect. Because they were far superior in numbers, the Laewomba were always feared by the Bukaua, and this made them more and more audacious. Then, for trifling reasons, quarrels developed among them.<sup>1</sup> They grew more and more vicious and many people were killed and many villages deserted. We do not know how these people have waged war among themselves in the interior of New Guinea, but I do know that only a few Jalu and Musom are left, who no longer live in their original homes but, forced out of them, were pushed closer and closer to the coast, always moving the Lae . . . in front of them, until the latter finally had to erect their huts on the beach. Even there they were not left in peace, the Laewomba followed, killing again and again a number of people,

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<sup>1</sup> According to a similar summary by Neuhaus (1911, 44-5), the fighting started when a Lae chief died whom the Laewomba had held in high esteem.

for instance, 72 in a single night. For quite some time these Lae have now been living scattered among the Bukaua so that a sizable Lae village has developed in the midst of my people (*ibid.*, 89).

This summary is still very much in the 'old style', but the climate changed almost overnight. The first to sound the new tune was the editor of the *Kirchliche Mitteilungen*.

So far it appeared as if the Laewomba differed in their behaviour from the rest of New Guinea. But now it has become apparent that their wars and raids were not the result of a particularly rapacious and bloodthirsty mentality but that they had their good reason and justification: they were the revenge for wrongs the Lae had earlier done to them. It is true that one of the missionaries had been told that the Lae had been feared warriors in the past – and a man eager to start a fight or brawl is still called a 'Lae' by the people – but he did not follow up this clue . . . . [Since the peace with the Laewomba] the Lae themselves have told stories which confirm what so far had only been suspected. In Logaueng [near Finschhafen] lives a young man from Lae who told our Missionary Bamler that he had been present as a young boy (*mote*) when they, the combined Lae, Labo and neighbouring mountain people, had carried out a raid on the Laewomba, attacking a village and killing almost all of its inhabitants. He counted forty men and twenty children and women. Thus they had killed many enemies and the latter now took revenge. – In the past they did not tell these things (1909, 71-2).

The future suddenly looked terribly rosy, at least for Professor Neuhaus who wrote in an enthusiastic report to the Government on 15 June 1909:

The positive effects of the . . . [new] peace are already visible everywhere. The people living close to the mouth [of the Markham], the Lae, Labo, Bukaua etc., make gardens for a considerable distance upstream, whereas four weeks earlier no one dared to enter the river at all. The gardens which are farthest inland are even jointly cultivated by the coastal tribes and the Laewomba. I am extremely glad that the two Markham expeditions which I initiated achieved this surprisingly favourable result (1909, 120).

On the other hand, the brighter the image of the Laewomba became, the darker grew that of the Lae and Labu. Böttger's account of a visit to the Labu in May 1909 includes the following episode.

When, by chance, I looked around in one of the villages, I noticed bones of a peculiar shape in a hollow next to the men's house where we sat. There was the jawbone of a pig and, next to it, other bones of pigs and dogs, but among them, as if it had been thrown out of the men's house: a human jawbone. And there was another one, and what was this? the upper part of a skull- and that - the top of a second.

I asked an old man who could speak some Jabim: 'What kind of bones are these?' 'From a snake?' he replied in the tone of a question. I pointed to the bones and asked: 'What about this one, and that one?' He: 'A pig?' I: 'They do not come from a pig! Who ate these people? Are these

the bones of Laewomba?' 'Yes', he admitted.

I made a fitting reproach to him and said to Brother Mailänder: we will have them removed so that the people see how horrible this is. I told the old man in a determined voice: 'Now you will get an iron and dig a grave and bury these bones'. At first he made excuses, but I insisted on what I had said. Finally he got up and poked with a stick a hole in the square hollow which had been caused by building the altar room onto the hut in which church services were held. Yes, this was the situation: here the *lum*, the men's house, ten paces away from it they had built a hut to hold church services when they had heard about the *miti* [gospel] and had waited for teachers, and in between lay the witnesses of their terrible heathendom! If they had at least built the church hut after the horrors of cannibalism had ceased, but, as it was, we had to assume that these bones had been picked after the hut had been erected, at least, they did not look very old.

The old man asked whether the hole was sufficient, I said, no, it had to be a big hole. In the soft sand he had soon completed his task. 'Now you can put the bones into it — stop, only the human bones.' Before he had finished, the children came and brought a hollow bone from one direction and a leg from another, as far as I could judge all from humans. Shortly afterwards a whole crowd of adults had gathered, but they soon disappeared, whereas the children, amidst much shouting, carried the bones together and threw them into the hole.

Brother Mailänder said: 'Will the Laewomba not get angry when they come and see the bones of their

people'? 'Don't worry', one of them laughed, 'they already saw them and were amused, and our three people, who went to the Laewomba, saw there the bones of our people whom the Laewomba had killed and eaten. Now we no longer eat people. What are you complaining about. They killed and ate us and we killed and ate them.' This is what is called the 'happy natural state of heathens' (1912(b), 5-6).

Mailänder himself wrote in an unpublished letter of 8 March 1910 (quoted in Pilhofer, 1961/3, Vol.1, 152):

In the past they [the Labu] acted with unbelievable cruelty towards the Laewomba. They wiped out an entire village. They tied the bodies of their living and dead victims in layers across their boats as if they were fattened beasts. Back home they slaughtered them and cooked and smoked the human flesh. The Lae also took part in such cruelties.

With this sudden change from black and white to grey in mind, one begins to look at the literature with different eyes. Fröhlich's account, for instance, includes a passage which now appears to indicate that there may have been a considerable amount of 'internal' fighting around the mouth of the Markham before the raids of the Laewomba began.

During the first days of our stay, several of my labourers who were from this area, only a short distance south [probably Labu] came to me and told me that the place where we stayed was a bad place; they called it 'place belong plenty fight' . . . .

It was remarkable that the whole area between Bumbu River and Markham River was uninhabited (that is ownerless), which can be regarded as a rarity

for Kaiser Wilhelmsland. Even if there are no villages directly along the coast, one usually finds settlements scattered over the hinterland. But this usually only happens if the land along the coast is not suitable for gardens which does not apply here.

When I enquired further, I learned that the area had once been inhabited. About thirty years may have passed since the people had left after putting a strong spell on the place. Until recently none of the natives living in the vicinity dared to enter the area, unless Europeans induced them to do so (1908, 201).

Moreover, it appears that as late as 1906, the Neuendettelsau Mission was not seriously worried about the Laewomba. The archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lae include a mysterious sketch map, initialled 'G.B.06', which leaves little doubt that G. Bamler had been sent out some time during this year to select land for a station among the Lae people. In any case, the Mission had applied to the Government for permission to acquire land for this purpose on 12 December 1905, which was granted on 28 December 1905 in the following terms: '100 hectares between Logamu (Burgberg) and Adler River, on the Markham Mountains and the plain before them.'<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, it is true that permission to acquire 100 hectares for a station in Samoa Harbour had already been granted by the Government on 13 September 1904.<sup>2</sup> Further, J. Flierl, the Mission's Senior, in reply to a government

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1 This permission is included in the Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lae. No precise location can be given, as the collection had not been indexed when I had the opportunity of looking at it some years ago. I am therefore particularly grateful for the generous access I was given.

2 See Fn.1 on this page.



circular of 16 September 1904, suggested that a police post be established in the Huon Gulf, because there were 'many reports of tribal feuds and cannibalism. A police post could protect the suppressed and control the evil without the need for serious military action.'<sup>1</sup> But Flierl proposed Samoa Harbour and not the Burgberg as the most suitable position.

Still, it is clear that the 'coastal tribes' were afraid of the Laewomba in 1906. But W. Dammköhler, for one, was not convinced that this fear was justified. K. Holzkecht (1973, 37) located an unpublished letter by G. Bamler of 9 February 1906,<sup>2</sup> which describes a meeting with Dammköhler at the Burgberg during which the latter strongly expressed this feeling. He told Bamler, he had visited a Laewomba village with a population of about 400. He was immediately attacked, but after he had shot a few of the warriors, the Laewomba withdrew and Dammköhler calmly pitched his tent in the middle of the village and spent the night there. His encounter with the Laewomba's cousins in the Watut area, three years later, had a different ending – but this is also a different story.

When the Bukaua left Cape Arkona to attend the great ceremony which was to seal the peace between the Laewomba and their coastal neighbours, Dammköhler and his new companion, R. Oldörp, were about to reach Laewomba territory from the interior, on their way from the Astrolabe Bay to the Huon Gulf, unaware of the changed circumstances.<sup>3</sup>

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1 See Fn.1 on p.61.

2 Holzkecht does not say where he found this letter – probably in the mission archives in Neuendettelsau, which contain an enormous amount of unpublished material.

3 Several (more or less edited) accounts of this trip by Dammköhler (and Oldörp) have been published. By far the most detailed version, over which I recently stumbled by chance, is included in a German metropolitan daily (*Vossische Zeitung* of 3 October 1909) and not in one of the many periodicals specialising in colonial matters. I am quoting here from this version.

Dammköhler had not chosen to repeat his 1907 expedition in the opposite direction – his aim was the gold in the ranges south of the Markham – but the Captain of the steamer on which he and Oldörp came from Australia had refused to land them with their twelve horses at the Burgberg and took them to the Astrolabe Bay. Dammköhler and Oldörp spent almost five months (1 January to 23 May 1909) covering the distance which Dammköhler had traversed a year earlier with Fröhlich in less than three weeks.

On 27 April 1909 Dammköhler and Oldörp left the last village of the Marapuman, who are probably a branch of the Azera, among whom they had spent about two months. They then crossed about 30 kilometres of uninhabited river plains, and Dammköhler made a prospecting excursion across the Markham. On 7 May 1909 they reached the first villages of people who were unknown to them. 'They were a wild crowd. The tallest people we had met so far. They looked very similar to the savages who live about 25 kilometres inland from the coast and who have undertaken so many raids, looting whole villages and killing their inhabitants.' Dammköhler was sure that these 'inland Laewomba' had intended to attack their camp if their horses – the first to be seen in the area – had not frightened them away. The following day contact was established.

I made signs of friendship and could persuade them, after some hesitation on their part, to come closer . . . . Repeatedly they pointed at my pistol, which I always carry with me, and called upon me, by means of sounds which sounded like 'bum, bum', to throw it away. Obviously they had already heard from other tribes about our firearms. Many of them wore red cloth and other little European things as decorations.

Dammköhler and Oldörp left these people on 10 May 1909 and passed through at least twenty deserted villages.

Six of them had apparently been destroyed by a flood which had been caused by a large river which comes down from the Finisterre Mountains. But human bones were also scattered everywhere which suggests that the natives had been at war not long ago. Further, we saw smoke rising in various places in the Finisterre Mountains where I had not noticed any the previous year. Obviously the refugees had settled there.

For the last 80 kilometres of their trip Dammköhler and Oldörp did not meet anyone – which was probably just as well. When they set out again on 25 July with ‘four horses and three blacks’, they met Laewomba at the Kerari River:

but they came unarmed and with peaceful intentions. They helped us to widen the track and were in every way friendly and helpful. In their villages we concluded a formal treaty of peace and friendship. At their request we confirmed this by rubbing the bodies of our horses with leaves and grass which they gave us and, afterwards, carefully preserved. The people were apparently serious in their wish to keep permanent peace, and we assured them that we would speak for them to the Imperial Government (Oldörp, 1909, 155-6).

Dammköhler and Oldörp had planned to cross the Markham as soon as possible, but they had to follow its left bank for about 90 kilometres before they could get their horses across. This was near the mouth of the Watut, the farthest point reached by Lehner and Neuhauss a few weeks earlier. Dammköhler and Oldörp found that the people who

lived in two villages near the Watut/Markham junction, were related to the Laewomba who lived on the other side of the Markham, above the Erap, but that they were bitter enemies of the Laewomba living along the lower Markham, and were much feared by them. However, they showed no hostility towards Dammköhler and Oldörp and accompanied them a 'considerable distance' along the Watut. The latter were confident that the people further upstream would also be friendly, but no contact was made for about four weeks.

By then the situation of the two Europeans, who had sent back their 'blacks' two weeks earlier, was getting desperate: on the one hand, they were rapidly running out of food, on the other, they had found more and more traces of gold and were sure that they would strike reefs any moment. Never before during his many travels in Papua New Guinea, had Dammköhler been keener to establish friendly contact with the local people. Yet the enormous riches he had almost within his grasp probably made him over-excited and ready to believe that the superstitious fear caused by a few shots into the air among people who had never heard this sound would protect them from any attack. He confidently used this sovereign remedy on 12 September 1909 when he suddenly faced five hostile warriors. They promptly fled, but a few hours later Dammköhler was bleeding to death, pierced by eleven arrows. Oldörp, seriously wounded, reached the Burgberg after a nightmare journey of five days (*ibid.*, 156-7, 162), only to drown seven months later, during his second attempt to lay his hands on the gold of the Watut.

This was only one of many trips of private prospectors (and later labour recruiters) which led through the area of the Laewomba. But most of them went unreported, and even if there are reports, they usually contain little information of interest to this paper (although they do contain valuable first

observations on areas further inland). This is different in the case of the Neuendettelsau Mission which, at that time, began to prepare the ground for a station among the Laewomba.

The leading pioneer missionary among the Laewomba was F. Örtel, who had arrived in New Guinea not long before and had served a short apprenticeship under Mailänder in Samoa Harbour.<sup>1</sup> Örtel made his first trip to the Laewomba in March 1910, again with Professor Neuhaus — and again after a ‘friendly warning’, this time from Lehner who had heard that the Laewomba were at war with the Waing and afraid of an attack.

The warning failed to reach Örtel in time, but the Lae had already told him about tensions between the Laewomba and the Waing, as well as the Labu. Yet the Lae showed no signs of fear and were happy to provide carriers so that Örtel and Neuhaus did not hesitate to carry out their plan.

And how were we received in the interior? Better than we could wish for. Our interpreter was the nephew of our usual guide . . . , Wogang. He cannot understand the language of the Laewomba quite as well, but enough to make himself understood. As soon as he marched ahead of us out of the bush track into the little village, the cheering and embracing began . . . . They received us as if their oldest friends had come after a long separation. When we arrived in one of the main hamlets, where Jagui lived, the son of the Lae woman who had been stolen a long time ago, banana leaves were spread out in the village

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1 The staff of the Mission was increasing rapidly during these years, and young missionaries were entrusted with new stations after a very short time.

square in the shade of a tree, and soon a few big pots full of tasty, stewed bananas appeared . . . . We settled down with our boys in a large hut . . . for the night. We could detect no signs of tension or fear, nor were there indications that the people did not dare to sleep during the night or to go to their gardens for fear of an attack (Örtel, 1910, 51-2).

Örtel spent two days in *agab munun*, which consisted of twelve hamlets of between four and ten huts. He compiled the first word lists, praising the Laewomba for their intelligent cooperation, but failed in his attempt to ascertain their ideas about religion and magic. The Laewomba merely told him that they did not have anything of this kind and the Lae added, that, while their old people were preoccupied with sorcery and spirits, the Laewomba thought of nothing but war (*ibid.*, 52).

On the third day Örtel went with a few Laewomba to the next village, Ngaschanobum, about an hour and a half further inland. He counted seven hamlets, (but doubted that he had seen all of them), and estimated the combined population of the two villages to be about 500.

Örtel would have liked to continue his trip to the Wanzif, but he wanted to be back at the coast in time for Easter and also hesitated to leave Professor Neuhauss on his own, who had stayed behind in Munun. Örtel was impressed by the large number of newly made pots he saw in Ngaschanobum (whole huts were filled with them, and some were beautifully decorated) and with a high post in one of the hamlets in which stuck 140 to 150 spears. Örtel was not sure whether it was a target or a tally to keep count of the people the inhabitants had slain. He tended to believe the latter as the post was apparently quite old and it looked as if the spears were not removed and remarked that this was quite a proud number of notches

(for such a small population) (ibid.).

On 27 April 1910 Örtel and J. Ruppert<sup>1</sup> moved into a base camp at the Burgberg. Between 6 and 11 July 1910 they visited first Munung (Munun), then Ngaschauabum (Ngaschanobum) – and finally Wanzar (Wanzif), an hour and a half inland from Ngaschauabum.

This is a larger village of twenty-eight houses with about 150 inhabitants. The houses form an open rectangle, and in the middle is a beautiful square, kept perfectly clean, which shows at least a sense of order (Ruppert, 1911, 10).

When Örtel and Ruppert (together with missionary Zwanzger) returned in October 1910, the situation had changed drastically.

The Munun started to quarrel with the Wanschar and killed several of them. The others fled to the Tschifesin. The latter, however, fought them too, and chased them back to the Munun . . . . Now, the Wanschar, Ngaschauabum and Munun are all afraid of the Tschifesin (who are said to be very numerous, and tall, strong people) and have therefore withdrawn into the adjacent hills . . . . We met the Munun about an hour and a half closer to the coast, on the banks of the Munun [River] where they had built a few miserable, grass-covered huts on a hill. Neither here nor in their old village did we meet many people. Some of them are said to have settled further downstream, near the Markham. Not only the first

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<sup>1</sup> Ruppert was the more senior of the two but left, for health reasons, after a few months.

[Munun] but also the two other villages [Ngaschauabum and Wanschar] were deserted. We met some Wanschar people in Ngaschauabum, who told us that their village had been burnt and that the people had 'all' been killed. However, 'all', as used by the blacks, can also mean ten percent. It is to be hoped that the three villages, on our advice and that of our interpreter, will now behave peacefully towards each other and move closer together. Unfortunately, we have still not been able to go to the Tschifesin to bring them peace also. I do not believe that this would be particularly dangerous for us. They must have heard about us, they have already seen whites and treated Dammköhler and Oldörp quite well. It will of course be impossible to combine them with the other Laewomba into one tribe, as they are said to live two days further inland, although this may well be exaggerated (Örtel, 1911, 12-3).

In January 1911 Örtel returned with K. Panzer (who had replaced Ruppert) to decide where the Laewomba station was to be built. The missionaries were well received by the Munun (who had still not returned to their village), but struck difficulties as soon as they explained to them that they were too small a group to justify a station and that the station had to be located much further inland. The missionaries had devised the following plan: the station was to be built near the 'Ilab' River (fairly close to the Tschifesin), and the Munun (a term which in this context probably includes the Wanschar and Ngaschauabum) should follow the missionaries some distance upstream and return the land they occupied at present to the Yalu, from whom they had taken it (Panzer, 1912, 20).



The Munun were not impressed, while the missionaries were not to be so easily discouraged. They and the Munun spent most of the second day trying to change each others' minds — without decisive results. The following morning Örtel and Panzer set out on their own. Around midday they reached the Markham and the end of the track. They debated what to do, and finally decided to begin cutting a trail the next day. When they began building a shelter, a few Munun, who had shadowed them, came out of the grass and guided them first to a few deserted huts and, the following morning, to a former village site. It was slightly elevated above the surrounding plain, and a few coconut palms stood among the trees. The missionaries thought that this would be a suitable place for a station and inquired about the former inhabitants. They were told, the Mezun had lived there, but they had been wiped out many years ago, although the spot was still known as *agab mezun*, a name which was retained for the mission station which was erected shortly afterwards.

The missionaries faced a difficult situation. Örtel wrote on 26 April 1912 that the new church and school were still empty and that thefts, robberies and murders continued to be the most important events on which he had to report (1912, 51).

The Ngaschanobum, who killed a Schaw six months ago, have recently killed four Waing and shortly afterwards another five. The Wandschar murdered four Ngain-Aschon and took part in an attack on the Kufit by the Afir.

The behaviour of Mosang, a young married man, who killed one of the Waing, has been our greatest disappointment. He was fairly close to us before this happened and lived for some time at the station.

When he was given a second wife, as usually happens after such fights, he stole a lot of things from our Tami people, who spent ten weeks here, cutting boards for the house, probably to the value of 10-12 marks, in order to pay with them for his wife. Another, who too had visited the station before taking part in the fight, also wanted a wife, started an affair with his own sister and eloped with her. Just now they are looking for him and want to spear him.

In the past, it must have been much worse. How much blood must have flown on the village square of Agab-Mezung before the small tribe of the Oroknaron was wiped out? . . . .

The Oroknaron who lived here in Agab Mezung started the war about thirty or forty years ago, when they attacked the Onowante, whose only survivors are good, old Wogang and his family in Lae. The Laewomba say: the people of Agab Mezung *empeng mrazeze*, they cut the road (of peaceful relations). The bloodshed, the long war, which cost many hundreds of lives and destroyed its originators, started in this very place. If Agab Mezung could now become the source of as much peace and salvation as bloodshed and war in the past, we will thank God and give him the honour (*ibid.*, 52-3).

This is an effective ending, but unlikely to be the true beginning of the story. Panzer's earlier report already suggests that, in order to find it, one must go at least to the other side of the Markham, which he regards as the original home of the Laewomba.

Here they had to give way to the stronger, the Laetimbu. Thereupon the Laewomba crossed the Markham and dispersed over the entire plain in smaller or larger villages. Woe, to those natives who did not flee, they were attacked and killed. Wiser were those who abandoned their former homes and fled into the mountains, like the Yalu (1912, 19).

But were the Yalu – or the Musom – so much better off? G. Schmutterer wrote in his first report from the new Lae station (late November or early December 1911):

. . . the day before yesterday the Laewomba killed again five men from the Yalu<sup>1</sup> . . . . We let it be known to the other Yalu, who live in the mountains, that they could come and live with us, for the time being, down at the sea. It is also said that the Laewomba plan to fight the Musom. A bloodthirsty race these Laewomba! They had no reason to start a fight, it was merely the desire to kill (1912, 29).

Örtel wrote in his report of 26 April 1912: 'If we did not trust the force of the word of God, we would probably say that only physical force could persuade these people [Laewomba] to mend their ways' (1912, 51). A few months later his patience had apparently worn so thin that he felt the word of God had to be supported by secular means. District Officer Klink, of the Imperial Station in Morobe, near the Papuan border, informed the District Commissioner in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen on 11 September 1912 that there appeared to be

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1 Native names, and for some unknown reason the name Yalu in particular, are frequently misprinted in the *Kirchliche Mitteilungen* in the most peculiar ways. Here it has become 'Ysln'.

again a great deal of unrest among the Laewomba. A prospector, who had just returned from the Markham, had told him, that Örtel had been so furious about two particular murders 'that he had burnt down a house, broken spears or otherwise interfered' (R.K.A., File 2995).

Possibly as a result of this report, District Commissioner Berghausen undertook (between 28 September and 5 October 1912) a large scale expedition (two police sergeants and 80 men) into the Markham Valley which reached the Tschiwissin villages about 90 kilometres upstream. He reported:

No clashes with the natives occurred during this expedition. Nine Laewomba hostages were brought back from the villages, including the farthest we reached, as a pledge for keeping public peace. In a year's time they will return to their villages after having learned the language [Pidgin?] and become familiar with the settlements of the white man.

It was not possible to punish the murderers of the explorer Dammköhler. The camp where the murder took place is at least fourteen days inland and therefore for a long time outside the area of possible police protection. A punitive expedition would be impracticable as well as useless. Along the Markham too public peace can only be brought about and protected by gradually expanding the organisation for the administration of the natives. A first step in this direction can be made when the nine Lae Womba hostages are returned (1912, 6).

On 28 March 1913 Berghausen reported on an enquiry by the Governor that Police Sergeant Leier had made a short expedition along the Markham between 15 and 19 March of

that year. Flooding had prevented him from crossing the 'Ilap' River and reaching the 'Tschiwissin Villages', but he managed to recruit three Laewomba as police boys and found that everything was peaceful – at present; Berghausen stressed that public peace had by no means been secured (R.K.A., File 2995).

This was a mild understatement. A few months later a new general war almost started among the Laewomba. It began in Munun, where the Government had in the meantime appointed the first luluai (headman):

. . . an old man died. Among the Laewomba no-one dies for natural reasons, everyone believes that they die as a result of sorcery. It was thus necessary to ascertain the man who had used sorcery against the deceased. For this purpose a sorcerer from Munun blew the shell trumpet and determined by its tone who had performed the sorcery . . . . Whereupon the relatives of the deceased decided to take their revenge on him. The intended victim had no idea of their plan and even came with his wife and child for the lamentation of the dead in Munun. On his way home some Munun ambushed and killed him . . . .

Because of this murder the Munun split in two factions, one favouring the murdered and trying to avenge him . . . . Soon an opportunity arose to take revenge. A Munun, called Nowang, who belonged to the other faction went up the Markham to visit the Zifesin. The supporters of the murdered together with the Ngashauabum came to Agab Medschun in order to ambush and kill Nowang. Moreover, Nowang had promised to bring several Zifesin down with him, so that there was a chance for some other Laewomba to be allowed to remove

their black mourning hats. As is well known they are not allowed to do . . . [this] until they have (in their words) speared a big pig, that is killed a man.<sup>1</sup> Therefore it promised to be a nice brawl which caused the Wanschar to side with the supporters of the murdered. If the ambush had succeeded, the peace among the Laewomba would have been destroyed for a very long time, because all Laewomba living on this side of the Markham were opposing each other: one faction of the Munun together with the Ngashauabum and Wanschar against the other Munun faction and the Zifessin (Panzer, 1914, 41).

Örtel and Panzer learned about the planned ambush – the latter on his way to visit the Waing in the Rawlinson Ranges – and managed to stop it. They were not always successful. During another visit to the Waing, on which Örtel was accompanied by K. Steck, the Inspector of the Mission who toured German New Guinea in 1914, the Waing suddenly attacked and killed six Laewomba who also belonged to the party. They harmed no-one else as they only wanted to avenge a raid during which the Laewomba had killed eight of their people three days earlier (Pilhofer, 1961/3, Vol.1, 174).

In 1917 Örtel still had to report: ‘six years of mission activity have not succeeded in breaking the spell of heathendom

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1 Örtel wrote in a report of 15 September 1913: ‘. . . they [the Laewomba] have so far not killed anyone during this year, whereas they used to raid a peaceful village about every three months. In the past their customs virtually forced them to kill, since a man who has not killed a person is not allowed to decorate himself, and it is also difficult for him to get a wife. Further, for every person who dies, someone else must be killed, otherwise they are not allowed to take off their mourning hats. It is hoped that they will soon abandon this custom. We are waiting anxiously for someone to make a start and to take off his mourning hat voluntarily’ (1914, 9).

which hitherto forces the Laewomba to bloodshed and murder' (quoted *ibid.*). According to Stürzenhofecker (1929, 14) Örtel's first pessimistic assessment was justified: it was not until twelve of them were shot by the Australian Administration in consequence of killings they had committed among the Azera, that the Laewomba began to pay attention to the word of God. But then the conversion was rapid and complete: 'the feared murderers turned into zealous evangelists' (Pilhofer, 1961/3, Vol.1, 174).

Looking back Stürzenhofecker claimed that the former bloodthirstiness of the Laewomba had had staggering demographic effects.

The elders . . . told me that the valley had once been as densely populated as the area of the Azera today. They named 27 villages with a population of about 10,000 people, of which only five with a population of 1,200 remain. During my visits to the villages I recorded all men who had taken part in raids and counted those whom they had killed. Usually the number was between fifteen and twentyfive. One even managed to reach forty. In Zifasing . . . live twentyseven men, who between them, killed 260 people in the past (1929, 13).

In addition, the Laewomba women had, according to Stürzenhofecker, the habit of burying newborn children alive. Some women had buried as many as five. In short, the bloodthirsty Laewomba must have been a truly miraculous race. The miracle, however, is not how they reduced their own numbers from about 10,000 to 1,200 (taking the Chivasing as an example, the men alone could have easily achieved this within a single generation) but how they managed to increase the population to 10,000 in the first place.

## VI

By now we have learned a good deal about the Laewomba and their history but very little about their 'enemies'. This applies in particular to the Lae, whom Lehner first described as a 'Bukaua tribe of about 600 people' (see above, p.37) and later as a Laewomba tribe which recently adopted the Bukaua language (see above, p.56). As Lehner emerges from the literature as a keen observer with a considerable interest in traditional history, his later writings may help to clarify this and other issues.

In 1925 Lehner had completed the manuscript of a substantial monograph on the Bukaua.<sup>1</sup> Some of the chapters were subsequently published in various journals, others were not. Among the latter is an introductory historical sketch. It is not surprising that it was never published: although in some ways the most valuable section of the manuscript, it reads like an editor's nightmare come to life. Viewed from a more positive point, one could also say: Lehner's sketch suggests that the task awaiting the historian in Papua New Guinea may be even more complex than that of the anthropologist or linguist, that he will certainly have no reason for adopting the former's attitude to make matters appear more complex than they are, and that he will probably find it harder than the latter to develop a plausible method of oversimplifying them. The historian may even be forced to abandon altogether any attempt of forging (in the full double meaning of the word) individual pieces of information into a coherent chronological account. Instead he may have to turn into a teller of individual semi-mythological tales which serve a hardly disguised ideological purpose rather than the tranquillising

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<sup>1</sup> A copy is held in the archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lae.



illusion of objective historical truth. Yet, Lehner's haphazard collection of historical and mythological fragments adds a new dimension to the literature so far considered. It also illustrates what a full-time historian could achieve if he were prepared to pick additional grapes of information instead of pouring thin old factual wine into elaborate but preconceived new theoretical bottles.

Lehner is mainly concerned with the coastal area between the Markham and Cape Arkona. He distinguishes three main 'tribes':<sup>1</sup> the Bukaua, the Laulo (Jalo, Laujalo)<sup>2</sup> – an apparently non-Melanesian Kai tribe (to be distinguished from the Melanesian Yalu, originally a part of the Laewomba 'tribe'), and the Lae (Lahe). Lehner further distinguishes a number of branches within the Bukaua and Lae 'tribes' (and is fully aware that the term 'tribe' is not very satisfactory in the New Guinea context). He names the following Bukaua sub-groups: the Laukelim, the Awade, the Uwaung, the Mundala, the Bogabung, and the Bukawa *ngano* (the true Bukaua). As far as the Lae 'tribe' is concerned, Lehner first of all distinguishes between the main body and a number of splinter groups. He names the following splinter groups: the Aloki (or Aloko, who also incorporate the Singling), the Apo, the Tale, and the Tikeleng. Among the main body, Lehner distinguishes the Lae Wogang, the Lae Luhu, and the Lae *awatalo* (the Lae speaking a peculiar dialect); but he also mentions in passing the Kamgumung and the Apo as leading Lae sub-groups.

Like Hogbin, Lehner was unable to obtain information on the 'original' home of the Bukaua. In contrast to Hogbin,

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1 He also mentions other 'tribes', for instance, the Msam, Musom and Labo.

2 Lehner's spelling of local names is complicated and not always consistent. I have omitted his 'in-between' vowels and the 'c' indicating a glottal stop.

however, he heard stories about the previous (non-Melanesian?) occupants of the area: a 'tribe' called the 'Msam' (to be distinguished from the Melanesian Musom) who once inhabited a large section of the foothills of the Rawlinson Ranges between the Bubulum and Buhem Rivers. In Lehner's days only a 'handful' of people were regarded as their descendants, but a number of village names and the powerful *balum*-spirit, *Timu langwa*, echoed of them (1925, 8).

According to Lehner the recent history of the area was dominated by population movements, but, unlike Hogbin, Lehner sees them as a result of an expansion of the Laewomba instead of the Bukaua. Consequently the main direction runs west-east, from the Markham towards Cape Arkona, rather than *vice versa*. Apart from these population movements Lehner also describes others, caused by natural disasters (which the people contributed to supernatural or rather super-human forces). These latter population movements went in all directions, although it should be emphasised that the former too cannot be represented by a few determined arrows on the map. There was an overall west-easterly tendency, but it was often achieved in a round-about way, and, naturally, the two kinds of population movements overlapped and influenced each other. Still, for the purpose of this paper it is probably better to treat them separately.

At the beginning of his sketch Lehner summarises the west-easterly population movements as follows:

People like the Lahe, who previously inhabited the present Laewomba area up the Markham in the villages Enggali, Bumpap and Buangaim, now sit, together with the remainders of the previous inhabitants of the mountains across the Markham

and as far as the Losenang,<sup>1</sup> near the Lowamu, between the Markham and Adler River. The descendants of those who had lived near the Lowamu before, are now settled in the Tale and Tikeleng villages across the Adler. They, together with the Jalo, who pushed from a north-westerly direction down from the mountains, in turn displaced the Bukawa sips, Bukawa *ngano*, Kelim, Mundala, Bogabung and Uwaung (ibid., 5).

For the history of Lae, Lehner mainly relied on what he was told by Wogang.

As a result of quarrels and because of their characteristic bloodthirstiness, the Laewomba destroyed all Lahe villages. Most of the inhabitants perished, only few . . . reached the coast. There they became the neighbours of the Labo who lived in Asabkabom [a village at the coast] . . . . When all Lahe had been chased down from the mountains and destroyed, the Labo (whose intentions towards the . . . Lahe in their midst were also not always peaceful) suffered frequently under treacherous attacks from the . . . Laewomba . . . and were forced to choose the . . . little island Busto [in the Herzog Lakes] as a refuge (ibid., 6).

In the long run there was no room near the Labo for the remainder of the people who had once lived in the mountains near the Losenang. They moved on and settled in and around Samoa Harbour and also, as already mentioned, in the villages Wogang and

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1 A mountain on the coast between Labu and Busama.

Luhu near the Burgberg. As a result of quarrels a part of the Lae Luhu (like Jangking's father) and the Lae Wogang (like the ancestors of Alu and Ikume) as well as a section of the Lae *awatalo* . . . (like the forefathers of Akwalam and Awedong) moved across the Adler River to the Buzo. They still live in this area today, although only in two villages: Obalasis and Wogangluhu. From there they have mixed over the years with the Lae sips of the Tale and Tikeleng (*ibid.*, 7).

Turning to the Tikeleng, Lehner writes:

In the past they had lived on the right bank of the Adler River, but they separated from their tribe, as they tell, because of a trifle . . . . On their village square stood two large trees, from which they had peeled the bark in order to kill them. Swarms of *sokwang* . . . [praying mantis] settled on the parts from which the bark had been removed. Their rocking and lurking movements stimulated the old ones to compose the following song: *eee sokwang, gole tau samu ne gole tau olisamu, sooo sooo ea pup pup* (o you praying mantis, you swallow whole things but remain yourself whole – then follow the *sooo sooo* quavers and *pup pup* as an imitation of the sound of a shell trumpet). The incessant bawling of this song which may also have included allusions to this or that member of the tribe, ended in bloodshed. In consequence the majority of the people left the place and moved to the grass plain Bahom. There they established a new settlement together with people from Lae Luhu (*ibid.*, 8).

Lehner does not record why the Tale left the Lowamu area, he only mentions that they were the closest neighbours of the Tikeleng and lived in the area of the Bumka and Buasum Rivers. However, he reports several instances of fights between the Tale (as well as the Tikeleng) and the Lae (ibid., 8-9). Lehner's account of the history of the Apo is more detailed.

We hear about the Apo people, who once formed an important tribe, that they originally belonged to the Lahe. Lae Apo is still today a large village in the Lae area, left of the Bumbu. Their forefathers lived in the village Buaga at the upper reaches of the Buleb and in the villages Malata and Ngakala on the mountain Sao. Because of quarrels with the Lae they moved to the mountain Mata. Further fights forced them down onto the grass plain Basop, right of the Bujem. From there they moved to Kwame, left of the Bujem, and into the extensive village Mogalong, at the foot of the mountain Kwamata, behind the grass plain Bamo. Only one headman, old Uwe moved close to the sea. Disputes between the two clan leaders Samati *langgwa* and the Timawa about the conducting of a pig market feast lead to further bloodshed. Seven Apo . . . [names given] were killed by the Lae and Bukawa and one was eaten by the Lae. The pigs were left to rot. After these events the Apo avoided the plains and moved into . . . (ten) villages . . . [names given], in the mountains between Buasep, Buso and Bulep (ibid., 9).

Some time later the Apo dispersed during a famine.<sup>1</sup> Many of them returned later to their old villages, but around

<sup>1</sup> See below, p.87.

1890 most Apo moved together into three villages (Bumang, Bussang and Mogalong) in the plain. Again fights between the Apo and the Lae are mentioned, among them one wild battle during which twenty one men were killed.

Lehner then considers the Aloko, the last of the branches of the Lae 'tribe'. They lived previously at the spring of the Bumka River, near the mountain Bungawa. For unknown reasons they moved to the grass plain Bahom (which was later occupied by the Tale). There they were frequently attacked by the Musom, who lived in the mountains behind him. Hence they moved closer to the coast, to the mountain Malatang, where they became the neighbours of the Apo. The two groups became even closer neighbours when the Aloko left Malatang and settled in the plains in the villages Sialing and Aloko (*ibid.*, 11-12).

The Lauulo 'tribe' lived east of the old home of the Aloko, along the upper reaches of the Buso, in the large village Malaseleng. After a fight with the Buso (apparently another Kai 'tribe'), they left and went to the mountain Gasom, near the Bulo River, where they established the villages Wa, Kwamtobau and Homala. Again the Buso forced them to leave, and they founded the villages Hob, Anduga and Nomtu, on both sides of the Bulo. But the fights with the Buso continued, and they fled to Bukawa. However, most of them returned not long afterwards and settled in the villages Homaseng and Agalom, near the Bulo. After the Mission had become active in the area, they moved again closer to the Bukawa and founded the villages Sanghu, Buhalu, Buso and Utigatob (*ibid.*, 12-4).

The first Bukawa branch discussed by Lehner are the Uwaung. They once lived in the village Umaso at the Butebam, a tributary of the Buob. They left Umaso because they were

afraid of the growing strength of another Bukawa branch, the Awade,<sup>1</sup> further inland, who had become their enemies.<sup>2</sup> The Uwaung moved to Cape Arkona, where they settled in the villages Kamseja, Galanglom, Mabelim and Alipong, along the Bukalu. When Lehner arrived at Cape Arkona these villages too had long been deserted and the last Uwaung had joined other Bukawa branches, for instance the Mundala (*ibid.*, 14).

The Mundala once lived on the grass plain Masili on the west bank of the Buhem, but the Apo and Lauulo forced them to leave, and they established three villages further east, at the Bueng, Buasa and Bukalu. They were later decimated by various natural disasters (*ibid.*, 15).

The Laukelim lived in the village Pako near the grass plain Sali, close to the coast, west of the Buso. The Wogang, Luhu and Aloko forced them to leave. They moved along the coast to the Buhem, where they founded the village Bombelip. Here they led a miserable existence as the village site was subject to frequent floodings. When the village was finally washed away, the Bukawa *ngano* and the Bogabung, who lived some distance further inland, gave them land between the Buaka and Bukalu, where they established the villages Apohu and Kelim. The Bukawa *ngano* and Bogabung had good reasons for this generosity as they intended to use the Laukelim as a buffer between themselves and the Msam who still attacked them from the mountains (*ibid.*, 16).

The Bogabung used to live in the villages Buha and Busalo at the Bulu River — until the Lauulo forced them to leave.

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1 The increasing strength of the Awade was a result of migration from mountain groups further inland, including the Msam.

2 The reason for this hostility is also worth mentioning. The Uwaung had been the intermediaries between the pottery traders from Laukano and the Awade. When the Laukano tried to establish direct trade links with the Awade, the Uwaung got angry and killed an entire Laukano crew.

They settled some distance further east in the villages Buma, Makasa and Umaso, between the Butob and Buobsang. Not long afterwards they had to abandon these villages as well and formed the coastal village Bulongtong. Further fighting forced them inland, where they established the village complex Buke, which they shared with the Kamung (apparently a Kai 'tribe'). When a number of Kamung were killed by lightning Buke was abandoned and Bogabung was founded at a site which had once been inhabited by the Awade (ibid., 16-7).

The Bukawa *ngano* too had once lived a considerable distance west of Cape Arkona, in the villages Sanghu and Lomgwam, on both sides of the Bulo River, two to three hours inland. They were first weakened by internal quarrels, which went so deep that they no longer held common *balum* ceremonies, and then forced to leave by the Lauulo (ibid., 18). It was a Bukawa who gave the latter the opportunity to strike the decisive blow.

In Sanghu lived the bachelor Kepugwa who was the laughing-stock of the village because he had to perform all the tasks which were usually reserved for women. At last he could not stand the teasing any longer. He decided to use the Lauulo as willing instruments of his revenge and got in touch with Maim and Ngaobom, the two worst enemies of the Bukawa. Shortly afterwards the Sanghu received an invitation to take part in the burning of the large grass plain Oba Bulo. The Sanghu were suspicious, but Kepugwa assured them that there was no reason to be afraid, and that he himself would lead the way. The Lauulo waited until the Sanghu were occupied by smoke and flames and then killed all of them, with the exception of Kepugwa. From that day the Bukawa *ngano* avoided Sanghu and moved to the Buhem (ibid., 14).

Whereas they soon again assumed dominance under their



leader Alumbam, a similar 'trifle' brought about the downfall of the Awade after they had triumphed over the Uwaung (see above, p.84). The Awade once lived in Kwape at the upper reaches of the Buob. They left, settled for a short while on a grass plain west of the Ukwa, crossed the Buhem and established a village at Gejabugo (ibid., 14) where they built a beautifully carved and widely famous men's house. The two leading elders among the Awade were, at that time, Bosolob and his rival Kamagang.

One day Kamagang swallowed the wrong way when chewing betel and started to cough. Bosolob cried with a loud voice: '*Pale ti agapawe ma ma, Sakaing langgwa ketbe*' (Be quiet, boys and girls, the old (widow) Sakaing is coughing). By the 'old Sakaing' he, of course, meant Kamagang, who could not get over this insult. Together with his son Bongbong he secretly secured the help of the Labo, Lae and Apo and bribed the leaders of the surrounding tribes with valuables, thus cutting off any possible support from the Awade. The enemies [Labo, Lae, Apo] therefore had no difficulty in overwhelming the unsuspecting or at least unprepared Awade. It is said that they acted terribly. They threw the corpses into the burning men's house, except those they ate. No hut was left standing and for this reason the place was long known as Jaso (the ash heap) (ibid., 17).

Lehner refers to a number of natural catastrophies (epidemics, villages disappearing into the sea etc.). The most important and possibly also the oldest of them was a widespread famine which afflicted the Huon Gulf 'about three generations ago' (in 1925), that is probably around 1850. Lehner gives the fullest account when discussing the history of the Apo.

According to the Apo it was caused by their elder Tikalom who had brought back a *saie* (famine magic) from a visit to the 'Kela-Awasa people'. He mixed the ingredients and, one night, spread them on the thresholds of the houses. In the morning, when the unsuspecting inhabitants stepped on the mixture, their hands and feet grew limp. Some of them fell down unconscious and none of them was able to work. Not satisfied with this result, Tikalom spread his magic in the gardens and the ripening crops rotted and the seeds and seedlings stopped growing. The people got weaker and weaker and many children died.

This famine caused the Apo people, and many other tribes around the Huon Gulf, to leave their homes and to seek refuge elsewhere. The elder Timawa, for instance, went with his sip to Kela, whereas the elder Samati fled with his relatives to Tigatedo in Hänisch Harbour. Only two elders, Molo and Kalum, remained in their little village Muasa and continued patiently to cultivate their land, and not without success. A considerable time later many returned to their old villages, but many continued to live where they had found refuge. This is the reason why one can still find members of the Apo tribe in Laukano and Kela (the elders Maeki, Ajabo and Walu), in Tigatedo (the elder Pengkau), in Taminagedo (the elder Alisi), and in Welelo and Jambo (the elder Ako, Tupele and Bising) (*ibid.*, 10).

This report shows first of all to what extent a single — unusual, but by no means unique — event could mix the population in pre-colonial New Guinea. It also illustrates that beneath the spectacular surface of bloodshed and treachery ran a quiet but at least equally important undercurrent of friendship

and co-operation – which Lehner almost totally neglects. Further, the report raises the difficult question of the relation between myth and history in oral New Guinea tradition.

Lehner obviously regarded the story of Tikalom's magic as a historically irrelevant mythological explanation for the famine. But what does this imply? Did Lehner see the whole story as an invention, or did he merely refuse to accept that Tikalom *caused* the famine with the magic he had brought back from Samoa Harbour? On the other hand, it could imply that Lehner thought he was confronted by a 'consolidated myth', incorporating facts and fiction connected with several historical famines – for instance, the one which, according to Hogbin, was caused by a bad drought about a hundred years earlier (see above, p.12).

The report makes it also necessary to consider again the problem of historical dates and chronological sequence. It suggests that the famine took place around 1850 and, apparently, a considerable time after the Apo had left the main body of the Lae. On the other hand, Lehner claims earlier that the destruction of the Lae villages in the Markham Valley which forced the Lae (presumably including the Apo) to the coast took place when Wogang (whom he described as a man of about 48 in 1909, see above, p.55) was a child – that is around 1870.

The problem of historical dates, weighty as it is, is probably not the most important. Looking at Lehner's account as a whole, it not only appears likely that the migration to the coast after the destruction of the Lae villages (in which Wogang was involved) was merely the last of several waves, but also that these waves followed at least two different routes, one along the Markham and the other along the Rawlinson Ranges. Considering the history of the Apo, it would seem more plausible that they (followed by the Musom and Yalu) took

the northerly route instead of reaching the Burgberg from the south-west – always assuming that they originally formed part of the Laewomba ‘tribe’. But is this assumption convincing? Why should all branches of the Lae ‘tribe’ suddenly have adopted the Bukaua language when they – although pushed by the Laewomba – were very much on the offensive in their relations with the Bukaua?

The greatest puzzle, however, are the Kamgumung: they hide like a mysterious overgrown boulder behind the veils of history, washed round by changing waves of migration, apparently without moving an inch themselves.

These and other riddles can only be solved, if we obtain a clearer picture of the history of the Lae ‘tribe’, and who, among the European writers, would be a more promising source of additional information than G. Schmutterer, who founded the mission station in Lae in 1911 and remained in charge for a quarter of a century?

In 1927 Schmutterer published an – unfortunately all too short – biography of Wogang.

He was a member of the Lahe tribe which, originally belonging together with e.g. the Laewomba, had its area south of the Markham at Lake Wonam . . . . The branches of the large joint tribe began to quarrel among themselves a number of decades ago, for reasons we do not know, and developed a deadly hatred of each other, which resulted in bloody feuds which continued until the present. These feuds with the Laewomba, who came down the Watut, a tributary of the Markham, forced the Lahe to flee across the Markham. One section, however, . . . remained on the right bank and withdrew towards the coast. These . . . [people] got in touch with the

Labo and founded several settlements at the foot of the Herzog Mountains . . . . The final settlement of these Lae was at the Losena, a mountain, . . . [south of the Labo] which rises very steeply out of the sea. But there too they found neither peace nor refuge. The Laewomba [still] came . . . and fought them. When in addition to this lightning killed six of their people, the tribe dissolved and the people dispersed . . . . Some of them came as far as Busama near Malalo. One section followed the Lae, . . . who had moved to the left side of the Markham and had combined with the Jalu. The Jalu had also been a part of the old joint tribe and now too lived in bitter hostility with the Laewomba.

Among those who combined with the Jalu, were also the parents of Wogang, Endi and Butopauwi. This section of the tribe established a village among the Einggali people . . . at a creek which they called Lahe. The Einggali gave them bush and gardens, and but for the continuing war with the Laewomba they would now have led a reasonable life.

Wogang was born on the way from Einggali to Laubeng, where a *sam*, a pig market, was going to take place. About two years later his mother was killed during a raid of the enemy. His father managed to escape with the little boy. Wogang's early youth was thus not pleasant and it did not become pleasant either. Apart from the fear of sorcery and evil spirits, which rules everywhere in New Guinea, the fear of the enemies never let him rest. One village after the other was attacked, and although the Lahe and Jalu stood together, they

were again and again beaten and chased. The enemies were too powerful. Their numbers did not reach those of the Jalu and their friends, but they always appeared together in one spot whereas the others lived scattered over a wide area.

One day Endi fell seriously ill. He had been the head of the Lahe. He said to his small son Wogang: 'I am about to die. When you have buried me, stay no longer in this place but go to the sea. There are people who know me. Tell them my name and they will look after you. If you remain here, you too will soon be killed.' Wogang followed his father's wish. The Lowamu, a section of today's Lae, welcomed him and adopted him into their tribe.

After long fights and great losses, the remainder of the Jalu and Lahe came to the coast. Little more than 200 of a population of 2,500 were left. About fifty of them moved inland to the Waing and Musom. (The Musom too had belonged to the original joint tribe.) The Laewomba then began to attack the Lae who now lived closest to them . . . .

Wogang took part in these fights, he even remained in Lae when everyone else fled. He successfully outwitted the enemies. Although they frequently went after him, he escaped again and again. He may have been helped in this by the fact that he had a half-brother among the Laewomba. His mother had not been his father's only wife, and one of the others had been abducted by the Laewomba, giving birth to her child there. This child, Jagwi was his name, grew up as a Laewomba. But it was also Wogang's strength and agility which was

feared and which protected him. His spear rarely missed. With the help of his hands and feet he enumerated thirtysix enemies to me, whom he had killed (1927, 1-3).

This is again a substantial step forward. But, like most of the previous steps, it raises more questions than it answers. What happened to the Lahe who fled straight across the Markham? (Were they the Jalu?) How do the people who founded Wogang and Luhu (see above, p.80) fit into the picture (were they the Lowamu?). Did the ancestors of the Lahe and Yalu also come down the Watut? What made the Laewomba move down the Watut?

Schmutterer was not such a prolific writer as Lehner and had no academic ambitions, but, in his retirement in Germany, he prepared a modest manuscript, entitled 'Thirty Stories from the Neuendettelsau Mission for Reading Aloud',<sup>1</sup> which includes many additional details. First of all Schmutterer gives a fuller description of the big Laewomba raid in June/July 1907 than any of the earlier accounts, presented, with a liberal amount of poetic license, as the first report by the Lae to Lehner.

The missionary knew from experience that the natives tend very much to exaggerate, especially in important matters. But he became soon convinced that things had to be very wrong in this case. The enemy really had attacked the village [the name Kamgumung is given earlier] and killed 82 people. Not many escaped. If a part of the inhabitants had not spent the night in another village because of a feast,

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<sup>1</sup> The manuscript is dated 1954. I am grateful to Schmutterer's family for giving me access to it.

they too would have been killed. Those who did escape immediately sounded the shell trumpet and thus announced the attack to all other villages. The Labo, who lived two hours away, were also informed. But before they arrived, the enemy had disappeared into the bush. However, as these people are no cowards and lusted for revenge, they pursued these monsters. They caught up with them at a small river, where they rested and fortified themselves with what they had stolen. The pursuers immediately attacked and a wild battle ensued. According to credible information (the individual names were given to me) another twentytwo Lae men were killed, not counting the dead of the Labo-Late. But the fleeing enemy, too, left many dead on the battle-field (1954, 1(a)).

Another story shows how the Laewomba linked the first punitive expedition against them (see above, p.34-5) with their mythology.

They [the Laewomba] say that they had once a big quarrel with the sun, because it burnt their banana gardens and prevented the rain from coming. They therefore declared war on the sun by hurling their spears at it. From then on they thought that the sun would send its sons to fight them. And really, one day they appeared. It must have been in the year 1906 or 1907 when several German colonial officials went up the Markham in the previously mentioned Labo canoes. The Labo accompanied them because they relied on the guns of the whites. They did not get very far. During the first night the Laewomba attacked the newly arrived sons of the sun. The latter shot in all directions, and killed



some of the attackers and wounded many more . . . . The Labo had kept their canoes ready for an immediate escape. Still, they managed to pull one of the corpses into their canoe in order to eat it at home. The whites escaped with a few wounds. It was impossible to overtake them in their fast canoes during the night. Years later some of the attackers showed their healed wounds to us missionaries. Thus ended the feud with the sun (ibid., 7(b)-(c)).

Still another story appears to be related to an event which, according to Neuhauss, caused the internal wars among the Laewomba (see above, p.56, Fn.1) — and Schmutterer's version makes a lot more sense than Neuhauss' own meagre facts.

The people also know stories about heroes and giants. A man, called Ahe-Lo, is said to have been particularly tall and strong. He did what he liked and no-one dared to oppose him. He even abducted women from the Laewomba. But they outwitted him. They dug a deep pit and covered it again in such a way that it could easily be made to collapse. With false friendliness they invited the brutal man and his sip. Unsuspectingly they sat down on the spot assigned to them. While they were harmlessly feasting, the pit suddenly collapsed and all of them were killed (ibid., 7(a)).

A fourth story contains a different version of the 'sokwang-incident' (see above, p.81) which is here used to explain the split between the Jalu and Musom. It was told to Schmutterer by Petrus Arungsasang, a Jalu who went as a catechist to the Musom. He said:

. . . I want to become a missionary. Inland from us

people are living who once belonged to our tribe. I want to visit them. They have been our enemies for a long time. I want to make peace with them. — About the reason for the hostility he told me the following: Two village groups among them had different totemic animals to which they traced their descent. One of them was the praying mantis. The boys from the other village group joked about it and in their wantonness killed one of these animals. Then they started to quarrel and, later, to hit each other. The adults came, joined in the fight, and finally several people were left dead. There was only one thing the defeated party could do: migrate. They moved eastward, higher up into the mountains. They established friendship with the people in the mountains and began to make miserable little gardens to be protected for the time being. The settlement was turned into a kind of fortress, where the people were at least safe during the night from the enemies of their own tribe. Even the Laewomba looked for them. But they decided the mountains were too high and killed instead the inhabitants of a small village of the Waing people (*ibid.*, 17(b)).

In other words: the *sokwang* story, whatever its historical origin, appears to have become part of the common Laewomba (?) mythology. This probably applies to a number of other motives as well, for instance, to the story of the covered pit, used to destroy a powerful enemy.<sup>1</sup>

In a way the most important story included in Schmutterer's collection is the following — important because

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<sup>1</sup> Compare the version of the Ahe-Lo story reported by K. Holzknicht, 1973, 34.

it indicates that there is also quite a different, coastal rather than Laewomba, line of oral tradition to be found in the Lae area.

The old Lae told me their first mother had been a woman from the Tami Islands. Her name is said to have been Abo-auwi. This woman was very daring. According to the myth she travelled along the coast in her small canoe. She married several men, but they soon died one after the other. At the Bumbu River . . . she met a man who offered her his betel bottle. She accepted and the man married her. She had seven sons from him, and, when they grew up, they too all had large families. The sip of the Lae Abo claims to be descended from her in direct line. I taught and baptised a very old woman who bore the name of the first mother; she claimed to know the whole genealogy . . . Later people are said to have migrated from Kela and Jabem because their home areas were effected by a big famine (ibid., 7(a)).<sup>1</sup>

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1 A short anonymous article in the *Neuendettelsauer Missionsblatt* includes a different version (which may well have been contributed by Schmutterer). "The Laë say that their first mother had come from Kela. At the Burgberg she married, one after the other, seven men from seven different tribes, but all of them died. Finally she met a Tami man on the beach. She made him her husband and bore him many children" (1926, 39).

## VII

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, comparatively little oral evidence of historical interest was given during the hearing of the 'Lae-Case' in 1971. On the other hand, a substantial body of evidence of this kind can be found in the records of the Native Land (Land Titles) Commission, and K.A. Jackson conducted a large number of relevant interviews during the early stages of the 'Lae-Case' (in 1966). Moreover, since 1973 the first contributions by New Guineans have begun to appear in the new *Journal of the Morobe District Historical Society*, and there is reason to hope that a considerable amount of work is going on at present. Still, it may be useful to complete this survey with a summary of the oral traditions which have already been recorded during recent years.

We will begin with the history of the Laewomba.

The Laewomba call themselves Onopualin. They now comprise many clans: Zianganasan, Olinganalin, Bualarompum, Montal, Ulintog, Nalofri, Nalumor, Nasab, Nijridzin, Malawalil, Olengadzog, Olengansan, Ologwangin, Ologlenan, Orungropum, Felef, Suwaif, Nensibrompum, Polinan, and Gabilelo.

Their original homeland is far away. The first parents were fishing on a raft along its shores, when a storm caught them. They were carried to the coast of Papua and followed the Saewi River to its headwaters in the Menyamya area. Then they moved across to the headwaters of the Banir River in the Watut area. There the first children were born. The group moved on, down the Watut. It first lived in the Wafi area near Maralinan and then in Kalinkala, where the first known headman, Nimalin, was born. After that, the people crossed the Markham River and settled at Zankia, near the Erap/Markham junction. They did not stay long. The group first moved a short distance to Turuguf and then to Gabrenan. Later it went back across the Markham and settled near

Mari. Then fighting began, and the group split into more and more branches, Gabensis and Gabsonkek developing into the main centres, south and north of the Markham.

According to Gabensis tradition, the Laewomba fought for the first time among themselves while they were living at Mari. As a result several groups left Mari and went to Chivasing, Ologwangin and Gabensis. Shortly afterwards new fights broke out between the people living at Mari and Gabensis. The Gabensis people moved again, this time to the present site of Gabensis Village. This move mainly comprised people of the Oronrumpum, Ologlenan and Felif clans, lead by the headmen Nimalin, Ampits and Gogles. But the population of Gabensis grew, and members of many other Laewomba clans took residence there. Some time later fighting started among the Gabensis people and many of them moved across the Markham. They founded the villages of Munum and Ngasawampum or went to live with the Olinganalin clan at Gabsonkek.

Gabensis tradition also mentions an important fight with the Olinganalin. According to this version, the Olinganalin clan attacked the Orungrumpum and Ologlenan clans at Gabensis. The latter clans secured the help of several other Laewomba clans and defeated the Olinganalin. It is said that it was this fight which brought members of these other allied clans to Gabensis.<sup>1</sup>

According to Gabsonkek tradition the first split of the Laewomba at Mari was not the result of fighting, although fighting broke out shortly afterwards among the north-Markham branch, which then resided at Ologwangin-Pup (No.2).<sup>2</sup>

1 This account closely follows evidence given by Gabensis elders before the Native Land Commission (Morobe Claim No.5).

2 The settlement at Mari, south of the Markham, was, according to Gabsonkek tradition, also called Ologwangin-Pup (No.1).

Members of the Ziangansan, Suwaif, Olinganalin and Ologwangin clans moved to Chivasing (which was already inhabited). Other Laewomba went to Saog (near the present Erap Agricultural Station) which was uninhabited, but the majority went to Onopualin in the Gabsonkek area which was also uninhabited. Some of these moved afterwards to the site of today's Gabsonkek village, which they called Olinganalin, because many young trees were growing there after a large grass fire. Later other people moved from Onopualin to Dumu, Nalamunkin, and Kupagab, all within the Gabsonkek area.

Then some members of the Ulintog clan (who lived at Onopualin) abducted several Olinganalin women.<sup>1</sup> Fighting commenced and the Olinganalin defeated the Onopualin as well as the Dumu, Nalamenkin and Kupagab. The survivors fled across the Markham to Mari, where they later established a separate village, first at Dankilankits and later at Goligas. When they had recovered their strength, they attacked the Olinganalin who had moved to Onopualin. The Olinganalin were defeated and many of them were killed.

Most survivors fled to the Yalu area, where they established a village, called Olinganalin (No.2). But their enemies followed, and again many Olinganalin were killed at Muntamunun. After a further attack on the Olinganalin at Kabatsits (a hillside near Yalu), the last Olinganalin fled across the Atzera Ranges to the Lae area.

So far their enemies had always returned across the Markham after their raids but now, after internal fights in the Gabensis area, groups crossed the river permanently and settled

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1 It appears that the Olinganalin were by now regarded as a clan, although those who had established the settlement came from the Ziangansan, Nensibrompum and Ulintog clans.

at Munum, Ngasawampum and Gabsonkek.<sup>1</sup>

These internal fights were caused by Waning, a member of the Ulintog clan (Onopualin or Ononapolan section). He left Goligas and went to Musantung. There he made sorcery against the Gabensis people who killed him. As a result the Onopualin left Gabensis and settled at Nalasa in the Lake Wonam area.<sup>2</sup>

We now turn to the history of the Yalu.

Long before the Europeans came the Yalu or Wapul people lived near the Erap River. From there they moved to Nalung'Ulis, in the vicinity of today's Ngasawampum village. One day Nalung'Ulis was flooded by a tidal wave which swept along the Markham Valley. Mungsi, the wife of headman Konsolung, wanted to feed her pigs but they could not hear her calling because of the roaring of the water, and she was very angry.

When the water receded the people left the valley floor and dispersed into the foothills. They formed seven clans (Umbukinuf, Olinganalin, Tamagali, Musakupnalumdiwung, Afapum, Imalan, and Misalengnalimu) who lived in many hamlets (Konsolung, Timkam, Nalungumbum, Mimin, Ombufing, Naluwasa, Ponzamale, Aliwis, Malunuf, Hengali, Nalutum, and Peng).

There they were attacked by the Laewomba. Unable to hold their ground, they fled to the Lae and Waing area. Many of the survivors settled in Kamkumun, but relations became strained when food got short and some young Yalu stole

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1 This account is based on the, not always consistent, evidence given by elders from Yalu, Munum, Ngasawampum and Gabsonkek before the Native Land Commission (Morobe Claim No.9).

2 Waning was the maternal grandfather of Zilu/Gansum one of the most knowledgeable Laewomba witnesses to give evidence before the Native Land Commission in 1959/60 (see also Morobe Claim No.7).

crops belonging to the Kamkumun people. This was after the arrival of the Europeans in Lae. The headman Ahi of Yalu decided to move back across the Atzera Range. He discussed it with the Europeans and arranged a feast with the Laewomba headmen, Nowang, Zensep, and Safal. Pigs were slaughtered and the people said: 'Now, that our troubles are over, let us work together'.<sup>1</sup>

The traditional history of the Ahi/Hengali can be summarised as follows.

The first known leaders of the Ahi/Hengali were Supunkwa, Naluwasi and Apiong. They lived with their people in Iago in the Wampit area until a quarrel developed between Supunkwa and Naluwasi over a flying mantis, or *suongkwang*.

It had been placed inside a coconut shell by Supunkwa and a singsing was held in its honour. Because of the noise Naluwasi could not sleep and, the next day, went to Supunkwa's house to tell him so. Neither Supunkwa nor any other adults were present. Naluwasi asked some children where the *suongkwang* was kept. They showed him, Naluwasi opened the shell, killed the *suongkwang*, destroyed the shell and went back to his house. When Supunkwa returned and learned what had happened, he went with his group to Naluwasi. A fight took place and several people were killed on both sides.

Supunkwa and his group then left Iago. He and his followers settled at Masing, near Oomsis. Other members of his group went to Samsam, further inland, at the right bank of the Markham. Some time later Supunkwa moved to Luampom. There his group was attacked by the Laewomba, and Supunkwa was killed. The survivors, together with headman Apiong and

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<sup>1</sup> This account closely follows evidence given by elders (especially Galang/Por) before the Native Land Commission (Morobe Claim No.7).



his group, left the area and settled in the hills close to the right bank of the Markham (overlooking the present Bubia Plant Industry Station). This village was called Ahi. The Ahi were soon joined by the Hengali, whom the Laewomba had driven out of Samsam. The Laewomba attacked Ahi as well, and Apiong was killed at Busanim. Headman Wagan and his followers then moved to Butibam, where the Wapiguhu and Agatu groups gave them land.

Naluwasi and his people also left Iago and settled at Buangam. His group too was attacked and many, including himself, were killed. A small boy (Anken) and a small girl (Anseg) were captured alive and taken to the Munum area. Naluwasi's group dispersed. Some of the survivors went to Labu and Busama, others to Butibam, Kamkumun, the Bulu River area, to Wagan-Luhu, near Singaua, and to Bukaua.

The Ahi/Hengali who had settled in the Butibam/Kamkumun area got involved in the big battle between the Laewomba and the Kamkumun. Most of the people fled afterward to Bukaua, Labu and Busama. Only Wagan, the headman of the Hengali/Butibam went with a number of followers to Voco Point where he built a stockade.<sup>1</sup>

One of the major reasons for confusing the recent history of the Lae area is the difficulty in distinguishing clearly between Wagan (or Wogang), the headman of the Hengali/Butibam and interpreter of Lehner, and Wagan (or Wagang), the founder of Wagang village.

Wagang village now consists of three clans: Wagangbu, Ambessi and Mabalum. The Wagangbu formed originally a

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<sup>1</sup> This account follows closely evidence given by elders (mainly Kahata/Wagan) before the Native Land Commission (Morobe Claim No.6).

part of the 'Ahi' when they lived south of the Markham as neighbours of the Laewomba. The relations between them were friendly until fights developed out of disputes over fishing rights. The details are vague, but it is clear that the 'Ahi' started the bloodshed. One of their men killed a Laewomba during a quarrel about a catch of prawns and threw his body into the river.

As we know, the Ahi were defeated and forced to disperse. The forefathers of the Wagangbu settled on the coast, near the present Lae Airport. While living there they quarrelled about the way in which the 'kot kot' bird produces its songs (see below, p.105). Fights ensued and the village broke up. Only Wagang wanted to stay, but his sons said the place was not safe. Wagang went to look for a better place to settle. First the family moved (east) to the present site of the Titan Nail Factory and then across the Bumbu into a swampy area near Buda creek.

There they were attacked by people from Yalu and moved further inland. But Wagang and his sons were joined by migrants from Salamaua and Bukaua, and the settlement grew in strength. Nevertheless it was again attacked, this time by the Musom, and the village was moved back to the beach. To protect themselves the people built a high pallisade around their village. They also built a guard house in a high tree. If the guard saw a stranger approaching he would blow a big shell (*tau*) and the men would prepare to fight.<sup>1</sup>

For the Mabalum and Ambessi clans much less information is available.

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1 There are two, largely supplementary, versions of the history of the Wagangbu clan. One is told by Sawang, a Wagang elder, and published in the *Journal of the Morobe District Historical Society* (Vol.1, No.3, 53-4), the other written by students of the Busu High School and published in the same *Journal* (Vol.1, No.2, 35-6).

The Mabalum clan gets its name from the bullroarer used in the *balum* ceremonies, and it is said to be the only clan in Wagang with *balum* beliefs. It is not certain from where it came to Wagang, but it apparently incorporates people from Apo who had fled across the Busu.<sup>1</sup>

The Ambessi clan was apparently founded by Kimabom and there are indications that he came from Kamkumung. Kimabom found a boy whom he named Homala at the beach near the mouth of the Bumbu. Homala had three sons, Galong, Nakau and Ubu of whom Ubu is still alive.<sup>2</sup>

We now follow the 'Ahi' refugees across the Adler River. First the history of Wagan Luhu village.

The people once lived in the Markham area but there was a dispute between the Markham and the Mabura people, and the Mabura people were chased away. The Mabura people broke into two groups. The larger group fled to Salamaua and made their homes there, while the other group of about three families shifted to the Lauulu area. At first only two families went there, but later they were joined by a third family.

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1 Note on the Mabalum Clan by Naku Tija (ibid., Vol.1, No.2, 38).

2 Note on the Ambessi Clan by Gajambau (ibid., 37-8). I was told another version of the story of Hamala (or Hamali) by Kissing of Butibam. According to Kissing, Hamili's parents were the forefathers of the Labu. They originally lived in a village near the headwaters of the Busu. The village was raided and they and their little son were the only survivors. They floated down the Busu, landed at its mouth and wandered along the beach when they were found by people from Wagang village. The Wagang looked after them but did not want them to settle down, because they thought this could lead to fights. So the man and his wife and son continued to walk along the beach until they reached the Markham River. The parents decided that they could not take the little boy across the river and left him behind (Interview of 18 July 1974).

In the Laulu area these families contacted and made friends with the Buang people, who then gave them land on which to settle and to make their gardens. Gradually the Buang people moved up towards the mountains and towards Bukaua so that the land was left to the three families. There were no fights in order to get the land. The three families who came to the Laulu area were the Poguic family, the Agurup family and the Pecuc family.

Later there was some trouble with the people of Bukawa, so that there was a fight. After the fight, they separated from them completely. The people made their new homes west of where Wagan Luhu is now situated. They then moved across to the other side of the river and settled there. The river flooded this village out, so they moved down closer to the sea, on the present side of the river. At first they made the village further north than the present site, but there was a very dry season and they were short of water, and food crops were dying, so they moved towards the coast again.<sup>1</sup>

Some information is also available on the history of the Apo, Aluki, Tali and Tikereng (see above, p.81ff).

The forbears of the Tali and Tikereng also came from the 'Ahi' area. They first settled at Wasalum (between the Bunga and Buem Rivers) and formed the clans of Aputu, Asalum No.1 and Kau'umpu. They were later joined by other people, left Wasalum and established the villages of Tali and Tikereng. Some members of the three clans migrated from there and

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<sup>1</sup> This summary was prepared by students of Balob Teachers College (*Journal of the Morobe District Historical Society*, Vol.1, No. 3, 67-8).

settled at Aluki, Apo, Yanga, Wagan and Kaisia.<sup>1</sup>

According to another version the Asalum No.1 clan, first lived on a mountain called Lukamor, then moved down on the flat land called Lukamor, and only moved to Tali after the mission station at Cape Arkona had been established.<sup>2</sup> But as Lukamor adjoins Wasalum (at the north-western boundary) this does not greatly matter.

The land called Asang, which adjoins Wasalum in the east, is claimed by the Apomawampum, Apo, Poalu and Alusum clans, who apparently form the Aluki. There is tradition that the people first settled on the land known as Buaga. They then moved to Lusau at the coast. From there they moved to Asang (or Gwaming), then inland to the mountain Lugwam, then down into the foothills and on to Bamzen. Some time after the Mission had been established in Bukaua the people moved again closer to the coast.<sup>3</sup>

We will now return to the Labu, across the Adler and Markham Rivers.

The first leader of the Labu, whose name is still remembered, is Isihi, who is said to have come to Labu from the Finisterre Mountains. He had one son, who was also called Isihi (No.2).

One day a huge tidal wave passed over Labu. It destroyed the houses and gardens and washed the people and their animals and canoes against the slopes of Diwali mountain and many died, among them Isihi, the father. Isihi (No.2), his five

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1 Statement by Sulu No.2 of Tali (Native Land Commission, Morobe Claim No.14).

2 Statement by Waho No.2 of Tali (Native Land Commission, Morobe Claim No.15).

3 Evidence given before the Native Land Commission (Morobe Claim No.16).

sons and some other people fled to a small island in the nearby mangrove swamps and managed to survive. But there was very little to eat and Isihi (No.2) told his sons, Butu, Miti, Malaatu, Tali and Lunda, to find other places to live. They each established a separate village. Later Labu Malaatu merged with Labu Butu, and Labu Lunda with Labu Tali.

The Labu lived in peace until they were attacked by the Laewomba while fishing in the Markham near Gabmazung. The Laewomba not only killed many Labu but also cut them off from their garden land near Markham Point. About the same time fighting began between the Laewomba and the Ahi. The Ahi were defeated and their three settlements dispersed. Some of the Ahi moved to Busama, others to Lae, and their leader, Wagang, and some of his followers came to Labu Butu.

Fighting with the Laewomba and food shortage continued although the Labu made new gardens at Muli below Oomsis. Because of these food problems, Pisi, the son and successor of Isihi (No.2), arranged for Wagang and the other Ahi to move to Lae. This, however, did not really solve the Labu's problems, and Pisi decided to attack the Laewomba. But the Labu were again defeated and Pisi was killed.

Yet, his son and successor, Poani, had no choice but to renew the attack. And this time the Laewomba were defeated and the victorious Labu took over the former territory of Ahi. But while the Labu were fighting with the Laewomba, the Munum people who had been living at Gabensis moved down to the Markham and occupied the land Samsam which had belonged to the Labu.

After his victory over the Laewomba, Poani made his son Asunu the leader of the Labu. Asunu wanted to drive the Munum out of Samsam but he knew that he could not do this on his own, as too few Labu were left. He managed to gain the

Yalu as allies and the combined forces defeated the Munum. Some time later Asunu again attacked the Munum at Narakapor and was again victorious.

From then on the Laewomba avoided the Labu and turned their attention instead to the Lae area. This time the Laewomba were again successful and the Lae people were dispersed. Some of them, including Wagan and Luampom, the father and uncle of Kahata, fled to Labu and lived for a while under Asunu's rule.

Then a German company arrived at Lae, and Asunu sent Wagan and Luampom back. They together with an old man, called Taba, were the first to return to the Lae area and settled at Hasiawi, now known as Voco Point.

Asunu retired not long afterwards and handed the leadership on to his son Pisi (No.2). Pisi (No.2) was the last traditional chief of the Labu. He later joined the German police force and, after his return, was appointed Tultul of Labu Butu.<sup>1</sup>

The Lae people now live in two village complexes, Kamkumun and Butibam, which are best treated separately.<sup>2</sup>

The two oldest Kamkumun groups are Wapi and Kamkumun *uapu* (the 'true' Kamkumun). According to Wapi tradition they and their land were created by Masa, a giant goanna-like creature (*daku*) which lived in a hole in the Atzera Range near Bunum Creek. Offerings were left for it and, if angry, it would eat pigs and children. The name of the original village was Sugapo'U, but there was also another old village called Teep-Wahli. Later the Wapi split into two branches, the Wapi

1 This account follows closely a summary of evidence given by Labu elders before the Native Land Commission (Morobe Claim No.4).

2 This account of Kamkumun and Butibam tradition is mainly based on evidence produced in connection with the 'Lae Case' (*Gaya Nomgui & Others v. The Administration of Papua New Guinea*); the 'Statement on Claim for Compensation', prepared by K.A. Jackson in 1966, was particularly helpful.

*mpom* (up-river) and the Wapi *soko* (down river). Later still another branch, called Mambu (now consisting of two lines) developed. The Kamkumun *uapu* lived further down the Bumbu River and claim to have always lived at the present village site.

The Wapi and Kamkumun *uapu* were later joined by the Kamkumunlu, Tia, Luhu and Hiwapa groups. The Kamkumunlu and Tia had lived on the hill Ndanghu (near the present Bumaiong School), the Luhu and Hiwapa in separate villages closer to the Busu. All these villages were attacked by the Busom people, defeated and afterwards invited by the Kamkumun *uapu* and Wapi to join them.

The six clans which make up today's Butibam Village (Tumatu, Agatu, Gwatu, Apo, Busulum (Buseram) and Wapiguhu (Wapigurhu)) used to live in different hamlets.

At least the Apo migrated to the Butibam area, from the other side of the Busu during the historical past. The names of their then leaders are said to have been Karo and Isum who were given land by Sawang and Kising, the then leaders of the Busulum and Wapiguhu clans.

According to Gwatu tradition, their original village was at the beach near Voco Point but some distance further out into the sea, on land which has since disappeared. While living there the Gwatu started to quarrel about a black crow-like bird which lifts its tail while singing. Some people claimed, for this reason, that it sang through its bottom instead of using its beak. Others denied it and a fight broke out and as a result a number of people left. They now form the Kambipu Clan in Yanga Village.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Yanga and Wagang are the two other villages between the Bumbu and the Adler River. Wagang traditions have been discussed above (p.102ff), for Yanga no specific information is available to me.



Although the relations between the Kamkumun and Butibam appear to have been unusually friendly in the past, there are indications that their origins and outlook may have been quite different. The Kamkumun, or at least the Wapi, were 'bush people' who only came to the beach to obtain salt by burning driftwood. When they did so, they announced themselves to the 'beach people' as the 'Luwing people', after a hill which formed their 'mark'. The Butibam were more orientated towards the sea, though they were primarily gardeners and their hamlets were usually some distance inland. But they kept rest houses and their canoes at the beach and frequently went fishing. This maritime outlook is reflected in their mythology which contrasts sharply with the Masa-mountain cave tradition of the Wapi.

The hill Luamung in the centre of Lae was not always where it is. It came from Siboma and Paiawa between Salamaua and Morobe. These two villages supplied Luamung and another mountain, Bombieng, with food whenever they had a feast. They brought food before Bombieng and said it was for the two of them. However, the village people said Bombieng was selfish and he ate all the meat and food and only gave the scraps and bones to Luamung.

Luamung said to himself: 'My cousin is not friendly to me, he only gives me the leftovers so I must find a new place to go and settle.' He waited until his cousin was fast asleep and then rocked to pull himself free from the ground. He then came across to Salamaua. He then turned round and could see the head of Bombieng and said to himself: 'This is not a good place for Bombieng can still see me and will laugh at me for running away'. He then came

to Busama, and saw the same thing. He therefore went to Bukaua but he could still see Bombieng. He said: 'I must go and hide in the bay where he cannot see me' and he then came to Lae. He looked back and could not see Bombieng and said: 'This is a much better position' and he is still here. Then the sun rose into the morning.

Bombieng woke early and found his cousin gone and said: 'My word, I did a wrong thing to my cousin. He has gone forever because of my unkindness'.

There is still a big hole near Bombieng from where Luamung came, and from this place the Siboma and Paiainea people get clay for cooking pots.

The story does not end here. It is connected with another mythical motive:

Once there was a woman who was pregnant who made a garden up on the side of Luamung, long after it had come from Siboma, and settled at Lae. She cut some sugar cane to chew on a very hot day. The sharp fibre of the cane cut her finger deeply so she made two holes in the ground and they filled with blood. She went home but after some days the two holes of blood turned into babies. A banana palm, the first ever, also sprang from these two holes and bananas ripened. When the babies started crawling the bananas dropped one by one down to them.

The old woman went back to her garden again and she saw marks where the children had crawled around, but the children had hidden themselves. She realised children had been playing there so she decided to hide amongst the sugar cane which had

cut her. She saw the two boys come out and play around the banana tree. She rushed out and caught them. The boys screamed: 'A devil has us, she's taken us'. 'I am your mother', the old woman said, 'I am not a devil'. She then named them Turu and Mde. She brought them home and fed them till they were grown up. (The two names mean 'strongboy' and 'weakboy'.) She then taught them how the people caught fish and all other things. The boys asked her: 'Can we go out and catch tuna?' She said: 'There is bamboo up on Luamung which is very good for catching tuna'. So they went into the bush and cut the tree down. The tree was on the top of Luamung on the inland side. They dragged the tree across Luamung and down to the coast. Even now there is a deep cleft down the mountain where they dragged the log down. They made their canoe and they often went to sea in it to catch fish. They cut the bamboo from Luamung to make their fishing rods. They caught a lot of tuna and their mother said: 'These boys are very smart'. She loved them and told them not to go onto the western side of Luamung because there was a white wild boar which had killed a lot of people. Some time later Turu said to his mother: 'Can we try to kill this boar'. She said: 'Don't go. You might be killed too'.

However, they made spears and went to the place where the boar was. It was rooting in the bamboo but saw them and charged. However they escaped and fought with the boar. It chased Mde and Turu speared and killed it. They brought it to their mother and said: 'It is dead and no-one can be afraid to go over that side again'. The mother said: 'This is

a strange boar; we should give a little to everybody so they will know you killed it'. So they gave the head to Musom people. The Musom kept the jaw for dancing until the Mission came. The jaw was given to Reverend Schmutterer and they told him the story.

The links with the sea are probably closest in the case of the Gwatu clan (although it is the land under the sea rather than the sea itself).

Whenever a Gwatu man dies he joins his ancestors below the sea off Asiawi. Like his ancestors, he turns into a sago palm and there is a great number standing below the sea there.

Whenever a Gwatu man was sick we would go and watch the sea. If the sea stayed calm the man would get better. But sometimes the sago palms below the sea would roughen up the water and bring great waves and storm and a water spout would rise to the heavens like a whale spouting. The sea would beat on the land and invade the bush and tear away great pieces of land. We then knew that the man had to go and join his fathers.<sup>1</sup>

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1 These stories were told to A.K. Jackson by Bogen-Ahi of Wapiguhu clan on 23 February 1966.

## VIII

The main purpose of this survey was to illustrate that the literature probably contains more detailed information on the pre-colonial history of Papua New Guinea than even the more optimistic among us tend to expect – and it must be stressed that the literature on the Lae area is by no means particularly rich. On the other hand, this paper should also have indicated how much work remains to be done. Though tempting, it would clearly be premature to try to combine the available pieces of information into one coherent story, not to mention the explanations this story would require. Still, a good command of the literature is clearly of prime importance for any attempt to close some of the crucial gaps in our knowledge, even as far as the recording of oral traditions is concerned.

It is just not sufficient to interview knowledgeable men and women without carefully preparing these interviews. There is a direct link between the interviewer's knowledge of the subject and the amount of information he will obtain from informants. The right questions and, in particular, reference to details already known from the literature will activate latent memories and yield valuable information the informant himself did not know he possessed.

Further, if an adequate coverage is to be achieved, the investigations must be guided by a flexible but well thought out overall plan. Strategic areas, geographically as well as topic-wise, must be isolated. At the same time, the net must be cast much wider in certain directions than would appear necessary at first glance. The identification of pseudo-historical mythological motives (see above, p.95), for instance, is only possible if whole regions are considered. The existence or absence of certain cultural elements which seem historically irrelevant, for instance *balum* traditions (see above, p.104), can also provide important clues for historical reconstruction.

Finally, the general traditional socio/political organisation, and in particular the traditional socio/political functions of oral history, must be appreciated before the task of writing regional or national history in Papua New Guinea can be tackled with a chance of success. And the historian should, of course, also be aware of the socio/political functions these new types of history can fulfil.

The strongest impression created by this survey may have been this: that traditional history in Papua New Guinea disintegrates the closer one looks. At first we were confronted by *the natives*, a black and shapeless body, without history, savage and ridiculous. Then a miraculous process of cell-proliferation set in. *The natives* became the 'coastal people' and the 'bush (mountain, Kai) people', who were in turn divided into 'tribes', which were again subdivided into 'branches', which had to make way for kinship groups, which dissolved as well, so that only (very human) individuals remained, each occupying the centre of a complex network of changing personal relationships. In a way it was like peeling an onion; we removed skin after skin, and, in the end, only the tears in our eyes and the smell on our fingers were left.

Yet this experience is surely no reason to dispute the existence of onions or the various smaller bulbs within them. And there is also no doubt that the various smaller and larger traditional groupings and divisions — though elusive and difficult to define — all played their parts in the history of the country.

Moreover, certain general features emerge with surprising clarity from what is still a mess of multicoloured, overlapping facts, gaps, guesses, memories and prejudices. Looking at the 'theories' which have been put forward to explain the phenomenon of the 'bloodthirsty Laewomba', we can already narrow down the field with some confidence.

The suggestion that the attacks of the Laewomba on the 'coastal people' were the result of European influences (that they attacked to obtain European goods and were successful because the 'coastal people' had been weakened by European recruiting, see above, p.46) is obviously inadequate. Nor is Hogbin's view convincing, that the Laewomba merely tried to check a further expansion of the Bukaua.<sup>1</sup> There is ample evidence to support Lehner's assertion that the Bukaua had been on the defensive for some time before the first Europeans arrived (see above, p.79-80).

Disregarding some of its most speculative and exotic features, Schmitz's theory (see above, p.7ff) is, up to a point, the most plausible. The population movements along the coast were largely a consequence of internal fights among the Laewomba. But were these fights caused by a clash between a southern and northern branch of the Laewomba? The evidence available so far rather tends to indicate that there may have been no separate northern branch. However, the situation is far from clear.<sup>2</sup>

In short, if we are not prepared to accept the 'characteristic bloodthirstiness' of the Laewomba as a sufficient explanation for what happened in the Lae area during the last pre-colonial decades – and there is no reason, why we should – we have to admit that we are only just beginning to appreciate what the search for a better explanation involves.

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1 The Awasa, for instance, were almost certainly not 'a collection of Gawa' (see above, p.13) but part of the Ahi/Hengali branch of the Laewomba (see above, p.79-80, 89-90, 104).

2 Especially the relationship between the Laewomba and the Yalu, Musom and older Kamkumung clans require further study.

## References

For unpublished material the full location has usually been given in the text.<sup>1</sup> The same applies to published material referred to in Section VII of this paper. The following lists therefore include primarily published material referred to in Sections II to VI of this paper.

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<sup>1</sup> For the files of the German Colonial Office, held by the Zentralarchiv in Potsdam, the abbreviation R.K.A. (Reichs-Kolonialamt) has been used.



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